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Article 1.

Foreign Policy

Brother Number One

Shadi Hamid

June 7, 2012 -- Egypt is on the cusp of its first real experiment in Islamist governance. If the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsi comes out on top in the upcoming presidential runoff election, scheduled for June 16 and 17, the venerable Islamist movement will have won control of both Egypt's presidency and its parliament, and it will have a very real chance to implement

its agenda of market-driven economic recovery, gradual Islamization, and the reassertion of Egypt's regional role. Over the course of Egypt's troubled transition, the Brotherhood has become increasingly, and uncharacteristically, assertive in its political approach. Renouncing promises not to seek the presidency and entering into an overt confrontation with the ruling military council, the Brotherhood's bid to "save the revolution" has been interpreted by others as an all-out power grab. Egypt's liberals, as well as the United States, now worry about the implications of unchecked Brotherhood rule and what that might mean for their interests. Things couldn't have been more different two years ago. Under the repression of Hosni Mubarak's regime, the Brotherhood's unofficial motto was "participation, not domination." The group was renowned for its caution and patient (some would say too patient) approach to politics. When I sat down with Morsi in May 2010 -- just months before the revolution and well before he could have ever imagined being Mubarak's successor -- he echoed the leadership's almost stubborn belief in glacial but steady change. He even objected to a fairly anodyne description of the movement's political activities: "The word 'opposition' has the connotation of seeking power," Morsi told me then. "But, at this moment, we are not seeking power because [that] requires preparation, and society is not prepared." The Muslim Brotherhood, being a religious movement more than a political party, had the benefit of a long horizon.

Morsi wasn't well known back then. He was an important player in the Brotherhood, but did not seem to have a particularly distinctive set of views. He was a loyalist, an enforcer, and an operator. And he was arguably good at those things. But being,

or becoming, a leader is a different matter. Despite heading the Brotherhood's parliamentary bloc and later leading the group's newly formed Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), Morsi struggled to command respect across ideological lines. He rarely spoke like someone who liked making concessions or doing the hard work necessary for building consensus. Like many Brotherhood leaders, he nurtured a degree of resentment toward Egypt's liberals. They were tiny and irrelevant, the thinking went, so why were they always asking for so much? In May 2010, the opposition seemed to be coming alive, but in a uniquely Egyptian way. At one protest in Tahrir Square, each group -- Islamists, liberals, and leftists -- huddled in its own part of the square. I asked Morsi why there wasn't greater cooperation between Islamists and liberals. "That depends on the other side," he said, echoing what the liberals were saying about the Brotherhood. This thinly veiled disdain could be papered over when liberals, leftists, and Brotherhood members were facing a dictator they all hated. And, during the revolution, Brotherhood members, Salafists, liberals, and ordinary Egyptians joined hands and put the old divisions aside -- if only for a moment. When Mubarak fell, though, there was little left to unite them.

The international community, particularly the United States, shares the liberals' fear of Islamist domination, but for a very different set of reasons. Historically, the Brotherhood has been one of the more consistent purveyors of anti-American and anti-Israeli sentiment. While some Brotherhood leaders, particularly lead strategist Khairat El Shater, are less strident in their condemnations and less willfully creative with their conspiracy theories in private, Morsi is not. In a conversation with me, he volunteered his views on the 9/11 terrorist attacks without any

prompting. "When you come and tell me that the plane hit the tower like a knife in butter," he said, shifting to English, "then you are insulting us. How did the plane cut through the steel like this? Something must have happened from the inside. It's impossible." According to various polls, such views are held by most Egyptians, including leftists and liberals, but that doesn't make them any less troubling. It is perhaps ironic, then, that out of the Brotherhood's top officials, Morsi has spent the most time in the United States. He is a graduate of the University of Southern California and, interestingly, the father of two U.S. citizens -- a reminder that familiarity can sometimes breed contempt. At a recent news conference, Morsi discussed his time living abroad, painting a picture of a society in moral decay, featuring crumbling families, young mothers in hospitals who have to "write in the name of the father," and couples living together out of wedlock. We don't have these problems in Egypt, he said, his voice rising with a mixture of pride and resentment. I met Morsi again, a year later in May 2011, at the Brotherhood's new, plush headquarters in Muqattam, nestled on a small mountain on Cairo's outskirts. The Brotherhood leader seemed surprisingly calm. He punctuated his Arabic with English expressions; he made jokes (they weren't necessarily funny), name-checked the 1978 film The Deer Hunter, and even did an impromptu impression of a former U.S. president. In the early days, in the afterglow of the 18-day uprising, the group's leaders were still careful to say the right things. He was quick to point out that 2,500 of the FJP's 9,000 founding members were not from the Brotherhood, and included Christians. He was also dismissive of ultraconservative Salafi movements. They weren't politically mature yet, he said. The implication was obvious: The Brotherhood, unlike the Salafists, had spent decades first

learning and then playing -- rather skillfully at times -- the game of politics. They learned how and when to compromise and how to justify it to their conservative base. Now, nearly 28 years after first entering parliament in 1984, the group was taking pains to present itself as the moderate, respectable face of political Islam. But the Brotherhood soon realized that it had stumbled upon one of those rare moments where a country's politics are truly open and undefined. So they decided to seize it, alienating many of their erstwhile liberal allies in the process. This approach was a good fit with the Brotherhood's distinctly majoritarian approach to democracy: They had won a decisive popular mandate in the parliamentary elections, with 47 percent of the vote, so why shouldn't they rule? Eventually, the Brotherhood decided to go for broke. "We have witnessed obstacles standing in the way of parliament to take decisions to achieve the demands of the revolution," Morsi said in March. "We have therefore chosen the path of the presidency not because we are greedy for power but because we have a majority in parliament which is unable to fulfill its duties."

The more important question is: Does it really matter what Morsi thinks? The Brotherhood's presidential campaign was never about Morsi. It was about the Brotherhood, and Morsi just happened to be the substitute candidate -- an unlikely accident of history -- after the charismatic Shater was disqualified from the race. This is what makes it difficult to assess a Morsi presidency. Over the past year, Shater's personal office has become the address for a steady stream of big-shot investors and visiting dignitaries, including senior U.S. officials. Those who have met him have come out both impressed and reassured. It was Shater who plucked Morsi from relative obscurity to join

the Brotherhood's Guidance Bureau, the organization's top decision-making body, and then selected him to lead the Brotherhood's political arm. Up until now, there has been little daylight between the two men. But will Shater be able to maintain his sway if Morsi ascends to Egypt's highest office? Some Brotherhood members are already chafing at the idea of Shater -- whom supporters and detractors alike portray as a brilliant but domineering operative -- serving as the power behind the throne: "If Morsi is able to free himself from the shadow of Shater, his policies will be balanced. If Shater stays in control, Morsi will become increasingly unpopular and fail to govern effectively," one Brotherhood member who has worked with both figures told me. "Will Morsi become the son who surpassed the father?" On the campaign trail, Morsi has proved a quick study and a hard worker. Campaign aides have worked to repackage him, coaching him on his speaking style and how to use his hands in interviews. In the process, the candidate has grown more confident -- and it's starting to show. His May 30 appearance on Yosri Fouda's television program showed a surprisingly fluent speaker, a far cry from his earlier, shaky media appearances. As one Brotherhood member remarked, "The new Morsi of today is different from the person I knew." Although Morsi outperformed most polls in coming out on top in the first round of elections, for the Brotherhood, his 25 percent share of the vote amounted to something of a shock. The group's internal projections, based on polling conducted weeks before the vote, saw Morsi with a commanding lead -- it was only a question of how close he would get to 50 percent. Morsi's lack of charisma -- as well as the lack of respect he commands among non-Islamists -- was part of the reason for his disappointing showing. But it was also the result of a series of

more serious mistakes and miscalculations. Brotherhood officials had become detached from the changing tenor in the group's former strongholds in the Nile Delta, where the Brotherhood was overtaken by Ahmed Shafiq, Mubarak's last prime minister. The Islamist-dominated parliament had failed to pass the sweeping reform legislation that many had expected. Most controversial was an attempt to stack the constituent assembly with Brotherhood supporters, a classic case of political overreach.

After the revolution, the Brotherhood -- like so many other political forces in Egypt's toxic political scene -- became consumed by paranoia, fearing that some combination of liberals, leftists, and old regime elements were out to get them. A democratic opening, as welcome as it was, came with its own risks. The rise of Brotherhood defector Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh as a viable candidate was seen as an unprecedented threat to organizational unity and discipline.

This paranoia, mixed with an old-fashioned dose of political cynicism, seeped into the group's discourse on foreign policy. When Egypt's ruling military council lifted a travel ban on American NGO workers in an attempt to defuse a political crisis, the Brotherhood-led parliament pounced, using the episode to call for a no-confidence vote and demand the removal of the military-appointed government. Brotherhood parliamentarians blamed the Egyptian government for giving into American pressure and called on Egypt to refuse U.S. aid. "I wish members of the U.S. Congress could listen to you now to realize that this is the parliament of the revolution, which does not allow a breach of the nation's sovereignty or interference in its affairs," said parliament speaker Saad al-Katatni, a Brotherhood

official, in reaction to the debate. The Brotherhood has found itself doing a difficult dance, thinking one thing in private and saying another in public. Such mixed messages are also a function of the love-hate schizophrenia that many Brotherhood members -- and Egyptians in general -- seem to display toward the United States. I remember the early days of Barack Obama's presidency, when Brotherhood officials would complain bitterly about the White House's disinterest in democracy promotion. "For Obama, the issue of democracy is 15th on his list of priorities," one Brotherhood official told me in May 2010. "There's no moment of change like there was under Bush." It is true that the Brotherhood, along with most of Egypt, hates particular U.S. policies, particularly those related to Palestine. It also tends to think that somehow -- usually through creative, indirect means -- the United States is responsible for various nefarious plots against Egypt. But that doesn't mean that a Brotherhood-dominated government would immediately reorder Cairo's international alliances. For all the public vitriol, the Brotherhood actually feels more comfortable with America than it does with America's adversaries: "The U.S. is a superpower that is there and will be there, and it is not to anyone's benefit to have this superpower going down, but we want it to go up with its values and not with its dark side," one senior Brotherhood official told me. "What are the values driving China across the globe?... It's just pure profit. The Russians and the Chinese, I don't know their values! Western European and American core values of human rights and pluralism -- we practiced this when we were living there."

Values aside, a Morsi administration simply would not be able to afford a rupture in relations with the United States. A Muslim

Brotherhood-led Egypt will need to rebuild its deteriorating economy, and U.S. and European loans, assistance, and investment will be crucial to this effort. There's also no certainty that a President Morsi could drastically alter Egypt's foreign policy even if he wanted to -- regardless of what Egypt's new constitution says, the military and the intelligence services will continue to exercise veto power over critical defense and national security issues. While there are limits to how much the Brotherhood can alter Egypt's foreign policy, there are also limits to how far it can go in satisfying U.S. concerns. As Egypt becomes more democratic, elected leaders will have no choice but to heed popular sentiment on foreign policy. And in an otherwise divided polity, the only real area of consensus is the need for an independent, assertive foreign policy that re-establishes Egypt's leading role in the region. That means tension and disagreement with the United States will become a normal feature of the bilateral relationship. The model to look to is Turkey, led by the Islamically oriented Justice and Development Party, which has employed anti-Israel rhetoric to useful domestic effect.

The effect of a Morsi presidency on domestic policy is similarly hazy. Egypt's byzantine bureaucracy remains stocked with Mubarak loyalists and could block any changes that Morsi tries to push through. As a former political advisor to the Brotherhood predicted to me, the "state machinery will devour him." To further confuse matters, Morsi is one of the rare presidential candidates who believes in limiting the power of his own office. In his TV interview with Fouda, he again stated his preference: an interim period with a mixed presidential-parliamentary system, which would pave the way for a system in

which the legislature held complete sway. A Brotherhood-led assembly is set to draft a constitution that will define the relative powers of elected institutions.

But, of course, Morsi's opinion on the matter could change once he became president. The Muslim Brotherhood's first experience in governance will be an experiment, and one the organization may not be prepared for. Elections have consequences. We just don't know what they'll be. And, for that matter, neither does Morsi.

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Article 2.

Al-Ahram Weekly

Revolution in chaos

Ayman El-Amir

7 - 13 June 2012 -- Revolutions that changed the course of history took years to mature, distil their fundamental principles and sow them in their spheres of influence and beyond. This was the case of the American, French and Russian revolutions. The

Egyptian Revolution of 25 January 2011, which is barely 17 months old, is still in its infancy, grappling with the priorities of its agenda. It seems more concerned with the issue of retribution than of building a new order.

There is, of course, the valid argument that it cannot build a new order unless it has demolished the old one. However, the Egyptian revolution is permeated by the mood of revenge. That probably explains the nationwide outrage that has engulfed the country following the court sentences in the case of former president Hosni Mubarak, his sons and associates. When the presiding judge, Ahmed Refaat, handed down a life sentence for Mubarak and his interior minister, Habib El-Adli, the crowd in the courtroom cheered Allahu Akbar (God is great). But when the charges against six top lieutenants were dropped for lack of concrete evidence, that had probably been tampered with and destroyed earlier by the defendants, the courtroom exploded "The people want to purge the judiciary" and went into a melee that continued outside the court building.

The protest demonstrations that followed in Tahrir Square and 18 other major Egyptian cities encapsulated the people's sentiment that what they wanted was revolutionary justice rather than the standard legal justice the country's judiciary has long been flattered for. Some of the demonstrators were not even happy with the life sentence against Mubarak and wanted him sentenced to death. Others interpreted it as a 25-year sentence that would be reduced drastically after further review by the Court of Cassation and that Mubarak would be ultimately released after a few weeks and probably whisked out of the country. The rumour mill was turning out all kinds of stories.

After 30 years of Mubarak rule and its devious policies that enriched a few thousand loyalists and sent millions of others into the abyss of poverty, Egyptians firmly embraced conspiracy theory. It became second nature to them. A wide credibility gap developed between the government and its public officials and the people. Even the legal system was not immune to it, especially that the Mubarak regime manipulated the justice system in the same way the 23 July movement handled domestic policy: reward loyalists and penalising critics. This has been the culture of governance for 60 years. Furthermore, corruption infected the entire country. From the smallest town to the most prestigious seat of power, everything worked by bribery and go-betweens. That was the legacy of the Mubarak regime -- indeed of the entire era since the 23 July 1952 military coup.

Revolutionary justice, as an extraordinary form of punishment, is extrajudicial. It involves state security and revolutionary courts and has often worked against Egyptians. For 60 years, it was invariably used to suppress the opposition and to punish opponents, including Marxists and members of the Muslim Brotherhood alike. Rulings of up to the death sentence were passed on different occasions against different individuals by special courts that tarnished the reputation of the country's judicial system. Cases of torture, sometimes leading to death, were never fully investigated or brought to justice.

Revolutionary justice has been tamed since the days of "the Terror" under Robespierre at the peak of the 1789 French Revolution when 15,000 to 20,000 French men and women were executed by the guillotine for expressing moderately opposite views. Yet, extraordinary forms of justice are sometimes called up in times of turmoil. Colonel Muammar

Gaddafi of Libya was summarily executed by one shot in the head without any due process of law. His execution met with little if any protest because his own countrymen and most people around the world had already condemned him as a villain. Nikolai Ceausescu of Romania and his wife were summarily executed by a firing squad in 1990 after being condemned to death by a political court in a small room adjacent to the execution arena.

Egyptians wanted extraordinary justice against the Mubarak clique for the extraordinary injustice of killing 840 and injury of more than 6,400 young people who demonstrated against his regime. They wanted revolutionary courts or trials in a Tahrir Square court followed by public hanging of the culprits. But times have changed.

The Egyptian public is right in suspecting that many assets of the Mubarak regime are still in power; thousands of his loyalists manage state and public affairs and economic policies. Should a national government closely monitored by the people and answerable to them be installed, and all the country's institutions be regulated by a civil, democratic and modern constitution, that would affirm the separation of powers, the country would be on the right course for change.

It is unfortunate that the Muslim Brotherhood has jumped on the bandwagon of public outrage to settle accounts with its rivals, reaffirm its one-track agenda and restore the confidence it had lost in the eyes of the public since last November's parliamentary elections. They have also used the opportunity to try and control the formation of the Constituent Assembly that will draft a permanent constitution. That was why they

boycotted the all-party meeting called by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) Tuesday to amend the Constitutional Declaration of March 2011, to pre-empt any attempt by the Brotherhood to dominate the proposed assembly. It resorts to delay tactics to gain time until the transitional period is terminated, SCAF's mandate has expired, and a Muslim Brotherhood president is in power.

The Brotherhood succeeded in quickly mobilising tens thousands of Egyptians in major cities to protest the rulings, and incited some of them to undermine the other presidential candidate scheduled for the rerun, Ahmed Shafik, by presenting him as an accessory to the Mubarak regime. That was violently rejected by Shafik who labelled the Brotherhood as "the forces of chaos and darkness". Again, the Brotherhood overplayed their hand by using the protest to raise the sagging image of Mohamed Mursi, their candidate, by attacking Shafiq. Looking forward to the presidential election rerun, the electorate still remembers what a voracious appetite the Brotherhood has for power. In the eyes of the public, it clearly wants to consolidate the powers of all state institutions into its hands. It is trying, rather successfully, to fire up people and to turn their wrath against Shafiq for the Brotherhood's ulterior motives.

Egyptians have only one last chance to restore the balance of the political system they envision: the composition of a multifarious Constituent Assembly. Should the Brotherhood succeed in vilifying Shafiq to give an edge to Mursi and to capture the presidency, the drafting of the new constitution is doomed to fall prey to theocratic tendencies. Instead, it should affirm the principles of the civil nature of the state, citizenship, equality and endorsement of the international covenants of human rights.

For this to happen, the Constituent Assembly should steer clear of any religious-leaning members and preferably consist mainly of jurists. Additionally, SCAF should ensure that the position of the president is not endowed with extraordinary powers or privileges. But the Brothers have a mind of their own. After flexing their muscles in public squares, they felt that they muster enough power to boycott an all-party meeting with SCAF and to turn a deaf ear to a proposal by other presidential candidates for setting up an interim presidential council.

Egyptians have a great deal to learn from their modern history. The celebrated constitution of 1923 was drafted by 18 members, mostly jurists, selected from among the 30-member Committee of the Constitution. The 18 members were called "the Committee of General Principles," which drafted the bulk of the constitution. In the course of the debate, a member proposed, as a courtesy to the Egyptian Copts, the constitution should provide a special quota for the Copts as a minority. The proposal was vehemently opposed by a prominent Copt at the time, Fikri Makram Ebeid, who argued that the rights of the Copts were fully protected and guaranteed by the constitutional provisions of citizenship and equality. The proposal was later dropped. That was the Egypt that was.

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The Washington Post

Obama's friend in Turkey

David Ignatius

June 8 – Istanbul -- As President Obama was feeling his way in foreign policy during his first months in office, he decided to cultivate a friendship with Turkey's headstrong prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Over the past year, this investment in Turkey has begun to pay some big dividends — anchoring U.S. policy in a region that sometimes seems adrift.

Erdogan's clout was on display this week as he hosted a meeting here of the World Economic Forum (WEF) that celebrated the stability of the "Turkish model" of Muslim democracy amid the turmoil of the Arab Spring. One panel had the enraptured title "Turkey as a Source of Inspiration."

In a speech Tuesday, Erdogan named Turkey's achievements over the decade he has been in power: Its economy has grown an annual average of 5.3 percent since 2002, the fastest rate of any country in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development; gross domestic product has more than tripled, as have its foreign reserves; investment from abroad has increased more than 16 times.

For Erdogan, receiving a visit from the WEF was a kind of vindication. The Turkish leader walked angrily offstage at the

group's 2009 meeting in Davos, Switzerland, after a panel moderator (yours truly) didn't allow him time to respond to Israeli President Shimon Peres's remarks about the Gaza war. This week, that moment seemed well in the past.

Turkey's ascendancy in the region may seem obvious now, but it was less so in 2009, when Obama began working to build a special relationship. To an otherwise predictable European itinerary for his first overseas trip in April 2009, he added a stop in Ankara. What impressed the Turks wasn't just that he spoke to their parliament but that earlier, in Strasbourg, he pushed for a greater role for Turkey in NATO, and in Prague he argued for Turkish membership in the European Union.

Obama and Erdogan continued their courtship despite a sharp deterioration in Turkey's relations with Israel after the Gaza war and despite U.S. worries in early 2010 that Ankara was becoming too friendly with Iran. Obama expressed his concerns in a blunt two-hour conversation at the June 2010 Group of 20 summit in Toronto. Since then, according to both sides, there has been growing mutual trust.

"My prime minister sees a friend in President Obama," says Egemen Bagis, the minister for European affairs and one of Erdogan's closest political advisers. "The two can very candidly express their opinions. They might not always agree, but they feel confident enough to share positions."

An example of the Obama-Erdogan channel was their meeting in March at the [Asian summit in Seoul](#). The top item was Obama's request that Erdogan convey a message to Iran's supreme leader about U.S. interest in a nuclear agreement. In Seoul, Erdogan

also promised to reopen a Greek Orthodox seminary on the island of Halki, granting a request that Obama had made in 2009; Erdogan had earlier agreed to Obama's request that Turkey permit services at an ancient Armenian church on Akdamar Island in Lake Van.

Turks cite several other concessions made by the Turkish leader: Obama persuaded him to install a missile-defense radar system that became operational this year, upsetting Tehran. And at U.S. urging, Erdogan reversed his initial opposition to NATO intervention last year in Libya.

In playing the Turkey card, Obama has upset some powerful political constituencies at home. Jewish groups protest that Obama's warming to Ankara has come even as Israel's relationship with Turkey has chilled almost to the freezing point. Armenian groups are upset that Obama has soft-pedaled his once-emphatic call for Turkey to recognize the genocide of 1915. And human-rights groups complain that the United States is tolerating Erdogan's squeeze on Turkish journalists, judges and political foes.

But as the Arab Spring has darkened, the administration has been glad for its alliance with this prosperous Muslim democracy — which it can celebrate as a beacon for the neighborhood. Ahmet Davutoglu, Turkey's ambitious foreign minister, argues that his country is a role model for Arabs because it shows that democracy brings dignity, not chaos or extremism.

Bagis puts it this way: "There are many Muslim leaders who can go to Egypt and pray in a mosque. And there are many Western

leaders who can go talk about democracy. Erdogan did both.” For Turkey these days, that’s something of a trump card. But there’s a mutual dependence. It seems fair to say that no world leader has a greater stake in Obama’s reelection than the Turkish prime minister.

Article 4.

World Politics Review

Disabling Iran's Oil Weapon

Frida Ghitis

07 Jun 2012 -- One of the obvious dangers of a possible war with Iran over its controversial nuclear program is that it could push oil prices sharply higher and, in turn, send the global economy into a tailspin. But a number of developments, some very deliberately set in motion by Iran’s adversaries, have recently converged to erode the effectiveness of Iran’s powerful oil weapon.

The sharp edge of Iran’s oil power has been dulled through painstaking tactical moves by Washington and its allies, but the most significant change came not by design, but by misfortune. Ironically, the fear that a conflict with Iran would cause a spike in petroleum prices and trip the world into a new recessionary spiral has been blunted by evidence that major economies are already suffering an economic slowdown. The sovereign debt crisis in the eurozone and the unexpected slowdown in growth

in the U.S. have helped depress the price of oil in the commodities markets to well below \$100 a barrel, the lowest level in eight months.

Lower oil prices are bad news for Iran for two reasons. First, they slash the Islamic Republic's principal source of income. Second, they make the cost of conflict with Iran more bearable for the West.

Tehran and the West continue their talks over Iran's uranium enrichment efforts, with Iran insisting the program has only peaceful intent and the West, bolstered by analysis from International Atomic Energy Association inspectors, claiming that the program looks suspiciously like one aiming to produce nuclear weapons. New talks are scheduled in Moscow for June 18, but there is scant evidence that the two sides are coming closer to an agreement. The threat of military action hangs in the air as Israel watches warily and Washington reiterates that "all options" are on the table.

As a top oil producer, with control of the sea lane through which other major oil exporters ship their hydrocarbon exports to the rest of the world, Iran has enormous potential to greatly disrupt oil markets. Its geographical location, spanning the eastern shores of the Persian Gulf, means that global oil supplies could suffer as an unintended consequence of military conflict. But it also gives Tehran the ability to squeeze supplies deliberately. Just how seriously the West takes the risk became evident late last year, when Iran threatened to block the flow of oil through the Persian Gulf. As the West announced stricter economic sanctions, Iranian Vice President Mohammad Reza Rahimi warned that "not a drop of oil will pass through the Strait of Hormuz" if the planned measures went into effect. About 40 percent of tanker oil, or 20 percent of global oil supplies, pass

through Hormuz. Stopping that flow would send a shockwave through oil markets.

Washington did not take the threat lightly. The chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Martin Dempsey, put it plainly: If Iran moved to close the strait, he said, the U.S. would “take action and reopen the strait.” The same message was repeated by Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and reportedly delivered through a secret channel to Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was informed that closing the strait would constitute the crossing of a “red line” that could trigger an armed military response.

Much has happened in the ensuing months. Before Iran has had a chance to decide if it wants to stop the flow of its own petroleum products, the West is planning to slash purchases of Iranian oil. A European Union embargo is scheduled to start in July, and China has already cut its purchases of Iranian oil by about a quarter. Even Turkey has sharply reduced purchases of Iranian oil.

Under normal circumstances, squeezing the flow of crude oil from the world’s second-largest producer would be a form of self-flagellation for the West. But oil supplies have been deliberately boosted from other sources, just as demand is easing because of economic problems.

Saudi Arabia, which sides with the West against Iran, its historical rival, has increased oil production to the highest levels in 23 years. And overall OPEC output has reached the highest level since 2008. Iran plans to pressure OPEC to lower production during this month’s meeting, hoping to raise prices. Iran still has the ability to disrupt oil markets, which will undoubtedly affect consumers everywhere. But major oil-

importing nations have sent notice that they are prepared to deal with threats to the global supply.

During last year's war in Libya, another important oil exporter, the International Energy Agency surprised markets with its announcement that it would release 60 million barrels from the global strategic petroleum reserves. The announcement alone caused prices to drop 4.5 percent in one day.

As tensions have heated up with Iran, Washington has persuaded its allies to draw up a similar plan. During last month's G-8 meeting in Chicago, the world's major economies agreed to coordinate their response and work together to lower oil prices should a confrontation with Iran make it necessary.

Meanwhile, as the West moves to reduce its dependence on Iranian oil or on oil that passes through the Strait of Hormuz, Gulf oil producers are seeking alternate routes to bring their hydrocarbons to the global market. The United Arab Emirates, the fourth-largest exporter, is about to open a 225-mile pipeline that will allow it to bypass Hormuz to reach shipping terminals for its oil exports. And Abu Dhabi is reportedly planning yet another pipeline for its liquefied natural gas, also allowing it to reach tankers without passing through the narrow strait.

In the meantime, the U.S., the world's biggest consumer of oil, has managed to considerably lower its reliance on crude oil imports. Higher domestic oil and natural gas production has resulted in a significant decline in America's need to buy from international markets, bringing seaborne imports to the lowest levels in more than 15 years.

America still imports 45 percent of the oil it consumes, and the price of those imports is set by the global commodities markets. That means that the U.S., like any country that imports fuel, would feel the effects of a conflict in the world's top oil-

producing region, the Persian Gulf.

But Iran's ability to unilaterally inflict pain has been sharply reduced. Even more troubling for Iran, if a war started today, global oil supplies are better prepared to withstand the shock than they have been in a long time. As the world worries that Iran may build a nuclear weapon, Iran's most powerful weapon to keep a Western military strike at bay has become much less effective.

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Article 5.

Center for a New American Security

Risk and Rivalry: Iran, Israel and the Bomb

Dr. Colin H. Kahl, Melissa Dalton, Matthew Irvine

(Executive Summary)

06/06/2012 -- A nuclear-armed Iran would pose a significant challenge to U.S. and Israeli interests and would increase the prospects for regional conflict. Nevertheless, a preventive military strike against Iran's nuclear program by either the United States or Israel at this time is not the best

option, and rushing to war would risk making the threat worse. Although Iran could probably be deterred from deliberately using or transferring nuclear weapons, a nuclear-armed Iran would be a more dangerous adversary in several respects. Believing that its nuclear deterrent would make it immune from retaliation, the Iranian regime would likely increase its lethal support to proxies such as Hezbollah and Hamas and commit more brazen acts of terrorism abroad, thus creating more frequent crises in the Levant. The Israeli-Iranian rivalry would be more prone to crises, and these crises would entail some inherent risk of inadvertent escalation to nuclear war. Preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons should therefore remain an urgent priority for both the United States and Israel. Until Iran appears poised to weaponize its nuclear capability, however, the preferable option is to continue the current combination of pressure and diplomacy. All options, including preventive military action, should remain on the table, but policymakers should recognize that the potential risks and costs associated with using force are high. Military action should remain a last resort, which should be contemplated only by the United States and only under stringent conditions. This report is the first in a series on the consequences of Iranian nuclearization.¹ It examines the direct threat that a nuclear-armed Iran might pose to Israel and the associated risks of Israeli-Iranian nuclear confrontation. Our analysis of these potential dangers concludes:

- The threat from Iran's nuclear program is growing but not yet imminent. Credible evidence suggests that Iran is pursuing a "nuclear hedging" strategy that aims to

develop the indigenous technical capability to rapidly produce nuclear weapons at some point, should Iran's supreme leader decide to do so. However, Iran is at least a year - and likely further - away from developing nuclear weapons.

- Multiple Iranian nuclear futures are possible. If Iran's nuclear progress continues, the supreme leader could conceivably be satisfied with stopping at a "threshold" capability just short of full-fledged weaponization. If the Iranian regime chooses instead to cross the nuclear threshold, the ultimate size and character of Iran's nuclear arsenal could follow a number of different pathways, each of which would produce different risks.
- Iran is unlikely to deliberately use a nuclear weapon or transfer a nuclear device to terrorists for use against Israel. The Iranian regime is not suicidal and is sufficiently rational for the basic logic of nuclear deterrence to hold.
- A nuclear-armed Iran would nevertheless be more aggressive and dangerous than an Iran without nuclear weapons. If Tehran thought that its nuclear deterrent would protect it against retaliation, Iran would be emboldened to increase its support for proxies in the Levant and terrorism abroad.

- A more crisis-prone Israeli-Iranian rivalry would create some inherent risk of inadvertent nuclear war. The possibility of Israeli-Iranian nuclear escalation has been somewhat exaggerated, but it is not trivial and would have potentially devastating consequences.

As policymakers attempt to head off those challenges, we make several recommendations:

- Preventing a nuclear-armed Iran should remain the priority. Given the threat posed by a nuclear-armed Iran, current policy rightly emphasizes prevention rather than containment with regard to the possibility of Iran developing nuclear weapons.
- The United States and Israel should avoid taking steps that limit diplomatic options. The best diplomatic outcome would be to roll back Iran's current nuclear progress. Yet even as policymakers aggressively pursue preventive efforts, they should avoid drawing diplomatic red lines - most notably, insisting that Iran end all domestic uranium enrichment - that box in negotiators and make creative solutions to the Iranian nuclear threat more difficult.
- The use of force should be a last resort. As the United States and its partners pursue a diplomatic solution that pressures Iran to meet its international obligations, all options, including possible military action, should remain

on the table. However, because of the enormous risks and uncertain benefits involved, a preventive strike on Iran's nuclear program should remain a last resort. Such a strike should only be considered if four conditions are met: 1. all nonmilitary options have been exhausted, 2. Iran has made a clear move toward weaponization, 3. there is a reasonable expectation that the strike would set back Iran's program significantly and 4. a sufficiently large international coalition is available to help manage the destabilizing consequences of the strike and to work collectively in the aftermath to contain Iran and hinder it from rebuilding its nuclear program.

- Israel should not attack Iran. A near-term Israeli attack on Iran fails to meet any of the previous criteria and would likely backfire, increasing the risks to Israeli security and regional stability. Only the United States - if it had exhausted all other options and faced compelling evidence that Iran was determined to produce a bomb - would have any hope of producing a significant delay in Iran's nuclear program while holding together the type of coalition required for effective poststrike containment.

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Article 6.

The New Republic

Why a Syrian Civil War Would Be a Disaster For U.S. National Security

Robert Satloff

June 7, 2012 -- Speaking Thursday before the U.N. General Assembly, just one day after the latest massacre of civilians by government-affiliated forces, Kofi Annan warned that the crisis in Syria was on a disastrous course. “If things do not change, the future is likely to be one of brutal repression, massacres, sectarian violence and even all-out civil war,” he said. “All Syrians will lose.”

Annan, of course, is not the first to evoke the term “civil war” in reference to the crisis in Syria, which has already resulted in more than 10,000 dead and 50,000 missing. The term has

become a favorite of opponents of intervention in Syria, who use it to conjure up the image of a human swamp of chaos, destruction and mayhem that is bloodier than what Syria has suffered over the past sixteen months, less tractable to resolution, and violently inhospitable to outsiders. The unspoken assumption is that while such a scenario may be horrible for Syrian civilians, it would not rise to the level of an international crisis—at least not one that would have much impact on the United States.

But if commentators have mostly been justified in raising the specter of civil war, they have mostly been wrong in assessing its consequences. If Syria descends into the chaos of all-out civil war, it's not only Syrians who will lose out, as Annan suggests. Very clear American interests are also at stake.

Consider the many plausible scenarios that could yet transpire. They include:

Syrian army units responsible for the control of the regime's substantial chemical and biological weapons stocks leave their posts, either through defection, mutiny, attack from insurgents or orders from superiors to fight elsewhere, and these weapons of mass destruction go rogue.

Syria lashes out at Turkey's hosting of anti-Assad rebels by offering aid and comfort to a rejuvenated PKK insurgency against Ankara, reigniting a hellish Kurdish terrorist campaign that has claimed more than 30,000 Turkish lives over the past 30 years.

Syria pushes hundreds of thousands of hapless Palestinians still living in government-controlled refugee camps over the

Jordanian, Lebanese and even Israeli borders as a way to regionalize the conflict and undermine the stability of neighboring states.

Syrian soldiers, Alawi thugs and their Hizbollah allies take their anti-Sunni crusade to the Sunnis of Lebanon, reigniting a fifteen-year conflict that sucked regional proxies—and U.S. marines—into its vortex.

Thousands of jihadists descend on Syria to fight the apostate Alawite regime, transforming this large Eastern Mediterranean country into the global nexus of violent Islamist terrorists.

None of this is fantasy. The threat of loose chemical and biological weapons tops the agenda of American and Israeli military planners. In late May, the PKK took responsibility for a suicide bombing attack by a cell that crossed the Syrian border and killed a Turkish policeman and wounded 18 others. A senior Jordanian intelligence official alerted me recently to his abiding fear of Assad using Palestinian refugees as political pawns. Already two Lebanese have been killed and many wounded by Syrian troops shooting across the border or hunting down escaping refugees on Lebanese territory. And although only a few hundred al-Qaeda-type militants have joined the Syrian opposition movement so far, the jihadization of the Syrian uprising has been on everyone's mind for more than a year.

With the passage of time, each of these scenarios—and others—have become more likely and the occurrence of any makes more likely the occurrence of others. To make matters worse, the current U.S. strategy—incremental tightening of

sanctions, provision of non-lethal goods to the unarmed opposition, ad hoc supply of weaponry by cut-outs to certain armed rebel units, no direct involvement by outside armed forces either in protecting Syrian civilians or degrading Syrian regime assets—stands a good chance of triggering precisely the worst possible outcomes. This "half pregnant" strategy projects the oozy aura of American commitment without the force to make it real; at the same time, it signals to regime loyalists that they need to take extraordinary measures to counter the possibility of greater intervention. The likely result will be that the Syrian regime begins to expand the conflict to ward off an intervention that they may fear is coming while increasing numbers of jihadists who flock to wage the fight that other outsiders refuse to wage.

For Washington, the potential fallout of these scenarios is truly frightening. Chemical or biological weapons in the hands of Alawite vigilantes, Islamist terrorists or criminal gangs. Full-scale fighting along Syria's borders. The release of pent-up ethnic and religious hatreds in Lebanon or Jordan. A renewal, after forty quiet years, of shooting between Syria and Israel. Military victory for what might eventually become the jihadist-dominated rebels leading to the establishment of Taliban-style rule in Damascus and the possible creation of a breakaway Alawite canton in the mountains of Latakia. Throw in weakness and division among western allies, a possible face-off with muscle-flexing Russia, and the wild card of how Iran may exploit the Syria crisis to press ahead with its own regional ambitions—and its nuclear program—and this is a witch's brew for U.S. interests that would consume the energies of the president and could put any strategic pivot to

Asia on hold for a decade.

Preventing these calamitous outcomes should be a high priority. But it is reasonable to ask whether prevention—in the form of outside intervention—will itself trigger some of these scenarios. Might it be better to let the current fighting take its course and not stir up the hornet's nest even more?

The answer is no. Left to its own, the Syrian rebellion may eventually succeed in bringing down the Assad regime, but the key to preventing these negative outcomes is speeding up the pace of change. A slow, grinding conflict in which the regime continues its merciless but ultimately futile whack-a-mole strategy is the most likely backdrop for these nightmare scenarios. In contrast, swift and decisive action to hasten Assad's departure is the best way to immunize against this set of terrifying outcomes. While Assad may unleash some of his fury in the face of assertive international action, chances are more likely that a clear display of resolve in support of the opposition is the key ingredient to fracturing his surprisingly resilient governing coalition and bringing the regime tumbling down.

Such resolve could include a mix of cyberwarfare, to interfere with Syrian government communications efforts; unmanned drones, to target key installations and weapons depots; air power, to establish and defend safe zones; and a manned element based in neighboring states, to execute a train and equip mission to support rebel forces. At the same time, it is essential that the United States, teamed with Arab, Turkish and other allies, inject urgency and energy into the task of upgrading the cohesion and message of the Syrian political

opposition, so that there is a clear answer to the important question of what comes in the wake of Assad's demise.

Even with all-out effort, a dose of realism is warranted. Syria is going to be a mess for years to come; a peaceful, inclusive, representative Syria anytime soon—one hesitates even to use the word "democratic"—is a fantasy. In a post-Assad world, inter-ethnic reconciliation will be an uphill battle and the inclusion of some Islamists in a successor government is—regrettably, in my view—a necessary fact of Syrian life. Still, policymaking is often accepting bad outcomes when the alternatives are worse, especially when the worse outcomes have the potential to wreak havoc on American interests.

Beyond the humanitarian disaster that Syria has become, the strategic damage that could result from the nightmare scenarios that could transpire in Syria should concentrate the minds of U.S. strategists. If it takes American-led intervention to prevent them, then that is where discussion of U.S. policy should begin. Time is not an ally.

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Vanity Fair

The Netanyahu Paradox

David Margolick

July 2012 -- At one point or another for an entire week last November, most of the Israeli establishment showed up at the Bauhaus home in the Rehavia neighborhood of Jerusalem: members of the Cabinet and Knesset, security officials, rabbis, businessmen, journalists, supplicants of all stripes, “everyone who didn’t want to get in any trouble,” as one participant put it. They stood solemnly around the small stone courtyard with a tent on top, officially mourning, but also studying who else was there, who was whispering to whom. Ehud Barak, the defense minister and, by many accounts, the most vigorous proponent of an Israeli strike against Iran, was there. So was Avigdor Lieberman, the foreign minister, who then held the key to the current government’s survival. Even an Arab member of the Knesset, Ahmad Tibi, came by later on. The guest registry also included Sheldon Adelson, the ubiquitous gambling magnate, and Ronald Lauder, an heir to the Estée Lauder cosmetics fortune—a pair of American billionaires who, improbably, have also become major Israeli media moguls.

The occasion was the shivah, or memorial observance, for a man named Shmuel Ben-Artzi, who had just died at the age of 97. Luminaries like this wouldn’t normally show up to honor a

beloved but relatively obscure Israeli poet and educator like Ben-Artzi; few of the guests had even met him. They were there more for his son-in-law: Benjamin “Bibi” Netanyahu, the prime minister of Israel. They had come to the prime minister’s official residence less out of friendship and respect—for Netanyahu is something of a loner, someone who antagonizes even his allies—than for reasons of realpolitik: even back then, before the shakeup that has left him with one of the largest majorities in Israeli history, Netanyahu was all-powerful. Attention had to be paid.

But, as is often the case in Israeli politics, it was even more complicated than that: many of the guests had come primarily for Sara Netanyahu, Ben-Artzi’s daughter and Bibi’s wife. Here, too, it was not so much out of love or respect, but fear. Even Bibi couldn’t stray very far, though he had other pressing business—like a memorial service commemorating the 1995 assassination of the Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin. So, there he was, at his wife’s insistence, sticking around for the whole week, periodically reading her late father’s poetry aloud to the mourners in a way that elicited pity even from his detractors. “I have no choice,” lamented one tycoon about his reasons for coming. “She’s running the show here in Israel. She can make or break anyone.”

It is the paradox of Israel that in Benjamin Netanyahu, 62 years old, now entering his seventh year in office, the country has both its strongest and its weakest leader in memory—and, as things now look, will have both sides of him for many years to come.

As of early May, when his coalition suddenly and surprisingly

swallowed up the largest opposition party, Kadima, Netanyahu now controls 94 of the 120 seats in the Knesset. An Iranian atom bomb may be some time off, but as Yossi Verter writing in Israel's liberal daily, Haaretz, put it, an atom bomb has fallen on Israeli politics. Until elections in the fall of 2013, Netanyahu can now do pretty much what he wants. The question is just what that is, and whether even he knows, for he's proven better at holding power than wielding it.

The Prisoner

Sometime this year, the Jewish population in Israel will hit a macabre magic number: six million, as many as the Jewish lives lost in the Holocaust. And now, in contrast to Hitler's day, they're all concentrated in one small place, sitting ducks for an Iranian bomb. Other Israeli leaders have long warned about the danger, but Netanyahu has made the issue his own, and forced a reluctant world to reckon with it. And as self-serving and hysterical and diversionary and even counter-productive as some consider his warnings to have been, he may finally be right: cry wolf long enough, and a wolf may actually be at your door.

The Iranian threat has made Bibi even more politically formidable: a supreme leader in Tehran has helped create a semi-supreme leader in Jerusalem. Not that it has rescued him from his insatiable critics. "For some Israelis, Israel is confronting two main problems: one is Iran and the second is Bibi Netanyahu—and not necessarily in that order," Gonen Ginat, of Israel Hayom, the free daily newspaper many believe Adelson essentially created for Netanyahu, told me. The paper's very existence reflects Netanyahu's conviction that, at

their core, many problems, both his and Israel's, are really matters of *hasbara*: Hebrew for public relations.

When we spoke in late spring, Netanyahu painted himself as a kind of prisoner, his life reduced to the narrow orbit between home and office. He'd projected similar *Weltschmerz* two years ago at the Council on Foreign Relations, in New York. "When you get to be at my advanced age, you don't come back to spend time in office," he'd said. "It's not that pleasant anyway. You come back to do something." That was code for peace with the Palestinians; on that, he declared, he planned "to confound the critics and the skeptics."

Those critics and skeptics remain completely unconfounded. But far from feeling put-upon, Netanyahu clearly revels in the job he has spent two decades coveting, obtaining, squandering, regaining, consolidating. He has few outside interests. For all his country's successes in high tech, he doesn't much use a computer, or surf the Web, or text; in his spare time he reads McKinsey reports and books on Jewish history or biographies—say, of Napoleon and Churchill. Netanyahu's job is his life—he'd surely be lost without it.

Tending, at least until recent weeks, simultaneously to his fragile conservative coalition and demands from Washington, Netanyahu tacks left and right, freezing West Bank settlements for a time, then approving them, talking peace with the Palestinians but doing little to advance it. Mindful of his truncated first term in the late 1990s, he has become compulsively cautious: despite all his bellicose rhetoric, for instance, there have been no military adventures on this watch. An Israeli strike against Tehran's nuclear facilities gone awry

may pose the single greatest peril to his political future, which may be the biggest guarantee—more than American opposition to any move or the effectiveness of sanctions—that it won't happen. If there's one thing Netanyahu has mastered, it is the fine art of holding on—of moving forward by standing still.

Arguably, his sole accomplishment this time around has been to trade 1,027 Palestinian prisoners held in Israel for the release of the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, held by Hamas for five years in Gaza. He built his career decrying negotiations with terrorists, and to both the hawks and settlers who back him and the centrists and leftists who don't, the move last October underscored how easily Netanyahu can be pressured. (It's a source of despair and disgust to the former, and of encouragement to the latter.) But Netanyahu manages never to alienate his right-wing base nor completely turn off at least some on the left who, in a Nixon-in-China kind of way, still see him as the sole surviving shot at a peace deal. And, besides, the Shalit swap enjoyed overwhelming popular support. And Sara wanted it.

As the populace—disillusioned with grandiose peace plans, exhausted by the Palestinians, increasingly controlled by Orthodox Jews and émigrés from the former Soviet Union and Arab countries who share his politics and resentment of Israel's liberal elites—has moved right, Netanyahu has been able to stay in one place: his country has come to him. The economy hums along, and, for the time being at least, buses aren't being blown up. Still, leaving nothing to chance, Netanyahu has further solidified his position by using allies like Adelson and Lauder to reshape an unremittingly hostile Israeli media. These days, Netanyahu and Israel are peculiarly

in sync. Few Israelis love him, but they've gotten used to him, or, as Israel's foremost political commentator, Nahum Barnea, of the newspaper Yediot Aharonot, puts it, "His ass fits the chair." For a majority of Israelis, Netanyahu is good enough, and surely better than anyone else.

For a couple of days in May, it looked as if Netanyahu would move up elections to this September. That was before the breathtaking late-night deal to accept Kadima and its 28 members into the coalition. Kadima's head, a former army chief and defense minister named Shaul Mofaz, had recently called Netanyahu a liar and vowed not to join with him. But with his party facing annihilation at the polls, it sold itself cheap. Netanyahu is a big man—his doctor worries a bit about his weight—but as he and Mofaz stood at adjacent lecterns to announce the agreement, one sensed that the difference in their stature was more than purely physical.

Mofaz has counseled caution on Iran, but by fortifying the government's military credentials—he is the third former army chief in Bibi's Cabinet—he could actually ease any decision to bomb its nuclear facilities. And by giving the government a more secular, centrist cast, the move lets Netanyahu tackle festering domestic issues like illegal settlements, drafting Orthodox Jews into national service, and reforming Israeli electoral laws.

If all goes as expected, Netanyahu will seek, and win, another four years in October 2013. Should he complete that term, only Israel's founding father, David Ben-Gurion, will have served long-er. "Putinyahu," a columnist for Haaretz recently called him. But invincibility cuts both ways: with settlers and

other right-wingers at his side, Netanyahu has always had an excuse to do nothing with the Palestinians. The handicapping is that he still won't, his new partners notwithstanding. But his days as a cipher may be numbered. Having shown—yet again—his paramount political skills, he may now have to reveal who he really is.

A Tale of Two Bibis

‘Psychobabble,’ he calls it. Surely no Israeli prime minister has been placed on the couch as much as Netanyahu. People talk about the enduring influence of his father, Benzion, who died in late April at the age of 102, and his implacable, uncompromising, anti-Arab strain of right-wing Zionism, which led him for a time to take his family into American exile and gave Bibi one of his most formidable political gifts: his mellifluous Americanized English. Then there's the ever present shadow of Netanyahu's older brother, Yonathon—the only Israeli soldier killed in the 1976 rescue of Jewish hostages at Entebbe. It was the courageous, sensitive, tormented Yoni, whose handsome face every Israeli schoolchild comes to know, who paved Bibi's political path. “Benjamin Netanyahu will be a bright star in the sky of Israeli politics as long as Yoni Netanyahu is dead,” the Israeli journalist Amnon Abramovich predicted after Bibi took over the right-wing Likud Party in 1993.

The pop psychoanalysis continues with the schizophrenic Bibi. Many analyses split him in two, then pit those halves against each other.

First, there's Bibi the statesman, the Israeli Churchill, seeking

immortality, versus Bibi the politician, seeking survival. Then there's the American Bibi versus the Israeli Bibi. The American Bibi is articulate, confident, charismatic. He spoke before a rapturous joint session of Congress last year; had he read from the Tel Aviv telephone book, Senator Joseph Lieberman said afterward, he'd still have gotten all those standing ovations. (In fact, there seemed to be no sitting ovations.) He also appeared at the annual conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, or aipac, this past March, where the adulation was something Soviet émigrés in Israel would have recognized—reminiscent of the Politburo, or Pavlov: 13,000 people, all conveniently out of harm's way, cheering as one for war against Iran. The American Bibi appeals not only to American Jews; in fact, evangelical Christians like him even more, and certainly far more uncritically. Visiting Jerusalem in March, Pastor James Hagee, of Christians United for Israel, compared him to Moses, King David, and, not entirely facetiously, even to the Messiah.

The Israeli Bibi, by contrast, can be accident-prone, panicky, deceptive, disloyal, and, as his own father—who found frequent fault with him—noted, indecisive. He governs by improvisation, picks people poorly, goes through them fast. And he's suggestible: an inordinate number of people say he tends to agree with the last person he has met. Sometimes that's Sheldon Adelson; critics charge that Netanyahu has subcontracted aspects of his foreign policy to the American billionaire, who implacably opposes a two-state solution with the Palestinians. Or it's Ehud Barak, who, seeking to relive his past military glories and redeem his disastrous political career, is, critics charge, exploiting his unique hold on

Netanyahu—Bibi served in an elite army unit under him—to maneuver him into war. “Barak symbolizes Yoni for him—the adored, legendary commander, the older brother,” said Isaac Herzog, a former minister in several governments and head of the Labor Party’s faction in the Knesset. (Notably, Barak was one of the people privy to the top-secret coalition talks.)

Then there’s the last person Bibi sees every night: Sara. Seconds into any conversation about Netanyahu, the subject of Sara, whom he married in 1991, invariably comes up. It’s amazing how many otherwise sane Israelis see her Lady Macbeth–like hand in every corner of her husband’s life and work—whom he hires, what he does and doesn’t do, whom he can and cannot see. One hears constantly that Sara “has something” on her husband, stemming from her decision to stick by him after the highly publicized affair to which he admitted early in their marriage when his political career hung in the balance. One also hears of a supposed contract between the two of them, said to have been drafted by a former attorney general of Israel, squirreled away in some safe. Or of Bibi cowering in the bathroom, calling the childhood friends of his whom she has excommunicated.

Friend and foe alike have stories about Sara—about a tantrum or feud or some abuse of the household help—or some illustration of her vanity, like the time when, dissatisfied with the picture of her that Yediot Aharonot was about to run, she had her husband call the paper’s famously private owner, Noni Mozes, from Washington, demanding it be changed. People offer medical or psychological diagnoses, and speculate, without any apparent knowledge, about the medications she might be on. Her every misstep or peccadillo is covered

minutely in the Israeli press (at least that portion Adelson doesn't own), particularly her repeated run-ins with the help, several of which have led to lawsuits. Since ordering employees to call her "Ha Giveret" ("The Lady")—an act of colossal hubris in a country rooted in unpretentious egalitarianism—it's what she's routinely and derisively called.

Numerous former staffers say her imbroglios periodically bring governance to a halt, forcing her husband to leave key meetings to tend to trivial matters or simply to calm her down. No one seriously contends that she will determine what happens with Iran. But many think she denies Netanyahu the serenity a man in his position needs. "She is a clear and present danger to the national security of the state of Israel," one of Netanyahu's prime critics, Ben Caspit, of the Israeli tabloid Maariv, told me. Just how, foreign minister Avigdor Lieberman is said to have asked, can a man control a government when he can't control his wife? (Already hobbled by a pending corruption investigation, Lieberman, who heads the party of former Soviet immigrants, is considered a big loser in the recent political machinations. So too are Yair Lapid, a former anchorman who'd recently launched his own party, and Shelly Yachimovich, whose Labor Party stood to regain some seats—and at least some of its historic influence—in a new vote.)

Press Gang

For all his political pre-eminence, Netanyahu, still convinced Israeli liberal elites consider him a "usurper," remains highly suspicious, even paranoid. "In every criticism, Bibi sees an attempt to bring him down," Uzi Arad, his former national-

security adviser and one of many people with whom he has had a falling-out, told Yediot Aharonot in March. So he's insular: his principal lawyer—David Shimron, who handles the numerous lawsuits Bibi and Sara have brought against their household employees and the press—is his cousin; a cousin-in-law, Yitzhak Molcho, is his most important diplomat, marginalizing both Lieberman (at least as foreign minister) and Israel's ambassador to Washington, Michael Oren; Netanyahu's long-time chief of staff, Natan Eshel, forced to resign earlier this year in a sexual-harassment scandal, never really went away and handled the recent negotiations with Kadima. Shimon Shiffer of Yediot Aharonot says that Netanyahu once told him that he has no friends, something Netanyahu denies saying. One often hears—and not just from Netanyahu's detractors—"Bibi has two types of friends: those he has betrayed, and those he will betray."

Netanyahu was recently quoted by Steve Linde of The Jerusalem Post as saying that Israel's most formidable foes were The New York Times and Haaretz, the newspaper of Israel's intelligentsia. (He denies saying or believing this, and Linde subsequently published a clarification.) But Netanyahu has feuded with the Times and, one former aide tells me, considers Times columnist Thomas Friedman, a frequent critic, to be a mouthpiece of the Obama administration. That battle pales, though, next to Netanyahu's wars with the Israeli press, which pilloried him during his first term. Like many Israelis on the left, it never forgave Netanyahu for Rabin's assassination, which it believed his inflammatory language helped foment.

Netanyahu has expended vastly more energy—and enjoyed far greater success—reshaping the Israeli media than seeking

peace with the Palestinians. As one observer puts it, he is less Israel's prime minister than its editor in chief. "Netanyahu's main lesson from his first term in office was 'If you can't beat

them, control them,' " says Lior Averbach, of Globes, the

Israeli business magazine. By appointment, intimidation, and infiltration, his tentacles have reached into every corner of Israel's tiny, fragile journalistic eco-system. In the process, Adelson has displaced Lauder as Netanyahu's most munificent backer and closest American protégé. In fact, Lauder, whose friendship with Netanyahu goes back decades—to encourage Random House to give Netanyahu a hefty book advance, he reportedly offered to buy up every unsold copy—has seen his efforts to help Bibi end in tears.

The process began in 2003, when Lauder purchased a stake in Channel 10, a fledgling Israeli cable station. No one thought he relished the role of Israeli press baron: it was, rather, his way of helping Bibi claw his way out of political exile by building a beachhead in Israeli journalism. Since then, Lauder has pumped \$80 million into the venture.

More than any other news outlet in Israel—where state ownership, cronyism, and scarce resources have long inhibited traditional investigative journalism—Channel 10 evolved into something scrappy and independent. On a couple of occasions, for instance, the station's principal investigative reporter, Raviv Drucker, reported how, between his terms as prime minister, Netanyahu, a man with an unbecoming penchant for

letting others pick up his tabs, traveled widely and extravagantly on the dollars—or pounds, or euros—of private donors. Sara Netanyahu lived well, too: on one trip, she is said to have brought dirty laundry along with her, the better to have it cleaned at the hotel on the other end. (The Netanyahus have denied both of these things in a libel lawsuit brought against Channel 10 and others.) Before the story—quickly dubbed “Bibi Tours”—aired last year, Netanyahu and his surrogates leaned on station officials to kill it. One large shareholder, Yossi Maiman, is said to have told a colleague later that when Netanyahu called him to squelch it Sara seized the phone and screamed so loudly—“Why do you lie? This is the man who will save Israel from another Holocaust!”—that Maiman put the call on speakerphone, then summoned his wife to listen. (Asked recently, Maiman says it never happened.)

Netanyahu also called Lauder, who, under Israeli law, was powerless to intervene. (Lauder recently denied ever having been asked.) After the program aired, the Netanyahus cut him off; to a number of people, including members of his staff, Lauder’s long friendship with Bibi, he complained, was over. He nonetheless attended the shivahs both for Sara’s father and Bibi’s (flying over immediately in his private jet). He still describes Netanyahu as his “steadfast friend.” “It’s O.K.” is how Netanyahu characterizes their relationship now. “We’ve had warmer periods and cooler periods. I respect him, and he respects me.”

Lauder’s problems as an Israeli media mogul, though, were not yet over: Channel 10 next tackled Sheldon Adelson. The gambling mogul, who is highly litigious, tried killing the story about himself beforehand, also without success. After it was

broadcast, he said two of its assertions were false: that he owed \$400,000 to a Las Vegas contractor (who said so on-camera), and that he had been given “extra considerations” when obtaining his Nevada gambling license. Unless he received an apology, Adelson warned, he’d sue, and in the United States, where a costly defense would bankrupt the cash-strapped station. Lauder’s aides related that he even threatened Lauder directly. (Adelson did not respond to repeated requests for comment.)

One might have anticipated a donnybrook: No. 8 on Forbes’s list of the 400 wealthiest Americans versus No. 103. Instead, Lauder, the station’s only funder, requested that it broadcast an apology provided by Adelson himself—which it promptly did. Three key figures at Channel 10 resigned directly afterward. “There was absolutely nothing wrong with the story and no reason—apart from a purely economic one—to apologize,” says Avner Hofstein, the reporter who worked on the piece. Channel 10 remains deeply in debt; only the Netanyahu government, it seems, can save it. Few think it will try, notwithstanding Lauder’s hefty investment in it. At the station, people believe it’s Sara, still stinging over that dirty laundry, who really wants it dead. (A charge an adviser to the P.M. calls “ridiculous.”)

Adelson, who reportedly first met Netanyahu in the 1990s, speaks no Hebrew and does not live in Israel, though his wife is Israeli. But, most likely with Netanyahu’s coaching, he came to believe that Israel’s three main newspapers did not represent the diverse Israeli public, and resolved to give Israelis what he called—borrowing Fox News’s slogan—a more “fair and balanced” alternative. At first he tried to buy Maariv. His pitch

wasn't subtle; he accused the paper's owner, Ofer Nimrodi, of being a bad Zionist. (Nimrodi, his parents, and his two sons have all served in either Israeli intelligence or the Israeli Defense Forces.) Not surprisingly, a deal never happened. So, in 2007, Adelson launched a new paper, Israel Hayom ("Israel Today"). Instantly, understandably, it was dubbed "Bibiton": "Bibi's Newspaper" in Hebrew. Israeli journalists compare it half-facetiously to Pravda or Tishreen, the house organ of Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. Because its biases are so blatant, the conservative columnist Kalman Libeskind, of Maariv, recently wrote, he'd never thought it worth criticizing. But its "complete symbiosis" with Netanyahu and his interests, he complained, sometimes "really makes you want to puke."

From its debut, Adelson's paper—the tens or even hundreds of millions of dollars he has dumped into it dwarfs the comparative pittance he invested in Newt Gingrich's failed presidential bid—enjoyed two advantages: it's free (even with home delivery) and ubiquitous, handed out everywhere. By leaching away readers and advertisers, it posed a mortal threat to Yediot Aharonot and Maariv. Maariv has already fallen into new, more Bibi-friendly hands. And after a period of all-out war with Netanyahu—in which, for instance, it plastered details of a maid's lawsuit against the First Couple over several pages—Yediot Aharonot has recently toned things down. Many see that as evidence of a hudna, or truce, between Netanyahu and the paper, though who has conceded what isn't clear.

"Almost the whole Israeli media is dependent upon Bibi," says a former editor of Maariv, Amnon Dankner, "and while I won't say they're not criticizing him, the music has

changed—to quieter, less vociferous tones.” But to Netanyahu, whom people credit with clearing Israel’s economy of its socialist cobwebs while he was Ariel Sharon’s finance minister, the Israeli media are finally being aerated. “I suppose that if it doesn’t lambaste me, if it’s not tendentious and hostile, it’s obviously tremendously biased,” he says of Israel Hayom. Adelson has no power over his decisions, Netanyahu says; the two disagree all the time. “My level of intervention in the press, trying to control stories, is zero,” he says. “Subzero.”

Letting Off Steam

I see Netanyahu late on a Friday afternoon in the spring. Arranging it all, escorting me in, is his most trusted aide, Ron Dermer, a personable man of 41. Dermer typifies many in Netanyahu’s entourage. He is originally American; both his father and brother were mayors of Miami Beach. And he is religious. Though Netanyahu remains secular, most of his key aides wear kippot, or skullcaps. Some say Netanyahu prefers their more conservative temperament, others that Sara likes having them around him: religious people, she feels, are less prone to tempt him into any more shenanigans. Still more think it’s a gesture to his religious supporters, until recently a crucial component in his coalition.

“I would not want him to be my daughter’s fiancé; basic human compassion is not on his agenda,” says Yossi Elituv, editor of the influential Orthodox weekly magazine *Mishpacha*. But alone among Israel’s leading politicians, Elituv goes on, Netanyahu respects Jewish history and tradition. “He doesn’t think Israel is just like Sweden only we happen to speak Hebrew, or that our history started only 60

years ago,” he says.

Netanyahu sits alone in the courtyard where the shivah for his father-in-law took place four months earlier. As illusory as it is—a group of young men with automatic weapons slung over their suit coats loiter just outside the stone fence—the scene seems serene, a refuge from the almost constant turbulence of Netanyahu’s life. Here, surrounded by miniature fruit trees and pots brimming with bright-pink flowers, he goes over the Bible every Shabbat with the younger of his two sons, winner of a national Bible competition. (Netanyahu also has a daughter from his first marriage, and is now a grandfather.) He meets here with Barak and Lieberman as well; pursuant to an edict from Sara, it’s the only place they can all smoke their cigars.

Netanyahu, characteristically, is dressed formally, at least by informal Israeli standards: blue blazer, white shirt open at the collar, woolen pants, black penny loafers. For all the talk of war, there is no sense of menace. The only siren to be heard is one proclaiming that sundown is half an hour away.

Interviewing Netanyahu for this magazine 16 years ago, I found him wary and confrontational. Now he is calm and affable, almost jolly; so softly does he speak that twice I have to pull closer to him just to hear. Perhaps it’s the contentment that comes from invincibility and vindication. “I’ve been right more than I’ve been wrong,” he says.

Many people agree that Netanyahu has become less headstrong, more modest and empathetic, since his first term in office. He is a better listener, or at least seems to be. That he’s “considerably less polarizing,” he says, also stems from a calmer political climate: “A lot of the things that steamed up

Israeli society, the steam has gone out.” Take the peace process: most Israelis now realize, even if the world doesn’t, that blame for the impasse lies elsewhere. “Some believed that I was the impediment to peace, but there were five other prime ministers since Oslo,” he says. “They did not make peace. Forget about the ‘two Bibis.’ I think about the single [Ehud] Olmert, the single Barak, the single Rabin. Why couldn’t they make peace?”

The tumult in the Arab world only highlights the perils. “People said I was a dinosaur because I asked some questions about the Arab Spring,” he says. “This is really going to be a shocker, but the region is a god-awful mess.” Then there’s Iran. For Netanyahu, it is not a new concern; a former chief of staff, Naftali Bennett, recalls Netanyahu grilling Bernard Lewis, the great scholar of Islam, about Iran and its leaders in a private dining room at the Knesset for an hour and a half six years ago. “He was incisive—he kept asking questions. He listened as never before,” recalls Bennett. “This was a man on a mission, to prevent a second Holocaust.” No one, Netanyahu tells me, “would be happier to see [the situation in Iran] resolved by sanctions or peaceful means.” He declines to speculate why so many prominent security officials—former heads of Mossad and Israeli Defense Forces among them—think he’s exaggerated the threat. But one charge clearly infuriates him: that Barak, a hugely unpopular figure in Israel whom Netanyahu has rescued from political oblivion, is driving him. “Oh, totally!” he scoffs. “He spins me on his little finger.”

Netanyahu is once reported to have said—he now denies it—that he “speaks English with a heavy Republican accent.”

“Israel’s current prime minister is not just a friend, he’s an old friend,” Mitt Romney, with whom Netanyahu worked at the Boston Consulting Group in the 1970s, told aipac in March. (Romney, Netanyahu suggests, may have overstated the tie. “I remember him for sure, but I don’t think we had any particular connections,” he tells me. “I knew him and he knew me, I suppose.”)

Netanyahu’s encounters with President Obama have been marked by slights, misunderstandings, mutual suspicion, and downright distaste. One Obama aide says they keep hearing Netanyahu has evolved but have yet to see any signs of it. At home, Netanyahu scores points with his every slight of Obama, to whom the Israelis have never warmed. But Netanyahu insists his relationship with Obama is friendlier than it has been portrayed. They are, he tells me, “two people who appreciate the savviness and strength of the other.”

Netanyahu calls his reputation for coldness “a good joke.” It’s just one of many canards about him, he says, like that he’s cynical and opportunistic. “I’m not naturally manipulative,” he says. “I’m not a natural politician. I’m not consumed with political machinations.” He does have friends, he says, but they’re “unseen,” such as the members of his army unit—many of them left-wing kibbutzniks who don’t even vote for him—who last October helped him mark his birthday. “I’m not a glad-hander, I’m not a backslapper, but I’m not [this] icy presence,” he tells me. “My voters don’t relate that way to me. They relate very warmly to me. It’s not that there are ‘two Bibis.’ There are those who relate to me, who believe in me, and those who don’t, and there are more of the former or I wouldn’t be where I am.” Still, he knows the usual knocks

well enough to anticipate them, and to keep returning to them with barely concealed irritation. “As you know, I’m humorless, friendless, controlled by my father’s hidden strings,” he volunteers. “And I’m twirling on Barak’s fingers.”

On one subject, Netanyahu is especially vehement, and voluble: his wife. “It’s a great injustice,” he says of her treatment in the Israeli press. Those who see her hand in everything are wrong, he says. People are shocked to meet her, and to discover she’s completely different from how she is depicted. Sara, he says, had made him more open with people, and, far from wreaking havoc around him, has given him the serenity he needs. (The benefits of having so supportive a spouse is something he says he shares with Obama; the two have even compared notes on it.) Quite the opposite of pulling him to the right, Sara’s views, he says, are “strongly, adamantly centrist.” The Israeli press attacks her, he suggests, only because it can’t lay a glove on him.

His Father’s Son

Tel Aviv’s cafés are crowded. Real-estate values—including those of the luxury condominiums rising near the Kirya, Israel’s Pentagon, surely ground zero for any prospective Iranian attack—are holding steady. A couple of weeks in Israel reveal that, while concerned about Iran, Israelis aren’t preoccupied with it. In the meantime, the real determinants of Netanyahu’s legacy, the Palestinians, remain. Saeb Erekat, the chief negotiator of the Palestinian Authority, tells me that Netanyahu’s legacy has already been sealed, and it’s in fact even greater than Churchill’s: by setting terms that no Palestinian could accept—a point with which Netanyahu’s

father agreed—he had destroyed the two-state solution. Had Netanyahu evolved since he first met him, nearly 25 years ago? “Yes, he is different,” Erekat replies. “He’s older, and a little fatter. Politically speaking, I haven’t seen any change.”

Amos Oz, the well-known Israeli novelist, recently wrote that most of Israel would happily line up behind Netanyahu and Barak if they withdrew from the West Bank but that they never will: they fear it would earn them what is in Hebrew the most insulting label of all: freyer, or sucker. Netanyahu professes not to care. His job, he suggests, is essentially defensive: safeguarding Israel’s future, avoiding “major pitfalls.” Shaul Mofaz has landed the thankless Palestinian portfolio, though Netanyahu will clearly call all shots. Can he, like Menachem Begin, Rabin, and Sharon before him, take bold and counter-intuitive steps for peace, or is he—as many believe, sometimes with surprising sympathy, as if he is indeed a prisoner of his own limitations—a kind of machine, quite beyond epiphanies? Suddenly a new but long-anticipated factor has entered the equation: the death of his beloved abba, or father.

In late April, as Netanyahu met with aides to discuss moving up the elections, he was hit by particularly pointed criticism from several sources, including the recently retired head of Israel’s state security service, Yuval Diskin, and former prime minister Ehud Olmert, each expressing doubts about his policies on Iran and the Palestinians. But when Benzion Netanyahu died in Jerusalem, early on the morning of April 30, the bricks suddenly stopped flying, at least until another shivah, this one at Benzion’s home, was complete. Within 12 hours of his death—Jerusalem traditionally buries its dead within a day—Netanyahu, his family, and much of the Israeli

establishment had gathered in a special section of Har Hamenuhot cemetery reserved for the parents of fallen soldiers. Only a few feet away, outside that portion of the graveyard, Shmuel Ben-Artzi already lay.

Finally, the issue that has hung over Netanyahu seemingly forever—that “psychobabble” about whether his father’s death would liberate him from his demons and prejudices—will be answered. Standing at a lectern aligned to face the battery of television and still cameras behind the guests, pausing occasionally to compose himself, Netanyahu spoke of love, a word people had rarely, if ever, heard him utter before. He talked, too, of clairvoyance—specifically, his historian father’s ability not just to decipher the past but to discern the future, particularly the next catastrophe awaiting the Jews. In so doing, he seemed not to be distancing himself from his father, but to be re-dedicating himself to him.