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Article 1.

The National Interest

# **The Tragic Decline of American Foreign Policy**

Ian Bremmer

April 16, 2014 -- It's remarkable that the US economy looks to be picking up steam even as rising stars like China, India, Turkey, and Brazil wrestle with slowing growth and the risk of unrest. Improving US fundamentals, a steadily recovering jobs market, and revolution in energy production remind us that Americans aren't waiting on Washington to kickstart growth. Yet, even as America strengthens at home, its influence abroad continues to wane. The American public doesn't seem to mind. A Pew Research poll conducted in December 2013 found that, for the first time in the fifty years Pew has asked this question, a majority of US respondents said the US "should mind its own business internationally and let other countries get along the best they can on their own." Just 38 percent disagreed. That's a double-digit shift from the historical norm. A full 80 percent agree that the United States should "not think so much in international terms but concentrate more on our own national problems." In a democracy, no president can sustain a costly and ambitious foreign policy without public support. In America today, that support just isn't there. US influence abroad is also diminished by a substantial shift in recent years in the global balance of power. China, Russia, India, Brazil, Turkey, the Gulf Arab states and others don't have the muscle to change the global status quo on their own,

but as Russia's intervention in Ukraine reminds us, they remain the most powerful actors in their immediate neighborhoods and have more than enough economic and diplomatic leverage to obstruct US plans. Aware that Obama is focused on domestic goals and that a war-weary US public will not support costs and risks that don't directly threaten US national security, it doesn't take much for outsiders to discourage US intervention in Syria, Crimea or the East China Sea. The energy revolution plays a role, as well. Thanks to new technologies and drilling techniques, the US Energy Information Agency forecasts that by the end of this decade half the crude oil America consumes will be produced at home. More than 80 percent will come from the Western hemisphere. With that in mind, it's tougher for any US president to explain why Washington should be more deeply involved in the Middle East's problems. Unfortunately, the US government has undermined its own ability to persuade allies to help with the international heavy lifting. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, Guantanamo, and drone strikes inside other countries have made it harder for foreign leaders to persuade voters they should still support US policy. The US National Security Agency has made matters worse. It's bad enough that NSA espionage undermines Obama's ability to criticize autocrats for spying on their citizens. It's much worse when the US president must explain to the presidents of Germany and Brazil why Americans are reading their email or listening to their phone calls. Washington's political food-fights undermine US foreign policy, as well. If there is any issue on which today's Republicans and Democrats should agree, it's trade. Republicans should be on board because they are traditional champions of international commerce. Democrats

should support Obama's trade agenda because party control of the White House gives Democrats the most influence in writing the rules of any new agreement. Add the fact that the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), an agreement that would open markets on both sides of the Pacific as part of one of the largest trade deals in history, is also a core component of US security policy. To finalize the agreement, the president needs "trade promotion authority," a power that reassures US negotiating partners by empowering the president to submit a final deal to Congress for a simple up or down vote. Without this power, individual lawmakers can demand revisions that change the rules that other governments have already accepted—delaying, and perhaps killing, the deal. With midterm elections looming in November, however, even trade-friendly Republicans who support TPP will take a pass on granting Barack Obama any new form of "authority," and Democrats are playing to a base that believes trade is a job-killer. As a result, Obama won't push for this power until after November. US foreign-policy reticence leaves outsiders to wonder which of its traditional commitments Washington will continue to accept. America's closest allies have little cause for concern. Some in Israel want Obama to follow through on threats to pummel Bashar al Assad's government in Syria and prefer airstrikes on Iran to a deal over its nuclear program. But Israel need not worry that this or any US president will renounce Washington's commitment to Israel's security. Nor should Japan fear that the US will begin to favor better relations with Beijing over ties with Tokyo. And even if Britain decides one day to leave the European Union, the historical and cultural ties that bind Britain and America will remain strong. "Second-tier" allies—countries like Saudi Arabia, Turkey and

Germany—have much more cause for concern. The Saudis are right to wonder what better US relations with Iran will mean for their interests in the Middle East—and how Washington would respond if a democratic uprising in that country threatened the Saud family’s political control. Sharp US criticism of Turkish prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his increasingly authoritarian domestic political agenda leaves another key regional ally unsure of US backing. Germany’s Chancellor Merkel, already understandably annoyed by US spying, will not always see to eye with Washington on Russia and how best to limit the damage it inflicts on Ukraine. But the region where concern is greatest is East and Southeast Asia, where some of China’s nervous neighbors want a reliable American presence. Countries like Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and others hope to deepen their commercial relations with China without becoming dependent on its good will. To do this, they want to broaden and deepen security relations with the United States, which has promised a “pivot” to Asia to help maintain the region’s stable balance of power. However reluctant US policymakers might be to accept new responsibilities in the Middle East or to tangle with Russia over Ukraine, it is in Asia where Washington must deeply engage. That’s because rising powerhouse China, established power Japan, dynamic emerging market South Korea, and potential star Indonesia make this region more important than any other for the strength and resilience of the global economy over the next generation. It’s also because there is no Asian Union or other regional security forum that is capable of managing competition among these states and the frictions it already generates. No region is more likely to send the global economy—and, therefore, the US economy—off the rails than

this one. Add the North Korean wildcard, and the need for a stabilizing outside power is only more obvious. In late April, Obama will pay an overdue visit to Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and Malaysia. The US president and his hosts will have much to discuss. As always, however, it is not what the president says, but what he does, that counts. If only in Asia, that means offering a predictable partnership that reinforces confidence in American staying power—for friends and foes alike.

*Ian Bremmer is the president of the Eurasia Group, global research professor at New York University and a contributing editor at The National Interest.*

[Article 2.](#)

The National Interest

## **Surprise Attack on Iran: Can Israel Do It?**

Thomas Saether

April 16, 2014 -- According to a [report](#) in March by the Israeli daily Haaretz, Israel continues to prepare for a strike on Iran's nuclear facilities. Quoting anonymous members of the Knesset who were present during hearings on the military budget, officials in the Israel Defense Force (IDF) have allegedly received instructions to continue preparing for a strike and a special budget has been allocating for that purpose. However, conducting a military operation against Iran's key nuclear facilities would be a challenging task for the Israeli military. The distance from Israel to the Iranian nuclear sites is such that

any strike using the air force would be challenging on its fuel capacity. Allocating tanker planes to the mission could alleviate part of this concern. Nonetheless, Israeli jets can't spend too much time in Iranian airspace before the mission itself is in jeopardy. Engaging Iran's air force in dogfights must be avoided. Therefore, surprise will be a necessary element in a successful Israeli mission.

A successful surprise attack is not easy to achieve. It rests on the ability to deceive the adversary. In general, a deception strategy might involve several elements, related to the timing of the operation, the military platforms involved, the targets, the routes chosen to the targets, the munitions used, and so on. There are several potential obstacles. First, preparations for conducting a military operation must be made without revealing the main elements of the surprise. Second, the political decision must be made covertly, that is, without revealing the timing of the operation. Could Israel pull it off?

### **Israel's History of Surprise**

Israel has in the past utilized both of these elements in order to succeed with conducting military operations. Both the Entebbe operation in 1976 and the attack on the Iraqi reactor in 1981 came as complete surprises to the targets due to their lack of knowledge about Israel's military capabilities and understanding of its decision-making process and willingness to accept risk.

An example of the latter factor as an element of surprise was the 1967 attack on Egyptian airfields. At the time, Israel possessed about two hundred operational jets. 188 were used against the airfields. The costs of this strategy were obvious:

only twelve planes were left to defend Israel's territory. Egypt failed to understand the Israeli willingness to accept risk, which in part led to the mission's success.

Another example of deception came before the 1982 invasion of south Lebanon. Prior to the formal Israeli annexation of the Golan Heights in late 1981, Israel amassed military forces in the north to deter a Syrian response. Instead of scaling back after tension had subsided, Israel kept the forces there in order to utilize them in the forthcoming Lebanese campaign. Getting used to the increased Israeli military presence in the north, the PLO and Syria failed to consider the possibility that these might be stationed there for a forthcoming invasion. Israel was itself the victim of this strategy in 1973. Egypt conducted several large training drills prior to its surprise crossing of the Suez Canal. This made it hard for the Israelis to assess whether the Egyptian actions were part of another drill or preparation for an actual attack. The Israeli failure to acknowledge this potential Egyptian deception strategy is also an example of how a state fails in incorporating the lessons of the past. Just five years earlier the Russian army had invaded Czechoslovakia in a move that began as a training exercise and continued as a surprise attack. The head of Israeli military intelligence at the time, Aaron Yariv, issued a directive that every major training exercise by an adversary was to be regarded as a potential attack, but this directive was forgotten by the Israeli military and political leadership after Yariv quit his position in 1972.

There was an additional element to the 1973 Egyptian deception strategy. In 1968, Egyptian generals concluded that they did not have the capabilities to challenge the Israeli military. Still, the decision was to train as if it had the military

capability to go through with the attack. After focusing all of its effort on covertly acquiring the necessary equipment and manpower—thereby making previous exercises more relevant—its capabilities came as a surprise to the Israelis who still assessed that the Egyptian military was in no shape to undertake the crossing. Israel learned the lesson of that experience and then utilized it in the 1981 attack on the Iraqi reactor. After having trained for months on fuel-saving maneuvers, and after just having absorbed their new U.S.-supplied F-16 fighters, the Israeli air force had acquired the necessary capabilities for the mission. It was Iraq's turn to fail in accurately updating its assessment of Israel's capabilities.

### **Surprise and Decision-Making**

An element of deception must also be included in the decision-making process. The meeting of the Syrian-Egyptian Armed Forces Supreme Council in August 1973 serves as a precedent. In order to keep the meeting secret, all participants resorted to civilian means of transport and false passports. An important topic was on the agenda at that meeting—a decision on the two options for D-Day (only to be awaiting the final approval of presidents Sadat and Assad). It was deemed crucial that the Israelis did not learn of the meeting.

In Israel, it is the government as a whole—not the prime minister—that is the commander-in-chief of the military. The green light for a decision to attack Iran's nuclear sites must thus be obtained from the cabinet ministers. Upholding secrecy after a vote in the full ministerial cabinet is a challenge. The cabinet meets every Sunday morning. However, according to the procedure requirements, the agenda items must be finalized by the preceding Wednesday. Listing the item “military attack

against Iran” is not an option since the time frame from Wednesday to Sunday is a long period to keep a secret. There are three options: assure an unscheduled meeting (which may well ring some alarms), vote in advance (that is, further outsource the decision on timing to a smaller forum, but this would still risk the leak of valuable information), or announce a general or fake topic. The Begin government chose the second option prior to the attack on the Iraqi reactor in 1981. Then the ministerial cabinet approved the operation in principle and allowed the final decision to be made in the smaller security cabinet (consisting of key ministers). Former premier Ehud Olmert preferred a combination of the first and third option. The press release announcing an unscheduled cabinet meeting the day before the attack on the Syrian reactor in September 2007 said that the security cabinet was to convene to discuss “Israel's response to Kassem rocket fire from the Gaza Strip”. Another example of Olmert's masking of the decision-making process leading up to the attack on the reactor was related to a meeting with the U.S. administration in June 2007. The official reason given for the meeting between Olmert and George W. Bush on June 19 was Iran's nuclear program and the peace process. However, in that meeting Olmert urged the U.S. to attack the reactor.

### **The Defensive Preparations Dilemma**

Since the Iranians are expecting an operation, it would be impossible for Israel to achieve strategic surprise like they did with the attack on the Iraqi reactor in 1981. However, operational and tactical surprise may be achieved with regards to how the operation will be conducted and the specific date and time of the operation. One of the major problems will be

how to achieve operational surprise when preparations will need to be undertaken to counter the threat of missiles from Iran, Hezbollah, and Palestinian groups in Gaza. One solution to this defensive preparations dilemma is to conduct exercises and distribute personal protective gear continuously for a long time, so as to make it impossible for Iran to determine when an attack will be launched. This has indeed been done. In recent years, Israel has conducted numerous large home-front exercises (in part also as a result of the Syrian civil war and potential fallout). It has also distributed gas masks to a large portion of the population (although it has recently been scaled back).

Mobilization of the reserves is a complex issue in Israel that also touches on the decision-making process. The mobilization would risk being delayed if it takes place under a massive missile attack from Iran and Hezbollah. A recent report from Israel's state comptroller questioned the reserves' ability to mobilize under fire. As such, the order needs to be given prior to the initial Israeli attack. However, mobilizing the reserves would be a signal to Iran that an attack is impending. It is possible that the Israeli leadership's preferences for operational secrecy induce it to delay the mobilization until the day of the attack (to the risk of higher casualty numbers). According to Israeli law, mobilization of the reserves requires the approval of the Knesset Committee on Defense. Time could be saved with obtaining the committee's approval in the months preceding the attack. Begin obtained an approval for the operation against the Iraqi reactor in the full ministerial cabinet in October 1980, which then outsourced the timing decision to the security cabinet. To protect secrecy after a series of domestic leaks, the security cabinet later decided to leave the

decision on the date of the operation to Begin, Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir, and Chief of Staff Rafael Eitan. A similar procedure could be implemented with regards to the decision to mobilize the reserves.

### **Offensive Preparations**

Complex military operations require lengthy preparations that cannot be concealed. However, although an adversary might know about the intention to attack, the timing and conduct of the operation are more difficult to dissect. In recent years, the Israeli military has conducted numerous offensive exercises to prepare for a potential green light from the political leadership. Two recent exercises demonstrating the capabilities of the Israeli air force took place in December 2013 and January 2014. Such exercises do not only prepare the pilots for a potential mission, it may also serve as part of a deception strategy. For several years prior to the Six Day War in 1967, Israeli aircraft could routinely be seen in the mornings hovering over the Mediterranean. As the Egyptians became familiar with the flight pattern, its air force did not pay much attention when Israeli planes followed the same route on the morning of June 5, 1967. The Israelis then launched a surprise attack. The trick used was to manipulate the adversary's perceptions and expectations. Although Iran is not neighboring Israel and does not have significant satellite surveillance assets, it does have some intelligence capabilities that it uses to monitor Israel. For example, an Iranian radar is stationed in Syria. Iran is also known to be studying Israel's military conduct in past campaigns. The head of the Iranian Civil Defense Organization Gholam Reza Jalali recently stated that it had sent a team to Lebanon after the 2006 war to study the

effect of Israeli munitions on destroyed buildings. Apparently, Iran is also monitoring Israeli intentions and decision making. On January 26, 2013—four days prior to an Israeli attack on a convoy carrying missiles from Syria to Hezbollah in Lebanon—Supreme Leader Khamenei's close advisor Ali Akbar Velayati stated that Iran would perceive an attack on Syria as an attack on Iran itself. Velayati might have known about the transport in advance and attempted to increase its chance of reaching its destination by creating a deterrent against an Israeli attack. This suggests that the Iranian regime have some understanding of Israeli intentions and redlines. Two Israeli signals are typical of an impending attack: deployment of Iron Dome batteries in areas of likely fallout and unscheduled meetings in the security cabinet. However, since the Israelis know there are under surveillance, they can also use it for deception. As long as the Syrian civil war continues, it would be difficult for Iran to know whether Israeli preparations are intended for the Syrian or Iranian arena. If Iran gets used to the Israeli behavioral pattern, then a surprise attack would be easier to achieve.

### **Operational Surprise**

The need for surprise requires that Israel is the one choosing the date of the operation. This may sound as an unnecessary consideration since by definition a preemptive attack is triggered by a decision in the leadership of the attacking country. However, with regards to the timing of an attack against Iran's nuclear facilities, there are some limits that constrain the time frame available to an attacker. Iran's nuclear program offers two potential routes to a nuclear weapon—enrichment of uranium in centrifuge facilities or the

production of plutonium in a yet-to-be-operational heavy-water reactor. Both of these routes must be considered when deciding on the date of an attack. The problem with linking the attack date to developments of the program is that Iran would have some control over the time frame available for an attack, thereby decreasing Israel's ability to achieve surprise. Since an operational nuclear reactor is a politically difficult target and as such is off limits, the date when the Arak reactor will go "hot" serves as the outer boundary of the available time frame. Iran would have an incentive to get it operational in order to reduce the utility of an Israeli operation against the other facilities (it makes less sense to attack the enrichment facilities when Iran could subsequently move to produce plutonium using the surviving reactor). On the other hand, its operational status constitute an Israeli redline, so Israel will have a strong incentive to launch an attack before it goes "hot." From the Iranian perspective, there is a dilemma between halting the work on the reactor—thereby reducing tension with Israel—and continuing with the work to dictate Israel's available time frame.

The element of surprise is also related to the choice of flight route to targets in Iran. Early detection by neighboring states situated along the Israeli route is not necessarily an operational threat as long as the Israeli planes are not targeted by Arab anti-aircraft systems and early warning is not passed on to the Iranian government. Given Israel's dependence on achieving the element of surprise with regards to the operation's timing, coordinating the operation with an external actor might be problematic and would involve considerable risk. Over the years, several such alleged partnerships have been suggested. In April 2012, a rumor emerged that Israel had been granted

access to Azeri bases. Both Turkey and Saudi Arabia have been named for this purpose as well. In June 2010 news reports surfaced in Western media saying that the Saudi military had conducted a test of its anti-aircraft systems and radars to ensure that it did not attack Israeli jets en route to targets in Iran. And again, in November 2013, The Sunday Times reported that Riyadh had given its consent to Israel's use of its airspace. However, coordinating a leak-sensitive operation with another state involves huge risks. Israel recently learned the price of regional cooperation with regards to sensitive operations. According to a October 2013 report by The Washington Post columnist David Ignatius, Turkey-Israel intelligence relations experienced a severe setback after Turkish espionage chief Hakan Fidan provided Iran with a list of Iranians who had met Mossad case officers in Turkey. There is thus an inherent dilemma between coordinating with an external actor—thereby easing the operational obstacles represented by the length of the route, the number of planes necessary for destroying the targets, and the requirements for conducting rescue operations—and minimizing the risk of leaks.

In order to avoid early detection, Israel would need to reduce the external signals of the strike force. This can be done in several ways. One way is to jam or blind radars located along the route to the nuclear sites. Another option is to avoid the radars' detection range. On June 7, 1981, Israeli jets on their way to the Iraqi reactor were flying low above the desert to avoid detection by radars. Similar low-profile flight paths could be chosen to Iranian nuclear sites. A third option is to use decoys to lure Iran into focusing its attention on the wrong targets. This was Israel's deception strategy in the 1982 Bekaa

Valley attack on Syrian anti-aircraft batteries. A fleet of Israeli UAVs was detected by Syrian radar. Subsequently, the anti-aircraft positions were exposed as the decoys were targeted. One can also try to pretend that the planes belong to the adversary. This might be the reason for Iran's recent decision to copy Israel's Heron design for its Fotros UAV. Iranian-made UAVs operated by Hezbollah have penetrated Israeli air space several times in the past: twice during the Second Lebanon War in 2006 and once in October 2012. Should a Fotros UAV penetrate Israeli airspace, it might take some time for Israel to identify it as hostile. The same could apply to Israeli jets or UAVs operating in Iranian air space.

As they examine the difficulties of carrying out a strike, Israeli operational analysts can take comfort in the fact that Israel has achieved surprise many times before. Iran, as the intended target of a potential attack, is faced with several problems. One is to detect the decision to attack. Another is to accurately assess the timing and conduct of the operation. And a third problem is to take measures to prevent it. Iran was caught off guard by Iraq's invasion in September 1980. Could it get caught napping again?

*Thomas Saether is a Norwegian security analyst and a post-graduate from the MA program in security studies at Tel Aviv University.*

[Article 3.](#)

NYT

## **Not the Same Old, Same Old**

Thomas L. Friedman

April 15, 2014 -- At first, the article in The Jerusalem Post last week seemed like the same old, same old: A picture of a ransacked Israel Defense Forces post in the West Bank. Then a quote from Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon: “The State of Israel will not tolerate such criminal activity, which is terrorism in all respects.” Those Palestinians will never quit.

Oh, wait a minute. Yaalon wasn't talking about Palestinian terrorists. He was talking about Jewish terrorists, renegade settlers, who slashed the tires of an I.D.F. jeep parked in the settlement of Yitzhar, after Israeli soldiers came to demolish illegal buildings. “Settlers clashed with security forces during Monday night's demolition and lightly injured six officers,” The Post reported. “A group of 50 to 60 settlers then raided an army post located to the west of the settlement, destroying generators, army equipment, heaters and diesel fuel tanks.” Israel's justice minister, Tzipi Livni, warned that extremist settlers had crossed a line: “An ideology has flourished that does not recognize the rule of law, that does not recognize us or what we represent.”

These small stories tell a bigger one: We're not dealing anymore with your grandfather's Israel, and they're not dealing anymore with your grandmother's America either. Time matters, and the near half-century since the 1967 war has changed both of us in ways neither wants to acknowledge — but which the latest impasse in talks only underscores. Israel, from its side, has become a more religious society — on Friday nights in Jerusalem now you barely see a car moving on the streets in Jewish neighborhoods, which only used to be the case on Yom Kippur — and the settlers are clearly more brazen. Many West Bank settlers are respectful of the state, but there is now a growing core who are armed zealots, who will

fight the I.D.F. if it tries to remove them. You did not go to summer camp with these Jews. You did not meet them at your local Reform synagogue. This is a hard core.

But even the more tame settlers are more dominant than ever in the Likud Party and in the Israeli army officer corps. It is not a fiction to say today that the Likud prime minister, Bibi Netanyahu, represents the “center” of Israel’s right-wing bloc. And it is not an accident that Israel’s housing minister, Uri Ariel, who comes from a pro-settler party to the right of the Likud, approved a tender for 700 homes in Jerusalem’s Gilo neighborhood, across the Green Line — just as Secretary of State John Kerry’s peace talks were coming to a head. As Minister Livni, Israel’s chief negotiator, put it: “Minister Ariel purposefully and intentionally did what he did to torpedo” the peace talks.

There are now about 350,000 Jews living in the West Bank. It took 50,000 Israeli police and soldiers to remove 8,000 settlers from Gaza, who barely resisted. I fear the lift in the West Bank to make peace there is now just too heavy for conventional politics and diplomacy. The only way settler resistance can be trumped would be by a prime minister, and an Israeli majority, who were really excited about the prospects for peace or truly frightened of the alternative.

But these are not your grandfather’s Palestinians either. There is a young generation emerging that increasingly has no faith in their parents’ negotiations with the Jews, have no desire to recognize Israel as a “Jewish state” and would rather demand the right to vote in a one-state solution.

At the same time, America has changed. There was a time in the 1970s and 1980s when the fate of the Middle East was critical to our economy. After all, there had been an Arab oil

embargo in 1973. And, strategically, the Middle East was seen as the arena most likely to trigger a U.S.-U.S.S.R. nuclear war. Peacemaking in Henry Kissinger's day was a necessity. Today it is a hobby. It is not an unimportant hobby: If Israelis and Palestinians go back to war, it surely would make an unstable region more unstable, creating myriad difficulties for the U.S. But urgent? America will become the world's largest oil producer by 2015, and the Soviet Union no longer exists. The truth is Kerry's mission is less an act of strategy and more an act of deep friendship. It is America trying to save Israel from trends that will inevitably undermine it as a Jewish and democratic state. But Kerry is the last of an old guard. Those in the Obama administration who think he is on a suicide mission reflect the new U.S. attitude toward the region. And those in Israel who denounce him as a nuisance reflect the new Israel.

Kerry, in my view, is doing the Lord's work. But the weight of time and all the changes it has wrought on the ground may just be too heavy for such an act of friendship. If he folds his tent, though, Israelis and Palestinians will deeply regret it, and soon.

Article 4.

The National (Abu Dhabi)

## **Shamefully, Hizbollah has abetted**

### **Assad's worst acts**

Michael Young

April 15, 2014 -- Last weekend, Bashar Al Assad was quoted as saying that the Syrian conflict was turning to his

government's advantage.

Few may take such optimistic comments seriously, but there is a broader implication in what Mr Al Assad said: that a military solution to the Syrian conflict is achievable. Among those who seem to support this view is Hizbollah, which has deployed thousands of combatants to Syria to defend the regime.

But what Mr Al Assad really means is that he intends to resolve Syria's problems by drowning the uprising in more blood. And that has implications for Hizbollah. The party's involvement in that effort, its strategic partnership with Syria's leadership, backed by Iran, has fundamentally altered its image.

From a party once hailed on the political left as part of the "resistance axis" against Israel and the US, Hizbollah has become complicit in the Syrian regime's brutality.

The party's image was damaged in Lebanon years earlier, after it sought to reverse the 2005 uprising against Syria following the assassination of a former prime minister, Rafik Hariri, which led to a Syrian military pullout. Party members were indicted in Mr Hariri's killing, while many believe Hizbollah was involved in other assassinations between 2005 and 2013. But somehow, Hizbollah's action in Lebanon did little to dent its reputation worldwide among those on the left describing themselves as "anti-imperialists". They tend to view the world mainly through a prism of hostility towards the United States. For its admirers on the left, Hizbollah symbolised not only resistance to America and Israel – culminating in the liberation of South Lebanon in May 2000 – it also embodied the triumph of a once-poor Shia community that had long been accorded a secondary status in Lebanon, which the party helped reverse. There was much here to rouse a feverish revolutionary

imagination: a successful anti-imperialist, Third-World liberation movement that had also overcome a corrupt political system to end Shia social and political marginalisation. Largely ignored was the other side of the coin. Hizbollah's admirers seemed entirely to disregard the party's more pronounced characteristics – as an armed and authoritarian religious and military organisation with a disturbing tendency to mobilise its supporters through a cult of death – jarring with many of the values the left claims to embody.

This was perhaps best shown in 2006, when Hizbollah provoked an unnecessary war with Israel after kidnapping two Israeli soldiers. At the time, the Lebanese government, in which Hizbollah was represented, issued a statement taking its distance from the party, which had failed to consult with anyone in the state before the abductions. Israel retaliated with air attacks, plunging Lebanon into a month-long war.

In response to the government, a group of 450 academics and intellectuals, many of them politically on the left and working in the west, issued a statement expressing “conscious support” for Hizbollah's resistance against Israel, “as it wages a war in defence of our sovereignty and independence ... a war to safeguard the dignity of the Lebanese and Arab people.”

The statement also expressed “utter rejection of the Lebanese government's decision to ‘not adopt’ the Lebanese Resistance operation, thereby stripping the Resistance of political credibility before the adversarial international powers ...”

Absent in this paean was any recognition that Hizbollah's actions had undermined the authority of the government, the embodiment of national sovereignty. Nor that Hizbollah was seeking to assert itself at a time when it worried that Lebanon might break free of Damascus' influence a year after the Syrian

military withdrawal, thereby consolidating its independence. It was easy to have contempt for Hizbollah's rivals in the Lebanese political class. Most of them were purveyors of old-fashioned patronage, usually engaged in shady political deal-making. Hizbollah seemed on a higher plane. Its seriousness came from its alleged refusal to compromise on its principles. But today in Syria this image has been substantially altered. While Hizbollah's jihadist adversaries elicit no sympathy in the west, the majority of those suffering from the regime's and the party's gains are average Syrians who simply no longer want Mr Al Assad in power, and initially sought to remove him peacefully.

Either by action or omission, Hizbollah has aided and abetted the worst crimes of the Syrian regime. Video evidence shows party members shooting wounded prisoners, which is a war crime. The party has collaborated with military and intelligence services that have massacred, tortured, bombed or starved civilians – not least Palestinian refugees in the Yarmouk area south of Damascus and refugee camps elsewhere in Syria.

Yet, despite all this, condemnation of the party has been scant among its western devotees. Nor any sense that the cruel fate of Mr Al Assad's Palestinian victims, given their symbolic importance for western anti-imperialists, has prompted a reconsideration of Hizbollah. No communiqués have expressed “utter rejection” of the Syrian regime's cruelty. Can Hizbollah continue to remain a model for its western aficionados? Can those on the political left continue to approve of a party that openly acknowledges its leading role in the Syrian regime's barbaric three-year campaign of repression? The answer has been only remarkable silence.

The American left-wing academic Norman Finkelstein once defended Hizbollah's resistance against Israel by saying: "There is a fundamental principle. People have the right to defend their country from foreign occupiers ... from invaders who are destroying their country."

Perhaps Mr Finkelstein is right. But that would mean that Syrians are entitled to defend their country against Hizbollah. But a wager says we will not hear that line anytime soon.

*Michael Young is opinion editor of The Daily Star newspaper in Beirut.*

[Article 5.](#)

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

## **Hezbollah and Israel's Risky New Pattern**

Benedetta Berti

April 15, 2014 -- The Syrian civil war is gradually altering the dynamic relationship between Hezbollah and Israel. Over the past decades, this relationship morphed from an asymmetrical confrontation between a conventional army and a sectarian militia to an ongoing conflict between a state and a quasi-army, regulated by de facto mutual deterrence. Now, with Hezbollah deeply involved in supporting Bashar al-Assad's regime in its bloody internal war, the Lebanese-Shia organization has focused its energies on the Syrian front. Israel, for its part, developed a minimalist policy aimed at preserving the quiet with its northern neighbors while avoiding direct intervention in Syria. That policy has also incurred an

active component—as confirmed by a number of unclaimed aerial strikes on Hezbollah targets within Syria—with Israel delivering a clear red line to both Hezbollah and the Assad regime by asserting its willingness to intervene to stop transfers of advanced weaponry to Hezbollah.

Since its creation, Hezbollah’s main purpose has been to confront Israel by repelling the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) presence in Lebanon, with the broader ideological aspiration to fight for the liberation of Palestine. Following the end of the Lebanese civil war, the pattern of engagement between Israel and Hezbollah shifted from open war to more restrained confrontation, mostly focused in the Israeli-occupied “security zone.” After two escalations in the 1990s, the rules of engagement became further institutionalized through an unsigned arrangement based on mutual restraint and reciprocity. That agreement came to an end rather abruptly in the summer of 2006 with the “34-day War.” Though the likely result of an initial miscalculation, the war represented a rupture in the rules of engagement, with Israel deciding to address what it saw as an erosion of its deterrence by escalating its response and engaging in a broad military operation. Since the end of that war, the relationship between Hezbollah and Israel has been regulated by mutual deterrence. Conscious that the next round of confrontation is only likely to be more devastating and intense, both parties have displayed a shared interest in preventing escalations and defusing tensions, while at the same time quietly preparing for the next round of confrontation at the military level. Even with the beginning of the Syrian civil war, the parameters of engagement between Hezbollah and Israel have not changed dramatically in terms of refraining from any direct cross-border engagement or attacks

in Lebanon proper. By confining the range and scope of the military operations against Hezbollah to only those preventing advanced arms transfers to Hezbollah from Syria, Israel signaled its interest in preserving the rules of the game intact along the “Blue Line.” The fact that also neither Israel nor Hezbollah acknowledged such attacks were taking place further confirmed the parties’ interest in sticking to the existing framework.

However, the reported Israeli attack against Hezbollah targets in Lebanon on February 24 represented the first clear departure from the pre-established rules. This is the case even though the operation itself is not necessarily an indication of a desire to escalate the conflict. Rather, it was likely guided by the perception that Hezbollah’s deep military involvement in Syria and its growing preoccupation with local Salafi-jihadi challengers in Lebanon would prevent it from forcefully responding to a limited Israeli attack. Yet it was a risky move for Israel. Even though Hezbollah initially denied that the attack had occurred, it later changed its tune and promised retaliation. And in the past two months, there have been a number of attacks against Israel possibly organized by Hezbollah, including a rocket attack, a reported attempt to place an explosive device along the Israeli border, and finally a successful bomb on March 18 that wounded four IDF soldiers. These attacks all originated from the Syrian Golan, and although Hezbollah did not officially claim responsibility for any of these operations, the IDF referred to the group as the potential culprit—yet another change in previous pattern of mutual denial. By targeting Israel through the Golan, Hezbollah may be warning them against broadening Israeli involvement in Syria. Israel, in its response to the March 18

attack, targeted the Syrian Army in the Golan in turn, warning Damascus against allowing armed attacks to originate from within Syrian territory. However, the limited nature of both the attack and Israel's response indicates that neither party is deliberately attempting to escalate the confrontation.

In addition to these attacks, another roadside bomb was detonated on March 14 in the Shebaa farms area. If perpetrated by Hezbollah, as the Israeli army suspects, this attack would be an even stronger indication of Hezbollah's willingness to respond to the February 24 Israeli attack and, in doing so, further erode the post-2006 rules of engagement. Indeed, no attack on the Shebaa Farms had taken place since the July 2006 war.

The situation is currently extremely fragile as, despite their shared interest in preventing another all-out war, both Israel's and Hezbollah's tit-for-tat actions—likely ironically aimed at restoring mutual deterrence—are instead bringing both parties closer to another undesirable escalation.

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[Article 6.](#)

Hürriyet Daily News

## **Options for the presidency**

Mustafa Akyol

April 16, 2014 -- These days, almost everybody that I see asks me about Turkey's options regarding the presidential race in

August. So, to help them all, I have decided to summarize the following.

First, let me note that these elections, scheduled to take place in August in two possible consecutive rounds, will be a first in Turkish history. Because until now, the presidency, a largely symbolic yet still key post, was a seat elected by the Parliament. But in 2007, right after the election of the current president, Abdullah Gül, the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP) passed a constitutional amendment, via a referendum, which made the presidency a popularly elected post. The idea was to get rid of the military's constant interventions to impose certain choices for "Atatürk's office." Now, seven years later, the seven-year term of Abdullah Gül, who was elected according to the old system, is to expire. And Turkey will experience a whole new election campaign whose rules are unknown to most.

Not to bore you with technicalities, here are the options I see ahead:

Option A: PM Recep Tayyip Erdoğan runs and wins the presidency. But then he supports Gül to get into politics, join the AKP to become its new leader, and become the new prime minister soon, either via a "mini-election" or in the general elections of 2015.

Although this switch-scenario sounds a bit Russian, it is still preferred by most liberals, because they want to see Gül in a powerful seat such as the prime ministry. (Because Gül, repeatedly, has proven to be more reconciliatory, liberal-leaning and globally minded than Erdoğan.)

Option B: Erdoğan runs and wins the presidency, but then he decides to go solo. In other words, he refrains from supporting Gül for the AKP's leadership, and rather tips a much more

loyal, and much less significant, name for the prime ministry, who would be his yes-man. (Some speculate that he might even decide to push for a presidential system, with major constitutional changes, once he gets into the office.) Turkey would turn into a full “one-man-system.”

If this happens, one might expect Gül to throw his lot in with his own political camp and spearhead a new political movement leaning toward the center-right rather than the growingly assertive Islamism of Erdoğan.

Option C: Erdoğan runs but loses the presidency. This is not very likely, because Erdoğan already has a solid 45 percent of the votes, and he seems likely to get the support of Kurdish nationalists in a possible second-round election. Moreover, the opposition does not seem to have a name that is powerful enough to challenge Erdoğan. It would be almost a miracle, thus, if opposition parties do find such a name in the upcoming weeks and succeed in defeating Erdoğan at the polls.

Option D: Erdoğan decides to continue his life as a prime minister and support Gül for a second term as president. He would then have to change the three-term limit the AKP has, and get ready for his third term. Some speculate that he can do this because the presidency is actually less powerful than the prime ministry and Erdoğan is happy with his current job.

Which option will prevail? Nobody knows right now, because it is up to a decision that Erdoğan and Gül will make together sometime this April. This is Turkey’s patriarchal politics, after all, and most things are decided by a strong man at the last moment.

Article 7.

The New Yorker

# **Eight Hopeful Legacies of the Arab Spring**

John Cassidy

April 14, 2014 -- More than three years after the Arab Spring began, the political situation in the Middle East is depressing. In Syria, a brutal civil war continues, with the forces of Bashar al-Assad gaining the upper hand. In Egypt, General Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, who has overseen a drastic crackdown on political opponents, looks likely to be elected as President. A democratic Iraq has descended into sectarianism. In Yemen, the U.S.-backed regime continues to battle militants linked to Al Qaeda. Libya appears to be on the brink of chaos. The Israel-Palestine peace process remains stalled. And the oil-rich Gulf monarchies sail on, stifling internal dissent with a combination of harsh laws and generous welfare policies. Is it time to give up hope? Not according to Mustapha Nabli, a former governor of the Central Bank of Tunisia, and Bessma Momani, a Jordanian political scientist at the University of Waterloo, who participated in a session that I moderated this past weekend, at a conference in Toronto organized by the Institute for New Economic Thinking. Nabli and Momani both acknowledged that the past three years have been disappointing, with high hopes giving way to counterrevolution, intergroup competition, economic problems, and religious polarization. But they also insisted that the long-term outlook was encouraging. Here are some of the reasons they cited:

1. Thanks to the mass protests that took place in many countries, there is now a credible threat of future uprisings

against corrupt and incompetent governments, Nabli said. A former World Bank official who ran Tunisia's central bank after the uprising that ousted the country's longtime ruler, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, Nabli insists that ruling élites in the Arab World can no longer afford to ignore public demands for democratic reforms and improved material conditions.

2. Despite the recent crackdowns on political expression, the pressure for reform remains strong. The old (and possibly racist) idea that democracy couldn't take hold in the Middle East has been successfully challenged. "Arab exceptionalism is gone," Nabli said. Momani, who has written frequently about the Arab Spring and its aftermath, agreed. "The democratic spirit is alive," she said.

3. In many Arab countries, a long-overdue debate between secularists and Islamists is taking place. This discussion started in the nineteenth century, Nabli said, but, for a variety of reasons—colonial rule, nationalism, and dictatorship—it was quashed. Its reëmergence suggests that the modernization process is ongoing, he added.

4. In places like Egypt, the Islamist ideology has been tested and found wanting, Nabli said. Going forward, Islamist parties will be forced to rethink how they engage with the public at large, and to focus on improving the day-to-day lives of the citizens whom they wish to govern. If the Islamists want to retain power, they will have to learn that adherence to religious precepts isn't enough.

5. Within Islam, there are signs of change. Momani pointed to the emergence of a generation of preachers, such as the Egyptian Amr Khaled, who are rejecting the ultra-conservative readings of the Koran, which have been increasingly dominant in recent decades. Some of these more progressive preachers

talk about the need for love and for making the most of life, Momani said, and they are finding a receptive audience.

6. Many of the demographic and technological forces that underpinned the Arab Spring are still in place. The Arab population is young and increasingly well educated, Momani reminded the audience. And, thanks to the Internet and other new technologies, young people have access to a lot more news and information than their parents did, which makes it more difficult for the élites to manipulate, or to ignore, them.

7. Although the old regimes have fought back successfully in some countries, respect for authority, and for old ways of thinking, has been gravely undermined, Momani claimed.

Many young Arabs are no longer willing to accept that all of their problems are caused by colonialism, Zionism, or American imperialism, she said, and they are looking more critically at their own societies and governments. She referred to this phenomenon as “an end of ‘isms.’”

8. Even in the area of gender equality, a bit of progress is finally being made. Momani pointed to Saudi Arabia, the only country in the world that bans women from driving. In recent months, activists have launched a campaign—which the authorities have not stamped out—to allow women to get behind the wheel. In a country as conservative as Saudi Arabia, this is a huge development, Momani said.

The other member of the panel, Sandra Halperin, a professor of international relations at the University of London, was more skeptical about the prospects for further reforms. Despite the mass uprisings that shook the region, many of the underlying social and economic structures that underpinned the old, oppressive regimes remain in place, Halperin pointed out. Nabli and Momani, while not downplaying the challenges

ahead, remained more upbeat. “In the short term, we are in for a rough ride,” Nabli said. “But we are seeing the seed of democracy rooting itself.” Referring to the Arab Spring, Momani said, “Is it over? No...This is the beginning.”

*John Cassidy is a British-American journalist, who is a staff writer at The New Yorker and a contributor to The New York Review of Books, having previously been an editor at The Sunday Times of London and a deputy editor at the New York Post.*

[Article 8.](#)

The Washington Institute

## **Bandar Resigns as Head of Saudi Intelligence**

Simon Henderson

April 15, 2014 -- The sudden shakeup at the top of the kingdom's intelligence service will likely have implications for Saudi policy on Iran and Syria.

Earlier today, Saudi Arabia announced that controversial prince Bandar bin Sultan had resigned as intelligence chief. According to the official Saudi Press Agency story, the unexpected royal decree stated that Bandar had been "relieved...from his post at his request" and replaced by Gen. Youssef bin Ali al-Idrisi, his deputy at the General Intelligence Presidency (GIP), the Saudi equivalent of the CIA. No mention was made of Bandar's other official position as secretary-general of the Saudi National Security Council. The news comes less than three weeks after Bandar was reported to be returning from Morocco, where he had been

convalescing for several weeks following shoulder surgery. Significantly, the spin on his absence was that he had still been running Saudi intelligence from his hospital bed despite reportedly bequeathing at least the Syria portfolio to his cousin, Interior Minister Prince Muhammad bin Nayef, in January. And last October, Bandar ruffled Washington policymakers by briefing foreign journalists on Saudi exasperation regarding the Obama administration's Middle East policies.

In the absence of fuller information, particularly on the status of his National Security Council role, the change is likely explicable in terms of Bandar's health. In addition to his reported shoulder surgery, the sixty-five-year-old former ambassador to Washington was using a cane to relieve a leg problem when he received Sen. Bob Corker (R-TN) at his Riyadh home in December. Biographers of the colorful prince also mention other ailments, including a bad back (due to an injury sustained during his career as a fighter pilot) and a tendency toward depression.

Bandar's 2012 appointment as intelligence chief was seen as a reflection of King Abdullah's policy on two key issues at the time: his hardline stance against the Assad regime in Damascus, and his determination to thwart Iran's emergence as a nuclear-armed regional rival to Saudi Arabia. Today's leadership switch allows for the possibility that these policies may be changing, as suggested by recent Saudi restrictions on supporting jihadists in Syria. But whether General Idrisi, a nonroyal, has the political weight to implement policy is questionable. Recent intelligence chiefs have all been princes; Bandar himself took over from Muqrin bin Abdulaziz, who was named deputy crown prince last month.

If Bandar retains his National Security Council role, he will continue to wield influence in Riyadh. But given his antipathy toward Washington in recent months, the change may suggest an opportunity to further close the rift between the United States and the kingdom following last month's meeting between President Obama and King Abdullah outside Riyadh. That assessment depends on which officials are promoted to fill the gaps that Bandar's resignation will leave.

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