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Article 1.

The Washington Post

The failure of a noble idea

David Ignatius

September 1 -- There is no “big idea” easier to pay homage to in principle, or harder to make work in practice, than the peacekeeping role of the United Nations. This is painfully clear in a new memoir by Kofi Annan, its former secretary-general.

The latest failure of the U.N. dream was Annan’s mediating mission to Syria. For months, he tried to cajole President Bashar al-Assad into stopping the killing and starting a political transition that would avert civil war. To which he received the standard answer to well-meaning U.N. missions: Go away. You are powerless to stop me.

Annan finally did walk away last month, ending his Syria mission and probably his career as a mediator.

What will come next, it’s increasingly clear, is a paramilitary covert action, supported by the United States and most of its allies, to help the Syrian rebels accomplish what the United Nations could not.

Annan’s new memoir, “Interventions,” is a study in the failure of a noble idea. And it should cause readers to reflect why, in so many cases, the international

community has been unable to gather sufficient force (or will) to prevent conflict. Another failure is probably ahead with Iran, where six years of escalating U.N. sanctions have not curbed Tehran's nuclear program and unilateral military intervention is increasingly likely.

I've long been a supporter of multilateral action through the United Nations, and I still think the United States is most powerful when it operates under the legitimacy of international organizations. But the United Nations today is bootless; the will of most members for a change of government in Syria, for example, is too easily blocked by the veto of a single permanent Security Council member, such as Russia. Annan gives a devastating account of some of the United Nations' errors during his decades with the organization, especially in his description of the peacekeeping missions in the 1990s in Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia, which he collectively describes as the organization's "greatest of failures."

Somalia was a project of Annan's predecessor, Boutros Boutros-Ghali. A U.N. peacekeeping force known as UNOSOM II had been authorized in March 1993, described by Madeleine Albright, then the United States' U.N. ambassador, as "an unprecedented enterprise aimed at nothing less than the restoration of an entire country." But the U.S. military contribution was restricted to a small special operations force hunting the rebel Gen. Mohamed Aideed; it communicated with Boutros-Ghali and didn't coordinate with the rest of the U.N. force. When the

Americans got slaughtered in a bloody ambush in Mogadishu (depicted unforgettably in the film “Black Hawk Down”), Washington bailed out, and UNOSOM II quickly collapsed.

The Somalia mess made the United Nations so nervous about intervention that it ignored an appeal a few months later from its own representative in Rwanda that a genocidal massacre was about to begin there.

In January 1994, Gen. Romeo Dallaire, the French Canadian commander of a small force called UNAMIR, cabled New York that the Hutu-led government in Kigali was planning the “extermination” of Tutsis. He concluded his message, “Allons-y.” Let’s go. The United Nations did nothing. Three months later, 800,000 Rwandans were dead. Annan was running peacekeeping operations at the time, and his deputy cabled the brave Dallaire insisting on “the need to avoid entering into a course of action that might lead to the use of force and unanticipated consequences.” That’s a sorry U.N. chapter, and it’s to Annan’s credit that he tells this and other stories so honestly.

The third debacle was Bosnia. In April 1993, the Security Council demanded that the town of Srebrenica, filled with 60,000 Muslim refugees and encircled by Bosnian Serb forces, become a “safe area . . . free from armed attacks.” The refugees waited more than two years for the United Nations to deliver. In July 1995, Gen. Ratko Mladic committed his infamous massacre. A month later, UNPROFOR

finally intervened.

When Annan became secretary-general, the United Nations tried to bolster its peacekeeping efforts. It did better in East Timor, Kosovo and Libya in putting some teeth in the concept of a “responsibility to protect.” But the abiding story has been the United Nations’ limitations — in dealing with Iraq, the Palestinian issue, Iran and now Syria.

What to do? Albright and 15 other former foreign ministers just sent a letter to President Vladimir Putin saying they were “gravely disappointed” by Russia’s failure to support the U.N. mission and pleading for action to stop the war in Syria. Albright’s office says that the Russians responded negatively. As the whole of this revealing book demonstrates, there’s got to be a better way to prevent ruinous conflicts.

Article 2.

Ahram Online

Egypt's Sinai Peninsula: Fertile ground for discontent

Sarah El-Rashidi

Sunday 2 Sep 2012 -- The Sinai Peninsula, famed as a leading tourist destination given its natural landscape, dazzling coral reefs and biblical history, is witnessing increasing volatility in post-revolution Egypt.

A bloody attack on 5 August that killed 16 Egyptian border guards has led Egyptian security forces to carry out a

security operation – 'Operation Eagle' – to restore security to the restive peninsula. Ongoing clashes between security forces and militants, as well as attacks on checkpoints, have since been reported.

A land bridge between two continents, Africa and Asia, the Sinai Peninsula is approximately 60,000 square kilometres in area and contains two of Egypt's 27 governorates. Sinai has a population of about 600,000 people.

"Sinai is three times the size of Israel; there are 30 major tribes in North and South Sinai. The North of Sinai is one of the poorest governorates, with a population of approximately 350,000," explained Said Sadek, a political sociologist at the American University of Cairo.

Geopolitical dynamics

The peninsula's geographic positioning and size is often perceived by experts as a primary reason for the area's continued instability.

"Sinai is a borderland in which all types of illegal activities occur and is thus very difficult to control; this applies to all border areas around the world," asserted Egyptian activist and political sociologist Saadeddin Ibrahim.

"Geography is one of the main reasons it is difficult to exert control over Sinai; Bedouins know their land more than the authorities and have secret escape routes," said Mohamed Sabry, a local journalist from the northern town of Al-Arish.

"No one knows the desert better than us Bedouin," said Bedouin rights advocate Said Abdel-Hadi from the

Sawairka tribe, the largest tribe in North Sinai. The young Bedouin recently founded a Bedouin rights NGO in the desert town of Sheikh Zuweid, located only a few kilometres from the border with the Gaza Strip.

Furthermore, international accords – such as the 1979 Camp David treaty with Israel – coupled with vested parties that benefit from Sinai's geo-strategic positioning, affect the area's stability.

Following the 5 August assault, it is the first time since 1973 that Egypt has launched an aerial and land offensive in the area, given the Camp David treaty's restrictions. The treaty divides Sinai into three areas, and in each of these areas Egypt is allowed a limited deployment of troops and arms.

Such military measures are deemed of absolute necessity as experts continuously identify the numerous geographic and economic complexities that face any cleanup security operation. Above land, the eerie Halal Mountain – portrayed by analysts as a desert with many caves hiding criminals and powerful artillery – is only one of the obvious security impediments.

"Al-Halal Mountain, where most of Sinai's criminals hide, is loaded with landmines. That's why aerial support is now being used," said Sinai expert Mohamed Fadel Fahmy.

The desert also conceals lengthy tunnels believed to be in the thousands, creating a huge security hindrance. The tunnels facilitate illicit activity, including human trafficking and arms and drug smuggling, and permit

close contact with Palestinians in the Gaza strip. Experts and Bedouins blame profiteering parties for the continued instability created by the clandestine tunnel network.

"If authorities build a lake, it will destroy the tunnels facilitating illegal trade, but Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood do not want to," said Hussein, a local Bedouin journalist.

Demographic dynamics

Other issues ensuring continued instability, by-products of the peninsula's geographic location, include the demographic nature of Sinai's people, given the many tribes and wars that have occurred. Mixed blood lines between Palestinians, Israelis and Egyptians related through intermarriage and work on the border further complicate security matters.

"We marry from each other; Palestinians and Egyptians are one," said Fathy, a Bedouin from Rafah whose home overlooks the Gaza skyline.

A lack of in-depth demographic studies on Sinai Bedouin contributes to the struggle for control, insist political sociologists. In order to re-instate and maintain dominance in any land it is necessary to understand the nature of the people and their land, Ibrahim stressed.

Esteemed Bedouin judge Abdel-Hadi from the Sawairka tribe and brother of Bedouin activist Said, maintains that authorities' neglect and ignorance concerning the desert terrain and the Bedouin and their leaders are detrimental to security.

"The state needs to recognise the importance of consulting

with the community, learning about the tribal judiciary system and ensuring the long-term equitable development of Sinai," the middle-aged tribal judge told Ahram Online from his remote desert villa in Shabana village just 4 kilometres from the Israeli border.

Socio-economic dynamics

Inhabitants from North Sinai like local Bedouin Abu Deraa complain that development and government assistance is void, which explains the growth in the black market economy, instability and the rise of extremism.

"Investments of around \$100 billion in Southern Sinai's tourist areas have been pumped in, ignoring the rest of the peninsula," said Ibrahim.

Moreover, the issue of land ownership in Sinai contributes to the population's frustration since no local resident can own the land their family has resided on for centuries. Consequently, based on their geographic location Sinai, inhabitants complain they do not have equal rights and believe that the residents of the Nile Valley do not view them as Egyptians.

"We don't feel like Egyptian citizens; the government views us as traitors due to past Israeli occupation and is thus punishing us," Mona Abdo, political activist who ran for parliament under Mubarak, told Ahram Online from her home in Rafah.

"I am more Egyptian than other Egyptians living in Cairo or elsewhere, as I reside on the turbulent borders," she said.

Political sociologists stress that this feeling of

marginalisation has become a self-fulfilling prophecy causing a grave identity crisis.

"Injustice and lack of socio-economic development create extremism. The North of Sinai is one of the poorest governorates," Sadek emphasised, suggesting that Mubarak-era neglect explained the Bedouin desire for revenge. A government report in 2010 said a quarter of the entire population of Sinai did not carry national ID cards and were therefore not allowed to obtain deeds to their land, serve in the army or benefit from local tourism.

"Extremist ideology of radical groups adds to the volatility of Sinai," Oxford University Professor Walter Armbrust told Ahram Online.

Takfir Wal Hijra and Salafist jihadism have been identified by experts as the principal jihadi security threats in Sinai.

Takfir Wal Hijra is one of the initial radical Islamist groups in Egypt, founded by Shukri Mustafa in the 1960s as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. According to its radical ideology, even Muslims that do not share its beliefs are infidels. Observers maintain that most of the group's activities take place in the desert and near Al-Halal Mountain.

Nevertheless, several experts try to quell fears.

"These jihadist groups are too small and too few in number to represent a real threat," said Saber Taalab, director of the Islamic Research Centre in Nasr City.

Domestic security dynamics

The former regime's short-sighted approach towards

domestic security in Sinai's turbulent terrain is another geopolitical dynamic that has exacerbated security matters, according to experts.

"Maintaining security in the short term, without reflective consideration of the long-term implications on national security, became a key feature of the regime's thinking," Tarek Osman wrote in his book 'Egypt on the Brink.'

Ill-treatment of Bedouins in the border lands by Egyptian security forces is continuously cited as a pivotal factor. Ibrahim told Ahram Online that the clumsiness of security institutions which, contrary to law, treat everyone as a suspect until proven otherwise, has added to the Bedouin-government vendetta.

"I offered to take part in 'Operation Eagle' but they refused. I know my land better than anyone," said Moustafa El-Atrash of the Tawabeen tribe.

Moreover, false promises put forward by the former El-Ganzouri government related to socio-economic development and releasing accused terrorists have increased tensions, claim analysts.

Defence Minister Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi is now trying to enlist their support in the current security operation as was done in 1967 and 1973. Some Bedouin have agreed to cooperate, yet remain sceptical regarding the government's intentions towards them given their past disappointments.

"Dialogue and amicable cooperation between the state and people of Sinai is a necessary measure to re-instate security," confirmed judge Abdel-Hadi.

The need for cooperation comes at a vital time, suggest spectators, given President Mohamed Morsi's recent removal of General Intelligence chief Murad Muwafi, which is likely going to hinder communication between Israel and Egypt.

Sadek, along with other analysts and military sources, contends that the US and Israel are trying to help contain and control the situation, but concedes that internal weakness will always be used as an excuse for foreign intervention.

"Operation Eagle' was well coordinated with both the US and Israel," according to a military source.

Imminent resolutions

Considering all the geopolitical complexities facing the restoration of Egyptian sovereignty over Sinai, the main solutions tabled by experts and members of the 25 January movement in Arish, like Hussein Gelabana, start with the immediate clean-up of the area.

Short-term goals should be strong economic policy fostering socio-economic and cultural development that will provide citizenship, the right to land ownership and employment, along with increased cooperation, cultural understanding and respect.

"We want respect in the new constitution for our traditions, culture and customs, because without this basic right, how can we respect the state?" asked Abdel-Hadi.

Other solutions proposed by experts and Sinai residents include the re-trying of Bedouin accused of terrorist acts, as well as increased cooperation between

Bedouin and external forces – namely Israel, the US and the Palestinians – which will involve revisiting existing security agreements.

"Morsi needs to urgently rethink Egypt's security architecture vis-à-vis Israel and the United States," London School of Economics professor Fawaz Gerges wrote in a recent paper.

An avowed realist, Sadek acknowledged: "Patience will be paramount, as all this will involve a 'no-man's land' beyond the control of the central government."

Article 3.

The Atlantic

Is the World Too Easy on Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood Leaders?

Steven A. Cook

Sep 1 2012 -- It has certainly been an interesting month in Egypt. As of a few weeks ago, President Mohammed Morsi had consolidated his power by ousting the military's senior command, firing the chief of General Intelligence, and canceling the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces' June 17 constitutional decree that gutted the powers of the presidency in defense and national security policy. It is important to note that bringing the military to heel is a positive development because it helps create an environment

more conducive to the emergence of democratic politics. At the same time, however, Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood -- or more precisely, the Freedom and Justice Party -- have made a number of questionable moves that raise concerns about the Brothers' commitment to democratic change. Despite seeking to shut down a television station, throwing the editor of the daily al Dostour in the dock for insulting the president (he was subsequently released when Morsi changed the law), reaffirming the state's ownership of a variety of media outlets, and assuming legislative authority, Morsi and his colleagues have largely gotten a pass. To be sure, Dennis Ross, the former Middle East hand for Bush (41), Clinton, and Obama, published a critical op-ed in the Washington Post and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy's Eric Trager did the same in the Wall Street Journal, but these were the exception rather than the rule. The Post's editorial page--which has made democratic change in Egypt a matter of principle over the last decade--mildly chided President Morsi, stating that the new Egyptian president "must learn to live with a certain amount of criticism." Before going any further, let me stipulate that I agree with my colleague and pal, Marc Lynch, who has pointed out that because Egypt is so polarized that whatever Morsi, the FJP, and the Brothers do, someone is going to see it as sinister. Still, while the Brothers and the Salafist al Nour party have assailed some of Egypt's alleged liberals for backing the SCAF as a bulwark against the Islamists instead of

supporting democracy, the Islamists and their followers have done something similar when they make excuses for Morsi and the Brothers' actions that seem to be more interested in institutionalizing their power than upholding the principles of the revolution. So given all the hopes and expectations Egyptians have about building a just and democratic order, why do Morsi and the Brothers get away with it? There are three reasons why the Brotherhood's illiberal inclinations are met with a collective shrug instead of the outrage that occurred when the now-defunct National Democratic Party (NDP) put pressure on its opponents and engaged in all kinds of non-democratic chicanery under the guise of reform:

First, some observers and partisans have argued that it is still early, that Morsi has only been in power for two months, and that upon assuming office he was confronted with powerful forces opposed to his presidency. In an-ends-justify-the-means type of argument, if Morsi needs to resort to legal, but non-democratic measures to secure his rule and thus the prospects for democracy, so be it. When al Dostour's Islam Afifi was hauled in by police for offending the president, social and traditional media outlets lit up with commentary. A fair number of people who no doubt consider themselves supporters of democracy argued that this action was within the framework of the law. The problem with this argument is, of course, we do not know that Morsi and his colleagues intend to build a democratic system. More importantly, the way to support democracy is to support democracy.

Inherently anti-democratic acts like prosecuting editors and shutting down television stations--no matter how distasteful--simply do not advance the cause of freedom.

Second, President Morsi and the Brothers have credibility. I remember five or six years ago when Egypt was first dealing with the avian flu outbreak. I was having dinner with my friend Hatem and his wife. They weren't supporters of the Brotherhood, but they shared the generally conservative values of Egypt's vast center. Hatem had the bare outlines of a zabeeba--a callous on the forehead from prostrating fervently during prayer--and his wife wore a headscarf. They told me that when the government announced that there was no danger in eating fowl, they continued to avoid it. Yet when they saw members of the Muslim Brotherhood on television enjoying grilled chicken, Hatem and his wife knew that they could once again eat poultry safely. That kind of credibility is political gold and it has given Morsi political leeway during his early days in power.

Third, primarily Western analysts and a good chunk of the American foreign policy establishment have come to believe that the Brothers can be a genuine force for progressive political change. This conclusion is based on an alleged evolution of the Brotherhood that is reflected in its discourse about reform and democratic change. Observers also point to the Brothers' past performance as parliamentarians when they sought to hold corrupt governments under Mubarak accountable. If neither of these arguments is

convincing, it may not matter so the theory goes because circumstances will force the Brothers to become democrats despite themselves. Left without the means of coercion, the only resource the Brothers have is their popularity and as a result, they will go back to the ballot box again and again in order to outmaneuver their political opponents. Eventually the principles and practice of democracy will become institutionalized.

As I have written before, much of this is based on hunches, wishful thinking, or historical analogies that are interesting but are hardly predictive of the Brotherhood's political trajectory. Still, if the reception that the Freedom and Justice Party received in Washington last March is any indication, these arguments hold sway and insulate Morsi and the Brotherhood from the widespread denunciation they deserve when they pursue non-democratic policies. It is too early to draw any firm conclusions about the Brothers in Egypt, but it certainly seems that their first inclination is to advance their agenda by any means necessary while expressing fealty to the revolutionary promise of Tahrir Square. It has become a cliché, but what the Brothers do is more important than what they say. After all, doesn't anyone remember "New Thinking and Priorities"? The NDP was also adept at the language of political change and reform, but hardly anyone believed it. Of course, the FJP is not the old ruling party, but in order to ensure that it does not become some variant of the NDP, liberal-minded Egyptians and foreigners (yes, foreigners) need to

speaking up loudly when the Brothers do illiberal things.

Steven A. Cook - Steven A. Cook is Hasib J. Sabbagh senior fellow for Middle Eastern studies at the Council on Foreign Relations and author of The Struggle for Egypt: From Nasser to Tahrir Square. He blogs at From the Potomac to the Euphrates.

Article 4.

Asharq Al-Awsat

Gaza tunnel trade: Matter of life and death for Hamas

Kifah Zaboun

31 August 2012 -- Ramallah-- The hundreds of underground tunnels that connect the Gaza Strip and Egypt have served as a means of smuggling banned goods into the occupied territories over the past 5 years of Gaza's international isolation. However today, these tunnel networks are serving a different purpose, namely as a major source of income and wealth for some Gazan citizens, not to mention the Hamas government that controls the Gaza Strip.

Thousands of tons of fuel, goods, medicine, building materials such as cement and steel, and even cars and cigarettes are smuggled into the Gaza Strip everyday via these tunnels. There is no accurate figure regarding precisely how much and what is being smuggled into the Gaza Strip, however well-informed sources have claimed that this tunnel network is made up of more

than 400 main tunnels, in addition to around 1,000 tributary sun-tunnels.

There are tunnels belonging to Hamas, and which are solely used by the Hamas organization and their affiliates, as well as “public” tunnels. It costs around \$80,000 to dig a tunnel, depending on the tunnel’s size and length; however this price is more than worth it as a single tunnel could net the owner \$150,000 per day.

A well-informed Palestinian source, speaking to Asharq Al-Awsat on the condition of anonymity, revealed that “the Hamas tunnel belongs to the [Hamas] movement, and Hamas affiliates are employed there, and this tunnel specializes in the smuggling and importing of special goods for the Hamas movement, including cars and arms.” He added that Hamas elements also uses the tunnel network to enter and exit the Gaza Strip.

As for the public tunnels, the source stressed that “these are owned by ordinary people, and they have partners, sometimes Egyptian Bedouins” adding “these tunnels are subject to Hamas supervision and specialize in the smuggling of goods and commodities.”

Over the past few years, Hamas has formed a special committee to supervise the tunnel network. This committee’s main function is to oversee the tunnel network and determine the appropriate tax that the public tunnel owners must pay on everything being smuggled into the Gaza Strip. This special committee enjoys legitimacy in the underground smuggling network, and following the recent killing of 16 Egyptian soldiers and officers in Rafah, for example, the committee ordered all tunnel owners to shut down

their smuggling operations for a period of three days. This decision had an immediate and explicit impact on life in the Gaza Strip, particularly as Cairo also took the decision to shut down the Rafah Border Crossing during this period. This had a huge impact on the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip, not to mention business, with construction projects shutting down and hospitals running low on medicines. This also resulted in the early stages of a full-blown fuel crisis in the Gaza Strip.

This committee monitors and oversees all smuggling, operating as a kind of unofficial customs department, examining goods and even licensing new tunnels.

An Egyptian source informed Asharq Al-Awsat that “the tunnels have become the primary source of income for the Hamas government” adding “if the subsidized price of a liter of fuel is 80 piasters [in Egypt]...it costs 5 pounds in Gaza” adding “this shows you the kind of profits that we are talking about.”

Reports indicate that approximately 500,000 liters of fuel are smuggled into the Gaza Strip every day. The Egyptian source stressed that “this creates astronomical profits.”

Egypt estimates that the tunnels generate approximately one billion dollars per year, whilst economic experts in Gaza place the figure at a little lower than this.

However nobody knows precisely how much Hamas is making from the tunnels and illegal trade. A source informed Asharq Al-Awsat that Hamas’s income would depend on what is being smuggled, adding “some people place a tax cut on every kilo that is

smuggled, others on every ton.”

He added “they charge around 50 cents for liter of petrol, 8 cents for every packet of cigarettes, \$15 on every ton of steel and \$10 on every ton of cement.”

The source also informed Asharq Al-Awsat that “some goods, such as cars, can be taxed as much as 25 percent, in addition to a \$2,000 flat fee.”

The Egyptian Al-Ahram newspaper estimated that 13,000 cars were smuggled into the Gaza Strip via the tunnels in 2011.

The source stressed that Hamas taxes every item that enters the Gaza Strip via the tunnels.

For its part, Israel’s Haaretz newspaper estimated that control of the tunnels yield around 10 – 15 percent of Hamas’s entire revenues.

Reports indicate that each tunnel can employ as many as 30 workers, and that workers are paid between \$60 and \$80 per day.

A tunnel worker, speaking on the condition of anonymity, revealed that “working in the tunnels is organized, and the Hamas committee monitors everybody”.

He added “they monitor what is being smuggled and how much it weighs and impose a tax according to this.”

The tunnel worker also revealed that the Hamas committee “bans the smuggling of alcohol, arms and drugs.”

Despite the dangers of working in the tunnels, facing the very real threat of suffocation or tunnel collapse, this is a popular and indeed guaranteed way of earning money in the Gaza Strip.

Hamas has completely rejected the closure or destruction of

tunnels before the guaranteed opening of the Rafah Border Crossing, and the establishment of a free trade zone between Egypt and Gaza. This demand was put to newly elected Egyptian President Mohamed Mursi by Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh during their meeting in Cairo last month.

Hamas views the tunnels as a matter of life and death, whilst the Palestinian Authority [PA] – based in the West Bank – supports their closure and destruction. The PA has claimed that 600 new millionaires have made their fortunes thanks to the tunnels, at the expense of thousands of ordinary workers who are risking their lives.

Article 5.

NYT

Can Europe Survive the Rise of the Rest?

Timothy Garton Ash

September 1, 2012 -- WHO won the most medals at the Olympics? Europe. Who has the largest economy in the world? Europe again. And where do most people want to go on holiday? Europe, of course. On many measures of power, the European Union belongs with the United States and China in a global Big Three. Yet say that to officials in Beijing, Washington or any other world capital today and they would probably laugh out loud. As European leaders stagger

into yet another round of crisis summitry, this potential superpower is widely viewed as the sick man of the developed world.

Why? The flawed design of the euro zone has made Europe's recession more acute than America's, and a collapse of the euro zone would drag the rest of the world economy down with it. But why haven't Europeans shown the political will to save the euro zone by moving toward closer fiscal and political union? What happened to the forces that drove the project of European unification forward over the last 60 years? And, if those have faded, where might Europeans find new inspiration?

As I recently argued in Foreign Affairs, the five great drivers of European unification since the 1950s have now either disappeared or lost much of their energy. First and foremost was the personal memory of war, and the mantra of "never again," which motivated three generations of Europeans after 1945. But the last generation to have experienced World War II is passing on, and the collective memory is weak. Second, the Soviet threat provided a powerful incentive for Western Europeans to unite during the cold war. And throughout the cold war, the United States was an active supporter of European integration, from the Marshall Plan to the diplomacy around German reunification. No longer. Try as he might, Vladimir Putin is no Joseph Stalin. And these days, the United States has other priorities. Third, until the 1990s, the engine of European integration was the Federal Republic of Germany,

with France at the steering wheel. Germans felt a powerful idealistic desire to rehabilitate themselves in the European family of nations — and had a hard national interest in doing so. For only by gaining the trust of their neighbors and international partners could they achieve German reunification. Now that national purpose has been accomplished, and European idealism has faded with the passing of the wartime generations. These days, Germany will no longer reach for its checkbook whenever Europe calls. Fourth, the once captive nations of Eastern Europe are no longer uniformly passionate about the European Union even though their citizens have more recent memories of dictatorship, hardship and war. While Poland is one of the union's most vigorous advocates, Hungary and the Czech Republic are now among its most skeptical and contentious members. Finally, the widespread assumption that "Europe" would mean a rising standard of living and social security for all Europeans has been badly dented by accumulated debt, aging populations, global competition and the crisis of the euro zone. Young Greeks and Spaniards hardly see those benefits today. Nonetheless, even in the most skeptical countries there is a basic understanding that it is better to belong to a single market of 500 million consumers, rather than depend on a domestic one of 50 million, or fewer than 10 million — the size of half the European Union's current members. And that is the beginning of the new case for European unification. While we Europeans should

redouble our efforts to ensure that our continent does not forget its troubled past, the need for scale is the key to our shared future. The 21st-century world will be one of giants: weary old ones, like the United States and Russia, and hungry new ones, like China, India, Brazil and South Africa. You do not need to accept the most apocalyptic forecasts of European decline to acknowledge that Europe is unlikely to remain the world's largest economy for long. In such a world, even Germany will be a small- to medium-size power.

IF Europeans are to preserve the remarkable combination of prosperity, peace, relative social security and quality of life that they have achieved over the last 60 years, they need the scale that only the European Union can provide.

In a world of giants, you had better be a giant yourself: A trade negotiation between China and the European Union is a conversation between equals; one between China and France is an unequal affair.

A decade ago, Chinese policy makers took the European Union seriously as an emerging political force, a potential new pole in a multipolar world.

Today, they treat it with something close to contempt. They look to Brussels only in a few specific areas, like trade and competition policy, where the European Union really does act as one. Otherwise, they prefer to deal with individual nations, as this week's reception in Beijing for Germany's chancellor, Angela Merkel, made clear.

The remedy lies in Europe's own hands. Were it to

move beyond the resolution of the euro zone crisis into a closer fiscal and political union, then onto a genuinely common foreign policy, China would take it more seriously, as would America and Russia.

And Europeans should not entirely abandon the hope — faint though it looks today — that their pioneering version of peaceful integration between previously warring states could point the way for better “global governance” in response to shared threats like climate change and to the tensions that inevitably arise between rising and declining powers. For without enhanced cooperation on a global scale, the 21st-century world may come to look like the late-19th-century Europe of rivalrous great powers, writ large. At best, Europe could become not just another giant; it could offer the example of a new kind of cooperative multinational giant.

When Ms. Merkel’s 19th-century predecessor Otto von Bismarck was shown a map of Africa by an eager German colonialist, the Iron Chancellor, dismissing the strategic value of faraway colonies, replied that the only map that mattered to him lay in Europe: “France is to the left, Russia to the right, we’re in the middle — that’s my map of Africa.” Today’s Europeans need to adapt Bismarck’s wisdom, declaring “China, India and Russia are to the right, America and Brazil to the left — that’s our map of Europe.”

Timothy Garton Ash is a professor of European studies at Oxford University and a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

Article 6.

Oilprice.com

Saudi Arabia Goes on the Offensive Against Iran

Felix Imonti

August 22, 2012 -- Saudi Arabia has gone on the offensive against Iran to protect its interests. Their involvement in Syria is the first battle in what is going to be a long, bloody conflict that will know no frontiers or limits. Ongoing disorders in the island kingdom of Bahrain since February 2011 have set off alarm bells in Riyadh. The Saudis are convinced that Iran is directing the protests and fear that the problems will spill over the 25 kilometer-long causeway into oil-rich Al-Qatif, where the bulk of the 2 million Shia in the Kingdom are concentrated. So far, the Saudis have not had to deal with demonstrations as serious as those in Bahrain, but success in the island kingdom could encourage the protestors to become more violent. Protecting the oil is the first concern of the government. Oil is the sole source of the national wealth and is managed by the state-owned Saudi Aramco Corporation. The monopoly of political power by the members of the Saud family means that all of the wealth of the Kingdom is their personal

property. Saudi Arabia is a company country with the 28 million citizens the responsibility of the Saud Family rulers. The customary manner of dealing with a problem by the patriarchal regime is to bury it in money. King Abdullah announced at the height of the Arab Spring that he was increasing the national budget by \$130 billion to be spent over the coming five years. Government salaries and the minimum wage were raised. New housing and other benefits are to be provided. At the same time, he plans to expand the security forces by 6,000 men. While the Saudi king seeks to sooth the unrest among the general population by adding more government benefits, he will not grant any concessions to the 8 percent of the population that is Shia. He takes seriously the warning by King Abdullah of Jordan back in 2004 of the danger of a Shia Crescent that would extend from the coast of Lebanon to Afghanistan. Hezbollah in Lebanon, Assad in Syria, and the Shia-controlled government of Iraq form the links in the chain.

When the Arab Spring reached Syria, the leaders in Riyadh were given the weapon to break the chain. Appeals from tribal leaders under attack in Syria to kinsmen in the Gulf states for assistance could not be ignored. The various blinks between the Gulf states in several Syrian tribes means that Saudi Arabia and its close ally Qatar have connections that include at least 3 million people out of the Syrian populations of 23 million. To show how deep the bonds go, the leader of the Nijris Tribe in Syria is married to a woman from the Saud Family. It is no wonder that Saudi Foreign

Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal said in February that arming the Syrian rebels was an "excellent idea." He was supported by Qatari Prime Minister Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani, who said, "We should do whatever necessary to help [the Syrian opposition], including giving them weapons to defend themselves." The intervention has the nature of a family and tribal issue that the prominent Saudi cleric Aidh al-Qarni has turned into a Sunni-Shia war by promoting Assad's death. The Saudis and their Qatar and United Arab Emirate allies have pledged \$100 million to pay wages to the fighters. Many of the officers of the Free Syrian Army are from tribes connected to the Gulf. In effect, the payment of wages is paying members of associated tribes. Here, the United States is not a welcomed partner, except as a supplier of arms. Saudi Arabia sees the role of the United States as being limited to a wall of steel that protects the oil wealth of the Kingdom and the Gulf states from Iranian aggression. In February 1945, President Roosevelt at a meeting in Egypt with Abdel Aziz bin Saud, the founder of modern Saudi Arabia, pledged to defend the Kingdom in exchange for a steady flow of oil. Since those long-ago days when the United States was establishing Pax Americana, the Saudis have lost their trust in the wisdom and reliability of U.S. policy makers. The Saudis urged the United States not to invade Iraq in 2003, only to have them ignore Saudi interests in maintaining an Iraqi buffer zone against Iran. The Saudis had asked the United States not to leave a Shia-dominated government in Baghdad that would

threaten the northern frontier of the kingdom, only to have the last U.S. soldiers depart in December 2011. With revolution sweeping across the Middle East, Washington abandoned President Mubarak of Egypt, Saudi Arabia's favorite non-royal leader in the region. Worried by the possibility of Iranian-sponsored insurrections among Shia in the Gulf states, the Saudis are asserting their power in the region while they have the advantage. For 30 years, they have been engaged in a proxy war with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Syria is to be the next battlefield, but here, there is a critical difference from what were minor skirmishes in Lebanon, Yemen and elsewhere. The Saudis, with the aid of Qatar and the UAE, are striking at the core interests of Tehran, and they have through their tribal networks the advantage over an isolated Islamic Republic. Tribal and kinship relations are being augmented by the infusion of the Salafi vision of Islam that is growing in the Gulf states. Money from the Gulf states has gone into the development of religious centers to spread the fundamentalist belief. A critical part of the ideology is to be anti-Shia. Salafism in Saudi Arabia is promulgated by the Wahhabi School of Islam. The Wahhabi movement began in the 18th century and promoted a return to the fundamentalism of the early followers of the faith. The Saudis incorporated the religious movement into their leadership of the tribes. When the modern state of Saudi Arabia was formed, they were granted control of the educational system and much else in the society in exchange for the endorsement of authoritarian rule.

When the Kingdom used its growing wealth in the 1970s to extend its interests far from the traditional territory in the battle against the atheistic Soviet Union, the Wahhabi clergy became missionaries in advancing their ideology through religious institutions to oppose the Soviets. More than 200,000 jihadists were sent into Afghanistan to fight the Soviet forces and succeeded in driving them out.

There is no longer a Soviet Union to confront. Today, the enemy is the Islamic Republic of Iran with what is described by the Wahhabis as a heretical form of Islam and its involvement in the Shia communities across the region. For 13 centuries, the Shia have been kept under control. With the hand of Iran in the form of the Qud Force reaching into restless communities that number as many as 106 million people in what is the heart of the Middle East, the Saudis see a desperate need to crush the foe before it has the means to pull down the privileged position of the Saud Family and the families of the other Gulf state rulers. The war begins in Syria, where we can expect that a successor government to Assad will be declared soon in the Saudi-controlled tribal areas even before Assad is defeated. The territory is likely to adopt the more fundamentalist principals of the Salafists, as it serves as a stepping stone to Iran Itself. It promises to be a bloody, protracted war that will recognize no frontier. This article was written for Oilprice.com.

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