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26 March, 2014

<a href="#">Article 1.</a>	WSJ <b><u>Putin's Challenge to the West</u></b> Robert M. Gates
<a href="#">Article 2.</a>	NYT <b><u>Putin and the Laws of Gravity</u></b> <a href="#">Thomas L. Friedman</a>
<a href="#">Article 3.</a>	The Washington Post <b><u>The war of words over Ukraine plays into Putin's hands</u></b> Anne-Marie Slaughter
<a href="#">Article 4.</a>	<a href="#">The New Republic</a> <b><u>John Kerry's Peace Process Is Nearly Dead and the fault is mostly Netanyahu's</u></b> John B. Judis
<a href="#">Article 5.</a>	Dissident Voice <b><u>Mahmoud Abbas vs Mohammed Dahlan -The Showdown Begins</u></b> Ramzy Baroud
<a href="#">Article 6.</a>	NYT <b><u>Qaeda Militants Seek Syria Base</u></b> <a href="#">Eric Schmitt</a>
Article 7.	The Diplomat <b><u>Indian Foreign Policy: The Cold War Lingers</u></b> Andrew J. Stravers and Peter Harris

[Article 1.](#)

WSJ

## **Putin's Challenge to the West**

Robert M. Gates

March 25, 2014 -- Russian President [Vladimir Putin](#) has a long-festering grudge: He deeply resents the West for winning the Cold War. He blames

the United States in particular for the collapse of his beloved Soviet Union, an event he has called the "worst geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century." His list of grievances is long and was on full display in his March 18 speech announcing the annexation of Crimea by Russia. He is bitter about what he sees as Russia's humiliations in the 1990s—economic collapse; the expansion of NATO to include members of the U.S.S.R.'s own "alliance," the Warsaw Pact; Russia's agreement to the treaty limiting conventional forces in Europe, or as he calls it, "the colonial treaty"; the West's perceived dismissal of Russian interests in Serbia and elsewhere; attempts to bring Ukraine and Georgia into NATO and the European Union; and Western governments, businessmen and scholars all telling Russia how to conduct its affairs at home and abroad. Mr. Putin aspires to restore Russia's global power and influence and to bring the now-independent states that were once part of the Soviet Union back into Moscow's orbit. While he has no apparent desire to recreate the Soviet Union (which would include responsibility for a number of economic basket cases), he is determined to create a Russian sphere of influence—political, economic and security—and dominance. There is no grand plan or strategy to do this, just opportunistic and ruthless aspiration. And patience. Mr. Putin, who began his third, nonconsecutive presidential term in 2012, is playing a long game. He can afford to: Under the Russian Constitution, he could legally remain president until 2024. After the internal chaos of the 1990s, he has ruthlessly restored "order" to Russia, oblivious to protests at home and abroad over his repression of nascent Russian democracy and political freedoms.

In recent years, he has turned his authoritarian eyes on the "near-abroad." In 2008, the West did little as he invaded Georgia, and Russian troops still occupy the Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions. He has forced Armenia to break off its agreements with the European Union, and Moldova is under similar pressure. Last November, through economic leverage and political muscle, he forced then-President Viktor Yanukovich to abort a Ukrainian agreement with the EU that would have drawn it toward the West. When Mr. Yanukovich, his minion, was ousted as a result, Mr. Putin seized Crimea and is now making ominous claims and military movements regarding all of eastern Ukraine. Ukraine is central to Mr. Putin's vision of a pro-Russian bloc, partly because of its size and importantly because of

Kiev's role as the birthplace of the Russian Empire more than a thousand years ago. He will not be satisfied or rest until a pro-Russian government is restored in Kiev.

He also has a dramatically different worldview than the leaders of Europe and the U.S. He does not share Western leaders' reverence for international law, the sanctity of borders, which Westerners believe should only be changed through negotiation, due process and rule of law. He has no concern for human and political rights. Above all, Mr. Putin clings to a zero-sum worldview. Contrary to the West's belief in the importance of win-win relationships among nations, for Mr. Putin every transaction is win-lose; when one party benefits, the other must lose. For him, attaining, keeping and amassing power is the name of the game. The only way to counter Mr. Putin's aspirations on Russia's periphery is for the West also to play a strategic long game. That means to take actions that unambiguously demonstrate to Russians that his worldview and goals—and his means of achieving them—over time will dramatically weaken and isolate Russia. Europe's reliance on Russian oil and gas must be reduced, and truly meaningful economic sanctions must be imposed, knowing there may be costs to the West as well. NATO allies bordering Russia must be militarily strengthened and reinforced with alliance forces; and the economic and cyber vulnerabilities of the Baltic states to Russian actions must be reduced (especially given the number of Russians and Russian-speakers in Estonia and Latvia). Western investment in Russia should be curtailed; Russia should be expelled from the G-8 and other forums that offer respect and legitimacy; the U.S. defense budget should be restored to the level proposed in the [Obama](#) administration's 2014 budget a year ago, and the Pentagon directed to cut overhead drastically, with saved dollars going to enhanced capabilities, such as additional Navy ships; U.S. military withdrawals from Europe should be halted; and the EU should be urged to grant associate agreements with Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine.

So far, however, the Western response has been anemic. Mr. Putin is little influenced by seizure of personal assets of his cronies or the oligarchs, or restrictions on their travel. Unilateral U.S. sanctions, save on Russian banks, will not be effective absent European cooperation. The gap between Western rhetoric and Western actions in response to out-and-out aggression is a yawning chasm. The message seems to be that if Mr. Putin doesn't

move troops into eastern Ukraine, the West will impose no further sanctions or costs. De facto, Russia's seizure of Crimea will stand and, except for a handful of Russian officials, business will go on as usual. No one wants a new Cold War, much less a military confrontation. We want Russia to be a partner, but that is now self-evidently not possible under Mr. Putin's leadership. He has thrown down a gauntlet that is not limited to Crimea or even Ukraine. His actions challenge the entire post-Cold War order including, above all, the right of independent states to align themselves and do business with whomever they choose. Tacit acceptance of settling old revanchist scores by force is a formula for ongoing crises and potential armed conflict, whether in Europe, Asia or elsewhere. A China behaving with increasing aggressiveness in the East and South China seas, an Iran with nuclear aspirations and interventionist policies in the Middle East, and a volatile and unpredictable North Korea are all watching events in Europe. They have witnessed the fecklessness of the West in Syria. Similar division and weakness in responding to Russia's most recent aggression will, I fear, have dangerous consequences down the road. Mr. Putin's challenge comes at a most unpropitious time for the West. Europe faces a weak economic recovery and significant economic ties with Russia. The U.S. is emerging from more than a dozen years at war and leaders in both parties face growing isolationism among voters, with the prospect of another major challenge abroad cutting across the current political grain. Crimea and Ukraine are far away, and their importance to Europe and America little understood by the public. Therefore, the burden of explaining the need to act forcefully falls, as always, on our leaders. As President Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "Government includes the act of formulating a policy" and "persuading, leading, sacrificing, teaching always, because the greatest duty of a statesman is to educate." The aggressive, arrogant actions of Vladimir Putin require from Western leaders strategic thinking, bold leadership and steely resolve—now.

*Mr. Gates served as secretary of defense under Presidents [George W. Bush](#) and Barack Obama from 2006-11, and as director of central intelligence under President George H.W. Bush from 1991-93.*

NYT

# **Putin and the Laws of Gravity**

[Thomas L. Friedman](#)

March 25, 2014 -- One thing I learned covering the Middle East for many years is that there is “the morning after” and there is “the morning after the morning after.” Never confuse the two.

The morning after a big event is when fools rush in and declare that someone’s victory or defeat in a single battle has “changed everything forever.” The morning after the morning after, the laws of gravity start to apply themselves; things often don’t look as good or as bad as you thought. And that brings me to Vladimir Putin’s annexation of Crimea.

The morning after, he was the hero of Russia. Some moronic commentators here even expressed the wish that we had such a “decisive” leader. Well, let’s see what Putin looks like the morning after the morning after, say, in six months. I make no predictions, but I will point out this. Putin is challenging three of the most powerful forces on the planet all at once: human nature, Mother Nature and Moore’s Law. Good luck with that.

Putin’s seizure of Crimea certainly underscores the enduring power of geography in geopolitics. Russia is a continental country, stretching across a huge landmass, with few natural barriers to protect it. Every Kremlin leader — from the czars to the commissars to the crooks — has been obsessed about protecting Russia’s periphery from would-be invaders. Russia has legitimate security interests, but this episode is not about them.

This recent Ukraine drama did not start with geography — with an outside power trying to get into Russia, as much as Putin wants to pretend that it did. This story started with people inside Russia’s orbit trying to get out. A large number of Ukrainians wanted to hitch their economic future to the European Union not to Putin’s Potemkin Eurasian Union. This story, at its core, was ignited and propelled by human nature — the enduring quest by people to realize a better future for themselves and their kids — not by geopolitics, or even that much nationalism. This is not an “invasion” story. This is an “Exodus” story.

And no wonder. A recent article in Bloomberg Businessweek noted that, in 2012, G.D.P. per person in Ukraine was \$6,394 — some 25 percent below its level of nearly a quarter-century earlier. But if you compare Ukraine with four of its former Communist neighbors to the west who joined the European Union — Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania — “the average G.D.P. per person in those nations is around \$17,000.” Can you blame Ukrainians for wanting to join a different club?

But Putin is also counting on the world doing nothing about Mother Nature, and Mother Nature taking that in stride. Some 70 percent of Russia’s exports are oil and gas, and they make up half of all state revenue. (When was the last time you bought something that was labeled “Made in Russia”?) Putin has basically bet his country’s economic present and future on hydrocarbons at a time when the chief economist of the International Energy Agency has declared that “about two-thirds of all proven reserves of oil, gas and coal will have to be left undeveloped if the world is to achieve the goal of limiting global warming at two degrees Celsius” since the Industrial Revolution. Crossing that two-degree line, say climate scientists, will dramatically increase the likelihood of melting the Arctic, dangerous sea level rises, more disruptive superstorms and unmanageable climate change.

The former Saudi oil minister, Sheik Ahmed Zaki Yamani, once warned his OPEC colleagues something Putin should remember: “The Stone Age didn’t end because we ran out of stones.” It ended because we invented bronze tools, which were more productive. The hydrocarbon age will also have to end with a lot of oil, coal and gas left in the ground, replaced by cleaner forms of power generation, or Mother Nature will have her way with us. Putin is betting otherwise.

How do you say Moore’s Law in Russian? That’s the theorem posited by Gordon Moore, an Intel co-founder, that the processing power of microchips will double roughly every two years. Anyone following the clean power industry today can tell you that there is something of a Moore’s Law now at work around solar power, the price of which is falling so fast that more and more homes and even utilities are finding it as cheap to install as natural gas. Wind is on a similar trajectory, as is energy efficiency. China alone is on a track to be getting 15 percent of its total electricity production by 2020 from renewables, and it’s not stopping there.

It can't or its people can't breathe. If America and Europe were to give even just a little more policy push now to renewables to reduce Putin's oil income, these actions could pay dividends much sooner and bigger than people realize.

The legitimacy of China's leaders today depends, in part, on their ability to make their country's power system greener so their people can breathe. Putin's legitimacy depends on keeping Russia and the world addicted to oil and gas. Whom do you want to bet on?

So, before we crown Putin the Time Person of the Year again, let's wait and see how the morning after the morning after plays out.

[Article 3.](#)

The Washington Post

## **The war of words over Ukraine plays into Putin's hands**

Anne-Marie Slaughter

The West is playing into Vladimir Putin's hands by treating Russia's annexation of Crimea as the return to a world in which Russia and the United States are once again principal adversaries. Yet a trio of [current](#) and [former](#) NATO secretaries general took exactly this position at the Brussels Forum over the weekend, announcing that 2014 marked the end of the post-Cold War era. Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman [Robert Menendez](#) (D-N.J.) said that Putin "has reignited a dangerous, pre-1991, Soviet-style game of Russian roulette with the international community." [Michael McFaul](#), the most recent U.S. ambassador to Russia, has written that the annexation "ended the post-Cold War era in Europe."

Many at the Brussels Forum seemed almost relieved to return to the verities of the Cold War, when the United States and Western Europe stood shoulder to shoulder against the threat of Soviet aggression. The script is familiar: It requires an increase in European defense spending and a tighter transatlantic alliance. The [Group of Eight turns back into the Group of Seven](#); [Moscow is the bad guy](#).

[NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said](#) that Crimea makes clear that Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008 was not a one-off but

instead part of a larger strategy. A strategy of what, exactly? [Kaadri Liik](#), a senior fellow at the European Council of Foreign Relations, [argues that Putin wants](#) a “new world order” that rejects the principle that “countries are free to choose their alliances,” re-legitimizing “the idea of geopolitical spheres of influence that Europe thought had been consigned to the dustbin of history.”

But this is a red herring. NATO has no intention of admitting Georgia or Ukraine precisely because we are not willing to go to war with Russia over them. Both nations have strong European ties but also Russian ties in their history, geography and culture. And while the United States and Western Europe reject, in theory, the idea of spheres of influence, Washington regards foreign intervention in Latin America very differently than intervention elsewhere and the European Union has an explicit “[neighborhood policy](#).”

More broadly, the United States would do well to tone down its sanctimony. Putin’s annexation of Crimea violated international law. But so did the U.S. invasion of Iraq and the [NATO intervention to protect Kosovo](#), even if the latter was, to many, including me, a legitimate violation. Insisting that this is a new era because Moscow is bent on violating international law may indeed propel the world into a new era. But that would be a choice of our making, not Russia’s.

Moreover, that choice would strengthen Putin and undercut the democratic movement in Russia. Just because members of the band Pussy Riot were imprisoned and Alexei Navalny was not elected mayor of Moscow and the [size of protests against Putin’s government](#) ebb and flow does not mean that this spirit has been crushed. On the contrary, these protests are like an aspen grove; fueled by social media, they spread in ways we cannot see until the next opportunity for their flowering emerges. Meanwhile, elevating Russia to global enemy No. 1 feeds the hard-liner narrative in Moscow just as it does in Iran. A better strategy would be to tone down the rhetoric and let Europe take the lead, while making clear that a Russian invasion of eastern Ukraine would be met with the strongest possible economic response.

Ultimately, the absence of that invasion is the most striking event of the past month. The Soviet Union would have sent troops into Ukraine at the first sign a pro-Soviet government was in trouble. Indeed, as protests

mounted on the Maidan in Kiev, the risk of direct Russian intervention was high; had Putin not sought to keep the world's goodwill before and during the Sochi Olympics, all of Ukraine might already be back under Russia's sway with a government willing to use whatever violence is necessary to suppress a pro-European opposition.

Instead, a new Ukrainian government just signed an [association agreement](#) with the European Union. That is a Ukraine without Crimea, a dismemberment that should not be recognized by the international community. Meanwhile, however, the United States and the European Union should do everything possible to strengthen Ukraine's government and hold it accountable for serving the interests of ordinary Ukrainians. We should not take those steps as a way of keeping Russia out, nor to prove that countries in "our" camp fare better than countries in "their camp." Ukraine, Moldova, [Transnistria](#), Georgia and others in Russia's "near abroad," with which it shares deep historic ties, will flourish over the long term only if they have strong relationships with both Russia and the European Union, just as countries in Southeast Asia must have strong relationships with both China and the United States.

For some frustrated with the complexity of the post-Cold War world, redividing the globe along an East-West axis would be comforting. Yet doing so serves military and defense interests all too well, as George Kennan understood as he watched his original doctrine of containment become an entrenched enmity licensing military adventures in the name of anti-communism.

That vision of the world does not reflect present realities. It would become a self-fulfilling prophecy that strengthens autocracy in Russia and increases the likelihood of Russia reverting to what the West considers a rogue state. Other nations that have reason to resent what they see as an imposition of Western values would view Moscow as a leader of an independent coalition of states dedicated to protecting national sovereignty. It will be the world Putin wants. We should not let him have it.

*Anne-Marie Slaughter, president of the New America Foundation, was director of policy planning at the State Department from 2009 to 2011.*

## **John Kerry's Peace Process Is Nearly Dead and the fault is mostly Netanyahu's**

John B. Judis

March 25, 2014 -- We'll know within the next month, and perhaps even within the next week, whether there is any chance for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during Barack Obama's second term. Yet even if the negotiations between the parties survive past the April 29 deadline, there is little chance that they will succeed. The talks, which Secretary of State John Kerry initiated last July with enthusiasm and promise, are floundering. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is [determined](#) to blame the Palestinians if the talks fail, but blame should almost certainly be assigned to Netanyahu and the Israelis. Kerry has clamped down on leaks about the talks. And with some justification: Attempts to negotiate agreements through public jousting invariably fail. But there have been enough leaks, and I have talked to enough people who have either talked to the negotiators or been involved peripherally with the negotiations, to construct a tentative outline of what has transpired. But be warned: Some of the details remain murky, probably to the negotiators themselves. Last July, the Israelis and Palestinians agreed to begin talks on a two-state solution. To smooth the way, Kerry got the Palestinians to put aside their campaign at the United Nations against the Israeli occupation and the Israelis to release, in four stages, 104 Palestinian prisoners. There were misgivings on both sides. Within the executive committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), skeptics outnumbered those who believed an agreement with the Israelis was possible. They were won over by the promise of the prisoner release. Netanyahu's governing coalition was also split, and probably would have to be reconstituted if he agreed to a two-state proposal. According to Kerry's plan, which both sides endorsed, the Israelis and Palestinians would reach a "final status" agreement by April 29 of this year. Kerry specifically rejected the idea of another "framework" that would merely outline areas of potential agreement. The Quartet of the U.S., European Union, United Nations, and Russia had tried that approach a decade before, and it had failed abysmally. So Kerry wanted the parties to

resolve key issues, including borders, Jerusalem, security, water rights, and refugees, in nine months. Formal talks began in August, but broke down by November. No agreement was reached on any of the final status issues. In addition, Netanyahu had introduced a new issue—that the Palestinians must not merely grant recognition to Israel, as other countries had done, but recognize Israel specifically as a “Jewish state.” Final proof of Netanyahu’s motives will have to await the release of his papers, but he appears to have introduced the new demand because he expected that the Palestinians would reject it and that he could then blame the failure of the talks on them. Israel is, obviously, a Jewish state, and has been described as such in United Nations resolutions and American diplomatic statements. But when Netanyahu made the term an unconditional demand in negotiations, he [made clear](#) that it meant that Palestinians would have to recognize that Jews had a legal right to Israel, based on Biblical history, that took precedence over their own claims to the land. Netanyahu was not simply demanding that Palestinians adopt a common sense usage, but that they deny their own historical ties to the land. He is “asking me to forgo my narrative,” Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat explained. He is also asking Palestinians to reject the right of return and ignore the political rights of Arab Israelis—and to do so as a precondition to agreement on anything else. On matters of substance, Netanyahu refused to concede Palestinians a capital in East Jerusalem, where Palestinians still make up a majority of residents. Former prime ministers Ehud Barak in 2000 and Ehud Olmert in 2008 had both accepted Palestinian demands for a capital in East Jerusalem. Netanyahu also insisted on an indefinite Israeli military presence in the Jordan Valley, which makes up a third of the West Bank; Olmert had agreed to an international force for a limited period. And Netanyahu would not explicitly accept the 1967 “Green Line” as the basis for negotiations over borders and land swaps. (To make matters worse, Israeli housing starts in the occupied West Bank [more than doubled](#) in 2013.) So in November, negotiations between the two sides ground to a halt, and have never resumed. Instead, the United States has negotiated separately with the two parties.

In December, Kerry gave up the attempt to secure a final status agreement and settled upon trying to achieve a framework for the talks. Kerry also adopted a negotiating strategy that assumed that Netanyahu, not Abbas,

was blocking an agreement. Kerry set out to find provisions that were acceptable to the Israeli prime minister and his political base. He planned to formulate a framework proposal that he could then present to the Palestinians. Over the next three months, Kerry and his negotiators acceded to Netanyahu's demand for recognition of Israel as a Jewish state and for Israeli troops being stationed in the Jordan Valley. (When they would leave was left unclear.) Kerry and his negotiators were stymied by how to reconcile the two sides on Jerusalem, but finally [proposed](#) to the Palestinians that they confine their capital to a neighborhood of East Jerusalem. Abbas made key concessions to Kerry. He accepted an Israeli army presence in the Jordan Valley for three years, and then extended that to five years. Abbas's negotiators also hinted that they would also recognize Israel as a Jewish state, but at the conclusion rather than at the beginning of negotiations. But Abbas was not ready to accept an indefinite Israeli presence in the Jordan Valley nor a mere neighborhood as the state's capitol. Kerry proposed that the two sides agree to the framework with reservations—a tactic that had doomed the Quartet's framework proposal—but Abbas was not ready to agree to the proposal even with reservations. Yossi Beilin, who helped negotiate the Oslo Accords and served in three Israeli governments, [commented](#), "Thus the U.S. repeated a familiar American error: the special relationship with Israel compels it to sit down for talks first with Israel; then, whatever is hashed out is shattered when the Palestinians, who were not party to the secret contacts, find the results untenable." In the aftermath of Abbas's rejection, it is unclear whether Kerry and his negotiators have been able to come up with a new framework proposal. During their visit to the U.S. on March 17 and 18, Abbas and Erekat denied that Kerry had submitted a new document. Last Sunday, New York Times reporter Jodi Rudoren [claimed](#) that Kerry's attempt at a framework has "been all but shelved." As if matters were not difficult enough, Netanyahu threw a new monkey wrench into the negotiations. He threatened to not approve the release of the final Palestinian prisoners on March 29 if the Palestinians did not agree to extending the talks past the April 29 deadline, which would presume their agreeing to some version of a framework proposal. In response, Abbas warned that he would then leave the negotiations. And he would probably have to do so. In a December meeting of the PLO Executive Council after

the negotiations had first broken down, a majority favored bolting the talks and taking the Palestinian case to the U.N. But Abbas had kept them in line by the promise of more prisoner releases. If the prisoners were not released, PLO support for negotiations would disintegrate.

As the talks have run aground, Kerry has finally begun to show signs of exasperation with Netanyahu. On March 6, when Obama described his meeting with the Israeli prime minister as “productive,” Kerry was [heard](#) to exclaim to Biden, “Productive??” At a hearing March 13 of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Kerry departed from Netanyahu’s demand that Abbas recognize Israel as a “Jewish state.” In response to a question from Rep. Brad Sherman, Kerry said:

That might suggest that Kerry has shifted his strategy and is pressuring Netanyahu to make concessions, but there have also been signs that Kerry has either been losing interest or giving up hope in the negotiations. In his opening statement to a Senate Committee on March 13, he mentioned American foreign policy concerns with the Ukraine, South Sudan, the Maghreb, Central Asia, the Korean peninsula, and Zambia, but not with Israel and the Palestinians. At a Town Hall meeting with students at the State Department on March 18, Kerry described the situation in the Ukraine and then listed “other challenges that are very real.” He cited “Syria, the challenge of Iran’s nuclear weapon, of Afghanistan, South Central Asia, many parts of the world.” Conspicuously absent was Israel and Palestine.

If Kerry does withdraw and lets the talks collapse, or simply allows them to peter out after a grudging agreement to extend them without a meaningful framework agreement, the Israelis and Palestinians are very unlikely to resolve their differences. And that could set the stage for a real tragedy. Palestinian leaders are threatening to go to the U.N. and to mount an international boycott campaign, but these measures probably won’t get the Israelis back to the negotiating table—not in the coming decade. The talks’ failure may well bring the most militant and intransigent factions among both peoples to the fore—those Israelis who want to create a “greater Israel” by annexing the West Bank and those Palestinians who fantasize about a one-state South African solution. The attempt to achieve either of these objectives will likely bring war and not peace.

*John B. Judis is an American journalist, who is a senior editor at The New Republic and a contributing editor to The American Prospect.*

[Article 5.](#)

Dissident Voice

## **Mahmoud Abbas vs Mohammed Dahlan - The Showdown Begins**

Ramzy Baroud

March 26th, 2014 -- When late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat was confined by Israeli soldiers to his headquarters in the West Bank city of Ramallah, Mohammed Dahlan reigned supreme. As perhaps the most powerful and effective member of the 'Gang of Five', he managed the affairs of the ruling Fatah movement, coordinated with Israel regarding matters of security, and even wheeled and dealt in issues of regional and international affairs.

That was the period between March and April 2002 and it was a different time. Back then, Dahlan – a former Palestinian Authority (PA) minister, a former National Security advisor and a former head of Gaza's PA Preventative Security Service (PSS)- was king of the hill. All of his rivals were conveniently or by chance out of the picture. Arafat was then imprisoned in his office in al-Muqata'a, and Dahlan's toughest contender, Jibril Rajoub, leader of the West Bank PSS, was discredited in a most humiliating fashion. During the most violent Israeli crackdown of the Second Palestinian Intifada (2000-2005), Rajoub handed the PSS headquarters to the Israeli army with all of its Palestinian political prisoners and walked away. Since then, Rajoub's star faded into a dark chapter of Palestinian history. For Dahlan, however, it was yet a new start. This is not exactly the kind of history the Fatah leadership, Dahlan included, would like to remember. Such history is simply too dangerous as it underscores the reality that engulfed, and to a large degree, continues to shape the ruling class of the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah whose reach has touched upon every aspect of Palestinian life.

The second uprising, starting in September 2000, unlike the first Intifada of 1987, resulted in much harm. The latter revolution seemed to lack unity of

purpose, was more militarized, and allowed Israel to rearrange the post-Intifada and post-Arafat political scene in such a way as to privilege its trusted allies within the Palestinian camp. Dahlan, and the current PA president Mahmoud Abbas, elected in 2005 to a five-year-term, were obviously spared the Israeli purges. Hamas, on the other hand, lost several layers of its leadership, as did the Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which, like other socialist groups, suffered massive crackdowns and assassinations. Even Fatah activists paid a terribly heavy price of blood and imprisonments because of the leading role they played in the Intifada. For Abbas and Dahlan, however, things were not too bad. In fact, at least for a while, the outcome of the Intifada was quite beneficial for some Palestinian leaders who were at one point relegated to minor roles. Thanks to Israeli schemes, and American pressure, they were brought back to the limelight.

Twelve years later both Abbas and Dahlan are still the center of attention. Abbas, 79, is an aging president of an authority that has access to funds but no real sovereignty or political leverage (aside from what Israel finds acceptable); and Dahlan, 52, is in exile in the UAE after his supporters were chased out of Gaza by Hamas in 2007, and then the West Bank by his own party in June 2011. This occurred after he was accused of corruption and the poisoning of Arafat, on behalf of Israel, during the Israeli siege. But Dahlan, aided by some strong friends around the region – and, of course, his old intelligence contacts in Israel and the US – is unmistakably plotting a comeback.

Abbas knows well that his rule is approaching a sensitive transition, and not only because of his old age. If the John Kerry peace mediation deadline of April 29 results in nothing substantial, as will most likely be the case, it would not be easy for Abbas to keep Fatah's various competing cliques under control. And since Dahlan is sagaciously finding and manipulating gaps to reassert his relevance in a political milieu that continues to reject him, Abbas is lashing out in anticipation of a possible showdown.

Interestingly enough, Dahlan is answering in kind by using the generous space given to him by private Egyptian media. Fatah is in crisis once more, and, by its sheer political dominance, Palestinian political institutions in their entirety are likely to suffer.

Even after being banished by both Hamas and Fatah, Dahlan's name continued to be associated with bloody conflicts in the Middle East. In April 2011, Libya's Transitional National Council accused him of links to an Israeli weapons cache that was allegedly received by former Libyan leader Muammar Ghaddafi. Muhammad Rashid was another name mentioned by the Libyans, as he was also a member of the 'Gang of Five' and Fatah Central Committee.

But things got even uglier when a Hamas leader, Mahmoud al-Mabhouh, was assassinated in Dubai in January 2011. While Hamas maintains that the Mossad was behind the assassination (as shown on video footage), two of the suspects who were arrested in Dubai for their purported involvement and for providing logistical aid to the Mossad hit team- Ahmad Hassanain and Anwar Shheibar – work for a Dahlan-owned construction company in Dubai. The men's intriguing resumes also link them to a death cell under Dahlan's command that operated in Gaza, and was dedicated to suppressing any dissent among Palestinian groups.

The ongoing Abbas-Dahlan spat is inadvertently confirming all suspicions of Fatah's detractors regarding the leadership role in conspiring with Israel to destroy the resistance and its leaders. Yet, strangely, both Abbas and Dahlan continue to present themselves as the saviors of Palestinians, while each accuses the other of being an Israeli collaborator and an American stooge. Many Palestinians are not amused, and it has gone to the extent that Mousa Abu Marzouk, a senior Hamas member, called on Abbas and Dahlan "to refrain from exchanging accusations that serve only the Israeli interests," reported the Middle East Monitor on March 20.

Abbas' laundry list of accusations against Dahlan (first delivered to the Fatah Revolutionary Council on March 10, then publicly two days later), included Dahlan's role in the assassination of a top Hamas and resistance leader, Salah Shahadeh, along with his family and some of his neighbors in an Israeli airstrike in 2002. Abbas went further by suggesting a Dahlan role in the poisoning of Arafat in 2004. The PA president made a reference to 'three spies' who worked for Israel and carried out high profile assassinations. Aside from Dahlan, the 'spies' included Hassan Asfour, who is another member of the 'Gang of Five'.

On March 16, in an 'interview' with privately owned Egyptian Dream 2 satellite channel that lasted hours, Dahlan was granted uncontested space to

articulate his political agenda as he saw fit. Dahlan called Abbas a “catastrophe” for the Palestinians. “The Palestinian people can no longer bear a catastrophe like Mahmoud Abbas. Since the day he came to power, tragedies have struck the Palestinian people. I may be one of the people who bear the blame for bringing this catastrophe upon the Palestinian people.”

The saga continues with all of its unpleasant details. Fatah supporters who are neither loyal to Abbas nor Dahlan, know well that their movement must fight for and reclaim its revolutionary identity, the very reason behind its existence in the first place.

*Ramzy Baroud is an author and a journalist. His latest volume is [The Second Palestinian Intifada: A Chronicle of a People's Struggle](#).*

[Article 6.](#)

NYT

## **Qaeda Militants Seek Syria Base,** **U.S. Officials Say**

[Eric Schmitt](#)

March 25, 2014 -- Dozens of seasoned militant fighters, including some midlevel planners, have traveled to Syria from Pakistan in recent months in what American intelligence and counterterrorism officials fear is an effort to lay the foundation for future strikes against Europe and the United States.

“We are concerned about the use of Syrian territory by the Al Qaeda organization to recruit individuals and develop the capability to be able not just to carry out attacks inside of Syria, but also to use Syria as a launching pad,” John O. Brennan, the C.I.A. director, told a House panel recently. The extremists who concern Mr. Brennan are part of a group of Qaeda operatives in Pakistan that has been severely depleted in recent years by a decade of American drone strikes. But the fighters still bring a wide range of skills to the battlefield, such as bomb-building, small-arms tactics, logistics, religious indoctrination and planning, though they are not believed to have experience in launching attacks in the West.

Syria is an appealing base for these operatives because it offers them the relative sanctuary of extremist-held havens — away from drone strikes in Afghanistan and Pakistan — as well as ready access to about 1,200 American and European Muslims who have gone there to fight and could be potential recruits to carry out attacks when they return home. Senior counterterrorism officials have voiced fears in recent months that these Western fighters could be radicalized by the country's civil war.

New classified intelligence assessments based on information from electronic intercepts, informers and social media posts conclude that Al Qaeda's senior leadership in Pakistan, including Ayman al-Zawahri, is developing a much more systematic, long-term plan than was previously known to create specific cells in Syria that would identify, recruit and train these Westerners.

Al Qaeda has in the past blessed the creation of local branches in places like Yemen, where an affiliate has tried to strike the United States. But the effort in Syria would signify the first time that senior Qaeda leaders had set up a wing of their own outside Pakistan dedicated to conducting attacks against the West, counterterrorism officials said. It also has the potential to rejuvenate Al Qaeda's central command, which President Obama has described as being greatly diminished.

The assessment by the United States, however, has some detractors among even its staunchest counterterrorism partners, which also see an increase in Pakistan-based veterans of Al Qaeda among Syrian rebel groups but which disagree over whether they are involved in a coordinated plan to attack the West.

“At this stage, it's a lot less organized than a directed plan,” said one Western security official. “Some fighters are going to Syria, but they're going on an ad hoc basis, not at an organized level.”

Most of the operatives identified by intelligence officials are now focused on attacking Syrian government troops and occasionally rival rebel factions. But the fact that these kinds of operatives are showing up in Syria indicates to American officials that Mr. Zawahri is also playing a long game — counting on easy access to Iraq and Qaeda support networks there, as well as on the United States' reluctance to carry out drone strikes or other military operations against targets in Syria.

“A key question, however, is how using Syria as a launching pad to strike the West fits into Zawahri’s overall strategy, and if he’s soft-pedaling now, hoping to consolidate Al Qaeda’s position for the future,” said one American counterterrorism official. “Clearly, there is going to be push and pull between local operatives and Al Qaeda central on attack planning. How fast the pendulum will swing toward trying something isn’t clear right now.”

The new assessment is not likely to change American policy toward Syria any time soon, but it puts pressure on the Obama administration and its allies because it raises the possibility that Syria could become the next Afghanistan.

Top officials at the F.B.I., the National Counterterrorism Center and the Department of Homeland Security say they are working closely with European allies to track Westerners returning from Syria.

There are perhaps “a few dozen” Qaeda veterans of fighting in Afghanistan and Pakistan in Syria, two top counterterrorism officials said. “What we’ve seen is a coalescence in Syria of Al Qaeda veterans from Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as extremists from other hot spots such as Libya and Iraq,” Matthew G. Olsen, the director of the National Counterterrorism Center, told a Senate panel in March. “From a terrorism perspective, the most concerning development is that Al Qaeda has declared Syria its most critical front.”

In his first speech as secretary of Homeland Security in February, Jeh C. Johnson put it even more bluntly. “Syria has become a matter of homeland security,” he said.

The Qaeda veterans have multiple missions and motivations, counterterrorism officials say. Like thousands of other foreign fighters, many have been drawn on their own to Syria to fight the government of President Bashar al-Assad.

Many others, like Abu Khalid al-Suri, a Syrian-born veteran of Al Qaeda, were sent by the terrorist group’s central command in Pakistan first to fight Mr. Assad, but also to begin laying the groundwork to use enclaves in Syria to launch attacks against the West, American officials said.

Mr. Suri, who is believed to have been close to Osama bin Laden and to have fought against American forces in Afghanistan and Iraq, was sent to mediate conflicts between Al Qaeda’s main affiliate in Syria, the Nusra

Front, and another extremist faction, the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, which Al Qaeda has disavowed. He was killed in a suicide attack in February by the rival group.

#### The Syrian Opposition, Explained

There are believed to be hundreds, if not thousands, of groups fighting in Syria. These opposition groups are fighting the Assad regime, but recently turned on each other with increased ferocity.

Many of the Qaeda planners and operatives from Afghanistan and Pakistan have clustered in the east and northwest sections of Syria, in territory controlled or heavily influenced by the Nusra Front, intelligence officials said.

Sanafi al-Nasr, a Saudi-born extremist who is on his country's list of most wanted terrorists, traveled to Syria from the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region late last year and emerged as one of the Nusra Front's top strategists. Jihadi forums reported that he was killed in fighting last week, but American counterterrorism officials said those reports could not be confirmed.

"Al Qaeda veterans could have a critical impact on recruitment and training," said Laith Alkhouri, a senior analyst at Flashpoint Global Partners, a security consulting firm that tracks militant websites. "They would be lionized, at least within the ranks, as experienced mujahedeen." While these senior Qaeda envoys have been involved in the immediate fight against Syrian forces, American counterterrorism officials said they also had broader, longer-term ambitions.

Without naming Mr. Nasr, James R. Clapper Jr., the director of national intelligence, told a Senate panel in February that a "small nucleus" of Qaeda veterans from Afghanistan and Pakistan in Syria who are "separate from al-Nusra harbor designs on attacks in Europe and the homeland." Charles Lister, a visiting fellow at the Brookings Doha Center in Qatar, agreed, saying, "The large majority of Al Qaeda-linked commanders now in Syria are there due to the potential for Syria to be the next jihadist safe haven."

Hassan Abu Hanieh, a Jordanian expert on Islamist movements, said that launching attacks on Western targets did not appear to be a priority for the Nusra Front now. However, the group's ideology, or a belief that it was under direct threat, could lead it to attack the West eventually, he said.

“As soon as they get targeted, they will move the battle outside,” Mr. Hanieh said.

*Ben Hubbard contributed reporting from Amman, Jordan.*

[Article 7.](#)

The Diplomat

## **Indian Foreign Policy: The Cold War Lingers**

Andrew J. Stravers and Peter Harris

March 24, 2014 -- In the wake of [Vladimir Putin’s incursion into Crimea](#), almost every member of the international community voiced concern over Russia’s actions. While the U.S. and European Union were the most forceful in their criticism, non-Western states such as China and even Iran also made clear their support for the principles of non-intervention, state sovereignty and territorial integrity – oblique criticisms of Moscow’s disregard for cornerstone Westphalian norms. For the most part, support for Russia has been confined to the predictable incendiaries: Cuba, Venezuela and Syria, for example. Yet there is one unusual suspect among those lining up behind Putin that requires further investigation: India.

On its face, New Delhi’s [enunciation of respect for Russia’s “legitimate interests”](#) in Crimea is a surprising blow to the prevailing U.S. policy of reaching out to India. As the largest democracy in the world, a burgeoning capitalist economy and an increasingly important military power, India has been viewed as a counterweight to China’s rise and an anchor of the U.S.-led international order. India’s support for Russia’s revisionism in Crimea, then, is something that should trouble U.S. policymakers. In the long run, India’s response to the Crimean crisis might even be remembered as one of the more important implications of the whole episode. For how India aligns in the coming multipolar world will have enormous ramifications.

India’s support for Putin is a reminder that the West should not take [India’s friendship](#) for granted. To be sure, India made a necessary shift in tone towards the West following the collapse of the Soviet Union. India has liberalized its economy and become a strategic partner in several key areas. But the past two decades of broad cooperation should not be taken as an

inexorable trend towards a complete harmonization of interests between India and the West. Amid all the talk of a renewed Cold War in Europe it has been forgotten that, for India, Cold War international relations never truly ended. In particular, the Indo-Russian relationship remains an important mainstay of Indian grand strategy – a hangover from that bygone era.

The years following the collapse of the Soviet empire saw the U.S. mainly concerned with a failed attempt to curb India's nuclear program. After 9/11, America's attention was focused on partnership with India while still maintaining the confidence and cooperation of Pakistan. Both periods of engagement, however, left the Indo-U.S. relationship well short of the kind of deep cooperation that marked Indo-Soviet relations during the Cold War. The result has been that Moscow still enjoys a thoroughly positive relationship with New Delhi.

India and Russia maintain deep cooperation on political, military and economic dimensions. Russian trade with India rivals the latter's trade with the United States, and Indian companies have made huge investments in Russian energy firms and energy projects in the Bay of Bengal. In addition, the two nations are developing a southern route from Russia to the Arabian Sea that will increase Russian trade in the whole of the Indian Ocean region.

Russia still provides India's military with more than 70 percent of its weapons systems and armaments and the two are currently cooperating in the development of cruise missile systems, strike fighters and transport aircraft. Russia is one of only two countries in the world that have [annual ministerial-level defense reviews](#) with India. The two cooperate on the advancement of a space program and they have bilateral nuclear agreement worth potentially tens of billions of dollars. Such deep and expansive ties with Russia complicate India's multifarious importance from the perspective of Washington (as a cog in the U.S. "pivot" to Asia, an indispensable ally in the War on Terror and a bustling hub of the global economy).

After the Bush administration left office, India was heralded as one of the foreign policy success stories of his presidency. Economic relations had been deepened, diplomatic ties strengthened, a nuclear agreement signed. All indications were that India would be a stalwart American ally at a

strategic nexus between the Middle East and the new focus on Asia. Historically poor relations with China would keep India safely out of the Chinese orbit. India could be relied upon to help encircle China, a vital link in a twenty-first century cordon sanitaire around the muscular Middle Kingdom.

But India never lost sight of its historic Cold War ally and the Indian people have never fully lost their suspicion of Western powers and creeping colonialism. American policymakers may have been overly naïve in thinking that economic growth, increased trade and a nuclear deal could move India safely into the American camp. Perhaps it is true that India will never cement itself on China's side, but the fact is that nothing has been done to erase the deep Indo-Russian ties that formed during decades of Cold War.

Putin's stratagem in Crimea has reminded the world that China is not the only rising or resurgent Great Power deserving of attention. As such, officials need to reconsider India's place in American grand strategy. There is no doubt that India (itself a rising state with the potential to become a geopolitical pole in its own right) will remain a prominent player in the decades ahead. India occupies a crucial geostrategic location between a rising China, the energy producing regions of the Middle East and a [newly vigorous African economy](#). An expanding Indian navy featuring 150 ships and multiple aircraft carriers will possess the capability to exercise veto power over key shipping choke points in the Persian Gulf, Strait of Malacca, and Suez region. Economic forecasts suggest India will surpass the GDP of the United States somewhere in the middle of the century. It should greatly concern the American foreign policy establishment that, at a moment when international norms are under assault by Moscow, India has chosen to (at least partially) [throw its lot in with Russia](#). How strong can a norm of territorial integrity be without the world's largest nation and the world's largest democracy? How stable can the American-led global order be with such a prominent repudiation of American foreign policy preferences? The answer to both of these questions is, unfortunately, "not very."

What should be done? The past decade has seen a consistent focus by Washington to integrate and contain a rising China, but not enough has been done to integrate and build ties with a rising India. Simply because

India is a democracy does not mean that it will automatically align itself to American preferences, and the United States must make a concerted effort to win India's favor and goodwill in a lasting way. Until now, closeness with India has been compromised by competing demands to remain faithful to Pakistan, America's own Cold War-era ally. Indeed, Russia's historic support for Indian claims over Kashmir (sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit) has been no small part of Moscow's appeal to New Delhi. Sooner or later, a new balance must be struck between U.S. commitments to these two nations. While Pakistan is integral to regional security, India's cooperation will be essential to sustain the American vision of global governance.

The Obama administration can lay the groundwork for a more intimate relationship with India by doing three things. First, and easiest, the United States must clear up the [detention and mistreatment of Devyani Khobragade](#). Far greater crimes have been excused for much less than would be gained in terms of Indian public opinion if the U.S. were to show flexibility towards Khobragade. Whether charges truly are warranted or not, Washington must at least apologize for her treatment in order to mitigate the blow that has been dealt to Indian impressions of the United States.

Second, the U.S. needs to commit itself to the establishment of a free trade agreement with India. India presents an enormous opportunity for American investment, with its stable system of property rights, consolidated democracy, and English-speaking population. An agreement will benefit both the Indian and American peoples, and intertwine the two nations to the high degree that their statures in the global economy mandate.

Third, the United States should seriously reconsider its support for a permanent Indian seat on the United Nations Security Council. If time is running out on the post-WWII international order, it makes sense for the U.S. to exploit its waning preponderant influence and play a major role in fashioning the future of the multipolar order. By seizing the agenda and winning the friendship and trust of rising countries (especially India and Brazil) that generally abide by an American-friendly set of global rules, the United States can promote the existence of a favorable global environment of peace and prosperity for generations to come.

Washington has been warned: India's expression of sympathy for Russian interests in Crimea should serve as an alarm bell for American officials that a crucial player in world affairs has gone neglected. India's enlistment as a card-carrying supporter of the existing international order simply cannot be counted upon going forward. If the U.S. wants India to serve as a bulwark of the international status quo, some form of policy change will be required. By shifting India to the front and center of American foreign policy, the United States can help to assure for itself – and the wider world – a future based on prevailing global norms rather than the designs of revisionist, illiberal and undemocratic states like Russia.

*Andrew J. Stravers is a PhD student at the University of Texas at Austin, where he studies the global role of the American military. He is also an Aiddata Center for Development Policy Fellow and a researcher on the Department of Defense Minerva Initiative's project on natural resource and armed conflict. Peter Harris is a doctoral candidate in Government at the University of Texas at Austin, where he is also a graduate fellow of the Clements Center for History, Strategy and Statecraft.*