

GREAT DECISIONS

Fall 2014 Update

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Israel and the U.S.

By Joshua Klemons

This past summer, in the midst of Operation Protective Edge, the European Union (EU) released a statement affirming Israel's right to defend itself and calling for a cessation of rocket fire from Gaza and for Hamas and other "terrorist groups" in Gaza to disarm.

Parts of the text were given a warm reception. Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman praised the statement, saying it showed the world stood with Israel and shared the opinion that Israel has a right to protect itself from terror.

However, the EU also offered a strong rebuke of Israel in the statement regarding both the ongoing fighting and the broader conflict. Referencing settlement expansion in the Palestinian Territories—including within East Jerusalem—they stated, "The preservation of the viability of the two-state solution must remain a priority. The developments on the ground make the prospect of a two-state solution increasingly unattainable."

With the dust now settled in Gaza, the EU is indicating its intent to make Israeli and European ties conditional upon the state of the peace process. Following a Jerusalem committee's approval to build 2,610 housing units in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Givat Hamatos, the EU released a statement declaring that "future development of relations between the EU and Israel will depend on the latter's engagement toward a lasting peace based on a two-state solution."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

shot back. "These are not settlements. These are neighborhoods in Jerusalem," he said.

Adding fuel to the fire, Sweden recently announced plans to become the first sitting member of the EU to recognize a state of Palestine. Lieberman penned an op-ed in a Swedish daily entitled "Unilateralism doesn't solve anything." In it, he argued that "friendly governments don't act to undermine the national security of their friends, and don't presume to know better than them how to deal with the host of challenges they face."

Whether Sweden's new stance will be a harbinger of change for Israeli/European ties is not yet known. In the meantime, Israel has made no sign that it intends to stall its expansion of Givat Hamatos.

Joshua Klemons is a writer for the Foreign Policy Association. You can follow him on Twitter @jlemonsk.

Recommended Readings

Grant Rumley, "Déjà Vu in the West Bank and Gaza," *Foreign Policy* (Sept. 29, 2014)

Michael J. Koplou and Jordan Chandler Hirsch, "After Gaza," *Foreign Affairs* (Aug. 11, 2014)

Nathan Thrall, "Israel & the US: The Delusions of Our Diplomacy," *The New York Review of Books* (Oct. 9, 2014)

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Islamic awakening

By Hannah Gais

As the U.S. and partners, both in the Middle East and Europe, work to counter the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS), they've found themselves struggling to wage an effective counterterrorism campaign both on ISIS' territory in Iraq and Syria, and on the new media sphere as well.

"ISIS...uses hashtags to focus group messaging and branding concepts, much like a Western corporation might," noted terrorism analyst J.M. Berger in *The Atlantic* a few months ago. From the group's impressive ability to rapidly co-opt hashtags to its use of an app to automatically send out tweets from consenting users' accounts, ISIS' new media sophistication has proven to be a thorn in the Obama administration's side. As the group steps up its programming through its Al Hayat Media Center, which supplies some of the group's digital programming, Twitter, YouTube and other major social media companies have made a concerted effort to pull jihadist content off the web (e.g., ISIS' videos of the beheadings of journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff), as well as to suspend accounts affiliated with the organization. Twitter, in particular, has undertaken an aggressive campaign to remove ISIS accounts, marking an end to its "hands off" approach to extremist groups online.

Silicon Valley isn't fighting the social media war on ISIS alone; it's also a grassroots, and even governmental, effort. Anti-ISIS hashtag campaigns have made the rounds on Twitter, including #ISISMediaBlackout (started after the release of Foley's execution video) and #NotInMyName (a product of British community organizing group The Active Change). Even the U.S. State Department's Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications has gotten in on the fun through its social media campaign, Think Again Turn Away. All seek not only to drown out ISIS accounts, but also to engender a positive counter-narrative that activists and politicians hope will persuade at-risk groups, particularly in the West, not to join ISIS.

Whether these tactics will be effective in the long run is up to debate, but for now, they've turned a once seemingly insurmountable problem into a more manageable one. Even for those who

liken the effort to a high-stakes game of whack-a-mole, the time and effort required to rebuild an account's original following undeniably diminishes ISIS' clout. As any social media user knows, building up enough of a following so as to have meaningful, high-quality interactions with other users doesn't happen overnight. And for ISIS, which seeks to use new media not only as a publicizing platform but also for recruitment, those strong ties are crucial.

Hannah Gais is assistant editor at the Foreign Policy Association and managing editor of ForeignPolicyBlogs.com. You can follow her on Twitter @hannahgais.

Recommended Readings

Ali Fisher and Nico Prucha, "ISIS Is Winning the Online Jihad Against the West," *The Daily Beast* (Oct. 1, 2014)

David Rothkopf, "How Malala Can Help Defeat the Islamic State," *Foreign Policy* (Oct. 13, 2014)

Hannah Gais, "Fighting Extremists One Tweet at a Time," *U.S. News and World Report* (Oct. 3, 2014)

J.M. Berger, "How ISIS Games Twitter," *The Atlantic* (June 16, 2014)

Karen Armstrong, "The Myth of Religious Violence," *The Guardian* (Sept. 25, 2014)

Food and climate

By William Sweet

As the climate changes before our eyes, we are having to get used to hearing some new terms in the daily weather reports: Last winter, in the American upper Middle West and Northeast, it was the "polar vortex," a huge swirling mass of air that produced much lower than normal temperatures and locked them into place for long periods of time. On the North American West Coast it has been the "ridiculously resilient

ridge” or “Triple R,” a high-atmosphere air barrier hovering inconveniently over the northeastern Pacific, producing persistent hotter and drier than normal conditions—that is to say, the unprecedented drought that has afflicted California for almost two years.

The cost of the drought to California this year alone has been estimated at \$2.2 billion, by researchers at the University of California, Davis. They found that the drought, which is almost certain to persist into 2015, has led to the loss of 17,000 agricultural jobs this year. Researchers at Stanford concluded, in a report published as a supplement to the September issue of the *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society (BAMS)*, found that climate change had made such a drought three times more likely than it would have been before industrialization began to pump large quantities of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere two centuries ago.

Contributors to the September BAMS report, the third such in three years, found that the first 12 months of California’s low rainfall and the ridiculously resilient ridge have been without equal in the state’s 119-year record of observations. Papers published in the *Bulletin* were more cautious than the Stanford team: Evidently the drought could be like the 100-year-storm scenario used in infrastructure planning—an event that is extremely unlikely but can be expected to occur once a century under normal conditions. Expert opinion on this issue no doubt will evolve as the drought itself evolves.

Meanwhile, publication of the BAMS report series is in itself an indicator of growing public concern about climate and food. The previous edition was recognized by *Foreign Policy* magazine in a 2013 analysis of leading global thinkers.

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Concern about extreme climate events and their impact on agriculture is of course not confined to the U.S. The BAMS reports have covered the 2003 European heatwave that cost thousands of lives, the 2010 Russian heatwave that sent world food prices soaring, and the British floods of 2000, as well as the 2011 Texas heatwave, though not the equally devastating U.S. drought of 2012 or the one that ravaged Central American crops this past summer. As for the record-high temperatures and terrifying fires that swept Australia in 2001, a team of Australian scientists concluded this fall that they almost certainly would not have occurred in the absence of climate change.

The immediate costs of such events are far from trivial. As a result of the 2011 and 2012 U.S. droughts, crop insurance payouts went from \$4.3 billion in 2010 to \$17.3 billion in 2012; of that, last least \$11 billion was covered by U.S. taxpayers, according to a recent book by Mark Shapiro. The long-term risks are even greater. A perfect storm of such extreme climate events taking place in several world regions at once could stretch global grain reserves beyond their limits and cause widespread misery. The biggest countries with the biggest reserves are perhaps least vulnerable to such shocks, but nobody would be invulnerable.

William Sweet is an independent writer currently at work on a book about climate diplomacy, looking ahead to the December 2015 Paris conference.

Recommended Readings

“Explaining Extreme Events of 2013 from a Climate Perspective” *Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society (BAMS)* (Sept. 2014)

Jeff Goodell, “China, the Climate, and the Fate of the Planet,” *Rolling Stone* (Sept. 15, 2014)

Justin Gillis, “Scientists Trace Extreme Heat in Australia to Climate Change,” *The New York Times* (Oct. 1, 2014)

Ker Than, “Causes of California Drought Linked to Climate Change,” Stanford University press office, (Sept. 30, 2014)

Energy independence

By Jordan Stutts

The U.S. Energy Information Agency (EIA) reported that by mid-2014 renewed oil drilling and increased extraction of natural gas and use of solar panels are helping the country make gains toward energy independence.

Net energy imports for the first six months of 2014 were 17% less than last year, reaching their lowest levels since 1985. Although Americans consumed 3% more energy than last year, in part thanks to a colder-than-average winter, the difference was made up and more by an increase in domestic production of petroleum, natural gas and renewables.

Since the U.S. economy was exposed as vulnerable to the world oil market during the 1970s oil shocks, U.S. presidents have vowed to break dependence on foreign energy imports. Today, energy independence remains a top U.S. foreign policy goal.

Not having to rely on others for energy has a number of positive implications for U.S. foreign policy, shielding the U.S. from instability and potential supply disruptions in the Middle East. The U.S. can impose sanctions on Russia for its aggression in Ukraine without having to worry about natural gas pipelines being shut off—a stance Europe wishes it could take. Energy independence, many hope, could free the U.S. from having to accommodate some of its more unfavorable allies and allow it to pursue a foreign policy agenda more in line with the U.S.’ interests and values.

Petroleum was the energy source with the highest increase in production for the first half of 2014 at 52%. Hydraulic fracturing—or “fracking,” the controversial means of extracting oil and gas from shale deposits—has enabled drillers to access oil (and natural gas) in previously inaccessible areas. The Bakken field in North Dakota and the Eagle Ford basin in Texas hold vast untapped resources, and a moratorium on exporting oil means a large part of what makes it to the surface will stay in the U.S.

Americans using more natural gas at home is another important trend to note. Over half the increase in U.S. energy consumption goes to natural gas, and two-thirds of that is for domestic use. More households are using the cleaner-burning natural gas to heat their homes.

Though renewable energy, such as solar, wind and geothermal, is not yet a realistic alternative to fossil fuels, the technology continues to become more efficient. Renewables accounted for 12% of increased consumption in the U.S. in the first six months of 2014. Many are hoping this number continues to grow, especially if the U.S. hopes to meet President Obama’s lofty goal of cutting carbon dioxide emissions by 30% over the next 15 years.

Jordan Stutts is a contributing editor at the Foreign Policy Association and blogs for Foreign-PolicyBlogs.com. You can follow him on Twitter @jwstuttered

Recommended Readings

Christopher Helman, “Obama EPA Issues Coal-Killing Rules To Cut Carbon Emissions 30 Percent,” *Forbes* (June 2, 2014)

John R. Bolton and T. Boone Pickens, “America’s Untapped Energy Weapon,” *Politico* (Aug. 4, 2014)

Keith Johnson, “Oil Prices Are Falling, Not Oil Regimes,” *Foreign Policy* (Oct. 2, 2014)

Ross Gerber, “Beating Our Enemies By Energy Independence,” *Forbes* (Aug. 27, 2014)

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