
From: Office of Terje Rod-Larsen [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, November 9, 2012 10:26 PM
Subject: November 8 update

Articl= 2. <https://mail.google.com/mail/=/0/html/compose/static_files/blank_quirks.html#b>

The Newsweek/Daily Beast

Why Obama Won't Take Revenge on Bi=i

Peter Beinart <<http://www.thedailybeast.com/=ontributors/peter-beinart.html>>

Aaron David Miller

Articl= 5. <https://mail.google.com/mail/=/0/html/compose/static_files/blank_quirks.html#e>

Stratfor

The Next U.S. Foreign Policy Team<=span>

Robert D. Kaplan

Articl= 6. <https://mail.google.com/mail/=/0/html/compose/static_files/blank_quirks.html#f>

Asia Times

The politics of money in Palestine=br> Ramzy Baroud

Ar=icle 1.

NYT

Netanyahu Rus=es to Repair Damage With Obama

Jodi Rudoren</=> <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/r/jodi_rudoren/index.html>

November 7, 2012 =97 Over the past several years, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/n/benamin_netanyahu/index.html?inline=nyt-per> has on several occasions confronted or even undercut President Obama <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/o/oback_obama/index.html?inline=nyt-per> , taking his message directly to the Israel <<http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/israel/index.html?inline=nyt-geo>> -friendly United States Congress, challenging Mr. Obama's appeal to the Arab world, and seeming this fall to support his opponent, Mitt Romney <<http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/people/r/romney/background/index.html?inline=nyt-per>> .

Mr. Netanyahu woke up Wednesday to find not only that his Republican friend had lost, but also that many Israelis were questioning whether he had risked their collective relationship with Washington.

"This has not been a very good morning for Netanyahu," a deputy prime minister, Eli Yishai of the religious Shas Party, told journalists in Eilat.

The prime minister, facing his own re-election fight on Jan. 22, did not directly acknowledge his missteps, but he rushed to repair the relationship. He called the American ambassador to his office for a ceremonial hug. He issued a damage-control statement declaring the bond between the two nations "rock solid." He put out word to leaders of his Likud Party whose congratulatory messages had included criticism of Mr. Obama that they should stop.

Mr. Netanyahu still maintains strong ties to members of Congress, particularly Republicans, and to other influential Americans. But his strained relationship with Mr. Obama may prove more than a temporary political headache. Israeli leaders and analysts are concerned that the prime minister has hampered his ability to influence Washington on vital policy matters, particularly the Iranian nuclear threat and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In practical terms, Jerusalem is worried that Washington will agree to direct talks with Tehran, and go easier on the Palestinian Authority's quest this month for upgraded status in the United Nations.

"Netanyahu backed the wrong horse," Mitchell Barak, a pollster and strategist, said at a morning gathering of Americans watching the election results here. "Whoever is elected prime minister is going to have to handle the U.S.-Israel relationship, and we all know Netanyahu is not the right guy."

Mr. Obama's re-election seemed to embolden Ehud Olmert <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/o/ehud_olmert/index.html?inline=nyt-per> , the former prime minister who has spent the past few years battling corruption charges, making it more likely that he will forge a comeback that he hopes can unite and expand Israel's center-left bloc.

"Given what Netanyahu had done these recent months, the question is: Does our prime minister still have a friend in the White House?" Mr. Olmert asked at a meeting with Jewish leaders in New York. "I am not certain of this, and this might be very significant to us at critical points."

Few believe that Mr. Obama will act to punish Mr. Netanyahu, but their notoriously tense relationship, made worse in recent months not only by the Romney question but also by Mr. Netanyahu's hard-line position on Iran, could hurt efforts to coordinate priorities. And freed from electoral concerns, the second-term president may prove likelier to pursue his own path without worry about backlash from Washington's powerful and wealthy pro-Israel lobby.

"I would be surprised if he were more rather than less forthcoming in dealing with Israel," said Bob Zelnick, a former Middle East correspondent for ABC News who now teaches at Boston University, said of Mr. Obama. "My sense is that he both dislikes and distrusts Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, and that he is more likely to use his new momentum to settling scores than to settling issues."

On Iran, the immediate concern here is that a White House pursuit of bilateral talks would stretch out the timetable for diplomacy even as Mr. Netanyahu's famous "red line" for halting Iran's capability to develop a nuclear weapon closes in. On Wednesday, one member of the inner circle of Iran's ruling system said such talks — the subject of an October article in The New York Times — are "not a taboo," though another said it was a "big mistake" for Washington to think it could "blackmail" Iran into relations.

Several analysts said Mr. Obama was loath to take on a new Middle East military operation; indeed, one of the biggest applause lines in his victory speech was his declaration that "a decade of war is ending."

Regarding the Palestinians, Israeli officials had been counting on the Obama administration to forcefully oppose the United Nations bid — as it did last year '97 and to chastise those countries that support it. But Palestinian leader seemed unworried on Wednesday, making the bid for nonmember state status in the General Assembly a central focus of their congratulations.

"We will not retreat," said Saeb Erekat, the chief Palestinian negotiator. "We hope President Obama will even support this move."

Regardless of how he handles the United Nations effort, Mr. Obama is unlikely to pursue the peace process more broadly in the early part of his second term, given the turmoil across the Middle East and internal divisions among the Palestinians.

"I think he recognizes the importance of this issue — he would be a fool not to," said Dana Buttu, a political analyst and former Palestinian Authority official based in Ramallah, in the West Bank. "But when it comes to the priority list of issues he will have to deal with, I'm just not certain that this is going to be No. 1 or even No. 10 on that list."

Ehud Barak, the defense minister who shared a close partnership with Mr. Netanyahu for much of the last four years but has tried to distinguish himself on Iran and other issues as elections approach, since he leads the separate Independence Party, congratulated Mr. Obama nearly an hour ahead of Mr. Netanyahu, and followed up by e-mailing reporters photographs and video of himself with the newly re-elected president.

"Even if there were certain kinds of bumps on the road in recent years, we should be able to move beyond it," Mr. Barak said in an interview. "There is nothing better to mend any scar or grudge from the past than making better achievements in the present and the future."

Article 2.

The Newsweek/Daily Beast

Why Obama Won't Take Revenge on Bibi

November 7, 2012 -- Within minutes of the President's reelection, my twitter feed was alive with conservatives fretting that Obama will take revenge upon Benjamin Netanyahu for doing everything he could to boost Mitt Romney and almost nothing to boost Israeli-Palestinian peace. Unfortunately, they're probably wrong.

The argument that in a second term Obama will intervene aggressively in the peace process rests on the mistaken belief that because he himself doesn't have to run for reelection, he's freed from worrying about the domestic political costs of friction with Israel. That's untrue.

Even if Obama is no longer worried about reelection, virtually every Democrat in Congress still is, and it's Congress where groups like AIPAC have long focused the bulk of their energy and wielded the bulk of their influence. If Obama launches a diplomatic initiative that leads him into conflict with Netanyahu, it will be the Democrats in Congress, especially the ones who run the Democratic Congressional and Senatorial Campaign Committees, and thus spend their time raising money for the 2014 midterms, who will make their displeasure felt. And given how much of Obama's second term fate depends on Democrats controlling the Senate (and not falling further behind in the House), he won't easily be able to ignore them. What's more, if Joseph Biden and/or Hillary Clinton have any desire to make their own runs in 2016, they'll be nervous about an American-Israeli clash, and the President will not want to undermine their chances.

And while the chances of a politically costly confrontation are high if Obama makes a renewed push for peace, the chances of success are low. Netanyahu, a heavy favorite to win reelection, vocally opposes the only parameters—the 1967 lines plus swaps—that could conceivably lead to a peace deal. Mahmoud Abbas publicly favors them, but in the four years since he negotiated seriously with Ehud Olmert, he's grown weaker and less legitimate in the eyes of his people. That means his room to make wrenching concessions (especially on refugees), and get Palestinians to accept them over the likely position of Hamas, has shrunk.

What's more, Obama's Middle East agenda is crowded with other issues. In Bill Clinton's second term, when the region was more placid, he had the time to invest heavily in Israeli-Palestinian (and Israeli-Syrian) peace. But Obama must grapple with the Iranian nuclear issue, the bloodbath in Syria and all manner of potential crises in unpredictable client states like Egypt. All this will suck up the time that an intensive peace push would require.

Finally, anyone who has spent any time around Democratic foreign policy types in recent years knows that many of them are desperate to "pivot" to Asia. Democrats feel that, for the most part, they've spent Obama's first term cleaning up George W. Bush's mess in the greater Middle East. While they know America must remain engaged there, they see the region largely as a place where America exerts enormous energy trying to keep bad things from getting worse. In Asia, by contrast, a Democratic secretary of state can imagine himself (or herself) the new Dean Acheson, "present at the creation." Since the greater Middle East has so dominated US foreign policy in the post-9/11 decade, no president has laid out the kind of strategic vision for America's relationship with China, India, Japan, South Korea, Australia etc that Acheson, George Kennan and Harry Truman famously did vis a vis Europe in the late 1940s. It's likely that Asia will receive more foreign policy attention in a second term because it is in Asia that Obama and his top aides believe they can etch their names in the history books, a consideration that always looms larger in a president's second term.

All this could be wrong. I hope it is. But it's worth noting that while Obama mentioned the peace process often during the 2008 campaign, he barely ever mentioned it this year. He didn't bring it up in his convention speech, the debates or his acceptance speech. The 2008 Democratic platform promised a "personal" presidential "commitment" to Israeli-Palestinian peace. In 2012, that was taken out.

The Jewish left and the Jewish right both have an interest in promoting the idea that Obama will intervene aggressively on the Palestinian issue in his second term. For the left, the prospect breeds hope, which fuels Jewish groups fighting for a two state solution. For the right, it breeds fear, which fuels Jewish groups skeptical of a two state solution. But in a

second term, I suspect, both hopeful doves and fearful hawks will encounter presidential indifference, and the looming realization that on the Israel-Palestinian issue, we are entering the post-American age.

Article 3.

Foreign Policy

How the Middle East Could Make Or Break Obama's Legacy

Aaron David Miller

November 7, 2012 -- Congratulations, Barack Obama. You now join a small club of 16 two-term presidents. (Of those, only 13 actually served out their second four-year term -- William McKinley, Abraham Lincoln and Richard Nixon weren't so lucky.)

An eight-year run does count for something. There are no great one-termers. All consequential presidents require a bond with the public that the validation of a second term provides. Consider it a necessary but not sufficient condition for presidential greatness.

Governing this republic effectively is hard and sometimes, I think, borders on the impossible. To a certain extent, the founders willfully contributed to the problem by designing a system that the late constitutional scholar Edwin Corwin brilliantly described as an open invitation to struggle. They did so to make the accretion of too much power by an individual or branch of government very hard.

But they still reserved for the presidency the capacity -- depending on the president and his circumstances -- to lead energetically, in a way 535 elected legislators or 9 Supreme Court jurists cannot. The presidency is the only national office all Americans can vote for -- it stands for something special, and remains to this day, regardless of its flaws and tendency to disappoint, the repository of our hopes and aspirations.

John F. Kennedy once said that nobody should judge presidents -- not even poor James Buchanan -- because it's impossible to know what it's really like to be in the White House.

Fair enough. At the same time, we elected you -- myself included. And, not to put too fine a point on it, you work for us.

And so, having worked for several of your predecessors on Middle East policy -- and having watched Republican and Democratic administrations succeed and fail in foreign policy -- I don't have the slightest reservation in offering up a number of suggestions for your second term.

1. Don't look for transformation this time around.

I get the fact that in your first term you saw yourself as a transformative figure -- a leader with a mandate to save the nation through bold policies at home and abroad.

And maybe you thought the country wanted a savior. I know that Abraham Lincoln was very much on your mind. With the possible exception of George W. Bush, you owe your presidency to him more than any other man.

We got the point. You recreated part of Lincoln's train journey to Washington, were sworn in on his Bible, and all but reenacted his post-inaugural lunch -- right down to the sour cherry chutney served on Mary Todd Lincoln's china.

With all due respect, Mr. President, try to be a tad more humble and less narcissistic in your second term. I knew Abe Lincoln, and you're no Abe Lincoln. I know you already think <http://www.politico.com/news/stories/1211/70841.html> you're entitled to be in the presidential hall of fame, but forget transforming the country at home. Americans don't want a polarizing transformer; they want a president who can fix what's broken -- this time with the support of Republicans so that change can be legitimate, authoritative, and successful.

Abroad, you also thought you would transform the world. You seemed to believe that, somehow, your own persona and the imperfections of your predecessor could combine to solve historic conflicts and convert adversaries into friends. But the world wasn't and isn't going to be transformed by you or anyone else. Look around at the 192 other nations represented in the United Nations. Do you see any transformative figures there, or international conflicts just waiting to be solved?

If the world is amenable to anything these days, it's transaction. Sports analogies are usually horrible, but in this case I think one works: Forget home runs; try small ball. Moderate progress, after all, can buy time to deal with the bigger issues like Iran and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (more on that later).

2. Legacy cuts both ways: the hero or the goat

Having been elected to a second term, the only thing you're running against now is the reputations and accomplishments of your predecessors. Health care -- it's too soon to know for sure -- may be your domestic legacy. But the temptation to secure a foreign-policy spectacular will be great, too.

I saw the draw of legacy play out in a negative way during the final year of the Clinton administration. As Clinton saw his last days in the White House tick away, he grasped on to the idea of hosting an ill-timed, ill-prepared, and poorly thought-through summit with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat at Camp David in July 2000. The rush to the summit led to a collapse of the peace process from which Israeli-Palestinian negotiations have yet to recover. Arafat received much of the blame for Camp David's failure, much of it well-deserved but counter-productive nonetheless, leading to another spasm of violence.

As the sand passes through the hourglass of your second term, that's something to keep in mind. Yes, a dramatic success on a tough issue can add to the luster of your presidency. But failure also carries consequences that go well beyond your presidency and can have serious implications for our successor.

3. Empower your secretary of state

I would have thought, given the huge domestic crisis you faced in 2008, that you would have been only too happy to delegate significant responsibility to your diplomat-in-chief. And why not? Hillary Clinton is talented and knowledgeable. And while certainly not a great secretary of state in the mold of Henry Kissinger or James Baker, she has done an immense amount to improve America's image by pursuing an agenda of global humanism -- emphasizing the role of women, the environment, technology, and social media.

But when it came to the big issues such as Iran, Afghanistan, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, you withheld far more than you gave. All power on these issues flowed to and from the White House. Clinton owned not a one of them.

No matter whom you choose as your next secretary of state, you ought to be more generous in delegating authority over some of these big issues.

Yes, this may conflict with your desire to forge your own legacy. But presidents can't be everywhere and do everything. Smart and empowered secretaries of state can set up all kinds of opportunities through the tireless and tedious diplomacy that you may not have the time to join. Baker worked for nine months to set up the Madrid peace conference for Bush 41. Madeleine Albright labored for a year and a half to set up the Wye River Summit and prevented a great deal of Israeli-Palestinian violence in the process. Give your secretary of state a few big issues -- he or she can actually make you look good, and serve American national interests too.

4. Come clean on Benghazi

You have a real credibility problem on this one from almost every conceivable angle. You've prided yourself on competence in foreign policy, and yet the fatal attack on the diplomatic mission in eastern Libya raises serious questions about your administration's judgment and performance.

Over the past two months, the questions have piled up higher and higher: Why weren't adequate reparations taken months before the attack to deal with what was clearly a higher threat level to Western and U.S. interests in Libya? What was the CIA's role in responding to the crisis, and the Pentagon's too? And what about the confused and misleading messages that came from your administration as you responded to the crisis?

Neither a congressional nor a State Department investigation will be credible enough to answer these questions. Some independent panel should be created -- one with the mandate to go after the White House, too -- to determine what transpired. In a turbulent Middle East, the threats to America's diplomats will continue. We need to figure out a better way to minimize the risks.

5. The Middle East is a choice between root canals or migraines. Pick your poison.

No region of the world is going to be more dangerous for the United States than the Middle East. Challenges abound -- but at the moment there don't appear to be a great many opportunities. Disengagement, sadly, is not an option.

Again, think transaction, not transformation. On Iran, explore the hell out of diplomacy before you seriously consider military action -- let alone war. Getting out of these conflicts is always more difficult than it seems, and the risk-to-reward ratio on Iran is inherently skewed toward the risk end. Once a nation acquires the knowledge and capacity to construct a nuclear weapon, it can't just be bombed out of its collective consciousness. Military actions will at best delay, not prevent, Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. </=>

Unless you can change the mullahcracy in Tehran, your best bet would be an outcome that would keep Iran years away from actually making a nuclear weapon. Given the depth of animosity and mistrust between the United States and Iran over the last half-century, the odds of a grand bargain are pretty low.

But here's how to give it your best shot: Start with an interim arrangement that deals with the issue of enrichment, and forestalls Iran from acquiring enough highly enriched uranium to construct a nuke. To get such a deal, by the way, you can't just come to the party with sticks. Carrots will be required too -- not only some sanctions relief on the enrichment question, but developing Iran's enrichment capacity on the civilian side. None of this may work -- but a good-faith, sustained effort is critical to your credibility and to any follow-on military attack.

On Israeli-Palestinian peace, think interim agreements and managing the conflict. Barring some profound change in the politics of Israel or Palestine, no conflict-ending solution that addresses borders, Jerusalem, refugees and security is likely.

Also, prepare to deal with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for some time to come. If you're looking to get even with him for stifling you on settlements, sit quietly until the urge passes. Israeli elections in January will likely return Bibi

to power, and if his coalition expands it will be for the purpose of stability and maybe war with Iran -- not for old moves toward the Palestinians.

Let's face it: You won't have much credibility with Netanyahu. If you want any progress, you're going to have to figure out a way to create a relationship with him. In any event, think small for now. Do what you can to keep the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty afloat. Push international donors to keep the Palestinian Authority in the black. Press hard on keeping Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation up and running. Push the Israelis to end restrictions on movement and economy opportunities for Palestinians. And, if there's a way to encourage quiet discussion on the least contentious final-status issues like territory and security, try that too.

If you truly can't help yourself and need to lay out a U.S. plan on all of the big issues, go ahead. Chances are they'll still be out there when your successor takes the inaugural oath. But don't delude yourself with visions of being the man to solve this thing once and for all.

On Syria, don't be lulled into believing that some notional post-election flexibility is going to expand your options there. As long as the rebels are so inchoate, the regime so militarily powerful, and the Russians so supportive of President Bashar al-Assad, the chances for dramatic change are pretty low.

That doesn't mean you should be idle on the Syrian front. Do what you can to ease the humanitarian and refugee crisis. Support Jordan, continue to work with the Turks, and support efforts to encourage a credible Syrian opposition. But be wary of a more proactive policy on the military side, particularly when it comes to providing sophisticated weaponry to a divided rebel movement whose interests may not necessarily be yours and which is acquiring its own record of war crimes.

6. Fix America's house even as you persist in trying to fix others.

Here's the bad news: Your credibility will begin to diminish the first day after your inauguration, and your status as a lame duck will grow ever closer as 2016 nears.

It's not that you can't chew gum and walk at the same time. The United States has to be involved in the rest of the world even while its domestic house is in a state of disarray. The major priority, though, must be on fixing our broken house and addressing the Five Deadly D's that sap American strength: debt, deficit, dysfunctional politics, decaying infrastructure, and dependence on hydrocarbons. If you bet on risky adventures abroad and lose, your credibility and political stock will fall when, in fact, it's badly needed to deal with pressing domestic matters, particularly the economy.

Governing is about choosing. The best thing you can do both for America and its position in the world is to address the sources of domestic weakness. If you succeed on that front, you will be strengthening the foundation on which our foreign policy rests. And in the process, who knows? You might actually become what you aspire to be -- a truly consequential American president.

Aaron David Miller is a distinguished scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. His forthcoming book is titled *Can America Have Another Great President?*

Article 4.

Why the Middle East is in Torment

Patrick Seale

6 Nov 2012 -- The Middle East is plagued by death, destruction and population displacements. A dozen different conflicts are raging. The whole region has rarely been in such torment.

In Syria, a bitter fratricidal war, largely fuelled by outsiders, threatens to reduce the country to a smouldering ruin, while consigning tens of thousands to the grave. Its neighbours are suffering from the spill-over. Turkey is struggling with a flood of Syrian refugees and a revival of Kurdish militancy. Lebanon and Jordan have been dangerously destabilised, and fear the worst. Iraq, once a powerful Arab state, was destroyed and dismembered by America's invasion and brutal ten-year occupation. Hundreds of thousands of Iraqis were killed or wounded and millions displaced. Material damage was enormous. The once united country was transformed into a far weaker federal state by the creation of an autonomous Kurdish enclave in the north. Although Iraq's oil industry is now recovering, its society and its politics remain highly unstable. Just as America's invasion in 2003 was launched on the fraudulent claim that Iraq was developing weapons of mass destruction, so the United States and its allies are now waging an undeclared war against Iran -- a war of crippling sanctions, cyber-subversion and assassinations. The alleged aim is to force Iran to give up its development of nuclear weapons -- although there is no credible evidence that Iran is doing any such thing. The real aim would seem to be 'regime change' in Tehran. A military attack on Iran in the New Year cannot be excluded. After eleven years of war in Afghanistan, the United States and its allies have failed to stabilise the country, let alone devise a credible exit strategy. Their planned departure in 2014 seems likely to turn into a humiliating scuttle, while plunging the country into an even more murderous civil war. Meanwhile, Egypt and Tunisia struggle to tame their Salafists, while armed gangs in Libya vie for supremacy.

In Mali, a war is in preparation to expel militant Islamic groups which have captured the northern part of the country and threaten the stability of the whole Sahel. In Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia, and soon possibly in Mali as well, U.S. 'targeted killings' of alleged Islamic terrorists by means of pilotless drones also kill civilians and terrorise peaceful communities, driving relations between the United States and the Muslim world to new depths of misunderstanding and hostility. Meanwhile, unchecked by either the Arab states or the Western powers, Israel continues its relentless seizure of Palestinian territory, finally burying any hope of a two-state solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and condemning itself to generations of future conflict with the Arab and Muslim world.

How has all this come about? What false moves and foolhardy decisions have brought the region to this lamentable state? In my personal opinion, the following are some of the main reasons.

- As everyone knows, America's invasion of Iraq triggered a civil war between the Sunni minority and the Shia majority, inflaming antagonisms between these two Muslim communities right across the region. The war transformed Iraq's regional role. Instead of acting as a counterweight to Iran -- which had long been Iraq's traditional role -- Iraq under Shia leadership has become Iran's ally.

This has overturned the balance of power in the Gulf region to the alarm of Saudi Arabia and its allies in the Gulf Cooperation Council. Fear that Iraq has ambitions to dominate the Gulf region has shaped the thinking and the regional policy of Saudi Arabia and some of its GCC partners. The fear may not be wholly justified, but it is real nevertheless.

- By removing Egypt, the most powerful Arab country, from the Arab military line-up, the Egypt-Israel peace treaty of 1979 eliminated any possibility of a balance of power between Israel and its Arab neighbours. It gave Israel the freedom to attack its neighbours with impunity and fuelled its ambition for regional dominance. One need only recall Israel's strike on Iraq's Osirak nuclear facility in 1981 and its invasion of Lebanon in 1982. Many more aggressions were to follow. In Israel itself, the rise of right-wing and ultra-religious forces hardened the country's determination to expand its land area and prevent any expression of Palestinian statehood, while maintaining Israel's military supremacy over the entire Greater Middle East.

- Israel's belligerent and expansionist policy has largely been made possible by the considerable influence of American Jews on American politics. The U.S. Congress seems to have succumbed to AIPAC, the main Jewish lobby. At the same

time, AIPAC's sister organisation, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, managed to place its members in key posts in successive American administrations and generally shape American policy towards the region. Pro-Israeli neo-conservatives pushed the United States into war against Iraq -- because Saddam Hussein was seen as a potential threat to Israel -- and are now echoing the call of Israel's Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu for war against Iran. Against this background, it is not altogether surprising that the United States has been unable to halt Israel's land-grab of Palestinian territory, let alone persuade it to make peace with the Palestinians and the rest of the Arab world.

• Yet another factor which helps explain the present disastrous situation is the collapse of Arab nationalism and its replacement by the rise of militant Islam. Arab leaders failed to coordinate their efforts in support of joint policies. Equally, they failed in their dealings with Western powers to use their considerable financial and oil and gas resources in support of Arab causes. The Arab League, a victim of inter-Arab quarrels, remains something of a broken reed. What needs to be done? What are the key challenges facing the leading Arab states as well as the new American Administration? A great deal will hang on the way the United States adapts to its changing position in the world. Once the world's dominant power, it must now come to terms with a new multi-polar international system. America's relative decline (largely brought about by its catastrophic wars and the misbehaviour of its deregulated financial institutions) has been matched by the rapid rise of China and a resurgent Russia.

The challenges are daunting. First, an urgent effort needs to be made to resolve the Arab-Israel conflict and bring to birth a Palestinian state. Nothing could better stabilise the region. Secondly, Arab leaders should work for a Sunni-Shia reconciliation, which must also require an entente with Iran. Iran should be the Arabs' partner, not its enemy. The United States, in turn, should seek to negotiate a 'win-win' deal with Tehran -- a perfectly feasible outcome which would at a stroke remove a major source of dangerous tension. Finally, the United States, the Arab states and the rest of the world should unite in finding a solution to the rise of Islamic violence. This must surely be done by negotiation and re-education -- and by a change of state policies -- rather than by force.

Is there even the slightest hope that any of this will be accomplished?

Patrick Seale is a leading British writer on the Middle East. His latest book is *The Struggle for Arab Independence: Riad el-Solh and the Makers of the Modern Middle East* (Cambridge University Press).

Article 5.

Stratfor

The Next U.S. Foreign Policy Team

Robert D. Kaplan

With the U.S. presidential election over, speculation now commences about the makeup of the defense and foreign policy team that will assume power following the presidential inauguration Jan. 20. It is not only a matter of who will be the next secretary of defense, secretary of state and national security adviser but also who will fill the critical deputy positions one, two and three steps below, at the level where the real day-to-day decisions are made. For what is often just one line in a newspaper -- the United States and Pakistan resume cooperation on this or that, or the United States and Australia decide to upgrade their military relationship -- entails many hours of negotiations with several American officials present at all times overseas. <http://us4.account-manage.com/transaction/track/click.php?u=74786417f9554984d314d06bd&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.stratfor.com%2Fanalysis%2Famericas-pacific-logic-robort-d-kaplan&url_id=49901&tags=3D5,33>

Foreign policy is mostly hidden: 90 percent of the effort never warrants a sentence in the media, even as it is essential to American interests. There are nearly 200 countries in the world, but the media only seriously follows about one-tenth of them, even as the State Department must conduct daily bilateral relations with almost all of them. And just because a country is not in the news does not mean that America's relations with it are not complex and fractious.

Media speculation about who will get the first- and second-tier jobs in government is often insane because the media http://us4.account-manage.com/transaction/track/click.php?u=74786417f9554984d314d06bd&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.stratfor.com%2Fwekly%2F20081222_death_deep_throat_and_crisis_journalism&url_id=202341&tags=5,33 confuse who is interesting and engaging in print and in conversation with who is actually qualified. Here is a list of the real qualifications of a top-tier foreign policy professional:

He or she has real administrative experience. He can manage people and systems -- and get decisions implemented fast. This kind of experience comes from the world of corporations, government and law firms, much less than from the world of universities and the media. Academic superstars like Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski are famous exceptions to this rule. Think tanks also produce top-tier foreign policy officials, provided such institutions are of a basically centrist inclination and are not pushing an ideological agenda.

Someone who can think functionally in terms of what works, at minimum risk to the public. This is practical, almost mathematical bent is in line with a corporate or a hard-core, think-tank background. Ronald Reagan was a great president in part because he had such men in key positions: Caspar Weinberger as secretary of defense, Frank Carlucci as national security adviser and George Shultz as secretary of state. These were the temperamentally bipartisan realists who were able to practically implement Reagan's conservative agenda.

Someone who has good judgment rather than detailed knowledge of an area. You will have expert staff who can brief you, but all the expertise in the world won't help you in government if your instincts are bad. It is all about the genius of temperament rather than the genius of intellect. Donald Rumsfeld had a first-rate intellect but a third-rate temperament, at least in his second go-around as secretary of defense under George W. Bush.

Someone who is able to make hard decisions http://us4.account-manage.com/transaction/track/click.php?u=74786417f9554984d314d06bd&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.stratfor.com%2Fweekly%2Fpurpose-presidential-debates&url_id=202345&tags=5,33 daily while still being able to sleep at night. Unlike journalists and intellectuals, who constantly revise their opinions to suit evolving circumstances, a top-tier government official will be dogged for life for decisions made without the benefit of hindsight. He can never walk away from them or revise them. This is especially true in matters of war and peace, in which he will see his name taken in vain in future libraries full of histories of the period.

Someone who can make decisions based on very partial evidence, because as Kissinger once famously quipped, by the time all or most of the facts are in, it is too late to affect the outcome. The world of government is not the world of academia, in which you can hold off publishing a monograph for months to add a few more vital footnotes.

Someone who can make decisions based on the greater strategic good rather than based on how he or she will look on the newspaper opinion pages the next day. The worst sorts of officials are those who crave good publicity. Of course, an official has to know how to manage the media -- but he must also avoid being captured by it.

It is not a requirement, but it certainly helps to be wealthy. Government jobs pay abysmally. And because of electronic communications, the 24-hour news cycle and so on, officials work longer hours and are under more stress than ever before. Wealth reduces stress, even as grants an official a measure of independence -- from which brave decisions might sometimes flow. Wealth means an official can quit his government job over principle anytime he wants. Someone without wealth, who needs to perform well in government to make wealth later on, is likely to take fewer risks and stand less often on his principles.

Someone who knows how to brief and be briefed. Both things require terseness. Those who feel the tendency to give speeches at small, time-constrained meetings and who always have the psychological need to get in the last word are apt to be less successful in government, which, after all, is about social skills at meetings. Successful officials get to the point quickly and efficiently extract knowledge from others by asking penetrating questions.

Someone who knows how to be a realist while talking like an idealist <http://us4.account-manage.com/transaction/track=click.php?u=74786417f9554984d314d06bd&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.stratfor.com%2Fweekly%2Fegypt-and-idealist-realist-debate-us-foreign-policy&ur=_id=202349&tags=5,33> . Idealism provides a state with an identity, even as a state requires realism to survive.

Someone who does not need -- for monetary or psychological reasons -- to publish often. Great public servants like former Secretary of State James Baker and former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates were never known for brilliant pieces in the newspapers and journals of opinion. Their genius was the process of decision-making itself. And that is the essence of government.

In short, the real foreign policy professionals are people who are all about discipline: discipline in what they say, in how they think, in how they administer and in the discipline of maintaining a thick hide against public criticism. Obviously, discipline is not all that is required -- just look at Rumsfeld, an intensely disciplined man -- but, nevertheless, discipline is the basis for good judgment and a good management style. Remember, America is a vast country that requires a massive security and diplomatic bureaucracy. Turning that bureaucracy in the direction you want it to go, and making it all work toward repeated, successful outcomes is more an art than a science.

But that art is more likely to come from some professional fields more than others. Baker was a high-powered lawyer, Gates spent a life in the intelligence bureaucracy and Shultz ran a large engineering firm. While Kissinger and Brzezinski were academics, they also came from World War II European immigrant backgrounds, which gave them an emotional and intellectual depth relatively rare on today's university campuses.

Ideas matter: An administration without ideas will drift from one tactical fix to another with no overall direction. But ideas need not always be articulated in print. George H. W. Bush's administration, in which Baker served, was about the sensibility of managing the Cold War to a peaceful conclusion advantageous to the United States, even as none of the top-tier men had ever published much of note. Keep that in mind when judging the next administration's foreign policy officials.

Unfortunately, it is sometimes hard for the public to scrutinize appointees to top- and upper-middle level positions. The media are not always aware of their personal traits, for the traits that really matter are often known to a relative small number of people. Meanwhile, congressional hearings on appointees are often a game of gotcha, in which mistakes over a long career are exposed for the sake of mere embarrassment or to disqualify someone who runs ideologically afoul of some members of the committee.

The best advice I can offer the public in this regard is to try to find out what the colleagues of the appointees themselves have to say about them. In addition, as I said at the beginning, look for people who have a resume of actually running things.

Article 6.

Asia Times

The politics of money in Palestine
Ramzy Baroud

Nov 8, '12 -- In Malaysia, a small group of community activists are busy at work developing projects that benefit most vulnerable members of Palestinian society in Gaza.

Working under the umbrella of Viva Palestina Malaysia (VPM), the group shows solidarity through empowerment projects: interest free loans for small projects, providing employment for women, supplying thousands of solar lamps aimed at ending the persistent darkness for many families, and more.

The overall value of the combined efforts of VPM is important because it is long-lasting. Equally important, the channeled funds are not part of a political scheme nor are aimed to exact concession. This can hardly be said of much of the relationship between Palestinian leadership and society, and outside funds, which began pouring in, with a clear political manual that has been dutifully followed by those who provide the funds and those who receive them. That relationship was once more a subject of scurrility and discussion following the recent visit by Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, emir of Qatar to Gaza, which has been under an Israeli siege soon following Hamas' victory in the general elections in 2006. The siege became complete in 2007, when Hamas clashed with its rival Fatah, perceived by Israel and the US as "moderate";

Al-Jazeera said the emir's arrival to Gaza was to "to inaugurate a Qatari investment project worth hundreds of millions of dollars to rebuild the impoverished and overcrowded coastal enclave". Gaza Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh interpreted the visit at a grander scale: "The visit of the emir announces officially the breaching of the political and economical siege imposed on Gaza for more than five years." Analysts, depending on their political leanings, however, spoke of entirely different mechanisms that compelled Qatar's generosity. Those sympathetic to Fatah warned that empowering Hamas in the Gaza enclave to act as a state will further deepen the national divide. Others spoke more candidly of a Qatari reward to Hamas for leaving Syria at the height of the regional power play ignited by the so-called Arab Spring.

Judging by the largely measured or reserved response from Israel, the US and other countries that would have made it impossible for the emir to visit Gaza in the first place, Syria might have been the keyword behind the seemingly selfless effort.

But in any case, there are hardly any inconsistencies between this episode and a history rife of the political manipulation of funds. It is an intrinsic relationship that goes even earlier than the signing of the Oslo Accords in September 1993. Oslo, however, officiated and cemented that relationship in many respects. Merely two weeks after the signing of the Declaration of Principles issues of international aid became a core subject involving mostly Western donor countries, Arab countries and others.

Although the political dominion of Oslo is all but dead, international aid continues to flow. The rise and decline in funds are often affiliated with the Palestinian Authority (PA) report card, as in its ability to sustain a political charade and serve as Israel's "partner" despite the fact that Israel has completely altered the physical reality upon which Oslo was predicated.

Despite appearances, Mahmoud Abbas' PA is much less immune to political arm-twisting as a result of its nearly two-decade entanglement of the international aid cartel, than Hamas. The latter is barely learning the ropes. They too will eventually learn that there is no such thing as free money, especially when those offering their services are very much at the heart of the political struggle for the future of the Middle East.

The link between political statements and action and money is obvious for all to see. What may appear as political concessions can oftentimes be attributed to some funds being frozen or waiting to be delivered. It is transaction-based politics at its best.

While the PA's budget deficit stands at US\$1.3 billion, old friends are barely in a hurry to offset the financial crisis. The US is yet to free \$200 million it pledged for the year 2012. The decision has everything to do with the PA's attempt last year to obtain UN membership for Palestine.

Israel on the other hand agreed to an early transfer of \$78 million of tax revenues it collects on behalf of the PA fearing that a collapse of PA institutions could prove too costly for Israel as well. With the conspicuous retreat of international donors, and the measured Israeli moves, Israel is now earning a greater stake in the PA's political investment in the West Bank. Israel is notorious for manipulating the weaknesses of the PA whenever the opportunity arises, as it surely will. The financial entanglement of the Palestinians to obtain political goals is not confined to such obvious examples. In fact that political/financial barrier is a major component that defines the relationship between Palestinian leaderships and factions and their supporters.

It is the same paradigm that turned thousands of NGOs in Palestine into disconnected entities, less concerned with uniting behind a national liberation program, and more concerned with maintaining attractive portfolios that make their services more marketable among potential donors, mostly affiliated with the donors' countries that have long leased the Palestinian political will in the first place.

It is difficult to say what it will take to free the Palestinian leadership and society from these impossible entanglements. But it goes without saying that those who rent their sovereignty to the highest bidder have no business speaking of national liberation, popular resistance and all the right sounding, but empty slogans.

Ramzy Baroud (ramzybaroud.net <<http://ramzybaroud.net>>) is an internationally syndicated columnist and the editor of PalestineChronicle.com. His latest book is My Father Was a Freedom Fighter: Gaza's Untold Story.