On Wednesday, President Obama will announce to the nation his new strategy to combat ISIS in Iraq and Syria. Let's hope that on the eve of the 13th anniversary of 9/11 he offers something a little more comprehensive than “no strategy,” “junior varsity,” and “fore”.

Have a good week,
Your AEI Foreign and Defense Policy Studies team

**Tweet of the Week**

Sadanand Dhume @dhume
Democracy 101: A few thousand angry protestors don't usually get to overturn the verdict of 14.9m voters who prefer the other guy. #Pakistan

**In the News**

**America and ISIS**

*This week, President Obama will outline plans for fighting ISIS, including a phased campaign against the terrorist group that may take three years to complete. In an interview airing on Sunday on NBC's “Meet the Press,” the president also announced that he does not intend to ask Congress for approval to act.*

This September 11 marks 13 years since the terrorist attacks in New York City; Washington, DC; and Pennsylvania. Although a daring special operations mission has since taken out Osama bin Laden, the world is a much more dangerous place now than it was then. At 10:00 AM on **Wednesday**, join us as former Vice President Richard B. Cheney discusses the current state and future of American foreign policy.

In response to Obama’s forthcoming speech outlining his administration’s plan to confront ISIS, House Armed Services Committee Chairman Buck McKeon will reveal the specifics of his own strategy to defeat the terrorist group in a conversation with Frederick W. Kagan on Thursday at 9:00 AM at AEI. RSVP [here](#).

On Wednesday morning, check the [AEIdeas blog](#), in which Congressman McKeon will detail what he will be listening for in President Obama’s speech.

Commentary from AEI's Foreign and Defense Policy team on what the president should say on Wednesday
will come later today! For more on how the US should be addressing the ISIS threat, Watch Danielle Pletka on CNN’s “Situation Room” and John R. Bolton on Fox News’s “On the Record.”

Thomas Donnelly examines Obama’s ruthlessly consistent “keep out” approach to the Middle East. Donnelly writes in The Weekly Standard, “It’s hard to imagine a set of circumstances or a parade of atrocities -- either qualitative, such as the beheadings of James Foley or Steven Sotloff, or quantitative, as in Syria -- that forces a fundamental change on a commander-in-chief whose mind is made up. Indeed, the White House has so carefully created and nurtured the weary-of-war trope -- both domestically and abroad -- that all Obama has to do is chant the magic words “boots on the ground” and all argument ceases.”

In 2009, the Obama administration believed that al Qaeda’s Yemeni affiliate, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), was focused on regional attacks and had no interest in attacking Americans’ homeland. Then, on Christmas Day 2009, AQAP sent a terrorist with an underwear bomb to blow up a Northwest Airlines flight over Detroit. Now, with the rise of ISIS, is history repeating itself? Marc Thiessen takes to the AEIdeas blog to list some of the Obama administration’s statements dismissing the ISIS threat. Also watch Thiessen on Fox News’s “The Kelly File,” where he reflects on the president’s latest attempt to throw the intelligence community under the bus for Obama’s own failure to act on ISIS.

Finally, check out “Throwback Thursday,” a new semi-regular AEIdeas blog series that seeks to address how AEI scholars’ work from previous years can offer wisdom on today’s events. Last week, the AEI Foreign and Defense Policy team reflected on Michael Rubin’s prescient warning in 2009 of the consequences of a premature withdrawal from Iraq and a lack of a coherent US strategy.

NATO, Ukraine, and Russia

Over the weekend, fighting in the rebel-held city of Donetsk and the key port city of Mariupol threatened a tenuous ceasefire between the pro-Russian separatists and Kiev. Later today, the European Union plans to press ahead with adopting a fourth round of sanctions on key Russian economic sectors, including finance, energy, and defense.

Should the United States pave the way for a Ukrainian path to NATO membership? John R. Bolton writes for The Weekly Standard, “This course remains a necessary precondition for any acceptable, long-term solution for Kiev and the West’s most important alliance. We cannot forget, if Obama ever understood, that NATO is America’s project. We created it, we sustain it, we lead it, and if we let it slip between our fingers, we have only ourselves to blame. Europe’s record in meeting its NATO obligations over the decades has been subpar, but the alliance is to protect our interests at least as much as theirs.”

No, the Russians are not 10-feet tall. However, with significant increases in their defense budget over the past few years, nor are they the same weak sister they were just a decade ago. Gary Schmitt argues, “NATO will have to do more than the baby steps that have been advanced at the Summit in Wales if it really wants to put an effective deterrence in place.”

ICYMI: Despite the gentleman’s agreement reached by NATO members in 2002 to maintain a floor for national defense budgets of at least 2 percent of GDP, of the major powers, only Britain currently tops that mark. So, what’s to be done? Read Schmitt’s take in the International New York Times. Also, don’t miss Schmitt’s latest AEI Top Three video on how to revitalize the NATO alliance.

Is Russian President Vladimir Putin’s “peace plan” a genuine attempt to end the conflict in Ukraine? Get Leon Aron’s point of view on the AEIdeas blog and Michael Rubin’s on Bloomberg TV’s “Street Smart.”
Iran

Iran missed a deadline to provide information on its past nuclear work, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) global nuclear watchdog reported on Friday. It was the first time Iran had missed a deadline since a November 2013 agreement between Iran and the IAEA to resolve all outstanding issues over Tehran's nuclear program.

Iran would love the US to come in and wipe ISIS from the face of earth. ISIS is bad for Iran, bad for Shi'ites, and bad for the Middle East. Although it is now saving its fire for others, it is probably ultimately bad for Iranian toady, Bashar al Assad, as well. However, Danielle Pletka warns, “That doesn't mean that the odious Tehran regime is somehow changing its stripes, ready to give up its nukes for American love, ready to stop trying to destroy Israel, ready to stop propping up the blood-stained Assad. What it means is they're not stupid. And anyone who thought they were is deluding himself.”

Iran is still at the negotiating table -- and still not cooperating. The prospect that Iran will fundamentally alter its positions in this next round is dim. Maseh Zarif argues why for VICE News.

ICYMI: Read Mehrdad Moarefian’s piece, “He’s just not that into us: The Supreme Leader’s resistance strategy expands,” on Iran Tracker.org.

Asia

Over the past few days, more than 250 people have been killed and thousands more stranded by flooding caused by intense monsoon-season rains across northern India and Pakistan.

ISIS has arguably made a bigger splash in India in three months than al Qaeda could manage in the 26 years since it was founded in Pakistan by Osama bin Laden. How well prepared is India for the radicalization threat that ISIS represents? Sadanand Dhume answers this question and more in his latest editorial for The Wall Street Journal Asia. WATCH: Dhume grades Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s first 100 days in office in his latest Top Three video.

Beijing is strangling Hong Kong’s democracy, despite its 1984 agreement with Great Britain. Michael Auslin argues in National Review Online, “China’s government remains as illiberal as it was when the United States helped midwife it into the international community. It may talk the talk, but when it walks, it reveals its true nature. The lessons of Hong Kong should cast long shadows in Asia and bring about a new, sober realism that its largest player will threaten liberal values whenever it senses the lack of opposition.”

For more on Beijing crushing Hong Kong’s democratic hopes, check out Gary Schmitt’s latest for the AEIdeas blog.

Latin America

Brazil has fallen into recession just weeks before its presidential election on October 5.

Signs of economic stagnation and simmering popular dissatisfaction in Brazil could not have come at a worse time for President Dilma Rousseff, who is seeking reelection in October. In his latest paper for AEI, Roger Noriega examines the lineup of candidates facing off against the incumbent ahead of next month’s presidential election.
Questions or comments about what you read? Contact Alex Della Rocchetta at adr@aei.org.

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