AIM HIGH . . . FLY-FIGHT-WIN

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Editorial

Articles

America, Lead; Airpower's Enduring Utility; Tunisian Army and Uprisings; South-South Land Grabs; and Where Ambassadors Go

The international system is perpetually in motion, and qualifying today's world appears highly debatable. Still, the real question underlying this debate is what tomorrow's international system will look like. Furthermore—and perhaps more importantly—what strategies should countries adopt to influence that system's structure in a way most favorable to them? Clearly, the main powers behind today's international system are the United States and China, and the two countries' relationship, therefore, is the subject of much study, according to Prof. Tanguy Struye de Swielande and Dorothée Vandamme in "America, You Are a Leader—Lead." Most works that attempt to predict the future US-China relationship have proposed various scenarios, including both hegemonic war and global governance. Tacitly, all such scenarios assume a systemic redistribution of power. However, few analyses have considered the potential for continuing American leadership. Nonetheless, this scenario is worthy of study, particularly in light of the Chinese "capacity-expectation gap" and the paradox of unrealized power. This is not to say that Beijing cannot compete with Washington in some domains, but America continues to dominate the international system. Such domination enables the United States to adapt its leadership so as to integrate China into the global order. The authors seek to understand the implications of roles and perceptions in the evolution of the international order and the types of leadership that the United States should put into practice to manage interrole conflicts with China, avoid Thucydides' scenario of hegemonic war, and, ultimately, remain the global leader.

In "The Air Force, Grand Strategy, and National Security: Toward a Better Understanding of Airpower's Enduring Utility," Prof. Robert Ehlers addresses the waxing and waning for nearly 70 years of the calls for an end to the independent US Air Force and the absorption of its component parts into the other military services. During the past

15 years, however, attacks on the utility of the Air Force—and thus its retention as an independent service—have become increasingly strident. This article takes an opposing view based on the continuing utility of airpower across the entire range of American grand-strategic aims and supporting policy efforts. Although it discusses the importance of airpower as part of a balanced combined-arms force in conventional wars and its often overlooked effectiveness in other kinds of armed conflicts, the article focuses on how the Air Force and the many assets it employs have proven particularly effective in helping policy makers achieve strategic aims short of armed conflict. This relatively little discussed dimension of the service's contributions to our country's security and prosperity—and those of key allies and associates—takes center stage and gives the reader a different and better appreciation of the wide range of air (and space) capabilities that the independent Air Force brings to bear. By viewing these capabilities and their employment through a broader lens that includes but goes far beyond war, and in which war is properly situated as the very last policy option, we develop a deeper, more nuanced understanding of both the Air Force and airpower as enduring assets of great importance. Granted, no service—including the Air Force—has approached perfection in either wartime operations or those short of war, but the Air Force has more than proven its worth along with the other services.

Prof. Landry Signé and Rémy Smida explain the 2011 Tunisian transition by analyzing how the army played a crucial role in the fall of President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's regime in their article "Actions of the Tunisian Army in Gafsa in 2008 and during the Uprising of 2011." What is the rationality behind the military's decision to refuse Ben Ali's order to open fire on the demonstrators? Why did the Tunisian army fire on protesters in the 2008 demonstrations in the city of Gafsa yet refused to do so in the decisive uprising of 2011? The authors maintain that the balance of power on the field was such that the army was better off backing the population and using a strategic entry point to bring a decisive "coup" against the regime. Their study offers the first analysis that applies game theory to explain the 2011 Tunisian transition and, more precisely, the interactions between Ben Ali's regime and the army. Although several analyses examine the unprecedented popular mobilization to explain the president's fall, only a few attempt to address the role of the militaries. However, even though they emphasize the "disdain" of the army towards the regime, the authors claim that the rationality of one of the most professional armies in the region explains why its soldiers refused to open fire at their own population in the 2011 national protests.

In "South-South Land Grabs: The Case of Korean Investments in the Greater Mekong Subregion," Prof. Teresita Cruz-del Rosario posits that land grabs in Southeast Asia, particularly in the Greater Mekong Subregion, are happening with unprecedented speed and on a vast scale. Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar are favored sites of transna-

tional capital to secure land rights. The global "race for arable lands" involves countries with rapid economic growth faced with increasing shortages of food for their expanding populations and shrinking land acreage for agriculture production. South Korea is a case in point. Land is substituting for capital resources, a phenomenon known as "land-capital switching." Because land still forms an intrinsic, critical feature of socioeconomic security—especially in the absence of opportunities to acquire capital—the loss of land exacerbates existing insecurities and denies dislocated populations any access to socioeconomic measures that could alleviate these insecurities. The article further investigates this phenomenon in the Greater Mekong Subregion and establishes the "agro-food-feed-fuel" complex as the underlying logic for the large-scale acquisition of land.

Prof. Dennis Jett, a retired US ambassador, informs us in "Where Ambassadors Go" that one can be an American ambassador at any of about 165 different places in the world. Many factors drive the decision of who gets to go to a particular country, and how such matters come into play is not easily understood. The most important determinant is whether the person is a career officer or a political appointee. Other issues influence ambassadorial assignments, however, and characteristics as diverse as gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, and one's position on abortion can prove influential. Professor Jett's article discusses how these factors affect where a person is sent as ambassador and why no general theory provides an appropriate explanation.

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America, You Are a Leader—Lead

Tanguy Struye de Swielande, PhD[*]
Dorothée Vandamme

The question of whether or not the world is in transition is an inadequate one. Transition is an ongoing process in international relations; the international system is perpetually in motion, evolving according to interstate relations. Qualifying today's world appears to be highly debatable, and scholars differ in their views and the qualifications that apply. Still, the real question that underlies this debate is what tomorrow's international system will look like. Also, and perhaps more importantly, what kinds of strategies should countries adopt to influence its structuring in a way that is most favorable to them?

It is clear that the main powers behind today's international system are the United States and China; therefore, the two countries' relationship is the subject of much study. A literature review highlights the fact that most of the studies that attempt to predict the future United States–China relationship have proposed various potential change scenarios, including both hegemonic war and global governance. Tacitly, all of these scenarios assume a redistribution of power in the system. However, few analyses have considered the potential for continuing American leadership. Nonetheless, this scenario is worthy of study, particularly in light of the Chinese "capacity-expectation gap" and the paradox of unrealized power. Moreover, the debate about American decline is far from original. In fact, the first of these debates dates back to the 1950s. The United States has had to face repeated competition throughout its history (i.e., from the Soviet Union or Japan), but each of these attempts to overtake American dominance has failed. This is not to say that Beijing cannot compete with Washington in some domains—for example, the economy—but America continues to dominate the international system. Such domination enables the United States to adapt its lead-

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ership so as to integrate China into the hierarchical global order, which has been structured by Washington since 1945. Adapting its role on the international scene and managing interrole conflicts with China are key to continuing America's success and, ultimately, avoiding Thucydides' scenario of hegemonic war.

In essence, what the United States must do if it wishes to stay number one is to reform today's international system in order to strengthen it. In other words, the leader should develop a strategy leading to an organizational change in the international system while it is in transition. Although leader-follower-challenger relations have not been studied much in international relations, management theories do deal with this subject extensively. Therefore, both role theory and leadership management theory can provide insights into the best way to develop such a strategy. Two aspects are important if Washington is to adapt its strategies: the identification of a step-by-step process and the evolution of its leadership style. This article seeks to understand the implications of roles and perceptions in the evolution of the international order and the types of leadership that the United States should put into practice to remain the global leader.

American Leadership in the International System

As the world's superpower, the United States has been leading the international system at least since 1945—some individuals even argue that this dominance has existed since 1914. In structuring the world according to its values, norms and interests, Washington has managed to construct a large network of alliances and partnerships on which its leadership lies. Built upon its self-perception as the world's democratizer and enforcer of "international" norms, the United States considers itself a leader whose national interests usually correspond to global interests. This national role conception, as defined by Kal Holsti in 1970, is correlated with a pragmatic vision of internationalism—as opposed to supranationalism.[1] Ultimately, the United States is thus an egocentric maximizer because it takes its interests into account first and foremost. Of course, one would argue that all countries act to defend their own interests, navigating international relations to advance the goals of their foreign policies. The fact remains, however, that few countries' foreign policy goals affect the international system as much as those of the United States. In this regard, role theory focuses on the coconstitutive nature of agency and structure: while the system shapes a country's foreign policy, the behavior of the country will also, to a certain extent, affect the system. Washington's fluctuating mix of pragmatic internationalism and selective engagement over the last 60 or so years, with fluctuations, has largely shaped construction of the system as we know it today. Countries are defined according to their percep-

tion, behavior, and support vis-à-vis the United States. Most importantly, China has been emerging over the last decade as the global leader's peer competitor, raising the debate about the United States' relative decline and about whether Beijing will indeed replace Washington as the world's superpower. Consequently, in trying to predict how the international system will evolve, we can perhaps contextualize and focus on how the United States–China relationship and confrontation will evolve and the effect on the international system. Further, given China's rise, what kind of strategy should Washington put in place in its attempt to remain the world leader?

Broadly speaking, three groups of countries exist in today's world: followers of the United States; its challengers—usually China's potential followers; and the swing states. The first group, the followers, can be subdivided into (1) allies, who align their foreign policy to the leader's and the system; (2) partners, whose political orientation aligns to and supports the system; and (3) the cohabitants, whose support for the system is utilitarian and limited and does not involve supporting the leader per se. On the opposite side of the spectrum are the challengers, whose opposition to the United States leads to an alignment with the peer competitor (i.e., China) since they cannot oppose the United States by themselves. The challengers can be subdivided into (1) opponents, whose alignment to the peer competitor is utilitarian and limited; and (2) adversaries, who fully reject Washington's leadership and align completely with China.[2] Thus, we currently see the development, within the international system led by Washington, of a reformist system centered around and led by Beijing, the aim of which is to counterbalance American power and ultimately replace it with Chinese global leadership. The resulting balance between China and the United States may well be decided by the orientation taken by the swing states. This category of countries, those that sit on the fence in terms of foreign policy alignment, has uncertain foreign policies, the orientation of which will weigh in favor of or against the leader, shifting the balance pro or contra the United States. These swing states are either (1) neutral, their foreign policy goal being explicitly neutral between China and the United States; or (2) indecisive, with foreign policy goals that are uncertain, sometimes even to themselves. Swing states use the doubt about their political orientation as a power multiplier to gain greater global impact. Because of their position, these countries have a wider range of exit options (i.e., the possibility to carry out their foreign policy as they see fit) without having to align with one great power or the other. Today's most important swing states are India, Brazil, Indonesia, South Africa, Mexico, and Turkey.[3]

Aligning countries to this set of classifications means that we can analyze the system according to countries' reactions to hegemony. As Robert Lieber points

out, the limits to American leadership are more ideational than material.[4] Unquestionably, the United States is the first military power and can mobilize a broad range of alliances and partnerships. Its economy remains strong, and the international economic system finds its roots in American principles and norms, thus strengthening US structural and normative power.[5] It is also a social, an ideational, and a networking power.[6] In this regard, the United States can be qualified as a transformational leader, mainly when one considers its relationship with its followers.[7] By integrating the ideas and motivations of these followers, the leader can inspire change in their reflection, leading them to reorient their behavior and even their role conception. However, Washington's leadership is also transactional, particularly towards challengers. Transactional leaders tend to have a coercive type of leadership, emphasizing rewards and punishment and influencing by might rather than right.[8] Hence, the leader's position is considered rightful and legitimate by its followers, but challengers perceive it as illegitimate, based on coercion and force. Accordingly, these reactions are determined by the perception that countries have of their own role in international politics, influenced by their national role conceptions. When such conceptions are either compatible with or complementary to those of the United States, these countries tend to be followers. In return for their support, they gain extra opportunities to reach their goals. However, when a country's national role conception is incompatible with Washington's, it will tend to oppose American leadership.

Here lies the root of the problem that American leadership faces: China's national role conception is inherently incompatible with that of the United States, leading to interrole conflict—that is, "a conflict between non-compatible, competing, or clashing role expectations about self and others," in that case "with systemic relevance."[9] Therefore, two competing sides emerge. On the one hand is the United States with its conception of itself as the world leader, whose foreign policy is guided by Manifest Destiny. On the other is China's foreign policy goal of erasing the "Century of Humiliations," a historical narrative that determines its international perception—anchored in competition and the pernicious dominance of the West, in particular in Asia. As Richard Haass explains, "China is not yet ready to become a partner in building and operating regional and global institutions, in part because its leaders remain focused on their perceived internal need, and in part because this rising power is busy in asserting itself throughout the region."[10] Recent declarations by the Chinese president illustrate this point. Whether it be the will to develop a Chinese dream, the idea of rejuvenation, or the May 2014 "Asia for Asians" declaration, China's objective is to control the region at the very least and to act as a leader. Neither is this ambition new (see for reference the Tributary System from 1368 to 1841). These elements come to rein-

force an already-exacerbated nationalism that is becoming increasingly bottom-up (i.e., originating from the people). As a consequence, China's goal is to reform the international system—either to transform it into a more equitable system (view number one) or to become the new leader (view number two).[11] The inherent incompatibility between America's and China's role conceptions seems clear: each conceives of itself as the only possible leader, making it impossible to reach an international system based on coleadership or global governance or to have a pacific transition of power.[12]

Washington thus faces a peer competitor whose power of attraction, mainly rooted in the very fact that it is opposing the leader, is gaining more and more weight and credibility among other countries. We have established that the followers will support the system because they benefit from it (keeping in mind that in international politics, there are no permanent allies or foes—only permanent interests). But challengers are already supporting China, and it is not possible in the short term to integrate them into the American web of alliance and influence by engaging them directly. The key to Washington's remaining the global leader lies in bringing the major swing states—America's "significant others" in role theory—into the US sphere of influence. This shift towards the United States would isolate China, both by avoiding a reinforced partnership between China and these swing states and by preventing a chain reaction that would drive minor swing states into China's sphere of influence. However, if the major swing states follow China, the United States should support and ally with minor swing states, in particular the regional number twos, to balance against the major swing states.[13]

Preliminary Phases

To realize its goals, the United States must adapt its current foreign policy, in particular US role behavior. As Harald Müller points out, actors need to adapt their role script to their new environment. Without taking this step, the probability of their failure in this new environment increases.[14] Kurt Lewin's "Change Management" model identifies change as a three-step process: defreeze, change, and refreeze. This model, according to its author, makes it possible to plan the transition ahead and not merely to step blindly into it.[15] Complementary to this model is John Kotter's "Leading Change" model, an eight-step process that helps one better understand "the anatomy of organizational change."[16] Kotter's model can be integrated as substeps into Lewin's theory. Both are adapted to establish a step-by-step process of systemic change in international relations.

First Step: Defreeze—Understand the System and Strengthen Alliances

The United States' relative power is in decline. Notwithstanding the wide agreement with this statement, it is not incontrovertible. As explained above, a carefully planned strategy and a smart use of its power may be central to ensuring long-lasting American leadership. Nonetheless, one can change a situation only if one is fully aware of what the situation is. Washington needs to cease merely watching China's rise and to start understanding what kind of change this emergence necessitates. China is not a threat per se, but it becomes so mainly because it has the capacity and power to mobilize a number of unsatisfied countries to confront and oppose American leadership by offering them a different "system of narration."[17] In this regard, the first step for Washington is to become fully aware of the phenomenon through which a system is developing inside the international system— one that opposes its leadership. Illustrative of this opposition system are institutions such as the Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, the Asian Infrastructure Bank, or the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.[18] As challenging as it might be for a leader to change its vision, it is important that American leaders not only realize this fact but also accept the existence of a subsystem within the international system, the goal of which is to reform the system by reorganizing the hierarchy of powers.

Once these first two subphases have been explored, "motivation for change [is] generated," thus enabling American leadership to prepare for change. The preparatory phase will involve dealing with intrarole conflicts inherent to foreign policy. Such conflicts result from the multiplicity and complexity of role conceptions, which "inevitably incorporate several important core precepts and principles, norms and values as well as an extensive set of individual role elements."[19] This type of role conflict thus emerges from a conception-performance gap within the role set (the aggregation of roles fulfilled by the actor) or from the multiplicity of actors involved in the foreign policy decision-making process.[20] Intrarole conflicts are the cause of internal incoherence that leads to external weakness. Consequently, it is of the utmost importance that American leaders in Washington be cohesive around a foreign policy project and the United States' national role conception in order to establish their grand strategy in accordance with a solid role set.

Evolving from acceptance of change to adaptation of the organization enables full entry into the defreeze phase. Allies, partners, and cohabitants should at this point know about the process, backing the reform of the system and understanding the new direction that American foreign policy will take. Therefore, once the leadership in Washington is ready for change, the closest web of alliances and

partners needs to be fully integrated into the evolution strategy if the United States is to gain their full support. Doing so will mean listening to their thoughts and visions and taking into account their opinions and interests. Indeed, as the leadership-followership literature shows, followers are an integral part of the system, providing the leader with the necessary legitimation for his position.[21]

The defreeze phase is a time of reflection, self-analysis, and consultation when American leaders should be attentive to what other countries have to say about the system. Arguably, the objective of American strategy is to integrate the swing states into the international system to a greater degree, thus focusing on more extensive functional integration. For instance, for several years now, emerging voices have opposed the current structure and require it to change the makeup of the United Nations, the world's most internationalized organization. It is widely recognized that the UN Security Council is reflective of the post–World War II order and is in need of amendment, as are other institutions such as the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank. Such change will require an optimal policy window (i.e., the period that would be best to suggest and implement that change). If the strategy includes giving greater voice to a series of countries, then the most appropriate way to do so is to gradually involve them in dealing with issues by devolving leadership to them.[22]

Second Step: Change—Role Adaptation and Delegation of Leadership

As explained above, the most important aspect of developing a vision of change for the international system involves the United States building a strong and cohesive coalition of followers that will support such reform. Thus, Washington must adapt its current role behavior to gradually implement a new form of leadership. Again, role theory can bring interesting insights to this process with the strategy of role change (i.e., "a change in the shared conception and execution of typical role performance and role boundaries").[23] Role adaptation, the first degree of role change, is the alteration required by the United States: foreign policy goals remain stable, but the instruments and strategies to implement said goals will change. This process, however, does not imply an inherent change in the American role conception, which is anchored in the United States' historical narrative and is part of the American national identity. Rather, Washington should implement a strategy of "altercasting," defined as "the conscious manipulation of one's own role-taking behaviour to (re)shape the role of another actor, presumably a counter or commensurate role."[24] Cameron Thies defines "altercasting" as referring to "situations in which the relevant others cast a social actor into a role and provide cues to elicit the corresponding appropriate behaviour" when adopting the point of view of the target entity.[25] Stephen Walker and Sheldon Simon iden-

tify altercasting as one of the five strategies for dealing with role conflict, one through which an entity (i.e., the United States) will respond to "cues and expectations with behaviour that creates reorientations of the target's role expectations."[26] The resulting process of socialization leads to the internalization of behaviors and rules by an outsider of the community. As Sebastian Harnisch explains, "to counter . . . indeterminacy, [a country] acts as if [it] were performing a new role, thereby allowing for a new shared meaning to emerge."[27] This action needs to occur through a mechanism of complex learning, leading to "changes in the actor's own preference rankings or a transformation of the underlying understanding about the nature of the political system within which the actor functions."[28] Hanns Maull thus argues that, to face the changes of the international environment, Washington should adopt an interactionist perspective through this process of complex learning, through which it will adapt its behavior by observing the behavior and position of others—in particular, the "significant others" that will determine how Washington must adapt its role.[29]

In essence, this approach suggests that the United States have a more self-assertive role behavior, allowing for fewer restraints on the boundaries, instruments, and scope of responsibilities that American leadership has defined for itself.[30] This suggestion does not mean being a stronger and more visible presence in international politics. Rather, it means asserting and putting into effect the new type of leadership required to influence the desired behaviors of others—in this case, those of swing states. Given the relative power of these countries, an authoritative allocation of roles most likely would produce a countereffect and antagonize the target countries. Instead, Washington should focus on an exchange process and, in a second phase, an institution-building process.[31] The exchange process addresses the "actual allocations of values in political processes," in which international-exchange relationships are viewed as a way to solve national problems; through an institution-building process, the terms of allocation and a set shared of expectations are formalized in a long-term perspective.[32] The relative distribution of power has evolved, and the swing states require more space in international politics. Since the United States has neither the power nor any interest in coercively imposing its leadership, delegation of leadership ought to become a cornerstone of its new role behavior. If we consider the period of American hegemony from its outset, we can see that the evolution of countries' interests and foreign policy goals broadly follows Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs.[33] First, countries are concerned with fulfilling their fundamental needs (survival, internal and external security). Once the first tier of needs is satisfied, social and psychological needs become the objective. This second tier corresponds to international recognition and consideration, as well as fulfilment of national role con-

ceptions and objectives. By increasing the swing states' management of issues, Washington will acknowledge their position and role in international politics, thus taking their needs into consideration. President Barack Obama's "leading from behind" doctrine in fact represents a tangible application of such an approach—the problem being that allies must be fully aware of and in agreement with the strategy—hence, the importance of the "defreeze" step.

Several tactics could be used to fulfil swing states' hierarchy of needs. These tactics can be exemplified by strategies developed in the management literature concerning organizational change and transition. Increasing regional and domain leadership are two examples of such tactics. Regional leadership would enable the responsibility for managing regional issues to be transferred to major swing states, who are usually regional leaders. This approach is not new and can be illustrated by Thomas Barnett's article "The Pentagon's New Map."[34] In his study, Barnett identifies three broad regions: the functioning core, the nonintegrated gap, and the seam states. According to the author, the functioning core should delegate responsibility and leadership to the seam states to reintegrate the disconnected gap into globalization. Not only would this process contribute to increasing swing states' national sense of achievement and satisfaction but also would enable the management of issues by actors who are an integral part of the region, with Washington "leading from behind." Additionally, implementing this strategy of diversification with a strategy of specialization could increase the efficiency of American leadership. A strategy of specialization corresponds to domain leadership. As David Ricardo explained in his economy theory of comparative advantages, greater efficiency is usually achieved when the actors who know a specific issue the best are the ones who manage it.[35] Literature about the middle powers largely deals with the question of niche diplomacy—suffice it to mention Canada and peacekeeping or Singapore and water diplomacy.[36] It is widely recognized in international politics that some countries have particular areas of expertise in international relations. These domains are becoming ever more visible, and the United States should pay careful attention to them, finding the best way to bring them to the forefront. Some individuals would consider this practice a modern example of "divide and conquer." If somewhat true, such a strategy of specialization would first and foremost enable greater efficiency in dealing with specific issues.

A third tactic to increase participative and delegated leadership would involve implementing institutionalism as a strategy of vertical and functional integration. As the theories of European strategic institutionalism show, the higher the degree of institutionalization, the higher the cost of noncompliance or nonimplementation of institutional norms and rules.[37] Since the United States is a normative power, this strategy would in essence mean reinforcing this aspect of its

power by binding countries through institutions, implicitly extracting more ide-ational support from followers and swing states. Institutionalism would go hand-in-hand with the evolution and reform of international (and regional) organiza-tions. Besides, "the larger the number of actors and the number and 'intricacy' of issues, the more likely it is that some actors will emerge as leaders and others as followers."[38] Consequently, while delegating to swing states through strategies of diversification and specialization, a strategy of institutionalism conducted in par-allel would allow the United States to emerge as the ultimate leader in times of crises or when other countries cannot manage an issue.

In this international system, Washington would emerge as primus inter pares, "first among equals." This structure corresponds to the Bismarck system, in which significant others have interstate relations, but the relationship that each one has on a bilateral basis with the leader is stronger than any other relation in the system.[39] The nature and degree of that prominent relationship will vary ac-cording to the country in question and will be formative for America's role adjust-ment.[40] Washington, therefore, needs to acknowledge that each of its bilateral relationships with swing states needs careful planning and cultivation to eliminate the potential exit options for these countries. Doing so calls for affecting the role that these countries perceive for themselves by influencing their definition of their own role scenarios (i.e., how they perceive the behavior they need to enact to reach their foreign policy goals). As Bruce Jones argues in his discussion of the importance of multinational coalitions in American foreign policy, this "does not mean committing the bulk of U.S. power to formal international institutions."[41] Institutionalism is one more element in increasing and deepening bilateral rela-tions in the Bismarck model of the international system. We agree with Jones's modelling of the international system as concentric circles, differing in the nature of the circles: we schematize the international system as concentric circles around the United States (the core). These concentric circles are composed of groups of countries depending on their support for and alignment with American leader-ship. The further the circle from the United States, the less supportive the country is of American leadership and the international system. This pattern of circles is itself embedded into a large circle that represents the international system. Sche-matically, what we see today is the development of a second pattern of circles, with China as its core and China's immediate followers (the United States' chal-lengers) in the immediate circle around China. The further we depart from both cores, the closer we are to swing states. They represent a moving circle, unfixed at any time, and uncertain about whether they will firmly circle around the United States or China.

To implement these changes in the international system, whether through bilateral relations or multinational settings, Washington should concentrate on the use of normative persuasion derived from communicative action. This process, first theorized by Jürgen Habermas, finds its roots in linguistics and supposes the rationality of human nature.[42] According to this theory, "the coordinating achievements in the process of interaction are tied to an insight which is tendentially based in linguistic communication."[43] In other words, it establishes that a common ground for cooperative action can be found through the use of language tools such as persuasion, argumentation, negotiations, and so forth, rather than through strategic action alone. As Müller points out, communicative action entails three aspects: first, one must understand the issue being discussed; second, actors should agree on distinguishing right from wrong in said issue; and third, there should be an "understanding about the authenticity of what is being said" that is about the credibility and legitimacy of the speaker.[44] The moral and legitimacy aspects must be highlighted. They require a minimum of shared norms and expectations so as to enable a reference system for all actors. The advantage of using communicative action, coupled with strategic action, is that it enables the consensual inclusion of all target countries in the process. Consequently, by emphasizing cooperation rather than unilateral action, Washington would acknowledge the role of swing states and include them in the process of systemic reform. In this regard, the United States is in a favorable position to bring about change in the international system: as the normative power that built the system, one could argue that it is also the ultimate depository of the norms, values, and interrelations that structure the system. Normative persuasion thus enables assessment of "the appropriateness of roles in a situation of uncertainty." Basically, it is about finding a common ground suitable for all parties involved in order to reach "a reasoned consensus."[45] However, this process would not work in a moment of extreme crisis because crises usually call for more fundamental changes—in which situation other countries might be tempted to overlook the American role in building the international system in order to implement their own norms and values. In this regard, a policy window should not be an international crisis but the aftermath of a crisis, when change can easily be understood as bringing a long-term solution to avoid another crisis. The use of communicative action makes it possible to build a strong coalition and at the same time to communicate the American vision of systemic transition. The process will also lead to short-term results, which have proved a great asset in encouraging entities to carry on with the transition.[46] Arguably, the same could be said about the international system: if the delegation of leadership brings swing states a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction about the system, then their role behavior will become more and more compatible with that of the United

States. Consequently, these countries will tend to tip the scales in Washington's favor.

Third Step: Refreeze—Fix Changes in the Long Term

Clearly, the process of delegating leadership entails a risk of empowering these countries, possibly to the extent that their foreign policy goals would become global. Additionally, one should note that obtaining short-term results and support from swing states does not represent a structural shift in these countries' foreign policy. For that reason, the process of establishing delegated and participative leadership must be implemented through strategies of both diversification and specialization, supplemented by a strategy of institutionalism. The last phase is thus to fix the changes in the long term. This is the refreeze phase, during which the United States should build upon and stabilize the accomplishments made during the change phase and learn from the negative results to identify the causes of failure and improve the implementation process.

Leadership is a combination of transactional and transformational styles of leadership, but the "refreeze" phase should address transformational leadership, with the occasional use of transactional leadership, more as a tool. As a transformational leader, the United States will begin to alter other nations' perceptions. The other powers—particularly the swing states—will begin to consider America's role conception legitimate and its ultimate foreign policy objective, Manifest Destiny, as both legitimate and beneficial to the international system. Long-term implementation of diversification and specialization strategies will lead to a multiplicity of issue/task-oriented and regional leaderships, with the United States supervising the general functioning of the system and intervening as a force of last resort. Given the structural objectives of the transition discussed in this article, the most appropriate tool at the United States' disposal to fix the changes works through institutionalization, both formal and informal. Formal institutionalization establishes rules, norms, and values, as well as sanctions in case of noncompliance. It binds other countries into a pattern of behavior and relations regulated by an organization considered almost a higher (moral) authority. Informal institutionalization "refers to the development of rules 'created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels.'"[47] The process of socialization thus creates patterns of interaction, leading to path dependency, eventually strengthening the structure of the system—in this case, with American leadership. Ideally, followers and swing states that at that point have fully joined the American system will perceive American interests as complementary to their own, thus pursuing both through their foreign policy.

Many scenarios seek to predict the future of the US-China relationship, ranging from hegemonic war to global governance. Nonetheless, this article has taken a different approach in analyzing the little-studied scenario of continuing US dominance by explaining the process to reach this objective through role and management theories. Hence, role theory emphasizes the conflicting roles between Beijing and Washington, emphasizing their national role conceptions as leaders of the international system. In light of this opposition, the risk of a hegemonic war is real. Adapting American strategy thus appears fundamental; such adaptation should take the form of giving greater voice to emerging countries, mainly swing states, while isolating China and locking it up into the international structure. One can do so only by transforming Washington's leadership style while maintaining its core national-role conception.

Notes

1. Kal Holsti defines a national role conception as "includ[ing] the policymaker's own definitions of the general kinds of decisions, commitments, rules, and actions suitable to their states, and of the functions, if any, their state should perform on a continuing basis in the international system or in subordinate regional systems." Kal Holsti, "National Role Conceptions in the Study of Foreign Policy," *International Studies Quarterly* 14, issue 3 (1970): 246.

2. This classification is adapted from Gerald Egan's management theory on the shadow side of organizations. This theory identifies and classifies the different actors in a company according to their support or lack of support of a company's project of change. James McGrath and Bob Bates, *Le petit livre des grandes théories du management: Et comment les mettre en pratique* (Paris: ESF éditeur, 2014), 142–43.

3. This list is not exhaustive and identifies only what we qualify as the *major* swing states—thus excluding the *minor* ones, such as Pakistan, Ukraine, Egypt, Algeria, Argentina, Nigeria, and Vietnam. For further references, see Tim Sweijs et al., *Why Are Pivot States So Pivotal? The Role of Pivot States in Regional and Global Security* (The Hague: Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2014), 1–57.

4. Robert Lieber, *Power and Willpower in the American Future: Why the United States Is Not Destined to Decline* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

5. Susan Strange, *States and Markets* (London: Pinter, 1994); and Dario Battistella, *Un monde unidimensionnel* (Paris: Presses de Sciences Po, 2011).

6. Daniel Flemes and Thorsten Wojczewski, "Contested Leadership in International Relations: Power Politics in South America, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa," German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Working Papers, issue 121 (2010), 1–35; and Min K. Hyung, "Comparing Measures of National Power," *International Political Science Review* 31, issue 4 (2010): 405–27.

7. James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: HarperCollins, 1978); and George R. Goethals, Georgia J. Sorenson, and James MacGregor Burns, *Encyclopedia of Leadership*, vol. 4 (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2004).

8. Edwin Hollander, "The Essential Interdependence of Leadership and Followership," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 1, issue 2 (1992): 71–75; and Fred Lunenburg, "Leader-Member Exchange Theory: Another Perspective on the Leadership Process," *International Journal of Management, Business, and Administration* 13, issue 1 (2010): 1–5.

9. Sebastian Harnisch, Cornelia Frank, and Hanns W. Maull, "Conclusion: Role Theory, Role Change, and the International Social Order," in *Role Theory in International Relations: Approaches and Analyses*, ed. Sebastian Harnisch, Cornelia Frank, and Hanns W. Maull (New York: Routledge, 2011), 256.

10. Richard N. Haass, *Foreign Policy Begins at Home: The Case for Putting America's House in Order* (New York: Basic Books, 2013), 102.

11. There is a debate about China's ultimate foreign policy goal. The authors, adopting an offensive realist view, analyze China's goal as replacing the United States as the world leader.

12. Not to mention the direct clash of their respective interests in the Pacific, where their lines of defense and projection overlap. For further reference, see Tanguy Struye de Swielande, "The Reassertion of the United States in the Asia-Pacific Region," *Parameters*, Spring 2012, 75–89.

13. Robert Chase, Emily Hill, and Paul Kennedy, "Pivotal States and US Strategy," *Foreign Affairs* 75, issue 1 (1996): 33–50.

14. Harald Müller, "Habermas Meets Role Theory: Communicative Action as Role Playing?," in Harnisch, Frank, and Maull, *Role Theory in International Relations*, 55–73.

15. Kurt Lewin, cited in McGrath and Bates, *Grandes théories du management*, 132.

16. John Kotter, "Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail," *Harvard Business Review* 73, issue 2 (1995): 59–67.

17. Dirk Nabers, "Identity and Role Change in International Politics," in Harnisch, Frank, and Maull, *Role Theory in International Relations*, 87.

18. Thus, President Xi declared at the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia summit in May 2014 in Shanghai that "Asia countries should all cooperate to resolve security issues in the region. . . . A third party aimed at enhancing military alliances in the region does not serve our interests." Additionally, China defends the new concept of *Asia for Asians*: "It is for the people of Asia to run the affairs of Asia, solve the problems of Asia and uphold the security of Asia."

19. Harnisch, Frank, and Maull, "Conclusion," 258.

20. The conception-expectation gap arises from a divergence between role conception and role behavior. Ole Elgström and Michael Smith, eds., *The European Union's Roles in International Politics: Concepts and Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2006).

21. Ira Chaleff, *The Courageous Follower: Standing Up to and for Our Leaders* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1995); and Barbara Kellerman, *Followership: How Followers Are Creating Change and Changing Leaders* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2008).

22. Interestingly, the American Congress has not ratified the bill designed to give greater voice to these countries in the International Monetary Fund, which is illustrative of the disconnect between the United States' current positioning and the expectations of other countries. This failure can only weaken American leadership.

23. Ralph H. Turner, "Role Change," *Annual Review of Sociology* 16 (1990): 88.

24. Sebastian Harnisch, "Role Theory: Operationalization of Key Concepts," in Harnisch, Frank, and Maull, *Role Theory in International Relations*, 55.

25. Cameron G. Thies, *The United States, Israel, and the Search for International Order: Socializing States* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 32.

26. Stephen G. Walker and Sheldon W. Simon, "Role Sets and Foreign Policy Analysis in Southeast Asia," in *Role Theory and Foreign Policy Analysis*, ed. Stephen G. Walker (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1987), 142.

27. Sebastian Harnisch, "'Dialogue and Emergence': George Herbert Mead's Contribution to Role Theory and His Reconstruction of International Politics," in Harnisch, Frank, and Maull, *Role Theory in International Relations*, 43.

28. Ibid.

29. Hanns Maull, "Hegemony Reconstructed? America's Role Conception and Its 'Leadership' within Core Alliances," in Harnisch, Frank, and Maull, *Role Theory in International Relations*, 191.

30. Harnisch, Frank, and Maull, *Role Theory in International Relations*.

31. Stephen G. Walker, *Role Theory and Foreign Policy Analysis*, 144–45.

32. Ibid.

33. Hayden adapted Maslow's hierarchy of needs to international relations. Casey Hayden, "A Hierarchy of Needs in International Relations" (PhD diss., Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 2009).

34. Thomas P. M. Barnett, "The Pentagon's New Map," *Esquire*, 29 January 2007, http://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a1546/esq0303-mar-warprimer/.

35. David Ricardo, cited in Paul Krugman and Maurice Obstfeld, *Economie internationale*, 8th ed. (Paris: Pearson Education France, 2009).

36. Andrew F. Cooper, ed., *Niche Diplomacy: Middle Powers after the Cold War* (London: Macmillan, 1997).

37. Chalmers A. Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle: The Growth of Industrial Policy, 1925–1975* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1982*);* and Peter Hall and Rosemary Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," *Political Studies* 44 (1996): 936–58.

38. Nabers, "Identity and Role Change," 84.

39. Tanguy Struye de Swielande, *La politique étrangère américaine après la guerre froide et les défis asymétriques* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Presses Universitaires de Louvain, 2003).

40. Harnisch, "'Dialogue and Emergence,'" 40.

41. Bruce Jones, *Still Ours to Lead: America, Rising Powers, and the Tension between Rivalry and Restraint* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2014), 205.

42. Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, *Reason and the Rationalization of Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984).

43. Axel Honneth and Hans Joas, eds., *Communicative Action: Essays on Jürgen Habermas's "The Theory of Communicative Action"* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 95.

44. Müller, "Habermas Meets Role Theory," 63.

45. Harnisch, "Role Theory," 13.

46. Kotter, "Leading Change," 59–67.

47. Heidi Hardt, *Time to React: The Efficiency of International Organizations in Crisis Response* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 75.

The Air Force, Grand Strategy, and National Security

Toward a Better Understanding of Airpower's Enduring Utility

Robert Ehlers, PhD[*]

For nearly 70 years, calls for an end to the independent Air Force and the absorption of its component parts into the other services have waxed and waned. During the past 15 years, however, attacks on the utility of the Air Force, and thus its retention as an independent service, have become increasingly strident. Robert M. Farley's latest call for an end to the Air Force is just one of many, if perhaps the most well known. His arguments have changed little from those he made in 2008 and remain just as unconvincing.[1]

The reasoning for abolishing the Air Force and incorporating its equipment and personnel into the other services inevitably evokes the time-worn claim that the Air Force is the only service that cannot be decisive in its own right and therefore is a "supporting" service in the most basic sense of the word. The Army, by contrast, is the decisive service in any war that requires Americans to close with and defeat the enemy. The Navy keeps open our sea lines of communication and thus ensures logistical superiority for our troops on the ground. It also shows the flag and exerts pressure through freedom-of-navigation operations. The Marine Corps is a vital service that must not be pulled apart because it gives the United States a capability to deliver elite assault infantry and supporting air, armor, artil-

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lery, and other assets worldwide with very little warning. The Air Force, we often hear, is simply an adjunct whose missions support these more fundamental and important activities. According to this school of thought, the other services could very easily incorporate the various roles, missions, equipment, and personnel of a dismembered Air Force. Inconvenient cases in which airpower has made grand-strategic impacts of its own, and sometimes on its own, do not find their way into these lines of argument. The Berlin airlift, for instance, could and should have been an Army—or perhaps a Navy—operation according to the detractors' line of reasoning. However, anyone who understands the immense complexity of planning, executing, and coordinating a combined air effort of such massive proportions with the Royal Air Force recognizes the deep flaws in this argument. This effort, which literally fed and heated the inhabitants of West Berlin and kept the city out of Russia's orbit, underscored the fact that properly employing airpower demands the same kinds of domain-specific expertise necessary in the other services. This single example also puts to rest the false dichotomies created by those who champion the "supported" and "supporting" services rationale in which the Air Force is inevitably in the "supporting" role. Such claims ultimately fail to address what the Air Force really *does* for American national security, why it is uniquely capable in this capacity and across the range of mission sets it has honed for as many as 100 years, and why dismembering it and dividing its assets among the other services will produce a series of cascading effects that would prove as troublesome in operations short of war as they would catastrophic during major military conflicts.

Rather than engaging in what currently passes for debate regarding the continuing utility of and need for an independent Air Force, it is time to address the question of the service's utility from the perspective of grand strategy, policy formulation and execution, and American national-security outcomes, particularly efforts to achieve strategic aims short of war. As theorists from Carl von Clausewitz to Sun Tzu remind us with some urgency, war—or in a more general sense, armed conflict—is the very last policy resort.[2] Effective grand strategies seek to attain objectives short of war or, if war is necessary, at the lowest possible cost in blood and treasure. Further, they pursue continuing advantage and, in cases in which war occurs, the "better peace" that B. H. Liddell Hart says we must have once the fighting ends.[3] This approach and these theorists' ideas will give us much clearer insights into whether or not the Air Force has paid its way as an independent service engaged in the protection of the republic and its citizens or whether, as critics assert, it has had its day and should now stand down.

The ultimate yardstick by which we must measure any military service's utility is the degree to which it supports grand-strategic and subordinate policy ef-

forts and thus, by extension, how well it contributes to the safety and prosperity of the American people. Clausewitz reminds us that "the political [policy] object—the original motive for the war [conflict]—will thus determine both the military [or other] objective to be reached and the amount of effort it requires."[4] We must read this admonition within our own context if we are to make sense of it—hence the bracketed words within the original quotation. In questions of orchestrating grand strategy and supporting policy efforts to maintain a continuing advantage over our adversaries, many national objectives fall short of the threshold of armed conflict—or at least should do so. Clausewitz focused on war not because he thought that resolving issues short of war was impractical. In fact, his work is brimming with cautions against going to war unless realizing a policy objective is otherwise impossible and with reminders that the objective must be of vital importance if one is to consider war. As he warns us, "The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish . . . the kind of war upon which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature."[5] This trivalent warning concerns pondering whether or not to go to war at all, understanding why we are doing so if it appears unavoidable, and developing a realistic set of strategy and policy objectives that do not change based on the whims or misunderstandings of politicians and military commanders. If we can reach an objective short of war and if the country can employ a proper combination of assets to attain this end, then doing so is far preferable to resorting to armed conflict—and this scenario is precisely where airpower in general and the Air Force in particular have been particularly effective.

The product of a Continental power that had no navy to speak of and obviously no air force, Clausewitz discussed this range of issues, from coercion to war, within his own historical and geographic context. However, he would be the first to tell us to discuss them *within our own context*, which includes *an Air Force ideally suited to achieving strategy and policy objectives short of war or to making its sister services dramatically more effective within it*. The Berlin airlift is thus a useful reminder—and just one of many—that airpower has the capacity, when used expertly and in proper orchestration with other instruments of power, to deliver grand-strategic results. Nobody referred to the Air Force as the "supported" service while it orchestrated this crucial victory in 1948–49, but it was in fact "supported." That is, as long as we allow ourselves to think of the employment of the military services and the other instruments of power in this truncated fashion, then one service or instrument is invariably "supported" and the others invariably "supporting" for the duration of a given conflict. This kind of shallow reasoning

has produced many policy and military failures and will very likely, and sadly, produce many more.

In its most basic sense, then, grand strategy is the process by which policy makers determine how to gain and maintain a continuing advantage over competitors, adversaries, and enemies. Policy is the collection of activities designed to attain grand-strategic objectives. The various instruments of power, including our military, are—at least in theory—employed in the most effective possible combinations with one another to achieve policy objectives and, by extension, strategic ones. Within this process, which, Clausewitz reminds us, is simple in the abstract but difficult in execution, the Air Force has played its role with varying levels of success, as have the other services.[6] Additionally, the Air Force has done more than its fair share in securing the "better peace" that Liddell-Hart reminds us should be the paramount concern whenever we go to war or engage in any policy effort short of war.[7] What matters here is the proper coordination of our various national assets, often in concert with those of other countries, to ensure the republic's security and prosperity. These dynamic and sometimes unlooked-for serendipitous *interactions* among the services, between the military and other instruments of power, and between American and allied or coalition efforts (*Wechselwirkungen,* as Clausewitz refers to these interactions of strategic consequence) often account for the difference between success and failure.[8] Among other objectives, this article seeks to highlight ways in which the number, richness, and effectiveness of these interactions would be fundamentally weakened and in fact impoverished by the disestablishment of the Air Force.

The United States was among the first great "airgoing" countries and is now the last of them to have an independent air force capable of producing strategy and policy outcomes in conjunction with the other services and instruments of national power or on its own. Despite personnel and equipment drawdowns, the Air Force retains an exceptionally potent capability. When used creatively and with proper attention paid to its abilities and limitations as they relate to realizing national objectives, airpower can still alter an adversary's decision calculus. Further, it can give allies and associates everything from a major military edge to protection, reassurance, and extensive humanitarian aid on very short notice. Finally, the Air Force has the unique capabilities to project substantial lethal or nonlethal power anywhere on the planet, independent of any other services or instruments of power, within hours in the relatively rare instances when doing so proves necessary.

Colin Gray notes astutely that "debates over the past and future of air power more often than not address both ancient and irrelevant questions. . . . The air force must be independent of army and navy service cultures for the elementary

reason that fighting in, for, and from the sky is a unique activity."[9] It is an activity that has produced exceptionally lethal and nimble capabilities that render judgments about airpower based on its misuses rather than its proper ones either unsound or tenuous. Gray's chapters on airpower in his groundbreaking work *Explorations in Strategy* remain highly relevant and useful today, 18 years after their publication in 1998. So do his additional insights in *Modern Strategy*, which appeared a year later. In fact, if Gray were to rework these chapters now, many of the detailed observations would likely change in keeping with the rapidly shifting contextual realities of the twenty-first century, but his major arguments would almost certainly remain the same. Further, they would be just as relevant for public servants charged with understanding how and why an independent Air Force makes major and unique contributions to our national security that could not be replicated merely by shifting personnel and equipment into the other services. Gray's focus on both the "logic" of grand strategy, which he views as unchanging, and on its "grammar" (the instruments of power and processes used to obtain strategic ends, which are changing increasingly rapidly over time) gives us a critical set of lenses through which to view the utility of airpower. Further, they help us understand why airpower belongs within an independent service whose practitioners are expert (if imperfect) in its employment, just as practitioners in the other services are expert (if equally imperfect) in the contextually and operationally effective use of assets under their control.[10]

Although Gray would be the first to tell us that his work deals primarily with war and the unique contributions of the various services and domain-specific capabilities within this arena, he also gives us many insights into understanding the potentially important or even central role of airpower in *all* strategy and supporting policy efforts, whether at the level of armed conflict or short of it. This latter category, in particular, requires much more emphasis than scholars have given it to date. Airpower is an indispensable member of the combined-arms team in conventional war. Examples throughout World War II, the early stages of the Korean War, the 1972 Spring Offensive in Vietnam, Operation Desert Storm, Israel's uses of airpower in its wars with the Arab states, and many other examples make this fact crystal clear. Armies win faster and with much lower casualties when capable airmen, exercising direct control over air assets, work with ground and naval commanders (who retain direct control over their assets) to maximize combined-arms effects. These are all clear matters of historical record, holding just as true today despite the changing character of certain forms of armed conflict in the current century.

However, the story too often not told in the grand narrative of airpower's utility and suitability to remain concentrated largely within a separate military

service is the one involving air operations in a myriad of national-security problems short of war. Just as Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines are best suited to employ force within their own domains and in a given context, so Airmen are uniquely capable of employing their domain-specific assets across a wide range of strategy goals and policy requirements. This problem is the most basic one with the works of Clausewitz and Gray, which do not discount the importance of achieving strategic objectives short of war but which also concentrate almost entirely on war itself rather than the myriad policy efforts short of it. Consequently, one must place certain of Gray's statements, such as "The Land Matters Most," firmly into context.[11] It very clearly matters most when a military must take and hold ground to help attain strategic and supporting policy objectives, but it matters much less if no need exists to take and hold ground. Similarly, although the Navy exerts a powerful role short of war with freedom-of-navigation and show-of-force operations, among others, it is not *the*, or even *a*, decisive force in major conventional war. However, that service may be so in various conflicts and crises short of war. Whether we consider Seventh Fleet operations off of Taiwan to deter Mao Zedong's army from invading, the Navy's principal role in the blockade during and after the Cuban missile crisis, its vital role in escorting shipping during the "tanker wars" of the 1980s with Iran, and its power-balancing efforts in dozens of other instances, the service has often proven that the land does not always matter most. So has the Air Force.

Even in certain kinds of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations, land power is not sufficient to do the job. The first phase of the war in Afghanistan (2001–2) was almost entirely a special forces, Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and airpower effort to enable the Northern Alliance to take decisive action against the Taliban. The land may have mattered most in the end, but it would have mattered very little without the Northern Alliance. Furthermore, the costs of a major US and International Security Assistance Force ground effort *without* the Northern Alliance to play the role of surrogate army and a major air presence to hammer successive Taliban defensive positions would have been much slower, costlier, and bloodier for the Army and Marines. The subsequent phase of the Afghanistan War and the Iraq War further serves to remind us that ground forces may not matter very much in terms of positive outcomes when the strategic objectives set for them are impossible to achieve or when policy makers forfeit any strategic advantage they may have gained—or both. Building a functioning democracy—or any kind of centralized government, for that matter—has always been a Sisyphean task in Afghanistan, and the people who inhabit the cobbled-together state we call Iraq have never known true democracy or even wanted it. And so ground power could not deliver—not because our troops were not outstanding

but because our policy makers were not. A shallow thinker might point to the Army's and Marines' major armed conflicts during the period of the independent Air Force's existence—Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, Afghanistan, and Iraq—and conclude that they have had one win, one tie, and three losses, and that they are therefore not effective. To carry this nonsensical argument to its extreme, one might then make the case that it is time to disband one or both services, combine them, or reshape them radically to make them more responsive to national-security crises. However, this line of (un)reasoning overlooks the many instances when the Army and Marines played vitally important roles in conflicts short of war, the most obvious being deterrence along the inner-German border. Only slightly less noteworthy is the very successful deterrent action on the Korean Peninsula since the armistice was signed in 1953. In both cases, potential aggressors chose not to attack or still are not doing so. American ground forces, simply by their presence and will, formed a key foundation for the hugely positive changes in governance and economic growth in these critical regions of the world. Air and naval power played their own vital roles in these and many other cases of deterrence that led to major grand-strategic successes. To argue that any one service or instrument of power was uniquely useful (or useless) in these kinds of efforts is misguided. Instruments of power respond to policy makers' guidance, and they are either more or less effective in nearly direct proportion to the soundness of the policies they support. The Air Force is far from unique here.

Even when one removes armed conflict from the mix of national-security efforts in which airpower plays major roles, the list of its contributions remains long and weighty in terms of what it actually *does* to support American strategy and policy. The first and most important of these qualities is the coercive power it exercises as a result of its range, speed, and lethality. This capability, of course, is entirely independent of the nuclear-security assets the Air Force brings to the table. No other service has the insight, expertise, or seven decades of practical experience engaging in the support of deterrence or compellance—as Thomas Schelling and others used these terms in their works—over continental and global ranges.[12] The very existence of an extraordinarily agile, flexible, and lethal air capability makes the United States unique in the world. Accordingly, Colin Gray asserts that America is an airpower nation to a greater degree than any other.[13] Geography, military and economic power, and the requirement for policy flexibility, given American commitments in the world, all reinforce this basic truth. Whether policy makers are tempted to misuse these uniquely American capabilities—and they often have done so as a result of either innocent or willful ignorance and egocentrism—is not the fault of Airmen or airpower any more than the improper and rash commitment of ground or naval forces is the fault of Soldiers,

Sailors, and Marines. Nor does it constitute any sort of valid argument for disestablishing the Air Force and giving its component parts to the other services.

A related and equally important—and distinctive—airpower function is the provision of rapid reassurance and support to allies around the globe. The age of state rivalries and interstate conflict is far from over, as recent Russian actions in Estonia, Georgia, and—most recently—Ukraine make abundantly clear. Vladimir Putin's constant employment of his instruments of power, bluff, bravado, and a masterful deception effort against the United States and European Union remind us that states and state power persist and that both are highly consequential. The forward deployment of air assets to Saudi Arabia immediately after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, to countries in Eastern Europe after various Russian provocations, along the Asia-Pacific Rim to counter Chinese provocations in the South China Sea, and to South Korea and Japan as a reminder that neither North Korea nor China has anything like a free hand on the peninsula or in the region, are just the most obvious of dozens of such examples. Whether or not the rapid deployment of airpower or even the threat of it has averted armed conflicts is open to argument. The question is also irrelevant. Airpower is ideally suited to operating alongside and in effective combinations with other instruments of power specifically to ensure that nobody decides to risk war. Once again, the paradox of airpower's strategic efficacy is clear. It is extraordinarily lethal during military operations, but airpower's greatest benefit to American national security and that of its allies is simply its presence and firm employment as a means of warning adversaries and enemies that they will pay a heavy price for armed aggression.

A third unique characteristic of airpower at the level of grand strategy and in crises short of armed conflict is its ability to gain and maintain air superiority or simply to assert it by arriving in place and, having done so, to deter potential opponents from taking actions they otherwise would have taken. One such example was the period following Desert Storm, when no-fly zones in northern and southern Iraq prevented Saddam Hussein from exacting the full measure and kind of revenge he preferred on the Kurds and Shia Arabs. The no-fly zones were far from perfect. Saddam managed to kill Kurds and particularly Shia the old-fashioned way—on the ground and in his many prisons. However, the United Nations resolutions and the policy makers' will to minimize the abuse of these peoples—and to keep Saddam from moving his army without threat—came together to place severe restrictions on what he was actually able and willing to do, not only to peoples within his own borders but also to those in neighboring countries. Additionally, the impracticability (from many perspectives) of sending the Army and Marines in yet again to establish and enforce long-term "no-drive zones" left just one military service with the range of capabilities and expertise to

do the job. Similarly, although far from perfect and in some cases not entirely effective, no-fly zones over Bosnia ultimately led to Operation Decisive Force, an air-ground operation coordinated with Croat and Bosnian Muslim troops that forced the Bosnian Serbs and their backers to stop the fighting.[14]

The ability of airpower, along with that of space power, to collect a massive amount of intelligence has also played an absolutely crucial role far beyond the bounds of armed conflicts. The unceasing, dangerous, and highly effective aerial reconnaissance missions around the periphery of the Soviet Union (and over it) told policy makers a great deal about the Russians' capabilities and occasionally about their intent. Increasingly, signals intelligence intercepts told us that their capability and will to continue the long confrontation with the United States were decreasing by the early 1980s—a set of insights that President Reagan used with great skill as he and his staff worked with key allies to craft a final push designed to bring about the collapse of the USSR. Reagan's attacks on the "Evil Empire" and his famous statement "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall" were much more than mere sound bites. Rather, they were implements for fomenting the uprisings in Eastern Europe that played such a central role in the collapse of the Soviet Union. As this drama proceeded, huge quantities of intelligence delivered by aircraft and satellites—along with new weapons programs such as the B-2 bomber, Peacekeeper ICBM, and Pershing II intermediate-range ballistic missile, as well as dramatically improved Army–Air Force jointness with a new blueprint for war (AirLand Battle)—played an important collective role in convincing the Russians that they had lost and needed to take another path.

Air intelligence gave the Kennedy administration its first indications that the Russians had deployed SS-4 medium-range ballistic missiles and nuclear warheads to Cuba. Subsequent intelligence reports gave the president and his Executive Committee the detailed situational awareness they needed to deal with Khrushchev from a position of firmness but also restraint—an approach that allowed for a major grand-strategic victory, the avoidance of what could have been a nuclear conflict, and innovations such as a hotline to ensure the availability of an open communications channel between US and Russian heads of state to avert any further crises of this magnitude or the major armed conflicts that might come in their wake. Military chiefs called for a massive air strike on Russian missiles and other assets followed by a ground invasion of Cuba, but Kennedy chose a wiser course—one informed in large part by air intelligence.

Air and space intelligence capabilities developed over the past century have resulted in an immensely complex set of structural and procedural skills and insights that simply cannot be replicated by moving them from one service to another. Of all the services, the Air Force focuses most heavily on grand-strategic

and military-strategic intelligence although it is equally adept at the operational and tactical levels. No other service can perform these missions, and the time it would take to get them to these levels of proficiency—if in fact they were to arrive at all—would be decades, not months or years. The Army considers its remotely piloted vehicles organic to specific units (much as it did with aircraft during the interwar years and early phases of World War II) and thus keeps two-thirds of them out of the fight at any given time rather than leaving them forward and mating them with specialists from incoming units. Although doing so has its advantages in terms of tactical responsiveness, it also leaves far too much of the fleet idle.[15] This situation raises the question about whether or not the Army would make proper use of major airborne intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) assets at higher levels of strategy and policy to help avert armed conflicts rather than support troops on the ground once wars are already under way. By definition, the former is preferable to the latter in nearly every case. The Navy and Marines have effective ISR capabilities of their own, but they also tend to reside at the operational and tactical levels and thus concentrate on delivering actionable intelligence during armed conflicts rather than before they begin in an effort to avert them.

Perhaps the least remarked but most persistent and diplomatically important aspect of airpower is its ability to project humanitarian relief into the furthest corners of the earth. Something that has attracted little notice is the fact that Air Force humanitarian operations, in concert with important but often "supporting" efforts by the other services, have saved a very minimum of 40 million people since the creation of this independent service in 1947.[16] These efforts have been of varying strategic importance. Some, such as the Berlin airlift, have served vital national interests in very direct and unusually effective ways. Others, such as periodic tsunami-relief efforts in Bangladesh, make no clear contribution to US interests on their own but in concert with the many other humanitarian operations that occur either in parallel with or in temporal proximity to these kinds of missions. Although it is impossible to gauge with precision the long-term diplomatic advantages and improved perceptions of the United States that such operations convey, no one who has served overseas and discussed the favorable impact of these humanitarian efforts on those on the receiving side—whether "average" people, military officers, or policy makers—can come away with anything other than a clear understanding of the quiet, strong, and largely beneficial effects these operations have over time and space.

Unfortunately, even these missions can change in character and thus in their objectives right out from under the military, as the Somalia misadventure underscores. The mission shifted from feeding starving Somalis to pursuing warlords

and building a state structure where none had ever existed, Siad Barre's short-lived simulacrum of a state notwithstanding. Given the extraordinarily restrictive rules of engagement in place for this effort and its fundamental impossibility in light of the contextual and cultural realities of Somali clan-based structures and loyalties, neither air-mobility aircraft nor fighters nor the then brand-new remotely piloted vehicles could have made a difference. Nor could a carrier battle group, a Marine expeditionary unit, or an Army Ranger battalion (the latter case tragically clear in this instance). As with any other instrument of power, the Air Force is only as effective as the policy makers who send it off to perform various policy efforts.

Even though space and cyberspace are parts of the larger Air Force mission (the former is very largely planned, executed, and monitored by Air Force personnel), their contributions matter only in terms of the ways in which expertise and mission requirements come together. Regarding space power expertise, the Air Force has led the effort since the very beginnings of the space age and continues to do so. The cumulative expertise thus developed is neither easy to replace nor likely to be so by other services, with the same degree of proficiency, should they take control of this mission. All services have limits regarding how many mission sets they can take on before beginning to lose focus on the most important ones and thus suffering a reduced level of aggregate effectiveness in mission performance.

Perhaps the cyber arena proves this point more clearly than anything else as a result of its ubiquitous presence (or, paradoxically, its nonpresence in terms of physical domains), the evident inability to find it a home, and continuing questions and problems regarding how best to apportion authorities for wartime activities and those in conflicts short of war. Similar arguments surrounded air and space capabilities as they emerged and matured. Each has found a good, if not a perfect, home in the Air Force in the century and half century, respectively, since coming into being. Cyber will also find a home although it is not at all clear that it will do so in the Air Force. In fact, it is not even clear that cyber should find a home there, considering how much the contextual factors at play with cyber differ from those involved in the ultimate placement of air and space power within the Air Force. Any claim that a new "war-fighting" capability must by definition reside with the newest service should be viewed with great skepticism. It made sense for air and space assets, but the case for cyber assets is nowhere near as clear. Nor is it likely to be, even with the passage of time. In fact, the opposite may well be the case, leading to an independent Cyber Force or operational control of this (non)domain by the National Security Agency through the direct control of the executive branch. Time will tell, but at this point any effort to argue that cyber is

a capability uniquely matched to Air Force talents and Airmen's insights is doomed to failure, as are any attempts to pry the service away from its obvious roles and unique skill sets in air and space.

Unfortunately, cyber has given critics of the independent Air Force additional ammunition if only because the newness of cyber allows them to argue in extremes about *all* Air Force roles and missions even though "extremist" theories of airpower (Giulio Douhet and Hugh Trenchard after World War I and the most extreme of the "bomber barons" during World War II) have long resided in Gray's "ancient and irrelevant" category. This tendency to discuss things in extremes without ever arriving at an understanding of how airpower (and everything else) works in the real world, rather than in an abstract one, is fatal to any argument. Clausewitz's entire opening chapter in *On War* deals with absolute war and why, in the abstract world, all armed conflicts would inevitably gravitate to the greatest possible levels of effort and violence. However, he moves from there to the antithesis of this position—no war at all—and then arrives at a synthesis in which war assumes its real characteristics rather than its absolute ones. This Hegelian logic, so central to any kind of effective analysis, is missing from attacks on Air Force independence. These inevitably set forth outdated ideas about the air weapon as the primary means for arguing that because airpower never achieved the early claims set forth for it by key theorists, it has therefore failed, by this test alone, to merit independent status within a separate service. Seeking a useful synthesis within which to judge airpower's efficacy within an independent service and as part of a combined-arms team would be a much more useful effort, but it is as of yet a relatively rare one.[17] Some individuals have leveled charges that the Air Force clings to a "vision of warfare that does not, despite tremendous investment, meet the defense needs of the United States."[18] As it turns out, this "vision" is what came to be called strategic bombing during World War II—a concept long since abandoned by the Air Force and policy makers. Efforts to define the service according to these outmoded concepts and to argue from there that, by extension, it has no relevance to today's grand-strategic and policy contexts are untenable.

One particularly telling example of this tendency is the argument that heavy bombers built during the Cold War, from the B-46 to the B-2, were not useful because they were never utilized for their intended purpose.[19] Clearly, this assertion is not valid, given that their use in a nuclear exchange would have constituted the most egregious failure of strategy. These weapon systems were built more to be present than to be used—although they were quite capable of performing their wartime missions if called upon to do so. This was the peculiar logic of the Cold War—namely, that transparency about one's strength was the most effective deterrent to any temptation the other side might have to use its own nuclear-armed

assets or even its major conventional ones, for that matter. Viewed in this light, the development and fielding of postwar heavy bombers were part of a major grand-strategic success and made clear the centrality of the Air Force to deterrence—and compellance—during the Cold War, and to the eventual American victory in that conflict. The even greater irony here is that the very aircraft said to be of no use because they were not employed in combat during the Cold War have evolved into new roles and missions in which they have flown in combat with great effect. Ask any Northern Alliance soldier about the utility of heavy bombers and the Global Positioning System–guided Joint Direct Attack Munition in the fall of 2001, and he will tell you without pause that they broke the Taliban's back along every major defensive position and allowed for its rapid dispersal, along with al-Qaeda Prime, in coordination with a surrogate ground force, CIA operatives, and special forces. Put simply, context changes, and inherently agile and flexible services such as the Air Force do best in such environments. Judged by any measure, the independent Air Force has proven its ability to change with the times and to engage emerging enemies and adversaries in new, ingenious ways in concert with the other services and the other instruments of power.

As various events referenced earlier make equally clear, we must also be constantly on our guard when arguments about disbanding the Air Force turn to the topic of temptations that policy makers have to employ such an agile and "easy" service and its inherent capabilities. It is simply wrong to assert that Airmen and their machines are to blame for strategy and policy failures because policy makers sometimes turn to them for an "easy solution" that is neither easy nor a solution but a palliative. Poor policy choices and unsound judgment at the level of national leadership do not constitute grounds for disbanding either the Air Force or any other service. Misuse of the Army and Marines in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan by policy makers as well as general officers does not render them irrelevant ipso facto. They were simply used for misguided policy ends and in some cases by officers who wanted to prove that their service was still the most important one. Air Force officers have sometimes made the same moral and professional errors, but one should not confuse cause and effect any more than one should use it to ascribe irrelevance to an entire branch of the armed forces. If, as Colin Gray says, "the strategic world is perennially beset with salespersons for this or that magical elixir," then we must be watchful, both for this tendency and its opposite number—the devaluation of a specific kind of national power based on equally faulty reasoning.[20] Similarly, one should pay very close attention to his argument that "strategic effect is unavoidable, which is to say that means and ends will conduct a strategic discourse whether or not a polity has [or supports] an explicit strategy (in the sense of plan)."[21]

A final and important point regarding the putative wisdom of disestablishing the Air Force and moving its assets to the other services is to consider the levels and kinds of emphasis they currently place on their air components and the inherent limitations of these instruments. The Army's Aviation Branch is comprised largely of warrant officers, is seen entirely as a supporting service at the tactical level, and is far below the traditional combat-arms branches in terms of overall emphasis as well as the promotion prospects for officers in the branch. Anyone who has served a full career and has worked with these officers understands the inherent and major problems that this state of affairs poses for the development of any broader view regarding airpower (and space power), much less the proper implementation of assets in support of this broader view. It is not suited, by temperament, training, or level of emphasis to take on the massive and complex range of Air Force roles and missions, particularly regarding those focused on matters at the levels of strategy and policy.

The Marine air-ground task forces and subordinate units, though self-contained with organic air assets, are concerned entirely with the support of Marine combat operations at the tactical level and very rarely look beyond that objective. During Desert Storm, even after the coalition had air supremacy, Marine expeditionary force commanders continually found ways not to release their aircraft for the larger effort *before the start of ground operations* to undermine the Iraqi army's logistical support and its ability to mass and maneuver. The Marine general officers' mind-set was understandably concerned with direct support of their Marines on the ground. However, with no Iraqi attacks possible, given the coalition's air supremacy—especially after the annihilation of two Iraqi armored divisions largely from the air during the Battle of Khafji—the wisest use of aircraft lay in the destruction of Iraq's logistical, communications, and other vital war-making and force-sustainment capabilities. Despite these frictions, once the ground war began, the Marines had all of their aircraft back and in direct support of leathernecks on the ground.[22] The joint force air component commander process worked very effectively, if nowhere near perfectly, despite challenges along the way.

Finally, the Navy's aviation component, though highly capable, has severe range and payload limitations. During the first phase of the Afghanistan War, Navy aircraft required three or sometimes four aerial refuelings by Air Force tankers on ingress to *and* egress from their targets. Shows of force and short-term, short-range strike capabilities are exceptionally useful in various contexts, but they are worlds away from Air Force mission sets and capabilities. They simply cannot deliver the constant presence or weight of effort that Air Force assets bring to bear, whether in the strike, ISR, refueling, mobility, or communications roles, among others.

None of these three services is suited by habits of mind, experience, or capabilities to take on the huge range of missions the Air Force performs to support strategy and policy as well as operations and tactics. When these services do engage in air operations that have strategic effects, they almost invariably rely on Air Force expertise and assets to help them close the deal. It is of the utmost importance to note that every one of these services can and does support strategy and policy efforts to achieve national-security objectives short of war, as does the Air Force. They do so in their own ways, with their own habits of mind, with their own roles and missions, and with various limitations that only the other services, employed within a truly effective combined-arms effort, can offset. Perhaps it is time to address once again how this combined-arms dynamic, the larger interactions between the military and other instruments of power to create an even greater combined-effects dynamic, and American coordination and interaction with its allies and associates all come together to help realize strategic aims short of war, rather than expending inordinate amounts of mental energy on discrediting the utility of one service or another in ways both decontextualized and intellectually truncated.[23]

It is well past time to begin assessing the value of various instruments of power, including the military and its services, in a much wider context than just the prosecution of armed conflict. Indeed, an effective grand strategy ideally should allow the United States to maintain a continuing advantage over enemies, adversaries, and competitors alike without fighting. This objective is not entirely possible in the real world but is feasible to a greater or lesser degree depending upon how effectively and realistically policy makers develop strategic aims and supporting policy actions and how they employ instruments of national power to attain them. In this sense, Airmen and the independent Air Force have proven repeatedly, regardless of their shortcomings in certain instances, that airpower gives policy makers a tremendous level of flexibility to achieve strategic aims short of war. In fact, they have used it toward this end more often than they have used it in violent ways—often as a panacea for their own lack of strategic insight. The employment of transport aircraft during the Berlin airlift; the presence of—but, thankfully, the nonemployment of—nuclear-armed bombers and missiles during the Cold War to deter the Soviet Union; the combination of effective photoreconnaissance and policy making during the Cuban missile crisis; the arrival of a C-141 at Ben-Gurion Airport every 45 minutes during the Yom Kippur (October) War in order to level the playing field and force a truce; the delivery of humanitarian aid all over the world to people who often understand and appreciate America's efforts in this regard; and the proper use of airpower during the Persian

Gulf War to starve the Iraqi army of supplies and make its defeat easier for the ground forces are all cases in point.

  Whether achieving American strategic aims short of war or making wars far less costly, these uses of airpower remind us that every service contributes to attaining strategic aims. The issue of overriding importance here is not the putative utility of the various services but whether or not policy makers and commanders use them within the proper context and in the proper ways. When one approaches this question of Air Force independence from the level of strategy and policy, the evidence is clear. Without an independent Air Force led by Airmen who understand the full range of capabilities and limitations associated with the assets under their control, any strategic discourse involving airpower will be more problematic. Consequently, its employment will likely prove far less effective than it could be, and our national security will suffer. Inflicting this kind of wound on ourselves by disestablishing the Air Force, or otherwise constraining a broader and deeper understanding of airpower's contributions to strategy and policy, would be the worst kind of folly.

Notes

  1. Robert M. Farley, *Grounded: The Case for Abolishing the United States Air Force* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014). He began this line of argument in an earlier article "Abolish the Air Force," *American Prospect*, 22 October 2007, http://prospect.org/article/abolish-air-force. A critique of it by this author marked a step in what has now become a continuing debate. See "Retain the Air Force, Abolish Anti-jointness," *Wright Stuff* 3, no. 16 (4 September 2008): 1–10.

  2. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 92–94, 581, 586, 605–7; and Sun Tzu, *The Illustrated Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005), 115. Although Sun Tzu tells the reader directly that the greatest acme of skill is not to win 100 battles but to defeat one's enemy without fighting, Clausewitz gives us more indirect but frequent thoughts about this issue. *On War* is concerned with how best to conduct a war once the decision to do so is made, but he reminds us that war is to be conducted "when inevitable" and only after very careful consideration. War is the extension of policy by other means—what human beings do only after diplomatic and other efforts to achieve strategic aims short of war fail to have the desired effect.

  3. B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Praeger, 1968), 366.

  4. Clausewitz, *On War*, 81. The words in brackets have been added to emphasize that Clausewitz's dictum applies with equal force in conflicts short of war.

  5. Ibid., 88.

  6. Clausewitz wrote that "everything in strategy is very simple, but that does not mean that everything is very easy." Ibid., 178. He was referring to military strategy, as we would call it today, but the principle extends with even greater force to grand strategy, which involves both an overarching set of enduring strategic aims and supporting policy efforts, including—among many others and by no means the *primus inter pares*—war.

  7. Liddell-Hart, *Strategy*, 366.

  8. Carl von Clausewitz, *Vom Kriege*, 7. Auflage (Hamburg: Nikol Verlag, 2014). The term *Wechselwirkungen* ("interactions") is everywhere in the German edition of *On War* and first appears during Clausewitz's

discussion, using the Hegelian dialectic, of the differences between absolute war (war in the abstract) and real war (war as it is within the constraints imposed by a myriad of factors). See pp. 30–36.

9. Colin S. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy* (London: Praeger, 1998), 55, 56.

10. Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), 270–71.

11. Ibid., 212.

12. Thomas C. Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966). The author introduces the concept of coercion, which includes deterrence and compellance, on pp. 2–3. He refers to all three terms frequently throughout the remainder of the book. Deterrence involves using the threat of force to keep an adversary from doing something while compellance forces him to do so. Bernard Brodie also discusses these concepts in his classic work *Strategy in the Missile Age* (Princeton University Press, 1959).

13. Gray, *Explorations in Strategy*, 83–84.

14. See Col Robert C. Owen, ed., *Deliberate Force: A Case Study in Effective Air Campaigning* (Maxwell AFB AL: Air University Press, 2000).

15. Maj David R. Buchanan, USAF, "Joint Doctrine for Unmanned Aircraft Systems: The Air Force *and* the Army Hold the Key to Success," student paper (Newport, RI: Naval War College, 3 May 2010), 10–11, http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a525266.pdf. See also Sandra I. Erwin, "Air Force to Army: There Are Better Ways to Deploy Surveillance Aircraft," *National Defense*, January 2010, http://www.national defensemagazine.org/archive/2010/January/Pages/AirForcetoArmyThereAreBetterWaystoDeploy SurveillanceAircraft.aspx. The rebuttals after the article fall short precisely because they do not mention the major inefficiencies and consequent reduction in aggregate effectiveness brought on by the deployment and redeployment of remotely piloted vehicles with a dedicated unit rather than their continuous employment in-theater, either with the arrival of new cadres to operate them or with remote operation from outside the theater—or a combination of the two. For Army training issues, see Brendan McGarry, "US Army Mulls Merging Drone Training after Scathing Audit," *DefenseTech*, 5 June 2015, http://defensetech.org/2015/06/05 /us-army-mulls-merging-drone-training-after-scathing-audit/.

16. It is impossible to know with precision how many people the Air Force and other services have saved from starvation and illness, but the 1992–94 Somalia mission alone saved well over a million while operations to feed the Kurds from 1991 to 1994 saved at least 400,000. The delivery of water-purification machines to Rwanda after the genocide there saved at least another million, and probably more, from cholera and other waterborne diseases, and food deliveries averted mass starvation. The Berlin airlift prevented starvation in West Berlin although the total number who would have died is open to debate. Airlift and ground-based operations in China between the end of World War II and the Communist takeover in 1949 saved several million people from starvation. Before this aid arrived, an estimated 10,000 per day were dying of starvation as a result of the Japanese expropriation of rice crops. Along with major deliveries of food, medical teams have saved many people in thousands of missions across the globe. The delivery vehicles are generally Air Force aircraft although the relief and medical parties are very often joint in nature and work with allies and associates. The author's estimate of 40 million is based on a review of every documented and accessible humanitarian effort since 1945.

17. See Robert Ehlers, *Targeting the Third Reich: Air Intelligence and the Allied Bombing Campaigns* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009); and Ehlers, *The Mediterranean Air War: Airpower and Allied Victory in World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2015). Both books offer insight into the importance of approaching airpower's utility within a nuanced grand-strategic, policy, military-strategic, operational, and combined-arms/combined-effects framework.

18. Farley, *Grounded*, 1.

19. Ibid., 105–6.

20. Gray, *Modern Strategy*, 7.

21. Ibid., 16.

22. For an excellent analysis of the Marine Corps's resistance to truly joint and properly phased air operations and the Navy's resistance to the same principles, see Mason Carpenter, "Joint Operations in the Gulf War: An Allison Analysis" (thesis, School of Advanced Air and Space Studies, Maxwell AFB, AL, June

1994). Although such concerns are normal, context matters. The Iraqis' inability to mount any kind of offensive action, particularly after their disaster at the Battle of Khafji, made clear both the opportunity to use all available air assets to attack Iraqi logistics and ground formations and the need to do so in order to maximize the effectiveness of ground operations and minimize casualties once the ground phase of the war began.

23. For a discussion of combined-effects power as a more holistic and effective concept than combined-arms operations, see Ervin J. Rokke, Thomas A. Drohan, and Terry C. Pierce, "Combined Effects Power," *Joint Force Quarterly* 73 (2nd Quarter 2014): 26–31, http://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/jfq /jfq-73/jfq-73_26-31_Rokk-Drohan-Pierce.pdf.

Actions of the Tunisian Army in Gafsa in 2008 and during the Uprising of 2011

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On 12 January 2011, Rachid Ammar, the Tunisian army's chief of staff, refused an order from President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali to shoot at protesters. Two days later, Ben Ali left the country, and the regime transition began. This event is too often neglected by the literature in explaining the Tunisian transition. Although street protests were necessary for initiating a change of regime, the occurrence of such protests does not suffice to explain the speed with which the transition actually happened. Instead, the question this article seeks to answer is why such a strong regime, feared by the entire population, collapsed one month after popular protests began. Without neglecting the importance of popular pressure, we argue that the army played a central role in the fall of Ben Ali. Why did it refuse the president's order to open fire at the demonstrators? This article is the first attempt to compare two consecutive events during which the army decided whether or not to open fire at its own population: the 2008 protests in the city of Gafsa and the massive revolutionary protests of early 2011. What are the rationales behind such decisions? Had the army had its fill of the generalized, corrupt regime organized around Ben Ali's personality, or did it choose to back the 2011 protests because it was simply better off for doing so? We tackle questions surrounding the issue of what consequences this decision had on the key actors of the uprising—specifically, Ben Ali, the demonstrators, and the French government.

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After demonstrating why the army refused the order to shoot, we discuss the implications of that decision in explaining why Ben Ali's dictatorship collapsed just one month after Mohammed Bouazizi set himself on fire at his workplace on 17 December 2010. We find that the army was better off refusing the president's order at this point in time due to the balance of power on the field. We show how its decision was a turning point of the Tunisian uprising because it altered the motivations of key players. We also utilize an extended model of game theory to depict the interactions between Ben Ali's regime and the army, focusing on the decision of the army to either accept or refuse the order to shoot at protesters. Finally, we compare two major, popular demonstrations, mentioned above, during which the army had the choice to follow orders and shoot at protesters: the revolt of the Gafsa Mining Basin in 2008 and the uprising of 2011 that led to the Tunisian transition.

Literature Review and Context

Literature Review

Most recent studies explain that unprecedented pressure from below caused the end of Ben Ali's regime. George Joffé argues that the president's fall was due to the organization of the population after spontaneous demonstrations and emphasizes the role of the Tunisian Labor Union UGTT (Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail).[1] Ahmed Jdey, Mohamed-Salah Omri, and R. A. Judy recognize that social demonstrations, mainly those caused by the defense of moral principles such as freedom, justice, and democracy, played a major role in the overthrow of Ben Ali.[2] Eva Bellin examines the "power of contagion" and collective action from the population to put pressure on the regime.[3] Randall Kuhn sees a direct link between the improvements of human development and social mobilization.[4] Filipe R. Campante and Davin Chor, though, show how the level of Tunisians' education affected the demand for economic opportunities, maintaining that the lack of jobs was a major factor in explaining the national protests.[5] Amira Aleya-Sghaier declares that youth unemployment and inequality triggered mobilization to overthrow Ben Ali's regime.[6] Other studies find mixed results and identify multiple actors in their explanations for the transition.[7]

Even though street protests were necessary for bringing about the change of regime in Tunisia, their occurrence does not suffice to explain the speed with which the transition actually happened. A few articles attempt to identify the rupture between elites, especially the role of the army, as the trigger for change in Tunisia. Zoltan Barany argues that the lack of support from the army was essen-

tial to the success of popular mobilization. He explains that the regime's lack of consideration, its disinclination towards corruption organized by the executive power, and the nonpolitical status of the professional army justified the Tunisian troops' unwillingness to shoot at members of their own population.[8] Although tensions between the Tunisian army and the regime affected the army's decision, Barany omits from his consideration the fact that the army fired on people during the 2008 protest of Gafsa. Thus, the disdain and the status of the Tunisian army towards the regime is not sufficient to explain the army's decision.[9] F. Gregory Gause asserts that the army, in order to play a more important role after the transition, took the risk of not backing Ben Ali.[10] However, this position has its limits since the Tunisian army has not actively been a part of the political debate, unlike the events in Egypt during 2013.[11] The literature on the role of the army in Ben Ali's fall often uses shortcuts to explain the army's reasons for its decision. Additionally, it appears that the aforementioned studies mainly use descriptive analysis rather than an explanatory demonstration to make their point.

Instead, we find that the army made the rational decision to back the Tunisian people specifically because of the occurrence of massive uprisings; the generals made a strategic move that triggered a change in the behavior of key actors, thereby influencing their actions. Additionally, we claim that the military benefits of a possible intervention were likely to endanger the army's interests. After using an extended model of game theory to demonstrate why the army refused the order to shoot, we discuss the implications of this decision as a means of explaining the collapse of Ben Ali's dictatorship just one month after Bouazizzi's self-immolation.

Comparing the Spreading Protests: 2008 versus 2011

The food crisis of 2008 resulted in unprecedented protests by miners in the Gafsa Mining Basin. Such actions denounced unemployment, inequality, a highly corrupt hiring process, and social injustice.[12] From January to July, demonstrations expanded very quickly across the entire region. Many Tunisians took to the streets, including miners, students, and the unemployed. The police and military were sent in, and their repression almost immediately stopped the demonstration. The armed forces shot several protesters (3 deaths and 10 injuries), hundreds were incarcerated, and the protests finally ended.

In December 2010, Bouazizzi's suicide triggered major protests that spread nationally in two weeks' time. The police and demonstrators fought in several regions while the army was in charge of protecting strategic locations. On 12 January, the army was sent to the streets, and a curfew was declared. However, when citizens did not abide by the curfew, Ben Ali ordered the army to shoot at them.

The army declined the order, and Ammar was dismissed from his position.[13] The first question that arises is why the army refused the order to shoot at demonstrators during the uprising of 2011 but accepted the order to do so during the massive demonstrations of 2008. Before proceeding, we must address the relationship between the army and the regime.

Suspicious Relationship between the Army and Ben Ali's Regime

Former president Ben Ali incessantly considered the Tunisian army a threat by virtue of his misperception of its position as an elite political player. For this reason, the army has always been excluded from any political power and was not institutionalized.[14] Tunisian troops have steadily decreased in number over the past decade, totaling only 35,000 underequipped soldiers in 2010.[15] To dissuade the population from contesting his position, Ben Ali based his power on a strong police apparatus, consisting of 120,000 members in 2010. The Tunisian army, unlike others in Middle Eastern and North African countries, lacks significant experience in military action. Furthermore, one should note that this "silent" or "invisible" actor has no economic power.[16]

Ben Ali himself was a general in the army that took power in a bloodless coup d'état in 1987; since then, the two have had a contentious relationship. With a good understanding of army forces and their power, Ben Ali found it necessary to weaken the army, lest he meet the same fate as the previous regime.[17] These tensions reached a peak in April 2002, when "thirteen Tunisian military officers, including the army chief of staff Brigadier General Abdelaziz Skik, [were] killed in a helicopter crash."[18] The army never believed that this tragedy was an accident, instead considering it an act calculated by Ben Ali, who was suspicious of and felt threatened by the military.

Theory and Method

This section addresses the theoretical debate regarding democratic transitions. It discusses theories on popular mobilization and the rupture between elites, emphasizing the role of the army in regime change.

Popular Mobilization

The agency approach on popular mobilization focuses on pressure exerted by the popular masses to explain democratic transitions. Elisabeth Wood describes how insurgencies in El Salvador and South Africa, by changing elites' payoffs, influenced regimes to engage in democratic reforms.[19] Conflicts over redistribution

offer another explanation of democratic transition. Stephan Haggard and Robert Kauffman emphasize inequality in analyzing how popular mobilization threatens elites and increases the cost to repress their population.[20] Even though Ben Ali proposed noncredible reforms during the last days before his departure to Saudi Arabia, this approach has limitations because it undermines the fissure between the elites' interests to explain democratic transitions.

Elites' Interactions

The rupture between regime elites may also explain why democratic transitions occur. Guillermo O'Donnel, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead point out that transitions from authoritarian to democratic regimes are triggered by negotiations between "hardliners" and "softliners."[21] Other studies show how the regime strategically interacts with elites to orchestrate an illusion of political reform. Larry Diamond attempts to explain why democratization does not happen in Arab countries by describing the strategic behaviors of regime elites.[22]

The Role of the Army in Transition

The robustness of material and nonmaterial ties between militaries and the regime may help to account for whether or not an authoritarian regime can sustain itself. Comparing the Arab Spring with the 1989 events, Lucan Way demonstrates that popular mobilization often reinforces ties between the regime and the army, preventing popular democratic demands from succeeding.[23] Studies of democratic transitions that emphasize the rupture of elites' interests are limited in their argumentation. Instead of analyzing and explaining in detail how the game between elites is played, they often propose a descriptive analysis.

Extended Model of Game Theory to Explain Democratic Transitions

This article emphasizes the role of the army in democratic transitions and, more specifically, in strategic interactions between the Tunisian military and Ben Ali's regime to clarify his fall in 2011. Our goal is to use game theory to offer a more detailed and explanatory analysis of the interactions between regime elites.

      Przeworski's model. The extended model of game theory used here to explicate the Tunisian transitions is mainly inspired by Adam Przeworski's model in his book *Democracy and the Market* as well as an extension of this model presented by Lisa Blaydes and James Lo in their article "One Man, One Vote, One Time? A Model of Democratization in the Middle East."[24] Przeworski demonstrates that a regime transition is a result of choices and strategies between political and economic elites within a context of uncertainty in a given society. Tunisia has seen

such a context with a period of high unemployment and economic crisis. Przeworski claims that a transition can happen when elite groups have an incentive to deviate from the status quo and impose a regime change, notably because of the nonestablishment of strong ties between the regime and key elites in a society. Democracy emerges from a bargaining between elites, and, more precisely, when a strong unity between competing democratic elites is created to contest the authoritarian regime. In his model, Przeworski analyzes the choices and strategies of the "protoliberalizers" in a given authoritarian regime and of key actors within civil society at the specific moment when that regime is considering political liberalization.

Blaydes and Lo and Middle Eastern transitions. Blaydes and Lo extend Przeworski's model and apply it to political transitions in the Middle East.[25] They test two of Przeworski's assumptions by concentrating on Middle Eastern democratic transitions. First, they integrate uncertainty or incomplete information since civil society may not know to what extent an authoritarian regime prefers repression to democratic transition. Second, they cast doubt on the assumed commitment of civil society to democratic principles in the Middle Eastern countries. Their results suggest that democracy cannot emerge when the regime's repressive capacity is too low. Third, they emphasize the importance of uncertainty and beliefs, both of which essentially determine the type of regime following a transition.[26]

An extended model applied to the Tunisian transition. The model introduced in this article aims to analyze strategic interactions between the Tunisian army and Ben Ali's regime that resulted in a transition. Primarily, our extended model draws on the works of Przeworski and Blaydes and Lo, described above. This study acknowledges the latter two scholars' contribution to Przeworski's model of transitions—that uncertainty is a crucial determinant that must be taken into account to study regime transitions. However, although Blaydes and Lo assume imperfect information possessed by civil society to account for the resulting type of regime, our analysis principally examines uncertainty and, more precisely, the asymmetry of information between Tunisian elites—namely, Ben Ali and the military. This does not mean that the demonstrators had a complete understanding of the balance of power during the 2011 uprisings. As discussed in the last part of this article, the Tunisian transition reflects the crucial impact of strategic behaviors chosen by elites to signal to the population the current balance of power, solving the problem of civil society's having only incomplete information before Ben Ali's escape to Saudi Arabia.

Our methodology differs substantially from that of most studies on the Arab Spring because of the strong focus on analysis. The preponderance of other inves-

tigations compares regime transitions in Arab countries and the role of the army in the different transitions. Consequently, these analyses lack focus, resulting in a misconception about the political economy and the inherent structural differences across countries. For these reasons, we analyze the Tunisian transition exclusively. Unlike Przeworski's and Blaydes and Lo's model, this study does not seek to predict the types of regimes that could arise from the transition; too many factors are in play, and, as the Egyptian case has shown with the army's overthrow of former president Mohamed Morsi, even short-term predictions in an uncertain context are almost impossible.

Considering only the Tunisian case, we try to answer the following questions: Why did the army refuse Ben Ali's order to open fire on its own population? How did this decision affect key actors of the Tunisian transition? How did this decision bring about the president's fall?

Model and Equilibrium

This model depicts the interaction between two key players: the regime of Ben Ali and the army as represented by its chief of staff, Rachid Ammar. It uses the two massive protests of 2008 and 2011 to depict the army's decision to accept or refuse the president's order to shoot at demonstrators as well as the outcome of the revolution.[27]

Actions and Order of Play

The advanced stage of the protests in 2008 and 2011 obliges Ben Ali to make the first decision in choosing between *asking the army to repress* protesters (Repress?) or to *remain passive* (Status Quo).

In both scenarios, the *status quo* (SQ) is represented by massive street demonstrations opposed to the police (repressing) and the army (dissuading). Moreover, the regime is waiting for weapons, notably from France, that would increase Ben Ali's repressive capacity if the SQ remains. The main assumption here is that the president cannot choose to reform the countries because the protests are too advanced to propose any credible concession.[28]

If he chooses to order the army to open fire, then Ammar can either *accept* (Accept) or *refuse* (Reject). Finally, Ben Ali will *stay in power* (Stay) with a probability p if the SQ remains, a probability q if the army chooses to shoot at the population, and a probability r if the army rejects the order to open fire.

We identify four potential outcomes in the sequential game presented below (figure 1). Although these scenarios help us understand the army's decision to

refuse to open fire, we focus on the decisive aspect of whether or not Ben Ali leaves power.
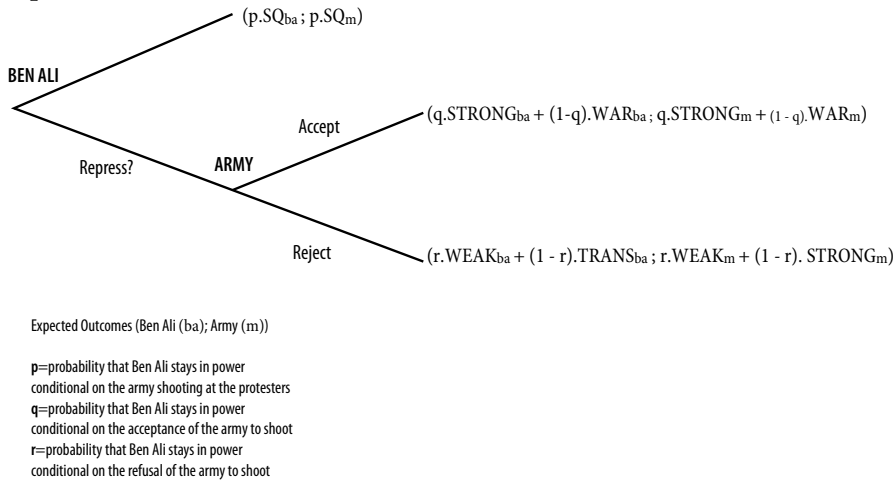

Expected Outcomes (Ben Ali (ba); Army (m))

p=probability that Ben Ali stays in power conditional on the army shooting at the protesters
q=probability that Ben Ali stays in power conditional on the acceptance of the army to shoot
r=probability that Ben Ali stays in power conditional on the refusal of the army to shoot

Figure 1. A sequential game between Ben Ali and the Army

Stronger dictatorship (STRONG). If the Tunisian army accepts the order to shoot at its population and Ben Ali stays in power, then the bloodbath's success will certainly reinforce the complicity and mutual interests between the regime and the army.

Civil (WAR). If the army accepts the order to open fire and Ben Ali is overthrown, then the situation is likely to be a sustained civil war between proregime and antiregime forces.

Weakened dictatorship (WEAK). The scenario in which the army refuses Ben Ali's order and he stays in power will weaken the regime. Desertion of the military's forces might be seen as a strong signal that the regime's security forces are divided.

Regime transition (TRANS). This scenario depicts what actually happened in Tunisia (i.e., a regime transition supported by a coalition between the army and the Tunisian people). If the army refuses Ben Ali's order and he leaves power, then a regime transition is expected even though the type of regime remains highly uncertain. However, we concentrate only on the transition of the Tunisian regime itself—namely, whether Ben Ali stays or leaves power.

Payoffs

Ben Ali's payoff is determined by p, q, and r, which describe the probabilities that he stays in power relative to the utility to stay in power. The utility is conditional on whether he orders the army to open fire (Repress?) or not (Status Quo). We

assume here that Ben Ali's payoff, if the SQ remains, equals 0. This assumption may hold for the following reason: even though Ben Ali cannot accept contestations of his power and is threatened by a certain number of protesters, he is also waiting for weapons from France. Therefore, since the strength of civil society may be reinforced if Ben Ali stays passive, the repressive force may increase as well if the police and army are better equipped. The assumption here is simply that the balance of power might not change by much if the SQ remains. The following equation gives a good picture of these variations: p = *repressive force / civil society strengths*. The army's payoff is also determined by the probability that Ben Ali stays in power, given the expected utility of his staying in power. However, its utility is conditional on whether the army chief of staff accepts or refuses to follow the order. If the SQ remains, then we assume that the army's expected utility is 0. Following the SQ, the army occupies strategic points of the Tunisian territory but does not take direct action either in favor of or against the demonstrators.

Actors' Preferences

Ben Ali obviously prefers staying in power to being overthrown; however, the regime is certainly better off if the transition occurs peacefully rather than through an armed rebellion or a civil war. Therefore, Ali will get a payoff of -2 if the outcome is a civil war (WAR) and -1 if a peaceful transition prevails (TRANS). Intuitively, he will prefer to stay in power, conditional on the acceptance of the army to repress the demonstrators (STRONG) rather than suffer from a contentious situation with the military's force. Therefore, a stronger government will give Ben Ali a payoff of 2 and a payoff of 1 if the game results in a weakened government (WEAK). The SQ, as explained above, equals 0 since the spread of demonstrations might be counterbalanced, for instance, by the acquisition of new weapons and equipment sent by Tunisian allies or by weakening of the street protesters.

We assume that the army is indifferent about either opening fire on the demonstrators, conditional on Ben Ali staying in power (STRONG), or refusing to open fire, conditional on the regime leaving power (TRANS). In both cases, the army will get a payoff of 2 because we assume that its payoff is completely determined by the identity of the regime after the protests.

Moreover, we assume that the army is indifferent about the two outcomes in which it makes a wrong prediction—specifically, in the scenarios of a civil war (WAR) and of a weakened government (WEAK) and will get a payoff of -1. This assumption is indeed discussable, but it does not change the final equilibrium. We use it in our analysis only as a matter of simplicity. The matrix presented below (table 1) describes Ben Ali's and the army's preferences in the sequential game.

Table 1. Summary of actors' preferences

Actors Scenarios	Ben Ali	Army
STRONG	2	2
WAR	-2	-1
WEAK	1	-1
TRANS	-1	2
SQ	0	0

Assumptions

The Probabilities q and r. Actors' preferences and payoffs are conditional on the probability that Ben Ali stays in power. Therefore, this section takes into account the probabilities p, q, and r to compute the threshold at which the president is indifferent about either keeping the SQ or repressing the population (Repress?), as well as the threshold at which the army is indifferent about either following or refusing Ben Ali's order to repress the population. The probability r is greater than q as the regime's repressive capacity increases when the military makes use of its weapons. In other words, there is a greater chance that the regime stays in power longer if the army accepts the order to shoot at protesters even though this decision doesn't exclusively determine the outcome of whether or not Ben Ali will fall—thus, q r. The probability p, q, and r is represented by the president's repressive capacity relative to the strength of civil society (i.e., p, q, and r = $\frac{\text{repressive capacity}}{\text{civil society strength}}$).[29]

Asymmetry of information. Because of incomplete information, Ben Ali's decision to order the shooting is not perfectly based on the army's expected utility because he doesn't know at which points the army will refuse to obey the order to open fire. In other words, Ben Ali has vague information about the limit at which the army will accept the order to shoot. For simplification, we assume here that his decision to order a repression is based on an expectation that the army will follow his order; however, the army follows its preferred expected utility, given our assumption that it has complete information about Ben Ali's expected utility. Even though the Tunisian army has been seen as a "weak" or even an "invisible" actor in Tunisian affairs, it remains a key player, particularly because of this asymmetry of information that the army has taken advantage of. Given the actors' preferences as well as the order of the p, q, and r, we are now able to compute the four possible equilibriums of this game (table 2).[30]

Table 2. Summary of the four scenarios

Equilibriums	Conditions
(SQ; Accept)	($q \leq$ ½; $q \geq -r + 1$)
(SQ; Reject)	($q \leq$ ½; $q \leq -r + 1$)
(Repress; Accept)	($q \geq$ ½; $q \geq -r + 1$)
(Repress; Reject)	($q \geq$ ½; $q \leq -r + 1$)

Results

Figure 2 describes our results and contains information about the four scenarios discussed above, as well as the probabilities that Ben Ali will stay in power. Results are presented via the straight line r = q since we assumed previously that r is surely smaller than q—that is, the probability that the regime stays in power longer if the army accepts the order to shoot at protesters (q) is greater than this same probability conditional on the army's rejection of the order to open fire (r). We turn our attention to the area in which q≥½ because we want to compare the 2008 and 2011 demonstrations. We can simply notice here that no equilibrium exists (SQ; Accept), a possibility that might look surprising at first glance. However, it suggests that no situation exists in which the army would agree to repress the demonstrators and in which Ben Ali would prefer the SQ. In other words, whenever the army is ready to accept the order to open fire on the streets, Ben Ali will prefer to order a repression (Repress; Accept).
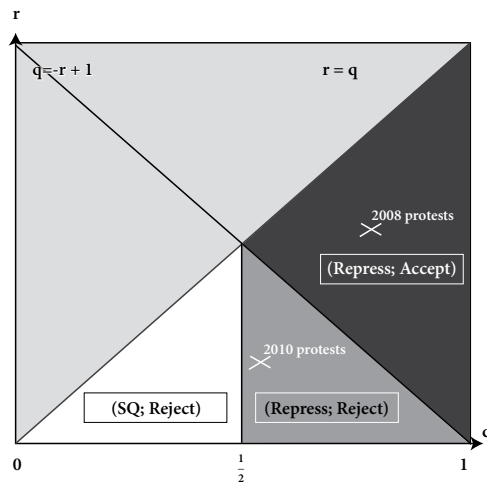

Figure 2. Equilibriums of the game relative to the probabilities q and r

Proposition 1: **When q is high and not bounded by a low probability r, Ben Ali's regime will order the repression of its population, and the army will accept this order. More specifically, when q ≥ ½ and q ≥ -r + 1, Ben Ali's regime will choose the equilibrium (Repress; Accept) (i.e., the dark area in figure 2).** In other words, when the probability that Ben Ali stays in power, conditional on the army agreeing to follow orders, is high enough and the likelihood that the regime stays in power, conditional on the army refusing orders, is high enough, then Ben Ali will decide to order a repression of the population, and the army will accept this order. The 2008 Gafsa protest can be represented within this dark triangle.

Proposition 2: When q is high and bounded by a low probability r, Ben Ali's regime will order the repression of its population, but the army will reject this order. More specifically, when q ≥ ½ and q ≤ -r + 1, Ben Ali's regime will choose the equilibrium (Repress; Reject) (i.e., the gray area in figure 2). In other words, when the probability that Ben Ali stays in power, conditional on the army agreeing to follow orders, is high enough and the likelihood that the regime stays in power, conditional on the army refusing orders, is low enough, then Ben Ali will decide to order a repression of the population, but the army will reject this order. The uprising of 2011, leading to a regime change, is represented within this triangle.

The main argument of this article is that the decisions of the two actors during the two different protests were principally influenced by an asymmetry of information that gave an advantage to the army. Because Ben Ali didn't expect the army to consider rejecting his order, he made his decision only according to the probability that he would stay in power when the army intervened. This decision was likely the most effective way to retain control during the 2008 Gafsa protests. In fact, we can see that the army repressed the population because the probability that the regime would stay in power, even if the army had refused to open fire, was too high. Therefore, the regime made the "best" decision to remain in power. In contrast, the uprising of 2011 demonstrates that the asymmetry of information between the regime and the army was crucial to effecting a regime transition.

In our case, asymmetry of information allows the army to have greater control over the final equilibriums because the generals have more information than Ben Ali's regime. During the 2011 uprising, the probability of the president remaining in power was below the line q = r + 1 because the spread of the population had reached a level close to the point where the probability of Ben Ali falling is more likely (towards q = ½ and r = 0). The balance of power between Ben Ali's repressive force and the strength of the civil society is such that the army prefers to reject Ben Ali's order to shoot at the population.

If Ben Ali had access to complete information, he would have integrated the probability of the army's rejection of the order into his calculations—doing so would have substantially changed our equilibriums and thus the outcome of the game. If this were the case, then a smaller area would have represented the equilibrium constituting Ben Ali's decision to repress his people and the army's decision to reject this order, and Ben Ali would have preferred to maintain the SQ to giving the order to shoot. Therefore, we can speculate that with complete information, he would have been able to stay in power longer.

However, this equilibrium does not reflect Ben Ali's decision, mainly because of the asymmetry of information that destabilized the regime. In reality, because

he had incomplete information about the army's preferences and payoffs, when Ben Ali gave the order to shoot, the army refused. Thus, we suggest that the president would have been better off and would have stayed in power longer if he had chosen to keep the SQ. Critics of these interpretations may emerge because of the idea that it is easier to draw lessons after transitions have actually happened; however, no one was able to predict such a fast regime change because of the illusion of domination that Ben Ali projected on his population and external actors.

We have attempted to look at the strategic interactions of the elites' behavior to explain the Tunisian transition. The next part of this article provides a detailed analysis of the crucial interactions and strategic behavior that explain how the Tunisian army's decision to reject Ben Ali's order has been crucial in pushing him out of the country.

Analysis

Despite Tensions, Why Has the Tunisian Army Never Attempted a Coup?

Barany proposes the idea that the reasons why the army has never taken action against the regime can explain why it has never taken substantive steps to overthrow the particular power in place.[31] First, Ben Ali's regime was careful in limiting the army's power in terms of numbers, budget allocation, and the scope of its role and responsibility. Therefore, more influential forces in the political economy of Tunisia largely overshadowed the army as Ben Ali's government conscientiously used the police and other security agencies to secure and control Tunisia's population. Additionally, the regime's decision to send a significant number of officers to the United States to attend training and programs is another reason that reveals the military's disinclination to take power. The Tunisian regime has strategically distracted the army from being involved in political concerns.[32]

The weakness of the army's institutional power in Tunisia is not the most determinant factor that explains why the military has never attempted to overthrow Ben Ali's regime. Instead, we maintain that the likelihood that he would stay in power was always too high for the army to attempt any action against him. Béatrice Hibou, in *The Force of Obedience*, magisterially explains how Ben Ali's regime was involved in every strata of Tunisian society and reinforced its power by satisfying key elites and civil society organizations.[33] As long as this long-term equilibrium was sustained, the army could take no feasible actions against the regime, despite the continuous tension between the two forces.

The 2008 regional protests of Gafsa demonstrated that the army was willing to back the regime and commit a crime against its own population. Unlike events of the 2011 uprisings, the spread of the demonstrations did not pose as great a threat to the regime. The army had no choice other than act severely against the demonstrators. Referring to the extended game presented above, we observe that the probability that Ben Ali would remain in power was too high for the army to risk taking the side of the Tunisian population. Doing so would have resulted in the army acting against its interests by accepting retaliation from the regime. Timing was also crucial; the expansion of protests across the entire region proceeded quickly, and Ben Ali's order to the army came when the balance of power on the field was clearly to the regime's advantage. One can fairly ask what the army's decision would have been if the regime had waited a few weeks before ordering a severe repression.

The Importance of Uncertainty and Beliefs in the Tunisian Transition

The army believed that the results of the protests were too uncertain to take a step forward and act against Ben Ali's regime. We assert that, on 12 January 2011, the military was better off refusing the president's order to open fire on the demonstrators and, in doing so, brought a decisive "coup" to change the regime in place (i.e., its preferred outcome). More precisely, the balance of power on the field at that time was such that the probability of having a new regime in place was likely, even with the army on the regime's side. Therefore, the army believed that its action to back the population would make the transition almost certain. Additionally, the risk of shooting at protesters was too high because the new government would have punished it harshly; thus, the army was a determinant in ending the long-term equilibrium built by the regime over a quarter of a century.

We contend that Ben Ali should have kept the SQ instead of ordering the army to shoot. Due to asymmetric information, he misevaluated the probability that the army would do so. This is not to say that the SQ would have allowed Ben Ali to stay in power indefinitely; however, it is very likely that if he chose to keep the SQ, the president would have retained control longer and the repression would have lasted an uncertain amount of time (days, weeks, or months).

Additionally, if the SQ had remained, it is uncertain that the army would have chosen to become an ally to the street protesters. The cost of protesting increases over time for the demonstrators, so it is not financially, physically, or psychologically affordable. Therefore, the likelihood that Ben Ali would stay in power was increasing over time, and because of the tenuous balance of power on the field, the army may not have backed the population as it did. Consequently, we

have demonstrated here that beliefs, asymmetry of information, and timing played a central role in the Tunisian regime transition.

Refusing an Order as a Strong Signal and Commitment Device

The army's decision to refuse the president's order triggered strong signals to the population and Ben Ali's foreign supporters. The following reasons help one understand why the Tunisian regime collapsed barely one month after the army's refusal to act.

A signal well received by the population. First, the refusal of the army to shoot in 2011 was seen as a signal to the population that the end of the Ben Ali regime was possible and potentially close. Susanne Lohmann interprets "the demonstrations as an 'informational cascade' that finally made public some of the previously hidden information about the nature of the regime. With this information in the public domain the viability of the regime was undermined."[34] In Tunisia, the nature of the regime was somewhat known; however, when the army refused Ben Ali's order and this information spread, the population stopped overestimating the regime's repressive forces. Thus, the army's decision to refuse Ben Ali's order very likely changed the population's belief in the repressive capacity of the regime; therefore, it played a substantial role in its overthrow.

The army: no choice other than committing. Second, after rejecting Ben Ali's order, the army had no choice other than take the side of civil society to make sure that the transition prevailed. One must not confuse this rationale with differing reports appearing in the French and Tunisian newspapers arguing that the army was an ally of the street. The Tunisian army became an ally of the people only because the same outcome was preferred, given the SQ. When the decisive moment of opportunity to overthrow the power in place arose, the army made a rational choice to reject Ben Ali's order. As such, the strength of civil society increased and became greater than the power of Ben Ali's repressive forces.

A warning for Tunisian allies. Third, the army's refusal to follow Ben Ali's order was a signal to his allies that the end of his regime was near and that its support was likely to hurt the army's reputation. One should not forget that at the time of the refusal of the Tunisian army to act, French weapons were about to be sent to Tunisia to help Ben Ali gain "control" over his population; therefore, timing was crucial. Had the regime received the weapons from France, the president's repressive force would have been much higher, and the game would have completely changed since it would have been very uncertain whether or not the army would reject Ali's order. However, its refusal to shoot at the population reflected the weakness and impending end of Ben Ali's regime, and after the army chief of

staff rejected the president's order, the French government reversed its position and sent no weapons.

Conclusion

Despite the Tunisian army's lack of involvement in the political and institutional sphere, it changed the rules of the game of political transition in Tunisia. The recent literature on Tunisia has mostly focused on the role of popular mobilization. We must emphasize that we do not neglect the role of the Tunisian population, but we maintain that the army's decision to reject Ben Ali's order was pivotal and has generated very strong signals to key actors that changed their beliefs about the evolution and outcome of the popular protests. It is true that some articles have recognized that the role of the military was crucial in explaining Ben Ali's departure, but their analyses have been more descriptive than explanatory. Instead, the extended game introduced here enables us to see the types of interactions, strategies, and outcomes that influenced the army's decision. Blaydes and Lo rightly think that uncertainty is key in regime transition; accordingly, we take it into account here as well.[35]

An alternative approach to explaining why the army refused to act involves connecting the two events analyzed in this article. Arguably, the army's decision to shoot at protesters in 2008 is linked to its refusal three years later; however, one would need to calculate in detail the costs to and benefits enjoyed by the army to shoot at the population. Such a study must be postponed until the archives for the event are released because this approach would necessarily miss important facts that are not yet known, such as possible compensations to the army by Ben Ali. Instead, our approach is based on what is already known and the uncertainty that remains about the change of regime.

Finally, it would be interesting to see more research on business power in Tunisia and its influence on the Tunisian transition. Granted, the Trabelsi family (the family of the president's wife) acted quite unconventionally before the 2011 uprising (i.e., imposing upon banks or businesses to give ["lend"] them money). But such research would prove crucial to understanding the extent to which businesses' discontent is related to the army's decision to reject Ben Ali's regime order, especially in regard to research exploring how business and military elites have interacted prior to transition.

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23. Way, "Comparing the Arab Revolts." The main argument supported by Way can be summarized by the following: "More often than not, autocrats let go of power not because they want to, but because key political, economic, and military allies force them to give up after deciding that the regime is no longer worth

supporting. The readiness of elites to back the regime in a crisis is generally more decisive to authoritarian survival than the number of protesters in the streets. Thus Tunisia's President Zine al Abidine Ben Ali was forced out of the country by angry crowds of thousands which, though sizeable by Tunisian standards, were hardly large enough to overwhelm the military and police" (19).

24. Adam Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and Lisa Blaydes and James Lo, "One Man, One Vote, One Time? A Model of Democratization in the Middle East," *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 24, no. 1 (January 2012): 110–46. Blaydes and Lo present their methodology as follows: "We extend a canonical model of political transition developed by Adam Przeworski in *Democracy and the Market* (Przeworski, 1991) to include the possibility of two types of uncertainty. The first—discussed in the original Przeworski conceptualization—is uncertainty on the part of civil society regarding the willingness of regime liberalizers to repress; the second involves the uncertainty of regime liberalizers regarding civil society's commitment to democracy" (112).

25. Blaydes and Lo, "One Man, One Vote, One Time?"

26. Blaydes and Lo present their argument as follow: "The model solution suggests a number of key findings. The first is that the existence of uncertainty is key to the possibility for democratic transition. Second, transition to democracy is only possible when the repressive capacity of a regime exceeds a certain threshold. Given these conditions, democracy occurs when regime liberalizers who prefer democracy to a narrowed dictatorship interact with a civil society that will honor democratic principles." Ibid., 112.

27. Other security chiefs, notably from the police and the president's personal security, have played a role in influencing Ben Ali's decisions. However, we assume here that the army was the decisive actor that made the difference in Ben Ali's escape.

28. Even though Ben Ali made enormous concessions the day before his escape, it cannot be said that the population could take his potential willingness to reform as a credible commitment. Interestingly, Ben Ali's concessions seem to share many similarities with the last speech of Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu, in which he made the same types of concessions to his people.

29. Blaydes and Lo, "One Man, One Vote, One Time?"

30. First, the equilibrium (SQ; Accept) describes the situation in which Ben Ali chooses to keep the status quo while the army decides to accept the order to open fire. This condition is given by the following two inequalities:

- $q.STRONG_{ba} + (1 - q).WAR_{ba} \leq p.SQ_{ba}$

As Ben Ali gets a payoff of 0 if the SQ remains, 2 if the army accepts the order to repress the population and he remains in power (STRONG), and -2 if the army accepts the order to repress the population but Ben Ali leaves (WAR), the previous equation becomes $2q + (-1).(1-q) \leq 0$

By simplifying, we get q ≤ ½

In other words, we can say that Ben Ali's regime will choose the SQ when the probability that he leaves power is equal or lower than half.

- $q.STRONG_m + (1 - q).WAR_m \geq r.WEAK_m + (1 - r).STRONG_m$

Following the same logic of calculation, we have

$2q - 2(1-q) \geq -r + 2.(1-r)$

By simplifying, we get q ≥ -r + 1

Therefore, the equilibrium (SQ; Accept) equals (q ≤ ½ ; q ≥ -r + 1).

Second, there is an equilibrium (SQ; Reject) when Ben Ali chooses to keep the SQ while the army decides to reject his order to shoot at the demonstrators. This situation is given by the following inequalities:

- $q.STRONG_{ba} + (1 - q).WAR_{ba} \leq p.SQ_{ba}$

As previously, we get q ≤ ½

- $q.STRONG_m + (1 - q).WAR_m \leq r.WEAK_m + (1 - r).STRONG_m$

Following the same logic of calculation as previously, we get q ≤ -r + 1

Therefore, the equilibrium (SQ; Reject) equals ($q \leq$ ½ ; $q \leq -r + 1$).

Third, the equilibrium (Repress; Accept) exists when Ben Ali's regime decides to repress its people and the army accepts this order. The following inequalities define this situation:

- $q.STRONG_{ba} + (1 - q).WAR_{ba} \geq p.SQ_{ba}$

Unlike previously, we get q ≥ ½

- $q.STRONG_m + (1 - q).WAR_m \geq r.WEAK_m + (1 - r).STRONG_m$

In this situation, we get q ≥ -r + 1

Therefore, the equilibrium (Repress; Accept) equals ($q \geq$ ½ ; $q \geq -r + 1$) .

Fourth, (Repress; Reject) is an equilibrium in which Ben Ali's regime makes the order to repress the demonstrators and the army rejects his order. This situation must satisfy the following inequalities:

- $q.STRONG_{ba} + (1 - q).WAR_{ba} \geq p.SQ_{ba}$

We get q ≥ ½

- $q.STRONG_m + (1 - q).WAR_m \leq r.WEAK_m + (1 - r).STRONG_m$

Following the same logic of calculation as previously noted, we get q ≤ -r + 1

Therefore, the equilibrium (Repress; Reject) equals ($q \leq$ ½ ; $q \leq -r + 1$) .

31. Barany, "Comparing the Arab Revolts."

32. Ibid.

33. Béatrice Hibou, *The Force of Obedience: The Political Economy of Repression in Tunisia* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2011).

34. Susanne Lohmann, "The Dynamics of Informational Cascades: The Monday Demonstrations in Leipzig, East Germany, 1989–91," *World Politics* 47, no. 1 (October 1994): 44.

35. Blaydes and Lo, "One Man, One Vote, One Time?"

South-South Land Grabs

The Case of Korean Investments in the Greater Mekong Subregion

Teresita Cruz-del Rosario, PhD[*]

According to Anders Riel Muller, by walking through Seoul, South Korea's cosmopolitan capital of 10 million people, one can easily appreciate the abundance of food in affordable restaurants and the propensity of Koreans to eat out, especially in a competitive society in which working long hours replaces the time spent cooking at home.[1] Furthermore, the increasing popularity of Korean food as an ethnic cuisine that is making waves in the world magnifies the importance of food in the emerging global identity of Korea as an economic and cultural superpower. However, Muller notes that Korea's worrisome record on land grabs threatens this celebrated global reputation as a success story since, as a country that has lost much of its agricultural land to urbanization and rapid industrialization, it faces a distinct problem of food insecurity. Except for rice, Korea imports nearly 90 percent of its food. Whereas 70–80 percent of its population derived its livelihood from working in the agricultural sector in the 1950s following a very successful land-reform program, today a mere 8 percent are employed in agriculture. Rural poverty is endemic, and farmers who were once favored through protectionist measures from the state are now a shrunken population with an average age of 60 years, burdened with debt, and farming on leased land. Korean agriculture, once the pride of East Asia in terms of food self-sufficiency, has been considerably reduced, giving people few incentives to return to farming as a viable livelihood.

To address the problem of food insecurity, South Korea has embarked on an aggressive program of land acquisition overseas, following in the footsteps of

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wealthy but food-insecure countries like Japan, China, Vietnam, and the Gulf states—notably Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar. Rising incomes and increased consumption, as well as rapid population growth and urbanization, have pushed the governments of wealthier countries such as South Korea to expand production systems overseas. These nations have been at the forefront of land grabs in Southeast Asia, and the model for negotiating land deals is patently the same as that of the West: companies (usually with state subsidies) in alliance with local politicians and bureaucrats enter into bargaining for long-term land concessions. In many countries in Southeast Asia, large tracts of land have been taken over by Vietnamese companies for coffee production, Chinese state-owned enterprises for rubber, Korean companies for mining, Qatari or Kuwaiti companies for wheat production, or Malaysian companies in joint ventures with Filipino corporations for growing palm oil. A later part of this article provides some examples of land deals among Asian and Middle Eastern investors in Southeast Asia that exemplify a new phenomenon in land grabbing in the global South, alerting us to the rise of "South-South land grabs." The article explores this concept, using Korea as a case study of investments in Southeast Asia that have become worrisome in terms of deleterious effects on development processes in the recipient countries of Korean investment.

Why Are Land Grabs Happening?

In many parts of Southeast Asia today, land grabs form part of a comprehensive agro-food-feed-fuel complex—one that underlies many of the relationships among states, corporations, multilateral institutions, and communities.[2] At the apex of this relationship are states and corporations, who, in alliance with local capital and local political agents, promote global strategies to address food and energy insecurities through large-scale acquisition of land. Massive land deals are happening all over Southeast Asia. These countries currently lack robust institutional mechanisms—independent legislative and judiciary systems, well-developed civil society organizations, and an independent media—to serve as countervailing forces against aggressive moves by the state and corporations to acquire land. The result is a "global race for arable land" that oftentimes lies at the center of public policy among wealthy countries as an effort to secure future energy and food, as speculative investments in anticipation of massive profits, or as a hedge against the risk of potential food and fuel shortages in the future.[3] In turn, developing countries pursue a development strategy premised on attracting foreign investment, the core feature of which is concessionary land deals to foreign investors involving huge tracts of land. In many instances, this approach results in a

displacement of local populations, the further immiseration of the rural poor, and an overall sociopolitical framework in which basic rights to land, food, water, adequate housing—as well as the right to self-determination, freedom of assembly, and the right to fair exploitation of natural resources—are denied. This phenomenon has accelerated in the past few years as the alliance between national and transnational capital through joint-venture profits continues unabated. Central governments, in turn, whose preferred development strategy is through foreign direct investment—often urged by multilateral institutions—either wittingly or unwittingly encourage these events.

According to the Amsterdam-based Transnational Institute, the term *land grabbing* reemerged on the international stage in the context of a spike in global food prices in 2007–8. A combination of crises in food, energy, the environment, and finance coalesced during this period, producing a response among transnational and national economic actors to acquire extensive swaths of land in order to maintain and extend large-scale extractive and agro-industrial enterprises. The term since then has come to be understood as land grabbing although authors Saturnino Borras and Jennifer Franco argue that the more precise term should be *control grabbing*, which refers to the "capturing of power to control land and other associated resources like water, minerals or forests, in order to control the benefits of its use."[4]

In 2009 the Washington-based International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) estimated that 15–20 million hectares in developing countries were either sold, leased, or under negotiation with foreign entities. IFPRI has compiled different media reports on large-scale land acquisitions from different investor countries all over the world. See table 1 for a sampling of such reports on land grabs. The shaded areas indicate that the biggest land deals are from new investor countries (China and South Korea).

Table 1. Media reports on overseas land investments to secure food supplies, 2006–9

Country Investor	Country Target	Plot Size (hectares)	Current Status	Source
Bahrain	Philippines	10,000	Deal signed	*Bahrain News Agency*, February 2009
China (with private entities)	Philippines	1,240,000	Deal blocked	*The Inquirer*, January 2009
Jordan	Sudan	25,000	Deal signed	*Jordan Times*, November 2008
Libya	Ukraine	250,000	Deal signed	*The Guardian*, November 2008
Qatar	Kenya	40,000	Deal signed	*Daily Nation*, January 2009
Saudi Arabia	Tanzania	500,000	Requested	*Reuters Africa*, April 2009
South Korea (with private entities)	Sudan	690,000	Deal signed	*Korea Times*, June 2008
United Arab Emirates (with private entities)	Pakistan	324,000	Under implementation	*The Economist*, May 2008

Reprinted from Joachim van Braun and Ruth Meinzen-Dick, *"Land Grabbing" by Foreign Investors in Developing Countries: Risks and Opportunities*, IFPRI Policy Brief 13 (Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute, April 2009), 2, http://ebrary.ifpri.org/cdm/ref/collection/p15738coll2/id/14853.

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food issued a statement in 2009 that an estimated 30 million hectares were under acquisition "in order to grow food for China and the Gulf States who cannot produce enough for their populations."[5] Globally, the World Bank estimates that 45 million hectares' worth of large-scale farmland deals were announced even before the end of 2009.[6] These estimates, however, are problematic. Lands classified as "suitable" for cultivation oftentimes imply that such areas are "marginal," "idle," or "unused" and therefore under the jurisdiction of the state. The reality, however, is that most of these lands are occupied and have been used by communities and households for generations without interference from outside interests. As land markets opened up, the push for land reclassification to make them available to foreign investment also spurred the drive for population displacement, with or without adequate compensation.

Shifts in land-use patterns, from subsistence farming to large-scale monocrop agriculture, have been at the forefront of massive land deals in recent years. Yet, as Borras and Franco point out, change in land use has many faces and directions. To capture this diversity and complexity, they have developed a typology as a heuristic device to portray more systematically the different dynamics of shifts in land use. Each of the different categories of such shifts "brings in important dynamics missing from the dominant land grab narrative, and enables us to situ-

ate our analysis of land-use changes in the latest wave of capitalist penetration of the countryside of the world."[7] (See table 2.) According to Borras and Franco, the shaded areas represent changes in land use that are the object of anti-land-grabbing campaigns, all of which indicate shifts from consumption to export, whether of food or biofuels. These areas also indicate transnational activity, especially from nontraditional countries (e.g., South Korea, the Gulf states, and Japan) that either transact directly with farmers through contract farming arrangements or enter into long-term leases, typically of 99 years, or a combination of both. Further, in these areas the most intrusive forms of land grabbing occur as state-sponsored companies aggressively enter into land concessions. Such land grabs occur very rapidly. As many as 60 South Korean companies are involved in farming in 16 countries.

Table 2. The main directions of land use today

Ideal Type	Type A Food to Food		Ideal Type	Type B Food to Biofuels	
	From	**To**		**From**	**To**
A	Food production	Food production	**B**	Food production	Biofuels production
A1	Food consumption	Food for domestic exchange	**B1**	Food for consumption, domestic exchange	Biofuels for export
A2	Food consumption, domestic exchange	Food for export	**B2a**	Food for consumption, domestic exchange	Biofuels for local use and domestic exchange but corporate controlled
A3	Food for export, monocropping, and industrial farming	Food for consumption and domestic exchange, small-scale polyculture	**B2b**	Food for consumption, domestic exchange	Biofuels for local use and domestic exchange but non-corporate-controlled
Ideal Type	Type C Nonfood to Food		Ideal Type	Type D Nonfood to Biofuels	
	From	**To**		**From**	**To**
C	Nonfood	Food production	**D**	Forest and marginal/ idle lands	Biofuel production
C1	Forest lands	Food for consumption, domestic exchange	**D1**	Forest lands	Biofuels for use and domestic exchange
C2	Forest lands	Food for export	**D2**	Forest lands	Biofuels for export
C3	"Marginal," "idle" lands	Food for consumption, domestic exchange	**D3**	"Marginal," "idle" lands	Biofuels for use and domestic exchange
C4	"Marginal," "idle" lands	Food for export	**D4**	"Marginal," "idle" lands	Biofuels for export

Reprinted from Saturnino M. Borras and Jennifer C. Franco, "Global Land Grabbing and Trajectories of Agrarian Change: A Preliminary Analysis," *Journal of Agrarian Change* 12, no. 1 (January 2012): 39.

Palm oil production is an illustration of large-scale land grabs for monocrop agricultural production, an instance of shifting food for consumption or domestic exchange to food for export (ideal type A2), or the clearing of forest lands for food for export (ideal type C2). Further, instances of lands (mis)classified as "marginal" or "idle" and subsequently shifted to food for export constitute ideal type C4. According to John McCarthy, "Oil palm is the most significant boom crop in Southeast Asia, and one associated with large-scale agrarian transformation. . . . The area under oil palm in Southeast Asia grew from 4.2 million hectares in 2000 to 7.1 million ha in 2009, with millions of additional hectares either in transition or set aside for further development."[8]

This shift in crop use arose out of the emergence of major buyers for palm oil—namely, China and India. Over a 10-year period from 1996 to 2007, both countries have increased their importation of palm oil. Chinese importation registered from 1.07 million tons in 2007 to an almost fivefold increase of 5.22 million in 2007. Similarly, India's imports in 1996 stood at 1.11 million tons; by 2007 this amount had increased to 3.51 million. The combined importation of palm oil by the top four European Union countries (Germany, Netherlands, United Kingdom, and Italy) is only equal to the amount of palm oil imported by India alone over the same time. This fact strongly suggests that the land grabs for palm oil production are very much a reflection of the food requirements of the two largest Asian countries—China and India (see table 3).

Table 3. Palm oil import data in tons

Year	China	India	Germany	Nether-lands	UK	Italy	Belgium	France	Top 4 EU Coun-tries*
2007	5,223,369	3,514,900	1,076,393	1,237,817	491,944	507,622	n.d.	n.d.	3,313,776
2006	5,220,161	2,766,382	963,886	1,832,217	692,513	515,337	431,340	334,841	4,003,950
2005	4,468,210	2,449,184	949,792	1,721,369	668,841	478,435	389,400	306,317	3,818,437
2004	3,980,868	3,472,518	821,987	1,378,826	706,083	369,956	345,347	267,586	3,276,852
2003	3,422,999	4,026,436	636,565	1,076,643	782,188	312,664	285,258	271,460	2,808,060
2002	2,302,730	3,052,625	679,794	1,044,336	632,401	308,318	n.d.	267,920	2,655,849
2001	1,606,287	2,733,119	605,438	989,612	619,549	303,714	253,054	251,566	2,518,313
2000	1,460,776	3,054,923	552,931	701,779	554,022	260,763	273,581	n.d.	2,069,495
1999	1,258,271	2,868,429	412,223	711,663	463,337	228,903	180,715	112,640	1,816,136
1998	990,317	1,608,056	471,911	695,263	372,101	227,454	143,147	108,271	1,382,986
1997	1,235,099	1,044,407	494,099	220,994	438,434	229,459	170,684	n.d.	1,382,986
1996	1,078,220	1,113,851	408,526	343,403	433,939	225,139	151,347	n.d.	1,411,007

Derived from Saturnino M. Borras Jr. and Jennifer C. Franco, *Political Dynamics of Land-Grabbing in Southeast Asia: Understanding Europe's Role* (Amsterdam: Transnational Institute, January 2011), 38, https://www.tni.org/files/download/Political%20Dynamics%20of%20Land-grabbing%20in%20Southeast%20Asia.pdf.
*Germany, Netherlands, United Kingdom, and Italy. These four were consistently among the top 20 importers. Belgium and France are in the top 20 for the most part (not in all years) during the same period.

Apart from the specter of food shortages in food-importing countries is the competition for foreign investment among nations that anchor their development strategies on capital infusion from overseas sources. Chief among these investments are those in rural infrastructure that in turn provide farm and off-farm employment.[9] Other investments are in agricultural technologies that spur production, thereby increasing local capacities for domestic food consumption as well as food exportation. The drive towards economic growth through foreign investments in the agricultural sector may very well offer benefits to the local economy,

yet the deleterious effects on rural communities—particularly in terms of land losses—are a direct consequence of a development strategy that favors foreign investment and increases the local economy's vulnerability to land losses and dislocation among rural populations. Further, trade agreements, whether regional or bilateral, typically contain provisions in the so-called investment chapter. The major focus of this chapter is the requirement for governments to liberalize land—that is, to lift restrictions on land ownership by foreigners and to inhibit governments from enacting land-governance measures that discriminate against foreign investors. When such agreements and treaties are violated, foreign investors seek recourse to international arbitration, which in most cases treats land as a commercial asset.[10]

A third factor that drives and accelerates land grabs is the imposition of export restrictions by countries that have been traditional food exporters but were faced with sudden increases in food prices in 2007 and 2008. Exporting countries reacted defensively to food-price spikes in a bid to maintain domestic food stocks, stabilize food prices, and ensure domestic supply. During the period of food-price increases, at least 29 countries curbed their food exports, among them India, China, and Vietnam—traditionally rice exporters.[11] In the aftermath of food hoarding among the exporting countries, the insecure countries utilized their resources to enter into massive land deals and embarked on a strategy to "outsource" their food production in a bid to stave off future price spikes and maintain a steady food supply.

Finally, factors that account for land grabs, such as those listed above, can be subsumed within a larger framework of international political economy, particularly the logic of primitive capital accumulation in which an uneven process of capitalist development results in "accumulation by dispossession."[12] Using Laos as a focal lens for large-scale land concessions, Ian Baird argues that primitive accumulation is a process of "turning land into capital, people into labor," a state-sponsored process of capital accumulation that views rural populations as unproductive and resistant to being integrated into the market economy.[13] Drawing semisubsistence farmers into wage labor furthers the logic of primitive capital accumulation; drives them out of the land, whether by coercion or through incentives of paid labor; and establishes the justification for entering into large land concessions by the state. It is interesting to note that any land use that shifts from consumption to domestic exchange signifies commoditization of food production and is an integral component in the evolution of capitalism in the agrarian sector. For peasants previously engaged in food production for domestic use, their participation in the market to obtain more money for their harvest eventually leads to dispossession.

Joachim van Braun and Ruth Meinzen-Dick provide a less pessimistic reading of rural dislocations, advocating strong collective action among rural populations and support from civil society to address power imbalances.[14] The role of local, regional, and global civil society is indispensable in mobilizing collective efforts—already evident in the numerous initiatives that have grown since 2008. All of these fall under the broad umbrella of land justice, and their activities range from education and research to the more active interventions that include sharing benefits, securing tenurial rights for farmers, and assisting in the design of responsible investment and investor management.

South-South Land Grabs in the Greater Mekong Subregion

Land grabbing in Southeast Asia, particularly in the Greater Mekong Subregion, is a pretty dire picture.[15] In Laos alone, Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese companies have secured concessions amounting to approximately 1.1 million hectares of land for commercial purposes—roughly 5 percent of Laos's total land area. This figure comes from a recent inventory of land concessions released by the Laos Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment. Yet, according to a report by the Land Issues Working Group, a partner of Oxfam, it "does not include mining areas, or the most recent concessions granted by the Government."[16] Since mining constitutes the biggest source of revenues for the Laos government, its exclusion means that the figure released by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment is not reliable and could probably be much higher than what has been reported. A separate report issued by the Land Management and Registration Project puts the figure at 5 million hectares, roughly 21 percent of Laos's total land area. The report further indicates that the biggest concessions are in mining. In three northern provinces of Luang Prabang, Phongsaly, and Houaphan, for example, 81 percent of a 100,000-hectare concession was granted for mining exploration and another 19 percent for agriculture, mostly for rubber production. The report confidently asserts that these figures "[mirror] the distribution of concessions at the national level."[17]

The value of mining production in Laos has increased to around $1 billion today. Mining accounts for nearly 50 percent of exports and 15 percent of government revenues. The pernicious effects of land grabs for mining purposes are more evident in the smaller concessions, which are often unreported and remain outside government regulation.

A separate report commissioned by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment and funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and German Cooperation confirm roughly the same trends. The report makes

a distinction between "land leases" and "land concessions."[18] Overall, there are a total of 2,642 land deals. Land concessions (1,535) outnumber land leases (1,107), comprising 58 percent of all total land deals and covering 1.1 million hectares or 99.8 percent of total land area under land deals. Land leases, on the other hand, comprise only 0.2 percent, and the average size of land leases is 3 hectares. In terms of sectors, the primary ones—agriculture, forestry, and mining—claim 91 percent of all land area under investment or 995,005 hectares out of 1.1 million. The remaining 9 percent are in the secondary and tertiary sectors (construction, electricity, communications, tourism, and services). The largest investor countries are China, Thailand, and Vietnam, whose combined investments account for 53 percent of all deals. Japan and South Korea comprise 5 percent, and domestic investment 17 percent. Moreover, the biggest investor in the Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR) is Vietnam, whose land deals cover 28 percent of the total area. A South-South land-based investment pattern is predominant. Although Lao PDR comprises 65 percent of all land deals, the area of coverage is only 17 percent, suggesting that domestic investments, though numerous, cover only a small area compared to the three investor countries whose pattern of investments is in large land concessions (see table 4).

Table 4. Overview of investment projects by investor country of origin

Investor Country	No. of Deals	Total Area (hectares)	Average Area (hectares)	Total No. of All Deals (%)	Total Area of All Deals (%)
China	299	199,015	777	11	18
Thailand	127	73,637	701	5	7
Vietnam	191	307,169	1,862	7	28
Lao PDR	1,705	181,477	117	65	17
South Korea	75	27,114	405	3	2
Japan	21	29,595	1,480	1	3
Other	224	278,787	1,245	8	25

Reprinted from Oliver Schonweger et al., *Concessions and Leases in the Lao PDR: Taking Stock of Land Investments* (Lao PDR: Geographica Bernensia, 2012), 25, http://www.cde.unibe.ch/v1/CDE/pdf/Concessions -Leases-LaoPDR_2012.pdf.

Relative peace and stability in Cambodia since the 1990s have created a favorable investment climate in the country, especially with the passage of the Foreign Investment Law in 1995. Further, tourism experienced a dramatic upsurge, with year-on-year increases since 1993. In 2003 the Ministry of Tourism reported that the country hosted 1.1 million tourists. In 2013 the figure almost quadrupled to 4.2 million.[19] Agriculture, on the other hand, comprises only 6 percent of total investment compared to tourism (58 percent), industry (19 percent), and services (17 percent).[20] However, foreign investments in agriculture that directly involve land concessions have been the most contentious and generate continuous social conflicts, especially among directly affected communities and populations. Land disputes in Cambodia have been occurring for decades. At the center of land controversies is the awarding of economic land concessions (ELC), defined as

> mechanisms to grant state private land through a specific contract to a concessionaire for use in agricultural and industrial agricultural exploitation, namely the cultivation of food or industrial crops, livestock raising and aquaculture, construction of plants, factories or facilities for processing domestic agricultural raw materials, or a combination of some or all of these activities.[21]

ELCs have proliferated over the past several years, as have land claims. Conflicts over land, particularly the resistance to big land concessions, were a contentious issue during the 2012 elections. As of June 2012, a total of 117 concessions occurred, covering 1.18 million hectares in 16 provinces, representing 5.2 percent of Cambodia's total land area and 14.5 percent of total arable land. This figure does not include concessions of 1,000 hectares or fewer, for which no available data exists.[22] Table 5 shows the distribution of ELCs by nationality for the period 1995–2009. Four Asian countries—China, Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam—account for 30 percent or 335,915 hectares, the total land concession under foreign investment, while the remaining 70 percent or 668,725 is under private domestic ownership. The biggest investor is China with 18 percent or 186,935 hectares of the total and one megaproject covering 60,200 hectares of land awarded in 1998 in Koh Kong province.[23]

Table 5. Distribution of ELCs by nationality, 1995–2009

Category	Size (hectares)	Percent of Total	Mean Size (hectares)	Minimum Size (hectares)	Maximum Size (hectares)	No. of projects	No. of projects > 10,000 hectares
Active Projects							
Unreported	-	-	-	-	-	9	
Cambodia	668,725	65	18,576	807	315,028	36	6
China	186,935	18	10,996	5,000	60,200	17	1
India	7,635	1	7,635	7,635	7,635	1	0
Korea	27,622	3	5,524	3,000	7,500	5	0
Malaysia	7,955	1	7,955	7,955	7,955	1	0
Taiwan	4,900	0	4,900	4,900	4,900	1	0
Thailand	37,436	4	7,487	6,523	9,700	5	0
USA	36,203	4	9,051	7,000	9,820	4	0
Vietnam	47,228	5	6,747	2,361	9,380	7	0
Total	1,024,639	100	13,307	807	315,028	86	7
FDI	335,914	35				41*	1
Cancelled Projects							
Cambodia	34,711	28	8,678	7,172	10,000	4	0
China	66,800	53	13,360	3,200	28,500	5	2
USA	9,214	7	9,214	9,214	9,214	1	0
Vietnam	15,160	12	7,580	7,560	7,600	2	0
Total	125,885	100	10,490	3,200	28,500	12	2
FDI	91,174	72					

Derived from Saing Chan Hang et al., *Foreign Investment in Agriculture in Cambodia*, CDRI Working Paper Series no. 60 (Phnom Penh: Cambodia Development Resource Institute and Food and Agriculture Organization, June 2012), 20, http://www.cdri.org.kh/webdata/download /wp/wp60e.pdf.

*This figure excludes the number of unreported projects.

As with Laos, Cambodia exhibits a pattern of foreign investment in the agricultural sector although with a comparatively lower coverage relative to other sectors. The 2009 report of the Cambodian League for the Protection and Defense of Human Rights notes an additional 16 ELCs totaling over 80,000 hectares and displacing 2,900 families despite a declared moratorium to review the existing concessions. However, the report asserts that the review bypassed state institutions and was conducted by the prime minister's office through the enlistment of 2,000 volunteers. As a personal initiative of the prime minister, the report claims that the process lacked transparency, had no monitoring controls, and ulti-

mately led to negligible results. All told, about 2.2 million hectares are currently under ELCs since 2003, affecting nearly 500,000 Cambodians in 12 provinces.[24]

Currently, Myanmar is in the grip of an investment surge. The rush for land concessions in the primary sectors is evident, and the story of community displacement in the rural areas is by now a familiar one, barely two years into Myanmar's economic reforms. Although neither updated nor very reliable data on the state of investments in agriculture exists, the emerging picture is one in which foreign investors are positioning themselves to take control of large tracts of land for agricultural and mining purposes.[25]

A policy brief from the United States Agency for International Development portrays the current array of land laws as "complex and poorly harmonized, with many of the legal instruments dating back to the nineteenth century." In addition, the Myanmar government does not recognize customary land-tenure practices; thus, community-based land use like that practiced by small-holder farmers and ethnic populations is most vulnerable in terms of land grabs and outright dispossession.[26] Without a firm land-tenure law that safeguards rights to the use of land, many farmers and poor rural households will be left behind in an investment-driven strategy currently being promoted by the government. Communities are most vulnerable in the crucial investments of agriculture, mining, and power.

Early signs of trouble are already evident. In early 2014, more than 6,000 land-grab complaints were filed with the parliamentary land investigation committee, even while the deputy minister of agriculture downplayed the number to fewer than 800.[27] The Agriculture and Farmers Federation of Myanmar (AFFM) held its first congress on 29–30 April 2014, attended by 1,592 delegates, to denounce the threat to farmers and their livelihoods resulting from land grabs by corporations in collusion with the government and the military. Though recently formed, the AFFM has a membership base of 51,890 in 628 registered unions all over the country. The fact that 35 percent of its members are women suggests that the formation of civil society is well under way in Myanmar, especially in the agricultural sector where small farmers recognize the immediate threat to their survival.[28]

Additional threats of land grabs in Southeast Asia come from the Middle East, particularly the wealthy Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.[29] Although wealthy, these nations have very little land area suitable for cultivation, and most of the small ones import all of their food supplies. In 2008, when global food prices spiked, GCC members were among those resource-poor countries that undertook a deliberate effort to strategize their food security needs by outsourcing food production through extensive land concessions overseas. During

the annual meeting of Arab financial institutions and the fourth meeting of the Council of Arab Ministers in Dubai in April 2013, the major item discussed was food and energy security and the imperative for GCC countries to "close the food supply gap."[30] Already, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Bahrain are entering into joint ventures with Philippine companies for the production of rice and bananas. Qatar's Sovereign Wealth Fund is investing US $1 billion in Vietnam and an equal amount in Indonesia to support and develop their agricultural production systems.[31] In 2012 Thailand and Bahrain addressed food and energy security needs through a joint steering committee.[32] The flow of investments from Arab countries towards Southeast Asia is part of an overall Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)–GCC action plan in which hydrocarbons and food supply figure prominently in the trade relationship. Total trade between the GCC and ASEAN had already increased by 24 percent in 2010, up from US $67.3 billion in 2009 to US $83.25 billion in 2010.[33] As investments are on the upswing from GCC countries, the threat of dislocation and displacement becomes even more pronounced in the absence of strong and robust land-governance mechanisms in destination countries.

The Role of Korean Investment

In recent years, Korean investments have seen a dramatic surge in the Mekong Subregion as part of a comprehensive investment strategy embodied in the Han River Mekong–Republic of Korea Comprehensive Partnership for Mutual Prosperity, a declaration signed in October 2011 by the foreign ministers of the five Greater Mekong Subregion countries (minus China) and the Republic of Korea. At the second foreign ministers' meeting in 2012, Korea announced more concrete pilot projects in the transport, water, and agricultural sectors.[34] By directly engaging with the five countries as a singular regional bloc, Korea would enter into its first-ever multilateral cooperation even while continuing its previous bilateral relationships with individual countries in the subregion. Interestingly, prior to the declaration of multilateral cooperation, Korean investments had steadily increased in the last 10 years since 2002. The most substantial share of Korean investment has gone to Vietnam, followed by Thailand and Cambodia. With the recent opening of Myanmar, Korea has begun to invest in that country. Laos has negligible investments. See Table 6 for the trend of Korean outward direct investment (ODI) from 1992 until September 2009. Shaded areas indicate the bulk of Korean investments (i.e., Vietnam), with massive increases during the years 2005–8, reaching over US $2 billion each year for the years 2007 and 2008.

Furthermore, Cambodia received a sudden increase in Korean ODI, reaching US $1.25 billion in 2008.

Table 6. Korea's ODI to CMLV countries by year, 1992–2009, in US $Millions

	Cambodia	*Laos*	*Myanmar*	*Vietnam*
1992	1.9	0.3	0.2	101.4
1993	0.0	0.2	2.0	152.9
1994	2.3	2.9	2.0	179.3
1995	0.5	9.9	1.5	233.5
1996	10.2	31.1	5.2	219.8
1997	18.1	27.5	13.2	195.0
1998	2.2	5.3	3.8	107.6
1999	8.8	0.7	5.5	79.3
2000	9.6	3.0	20.5	98.7
2001	8.3	0.0	3.2	98.8
2002	11.5	1.3	2.4	388.7
2003	33.2	0.6	3.0	723.6
2004	7.8	2.0	0.5	358.5
2005	110.8	0.0	0.8	403.7
2006	172.9	7.7	0.5	**1,811.6**
2007	829.9	370.0	19.4	**2,708.0**
2008	**1,255.9**	47.8	49.8	**2,014.7**
2009	225.3	41.8	9.2	634.9

Reprinted from Jaewan Chong, "Korea's Economic Cooperation with CLMV [Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam] Countries: Vietnam Case," in *Japan and Korea with the Mekong River Basin Countries*, BRC Research Report, ed. Mitsuhiro Kagami (Bangkok: Bangkok Research Center, IDE-RETRO, 2010), 137.

Investments in Vietnam have been predominantly in the agricultural sector. In 2014, through the Korean company Korea Agricultural Machinery Industry Cooperative, the government of Korea gave nonrefundable agricultural aid in the amount of US $23.5 million to Vietnam to assist in the mechanization of agriculture. Sixty percent will go towards the purchase of agricultural machinery from Korea. Another US $65.8 million investment in infrastructure development will facilitate the implementation of the agricultural modernization project.

Korean investments are channeled mainly through state corporations such as the Korea Rural Development Corporation that own and operate the overseas farms. Others are private-sector companies such as Daewoo that enter into long-term land concessions. In Cambodia, investments in food crops are purely Cambodian owned or in partnership with Cambodian firms. The most famous and largest Korean firm in Cambodia is Kenertec Company, which was awarded the largest concession, covering 60,000 hectares, to plant rubber trees, cassava, and

jatropha. The concession is six times bigger than the allowable size under Cambodian land law. Moreover, Kenertec has been awarded mining rights for eight sites in the country, covering a land area of 1,520 square kilometers. Kenertec plans to mine copper, lead, manganese, zinc, iron, silica, and jewels. The concession overlaps the Prey Long forest and threatens the livelihoods of approximately 700,000 indigenous peoples who inhabit the forest.[35]

Conclusion: Emerging Trends and the Possible Future of Asia

This article has sketched out several trends regarding land grabs in Asia. First, the logic of the global industrial agro-food-feed-fuel complex serves as the motor for large-scale land acquisition, which results in the dispossession of land by people who have been living and working there for generations. This complex has produced very specific changes in land use—from food crops to biofuels, from forest land to biofuels, and food production for export. These shifts in land use exert pressure towards the large-scale accumulation of land, which in turn results in dispossession and dislocation of communities. Small-scale farming is threatened, and livelihoods of farmers have been virtually eradicated, either turning them into wage laborers who work the plantations in the large land concessions or rendering them totally landless altogether.

Second, changes in crop use that entail a shift from food and feed products to biofuels exacerbate food and water insecurity. The tension between food and fuels puts further pressures on countries that allocate land concessions to award investor countries with large tracts of land to satisfy the latter's needs for both food and biofuel. This situation is especially true for small but wealthy countries that have limited land for agricultural and biofuel cultivation but sufficient financial resources and power to negotiate lucrative land deals for themselves, whether for outright land exploitation or for speculation in the event of unexpected surges in the price of food and fuel, as occurred in 2008.

Third, this complex has caused changes in land-property relations in which the rural poor who had once exercised control of land resources have been dispossessed and dislocated to give way to larger and more powerful forces that exert pressure on the disempowered poor to leave either with or without compensation. In most cases, these dislocated farmers are converted into wage laborers, thus confirming Harvey's assertion of capital accumulating through an extremely uneven process, resulting in dispossession—especially among the rural poor.[36]

Fourth, land grabs also emerge from the erroneous (re)classification of land—from land previously utilized by small farmers, usually under customary laws no longer recognized under a new investment regime, to "idle," "marginal,"

and "unpopulated." The witting or unwitting participation of international financial institutions serves to legitimize massive land grabbing in the guise of a development model premised on attracting foreign investment and financed through public-private financial schemes. This development approach by multilateral financial institutions encourages and endorses land grabbing.

Fifth, these trends suggest, among other scenarios, that the future of Asia is possibly going to be redrawn according to commodity and transportation lines (i.e., pipelines and railways) and large-scale plantations dedicated to monoculture production. The old political-administrative lines drawn by the previous colonials may give way to these boundary divisions of the future and will constitute the "real borders" of the Global South. These new borders are premised on land deals that cut across countries. In the future, we will possibly refer to the Yunnan-Cambodia railway, the Thai-Myanmar pipeline, the Dubai-Qatar rice agglomerate, the Korea biomass plant, the Vietnam-Lao rubber plantation, and so forth. Countries will be known for their ports, economic zones, plantations, and mining concessions. The next generation will live in a world where land has been "transnationalized" while local populations and communities have disappeared.

Finally, alongside this new trend is the emergence of the Asian colonial company, one that possibly resembles the old trading companies of previous colonials. Awash in cash but pressured by domestic concerns regarding food, water, and energy insecurities, these companies are the pioneers of creating a new pattern of hegemony in Asia by Asians. The *Financial Times* carried an article in 2008 that refers to a new "food neocolonialism." It reports a warning from Mr. Jacques Diouf, secretary-general of the Food and Agriculture Organization, who talks about the creation of a neocolonial system based on unequal power relations and "short-term mercantilist agriculture."[37] Control over land resources is reshaping global politics in agriculture and awards geopolitical leverage to countries able to acquire and retain control over global production systems.

Using Korean investment in the Mekong region as a case study illustrates these emerging trends. Korea, a wealthy but resource-challenged country due to its rapid urbanization and industrialization process during the last 50 years, has had to face the challenge of feeding its largely urbanized population and proactively preparing for sudden spikes in food prices. Its massive capital resources were deployed to secure large land concessions not only in the Mekong countries in Southeast Asia but also in other regions like Africa. As a former developing country that had to address its own poverty issues, Korea has joined a group of new, wealthy countries to embark on land-grabbing activities.

This article has not addressed the countervailing forces that confront the new forces of domination. Civil society organizations at local, regional, and global

levels are bringing this issue to the forefront, and more concerted efforts are emerging. Enhanced awareness is now evident—an encouraging trend. One hopes that continuous research will result in deepening appreciation of the current social and economic landscape of the region—one in which inequalities in the land sector, particularly in the rural areas where a sizeable number of Asians still live and from which they derive their livelihoods, are exposed. This exposure creates an enlarged space for the expanded participation and increased solidarity to put forward proposals and alternatives—one that is already in process and that provides an antidote to the seeming hopelessness wrought by powerful forces. In this respect, the continuing economic and social dynamism occasioned by the formation of the Greater Mekong Subregion will spur the kind of prosperity truly shared and enjoyed equally by all of its citizens.

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Where Ambassadors Go

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I n the nineteenth century, diplomatic appointments and government positions in Washington were mainly given out on the basis of political patronage. With each new administration, a long line of job seekers would form, and the president and members of his cabinet would spend many hours responding to the requirements of a system driven by patronage.

In 1891 Charles Guiteau, one such supplicant, wanted President Garfield to appoint him as the minister in Vienna, the highest-ranking position in that embassy at the time. Lacking any political connections, Guiteau saw his request rejected. He then asked to be named a consul in Paris but was again turned down. He chose to express his displeasure at being rebuffed by shooting the president.

Garfield's wounds, together with nineteenth-century medicine, killed him but gave birth to a reform movement. For the first time, laws were passed to move from a complete spoils system to one that filled most jobs on the basis of merit and that held the prospect of promotion and a long-term career working for the government for those who did their jobs well. That reform movement started with passage of the Pendleton Act in 1883 for civil servants but was not formally extended to diplomatic positions until approval of the Rogers Act in 1924.

Because of these reforms, as well as the growing importance and complexity of foreign affairs, American diplomats gradually became more professional. As a result, the number and percentage of ambassadors who were career officers throughout the first half of the twentieth century steadily increased. By the time of the Eisenhower administration, professionalization had expanded to the point that only one-third of US ambassadors were political appointees and the remainder were career Foreign Service officers.

The criminality of the Nixon administration, which included the outright selling of ambassadorships, prompted additional reforms.[1] They were codified in the Foreign Service Act of 1980, which specifically states that political contributions should not be a factor in deciding who gets to be an ambassador. Since the passage of the Rogers Act, the ratio of political appointees to career officers has consistently been about 30/70 even though the question of who receives an ambassadorial appointment is still largely left up to the president. The one exception to that ratio occurred during the Reagan administration, which managed to make 38 percent of its ambassadorial appointments political. Regardless of the percentage, to join the ranks of political-appointee ambassadors, one must have an economic, a political, or a personal relationship with the president. Although these are not mutually exclusive, the predominant one will have a direct impact on the appointee's country assignment.

The single most important determinant of who goes where as ambassador, however, is whether the person is a career officer or political appointee. That fact is made clear by looking at the distribution of political versus career ambassadors broken down by region. Although the ratio is 70/30 career to political worldwide, in Western Europe and the Caribbean, it is reversed. In those regions, 72 percent of the ambassadors serving there since 1960 were political appointees, and only 28 percent were career officers. That proportion stands in stark contrast to Central Asia, where none of the more than 50 people named as ambassador to countries in that region since the end of the Soviet Union has been a political appointee.

Why the pronounced pattern of assignments? No social science theory could explain it, nor would any State Department or White House official admit it, but an explanation does exist: political appointees who give substantial amounts of money to buy the title want a country whose name their friends will recognize and will visit—one that poses very few risks to life and limb and that boasts a good quality of life. Such locations include Western Europe and the Caribbean, with a few other English-speaking nations in the Pacific like Australia and New Zealand thrown in.

Another feature of this peculiar geography is that the more money an appointee gives, the better the assigned country as measured in terms of both gross

domestic product per capita and the number of international tourists visiting each year. In other words, as per capita gross domestic product increases from $0 to $90,000 and as the number of tourist visits increases from 0 to 120 million, the chance of the ambassador being a political appointee increases from 20 percent to 70 percent.

A system in which the wealth of both the country, and the appointee, determines who becomes ambassador can hardly be expected to produce optimal results in terms of foreign policy. Nonetheless, this thinly veiled corruption is tolerated because, in the end, the president chooses whomever he (and some day she) wants as an ambassador. Although the chief executive is bound somewhat by the 70/30 tradition, no law or regulation places any firm restrictions on that power.

Such a system is just another indication of the influence of money on the American electoral system. Even though the president is the most powerful individual in the world, he has only a limited number of ways of rewarding those who help him get elected. Given the fact that the cost of presidential campaigns has surpassed the $1 billion mark, a candidate needs plenty of helpers, and some of them will have to be rewarded with an ambassadorship.

This system may not be as dysfunctional as it seems because of the preferred destinations of political appointees. Relations with the countries in Western Europe are typically as strong as they are complex. Communications with and travel to and from the United States are not difficult, and those nations have large embassies with capable staffs and a usually competent ambassador in Washington. It is easy enough to circumvent a political appointee, either in the foreign capital or Washington, if the ambassador turns out to be lazy or a disaster. Moreover, these countries are well accustomed to the peculiar American tradition and manner of sending amateur envoys. Some have even complained privately when their ambassador gave less in campaign contributions than the one sent to a neighboring country.

As for the Caribbean nations—those tropical paradises not far from the southeastern United States—relations are also usually very good and not that important from Washington's perspective. If the ambassador runs the embassy badly, damage is confined mainly to those who have the misfortune to work for him or her.

Not all political ambassadors are big campaign contributors or bundlers—those people who literally collect, neatly package, and deliver the contributions of many. The contributors and bundlers are the largest group but comprise a bit less than half of the political appointees. The rest are divided between people appointed for political reasons, such as retired senators or women and minorities who add diversity to the mix, or those who have been loyal staff aides or campaign

workers. The latter two types will not wind up in Europe, but they could find themselves in the Caribbean or the more attractive posts in Latin America.

Regardless of which of the three types of friends of the president—economic (big donors), political, and personal—a political-appointee ambassador is, there is very little chance that person will be sent to a country that is undesirable because it is difficult or dangerous. The best measure of a lack of desirability is salary differentials paid to the people who serve there. They receive incentives for working in the embassies of dangerous, unhealthy, or generally unpleasant countries in order to facilitate staffing the post at all levels. Political appointees of any description are very rarely found in such countries—and never major campaign contributors.

Danger pay is compensation for just what the name implies. It amounts to a bonus of at least 15 percent of the employee's base pay and can go as high as 35 percent for serving in places where a threat to embassy personnel exists because of civil unrest, terrorism, drug traffickers, or some other form of violence. In the first term of the Obama administration, only 2 of the 18 embassies with danger pay—Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia—hosted political-appointee ambassadors. Both were retired generals, neither of whom made any significant campaign contributions.

Hardship pay is awarded for service in nations where the local conditions differ substantially from the environment in the United States and warrant additional compensation as a recruitment and retention incentive. This allowance is compensation for spending a few years in a country known for crime, disease, poverty, poor health care, isolation, or other local features that make it a particularly difficult place to live. The hardship allowance, an addition to base pay, starts at 5 percent and can go as high as 35 percent.

Of the more than 165 US embassies, 127 have conditions sufficiently difficult to warrant some level of hardship pay. Of those 127, only 13 had political appointees as ambassadors during Obama's first term. Of those 13, only 4 made campaign contributions or bundled in the 6-figure range, and their posts carried a hardship allowance of only 5 percent in 2 cases and 10 percent in the other 2.[2]

Aside from the wealth and touristic value of countries, a number of other factors determine who goes where as an ambassador. In the United States' early days, the men in charge of the nation's diplomatic missions abroad were either the Founding Fathers themselves or looked just like them: white, male, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant with the occasional Catholic. As the country's overseas interests, economy, and population grew and became more diverse, so did the ranks of its diplomats.

More recently in the nation's history, some commentators have asserted that diplomats who represent America should be a microcosm of the American people. In reality, the makeup of US ambassadors reflects the prejudices and social values of the moment and will never be an exact replica of the demographics of the population as a whole. Although less true than in the past, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religion have an effect on who becomes an ambassador to what country. The following discusses each of these factors and its effect on ambassadorial assignments.

Gender

For nearly a century, the State Department employed no women in full-time positions. It began to hire them in 1874 but only for clerical work. The view of the department reflected the era's condescending attitude toward women. For example, in 1905 Assistant Secretary Frederick Van Dyne is quoted as saying, "The greatest obstacle to the employment of women as diplomatic agents is their well known inability to keep a secret."[3]

The effort to win women the right to vote, which culminated with ratification of the 19th amendment in 1920, helped bring about a different attitude. Things began to change, but progress came slowly to such a tradition-bound institution like the State Department. The first woman to enter the Foreign Service, Lucile Atcherson, did not do so until 1922. Ruth Bryan Owen, a former member of Congress, was the first woman to be chief of a diplomatic mission. President Franklin Roosevelt named her envoy extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Denmark in 1933. Helen Eugenie Anderson was the first woman to hold the title of ambassador. Active in the Democratic Party, she was appointed by President Truman as ambassador to Denmark in 1949. In 1962 President Kennedy sent her to Bulgaria, making Anderson the first female ambassador to a Communist country. Frances Willis became the first career diplomat named ambassador when she was appointed to Switzerland in 1953.

Opportunities for women in the Foreign Service have greatly increased in recent years. In the 1960s, only 7 percent of new officers brought into the Foreign Service were women, and they held only 2.5 percent of the senior positions. By 1990 the Senior Foreign Service was still only 19 percent female. By 2005 that ratio had risen to 30 percent although it has not increased much since.[4] At the entry level, things are better. Today 40 percent of people who take the written exam for the Foreign Service and 40 percent of those hired are women.

Even though the number of women in the senior ranks seems to have plateaued at 30 percent, the Foreign Service is still far ahead of other sectors of

American society in terms of workforce composition. Only 4 percent of the chief executive officers of *Fortune* 500 companies are women, and less than 17 percent of those who sit on the boards of those corporations are female.[5] Only a quarter of university presidents, a supposedly enlightened group, are women.[6]

Progress has also been made with regard to the effect of gender on ambassadorial placements, but some patterns are still pronounced. The historical data show that women ambassadors typically have been underrepresented in Western Europe, North and Central America, East Asia, South America, and the Middle East. With the exception of the first region, the explanation could be that Washington was reluctant to send an ambassador to parts of the world where local attitudes toward women might make their job more difficult. In the case of Western Europe, the paucity of female ambassadors can probably be attributed to the fact that the region is popular with big donors and that, unlike men, women usually have not had the financial wherewithal to make the required large campaign contributions.

Race and Ethnicity

African-Americans have a longer history as diplomats than women but have enjoyed much slower progress. The only reason for the longer history lies in the thinking that deemed it appropriate to send African-American envoys to two predominantly black nations: Haiti, the second country to win its independence in the Western Hemisphere, and Liberia, founded by freed American slaves and dating its independence from 1847. The first African-American diplomat, Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett, was sent to Haiti as minister resident and consul general in 1869. Lester Aglar Walton, the first African-American chief of mission, went to Liberia in 1935. Edward Dudley, the first African-American to hold the title of ambassador, was assigned there in 1949.[7]

Clifton R. Wharton Sr., the first African-American to have a professional position in the State Department, was also the first to become a Foreign Service officer and the first appointed as chief of a diplomatic mission to a European country. His road to Europe, however, passed through Liberia—his first overseas assignment. Wharton went on to become chief of mission in Romania in 1958 and then ambassador to Norway.

Wharton overcame a deeply ingrained State Department view regarding where African-Americans should properly be assigned. In 1949 Christian Ravndal wrote a memorandum to the deputy undersecretary for administration with the subject line "Countries to which an outstanding Negro might appropriately be sent as Ambassador." Ravndal was director general of the Foreign Service at the

time, the State Department's most senior personnel officer.[8] He suggested three sets of countries. Romania or Bulgaria came first because "the appointment of an outstanding Negro as Ambassador to one of the iron curtain countries should serve to counteract the communist propaganda that Americans are guilty of race discrimination."[9] The second choice was Afghanistan or Ethiopia, but he gave no justification for suggesting either country. The third group included Haiti, Paraguay, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras even though Ravndal worried that the ambassador would have to "overcome the initial hostility with which he would be met."[10] As for other possibilities, Ravndal thought that Middle Eastern countries and Portugal would be offended by an ambassador of color and that Ecuador, Bolivia, and the Dominican Republic had not "evolved enough socially to overcome race prejudice."[11] He suggested that Switzerland, Norway, and Denmark were civilized and enlightened enough and "generally without the race prejudice found in other places."[12] Less than three months after Ravndal wrote the memo, Dudley was named ambassador to Liberia. Over the next decade, five more African-Americans would attain ambassadorial rank. Four of them would be sent to Africa—two to Liberia and one to Guinea and Niger—and one to Europe (Wharton to Norway).

The regional distribution of ambassadorial appointments for African-Americans is much less balanced than for women. Historically, over 72 percent of those individuals who have become ambassadors have gone to Africa. In the last decade, the percentage has fallen but remains at 60 percent.

In earlier times, prejudices within the State Department had a profound effect on where African-American diplomats were sent. Ravndal's memo demonstrates another kind of bias: trying to anticipate the prejudices of the country to which a diplomat might be appointed and letting those attitudes drive the assignment process.

A third, more benign explanation exists for this geographic pattern of assignments today. Because of their heritage, African-American diplomats might choose to serve in Africa because they have greater ties to, or interest in, the continent or because they think their ethnicity might be an advantage in dealing with African officials. Or perhaps they anticipate that they will be less welcome in other parts of the world and therefore less effective.

Most Foreign Service officers tend to specialize in a particular region of the world that reflects their personal preferences. For a career officer, having established one's identity and gained experience and language proficiency in a region makes it highly likely that when the possibility of an ambassadorship arises, it will be in that same part of the world.

If self-selection is now an important determinant of where an African-American might go as ambassador, then the same might be true for other minorities. Of the 23 Hispanic-Americans named ambassadors between 2001 and 2013, 14 of them (61 percent) went to Latin America and the Caribbean. Whatever the reason, the same sort of geographic concentration that results in African-American ambassadors to Africa seems to work for Hispanic-Americans and Latin America.

Sexual Orientation

One might not think that sexual preferences would have an effect on the selection and assignment of an ambassador, but that issue has always been in play. Despite the remarkable progress made in gay rights in recent years, it will continue to have an influence in the future.

Since Thomas Bayard became the first American diplomat to receive the title "ambassador" when he was sent to London in 1893, more than 4,500 people have had that honor. Until 2013 only three of them have been openly gay. The first was James Hormel, a prominent philanthropist and grandson of the founder of the meat company that created Spam. When President Clinton put him forward for Luxembourg in 1997, his selection created a firestorm of congressional opposition.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee approved Hormel's appointment, but a number of Republican senators, responding to pressure from conservative Christian groups and Catholic organizations, blocked the nomination.[13] In arguing against Hormel, Senator Trent Lott of Mississippi labeled homosexuality a sin and compared it to alcoholism and kleptomania. Among those senators opposing Hormel was Chuck Hagel of Nebraska, who said being openly, "aggressively gay" would limit Hormel's effectiveness as ambassador. Fifteen years later, facing his own confirmation struggle to become secretary of defense, Hagel apologized for the remark.[14]

When the full Senate failed to act on Hormel's nomination, Clinton bypassed that body and gave him a recess appointment in 1999 that allowed him to serve only until the beginning of 2001. At that time, a new session of Congress began, and his nomination as ambassador was not resubmitted for consideration because of the opposition to his appointment.

Over the next 12 years, only two more openly gay ambassadors served their country. The first one to be confirmed by the Senate was Michael Guest, a career diplomat whom George W. Bush named as ambassador to Romania. In his first term, President Obama named one openly gay ambassador, David Huebner, to

New Zealand without any significant Senate opposition. Then in June 2013, following his reelection, Obama nominated five more gay men who were confirmed without controversy within two months. All were political appointees, and all were named to wealthy nations, except one who went to the Caribbean.

The congressional treatment that openly gay nominees receive today stands in stark contrast to the reaction to Hormel's appointment in 1997 but is even more remarkable when compared to attitudes in the 1950s. Back then, when State Department officials made their annual appearance before Congress to discuss the budget, the chair of the committee that handled the department would ask, "How many homosexuals has the Department fired this year?"[15] In that era, homosexuality was grounds for dismissal, and security officials in the department devoted considerable time and effort to investigating anyone accused of being a homosexual. One security officer, in fact, was employed full time to follow up on such allegations.[16]

Even in the 1980s, homosexuality was reason enough to revoke one's security clearance because the employee was considered vulnerable to blackmail by foreign agents. Loss of one's clearance made any meaningful work in the department or career advancement impossible. Secretary of State George Shultz stopped that practice during the Reagan administration.

Just as the country's attitudes have changed, so did the approach of the State Department toward issues of race, gender, and sexual orientation evolve. After announcement of the 2013 Supreme Court decision striking down the Defense of Marriage Act, the State Department and other federal government agencies moved quickly to expand benefits to same-sex married couples. A majority of Americans now support gay marriage and don't believe that homosexual relationships between consenting adults are morally wrong. Additionally, gay men and lesbians are now welcome in the military, even by former secretary of defense Hagel.

Governments in some other parts of the world, however, are not so enlightened: 76 countries criminalize homosexuality, and 5 of them allow the death penalty for such an offense. Nearly all of Africa and the Middle East impose harsh legal restrictions, and the trend recently is not necessarily in the right direction. In December 2013, India's highest court reinstated a colonial-era law criminalizing same-sex acts, and in February 2014, Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni signed a bill into law that toughened sanctions against homosexuality, including the possibility of life sentences for gay sex and same-sex marriages.[17]

Sending openly gay ambassadors to countries where homosexuality is condemned and criminalized will therefore be an issue that the State Department must continue to deal with. It is a new variation of an old problem, however. The

State Department reflects the country it represents, but it cannot completely ignore the attitudes in a country to which an ambassador is sent. Because of racism abroad as well as at home, assignment of an African-American ambassador outside Africa or Western Europe was a rarity for many years. Moreover, prolonged debates undoubtedly occurred about sending women ambassadors to the Middle East.

Although Americans like to ignore their own prejudices and insist that the rest of the world be as enlightened as they, that simply is not going to happen. A country that imposes harsh penalties on its own citizens for homosexuality will not accept an openly gay ambassador with enthusiasm and would not be receptive to a request for a diplomatic visa for an ambassador's same-sex spouse or life partner.

The predominance of gay ambassadors nominated by Democratic presidents reflects the impact of election politics and the tendency of political strategists to slice and dice the electorate in order to make direct and indirect appeals for the support of certain groups. The president and Governor Romney evenly split heterosexual voters in 2012, but Obama won the gay vote by 76 percent to 22 percent—an even greater gap than the one among Latino voters.[18]

Clinton appointed Hormel because he was a major donor to the Democratic Party.[19] Indeed, in his autobiography, Hormel describes how Bob Farmer, the national treasurer of the party, urged him to seek a presidential appointment. Farmer suggested that he look over a copy of the "Plum Book," a government publication listing some 7,000 federal jobs for political appointees. Hormel took this advice and described what he found:

> I skimmed through the Cabinet jobs, the senior level department appointments, and the presidential commissions. There was assistant secretary of this and undersecretary of that and memberships on commissions relating to every aspect of public policy. In most cases, my qualifications weren't suitable for a given position, or else I knew of someone higher in the pecking order than me. The best fit, it seemed, was an ambassadorial post.[20]

The clear implication, at least in Hormel's assessment, is that the qualifications to be an ambassador are not as great as those for other government jobs. Having made the decision, Hormel showed he was going to work hard to get the position. He goes on to detail how much time, effort, and networking he had to do to overcome the opposition to his being named. Although the Senate never acted on his nomination, it took considerable work on his part to push the president into giving him a recess appointment. Nearly two years passed from the time

his name was sent to the Senate in October 1997 until he presented his credentials in Luxembourg, but he persisted and made history in the process.

Religion

One of the concerns of the Founding Fathers during the drafting of the Constitution was the separation of church and state, and it was reflected in Article VI, which states, "No religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any Office or public Trust under the United States." Nonetheless, there have been religious tests in a few cases. Belonging to a certain religion precluded some diplomatic assignments and was a requirement for others.

Before the 1970s, Jews were not assigned to the embassy in Tel Aviv. Martin Indyk was the 13th ambassador to Israel and the first Jewish one when he got the job in 1995. Since Indyk, five men have served as ambassador to Israel, two of whom have been Jewish. Today it is unlikely that many nations would openly reject an American ambassador because he or she was Jewish. That was not the case in the past, but in some countries it was never a problem. In Turkey, for instance, a relatively high percentage of ambassadors have been Jewish because the Ottoman Empire was one part of the world that had no problem accepting Jews.

In the past, Jews have been excluded from some ambassadorships, but at least one position at present has a religious requirement. Not only is there a "religious test" for this particular ambassadorship but also it automatically draws the person under consideration into the debate about one of the most divisive social issues in America today. That ambassadorship is to the Holy See—a unique appointment in that it is to a city-state as well as a religious group.

Some level of diplomatic relations with the Catholic church date back to 1797, but they lapsed in 1870 after Congress passed a ban against spending federal funds on a diplomatic mission to the Vatican. The congressional action was prompted by a rumor that the Pope was going to forbid American Protestants from holding services in their homes within Rome's city walls.[21]

Congress repealed the prohibition in 1984, making relations at the ambassadorial level possible, and President Reagan quickly elevated his special envoy to the Vatican, William A. Wilson, to ambassadorial rank. Wilson was a very close friend of Reagan and a member of his "kitchen cabinet," a collection of wealthy supporters and advisers. Wilson used the opportunity of being in Rome to secretly fly to Libya to talk to Mu'ammar Gadhafi. The purpose of the trip was never made clear, but it happened at a time when the Reagan administration was trying to rally international efforts to sanction Gadhafi because of his support for terrorism.[22]

Since Wilson, 10 US ambassadors have served at the Vatican, all of them political appointees and Catholics. Additionally, each one either opposed abortion or did his or her best to avoid discussing the issue.[23] During Obama's first term, stories in the conservative media claimed that the Vatican rejected three of the administration's candidates for the position because they were insufficiently pro-life. An article by the Catholic News Service denied this claim, quoting a Vatican official who maintained that the Holy See did not vet the personal beliefs of individuals put forward as ambassadors. The article went on to state, however, that marital status did matter and that the Vatican had rejected two ambassadorial candidates in recent years—one a divorced man from Argentina with a live-in partner and the second an openly gay man from France in a union with another man. Both were Catholic but apparently not Catholic enough.[24]

The Vatican is not the only embassy where being Catholic matters. Ambassadors to Ireland have been overwhelmingly Irish and Catholic and, for the last half century, all have been political appointees.[25] During Obama's first term, the ambassador in Dublin was Dan Rooney. He gave the exceedingly modest amount of $30,000 to the campaign, but having the support of the owner of the Pittsburgh Steelers football team was apparently contribution enough. Following Rooney's departure in December 2012, two years passed without a replacement.

Several candidates were supposedly considered during that time, but they apparently failed to survive the background investigation.[26] A senior White House official was quoted as saying that reports that candidates had failed the background check were "not right." The official offered no excuse for the long gap between ambassadors, however. In this case, as with most questions surrounding personnel decisions, the truth is elusive and facts hard to come by.[27] Reputations are at stake, and the reasons for why and when such decisions are made are always opaque.

Finally, in June 2013, the White House announced that it would nominate Kevin O'Malley, a Missouri lawyer, for the post. According to media reports, he was a devout Catholic and Irish-American but neither a significant campaign contributor nor bundler.

One news story interpreted the lack of major contributions as a sign that the embarrassment caused by other big-donor nominees might lead to the avoidance of bundlers for a time.

That theory proved short lived. The next day, the White House announced that Jane Hartley, an economic and political consultant married to an investment banker, was being nominated as ambassador to France. She was among the top 50 bundlers for the 2012 campaign, gathering up more than half a million dollars for the election effort. According to press reports, she speaks "conversational" French.

Although that statement gives no real indication of how well she can speak the language, it is clear that, despite any earlier bundler embarrassments, money still talks when it comes to ambassadorial appointments.[28]

At O'Malley's confirmation hearing, he was introduced by both senators from his state. One of them, Claire McCaskill, had high praise for O'Malley and noted with enthusiasm that he had until very recently been a citizen of both the United States and Ireland but had given up the latter when nominated. The prospect of such an obvious conflict of interest and the potential for divided loyalties apparently made no impression on the senator.

Personal Preference

The desires of the aspiring ambassador can also play an important role in the decision about whom to appoint to a particular country. On the one hand, career officers are usually happy, or at least willing, to take any embassy they are offered. Political appointees, on the other hand, often have very specific ideas about where they want to go.

Those ideas can sometimes be driven by where they were born or grew up, but it is generally not a good idea for ambassadors to attempt to go home. Any ambassador is always subjected to all kinds of pressures and expectations that will only be made much worse if they have roots in the country in question. It will not be long before a distant relative asks for help getting a visa or for some other favor.

Or perhaps the ambassador's spouse wants to go home again, as was the case of Vera and Donald Blinken. She had left Hungary as a child, and he, years later, went there as ambassador. He helped raise $5 million at a single dinner in New York for Bill Clinton's election in 1992. In their coauthored memoir, she describes why his getting the job was not such a great idea:

> For the first time in our marriage, in his capacity as ambassador to Hungary, Donald was obliged to keep secrets from me. A red folder on his desk contained intelligence reports, and it was allowed to be there only when he was alone in his office. What disturbed me more than the curiosity about the contents of the red folder was not being able to share this part of Donald's life.
>
> Being a wonderful husband, Donald applied for and obtained a security clearance for me from the State Department. Now, when I was with him escorting officials on diplomatic missions, I could accompany them into "The Bubble," the secure enclosure in the Embassy where sensitive information was discussed.[29]

Access to classified material is always based on a person's having the appropriate security clearance and on a need to know the information in question. Security clearances take time and money to obtain, so there is the question of the use of

government resources in this case. Clearly, the ambassador's wife had no need to know what was in the red folder or what was said inside "The Bubble."

Another case of an ambassador returning to his roots is that of John Estrada, nominated to be ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago, the country of his birth, in July 2013. He gave only about $1,000 to political causes, but he did endorse Obama for president in 2008.[30] He did so after retiring as sergeant major of the Marine Corps, the highest-ranking enlisted man in the Corps. It took until February 2016 for him to be confirmed although the reason for the inaction was never explained.[31] The Senate never rejects an ambassadorial appointment outright. It just refuses to act—and doing nothing is something that Congress does very well.

Congress is not the only entity that gets a vote in the process. Even before an ambassadorial appointment is made public and forwarded to the Senate, the country receiving the ambassador must grant *agrément*, the formal term for its concurrence with the nomination. Although this action is usually just a formality, some countries have strong opinions about the kinds of ambassadors they are willing to accept. Saudi Arabia wants individuals who don't speak Arabic and have a close personal relationship to the president. Japan, which likes high-profile personalities, was thrilled when Caroline Kennedy was sent there in 2013 as ambassador—thrilled, that is, until she took to Twitter to criticize the country for the way it treats dolphins.[32]

Clearly, many factors affect the way an ambassador winds up in a specific country. Many of them have little to do with either the ability or experience of the individual, and no theory will ever be able to explain how or why it came to be. And as long as campaign contributions continue to play such an important role in American politics, some of the appointments will continue to be for sale.

Notes

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