Editorial

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It does not seem that 2015 is off to a much better start than 2014. The civil war in Syria continues to rage, complicated by the ever-expanding presence of the Islamic State in the Levant, which, as of early April, had launched attacks within the Syrian capital city of Damascus. The West is caught in a double bind here – fight ISIS and you help the mass murderer Assad. Don't support Assad, and you encourage the advances of the maniacal and murderous 'caliphate' of ISIS. Either way the situation is, to put it mildly, difficult. Extremism also reared its ugly head again in Kenya, when al-Shabaab militants killed well over a hundred students at a Kenyan University. It seems like only a few years ago when the world was wide-eyed with amazement about the possibilities of the Arab Spring. That period now seems like a dream, one replaced by a dystopian nightmare of war and violence in the Middle East. One government analyst recently told me that the current unrest in the Middle East will last 'at least a generation; there will be 30 years of war in the Middle East'. I hope that he is wrong, but the reality doesn't seem to bode well. It is quite fitting then that the University of Montreal's Olivier Schmitt provides us with a retrospective review of NATO's war in Libya – a war meant to oust Gadhafi and usher in a new era of democracy and stability. In 'A War Worth Fighting?' Schmitt explores the real costs of the West's intervention and the scale of the problem on the ground today.

While Libya, Syria and Iraq remain mired in conflict, as of early May it seems that the Obama Administration managed a diplomatic coup on another front in the Middle East – the successful conclusion of preliminary negotiations with the Islamic Republic of Iran on the parameters of a final agreement (yet to be negotiated) to monitor the Iranian nuclear energy program. The deal is unpopular with Republicans (and some Democrats) at home, as well as

with regional US allies like Saudi Arabia and Israel. Yet, only time will tell whether or not the deal is a real breakthrough, and the role of Israel in this process is yet to be seen – Will Tel Aviv accept the accord or will it lash out? Carlton University's Mira Sucharov offers us an excellent review of current Israeli politics, narratives and history in 'Modern Israel: Triumph and Tragedy' detailing the most recent writings on what is increasingly a contentious and fractured society caught between hostile nations and, at its core, divided over Israel's relationship to, and treatment of, the Palestinian people.

Israel's central concern is the use of terrorism against its citizens from militant groups, many of which are supported by Iran. Andrew Majoran from the Mackenzie Institute in Toronto provides an excellent overview of international law and the different approaches to treating terrorism as an act of war or as a crime. Utilizing some of the most recent books on the topic, informed by his research and policy work, Majoran offers us a compelling argument as to why the West needs to carefully reconsider current counter-terrorism strategies in the coming years.

If terrorism has been the overriding concern of the last decade, a close second would be the global financial crisis – indeed, I would argue that the global economic crisis of 2008 had a larger impact on most peoples' daily lives than terrorism. Exploring the financial crisis and the contemporary financial system Garvan Walshe of the European University Institute offers us an excellent review of Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the 21st Century*. Although the global economic crisis seemingly continues to recede, the next crisis may be just around the corner as JP Morgan CEO James Dimon argued earlier in April. His argument is that new regulations will make it more difficult for banks to respond, which will make the crisis worse. Is Dimon right? I don't know, but Walshe offers excellent analysis of the

arguments underlying Piketty's work providing you with much food for thought.

Finally, *International Politics Reviews* is thrilled to have the legendary *Sunday Times* foreign correspondent Christina Lamb penning this edition's Field Note. Christina has been named Foreign Correspondent of the Year five times in the British Press Awards and What the Papers Say Awards, and in 2007 was winner of the Prix Bayeux Calvados – one of the world's most prestigious prizes for

war correspondents, for her reporting from Afghanistan. A foreign correspondent for 20 years, Christina is one of the best informed writers on Afghanistan and her report on warlords in modern Afghanistan and what it means for state-building in Afghanistan over the next decade is a real page turner – I hope you will enjoy it as much as I did.

Michael John Williams.

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