

By Robert S. Dudley

Things Fall Apart

"In the 1930s, when things began to go bad, they went very bad very quickly. Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931 exposed the hollow shell that was the League of Nations—a lesson acted upon by Hitler and Mussolini in the four years that followed. Then Germany's military successes in Europe emboldened Japan to make its move in East Asia. ... The successive assaults of the illiberal aggressors, and the successive failures of the liberal powers, thus led to a cascade of disasters. ... Let us hope that those who urge calm are right, but it is hard to avoid the impression that we have already had our 1931. As we head deeper into our version of the 1930s, we may be quite shocked, just as our forebears were, at how quickly things fall apart."—*Robert Kagan, Brookings Institution, Wall Street Journal, Sept. 5.*

McCarthy's SITREP

"We have a problem because America's not leading. We need a very clear, concise foreign policy doctrine for America. Currently, our friends don't trust us, and our enemies don't fear us."—*House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.), interview on Hugh Hewitt radio program, Sept. 4.*

No Strategy Yet

"I don't want to put the cart before the horse. We don't have a strategy yet."—*President Barack Obama, on how the US will deal with ISIS, White House news conference, Aug. 28.*

Now We Have One

"Tonight, with a new Iraqi government in place, and following consultations with allies abroad and Congress at home, I can announce that America will lead a broad coalition to roll back this terrorist threat. ... "Our objective is clear: we will degrade, and ultimately destroy, [ISIS] through a comprehensive and sustained counterterrorism strategy."—*President Obama, address to the nation, Sept. 10.*

Zinni's Question

"My God, we are the most powerful nation in the world. This is a moment we have to act. How many Americans getting their throats cut on TV can we stand?"—*Retired USMC Gen. Anthony*

C. Zinni, referring to ISIS murders of journalists James W. Foley and Steven J. Sotloff, Tampa Tribune, Sept. 3.

Paradise Lost

"We have lost the electromagnetic spectrum. That's a huge deal when you think about fielding advanced systems that can be [countered] by a very, very cheap digital jammer. ... We have got to, in my opinion, regain some dominance in the electromagnetic spectrum, or at least parity, so things that we buy continue to operate as we intended them to. ... People are able to create very agile, capable systems for very little money, and those agile, capable systems ... can impact the performance of some of our high-end platforms."—*Alan Shaffer, DOD research and engineering chief, quoted in breakingdefense.com, Sept. 3.*

Revenge of the Little Guys

"While we face a multitude of threats and sources of instability in the world, I am greatly concerned that our military's technological superiority is being challenged in ways we've never experienced before. As the United States emerges from more than 13 years of grinding warfare and large-scale counterinsurgency operations, we're seeing firsthand that the rest of the world has not stood still. Disruptive technologies and destructive weapons, once solely possessed by only advanced nations, have proliferated widely and are being sought or acquired by unsophisticated militaries and terrorist groups. Meanwhile, China and Russia have been trying to close the technology gap by pursuing and funding long-term, comprehensive military modernization programs. They are also developing anti-ship, anti-air, counterspace, cyber, electronic warfare, and special operations capabilities that appear designed to counter traditional US military advantages—in particular, our ability to project power to any region across the globe by surging aircraft, ships, troops, and supplies. All this suggests that we are entering an era where American dominance on the seas, in the skies, and in space—not to mention cyberspace—can no longer be taken for granted. And while the United States currently has a decisive military and technological edge over

any potential adversary, our future superiority is not a given."—*Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, address to a defense industry conference, Newport, R.I., Sept. 3.*

Welsh on the Force Mix

"The intent is to figure out how to quit doing things that stand in the way of doing things with common sense. ... If we can become more efficient as an Air Force without losing operational capability, by putting more things in the Air Guard and Reserve component, then why wouldn't we?"—*Gen. Mark A. Welsh III, USAF Chief of Staff, speech to the National Guard Association of the United States, Aug. 24.*

Again, Der Führer

"Putin is ... more talented and dangerous than either Nikita Khrushchev or Leonid Brezhnev. Their truculence was not fueled by fury. Putin's essence is anger. It is a smoldering amalgam of resentment (of Russia's diminishment because of the Soviet Union's collapse), revanchist ambitions (regarding formerly Soviet territories and spheres of influence), cultural loathing (for the pluralism of open societies), and ethnic chauvinism that presages 'ethnic cleansing' of non-Russians from portions of Putin's expanding Russia. This is more than merely the fascist mind; its ethnic-cum-racial component makes it Hitlerian. Hence Putin is 'unpredictable' only to those unfamiliar with the 1930s."—*Syndicated columnist George F. Will, Washington Post, Sept. 3.*

Dissatisfaction Abounds

"I see our veterans as American heroes—not as cartoon characters. ... The VA is a broken system, and this is yet another example of the failure of VA executives to provide veterans the respect and quality service they deserve. ... I am calling on the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, Robert McDonald, to publicly apologize and deal with executives responsible for this offensive training guide."—*Rep. Blake Farenthold (R-Tex.), on the VA training guide depicting a dissatisfied veteran as "Sesame Street" character Oscar the Grouch, statement issued Aug. 28.*