

# IISS: Ten of the best Survival articles from 2017

*A selection of our favourite essays this year.*

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By [Dana Allin](#) and [Matthew Harries](#)

As the year draws to a close, here is our pick of some of the most interesting *Survival* articles we published in 2017. They are offered free-to-view until the end of January 2018. We hope you enjoy them.

## [Olga Oliker, 'Putinism, Populism and the Defence of Liberal Democracy', vol. 59, no. 1, February–March 2017](#)

Olga Oliker, Senior Adviser and Director of the Russia and Eurasia programme at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), brings analytical rigour to two much-discussed topics – Vladimir Putin's rule in Russia, and the apparent upsurge of populism in Europe and America – and asks if the two are related. Wary of easy answers, she concludes that the surge of illiberalism in Western democracies finds its causes – and must find its solutions – at home.

## [Beatrice Fihn, 'The Logic of Banning Nuclear Weapons', vol. 59, no. 1, February–March 2017](#)

Some nine months after this article was published, the organisation its author directs – the International Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) – won the Nobel Peace Prize. Here, Beatrice Fihn lays out the logic behind ICAN's central purpose: a treaty prohibiting nuclear weapons, which opened for signature in September 2017.

## [Nelly Lahoud, 'Can Women Be Soldiers of the Islamic State?', vol. 59, no. 1, February–March 2017](#)

Nelly Lahoud, IISS Senior Fellow for Political Islamism, takes on an intriguing question: what to make of the approval shown by ISIS news outlets for a terrorist attack in Mombasa carried out by women. Lahoud judges that ISIS will remain wary of permitting militancy that involves mixing of the sexes, for fear of encouraging women to explore their *eros* – a prospect even more threatening than losing the war against the 'infidels'.

## [Alexey Arbatov, 'Understanding the US–Russia Nuclear Schism', vol. 59, no. 2, April–May 2017](#)

If you know anything about nuclear weapons, you know that the US and USSR spent the Cold War in a relationship of mutually assured destruction – right? Not necessarily. Alexey Arbatov (Director of the Center for International Security at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, and a former Russian parliamentarian and nuclear negotiator) shows that American and Russian

understandings of nuclear deterrence have always been different, and that this divergence lies at the heart of problems in today's nuclear order.

**[Hal Brands and Peter Feaver, 'Was the Rise of ISIS Inevitable?', vol. 59, no. 3, June–July 2017](#)**

Counterfactual history is a dangerous endeavour; getting it right requires fair-mindedness and a willingness to put yourself fully in the shoes of the actors of the day. Here, Hal Brands (Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies) and Peter Feaver (Professor of Political Science and Public Policy at Duke University, and a veteran of the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations) apply that approach to America's response to the rise of ISIS, concluding that the United States failed to make the best of an admittedly bad situation.

**[Jonathan Stevenson, 'Does Brexit Threaten Peace in Northern Ireland?', vol. 59, no. 3, June–July 2017](#)**

Jonathan Stevenson, IISS Senior Fellow for US Defence – and author of *We Wrecked the Place*, an account of the Troubles in Northern Ireland – opened this June essay with the observation that Brexit supporters had not given enough thought to the effect that an end to EU membership could have on the Northern Irish question. In December, as the Brexit negotiations hit serious turbulence on precisely that question, his analysis seemed prescient. Membership of the European Union was an important part of the success of the Good Friday Agreement, Stevenson shows – and losing it might even threaten the peace.

**[Daniel Deudney and G. John Ikenberry, 'Realism, Liberalism and the Iraq War', vol. 59, no. 4, June–July 2017](#)**

It is conventional wisdom that the 2003 invasion of Iraq was a disaster. Daniel Deudney (Associate Professor of Political Science at Johns Hopkins University) and John Ikenberry (Albert G. Milbank Professor of Politics and International Affairs at Princeton University) agree. But of the other conventional wisdoms that have formed since then, they argue, 'none is more salient – or more misleading – than the notion that the war was a product of liberalism'. They set out instead to demonstrate that the Iraq War was the product of a realist ideological impulse in high policymaking circles, quite different from the academic variant.

**[Erica Frantz and Andrea Kendall-Taylor, 'The Evolution of Autocracy: Why Authoritarianism is Becoming More Formidable', vol. 59, no. 5, August–September 2017](#)**

Autocracy is on the march. But these are not your parents' dictators. The new autocrat, according to data gathered by Erica Frantz (Assistant Professor at Michigan State University) and Andrea Kendall-Taylor (US Deputy National Intelligence Officer for Russia and Eurasia, and Adjunct Professor at Georgetown University), is increasingly one who gained power by democratic means, and then used it to subvert democratic institutions. This is a form of dictatorship, they warn, that is harder to dislodge.

**Jürgen Altmann and Frank Sauer, 'Autonomous Weapon Systems and Strategic Stability', vol. 59, no. 5, October–November 2017**

A great deal is currently being written on the technical, legal and ethical implications of autonomous weapons (or 'killer robots', in tabloid language). Less has been written so far on their effect on strategic stability, a gap that Jürgen Altmann (lecturer in experimental physics at the Technical University of Dortmund) and Frank Sauer (senior research fellow and lecturer in international relations at the Bundeswehr University in Munich) seek here to fill. They suggest that autonomous weapons systems are likely to proliferate, heightening crisis instability and risks of escalation.

**Jeffrey Lewis and Bruno Tertrais, 'The Thick Red Line: Implications of the 2013 Chemical-Weapons Crisis for Deterrence and Transatlantic Relations', vol. 59, no. 6, December–January 2017**

Barack Obama's decision not to attack Syria in 2013 has been assailed by critics as a blow to American credibility and cheered by supporters as an exercise of courageous restraint. This article contributes three things to the ongoing debate: a definitive account of France's preparations to join the US in carrying out cruise-missile attacks; intriguing detail on the Israeli origins of the deal struck to disarm Syria of its chemical weapons; and a call for better coordination of deterrence messaging between the 'P3' – Britain, France and the United States.