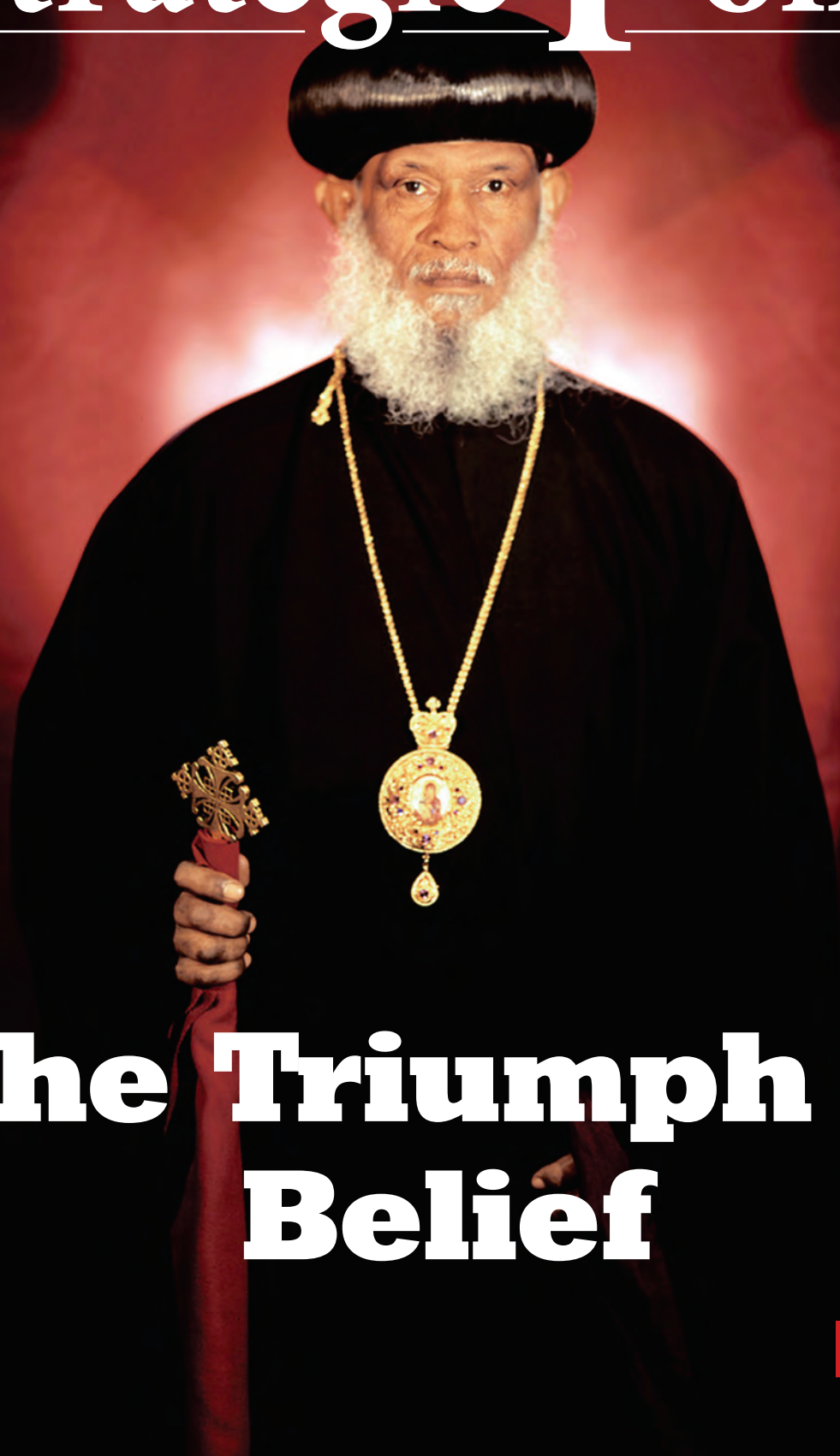


Defense & Foreign Affairs

# Strategic Policy



## The Triumph of Belief

8, 2018

Sovereignty is not just  
a legal framework.  
It is deeply rooted  
in society.  
Or it fails.



HIS MAJESTY KING TUFOA VI, OF TONGA, AT HIS CORONATION, JULY 4, 2015

## A new wave of nationalism is sweeping the world, but do we understand it, and where it's going?

The 20th Century brought the global supply chain architecture into sharp relief, culminating with the Internet era. It brought not just the framework of globalization, but urbanization. With these came the belief system of *globalism*: the philosophy which seemed to spell the end of the Westphalian nation-state structure, nationalism, and borders. But this "globalism" movement, largely linking urban societies around the world, also generated the pendulum response — as it threatened the identity security of many peoples and even civilizations — of reviving the importance of nationalism, and the need to re-assert sovereignty.

Many large groupings of people have expressed disillusionment and distrust in modern governance, and many have felt robbed by the manipulation of modern forms of ballot-box democracy. The search for answers, then, goes to the past as well as in understanding the promises of the future. Thousands of national and sub-national historical hierarchies retain their vibrancy and importance to social cohesion, as the reassertion of the importance of sovereignty, Westphalian or otherwise.

**The Center for the Study of Monarchy, Traditional Governance, and Sovereignty**, at The International Strategic Studies Association (ISSA), was created in 2016 to study the sweeping, historical forces which define human societal and civilizational organization. It was named "The Zahedi Center" in honor of former Iranian Foreign Minister and Ambassador Ardeshtir Zahedi and his late father, former Iranian Prime Minister Fazlollah Zahedi, and Amb. Zahedi has joined with His Imperial Highness Prince Ermias Sahle-Selassie Haile-Selassie as patrons of the Center. Already the Center has developed a strong core of on-line resources for academic and policy researchers at: <http://strategicstudies.org/Monarchy%20Center/Monarchy.htm>

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It's not just about the past. It's about the future. And how societies are looking at the structures they already have.



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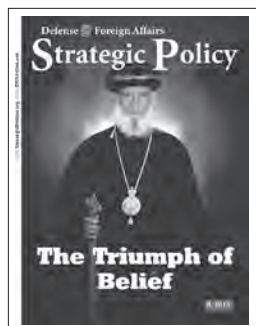
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# Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy

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## The Cover

*The Triumph of Belief* is a theme carried through some of the analysis in this edition, starting with the report on page two. The cover shows the Spiritual Patriarch of the now-reunited Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Abune Merkorios, who returned to Addis Ababa on August 1, 2018, from decades of exile, with the new Ethiopian Prime Minister. Prime Minister Abiy has galvanized much of the Horn of Africa with a belief in its historical destiny, transforming strategic reality on the ground in this key region, as the report on page four shows. Beliefs, too, are driving much of the strategic momentum in the Arab Middle East, as the report on page 12 shows. — Photograph of Abune Merkorios by Taylor Reed Branson. [www.TaylorReedBranson.com](http://www.TaylorReedBranson.com)

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# Early Warning

By Gregory R. Copley

## The Triumph of Belief



- *Some 100-million Ethiopians have, since April 2018, begun to move their country in a new strategic direction;*
- *Egyptians, Austrians, Hungarians, Italians, Persians, and Spanish Catalans, not to mention Kurds: each have begun to polarize around a revived sense of identity in the past year or two, as they attempt to ensure their survival;*
- *Societies in Europe, the Americas, and elsewhere have begun to polarize, often without being able to articulate their concerns, fears, or hopes;*
- *The People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Russian Federation have become strenuously nationalistic ...*

IT IS AS THOUGH, IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, people of different regions, races, and beliefs have become galvanized into actions which have transformed the trajectory of their own, and other, societies. Some toward safety; some toward chaos.

For many, it has not been a path chosen for the clear rationale or impetus of hunger or thirst, or for immediate safety; neither for the lure of tangible wealth. These are movements separate from the economic materialism which drives urbanization or trans-national migration.

The main impetus of mass action in many societies today has been a galvanic series of movements focused around a single factor: identity. Perhaps, in many instances, it is the hope that finding the security of one's clan and rallying it in collective action to defeat marginalization or elimination.

Why now have so many people around the world — people of such a vast array of beliefs and under such different circumstances — chosen to surge into emotionally-driven collectives? Two primary reasons beckon:

- Many modern, urban-dominated socio-economic-geopolitical structures have begun to collapse or fail to deliver on the expectations of them. These structures had given safety and material reward, and, for a while, caused old identities and loyalties to be forgotten. But a sense of impending uncertainty in these modern structures has induced a profound fear of the consequences of continuing to rely on them. Thus people revert to the "safe haven" of their clans, lands, and their myths and cultures; and
- Many societies have become "post-Enlightenment", abandoning education systems devoted to the scientific method and to contextual history. The result is that, absent knowledge, all faith is placed in the delivery of material benefits, and hierarchies based solely on materialism. When such systems fail, people revert to core identities.

There are also belief-driven movements which identify with — rather than resile from — the sciences and the logic of market-driven rationales.

To be clear: the Judeo-Christian belief systems of the West, or the Buddhist, Shintoist, or Confucianist beliefs of Japan, did not contradict commitments to scientific progress and enlightenment so much that they prevented strategic growth and national security. Thus, belief-driven nationalism is no barrier to enlightened growth. And urban materialism is no guarantee that there is respect among the

city élites for the scientific process or enlightenment.

But underlying each of the factors just mentioned is that each is being driven substantially by psychological (belief) factors, rather than by empirical evidence. This applies equally to the urban, globalist, modernists of the major economies, as well as to the regional, nationalist, traditionalist groups. The primary difference is that the urban, globalist, modernists are — because short-term materialism has become a core belief system — convinced that they remain faithful to the scientific method. In reality, however, real science and engineering have been driven into smaller and smaller social spaces, and the "science" of modern material society has become — because of widespread degradation of education, to the point where historical lessons can no longer be understood — merely a new belief system. It is the urban sophists who have embraced the new religion of Ra, the sun god of human-induced climate change.

Materialism differs little in its nature from religion, except that the need for personal validation (self worth) is derived from tangibles (possessions) in one belief system and intangibles in the other. Intangibles tend to be more durable and sustaining than the tangibles of materialism, which are short-term. The two belief systems currently opposing each other are, then, being imprecisely reduced to materialism (portrayed often as modernist and urbanist) *versus* intangible traditionalism (often portrayed as nationalist and religious).

As a result of this belief-driven zeal, the scope for compromise and debate between belief groups has diminished. Beliefs are the final repository of hope, confidence, security against threat, and identity. They are the only horizon when our ship is tossed upon dark and violent waters. They also are hosts to fear, suspicion, and paranoia, guarded by political correctness.

Some beliefs work better than others to secure the interests of a society. History has shown that the fewer the dependencies one has, and the more that the instruments of survival are under one's own control, the greater the security in times of great change. That is not to deny the value of great alliances and the retention of options, only that reliance on an ally (who may be equally, or even more greatly, challenged) is a strategy of hope over logic.

In the end, all depends on the strength and clarity of will in each individual and society. As the great strategic philosopher, Stefan Possony, articulated: strategy and power are about the imposition of will on friends and foes. Nothing more. So those nation-states with the shortest interior supply lines, the strongest identity, and an implacable sense of will tend to emerge best from periods of crisis.

Few states today exhibit the commitment to these tenets better than the PRC and Russia. Yet even they have no guarantee of strategic success. The PRC, in particular, has an imperative to overcome its global external supply lines in a way no great empire since the British has had to cope. Britain — the United Kingdom — at least had for most of its great days of empire the ability to feed and water its core population. The PRC does not. And when the UK, during the 20th Century's two world wars, became dependent upon foreign supply of much of its food, it, too, lost the ability to sustain empire. Rome became vulnerable when its supply lines became longer and more difficult to sustain than its willpower could manage. Rome and Britain became tired; all civilizations do.

Now it is the "traditionalist" movements which are breaking down the anti-sovereignty global architecture of the past half century and pushing it back into a framework of sovereign nations. The impetus for tomorrow is not material progress but an inner, burning light. ★

# Strategic Trajectories

*Indicators of emerging patterns of global significance*

Australian Prime Minister Turnbull (left) and former Home Minister Dutton.



The short-lived US LGM-118 Peacekeeper (MX) ICBM.



## Australia Drifts Hypnotically Toward a Power Change

**Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull on August 21, 2018, survived a serious leadership challenge from within his own Cabinet, followed by a Parliamentary no-confidence motion, but the saga has not ended.** Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton twice declared his loyalty for the Prime Minister before mounting the leadership challenge vote by parliamentary Liberal Party members.

Mr Turnbull survived with a 48 to 35 vote, but even if no further challenge occurred, the Government was drifting toward a hard deadline for Parliamentary elections in May 2019, and the governing Liberal-National Party coalition was fractured in discontent, focused on legislation to reduce electricity prices.

Australia remains on a path toward a change of leadership, either at the national polls or another leadership challenge against Mr Turnbull. Or both.

Australia is presently the southern geopolitical anchor for Western containment of the People's Republic of China (PRC), and is thus under massive direct and indirect pressure from Beijing. Both major parties were compromised by questionable links with PRC figures, but opposition Labor — which could take the next election — has demonstrated a greater willingness to kow-tow to Beijing.

Without Australia, the US faces grave difficulty in retaining the Indo-Pacific as an area of vital competition with the PRC. Yet the US Trump Administration has not yet agreed to a new Ambassador for Canberra, and the Australian foreign policy establishment remains cool to Pres. Trump. US attempts to win greater influence with Indonesia and India have thus far been insufficient to give Washington any strategic comfort, and do not help deter PRC strategic expansion into the South Pacific and South-East Asia.

Geopolitically, Australia dominates the Indo-Pacific ocean linkage, but seems, itself, to be drifting politically and economically, and increasingly vulnerable to PRC pressures. ★

## The US Back in Space: It's Happening, But Without Real Strategic Debate

**The US is moving to “regain outer space” from a defense perspective (as well as in a non-military context), but there has, significantly, been no US public policy debate over goals and purpose.** Much of the rationale is taken for granted, and largely relates to the fact that the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Russia are moving their respective defense postures into space, but the reality is that the militarization of space — which has been underway since the launch of the first V-2 rocket in 1944 — is something little discussed, and is papered over with deliberate policies of lies, ambiguity, or silence by most governments. Space assets are critical for communications, surveillance, and navigation, with communications providing the critical link to information dominance and cyber weapons, quite apart from the passage through space of kinetic weapons.

Pres. Donald Trump's proposal to Congress on August 9, 2018, to create a US Space Force as a fourth full armed force may not yet be fully conceived, but it is a belated start to catching up with Russia and the People's Republic of China (PRC), which have, in many respects, overtaken the US. [The Marine Corps is technically part of the Navy; the Coast Guard is often counted, but is not, except in time of war, under Defense.] As with submarine and anti-submarine warfare, the US allowed itself to lose space strategic competitiveness in the post-Cold War period during a time when the space sector (as with the submarine sector) was being opened to many other states, with even India positioning itself to make significant strides.

Space is becoming crowded, militarily and in civilian terms, and in that field and other strategic areas the “brief, but profoundly deep, nap” the US took to sleep off the Peace Dividend of the post-Cold War period has passed and the US has awakened to a new world. The US armed services already have (along with the intelligence community) well-established rôles in space, and there will be much sorting out to be done to create a unified Space Force. But, again, the separate space programs, which now touch all sectors of defense and intelligence operations, have not formed an organic structure. Space Command will attempt to create that.

The Trump Administration proposed that the Defense Department would first establish a Space Development Agency to develop and field space capabilities, which, as *Aviation Week* noted, would be similar to how the Air Force's Rapid Capabilities Office and the Defense Department's Strategic Capabilities Office have operated. Then, Defense would develop a Space Operations Force to support the combatant commanders. Third, Defense would create the governance, services, and support functions of a new military service. Finally, Defense would create US Space Command led by a four-star officer. The US had a Space Command from 1985 to 2002, but it was dismantled after the terrorist attacks on the US of September 11, 2001, to make way for US Northern Command.

Almost every aspect of US military strategy touches on space, but the big capital areas are in the inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) realm currently under US Air Force control. Submarine-launched strategic ballistic missile delivery would presumably stay with the US Navy. But discussion of a Space Force to deal with the distant future must include the reality that warfare is moving beyond nuclear weapons, so could terrestrially-launched nuclear weapons remain with their present forces and leave Space Force to deal with truly next-gen, innovative technologies and, more importantly, strategies?

The White House, which has indicated (with Defense agreement) that it could have a Space Command initiated by late 2018, has indicated concern over the possible development by Russia of possible new anti-satellite weapons. Russia in October 2017 had conducted tests of a “space apparatus inspector”, detected by US intelligence to be a system which was maneuvering and taking other unusual actions in space, with the suspicion — according to Yleem Poblete, Assistant Sec. of State for Arms Control — that it could presage another round of anti-satellite weapons capability. ★

# Red Sea Rising

*The Red Sea is emerging as a key global strategic dynamic thanks to a revolution begun in Ethiopia. The transformation moves back to a 3,000-year-old pattern, and is far from done.*

IT IS NOW NECESSARY FOR ALL MAJOR TRADING STATES to begin revision of strategic concepts surrounding one of the most vital global arterial sea-lanes and theaters, the Red Sea-Suez.

The rapidly-evolving events and changing strategic balance center around the new Ethiopian Government of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali, 41, who came to office on April 2, 2018.

Much now depends on the political — and physical — survival of the Prime Minister.<sup>2</sup>

The result of Dr Abiy's appointment as Prime Minister is that the strategic framework in the Horn of Africa and Red Sea regions has begun to undergo its most profound change since the coup against Emperor Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia in 1974, during the Cold War.<sup>3</sup>

The changes to the regional balance caused by the 1974 coup, as well as the impact to the security of global trade routes, were lost in the global swirl of the Cold War. As a result, the importance of that event is only now beginning to become evident as we see the rapid return to a core strategic framework which had existed for most of the past 2,500 years.

The long-term impact of that 1974 coup is now starting to be reversed, or returned to "normalcy". It was not surprising then that Dr Abiy said on June 1, 2018: "We should build our naval force capacity in the future."<sup>4</sup> He had already taken key initiatives with regard to neighboring states in the region; this signaled his intention to return Ethiopia to its maritime mission.

It is significant that he said this before his plan to restore Ethiopian links with Eritrea had become known. It was only on June 5, 2018, that he unveiled his plan for Ethiopia to accept the Algiers Agreement of June 18, 2000, which agreed to a

resolution of the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict (May 6, 1998 to June 18, 2000). Dr Abiy's acceptance of the Algiers Agreement overturned almost two decades of Ethiopian policy, and created an immediate Eritrea-Ethiopia *rapprochement*, surprising Eritrean Pres. Isayas Afewerke, who immediately embraced the news.

Pres. Isayas became a partner in the transformation, which promised a new viability for Eritrea. An Eritrean delegation was invited to Addis Ababa (it arrived on June 26, 2018, and included key Isayas advisor Yemane Gebreab), paving the way for a euphoric visit by Dr Abiy to Asmara (July 8, 2018), followed by a visit by Isayas to Addis Ababa (July 14, 2018).

It became clear with that sequence of events that Dr Abiy had taken office with a very detailed strategic vision for the restoration of Ethiopian sovereignty, which embraced its unity, identity, and prestige, and yet he was not even alive at the time of the 1974 coup. He was born on August 15, 1976, two years after it.

By the beginning of August 2018, events in the Horn of Africa had been moving with such rapidity since the installation of Dr Abiy that strategic reassessments of the region now required review on a daily basis. Not only had Dr Abiy initiated the end of 44 years of communist, neo-communist, and ethnically-based government in Ethiopia, he had also begun the process of strategic reintegration with Eritrea — once part of the Ethiopian Empire — and the restoration of a Red Sea naval presence for Ethiopia.

He also fanned the flames of closer integration of Ethiopia with Djibouti, itself

historically part of the Ethiopian empire before the introduction of the French trading post there at Obock — now a military base for the People's Republic of China — in 1862.

Through all of this, it is worth bearing in mind that Ethiopia, even without the reintegration of Eritrea and Djibouti, has a population of some 100-million, the second largest in Africa, and the fast-growing economy on the Continent (albeit building from a small base).

Dr Abiy's reforms already show the promise of further economic growth and stability, and it should be expected that this process would soon receive the fillip of restoration of the vital foundation for economic growth: the return of private property ownership, coupled with the time-consuming challenge of reforming the bureaucracy. He will find considerable resistance among many of the old socialists and marxists of the various factions of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) Coalition Government.

At home, Dr Abiy, a Protestant Christian and former Muslim, and of both Oromo and Amhara parentage, has moved quickly to reinstate the teaching of Ethiopian history, banned when the pro-Soviet *Dergue* seized power in 1974, and to restore respect for Ethiopia's three millennia of Solomonic lineage, tying the country to its roots in the union of King Solomon of Israel and Queen Makeda of Saba (the Queen of Sheba).

And Dr Abiy dramatically enhanced this process when, on July 26, 2018, on arrival for a private visit to the US, he brought together the synods of the two schismatic branches of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. This was the most significant step forward for Christianity in the

1 Gregory Copley is also author of numerous studies, monographs, and lectures on Ethiopia, including the book, *Ethiopia Reaches Her Hand Unto God: Imperial Ethiopia's Unique Symbols, Structures and Role in the Modern World*. Alexandria, Virginia, 1998: the International Strategic Studies Association. ISBN: 1-892998-00-9 (paperback), 1-892998-01-7 (hardcover).

2 "Massive, Rapid Change in Ethiopia Causes Push-Back and a Coup Attempt Against the New Abiy Government", in *Defense & Foreign Affairs Special Analysis*, June 6, 2018.

3 "Abiy Transforms the Horn, and Egypt's Position" in *Defense & Foreign Affairs Special Analysis*, July 13, 2018.

4 "Ethiopia Moves to Re-Establish Itself as a Red Sea Power as it, and Other African States, Put Relations with the PRC in a New Light" in *Defense & Foreign Affairs Special Analysis*, June 21, 2018.

Middle East and Africa for decades, reversing much of the fragmentation and decline of Christian populations.

The Church had been split since 1974, when the revolutionary *Dergue* (Committee) seized power, but particularly when the Patriarch, *Abune Tewophilos*, who had served during the latter reign of Emperor Haile Selassie I, was assassinated by the *Dergue* in 1979. The *Dergue* then installed Patriarch *Abune Takla Haymanot*, and later installed Patriarch *Abune Merkorios*, who went into exile in the US in 1991. He then was accepted as the Patriarch by the diaspora Ethiopian Orthodox community.

The Tigré Popular Liberation Front (TPLF) — when it seized control of Ethiopia with the collapse of the *Dergue* and its Soviet sponsors in 1991 — installed Patriarch *Abune Paulos*, and then, with his death in 2012, installed Patriarch *Abune Mathias*.

Ethiopians, who had never in history left their country in large numbers, flooded out after 1974 to create a global diaspora, with as many as one-million in North America. Most came to look to Patriarch *Abune Merkorios* for spiritual leadership.

On July 26, 2018, Dr Abiy, immediately upon his arrival in Washington, DC, brought church leaders from Ethiopia and the diaspora together as part of an Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahedo* Church Unification and Reconciliation ceremony. The two synods of the Church agreed — apparently with enthusiasm — to unite, restoring Patriarch *Abune Merkorios* to nominal head of the Church, despite his now advanced age and frailty, with the TPLF-installed Patriarch acting, effectively, as the chief executive of the Church, and retaining his rank and status.

This reunification was of strategic significance in itself, quite apart from the enormous impetus it gave for the restoration of Ethiopian identity. And it is significant, too, that the now-united Church leadership sees that a pillar of the Church is its link to the Solomonic line represented by Ethiopia's Imperial dynasty. The Church leaders, together in Washington, DC, for the Prime Minister's visit, met with the President of the Crown Council of Ethiopia, Prince Ermias Sahle-Selassie Haile-Selassie, grandson of Emperor Haile Selassie, and affirmed their mutual goodwill to work toward improving Ethiopian unity and development.

Prime Minister Abiy took Patriarch *Abune Merkorios* back to Addis Ababa with him when he returned on August 1, 2018, ending the *Abune's* 27-year exile which began when he walked alone

across the Ethiopian border into Kenya. He returned to Addis Ababa to be met by several official bands and stands of supporters and Church officials at Bole International Airport, and went immediately — through streets lined with supporters — to the National Cathedral, Holy Trinity, where he met with Patriarch *Abune Mathias*.

[In an emergency meeting called on July 30, 2018, the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahedo* Church Holy Synod based in Addis Ababa lifted the excommunication of members of the Holy Synod based in the US; the excommunication had been instituted soon after Patriarch *Abune Merkorios* left the country in 1991.]

But what was significant was that during the Prime Minister's visit to Washington, DC (he also visited Minneapolis and Los Angeles) he met with key Muslim Ethiopian leaders, particularly the Sultan of Afar, Sultan Hanfare Alimirah, who, like his late Father, had opposed the *Dergue* and remained a supporter of the monarchy. He also addressed a large gathering of Ethiopian Muslims. It was known that the Sultan of Afar's family and entourage met with Crown Council President Prince Ermias during the Prime Minister's visit to Washington, DC.

What was clear was that Dr Abiy had presided over not only the reunification of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church — saying that it was impossible to think of Ethiopia without taking note of the Ethiopian Orthodox *Tewahedo* Church (to which he does not belong) — but had also brought about a *rapprochement* between Orthodox Christians, Protestant and Roman Catholic Christians, and the distinct brand of Ethiopian Islam. It is difficult to overstate the unifying impact of Dr Abiy's moves, not only with the Church, but also on ending the conflict with Eritrea, and moving against corruption and in freeing large numbers of political prisoners.

It is also difficult to recall when a similar process of mass support — particularly on the scale of the Ethiopian, Eritrean, and Djiboutian rally — has occurred in Africa, unifying not just a country, but a region. The absolute and overriding message of Dr Abiy — which won the greatest public response — has been to stress national unity over ethnic and religious divisions, and to stress that the sovereignty of Ethiopia was paramount.

### The Domestic Impact

THERE HAS BEEN disruption to a pattern of national management which had evolved over the 44 years since the *Dergue's* coup.

This will take some time to stabilize, particularly as Prime Minister Abiy moves heavily against politically and fiscally corrupt former and current officials.

It is significant that the anti-corruption campaign on which the Government was now embarked was not, as in some countries, merely a disguise to suppress political opposition. The corruption had been real, pervasive, and a source of much of the public outrage.

Ethiopian analyst and former World Bank executive Dr Aklog Birara noted, in a post on ECADForum.com on May 19, 2018: "Ethiopian society has been 'bleeding' or hemorrhaging from theft, graft, nepotism, corruption and illicit outflow of massive financial and human capital for almost three decades." He also noted that the solution for Ethiopia was not more foreign aid, given that the previous Government had already received \$30-billion from the US alone, and that this was, essentially, stolen by the then- leadership. He praised the new Prime Minister's attempts to recover funds, prosecute corrupt officials, and to empower the Ethiopian economy.

Invigorating the economy will take some time, but it has clearly already begun, and the opening of the old trade links with Eritrea will yield tangible, short-term results.

The prosecution of corrupt officials, most (but not all) of whom are linked with the Tigré Popular Liberation Front (TPLF) which controlled the Government since 1991, has already resulted in a strenuous push-back against Prime Minister Abiy. This has included at least two assassination attempts. And the response when Dr Abiy began investigating corruption surrounding the controversial Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), on the Sudanese border, was for its Chief Engineer and overseer, Semegnaw Bekele, to be shot dead in his Toyota Landcruiser in Addis Ababa on July 26, 2018. A Colt handgun was found in his vehicle, but some reports indicated that the actual single killing shot to the head came from a sniper, which would point to the TPLF's "private special forces" group, the *Agazi*.

The dam itself has been controversial, and possibly threatening to the Blue Nile water flows, affecting Egyptian water access (particularly in the current period of extensive, *El Niño*-cycle drought. But that the project was riddled with inefficiencies (it is only now half-completed) and corruption as the flagship project in the country made it a primary focus for the new Government.

What is clear, though, is that the pushback against the Prime Minister is

not over by a long shot, and there is a race to see whether Dr Abiy can neutralize some of the TPLF communist hardliners — like one of its founders, its key ideologue and the godfather of the *Agazi*, Sebhat Nega, 84, who recently withdrew from Addis Ababa to return to Tigré — before the former *apparatchiks*, with their billions of dollars in resources, can neutralize the Prime Minister.

The TPLF immediately mobilized its US-trained force of *Liyu* regional paramilitary force in Somali State (of Ethiopia) and began an attempted uprising — under Tigrean generals — in three locales in neighboring Oromia State's East Hararghe Zone on August 12-13, 2018. There were at least 40 deaths, but Ethiopian Federal Forces contained the *Liyu*, which reportedly has more than 30,000 combatants. The *Liyu* made a stand a week earlier, when their former leader and president of the Somali regional state, Abdi Mohamoud Omar, was forced to resign amid a standoff between regional and Federal forces.

In the meantime, however, the new Government has begun the process of privatizing parts of State-owned enterprises, such as Ethio Telecom, Ethiopian Airlines, Ethiopian Power, and the Maritime Transport and Logistics Corporation, but he is still fighting decades of entrenched socialist thinking within his own party, the Oromo Peoples' Democratic Organization (OPDO), and the coalition of which it is part — and which, as Prime Minister, he leads — the EPRDF. Despite this, it is clear to the Prime Minister himself that motivating the private sector and foreign direct investment (FDI) is key to giving the Ethiopian economy even greater levels of growth.

As well, though, the sense of support for him across the ethnic and religious divides in Ethiopia has been profound, not just from the Christian groups, but also from the Muslim and ethnic Somali Ethiopians. As a result, Dr Abiy is being channeled by circumstances to respond to the flood he has unleashed which demands the restoration of Ethiopian historical identity. And this will include the restoration of individual dignity, a process which has already meant the release of the thousands of political prisoners, people who had opposed the TPLF.

It will also lead ultimately to the restoration of private property, which in turn will drive FDI.

But if Dr Abiy is to succeed in prosecuting criminal behavior by the former TPLF officials, he cannot avoid addressing the still-outstanding criminal activities — including genocide — by the former *Dergue* officials who have been

hiding in exile. Principal among these is Mengistu Haile Mariam, who led the *Dergue's* coup and ran the country from 1974 until 1991, when he fled into exile in Zimbabwe with very substantial stolen funds and assets belonging both to the nation and to Emperor Haile Selassie.

One of the rare shock waves which was sent through the Ethiopian community since Dr Abiy took office has been the meeting which took place in Harare, Zimbabwe, on August 1, 2018, between immediate past Prime Minister of Ethiopia Hailemariam Dessalegn and Mengistu. Hailemariam was in Zimbabwe as an election observer, but his beaming photograph alongside Mengistu belied the fact that Mengistu had been tried in absentia in Ethiopia in 2007 — under the Government which Hailemariam subsequently led — and was sentenced to life in prison for genocide. Thus, Mengistu remains a fugitive from Ethiopian justice, and it would be difficult for Dr Abiy to selectively pursue TPLF transgressors without also hardening the Government's determination to seek justice for the *Dergue's* victims.

Behind all of this is the dominant core of Ethiopian identity, the Solomonic Crown, which had survived 2,500 years, and which the Mengistu coup had attempted to usurp through the regicide of 1974. The Solomonic line had undergone interregna in the past, some longer than the 44 years of the present interregnum. But the popularity of the Crown never dissipated, even among Dr Abiy's generation, born after the coup.

A parallel is evident with the return to nationalism of Russia, where the popularity of the Romanov Crown and even earlier Boyar traditions, re-emerged as a driving force in Pres. Vladimir Putin's restoration of Russian identity, a century after the 1917 *putsch* against the Crown. The Crown in Ethiopia and Russia represented legitimacy and unity.

Significantly, the Ethiopian Crown in exile — at first represented by Emperor Haile Selassie's heir, Crown Prince Asfa-Wossen (who was named in exile as Emperor Amha Selassie I), and then by the Crown Council he re-established — had consistently worked from the diaspora to highlight a sense of Ethiopian tradition during the interregnum.

The Crown Council maintained the practice of celebrating the Victory of Adwa, to commemorate the victory of Emperor Menelik II over the invading Italians in 1896 at Adwa, in Tigré province. And during recent years such celebrations began to resume again inside Ethiopia, despite the refusal of the *Dergue* and later the Meles Zenawi TPLF leader-

ship to acknowledge any of Ethiopia's pre-“revolutionary” history.

The reality was that the “revolutionaries” had not come to power through revolution, but through a *putsch*, and events after 1974, such as the banning of teaching Ethiopian history, could not erase the sense in Ethiopia that it had several millennia of unique heritage. Dr Abiy has very consciously tapped into that.

## Impact on the PRC

THE WAVE of Ethiopian nationalist sentiment which has risen since Prime Minister Abiy took office was seen in part as a push-back against the strong dominance over the Ethiopian economy by the People's Republic of China (PRC) as much as a push-back against the 44 years of suppressive governance since 1974. However, the “Abiy Revolution” in many ways works positively for the PRC.

Indeed, by the time Prime Minister Abiy had come into office, inheriting a parlous economic condition, the PRC had already begun to reduce its financial ties to Ethiopia because of concerns over foreign exchange shortages and the national debt. That did not mean that the PRC had in any way diminished its desire for strategic links with Ethiopia, only that it did not know how to manage its economic risks there.

Beijing had worked to conduct economic alliances with Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Djibouti when these states were separated by considerable mutual hostility (between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and between Djibouti and Eritrea). Now, PRC-financed infrastructure could integrate all three regional nations, and trade would increase to and from Ethiopia from several ports, including Assab and Massawa, controlled by Eritrea, which had been closed for more than two decades to Ethiopian traders. In the short term, however, Djibouti fears losing some of its Ethiopian traffic.

What has emerged is that the PRC may have less absolute influence over the new Ethiopian Government, but it would enjoy a share of a larger and expanding market which was less reliant on Beijing. And there is no suggestion that the PRC would lose its ability to dominate a strategic infrastructure network, linking its African trade through Ethiopian rail, road, and pipeline links to Red Sea ports.

But it would expect that there should be more competition from other major investors — particularly as the Ethiopian economy and market continues to firm — such as the European Union, the UK, and the US.

## Impact on the US

US-ETHIOPIAN RELATIONS have begun a resurgence and warmth unseen for a decade. Bilateral relations had soured dramatically at a strategic, intelligence, and military level during the years of the US Barack Obama Administration (2009-17), but particularly since the May 2015 visit by US Secretary of State John Kerry to Djibouti<sup>5</sup> and the July 2015 visit to Addis Ababa by Pres. Obama, where he pointedly offended Ethiopians.

The transfer of power — dictated by mass popular protests, largely spearheaded by Oromo and Amhara peoples — from the TPLF-controlled EPRDF to Dr Abiy was seen in Washington as a chance to reverse the schism between Washington and Addis Ababa, and US Acting Assistant Secretary of State Donald Yamamoto moved quickly to re-ignite bilateral relations. He actively, but discreetly, engaged in shuttle diplomacy between Addis Ababa and Asmara to ensure that Dr Abiy's initiative to restore Ethiopia-Eritrea relations could gain traction, and this was reportedly welcomed by both sides.

Amb. Yamamoto, a career diplomat, had earlier been US Ambassador to Ethiopia, and was, during July 2018, named as Ambassador-designate to Somalia, where he clearly could also backstop the changing Horn of Africa dynamic now centered on Ethiopia. There has been no clear indication as to where the US will go in pursuing this opening, although the opportunity is unique. Nonetheless, the bilateral relationship will clearly be less paternalistic than it was in the past, just as the revived (under the US Donald Trump Administration) US-Egypt relationship is less paternalistic than it was before the Washington-Cairo rift which occurred under the Obama Administration.

## Impact on Egypt

THE ETHIOPIA-EGYPT relationship immediately improved with the assumption of office of Dr Abiy.

It is not insignificant that Dr Abiy and Egyptian Pres. Abdul Fatah al-Sisi have each gained enormous traction because they have each stressed the paramount importance of the sovereignty and well-being of their respective nation-states. They saw in each other kindred spirits.

Pres. al-Sisi had come into office on June 8, 2014, determined to build a positive relationship with Ethiopia, the other major African anchor of the Red Sea-Suez sea line of communication (SLOC). But, under the TPLF-dominated Government in Ethiopia at that time, Pres. al-Sisi could get no clarity or cooperation over the GERD project, which most Egyptian media had portrayed as an existential threat to Egypt's access to Nile waters.

Dr Abiy's formal visit to Cairo on June 9-11, 2018, although not his first meeting with Pres. al-Sisi, may have proven decisive, especially in light of the heightened Egyptian concerns over water caused by the current drought. Pres. al-Sisi released to Prime Minister Abiy a number of Ethiopian prisoners, who the PM took with him back to Addis Ababa on June 11, 2018. And, in a speech before leaving Cairo, thanking the Egyptian President, Dr Abiy said: "I swear to God, we will never harm you." This was specifically in reference to the flow of Nile waters. Pres. al-Sisi said: "We have come a long way in building confidence and strengthening bilateral cooperation", to which Dr Abiy noted: "We will take care of the Nile and we will preserve your share and we will work to increase this quota and President Sisi and I will work on this."

In many ways this also releases Egypt from its covert subversion campaign against Ethiopia, which had largely been conducted through, and with the cooperation of, Eritrea. Now Eritrea is reunited with Ethiopia, cutting Egypt's options for such activities. Thus, the growing *rapprochement* between Egypt and Ethiopia augurs well for a more unified approach to the management of the Red Sea SLOC.

This will be critical for both "great powers of the Red Sea", given the collapse into internal disputes in both Yemen and Saudi Arabia, and the consequent surge of strategic interest in the Red Sea by Iran and Turkey (and by powers such as the PRC). Essentially, the security for a stable Red Sea is now in the hands of Egypt, Ethiopia (working with Eritrea, and possibly under a new confederation of Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Djibouti), and Israel.

This is bolstered by the re-start by the US Trump Administration in September 2017 of the biennial joint *Bright Star* military exercises between US and Egyptian forces which had been canceled by US Pres. Obama in 2013 because of the Egyptians' rejection of the US-backed

Muslim Brotherhood Government of Pres. Mohammed Morsi.

Despite the continued Egyptian wariness of ever again becoming totally dependent strategically on the US, the continued improvement in US-Egyptian bilateral relations means that a US-Egyptian-Israeli-Ethiopian coordination was now possible. Jordan could also be included in that framework, if it managed to survive its present unrest without having become subject to enduring influence from Turkey (which is currently pushing its writ upon the Jordanians and Hashemites). The US also has been improving relations with Sudan, completing much of the Eastern Mediterranean to Indian Ocean linkage, albeit leaving the Arabian Peninsula, a process which offered prospects for, finally, the recognition of the Republic of Somaliland and the strategic port of Berbera to be incorporated into the matrix.

This gives Washington the hope of revived influence, albeit in a new and less dominant manner, in the region. Much of this was discussed during late 2016 Washington, DC, conference on the Rise of the RedMed (Red Sea/Mediterranean) conducted by the International Strategic Studies Association (ISSA); the Gusau Institute of Kaduna, Nigeria; and the Water Initiative for Africa, of Ethiopian Crown Council President Prince Ermias Sahle-Selassie Haile-Selassie. The results and additional analysis on this emerging framework, which advocated the creation of a clearing house for intelligence on the region, was published as *Rise of the RedMed: How the Mediterranean-Red Sea Nexus is Resuming its Strategic Centrality*.<sup>6</sup>

This study has proven prescient on the transformation of the strategic theater.

## Impact on the Middle East

THE KINGDOM OF Saudi Arabia, despite being embroiled in internal crisis during 2017-18, played a key rôle, along with the US and the United Arab Emirates, in bringing Ethiopia and Eritrea together.

The fact that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin 'Abd al-'Aziz al Sa'ud took time to work with Dr Abiy in the Kingdom on May 18, 2018, during the Prince's recovery from the fighting which occurred in Riyadh on April 21, 2018, spoke to the commitment the Saudis had for the transformation of Ethiopia.<sup>7</sup>

5 Sec. Kerry, while in Djibouti, essentially threatened the continued leadership of Djibouti Pres. Ismaïl Omar Guelleh, calling him corrupt and saying that the US would not tolerate a further term in office for the President. As a result, Pres. Guelleh immediately called PRC Pres. Xi Jinping, inviting the PRC to build a military base in Djibouti, and offered the US Special Forces base at Obock as the location.

6 Copley, Gregory R., et al: *Rise of the RedMed: How the Mediterranean-Red Sea Nexus is Resuming its Strategic Centrality*. Alexandria, Virginia, 2016: The International Strategic Studies Association. ISBN: 978-1-892998-24-8.

7 See: "Saudi Arabia's Fortunes Reach a Critical Juncture", in *Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, 5/6-2018.

Dr Abiy's arrival on the scene seemed to have transformed the Saudi view of the Horn, and of Ethiopia and Eritrea. The question now, however, is to what degree Saudi Arabia's internal challenges would permit its full engagement with Ethiopia in the coming year or two. Riyadh must ensure that Ethiopia is a major regional player, given the impact which the African littoral — Somalia, Somaliland, Djibouti, Ethiopia, and Eritrea — could now exert on stabilizing the Yemen dispute.

The outcome of the Yemen conflict is unknown at this stage, although clearly Yemen "cannot be put back together again", à la Humpty Dumpty, and new bilateral frameworks will need to emerge to cope with that reality (not yet acknowledged by Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates). But Ethiopia and Oman, for example, have a natural historical rapport which may prove interesting. And Oman and Iran have a separate discreet rapport which may prove significant in the Red Sea context, given Iran's imperative to seek to encircle the Arabian Peninsula.

In all of this, the UAE has made itself an important player, and continues to occupy key areas, such as the Yemeni island of Socotra, guardian of the Red Sea/Indian Ocean SLOC. And the UAE has key interests in Djibouti (where it lost its port management contract to the PRC) and Berbera (Somaliland), the latter being a critical logistical point for Ethiopia.

The Greater Ethiopia which Prime Minister Abiy is reconstructing is central to a matrix which involves the African littoral states of Egypt, Sudan, Djibouti, Somaliland and Somalia, and the Arabian, Persian Gulf, and Levantine states, plus Turkey. There are, within this highly diverse framework, a variety of relationships which allow for an interactive tableau not seen before in modern history.

*The Rise of the RedMed*, in late 2016, discussed the emergence of a new market area within this framework which could be highly significant in global terms over the coming decade. That was dependent on the potentially large markets of Egypt and Ethiopia coming to full vitality.

For all of these regional actors, the reality is that Ethiopia has emerged from 44 years of internal preoccupation to becoming, again, a regional strategic factor.

### Impact on the Indian Ocean Littoral States

THE PEOPLE'S Republic of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) intends to transform much of how the world's trade is conducted. At

present, some 90 percent of the volume of international trade is carried by sea, and the BRI would take a proportion of that and move it by rail and road across the Eurasian landmass, linking with mainly overland logistical lines across the Middle East and Africa.

By 2016, some 20 percent of the volume and value of world trade was being run through the Suez Canal and Red Sea. That made that particular SLOC vital in global terms, but it is equally true that the stability of the north-western Indian Ocean (which includes the Red Sea as well as the Persian Gulf) relies heavily on the Red Sea littoral states, and Ethiopia has now revived as a major factor in that, and, for example, in such issues as providing the prospect for the economic revival of the entire Horn of Africa, including Somalia, Somaliland, and Kenya (which is vitally affected by the stability of Somalia).<sup>8</sup>

But if the PRC's BRI aims at linking the great new arterial infrastructure of Africa with that of Eurasia, it is dependent on sea linkages from the Red Sea at least to Gwadar, Pakistan; or from Lamu, Kenya, up to Gwadar. By such a short, coast-hugging maritime logistical framework does Beijing hope to avoid the exposed threat of naval interdiction to vital trade which could occur from the Indian Navy, the Royal Australian Navy, or other major power fleets which find safe operation in the Indian Ocean. Nonetheless, even the Red Sea/north-western Indian Ocean sea routes are vulnerable.

The result is that the PRC's critical area of naval projection must be geared toward protecting the short maritime links between Africa and Gwadar (at the very least; more for China-related shipping which must cross the Indian Ocean). It is no coincidence that the PRC, then, has devoted considerable military diplomacy to building relations with Egypt, Djibouti, Eritrea, and Ethiopia, as well as to Saudi Arabia and Iran.

It is axiomatic then, given that so much of the world's trade flows through the Red Sea/Suez SLOC (and so much more originates or travels within the Indian Ocean basin), that all states dependent on Indian Ocean maritime trade must move to achieve a measure of influence with the "new" Ethiopian "commonwealth" which is emerging between Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Djibouti. Certainly, states such as Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of China (ROC: Taiwan), and the Philippines also must take increasing cognizance of the emerging new balance in the

Red Sea/Horn, even as they strive to find alternate ways around the PRC's "check mate" blockade of the new bases on the Nine-Dash Line islands of the South China Sea.

### In Conclusion

SO THE CHANGES EMERGING from Ethiopia are of global significance, and new aspects are emerging daily.

At some stage soon, Dr Abiy will need to be able to institutionalize his changes, embodying them in new bureaucratic practices and institutions. In this regard, the reintegration of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church should not be underestimated. This will drive much of the political ethos of Ethiopia going forward, and it will also strengthen neighboring Eritrea, which has an Orthodox Christian Government but a Muslim majority population.

He will need to broaden the institutions, and restore a sense of legitimacy to them, a legitimacy which had been notably absent during the past 44 years.

The Ethiopian military has already begun to undergo a change of leadership and style, moving it away from a Tigrean-dominated force to a balanced national force, and the same has begun in the intelligence community.

Dr Abiy's seeming side-step into the masses of the Ethiopian diaspora in North America during late July 2018 was part of this process. Abiy knows the wealth amassed by the diaspora, and the fact that it contributes more than \$4-billion a year to the Ethiopian economy already. He now looks to it for capital as well as for Ethiopia-centric entrepreneurship which has learned new skills and work ethics from the international exposure of the past four decades. Already, Ethiopians are beginning the path back to the land they or their parents left as a result of the marxist coups and governance which had stolen their identity.

It is ironic that the *supposedly* nationalist assumption of power in Turkey by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan over the past decade has caused a consistent outflow of financial and intellectual capital from Turkey, whereas a *decidedly* nationalist revival by Prime Minister Abiy in Ethiopia has prompted a surge in national unity and economic and strategic promise.

It could be argued that Egypt's Pres. Sisi has also revived Egypt's fortunes by leading an embracing form of national unity, which — like Abiy's — promotes national values rather than internally divisive ethnic or religious values. ★

8 See, particularly, Copley, Gregory R.; Pickford, Andrew: *On Such a Full Sea: Australia's Options in a Changing Indian Ocean Region*. Glen Waverley, Victoria, Australia, 2009: Sid Harta Publishers Pty. Ltd.

# Persian Caesar?

*Not just Iran's Caesar abroad, Major-General Qasem Soleimani is finally being recognized as Iran's "Man on Horseback".*

**W**ATCH FOR MAJ.-GEN. QASEM SOLEIMANI, Commander of the *Qods Force* (*Jaysh al-Qods* or *Failaq al-Qods*) of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (*Pasdaran*), to become increasingly central to the transformation of Iran's political leadership over the coming year or two.

Many factors point to the prospect that he may be on, literally, an almost inevitable trajectory to becoming Iran's next leader in the classical Persian tradition. This could lead — in a process masked as “business as usual” — to the overturning of the present interregnum of the clerics, who have ruled since the 1979 overthrow of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, and return Iran to a more balanced, nationalist path.

The pattern is very much in line with the galvanizing trend of many societies around the world, but particularly in the Middle East, around historical identities and their geopolitical sovereignty. This is becoming evident, for example, in the Arab Middle East, with the renewed emphasis at a grassroots level on the importance of *Qaum*: the family-clan-tribe framework not only of peoples but also of the land with which they identify.<sup>1</sup>

It is also evident in the early return by Russia and the People's Republic of China (PRC) to nationalism in the 1990s, and by Egypt and Ethiopia at present.

In Iran, the return to Persian values and identity has been building, too, for the past decade or so. Maj.-Gen. Soleimani has already built a high profile for several years in Iran's “near-abroad,” where he has been hailed as an electrifying leader, pushing for Iran's geopolitical interests.

Significantly, although Maj.-Gen. Soleimani has shown visible leadership in

Iran's foreign combat operations and has courted notoriety in the external sphere, he has been careful to avoid speculation as to a potential leadership rôle within Iran or with regard to national politics. However, it is now clear that he is moving toward center stage in domestic leadership consideration — or, actually, is being moved to it — if only because of the changing political dynamic of politics, economics, and social patterns in Iran.

It would be apposite to parallel the unfolding scenario around Soleimani with the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte from charismatic general, becoming the favorite warrior protector of the French Revolution and hero of France's military campaigns abroad, to his assumption of office as First Consul in 1799, then First Consul for Life (1802), and finally Emperor in 1804. Or even the rise of Abdul Fatah Saeed Hussein Khalil al-Sisi from Director of Military Intelligence of Egypt (2010-2012) to Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces and Minister of Defense (2012-14), to Deputy Prime Minister (2013-14), and then, to the Presidency of Egypt in 2014. Or Julius Caesar's rise as a Roman general outside of Rome, to his seizure of power by taking his troops back to Rome, across the Rubicon River on January 10, 49 BCE, when a hostile Senate demanded his return to Rome (without his troops), and his subsequent creation of the Roman Empire.

Equally apposite would be a comparison of Gen. Soleimani with Iran's Gen. Reza Shah, who moved from military success against the enemies of the Qajar Crown to the post of Minister of War (1921-25) to 20th Prime Minister of Iran (1923-25); thence to become Shah of Iran and the founder of the Pahlavi Dynasty on December 15, 1925. All four — Caesar, Napoleon, Pres. al-Sisi, and Reza Shah — moved from trusted military positions as servants of their administrations through to the granting to them of governance posts, which then led them to seamlessly assume command of their nations.<sup>2</sup>

Events, as much as ambition, may have determined the trajectory of Soleimani's destiny, just as events conspired to give Napoleon, al-Sisi, and Reza Shah a path which would be difficult to reject. It is clear that, above all else, Gen. Soleimani has a primary mission which accords with the wishes of virtually all Iranians: the retention of the national sovereignty and territory of Iran.

Most external appreciations of Maj.-Gen. Soleimani focus on his devotion to Shi'a Islam and his support for the clerical leadership, particularly Supreme Leader *Ayatollah* Ali Hoseini-Khamene'i, 79. That devotion seems undeniable, and it has earned him the trust of the Supreme Leader, even more now that the *Ayatollah* is in failing health (prostate cancer and perhaps other ailments),<sup>3</sup> and anxious to find a protector for a planned future rôle for his son, *Sayyed* Mojtaba Hosseini Khamenei, 48.

Soleimani is very close to *Ayatollah* Khamene'i's powerful son, Mojtaba, the *de facto* chief of Iran's foreign intelligence and security forces. In mid-June 2018, they worked together closely in

1 See, Bodansky, Yossef: “Transformation in Much of the Middle East Now Seems Inevitable, Substantial, and Imminent”, in *Defense & Foreign Affairs Special Analysis*, June 6, 2018.

2 Sultan Ahmad Shah Qajar, from exile in Europe after the coup, said, in essence: “I brought Reza Khan into the Government to protect me from Seyyed Zia'eddin Tabatabaee [Prime Minister, 1921], and then it was Reza Khan who forced me out.” Reza Khan Mirpanj, who later became Reza Shah Pahlavi, had assisted Zia'eddin Tabatabaee to stage a *coup d'état* against Ahmad Shah, who was to die in exile in France, at age 32, in Neuilly-sur-Seine, Paris, on February 21, 1930.

3 “Iranian Leadership Aspirants Move as ‘Supreme Leader’ *Ayatollah* Ali Hoseini-Khamene'i Declines”, in *Defense & Foreign Affairs Special Analysis*, April 14, 2017.

Baghdad (along with the Iranian Ambassador, Brig.-Gen. Iraj Masjedi, who is Soleimani's deputy) in an effort to consolidate a pro-Iran all-Shi'ite coalition Government for Iraq.<sup>4</sup> Mojtaba was very impressed and subsequently was considered a friend/supporter of Soleimani.

*Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy* noted in its 1-2018 edition:

The obvious caesar in the wings, and well outside the Rubicon, is Maj.-Gen. Qasem Soleimani, Commander of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Qods Force. He has demonstrated real dynamism and success fighting for Iranian interests outside of Iran's formal borders (just as Julius Caesar did, with his legions abroad from Rome, returning to Italy at the Rubicon River, in 49 BCE). Clearly, the ambitious Gen. Soleimani has no desire at this stage to break cover and promote any agenda for his advancement; in fact, he may genuinely eschew such a proposal.

As *Defense & Foreign Affairs* noted on April 14, 2017: How much attention would the leadership of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (the *Pasdaran*), the significant combat force, pay to ensure national stability in the event that a vacuum was perceived to emerge? That report noted: "It seems probable that the *Pasdaran* itself could produce a strong leadership figure to fill such a vacuum in the way that Gen. Reza Khan did in 1921, removing the pro-British Government of Iran. [He then went on to serve, in 1923, as Prime Minister, until the Constituent Assembly appointed him as Shah, in 1925, to replace the last Qajar Shah, Ahmad Shah Qajar. That began the Pahlavi Dynasty.]"<sup>5</sup>

The speed of Soleimani's move toward a central rôle — albeit one which may initially be with a lower profile — in internal affairs is being determined by the political, economic, strategic, and environmental crises which are gathering and mounting in intensity over Iran. The current drought, the worst in modern Iranian history, has exacerbated all the other problems, and "the people are in the streets" in literally every Iranian city.<sup>6</sup> The threat to the clerical leadership has become palpable, to the point where Iranians are openly telling foreign journalists such things as: "People are desperate

to find a way out ... If it's war, so it be, but quick; if it's reaching an agreement, so it be, but quick; if it's regime change, so it be, but quick."<sup>7</sup>

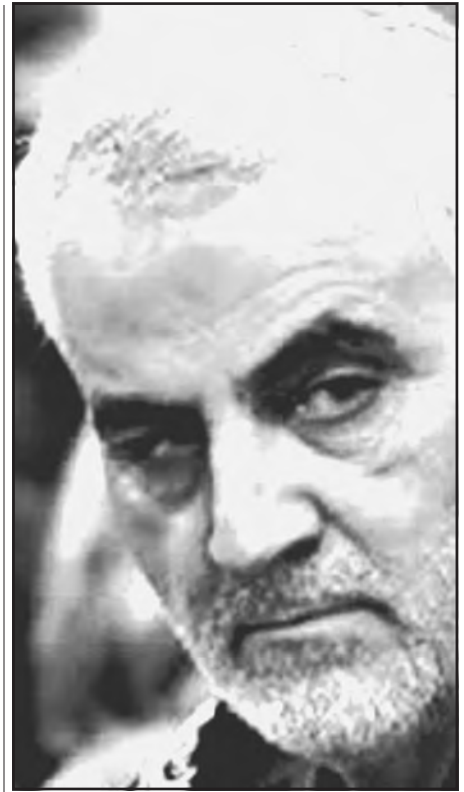
What, then, is the rôle, if any, of the US — and particularly US President Donald Trump's rejection of the 2015 "nuclear pact" with Iran and its promise to end sanctions against Iran — in the rise of Soleimani and the rapidly approaching time of decisions in Iran?

There seemed little doubt that the initial rejection by Pres. Trump when he assumed office in January 2017 of the July 14, 2015, Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) which Iran signed with the P5+1 (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, plus Germany), was the opening round of Pres. Trump's negotiations with the Iranian leadership. His negotiating style, as demonstrated with DPRK leader Kim Jong-Un and with the European Union on tariffs, has been to galvanize a new negotiating position by heavy threats.

This dramatic build-up of threats worked, as well, with Iran, causing the Iranian leadership and population to galvanize around nationalist policies and leaders. This initially hurt Pres. *Hojjat ol-Eslam* Hasan Fereidun Rouhani, and appeared to allow the conservative clerics to rally, particularly as hopes for the economy seemed to fade with the continuation of US sanctions. But the pressures on the economy became seen in the country as the fault of the clerical leadership rather than being solely caused by US sanctions.

That then moved positive attention to Maj.-Gen. Soleimani, who has exemplified the Iranian — indeed, traditional Persian — identification with its sovereignty and the defense of it against foreign threats. This position — the defense of Persian sovereignty — shows a marked difference from the pan-Islamist nature, anti-Persianness of the clerical government when it came to power in 1979. Gradually, even the clerics have "become Persian", but Soleimani even more so.

The bravura of Soleimani's comments, particularly with regard to Israel and the US, obscures the fact that he is seen inside Iran as the most important defender of Iranian sovereignty. It positions him well for transition to greater authority inside the country. Indeed,



Gen. Soleimani's actions and statements, although often colored by Islamic and Islamist sentiments, have been profoundly traditional in the pursuit of Persian/Iranian sovereignty and territorial integrity.

US Pres. Trump on July 30, 2018, then indicated that he would meet Iranian leaders with "no preconditions" and "any time they want", adding "I'd meet with anybody. I believe in meetings." This was classic Trump negotiating style: massive threats exchanged as an opening artillery bombardment, satisfying honor on both sides, allowing both the ability to then open talks on the basis that there were, literally, "no preconditions".

It is highly probable that Trump could offer Iran concessions which would be of greater benefit than the JCPOA did. The question would be, then, who would benefit within the Iranian power structure, and who the US would wish to see benefit. Given the fear, literally, that Gen. Soleimani generates among US military and political observers, it is probable that Washington — and particularly the US State Dept. — would wish to see Pres. Rouhani strengthened.

That, ironically, could enable the pres-

4 See, Bodansky, Yossef: "Iran's Triumph in Iraq is Now Sealed, While Turkey and Iran Cooperate to Crush the Kurds with US Acquiescence", in *Defense & Foreign Affairs Special Analysis*, June 15, 2018.

5 Copley, Gregory: "Iran's Unity is Intact, But So, Too, the National Angst", *Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, 1-2018.

6 See, Bodansky, Yossef: "Historical Fatalism, Water and Food Shortages, and Jihadism Conspire to Set the Stage for a Major Conflict Escalation Based on 'Greater Syria'", in *Defense & Foreign Affairs Special Analysis*, July 23, 2018.

7 Protestor quoted, anonymously, in *The Guardian*, UK, on July 20, 2018.

ent clerical system sustained in office longer, even in the face of widespread, and growing public hostility, whereas the rise of Soleimani as a caesar, a Bonaparte, or the like could see a more rapid transformation back to a more secular framework which could begin the restoration of economic and social liberalization.

The fact that Hamid Aboutalebi, an adviser to Pres. Rouhani, tweeted in response to Mr Trump that “returning to the nuclear deal” and “respecting the Iranian nation’s rights” would pave way for talks, showed that the Iranian President perhaps did not understand that he had been served a strategic opening which could literally be a career saver. Even if he did understand that, it would have behooved Pres. Rouhani not to agree too readily.

What all this has begun, albeit outside the purview of the international media (and therefore the intelligence communities), is a further complication in the trajectory of Iranian power transition over the coming year or two. It is significant that the restoration of a clear sense of sovereignty and secure borders to Iran is most likely under a leader like Soleimani in a post-Islamist sense. In other words, Soleimani’s devotion to the Iranian historical destiny, not his religious principles, would most likely guide his actions.

And it is equally significant that a sovereign, secular Iran of the post-clerical era would also serve to satisfy the US and Israel, while being not unacceptable to Moscow and Beijing at the same time. Such an evolution, which could occur in the time of US Pres. Trump’s first term, could reduce concerns over strategic (nuclear) instability far more than the JCPOA could ever have done. But it would not necessarily help the sense of insecurity which has been rising across the Persian Gulf in Saudi Arabia.

All that aside, the clerics are maneuvering for a leadership succession which would preserve their position, if the public would accept it. *Ayatollah* Mohammad-Taqi Mesbah-Yazdi was, by mid-2018, being mentioned as a possible successor of Khamene’i. The main reason for this is the desire among the closest confidants of Khamene’i (including his son, Mojtaba) to select a religious figure who would also be acceptable to the rising élites of the *Pasdaran*, Intelligence, and *Baseej*. Mesbah-Yazdi was a close friend of Khomeini and is an ultra-orthodox radical even by Qom standards.

He is now a member of the Assembly of Experts, and the leader of the Endurance Front, a very conservative political

group. He has been running the Haghani School/Seminary in Qom for decades (since the 1980s). Most of Iran’s senior intelligence/security officials, and several seniors of both the *Pasdaran* and the *Baseej*, graduated from Haghani and were thus regarded as faithful followers of Mesbah-Yazdi (he is their *Marja al-Taqlid*, or source of imitation). He is rumored to be the head and spiritual guide of various religious entities including the messianic-militant and secretive *Hojjatiyeh* Association. And Soleimani is reported to be a leading member of the *Hojjatiyeh* Association.

Gen. Soleimani remains, however, in contention. The pertinent part of a report of July 26, 2018, from the Fars News Agency, which belongs to the *Pasdaran*, is worthy of noting:

### **General Soleimani: IRGC Quds Force Spearheading Any Confrontation with US**

TEHRAN (FNA) — Commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Qods Force Major-General Qasem Soleimani blasted US President Donald Trump for his hollow threats against Iran, warning that the Qods Force alone is powerful enough to stand against Washington in any possible confrontation without any need of the other Iranian armed forces.

“We are closer to you than what you think. You should know that I am your foe. The Qods Force alone and not all the (Iranian) Armed Forces is enough to be your rival (in any confrontation). You are aware of Iran’s power in asymmetric war,” General Soleimani said, addressing a forum in the Western city of Hamedan on Thursday.

He underlined that Trump’s recent remarks against Iran are not worth response by the Iranian president, and said, “I, as a soldier, respond to Trump. Mr Trump! How do you dare to threaten us?”

General Soleimani said that the literature that Trump uses to speak with other countries is like the words uttered from the mouth of a person who runs a cabaret or a casino, calling on the US president to ask the country’s spy and security agencies about Washington’s failures against Iran.

“You did everything you could against Iran in the past 20 years but victory belonged to the Iranian nation,” he underscored.

General Soleimani reminded

Trump of the US failures in Afghanistan, Iraq and Yemen and the 33-day war against *Hezbollah* in Lebanon, and said the US attacked the *Taliban* with 110-thousand troops but after nearly two decades it is now begging the *Taliban* for negotiations.

“Ask the ex-commander of your forces in Iraq who he sent to me to ask me to open a window of opportunity by using my influence to stop attacks by Iraqi resistance forces (*Mujahedin*) on the US soldiers so that they could withdraw from Iraq? Have you forgotten that you had provided adult-size diapers for your battle tank crews? What is your saga and what is the historical background that you rely on for threatening us?”

“You should know that there is not even a single night that we don’t think of destroying you,” he said.

He named Trump as a gambler, and said, “We are so close to you in places that you might not even think of. Come to us! We are waiting for you. You know that this war (against Iran) means destruction of all of your possibilities. You may start the war, but we decide when it should end.”

“Do not threaten us with killing. We are thirsty for martyrdom and annihilation of arrogant powers,” he said.

General Soleimani reminded Trump of the US awe and military power in the past, and said they have become so weak today that they have resorted to *Mojahedin-e Khalq* Organization (MKO, also known as the MEK, PMOI and NCRI) terrorist group to hit a blow to Iran.

“There was a time when the US enjoyed some awe, when its naval fleet started a voyage, a state would collapse, but today you have pinned hope on the MKO that has been buried in the wasteland of the history. Have you really pinned hope on a wandering woman that you take from one TV channel to another? Is that all your power?” he asked.

Gen. Soleimani thus escalated the negotiating stakes with Pres. Trump while also declaring his political leadership within Iran. He had watched the Trump-Kim Jong-Un negotiations, and took his starting position with the US to the limit. Who would now call whose bluff in the US-Iran arena, or even within the Iranian arena? ★

# Can Wishing Make It So?

*Historical fatalism, water and food shortages, and jihadism conspire to set the stage for a major conflict escalation based on “Greater Syria”. It is already underway.*

**I**MMINENT CONFLICT ESCALATION in the historical “Greater Syria” region has been predicted as the result of a great confluence of natural and man-made trends now underway.

The land of Bilad al-Sham, or just Sham, has a unique heritage and evolving territory in the annals of Islam. This is one of the keys to comprehending its rôle in the still unfolding violent drama in the Hub of Islam.

According to Arab Islamist geographers, originally “the term Sham referred to an area that now includes parts of modern Turkey, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia”.

Only since the middle of the 20th Century has Sham become the Greater Syria, encompassing modern Syria and adjacent areas in southern modern Turkey, Lebanon, and the northern half of Palestine (that is, Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and Jordan).

According to Muslim mysticism, the “End of Times” would start from Sham. “There shall be a scented, perfumed, beautiful wind coming from Sham that will take the soul of every Believer,” Prophet Mohammed said, according to a *Hadith*.

Far more important to the current political-military posture is the conviction among Muslims that the “End of Times” and the arrival of *al-Masih* [the Messiah] would be preceded by the apocalyptic *Malahem* [the fateful epic battles and wars of the apocalypse]. Islam’s decisive Armageddon would take place near Dabiq in northern Syria, north of Aleppo.

“The last hour will not come until the Romans arrived in al-Amaq or Dabiq, and an army consisting of the best people on earth in those days will hasten them from Medina,” Prophet Mohammed predicted, according to an *Hadith* reported by Abu Hurayrah. This meant that the ensuing liberation of all Muslim

lands, including the Holy Shrines; the conquest of Constantinople and Rome (that is, challenging Muslim nemeses and the Christian West); and the empowerment of a righteous divine Caliph over the entire Muslim-ruled world would originate from Sham.

In recent years, since the late 20th Century, these apocalyptic prophecies have increasingly become part of the mainstream convictions throughout the greater Middle East. Prof. Jean-Pierre Filiu, a former French diplomat with extensive experience in the Arab Middle East, warned in his 2008 book *Apocalypse in Islam* of “the fast-growing belief in Muslim countries that the end of the world is at hand”. Even before the eruption of the “Great *Intifada*” (aka “Arab Spring”), the ongoing failures and defeats in the Arab Middle East were widely perceived as the harbingers of an imminent “End of Times”. “In the minds of the most impassioned believers, each bloody defeat draws the moment of ultimate and total triumph that much nearer,” Filiu observed.

Arab *jihadist* scholars found in all on-going events in the Middle East — from the Arab-Israeli confrontation, to the US-led invasions of Arab lands, to the “Great *Intifada*” — indications of the fast approaching *Malahem*. In 1997, Yussuf Muhammad Amr predicted that “the 21st Century will witness the disappearance of the Jewish impiety and of those who support it, with the return of Islam to power.” In 2002, Hisham Mohammed Abu Hakima presented contemporary definitions of the main forces in the Battle of Armageddon.

“The Islamic forces, believing in Allah and in Him alone, will be found in Sham

[Greater Syria] and in al-Jazirah [the Arabian Peninsula], whereas the stalwarts of the forces of the *Dajjal* [the arch-nemesis of the Messiah or Anti-Christ] will be the Jews and their henchmen,” he wrote. Both sides would be closing in on each other before the fateful eruption in Sham. *Sheikh* Faraz Rabbani, recently stressed the growing value and relevance of Ismail Ibn Kathir (c.1300-1373) and particularly his book, “The Signs before the Day of Judgment”, to the understanding of the unfolding *jihad* in and around Bilad al-Sham. “The very last group of Believers that will be on this earth before the Day of Judgment will be in the land of Sham; therefore, the land of Sham will be the very last land to have Muslims on it right before the end of times,” Ibn Kathir wrote, according to Rabbani.

There are numerous traditions and popular myths in Islam about the immediate and concrete harbingers of that apocalyptic eruption at the “End of Times”.

These popular traditions provide the believers with the early or advance indications that the Day of Judgment is about to arrive. One of the popular traditions about such harbingers is that the cataclysmic eruption would take place, and fire would consume the entire region, when the Three Great Rivers dry out. The rivers are the Euphrates and Tigris of Um al-Rafidayn [The Mother of the Twin-Rivers or Mesopotamia] and the Nile of Bilad al-Cananah [The Land of Canaan or the greater Egypt]. The ensuing eruption of the cataclysmic war would originate from the land surrounded by these rivers: Bilad al-Sham.

Presently, the entire greater Middle East has been facing a severe drought and drying up, from 2017, and this would likely only intensify as the hot summer of 2018 dragged on.

Consequently, there are widespread riots, some turning very violent, over the shortages of water in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Turkey, and Iran. Water supplies were, in many instances by mid-July 2018, being cut to a few hours a day, and the quality of water was rapidly deteriorating to being brown and malodorous. There were no longer any water supplies as local wells — both legal and illegal — were drying up in many urban slums and remote villages.

Some of the cause of these rivers' drying up is man-made: the outcome of the beginning of filling up of the artificial lakes of the Ilisu Dam in Turkey on the Tigris and, it is claimed (but disputed), the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance (hydropower) Dam in Ethiopia on the Blue Nile, as well as the forced filling of the Atatürk Dam on the Euphrates, in some instances in order to compensate for the lingering drought. As well, the drought from which the greater Middle East has been suffering for a decade now also has an aggregate impact on the levels of water coming down from nearby mountains and feeding tributaries.

In the case of northern Iraq, the flow from western Iran is at an all-time low.

The worsening shortages of water, as well as the ensuing shortages of most basic food and electricity (because of the paralysis of some hydro-electric stations) — and fears of shortages caused by reporting — are sending the grassroots population to the streets in widespread riots from Iran to Egypt and from Turkey to Saudi Arabia. What began as indigenous fear over the plight of daily life has quickly evolved into communal protests against higher authorities and the ruling states.

A myriad of grassroots heritage grievances is coming to the surface. Significantly, in all the countries, more segments of the grassroots populace are participating in the ongoing protest and riots than at the height of the original *intifadas* of 2011-12.

In western Iran, the local minority-nationalities — the Kurds and the Ahwazi Arabs — started protesting over acute shortages of water, electricity, food, and other services. The demonstrations quickly became violent riots with the crowds blaming the national authorities in Tehran of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity. Significantly, the riots and protests have spread rapidly to include

ethnic minorities as well as areas of the general population which are less affected by the shortages of water and power.

**P**RESENTLY, THERE ARE disturbances, riots and even violent insurrection in areas inhabited by mainstream Iranians, Kurds, Ahwazi Arabs, Baluchis, and Azerbaijanis.

Where local police have failed to quell the riots, Persian units of the *Pasdaran* and *Basij* are brought in and they frequently use live fire against the rioters. Tehran is clearly cognizant of the gravity of the crises which have broken to the surface.

In Shi'ite central and southern Iraq, protests over acute shortages of water and electricity due to the drying up of the Euphrates and the Tigris quickly escalated. On-site observers in Arab Shi'ite areas of Iraq noted that "social grievances that once simmered on the back burner have boiled over in a series of protests that have spread to several cities". In increasingly violent riots, "people have vented their anger over unemployment, high prices, power cuts and a lack of usable water".

These protests represent "an explosion of rage at an entire system that has brazenly robbed Iraqis of the chance for a better life", explained Iraqi expert Fanar Haddad. The frequent use of deadly force by both the military and Shi'ite militias has failed to quell the riots. On the contrary, the rioters started shouting anti-Iranian and anti-clerical slogans. In Najaf, rioters burned signs in Iranian institutions which have the late *Ayatollah* Ruhollah Khomeini's picture on them: an unthinkable transgression. Starting in Basra and spreading to Najaf, Karbala, and other Shi'ite cities, rioters stress the failure of post-Saddam Iraq which was established 15 years ago in the aftermath of the US-led invasion of 2003.

The demonstrators then began calling for regional autonomy for the Shi'ite Arabs; at the least a status similar to that of Iraqi Kurdistan.

These calls were getting louder and louder, challenging the delicate process in Baghdad of agreeing on a predominantly Shi'ite government acceptable to pan-Shi'ite Tehran. On July 19, 2018, Iraqi Shi'ite leader Moqtada al-Sadr de-

clared that "the people's revolution is a right", and that he supported the people's "revolution of the angry". Addressing the people's grievances should take precedence over forming a new government, he felt. "All political *blocs* which won in the current elections should suspend all political discussions to form alliances and other, until the protesters' legitimate demands are met and a serious committee is formed to work with the government in coordination with protestors in order to fulfill their demands," Sadr stated.

Meanwhile, Sadrist were closely cooperating with Shi'ite Arab *sheikhs* throughout southern Iraq and the Baghdad area in order to organize a million-man demonstration on Friday, July 20, 2018. Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi warned that the security forces would open fire because there were "subversive elements among the protesters".

On that Friday morning, the commander of the Iraqi elite police forces, Maj.-Gen. Thamer al-Husseini, declared any and all demonstrations "illegal" and backed his threat with a massive show of force by the security forces throughout the entire Shi'ite area. Nevertheless, hundreds of thousands braved the cordon and demonstrated in the afternoon.

"Our demands are [the] people's demands," explained a protester in Baghdad's Tahrir Square. "We want drastic solutions. We want to change the government. It has been 15 years, and there is no employment, no services." The people of Basra "will no longer remain silent. ... It has been 15 years, and still they [the Government] haven't been able to provide us with electricity," explained a protester. "We are just poor people who have come to demand their rights," explained another in Basra's main Square.

In Syria, local tribes, mainly Sunni Arab but also Kurdish, reach out to the Bashar al-Assad Government, and by default Russia, for humanitarian help. The US-led forces which claimed to have liberated Sunni Arab Raqqa and the increasingly dry Euphrates Valley have proven unwilling to, and incapable of, helping the destitute civilian population.

The situation in predominantly Kurdish north-eastern Syria is no better.

In contrast, numerous Russian and Syrian government convoys delivered huge quantities of humanitarian aid to the hard-hit areas without any demand

from the people. These convoys braved US-led coalition air strikes and ambushes by US-led local forces. As well, aircraft and helicopters dropped supplies in remote areas. The Sunni Arab tribes do get the message as they are forcing the *jihadists* in their midst to surrender, vacate the area, and move to the Idlib enclave. The Kurdish authorities in Rojava announced their intent to reach comprehensive agreements with Damascus. (The US betrayal of the Kurds in Manbij in favor of a deal with Turkey did not help.)

In Jordan, riots have been spreading and escalating all over the country since Spring 2018.

Protests started over new taxes and growing shortages. With time, larger crowds joined demonstrations over the acute shortages of water, work, fuel, cooking oil, electricity, and food. Riots of varying sizes persisted in all key Jordanian cities: Amman, Zarqa, Irbid, Karak, and Salt. The riots by mid-July 2018 were threatening the political stability of the country. There was widespread despair over the bleak future of the Jordanian public, and anger at the humanitarian aid accorded to millions of Syrian refugees (which Amman correctly attributes to pressure from the US-led West) while Jordanians received nothing.

And public outrage was increasingly focused on the Hashemite Royal Family.

Since the Jordanian economy and society were considered as being beyond repair, at least in the near-term, a wider eruption in Jordan was increasingly likely. Indeed, Islamist elements were, through July 2018, organizing violent riots which not only protest the socio-economic destitute, but offer Islamist solutions as a viable alternative and principled challenge to the monarchy and its legitimacy.

The most dangerous riots in Jordan have been taking place in the increasingly Islamist-radical south, bordering Saudi Arabia's Qassim Province.

Qassim, particularly its capital, Buraydah, has long been the center of radical Islamist opposition to the House of al-Saud. Little wonder that the local populace has reacted harshly to the reforms of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman bin 'Abd al-'Aziz al Sa'ud and the overall deterioration of the economic posture due to the fall in oil prices, mismanagement, corruption, and mis-

guided reforms.

Panicked, Riyadh has reacted with brute force and has intensified the crack-down on dissent. On July 11, 2018, the Saudis arrested, in Buraydah, the prominent Islamist scholar *Sheikh* Safar al-Hawali, three of his sons, and his brother, *Sheikh* Saadallah. Hawali is the venerable leader and leading theologian of the Islamist opposition, the founding leader of the *Sahwa* movement in the early 1990s, and a key scholar of apocalyptic visions and doctrines with emphasis on the liberation and cleansing of the Holy Shrines (in Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem) by *jihadists* as a precursor to the "End of Times".

According to sources in Riyadh, Hawali was arrested because of his just-published book, *Muslims and Western Culture*, which harshly attacked the House of al-Saud, the socio-economic reform policies, and the friendly relations with the US, the UAE, Israel, and Egypt. Significantly, the book alluded to the harbingers of the "End of Times" when the divine *al-Masih* would take over the Holy Shrines from the current "unworthy custodians": the House of al-Saud.

Meanwhile, the Iranians have renewed their claim to the Holy Shrines in the name of Shi'ite Islam.

In mid-July 2018, Iran's Supreme Leader *Ayatollah* Ali Khamene'i urged the removal of the House of al-Saud from the custodianship of the Holy Shrines and the establishment of a religious all-Muslim (both Sunni and Shi'ite) council in its stead. "The holy lands of Mecca and Mina belong to all Muslims," Khamene'i stated, "it does not belong to rulers of Saudi Arabia."

By now, local governments throughout the greater Middle East had no inkling how to cope with the catastrophes: with the shortages of water, the marked decline in food production, the massive internal migration and dislocation from rural areas which overwhelmed the already-collapsing urban slums filled with refugees from fighting and carnage, and, most importantly, the intensifying radicalization of the grassroots which challenged the governments' own legitimacy. The lowest common denominator of all grassroots protests and riots is the further alienation from, and rejection of, the state authorities for their failures to take care of the people at a time of dire

need.

Significantly, while the Islamists provide justification and logic for overthrowing governments and delegitimizing modern states, they offer no concrete or timely solutions to the plight of the grassroots. Hence the grassroots increase their gravitation around ethnocentric heritage frameworks [*Qaum*]: mainly tribes and extended families.

With no remedy on the horizon, the entire greater Middle East is bracing for a rapidly expanding and escalating Summer of discontent.

Kuwaiti Prof. Abdullah al-Shayji warned in *The Gulf News* of the impending escalation. "As the Summer kicks in, the scene in the Arab world looks bleak. ... [T]here is little cause for cheer." The current crisis is the outcome of "the dysfunctional and at times chaotic Arab politics". Shayji observed that in most countries the people now redefined themselves along "sectarian, tribal ethnic lines, which perpetuate fragmented and broken societies and political systems."

There might be no way back from this transformation of society throughout the Middle East.

So the absence of viable concrete solutions is sending the believers into embracing mysticism and apocalyptic expectations. Since the current plight could neither be alleviated nor explained, it has been interpreted as the harbinger of a higher dynamic. The widespread suffering, along with the dramatic signs of divine catastrophes, have thus created the grassroots' expectations of an impending cataclysmic eruption heralding the "Day of Judgment". It is because of this distinction, rather than the day-to-day carnage, which makes the ongoing *jihad* in Bilad al-Sham so uniquely crucial to the future of the entire greater Middle East, and, to a great extent, the entire Hub of Islam.

After all, as the *Hadith*, recorded by both Abu Dawood and Ahmed, articulated, Prophet Mohammed stressed the significance of Sham as the blessed key to the "End of Time". Prophet Mohammed told his companions: "It will be such [time] that many armies [of Islam] will be mustered. An army in Sham, an army in Iraq and an army in Yemen." A companion asked: "If I live that long, which do you choose for me?" And Prophet Mohammed replied: "I choose Sham for

you, because it is the best of places, and the land that Allah has chosen for his special bondsmen ... [and] for Allah *Ta'ala* has guaranteed that He will look after the land of Sham and its inhabitants.”

**M**EANWHILE, THE WARS in and for Bilad al-Sham are now in their seventh year. That the fratricidal carnage is taking place in the same geographic area does not mean that there is commonality between the various wars unfolding simultaneously.

There is, however, a sense shared by all that the conflicts and carnage might finally be coming to an end because the participants and the population at large are exhausted.

Hence, all key participants — the regional states (mainly Turkey and Iran, but also Israel), the various *jihadi* movements, and the grassroots ethnocentric [*Qaum*] groupings — seem to be preparing for a possible final surge to guarantee their vital interests before “the final curtain”.

Eager to avoid such a calamity, local population groupings are eager for reconciliation deals with Damascus and its Russian patrons which could alleviate the threat of escalation and provide bare necessities for the population.

The deal about the Golan border offered a useful outline for future deals.

While the overall political framework was worked out between Moscow, Jerusalem, Damascus, Amman, and Washington, the real success on the ground was the result of Russian-led mediation and reconciliation deals with the individual tribes and extended families in the area.

The decisive factors for these deals were the growing reputation for comprehension of local dynamics and fairness of the GRU’s (Russian Military Intelligence) negotiating teams, the fairness of the members of Military Police units (particularly Chechen Muslim MPs) overseeing the implementation of these agreements, and the lavish humanitarian aid which has followed all agreements.

It was indigenous tribal forces, rather than Syrian shelling and bombing, which compelled local *jihadi* forces in the Daraa area to cease fighting, and then surrender or leave.

Similarly, Sunni Arab tribes in the Idlib enclave, the bastion of Sunni *jihadi*ism where Dabiq and A’maq are located, were reaching out to the Russians for reconciliation deals and military help against the *ihadists*, particularly the Turkey-sponsored units. Should these Sunni Arab tribes be prevented from completing the reconciliation deals with the Russians and Damascus, it must be expected that there would be a major eruption of destitution and despair. Given the sym-

bolism of the eruption, the ensuing fighting would spread throughout the region.

A multitude of indigenous conflicts are now once again threatening to escalate and spread.

At the same time, however, there is now a unique opportunity to capitalize on the despair and yearning for localized solutions in order to attain peaceful regional bottom-up compromises based on the Fertile Crescent of Minorities and localized Arab heritage-based entities. In order to secure their own localized vital interests and self-identities, these minority and Arab entities could constrain the ability of both Iran and Turkey to project power regionally.

Failure to empower these localized entities would likely reinforce the grassroots’ conviction that the endless and worsening crises and destitution were indeed the harbingers of the apocalyptic *Malahem* as promised by the *ihadists*. For the grassroots of the greater Middle East, this would become a self-fulfilling prophesy, and, as the *Hadith* predicts, the *Malahem* would spread from Bilad al-Sham all the way to the Holy Shrines (Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem) and beyond, with no end in sight.

Meanwhile, two hours of a red blood moon — another popular harbinger of the “End of Time” in Muslim beliefs — was seen over the greater Middle East on July 27, 2018. ★



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## Nigeria's Buhari Government Implodes

**N**IGERIA'S INTERNAL SECURITY SITUATION WAS, by mid-August 2018, almost at a tipping point, with the Government of Pres. Muhammadu Buhari now unable to control corruption, law enforcement, or the war against insurgents.

Pres. Buhari, who has become a virtual prisoner of his own staff, may soon make it clear that he would not, in fact, run for re-election to the Presidency on February 16, 2019, even though — after much pressure from his team — he had earlier said that he would.

Many on the President's team are concerned that not only would their access to corrupt funds be ended, but they would, under the next Administration, likely face legal consequences. As a result, a number of the highest officials in "the Villa" — the Presidential offices — in Abuja have attempted to de-rail the anti-corruption enquiries which Pres. Buhari had initiated after taking office on May 29, 2015. A number of extra-judicial killings and attempted assassinations of corruption probers were alleged to have been ordered at "the highest level" under Buhari. Vice-Pres. Oluyemi Oluleke (Yemi) Osinbajo has attempted to restrain the Villa officials, and those within the State Security Service and Armed Forces, but with little success.

The Armed Forces leadership, which had successfully resisted oversight and chain of command control during the earlier Presidency of Goodluck Jonathan (2010-15), have not only continued to resist accountability under Buhari (even though some senior officers were replaced), but have put the theft of funds above everything else. This has already resulted in several mutinies, including an incident at the Maiduguri International Airport in Borno State — the focus of the guerilla war by *Boko Haram* — on August 12, 2018, when members of the Armed Forces Special Force (AFSF) fired shots in the air, and threatened to shoot Brig.-Gen. Abdulmalik Bulama Biu, the Acting General Officer Commander (GOC) of 7 Division, if he showed up. More than 300 members of the AFSF had been posted to Borno almost four years earlier, but more than 200 of them have subsequently been killed in operations. Several AFSF troops have now been charged with mutiny, but nothing has been done to alleviate the plight of troops thrown away in badly-led operations, or to stop the theft by senior officers of troops' food money and wages.

The corruption is also profound in the large systems procurement area, and in all three branches of the military, and the chiefs and senior officers of all services are known to be actively engaged.

The death toll among troops fighting *Boko Haram* was, in 2018, moving dramatically higher, along with increasing losses of Army equipment to *Boko Haram* (including 10 heavy trucks taken in the first weeks of August 2018 when 166 troops were killed and some 300 wounded, not the single soldier wounded as the Government claimed). *Boko Haram* continues to escalate the qualitative level of its insurgency. [The Borno State Governor and the Task Force Commander attended the burial ceremonies for the 166 troops killed.]

There was now growing evidence that Turkish and Iranian government agencies were continuing to support *Boko Haram* in a variety of ways, and that, for example, nomadic Fulani cattle herders, who were often engaged in violent retaliatory fights with settler farmers in Central Nigeria (separate from the *Boko Haram* war in the north), were using AK-47s and Iranian-made ammunition.

Pres. Buhari, quite apart from his trademark unwillingness to make difficult decisions, was also in declining health. His two-week "working holiday" to London in August 2018 was, in fact, for medical treatment; his third significant visit to the UK during his presidency for health reasons. Several Nigerian media outlets had indicated in

the second week of August 2018 that pressure on Pres. Buhari to withdraw from the 2019 election had come, particularly, from the European Union, the US, the UK, and Saudi Arabia. The news website *Nairaland* said on August 14, 2018: "Shortly before his departure to the UK [in August 2018], the President had appealed to his supporters across the nation to suspend campaigns for his re-election in compliance with the electoral law, saying it had come to the realization of the presidency that his supporters had started campaigns through advocacies and placement of advertisements in the media. A member of the [the President's] All Progressives Congress National Working Committee, who also confirmed the development, said there was a possibility that the President might not seek re-election."

Within all this, the confrontation between the Executive Branch of the Government and the National Assembly escalated on August 7, 2018, while Pres. Buhari was in London. Armed personnel of the Dept. of State Security (DSS) blocked entry to the National Assembly in an attempt to stop senators voting. This followed the defection of some 50 members of the House of Representatives and the Senate from the governing All Progressives Congress (APC) party to the main opposition in the few weeks before. These included Senate President Bukola Saraki. The President's key team in the Villa, including his Chief of Staff and the National Security Advisor, had wanted Sen. Saraki impeached, but the only way that could be guaranteed was if opposition and defecting APC senators could be prevented from entering the Parliamentary complex.

Vice President — Acting President, given that Pres. Buhari was out of the country — Yemi Osinbajo, a former law professor, was alerted to the DSS actions, and he immediately dismissed DSS Director-General Lawal Musa Daura, noting: "The unlawful act, which was done without the knowledge of the presidency, is condemnable and completely unacceptable." A group of Buhari supporters, however, retaliated immediately. The group, which included as many as four state governors, the Attorney-General, and some close Administration officials, flew immediately to London to convince Pres. Buhari to reverse the dismissal of Daura, given that Daura was the official on whom they counted to undertake "dirty jobs". However, the Vice-President's office had already begun rapidly gathering incriminating information — including discoveries of large caches of money, weapons, and other items linked to Mr Daura — which would likely make it difficult for the President to reverse the decision.

The Villa denied all the accusations against Mr Daura, but further disclosures about the action of the cabal (Director-General Daura, National Security Advisor retired Maj.-Gen. Babagana M. Monguno, and Presidential Chief of Staff Abba Kyari) would possibly irreparably damage Pres. Buhari's chance, if they still existed, for re-election.

The affair could well, in fact, lead Pres. Buhari to resign on health grounds — which would be difficult to refute — leaving the balance of the Presidential term to Vice-Pres. Osinbajo, who could then well be a credible candidate for the 2019 election, but he would need to work quickly to remove virtually the entire Buhari team from the Villa and the Armed Forces. And there are questions as to whether he could actually achieve that. ■

**See also:** "Nigeria Prepares for a Major Challenge to Buhari, But First ...", in *Defense & Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, 7-2018.

## Turkey's Crisis May Be Terminal

Turkish Pres. Recep Tayyip Erdogan seems to believe that the US will stop short of forcing Turkey out of NATO, destroying its currency, and pushing it into an alliance with Russia and the People's Republic of China. But is his confidence justified?

The Turkish economy, which has been weak for some years, is now in severe danger, and not merely because US Pres. Donald Trump instituted minor economic sanctions against two Turkish officials and doubled US tariffs on imported Turkish steel and aluminum. On September 27, 2013, *Defense & Foreign Affairs* noted that Turkey's "economy, built on foreign direct investment, has begun to founder and its overall fragility is likely to become profound within the coming year", which it did. But Pres. Trump's direct withdrawal of US friendship in August 2018 caused the Turkish *lira*, already weak, to slump a further 35 percent, before a promise of Qatari support helped it recover slightly.

But the economic collapse in Turkey, which Mr Erdogan knew was coming, was the reason he brought forward the elections from November 3, 2019, to June 24, 2018. Even then, Mr Erdogan and his governing AKP achieved only the slimmest of victories. Meanwhile, Turkey's civil war against the Kurds and their multi-ethnic allies gathers pace outside the glare of media scrutiny.

If US Pres. Donald Trump was serious, he could also direct the State Dept. to lift its embargo on the sale of US defense equipment to Cyprus (inexplicably in place since 1985) and penalize Turkey for using US defense equipment illegally for the 1974 invasion and subsequent occupation of the northern 37 percent of Cyprus.

Pres. Trump's signing of a \$716-billion defense spending bill on August 13, 2018, included an amendment which prohibited the sale by the US to Turkey of F-35 *Lightning II* combat aircraft unless the Defense Department issued a report downplaying the damage to the secure operation of the F-35 if it was adopted by the Turkish Air Force while the TAF was also operating the Russian S-400 air defense missile system. The Pentagon has historically given Turkey the benefit of the doubt, but this time Pres. Erdogan has escalated his hostility toward the US, which may make it difficult for the DoD to justify release of the F-35. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis had, in a letter to Congress in August 2018, urged Congress not to stop the F-35 transfer.

Sec. Mattis made his case to safeguard the F-35's industrial/cost base, but the sale of a proposed 100 F-35As to Turkey could be offset by a sale of a similar number of F-35Bs to the Republic of China (ROC: Taiwan) Air Force. Trump would simultaneously punish Turkey and bolster the ROC. And, many argue, hasn't Turkey already left the West anyway, in all but name? And doesn't the US need, in any event, to bolster the ROC and Japan sooner rather than later if it is to contain the PRC in the Pacific?

On August 15, 2018, the American Hellenic Institute (AHI) published an *Issue Brief* on the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) under which the United States had prohibited sales of US defense articles and services to the Republic of Cyprus since 1985. In June 2018, AHI discussed the issue with State Department officials. It described the ITAR, analyzed why the prohibition on Cyprus was unlawful, explained how the State Department itself could remove Cyprus from the application of the ITAR prohibition and concluded that legislation was not necessary. "The State Department has the legal authority to remedy what has been, for years, an unlawful prohibition on arms transfers to ... Cyprus," AHI Pres. Nick Lirigakis said. Bolstering Cyprus would directly confront Turkey.

The bottom line is that Turkey is heading toward strategic collapse, anyway, and this has little to do with the present US-Turkey spat. Pres. Erdogan uses that dispute, however, to create an external enemy which "threatens Turkey", to distract from the economic and political collapse over which he has presided. However, in Washington, DC, there is no consensus as to the options open to the US if Erdogan collapsed and, for example, if Turkey was to face break-up. Moscow and Beijing, too, are looking at the issue of a "post-Erdogan" or "post-Turkey" balance. ■

# The Power Tables

## Significant elections and changes in governments since January 1, 2016

Country	Date of Transfer of Power or poll	Former Head of Government/State	Resultant Head of Government/State	Effective Ruling Party-Group	Type of Government	Cause of Change
Angola	Sep. 25, 2017	Pres. Jose Eduardo dos Santos	Pres. João Manuel Lourenço	MPLA	Republican/presidential	Elections, Aug. 23, 2017
Armenia	May 8, 2018	Act. PM Karen Vihelmi Karapetyan	PM Nikol Pashinyan	Yelq/Civil Contract	Republican/presidential	Parlt. elected Pashinyan
Armenia	Apr. 23, 2018	PM Serzh Sargsyan	Act. PM Karen Vihelmi Karapetyan	HKK	Republican/presidential	Serzh Sargsyan resigned
Armenia	Apr. 17, 2018	PM Karen Vihelmi Karapetyan	PM Serzh Sargsyan	HKK	Republican/presidential	Parlt. elected Serzh Sargsyan
Armenia	Apr. 9, 2018	Pres. Serzh Sargsyan	Pres. Armen Vardani Sarkissian	HKK	Republican/presidential	Elections, Mar. 2, 2018
Armenia	Apr. 2, 2017	PM Karen Vihelmi Karapetyan	PM Karen Vihelmi Karapetyan	HKK	Republican/presidential	Elections, Apr. 2, 2017
Australia	July 18, 2016	PM Malcolm Turnbull	PM Malcolm Turnbull	Liberal-National Coalition	Const. monarchy/parlt.	Elections, Jul. 2, 2016
Austria	Jan. 26, 2017	Pres. Heinz Fischer	Pres. Alexander Van der Bellen	Green	Republican/parliamentary	Election re-run, Dec. 4, 2016
Austria	May 23, 2016	Int. Ch. Michael Häupl	Ch. Christian Kern	SPO	Republican/parliamentary	Parlt. elected new Ch.
Austria	May 9, 2016	Chanc. Werner Faymann	Int. Ch. Michael Häupl	SPO	Republican/parliamentary	Ch. Faymann resigned, May 9, 2016
Azerbaijan	Apr. 18, 2018	Pres. Ilham Aliyev	Pres. Ilham Aliyev	YAP	Republican/presidential	Election, Apr. 11, 2018
Azerbaijan	Apr. 21, 2018	PM Artur Rasizade	PM Norvuz Mammadov	YAP	Republican/presidential	Appointed Apr. 21, 2018
Bahamas	May 10, 2017	PM Perry Christie	PM Hubert Minnis	FNM	Const. monarchy/parlt.	General election, May 10, 2017
Benin	Apr. 2016	Pres. Thomas Yayi Boni	Pres. Patrice Talon	Independent	Republican/presidential	Pres. election, Mar. 6 and 20, 2016
Brazil	May 12, 2016	Pres. Dilma Vana Rousseff	Act. Pres. Michel Temer	PMDB	Republican/presidential	Senate voted to impeach Pres. Rousseff
Burkina Faso	Jan. 6, 2017	—	PM Paul Kaba Thiéba	MPP	Republican/presidential	Parlt. appr. Jan. 6, 2017
China (ROC)	May 20, 2016	Pres. Ma Ying-jeou	Pres. Tsai Ing-wen	DPP	Republican/presidential	Pres. election, Jan. 16, 2016
Colombia	Aug. 7, 2018	Pres. Juan Manuel Santos	Pres. Iván Duque Márquez	CD	Republican/presidential	Elections, May 27-June 17, 2018
Costa Rica	May 8, 2018	Pres. Luis Guillermo Solís	Pres. Carlos Alvarado Quesada	PAC	Republican/presidential	Elections, Feb. 4 and Apr. 1, 2018
Croatia	Oct. 19, 2016	PM Tihomir Oreškovic	PM Andrej Plenkovic	HDZ/Most	Republican/presidential	Elections, Sep. 11, 2016
Cuba	Apr. 19, 2018	Pres. Raúl Castro Ruz	Pres. Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermudez	PCC	Republican/presidential	Pres. Castro resigned.
Cyprus	Mar. 1, 2018	Pres. Nicos Anastasiades	Pres. Nicos Anastasiades	DISY	Republican/parlt.	Elections, Jan. 28 and Feb. 4, 2018
Djibouti	Apr. 8, 2016	Pres. Ismail Omar Guelleh	Pres. Ismail Omar Guelleh	RPP	Republican/presidential	Election, Apr. 8, 2016
Egypt	Jun. 7, 2018	PM Sharif Ismail	PM Mostafa Madbouly	Indep.	Republican/presidential	PM Ismail res. Jun. 5, 2018
Egypt	Jun. 2, 2018	Pres. Abdel Fattah al-Sisi	Pres. Abdel Fattah al-Sisi	Indep.	Republican/presidential	Elections, Mar. 26-28, 2018
Ethiopia	April 2, 2018	Int. PM Hailemariam Dessalegn	PM Abiy Ahmed Ali	EPDRF	Republican/presidential	Abiy elected to replace Hailemariam
Ethiopia	Feb. 15, 2018	PM Hailemariam Dessalegn	Interim PM Hailemariam Dessalegn	EPDRF	Republican/parliamentary	PM resigned Feb. 15, 2018
France	May 15, 2017	PM Bernard Cazeneuve	PM Edouarde Philippe	En March!-led coalition.	Republican/parliamentary	Incoming Pres. appointed
France	May 14, 2017	Pres. François Hollande	Pres. Emmanuel Macron	En March!	Republican/parliamentary	Election, May 7, 2017
France	Dec. 6, 2016	PM Manuel Valls	PM Bernard Cazeneuve	PS	Republican/parliamentary	PM Valls resigned
Gabon	May 4, 2018	PM Emmanuel Issozé-Ngondet	PM Emmanuel Issozé-Ngondet	PDG	Republican/presidential	Govt. resigned Apr. 30, 2018
Gambia, The	Jan. 19, 2017	Pres. Yahya Jammeh	Pres.-elect Adama Barrow	Ind. Coalition	Parliamentary/presidential	Parliamentary, Dec. 1, 2016. Disputed.
Georgia	Jun. 20, 2018	PM Giorgi Kvirikashvili	PM Mamuka Bakhitadze	Georgian Dream	Republican/parliamentary	PM Kvirikashvili resigned Jun. 13, 2018
Germany	Mar. 19, 2017	Pres. Joachim Gauck	Pres. Frank-Walter Steinmeier	CDU	Republican/parliamentary	Election, Feb. 12, 2017
Ghana	Jan. 7, 2017	Pres. John Dramani Mahama	Pres. Nana Akufo-Addo	NPP	Republican/presidential	Elections, Dec. 7, 2016
Honduras	Jan. 2018	Pres. Juan Orlando Hernández	Pres. Juan Orlando Hernández	PN	Republican/presidential	Elections, Nov. 26, 2017 (disputed)
Hungary	Apr. 9, 2018	PM Viktor Orbán	PM Viktor Orbán	FIDESZ-KDNP	Republican/parliamentary	Election, Apr. 8, 2018
Iceland	Jan. 11, 2017	PM Sigurdur Ingi Johannsson	PM Bjarni Benediktsson	Independence-led coalition	Republican/parliamentary	Elections, Oct. 29, 2016
Iceland	Apr. 7, 2016	PM Sig. Davíð Gunnlaugsson	PM Sigurdur Ingi Johannsson	Coalition	Republican/parliamentary	PM resigned, Apr. 7, 2016
Iran	May 20, 2017	Pres. Hasan Rouhani	Pres. Hasan Rouhani	MDP	Presidential republic	Presidential elections, May 19, 2017
Ireland	Jun. 14, 2017	PM Enda Kenny	PM Leo Varadkar	Fine Gael	Republican/parliamentary	PM Kenny resigned
Ireland	May 6, 2016	PM Enda Kenny	PM Enda Kenny	Fine Gael-led coalition	Republican/parliamentary	Elections, Feb. 25, 2016
Italy	Jun. 1, 2018	PM Paolo Gentiloni	PM Giuseppe Conte	M5S/Lega	Republican/parliamentary	Elections, Mar. 4, 2018
Italy	Dec. 11, 2016	PM Matteo Renzi	PM Paolo Gentiloni	Democratic.	Republican/parliamentary	PM Matteo Renzi resigned Dec. 5, 2016
Jamaica	Mar. 2016	PM Portia Simpson-Miller	PM Andrew Holness	JLP	Const. monarchy/parlt.	General elections, Feb. 25, 2016
Japan	Oct. 23, 2017	PM Shinzo Abe	PM Shinzo Abe	LDP	Const. monarchy/parlt.	General elections, Oct. 22, 2017
Jordan	Jun. 4, 2018	PM Hani Mulki	PM Omar al-Razzaz	—	Const. monarchy/parlt.	PM Mulki res. Jun. 4, 2018
Jordan	May 29, 2016	PM Abdullah Ensour	PM Hani Mulki	None	Const. monarchy/parlt.	PM Ensour term exp.
Kenya	Nov. 28, 2017	Pres. Uhuru Kenyatta	Pres. Uhuru Kenyatta	Jubilee	Republican/presidential	Elections, Oct. 26, 2017
Korea (RoK)	May 2017	Act. Pres. Hwang Kyo-ahn	Pres. Moon Jae-in	DP	Republican/parliamentary	Election, May 9, 2017
Korea (RoK)	Mar. 10, 2017	Pres. Park Geun-hye	Act. Pres. Hwang Kyo-ahn	Saenuri	Republican/parliamentary	Pres. Park removed by Const. Court
Korea (RoK)	Dec. 9, 2016	Pres. Park Geun-hye	Act. Pres. Hwang Kyo-ahn	Saenuri	Republican/parliamentary	Pres. Park impeached
Korea (RoK)	Nov. 2, 2016	PM Hwang Kyo-ahn	PM-designate Kim Byong-joon	Saenuri	Republican/parliamentary	Pres. dismissed PM Hwang
Latvia	Feb. 11, 2016	PM Laimdota Straujuma	PM Maris Kucinskis	Greens & Farmers led coalition	Republican/parlt.	Parlt. appr. new Govt.
Lebanon	Oct. 31, 2016	Pres. Michel Suleiman	Pres. Michel Aoun	FPM	Republican/parliamentary	Parlt. elected M. Aoun
Lesotho	Jun. 16, 2017	PM Pakalitha Mosisili	PM Thomas Mtoahae Thabane	ABC	Const. Monarchy/parlt.	Elections, Jun. 3, 2017
Liberia	Jan. 23, 2018	Pres. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf	Pres. George Weah	CDC	Republican/presidential	Pres. elections, Dec. 26, 2017
Madagascar	Jun. 4, 2018	PM Olivier Mahafaly	PM Christian Nisay	Independent	Republican/parliamentary	PM resigned Jun. 4, 2018
Madagascar	Apr. 10, 2016	PM Jean Ravelonarivo	PM Olivier Mahafaly	Independent	Republican/parliamentary	PM resigned Apr. 8, 2016
Malaysia	May 10, 2018	PM Najib Abdul Razak	PM Mahathir bin Mohamad	Pakatan Harapan	Const. Monarchy	Elections, May 9, 2018
Malaysia	Dec. 13, 2016	HM Sultan Badlishah	HM Sultan Muhammad V	Monarchy	Const. Monarchy	King's 5-yr term exp.
Malta	Jun. 4, 2017	PM Joseph Muscat	PM Joseph Muscat	PL	Republican/parliamentary	Elections, Jun. 3, 2017
Mexico	Dec. 1, 2018	Pres. Enrique Peña Nieto	Pres. Andrés Manuel López Obrador	MORENA	Republican/presidential	Pres. elections, Jul. 1, 2018
Montenegro	Apr. 2018	Pres. Filip Vujanovic	Pres. Milo Đukanovic	OB	Republican/parliamentary	Elections, Apr. 15, 2018
Myanmar	Mar. 28, 2018	Pres. Htin Kyaw	Pres. Win Myint	NLD	Presidential/parliamentary	Pres. resigned; new Pres. apptd.
Myanmar	Apr. 7, 2016	Did not exist	State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi	NLD	Presidential/parliamentary	Post created by Parlt. Apr. 7, 2016
Myanmar	Apr. 1, 2016	Pres. Thein Sein	Pres. Htin Kyaw	NLD	Presidential/parliamentary	Parlt. elected Pres. Mar. 14, 2016
Nepal	May 25, 2017	PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal	Act. PM Sher Bahadur Deuba	NCP/coalition	Federal democratic republic.	PM Dahal resigned
Nepal	Aug. 4, 2016	PM Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli	PM Pushpa Kamal Dahal	Maolist	Federal democratic republic.	PM Oli resigned Jul. 24, 2016
New Zealand	Oct. 27, 2017	PM S. W. "Bill" English	Jacinda Ardern	Labour-led coalition	Const. monarchy/parlt.	Const. Monarchy/parlt.
New Zealand	Dec. 12, 2016	PM John Key	PM S. W. "Bill" English	NP-led coalition	Const. monarchy/parlt.	PM Key announced resig. Dec. 4, 2016
New Zealand	Sep. 14, 2016	Gov.-Gen. Sir Jerry Mateparae	Gov.-Gen. Dame Patsy Reddy	NA	Const. monarchy/parlt.	Gov.-Gen. Mateparae term expired
Pakistan	Aug. 2018	PM Shahid Khaqan Abbasi	PM elect Imran Khan	PTI	Republican/parliamentary	Elections, Jul. 25, 2018
Pakistan	Aug. 1, 2017	PM Muhammad Nawaz Sharif	Shahid Khaqan Abbasi	PMI-N	Republican/parliamentary	Supreme Court removed PM Jul. 28, 2017
Papua New Guinea	Aug. 2, 2017	PM Peter O'Neill	PM Peter O'Neill	PNC	Const. monarchy/parlt.	Elections, Jun. 24-Jul. 8, 2017
Paraguay	Aug. 10, 2018	Pres. Horacio Manuel Cartes Jara	Pres. Mario Abdo Benítez	Colorado	Republican/presidential	Election, Apr. 21, 2018
Peru	Mar. 23, 2018	Pres. Pedro Pablo Kuczynski	Pres. Martín A. Vizcarra Cornejo	PKK	Republican/presidential	Pres. Kuczynski res. Mar. 22, 2018
Peru	Jul. 28, 2016	Pres. Ollanta Moises Humala	Pres. Pedro Pablo Kuczynski	PKK	Republican/presidential	Elections, Jun. 5, 2016
Philippines	Jun. 30, 2016	Pres. Benigno S. Aquino III	Pres. Rodrigo Duterte	PDP-Laban	Republican/presidential	Elections, May 9, 2016
Portugal	Mar. 9, 2016	Pres. Aníbal Cavaco Silva	Pres. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa	PSD	Republican/parliamentary	Election, Jan. 24, 2016
Russia	May 7, 2018	Pres. Vladimir Putin	Pres. Vladimir Putin	All-Russia People's Front	Republican/parliamentary	Pres. elections Mar. 18, 2018
Rwanda	Aug. 2017	Pres. Paul Kagame	Pres. Paul Kagame	RPF	Republican/presidential	Elections, Aug. 4, 2017
Serbia	May 31, 2017	Pres. Tomislav Nikolic	Pres. Aleksandar Vucic	SNS	Republican/parliamentary	Elections, Apr. 2, 2017
Serbia	Apr. 24, 2016	PM Aleksandar Vucic	PM Aleksandar Vucic	SNS	Republican/parliamentary	Elections, Apr. 24, 2016
Sierra Leone	Apr. 4, 2018	Pres. Ernest Bai Koroma	Pres. Julius Maada Bio	SLPP	Republican/presidential	Election run-off Mar. 31, 2018
Singapore	Sep. 14, 2017	Pres. Tony Tan Keng Yam	Pres. Halimah Yacob	None	Republican/parliamentary	Unopposed Pres. elections, Sep. 11, 2017
Somalia	Feb. 22, 2017	Pres. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud	Pres. Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo	NA	Republican/presidential	Pres. election, Feb. 7, 2017
South Africa	Feb. 15, 2018	Pres. Jacob Zuma	Pres. Cyril Ramaphosa	ANC	Republican/presidential	Zuma res., Feb. 14, 2018; Parlt. el. Ramaphosa
Spain	Jun. 1, 2018	PM Mariano Rajoy	PM Pedro Sánchez Pérez-Castejón	PSOE	Const. Monarchy/parlt.	Vote of No-Conf. in PP, Jun. 2018
Spain	Oct. 31, 2016	Act. PM Mariano Rajoy	PM Mariano Rajoy	PP-led coalition	Const. Monarchy/parlt.	Elections, Jun. 26, 2016
Thailand	Oct. 13, 2016	King Bhumibol Adulyadej	Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn	NA	Const. Monarchy/parlt.	King died, Oct. 13, 2016
Turkey	Jul. 9, 2018	Pres. Recep Tayyip Erdogan	Pres. Recep Tayyip Erdogan	AKP	Republican/Presidential	Elections, Jul. 24, 2018
Turkey	May 21, 2016	PM Ahmet Davutoglu	PM Binali Yildirim	AKP	Republican/Parliamentary	PM Davutoglu resigned May 4, 2016
Uganda	Mar. 2016	Pres. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni	Pres. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni	NRM	Republican/presidential	Elections, Feb. 18, 2016
United Kingdom	Jun. 8, 2017	PM Theresa May	PM Theresa May	Conservative	Const. Monarchy/Parlt.	Gen. Elections, Jun. 8, 2017
United Kingdom	Jul. 13, 2016	Acting PM David Cameron	PM Theresa May	Conservative	Const. Monarchy/Parlt.	PM Cameron resigned, Jul. 24, 2016
United St. of America	Jan. 20, 2017	Pres. Barack Obama	Pres. Donald J. Trump	Republican	Republican/presidential	Elections, Nov. 8, 2016
Uzbekistan	Sep. 2, 2016	Pres. Islam Karimov	Act. Pres. Shavkat Mirziyoyev	XDP/NDP	Republican/presidential	Pres. Karimov died Sep. 2, 2016
Venezuela	May 20, 2018	Pres. Nicolas Maduro	Pres. Nicolas Maduro	United Socialist Party	Republic/presidential	Election, May 20, 2018
Vietnam	Apr. 7, 2016	PM Nguyen Tan Dung	PM Nguyen Xuân Phúc	Communist Party	Public/parliamentary	Party Congress dec. Jan. 28, 2016
Western Sahara	May 31, 2016	Pres. Mohamed Abdelaziz	Act. Pres. Khafri Addouh	POLISARIO	Autocracy in exile	Pres. Abdelaziz died
Zambia	Sep. 30, 2016	Pres. Edgar Lungu	Pres. Edgar Lungu	PF	Republican/presidential	Election, Aug. 11, 2016
Zimbabwe	Aug. 12, 2018	Pres. Emmerson Mnangagwa	Pres. Emmerson Mnangagwa	ZANU-PF	Republican/presidential	Election, Jul. 30, 2018
Zimbabwe	Nov. 24, 2017	Pres. Robert Mugabe	Pres. Emmerson Mnangagwa	ZANU-PF	Republican/presidential	Pres. Mugabe resigned, Nov. 21, 2017

# Key Transitions

**Colombia:** Pres. Iván Duque Márquez, 42, was sworn into the Presidency of Colombia on August 7, 2018, at the Plaza de Bolívar in Bogotá at 15.00hrs, and became the country's youngest President for more than a century. Vice-President Marta Lucía Ramírez, the first woman elected to the post and a Senator since 2006 and Minister of National Defense in 2002 and 2003, was also sworn into office. She had served as the sixth Minister of Foreign Trade from 1998 to 2002. The President immediately announced his new Cabinet:

President: . . . . . Iván Duque Márquez  
Vice-President: . . . . . Marta Lucía Ramírez Blanco  
Minister of Agriculture: . . . . . Andrés Valencia  
Minister of Defense: . . . . . Guillermo Botero  
Minister of Finance: . . . . . Alberto Carrasquilla  
Minister of Interior: . . . . . Nancy Patricia Gutiérrez  
Minister of Commerce, Industry & Tourism: . . . . . José Manuel Restrepo  
Minister of Foreign Affairs: . . . . . Carlos Holmes  
Minister of Mines and Energy: . . . . . María Fernanda Suárez  
Minister of Transport: . . . . . Angel María Orozco  
Minister of Environment: . . . . . Ricardo Lozano  
Minister of Housing: . . . . . Jonathan Malagón  
Minister of Culture: . . . . . Carmen Vásquez  
Minister of Work: . . . . . Alicia Arango  
Minister of Justice: . . . . . Gloria María Borrero  
Minister of Technology: . . . . . Silvia Constain  
Minister of Education: . . . . . María Victoria Angulo  
Minister of Health: . . . . . Juan Pablo Uribe

**Gambia, The:** Pres. Adama Barrow of The Gambia announced on June 29, 2018, after a series of protests led by an umbrella group called "Enough is Enough" over debt and corruption issues, that Ousainou Darboe, the head of the United Democratic Party, had been named as the new Vice-President, replacing Fatoumata Jallow Tambajang who was "redeployed into the foreign service". Darboe was among more than a dozen political prisoners who had been detained after protests against then-Pres. Yahya Jammeh and released in December 2016 after Jammeh lost the election to Barrow. Pres. Barrow also said that Momodou Tangara, who had served under Jammeh, had been named Minister of Foreign Affairs. The Cabinet reshuffle followed the resignation of the Police Commissioner following the death of three protesters during clashes with the police on June 18, 2018. Pres. Barrow also dismissed Agriculture Minister Omar Jallow, who was battling corruption allegations, and Youth Minister Henry Gomez and Communication Minister Demba Jawo, both of whom were criticized for being incompetent. The Cabinet was now as follows:

Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs: . . . . . Mambury Njie  
Minister of Agriculture: . . . . . Lamin N. Dibba  
Minister of Foreign Affairs and  
Gambians Abroad: . . . . . Momodou Tangara  
Minister of Lands and Regional Government: . . . . . Musa Drammeh  
Minister of Trade and Regional Integration: . . . . . Amadou Sanneh  
Minister of Youths and Sports: . . . . . Hadrammeh Sidibeh  
Minister of Health and Social Welfare: . . . . . Isatou Touray, Dr

**India:** Atal Bihari Vajpayee, 93, Prime Minister (*Bharatiya Janata Party*: BJP) of India from March 19, 1998, to May 22, 2004, died on August 16, 2018, in New Delhi. Mr Vajpayee, a diabetic, died at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences after being admitted there on June 11, 2018, with a kidney tract infection and other ailments.

**Pakistan:** Voters went to the polls in Pakistani general elections on July 25, 2018, in what was to be Pakistan's second election transferring political power from one elected government to the next. Some 105.95-million voters were eligible to exercise their right of franchise in the country's 11th general election. More than two dozen parties were in the race but a close contest had been expected between Imran Khan's Pakistan *Tehrik-e-Insaaf* (PTI) and Shebaz Sharif-led Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in most constituencies. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) was also expected to retain its seats in Sindh, where it faced a strong challenge from a grand alliance of opposition parties, but at a national level PPP was greatly reduced from its former standing. In Karachi, MQP-Pakistan, PTI, *Muttahida Majlis-e-Amaal* Pakistan (MMA), PPP and PSP were in a tight race. The election was marred by significant terrorist violence, both in the run-up to the day and during election day itself, despite the fact that 370,000 Army personnel supported the Police in

maintaining calm. Polls closed at 18.00 hrs on July 25, 2018, and first results had been promised by 19.00 hrs, but that deadline passed without any initial results. The election was for 272 seats in the National Assembly and a total of 577 seats in the four provincial assemblies; each being elected for a five-year term. There were 12,500 candidates for the federal and provincial seats. The Election Commission of Pakistan had established 83,307 polling stations, 17,000 of them had been declared as sensitive. It had set up 23,424 polling stations for male voters and 21,707 for female voters. There were some 53,000 international, national and local observers, and media personnel monitoring the elections. A bomb attack, claimed by Df'ISH, killed at least 31 people and injured 35 others in the outskirts of Quetta, the Baluchistan capital, on election day. Earlier in July 2018, a suicide bomber killed 149 people (including the parliamentary candidate) at a rally in Mastung, Baluchistan, an attack also claimed by Df'ISH.

Early election results, when they began to come in, showed an initial slight lead for Imran Khan's PTI, but it seemed that neither his party nor PML-N would gain a clear majority in the National Assembly. There was then a brief lull in reporting of ballot counts, leading to charges from all sides of possible tampering. By July 26, 2018, incomplete counting showed that PTI had won 105 of the National Assembly constituencies, PML-N had won 54; PPP had 33; others from smaller parties had 32; and 48 remained to be counted. It was enough for PTI leader Imran Khan to claim victory and the right to form a new government. He noted: "I think this has been the clearest, fairest election Pakistan has ever had." PML-N, however, rejected the election results outright.

Final election results on the night of July 27, 2018, showed that PTI had won 116 seats in the National Assembly and taken 16.86-million votes (total seats rose to 149 with allocated seats for women and minorities). PTI spokesman Iftikhar Durrani said that PTI allied parties had 11 seats, and that 13 independent MNAs were prepared to work with PTI to form the Government. Imran Khan was expected to take the oath as Prime Minister "before Independence Day" (August 14, 2018); however that was later moved to August 18, 2018. Overall voter turnout was 52 percent, compared with 55 percent for the 2013 election. Meanwhile, PPP co-chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that he would sit on the opposition benches. Allegations of vote rigging were supported when it was revealed in the media that five empty ballot boxes and more than a dozen voting papers had been found alongside roads in Karachi and Sialkot. Despite that, the elections were widely regarded as having been the most open and fair in Pakistan's history.

**Somalia:** Prime Minister Hassan Ali Khayre of Somalia in early August 2018 made six new ministerial appointments to his cabinet, with four ministers, one state minister and one deputy minister. Abdullahi Godah Barre was appointed Minister of Education; Sheikh Noor Mohamed Hassan, Minister of Religious Affairs; Hussein Sheikh Mohamud Hussein, Minister of Livestock; and Abdullahi Badhan Warsame, Minister of Fisheries and Marine Resources. Abdikadir Sheikh Ali became State Minister for the President; and Shawaqar Ibrahim Abdalla, Deputy Minister of Labor.

**Zimbabwe:** Zimbabweans went to the polls on July 30, 2018, for the first Presidential ballot to be held without former Pres. Robert Mugabe's name. Voter turnout was unprecedented, estimated at between 75 and 80 percent of registered voters, but the count was not expected to be concluded for almost a week, with official results scheduled to be released on August 4, 2018 (informal results were expected to be known, however, by August 2, 2018). The race appeared to come down to the front runners, incumbent Pres. Emerson Mnangagwa (ZANU-PF) and House of Assembly member Nelson Chamisa (MDC Alliance), although there were a total of 23 candidates contesting for the Presidency.

Results for the Presidential race were announced on August 3, 2018, with incumbent, transitional Pres. Em-

merson Mnangagwa (ZANU-PF) declared the winner by a small margin (50.8 percent of the vote; 2,460,463 votes). However, the leading opposition candidate, Nelson Chamisa, of MDC Alliance, (44.3 percent of the vote; 2,147,436 votes) said that the results would be challenged in court, and declared the election win a "coup against [the popular] will". Pres. Mnangagwa, who had won a full five-year term after completing less than a year of former Pres. Robert Mugabe's term, said that he would be President for all Zimbabweans, including "those who voted for me and those who did not". Mr Chamisa conceded that the MDC Alliance had lost the Parliamentary vote, winning only 63 parliamentary seats to ZANU-PF's 145. The National Patriotic Front won the two remaining seats in the 210-seat National Assembly. ★

## Change in Korea

*Continued from Page 20*

South Korean experts have already presented concrete plans and studies covering these issues. "It is the goal to hold groundbreaking ceremonies within this year for the reconnection of railroads and roads as agreed to in the Panmunjom Declaration. The reconnection of railroads and roads is the beginning of mutual prosperity on the Korean Peninsula," Pres. Moon said.

Beijing is enthusiastic about the latest developments on the Korean Peninsula, particularly the prospects of the September 2018 Kim-Moon summit in Pyongyang.

However, Beijing was also apprehensive about the extent of the challenges ahead and particularly the extent of US opposition. "The biggest challenge to the infrastructure project is the US, which wants to maintain economic sanctions on Pyongyang to force the country to give up its nuclear weapons," Hu Weijia wrote in *The Global Times*.

"We don't think Seoul can persuade Washington to change its strategy on North Korea. Although Moon has invited Washington to join the railway project by creating a north-east Asian railroad community with six countries including the US, Washington is unlikely to unconditionally accept the olive branch Moon has extended."

Hu Weijia said that the PRC and Russia supported the proposal to link railway networks in north-east Asia via North Korea. "The US has a major stake in resolving the Korean Peninsula issue, but that issue can hardly be resolved without a reduction or withdrawal of US troops from South Korea. Whether South Korea can achieve peace and denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula depends on Seoul's courage and sincerity."

Also in mid-August 2018, Beijing advanced the preparations for the major visit to Pyongyang by Pres. Xi Jinping. On September 9, 2018, he was to be Kim Jong-Un's guest of honor in the celebrations of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of North Korea. Beijing planned the upcoming visit by Xi to Pyongyang as a clear endorsement of the bilateral inter-Korean rapprochement as pushed by Kim Jong-Un and Moon Jae-In.

Meanwhile, the Kremlin also encouraged Seoul and Pyongyang to persevere with their bilateral rapprochement.

The main venue was an exchange of messages between Pres. Vladimir Putin and "Supreme Leader Kim Jong-Un" which included a Russian invitation for an urgent summit meeting with Pres. Putin. This latest invitation came on top an earlier invitation by Pres. Putin to the annual economic forum to be held in Vladivostok in September 2018. At the time, Pyongyang committed to holding a summit before the end of 2018.

On August 15, 2018, Kim Jong-Un sent a message to Pres. Putin on the occasion of the 73rd anniversary of the liberation of Korea by the Soviet Armed Forces and Korean communist fighters. The same day, Pres. Putin sent "Supreme Leader Kim Jong-Un" a congratulatory message.

Thus, both Beijing and Moscow had committed to encouraging Seoul and Pyongyang to ignore the impasse with Washington over denuclearization, and instead implement the dramatic breakout in the form of inter-Korean transportation and energy projects and their integration into the Eurasian BRI.

The north-east Asian railroad community of the six countries of East Asia as proposed by Moon Jae-In could indeed transform the entire region and integrate Kim Jong-Un's DPRK into the family of nations.

Left to be seen, though, is how Washington would react to the ensuing marginalization of the US. ■

# Arms Transfer Tables

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Kim and Moon: as one.

## Current Estimate

Of current significance

By Yossef Bodansky, Senior Editor

# US Faces Exclusion from the Korean, Silk Road Dynamic

**T**HERE WAS, BY MID-AUGUST 2018, A GROWING CONSENSUS between the governments of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK: North Korea), the Republic of Korea (ROK: South Korea), and the Russian Federation to effectively sideline the United States from the transforming dynamic of the Korean Peninsula strategic theater.

ROK Pres. Moon Jae-In seized the initiative to consolidate a new regional order embracing Pyongyang while Washington was relegated to the rôle of an increasingly irrelevant irritant. Both Beijing and Moscow committed to shielding Seoul and Pyongyang from possible retribution by Washington.

The Government of the ROK had concluded by June or July 2018 that there was no alternative to a breakout from the US domination of the regional dynamic surrounding the Korean Peninsula, and decided to attempt it. Seoul was ready to shoulder the financial burden of seeing through this breakout.

Seoul's decision was the result of sophisticated enticement and prompting by Pyongyang, while it saw the growing irrelevance of Washington to the dynamic underway. Meanwhile, Pyongyang continued to demonstrate knowledge as to how to appeal to Seoul and reinforce Pres. Moon's commitment. Both Beijing and Moscow have, not surprisingly, cheered Pres. Moon's initiative.

Although Pyongyang launched its initiative to win over Pres. Moon Jae-In's Seoul in mid-June 2018, the region-wide disappointment with the US posture on the Korean Peninsula did not burst into the open until early August 2018.

Having failed to move the US into some flexibility, and recognizing the long-declared positions of the DPRK, Pyongyang publicly expressed its displeasure and disappointment on August 9, 2018. The entire North Korean media carried a lengthy "Press Statement of Spokesperson for DPRK Foreign Ministry" accusing the US of reneging on the commitments and understanding reached in Singapore.

The statement stressed that while the DPRK started unilateral acts of denuclearization, the US did not undertake reciprocal measures either in the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, or in lifting some of the sanctions. Instead, the US only kept demanding that the DPRK undertake additional unilateral measures. Even when North Korean leaders protested the lack of reciprocity, "the US insisted on its unilateral demand of 'denuclearization first' at the first DPRK-US high-level talks held in Pyongyang in early July [2018]". Nevertheless, the DPRK fulfilled its promise to repatriate to the US Korean War era US POW/MIA remains.

However, the US and its allies only kept imposing additional sanctions on the DPRK and its friends. Worse, the US was now pressuring friendly countries "not to send high-level delegations to the celebrations of the 70th founding anniversary of the DPRK". This was perceived as an unpardonable insult to the entire Kim dynasty, both the dead and the living.

Pyongyang noted: "Expecting any result, while insulting the dialogue partner and throwing cold water over our sincere efforts for building confidence which can be seen as a precondition for implementing the DPRK-US joint statement, is indeed a foolish act that amounts to waiting to see a boiled egg hatch out." The statement warned of potentially far reaching and adverse consequences of the US policy.

"As long as the US denies even the basic decorum for its dialogue partner and clings to the outdated acting script which the previous administrations have all tried and failed, one cannot expect any progress in the implementation of the DPRK-US joint statement including the denuclearization, and furthermore, there is no guarantee that the hard-won atmosphere of stability on the Korean Peninsula will continue."

Still, Pyongyang did not close the door completely. "We remain unchanged in our will to uphold the intentions of the top leaders of the DPRK and the US and to build trust and implement in good faith the DPRK-US joint statement step by step. The US should, even at this belated time, respond to our sincere efforts in a corresponding manner."

By mid-August 2018, PRC and South Korean senior officials defined the relations between Pyongyang and Washing-

ton over the nuclear talks as "a standoff" which could quickly erupt. US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo's efforts to revive the talks on US terms were going nowhere. PRC and South Korean senior officials concurred that the US and the DPRK were "deadlocked over details" of the denuclearization time-line, the status of the DPRK's ballistic missile and nuclear programs, as well as the North Korean intentions regarding the future of its nuclear arsenal.

Still Sec. Pompeo kept trying to set a summit meeting in Pyongyang for late August 2018. Washington informed both Seoul and Pyongyang that "sanctions will remain in full effect should North Korea fail to denuclearize" in accordance with US terms and *diktats*. Pyongyang was not cooperating and did not even reveal whether Kim Jong-Un would meet Sec. Pompeo on his next visit. Washington was persistent in seeking the next summit and coerced Pres. Moon to postpone his planned visit to Pyongyang — a visit which would benefit North Korea greatly — until the second half of September 2018.

In response, on August 17, 2018, Pyongyang formally accused Washington of "impeding inter-Korean cooperation" in pursuit of its own narrow interests.

The DPRK labeled the US as "the root cause of evil" oppressing the national sovereignty of all Koreans throughout the peninsula. "While we [North Koreans] are taking preemptive measures to achieve a complete denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula, the United States is repeatedly making unilateral demands, instead of taking measures comparable to ours," said a communiqué of the North Korea's Pan-Korean Alliance for Reunification. "The core spirit of the Panmunjom declaration is national sovereignty. ... It is simply not possible for the declaration, cooperation with foreign states, and American occupation to exist at the same time."

Kim Jong-Un joined the criticism of the new sanctions and threat. During an inspection visit to the construction site of the Wonsan-Kalma coastal tourist area, Kim Jong-Un attributed recent economic and development setbacks to "an acute standoff with hostile forces trying to stifle the Korean people through brigandish sanctions and blockade" that would be defeated by "a do-or-die struggle to defend the prestige of the party and a worthwhile struggle for creating the happiness of the people".

Ultimately, the US effort to redirect the contacts with the DPRK toward US priorities and unilateral denuclearization do seem destined to fail. Washington has failed to accept the emotional and psychological commitment of Pres. Moon and his inner-circle. Moon remained committed to the original vision of his mentor: the late Pres. Roh Moo-Hyun. For Pres. Moon, as for Pres. Roh a decade earlier, the improvement of inter-Korean relations, both economic and political, had a far higher priority than denuclearization. And Pres. Moon would not let the US reverse these priorities and stifle the inter-Korean *rapprochement* the way it did in 2007.

Pres. Moon seemed convinced that he had in Kim Jong-Un a soul-mate as committed to fulfilling the vision of inter-Korean *rapprochement* of his late father Kim Jong-Il as Moon was committed to realizing the vision of Roh. The apparent conviction of Moon was dramatically reinforced in mid-June 2018 as a result of a significant gesture by North Korean military negotiators.

In 2007, while in Pyongyang, Pres. Roh Moo-Hyun had planted a tree as a gesture of peace and reconciliation. He did so with Kim Jong-Il. On June 14, 2018, during the General-level inter-Korean military talks at Panmunjom's Unification House, Lt.-Gen. Ahn Ik-San (the head of the North Korean delegation) presented his Southern counterpart a photograph of the tree Roh planted and noted that it was "alive and well".

The August 16, 2018, round of military talks announced

the completion of the inter-Korean military communication lines and that communications between the two militaries were fully restored in accordance with the agreement of June 14, 2018. During the talks, the North Koreans expressed hope that Moon and Kim Jong-Un would be able to plant another tree during the forthcoming summit in Pyongyang. Moon expressed his enthusiasm.

On August 16, 2018, Moon Jae-In delivered a major speech during a ceremony in central Seoul marking Korea's independence from the Japanese colonial rule of 1910-1945. Pres. Moon asserted that inter-Korean reconciliation not only took precedence over the US-DPRK negotiations, but actually facilitated them. "Advancing inter-Korean relations is not a secondary effect from achieving progress in North Korea-US relations. Rather, it is advancement in inter-Korean relations that provides the energy promoting the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," Moon said, using Kim Jong-Un's term.

"This is borne out by our historical experience: when inter-Korean relations were good in the past, the North Korean nuclear threat diminished and we were able to achieve a denuclearization agreement. ... Even if political reunification remains far away, true 'liberation' for us comes through establishing peace between South and North, freely coming and going and estimating a single economic community." For Moon, the future lies in the "dream of a peace economy and an economic community." Moon promised that once in Pyongyang he "will help build a relationship based on deeper trust between the two Koreas and simultaneously lead efforts to promote dialogue on denuclearization between North Korea and the United States."

Seoul wants the revival of joint projects agreed during Pres. Roh Moo-Hyun's visit to Pyongyang in 2007. For example, Minister of Oceans and Fisheries Kim Young-Choon proposed the designation of "a joint fishing zone on the western sea border" between the North and the South as a first step toward creating the "maritime peace zone" originally envisioned by Roh Moo-Hyun and revived by Moon Jae-In. "Designating the NLL [Northern Line Limit] as a joint fishing zone between the two Koreas is a different matter from making a maritime peace zone," Kim Young-Choon explained, and both Koreas can "hold talks on the maritime peace zone in the future".

In mid-August 2018, Pres. Moon announced a target of "holding a groundbreaking ceremony within the year" for the myriad of bilateral and regional "railway and road cooperation projects". He made it clear that he was adamant on having irreversible facts on the ground within less than a year. Pres. Moon noted that Item One of the Panmunjom Declaration committed both Koreas to "reconnect the blood relations of the people and bring forward the future of co-prosperity" which, in Moon's opinion, would be best implemented with the railway and road cooperation as a key foundation. Pres. Moon let it be known that Seoul would not let this breakout be "stymied by the UN and US's North Korea sanctions".

The crux of Pres. Moon's vision for the future is the creation of "a north-east Asian railroad community" comprised of "the six countries of East Asia" — South Korea, North Korea, China, Japan, Russia and Mongolia — as well as the US (as a perfunctory mentioning). "This community will extend our [both Koreas'] economic horizon into the lands to the north and will become the principal artery of coexistence and co-prosperity in north-east Asia. This will lead to an energy community and economic community in East Asia and will be the starting point for a multilateral peace and security system in north-east Asia," Pres. Moon said.

He emphasized that re-connecting the railroads between the two Koreas would facilitate the movement of goods and people "as far as into the European continent", thus affecting global economy. Moon was also convinced that these immense undertakings would bring to South Korean companies "huge progress in addition to the numerous jobs created."

Seoul expects the "north-east Asian railroad community" to be fully integrated into the PRC's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the Russian Trans-Siberian arteries.

*Continued on Page 18*

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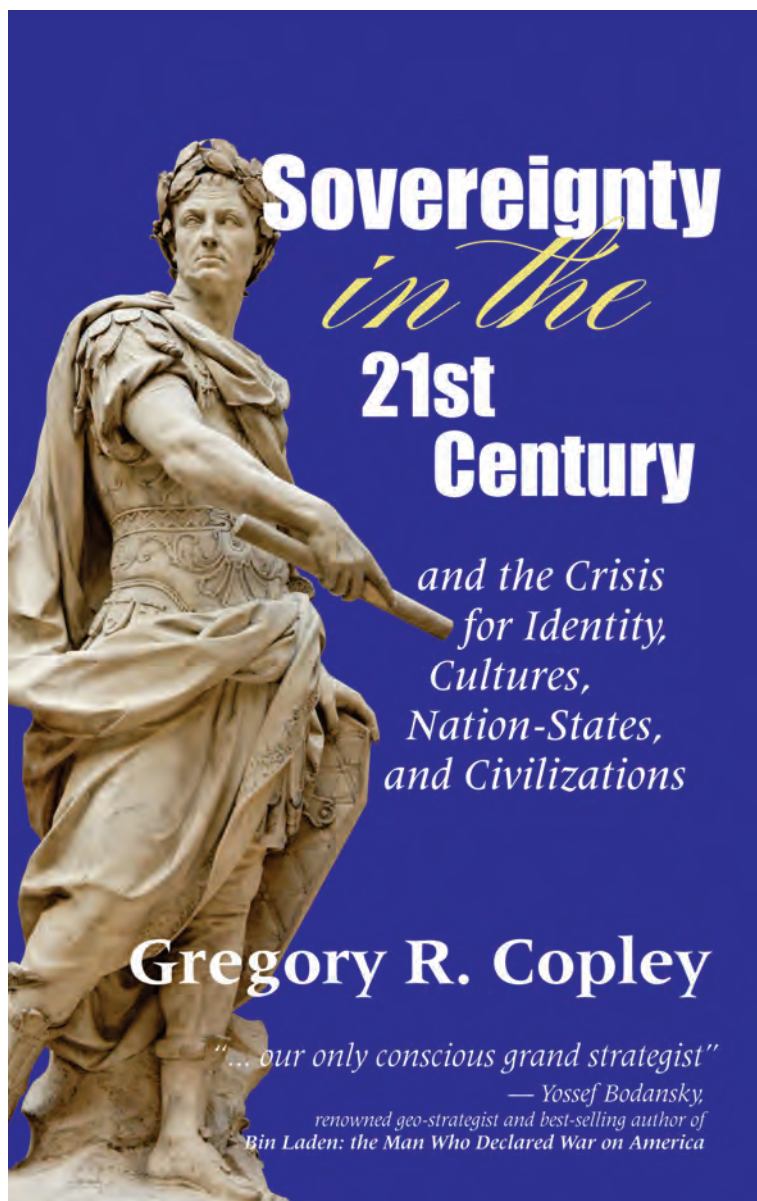
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