



Africa – The Looming Yet Preventable Crisis

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Executive Summary

The concurrent escalation in the fighting and insurrections in the northern and eastern parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Central African Republic (CAR) and the Republic of South Sudan (RoSS) are part and parcel of the same geo-strategic and geo-economic mega-trend. The fratricidal violence is the manifestation of violent posturing and quest for power by sub-state and sub-region elements in anticipation for forthcoming development and enrichment throughout the region. All local foci of power and aspirant foci of power are cognizant of the growing importance of the region and its riches to the future economic modernization, reindustrialization and growth of industrialized Eurasia (from Lisbon to Vladivostok) – that is, the revival of the urban industrialized base as the driving engine of Eurasia's future.

The escalating violence is therefore an African reaction to global trends as they are directly affecting Africa's own future. Hence, to genuinely resolve the spreading and escalating violence, it is imperative to comprehend the root-causes of the violence and address the challenges in African terms.

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ANALYSIS

The current developments in Africa do not happen in a vacuum. From the very beginning of the quest for independence, post-colonial sub-Saharan Africa has been plagued by arbitrary borderlines and state territories. These were defined on the basis of the territories and borders of colonies and in total disregard to the historic habitats of the native peoples, nations and tribes. Samia Nkrumah, the daughter of Kwame Nkrumah (the father of Pan-Africanism), attributes all of Africa's ills to the unresolved question of borders and statehood. "Africans still need the vision my father had half a century ago," Samia Nkrumah argues. "African borders have no sense, let's bring them down."

While the African modern state is here to stay – the ramifications of the artificial borders can no longer be ignored. Most of the trials and tribulations of post-colonialism sub-Saharan Africa stem from the endemic failures of governments to provide sub-state tribal groupings with ways to be involved in affairs of the state. This bitter schism between state authorities and sub-state grassroots has provoked numerous secessionist struggles and wars – including South Sudan's generation-long war for independence. However, the suppression of sub-state entities by increasingly centralized and authoritarian state-level governance has been, and continues to be, the prevalent relationship. As well, genuine and well-meaning efforts at democratization focused on the rights and freedoms of individual citizens rather than the groups they identify with. Thus, both the authoritarian and the democratic forms of governance have largely failed to address and take into consideration the all-important tribal and clan identities that still constitute the most essential self-identity of the vast majority of people in sub-Saharan Africa.

In recent years there has been a profound evolution of the relationships between the people, the tribes-clans and the modern state. This is the result of the communication revolution. On the most basic level, the arrival of mobile phones, and to a lesser extent internet, to the African heartland facilitates the exchange of information, thoughts and quest for solutions of prevalent problems. The awareness of challenges beyond localized crises is the direct result of the rapid expansion of urbanization.¹ Contemporary urbanization engenders both on-site interactions between diverse population groups that have been isolated from each other in the past, as well as facilitates the flow of information, or knowledge, between the swelling urban centers and the shrinking rural countryside through ongoing travel and migration by individuals.

The new era of communications has already resulted in the profound change in the perception of the central state government and governance by the African grassroots. The grassroots and their localized leaders focus in particular on issues of legitimacy, viability, roles and expectations.

The modern state is presently the entity held responsible for providing services and capabilities tribal leaders are not expected to be able to – namely, security, stability, services (e.g. transportation, electricity and communication infrastructure) and communal empowerment.

With the spread of knowledge and communications, as well as interaction with Chinese and other foreigners working all over Africa, wider segments of the African grassroots are aware of the huge gap between their standard of living and that in Africa's cities, as well as the affluent West. The desire to end one's destitute and improve one's own lot and prospects is increasingly based on knowledge of what exists for others – not just

¹ The overall impact of urbanization on the developing world is brilliantly analyzed by Gregory R. Copley in his ground-breaking *UnCivilization: Urban Geopolitics in a Time of Chaos*, Washington DC, The International Strategic Studies Association, 2012.



dreams and myths. At the same time, it is clear to all grassroots that there can be no miracle that will suddenly lift everybody from destitute to new affluence. Priorities and pace will inevitably vary from place to place.

Hence, an immediate and pertinent challenge for all population groupings is to expedite and improve the empowerment and betterment of one's own group – even if at the expense of other groups. The emerging new role of, and expectation from, the tribal leadership is to interact with the state authorities in order to prioritize the empowerment and betterment of the lot of their own tribe. Moreover, there emerges slowly a comparable dynamics between the nascent clans and extended families in the new urban centers that are based on socio-economic narrow interests of professions. They also empower clan-level leaders to interact with the modern state in quest for empowerment and betterment of the lot of their own localized constituencies. The evolving nature of African society still blurs the boundaries between old tribes and new clans – thus further exacerbating the situation and complicating the challenges ahead.

Throughout the greater west Africa – from the Atlantic to the Red Sea, and from the edges of the Sahara to south of the Equator – there is growing anticipation for major investment in, and development of, the riches of states. These expectations have already created a rush to posture one's sub-state grouping in advantageous position to benefit from the inevitable revenues. Tribes, clans and communities are increasingly determined to influence the priorities of the modern state in handling and distributing the anticipated rewards. The majority of groupings prefer to do so through growing involvement of both individuals and communities in state-level politics. However, there are also a growing number of cases where sub-state groupings despair for failing to convince their states' governments. Some of these grouping resort to violence, rebellions and insurrections.

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This is the quintessence of the fratricidal violence now plaguing the region.

In South Sudan, a corrupt and power hungry politician – Riek Machar – is desperately trying to incite his own tribe – the Nuer – into rebelling against the state system in quest for economic gains. Back in April 2013, the Machar camp argued that leadership should be transferred from the Dinka to the Nuer because, in the words of a Machar key supporter, "it's our turn to eat". At the time, SPLM political leaders concluded that "the Nuer in the SPLM will not vote for Riek Machar ... because his campaign for tribal war will not benefit anybody at all. ... South Sudan cannot be a country if it is a turn of each tribe to eat." By autumn, Machar and his innermost circle realized that their quest for power in the name of tribal rights would fail to gain support within the South Sudanese political establishment. Undaunted, they started to prepare for the rebellion they unleashed in mid-December 2013.

The course of the revolt reflects the grassroots' ambivalence toward tribal revolts claimed in their name. Thus, although predominantly Nuer rebel forces marched on Bor, the capital of the volatile Jonglei State and the place of a 1991 massacre of the Dinka by Machar-led Nuer forces, the local population was reluctant to join the revolt. The SPLA restored order in Bor quickly because the people ejected Machar's forces. Meanwhile, Machar capitalized on the defection of, and support from, his ally General Koang in order to attempt controlling Bentiu, the capital of Unity State and Machar's home constituency. But the grassroots refused to join the revolt and Bentiu returned to government hands with little fighting.

Undaunted, Koang's forces marched on Malakal, the capital of Upper Nile State. Although the Nuer have relatively little presence in Malakal, the most developed and profitable oil fields are there and Machar thought he'd be able to pressure Juba into concession by threatening the oil fields. Moreover, the proximity to the



Sudanese border and Khartoum's smuggling routes supporting David Yau Yau's Murle revolt would enable Machar's forces to have Khartoum replenish their weapons and supplies. Indeed, even Koang acknowledged that Sudanese Jihadist forces of the Justices and Equality Movement (JEM) recently crossed into Pariang County, Unity State, while exploiting the SPLA's withdrawal from the border with Sudan. On December 29, Machar's forces were pushed out of Malakal by the SPLA and local self-defense militias.

Throughout, Machar continues to adamantly refuse to enter negotiations with President Salva Kiir Mayardit and official Juba. Machar rejected the mediated talks sponsored by local leaders – Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta and Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn – on behalf of IGAD. Machar continues to add preconditions even when President Kiir agreed to unconditional negotiations and accepted the possibility of power-sharing solely in order to end the bloodshed among innocent civilians. The IGAD leaders were most apprehensive about the regional reverberation of Machar's continued revolt. "The present crisis, if not contained, will ... set back this region immeasurably," Kenyatta warned in Juba.

Meanwhile, Machar started raising a new "White Army" of more than 25,000 Lou Nuer youth with funding and weaponry from Sudan. The selection of the name is significant because back in 2011 Nuer chauvinists established another White Army in order to fight and kill the Murle tribe in southern Jonglei State. Although Machar loyalists threatened that their White Army would "wipe out" the SPLA in Bor – Machar's "White Army" has so far failed to march on Bor or anywhere else. This is because Nuer community leaders in Jonglei State met with the young fighters and persuaded most of them to stand down and return home. Only about 5,000 White Army fighters reached Mathiang, about 18 miles from Bor, and were defeated by the SPLA. On December 31, about 2,000 members of the White Army infiltrated into Bor. They started rioting in the Nuer suburbs. Initially, the SPLA refrained from intervening for fear of bloodshed among the population. Machar's camp announced that their forces have taken Bor, and later corrected it to only parts of Bor. By nightfall, SPLA forces started pushing the rebels out of Bor.

On December 30, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni reiterated IGAD's support for the Kiir administration and warned that IGAD would "defeat Machar" in order to avert further escalation of violence in the entire region. "We gave him [Machar] four days and [agreed that] if he doesn't [comply with the agreement], then we shall have to go for him. That is what we agreed on", Museveni stated after meeting Kiir in Juba.

On December 31, both Kiir and Machar announced that they accepted the invitation of Ethiopian President Mulatu Teshome to attend peace talks in Addis Ababa. Kiir's office announced he'd be going immediately to Addis Ababa. Kiir is eager to negotiate cease-fire (as requested by IGAD) and anything but power-sharing. Machar's camp keeps insisting that there can be no cease-fire and that Machar insists on power-sharing. Although Machar has agreed to either come to Addis Ababa or send emissaries - it is still not clear when any representative of Machar will arrive.

Put to a major test, the grassroots of the young Republic of South Sudan thus refused to succumb to the lure of tribal revolts.

In the Central African Republic, meanwhile, the numerous indigenous clashes on the basis of localized conflicts have largely subsided on their own. Only the armed struggle of the distinctly Christian anti-Balaka militias from the Manja tribe continues to escalate. The anti-Balaka militias can escalate and exacerbate their operations because they are supported and incited by the Paris-sponsored pro-Bozize forces. The center of the anti-Balaka revolt is from the greater Bossangoa area all the way to the nearby borders with Chad and Cameroon from



where they get support, supplies and reinforcements. French troops stay out of this region while the African forces' presence is symbolic at best. Meanwhile, French and Francophone African forces already control the Bakouma-Bangassou area where the Uranium deposits are located even though there was hardly any violence there.

The continued threat to the stability of the Central African Republic comes from the Christian anti-Balaka militias that arrived in the slums of Bangui where a quarter of the country's population – that is, members of all tribes – are pressed together in squalor. The anti-Balaka leaders incite their tribe members in the Bangui slums to attack their neighbors – both Christians and Muslims – in order to avenge past discrimination and provoke international intervention that will topple the government of President Michel Djotodia and empower them – the pro-Paris group and their anti-Balaka militias – over the country and its riches. When the widespread slaughter of innocent civilians failed to elicit the toppling of the Djotodia administration, the anti-Balaka militias escalated their fighting to intentionally ambushing and attacking AU forces, as well as government facilities protected by French forces. By December 30, the anti-Balaka already killed two French troops and over a dozen African troops.

The issue at hand is the control over the riches of the region and the government that will divert and distribute the proceeds from their exploitation. The Paris-sponsored pro-Bozize leaders keep inciting that priority will be given to the majority Banda (Christians) and the northerner Sara (Muslims) tribes at the expense of minor tribes such as the Manja under whose lands some of the riches are located. However, the Djotodia government would not budge and President Djotodia himself refuses to accept French "advice" and resign. Instead, the government attempts to urge national solidarity and cessation of hostilities. The government's ability to use force outside the immediate zone of the presidential compound is restricted by the French and the AU's MISCA (the French acronym for the International Support Mission to the Central African Republic).

Significantly, the Djotodia administration is the most nationalist state government in the history of the Central African Republic. The majority of the most senior officials of the Djotodia government are from the Colonial era's urban elites that rose through cross-tribal intermarriage among the educated westernized officials. For example, President Djotodia's mother is Christian and his father Muslim. Thus, the objective of the revolt implemented by the anti-Balaka militias is to not only topple the Djotodia administration but to reverse the emergence of nationalist government for the entire Central African Republic.

In the northern parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo the roots of conflict are not different. The March 23 Movement (the M23) rebelled and fought to free the very rich northeast – mainly the provinces of North Kivu and South Kivu near the Ugandan and Rwandan borders – from the dominance of, and exploitation by, the Katanga-origin leaders ruling Kinshasa. The M23 is made up primarily of Tutsi forces, as well as area Mai-Mai militias (that are comprised of all the region's tribes in Congo, Rwanda and Uganda, but mainly the minority Batembo and Babemba ethnic groups that are majority to the south near and across the border with Zambia and thus have aspirations for power). In late 2013, DRC troops, along with UN Stabilization Mission in Congo (MONUSCO) forces, retook control of Goma. Having been promised a de-facto self-rule as part of the cease-fire deal – the M23 subsided fighting. The M23 leadership announced a cease-fire and the resumption of peace talks. However, fighting can resume at a moment notice if self-empowerment and self-rule do not happen.

The growing threat to the northeastern DRC is the Uganda-based ADF-NALU (The Allied Democratic Forces-National Army for the Liberation of Uganda). The ADF-NALU is one of the oldest armed groups in the eastern DRC. The ADF-NALU leaders insist that they are an Islamist-Jihadist force that had been originally sponsored by



Sudan's Hassan al-Turabi. Theologically, the ADF-NALU's commitment to rigid Islamism-Jihadism is rather superficial. However, they still enjoy logistical and military support from Sudan that is being smuggled via the rebellious eastern parts of South Sudan. The ADF-NALU initially fought the Ugandan government but in recent years expanded operations into the eastern DRC and mainly the Kivus. As the M23 reduces operations, the ADF-NALU forces invade northeastern DRC in the name of tribal solidarity and quest for control over the oil and mineral resources discovered in the area and about to be exploited.

Similar conflicts are developing throughout the rest of the region. No country seems immune to the rising tribal and sub-state violent challenges to the modern state in order to redress past discrimination and ensure preferable access to anticipated revenues from future development. The conflicts in the Chad-Niger-Mali belt between nomadic tribes and the modern states anchored in the southern provinces are also most dangerous. The French-led intervention in and beyond Mali has so far only exacerbated the grassroots commitment to fighting the modern states. As well, Nigeria is rapidly self-imploding – the victim of ethno-centrist, regional and sectarian conflicts needlessly exacerbated by power-hungry and greedy aspirant leaders led by President Goodluck Jonathan. And the list of potential eruptions keeps growing daily as more sub-national groupings decide to challenge the modern state in pursuit of self-interests before it is too late.

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Hence, there is urgent imperative to contain existing eruptions and prevent future ones. It is high-time to implement African solutions for African problems. Clairvoyant African leaders and experts have long urged the rethinking of African politics in practical and pragmatic terms in order to address the endemic schism between state and tribe-clan. At the core of all African programs is the need to organize a viable three-layered or three-tiered power structure: supra-state regional, state-level, and sub-state regionalization or autonomy. The overall objective is to address the legitimate interests of the vital sub-state tribe and clan groupings without harming the modern state. Hence, the supra-state dynamics will permit cross-border tribe and clan activities without challenging the centrality and authority of the modern state. Supra-state arrangements will also facilitate and regulate regional development programs that exceed the capabilities or territories of individual states. Sub-state dynamics will ensure the legal, institutional and proper modalities for the tribe and clan groupings to ensure their self-interests vis-a-vis the state authorities.

Budget is not an issue in the longer-term because revenues from the development of Africa's riches will more than provide for the most ambitious reform, development and empowerment programs for the grassroots. Diverse legal and financial reforms are still required in order to guarantee that the local grassroots will be the prime beneficiaries of the new revenues, and that genuine reforms facilitating good governance and long-term empowerment and modernization are implemented. Local leaders know very well what their peoples need, and western expertise can expedite implementation. African governments and regional entities will also have to ensure that these funds are not wasted on Western-sponsored futile undertakings that will only enrich the sponsoring Western governments and their pet corporations and NGOs.

For example, the three-state band/strip comprised of the Republic of South Sudan (RoSS), the Central African Republic (CAR) and Cameroon is both a viable region for accelerated development in the near future and the core of a wider regional alliance. President Kiir's Juba considers this three-state bloc as the key to regional development. Initially, Juba was looking for a corridor to export South Sudanese oil to the Gulf of Guinea – thus, both easier for European customers and away from the politically stifling Sudanese pipeline. President



Djotodia's Bangui has been most interested in such an idea because of the CAR's own desperate need for oil export and transportation infrastructure.

Presently, the three-state bloc idea is rapidly expanding to include joint and/or coordinated oil drilling and mining projects. Geological experts stress that the geological characteristics of the terrain in the entire area indicate that the veins of virtually all minerals are regional and cross borders. Hence, cooperation in the exploitation of these riches makes perfect sense. Thus, the proven and estimated energy and mineral (including diamond) reserves and resources in both the RoSS and the CAR make the entire region an ideal location for long-term development and strategic cooperation. Cameroon's sea ports have development potential to sustain exports that can be shipped to the West around West Africa and into the northern Atlantic – thus away from hostile waterways and choke-points. Moreover, given political, economic and geological considerations, the three state initiative can be further expanded from Cameroon into northeastern Nigeria – where State governors are desperate for regional development because President Jonathan's Abuja is immersed in corruption and inaction – and into Gabon – for Libreville has been striving to expand and diversify the economy exploiting manganese mining and one of the world's largest unexploited iron ore deposits – and Congo Brazzaville.

Even under optimal conditions, implementing such a major undertaking is far from simple. The main challenges are political instability and uncertainties, and virtually non-existing institutional governance in the vast countryside. Actual development of both governance and economic recovery is hampered by the near total absence of infrastructure. While infrastructure can be built, especially as revenues from oil and minerals become available, a precondition is the establishing of conducive conditions for Western investment and support. This means resolving the political instability and uncertainties, as well as addressing the absence of security and governance.

Each of the three states will have to establish a comprehensive multi-layered system of governance that balances the ethno-national diversity of the population in the entire region with having strong-centralized state governments that are imperative for undertaking and implementing major development programs. As well, the three governments will have to convince the West of their long term security and predictability. Both President Kiir and Djotodia are doing their utmost to both quell the insurrections destabilizing their states and convince the West of their enduring commitment to long-term profound reforms. Ultimately, since all issues pertaining development, infrastructure and security are inherently regional, the three governments must also commit to a viable regional political cooperation. Official Juba, Bangui and Yaounde have already committed to such cooperation.

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Meanwhile, in the tradition of "the road to Hell is paved with good intentions" the arrogant-yet-ignorant Obama White House is leading the liberal West into pushing Africa's tenuous grappling with modernity and statehood into a major explosion and yet more fratricidal bloodshed.

People take up arms and embark on fratricidal carnage when they are convinced that their existence and vital interests will be irrevocably destroyed if they do not fight for them. The extent of the carnage inflicted – usually along religious and ethnic lines – is more a reflection of communal dread for their own existence and vital interests from those they slaughter than abstract hatred toward those they slaughter. Grassroots revolts in Africa can be against nemeses tribes and/or state authorities and the key population groupings identified with the preservation of state authority.



Therefore, the foreign humanitarian interventions – the R2P² doctrine – advocated by President Obama, Samantha Power, and other White House inner-circle is counter-productive. At best, the application of superior force by outsiders might bring about temporary cessation of hostilities due to the grassroots fear of the massive force available to the Western powers. However, the carnage will eventually resume because the root-causes for the carnage – one grouping's dread of another – remain unchanged. If anything, the temporary cessation of hostilities imposed by the intervening forces provides the affected groupings with time for military training, radicalization and incitement of wider segments of their constituencies. Moreover, Western penchant for empowering ostensibly pro-Western leaders rather than those popular among the grassroots are bound to backfire for the grassroots refuse to accept imposed leaders and tend to rebel against both the leaders and the modern state they claim to represent. That humanitarian interventions fail to resolve core-problems and instead set the stage for marked escalation of the fratricidal carnage can be seen in Libya, Mali and Darfur. The simmering hatreds in the former Yugoslavia some two decades after the Dayton Accords also attest to the long-term futility of humanitarian interventionism.

Moreover, Western humanitarian interventionism is further complicated by the inherent dishonesty of most Western powers. Western governments unabashedly pursue self-interests against African governments and leaders in the name of sanctimonious goals associated with R2P. For example, the French quest for Uranium and the US quest for oil in cooperation with the Chinese determine where humanitarian interventions will take place and against whom. Real and/or exaggerated horror stories about humanitarian catastrophes usually flood the Western liberal mainstream media only after a decision to intervene has been made on the basis of intrinsic economic and strategic interests.

The increasingly frequent French neo-colonial deployments along with a sprinkle of ill-equipped and untrained symbolic Francophone African forces are not intended to address Africa's core problems. The UN peace-keeping forces throughout the greater west Africa are not much better. These AU and UN forces are not sufficient to do anything but lower the level of violence at the immediate spots where they are present at any given time. All key protagonists, particularly the sub-state rebels, consider these AU and UN forces the instruments of sustaining current political and economic order that favors the modern state they perceive to be implacably hostile and threatening. Hence, intentional lethal attacks on these AU and UN forces will keep escalating in order to deter them from influencing the overall outcome of the rebellion and carnage. That these attacks are carried out with near impunity for the rebel forces only encourage more lethal and more brazen attacks.

The fratricidal carnage initiated by sub-state groupings will disappear when extremist elements are soundly defeated by state forces (as distinct from foreign forces) while the population groupings they claimed to be representing are accorded development and reform programs that prove that the state is cognizant of these groupings' needs and interests and is not hostile to them. To accomplish these goals, desperately needed are indigenous African (with Western expertise) governance reform and economic development programs, as well as military reforms, that will take into consideration the vested and vital interests of both the African modern state and Africa's unique and traditional sub-state elements both locally and regionally. This is not going to be easy or quick. However, absent such a comprehensive reform process the entire region will go up in flames. In all likelihood, future eruptions will be more virulent and genocidal in order to deter potential interruption of the self-fulfillment of core goals by real or anticipated humanitarian foreign interventions.

² R2P, according to its acolytes, stands for "Responsibility to Protect". The pragmatic cynics argue that R2P actually stands for "Race to Plunder".



Africans know what they want – good governance, development, security and stability, grassroots empowerment, real balance between state and tribe-klan – and the real industrialized Western states know what they want – extraction of riches and viable export markets under a most stable and predictable environment. These are not mutually exclusive interests but for the West’s penchant for “we know better what’s good for you” humanitarian interventionism.

The rapidly and needlessly escalating violence and instability in, among others, the Republic of South Sudan and the Central African Republic demonstrate anew the urgent imperative to work with the state leaders in order to not only stabilize their states but embark on comprehensive development and reform programs at both state and regional levels. President Kiir proposed regional and national reform and development programs. President Djotodia committed to participation in and implementing far-reaching reforms. Fearing marginalization, sub-state groupings in both countries immediately rebelled and will continue to rebel. The solutions presently pushed by the international community amount to enforcing cessation of hostilities in a way that will benefit the rebels and encourage others to follow suite in the name of humanitarian concerns. Instead, the time is ripe for the international community to assist state leaders such as Presidents Kiir and Djotodia to not only defeat the unfolding rebellions but to immediately launch their long-term reforms and development programs in order to put their states and the entire region on the right track to long-term stability and prosperity.

Remarks: Opinions expressed in this contribution are those of the author.

About the Author of this Issue

Yossef Bodansky has been the Director of Research at the International Strategic Studies Association [ISSA], as well as a Senior Editor for the *Defense & Foreign Affairs* group of publications, since 1983. He was the Director of the Congressional Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare at the U.S. House of Representatives between 1988 and 2004, and stayed on as a special adviser to Congress till January 2009. In the mid-1980s, he acted as a senior consultant for the U.S. Department of Defense and the Department of State. He is the author of eleven books – including *Bin Laden: The Man Who Declared War on America* (*New York Times* No. 1 Bestseller & *Washington Post* No. 1 Bestseller), *The Secret History of the Iraq War* (*New York Times* Bestseller & *Foreign Affairs Magazine* Bestseller), and *Chechen Jihad: Al Qaeda’s Training Ground and the Next Wave of Terror* – and hundreds of articles, book chapters and Congressional reports. Mr Bodansky is a Director at the Prague Society for International Cooperation, and serves on the Board of the Global Panel Foundation and several other institutions worldwide.



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