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<a href="#">Article 1.</a>	<a href="#">Los Angeles Times</a> <b><u>The Jewish vote as a factor in U.S. politics</u></b> <a href="#">Rafael Medoff</a>
<a href="#">Article 2.</a>	The Financial Times <b><u>Thucydides's trap has been sprung in the Pacific</u></b> <a href="#">Graham Allison</a>
<a href="#">Article 3.</a>	The National Interest <b><u>The Elusive Obama Doctrine</u></b> <a href="#">Leslie H. Gelb</a>
<a href="#">Article 4.</a>	The National Interest <b><u>All the Ayatollah's Men</u></b> <a href="#">Ray Takeyh</a>

Article 1.

[Los Angeles Times](#)

# **The Jewish vote as a factor in U.S. politics**

Rafael Medoff

August 23, 2012 -- One does not usually think of the conventions of the major U.S. political parties as having any particular impact on Jewish history. But 68 years ago, the Republican National Convention adopted a plank that would shape the future of U.S.-Israel relations and redefine the role of Jewish voters in American politics. This surprising turn of events was the result of efforts by an unlikely trio: a former president, a maverick journalist-turned-congresswoman and the father of Israel's current prime minister.

The race for the 1944 GOP nomination was settled early. After his sweeping win in the Wisconsin primary, New York Gov. Thomas Dewey was set to get the party's nod.

There were, however, several surprises in store when the Republicans gathered in Chicago at the end of June. One was the choice of Connecticut Rep. Clare Boothe Luce to deliver the keynote address — the first time a woman had been given that honor by either major party.

Luce, a former editor of *Vanity Fair* and war correspondent for *Life*, was one of the GOP's rising young stars. The charming and charismatic Luce had a knack for turning a clever political phrase. Her description of postwar liberal visions of a universal world order as "globaloney" instantly became part of the

political lexicon.

Former President Herbert Hoover hailed Luce as "the Symbol of the New Generation."

The other major surprise of the convention was the party's decision to actively seek the support of Jewish voters. In the presidential elections of 1936 and 1940, 85% of American Jews had supported Franklin D. Roosevelt. "The problem with you people," Republican Sen. Arthur Vandenberg once complained to a group of pro-FDR Jewish leaders, "is that every time the Great White Father [Roosevelt] waves his hand, you jump right through the hoop."

But by the spring of 1944, many Jews were deeply frustrated by the Roosevelt administration's failure to aid European Jews fleeing the Nazis, and FDR's refusal to press the British to open Palestine to Jewish refugees.

Even the fervently pro-FDR American Jewish Congress challenged the president. An editorial in its official journal, addressing the Allied leaders, declared:

"You cannot recompense a people for its millions left to be butchered by the enemy through your indifference to their fate and the red tape of bureaucratic approach to the matter of their rescue." The editorial said those Jews who had managed to escape from the clutches of the Nazis "escape[d] also from the indifference of the democratic nations, from the inhumanity of certain of their policies, from their strict adherence to rigid immigration regulations."

The growing bitterness in the Jewish community opened the

door to Benzion Netanyahu, a young Zionist activist from Jerusalem who had come to the U.S. to mobilize public support for creation of a Jewish state. (Netanyahu, whose son, Benjamin, is Israel's current prime minister, passed away this year at the age of 102.) At a time when most mainstream Jewish leaders backed Roosevelt and ignored the Republicans, Netanyahu cultivated ties to Hoover, Luce, Sen. Robert Taft of Ohio and other senior GOP figures. He urged them to include a pro-Zionist plank in their 1944 platform. So did Cleveland rabbi and Zionist leader Abba Hillel Silver, who was close to Taft.

In an interview some years ago, Netanyahu told me that on the eve of the convention, Luce called him to say, "I'm going now, to do your work at the convention."

Luce was a member of the convention's resolutions committee, and Taft was its chairman. With Hoover's encouragement, the committee adopted a resolution urging the Allies to "give refuge to millions of distressed Jewish men, women and children driven from their homes by tyranny," by opening British-controlled Palestine to "unrestricted immigration" and then establishing a Jewish state.

Prominent Jewish supporters of FDR and the Democrats, especially Rep. Emanuel Celler of New York and Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, feared the GOP plank might break the Democrats' lock on the Jewish vote. At the Democratic Convention in Chicago the following month, Wise warned a Roosevelt administration official that their failure to adopt a pro-Zionist plank to match the Republicans "will lose the president 400,000 or 500,000 votes."

Wise was referring to the large Jewish population in New York state. With its 47 electoral votes — the largest in the nation at the time — New York would be crucial to FDR's 1944 reelection bid. The fact that New York's governor was the Republican nominee meant it might become a battleground state. The party leadership heeded the warnings from Celler and Wise. The Democrats adopted a plank endorsing "unrestricted Jewish immigration and colonization" of Palestine and the establishment of "a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth." Now both parties stood unequivocally in support of rescue and statehood.

This was the beginning of the "Jewish vote" as a factor in U.S. presidential politics. For the first time, both parties recognized that Jewish votes might be up for grabs, and that Jewish concerns needed to be addressed to attract the support of Jewish voters.

The two 1944 planks also represented the birth of bipartisan support for a Jewish state. With both parties in agreement, the path was clear for America-Israel friendship to become a permanent part of American political culture.

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The Financial Times

## **Thucydides's trap has been sprung in the Pacific**

Graham Allison

August 21, 2012 -- China's increasingly aggressive posture towards the South China Sea and the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea is less important in itself than as a sign of things to come. For six decades after the second world war, an American "Pax Pacifica" has provided the security and economic framework within which Asian countries have produced the most rapid economic growth in history. However, having emerged as a great power that will overtake the US in the next decade to become the largest economy in the world, it is not surprising that China will demand revisions to the rules established by others.

The defining question about global order in the decades ahead will be: can China and the US escape Thucydides's trap? The historian's metaphor reminds us of the dangers two parties face when a rising power rivals a ruling power – as Athens did in 5th century BC and Germany did at the end of the 19th century. Most such challenges have ended in war. Peaceful cases required huge adjustments in the attitudes and actions of the governments and the societies of both countries involved.

Classical Athens was the centre of civilisation. Philosophy, history, drama, architecture, democracy – all beyond anything

previously imagined. This dramatic rise shocked Sparta, the established land power on the Peloponnese. Fear compelled its leaders to respond. Threat and counter-threat produced competition, then confrontation and finally conflict. At the end of 30 years of war, both states had been destroyed.

Thucydides wrote of these events: “It was the rise of Athens and the fear that this inspired in Sparta that made war inevitable.” Note the two crucial variables: rise and fear.

The rapid emergence of any new power disturbs the status quo. In the 21st century, as Harvard University’s Commission on American National Interests has observed about China, “a diva of such proportions cannot enter the stage without effect”.

Never has a nation moved so far, so fast, up the international rankings on all dimensions of power. In a generation, a state whose gross domestic product was smaller than Spain’s has become the second-largest economy in the world.

If we were betting on the basis of history, the answer to the question about Thucydides’s trap appears obvious. In 11 of 15 cases since 1500 where a rising power emerged to challenge a ruling power, war occurred. Think about Germany after unification as it overtook Britain as Europe’s largest economy. In 1914 and in 1939, its aggression and the UK’s response produced world wars.

Uncomfortable as China’s rise is for the US, there is nothing unnatural about an increasingly powerful China demanding more say and greater sway in relations among nations. Americans, particularly those who lecture Chinese about being “more like us”, should reflect on our own history.

As the US emerged as the dominant power in the western hemisphere in about 1890, how did it behave? Future president Theodore Roosevelt personified a nation supremely confident that the next 100 years would be an American century. In the years before the first world war the US liberated Cuba, threatened Britain and Germany with war to force them to accept US positions on disputes in Venezuela and Canada, backed an insurrection that split Columbia to create a new state of Panama – which immediately gave the US concessions to build the Panama Canal – and attempted to overthrow the government of Mexico, which was supported by the UK and financed by London bankers. In the half century that followed, US military forces intervened in “our hemisphere” on more than 30 separate occasions to settle economic or territorial disputes on terms favourable to Americans, or oust leaders we judged unacceptable.

To recognise powerful structural factors is not to argue that leaders are prisoners of the iron laws of history. It is rather to help us appreciate the magnitude of the challenge. If leaders in China and the US perform no better than their predecessors in classical Greece, or Europe at the beginning of the 20th century, historians of the 21st century will cite Thucydides in explaining the catastrophe that follows. The fact that war would be devastating for both nations is relevant but not decisive. Recall the first world war, in which all the combatants lost what they treasured most.

In light of the risks of such an outcome, leaders in both China and the US must begin talking to each other much more candidly about likely confrontations and flash points. Even more difficult and painful, both must begin making substantial

adjustments to accommodate the irreducible requirements of the other.

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Article 3.

The National Interest

## **The Elusive Obama Doctrine**

Leslie H. Gelb

August 22, 2012 -- LEAVING ASIDE political and ideological malcontents as well as defenders of the faith, it seems to me that three points can be made fairly regarding President Barack Obama's foreign-policy and national-security record.

First, he has captured the potent political center, a considerable feat for any Democrat. He's done so mainly by staying out of big, costly trouble. He further helped himself by co-opting some of the popular hard-nosed rhetoric and actions of traditional realists not generally associated with Democrats. Right-wing extremists did their part by practically conceding the middle ground with their unrelenting hawkishness. All of this permitted Obama to outmaneuver the Republicans and hold the center. In doing so, he has given Democrats their first real shot at being America's leading party on foreign policy since Franklin Roosevelt and the earliest days of Harry Truman.

This has been nothing short of a political coup that could reverse long-standing Republican electoral advantages on national security.

Second, Obama managed a complex range of tactical challenges quite well, improving significantly on the international position he inherited from George W. Bush and generally bolstering America's reputation. Specifically, he managed America's exit from Iraq well and developed a new, focused and effective military strategy to counter terrorists. Inevitably, experts will quarrel over whether Obama could have done more of this or less of that. But on the whole, he guided America capably through the kinds of problems that often had turned sour in administrations past. Even where Obama took wrong turns—and there were a number of these—he mostly sidestepped costly mistakes, with the exception of Afghanistan. He was aided in avoiding such big errors—quite an accomplishment—by possessing a clear sense of the limitations of American power.

Third, while Obama saw what American power could not do, he failed to appreciate what American power could do, especially when encased in good strategy. Thus, his principal shortcoming was failing to formulate strategy and understand its interplay with power. He should be faulted here, even though most who fault him usually fail to produce their own viable strategies—those magical brews of picturing pitfalls and opportunities, hammering out attainable objectives and focusing the use of power. To this day, Obama's Afghanistan strategy seems little more than a disjointed list of tactics. More sorrowfully on the strategic front, he has yet to put economic resurgence and U.S. economic power at the core of the national-security debate, where they must be, for an effective national-

security policy in the twenty-first century. To be sure, he has spoken of this need on occasion, but in his hands it has seemed more a rhetorical stepchild than a key ingredient of international power and successful strategy. Without strategy and without economic renewal to power it, Obama neither has achieved lasting strategic breakthroughs nor laid the groundwork for them later on. Those who have easy solutions for foreign-policy challenges don't know very much about foreign policy. I've tried to be mindful of the great difficulties and of reasonably varied policy perspectives—and of the fact that, in the course of events, I've changed my own mind on matters small and large. I am mindful, too, that strange occurrences often attend the months preceding presidential elections. Obama's position at the political center in U.S. foreign policy has enabled him to deflect classic Republican charges of liberal weakness that always kept Democrats on the defensive. He and his team also adopted much of the realist language of "interests" and "power," which further enhanced public confidence in him. Holding center field allowed Obama to move both left and right to block attacks or gain support. At times, though, such political gain came at the cost of contradictory actions that confused audiences both domestic and foreign. As for unhappy liberals, Obama often has flicked them away almost as easily as Republicans have. In taking over the middle, Obama had help from a centrist-oriented Bill Clinton, who certainly was an elusive target for Republicans in the 1996 elections. However, Clinton's immunity often derived from his tiptoeing around international issues rather than boldly seizing the center. Obama seized that center. It must be said that, during the Clinton and Obama years, Republicans contributed to their own decline with unadulterated hawkish rhetoric. The 9/11 events briefly boosted Bush and

Republican hawkishness, but that faded soon enough.

Obama earned the people's trust. He and his new Democrats averted the usual hellholes because they understood the limits of American power far better than Bush had, particularly when it came to the shortcomings of military force. Yes, the United States had military superiority after the Cold War. Bush and the neocons saw this clearly. But they went on to draw the wrong conclusion—namely, that the way to exercise that superiority was to threaten force and wage war. Obama and his minions grasped the reality that American superiority can prevail in conventional wars against nonsuperpowers (driving Iraq out of Kuwait), in operations to decapitate regimes in their capital cities (Saddam Hussein in Baghdad; the Taliban in Kabul) and in commando-like operations. But unlike the Bush contingent, the Obamanites saw that conventional military superiority cannot pacify countries or resolve civil wars and vast internal conflicts. With the notable exception of Afghanistan, the new Democrats respected this reality. Once in office, Obama aided himself politically by quickly ditching the liberal foreign-policy agenda of his campaign. By the end of his first year, he had quietly abandoned promises on global warming and Guantánamo. The former proved much too expensive in the short run, and the latter had become a symbol of liberal naïveté. He hushed conservative critics with a more skeptical tone on Palestinian-Israeli talks and a tougher stance on Iran and North Korea. He guarded himself further by stiffening his position on economic and humanitarian issues with China and stressing his pro-human-rights posture on Russia.

Obama then deflected the Republicans' remaining bullets with his amplified and winning war against terrorists. He topped the

antiterror charts when, in the face of considerable risk, he ordered the killing of Osama bin Laden in May 2011. He punctuated this by eliminating Anwar al-Awlaki, another monster, in September 2011. Instead of sending in the troops to fight open-ended land wars, he fought the terrorists with special-operations teams and drones. Whatever you think of his administration's tendency to leak news of its victories or the ethics of having a "kill list," in his four years, Obama has taken the fight to our enemies and dealt them a staggering blow.

Only buckshot remained in the Republican political arsenal. The GOP was reduced to complaining about Obama's abandoning Bush's democracy-promotion agenda, delaying the elimination of Egypt's and Libya's dictators, not taking "action" to remove Syrian president Bashar al-Assad and generally forsaking the Arab Spring. Obama barely had to respond, given the prevailing political sentiment. Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton must have been jealous.

But Obama surely knows that history is closing in and will be seeking real accomplishments. He has to be aware that at some point even the sleepy press will ask: "Where's the beef?"

This lack of beef brings us to the major hole in Obama's foreign policy—the paucity of genuine strategic thinking. While the president's political leeway was constricted on most domestic issues, he had a relatively free hand on foreign policy, especially after he demonstrated he could handle issues reasonably well. To be sure, he stayed attentive and responsive to conservative attacks on his actions abroad. For the most part, however, he made foreign policy his turf and ran a highly centralized one-man show. The cost of this overconcentration was that he

usurped even the details of policy from his principal cabinet officers and thus left himself little time to conceive and craft a long-range strategy. Fashioning strategy takes both time and experience, neither of which Obama possessed. Further, there was a deeper impediment still—his personal predilections and personality. He was not built for strategizing. Strategy calls for making bets and taking risks that the strategist must stick to over time, come what may. Strategy requires reducing flexibility, cutting off options to follow a certain course and not getting overwhelmed by details. These traits, too, ran counter to Obama's disposition to shift nimbly and keep options open. Strategy requires sticking to your guns, with some discomfort, in the face of pressures to trim sails. Strategy is also about figuring out precisely how to use the power you have. Even with the decline in America's economy and the shifting sands of international affairs, one remaining constant is that nations the world over still recognize Washington as the indispensable leader. America never had the power to order others around—not after World War II nor at the Cold War's end. But now more than at any point since America's global reign began, other countries have the power to go their own way and say no to Washington. America may be the only nation that can lead, but with less relative power, it needs good strategy more than ever.

Such strategic considerations are at the heart of the exercise of power. Obama does not have an overarching strategy, nor did Bill Clinton or George W. Bush. George H. W. Bush did: end the Cold War without a hot war by helping Soviet leaders dismantle their empire. President Nixon and Henry Kissinger did as well: bury the ill effects of the Vietnam War by

skywriting America's unique diplomatic power, make peace between Egypt and Israel, open up relations with Communist China, and use that as leverage against Moscow and ties to Moscow against Beijing. Best of them all, President Truman created two handfuls of international institutions for the exercise of America's economic power—the IMF, the World Bank, the UN, the Marshall Plan, NATO and more. In the face of Soviet military superiority in Europe and Chinese superiority in Asia, that power was key for Truman, as it was for Dwight Eisenhower. Through these institutions, and thanks to sustained U.S. economic growth and superior military technology, Washington implemented the brilliant policies of containment and deterrence. The difficulty with presidents who don't have strategies is convincing them that they actually don't have them and that they do need them. George W. Bush seemed to believe that military assertiveness constituted a strategy. Bill Clinton subordinated international strategy to domestic politics. Obama appears to think that common sense and flexibility constitute a strategy. The result is that leaders around the world often puzzle over what Obama is seeking and how. It's not that these leaders have their own strategy, but there is a much better chance that they'll go along with Obama if they believe he has a plausible one.

To understand this gap, it's helpful to survey the evolution of Obama's approach to world affairs. When he took the oath of office, Washington's relations with the world were, to put it kindly, in a state of disrepair. Initially, Obama tried to be forthcoming and understanding to all. He offered talks with Iran and North Korea, and he made conciliatory gestures toward China and Russia. He opened a welcoming hand to Arabs and

Muslims in a June 2009 speech in Cairo, which he underscored by not traveling a few extra miles to Israel. Europeans expressed pleasure at his un-Bushian willingness to consult them, appreciate their points of view and recommit America to an early exit from Iraq. But with little to build upon and a declining U.S. economy, these initiatives stalled, and high hopes abroad began to dim. What follows is a rapid run-through of my observations on some of the major issues.

NOWHERE WAS Obama's understanding of the limitations of American power better executed than in Iraq. Bush signed a pact for the full withdrawal of U.S. forces by the end of 2011, and it was clear to all—save the neocons—that the Iraqis would not budge on that. Obama took out the troops. Republicans tried to attack but got nowhere. Most Americans realized that staying would expose U.S. soldiers further without having much effect on Iraq's various troubles. However the public may have felt about the toll in American lives and money, it now seemed relieved. And the negative consequences in the Gulf area have been minute. The real strategic blunder came when Bush destroyed Iraq, leaving Iran as the only major regional power.

In Afghanistan, Obama made the opposite call, yielding to the pressure to escalate. He quickly became bogged down due to the casualties and costs, Afghan corruption and inefficiency, Pakistani duplicity in providing safe havens to the Taliban and so on. Only as his reelection campaign approached did he commit to a limited war-fighting strategy and eventual withdrawal. But questions linger over how many troops will remain after combat forces are withdrawn in 2014 and for how long. Perhaps Obama simply is trying to cover up retreat in an election year. Perhaps he still believes in some of his old danger-

and-victory rhetoric about Afghanistan. Or perhaps he still doesn't quite know what to do.

Obama's policies on the nuclear bad guys—Iran and North Korea (and don't forget Pakistan)—have been mixed. After early days of conciliation, Obama's policy on Iran has been mostly hard-line, a clarity blessed by U.S. and Israeli politics. And it's been half right. On the plus side, he's gotten most major nations to impose a formidable list of economic sanctions and stepped up U.S. military presence in the region. But pressure alone, no matter how formidable, hasn't been and won't be sufficient to settle matters with Iran. Sanctions won't work unless teamed with a reasonable proposal. If the U.S. goal is to eliminate Iran's nuclear program altogether, the risk of war will be high. If the goal is to restrict that program to energy and make it very difficult for Tehran to develop and hide weapons-grade material, diplomacy has a chance.

So far, Tehran wants almost all sanctions lifted without giving clear indications of its bottom line. The American-led side insists on a step-by-step approach and won't concede Iran's right to produce uranium enriched to 20 percent, a short jump to weapons-grade quality. Neither side will budge, and nothing will happen before November. The same holds for the already nuclear-capable North Korea. Obama tried talking, but like his predecessors, he flopped. For all Pyongyang's threats, however, its leadership seems to respect deterrence—buttressed by Beijing's aversion to another Korean war.

To me, more worrisome than North Korea or Iran is our sometime ally Pakistan. Pakistan already has damaged antiproliferation efforts by divulging nuclear secrets to ignobles

the world over. With its unstable domestic politics and possession of over a hundred nuclear weapons (and growing), it has to rank well ahead of Iran and North Korea in likelihood to use nuclear weapons or give them to terrorists.

OBAMA'S POLICIES toward China, Russia and India have had their inevitable ups and downs, without crises. From here on, presidents will be judged in large measure by how well they manage affairs with China, the other superpower. At the outset, Obama faced the improbable circumstance of Chinese leaders liking his predecessor, who didn't arouse the usual Chinese suspicions about scheming Americans. Obama has not had an easy time commanding their respect. To them, he's been sometimes too hard, sometimes too soft, sometimes both. They certainly didn't like the Obama team's policy and resource pivot from Europe and the Middle East to Asia, China's turf. To China, it smacked of a new containment policy and of Washington's refusal to allow Beijing its day in the sun.

Obama has a genuine desire to work out differences with China, provided he can satisfy three key constituencies: 1) China's neighbors, who want an unobtrusive U.S. bubble of protection from Beijing; 2) humanitarians, who believe that strategic concerns should be subordinated to democratization and human rights; and 3) conservatives, who fear growing Chinese military might. All represent legitimate U.S. concerns.

Obama has tried to calm Beijing somewhat by reframing the pivot as more of a "rebalancing." Thus, even as Obama transfers U.S. military resources to Asia, he correctly is attempting to shift the main theater of competition from security to economics. He boldly and rightly expanded plans for the Trans-Pacific

Partnership, going beyond free trade to the aggressive protection of intellectual-property rights and other matters. At the same time, however, he has tried to comfort China's neighbors over key issues such as the South China Sea. These neighbors want it all ways—U.S. protection but not so much as to anger Beijing and risk Chinese trade and investment. In other words, they want Washington to take the heat, not them.

Relations with China are nothing like those with the old Soviet Union. There was no economic dimension to Cold War politics. In U.S.-Chinese relations today, economics is central. Each is a major trader and investor with the other, and China holds more than a trillion dollars of U.S. debt. While common economic interests certainly do not guarantee peace, they sure help. The main point is this: events in Asia and elsewhere will go China's way unless America's economy revives—a key point that Obama hasn't sufficiently stressed to Americans.

From a low point under Bush, U.S. relations with Moscow had nowhere to go but up. Obama hit the “reset” button to start a new relationship. Sometimes, this produced good feelings; other times, there were increased tensions. Particularly troublesome to Moscow have been U.S. interventions, actual and potential, in other countries. Russia worries about U.S. interference in Ukraine and Georgia as well as in places like Syria. Yet Moscow has cooperated with Washington on Afghanistan logistics, nukes in Iran and North Korea, and antiterrorism issues generally.

The reset button has had its offs and ons, and the relationship hasn't been elevated to the strategic partnership Obama wanted. But it's still worth trying, especially with Vladimir Putin reensconced as president. To make it work, U.S. leaders must

prepare to be seen side by side atop the mountain with Russian leaders. That's how they see themselves, and Washington should treat them that way. It's a small price to pay for Russia's diplomatic cooperation. American leaders can't ignore human-rights and democracy concerns, but for now they will need to temper the rhetoric to get Moscow's power aligned with America's on difficult world issues.

The would-be strategic partnership with India has yet to bloom, and if it ever does it's not clear what form it will take. Like many of its neighbors to the east, India wants China to be distracted with America as it flexes its muscles. At the same time, New Delhi is deciding when and how much to embrace Washington. And it is India that will do the deciding. So far, Washington's devotion to forging this strategic partnership (against China, unspoken) has been mostly unrequited. Washington has given India a free ride on inspecting military-run nuclear facilities. In return, New Delhi has been quite stingy. In a huge deal last year, India snubbed U.S. jet fighters and chose to buy Russian and French ones instead. India is still figuring itself out, and both New Delhi and Washington are calibrating how far they can go without alienating the Chinese.

OBAMA'S POLICY of humanitarian intervention and democracy promotion has been inconsistent. Such is the trouble for every president who must balance values and hard interests.

The most dramatic problems have been Libya and Syria. Obama rushed into Libya to help America's allies crush a dictator. It was a tricky decision. Washington couldn't ignore the pleas of friends who had fought alongside Americans in the two big contemporary wars. Yet the eager interveners hadn't the foggiest

idea whether they were helping future Islamic extremists or potential democrats. It is a welcome sign that Libyans bucked the regional trend of electing Islamists in their July elections but nothing to warrant a proper exhale. For now, the Obama team is happy it eliminated an Arab dictator to prove America's democratic wares.

Not so, so far, in Syria. Unlike in Libya, Obama is wary of the potential sinkhole and rightly so—even as the neocons, as always, beat their war drums. And unlike in Libya, where the Arab League encouraged intervention, Obama has been spared its pressure to use force against the Assad regime. Nobody wants to take the military lead because of the blame that may come later. The hope is that Moscow, a supporter of Assad, may pull the plug on its ally and save everyone else from having to go in.

There is a big strategic question mark over Syria. Will it miraculously become calm and democratic? Will it become a radical Sunni state tied to Al Qaeda? Will Iran lose the future Syria as an ally, thus driving Tehran from its main Mideast outpost? Those at Syria's borders are bracing for the worst.

The day may come when Washington can help Arabs toward a freer life. But that day still is not near, as the Arab Spring screams both hope and danger.

For Egypt, there is so much to say and so little that can be done. It embodies all America's dreams and nightmares about societies progressing from dictatorship to democracy, with little or no grounding in democratic traditions and institutions. The fear, of course, is that dictators relatively friendly to Washington will be replaced by new dictators harsher to their own people and

unreceptive to Washington. Hosni Mubarak was a corrupt dictator indeed, and it's just babble to argue that America could have kept him in power and/or moved him toward democracy. He seemed dug in forever. Yet when Tahrir's moment came, the dictator disappeared in the blink of an eye.

Obama now must choose between a corrupt and nondemocratic Egyptian military, possibly amenable to American interests, and the people's choice: a Muslim Brotherhood that might be moderate now but extreme once in control. If the Muslim Brotherhood strips off its Clark Kent suit to become Islamist Superman, there will be hell to pay for Egyptians, Israelis and Americans.

The choice now would be no better had Obama immediately dumped Mubarak and sided with the protestors. The latter had little power and no political organization, demonstrated by their poor performance in elections. Indeed, Libya aside, liberals throughout the Arab lands are unprepared to compete with Islamists for power. With no obvious and viable ally, Obama has little choice but to keep lines out to most parties, as is his wont. He has been mostly cautious about the unknown tides of the Arab Spring, and for that he deserves commendation. But there is a future to plan for, and it is not too soon for a U.S.-led economic-aid project to strengthen the cadres of moderate reform in the Arab world.

Obama does not merit high marks for managing Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. He did virtually nothing to prod Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas to prepare his people for compromise, and he allowed Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu to denigrate the negotiation process. At a joint press

conference, Netanyahu lectured Obama on the evils of a peace accord built around the 1967 borders, and the U.S. president just sat there. The modified '67 borders, endorsed by several of Netanyahu's predecessors, have been America's position on peace for a half century. With November approaching, an American clarification of this issue has to wait until 2013. But at that point, Washington must be ready for straight talk with Israel and the Palestinians, backed up by the blessings of Arab states and an Arab economic-development plan for Palestine.

Latin America offers an opportunity largely ignored by Obama, and Africa represents a growing threat about which he can do little. Brazil is the world's sixth-biggest economy, and the Mexican economy is booming. Even with America's own difficulties and other international priorities, the Southern Hemisphere has commanded shockingly little time from the White House. The administration put muscle into passing trade agreements with Panama and Colombia only because it had the GOP votes in Congress. At the Cartagena summit in 2012, Obama was slammed for his failure to roll up his sleeves on either the Cuban embargo or drugs. The most interest Americans showed in the region came when Secret Service officers were found to be cavorting with prostitutes.

In Africa, some countries have strengthened their democracies, though many are now gravely threatened by corruption, internal butchers or Islamic extremists. The United States and others feign interest, but absent direct implications for other continents, outside lights rarely will shine on Africa for some time to come.

Even as fashion now runs to Asia, Europe remains America's principal economic, diplomatic and security partner. Asia will

never replace it—though Obama doesn't seem to see it that way.

Our European friends have fallen on miserable economic times, and Washington can offer little help. But the degree to which Europeans have gone their own way is worrisome. Eastern European leaders are unhappy about Obama's apparent lack of consideration for their feelings about the Russian bear. And Obama did not handle issues regarding that region's missile-defense system in a way that inspired confidence.

When the Obama administration announced what sounded like a strategic shift in emphasis toward Asia, it demonstrated a lack of sensitivity to all Europeans in a time of great need. Explanations and qualifications flowed from Washington, but the damage was done. Not surprisingly, early European acclamations of Obama—fueled by hopes that he was more in tune with world affairs than Bush—have mostly dissipated.

In no theater of the world has Obama's lack of a strategic vision had starker consequences than in Afghanistan. The White House has altered its objectives there so frequently, it's hard to follow what America is fighting for now. First, it was to defeat Al Qaeda in retribution for 9/11. Then, it became to defeat the Taliban as well because the Taliban might let terrorists back into the country. Later, it was somehow to prevail in Afghanistan to bolster moderates in Pakistan and safeguard Pakistani nukes. This last objective was nothing short of psychedelic. It was never clear how any outcome in the wilds of Afghanistan, no matter how positive, could save a messed up, corrupt, multiethnic country of 190 million where the military and the Islamists are the only real political forces. Without realistic goals to give his actions ballast, Obama increased the U.S.

military presence more than threefold from the approximately thirty thousand troops he inherited. He gave them a counterinsurgency and nation-building mandate that stretched credulity. Finally, now, he will withdraw all combat troops by 2014 and drop his broad counterinsurgency strategy in favor of a sensible, targeted counterterrorist approach. For all that, he still hasn't decided the size of the residual force after 2014. It could be as high as thirty thousand and hang around indefinitely.

Administration officials say that their objective is to remove “almost” all U.S. forces in “coming years” while making Afghanistan more secure. And they aim to achieve these goals by taking three steps: exploring a deal with the Taliban, improving the performance of Kabul and Afghan security forces, and enticing Afghanistan's neighbors to accept greater responsibility. But what the administration has here is a list—not a strategy.

A strategy starts with the essential judgment that the United States simply does not have vital interests in any major sustained presence in Afghanistan, but Afghanistan's neighbors do—and it is to them, therefore, that Washington's strategy must be directed. It is they who will have to worry about what happens after U.S. forces depart, they who will have to deal with the drugs, the refugees and the Islamic extremists that will flow across their borders—not the United States. As for U.S. concerns about Afghanistan as a global headquarters for terrorists, that time has passed. Today, terrorists operate worldwide, certainly more in the Middle East than in Afghanistan.

Task number one, then, is to convince Afghanistan's neighbors

that the United States is pulling almost all of its forces out, and soon, and that America no longer will bear the primary burden. These countries must be convinced that while Washington can live with an anarchic Afghanistan—or worse—they cannot. Otherwise, the neighbors will be happy just to sit back and watch. Afghan parties, including the Taliban, must understand that they will have to deal with these neighbors in America's absence, and the neighbors must be made to see that they must shoulder the burdens or suffer the consequences. None of this is to say that Washington should simply walk away and hope these countries see the light. The United States still will have to play a leading role in getting this new coalition organized.

In Afghanistan and elsewhere, Washington has to persuade key countries that U.S. power is being used to solve common problems. America's future power must be based on mutual indispensability: the United States is the indispensable leader because it alone can galvanize coalitions to solve major international problems (most nations know this); other nations are indispensable partners in getting the job done. Others must see clearly that U.S. actions serve their interests as well as America's and that their interests cannot be advanced save by American leadership.

THIS PRINCIPLE of mutual indispensability, with Washington in the lead, must be the intellectual heart of strategy—but what will keep it pumping is economics. Good strategy is a necessary but insufficient condition for success in the twenty-first century. Money, more money, innovation in management and technology, competitive and skilled workers, and an economy that can trade and invest with the best are also essential. The U.S. economy is the basis of America's military and diplomatic

power and, of course, America's foreign economic power. Economics is now the principal currency of international affairs, the new precious coin of the realm. Of course, in certain matters, only force and traditional diplomacy are appropriate. But in most international transactions today, it's economic goodies given or withheld that turn heads.

Obama often speaks of the importance of America's economic strength. Yet he has not put this point at the core of his national-security agenda, and that's why he has fallen short. It's not enough to say, "Our nation must do this." He has to show how and inspire fear of failure—show how declining economic vitality destroys American power and undermines U.S. interests. He hasn't established this sense of urgency.

Eisenhower knew the magic here. When the Soviets threatened, he tied it to the U.S. economy. Moscow increased military spending? Ike said our country needed to launch a massive highway-building program so U.S. forces could crisscross the nation more readily. Moscow launched Sputnik? He insisted Congress vastly increase spending on math and science education "to catch up."

The greatest danger facing America today is economic stagnation and decline as we lose trade and jobs to more competitive and innovative countries. Obama must find the words to reverse the downward slope—to restore research, manufacturing skills and physical infrastructure. He's got to make Americans understand that without such rejuvenation, we cannot sustain America's lead in technological or military superiority.

Obama uttered these very thoughts. At West Point in December 2009, he said, “The nation that I’m most interested in building is our own.” But he has only just begun to yoke together the American economy and American security. This should be the stuff of a national crusade, with flags flying and a political strategy to rally Americans. It’s the kind of task great leaders are built for.

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Article 4.

The National Interest

## **All the Ayatollah's Men**

Ray Takeyh

August 22, 2012 -- MORE THAN thirty years after Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini came to power—and two decades after his passing—the Islamic Republic remains an outlier in international relations. Other non-Western, revolutionary regimes eventually eschewed a rigidly ideological foreign policy and accepted the fundamental legitimacy of the international system. But Iran’s leaders have remained committed to

Khomeini's worldview. The resilience of Iran's Islamist ideology in the country's foreign policy is striking. China's present-day foreign policy isn't structured according to Mao's thought, nor is Ho Chi Minh the guiding light behind Vietnam's efforts to integrate into the Asian community. But Iran's leadership clings to policies derived largely from Khomeini's ideological vision even when such policies are detrimental to the country's other stated national interests and even when a sizable portion of the ruling elite rejects them.

Many Western observers of Iran don't understand that its foreign policy has been fashioned largely to sustain an ideological identity. Thus, we can't understand Iran's foreign relations and its evident hostility by just assessing its international environment or the changing Mideast power balance. These things matter. But Iran's revolutionary elite also seeks to buttress the regime's ideological identity by embracing a confrontational posture.

The question then becomes why the Iranian leadership continues to maintain this ideological template so long after its revolutionary emergence. After all, other revolutionary regimes, after initially using foreign policy for ideological purposes, later moved away from that approach. Why has China become more pragmatic but not Iran? The answer is that the Islamic Republic is different from its revolutionary counterparts in that the ideology of its state is its religion. It may be a politicized and radicalized variation of Shia Islam, but religion is the official dogma. Thus, a dedicated core of supporters inevitably remained loyal to this religious ideology long after Khomeini himself disappeared from the scene. Revolutionary regimes usually change when their ardent supporters grow disillusioned and

abandon the faith. It is, after all, much easier to be an ex-Marxist than an ex-Shiite. In one instance, renouncing one's faith is political defection; in the other, apostasy. Although the Islamic Republic has become widely unpopular, for a small but fervent segment of the population it is still an important experiment in realizing God's will on earth.

To understand this, it helps to review some pertinent Iranian history, beginning with the thought and actions of Ayatollah Khomeini. Khomeini offered a unique challenge to the concept of the nation-state and the prevailing norms of the international system. The essence of his message was that the vitality of his Islamist vision at home was contingent on its relentless export. Moreover, because God's vision was not to be confined to a single nation, Iran's foreign policy would be an extension of its domestic revolutionary turmoil. For the grand ayatollah, the global order was divided between two competing entities—states whose priorities were defined by Western conventions; and Iran, whose ostensible purpose was to redeem a divine mandate. Of course, no country can persist on ideology alone. Iran had to operate its economy, deal with regional exigencies and meet the demands of its growing population. But its international relations would be characterized by revolutionary impulses continually struggling against the pull of pragmatism.

Khomeini's internationalism had to have an antagonist, a foil against which to define itself. And a caricatured concept of the West became the central pillar of his Islamist imagination. The Western powers were rapacious imperialists determined to exploit Iran's wealth for their own aggrandizement. Islamist themes soon followed, portraying the West as also seeking to

subjugate Muslims and impose its cultural template in the name of modernity. Disunity among Muslims, the autocracies populating the region, the failure of the clerical class to assume the mantle of opposition and the young people's attraction to alien ideologies were seen as byproducts of a Western plot to sustain its dominance over Islam's realm. Four episodes from the 1980s underscore how foreign policy was used to buttress the ideological transformation at home: the 1979–1981 hostage crisis, the war with Iraq, the events surrounding the Salman Rushdie fatwa and a Khomeini-ordered massacre of political prisoners.

It is often forgotten that those in charge during the initial stages of the 1979 revolution were not Khomeini's clerical militants. During a power struggle between the clerics and the provisional government's moderates, the provisional government did not seek to break ties with the United States. Although Tehran would not be a pawn in the U.S.-Soviet conflict, it wished to maintain normal diplomatic and economic relations with Washington.

Thus, Khomeini and his clerical allies increasingly saw the provisional government as an impediment to their larger objectives. The task of redrafting the constitution along radical lines and electing a clerically dominated parliament required displacing the provisional government. In the end, this combination of concerns pressed the radicals to provoke a crisis that would galvanize the populace behind the cause of the Islamic Republic and its ideological mandates.

On November 4, 1979, a group of Iranian students breached the walls of the U.S. embassy and captured sixty-six Americans.

They remained hostage for 444 days. The embassy takeover provided Khomeini with his opportunity to inflame popular sentiment and claim that external enemies, aided by domestic accomplices, were plotting against the revolution. To a frenzied populace, it seemed plausible that the United States, which had used its embassy to restore the Pahlavi dynasty to power in 1953, was now up to similar mischief. The Iranian public rushed to the defense of the revolution, and Mehdi Bazargan's provisional-government premiership soon faded.

On December 2, 1979, a draft constitution favored by Khomeini, which granted essential power to the unelected branches of government, was submitted to the public. Khomeini warned that its rejection at such a critical juncture would demonstrate signs of disunity and provoke an attack by the United States. The regime's propaganda machine insisted that only secular intellectuals tied to U.S. imperialism were averse to the governing document. It worked: fully 99 percent of the population voted for the constitution.

Out of this emerged two other factors—namely, the clerics' quest to usher in a militant foreign policy and their desire to strike a psychological blow against the United States. The provisional government's approach to international relations was strict nonalignment with a willingness to pursue normal relations with the United States. This formulation was rejected by the newly empowered militants, who provoked the hostage crisis to foster a different international orientation. Under this orientation, Iran's foreign policy would become not merely an exemption from the superpower conflict but an assertion of radical Islamism as a foreign-policy foundation. Through a symbolic attack on the U.S. embassy, the new revolutionaries

not only consolidated their domestic power through their antagonism toward the United States but also demonstrated their contempt for prevailing international norms. Iran now would inveigh against the United States, assist belligerent actors throughout the Middle East and plot against the state of Israel.

IRAN'S WAR with Iraq was the next big event in this saga of the Iranian elite's resolve to meld domestic and foreign policy. The triumph of Iran's revolution, with its denial of the legitimacy of the prevailing order and its calls for the reformulation of the state structure along religious precepts, portended conflict. Revolutions are frequently followed by war, as newly empowered elites often look abroad for the redemption of their cause. In Iran, the new elite mixed aggressive propaganda, subversion and terrorism to advance its cause in Iraq, where minority Sunnis dominated the majority Shia population. Perhaps nowhere was Iran's message of Shia empowerment received with greater acclaim than among Iraqi Shiites. This provocative behavior contributed to Saddam Hussein's decision to invade Iran in 1980, which ignited one of the region's most devastating conflicts.

The Iranian clerical state didn't measure progress in the Iran-Iraq war in territory lost or gained, boundary demarcations or reparation offers. Rather, it saw the war as an opportunity to merge its religious pedigree with its nationalist claims. The war was viewed as a struggle against an assault on Islam and the Prophet's legacy by profane forces of disbelief. The clerical estate genuinely identified itself with the Prophet's mission and saw Saddam's secular reign as yet another manifestation of inauthenticity and corruption. Iran had not been attacked because of its provocations or lingering territorial disputes but

because it embodied Islam and sought to achieve the Prophet's injunctions. Thus, it was the moral obligation of the citizenry to defend Iran as if it were safeguarding religion itself.

By June 1982, Iran essentially had evicted Iraq from its territory, and the question emerged whether to continue the war by going into Iraq. Given the war's economic costs and human toll, the decision to attack Iraq remains one of the most contentious in Iran's modern history. Khomeini resolutely dismissed various offers of cease-fire and generous reparations. Instead, Iran embraced a disastrous extension of the conflict based on a combination of ideological conviction, the misperception that the war would be quick and a fear that Saddam would not remain contained.

The rationales underlying Iran's decision to prolong the war still are debated widely. The conventional view discounts the notion that prolonging the war was seen as a means of consolidating the revolution at home. But Khomeini soon celebrated the decision as the "third revolution," whose purpose was not just to repel the invaders but also to cleanse Iran of all secular tendencies. In order to exploit the war politically, the state had to present the conflict in distinctly religious terms. A revolutionary order seeking to usher in a new era could not wage a limited war designed to achieve carefully calibrated objectives. The war had to be a crusade—indeed, a rebellion against the forces of iniquity and impiety. Through collective sacrifice and spiritual attainment, the theocratic regime would fend off the invaders, change Iran and project power throughout the region.

The war finally ended for the same reason it was prolonged: the need to sustain the revolution at home. By 1988, Iran was

exhausted and weary from having waged an eight-year war without any measurable international support. Iraqi counterattacks and the war of cities, whereby Iraq threatened Iranian urban centers with chemical weapons, undermined the arguments for war. The difficulties of the war were compounded by a smaller pool of volunteers, which undercut Iran's strategy of utilizing manpower to overcome Iraq's technological superiority. The inability of Iran to muster sufficient volunteers meant it had to embark on a more rigorous conscription effort that further estranged the population. Continuation of the war threatened the revolution and perhaps even the regime.

The war left a significant imprint on Iran's international orientation. The quest for self-sufficiency and self-reliance is a hallmark of the Islamic Republic's foreign policy, as the guardians of the revolution recognized that the survival of their regime depended entirely on their own efforts. International organizations, global opinion and prevailing conventions did not protect Iran from Iraq's chemical-weapons assaults. Saddam's aggression, his targeting of civilians, persistent interference with Persian Gulf commerce and use of weapons of mass destruction were all condoned by the great powers. The idea that Iran should forgo its national prerogatives for the sake of treaty obligations or Western sensibilities didn't resonate with the aggrieved clerics. Thus, the war went a long way toward imposing the clerical template on Iran's ruling system.

As Khomeini approached the end of his life, he grew apprehensive about the vitality of his revolution. Suddenly there was a risk that the vanguard Islamic Republic would become a tempered and cautious state. At this point, he undertook two specific acts to ensure that his disciples would sustain his

revolutionary radicalism and resist moderation. In 1988, shortly after the cease-fire with Iraq, he ordered one of his last acts of bloodletting—the execution of thousands of political prisoners then languishing in Iran’s jails. The mass executions, carried out in less than a month, were designed to test Khomeini’s supporters and make certain that they were sufficiently committed to his revolution. Those who showed hesitancy would be seen as halfhearted and dismissed from power. And this indeed did happen to Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, who objected. Khomeini was confident that the government he would leave behind had the courage to inflict massive and arbitrary terror to maintain power. However, he still worried about possible backsliding on the issue of relations with the West.

Thus did Khomeini manufacture another external crisis to stoke the revolutionary fires. The publication of Salman Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses*, which depicted the Prophet Muhammad in an unflattering light, offered a perfect opportunity. In February 1989, Khomeini issued his famous fatwa, designed to radicalize the masses in support of the regime’s ideology. While the international community saw his egregious act as an indication of his intolerance and militancy, Khomeini considered domestic political calculations to be paramount. Iran was once more ostracized, a development entirely acceptable to Khomeini.

WITH THE end of the prolonged war with Iraq and Khomeini’s death, Iran’s focus shifted from external perils to its own domestic quandaries, and the 1990s became one of the most important periods of transition for the Islamic Republic. It was a period of intense factionalism. On the one hand, the new president, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, and his allies sensed that for the Islamic Republic to survive, it had to craft a new

national compact and reestablish its legitimacy. Iran had to restructure its economy and provide for the practical needs of its people. It also had to adjust to new international realities fostered by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the 1991 Gulf War. To realize his vision of economic renovation and foreign-policy adjustment, Rafsanjani sought to mend fences with the neighboring Gulf states and reach out to the European community and Russia. But the United States remained too unpopular in Iran for any such outreach.

Standing against Rafsanjani and his cohort was a conservative faction that gradually would be led by the new supreme leader, Ali Khamenei. This faction appreciated that, in the aftermath of the war and due to economic demands, a relaxation of tensions was necessary. But its international outlook continued to be influenced by the need to sustain Iran's Islamic culture. This became all the more pressing as many Iranians began to move beyond the revolutionary legacy and seek a new future. Given this popular challenge, the conservatives became even more invested in rejecting normalization with the West for fear that such a move could provoke a cultural subversion that would further erode the foundations of the state. The dual themes of the "Great Satan" and the "clash of civilizations" laced their pronouncements and defined their political identity. The West remained a sinister source of cultural pollution whose influence and temptations had to be resisted even more strenuously after Khomeini's passing and the emergence in Iran of popular interest in Western ways and vogues. The fact that Iran's youth no longer paid attention to its ponderous theological musings was immaterial to a political class that perceived its legitimacy as deriving from God's will. Foreign policy was seen

paradoxically as a way of isolating Iran from the international integration that this class feared. Iran would now move in opposing directions, confounding both its critics and supporters.

This contradictory nature of Iran's foreign policy was most evident in the Persian Gulf. Iran behaved moderately and judiciously during the American campaign to evict Iraq from Kuwait. In the aftermath of the war, Iran began discussing a regional-security arrangement whereby the stability of the Persian Gulf would be ensured by indigenous actors in a cooperative framework. Instead of seeking to instigate Shia uprisings and exhorting the masses to embrace Iran's revolutionary template, Rafsanjani called for greater economic and security cooperation. To be sure, this served Iran's interests, as it naturally would emerge as the leading power in such a Gulf order. Still, this new policy accepted the legitimacy of the monarchical regimes that Khomeini long had maligned.

In a manner that bewildered the international community, Iran started speaking with multiple voices. Rafsanjani called for better relations, but hard-liners denounced what they considered his betrayal of the revolution. Moreover, Iran continued to pursue subversive activities and terrorism, including the 1996 bombing of Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia, which housed American military personnel. Nineteen U.S. servicemen were killed in the attack. While one arm of the state emphasized diplomacy and cooperation, the other engaged in incendiary propaganda and acts of terror. In the end, Rafsanjani couldn't convince the Gulf community that Iran had turned a new page, and relations with the sheikhdoms remained tense.

A similar pattern was seen in Rafsanjani's desire to improve

relations with Europe. Iran's need for foreign technologies and investments, as well as its desire to escape its isolation, propelled it toward this new outlook. The European states initially embraced the new Iranian president and responded to his call for reconciliation. The Europeans labeled this diplomatic exchange a "critical dialogue," which suggested that Iran could be persuaded to modify its behavior through diplomatic discussions and economic incentives. But the death sentence on the British author Salman Rushdie and the assassination of Iranian dissidents on European soil soon militated against better relations.

Rafsanjani sought to tone down the Rushdie affair by suggesting that, although Khomeini's decree could not be countermanded, Iran would not necessarily carry out the order. These statements were soon contradicted by Iranian politicians who insisted that the fatwa was irreversible. In the meantime, powerful religious foundations maintained bounties on Rushdie's head. Britain actually expelled a number of Iranian diplomats on the suspicion that they were plotting Rushdie's murder. Whatever the validity of those allegations, Iran's inability to separate itself from Khomeini's decree obstructed its attempt to mend fences with Europe.

And terror remained an instrument of Iran's policy in Europe, as reflected in Iran's assassination of Kurdish dissidents in the Berlin restaurant of Mykonos. The German judiciary blamed Iran for the attack, particularly its Ministry of Intelligence and Security. As a result, the European states all withdrew their envoys from Iran. Ultimately, Iran's failure to craft a different relationship with the accommodating Europeans reflected its inability to balance competing mandates.

The one policy area where Rafsanjani's pragmatism prevailed unmolested concerned the Russian Federation. Like many Third World countries struggling for autonomy within the international order, Iran found the collapse of the Soviet Union initially disturbing. That turned to alarm for the clerical elite with the massive deployment of U.S. forces to the Persian Gulf and the expressed American commitment to contain "outlaw" regimes. As a price for strategic support and arms trade, the Islamic Republic made its own adjustments to the emergence of Central Asia. In a rare display of judiciousness, Iran largely tempered its ideology, stressing the importance of trade and stability rather than propagation of its Islamist message. The full scope of Iranian pragmatism became evident during the Chechnya conflict. At a time when Russian soldiers were massacring Muslim rebels indiscriminately, Iran merely declared the issue to be an internal Russian matter.

Several factors propelled Iran toward such realism. First, many within the clerical elite perceived that Central Asia was not really susceptible to Iran's Islamist message. But Iran's aversion to isolation also played a part. The fact that Iran could not craft better relations with the United States and was largely isolated from both Europe and the Gulf sheikhdoms made ties with Moscow an imperative. For the conservatives, one way of fending off American pressure and European displeasure was cultivating close economic and security ties with Russia. Thus, the Russian Federation became the beneficiary of Iran's failure to craft a more coherent policy toward other global actors.

It seems clear that during this period, Iran moved cautiously beyond the rigid, revolutionary parameters of the 1980s. Pragmatism and calibration of national interest became

important considerations in Iran's foreign-policy decision making. Yet ideology never was eclipsed completely by pragmatic calculations. For many conservatives, their charge remained redemption of Khomeini's Islamist vision at home. They therefore desired Iran's estrangement from the West while avoiding any crisis that would threaten the regime. It was a difficult balancing act in which terrorism served a useful purpose by provoking Western sanctions and opprobrium but not much more. Thus did the conservatives use a threat atmosphere to sustain their power and preserve the essential identity of their state.

THE MOST momentous change in Iran's foreign policy came with the 1997 election of the reformist president Mohammad Khatami, whose ambitions were nothing less than extraordinary. His aim was not merely to make the theocracy more accountable to its citizenry but also to end the Islamic Republic's pariah status and integrate it into the global society. Thus, he embraced much of the reformist agenda. And, given his popular mandate and determination, he presented a certain authority to the supreme leader and the conservatives. While the reformist forces wanted reconciliation with Saudi Arabia, normalized relations with the European Union and even an outreach to the United States, Khamenei accepted only the first two of these measures. He understood that Iran's national interest required a different relationship with its neighbors and its European commercial partners. Moreover, the conservatives, initially shell-shocked by Khatami's unexpected triumph, eventually yielded warily to his early measures.

Khatami's "good neighbor" diplomacy rehabilitated Iran's ties with the Gulf regimes. Numerous trade, diplomatic and security

agreements were signed between the Islamic Republic and the Gulf sheikhdoms. Iran ceased its support for opposition forces operating in those countries. Thus, Khatami managed—at least momentarily—to transcend Khomeini’s divisive legacy and replace ideological antagonisms with policies rooted in pragmatism and self-interest.

Khatami’s cautious domestic liberalization similarly expedited détente with the European states. He ended the long-standing practice of assassinating Iranian dissidents in Europe. Also, the issue of the Rushdie fatwa was finally settled. After decades of living underground, the beleaguered author was allowed to pursue a more normal life and resume his literary pursuits. European envoys returned to Iran, and Iran’s president was welcomed in European capitals.

Khatami even attempted to adjust Iran’s stridency toward Israel. The Iranian government now said it would assent to an agreement if it were acceptable to the Palestinians. The clerical state’s calls for the eradication of Israel and its periodic conferences pledging to reclaim Jerusalem through holy war were at odds with the reformist perspective, not to mention the sentiments of the Arab states. The critical question was: Who was the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people? Was it Hamas, as the hard-liners insisted, or the Palestinian Authority, as the reformers maintained? The reformers pressed the state to recognize that Iran’s stance was popular only with radical Islamists, rejectionists and terrorists. In his inaugural address, Khatami stressed that Iran was prepared to advance an agreement predicated on UN resolutions. Given the fact that those resolutions had conceded a two-state solution, Iran’s reformist leader subtly stipulated the authority of the land-for-

peace formula. It was during Khatami's tenure that the Islamic Republic accepted the results of the 2002 Arab summit, with its recognition that in exchange for return to pre-1967 lines the Arab states would recognize Israel. Critics certainly could scoff at this concession on the ground that it did not eliminate Iran's support for Hezbollah or Hamas, but it was an important breakthrough for a country known for its unrelenting hostility toward the Jewish state. Indeed, the reformists' rhetoric and stance would not survive the rise of their more hawkish successors.

Khatami's approach to America was more gingerly and carefully crafted. Conscious of the conservatives' deep-seated reservations, Khatami sought to ease mutual suspicion through a gradual exchange of scholars, activists and athletes. He hoped U.S. economic concessions might provide him with sufficient leverage to influence the conservatives at home, particularly the wary supreme leader. But Khatami underestimated the extent of the hard-liners' hostility to any thaw in U.S.-Iranian relations, as well as the rigidity of America's unimaginative containment policy. In essence, Khatami fell victim to both Iranian hard-liners and post-9/11 politics in the United States.

Soon, a conservative counterstrategy began to crystallize. The conservatives employed their governmental leverage to negate parliamentary legislation designed to liberalize Iran's polity. The judiciary imprisoned prominent reformers and closed down their newspapers. Vigilante and terror groups harassed student gatherings and assassinated prominent intellectuals. And foreign policy once again came into play. Conservatives dismissed the reform movement's ability to deliver on its promises as a means of undermining international confidence in Khatami's

government. Terrorism reemerged as a means of advancing the conservative agenda and subverting reformist plans. And then Iran's conservatives received a helping hand from an unexpected corner—George W. Bush.

Khatami and the reformers viewed 9/11 as an ideal opportunity to mend fences with America. Khatami quickly realized the advantage in cooperating with the United States on the intersecting objectives of the two countries following 9/11. A religious intellectual who saw Islam and democracy as compatible, Khatami viewed the Taliban as a particular affront to his sensibilities. He also believed the demise of the radical Sunni group would enhance Iran's security while providing an avenue for reconciliation with the United States.

Then, in his January 2002 State of the Union address, Bush uttered his famous line castigating Iran as part of an "axis of evil" (along with North Korea and Iraq). Bush rebuked Iran as a major sponsor of terrorism and condemned its unelected leaders for oppressing their citizens. The president declared that in the post-9/11 environment, the United States would "not permit the world's most dangerous regimes to threaten us with the world's most destructive weapons." Though perhaps designed to prepare the American public for the administration's plan to invade Iraq, the inclusion of Iran dealt a fearsome blow to Tehran's reformers. Thus did Khatami's interlude in leadership prove to be short-lived, despite his impressive accomplishments. The conservatives, fearful that the reform movement could end up undermining the pillars of the Islamist state, soon rebounded.

THE 2005 Iranian presidential election signified a change, as the elders of the revolution receded from the scene and a new

international orientation gradually surfaced. The 1990s often are seen as a time when clerical reformers sought to reconcile democracy with religion, and a younger generation increasingly resisted a political culture that celebrated martyrdom and spiritual devotion. But another important development also was emerging—the rise of a generation of pious young men who had served on the front lines of the Iran-Iraq war. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad personified this new leadership. Often called the “New Right,” it brought to the scene a combustible mix of Islamist ideology, strident nationalism and a deep suspicion of the West. As uncompromising nationalists, they were sensitive to Iran’s prerogatives and sovereign rights. As committed Islamists, they saw the Middle East as a battleground between forces of secularism and Islamic authenticity. As emerging national leaders, they perceived Western conspiracies where none existed.

The rise of Iran’s New Right coincided with important changes elsewhere in the Middle East. As the Iraq and Afghan wars drained America’s power and confidence, and as Islamist parties claimed leadership in Lebanon and the Palestinian territories, Iran emerged as an important regional player. Recently, the Arab Awakening unleashed a surge of Islamist parties that may not become clients of Iran but are likely to evince greater sympathy for the Islamic Republic than the likes of Hosni Mubarak. Meanwhile, Tehran finds it can assert its regional influence through its determination to sustain its nuclear program, its quest to emerge as a power broker in Iraq and its holding aloft the banner of resistance against Israel. The old balance between ideology and pragmatism is yielding to one defined by power politics and religious fervor. In the early twenty-first century,

Iran has a government that consciously seeks guidance from the revolutionary outlook of the long-dead Ayatollah Khomeini.

Although many in Iran's younger generation of conservatives may have been in their twenties when Khomeini died, his shadow looms large over their deliberations. They often romanticize the 1980s as a pristine decade of ideological solidarity and national cohesion. They see it as an era when the entire nation was united behind the cause of the Islamic Republic and determined to assert its independence against Western hostility. Khomeini and his disciples were dedicated public servants free of corruption and crass competition for power, traits that would not characterize their successors. Self-reliance and self-sufficiency were the cherished values of a nation seeking to mold a new Middle East. Thus, the common refrain of the New Right became essentially: "Back to the future."

In light of all this, the 2009 election posed a stark choice for Iran. It could opt for a return to reformist policies and an effort to become part of the community of nations by accepting the norms of the international community, or it could embark on the New Right path of self-assertion and defiance. The public chose the former path, but the governing elite chose the latter. The result is that the gap between state and society has never been wider. A broad mass of the Iranian public doesn't share the ideological fervor of the ruling elite.

In the meantime, the hard-line outlook of the Iranian government has contributed to a situation that is both destabilizing and dangerous—the emergence of the nuclear issue. These days, all of Iran's relationships are defined and

distorted by that dispute. Iran is at odds with its Gulf neighbors not because it is seeking to export its revolution but rather because of its nuclear aspirations. For the first time in three decades of animosity and antagonism, there is a real possibility of a military clash between Iran and Israel. Washington and Tehran seem locked in a confrontation they cannot escape. The European states have abandoned constructive dialogue in favor of sanctions and hostility due to the nuclear dispute. Even the Russian Federation seems increasingly uncomfortable in its relations with Iran as its conflict with the international community deepens. Only time can answer the question of how this issue will be sorted out—whether there will be a negotiated compromise; whether one side will ultimately back down; or whether a catastrophic clash will ensue that will further destabilize an unsteady region.

But we do know that Iran isn't likely to go the way of other revolutionary states and relinquish its ideological patrimony for more mundane considerations. Khomeini was too powerful an innovator in the institutions he created and the elite he molded to see the passing of his vision in any routine way. That's why Iran has sustained its animus toward the United States and Israel long after such hostility proved self-defeating. That's why the theocratic regime remains a state divided against itself, struggling to define coherent objectives, with revolutionary pretensions pitted against national interests. The Islamic Republic might alter its course, limit its horizons and make unsavory compromises along the way. Yet it will not completely temper its raging fires. In the end, Khomeini couldn't impose the totality of his vision on Iran, much less the Islamic world. But he was not the kind of figure to become another faded

revolutionary commemorated on occasion and disregarded most of the time.

In many ways, China's experience encapsulates the paradigm of the life cycle of a non-Western revolutionary state. Initially, the new regime rejects the existing state system and norms of international behavior, especially respect for sovereignty. Foreign-policy decision making is dominated by ideological considerations, even if there are concessions made to pragmatic concerns. But, over time, a clear trajectory emerges. As new leaders come to power, the ideology is modified and later abandoned in favor of "normal" relations with other countries, usually to promote economic development and modernization.

Thus, Western policy makers continue to be puzzled over why Iran has not yet become a postrevolutionary country. What makes this case more peculiar is that by the late 1990s, Iran did appear to be following in the footsteps of states such as China and Vietnam, at least in terms of its foreign policy. Yet this evolution was stymied by the 2005 election of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Paradoxically, it is today's younger generation of Iranian leaders that has rejected the more pragmatic, nonrevolutionary approach of their elders—Rafsanjani and Khatami, for example—in favor of the legacy of Khomeini in foreign affairs. It is a legacy rooted in an austere Islamist vision dedicated to overturning the regional order and finding ways to challenge the existing international system.

What's remarkable is that the Islamic Republic has managed to maintain its revolutionary identity in the face of substantial countervailing pressures, elite defections and mass disaffection throughout the country. The institutional juggernaut of the

revolution has contributed to this success, as has the elite molded in Khomeini's austere image. But Iran's foreign policy also has played a crucial role in sustaining this domestic ideological identity. A narrow segment of the conservative clerical elite, commanding key institutions of the state, has fashioned a foreign policy designed to maintain the ideological character of the regime. And that remains a key ingredient in determining how the Islamic Republic thinks of itself and its role in the Middle East.

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