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The "Deep State" behind U.S. democracy

Born in Montreal in 1929, Peter Dale Scott is a former diplomat, a poet and a writer. He is also Professor emeritus of English literature at the University of California, Berkely. Known for his anti-war stance and his criticism of U.S. foreign policy dating back to the Vietnam War, Peter Dale Scott is an author and political analyst hailed by critics and acknowledged by his peers, including Daniel Ellsberg known as the "man who toppled Nixon".

VoltaireNet: Professor Scott, as your work is not as widely known as it ought to be in French-speaking countries, could you please start by defining what “Deep politics” is, and explain the distinction between what you call the “Deep state” and the “Public state”?

Peter Dale Scott: The term “Deep state” comes from Turkey. They invented it after the wreck of a speeding Mercedes in 1996 in which the passengers were a Member of Parliament, a beauty queen, a local senior police captain, and an important drug trafficker in Turkey who was also the head of a criminal paramilitary organization – the Grey Wolves – that went around killing people. And it became very obvious in Turkey that there were a covert relationship between the police who officially were looking for this man – even though a policeman was there with him in the car – and these people who committed crimes on behalf of the state. The state that you commit crimes for is not a state that can show its hand to the people, it’s a hidden state, a covert structure. In Turkey, they called it the Deep state, [1] and I had been talking about deep politics for a long time so I used the term in The Road to 9/11. This is why I have defined deep politics as all those political practices and arrangements, deliberate or not, which are usually repressed rather than acknowledged. So the term “Deep state” – coming from Turkey – is not mine.

It refers to a parallel secret government, organized by the intelligence and security apparatus, financed by drugs, and engaging in illicit violence, to protect the status and interests of the military against threats from intellectuals, religious groups, and occasionally the constitutional

government. In this book, I adapt the term somewhat to refer to the wider interface in America between the public, the constitutionally established state, and the deep forces behind it of wealth, power, and violence outside the government. You might call it the back door of the Public state, giving access to dark forces outside the law. The analogy with Turkey is not perfect, because what we see today in America is less a parallel structure than a wide zone or milieu of interaction between the public state and unseen dark forces, as I expound in my latest book *The American War Machine*. But this interaction is significant, and we need a name, such as Deep state, to describe it.

VoltaireNet: Your critically acclaimed book, *The Road to 9/11*, was published in 2007 under the Bush regime in the United States. In November 2010, you have published your latest body of work, *The American War Machine*, two years after Obama's electoral victory; in your opinion, did the influence of the Deep state decrease in favor of the Public state after Mr. Obama's election, or did it stay the same or even increase?

Peter Dale Scott: After almost two years of the Obama presidency, I have to conclude, regretfully, that the influence of the deep state, or more accurately what in my new book I call the American war machine, has continued to increase, just as it has under every US president since Kennedy. A key sign is the extent to which Obama, despite his campaign rhetoric, has continued to expand the scope of secrecy in US government, and especially to punish whistle-blowers: his campaign against Wikileaks and Julian Assange, who has not been charged yet with any crime, is without precedent in US history. I suspect that Washington's fear of publicity is related to its awareness that US war policies are increasingly at odds with reality. In Afghanistan Obama appears to have capitulated to the efforts of General Petraeus and other generals to ensure that US troops do not begin to withdraw from combat in 2011, as originally foreseen when in 2009 Obama authorized a troop increase. Bob Woodward's new book, *Obama's Wars*, reports that during that protracted administration debate over whether to escalate in Afghanistan, CIA Director Leon Panetta advised Obama that "no Democratic president can go against military advice... So just do it. Do what they say." Obama recently told US troops in Afghanistan that "you're achieving your objectives, you will succeed in your mission." This echo of earlier, fatuously optimistic statements from Petraeus explains why there were no realistic appraisal of the war's progress inside the White House in December 2010, as was originally mandated.

Like Johnson before him, the president is now trapped in a quagmire war he dare not lose, and which threatens to spread to both Pakistan and Yemen, if not further. I suspect that the deep forces dominating both political parties are now so powerful, so affluent, and above all so invested in the profits from war-making, that a president is farther than ever from challenging this power – even as it becomes more and more clear that America's era of world dominance, like Britain's before it, is drawing to a close.

In addition Obama, without debate or review, has extended the domestic state of emergency proclaimed after 9/11, with its drastic limitations of civil rights (see below). In September 2010 the FBI raided the homes or offices of nonviolent human rights workers in Minneapolis and Chicago, citing a recent Supreme Court ruling that nonviolent first amendment speech and advocacy was a crime if "coordinated with" or "under the direction of" a foreign group designated as "terrorist." It is worth noting that, in nine years, Congress has not once met to

discuss the State of Emergency declared by George W. Bush in response to 9/11, a State of Emergency that remains in effect today. Former Congressman Dan Hamburg and I appealed publicly in 2009, both to President Obama to terminate the emergency, and to Congress to hold the hearings required of them by statute. But Obama, without discussion, extended the 9/11 Emergency again on September 2009, and again a year later. Meanwhile Congress has continued to ignore its statutory obligations.

One Congressman explained to a constituent that the provisions of the National Emergencies Act have now been rendered inoperative by COG ("Continuity of Government"), a secret program to deal with running the state in the event of national emergency. The COG program was partially implemented on 9/11 by Dick Cheney, one of its main designers on a committee operating outside regular government since 1981. (See below for more details about COG). If it's true that the National Emergencies Act have been rendered inoperative by COG, this would indicate that the constitutional system of checks and balances no longer applies, and also that secret decrees now override public legislation.

VoltaireNet: In this context, why doesn't the U.S. Congress fulfill its legal obligations in overseeing the limitation of the secret powers of the Deep state – a limitation implemented after the Watergate scandal? What were the consequences of Nixon's impeachment and the subsequent strengthening of Congress oversight on the secret operations of the United States intelligence agencies?

Peter Dale Scott: Nixon's Vietnam strategy consisted of attempting to gain the other hand by making strategic deals with both the Soviet Union and China. This produced violent opposition from both hawks and doves in a deeply divided nation; and I believe that hawks from both the CIA and Pentagon were part of the engineered Watergate crisis that led to his resignation. In the aftermath, doves in the 1974 "McGovernite Congress" achieved a number of reforms in the name of more public politics, abolishing a state of emergency that had survived since the Korean War, and establishing Congressional and legal restraints on the CIA and other aspects of secret government. These reforms in turn immediately produced a concerted mobilization to overturn them, and restore the status quo ante. Underlying this political debate was a disagreement in the nation's leadership between so-called "traders" and "Prussians," as to whether America, in the wake of the Vietnam fiasco, should strive to return to its former role as a preeminent trading nation, or whether it should respond to the Vietnam defeat by a further buildup of its armed forces.

This struggle was simultaneously a struggle between moderates and militarists for control of the Republican Party. This culminated in the demise of Nixon and the gradual redirection of United States foreign policy in the Ford presidency from peaceful coexistence with the Soviet Union towards plans for the weakening and destruction under Ronald Reagan of what Reagan called "the evil empire." Thus in October 1975, the highly probable involvement of Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld in the palace revolution known by historians as "The Halloween Massacre" meant the defeat of Nelson Rockefeller's moderate Republicanism, and its gradual replacement by the hard-edged anti-communism of Ronald Reagan. Essentially, it meant the reorganization of Ford's team toward the demise of détente, along with America's huge defense budgets in the 1980's and again today.

Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, then heading the White House staff of President Gerald Ford and controlling the Department of Defense, played a key part in securing the ultimate triumph of the Prussians, by demoting Henry Kissinger and appointing George H.W. Bush as head of the CIA, where he arranged for a new, more alarmist estimate of the Soviet threat (which explains the correlated skyrocketing of defense budgets, and the demise of détente). Since then, we have observed an increasing influence of what Dwight D. Eisenhower called the military-industrial complex (in his farewell address of January 17th, 1961) on the United States' political economy.

Today we have a new extended state of emergency, and Congressional oversight has become almost defunct. For example, legally mandated congressional oversight of the CIA's covert operations has been successfully evaded by the creation in 1981 of the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) in the Pentagon, which simply incorporates CIA personnel into its operations. JSOC, now known as the Special Operations Command, has become the locus of covert Pentagon operations, of the sort conducted under General Stanley McChrystal, before he was appointed the US commander in Afghanistan.

VoltaireNet: In the last question, you briefly invoked the important role played by Georges Bush Sr. in the demise of détente – a détente promoted by Henry Kissinger. Mr. Bush was the CIA head for a brief period though. Did the replacement of George H.W. Bush by the more moderate Admiral Stansfield Turner at the CIA increase the control of the secret operations led by different elements of the American Deep state?

Peter Dale Scott: No, it did not. It has been the contrary, because some of the key men who were squeezed out after Turner's appointment found themselves a new home working for the so-called Safari Club, an off-the-books secret organization uniting the intelligence chiefs of several countries – including France, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iran – to supplement CIA actions with other anti-communist operations in Africa and the Third World over which the US Congress had no control. Then in 1978, Zbigniew Brzezinski – who was not part of the Safari Club – engineered an end run around Turner by organizing a special unit in the White House under Robert Gates, the current Secretary of Defense who was a junior CIA operative at the time. Under Brzezinski's guidance, CIA officers contrived with the Iranian agency SAVAK to send Islamist agents to Afghanistan, destabilizing the country in a way which led to the 1980 invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union.

The succeeding decade of covert CIA involvement in Afghanistan was crucial in converting that country into a centre for poppy culture, heroin trafficking, and jihadist Islamism. About the narcotics, there are some very good books about the CIA written a few years ago – one by Tim Weiner and one by John Prados. But because they talked to some CIA officers who showed them only a few recently declassified CIA documents – particularly Weiner – they don't talk about the drugs. The narcotic connection is so deep its not mentioned in released CIA documents. But the collaboration of the CIA under William Casey with the drug-dealing Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI) fostered the creation of a huge Afghan narco-economy, whose destabilizing consequences help explain why NATO soldiers, Afghans and Pakistanis are dying there today.

The BCCI was a huge global drug-laundering bank. It was corrupting – with its budgets, with its resources – leading politicians, presidents, prime ministers all over the world. And some of that money – it's not much talked about, but it is true – was reaching politicians in the United States – politicians of both parties, which is one of the main reasons why we didn't get a congressional investigation of BCCI. There was actually a Senate report that came out, under the names of one Republican, Hank Brown, and one Democrat, John Kerry. And Brown congratulated Kerry on having the courage to write that report when so many people in his party were affected by the BCCI. The latter was a big factor in creating the connexions with people like Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who was probably the leading heroin trafficker in the world during the 1980's. He also became the leading recipient of CIA largesses supplemented by an equal amount of Saudi Arabian money. There's something terribly wrong in a situation like this!

VoltaireNet: At the outcome of the presidential campaign of 1976, Jimmy Carter was elected in part on his pleas for a decrease in military spending and expanding détente with the Soviet Union. This did not happen in the four years of his presidency. Could you explain to us why? Did Zbigniew Brzezinski – whom you mentioned in the previous question – play any role in this then-unexpected hawkish foreign policy?

Peter Dale Scott: The media presented Carter as a populist candidate, a peanut farmer from the South. But the deep reality was that Carter had been prepared for the presidency by Wall Street, and particularly by the Trilateral Commission that was funded by David Rockefeller, and directed by Zbigniew Brzezinski. Brzezinski, a passionately anti-Soviet Pole, then became Carter's national security adviser; and from the outset overruled Secretary of State Cyrus Vance repeatedly in pursuit of a more vigorous anti-Soviet foreign policy. In this Brzezinski went against the stated goals of the Trilateral Commission, of which President Carter had been a member. The underlying idea of the Trilateral Commission was a rather attractive picture of a multipolar world in which America would mediate between the Second World, which was the Soviet block, and the Third World, which was what we used to call in those days the underdeveloped or lesser developed countries... By the way I hate that term, because I lived in Thailand: in some ways they are very much more developed than we are!

When he was elected, Carter nominated a genuine trilateralist, Cyrus Vance, the Secretary of State, and he had as his National security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was determined to use the Deep state to inflict as much damage on the Soviet Union as he could. A lot of things which are thought of as the successes of the Reagan regime clearly had their origins under Brzezinski. And it was a total repudiation of what trilateralism stood for. Carter – the poor man – was elected promising cuts in the defence budget, and before he had left, he had committed the Defense Department to huge increases which we associate with the Reagan administration but were initiated before.

As a consequence, under the surface a massive campaign for increased defense spending, mobilized by wealthy military industrialists through the Committee on the Present Danger, brought public opinion to reinforce Brzezinski's push for a more militant U.S. presence and policy, particularly in the Indian Ocean.

VoltaireNet: After being a very influential man under President Gerald Ford, Dick Cheney – allied with his mentor Donald Rumsfeld and Vice-president George Bush senior – has been since the onset of the Reagan presidency one of the key men in the development of the ultra-secret so-called “Continuity of Government” (COG) program. Could you explain to us what that program is? Has it ever been implemented, even partially?

Peter Dale Scott: From the beginning of the Reagan presidency in 1981, arrangements were made for a secret group outside government to work on so-called “Continuity of Government” or COG plans for running the state in the event of national emergency. Initially this was an extension of existing plans for a response to a nuclear attack which would decapitate the United States’ leadership, but before Reagan retired the terms were modified by his Executive Order 12686 of 1988 to cover any emergency.

The COG is another thing which we associate with Reagan but actually began under Carter, although Carter may have never been aware of it. The latter did create FEMA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which has always been charged with being the infrastructure for this COG planning. What is kind of shocking is that the COG plans were extreme plans, but that Congress didn’t know about them in the 1980’s. Only a small group of people – including Oliver North, Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld – were secretly assigned to work on them by a 1981 top secret executive order from Reagan. The COG issue was first publicly brought up in 1987 during the Iran-Contra hearings, when congressman Jack Brooks asked Oliver North: “Colonel North, in your work at the N.S.C. were you not assigned, at one time, to work on plans for the continuity of government in the event of a major disaster?” Congressman Brooks further added: “I was particularly concerned, Mr. Chairman, because I read in Miami papers, and several others, that there had been a plan developed, by that same agency, a contingency plan in the event of emergency that would suspend the American constitution. And I was deeply concerned about it and wondered if that was an area in which he had worked. I believe that it was and I wanted to get his confirmation.” Senator Inouye, the Chairman of this congressional commission, answered: “May I most respectfully request that that matter not be touched upon at this stage. If we wish to get into this, I’m certain arrangements can be made for an executive session” What Congressman Brooks was asking about was “continuity of government” (COG), and those arrangements for an executive session were never made.

Cheney and Rumsfeld – two key figure of the COG program – continued to participate in these very expensive plans and exercises for the next two decades, even though by the late 1990’s both men were corporate executives with no official government connection whatsoever. Reportedly the new target replacing the Soviet threat was terrorism, but some journalists have claimed that from the early 1980’s on there were major plans to deal with the kind of anti-war protests which (in the mind of Oliver North and those like him) had been responsible for the American defeat in Vietnam.

It is not disputed that on 9/11 COG plans were implemented, along with an officially proclaimed state of emergency that is still in effect after nine years, ignoring a post-Watergate law calling for either approval or termination of an emergency by Congress. The COG plans are a closely kept secret, but there were reports in the 1980’s that these involved warrantless surveillance and

detention, and a permanent militarization of government. To some extent these changes have clearly been put in place since 9/11.

There is no way to determine how many of the constitutional changes since 9/11 can be traced to COG planning. However we do know that new COG planning measures were still being introduced in 2007, when President Bush issued National Security Presidential Directive 51 (NSPD-51/HSPD-20). This Directive set out what FEMA later called “a new vision to ensure the continuity of our Government,” and was followed in August by a new National Continuity Policy Implementation Plan. NSPD-51 also nullified PDD 67, Richard Clarke’s COG directive of a decade earlier; and it referred to new “classified Continuity Annexes” which shall “be protected from unauthorized disclosure.”

Under pressure from his 911Truth constituents, Congressman Peter DeFazio of the Homeland Security Committee twice requested to see these Annexes. His request was denied. DeFazio then requested a second time, in a letter signed by the Chair of his committee. The request was denied one more time. Again, as I said in the second question, this would indicate that the constitutional system of checks and balances no longer applies, and also that secret decrees now override public legislation.

VoltaireNet: In *The Road to 9/11* as well as in *The American War Machine* you assert in a very well-documented fashion that the 9/11 Commission - whose members were nominated by and worked directly under the control of President George W. Bush – covered up what happened on that fateful day, especially when it comes to Cheney’s actions on that particular morning. Could you say more about this?

Peter Dale Scott: Bush initially resisted any review of 9/11, until Congress imposed a 9/11 Commission in response to an effective political campaign by the victims’ families. (Editor’s note: See documentary *9/11 Press for Truth* Kean & Hamilton, the two chairmen of the Commission promised publicly to be guided by the families’ unanswered questions, such as who the alleged hijackers were and how three buildings in the World Trade Center collapsed, one of them without being hit by a plane. These and other questions were in the end not addressed at all. Meanwhile the Commission received a great deal of conflicting testimony and repeatedly revised accounts.

Under the close supervision of Commission director, Philip Zelikow, a man with a government security background, the *The 9/11 Commission Report* ignored some conflicts altogether and reconciled others in a way many critics have challenged. The Report attributed the lack of response that day to a systemic chaos and breakdown, ignoring Cheney’s own statements elsewhere that he played a dominant role that day, and ignoring also important conflicts in and authoritative challenges to his own testimony.

One topic the Commission and Report explicitly did not investigate was the implementation of COG plans on 9/11 (p.555, note 9). Nor did they say anything about Cheney’s terrorism task force of May 2001, which has been cited as a source for a June 1st 2001 JCS order, modifying the conditions for the military interception of hijacked planes. To arrive at their reduced account of Cheney’s responsibility on that day, the Commission also flagrantly overlooked eyewitness

accounts at odds with their chronology, notably by Counterterrorism Chief Richard Clarke and Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta.

VoltaireNet: One of the most fascinating aspects of The Road to 9/11 – and there are many – analyzes the geo-strategic decisions set up by the Deep state within the U.S. since the Carter presidency, in Central Asia as well as in the Middle East in relations to the oil/gas/drugs/military and weapons industries. In your latest book, The American War Machine, you analyze the roots of this oil/gas/drugs shadowy pattern, tracing them even before the creation of the CIA – which is a very interesting view. Given that the “War on Terror” is still going on, (albeit under new names such as pacification, democratization, etc.) and that it is currently spreading in over 60 countries across the globe (mainly through secret operations), what are the real goals – as well as the origins – of this war?

Peter Dale Scott: At the outset of the “War on Terror”, it was very clear that strategic advisers to both parties, as well as in think-tanks like the Council on Foreign Relations, were concerned about the U.S. need to preserve its historic dominance over the global petroleum markets. They produced documents pushing for increased U.S. military strength in the Persian Gulf region, and for military plans to deal with Saddam Hussein in particular. Now the “War on Terror” has continued to expand, as we are told that Salafi militants have predictably moved to new areas, notably Yemen and Somalia, to plan their retaliations. So the “War on Terror” has become a test of the current U.S. global strategic posture calling for “Full-spectrum dominance” as defined in the Pentagon’s Joint Vision 2020: “The ability of U.S. forces, operating alone or with allies, to defeat any adversary and control any situation across the range of military operations.”

Driving all of these escalations since World War Two has been a defense lobby funded originally by the military-industrial complex, and now also by a half dozen right-wing foundations with unlimited funds. Over time the personnel have migrated from one group to the next – the American Security Council, the Committee on the Present Danger, the Project for the new American Century, and now the Center for Security Policy (CSP). [2] But the goals have expanded over the years, from maximizing the American military presence to also shrinking individual liberties, to forestall the resurgence of any future U.S. antiwar movement. (I discuss the growth of this defense faction in my most recent book, The American War Machine)

Increasingly this agenda smacks of McCarthyism if not fascism. A number of groups are feeding an anti-Muslim hysteria reminiscent of the anti-communist hysteria in the 1950s, and calling for an apparently endless war against Islam. For example the CSP recently published a document, Shariah, The Threat to America, [3] proclaiming sharia to be “the preeminent totalitarian threat of our time,” with dire warnings of “stealth jihad” and “demographic jihad.”

VoltaireNet: This “War on Terror” – whose real goals are far from being openly admitted by NATO member-state governments – was initiated in Afghanistan in late 2001. There, some powerful local warlords formerly allied with the United States during the USSR-led war in Afghanistan in the 1980’s are currently appearing as major players in the “AfPak” war zone. Let’s focus on the example of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar; public opinion in the countries which are part of NATO does not seem to be remotely aware of who he is. Could you remind us of who Mr. Hekmatyar is? Can you tell us to what extent he symbolizes the danger generated by U.S.

foreign policies which – due to a lack of congressional oversight and public scrutiny – led to a major increase in the global drug trade (in this particular case, heroin)?

Peter Dale Scott: With few assets of its own in Afghanistan, the U.S. decided to conduct its anti-Soviet Operation Cyclone there through the resources of the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). In turn Pakistan, fearful of authentic Afghan nationalists' claims on its own border territories, directed the bulk of the U.S. and Saudi assistance to two extremists with little power base inside Afghanistan – Abdul Rasul Sayyaf and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. Hekmatyar, a Ghilzai Pashtun from the non-Pashtun north, was first trained in violent resistance under Pakistani guidance; and is said to have been the only Afghan leader who explicitly recognized the Durand Line defining the Afghan-Pakistan border. Both Sayyaf and Hekmatyar compensated for their lack of indigenous support by cultivating and exporting opiates in the 1980s, again with ISI support. For the same reason both men worked with the foreign mujahideen – the antecedents of what is now called Al Qaeda – who flocked to Afghanistan in this period; and Hekmatyar in particular is said to have developed a close relationship with Osama bin Laden. This influx of Wahhabi and Deobandi fundamentalists weakened Afghanistan's traditional Sufi-dominated version of Islam.

In the course of the anti-Soviet campaign Hekmatyar's forces murdered supporters of Ahmed Shah Massoud, the chief threat to Hekmatyar's ISI-backed plans to dominate post-Soviet Afghanistan. After the Soviet withdrawal the CIA (against State Department advice) also used Hekmatyar as an instrument to block a government of national reconciliation, leading to a civil war in the 1990s which killed thousands of people. Since the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, Hekmatyar has led his own faction fighting for U.S. withdrawal; but allegedly he is more open than the Taliban to joining a Karzai-led coalition government. Senior defense officials in Washington, such as Michael Vickers, still refer to Operation Cyclone as the “most successful covert action” in CIA history. It seems not to concern them that the CIA's program helped generate and unleash Al Qaeda – the new post-Soviet rationale for defense budgets – and Afghanistan's current role as the world's major source for heroin and hashish.

VoltaireNet: In conclusion, given the disastrous financial, economic, political, social crisis and even the moral situation in the United States as in many parts of the world, are you still confident in the future? Do you see some encouraging signs towards a greater influence of what you call in your book the “Prevalable will of the people” in the political decision-making process - a process which is more oligarchic than ever?

Peter Dale Scott: It is said that we should view every crisis as an opportunity. Certainly America's crisis, which is also the world's, ought to be the occasion for far-reaching reforms of the market capitalist processes that have created such huge gaps between the very rich and the very poor. Unfortunately these processes have also made traditional politics and modes of mobilization even more ineffective than they were before.

I argue in *The Road to 9/11* that major social change is possible when oppression leads to the formation of a united public opinion – or what I called a prevailable will of the people – to oppose it. I pointed to examples such as the civil rights movement in the American south, or the Polish movement Solidarity. Technological developments such as the Internet have made it

easier than before for people to unite, both nationally and internationally. But technology has also refined instruments of top-down surveillance and repression, making successful activist mobilization more difficult than before. So the future is very uncertain; one can say only that the present global system is more unstable than it has been, and that some kind of showdown is likely to change it.

I do believe however that this is a very exciting time in which to live. Young people should continue as they have been to join the movements for social change, and to create new venues for global exchange. And above all, there is no excuse for despair.

Note

[1] Nato's Secret Armies, by Daniele Ganser, Frank Cass (www.frankcass.co.uk), 2995.

[2] "The Center for Security Policy: Washington's manipulators".

[3] Download PDF version: Shariah, The Threat to America (An Exercise in Competitive Analysis—Report of Team 'B' II), The Center for Security Policy, 2010.