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Article 1.

The Atlantic

Race for Egypt: Inside the Three-Way Fight for the Presidency

Thanassis Cambanis

May 11 2012 -- CAIRO -- Egypt's first real presidential contest ever, for which the candidates met last night for the Arab world's first-ever real presidential debate, has all the makings of a genuinely interesting fight. The front-runners nicely capture a wide stretch of the spectrum, while leaving out the extremes. Voter interest appears high, and the military rulers seem unlikely to allow major fraud based on their record with parliamentary elections.

But enthusiasm about the debate should not obscure the unsatisfying circumstances of the presidential election, which

itself does not guarantee a full transition to civilian rule or democracy.

The president's powers still have not been delineated, and the significance of the race and its victor could be heavily tarnished by future decisions about the assembly that will write the next constitution, among other unresolved questions about whether Egypt will have a presidential, parliamentary, or hybrid system.

Islamists have proven themselves to be the dominant political bloc, garnering more than two-thirds of the vote in parliamentary elections earlier this year. The winner of the presidential race, even if he is secular, will owe his victory to Islamist voters, and will have to govern in tandem with a parliament that has a veto-proof Islamist majority. Islamist politics are malleable and by no means monolithic, but they will drive the political agenda after decades of total exclusion.

The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, or SCAF, has heavily manipulated the process, deepening its unaccountable and authoritarian mechanisms of control. Crony-packed courts and the presidential election commission have made a series of arbitrary decisions. Egypt's next government will have to negotiate artfully to wrest the most important powers out of the hands of generals.

The campaign has galvanized Egyptians. This week, the candidates crisscrossed the countryside in bus caravans, and thousands turned out in even the minutest villages.

"He has a special charisma," gushed an English teacher named Ahmed Abdel Lahib, during a pit stop by the Amr Moussa campaign in a Nile Delta hamlet called Mit Fares. "Egypt needs

a man like him," he said of the former Arab League secretary-general.

Hundreds of men thronged the candidate, shouting, "Purify the country!" and "We want to kiss you!" In his tailored suit, and carrying the patrician demeanor he honed over decades as Egypt's foreign minister and then Arab League chief, Musa clambered onto a makeshift stage for his short stump speech (fix agriculture, the economy, and health care, long live Egypt!). Men pushed over chairs and slammed one another into the walls of the narrow alley to get closer to Moussa and touch his sleeve.

The oaths of loyalty felt a tad staged and excessive, but similar displays characterized all the major candidate rallies, and could reflect the old authoritarian rallies, or a desire for a galvanizing leader like Gamal Abdel Nasser, the nationalist colonel who took power in a 1952 coup, or simply the enthusiasm of voters who for the first time in their lives will likely get to choose their president.

Moussa has presented himself as a secular elder statesman who can stand against what he portrays as a power-hungry Islamist tide, personified by the other two front-runners: the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsi and the ex-Muslim Brother Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh. It is Aboul Fotouh who most worries Moussa's strategists: he is giving the former minister a run for first place, marketing himself as potential bridge candidate, a "liberal Islamist" who can appeal to Islamists as well as the secular nationalists and revolutionaries who are wary of Moussa's connections to the old regime.

Thousands of fans in the market town of Senbelawain waited

hours on a recent night for Aboul Fotouh, who seems perpetually delayed by traffic (he was late for the historic presidential debate for the same reason). When he arrived, the retired doctor was greeted like a rock star with swoons and chants. Bearded Salafis and women in full-face-covering niqabs jostled with clean-shaven students.

Aboul Fotouh is a more gripping orator than Moussa, with a gruff, gravelly voice that he controls well, shifting cadence to maintain his audience's attention. "If this country succeeds, the whole Islamic world succeeds," Aboul Fotouh shouted, provoking cries of exultation. He talked extensively about sharia, in a way apparently calculated to burnish his Islamist credentials while reassuring his left flank that he opposes such literal interpretations as severing the hands of thieves. Aboul Fotouh's stump speech played to his Islamist base rather than to his revolutionary and secular sympathizers.

A Muslim Brotherhood member in the audience named Yousef Eid Hamid, 38, said he was campaigning for Aboul Fotouh in defiance of his organization's strict orders to vote for Morsi. "We are not machines," he said. "You cannot love a candidate, and then just change."

Backroom deals with the military will likely be decisive in determining how the winner can govern, but retail politics seem to be taking root for now. During Thursday night's debate, the two front-runners, Moussa and Aboul Fotouh, dug at each other's records. Aboul Fotouh portrayed Moussa as a corrupt, weak stooge for Mubarak who will continue the old regime's authoritarian ways. Moussa attacked Aboul Fotouh as a fire-and-brimstone Islamist who founded a radical group in the 1970s

and now disingenuously presents himself as a moderate.

Egyptians crammed cafes to watch. During a half-time walkthrough (the debate lasted more than four hours, from 9:30 p.m. to 2 a.m.) at the Boursa pedestrian arcade behind the Cairo stock exchange, I met several people who had voted for the Muslim Brotherhood for parliament but were leaning toward the anti-Islamist Moussa for president.

"I will give the Muslim Brotherhood domestic policy, but I want to keep them far away from security and foreign policy," said Abdelrahim Abdullah Abdelrahim, 44, an import-export businessman built like a bouncer. "These Islamists want to march on Al Quds" -- Jerusalem -- "and wage war. It's not the time for this."

He went on to mock the Salafi legislator who tried to sound the call to prayer in parliament, and his Noor Party colleague who tried to claim his nose job bandage was really the scar from a politically motivated assault. "People are more tired than before," Abdelrahim said as he lost another round of dominoes to a friend.

At the presidential rallies in the Delta, I met numerous voters who were shopping or just checking out the opposition. Leftist revolutionaries, committed to minor candidates guaranteed not to reach the second round, listened to stump speeches to consider whom they'd be willing to hold their noses and vote for in a runoff. Confirmed skeptics came, in case they might change their minds.

Arguments broke out. At the end of one Moussa pit stop in Dikirnis, an older man dismissed the candidate as a "felool," or

remnant of the old regime. Another man pushed him hard in the abdomen: "He is not a felool! Amr Moussa is a great man!" The critic scuttled off to his nephew's pastry shop, where he continued his invective against Moussa. The nephew, 37-year-old Ahmed Burma, smiled benevolently. "My uncle jumped on the revolutionary bandwagon," he said. "But I'm supporting Amr Moussa. I run a business with 90 employees. Let's give this guy a chance to work."

Still, the polls and predictions are little more than guesswork. Most of the voters live without internet or phones and are beyond the reach of the campaigns' opinion researchers. Egypt has had only one real election in its modern history: the parliamentary ballot that concluded this January. Twenty-seven million people voted, more than two-thirds of them for Islamist parties.

Even with the Islamist vote split between Aboul Fotouh and the Brotherhood's Morsi, it's all but assured that one of them will face Moussa in the runoff June 16 and 17. Morsi might fare better than many analysts seem to think, as the Brotherhood deploys its formidable get-out-the-vote operation, which no other campaign can currently match.

The Islamists in parliament haven't acquitted themselves well, wasting time on fringe religious debates while the economy sinks, deferring to the army on crucial issues such as military trials for civilians, and alienating almost every major constituency in the country other than their own by trying to impose a constitutional convention packed with Salafist and Brotherhood members.

If turnout is as high as it was for parliament (and it might be higher, since the president has always been the commanding figure in Egypt's modern political system), Moussa would need to convince more than 6 million people, a full third of those who voted Islamist for parliament, to switch allegiance and vote for him. His advisers believe that's possible.

They also seem to think that Moussa's year-long bus tour of rural areas will pay dividends, and that their basic selling point resonates with common voters: a pair of safe, experienced hands for a transition.

Nonetheless, Moussa's strategy smacks of secular liberal wishful thinking, a common affliction among Egypt's veteran political class in a year and a half of dynamic change. It might just work out for him, but an equally likely scenario would have the voters that propelled Islamists to parliament eager to give someone with their values more of a chance for success than has been allowed by three months of parliamentary machinations under the shadow of the military.

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Article 2.

The Washington Post

Syria's Muslim Brotherhood is gaining influence over anti-Assad revolt

Liz Sly

May 13 -- ISTANBUL — After three decades of persecution that virtually eradicated its presence, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood has resurrected itself to become the dominant group in the fragmented opposition movement pursuing a 14-month uprising against President Bashar al-Assad.

Exiled Brotherhood members and their supporters hold the biggest number of seats in the Syrian National Council, the main opposition umbrella group. They control its relief committee, which distributes aid and money to Syrians participating in the revolt. The Brotherhood is also moving on its own to send funding and weapons to the rebels, who continued to skirmish Saturday with Syrian troops despite a month-old U.N.-brokered cease-fire.

The revival marks an extraordinary comeback for an organization that was almost annihilated after the last revolt in Syria, which ended in the killing by government forces of as many as 25,000 people in the city of Hama in 1982. Only those who managed to flee abroad survived the purge.

The Brotherhood's rise is stirring concerns in some neighboring countries and in the wider international community that the fall of the minority Alawite regime in Damascus would be followed by the ascent of a Sunni Islamist government, extending into a volatile region a trend set in Egypt and Tunisia. In those countries, Brotherhood-affiliated parties won the largest number of parliamentary seats in post-revolution elections.

Brotherhood leaders say they have been reaching out to Syria's neighbors, including Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon — as well as to U.S. and European diplomats — to reassure them that they have no intention of dominating a future Syrian political system or establishing any form of Islamist government.

"These concerns are not legitimate when it comes to Syria, for many reasons," said Molham al-Drobi, who is a member of the Brotherhood's leadership and sits on the Syrian National Council's foreign affairs committee.

"First, we are a really moderate Islamic movement compared to others worldwide. We are open-minded," Drobi said. "And I personally do not believe we could dominate politics in Syria even if we wanted to. We don't have the will, and we don't have the means."

Signs of jihadist influence

Of far greater concern to the United States and other Western countries are recent indications that extremists are seeking to muscle their way into the revolt, said Andrew Tabler of the Washington Institute for Near East policy. The double suicide bombing in Damascus last week, in which 55 people died in circumstances reminiscent of the worst of the violence in Iraq,

bore the hallmarks of an al-Qaeda attack, deepening suspicions that militants have been relocating from Iraq to Syria.

On Saturday, a group calling itself the al-Nusra Front asserted responsibility for the attack in a statement posted on a jihadist Web site.

The Brotherhood is eager to distance itself from the jihadists, whose radical vision of an Islamic caliphate spanning the globe bears no resemblance to its philosophy.

As the Brotherhood starts distributing weapons inside the country, using donations from individual members and from Persian Gulf states including Qatar and Saudi Arabia, it is going to great lengths to ensure that they don't fall into the hands of extremists, Drobi said.

"We have on the ground our networks, and we make sure they don't distribute arms to those who are not within the streamline of the revolution," Drobi said.

Other leaders also stress the moderation of the group's policies, even by comparison with the original Brotherhood movement in Egypt, to which the Syrian branch is very loosely affiliated.

Syria's Muslim Brotherhood would support NATO intervention to help the opposition topple Assad, and it has published a manifesto outlining its vision of a future democratic state that makes no mention of Islam and enshrines individual liberties, said Mohammed Farouk Tayfour, who is the movement's deputy leader, vice president of the Syrian National Council and head of the council's relief committee, making him perhaps the most powerful figure in the opposition.

“In Tunisia and Egypt, the regime did not uproot the Islamic movement as they did in Syria,” he said, citing a 1980 law that made membership in the Syrian Brotherhood punishable by death. “Based on that, I would not expect to gain that much support after the fall of the regime.”

Syria’s long history of secularism and its substantial minority population also make it unlikely the Brotherhood would ever achieve the kind of dominance it appears to have won in Egypt or Tunisia, analysts and activists say. Drobi predicted that the Brotherhood would win 25 percent of the vote if democratic elections were to be held.

Even that could be optimistic, experts say. A third of Syria’s population belongs to religious or ethnic minorities, among them Christians, Alawites, Shiites and Kurds, who share concerns about the potential rise of Sunni Islamism.

It is in large part a measure of the dysfunction of the rest of the opposition that the Brotherhood has managed to assert itself as the only group with a national reach, at a time when most of the uprising’s internal leadership is atomized around local committees that don’t coordinate, said Yezid Sayigh of the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut.

“There is no other political party outside of the Brotherhood that has organization across the country,” he said.

The flow of weapons and money to fighters is one of the biggest concerns of secular Syrians, who worry that it will give the Brotherhood undue influence over the direction of the revolt and whatever may come after Assad, should the regime fall.

“The Muslim Brotherhood has played it really well. They’ve distanced themselves from extremism, and they’re trying to gain the middle ground,” said Amr al-Azm, a Syrian dissident and history professor at Ohio’s Shawnee University who declined to join the Syrian National Council because he felt it was overly influenced by Islamists.“But they are trying to make sure they have a finger in every pie and a hand on every lever of power that they can.”

The vast majority of Syrian activists on the ground do not support the Muslim Brotherhood, he and other Syrians insist.

“We don’t want what happened in Egypt to happen in Syria,” said Omar al-Khani, the pseudonym of an activist in Damascus with the Syrian Revolution Coordinators Union. He and several of his colleagues have accepted small donations from Muslim Brotherhood members outside the country, but the money has not contributed to any noticeable increase in the group’s influence in the Damascus area, he said.

“We won’t let people living outside the country come here and tell those of us who made the revolution what to do,” he said.

Support could swell

But although support for the Brotherhood inside Syria appears to be limited, activists say it is growing as the uprising drags on.

“The Muslim Brothers have resources, and they get help from Saudi Arabia and the gulf states,” said Mousab al-Hamadi, an activist in Hama with the secular Local Coordination Committees. “They have a long history behind them, whereas other groups like us are newly born.”

"From the point of view of religion, most Syrians don't accept political Islam," he added. "But the people here are still Muslim, and they are still conservative, so I think the Muslim Brotherhood will become the biggest political power in Syria after the departure of the Assad regime. And I will be the biggest loser."

Article 3.

Syria Comment

The Hamas-Syrian Split, a Dilemma for Iran's Palestinian Strategy

Mohammad Ataie

May 13, 2012 -- Since the advent of the Iranian revolution, the Palestinian issue has been at the heart of the Islamic Republic's foreign policy. For ideological and strategic reasons, supporting the Palestinian cause and resistance against Israel has been an integral part of the Islamic Republic's identity and international approach. However, Iran's Palestinian policy has, to a great extent, been forged under the influence of its alliance with Syria. That is why the tensions between Damascus and Hamas, brought about by the latter's equivocal stance on Syrian crisis, have spilled over into the Palestinian movement's relationship with Tehran.

Last February, on the thirty third anniversary of the Iranian revolution, Hamas' Prime Minister in Gaza paid a visit to Tehran and met with the Iranian leader, Ayatollah Khamenehi. Given the rumors and reports of tensions between Iran and

Hamas over the Syrian crisis, Ismail Haniyeh's official trip was important and timely for the Islamic Republic. The visit conveyed a clear message that, in the words of Haniyeh, Iran's support for Palestinian issue has "remained unchanged and unconditional" and that their ties are "as strong as before". But some remarks that Iranian officials made during Haniyeh's visit revealed how concerned Tehran is with a changing Hamas in the wake of the "Arab Spring".

In the meeting between Haniyeh and the Iranian leader, Ayatollah Khamenehi warned him that "compromisers' infiltration into a resistance organization would gradually weaken it". He reminded Haniyeh that a once very popular Arafat lost his credibility when he distanced himself from resistance. Iran is obviously concerned with the recent signs of pragmatism in Hamas and reports of it reconsidering its strategy in the wake of the ascendance of its sister Islamic movements to power across the Arab world. But a graver concern for Tehran has been Hamas' position regarding Syria. More than a year into the Syrian crisis, Hamas has refused to take sides in the conflict and has not concealed its intention to turn to new patrons in the region.

Tehran believes that Syria has fallen victim to a foreign plot. While Bashar al-Assad is carrying out reforms, Tehran says, there are foreign parties solely concerned with Assad's alliance with the axis of resistance, that wreak havoc in Syria. This was what Iranian officials told Haniyeh in Tehran. Similar remarks were made by Ayatollah Khamenei earlier, in January, when he received the head of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and warned about an American plan against Syria that aims to undermine the "line of resistance", which is a reference to the alliance of Iran,

Syria, Hamas and Hezbollah vis-à-vis the US and Israel.

In the past several months, the Islamic Republic has sought to convince the Hamas leadership to adopt its own reading of the Syrian crisis and at the same time cement the cracks that are appearing in Damascus-Hamas ties. Haniyeh's visit to Iran and his statement that the movement would not abandon its long time base in Syria left an impression in Tehran and Damascus that the movement would not "stoop to pressures" and turn its back on Bashar al-Assad. However a mere two weeks after his visit, Haniyeh made unprecedented remarks in Cairo in support of the uprising in Syria which was interpreted as "Hamas's first public break with its longtime patron". During the Friday prayer at al-Azhar Mosque Haniyeh said "I salute all people of the Arab Spring, or Islamic winter, and I salute the Syrian people who seek freedom, democracy and reform." This was disturbing for Iranian officials. Hossein Shikholeslam, a veteran Iranian diplomat, expressed his dismay at Haniyeh's speech by saying that "this was not the position of those who struggle against Israel". The former Iranian ambassador to Syria stated that "if Hamas abandons armed resistance, it will be no different from other Palestinian factions". Again, in the latest sign of cooling in the Iranian-Hamas relationship, a member of the group's political wing in Gaza said "Hamas will not do Iran's bidding in any war with Israel".

Hamas Syrian position is still quiet nebulous as the movement's leadership in Gaza and abroad remain divided over the Syrian crisis. But it is clear that the shadow of tensions between the movement and President Assad has already fallen over Hamas' relationship with Tehran. For Iran, supporting Hamas is linked to its alliance with President Assad. In other words, despite the

Iranian commitment to the Palestinian resistance, the Islamic Republic saw its relationship with the Palestinian as well as the Lebanese resistance from a Syrian perspective. This is well understood in the light of the three decades of Iran's Levant policy and partnership with Syria.

Thirty three years ago, after the fall of the Shah, Yasser Arafat was the first foreign leader who arrived to revolutionary Iran. When the PLO leader, who was indeed a long time ally of many anti-Shah revolutionaries who had just risen to power in Tehran, delivered a zealous speech in front of thousands of Iranians in Tehran, the prospect of a strong Iranian-PLO axis could not have been brighter. In that speech he proclaimed "we will march to Jerusalem under a united Islamic flag". But as developments began to unravel in Iran and Middle East, things changed between Tehran and the PLO.

From the very beginning, Hafez al-Assad carefully watched the PLO courting of Khomaini's Iran. The B'ath regime kept a wide open eye on the extent of Iranian relations with Yasser Arafat, who was a challenge to President Assad's initiatives both in Lebanon and on the Arab-Israeli front. Syrians were eager to make the new regime in Iran adopt its Palestinian vision and ensure that the Islamic Republic did not go too far with the PLO. Initially Tehran was oblivious to Assad's concerns on both the Lebanese and Palestinian fronts. When in late 1979, radical factions in Iran endeavored, in coordination with al-Fatah, to dispatch volunteer corps to Southern Lebanon, Syrians thwarted the initiative. From the perspective of President Assad, the translation of an emerging Iranian-PLO alliance into creating an independent axis in Lebanon could have undermined his grand strategy in Lebanon which was

contingent on eliminating al-Fatah autonomy and Arafat's state-within-a-state in his backyard.

Iran learnt greatly from that early failed experience; that it could not ignore Syria's regional weight nor Assad's calculations in the Levant. Yet, it took a decade before Tehran and Damascus reached a modus vivendi. During the formative years of Syrian-Iranian relations throughout the 1980s, their disagreements ranged from the Palestinian issue to the Iraq-Iran war, to Hezbollah and Amal in Lebanon. In the mid 1980s, the Camp Wars and Assad's policy to oust Arafat from Lebanon strained their bilateral relationship. The shelling of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon by pro-Syrian Amal forces shocked the Iranian leadership and led to a period of friction with Damascus and even military confrontation with the Shi'i Amal movement which fought the PLO forces in Beirut and the Southern Lebanon. Nevertheless, over time, Tehran's line steadily converged with Assad's "Palestinian vision" which became a factor in the deterioration of the once much hoped for Iran-Arafat partnership. Indeed, Tehran realized that without Assad's approval, making inroads into the Levant and their goal of "exporting the Islamic revolution" would not succeed.

No doubt that Arafat's close ties with Saddam Hussein, a nemesis of both Assad and Khomeini, and his concession to recognize Israel also widened the chasm between the PLO and the Islamic Republic. From Assad's standpoint, Arafat's relationship with Iraq, Jordan and Egypt was to side-step Damascus and give other Arab parties decisive influence within the PLO at Syria's expense. When in 1985 Arafat announced his acceptance of a joint Palestinian-Jordanian peace initiative, Syria and Iran alike lambasted the PLO chief. "Disillusioned"

with Yasser Arafat and his moderation toward Israel, revolutionary Iran began to acknowledge Assad's standpoint toward the PLO leader: that they had initially been, against all the advice of Assad, too optimistic about Arafat.

Since the early 1990s, Syrian-Iranian relations have turned into an enduring and strategic partnership with considerable achievements in keeping their common adversaries in check. In the Palestinian arena, Hamas and Islamic Jihad were the fruits of the convergence and cooperation between Islamist Iran and the Ba'thist Syria. Inspired by the 1979 revolution and Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas rose from the first intifada that Iran rallied strongly to it. Unlike Arafat's PLO, Syria and Iran had a great deal in common in collaborating with Palestinian Islamists to derail grand US plans in the Middle East. Hamas emerged as the main Palestinian opponent of the Oslo accords, the US-sponsored peace process. It challenged a secular-Nationalist PLO that "betrayed Palestine" and defied Arafat's authority who had once been the epitome of anti-Israel struggle for many Iranian revolutionaries.

The senior Assad wanted tractable leadership at the head of the PLO that would act according to his strategy in Lebanon and on the Arab-Israeli front. It was Hamas that inserted itself into his strategy and won exceptional support from Damascus. Now Hamas, reorienting itself in the wake of the "Arab Spring", has turned into an ungrateful ally for Bashar al-Assad, who sees the movement's leaders dealing with Arab states without consulting Syria and lauding the protests against his rule. Before the dust settles in Syria, Hamas is unlikely to shift from its equivocal position.

The movement's cold shoulder to Damascus has posed a serious challenge to the integrity of the "axis of resistance". Iran, for "the good of resistance", is making every effort to prevent a break between the two key parties of the resistance camp. This is no easy position for Tehran, which has found itself locked between two pillars of its foreign policy; that of backing the Palestinian resistance and safeguarding its unique alliance with Syria.

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Article 4.

The Nation

The Energy Wars Heat Up

Michael T. Klare

May 10, 2012 -- Conflict and intrigue over valuable energy supplies have been features of the international landscape for a long time. Major wars over oil have been fought every decade or so since World War I, and smaller engagements have erupted every few years; a flare-up or two in 2012, then, would be part of the normal scheme of things. Instead, what we are now seeing

is a whole cluster of oil-related clashes stretching across the globe, involving a dozen or so countries, with more popping up all the time. Consider these flash-points as signals that we are entering an era of intensified conflict over energy. From the Atlantic to the Pacific, Argentina to the Philippines, here are the six areas of conflict—all tied to energy supplies—that have made news in just the first few months of 2012:

* **A brewing war between Sudan and South Sudan**: On April 10, forces from the newly independent state of South Sudan occupied [5] the oil center of Heglig, a town granted to Sudan as part of a peace settlement [6] that allowed the southerners to secede in 2011. The northerners, based in Khartoum, then mobilized their own forces and drove the South Sudanese out of Heglig. Fighting has since erupted [7] all along the contested border between the two countries, accompanied by air strikes on towns in South Sudan. Although the fighting has not yet reached the level of a full-scale war, international efforts to negotiate a cease-fire and a peaceful resolution to the dispute have yet to meet with success. This conflict is being fueled by many factors [8], including economic disparities between the two Sudans and an abiding animosity between the southerners (who are mostly black Africans and Christians or animists) and the northerners (mostly Arabs and Muslims). But oil—and the revenues produced by oil—remains at the heart of the matter [9]. When Sudan was divided in 2011, the most prolific oil fields wound up in the south, while the only pipeline capable of transporting the south's oil to international markets (and thus generating revenue) remained in the hands of the northerners. They have been demanding exceptionally high "transit fees"—$32-$36 per barrel compared to the common rate of $1

per barrel—for the privilege of bringing the South's oil to market. When the southerners refused to accept such rates, the northerners confiscated money they had already collected from the south's oil exports, its only significant source of funds. In response, the southerners stopped producing [10] oil altogether and, it appears, launched their military action against the north. The situation remains explosive.

* **Naval clash in the South China Sea**: On April 7, a Philippine naval warship, the 378-foot Gregorio del Pilar, arrived at Scarborough Shoal, a small island in the South China Sea, and detained [11] eight Chinese fishing boats anchored there, accusing them of illegal fishing activities in Filipino sovereign waters. China promptly sent two naval vessels of its own to the area, claiming that the Gregorio del Pilar was harassing Chinese ships in Chinese, not Filipino waters. The fishing boats were eventually allowed to depart without further incident and tensions have eased somewhat. However, neither side has displayed any inclination [12] to surrender its claim to the island, and both sides continue to deploy warships in the contested area. As in Sudan, multiple factors are driving this clash, but energy is the dominant motive. The South China Sea is thought to harbor [13] large deposits of oil and natural gas, and all the countries that encircle it, including China and the Philippines, want to exploit these reserves. Manila claims a 200-nautical mile "exclusive economic zone" stretching into the South China Sea from its western shores, an area it calls the West Philippine Sea; Filipino companies say they have found [14] large natural gas reserves in this area and have announced plans to begin exploiting them. Claiming the many small islands that dot the South China Sea (including Scarborough Shoal) as

its own, Beijing has asserted sovereignty over the entire region, including the waters claimed by Manila; it, too, has announced plans to drill in the area. Despite years of talks, no solution has yet been found to the dispute and further clashes are likely.

* **Egypt cuts off the natural gas flow to Israel**: On April 22, the Egyptian General Petroleum Corporation and Egyptian Natural Gas Holding Company informed [15] Israeli energy officials that they were "terminating the gas and purchase agreement" under which Egypt had been supplying gas to Israel. This followed months of demonstrations in Cairo by the youthful protestors who succeeded in deposing autocrat Hosni Mubarak and are now seeking a more independent Egyptian foreign policy—one less beholden to the United States and Israel. It also followed scores of attacks [16] on the pipelines carrying the gas across the Negev Desert to Israel, which the Egyptian military has seemed powerless to prevent. Ostensibly, the decision was taken in response to a dispute over Israeli payments for Egyptian gas, but all parties involved have interpreted [17] it as part of a drive by Egypt's new government to demonstrate greater distance from the ousted Mubarak regime and his (US-encouraged) policy of cooperation with Israel. The Egyptian-Israeli gas link was one of the most significant outcomes of the 1979 peace treaty between the two countries, and its annulment clearly signals a period of greater discord; it may also cause energy shortages in Israel, especially during peak summer demand periods. On a larger scale, the cutoff suggests a new inclination to use energy (or its denial) as a form of political warfare and coercion.

* **Argentina seizes YPF**: On April 16, Argentina's president, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, announced [18] that her

government would seize a majority stake in YPF, the nation's largest oil company. Under President Kirchner's plans, which she detailed on national television, the government would take a 51 percent controlling stake in YPF, which is now majority-owned by Spain's largest corporation, the energy firm Repsol YPF. The seizure of its Argentinean subsidiary is seen in Madrid (and other European capitals) as a major threat that must now be combated. Spain's foreign minister, José Manuel García Margallo, said [18] that Kirchner's move "broke the climate of cordiality and friendship that presided over relations between Spain and Argentina." Several days later, in what is reported to be only the first of several retaliatory steps, Spain announced [19] that it would stop importing biofuels from Argentina, its principal supplier—a trade worth nearly $1 billion a year to the Argentineans. As in the other conflicts, this clash is driven by many urges, including a powerful strain of nationalism stretching back to the Peronist era [20], along with Kirchner's apparent desire to boost her standing in the polls. Just as important, however, is Argentina's urge to derive greater economic and political benefit from its energy reserves, which include [21] the world's third-largest deposits of shale gas. While long-term rival Brazil is gaining immense power and prestige from the development of its offshore "pre-salt" [22]petroleum reserves, Argentina has seen its energy production languish. Repsol may not be to blame for this, but many Argentineans evidently believe that, with YPF under government control, it will now be possible to accelerate development of the country's energy endowment, possibly in collaboration [23] with a more aggressive foreign partner like BP or ExxonMobil.

* **Argentina re-ignites the Falklands crisis**: At an April 15-16 Summit of the Americas in Cartagena, Colombia—the one at which US Secret Service agents were caught fraternizing with prostitutes—Argentina sought fresh hemispheric condemnation of Britain's continued occupation of the Falkland Islands (called Las Malvinas by the Argentineans). It won strong support [24] from every country present save (predictably) Canada and the United States. Argentina, which says the islands are part of its sovereign territory, has been raising this issue ever since it lost a war [25] over the Falklands in 1982, but has recently stepped up [26] its campaign on several fronts—denouncing London in numerous international venues and preventing [27] British cruise ships that visit the Falklands from docking in Argentinean harbors. The British have responded by beefing up [28] their military forces in the region and warning the Argentineans to avoid any rash moves. When Argentina and the U.K. fought their war over the Falklands, little was at stake save national pride, the stature of the country's respective leaders (Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher vs. an unpopular military junta) and a few sparsely populated islands. Since then, the stakes [29] have risen immeasurably as a result of recent seismic surveys of the waters surrounding the islands that indicated the existence of massive deposits of oil and natural gas. Several UK-based energy firms, including Desire Petroleum [30] and Rockhopper Exploration [31], have begun off-shore drilling in the area and have reported promising discoveries. Desperate to duplicate Brazil's success in the development of offshore oil and gas, Argentina claims the discoveries lie in its sovereign territory and that the drilling there is illegal; the British, of course, insist that it's their territory. No one knows how this simmering potential crisis will

unfold, but a replay of the 1982 war—this time over energy—is hardly out of the question.

* **US forces mobilize for war with Iran**: Throughout the winter and early spring, it appeared that an armed clash of some sort pitting Iran against Israel and/or the United States was almost inevitable. Neither side seemed prepared to back down on key demands, especially on Iran's nuclear program, and any talk of a compromise solution was deemed unrealistic. Today, however, the risk of war has diminished somewhat [32]—at least through this election year in the United States—as talks have finally gotten underway between the major powers and Iran, and as both have adopted (slightly) more accommodating stances. In addition, US officials have been tamping down war talk and figures in the Israeli military and intelligence communities have spoken out [33] against rash military actions. However, the Iranians continue to enrich uranium, and leaders on all sides say they are fully prepared to employ force if the peace talks fail. For the Iranians, this means blocking [34] the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow channel through which one-third of the world's tradable oil passes every day. The United States, for its part, has insisted that it will keep the Strait open and, if necessary, eliminate Iranian nuclear capabilities. Whether to intimidate Iran, prepare for the real thing, or possibly both, the United States has been building up its military capabilities in the Persian Gulf area, deploying two aircraft carrier battle groups [35] in the neighborhood along with an assortment [36] of air and amphibious-assault capabilities.

One can debate the extent to which Washington's long-running feud with Iran is driven by oil, but there is no question that the current crisis bears heavily on global oil supply prospects, both

through Iran's threats [37] to close the Strait of Hormuz in retaliation for forthcoming sanctions on Iranian oil exports and the likelihood that any air strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities will lead to the same thing. Either way, the US military would undoubtedly assume [38] the lead role in destroying Iranian military capabilities and restoring oil traffic through the Strait of Hormuz. This is the energy-driven crisis that just won't go away.

How Energy Drives the World

All of these disputes have one thing in common: the conviction of ruling elites around the world that the possession of energy assets—especially oil and gas deposits—is essential to prop up national wealth, power and prestige. This is hardly a new phenomenon. Early in the last century, Winston Churchill was perhaps the first prominent leader to appreciate the strategic importance of oil. As First Lord of the Admiralty, he converted British warships from coal to oil and then persuaded the cabinet to nationalize the Anglo-Persian Oil Company [39], the forerunner of British Petroleum (now BP). The pursuit of energy supplies for both industry and war-fighting played a major role in the diplomacy of the period between the World Wars, as well as in the strategic planning of the Axis powers during World War II. It also explains America's long-term drive to remain the dominant power in the Persian Gulf that culminated in the first Gulf War of 1990-91 and its inevitable sequel, the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

The years since World War II have seen a variety of changes in the energy industry, including a shift in many areas from private to state ownership of oil and natural gas reserves. By and large,

however, the industry has been able to deliver ever-increasing quantities of fuel to satisfy the ever-growing needs of a globalizing economy and an expanding, rapidly urbanizing world population. So long as supplies were abundant and prices remained relatively affordable, energy consumers around the world, including most governments, were largely content with the existing system of collaboration among private and state-owned energy leviathans. But that energy equation is changing ominously as the challenge [40] of fueling the planet grows more difficult. Many of the giant oil and gas fields that quenched the world's energy thirst in years past are being depleted at a rapid pace. The new fields being brought on line to take their place are, on average, smaller and harder to exploit. Many of the most promising new sources of energy—like Brazil's "pre-salt" petroleum reserves [22] deep beneath the Atlantic Ocean, Canadian tar sands [41] and American shale gas [42]—require the utilization of sophisticated and costly technologies. Though global energy supplies are continuing to grow, they are doing so at a slower pace than in the past and are continually falling short of demand. All this adds to the upward pressure on prices, causing anxiety among countries lacking adequate domestic reserves (and joy among those with an abundance). The world has long been bifurcated between energy-surplus and energy-deficit states, with the former deriving enormous political and economic advantages from their privileged condition and the latter struggling mightily to escape their subordinate position. Now, that bifurcation is looking more like a chasm. In such a global environment, friction and conflict over oil and gas reserves—leading to energy conflicts of all sorts—is only likely to increase.

Looking, again, at April's six energy disputes, one can see clear evidence of these underlying forces in every case. South Sudan is desperate to sell its oil in order to acquire the income needed to kick-start its economy; Sudan, on the other hand, resents the loss of oil revenues it controlled when the nation was still united and appears no less determined to keep as much of the South's oil money as it can for itself. China and the Philippines both want the right to develop oil and gas reserves in the South China Sea, and even if the deposits around Scarborough Shoal prove meager, China is unwilling to back down in any localized dispute that might undermine its claim to sovereignty over the entire region. Egypt, although not a major energy producer, clearly seeks to employ its oil and gas supplies for maximum political and economic advantage—an approach sure to be copied by other small and mid-sized suppliers. Israel, heavily dependent on imports for its energy, must now turn elsewhere for vital supplies or accelerate the development of disputed, newly discovered offshore gas fields, a move that could provoke fresh conflict with Lebanon [43], which says they lie in its own territorial waters. And Argentina, jealous of Brazil's growing clout, appears determined to extract greater advantage from its own energy resources, even if this means inflaming tensions with Spain and Great Britain.

And these are just some of the countries involved in significant disputes over energy. Any clash with Iran—whatever the motivation—is bound to jeopardize the petroleum supply of every oil-importing country, sparking a major international crisis with unforeseeable consequences. China's determination to control its offshore hydrocarbon reserves has pushed it into conflict with other countries with offshore claims in the South

China Sea and into a similar dispute with Japan in the East China Sea. Energy-related disputes of this sort can also be found in the Caspian Sea and in globally warming, increasingly ice-free Arctic regions.

The seeds of energy conflicts and war sprouting in so many places simultaneously suggest that we are entering a new period in which key state actors will be more inclined to employ force—or the threat of force—to gain control over valuable deposits of oil and natural gas. In other words, we're now on a planet heading into energy overdrive.

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Article 5.

The Diplomat

Azerbaijan - Israel's Reluctant Friend

Kevjn Lim

May 12, 2012 -- A new and perhaps surprising country took center stage recently in the ongoing row over Iran's nuclear

program – Azerbaijan. Citing anonymous "high-level sources" from U.S. diplomatic and intelligence circles, a controversial article in Foreign Policy at the end of March suggested the possibility that Israel might have been proffered the use of Azerbaijani airstrips for any strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities. The article attracted impassioned rebuttals from officials and observers alike. But the question remains: how did Azerbaijan get sucked into the controversy over Tehran's nuclear plans in the first place?

Azerbaijan's relations with Israel developed in earnest 20 years ago, and have grown significantly in depth and scope ever since. With bilateral trade currently hovering around $4 billion, Azerbaijan is Israel's top trading partner among Muslim states, and the second largest source of Israel's oil after Russia.

Conversely, Israel represents Azerbaijan's second largest oil customer, and via the Ashkelon-Eilat Trans-Israel Pipeline, a crucial transit point for Azeri oil flowing to Asia's growing markets. Israeli companies have also made no secret of their stake in the country's other key, non-energy sectors, including agriculture and communications. However, it's the military-defense aspect of bilateral cooperation that has kept Iran on its toes of late. Israel began modernizing Azerbaijan's ragtag army after its six year, undeclared war with Armenia led to the loss of the Nagorno-Karabakh enclave and seven neighboring districts. On February 26 of this year, Baku and Tel Aviv inked the latest in a series of arms deals, this time to the tune of $1.6 billion, on the basis of which Israel Aerospace Industries would supply Heron and Searcher drones, anti-aircraft and missile defense systems over the coming months and perhaps years.

This closeness represents everything that relations between Iran and Azerbaijan ought to have been right from the start, given both nations' deep historical ties. Azerbaijan was a Persian satrapy under the Achaemenid, the Parthian and the Sassanian empires, and the Shiite Safavids credited for laying the foundations of modern Iran were mainly ethnic Azeris, a sub-branch of the Turkic peoples. Only after Iran was twice defeated by the Russians in the 19th century was it obliged to renounce the half of the Azeri homeland located north of the river Araxes. This disjuncture largely stems from the overwhelming secularism brought on by 71 years of Soviet rule (1920-1991) and Azerbaijan's palpably pro-West, pan-Turkic and anti-Iranian outlook, especially under former President Abulfaz Elçibey and his Popular Front Party of Azerbaijan, a factor that prompted Iran to support Christian Armenia during the Nagorno-Karabakh war.South of the Araxes, Tehran remains acutely sensitive to potential Azeri irredentism stoked by the existence of independent Azerbaijan, despite the fact that its own Azeris – a fifth to a quarter of all Iranians including Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei (who is half-Azeri) – are generally well integrated. Baku has for its part accused Iran of supporting radical Shiite elements, including the now outlawed Islamic Party of Azerbaijan, as well as the Talysh ethnic minority inhabiting the border areas. Nationalist rhetoric has also sharpened with calls for the country to be rechristened "North Azerbaijan" as opposed to what some view as the "occupied" South.

Both Israel and Iran have repeatedly accused each other of using Azeri territory as a base for covert operations, and the Azeri authorities haven't held back from publicly linking a number

of locally arrested individuals with Iranian intelligence. All this suggests that an Israeli "staging ground" may not be that farfetched, despite a 2005 Baku-Tehran non-aggression pact and official insistence – most recently by President Ilham Aliyev during a cabinet meeting – that Azerbaijan would never allow its territory to be used against its neighbors. However, while Azerbaijan is eminently suited to Israeli interests, the costs of a potential Iranian backlash toward Baku are unbearable for three key reasons.

First, Azerbaijan suffers from the tyranny of proximity, with 611 kilometers of porous common border on Iran's northwestern doorstep. Geographically, Azerbaijan's capital and much of its population and energy infrastructure are concentrated in the flatlands just beyond the Talysh mountains and Iran's formidable but not impassable Alborz range. Baku is located less than 200 kilometers from Parsabad in Iran as the crow flies, and little more than 300 kilometers from the border along an axis suitable for the projection of ground forces. Iran's relatively modest naval and aerial could incapacitate Azerbaijan's critical energy infrastructure – the country's lifeline – before being neutralized. Priority targets might include various pipelines or the crucial Sangachal terminal. Indeed, the fact that the entire pipeline corridor lies underground may give Tehran greater incentive to target the terminal instead.

Second, Azerbaijan's geopolitical environment and the region's interlocking energy interests greatly raise the costs of a long-distance military alliance targeting an immediate neighbor. The BTC and BTE pipelines were designed to traverse Georgia and Turkey, two of Azerbaijan's closest regional allies. In Georgia's case, a third, Baku-Supsa pipeline also begins at Sangachal

terminal.

This makes Turkey the key transit point on the East-West energy corridor leading onwards to European markets. However, since it also heavily relies on Caspian hydrocarbon imports and earns an estimated $200 million per annum on BTC transit fees alone, Ankara has little interest in having Azerbaijan invite retaliation on its energy sector. Moscow, the region's preeminent power, continues to view the Caspian basin and the south Caucasus as part of its Soviet-era sphere of influence and is therefore wary of any development that might further diminish its toehold. A direct Israel-Iran faceoff would almost certainly draw the U.S. military into the fray. But the consequences could be worse for Baku if proof of complicity leaks out. And, pipeline routing disputes aside, all five Caspian littoral states – Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan – share an obvious interest in ensuring energy stability.

Given what's at stake, Baku has been careful about pursuing an independent but "balanced foreign policy" with its neighbors. Geography, after all, is immutable, unlike long-distance alliances.

Third, Azerbaijan's leaders have been consistently clear about their top national priority, which is the "restoration of territorial integrity." According to the 2007 National Security Concept, Armenia's ongoing occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding districts represents the "major determinant of the country's security environment and…a key factor in the formulation of the National Security Policy." Baku's military buildup and defense pacts should therefore be regarded chiefly through this prism, with Iran being relevant at this level only

insofar as it supports Yerevan.

Given the geopolitical constraints, frequent official references to "shared strategic interests" between Tel Aviv and Baku are in all likelihood restricted to the former's energy security and the latter's defense posturing vis-à-vis Armenia, even if both governments clearly benefit from containing Iran. What's more, Baku essentially views its Israeli relations as a means of cementing patronage from the West and in particular Washington. Azeri officials have been frank about the role of the Israeli lobby in counteracting the influence of the Armenian lobby in Azerbaijan's favor. This paid dividends when President George W. Bush eventually waived Section 907 of the 1992 Freedom Support Act, which stipulated assistance to the 15 former Soviet republics barring Azerbaijan (because of its conflict with Armenia).

While the Azeri national security concept also prizes "integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures," some of Baku's positions within the Islamic world and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) – such as recognition of a Palestinian state – and the mere absence of an embassy in Israel after twenty years of diplomatic relations corroborate this balancing act.

Above and beyond all this, though, the simple fact that a potential Israeli staging ground in Azerbaijan is no longer a secret puts this quite out of the question. The "leak" conveyed in the article may have served its purpose if, according to former U.S. diplomat John Bolton, it was indeed "part of the [Obama] administration's campaign against an Israeli attack."

At the end of the day, while the Azeris can ill-afford to be part of an Israeli strike on Iran, Baku may still tolerate some degree of covert activity as long as Azeri national interests aren't mortgaged as collateral. This would be of little consolation to Israeli strategists if not for parallel listening posts widely believed to exist in Iraqi Kurdistan, Turkmenistan and even elsewhere in coordination with the United States

But more importantly, this also means that a conflict with Iran may be much less likely to spread to the strategically sensitive Caspian region. Or at least, not by way of the "northern" Azeris.

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Article 6.

NYT

This Column Is Not Sponsored by Anyone

Thomas L. Friedman

May 12, 2012 -- PORING through Harvard philosopher Michael

Sandel's new book, "What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets," I found myself over and over again turning pages and saying, "I had no idea."

I had no idea that in the year 2000, as Sandel notes, "a Russian rocket emblazoned with a giant Pizza Hut logo carried advertising into outer space," or that in 2001, the British novelist Fay Weldon wrote a book commissioned by the jewelry company Bulgari and that, in exchange for payment, "the author agreed to mention Bulgari jewelry in the novel at least a dozen times." I knew that stadiums are now named for corporations, but had no idea that now "even sliding into home is a corporate-sponsored event," writes Sandel. "New York Life Insurance Company has a deal with 10 Major League Baseball teams that triggers a promotional plug every time a player slides safely into base. When the umpire calls the runner safe at home plate, a corporate logo appears on the television screen, and the play-by-play announcer must say, 'Safe at home. Safe and secure. New York Life.' "

And while I knew that retired baseball players sell their autographs for $15 a pop, I had no idea that Pete Rose, who was banished from baseball for life for betting, has a Web site that, Sandel writes, "sells memorabilia related to his banishment. For $299, plus shipping and handling, you can buy a baseball autographed by Rose and inscribed with an apology: 'I'm sorry I bet on baseball.' For $500, Rose will send you an autographed copy of the document banishing him from the game."

I had no idea that in 2001 an elementary school in New Jersey became America's first public school "to sell naming rights to a corporate sponsor," Sandel writes. "In exchange for a $100,000

donation from a local supermarket, it renamed its gym 'ShopRite of Brooklawn Center.' ... A high school in Newburyport, Mass., offered naming rights to the principal's office for $10,000. ... By 2011, seven states had approved advertising on the sides of school buses."

Seen in isolation, these commercial encroachments seem innocuous enough. But Sandel sees them as signs of a bad trend: "Over the last three decades," he states, "we have drifted from having a market economy to becoming a market society. A market economy is a tool — a valuable and effective tool — for organizing productive activity. But a 'market society' is a place where everything is up for sale. It is a way of life where market values govern every sphere of life."

Why worry about this trend? Because, Sandel argues, market values are crowding out civic practices. When public schools are plastered with commercial advertising, they teach students to be consumers rather than citizens. When we outsource war to private military contractors, and when we have separate, shorter lines for airport security for those who can afford them, the result is that the affluent and those of modest means live increasingly separate lives, and the class-mixing institutions and public spaces that forge a sense of common experience and shared citizenship get eroded.

This reach of markets into every aspect of life was partly a result of the end of the cold war, he argues, when America's victory was interpreted as a victory for unfettered markets, thus propelling the notion that markets are the primary instruments for achieving the public good. It was also the result of Americans wanting more public services than they were willing

to pay taxes for, thus inviting corporations to fill in the gap with school gyms brought to you by ShopRite.

Sandel is now a renowned professor at Harvard, but we first became friends when we grew up together in Minneapolis in the 1960s. Both our fathers took us to the 1965 World Series, when the Dodgers beat the Twins in seven games. In 1965, the best tickets in Metropolitan Stadium cost $3; bleachers were $1.50. Sandel's third-deck seat to the World Series cost $8. Today, alas, not only are most stadiums named for companies, but the wealthy now sit in skyboxes — even at college games — that cost tens of thousands of dollars a season, and hoi polloi sit out in the rain.

Throughout our society, we are losing the places and institutions that used to bring people together from different walks of life. Sandel calls this the "skyboxification of American life," and it is troubling. Unless the rich and poor encounter one another in everyday life, it is hard to think of ourselves as engaged in a common project. At a time when to fix our society we need to do big, hard things together, the marketization of public life becomes one more thing pulling us apart. "The great missing debate in contemporary politics," Sandel writes, "is about the role and reach of markets." We should be asking where markets serve the public good, and where they don't belong, he argues. And we should be asking how to rebuild class-mixing institutions.

"Democracy does not require perfect equality," he concludes, "but it does require that citizens share in a common life. ... For this is how we learn to negotiate and abide our differences, and how we come to care for the common good."