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Article 1.

NYT

U.S. Is Weighing Release of a Spy for the Israelis

Mark Landler and Michael R. Gordon

March 31, 2014 -- The Obama administration is discussing the release of an American convicted of spying for Israel more than a quarter of a century ago, American officials said Monday, as it struggles to avert a collapse in peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians.

The Israeli government has long sought the release of the spy, Jonathan J. Pollard, a former Navy intelligence analyst, who is serving a life sentence in a North Carolina prison for passing classified documents to his Israeli handlers. But the United States has steadfastly refused, in part because of the vehement opposition of the nation's intelligence agencies.

Now, however, freeing Mr. Pollard is again on the table, as Secretary of State John Kerry arrived in Jerusalem on Monday for urgent talks to try to resolve a dispute over Israel's release of Palestinian prisoners. That dispute is the latest roadblock to high-stakes peace talks that began last summer but appear to have made little progress and now face an April 29 deadline.

No decision has been made yet on Mr. Pollard, said one official, who asked not to be identified because the person was discussing private deliberations. A decision to release Mr. Pollard would be in the context of a broader agreement to extend the talks between the Israelis and Palestinians, officials said, and would require President Obama's approval.

But time and politics have coalesced to make his release more plausible. Intelligence officials are no longer likely to object as fiercely to freeing Mr. Pollard, who is 59, said to be ailing and eligible for parole in November 2015. And his release could provide the Obama administration with a way to coax additional concessions from Israel as it pursues a broader peace accord, which Mr. Kerry and Mr. Obama have made a centerpiece of their diplomacy.

Some analysts questioned the wisdom of giving up one of the few leverage points the United States has when it is not clear it would gain more than an extension in the talks, much less a full-blown agreement. Mr. Pollard is a reviled figure in intelligence circles, seen as a prolific spy who betrayed his country and damaged national security.

"I think it shows real desperation," said Aaron David Miller, a former Middle East negotiator and now a vice president at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

“In an era of leaks and surveillance and Snowden, the idea that the administration is going to trade Jonathan Pollard makes absolutely no sense,” he said, referring to the leaker and former N.S.A. contractor Edward J. Snowden.

On Monday, the White House press secretary, Jay Carney, declined to say whether Mr. Pollard might be freed as an incentive to Israel, noting: “He is a person who was convicted of espionage and is serving his sentence. And I don’t have any update on his situation.”

But the administration’s tone has softened since last week, when a State Department spokeswoman, Jen Psaki, said that Mr. Pollard had been convicted of “espionage against the United States, a very serious crime,” and that there were no plans to release him.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel has pushed for Mr. Pollard’s release for many years. Granting it now would be a political gift that could give him the cover to make tougher decisions in pursuit of a peace agreement later on. But it might raise complicated political issues on Capitol Hill and could still provoke the intelligence agencies.

The closest Mr. Netanyahu came to winning Mr. Pollard’s release was in 1998, at a summit meeting with President Bill Clinton in Wye Mills, Md. Mr. Clinton seriously considered it until the C.I.A. director at time, George J. Tenet, threatened to resign in protest. Mr. Clinton ultimately declined and still got the two sides to sign a modest agreement.

A spokesman for the C.I.A. declined Monday to comment on the case. Shawn Turner, the spokesman for the director of national

intelligence, James R. Clapper Jr., suggested that Mr. Clapper did not plan to insert himself into the Pollard debate.

Mr. Pollard “is not under the purview of the intelligence community,” Mr. Turner said, “so it would not be appropriate for D.N.I. Clapper to comment on reports about his status.”

In Israel, where many view Mr. Pollard’s punishment for spying on behalf of an American ally to be excessive, the calls for his release have moved from the political fringe to the mainstream over the years — championed not just by Mr. Netanyahu’s Likud Party but by Israel’s dovish president, Shimon Peres.

When Mr. Pollard was arrested in 1985, Israel disowned him, saying that he was a rogue. But he was granted Israeli citizenship in 1995, and Mr. Netanyahu, during his first term in office in the late 1990s, officially recognized Mr. Pollard as an Israeli agent.

Raising Mr. Pollard’s case now carries extra resonance because this round of talks is in danger of breaking down over whether Israel will release a fourth and final batch of Palestinian prisoners.

The president of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, has said that unless Israel releases the prisoners as promised, he will not consider any extension past the April target date for negotiating the outlines of a comprehensive treaty. But Israeli leaders, who assert that the Palestinians have yet to make meaningful concessions, have threatened to halt the prisoner release unless the talks are extended — creating a chicken-and-egg problem for Mr. Kerry.

For the second time in a week, Mr. Kerry interrupted visits in European capitals to rush to the Middle East to confer on the peace talks. He met Monday evening with Mr. Netanyahu and later with Saeb Erekat, the chief Palestinian negotiator.

“The Israelis would say to Kerry: ‘You’re asking us to allow the release of prisoners who have 50 deaths on their hands. Surely you can release one man who means a lot to the Israeli people,’ ” said Daniel C. Kurtzer, a former American ambassador to Israel.

In Washington, the arguments against releasing Mr. Pollard are no longer as compelling as they once seemed. After nearly three decades in prison, he is no longer a threat to national security, and his parole is looming. If Mr. Pollard is a chit to be played in the talks, it will lose value over time. Two former secretaries of state, Henry A. Kissinger and George P. Shultz, have called for clemency, as has a former C.I.A. director, R. James Woolsey Jr.

“Many in the intelligence community have opposed out of habit rather than considered argument,” said Dennis B. Ross, a former senior adviser to Mr. Obama on the Middle East. “The instinct will, thus, still be negative but may be less vehement.”

In a measure of the popular support that Mr. Pollard’s case now garners in Israel, the newspaper Yediot Aharonot published excerpts Monday of an impassioned letter to Mr. Netanyahu from Gilad Shalit, an Israeli soldier who was held captive by Hamas in Gaza for five years and released in a lopsided prisoner exchange in 2011.

“I cannot help but feel the great pain of Jonathan Pollard, who has been sitting in prison for about 29 years — more than five

times the length of time I spent in captivity, and in the United States, our great friend,” Mr. Shalit wrote, adding, “I am asking you to make it clear to the Americans that before anything else, Jonathan Pollard must go free.”

Mark Landler reported from Washington, and Michael R. Gordon from Jerusalem. Isabel Kershner contributed reporting from Jerusalem, and Mark Mazzetti from Washington.

Article 2.

Bloomberg

A Spy's Release Won't Bring Peace to the Middle East

Jeffrey Goldberg

Apr 1, 2014 -- We appear to be in the midst of another Jonathan Pollard eruption in the Middle East peace talks, which means, among other things, that the peace talks are close to collapsing.

Pollard, you will recall, was the U.S. Navy intelligence analyst who stole valuable American secrets and passed them to Israel. In his delusional mind, he was playing the role of Mordechai in the Purim story, protecting the Jews from imminent annihilation. (He was under the impression that the U.S. was keeping

existentially important information from its ally.) In reality, Pollard was a traitor, and he was treated as such, receiving a life sentence after being convicted of espionage. He has been imprisoned for almost 30 years now.

During this period, Pollard's image in Israel has undergone a transformation. At first, the Israeli government refused to acknowledge that he was in their employ. Now, his release is a broad-spectrum cause among Israel's public. As a purely humanitarian matter, Pollard's supporters in Israel (and in the U.S.) have an argument: His sentence was unusually harsh, and there is evidence to suggest that federal prosecutors violated a plea agreement they struck with him.

Pollard has never been particularly well in the head, and he is said to be substantially more damaged now than he was when he was arrested. If Barack Obama's administration decides that Pollard has paid his debt to society, and chooses to free him, so be it. He does not have my sympathy, but I understand his supporters' motivation.

If, however, the Obama administration is considering releasing Pollard as a way to advance peace negotiations -- as many Israeli politicians have apparently been arguing -- then the Obama administration needs to hire savvier negotiators.

Pollard's release would constitute a political triumph for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and it would create feelings of gratitude for Netanyahu among the right-wing ministers in his ruling coalition. But these feelings would dissipate entirely at the exact moment when Netanyahu returns to the business at hand: trading land to the Palestinians in

exchange for peace. These feelings would also dissipate, though not quite to the same degree, the moment Netanyahu once again began releasing Palestinian prisoners to the custody of the Palestinian Authority.

The right-wing of the Netanyahu coalition, and the right-most members of the prime minister's own Likud Party, would like very much to welcome Pollard at Ben-Gurion International Airport, but they will not trade land for him, not one inch. To think otherwise is foolish. The cause of Middle East peace will not be advanced by the release of a hapless spy.

[Article 3.](#)

NYT

Prime Minister Erdogan's Revenge

Editorial

March 31, 2014 -- Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey got what he wanted from Sunday's elections for mayors and other local officials — a strong vote of confidence for his Islamist-rooted Justice and Development Party and its 11 years in power.

While it's not surprising that Mr. Erdogan would use this result to solidify his rule and undermine critics, his response — pledging to make sure his political enemies pay a price — was deeply disturbing and undemocratic.

Mr. Erdogan long ago veered from his promises to deliver reforms that would make Turkey freer. He ruthlessly cracked down on antigovernment protests last summer, and has severely constrained free speech and the press in recent years.

His postelection threats were particularly ominous, as he told thousands of supporters that his enemies will be “brought to account” and “we will enter their lair.” His own name was not on the ballot but nationwide, his party drew about 45.6 percent of the vote, a big jump over the 2009 local elections when it polled 39 percent.

The bitterly fought campaign was dominated by a power struggle between Mr. Erdogan and the Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen, who lives in self-imposed exile in Pennsylvania and had at one-time been a political ally. Mr. Erdogan now accuses Mr. Gulen of using a network of followers in the police and the judiciary to fabricate corruption allegations against him.

Mr. Erdogan has disparaged his political adversaries as traitors, terrorists and an alliance of evil. In his postelection speech, he repeatedly mentioned Pennsylvania and suggested the government would take aim at Mr. Gulen’s supporters, possibly with mass arrests.

This kind of response, especially in an electoral context, shows how far Mr. Erdogan has departed from democratic principles that allow dissent. Shaken by the extensive corruption investigation that has embroiled him and his family, he seems eager to seek revenge against opponents, even suggesting that the inquiry is the work of foreign conspirators. He has already acted aggressively against the Gulenists, purging thousands of police officers and hundreds of prosecutors.

The election undoubtedly strengthens Mr. Erdogan's hand to run for president later this year. Neither the Republican People's Party, a secular party, nor any other Turkish opposition group has shown the ability to field a candidate who could mount a serious challenge.

But instead of defending himself against the corruption charges according to a legal procedure, Mr. Erdogan seems determined to crush anyone or anything who crosses him — a strategy almost certainly guarantees more dangerous political polarization and instability in Turkey.

[Article 4.](#)

Los Angeles Times

How Syria's civil war threatens Lebanon's fragile peace

David Schenker

April 1, 2014 -- Three years into the Syrian civil war, neighboring Lebanon is fraying at the seams. Over the last year, as Lebanese Sunni Muslim jihadis and their counterparts in the Shiite militia Hezbollah fought each other in Syria, at least 16 car bombs detonated in Lebanon, in both Shiite and Sunni neighborhoods. In December, a leading Sunni politician was assassinated. Meanwhile, more than 1 million mostly Sunni refugees have streamed in from Syria, increasing Lebanon's

population by more than 20% and skewing its delicate sectarian balance.

Less than a generation removed from the 15-year civil war that claimed nearly 200,000 lives, Lebanon again appears to be hurtling toward instability. If not for the Lebanese armed forces, many say, the state would have already devolved into chaos. It's not clear how much longer the army will be able to play this critical role.

The army is widely viewed as a national savior, an indispensable bulwark against the resumption of civil war. In recent years, it has deployed throughout Lebanon, establishing checkpoints at sectarian fault lines and serving as a buffer between warring factions. In the course of this mission, the army has been caught in Sunni-Shiite crossfire and has even become the target of car bombs.

Unlike other narrowly parochial government agencies, the army is the only truly integrated, functioning and "national" institution in Lebanon. It is unique because it reflects the diverse demography of Lebanon, a state with 17 recognized religious sects. More important, in contrast to the Shiite-dominated General Security services and the Sunni-controlled Internal Security Forces, the army is ostensibly nonaligned, affording it broad popular support.

Lately, however, the widespread perception of army neutrality has started to shift, threatening the institution's stature and, potentially, its organizational cohesion.

For the last two decades, the army was tasked primarily with the noncontroversial role of securing Lebanon's 10 Palestinian

refugee camps and, on rare occasions, with battling local Al Qaeda affiliates. Although Hezbollah maintained a huge arsenal outside state control, the army never confronted the organization, fearing that such a politically sensitive directive might lead to a split within its ranks along sectarian lines.

But spillover from the war in Syria has complicated the army's traditionally hands-off approach to Hezbollah. The Shiite militia's provision of military support to the Syrian regime has incensed Lebanon's historically restrained Sunnis, and there are signs the community is radicalizing. At the same time, reports suggest that hundreds of armed Sunni militants, some affiliated with Al Qaeda, have crossed into Lebanon from Syria.

The problem is that while the army continues to assiduously avoid hostilities with Hezbollah, it is adopting a more aggressive posture toward Sunni militants. This tack is leading many Lebanese Sunnis to conclude that the army is no longer neutral. It's easy to see how they might reach that conclusion.

Consider, for example, the June 2013 gun battle between the army and Sunni-Salafist preacher Ahmad Assir and his supporters in Sidon. About two dozen army soldiers were killed. Assir, a supporter of the Syrian uprising and an outspoken critic of Hezbollah, was ultimately defeated only by a coordinated army-Hezbollah military offensive.

In addition to operational collaboration with Hezbollah, the army's campaign of arrests and shootings targeting Sunnis — including religious leaders — for allegedly providing assistance to Syrian rebels has angered the community. In January alone, the army arrested at least 12 Sunni militants and shot and killed

two others. Separately, a Sunni who was linked to an Al Qaeda car bomb attack on the Iranian Embassy in Beirut two months earlier subsequently died in military custody, purportedly of kidney failure. During the same period, no Shiites were reported detained.

To be sure, Al Qaeda holds little appeal to the vast majority of Lebanese Sunnis. But Sunnis increasingly resent Hezbollah's immunity. As Sunni lawmaker Mustafa Alloush recently said, "When the law is only applied to one side, it creates grievances.

"What the Sunni street feels," he lamented, "is that there's winking toward Hezbollah and severity toward the other side."

As casualties mount in both Syria and Lebanon, this sentiment appears to be rising. Last month, the Lebanese branch of Syria's Al Qaeda-linked Al Nusra Front issued two statements calling for Sunnis to desert the "Hezbollah-controlled" army. The army, it claims, "has become a tool in the hand of the Shiite project."

"If you look at prison inmates," the statement says, "you can determine they are all Sunnis.... Does anyone detain a Shiite for fighting in Syria?"

The extent to which the Al Nusra Front declaration will resonate with the army's roughly 30% Sunni conscripts remains to be seen. Should the army continue to be seen as aligned with Hezbollah in targeting Sunni militants, however, it is all but certain that sectarian loyalties will eventually affect soldiers' morale, if not discipline.

Currently, there are few overt signs that the army is cracking. But with no end in sight to the war in Syria, the prospect of a

degraded and discredited army is of concern. In 1975, well before current levels of Sunni-Shiite hostility, the army could neither prevent nor contain the civil war. Under pressure, it went missing in action. Today, as sectarian tensions spike in Lebanon, it's increasingly difficult to imagine a different trajectory for Lebanon's armed forces.

David Schenker is director of the program on Arab politics at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

Article 5.

The National Interest

Why Man Seeks Power

Dominic Johnson, Bradley A. Thayer

April 1, 2014 -- Russia's bold actions in Crimea and China's continuing expansion in the South and East China Seas mark the return of great-power politics. We should not be surprised. Although many Americans thought it did, great-power politics never went away. This is because humans never went away: The world may change, but humans do not.

While there is considerable surprise and anger in the West, the actions of China to push the United States out of the South China Sea or Putin's seizure of Crimea reminds us of a

fundamental truth. Power is the coin of the realm in international politics. States want power. But this desire does not arise out of a vacuum. States want power because men want power—a feature of biological organisms stretching back to the origin of life on Earth. Evidence of this is so woven into the fabric of economic, social, and political life that we rarely question or notice it.

The behaviour we expect—indeed praise—in business is also true of international politics. Firms strive for more profit, market share, and return to investors. In essence, they try to maximize their power, all the while undermining or preventing competition.

Athletes do the same. We praise rather than condemn Peyton Manning or Albert Pujols for trying to be his best in a fiercely competitive and dangerous environment.

Domestic politics is often described as a “contact sport,” and not for the timid. Bold action is rewarded. Bill Clinton, Dick Cheney, or Barack Obama did not rise to their heights by being shrinking violets.

What is true for business, sports and domestic politics is true for international politics.

It is just much worse.

Corporate leaders are praised, but Putin is condemned for the same type of behaviour, albeit in a crucially different realm.

Unlike business, baseball, or domestic politics, the realm of international politics is the realm of anarchy. There is no world government and so actions, like preying upon another state, can

go unpunished. Power, therefore, reigns supreme.

The cause of power seeking behaviour is broader than Vladimir Putin or Xi Jinping, or modern Russia or China. It is to be found in evolution.

Evolution has four insights that can help us understand Beijing's and Moscow's actions.

First, Americans should recognize that leaders are not “normal” people. . As social mammals, those topping the hierarchy differ in important ways from those at the bottom. Leaders demonstrate certain, similar behaviors that are over-represented among those who rise to the top. Some of these are positive. Decisiveness, for example, is the core of leadership. But many are negative, such as the arrogance and abuse of subordinates—the so-called “toxic boss.” It is not that leaders are from Mars and followers from Venus. Leaders are as focused and ruthless as House of Cards while the rest of us are tuned into The Daily Show. Their brains are different from the rest of us.

Second, evolution explains why leaders will have a tendency to possess positive images of themselves. Fortune favors the bold, and this contributes to their overconfidence and the illusion that they are in control of the situation. As a result, they have a proclivity to take bold action, even somewhat regardless of the risks and costs. Sometimes that can be offset by calmer voices or bureaucratic lethargy, but not always. And sometimes it works, as Putin demonstrated in Crimea, and as China is doing in the East and South China Seas. Boldness pays when others can only bluff.

Third, evolution and Machiavelli overlap in the recognition that

leaders want power to work their will despite opposition: in sum, dominance. Power provides all of the benefits that accrue to rulers, from money, to aid to family, friends, and supporters, to privileged access to mates—power is the ultimate aphrodisiac, as Kissinger once wrote. And once they have it, they are loathe to give it up, not just to lose its trappings and other benefits, but for the loss of dominance itself. Power has been shown to stimulate reward circuits in the brain, driving leaders to seek even further exploits.

Fourth, evolution leads to flexible, contingent strategies. Leaders will not be naturally cooperative or naturally aggressive at all times in all circumstances, rather these behaviors will be activated and exaggerated in certain settings. Part of the problem the United States faces with China and Russia is that each increment of power allows these leaders to visualize and realize greater ambitions, especially if they are not challenged. Cooperation can work well in achieving ends, but aggression can be even better or cheaper.

The application of evolution to the study of political behaviour is relatively new, but it offers a variety of novel insights into the causes of that behaviour. Whether we like it or not, evolution's stamp on human thought and behavior is significant. Exploring its impact does nothing to legitimize Putin's actions, of course, but it does help us to understand them.

Finally, Americans should recognize that the behaviour of these men is not an aberration. It is in accord with the types of behaviour we have seen throughout history, and that in the future we should expect, prepare to deter and, if necessary, contain. Power is ingrained in our psyche not by accident or

mistake, but rather because it is a vital ingredient of survival.

Dominic Johnson is Alistair Buchan Professor of International Relations at Oxford University and Fellow of St. Antony's College. Bradley A. Thayer is Reader of International Politics, University of Bath.

Article 6.

Global Post

8 Reasons Why India's Elections Really Matter to the World

James Tapper

March 31, 2014 -- New Delhi, India - With 48 countries going to the polls this year, it would be easy to dismiss India's April general election as just more democracy in action.

But India is different, and not only because it is the world's largest democracy.

The current prime minister, Manmohan Singh, is stepping down which means the world will see a new leader of the subcontinent's 1.3 billion people. That new leader will rule over nearly one out of every five people on planet Earth.

Favored to win is the charismatic nationalist Narendra Modi, of the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party, who would be expected to follow a Hindu nationalist agenda.

But whoever emerges as the winner when the results are announced on May 12 will have some tough decisions to make, which will have a real impact on people around the world.

Here are 8 reasons:

1. India is developing a nuclear missile that could reach the United States

Sure, it's unlikely that India would decide to launch a nuclear attack on the United States. But that hasn't stopped the country from designing a missile that could reach Alaska. The Agni VI is due for its first flight test in 2017 and is reported to have an intended range of 10,000 kilometers (6,200 miles). New York is about 11,500km (7,150 miles) from Delhi. India already has an intercontinental ballistic missile with a range of 5,000km (3,100 miles): the Agni V which can reach Beijing and Teheran. It has fought wars with Pakistan and China, but the land-based Agni VI missile would allow India's next prime minister to potentially threaten western Europe and Australia, in addition to parts of the US. Modi is an enthusiastic supporter of India's nuclear armory. Last year he wrote that the original nuclear tests, under the BJP's previous Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, were "very much a test of our political will and needless to say, we passed the test with flying colors." India's nuclear ambition may enable a future leader to lobby harder for a seat on the United Nations Security Council - something leaders of all parties have been keen to win.

2. China keeps invading India

For the past year, Chinese soldiers have made regular incursions into the disputed Himalayan border area of Ladakh in Kashmir. The tension was sparked by a 21-day stand-off last May between Indian and Chinese soldiers. That is one of many potential flash points between the two countries, home to about a third of the world's population. China has a territorial claim on north-eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, and there has been a long-running dispute about the Brahmaputra river, which begins in Chinese-controlled Tibet and flows into India. A series of Chinese hydroelectric dam projects have made Indians nervous that the river might be diverted to irrigate the dry southern regions of China. Then there is the Dalai Lama, a symbol of Tibetan autonomy, scorned by China and protected by India. And India has close relations with Japan, whose "soft loans" have funded much of India's growing infrastructure. Japan and China have a decidedly chilly relationship right now.

Modi, whose popularity centers on his 'tough guy' image, has been shy about referencing foreign policy on the election trail, but he made an exception in February. "China should give up its expansionist attitude and adopt a development mindset," he said at a rally in northeast India. "No power on earth can take away even an inch from India." Of course, it's one thing to talk tough, another to take on another nuclear power, and analysts believe there is unlikely to be a significant change in foreign policy. But the rhetoric and constant border tension between the two countries is not something the international community can afford to ignore.

3. India is leading the way in superbugs that could harm you

Antibiotic drugs are the cornerstone of modern healthcare, but

their "rampant" overuse in India is contributing to a major health problem, according to the World Health Organisation. At a regional meeting of the WHO last year, researchers said they had found antibiotic resistance in up to 80 percent of reported cholera cases and up to 50 percent of typhoid fever cases. Nearly 17,000 Indians have contracted drug-resistant tuberculosis, and as many as 200 million Indians could be carrying an enzyme that makes them resistant to all existing forms of antibiotic drug, according to British researchers. Antibiotics for humans and animals are available over the counter in India, with few guidelines in hospitals about when they should be used, the WHO researchers said. Making matters worse, the government isn't terribly eager to deal with the problem head-on. For example, British researcher Tim Walsh says he was barred from entering India after discovering the New Delhi Metallo 1 superbug in 2010. "We were banned from India and India had a massive clamp down on sending [biological] strains out," Mr Walsh told the Wall Street Journal. "Indians were banned from working with me, or anybody in Europe. The whole thing was a systematic campaign to control research into antibiotic resistance in India." Meanwhile, India has a large and growing health tourism industry, worth around \$2 billion, meaning that people from all over the world travel to its clinics and hospitals, potentially spreading any problems that exist there.

4. A fifth of the world's billionaires are Indian

Modi is a darling of big business, especially Indian big business. He has appeared on platforms alongside steel and tea magnate Ratan Tata, oil and retail tycoon Mukesh Ambani, and diamond and coal entrepreneur Gautam Adani. They may expect to see a return on their investment in brand Modi, if he wins. Adani

controls India's largest port, Mundra in Gujarat, and hopes that a Modi government might clear away red tape to allow him to expand it. Investors believe his administration would be much more capable than the present Congress Party-led coalition government. Modi also has spoken positively about foreign investment in India. International firms have complained they operate in uncertain conditions, with Nokia and Vodafone both facing multibillion dollar tax claims and other firms criticizing complex and unevenly enforced regulations.

5. Talented expat Indians who work in western businesses may decide to go home in large numbers if they feel there are more opportunities there

The Indian diaspora has made a major contribution to the economies of countries like Britain and the US. Since the 1990s, the Indian government has been trying to entice them back home, and thousands returned during the boom years of the 2000s. The numbers returning slowed down when the Indian economy slumped after the global financial crisis, but a pick up in India's fortunes could see the numbers growing. Modi regularly makes televised speeches to Indians living in the US. As the chief minister of Gujarat, he has successfully courted Indian expats, known as NRIs or Non-Resident Indians. Gujarati NRIs have funded a large number of public works in Modi's state.

6. Indian politicians take climate change seriously

India's economic potential is limited by its poor access to cheap energy. It has few oil and coal resources and its reliance on imported fuel makes it vulnerable to changes in oil prices and

currency dips. Modi is one of the few politicians to have made climate change a central part of his platform. Like former US Vice President Al Gore, he wrote a book about the issue and has pushed solar energy as part of the solution to India's power troubles. Around 40 percent of Gujarat's power comes from solar energy and Modi believes India should focus more on renewable energy. "The time has arrived for a saffron revolution, and the color of energy is saffron," he said at a rally in February. "God has showered our country with an abundance of renewable energy. If these renewable resources were exploited properly, we wouldn't have required mining coal or spending so much on importing crude and petroleum products." Using renewable energy would no doubt help cut India's carbon emissions, but a larger market for solar panels could help boost research into improving solar cell efficiency.

7. Afghanistan is about to become India's and Pakistan's problem

With NATO soldiers withdrawing from Afghanistan, the onus is on its regional neighbors to ensure the country continues its climb towards stability. That would be hard enough - Afghanistan is known as the "graveyard of empires" for a reason - but it also means the next Indian Prime Minister will need to work with Pakistan. Yes, that's the same country India has waged war against three times since independence in 1947. There is deep suspicion between the two countries about the other's involvement in Afghanistan. Pakistan has long held to a doctrine of "strategic depth" - viewing the Afghanistan border area as a place for its leadership to retreat to in the event of an Indian invasion. India believes Pakistani influence has enabled militants such as Lashkar-e-Taiba to use this region as a base

from which to launch terror attacks in India. Meanwhile Pakistan believes India is using its growing influence in Afghanistan to aid Baluchistan separatists. While the NATO-led forces were present in Afghanistan, the two countries had less space to operate. As soldiers go, there is the potential for it to become a new proxy for the conflict over Kashmir. The new prime minister will face a choice between aggressively extending India's influence in Afghanistan and potentially provoking Pakistan, or taking a more careful approach that might allow China to advance its own interests. As Gujarat's chief minister, Modi has been involved in Indian aid to Afghanistan, and he made it a talking point when he met US Ambassador Nancy Powell in February. As a nationalist strongman, Modi is expected by some to take a tough line with Pakistan. But he may follow Vajpayee in trying to establish a more peaceful relationship between the two nations.

8. Your gold could get more valuable again

Gold is part of the Indian way of life. Every bride expects to receive some gold on her wedding day, and it is seen as a sign of good luck, as well as being considered a safe investment. The demand for gold means India has imported around 950 metric tons (about 1,050 US tons) each year. But in July 2013, the Indian government raised duty on gold imports to try to solve its current account deficit. The idea was that reducing demand would reduce the amount of Indian currency flowing out of the country. World gold prices have also gone down, but India has been hit by a massive rise in gold smuggling. Modi and the BJP have criticized the import duty on gold and would probably reduce tariffs or abolish the duty.

James Tapper is a Journalist covering South Asia for UK newspapers.

Article 7.

Foreign Affairs

Maimonides Meets Modernity

Contemporary Lessons from Judaism's Greatest Sage

Jay M. Harris

Maimonides: Life and Thought.

By Moshe Halbertal.

Translated by Joel Linsider. Princeton University Press, 2013,

400 pp. \$35.00.

March/April 2014 Issue -- In the fall of 1993, as my daughter was getting ready to enter first grade at the Maimonides School in Brookline, Massachusetts, a friend of mine asked her where she was going to school. “Mommy’s-monides,” she replied. Apart from making clear which parent carried the most weight with her, this reply gave a new twist to the old quip, generally attributed to the Israeli scholar Shalom Rosenberg, that “there is

my-monides, your-monides, and their-monides.” Indeed, the medieval Jewish scholar Moses Maimonides (1138–1204, although frequently said to have been born in 1135) has been read in myriad ways. Surely the greatest Jewish intellectual of the Middle Ages (and arguably of any age), Maimonides has been invoked to support or challenge virtually all forms of Jewish life and discourse since the thirteenth century. Historians and scholars of Judaism have interpreted Maimonides in countless, sometimes contradictory ways: as a philosopher and as an anti-philosopher, as an upholder of Talmudic authority and as a subverter of Talmudic authority, as a religious zealot and as a herald of religious tolerance, and as a model of clarity and as a model of opacity.

Maimonides’ readings of the Bible turned that document into a remarkably flexible text, capable of bearing interpretations that incorporate the insights of Aristotle, among others. Ever since it was “rediscovered” by Muslim, Jewish, and Christian thinkers in the Middle Ages, Aristotelian thinking has posed a fundamental challenge to the monotheistic traditions by, among other things, questioning the notion of a theistic God who manages nature and intervenes in human affairs. Because he incorporated many, but not all, Aristotelian ideas into his understanding of Judaism -- while often striving to conceal that he was doing so -- Maimonides remains one of the most challenging major thinkers to understand and explain. Many have tried, but no one has succeeded completely. There is no definitive interpretation of his works, and one can probably never be produced.

The Israeli philosopher Moshe Halbertal seems to realize this, and in his new book on Maimonides (originally published in Hebrew in 2009), he does not try to offer a definitive reading,

although his preferred interpretations are often clear enough. He nevertheless pioneers a new path, walking the reader through the different interpretive schools and explaining what supports each one while acknowledging that Maimonides contradicts himself both across and within his many writings -- at times purposefully, which inevitably leaves his readers perplexed. Halbertal is a wonderful guide, explaining how different approaches illuminate Maimonides' writings and how certain issues reverberate throughout the sage's work, returning in new forms and contexts.

Halbertal's book also demonstrates why Maimonides should matter beyond the rather narrow confines of Jewish theology, revealing how Maimonides dealt with questions common to all faiths and with some problems also faced by secular philosophies. At its core, Maimonides' work represents a powerful bastion against the retreat from rationality that too often accompanies contemporary discourse, religious and otherwise. Maimonides insisted that the religious mind should not embrace the absurd or imagine that one honors God by resisting science and human understanding, fallible though they may be. He urged the faithful to include the study of the natural world in their quest for a righteous and loving God, or risk falling prey to "powerful anxieties and urges" that sow confusion and fear. For Maimonides, only religion informed by science and philosophy could allow believers to be at peace with the world and its complex reality, instead of their retreating from reality into a world of imagined demons and angels -- literal or metaphoric.

Spanish Prisoners

Halbertal's book opens with a short but masterful biography of his subject, following Maimonides' journey from Spain, through the Maghreb, and on to Egypt after a brief sojourn in the Holy Land. Maimonides was born in Córdoba, the provincial capital of what was then al-Andalus (today Andalusia), a region of modern-day Spain that was ruled at the time by the Muslim Almoravid empire. His father was Maimon ben Joseph, a rabbinical scholar in his own right; his mother's identity remains unknown. Maimonides grew up in a culture that blurred many lines that elsewhere separated Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Poets, philosophers, and scientists all thrived under the Almoravids.

And yet it was an age filled with tension and religious extremism, as Christian crusaders sought to reconquer the Muslim territories of Iberia and retake the Levant and intra-Muslim struggles ultimately brought a militant Islamic regime -- the Almohads -- to power in al-Andalus. The Almohads treated non-Muslims harshly, forcibly converting or killing many Jews throughout their realm. When Maimonides was in his early 20s, his family fled to Fès, in present-day Morocco. But this did not help much, since the Almohads ruled there as well. A few years later, the family moved once more, this time to Acre, then part of the crusader kingdom in the Holy Land. Soon after, the family relocated yet again, this time to Egypt. Maimonides would spend the rest of his life there, ultimately rising to become the semiofficial head of the Jewish community in Egypt. He supported himself by working as a physician in the Jewish community and at the court of the Muslim ruler of the region, Saladin. It was in Egypt that Maimonides established his reputation as a great scholar of Jewish law and thought, his

renown spreading throughout the Islamic world and into Europe. Letters reached him from all over the Jewish world, seeking his advice and legal rulings.

Drawing on all of Maimonides' writings, and especially his many letters, Halbertal crafts a portrait of a refugee who never fully left home and felt the pain of exile for his entire life. This character study forms the backdrop for Halbertal's discussion of Maimonides' intellectual output, which covers virtually all the legal and philosophical works that Maimonides produced. Halbertal pays little attention to Maimonides' medical writings (except when they shed light on legal or philosophical matters) and provides only a limited overview of his other works, focusing on matters that stand out as unique contributions to Jewish ethical, legal, or philosophical discourse or that generated significant controversy. As a result, the novice approaching Maimonides through this book might not fully appreciate the audacity of what Maimonides attempted in each of his major works.

Nevertheless, Halbertal deftly guides the reader through Maimonides' contributions to Jewish thought. Among these is Maimonides' embrace of what philosophers refer to as "virtue ethics," which calls for people to act morally by developing a longing for what is right or a disgust for what is wrong -- in contrast, for example, to desiring the pleasures of the flesh but refraining from them out of a sense of duty. Virtue ethics presents a distinct challenge to a Jew loyal to the laws of Judaism, which seem to insist that obeying God's commandments -- and nothing else -- should form the basis of one's moral life. In other words, Jewish law seems to speak to duty, not disposition. It is thus difficult to imagine a strictly

observant Jew embracing virtue ethics; the same could be said for strictly observant Muslims or Christians, as well.

Halbertal shows how Maimonides tried to resolve this problem by distinguishing between acts that reason identifies as virtuous (such as caring for others or refraining from violence) and things that have moral importance only because God has weighed in on them (such as consuming some kinds of food but not others). Maimonides argued that fulfilling the latter type of duties can contribute to the cultivation of virtue by encouraging a kind of discipline: learning to follow God's commands can help one develop the habits needed to lead a virtuous life. Thus, reason came to occupy a central place in Maimonides' view of the properly lived religious life, in which duty is subservient to the demands of virtue.

Cracking the Code

Halbertal's most significant contribution comes in his discussion of Maimonides' two most important works, his code of Jewish law (Mishne Torah in Hebrew) and his great philosophical work, *The Guide of the Perplexed*. Maimonides attempted to codify the entirety of Jewish law, an unprecedented effort that has never been repeated. Other codes of Jewish law (of which there are many) are selective in one way or another, generally choosing to focus on only a specific set of laws or only those laws that would apply to Jews in exile. Maimonides, by contrast, dealt with laws that involve the sovereign institutions of the state and even with laws that would apply only during a hoped-for messianic age. (It is worth noting that unlike in the apocalyptic visions of the end times so common among many Christians and Jews, in Maimonides' account, the Messiah's

return will usher in world peace and political maturity without any transformation of nature, human or otherwise. When “the end” comes, people will still live, reproduce, and die but will do so while “accepting the true religion,” leading to a world without plunder or destruction.)

Halbertal, understandably, does not dwell on the minutiae of Jewish law, focusing instead on the broad philosophical themes that form the foundation of the Mishne Torah. In particular, Halbertal shows that in the philosophical sections of his code, Maimonides seems to say that the world exists eternally as an extension of God’s unchanging wisdom and not as a creation of God’s will (as the Bible seems to suggest). In a created world, God is the supreme power in the universe and continuously brings about his desired outcomes. That is the more conventional, familiar religious view of creation. But in Maimonides’ view, the world represents an extension of God’s wisdom, not his will, so it is impossible for God to, say, change the course of someone’s health or determine the victor in a battle. This does not suggest a limitation on God’s power but serves as an expression of God’s perfection; after all, perfect beings do not change their minds.

This is one of Maimonides’ concessions to Aristotelian logic and seems to run contrary to the meaning of the Bible, not to mention the thousands of pages of Jewish commentary on the Bible. It is all the more audacious coming in a code of Jewish law, since such a code seems wholly dependent on the notion of a willing God who responds to human behavior. After all, why refrain from eating pork if not to please a God who will respond with favor?

Of course, a God devoid of a discrete will cannot respond to human behavior at all. So why bother observing any of these laws? For Maimonides, one observes because observance both cultivates and expresses love and awe for a God stripped of all personality or caprice. Observance is not, as generally assumed, a submission to divine will.

In general, Maimonides' code presents a system of Jewish law that seeks to eliminate the nonrational elements from human life. To be sure, the Mishne Torah presents many laws whose purpose seems less than rational to most people. But as with virtue ethics, the laws' apparently nonrational dimensions serve a rational purpose: to develop habits of behavior that will encourage virtue. Still, Halbertal concedes that, at times, even Maimonides had to push his considerable interpretive skills to their limits in order to explain how many of the laws and customs inherited from the ancient rabbis, which seem on the surface so distant from rational purpose, actually serve to bring the observer nearer to knowledge of God.

Speaking of God

When he turns to Maimonides' other major work, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, Halbertal once again finds the philosopher confronting the question of whether the world was created by God's will or exists eternally by virtue of God's wisdom. As Maimonides himself notes in *The Guide*, "everything is bound up with this problem." As the name implies, *The Guide of the Perplexed* was written to help those confounded by Aristotelian philosophy, and nowhere did Aristotle challenge the core of Judaism and the other scriptural monotheistic faiths more than in his insistence that the world was not created in time and

certainly not as an act of will by a benevolent God. The issue is further complicated by the challenges of language. How does one speak of God? What does it mean to say that God has a will? That God could one day be satisfied with no universe and the next day begin creating one? Does such language even make sense? What does it mean to say, as the book of Genesis does, that God “rested,” or that God created man “in his own image,” or that God was “angry” or “jealous”? Can a sophisticated thinker even take such ideas seriously?

Maimonides devoted much of *The Guide* to examining the limits of language and the need for metaphor and allegory to communicate basic truths about God and humanity. This led him to the notion of what has come to be called “negative theology”: the claim that one cannot make any affirmative statements about God without introducing corruption but that one can describe what God is not. Further, one can describe how God is manifest in the world. Here, Maimonides presents an interpretive tour de force, explaining the mysterious back-and-forth between God and Moses that takes place in the book of Exodus, in which Moses asks to see God’s glory, and God replies that Moses may not see his face but may see what is usually translated as God’s “back.” Maimonides reads this passage as saying that a human cannot know what God is but can recognize God’s effects in the world, which Maimonides believes will reveal a God who brings about righteousness and loving-kindness.

The Guide also reflects on the reasons for the commandments in the Torah. In other works, Maimonides presents the commandments as an aid in forming the habits of virtue. That notion does not entirely disappear in *The Guide*, but Maimonides shifts to an emphasis on the commandments’ role

in steering observant Jews away from idolatry, considered to be false ideas about God that represent the most corrupting force imaginable. Maimonides insists that a proper understanding of God (knowing what God is not), together with the commandment to imitate God as he is manifest in the world, will lead people to a life devoted to righteousness and loving-kindness -- the essence of God's impact on the world. A mistaken understanding of God, on the other hand, can lead people to place a divine imprimatur on all manner of evil acts. Thus, the failure to think properly about God is ultimately a moral failure, one that has led to the spilling of much blood. With this extraordinary philosophical and moral vision, *The Guide* ends. It is to Halbertal's great credit that he brings this vision to life for the contemporary reader.

O Ye of Little Faith

The specific challenges of Aristotelian philosophy no longer keep many people up at night. But the question of how to understand the origins of the universe is as alive as ever -- and the retreat from the challenges of existence, the refuge of the imaginative and the "miraculous," remains as seductive as ever. Maimonides demands something more honest and mature than that. As Halbertal writes, "Many faiths place God's appearance under the rubric of 'miracle.'" But, he continues,

"Maimonides considered that belief to offer a flimsy, ad hoc expression of divine revelation. At the focus of religious consciousness, the world must remain as it is, as the highest expression of God's mercy, justice, and wisdom. Relying on the wondrous and the extraordinary as the basis for religious experience rests on an inability to distinguish the impossible

from the possible."

Many of the world's current ills result from just that inability.

Centuries after Maimonides, Sigmund Freud (among others) would come to see the abolition of religion as the only way to overcome people's reluctance to face the world as it is. Yet in the decades that have elapsed since the publication in 1927 of Freud's *The Future of an Illusion*, religion has shown no sign of disappearing -- nor has contemporary secular political or moral discourse particularly distinguished itself when it comes to dealing with the world in all its complexity.

More than anything else, Maimonides provides an understanding of religion generally, and Judaism specifically, that suggests our species must go through, not bypass, its great spiritual dilemmas. As Halbertal writes toward the end of his extraordinary book, Maimonides believed that "by grasping the vast beauty and power of the world we learn to perceive it for what it is -- a grand manifestation of God's wisdom in which we humans are one marginal aspect of its design. In internalizing this non-instrumental attitude we reconcile ourselves with the world, a world that is suited to our potential as creatures capable of knowledge and capable of transcending the initial grip of fear and the imagination."

In this respect, Maimonides' work has as much to offer today as at any time since his demise more than eight centuries ago.

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