

# ORIGINAL PAPERS

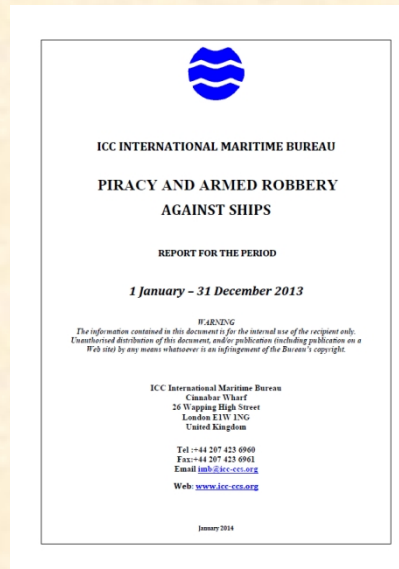


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## What George Santayana has to say about Somali Piracy

By George Kiourktsoglou <sup>1</sup> and Dr. Alec Coutroubis with the kind contribution of CDR. Kentaro Furuya

Couple of weeks ago, the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) published a report titled 'Lessons Identified from Somali Piracy' (ICS, 2014). The document is, among other things, a compilation of mostly successful (to different degrees) practices applied by the international community throughout the last five years to address rising criminality and seaborne crime off East Africa. In an obvious attempt to



hedge its bet(s), the ICS emphasized that *'it is premature to conclude that the crisis is over, that shipowners should in any way adjust their practices outside compliance with the Best Management Practices (BMP, 2011), or that governments should reduce current levels of military protection to Shipping. Nevertheless, it is not unreasonable to envisage a situation within the foreseeable future in which the ongoing threat presented by Somali piracy may have reduced significantly'*.

Giving credence to the ICS report, the International Bureau of Shipping (IBS) published a few days later its annual 2013 **'Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships'** report (ICB IBS, 2014) on the status quo of maritime piracy worldwide. According to the report, *'Piracy at sea has reached its lowest levels in six years, with 264 attacks recorded worldwide in 2013, a 40% drop since Somali piracy peaked in 2011'*. Just 15 incidents were reported off Somalia in 2013, down from 75 in 2012, and 237 in 2011. *'The single biggest reason for the drop in worldwide piracy is the decrease in Somali piracy off the*

*coast of East Africa,'* said Pottengal Mukundan, Director of IBS. According to the report, Somali pirates have been deterred by a combination of factors, including the key role of international navies, the hardening of vessels, the use of private armed security teams, and the stabilizing influence of Somalia's central government. *'It is imperative to continue combined international efforts to tackle Somali piracy. Any complacency at this stage could re-ignite pirate activity,'* warned Captain Mukundan (Maritime Executive, 2014).

For all it matters though, the cardinal problematic remains still the same: *'is there a solution to the problem of Somali piracy?'* The nation's recent history promptly offers some valuable hints.

### The Dawn of Piracy

The Somali Republic (as it has been recognized *de jure* by the UN) came into existence in 1960. The newborn democracy lasted only nine years, until General Muhammad Siad Barre organized and executed a successful *coup d'état* which paved the way for him to become head of the state and the *de facto* ruler of the nation. The military regime created and maintained a small maritime force, forerunner to a coastguard that was never meant to come to existence. By leveraging this body to enforce Somali sovereignty on the maritime domain, Siad Barre took advantage of Somalia's vast fishing resources (through the sale of fishing licenses to foreigners), protected the nation's territorial waters from wanton and illegal dumping of toxic waste and at the same time kept on a tight leash the traditional Somali tendency towards piracy and seaborne crime (Weir, 2009).

The Siad Barre military junta collapsed on January 26th 1991, triggering a period of insurgency, warlordism, interclan fighting, Islamic jihadism, foreign intervention and piracy (Hesse, 2010), (Pham, 2010). The wrecking mixture of absent central authority, lawlessness and progressive destitution, created a humanitarian disaster. It devastated a raft of coastal communities chiefly for two reasons: first, it practically opened the door to Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing (IUUF) and second, it immensely facilitated the dumping of toxic waste off the Somali coasts and as such, it

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rendered the nation's seas a free-for-all depot of toxic garbage. Scholars attribute the dawn of piracy off east Africa to the previous two direct consequences of the fall of the Siad Barre regime (Hirsi, 2011), manifested through the absence of a robust law enforcement agency in the territorial waters and the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the nation.

### The Evolutionary Timeline (Picture 1)

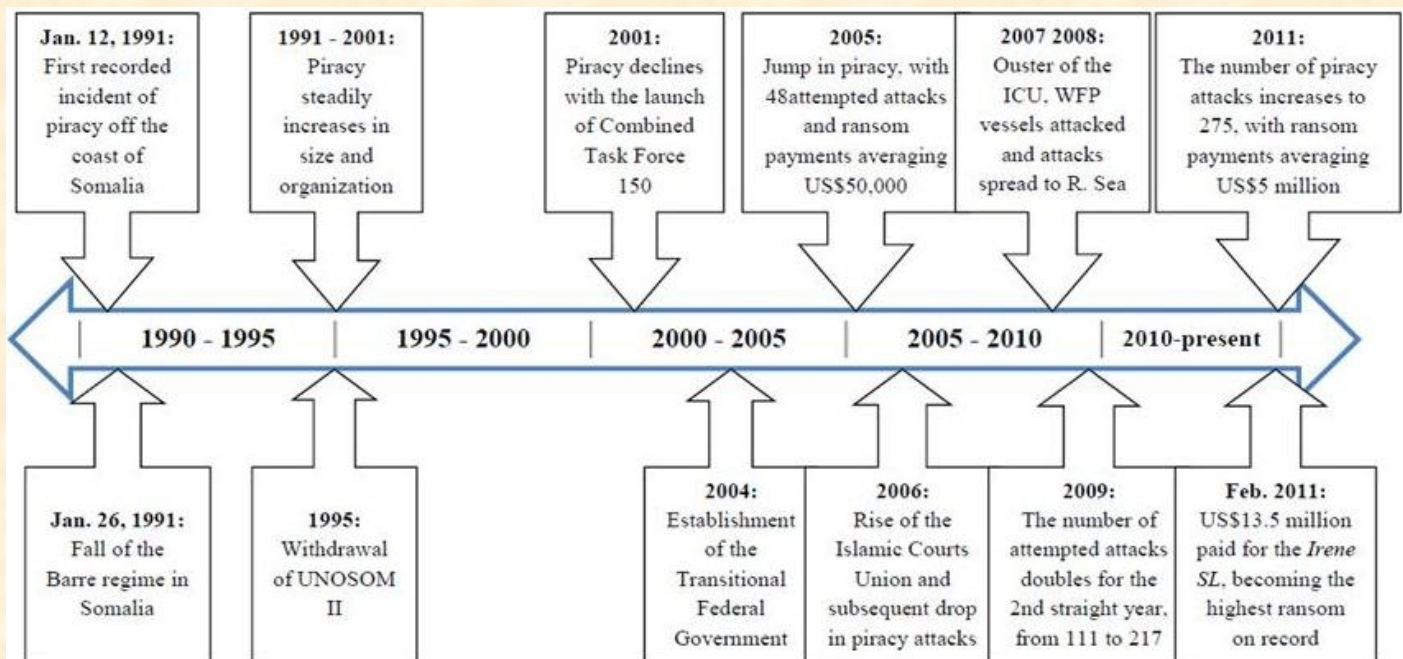
According to Edward R. Lucas *'the increase in pirate activity off Somalia did not occur in a steady linear progression, but has instead taken place in three separate phases'* (Lucas, 2013).

The first phase opened with a seajack which involved a cargo ship on her way to Saudi Arabia and the slaying of three Filipino crew members by Somali pirates. It took place on 12 January 1991, (Pham, 2010). Throughout this phase, the frequency of incidents of piracy remained rather low, but attacks went up throughout the 1990s until 2001. The 9/11 atrocities indirectly acted as a catalyst, which led to the substantial reduction of East African piracy. More specifically, the presence of NATO naval assets (Combined Task Force (CTF) 150) in and around the Gulf of Aden (for purposes of counterterrorism) produced a stunning fall in reported cases of piracy off the Horn of Africa (Murphy, 2011).

Piracy remained fairly subdued until 2005. That year marked the beginning of the second phase, which featured a much higher frequency both of attacks and seajacks. The milestone was the seajacking of a ship, fifty nautical miles off the coast of Somalia (Murphy, 2011). This attack triggered an avalanche of attacks in the region up until 2006, when the meteoric rise of the phenomenon came to a grinding halt mainly due to the Islamic Courts Union (ICU) and their strong anti-piracy stance (Murphy, 2011).

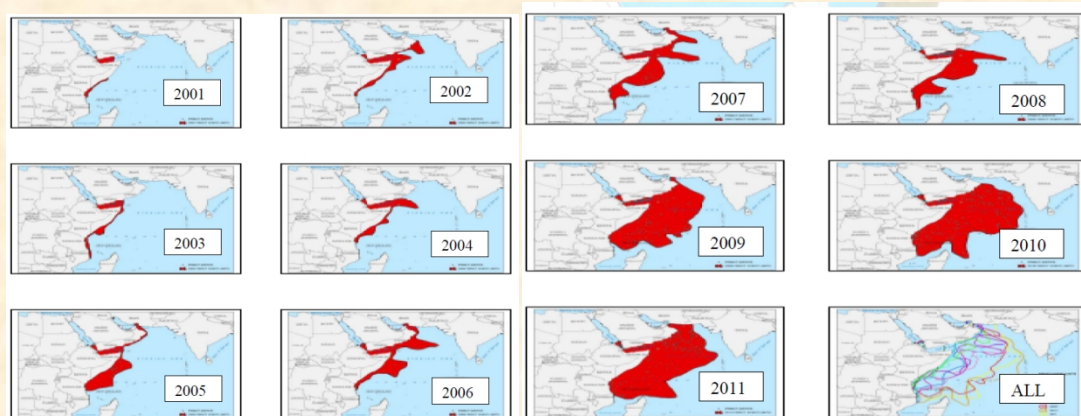
The number of seajacks picked up again in 2007 following the ouster of the ICU. From that point on, the High Risk Area (HRA) kept expanding all the time up until 2011, when it ballooned and reached the coastline of west India, more than 1000 miles away from Somalia (Middleton, 2011). East African pirates' 'playground' was covering by then the whole Western Indian Ocean (Picture 2). The pirates' sphere of operations included at its peak in 2011 the Arabian Sea, affecting Yemen, Oman, Pakistan, and India; the coast of East Africa, affecting Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Madagascar, Mauritius, Seychelles, and South Africa; and the Bay of Bengal.

The year of 2011 marked the heyday of piracy in East Africa. The number of incidents peaked at more than 220 counts and then started to peter out. Until late 2013, it continued to decline with only ten incidents reported to the International Maritime Bureau (IMB) in the first three quarters of the year (ICC IMB, 2014).



Picture 1: Timeline of Somali piracy (Whitman & Saurez, 2012)

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Picture 2: Expansion of Somali piracy in time and space (Maritime Liaison Office, 2012)

According to the IMB, the substantial reduction of seaborne criminality off East Africa can be readily attributed to three factors:

1. Deployment of naval assets (from a host of nations around the world) mainly to the Gulf of Aden;
2. Compliance with the Best Management Practices (BMP), (IMO, 2011); and
3. Use of (armed) professional security teams on board vessels in the High Risk Area (HRA);

For reasons of political correctness, any seasoned scholar would probably add a fourth contributing factor, and more specifically the crime-fighting efforts of Somali communities and their government (based in Mogadishu). For all the flaws of potentially 'controversial' tactics put in practice, the nation has moved the dot and has gone to great lengths to eradicate seaborne criminality altogether.

#### Lesson to remember: Couple Anti- with Counter-Piracy Initiatives

In his masterpiece *The Life of Julius Caesar*, Plutarch claims that the emperor 'was captured, near the island Pharmacusa, by pirates, who already at that time controlled the sea with large armaments and countless small vessels' (North, 1915). Careful study of the phenomenon in its previous occurrences throughout history renders obvious the fact that piracy does not pop up randomly. Even more interestingly, once it has come to surface, it becomes a 'wicked problem', meaning that it has neither a definitive nor an end-state solution; instead, it features an evergreen and non-linear learning process, that can lead both to improvement(s) and deterioration(s) of the situation (Coutroubis, Kiourtsoglou & Schwartz, 2012).

Within this conceptual framework of 'Wickedness', policy-makers and decision-makers at all levels (private, national, supranational) should take note and think both tactically and strategically. Tactics should address the short-term problem of *containment* (counter-piracy). Siad Barre's regime managed to pull it off throughout the years of its reign using a nascent law-enforcing Somali Coastguard. By the same token, a *mêlé* of naval assets, armed security personnel onboard ships transiting the HRA, application of Best Management Practices by crews and vigilance coming from the side of local Somali communities', have managed to keep (with growing success) Somali seaborne criminality at bay since 2012.

Strategy should address the long-term problem of *elimination* (anti-piracy). In this case, the challenge is more intriguing and the solution admittedly involves prolonged exertion of soft power in terms of rising economic growth, enhanced grassroots' reconciliation (to address clan and/or political grievances), religious and political inclusiveness (to partially address rising jihadism) and last but not least, gradual reduction of foreign military intervention (to address national grievances).

Piracy is neither a new challenge, nor one that has ever been utterly eradicated. Throughout history, the phenomenon has simply moved from one area of the world's high seas to another, based on the solutions applied at any given time. In the 21<sup>st</sup> as well, the international community is unlikely to fully eradicate piracy. Interestingly though, it can limit the problem along with its impact(s), by studying and understanding its true nature and similarly, the nature of potential solutions. All in all, to quote George Santayana (Santayana, 1906), 'the one who does not study history is doomed to repeat it'... In the case of Somali piracy too!

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## **SURPRISE – The ultimate weapon**

By The Editor-in-Chief

I hate surprises! Both good surprises and unfortunate ones! Especially when the latter are kind of predictable. You might say: “Predictable surprise is not a surprise. Just failure of Plan A and lack of Plan B!” You are totally right BUT if this is the case then practically all bad surprises simply do not exist! On the other hand “good” surprises are real surprises because the element of unexpected is real – i.e. win a couple of millions in lottery!

Reasoning behind my thoughts put in this paper is the constant “surprise” status our societies are experiencing on daily basis worldwide. While searching for the definition of surprise I read about the obvious countermeasure (read more on “familiarity” below) of surprise that is very applicable in the safety and security section. The latter is the one that suffers almost all surprises that affect our lives both individually but also collectively. Public sector is prone to surprises during peace and war/conflicts and I will try through real life examples to share certain solutions/proposals that might help make our short lives a bit more controlled and safe.

### **Surprise**

#### **Definition**

According to Wikipedia, “surprise” is a brief mental and physiological state, a startle response experienced animals and humans as the result of an unexpected event. Surprise can have any valence; that is, it can be neutral/moderate, pleasant, unpleasant, positive, or negative. Surprise can occur in varying levels of intensity ranging from very-surprised, which may induce the fight-or-flight response, or little-surprise that elicits a less intense response to the stimuli.

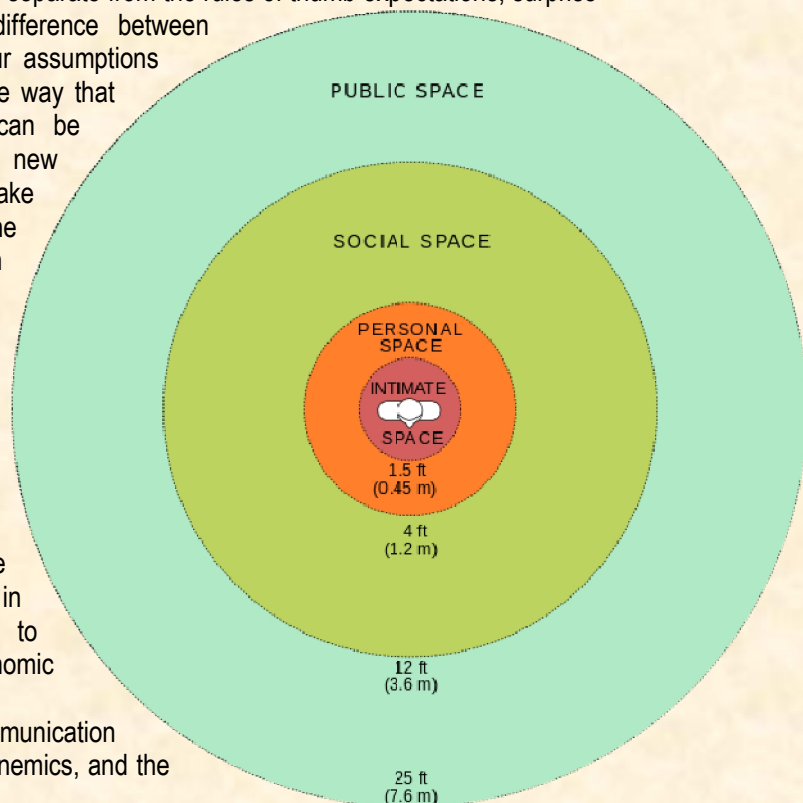
#### **Construction of surprise**

Surprise is intimately connected to the idea of acting in accordance with a set of rules. When the rules of reality generating events of daily life separate from the rules of thumb expectations, surprise is the outcome. Surprise represents the difference between expectations and reality, the gap between our assumptions and expectations about worldly events and the way that those events actually turn out. This gap can be deemed an important foundation on which new findings are based since surprises can make people aware of their own ignorance. The acknowledgement of ignorance, in turn, can mean a window to new knowledge.

Surprise can also occur due to a violation of expectancy's. The Expectancy Violation Theory (EVT) says that three factors influence a person's expectations: interactant variables, environmental variables, and variables related to the nature of the interaction or interaction variables.

- Interactant variables involve traits of the persons involved in the communication and in this instance the communication leading to surprise, including: race, sex, socio-economic status, age, and appearance.
- Environmental variables that effect the communication of surprise include: proxemics (photo), chronemics, and the nature of the surroundings of the interaction.
- Interaction variables that influence surprise include: social norms, cultural norms, physiological influences, biological influences and unique individual behavioral patterns.

Surprise may occur due to a violation of one, two, or a combination of all three factors.



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Surprise does not always have to have a negative valence. EVT proposes that expectancy's will influence the outcome of the communication as a confirmation, behaviors within the expected range, or violation, behaviors outside the expected range. EVT also postulates that positive interactions will increase the level of attraction of the violator, where as negative violations decrease the attraction. Positive violations would then cause positive surprise, such as a surprise birthday party, and negative violations would cause negative surprise, such as a parking ticket. Positive violations of surprise may enhance credibility, power, attraction, and persuasiveness, where as negative violations of surprise may reduce, credibility, power, attraction, and persuasiveness

### ***Physiological responses***

The physiological response of surprise falls under the category of the startle response. The main function of surprise or the startle response is to interrupt an ongoing action and reorient attention to a new, possibly significant event. There is an automatic redirection of focus to the new stimuli and, for a brief moment, this causes tenseness in the muscles, especially the neck muscles. Studies show that this response happens extremely fast, with information (in this case a loud noise) reaching the pons within 3 to 8 ms and the full startle reflex occurring in less than two tenths of a second.

The startle response may then start another physiological process called the fight-or-flight response. If the startle response is strongly elicited through surprise then it will bring on the fight-or-flight response, which is a perceived harmful event, attack, or threat to survival that causes a release of adrenaline for a boost of energy as a means to escape or fight. This response generally has a negative valence in terms of surprise.

Surprise has one core appraisal-appraising something as new and unexpected-but new appraisals can shift the experience of surprise to another. Appraising an event as new predicts surprise, but the appraisal of the coping mechanism predicts the response beyond surprise, such as confusion or interest.

### ***Familiarity of surprise***

As individuals become more accustomed to particular types of surprise, overtime the level of surprise will decrease in intensity. This does not necessarily mean that an individual, for instance, will not be surprised during the jump scene of a scary movie, it implies that the individual may expect the jump scene due familiarity with scary movies thus lowering the level of surprise. The EVT model helps to support this claim because as individuals become more accustomed to a situation or communication it becomes less and less likely that the situation or communication will cause a violation of expectation and without violating an expectation then surprise cannot occur.

### **Categorization of surprises**

Although non-substantial we can categorize surprise into:

- Public surprise
- Personal surprise
- Operational/conflict surprise

#### **Public surprise**

National authorities are often surprised by incidents of terrorism, organized crime and natural phenomena.

#### ***Terrorism/organized crime***

Recently in Greece one of the most notorious terrorists Christodoulos Xiros disappeared during his last furlough from high security prison he was jailed after his six life sentences' conviction for active participation in "17 November" terrorist group. Before his last furlough he was issued furloughs six more times and he always returned back to jail on time. During all his furloughs he was never surveillance by police/intel authorities while during his prison time he enjoyed special hospitality by being able to move within jail and meet imprisoned members of other terrorist cells. The time I am writing these lines a stolen car full of weapons and ammunition (RPGs, AK-47s, 7,62mm ammos, detonators and F1 grenades of Soviet origin) was discovered somewhere in Athens. Since Greece is presiding EU during

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the first semester of 2014, authorities are on highest alert fearing a spectacular attack against EU targets (both people and infrastructure). Long range attacks, kidnappings of important people (businessmen, politicians) are among of possible scenarios put on the table. To all these add the recent attack (with AK-47) against the residence of the German Ambassador in Athens and two kidnapping attempts – no victims resulted.



Based on the above it is obvious that the element of surprise of both the authorities and the public is purely fictitious. Let us analyze why:

- If imprisoned terrorist was “really” imprisoned then none of these should have happened.
- If chief guardian of prison was not afraid to deal with prisoners and their reactions following restriction of movement, none of these should have happened.
- If police and state intel authorities were out in the open visible during his time out the jail none of these should have happened.
- If the armed police officer guarding the German Embassy was trained and confident to his armors and operational environment in order to fight back instead of falling to the ground following the distant order of his perpetrators none of these should have happened.



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- If the Embassy security personnel have taken all the defensive measures required for hot targets then none of the bullets fired could have passed through windows in Ambassador's daughter room.
- If the businessman who was kidnapped but managed to persuade one of his kidnapers to let him go and surrender to Police have taken basic defensive precautions (special films on car windows, always traveling with a second person etc) then the whole operation would have failed.
- This is the case with the second kidnapping attempt against the son of a low-tones ship owner that he reacted automatically while driving, managed to ram one of the blocking cars and escape back to his business premises to inform police about the incident. Was it luck? Surely not – he was trained abroad on how to deal with similar surprises.



Kikos Martinos – on the right is the car rammed



Manolis Karamolegos

What really feeds surprises is the element of “it will not happen to me or us!” This is translated with certain related hypothesis like: I am just a congressman. Who would bother to attack me when ministers are responsible for what is happening today in Greece?” They forget that they also belong to ruling party or opposition of the government. And the government is the target. So why not one of them? Ministers are heavily guarded, they are not! Implication would be the same – it is not about persons but targeting government as a whole.

In similar way businessmen often think: “I am safe because my name never attracted negative publicity nor accused for corruption or debts! Not to mention that there are others who are richer than me and can pay huge ransoms!” These people fail to comprehend that it is not personal but against their line of work – business in total! And business is one of the major pylons on national level. Who will invest in Greece if his life and that of his family and colleagues is constantly threatened?

What are the key words for this category? Common sense and training can make the difference. Threat assessment and gap analysis should be incorporated in all our daily activities as a protective shield against both terrorism and daily crime. But can we all practice and be trained on how to cope with possible threatening scenarios? Can we train ourselves or our wives and children how to respond if someone throws eggs on their windshield while driving in a dark remote road on their way back home? Even if they are aware of the fact that operating window cleaners will produce a whitish film that will make continuation of driving almost impossible the bottom line is that they pull the brakes and stop. Theoretical training is not enough if not accompanied by practical training. Repetition might be “useful” for watching terror movies but practice is the one that will save lives. You cannot practice fancy martial arts and never been punched in the nose. The latter has always been a personal question when observing armed women patrolling in various airports around the globe. I might be wrong – hope so!

Recalling from the past a bombing against the Minister of Public Order comes to my mind. Some years ago (24 June 2010) a parcel bomb was mailed to him by a terrorist group. Parcel was moving freely among postal and courier services within Athens for a couple of days until arrived at the main gate of the Ministry. There security personnel read the writing on the parcel: Minister himself was

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the final recipient of the parcel (there was a note written on the parcel indicating that it contained important information related to the Siemens bribery scandal devastating public opinion at that time).

For those who know the mentality of public servants it was obvious that the parcel should be delivered “asap” to his office – no security measures apply for these high priority items... No parcel check, no parcel scan (rumors say that related equipment was out of operation or in maintenance status at that time), no nothing! So the parcel was delivered to the office of the officer serving as personal assistant to the Minister on top floor of the building. At that time Minister was in another office on the same floor just 10-15m away from his own office. Because of this the 49 year old Police Commissioner George Vassilakis open the parcel instead of the Minister himself. A devastating explosion took place and the unfortunate officer was instantly killed. During the following days both public opinion and state authorities were “surprised” by this terrorist action against one of the most guarded buildings in Greece and the Minister who achieved the dismantling of three terrorist organizations including “17 November”! But this surprise was just the result of not following SOPs and if you do not follow SOPs then a bloody outcome is guaranteed! As simple as that...



The Target



The Building



The Victim

Finally let us analyze a hypothetical non-conventional (CR) attack terrorist against a very important person (VIP). Imagine that Prime Minister of a country is attending a major social event.



Suddenly an explosion takes place in close proximity of his/her location. PM is not wounded and his personal guard is responding to evacuate him in a safe location (SOP). At exactly that time people in close proximity to PM are starting to fall down gasping for air. Some die instantly. What should be the automatic reaction of the VIP group? “Gas – Gas – Gas !” Next automatic action: put your gas masks on! Yes but there is a small problem with that. Gas masks are in the port baggage of the limousine used to transfer PM. And it is only 50m away. And the PM does not know how to put the mask on! And even if they have them on hand his body guards should be in a terrible dilemma: put their own first (PM dies) and then assist him (too late) or assist him first (they die) and then put their own on (too late)? And what about PM’s wife escorting him? In all cases someone or more will die. And it is so simple to carry the masks (or at least escape hoods) with them and know how to handle this specialized equipment – including the PM himself (and his wife). Explore the variations in this simple scenario and make your own conclusions providing you couple the threat with

the inherent belief that “this is impossible to happen”.

### **Natural phenomena**

In the last days of January 2014 the Greek island of Cephalonia was hit by a 6.1R earthquake. On Feb 3 a second 5.7R earthquake hit the wounded island – not to mention the repeated smaller earthquakes followed both major events. There were no dead and despite the construction hardening of local infrastructure against earthquakes due to the past history of the island (1953 6.4R earthquake

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destroyed almost all buildings in three islands [Cephalonia, Zakynthos and Ithaki] resulting in 871 dead, 1690 wounded 145,092 homeless) damages in houses, port, roads etc were very extended disrupting normal life of inhabitants. To all the above add bad weather conditions – strong winds, heavy rain and low temperatures.



What would be more logic than to activate the relevant reaction plan of Civil Protection and start providing aid to those affected? Well it seems that even logic has been swallowed in the abyss of current turmoil Greece is experiencing in the last few years...

Let us start with planning – plan is nothing; planning is everything! Based on this important rule applicable to all kind of plans, planners should have known in advance that there are major differences between a catastrophe in mainland and that in an island. Also there are differences depending on the time of the year catastrophe emerges. For example: when a major earthquake stroke the second biggest city in Greece (Thessaloniki [1978] – personal experience as a second

year cadet at Military Medical School in that city) it happened during mid-summer time. People could comfortably stay outside and camp in parks, open spaces, beaches etc. Help could easily provided by road or air and assistance delivered fast and efficiently – despite the fact that were also dead due to building collapses (not the case in Cephalonia).

Cephalonia is an island and earthquake stroke in mid-winter. As a result aid and assistance from mainland faces problems both in timing and quantity.

What is important to deal with in such a scenario? (1) Shelters for the homeless; (2) Food; (3) Water; (4) Medical assistance (for acute cases but also for those suffering from chronic conditions requiring medication) and (5) Psychological assistance to those affected. How this should be accomplished? (1) By sea; and (2) By air. What should we expect especially for earthquakes? Logic says that during major earthquake ground surface changes resulting in cracks, formation of craters, disposition of sea floor and alike. In that respect if sea floor changes then the major problem resulting is the ability of cargo vessels to approach the ports in order to



deliver assistance. The second problem is the size of the port. In a small island like Cephalonia port's capabilities are limited depending on docking facilities and safe depth of sea bottom for big vessels (i.e. warships). And all these peculiarities (along with tens of smaller problems) need to be addressed fast and effectively from Civil Defense authorities either centrally or from near-by prefectures.

After the first days following the earthquake nakedness of state authorities is becoming apparent. Two cruisers docked in the island have been fully occupied by homeless – mainly gypsies/Roma and this result in poor hygiene on board with many cases of food poisoning. Air-conditioned containers on stock are currently used to host thousand of illegal immigrants (photo) mostly in Attica prefecture. Local hospital suffered major damages but is still operable. Roads are cracked and in certain communities destroyed by fallen rocks. Port is



unfriendly for docking. And much more. Of course the easy solution is (as always) to mobilize armed



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forces to do the job. Military assistance was provided (tents, sleeping bags, food packets etc) along with mobile medical assistance, field cooking facilities, mobile power generators etc. Navy SEALs will



explore the bottom of the sea port in order to identify safe passages for navy vessels bringing road restoration hardware; Air Force cargo planes will transfer heavy equipment, sheltering material etc. To make a long story short: the state was once more surprised and now governance is facing the anger of local community who complains of providing a 4mil euro reward for the escaped terrorist Xiros (mentioned above) but not providing enough money and means to people affected by this

natural phenomenon in a country with known seismic history. We cannot (yet) predict earthquakes but we can surely predict its consequences and plan accordingly. What if a tsunami has been generated by this or an even mightier earthquake (anticipated within the next decade)? I am sure such a scenario was never given a second thought since these kind of things are not happening in Greece – ever!



Floods represent another good case of public surprise. In Greece we use to construct houses in rumbled streams. As a consequence many times in the past (and in the future) many houses have (entirely or partially) destroyed from angry water storming properties. Since the beginning of time, people do know that water is mightier than rock but they continue (usually with state approval) to build in areas representing water escape routes. Then people usually complain that state's response was not

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adequate, that they are homeless, they demand compensations, they threaten to vote the opposite party etc. And life goes on until the next heavy rain leading to flooding both in big cities and smaller towns.



Greece – Argos town flooding



Czech Republic – Moldova River flooding

On the other hand, people residing in close proximity to rivers never take flooding seriously. Usually because flooding have never recorded into their territories. Or because climate change sounds like a remote threat for the decades to follow. But floods happen right here, right now! And “water” needs out-of-the-box inspired solutions. Sand sacks are not enough! And so is populace evacuation! What if we open new supporting rivers or connecting rivers with each other? Budget is surely your reflect reaction! Nonsense! We do have money for many evil problems; therefore money is not an issue! Humans are and lack of leaders is the biggest problem this planet is currently facing. Struggle for power and chess politics sound so ridiculous when comes to human lives and survival...



Peloponnese wildfires (2007)



Varnavas, Attica wildfires (2010)

A final example of public surprise is wildfires. Greece is prone to this phenomenon that in recent years went beyond nature. We grow up by believing that wildfires are caused by human negligence, thunders and criminal actions (burning forests to gain earth for future building purposes). Thinking that some of the biggest wildfires (i.e. those in 2007 in Peloponnese, 2009 and 2010 in Attica/Athens prefecture – personal experience since our permanent residence was stormed by the July 17, 2010 wildfire) might be a terrorism action (pyro-terrorism) is out of the question – at least for those in high places. But if you analyze data and consequences it will become obvious that wildfires share similar objectives with terrorism acts. Threat against life, property, state infrastructure, defense – well being in general! Not to mention malicious activities from neighboring countries in the concept of politics but also as means of wounding critical financial pylons such as tourism.

When you expect wildfires every summer then the element of surprise is gone but for a strange reason this anticipation is becoming a new surprise every year. Civil defense and fire service have been proven unable to conduct defensive operations that resemble real military equivalents. A Brig General from Fire Service was supervising firemen trying to save a house in flames instead of being on the top of the nearby hill assessing the flame wave burning/threatening a whole village. Forest Service is also a ghost service visible only when a citizen (me) is asking four years after the fire to cut a huge pine tree that suddenly “died” and at any given time might cause severe damages by falling onto our house. Then

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they deploy all their bureaucracy and inspections and paperwork for the obvious and logic. By we have never saw them during peace time (winter) to cut tree branches touching ground, remove meter-high biomass gathered in nearby forests or enforce local communities to cut the grass aside roads etc.

### **Operational/conflict surprise**

Why did the safest tank in the world not withstand the second Lebanon war (2006)? As a non tank expert, I copy from Israeli press and websites:

*"Four types of Merkava tanks were in action in Lebanon 2006, including Merkava Mk4, the Merkava Mk 2D (with its distinctive sloped turret), the standard Mk2 (mostly with reserve units), and Merkava Mk3Baz. Fifty Israel Defense Forces tanks were damaged during the 34 day war in Lebanon, 30 soldiers and officers from the corps were killed and more than 100 were injured, including two battalion commanders. These are the statistics from the recent conflict.*

*Was it possible to have decreased the number of casualties? Subsequent investigations exposing details of earlier preparations underscore this question.*

*A senior defense establishment official commented: "Some 350 to 400 tanks took part in the battles in Lebanon, and we can already posit that they stood against a few thousand antitank missiles, most of them with excellent penetration capacities." According to the official, "it is possible to see from this that Hizbullah operatives were familiar with the tanks, their characteristics, they knew when and where to shoot in order to inflict the most damage."*

*Conditions in the armored corps prior to the war were not the best: many soldiers dealt with day-to-day security issues outside of the tanks, instead of undergoing significant field training in the tanks, similar to what they underwent in Lebanon. Additionally, the corps did not receive top priority among senior defense establishment officials. Budget cuts took a heavy toll on armored units. According to the official, the armored vehicles were not used properly. "In the battles in Lebanon, the tanks did not move and shoot. They remained 'static'. Instead of taking advantages of the tank's many capabilities, they underscored the tank's weakness, leading to heavy damages," said another senior official, who stated that the capabilities of the IDF's newest tank – the Merkava-4 – were barely utilized in the war. "Our tanks are the most armored in the world, but there's no such thing as 100 percent protected. Only if you take advantage of their capabilities, can you ensure minimal damages," he explained.*

*The conditions for the armored corps were so harsh that the official referred to the tanks as "a person with one hand tied behind his back that turns his cheek to be slapped. Then people ask why he was hurt." Another depressing statistic: Twenty-two tanks sustained hits that penetrated their steal armor (in ten of the tanks, there were 23 fatalities; in the rest, severe damage was caused to the vehicle). Forty-four percents of the tanks hit by missiles had their armor penetrated. During the first Lebanon War, this happened to 47 percent of the tanks and in the Yom Kippur war, 60 percent.*

*In the last two days of the war, in the battles in Wadi Sluki and Marjayoun, 14 tanks were hit. The IDF decided that five of the tanks could not restore five of these tanks, two of which had been damaged by underbelly explosives (one of them a Merkava-4) and three of which had been demolished by antitank missiles.*

*In addition to cuts in the Armored Corps' procurement budget (down from NIS 1 billion to some NIS 750 million – about USD 170 million), many of the tank systems 'disappeared.' For example, the mortar shells field. The launching barrel remained, but no shells were purchased.*

*Finally, reserve soldiers called up to the war were astonished to discover that they are meant to enter Lebanon without a smoke shield in the tank. Shielding the area where the tank is stationed makes it possible to disguise it and prevent the enemy from firing on it. Due to the budgetary cuts, this option was prevented from the soldiers in the field. (...)*

From the above it is obvious that Hezbollah did its homework while Israelis were based solely on technical superiority. Although all battles in the area during the last five decades represent the epitomes of asymmetric confrontation it seems that only the weaker opponent benefits of lessons learned and continues to transform surprise into the ultimate weapon. It is also proof that no technology can bit human brain and its immense capabilities. Improvised explosive devices are excellent examples of such capabilities and currently represent the number one threat worldwide both in terrorism and conflict fields. Advanced nations try to counter current threats with technological advances but the overall success is surely in doubt. Lessons learned changed to "problems identified" and billions are spent in order to come with human brain improvisation when individuals, groups or social entities are cornered.

Take for example the Olympic Games. The "Games" part sounds like a joke – a bad joke! Olympic Security Games sound more appropriate. It is "us" against "them"! And in the middle of these

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two poles there is a bunch of high level athletes costing billions and a bunch of global supporting companies gaining billions and the global security industry selling its gadgets to secure athletes, sponsors and infrastructure for the price of billions as well.

A second example comes from the most modern battle field – Syria. And I am not referring to the chemical weapons threat or the politics accompanying this threat. Syrian battle field are full of improvisation – deadly in most of the cases. On the Internet there are many posting on the methods used by the rebels and terrorists against opposing Syrian Armed Forces.



The Hell Cannon



Machine gun robot

Below is a case study I recently laid my eyes on – I copy from a website post (Ancient U.S. Weapon Makes a Surprise Reappearance in Syria) written by Brendan McNally a defense writer and author endlessly bouncing between Texas and the Czech Republic:

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Watch enough YouTube videos of the fighting in Syria, and you'll start to notice it: a long-tubed gun, mounted on the back of either a jeep or large, fast pickup. Usually it's blasting bunkers, blockhouses, fortified positions, or places where snipers are hiding. It even goes after tanks. And



whenever it fires, the gun seems to kick up way more hell behind it than what it sends out the barrel's front end. It's the M40 106mm recoilless rifle, an American-made, Vietnam-vintage weapon that got dropped from the Army and Marine inventory back during the early 1970s. Until recently, the 106mm hadn't seen much action in the irregular wars that have swept the globe. Then M40s somehow came into the hands of rebels in Libya and Syria. Suddenly, the 106mm – light, cheap, easily transportable, simple to operate, and packing a

punch all out of proportion to its modest size — has emerged as a possible Great Asymmetric Weapon of the Day.

Although the U.S. military no longer officially uses the M40, they still keep some around. A few found their way to Afghanistan where they were put to use by certain Special Forces units. The Danish and Australian armies, which acquired them from the U.S. decades ago under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program, used them extensively during their ground operations there.

In Libya, the M40 was used primarily in urban warfare, killing tanks and fortified positions. How exactly it found its way into the hands of the rebels there is a bit of a mystery. The M40s showed up in Libya along with thousands of brand new Belgian FN rifles, apparently from Western arsenals. That lead many to suspect they were supplied by Western intelligence. The M40s currently being

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seen in Syria might be coming either from the same sources that supplied the Libyan rebels or even from the Libyans themselves.

There is also a strong possibility that these weapons might actually be of Iranian origin. Iran's state-owned weapons arsenal, the Defense Industry Organization, has been manufacturing what was originally a licensed-version of the M40. Now called the "Anti-Tank Gun 106," it is being offered on the open market, and are probably being supplied to the Syrian Army, which have since lost them to the rebels.



While the M40 makes a big comeback in the Middle East, dozens of other armies all over the world never stopped using it. The Danish and Australian armies have used the 106mm in Afghanistan with excellent results. It turns out that in many instances they have outperformed the expensive, high tech, anti-tank rockets like the TOW, the Javelin and others that were supposed to replace the M40 four decades ago.

While no one is suggesting the replacements aren't good weapons, all have their

shortcomings. Some, like the TOW, don't operate well in extreme environments. Others, once fired, sometimes require too many rotations before they arm; that limits their effectiveness in close-in situations. Probably the biggest problem is that whenever targets are inside mud-walled buildings (which, in places like Afghanistan, is much of the time), the explosion's force tends to get seriously dampened. Enter the M40: a home-grown weapon, already in stock, developed and manufactured at the Watervliet Arsenal, the U.S. Army's own gun factory, and at Benet Laboratories, which has quietly continued the weapon's advancement during the decades it's been out of use.

As weapons go, the M40 is almost amazingly crude. The first thing you notice about the back of the gun is that, unlike conventional cannon, the breech block has big openings. The rounds it fires look different too; the shell casings are also open, more like cages than canisters. But what makes it so different from conventional artillery is its way of dealing with recoil. Rather than try to contain it, as conventional guns do, recoilless rifles endeavor to balance it by offering the propellant gasses the easiest escape possible. That's why breech mechanism is vented and open, functioning like a rocket nozzle. It is also why recoilless rifles generate the massive and deadly back blast that can make them such a frightening weapon to be around.

Though the idea behind the recoilless rifle goes back five hundred years, it wasn't until the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century that the key technologies were developed to actually make recoilless rifles practical. The Germans built a 75mm recoilless rifle used by their airborne troops during the invasion of Crete that proved to be a decisive weapon in that campaign. The U.S. developed its own version of the 75mm gun, but it did not reach the battlefield until the last weeks of the European war.

The present-day M40 106mm was developed following the Korean War and used extensively during the Vietnam War. Since the North Vietnamese almost never used their tanks, the M40 found other tasks for the weapon besides hitting armor. Sometimes it got used against enemy bunkers, but mostly, following the introduction of a steel dart-laden "beehive" round, it became a fearsome anti-personnel weapon. But in Vietnam, the M40 is best remembered for its association with the Ontos, possibly the most downright eccentric armored vehicle ever concocted for the U.S. Military. It was a tiny tank, armed with six M40 recoilless rifles, which were mounted externally on its tiny turret. The Ontos fought in countless skirmishes, but where it became part of Marine legend was in the battle for Hue during the Tet Offensive. There it was involved in some of the fiercest urban fighting in the Corps history. According to one source, the only reason the Fifth Marine Regiment survived Hue was because of the Ontos and the 106mm recoilless rifle.



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And then the U.S. military moved on — or so it seemed. While the M40 was technically replaced, the Army's scientists, like Dark Ages monks, have continued preserving and even improving it until the day comes for its resurrection.

### **Personal surprise**

Case 1 – The moment a man was left paralyzed after being kicked through the window of a



double-decker London bus to the street below has been caught on camera (Feb 04, 2014).

The victim of the savage attack was travelling along the Seven Sisters Road, near Finsbury Park, north London, when he was kicked in the midriff with such force that he fell through a pane of glass.

The bus driver described how he looked out his near side mirror to "just see a body drop".

The victim broke his back in the fall, leaving him paralyzed. Doctors are uncertain whether he will ever be able to walk again.

There were more than 20,000 crimes reported on London's buses in 2013, according to official figures.

Case 2 – The "knockout game" is one of many names given to assaults in which, purportedly, one or more assailants attempt to knock out an unsuspecting victim, often with a single sucker punch, all for the amusement of the attackers and their accomplices. Other names given to assaults of this type include "knockout", "knockout king", "point 'em out, knock 'em out", "bomb", and "polar-bearing" or "polar-bear hunting" (allegedly called such when the victim is white). Serious injuries and even deaths have been attributed to the "knockout game". Some news sources report that there has been an escalation of such attacks in late 2013, and in some cases the attack has been charged as a hate crime, while some politicians have been seeking new targeted legislation specifically against it. However, other media analysts have cast doubt on this and have labeled the trend, although not the attacks themselves, a myth or an example of a panic, both with racist undertones. Liberal analysts claim that their conservative counterparts falsely promote a view that the "knockout game" trend is real and conservative analysts claim that the liberal media does not report on it due to the racial implications it may have.

The above two case studies point out that the enemy is out there! Stop looking at your shoes and investigate your environment whether in a bus, a street, a shopping mall or athletic court. See who is surrounding you; active your third eye in the back of your head; make some attack scenarios when moving in strange territories. This might save your life or minimize consequences. Practice on your own some defensive movements and actions; read a book or see a YouTube video. Store this info in your brain computer and they will come front at the right moment. Minimize surprise by preparation and training. We live in civilized jungles and even mosquitoes are dangerous!

### **Home invasion**

We use to say "*my house is my castle*" but this is not the case on daily basis worldwide. Robberies and rapes are daily news related to these castles. Citizens are not allowed to legally defend their castles and if they do they end up in court. Even in societies where gun are legally possessed the decision to shoot the intruder is not without consequences. But if we carefully examine the scenery

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there is always a small window left open, a door left unlocked or opening the door to a total stranger without verification of intention and identity. I recall the days when we left our houses and cars unlocked, slept under the stars during beautiful summer nights in the porches of our houses or slept with open windows during hot weather. And all that was only 40 years ago not centuries back. Intruders always take advantage of the element of surprise and its paralyzing effects on inhabitants. A few minutes of no response is all it takes to accomplish mission. Even if they are unarmed or carrying only a stick surprise magnifies their presence to the size of an elephant attacking an ant. If we manage to shift our own adrenalin levels to match those of intruder's then there is a good chance to win the battle and save souls and properties. But nothing can be done without training and repetition. So at least let us take all precautions day after day to minimize the odds and element of surprise.

### Home emergencies

How many times you murmured to yourself: *"I should have bought these damn batteries last time I went shopping?"* Usually when there is unexpected power blackout late in the afternoon. Although this a common human reaction did you fix the problem for the next blackout to happen? Did you get that



external power generator and gas stove you always wanted to buy but always thought that cost did not match the need since you live in an area close to the main city with no history of adverse weather

conditions reasoning the buy? And then one day there was so much snow and wind that electricity was gone for days and you were trapped in your own castle cold and upset. Of course when you finally bought both of them most probably you will not need them (again personal experience from 2004 heavy snowfall in Athens!) – but isn't it nice to know that you have them at place? Not to comment on first aid kits for emergencies! This why we call them emergencies and not programmed injuries. But if you have not always buckled you seat belts while driving then injuries can be programmed as well. What if you travel with underground tube, you are a security professional and you do not carry your own slim escape hood in your pocket?



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Extraordinary precaution you might say but consider this: the seven (or nine) lives of a cat are just a myth!

### Epilogue

All the above cases and personal thoughts lead to the same conclusion. Surprise is the ultimate weapon if you know how to use it against others. States use it; terrorists use it; criminals use it; even our work colleagues use it! Why not us? Learn from surprises and transform “problems identified” to “lessons learned”. Start thinking asymmetric ways to confront symmetric surprises. If we manage to eliminate predictable surprise from our personal, national and international environment we might achieve to re-route our societies into the right orbit. If we do not use preparedness as antidote to surprise then we abolish the right to complain about the unfortunate outcome of patient’s course.

As Sir John Harvey-Jones (mostly known from BBC’s “Troubleshooter” series) quoted: **“The nicest thing about not planning is that failure comes as a complete surprise, rather than being preceded by a period of worry and depression.”**

And Arkansas US Senator James William Fulbright additionally advised: **“We must dare to think about “unthinkable things” because when things become “unthinkable” thinking stops and action becomes mindless.”**



*Why I hate surprises!*

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