Labyrinth: Awakening Event Card Background

By Trevor Bender

Labyrinth: The Awakening 2010 - ? was published by GMT in 2016 as an expansion to Labyrinth: The War on Terror 2001 - ?.

Awakening provides 120 new event cards that represent the ongoing conflict in the Muslim world from 2010 through 2015, to include the Arab Spring and the period of Civil Wars the followed. This article provides historical context and some design considerations to the event cards contained in the expansion. The cards start with #121 as events #1-120 were previously described in the Labyrinth Playbook (some of which are referenced here for comparison). For those of you who already own the Awakening expansion, you may enjoy this article best by getting your cards out and placing them in numerical order to read-along with the article. Note that the cards are listed in the following order: US, Jihadist, Unassociated, then by Ops value, then alphabetical by title.

121. Advisors: The Obama Doctrine has shifted the burden of fighting from US to local forces. Training is being provided by Advisors who have become substitutes for the deployment of large numbers of US Combat Troops. The presence of Advisors on the ground in the host country has increased both the staying power and offensive capability of local forces. Similarly, it has increased the effectiveness of US Air Assets while the smaller footprint has significantly reduced US casualties. Advisors have had less success when the training is conducted in third party countries and the local forces are sent into the fray unsupported.

122. Backlash: Some of the success of ISIL and others has been mollified by the extreme violence they portray. The backlash experienced, whether through organized groups or simply in the hearts and minds of would-be followers, is real and limits the growth of extremist organizations. The event was also contained in Labyrinth as card #1, though as card #122 is non-playable in a Caliphate country.

123. Humanitarian Aid: Looking for an excuse to take action against the relentless ISIL advance in Northern Iraq, NATO countries dropped aid to refugees, then followed-up with Special Forces to "assess" the situation.

124. Pearl Roundabout: Though the number of demonstrators assembled never approached that of Egypt, the monument with its six spires holding the Pearl aloft was a rallying point to seek reforms in Bahrain. The monument was destroyed after Bloody Thursday (card #164).

125. Peshmerga: Some of the potential end-game scenarios stemming from the rise of ISIL include the de-facto creation of a Kurdish state. The Peshmerga fighters have proven competent, reliable and a steady ally to the US in its efforts to bring stability to the region.

126.-128. Reaper: With 15 times the payload carrying capacity and three times the cruising speed of the Predator, the Reaper is changing the game for persistent aerial counterinsurgency.
129.-130. Special Forces: Although UAVs have reduced the workload some, Special Forces are still engaged daily against Jihadist elements. The V-22 has made it possible for these forces to range further afield and to get to their targets much quicker and safer than traditional helicopters. This is a modification of cards #8-10 in Labyrinth, and represents the fact that through the US has pulled much of its conventional combat power out of the Middle East; it still retains significant tactical offensive capability in both Africa and Asia.

131. Arab Spring "Fallout": The path of the Arab Spring was spontaneous in nature and where it would take root next was difficult to predict.

132. Battle of Sirte: The capture of this town was the final struggle in the early phase of the Libyan Civil War and showed both the organization and capability of anti-regime forces.

133. Benghazi Falls: The Arab Spring in Libya went straight to Civil War without any kind of lengthy period of demonstrations. The west was largely unsure how to respond in the first few weeks and missed an opportunity to guide this country towards good governance.

134. Civil Resistance: One of the many techniques used by demonstrators to gain the attention of their governments, and duplicated elsewhere by the "Occupy Wall Street" movement and the more recent Hong Kong student lead Democracy movement. These occupations of key locations showed the strength of the movement and provided a backdrop for audio-visual based propaganda efforts.

135. Delta / SEALS: In addition to the Raid on Osama Bin Laden's complex, Army Delta Force and Navy SEALs have been very active in rescue efforts of western hostages in Yemen, Syria and elsewhere. It is assumed they would be on high-alert for any opportunity to nab WMD before they could be used.

136. Factional Infighting: All too often the jihadist fought themselves in struggles to gain supremacy in a variety of minor organizations, with a recent example being the Islamists States of Iraq and of Syria in open warfare against each other. The Sunni – Shia rift has also been particularly deadly since 2014.

137. FMS: The transfer of M1 Tanks and the selling of F-16 Fighters are just two examples of the US allowing its corporations to sell equipment to Middle Eastern allies through Foreign Military Sales (FMS). Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States have benefited immensely form these arms deals and associated training and logistics, as have many other allies in the region.

138. Intel Community: The cloak and dagger element continues in the second decade of this century, and Intel elements have thwarted a number of would-be plots (reference #18).

139. International Banking Regime: The US State Department has been quite successful in identifying terrorist organizations and seeking international cooperation to limit the sources and movement of their funds.

140. Maersk Alabama: The later end of the first decade saw Horn of Africa pirates raking in major profits. A combined Naval
Task Force using aerial drones put an end to that threat, with the main event being the Navy SEALs rescue of Captain Phillips as portrayed in the Tom Hanks movie of the same name.

141. Malala Yousafzai: This young Pakistani activist’s demands for equal access to education resulted in a failed assassination attempt and her becoming a global leader for female Muslim education rights. She became the youngest winner of the Nobel Peace Prize when she received it in 2014; many other awards and speaking engagements followed.

142. Militia: All too often desperate governments or popular forces were forced to rely on local tribes, sectarian militia or even warlords to provide a level of security. These militia became front line combatants in the Arab Spring Civil Wars.

143. Obama Doctrine: President Obama has been less engaged than his predecessors in foreign policy. Inclined more to influence around the edges than to take bold stands, his doctrine of “collaboration, multilateralism & strategic patience” has nevertheless proven consistent across his administration and netted slow progress without the commitment of large US ground forces.

144. Operation New Dawn: The draw-downs in both Iraq and Afghanistan, though similar to the policy of “Vietnamization” in that struggle, focused on making local units self-sufficient and arming them with surplus US arms and equipment. Although the training and equipment provided is top-notch, US advisors have been less successful in replacing tribal loyalties with feelings of national unity and pride.

145. Russian Aid: Timely Russian aid kept the Assad government hopeful during its darkest hour, and the later Russian intervention restored the initiative to the Alawite regime.

146. Sharia: The voices of women were raised during the Arab Spring and despite some violent set-backs, have opened the dialogue towards achieving greater freedoms for womankind (reference #28).

147. Strike Eagle: Israel carried out a similar operation in Osirak Iraq in the 1980s and could do it again unilaterally in Iran or elsewhere when a fixed target is known and the need for self-preservation requires action.

148. Tahrir Square: The press coverage of the events at “Liberation Square”, where up to 300,000 demonstrators had gathered over a three week period of time, is what awakened the west to the potential of the Arab Spring. This event is not removed because the demonstrations here and spawned elsewhere have happened multiple times.

149. UN Nation Building: The role of the UN, NATO and others in nation building has only increased with the draw-down of the US commitment to the Middle East (reference #30).

150. UNSCR 1973: The west ultimately intervened in three Civil Wars using conventional aerial forces. They cut their teeth in Libya and learned what could and could not be accomplished when supporting freedom forces on the ground. The lessons were perfected in Syria where B-1 Bombers flew 3% of the missions yet dropped 60% of the ordnance, effectively saving Kobani from the ISIL siege and
attributing their fighters in multiple other locations.

151. UNSCR 2118: The safe removal and destruction at sea of the entire known stockpile of Syrian chemical weapons in the midst of a civil war was one of the greatest international accomplishments of this time period.

152. Congress Acts: The confirmed death of US Aid Worker Kayla Mueller, ostensibly from a Jordanian bomb strike that was in retaliation for the burning alive by ISIL of their captured F-16 pilot, galvanized America, and could have caused Congress to grant greater authority for prosecuting ISIL to the level of a Regime Change activity as represented in the game.

153.-154. Facebook: Social Media has allowed grassroots leaders to organize and mobilize followers in ways never seen before, and has enabled the sharing of ideas efficiently across borders to similar minded peoples elsewhere.

155. Fracking: By far the most significant resource-driven economic event of this decade, Hydraulic Fracturing and Horizontal Drilling have set the US towards energy independence within the next 20 years, and is largely responsible for the plunge in global crude prices, and in the process of drying-up high oil profits as a source of revenue for Jihadists.

156. Gulf Union: Several Middle East and North African states are in the process of organizing a "NATO-like" security structure to allow for the sharing of troops for defensive purposes, to include taking the war to ISIL. These types of cooperative arrangements tend to increase stability of their component members over time, as NATO has shown with the inclusion of Turkey and other more recent states. The Saudi led coalition intervention in Yemen is a recent example of the power of this unity and shows that these wealthier Muslim states have watched closely and learned as the United States led coalitions into Iraq on two separate occasions.

157. Limited Deployment: The various options of response considered by the west to many of the uprisings and civil wars portrayed in this game ranged from Regime Change, to smaller uses of force, to sending training advisors. All of these options are available in the game expansion and this card represents the middle approach.

158. Mass Turnout: It's still up to the populace of the host country to decide if they want to accept the new regime that was placed into power through US Intervention (reference #40).

159. NATO: The sharing of the burden in Afghanistan has been a tremendous benefit to this country as the US winds down its commitment (reference #41). Continued incidences of major terrorist strikes across Europe may prompt the alliance to strike again as they did after 9/11. Will Syria (or portions of it) become the target of a future NATO intervention?

160. Operation Neptune Spear: Perhaps the most singular event in the Global War on Terror (GWOT) over the last five years was the successful raid on Osama Bin Ladin’s compound, and the removal of the fugitive yet figurative leader of global Jihadism. Tireless intelligence gathering made the event possible.

161. PRISM: Began in 2007 but not disclosed until Snowden made it public, according to open sources, PRISM is reportedly the number one source of raw intelligence used for NSA analytic reports, and accounts for 91% of the NSA’s Internet traffic monitoring.
162. SCAF: The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces in Egypt has stepped in on a number of occasions to restore order. Some would question if it has aided the people or its own position, but there is little doubt that its actions have prevented the country from sliding into a protracted Civil War.

163. Status Quo: The ongoing withdrawal from Afghanistan was not so much because the US had achieved a state of Good Governance in Kabul, but more because the Jihadists had shifted their energies to other fronts, largely Syria, creating a status quo situation in Afghanistan allowing the US to draw down its post Regime Change level of commitment.

164. Bloody Thursday: With the support of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) foreign troops, the Pearl Roundabout in Bahrain is cleared of protestors with tear gas and bird shot. The monument was later destroyed to prevent its future use as a rallying point.

165. Coup: There have been many attempts and many more opportunities for armed groups to seize the reins of power during and after the Arab Spring.

166. Ferguson: This card could also represent any number of domestic concerns (Deepwater Horizon, Hurricane Katrina, Occupy Wall Street, Immigration, etc.) or Civil Unrest (Baltimore Riots) that could distract the US from its leadership role of the Free World. In the case of Ferguson, Missouri, the police use of retired military equipment to respond to domestic demonstrations caused considerable controversy.

167. Houthi Rebels: In an apparent attempt to replace the Yemeni government with Zaidi Religious Law, the Houthis have been in active rebellion since 2004. Their shelling of the presidential palace on January 15, 2015, is what caused President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, who had previously replaced Ali Abdullah Saleh (reference #119 & #203) when he fled from office in 2011 during the Arab Spring, to seek refuge in Saudi Arabia and request international assistance to restore his government (card #156).

168. IEDs: The Obama Administration has learned that the best way to reduce US casualties in a conflict is to not have troops present in a massive conventional sense. An extraordinary high number of casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan were the result of simply moving soldiers and material on the ground in a logistical, non-combat fashion. Small Special Forces contingents in country can be supported by the host country or by the far less vulnerable air-lift method, yet can have a decisive effect on the situation within the host country (reference #52).

169. Islamic Maghreb: The spread of ISIL to Libya was a surprise to western intelligence and is indicative of the Islamic State’s ability to attract followers across a large swath of territory. Equally surprising was how quickly the movement has been able to siphon funds from Human Trafficking across Africa and exploit or infiltrate those trying to flee to Europe.

170. Theft of State: One of the failures of the Arab Spring has been the establishment of governments that truly represent the citizenry. In many cases, corrupt officials have caused significant portions of the population to desire a return to the more strict interpretation of Islamic Law as a way of removing western vices and materialism. Perhaps fittingly, Tunisia, the country where
the Arab Spring started, is an exception. Its government has had relative popular support and is the only Arab Spring country to have passed the bell-whether test of having had two successful democratic elections since its previous government was deposed.

171. Abu Ghraib Jail Break: The 22 July 2013 commando style operation to release these prisoners infused new hope into the Sunni population and the remnants of al-Qaida in Iraq, and cast doubt about the organizational control of the post-US departure regime.

172. Al-Shabaab: Responsible for terrorist activities in many Horn of Africa countries, including the Westgate shopping mall attack in Nairobi, Kenya in 2013; Al-Shabaab is hindering nation building by more stable elements in this quarter.

173. Arab Winter: By mid-2012 the Arab Spring had run its course, save in those countries that had transitioned to Civil War. It remains to be seen what event will spawn the next popular movement in the Arab world and when.

174. Boston Marathon: The first major incident of international terrorism within the borders of the US since 9/11. The US could have tipped to Hard in the aftermath if there had been a clearer link to al-Qaida.

175. Censorship: Some regimes have been successful in clamping down on the means of communicating dissent via the internet within their own borders, effectively silencing would-be popular movements.

176. Change of State: The death or change of heads of state or a vote of no confidence in Parliament will often lead to a resetting of the political agendas within a country and a reassessment of external relations.

177. Gaza Rockets: It appears that Israel and Gaza are locked into a rocket skirmish cycle of every 2-3 years, with the 2014 iteration being the most deadly, resulting in 20% of the population of the Gaza Strip being displaced.

178. Ghost Soldiers: A 2014 Iraqi audit found that 50,000 soldiers on their pay roll never showed up for work, leading to a hollow force in many units and easy victories early on for ISIL.

179. Korean Crises: This event represents any number of crises that could develop outside the Muslim World that would cause the US to need to react with a brigade or two for a period of time, thus decreasing forces and potentially resources (cards) that could be committed to the ongoing GWOT.

180. Mosul Central Bank: There is some dispute as to how much bullion was actually pulled from the banks in Mosul during ISIL's early advance into Iraq in June of 2014, but the propaganda impact as the news of the heist played out on the world stage was worth its weight in Gold! Equally significant was the news of regular Iraqi Army units abandoning their posts when faced with only minimal pressure from ISIL (card #178), which made the capture of the second largest metropolitan area in Iraq so easy.

181. NPT Safeguards Ignored: The Iranian government or a successor regime could restart its nuclear fuel purification process, which could result in a WMD falling into the hands of a Jihadist. Based on the accords signed it 2015 (card #232), this does not appear to be in the short term plans.
182. Paris Attacks: Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the organization credited with the attack on the Charlie Hebdo satirical press in Paris, is the remnants of Osama bin Ladin’s original network. The event card shows their desire to influence not only the governments of the Arabian Peninsula but also the Islamic populations of Europe. Subsequent to the creation of this card on 7 JAN 2015, it was later expanded to include the ISIL inspired 13 NOV 2015 attacks in Paris, the 2 DEC 2015 attack in San Bernardino, California, the 22 MAR 2016 attacks in Brussels as well as other locals that could have been targets. The randomness of the event depicts that Jihadist planners in the Middle East oft-times have little direct control on the type, size, timing or location of their inspired attacks in the West.

183. Pirates: The situation with the Red Sea / Gulf of Aden pirates was largely resolved through multinational efforts at the beginning of the Arab Spring (card #140), but could have been a lingering problem if not addressed in the manner in which it was.

184. Sequestration: Though not at the levels seen in the post-Vietnam era, US defense readiness has been reduced due to fiscal realities and budget pressure, and the ability to deploy large combat formations for lengthy periods of time in multiple simultaneous conflicts would be a greater challenge now than in the previous two decades.

185. al-Maliki: The inability to arrange a Status of Forces Agreement with Iraq’s Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki is what led to the rapid departure of US troops from Iraq by 18 DEC 2011, thus paving the way for the post-withdrawal insurgency. This event forces US Troops out of any one country (including Regime Change countries) even if the country has not achieved Good Governance.

186. Boko Haram: The Chibok schoolgirl kidnapping on the night of 14 APR 2014 put this movement on the map, though not in this game, since Nigeria was not represented geographically. A decision was made mid-way through Alpha testing to add Nigeria, and then Mali to the map as new countries via country mats, and create a few more West Africa related event cards. This unique nature of this event card allows for the sudden surge of Boko Haram in the game without the need for multiple event cards covering the movement.

187. Foreign Fighters: The ability to excite action amongst the economically deprived elements within the greater world of Islam has been a quest of the various Jihadist movements, with ISIL showing the greatest success in Syria (reference #81).

188. ISIL: The world was caught by surprise with how fast ISIL was able secure significant swaths of territory on both sides of the Syrian and Iraqi border. If this organization has staying power, it could redraw the map in the Middle East.

189. Jihadist Videos: The web has endured as a proven method of recruitment for Jihadists. Oftentimes these embryonic cells / cadre stay in their home country where later events might spur them to action (reference #82).

190. Martyrdom Operation: Perhaps one of the most powerful Jihadist event cards in the game. I dropped the quantity from the three cards contained in original Labyrinth to the one in this expansion, primarily because there are many more Awakening cards the provide plots as a mechanic of their event (reference #87-89).
191. **Muslim Brotherhood**: Largely misunderstood by the west as a solely Terrorist organization, the Society of the Muslim Brothers provides a number of social services in Egypt and elsewhere and spreads its views via political discourse. It came to power as the first democratically elected party in Egypt following the Tahrir Square protests (card #148). It was subsequently removed from power by the Egyptian Army (card #162).

192. **Quagmire**: Always a concern for the United States; the Obama Doctrine seems to be driven by a pledge that that this event will never occur on their watch.

193. **Regional al-Qaeda**: In the expansion this card represents remote organizations that might have affinity for other Jihadist groups beyond al-Qaeda, with ISIL being the most successful at spawning allegiant groups in other countries (reference #91).

194. **Snowden**: Perhaps the most damaging leaks to the top NATO intelligence agencies of all times. The prestige loss to the US and the potential rift in strategic partnerships across a variety of alliances is significant and still playing out.

195. **Taliban Resurgent**: The Thanksgiving 2014 "mini-Tet" offensive in Kabul caught nearly everyone by surprise. Whether it will prove to be the dying gasp of the Taliban or a new phase in the Afghanistan insurgency remains to be determined.

196. **Training Camps**: Despite repeated efforts by the US to destroy them through TLAM or drone strikes, Jihadists have been successful in establishing training camps in under-governed areas where the US is less air-active, and in sending the resulting cells out to fight in civil wars or to sleep in non-Muslim countries until activated.

197. **Unconfirmed**: Claims of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi’s death in a drone strike during the early rise of ISIS ultimately proved false. Due to the secretive nature of jihadist networks, similar claims of other leader’s demise have sometimes taken months to confirm. This card also represents a capable Jihadist leader rising from the ranks to fill the leadership void caused by the loss of the predecessor.

198. **US Atrocities**: From the accidental burning of the Quran at Bagram Air Force base, to the killing of 14 villagers by an errant soldier, to the unintended targeting and death of 24 Pakistani Border Guards, the operations of war have unintended consequences that are frequently portrayed by the media in a controversial light.

199. **US Consulate Attacked**: Purportedly the Benghazi Consulate attack was in reaction to a controversial YouTube trailer and subsequent protests that left at least 50 people dead across the Muslim world. The failure to improve the consulate’s security became an issue in Presidential politics and served as an enduring distraction to the US Government.

200. **Critical Middle**: Perhaps the best way to remove the draw towards Jihadism is to raise the standard of living across the spectrum of Muslim countries. The middle classes of these nations will ultimately determine their long-term political trajectory.

201. **Cross Border Support**: Several regimes or insurgent organizations represented in the game reached out to soldiers of fortune to aide their cause. These mercenaries differed from foreign fighters in that there where better trained, though not necessarily ideologically motivated. Additionally, countries such as Chad
and Cameroon supplied troops to fight Jihadists insurgents in neighboring countries, and Jihadists themselves regularly free-range across borders to achieve their objectives.

202. Cyber Warfare: Undoubtedly any future expansions to this series will have a lot more documented events on this theme! The card is designed to show in game board effects what could be achieved through clandestine cyber warfare.

203. Day of Rage: The demonstrations in Yemen were meet with violence, but were effective and resulted in the replacement of the government within 2 months; though a Jihadist movement lingered and flared up into Civil War in 2015 (Card #167).

204. Ebola Scare: The 2014 Ebola outbreak grabbed the headlines for several months and diverted resources and national command authority attention away from GWOT when ISIL was center stage at the same time. The US led response to this world health crisis was historic and worthy of praise.

205. Erdoğan Effect: President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has a tough challenge with the largest Civil War of this century raging on his borders, NATO commitments to fulfill, a large progressive Muslim population, and Kurdish separatists in the East. His attempts to balance these demands could lead Turkey to take a variety of different courses of action.

206. Friday of Anger: The Muslim Holy Day provided an easy, recurring opportunity to gather supporters amongst those who had gathered to worship.

207. JV / Copycat: A number of home-grown cells with no direct ties to or marching orders from Jihadist movements overseas have planned and/or carried out attacks on US soil, with the attempted attack in Garland Texas and the raid in San Bernardino California being examples. These were in part inspired by recent previous attacks or Jihadist websites on the so called Darkweb, and by universal calls for action from Jihadist videos. The result has been a tightening of security on the home front to include placing all US military bases at Threat Condition Bravo; the first time this has occurred since 9/11.

208. Kinder – Gentler: Although it has not always played out well at home, the Obama administration has been much more restrictive in the use of troops on the ground, and for the most part this change in approach has played out well in the hearts and minds of the people and governments in the Middle East.

209. Quds Force: This Iranian Revolutionary Guard elite force has been very active in Iraq, and lately in Syria in opposing ISIL. In addition to typical commando style operations, presumably it has carried out clandestine airstrikes as well.

210. Sectarian Violence: All too frequently progress made in the Middle East is thwarted by a jealous ally or a neutral party that turns adversary.

211.-213. Smartphones: The preponderance of cell phones across the globe means that nearly any public event will be captured on video and can be spun on the web to suit political agendas the very same day. Marrying up this technology with Social Media (cards #153-154) provides an ever stronger level of communication and focused organization.
214. 3 Cups of Tea: Non-Government Organizations (NGO’s) have built hundreds of schools to help increase education in poor areas in the Middle East. Education of Girls has been especially promoted under the belief that educated girls tend to remain in the community and will pass their enhanced knowledge on while raising the next generation. This has been the message of Malala Yousafzai (card #141) and many aid organizations, and has been resisted by the most extreme Sharia proponents.

215. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi: The most significant development in the Jihadist movement during the time period covered by this expansion was the creation of ISIL and its seemingly unstoppable march on the battlefield in the summer of 2014. It remains to be seen if al-Baghdadi and the Caliphate he declared will become the de facto leader of the global jihadist movement or if the organization and the extreme violence it dishes out will ultimately be ignored by mainstream Muslims.

216. Abu Sayyaf (ISIL): Also known by the names Abu Muhammad al Iraqi and Abd al Ghani, was the funding mastermind behind ISIL finances. He died in a firefight when US Delta forces tried to capture him alive in an otherwise successful raid on 15 May 2015, which also netted "reams" of intelligence and captured his wife, who may have been a leader in ISIL sponsored Human Trafficking.

217. Agitators: A little nudge could have sent many of the Arab Spring countries into bloody civil war. From a game design perspective, this card allows players to retrieve Civil War & Regime Change causing events from the discard pile thus allowing greater play combinations when playing the shorter one-deck scenarios.

218. al-Nusra Front: The third warring faction in Syria. Has largely eclipsed the Free Syrian Army and appears to focus either on the Alawites or on ISIL depending on who seems to be gaining the upper hand.

219. Ayman al-Zawahiri: Egyptian Ayman al-Zawahiri has inherited from Osama bin Ladin a fractured Al-Qaeda network. Continuously on the run, he has not been able to lead the organization back to its original purposes and has lost many lieutenants to US drone strikes and the loss of allegiance of many followers to other organizations, in particular ISIL.

220. Daraa: The arrest of 15 children protestors in Daraa is what really inflamed the Arab Spring movement against the Ba’athist regime in Syria, quickly leading to Civil War (card #234).

221. Fly Paper: The debate continues on if the US operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have actually made the world safer or not. It does appear that conflicts such as these and the Civil War in Syria have attracted a number of international Jihadists, thus congregating many would-be "bad actors" in one location, where many find any early demise on the battlefield and are thus unable to hatch plots in other more vulnerable areas of the world.

222. Hagel: Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel, a Republican, tried to nudge the Obama Administration towards a more proactive response towards ISIL, and sometimes got out ahead of the President on policy, leading to an early end to his career.

223. Iranian Elections: It is ironic that in many ways the first seeds of the Arab Spring were planted in the protests that followed the June 2009 presidential election in Iran. It was perceived by some that If there can be
demonstrations against the government in Iran...there can be demonstrations anywhere; with perhaps the exception of North Korea!

224. Je Suis Charlie: The failure of US President Obama to attend the marches in support of the January 2015 Paris attack victims represented a missed opportunity for the US to show solidarity in the fight against extremism, and is in many ways indicative of the other missed opportunities that the US has failed to act on over the last five years in the GWOT.

225. Jihadi John: The gruesome YouTube beheadings of James Foley and other westerners has polarized the world in its views towards the Islamic State. Thousands of others have been executed in equally terrible ways without a camera present.

226. Operation Serval: French Legionnaires intervened in Mali to support Ex-Colonial troops in their ultimately successful struggle against local Jihadists.

227.-228. Popular Support: Using the internet and mobile phones to organize support or opposition, embryonic movements have influenced Middle Eastern politics to a level never before seen by motivating local peoples in mass.

229. Prisoner Exchange: The Israeli’s routinely swap prisoners with Jihadist organizations every couple of years, and even a long held US prisoner from Afghanistan was recently released. Sometimes the information learned is useful; sometimes it is not.

230. Sellout: On occasion, resistance groups can be silenced for a time through the payment of bribes, though this pattern of dealing with the opposition invariably leads to longstanding corruption and weaker governance.

231. Siege of "Kobanigrad": Turkey allowed Kurdish Fighters through it borders to reinforce the beleaguered city of Kobani, Syria. The ensuing battles turned the city into piles of rubble, thus the defenders adopted the WWII sounding ending in its name in reference to the Soviet city on the Volga that met a similar fate, yet in the process consumed its attackers.

232. Trade Embargo: One of the US Foreign Policy successes of this period was its orchestration of a Trade Embargo against Iran which was based on placing restrictions on those banks or other major institutions and businesses if they engaged in commerce with Iran until that government committed to forgoing Weapons Grade enrichment. The voluntary compliance rate among large companies was high, and the impact on the Iranian economy significant. Although the burden was largely borne by the Iranian people, the Embargo did bring the Iranian government to the negotiations table on the NPT matter (card #181) and has opened the way for dialogue between the US and Iran on other matters.

233. UN Ceasefire: The United Nations have attempted to broker cease fires in a number of the conflicts that have their genesis in the Arab Spring, with limited success in Syria in 2016. The objective in these efforts is for a cease fire to lead to a peace settlement with power sharing recognized over time.

234. Free Syrian Army: The FSA transitioned a political reform movement into full scale Civil War in the summer of 2011. As a comparison to its size and scope, more people have died in the Syrian Civil War than all of the modern Arab Israeli conflicts combined.

235. Qadhafi: The flight, death or capture of a dictator will often bring an end to a civil war,
through the type of government that will follow may be in question.

**236. Oil Price Spike:** Fracking (Card #155) and a desire by Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States to keep production up have largely stabilized global energy supplies, though there is always the potential for a spike should developing nations demand more of the product to fuel their growth (reference #117-118).

**237. Osama bin Laden:** Though less active while in hiding at his Abbattabad compound, Osama bin Laden could still claim credit for being the catalyst for the Jihadist counter-Awakening to the Arab Spring, and was still public enemy #1 back in the USA. His killing was a propaganda windfall for the Obama administration.

**238. Revolution:** The conditions existed for other Arab Spring countries to fall into civil war.

**239. Truce:** The level of violence both during the Arab Spring and in the resulting Civil Wars was at times so intense that the populace or governing officials would pause activity either officially or unofficially to allow for humanitarian aid to be administered and/or for talks to occur. These breaks have occurred at various times in Libya, Syria and Yemen, though have not yet lasted long enough to build upon a foundation of peace (card #233).

**240. US Election:** The US has only had one President during the period covered by this expansion, but there remained the possibility that a different path could have been followed half way through.

**Summary**

The Arab Spring was an unprecedented period of time for the peoples of the countries impacted. Never before had the citizens of these countries raised their voices to this level, demanding to be heard on both the national and world stage. Changes in government did come about, and some are still in process, but in many ways the participants will look back on this period as a lost opportunity, as other forces came in and steered many of the movements in contradictory directions. Perhaps the Arab Spring will spawn a follow-on phase in the political evolutionary process, as truly nothing is a waste in history; just as in card driven games, in history, all events lead to something else!