

Giving Up the Global-Cop Badge

Official Washington is fuming over Russia's expanded military role in helping Syria fight the Islamic State and Al Qaeda (as if the U.S. has been doing such a crack job). Instead, the U.S. should retreat from the unpopular job of global policeman, says ex-CIA official Graham E. Fuller.

By Graham E. Fuller

Washington has jealously guarded the role of global policeman for over half a century. But is the game still worth the candle?

World War II left no power standing other than the United States. Washington was in a unique position to lead "the free world" against the Soviet Union in the Cold War. But after the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the U.S. found its true moment in the sun, perceiving its new emergence as the "sole global superpower."

Prestige, respect, economic and cultural "soft power" had all been originally vital complements to American military superpowermanship. But 9/11 eclipsed all that. In today's world the U.S. has increasingly diverted its true national and international voice into the field of national security, where military means become the prime instrument of statesmanship and diplomacy. The State Department is now largely overwhelmed by the Pentagon in the formulation of foreign policy.

This militarization of American strategic vision emerges directly from possession of the overwhelmingly largest military machine in the world, supported by over 700 military bases scattered across the globe and the biggest military budget of all other competitors combined.

As then-U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright complained to then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell in the 1990s, "What's the point of having this superb military you're always talking about if we can't use it?"

This souped-up security role is likewise the chosen instrument for explicit assertion of American global dominance, or "global leadership", nominally giving us the dominant voice in determining the "architecture of the global order." Those whose actions defy that architecture have been labeled "rogue."

And this global security burden accordingly led us into extravagant expenditure of our own treasure and the spilling of blood of upwards of a million people directly or indirectly in recent military arenas, nearly all Muslim.

But where do these costs come up in what passes for national debate on foreign policy? Are we perhaps still jealously guarding a role in which there are no

other willing competitors? In a situation where other nations prefer to seek their global prestige in other terms? And, as we focus on preserving our national security power, are others perhaps starting to eat our lunch in other arenas?

China is unquestionably building its military power, a rapid rise for a nation that for long decades possessed little other than massive manpower and lots of nukes. Russia too has a strong military. But the U.S. still leads almost all of the rest of the world combined in the size of its annual military budget.

So what *is* China doing? Indeed building its military from scratch, and expanding its range of interests, but rather than focusing single-mindedly on the military, it is busier in making massive investments, for example, in African agriculture and Central Asian infrastructure projects among its many projects that span most of the world. These activities leave far more positive and enduring monuments and influence, not to mention good will, than do military bases, military training or even war-fighting and counter-insurgency.

In a state-to-state war we will of course prevail. But if it's not a war, we fare less well. So the list of contenders for the role of global policeman is not crowded. Indeed, China is probably quite happy to have the U.S. serve as global policeman at this point, bearing the primary burden of international counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency.

Thus in the eyes of our global competitors, our policies serve their interests in several ways. When we go to war, conduct numerous regime changes, launch drones, engage in assassinations and anti-terrorist operations we are wasting our treasure, eliminating many of the same bad guys that most people in the world might like to see eliminated, while all the while building up reservoirs of anger and feelings of revenge among the many victims of "collateral damage."

For China and Russia these are strategic gifts, sparing them the job of doing the heavy lifting in counter-terrorism, while weakening our economy, and leaving their reputations unbesmirched, their reservoirs of good will untouched. Indeed the large reservoirs of good will the U.S. once possessed began to dry up once Washington launched the Global War on Terror and asserted the unilateral right to go anywhere, do anything, and kill anyone in the interests of American national security.

Some realists may not mourn loss of good will, but mounting opportunity costs to U.S. society and economy bite deeper. And our writ abroad counts for far less now.

"Somebody has to do the dirty work", after all terrorism must be combated. But

its international acceptance hinges heavily on the success of the program. And by now many top U.S. military figures including retired Gen. Stanley McChrystal and other strategists have suggested that our counter-insurgency tactics have largely served to create new reservoirs of terrorist recruits eager to fight the U.S.

Indeed, it's a frustrating war in which the enemy, on its own soil, resembles a Hydra that grows two heads with each one severed. Projecting military operations into the Muslim world has produced little success and sowed mass chaos in most of the losing wars over the past decade: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia and other locales. The Kuwait war (in 1990-91) is the sole exception. Indeed, many observers of the Middle East doubt there is any true military solution to countering terrorism when the chief by-products seem to be more hatred and instability that fosters still greater radicalism.

So do we truly still want this role as global policeman and anti-terrorism chief? Does it make sense when global solutions now require many players, many not even allies, to accomplish the goal?

I am heartened that the Obama administration more recently seems to be willing to share with China the role of creating a security structure in Afghanistan and Pakistan. China after all *borders* on both these states. And Obama/Kerry now seem willing to consider working with Russia in Syria instead of seeking to deprive Russia, dog-in-the-manger posture, of any meaningful role there, even as we thrash around in a no-win situation.

Future global strategy demands a new working plan for global security in which other great powers, whom we may not like, play major roles. Washington can neither afford, nor fulfill, the role of primary global security provider, which, if anything, now seems to detract from America's reputation and well-being.

Instead, sadly, we witness the absurd posturing of presidential candidates each seeking to out-macho the other on how they would lay down the law to the world, utterly out of touch with shifting global reality.

It would be sad if American talents have now become primarily relegated to the security and military field. Such goals are eating up our country, raising our opportunity costs, stifling it in crushing and muscle-bound national security institutions whose growing weight, cost and power dominate the foreign policy field. American genius for creativity, know-how technology, even the former reputation of its citizens for being liked and welcomed, is being sidelined in the endless quest to maintain global dominance for "our security." We are not gaining either.

Is it naive to suggest maybe we should be cooperating internationally in helping build a new global economic infrastructure? Roads, hospitals, schools, clinics, industries, as the best *security* investment for the present trillions now spent on military and security-related institutions and projects, especially in the face of the gathering global refugee tsunami? Otherwise we are opening the field to the Chinese and even Russians who are not even seeking to compete in our chosen policeman tasks, confident that we are likely making their quest for influence all the easier.

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Decline of Western Ethnic States

The neocon-driven wars in the Middle East have unleashed a demographic tidal wave on Europe, the arrival of refugees from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and other war-torn countries. Despite political resistance, this flood inevitably will reshape the Continent's ethnic character, says Lawrence Davidson.

By Lawrence Davidson

If you were transported back to Europe in 1900 and asked educated citizens to describe the ideal political arrangement, what they would outline to you is a homogeneous nation-state: France for the French, Germany for the Germans, Italy for the Italians, and the like. They would note exceptions, but describe them as unstable.

For instance, at this time the Austro-Hungarian Empire was, ethnically, a very diverse place, but it was politically restless. Come World War I, ethnic desires for self-rule and independence would help tear this European-centered multinational empire apart. In truth, even those states that fancied themselves ethnically unified were made up of many regional outlooks and dialects, but the friction these caused was usually minor enough to allow the ideal of homogeneity to prevail. The ethnically unified nation-state was almost everyone's "ideal state."

This standard of homogeneity started to break down after World War II. After this war, the foreign empires run by many of Europe's homogeneous states were in retreat and in their wake came a slew of new nations in Africa, Asia and the

Middle East. Simultaneously, the impact of the end of empire on the European nations was to have their own homogeneous status eroded.

For instance, when Great Britain set up the Commonwealth as a substitute for empire she allowed freer immigration into England for Commonwealth citizens. The result was an influx of people of color from former British colonies in Africa, India-Pakistan and the Caribbean.

A similar thing happened as the French empire crumbled. With its demise many North Africans, as well as Vietnamese Catholics, went to France. Later, Turks would go to Germany, a preference that reflected the close relations between Berlin and the defunct Ottoman Empire.

Then came the formation of the European Union (EU) in 1993, which facilitated the flow of labor across European borders. Now citizens of one EU state could go and work in any other member state. In other words, the 20 or 30 years following World War II marked the beginning of the end of the Western homogeneous state.

The Refugee Crisis

Now we may be witnessing the final stage of that demise. The present refugee crisis resulting from wars raging in Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Yemen and Libya, among other places in the Middle East, has set in movement millions of displaced people. Many of these refugees are heading for Europe.

While initially most of the European Union leaders showed some willingness to take in substantial numbers of refugees, strong resistance from Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and the Czech Republic caused a pause in the effort. This was a predictable moment. All established populations, even relatively diverse ones, fear that their cultural norms and economic advantages will be threatened by large waves of new immigrants.

At the extreme, one finds ideologically and religiously defined nations such as the Arab Gulf states and the allegedly Westernized Israel (itself a product of an overwhelming refugee invasion of Palestine) refusing to take in any of the present refugees. Even in a country such as the United States, which is historically built upon the inflow of diverse populations, it is politically difficult to open borders to new refugees in need. Initially, announcing a willingness to allow an embarrassingly small number of 10,000 refugees to enter, Washington has increased that to 100,000 between now and 2017.

Getting back to the European scene, the pressures now building on the borders eventually resulted in a EU decision, allegedly binding on all its 28 member states, to speed up the intake screening process for refugees and distribute the accepted numbers across the EU countries. How many will ultimately be allowed

into Europe is still unclear.

If the leaders of Europe are smart about it they will go beyond merely symbolic numbers. If they are not, then there will be concentration camps on their borders and eventual violence that will mark a dark period in their supposed civilized histories. Controlled or not, in the end, many of the refugees will probably find a way in.

Ironic Justice

There is ironic justice in this prospect. After all, the wars that have uprooted so many were triggered by Western intervention in the Middle East. One can thank George W. Bush and his neoconservative colleagues (along with British allies) for the 2003 invasion of Iraq. That action set loose the forces that have subsequently displaced the people who make up the bulk of today's refugees.

To this can be added the 2011 NATO intervention in the civil war in Libya, in which France, Italy and the U.S. led the way. This action has prolonged the anarchy in that country and is one of the reasons that 300,000 people attempted to cross the Mediterranean Sea in the direction of Europe in 2015 alone. At least 2,500 of them died in the attempt.

It is a testimony to the fact that the average citizen has little knowledge and less interest in their nation's foreign policies that few in Europe and the U.S. recognize, much less acknowledge, responsibility for the present disaster.

The population in western and central Europe has been shifting in the direction of diversity for the last 70 years, and that of the United States more or less consistently since the nation's founding. Along with diversity comes a complementary, if perhaps more gradual, shift in culture.

Opposing this historical trend is the fact that anti-immigrant resistance among established national populations is almost a default position. However, this is like spitting in the wind. In the long term, the evolution of populations moves from homogeneity to diversity. It is just a matter of how long the process takes.

Thus, from every angle, ethical as well as historical, the way to approach the present refugee crisis is to allow, in a controlled but adequately responsive way, the inflow of those now running from the ravages of invasion and civil war.

In so doing we should accept the demise of the homogeneous state. Whether it is Germany, France, Hungary, Israel or Burma, the concept is historically untenable and neither raises nor even maintains our civilizational standards. Rather it grinds them down into the dust of an inhumane xenophobia.

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The Sneering at China's President Xi

In mainstream U.S. media, it's always a "safe play" for pundits to sneer at foreign leaders and countries that interfere with American hegemony, thus guiding the public toward unnecessary hostilities, a phenomenon now playing out in the treatment of China and President Xi, writes Dan Steinbok.

By Dan Steinbok

Thanks to misguided stories about Chinese President Xi Jinping's reforms, America risks losing the opportunity to participate appropriately in China's massive economic rebalancing and reform drive.

In their *Animal Spirits*, George A. Akerlof and Robert J. Shiller, two Nobel Prize winners, show how human psychology drives the economy and why it matters for global capitalism. In particular, they show how stories move markets and are themselves a real part of how the economy functions.

The same goes for other economies, including China. What "we" in America know about China is filtered through aggregate stories by Washington's political pundits, policy wonks, economic analysts, and news oracles. Some stories reflect realities; others don't. Still others are misguided and flawed, while the rest have self-serving agendas.

As President Xi is in his first official state visit in the U.S., he remains an enigma to most Americans not in spite of these stories, but because of them. After his first year in power, leading media, such as Bloomberg, reported that "Xi amassing most power since Deng raises reform risk." After two years, the Chinese president was portrayed in the West as "Xi who must be obeyed" as *The Economist* put it in its cover story, calling him the most powerful Chinese ruler certainly since Deng, and possibly since Mao.

What united these stories, which quickly spread across the world via lesser-tier media channels, was their common denominator: Xi had acquired too much power. More recently, Washington's stories would like us to believe that the problem with President Xi is not that he has too much power, but that he is increasingly powerless.

The new conventional wisdom came about after Chinese equity market volatility, which the *Financial Times* thought showed that "Xi's imperial presidency has its weaknesses." That wisdom was quickly seconded by the *Wall Street Journal*, which reported that crises put dents in Xi's armor as "Chinese president is looking more vulnerable than at any time since taking office in 2012, insiders say."

Despite the demise of the Cold War, the West's old imperial inclination to see the world through the glasses of good ("we") and evil ("they") permeates the Xi biographies. From *Foreign Affairs* and *Foreign Policy* to the *Atlantic* and the *New Yorker*, the story starts with an "insider" anecdote, a political recollection or recent event that presumably serves as an intro to the Xi narrative. In reality, it is a Potemkin bridge because of its basic point: If you serve in a Communist Party, you are "Born Red," as Evan Osnos entitled his Xi story in the *New Yorker* not one of "us" but "them," and thus neither credible nor trustworthy.

Xi's policy stance does not require deeper economic, political, or defense analysis; a quasi-Freudian insight will do. As Osnos puts it: "When Xi was fourteen, Red Guards warned, 'We can execute you a hundred times.' He joined the Communist Party at twenty." With that simple but shrewd overture, President Xi's entire life story is presented as a case of psychoanalytic identification with the aggressor.

In these "in-depth analyses" key biographical data are almost always explained on the basis of condescending Cold-War like interpretations of Chinese history and leaders.

Accordingly, none and at best, few real insiders or opinion-leaders in China are consulted. Instead, the "real story" is obtained from former U.S. ambassadors, U.S. think-tanks, and a list of shady U.S. "well-informed sources" which usually represent one of the many three-letter abbreviated organizations that have ample reason to remain unidentified.

Xi's Massive Reform Agenda

Following in Deng's footsteps, President Xi's leadership is pushing new reform and opening-up policies that seek to transform China into a post-industrial, middle-income society by the late 2020s. The huge agenda focuses on tripartite reforms, eight core sectors and three packages.

The triple reforms comprise the market, government and corporations. Market reforms accelerated after the arrival of the new leadership. Governance reforms permeate the public sector. Neither foreign-owned multinationals nor mighty state-owned enterprises (SOEs) can escape antitrust laws, which are now

enforced.

The eight core sectors include finance, taxation, state assets, social welfare, land, foreign investment, innovation, and good governance. Financial and foreign-exchange reforms have been sped up, along with accelerated attempts at capital convertibility to modernize China's financial markets and to make the renminbi an international currency reserve. The new SOE reform plan has been launched and gradual privatizations will ensue.

The evolving basic social security package is reflected by modest pension, medical insurance and education support. New rules have been introduced for the sales of collectively-owned rural land, while the phasing-out of the old household registration system (*hukou*) will support Beijing's new urbanization agenda in mid-size cities of 1-5 million people.

Foreign investment in manufacturing is encouraged in the less-developed provinces, while foreign capital in R&D and business services is favored in the more-developed coastal provinces. The central government is also pushing efforts to increase higher productivity and R&D, which will soon exceed that in Europe.

When President Xi launched his far-reaching campaign against corruption, it was portrayed in Washington as "Xi's effort to consolidate his own power" because, as the *Atlantic* put it, Chinese politics represents "a pervasive culture of patronage, factionalism, and cronyism." However, to Xi and his anti-graft tsar, Wang Qishan, former key negotiator in the U.S.-China Strategic & Economic Dialogue, any real anti-corruption struggle must crack down on "both tigers and flies," both petty civil servants and high-level officials alike.

Curiously, after decades of criticism against Chinese corruption, Washington has begun to argue that, actually, anti-corruption struggle can be bad for the Chinese economy. Such double standards cast a dark shadow over U.S. credibility in Beijing and Chinese popular opinion.

New Terrain of Bilateral Relations

For three decades, bilateral economic ties were overshadowed by China's role as exporter and U.S. capital in China. While mainstream Washington continues to blame China for "taking our jobs," the new normal is reflected by rapidly-increasing U.S. exports to China and Chinese capital in the U.S. Meanwhile, Beijing and Washington are completing the highly-anticipated U.S.-China bilateral investment treaty (BIT).

In the Asia Pacific, the White House has done whatever it could to deter China's free-trade plans, while seeking to complete the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement, which leaves out China, India, and Indonesia the three largest and

most consequential economies of Asia.

In Washington's stories, President Xi's foreign policy is typically portrayed as more "assertive." An alternative view is that it is largely a defensive posture, which was deemed vital in Beijing, due to NSA's controversial cyber activities and Washington's "pivot to Asia"; that is, Cold-War like containment policies that seeks to encircle and suppress China's economic, political, and security ties with its regional neighborhood. In contrast, President Xi's historical "One Road, One Belt" initiatives are likely to defuse military distractions and to optimize economic development regionally.

Along with other large emerging economies, China has also pushed for the BRICS New Development Bank (NDB) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) that are each vital to desperately needed infrastructure projects in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and elsewhere but the White House fought until it found itself alone, even amid its closest security allies.

Thanks to these ongoing reforms, the very environment of Chinese-U.S. bilateral relations is under drastic transformation. And yet, Washington has too often than not embraced old Cold War policy stances rather than embraced the new opportunities inherent in Xi's reform agenda. The Cold War ended a quarter of a century ago. It is time to be on the right side of history.

What Washington needs are, well, new stories.

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