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Project Syndicate

Organizing Middle East Peace

Chris Patten

Jun 30, 2014 -- In Bertolt Brecht's great anti-war play, "Mother Courage and Her Children," one of the characters says, "You know what the trouble with peace is? No organization."

The play is set during Europe's Thirty Years' War, which devastated Europe in the first half of the seventeenth century, ending only with the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. The war began as a religious struggle between Protestants and Catholics, but rapidly morphed into a long-running fight between rival countries and dynasties, principally between the Habsburgs and the Holy Roman Empire on one side and Cardinal Richelieu's France on the other.

Not surprisingly, some have compared today's Sunni-Shia conflict, which is consuming swaths of Mesopotamia and Western Asia, to that war, which caused death on a massive scale, plagues, economic destruction, and social turmoil marked,

for example, by a wave of witch hunting.

There had in fact been a peace settlement a half-century before the fighting broke out – an effort to organize peace. Emperor Charles V engineered the Peace of Augsburg in 1555, which was based on an agreement that sovereign states could choose for themselves which version of Christianity to adopt. When that treaty fell apart, the killing started.

What was the “organized peace” that preceded the current bloody turmoil in Iraq, Syria, and elsewhere? The answer depends on how far back one goes.

As the Ottoman Empire crumbled, the Western powers launched a self-aggrandizing project to redraw the region’s map, installing regimes, creating dependencies, establishing spheres of influence, and securing access to increasingly important supplies of oil. Then came a persistent tendency to judge the behavior of states across the Maghreb and the Levant by whether or not they would make diplomatic (or other) trouble over Israel’s attitude toward Palestine and the latter’s claim to viable statehood. There have also been explicit interventions, from the covert removal of Iran’s democratically elected prime minister, Mohammad Mossadegh, to the more recent military intervention in Iraq, which led to a quarter-million Iraqi deaths.

But Western countries have been reluctant to face up to the region’s underlying realities, set out in a [2002 report](#) by the United Nations Development Program. The Arab scholars and policymakers who drafted the report drew attention to the connections between authoritarian government, economic weakness, high unemployment, and excessively confessional

politics. The more dictatorial politics in the region became, the more young men – denied both jobs and freedom of expression – turned to extremist and violent Islamism, the perversion of a great faith.

So here we are today, with the obvious but inadequate answer to the question, “Well, what would you do about it?” being the Irish farmer’s reply to a traveler’s request for directions: “I wouldn’t start from here.”

Alas, that is no answer at all, though it may be a useful riposte to those – like former US Vice President Dick Cheney – who advocate a replay of the recent past. Denying reality, American and British neoconservatives apparently believe that recent events justify their view that their war of choice in Iraq would have been a great success had there only been more of it.

But the neocons are not entirely misguided. The United States, former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice rightly argued, for too long had pursued “stability at the expense of democracy”; as a result, it had “achieved neither.”

That is a powerful argument for not abandoning a long-term commitment to the sort of pluralist values embraced by – among others – the authors of the 2002 report. The West has been inconsistent in its application of these principles, has occasionally tried to impose them by force (with disastrous consequences), and has failed to use effectively the money and mechanisms devised to support them. Consider, for example, the miserable results of the European Union’s trade and cooperation agreements around the Mediterranean.

The West must use all of its diplomatic resources to broker an

understanding between Iran and Saudi Arabia, the main sponsors of, respectively, Shia and Sunni armed struggle. It is not remotely in either country's interest to see their own region go up in flames. These two countries need to start repairing their relations, a prospect (recently set back) which seemed a real possibility back in May.

With American and Turkish help, Iraq should be steered in the direction of a federal state, which recognizes the aspirations of Kurds, Sunni, and Shia. In Syria, President Bashar al-Assad remains in office but hardly in power. His army is probably winning, but the fighting continues. At the moment, the best outlook appears to be that described by the Roman historian Tacitus – “they make a desert, they call it peace.”

The time is long since past when outsiders could have considered an effective military intervention. But with UN Security Council support, the world's humanitarian efforts should be more extensive and focused, so that greater relief can be brought to the almost 11 million Syrian refugees who need it.

Finally, we should not ignore the continuing toxicity of the unresolved Israel-Palestine conflict, which continues to feed political extremism and raises serious questions about the West's commitment to human rights.

Countries outside of the region face an additional task: the need to discourage young men from going to fight in Islam's civil war. That is a problem for my own country, where it seems that we have not done a good job instilling in some communities an understanding and acceptance of the values that often brought these young men's parents to the United Kingdom in the first place.

The agenda for real and lasting peace is long and complex. Plans need to be organized, and they will take years to implement. Unless we start now, the fires will spread – fanned by politics and religion – and it will not only be Nineveh that is consumed by them.

Chris Patten, the last British Governor of Hong Kong and a former EU commissioner for external affairs, is Chancellor of the University of Oxford.

[Article 2.](#)

Foreign Affairs

ISIS' Western Ambitions - Why Europe and the United States Could be the Militant Group's Next Target

Robin Simcox

June 30, 2014 -- In January this year, U.S. President Barack Obama was asked to comment on the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) takeover of the Iraqi city of Fallujah. Almost 100 U.S. troops had died fighting insurgents there a decade earlier, yet Obama's reply was flippant: "if a jayvee team puts on Lakers uniforms that doesn't make them Kobe Bryant." ISIS, in other words, was small bore -- not the United States' problem.

Fast-forward six months. ISIS has taken over a stretch of territory the size of Jordan and subsequently declared it an Islamic caliphate. Its advances have helped it pick up more recruits, weapons, and money. Virtually overnight, it has gone from terrorist group to terrorist army. And it seems intent on tangling with the West. Earlier this year, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the head of ISIS, warned the United States, “soon we’ll be in direct confrontation,” continuing “watch out for us, for we are with you, watching.” Late last month, ISIS issued another statement threatening to attack the United States.

Suddenly, Obama’s understanding of the situation in Iraq (as well as in West Africa and Syria) as a “local power struggles,” as he remarked in January, looks naive at best and dangerously misguided at worst. Yet his scepticism about ISIS seems unchanged. In a June 22 interview with “Face the Nation,” Obama maintained that “there are a lot of groups out there that probably have more advanced immediate plans directed against the United States.” In other words, the “jayvee team” label has stuck.

That is a problem. ISIS -- and its previous incarnations, al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) and the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) -- is aggressive, expansionist, and poses a real danger. It might be focusing most of its attention on Iraq for now, but its long-term ambitions are much wider. For example, in a video released shortly after the fall of Mosul, a British jihadist proclaims that ISIS “understand no borders” and will fight “wherever our sheikh [Baghdadi] wants to send us.” He specifically cites Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria as targets.

And targets they are; the group has already attacked all of those

countries over the last decade. In 2004, AQI Leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi helped create the Abdullah Azzam Brigade with the specific purpose of waging battle in the Levant and broader Middle East. In November 2005, AQI killed 57 in suicide attacks in Amman, Jordan. Six years later, Amman would be targeted again. This time, though, authorities disrupted the cell, which had received assistance [9] from ISI to plan a series of attacks. In mid-2011, Mohammed al-Joulani, an ISI member, formed the al-Nusra Front (ANF), which fights the government of Bashar al-Assad in Syria and was established with funding by the ISI. And this year, ISIS carried out a string of operations in Lebanon. In June alone, it claimed credit for a car bomb attack in Beirut and two suicide bombings.

These are not the actions of a locally focused group. Rather, they are the actions of a group that, like al Qaeda before it, is looking to establish a base in the Levant from which to expand its influence throughout the whole region -- and beyond. The real question, then, is where ISIS will go next. And unlike Obama, some European leaders are beginning worry. In a late June interview with Reuters, Gilles de Kerchove , the European Union's counterterrorism coordinator, said that it is “very likely that the ISIS ... maybe is preparing, training, directing some of the foreign fighters to mount attacks in Europe, or outside Europe.” And in an address to the House of Commons, British Prime Minister David Cameron warned that “as well as trying to take territory,” radicals “are also planning to attack us here at home in the United Kingdom.”

And ISIS does have connections to previous attacks in Europe. In 2007, a British doctor who had fought in Iraq carried out a car bombing attack on Glasgow Airport. It later emerged that he

and his accomplice, who had also planted car bombs in London's West End, had the telephone numbers of ISI members on their cell phones. Counterterrorism officials called the Glasgow and London attacks "the closest collaboration" between ISI and Western fighters to date.

That record was overturned in 2010, when a captured senior ISI operative admitted to Iraqi forces that ISI was preparing to carry out an attack in the West at the end of the year. Later that year, Taimour Abdulwahab al-Abdaly, an Iraqi-born militant, staged a suicide attack in Stockholm, Sweden. He is thought to have trained with ISI in Mosul for three months prior to the operation, and jihadist websites claimed he was affiliated with the group. Indeed, Abdaly's attack was potentially inspired by -- and dedicated to -- ISI. In an audio message released after his death, he cited the Swedish artist Lars Vilks' derogatory cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed as a motivation for his actions. ISI had offered \$150,000 to anyone who killed him. Unsurprisingly, ISI praised al-Abdaly's subsequent suicide mission.

Another link between ISIS and Europe emerged in June 2013, when the Iraqi defense ministry announced that it had arrested members of a terror cell in Baghdad that had been attempting to manufacture chemical weapons to smuggle into Canada, the United States, and Europe. Then, in June 2014, Mehdi Nemmouche, a French citizen whom French intelligence agencies believe joined ISIS in Syria in 2012, shot and killed three people at the Jewish Museum in Brussels. His gun was found wrapped in an ISIS flag.

Whether ISIS directed or merely inspired these attacks, an

alarming trend is emerging. Over the last decade, the Iraqi group carried out attacks in four countries in the Middle East and has been linked to three others in Europe. It has offered financial reward for the assassination of Europeans and allegedly planned to smuggle chemical weapons into the West.

Following its recent successes, ISIS is likely to attract hundreds of fresh recruits to its new safe haven in Iraq. The very thing that the U.S.-led coalition fought so hard against in Afghanistan, in other words, is emerging in Iraq. ISIS ambitions should not be believed to stop at the Iraqi and Syrian borders, and its links to attacks in Europe should not be taken lightly. Western governments have no option but to prepare for the time when this “jayvee team” starts having a lot more in common with the Lakers than many previously imagined.

Robin Simcox is a Research Fellow at the Henry Jackson Society.

[Article 3.](#)

The National Interest

America Broke Iraq: Three Lessons for Washington

Kishore Mahbubani

July 1, 2014 -- Colin Powell put it clearly and succinctly: “If you break it, you own it.” America broke Iraq. America owns Iraq. This is how the rest of the world sees it. This is also why the world is mystified by the current Obama-Cheney debate. Both these camps are saying, “You did it.” Actually both the camps should say, “We did it.”

The tragedy about this divisive debate is that America is missing a great opportunity to reflect on a big and fundamental question: why is America so bad at the simple task of invading and occupying countries? Surely, the American invasion and occupation of Iraq will go down in history as one of the most botched operations of its kind. America spent \$4 trillion, lost thousands of American lives and millions of Iraqi lives, and at the end of the day, achieved nothing. Since the failure was so catastrophic, why not at least try to learn some valuable lessons from it? There are at least three lessons that scream for attention.

The first lesson is the folly of good intentions. Let’s be clear about one thing: Americans are not evil people. They do not conquer countries to rape, pillage and loot. Instead, they conquer countries to help the people. President George W. Bush’s goal was to set up a stable, functioning Iraqi democracy, not to set up an American colony in perpetuity. The British colonial rulers of Iraq in the early twentieth century would have been totally mystified by these good intentions. And they would have been even more flummoxed by the methods used to achieve these good intentions. For example, the British would preserve local institutions, not destroy them.

The last successful American occupation was the occupation of Japan. MacArthur wisely preserved Japanese

institutions—including Emperor Hirohito, despite his role in the war. By contrast, America destroyed both Saddam’s army and his Ba’ath party at the beginning, thereby condemning the occupation to failure. Some Americans believed they could manage Iraq because American governance was inherently superior. Paul Bremer assumed he could rule Iraq effortlessly with his big boots, without ever being aware that his big boots were culturally offensive.

This American trait of supreme self-confidence in running other societies is not new. When I lived in Phnom Penh in 1973-74 forty years ago, I witnessed firsthand how a young, inexperienced American diplomat would walk into the offices of the Cambodian Economic Minister and give him daily instructions from Washington, DC on how to run the Cambodian economy. What was the result of this? The Cambodian leaders felt powerless to govern their own society. There is a paradox here. One strength of American culture is that it empowers people. But when America takes over another society, it disempowers it. This happened in Iraq, too. So after the disastrous management of Cambodia and South Vietnam and of Afghanistan and Iraq, Americans should absorb one painful lesson: because Americans are full of good intentions, they are incapable of occupying other countries. America should get out of this business completely. Even the UN does a better job of managing countries in transition.

The second lesson is to avoid overreliance on the American military. Obama said it well: “Just because we have the best hammer, does not mean that every problem is a nail.” Future historians of the American century will spend a lot of time scratching their heads over a difficult conundrum: how did the

relatively peaceful people of America become so trigger-happy in their external adventures?

The simple lesson of Iraq and Afghanistan and of Cambodia and South Vietnam is that guns alone do not work. This is why the recent American debate about Syria is so bewildering. Both sides were debating one question—to bomb or not to bomb Syria? But bombing would have solved nothing. And it was equally unwise for America to make a unilateral announcement on August 18, 2011 that “Assad must go”. Almost three years later, he is still in office. All debates in America inevitably become black and white. Assad is black. His opponents must be white. Therefore, kill the bad guys—this appears to be the only solution. In many parts of the Middle East the choice is between black and black (or, more accurately, between various shades of grey). To bring “peace”, America will have to learn to deal with and shake hands with people who are not American boy scouts.

All this leads to the obvious third lesson: strengthen American diplomacy. Let me start with one painful fact obvious to many in the rest of the world: American diplomacy has deteriorated. In my thirty-three-year career with the Singapore Foreign Service from 1971-2004, I witnessed this firsthand. The reasons for deterioration are obvious. Organizations attract young talent when they can promise the best jobs at the end of their hardworking and dedicated careers. But if all that a young American diplomat can aspire to after three decades of service is to be the Ambassador to Ouagadougou or Kabul (with London and Paris being completely out of the equation), why stay on?

One counterargument I have heard is that the strong American private sector makes up for the weak public sector. A weak State

Department, for example, is compensated by strong think tanks. This is true, but it creates a deeper mystery: how can America have the best strategic think tanks and strategic thinkers and yet have the worst strategic thinking in invading and occupying other countries? So this is the time for Americans to have the obvious epiphany: America should get out of the business of invasion and occupation. Four decades of failure have provided enough evidence to prove that the American people are far too good to do this job.

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[Article 4.](#)

The London Review of Books

The World's Most Important Spectator

David Bromwich

The first year and a half of Barack Obama's second term has been preternaturally unlucky. The stymied enrolments for his healthcare plan, the multiple errors of computer co-ordination

that forced people to wait days or weeks in front of blank screens, marred the new faith in government the plan had been intended to affirm. Just when, around the end of April, the trouble seemed to be halfway resolved, with millions finally insured and several deadlines put off, there emerged stories of faked records of treatment and months-long waiting lists at Veterans Hospitals. It was another failure of managerial competence, in another branch of government to which Obama had professed the warmest commitment. And there has been nothing resembling a success in foreign policy to offset the embarrassments at home. The United States, which always needs to be doing something, was in no position to do much about the Russian annexation of Crimea or the conflict in Ukraine.

A common feature in all these events was that Obama himself seemed far from the scene. He was looking on, we were made to think, with concern and understanding. But in matters like these, one could easily feel that a conspicuous sign of a 'hands-on' president was needed. Apparently Obama was startled by the bad rollout of healthcare – shocked and dismayed like all Americans. But shouldn't he have known more about it than most Americans? Again, the Veterans Affairs scandal was something he learned about when he read the papers, but why only then? His show of injured trust and surprise had been received more charitably on the still obscure earlier occasion when four Americans were killed in Benghazi on 11 September 2012. He was notified at the time, but he was in the middle of campaigning and left the crisis to the State Department. Absent and accounted for. Yet there has been, all along, an airy and unnerving quality about these absences. Obama launched the bombing of Libya in March 2011, having previously signalled

that he intended no such action, in an emergency speech during a state visit to Brazil.

The second term had begun on a quite different note, with a spontaneous initiative which sprang from Obama's voluntary presence at a scene he could have avoided. After the mass killing of schoolchildren in Newtown, Connecticut in December 2012, he vowed to pass a stringent new measure to strengthen gun control. For anyone who has been watching him, it was the most deeply felt moment of his presidency, and the largest risk he had taken on any issue. The time to publicise the outlines of such a bill was during those December days when the grief of the parents overwhelmed the country. Obama's solution was characteristic. He announced that Joe Biden would explore the legislative possibilities and report back in a month. As the weeks passed, various weapons bans were drawn up and canvassed in public, but the National Rifle Association had been given time to rally and the moment passed. Much the same happened with the pledge in January 2009 to close Guantánamo. Obama left the room and asked his advisers to call him when they had solved it. A prudential pause was lengthened and became so clearly a sign of unconcern that the issue lost all urgency.

Obama is adept at conveying benevolent feelings that his listeners want to share, feelings that could lead to benevolent actions. He has seemed in his element in the several grief-counselling speeches given in the wake of mass killings, not only in Newtown but in Aurora, at Fort Hood, in Tucson, in Boston after the marathon bombing; and in his meetings with bereft homeowners and local officials who were granted disaster funds in the aftermath of recent hurricanes. This president delivers compassion with a kind face and from a decorous and

understated height. And that seems to be the role he prefers to play in the world too. It was doubtless the posture from which he would have liked to address the Arab Spring, and for that matter the civil war in Syria, if only Assad had obeyed when Obama said he must go. Obama has a larger-spirited wish to help people than any of his predecessors since Jimmy Carter; though caution bordering on timidity has kept him from speaking with Carter even once in the last five years. Obama roots for the good cause but often ends up endorsing the acceptable evil on which the political class or the satisfied classes in society have agreed. He watches the world as its most important spectator.

Yet he shuns the company of other politicians – a trait now generally familiar and wondered at. A leading Democrat in the Senate, when asked how often he had spoken to Obama in the past year, answered that they had spoken once. The same senator declined to be named because that degree of intimacy would arouse the jealousy of his peers. Obama's lack of concern with the daily business of politics – the bargaining and immersion in other people's interests, the often merely formal but necessary exchange of views – has done much to blunt his sensibility to changes in public sentiment. Conflict-averse as he is, he never sees a fight coming until it is on him and almost out of control. The Tea Party got its start in spring 2009, with a rant at the Chicago Mercantile Exchange by the former hedge fund manager Rick Santelli, who asked why good Americans should pay for the losers whom the financial collapse had sunk with unpayable mortgages. Santelli promised to deliver a new insurgent group in the coming weeks, modelled on the Boston Tea Party. It was a clever speech, but morally ugly on the face of

it, and could have been parried. Obama noticed the Tea Party more than a year later. By then, it was well organised and in a position to hand him the midterm congressional defeat of 2010 from which his administration has never really recovered.

Why these recurring shocks? Obama entered the presidency never having run anything. He appointed several qualified-looking but (as they turned out) inept officials with none of the relevant management skills. Steven Chu, the secretary of energy in Obama's first term, was the winner of a Nobel Prize in physics, but he promulgated without complaint the 'all of the above' energy policy, which included, with ecumenical indifference, nuclear power, deep-sea drilling, Arctic drilling, and fracking. Kathleen Sebelius, the secretary of health and human services, had been governor of Kansas and a loyal supporter of Obama, but was quite untested as a large-scale administrator before she was handed the gigantic apparatus of the Affordable Care Act. The same was true of Eric Shinseki, the general famous for telling the truth about the number of troops that would be needed to secure Iraq. Shinseki was misplaced as chief VA administrator and sacked a few weeks after Sebelius.

Disengagement has become the polite word for Obama's grip on his own policies. Absent and not accounted for was the general view of him as the crisis in Ukraine built up in January and February. The overthrow of Yanukovich and seizure of power by a provisional government in Kiev had been anticipated and indeed encouraged by the European and Eurasian desk of the State Department. The assistant secretary in charge there is Victoria Nuland, a neoconservative who made a highly successful transition in 2009 from Dick Cheney's staff to Hillary Clinton's. Nuland is married to the co-founder of the Project for

the New American Century, Robert Kagan, one of the leading promoters of the Iraq war. We may never know what Obama thought Nuland was up to when she flew in to the Maidan to pass out cookies to the protesters in Russia's backyard. But the message has got around by now that Obama doesn't particularly want to know things. On Ukraine, he seemed far out on the margins of the action, and possibly not aware of the implications of the State Department's investment in civil society and democracy promotion in Ukraine: a subsidy of more than \$5 billion since 1991, as Nuland revealed at the National Press Club on 13 December – a tremendous sum by USAID standards. Obama ceded control of America's public stance to his secretary of state, John Kerry. The result with Ukraine in 2014, as with Syria in 2013, was to render a critical situation more confused, and bristling with opportunities for hostility between the US and Russia. Eventually, in late March, Obama gave a speech to the EU in Brussels that dressed up the debacle as policy.

His obliviousness to the Cheney weeds in his policy garden is characteristic and revealing. As Barton Gellman revealed in *Angler*, still the best book about Cheney, the vice president in 2001 was given a free hand to sow the departments and agencies of government with first and second-echelon workers who were fanatically loyal to him. Many of those people are still around; Obama made no effort to scour his government of their influence. Disgust with Bush and Cheney, even in the Republican Party, was general in early 2009 and it gave real leverage to a new president. But the idea of a return to the rule of law has not prospered under Obama; the phrase itself has scarcely been heard. We have seen not one significant prosecution of a Wall Street criminal and not one legal action

against a lawyer who justified torture or an officer who ordered torture or an agent who committed it. Where Cheney and Bush are felt to have instigated crimes, Obama is seen to have countenanced or condoned them.

His relaxed way with the Constitution has finally put him on the wrong side of his most faithful allies even among centrist Democrats. The White House is now involved in a wrangle with the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, Dianne Feinstein, who is almost routinely a defender of the interests of police and intelligence services against suspects and citizens. The CIA's refusal, over months of delay, to approve the release of a Senate committee report on its actions since 2001 has prompted Feinstein at last to question the role of the White House in suppressing the report. She interpreted Obama's elaborate show of impartiality as one more extension of executive privilege against the branch of government that is responsible for oversight.

Executive action was once again Obama's preference in arranging the return on 31 May of Bowe Bergdahl, the American prisoner in Afghanistan, in exchange for five Taliban prisoners in Guantánamo. On 2 June, the Environmental Protection Agency, with Obama's explicit backing, announced rigorous new carbon limits calculated to shorten the life of coal-fired power plants. These two actions, one in domestic, the other in foreign affairs, are the boldest Obama has taken in five years; but both were presented as executive decisions, owing nothing to consultation with lawmakers. Election-wary Democrats who were not consulted have been reluctant to defend the prisoner exchange, while Democrats from coal-mining states such as West Virginia and Kentucky are actively denouncing the carbon

limits. Obama's determination to do things however he can in his last years in office, and act alone when he cannot act with Congress, has now committed him in ways that allow no exit. These are decisions which cannot by their nature be walked back. If the Republican Party hadn't squandered an impeachment a little too recently on Bill Clinton, they would probably answer the drumbeat of their rank and file and impeach Barack Obama.

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The Tea Party has the reputation of being the home of American libertarians: defenders of the separation of powers and the Bill of Rights, especially the first, second, fourth and fifth amendments to the Constitution, which assure respectively the freedom of speech, the press, religious practice and peaceable assembly; the right to bear arms; the right of citizens to be secure against unwarranted searches and seizures; and the right not to be charged with a capital crime, or convicted or punished, without due process of law. But the Tea Party encompasses believers of at least two sorts in addition to the 'rights' libertarians: fanatical defenders of private property and earnings (no matter how acquired) as a good on a par with life and limb; and haters of government action and government itself, except in the cause of imprisoning criminals and waging war on enemies of the state. So far, only one credible non-Tea Party candidate seems prepared to run for the presidency in 2016. This is Jeb Bush, the former governor of Florida, younger brother of George W. and, according to their father, the more sensitive of the two.

Meanwhile the Tea Party aspirants are a peculiar array that

reflects the still uncertain character of the party. Marco Rubio, the handsome junior senator from Florida, has an effortless flow of speech, fast, glib and shallow, and might possibly be equipped to recapture the Hispanic vote which the Republicans need if they are to survive. Rubio was caught in a patent falsehood a few months ago, having postdated his parents' flight from Cuba to make them look like refugees from Castro and Communism, but he was soon forgiven: in the Southern states generally, the anti-Castro mania has outlasted its motive, and in such a cause fiction and fact will inevitably be mingled. Ted Cruz, the junior senator from Texas, a graduate of Princeton and Harvard Law School, presents himself as another adoptive and grateful American of Cuban descent (though born in Canada). He bears an uncanny physical resemblance to Joe McCarthy – a clean-shaven, teetotal McCarthy, without the jowl and the after-hours squint. Cruz talks smoothly and skilfully, always in a tone of accusation: a manner that one might suppose had passed with the death of McCarthy, but nationalist rage and resentment have a melody that lingers on.

'The undisputed party leader' in Texas (according to the Dallas Morning News), Senator Cruz has pledged to carry into national politics the 2014 platform of the Texas Republicans. The elements of the platform include: sealing off the border with Mexico and prohibiting amnesty for illegal immigrants; permitting owners of businesses to refuse service to persons they find offensive on moral or religious grounds; abolition of property taxes; abolition of the Environmental Protection Agency; repeal of the minimum wage; termination of affirmative action; endorsement of 'reparative therapy' to convert homosexuals to heterosexual practice; and repeal of the state

lottery. Any hope of tempering the rigours of such a programme by the national Republican establishment was considerably weakened on 10 June, when a Tea Party insurgent defeated Eric Cantor, the majority leader in Congress, in the Republican primary in Cantor's Virginia district. Cantor had seemed to define the outermost limit of Republican intransigence during the debt-ceiling negotiations of 2011, and he held the status of Benjamin Netanyahu's virtual representative in the US. The man who beat him on a shoestring budget, Dave Brat, is a professor of economics, a denouncer of crony capitalism, and an immigration alarmist. 'The guy,' the blogger who signs himself Pangloss wrote in sheer wonder, 'found room to the right of Cantor.'

Rand Paul, the son of the libertarian Ron Paul, remains alongside Cruz a contender for Tea Party support in 2016. He is among the most interesting of contemporary politicians, and also the most troubling in his inconsistency. Paul's speech against the nomination of John Brennan to head the CIA, which became a 13-hour filibuster against the president's right to order drone strikes, was a singular event of 2013, yet it has turned out to be a prelude without a sequel. More prudential displays of ambition by Paul, such as his equivocal postponement of judgment on climate change, his trip to Israel (with the usual ritual obeisance), his gimmicky solution to Ukraine (give it to the Russians, cut off all relations and let it bankrupt them), have suggested nothing like the single-mindedness of his father. Nevertheless it will be interesting to see how much of Ron Paul's libertarianism, shared by no other politician of national standing, might come to be represented in some way by Rand.

On 21 May he delivered an extraordinary speech against the

nomination of David Barron to the federal appeals court; and he did so on the grounds that Barron, author of the secret document rationalising the president's drone assassination of Americans, manifestly held beliefs about executive power that were in themselves disqualifying. Paul read from the writings of journalists hardly identified with the American right, such as Glenn Greenwald and Conor Friedersdorf; and he made the substance of his criticism the all-importance of trial by jury and the legal standard requiring proof of guilt beyond a reasonable doubt:

In these memos [written for the president by Barron] there's a different standard ... The standard is that an assassination is justified when 'an informed, high-level official of the US government has determined that the targeted individual poses an imminent threat of violent attack against the United States.' So we're not talking about beyond a reasonable doubt any more. That standard's gone. We're talking about an informed, unnamed high-level official in secret deciding that an imminent attack is going to occur.

The interesting thing about an imminent attack is we really don't go by the plain wording of what you might think would be 'imminent' any more ... You wonder about a definition of imminence that no longer includes the word immediate ... The president believes, with regard to privacy in the fourth amendment, and with regard to killing American citizens in the fifth amendment, that if he has some lawyers review this process, that that is due process. This is appalling, because this has nothing to do with due process ... You cannot have due process by a secret, internal process within the executive branch ... Next time they kill an American, it will be done in secret, by

the executive branch, because that's the new norm.

You are voting for someone who has made this the historic precedent for how we will kill Americans overseas. In secret – by one branch of the government – without [legal] representation – based upon an accusation. We've gone from you have to be proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt to an accusation being enough for an execution. I'm horrified that this is where we are... . We need to ask ourselves: how precious is the concept of presumption of innocence?

In the second term of the Obama presidency, it was left to a Republican to speak these words on civil liberties – though he stood alone in his party. By contrast, the Harvard law professor who wrote the memorandum justifying the assassination of Americans was looked on kindly by the liberal establishment because he had a good position on gay marriage. The Democrats hold the majority in the Senate and Barron's ascent to the judgeship has now been approved.

The anomaly of Paul's speech in dissent and the Democratic vote for the drone lawyer points to a deeper puzzle. A perilous and unspoken accord in American politics has grown up while no one was looking, which unites the liberal left and the authoritarian right. They agree in their unquestioning support of a government without checks or oversight; and it is the Obama presidency that has cemented the agreement. The state apparatus which supports wars and the weapons industry for Republicans yields welfare and expanded entitlements for Democrats. The Democrats take to the wars indifferently but are willing to accept them for what they get in return. The Republicans hate the entitlements and all that goes by the name of welfare, but they

cannot escape the charge of hypocrisy when they vote for ever-enlarging military entitlements.

At the end of May, Obama added two and a half years to his promised deadline for removing American troops from Afghanistan. December 2016 now marks the date for final withdrawal. Two days later, he hosted a ‘Concussion Summit’ at the White House on the effects of head injuries on small children – just the sort of thing Republicans single out for mockery because it seems beneath the dignity of the presidency. Obama chose the day between those two events to deliver a West Point commencement address, which was advertised by his handlers as the main formulation of the Obama doctrine in foreign policy. The speech faithfully represents the have-it-both-ways tendency of the president, even as it ratifies the bargain on state power that is the overriding force in American politics. He asserted that the United States would engage in more military actions than ever before, but with far fewer American deaths. We would look to the well-being of our own country first, without forgetting the need to defend something broader and harder to set a limit to: our ‘core interests’ and our ‘way of life’.

The invisible epigraph for Obama’s address might have come from Madeleine Albright, the secretary of state in Bill Clinton’s second administration. ‘If we have to use force,’ Albright said, ‘it is because we are America; we are the indispensable nation. We stand tall and we see further than other countries into the future.’ Very much in that spirit, Obama told the graduating West Point cadets that the US must lead the world even though it cannot police the world. For that, an international consensus is necessary in order to enforce ‘international norms’. This last phrase has become an important piece of intellectual furniture

for Obama: international norms split the difference between international law, which the US reserves the right to violate, and the new ‘world order’ of which the US was the maker and must remain the guardian.

We have pulled out of Iraq, Obama said, and are ‘winding down our war in Afghanistan’; al-Qaida’s leadership in border regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan ‘has been decimated, and Osama bin Laden is no more’. Accordingly, ‘the question we face ... the question each of you will face, is not whether America will lead but how we will lead.’ But why must the United States continue uniquely to lead and enforce? Because ‘if we don’t, no one else will.’ So far, the deference to Albright’s national boast had been preserved, and it clearly left an opening for the doctrine of humanitarian war espoused by Samantha Power – a successor of Albright’s as UN ambassador who has become Obama’s steadiest consultant on the wisdom of foreign engagements. Power helped him to rewrite his second book and may have helped to draft the West Point speech itself. In deference to this way of thinking, which mixes persuasion, force and emergency rescue, ‘US military action’, he went on to say, ‘cannot be the only – or even primary – component of our leadership in every instance.’ The preferred mode of address to international problems that ‘tear at the conscience’ will be multilateral. The US, however, will use force unilaterally ‘when our core interests demand it; when our people are threatened; when our livelihoods are at stake; when the security of our allies is in danger.’

Every key word in that last passage is ambiguous. And the sentence as a whole invites interested construal by those who look for ambiguities to carve an opportunity for force. Even the

phrase our people – does that include camp followers and spies? Special forces operating illegally? But the most shifting word of all is the all-purpose excuse for action, security. There follows a sentence that is echt Obama: ‘International opinion matters, but America should never ask permission to protect our people, our homeland or our way of life.’ In short, we try to respect international opinion, by getting it to go along with us, but ultimately we do as we please: enforcement of international norms by violence is not a crime on a par with a war of aggression, no matter what international opinion may say. The president and the secretary of state have called for \$5 billion from Congress to support ‘a new counterterrorism partnerships fund’ which will ‘facilitate partner countries on the front lines’. Five billion dollars echoes the amount cited by Nuland for Ukraine, and it calls to mind the curious fact that violent as well as non-violent foreign assistance now often comes from the State Department rather than Defense. Syria will be the first theatre of action for those funds; the partners are to be Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Jordan. ‘I believe in American exceptionalism,’ Obama said in conclusion, ‘with every fibre of my being.’ This formulation has lately become the measure of allegiance, hand on heart, expected from every American leader, and Obama spoke the words with the necessary throb and unction. Still, he added that the US should be willing to work with Nato, the UN, the World Bank and the IMF. The international organisations and financial institutions were grouped together without distinction.

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What can be the reason for Obama’s decision to ‘partner’ in counterterrorist training and the supply of weapons to protract

the civil war in Syria? This would scarcely seem to be in his interest if he wants a settlement with Iran to round off his record in foreign affairs. And yet Obama has a propensity, which no walk of reason could justify, to pledge to do a thing that looks strong, then call it off, then halfway do it anyway. Syria in the summer and autumn of 2013 was the most damaging instance of this to occur in open view. From threat to hesitation, to declaring an attack, to postponing the attack, to aborting the attack because a solution was offered from outside that didn't require the use of force: the giddy succession of warlike postures entertained and abandoned last year is now to be followed by the subsidising of a proxy war after all.

The worst American mistake of the past decade was to speak of a war on terror rather than a co-operative international police operation. Obama does not like to say 'war on terror' but he speaks constantly in terms of war-readiness and war capacity, and lets Americans take for granted that we will have to be involved in more than one war at a time for longer than a generation. It is instructive that Dick Cheney, in 2002 and 2003, alluded repeatedly by name to the possible 'criminal' or 'police' description of a hypothetical policy of defence, and heaped contempt on it. He knew that if it ever caught hold of common sense, the panic that his own policy required would be starved of fuel. The fact is that ever since 2002, with the exception of the early months in Afghanistan and Iraq, the US has been fighting against insurgencies. The enemies are rebels opposing governments we want to keep in place, in Afghanistan, in Yemen, in Somalia and now in Libya too. The adepts of humanitarian war – Hillary Clinton and Samantha Power above all – in their push for the Libya war stretched the target and

confused the aim by making the US equally the opponent of a sovereign government, and by claiming the prerogative of siding against a government and publicising its crimes while ignoring the crimes of the rebels. They soon extended the same rationale to Syria. The details might displease Cheney, but the result is much on his lines. The new Obama partnering in counterterrorism will mean there is nothing odd about fighting a dozen little wars at the same moment all around the world.

The next election is already being handicapped by the press. It is widely assumed – almost, indeed, accepted – that the Democratic nominee will be Hillary Clinton. She was a dutiful secretary of state under Obama. She never spoke flashy, quotable and negligent words that could upstage and embarrass the president, as her successor, John Kerry, has done again and again. At the same time, Clinton made Afghanistan a harder and longer trial for Obama by siding with the generals, and she dug a deep ditch for him, and for the country, by pressing for the overthrow of Gaddafi. Mrs Clinton is busy now positioning herself to the right of Obama. This suits her sense of the mainstream consensus, just as it did in 2008. In recent weeks, she has avowed her longtime preference for arming rebel forces in Syria, has compared Putin to Hitler, and has suggested that her view of Iran is more jaundiced than Obama's: no decent bargain should be expected from the negotiations over uranium processing. It is a craven and cynical approach; who can say that it will not succeed? Iraq – a war that both Hillary Clinton and John Kerry voted to authorise – was a catastrophe that might have jerked us awake; but since American troops have departed, we hold ourselves answerable for none of the subsequent violence there. Even so Obama responded to the June rebellion

in the Sunni Triangle by deploying 275 marines to help defend the US embassy in Baghdad. As an afterthought, under pressure, he added three hundred military ‘advisers’; and he has said he may order airstrikes and drone killings. Neoconservatives are on the march again in the op-ed pages. The Republican Party and some Democrats are saying the US should do more, though they don’t know exactly what. To judge by the chaos in the region and the confusion of the American political class, whose most ambitious members continue to outbid one another in delusion and posturing, there will have to be further echoes of the disasters of Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan before the US is forced to think again.

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[Article 5.](#)

WSJ

Where are the Palestinian Mothers?

Bret Stephens

June 30, 2014 -- In March 2004 a Palestinian teenager named

Hussam Abdo was spotted by Israeli soldiers behaving suspiciously as he approached the Hawara checkpoint in the West Bank. Ordered at gunpoint to raise his sweater, the startled boy exposed a suicide vest loaded with nearly 20 pounds of explosives and metal scraps, constructed to maximize carnage. A video taken by a journalist at the checkpoint captured the scene as Abdo was given scissors to cut himself free of the vest, which had been strapped tight to his body in the expectation that it wouldn't have to come off. He's been in an Israeli prison ever since.

Abdo provided a portrait of a suicide bomber as a young man. He had an intellectual disability. He was bullied by classmates who called him "the ugly dwarf." He came from a comparatively well-off family. He had been lured into the bombing only the night before, with the promise of sex in the afterlife. His family was outraged that he had been recruited for martyrdom.

"I blame those who gave him the explosive belt," his mother, Tamam, told the Jerusalem Post, of which I was then the editor. "He's a small child who can't even look after himself."

Yet asked how she would have felt if her son had been a bit older, she added this: "If he was over 18, that would have been possible, and I might have even encouraged him to do it." In the West, most mothers would be relieved if their children merely refrained from getting a bad tattoo before turning 18.

I've often thought about Mrs. Abdo, and I'm thinking about her today on the news that the bodies of three Jewish teenagers, kidnapped on June 12, have been found near the city of Hebron

"under a pile of rocks in an open field," as an Israeli military spokesman put it. Eyal Yifrach, 19, Gilad Shaar, 16, and Naftali Fraenkel, 16, had their whole lives ahead of them. The lives of their families will forever be wounded, or crippled, by heartbreak.

What about their killers? The Israeli government has identified two prime suspects, Amer Abu Aysha, 33, and Marwan Qawasmeh, 29, both of them Hamas activists. They are entitled to a presumption of innocence. Less innocent was the view offered by Mr. Abu Aysha's mother.

"They're throwing the guilt on him by accusing him of kidnapping," she told Israel's Channel 10 news. "If he did the kidnapping, I'll be proud of him."

It's the same sentiment I heard expressed in 2005 in the Jabalya refugee camp near Gaza City by a woman named Umm Iyad. A week earlier, her son, Fadi Abu Qamar, had been killed in an attack on the Erez border crossing to Israel. She was dressed in mourning but her mood was joyful as she celebrated her son's "martyrdom operation." He was just 21.

Here's my question: What kind of society produces such mothers? Whence the women who cheer on their boys to blow themselves up or murder the children of their neighbors?

Well-intentioned Western liberals may prefer not to ask, because at least some of the conceivable answers may upset the comforting cliché that all human beings can relate on some level, whatever the cultural differences. Or they may accuse me of picking a few stray anecdotes and treating them as dispositive, as if I'm the only Western journalist to encounter the

unsettling reality of a society sunk into a culture of hate. Or they can claim that I am ignoring the suffering of Palestinian women whose innocent children have died at Israeli hands.

But I'm not ignoring that suffering. To kill innocent people deliberately is odious, to kill them accidentally or "collaterally" is, at a minimum, tragic. I just have yet to meet the Israeli mother who wants to raise her boys to become kidnapers and murderers—and who isn't afraid of saying as much to visiting journalists.

Because everything that happens in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is bound to be the subject of political speculation and news analysis, it's easy to lose sight of the raw human dimension. So it is with the murder of the boys: How far will Israel go in its retaliation? What does it mean for the future of the Fatah-Hamas coalition? What about the peace process, such as it is?

These questions are a distraction from what ought to be the main point. Three boys went missing one night, and now we know they are gone. If nothing else, their families will have a sense of finality and a place to mourn. And Israelis will know they are a nation that leaves no stone unturned to find its missing children.

As for the Palestinians and their inveterate sympathizers in the West, perhaps they should note that a culture that too often openly celebrates martyrdom and murder is not fit for statehood, and that making excuses for that culture only makes it more unfit. Postwar Germany put itself through a process of moral rehabilitation that began with a recognition of what it had done.

Palestinians who want a state should do the same, starting with the mothers.