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Article 1.

Foreign Policy

## **Six Big Lies about How Jerusalem Runs Washington**

Aaron David Miller

March 21, 2012 -- Several years after leaving government, I wrote a piece in the Washington Post titled "Israel's Lawyer." The article was an honest effort to explain how several senior officials in U.S. President Bill Clinton's administration (myself included) had a strong inclination to see the Arab-Israeli

negotiations through a pro-Israel lens. That filter played a role -- though hardly the primary one -- in the failure of endgame diplomacy, particularly at the ill-fated Camp David summit in July 2000.

Unsurprisingly, the piece was hijacked in the service of any number of agendas, especially by critics of Israel only too eager to use my narrow point about the Clinton years to make their broader one: America had long compromised its own values and interests in the Middle East by its blind and sordid obeisance to the Jewish state and its pro-Israeli supporters in the United States.

Here we go again. Election years seem to bring out the worst -- not only in politicians, but in advocates, analysts, and intellectuals too. Nowhere are the leaps and lapses of logic and rationality greater than in the discussion of Israel, the Jews, domestic U.S. politics, and the Middle East. Once again, we're hearing that a U.S. president is being dragged to war with Iran by a trigger-happy Israeli prime minister and his loyal acolytes in America.

Before we lose our collective minds (again), it might be useful to review some of the myths and misconceptions about domestic U.S. politics and America's Middle East policies that still circulate all too widely in Europe and the Arab world -- and sadly in the United States too. Here are a half-dozen of the worst ones.

### **1. The White House is Israeli-occupied territory.**

The idea that American Jews in collusion with the Israeli government (and, for some time now, evangelical Christians)

hold U.S. foreign policy hostage is not only wrong and misleading but a dangerous, dark trope. It coexists with other hateful -- and, yes, anti-Semitic -- canards about how Jews control the media and the banks, and the world as well. It's reality distortion in the extreme, with little basis in fact. The historical record just doesn't support it. Strong, willful presidents who have real opportunities (and smart strategies to exploit them) to promote U.S. interests almost always win out and trump domestic lobbies.

Indeed, when it counts and national interests demand it, presidents who know what they're doing move forward in the face of domestic pressures and usually prevail. Whether it's arms sales to the Arabs (advanced fighter jets to Egyptians or AWACS to Saudis) or taking tough positions on Arab-Israeli negotiating issues in the service of agreements (see: Henry Kissinger and the 1973-1975 disengagement agreements with Israel, Egypt, and Syria; President Jimmy Carter, Camp David, and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty in 1978 and 1979; and Secretary of State James Baker and the 1991 Madrid peace conference), administrations have their way. The fights can be messy and politically costly, but that doesn't preclude policymakers from having them.

No U.S. president would pick a fight with a close ally, particularly one that had strong domestic support, without good reason and a clear purpose. To wit, President George H.W. Bush and Baker's decision to deny the Israelis billions of dollars in housing-loan guarantees because of settlement construction on the eve of the Madrid conference made sense. It sent a powerful signal to the Israelis and Arabs at a critical moment that America meant business. President Barack Obama's war with Prime

Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over a settlement freeze didn't: One was a productive fight with a purpose, and the other was an unproductive one with no strategy. At the end of the day, Obama got the worst of all outcomes: He pissed off the Israelis and the Palestinians, and he got no negotiations and no freeze. That Obama was seen to have backed down in the end only made matters worse, making it appear that he lost his nerve with Netanyahu. Even so, none of this means the Israelis run the White House. Obama's failure was much a result of a self-inflicted wound.

## **2. The U.S.-Israel relationship rests on shared values alone.**

Israel's critics believe that without domestic politics, there would be little to the U.S.-Israel special relationship. Israel's supporters, meanwhile, like to believe that politics has little to do with it. Neither is right. The U.S.-Israel relationship is a curious marriage of shared values, national interests, and domestic politics.

Sure, common values are at the top of the list. There's no way the bond between Washington and Jerusalem would be as strong and as durable these many years without broad public belief that it was in America's national interest to support a fellow democracy. These shared values more than anything else -- not Israel's importance as an strategic ally -- is the foundation of the bond.

Since 1950, only 22 countries have maintained their democratic character continuously -- and Israel's one of them. That the Jewish people have a very dark history of persecution and genocide and that millions of Americans have powerful religious

connections to Israel and the Holy Land has only made the sell easier and the bond stronger.

But let's not kid ourselves -- and activists at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and other Jewish organizations don't. Without the strong vocal support of a unified American Jewish community that brings pressure to bear in Congress, assistance levels to Israel would not be nearly as high as they have been for so long. AIPAC not only assiduously guards the pre-existing pro-Israeli tilt among the American public, but it also defines for much of the Jewish and political establishment what it means to be pro-Israel in America today. Its clout on Capitol Hill sends a powerful message to elected officials, many of whom already share general sympathy with Israel and who have no desire to cross swords with a powerful lobby that might jeopardize what they've come to Washington to do: advance their constituents' interests.

### **3. Lobbies are evil.**

The United States' Founding Fathers were very worried about factions with special interests. But lobbies and special interests advocating causes -- from guns to tobacco to senior citizens -- aren't some kind of dark cabal plotting in a cloakroom. They are a natural part of America's democratic political system and, yes, part of a culture that has many excesses that bend the system and often reflect the seamier aspects of U.S. politics. But good luck trying to eliminate the practice of citizens and groups organizing to press their elected representatives to support an issue. The U.S. system -- whatever the Founders intended -- was a natural for lobbying and special pleading.

I'm not sure that has ever been clearly understood in the Middle East or in Europe, where lobbies are viewed as some nefarious force operating in the shadows with the aim of holding U.S. foreign policy hostage. When a former Arab diplomat I know once referred to the U.S. Congress as the Little Knesset, he was not only mocking a system -- he was jealous too. Arab Americans only wish they could marshal AIPAC's power.

America's foreign policy -- like its unruly politics-- is forged in a competitive arena of many voices, influences, and interests. But let me be clear: I don't want the American Jewish community controlling Washington's Middle East policy; nor do I want it run by Congress or regional specialists in the State Department for that matter.

Here's where a willful, smart president with a sound strategy is critically important -- both in exercising constitutional powers and in responding to the practical reality that the executive branch is the only actor in the U.S. system that can guide and lead the country abroad. Indeed, the power of the pro-Israel community recedes the farther away you get from Capitol Hill. The pro-Israel community has a powerful voice, but it doesn't have a veto.

#### **4. His Jewish advisors made him do it.**

This charge -- which has been leveled at senior officials in both Clinton's and George W. Bush's administrations -- that presidents are controlled by a tiny group of American Jewish advisers is as absurd as it is pernicious. I speak from personal experience. I admit it freely: Several Clinton administration officials, including me -- with the best of intentions -- adopted

an approach to the negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians in 1999 and 2000, both on substance and on process, that reflected Israeli needs far more than those of the Palestinians. These views, however, gained currency not because the president's advisors, who happened to be American Jews, were pushing them, but because they made sense to a non-Jewish president with great sensitivity for the Israelis -- and a great deal for the Palestinians too.

Some of these same advisors worked for Bush 41 and Baker too, yet policy turned out quite differently, much more balanced and tougher on Israel (take, for example, the denial of loan guarantees). The fact is that policy advisors -- to paraphrase The Eagles in one of the band's better love songs -- don't take policymakers anywhere they don't already want to go. Here is where adult supervision is essential. Indeed, it's ultimately the responsibility of the president to sort through these views and determine which ones make sense and which ones don't -- and then to make the best decision possible. The key is to have a variety of views. To blame senior official X as the primary reason a president supports Israel or favors this approach or that is absurd.

Obama is no lawyer for Israel. If he chooses not to push his confrontation with Netanyahu, it's not because an advisor with a pro-Israel agenda is whispering in his ear; it's because the president has his own political agenda, has other priorities, or realizes the fight won't produce the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations he seeks. In the Obama administration, you'd better believe that it's the president who runs things.

## **5. Election-year politics are driving Obama to war with Iran.**

You've heard the rap many times. Election-year politics erode a president's room to maneuver, chain him to collecting votes, and increase the odds substantially that political interests will trump the country's. This year's presidential election has been dominated by the economy, but when foreign policy has intruded into the campaign, it has been on one issue: Iran. It's erroneous, however, to conclude that because it's an election year, Obama is being pushed to war -- either by Republicans or by the pro-Israel community. Sure, he has toughened his rhetoric, but whether that's smart politics or smart policy (to keep the Iranians under pressure) isn't clear. It's probably both.

The fact is, this president doesn't do anything quickly or recklessly -- or under pressure. He's the deliberator-in-chief. And as he ponders, one thing is clear: The last thing he needs leading up to an election he has a very good chance of winning is a war in the Middle East. And an Israeli strike or an American one that would bring on \$200 a barrel oil, thus raising prices at the pump and deflating the fragile U.S. economic recovery, is not something Obama wants. Whatever the Israeli prime minister got from the president in their meeting this month at the White House, it wasn't a green -- or even a yellow -- light to strike Iran's nuclear sites.

## **6. Barack Obama is just as pro-Israel as Bill Clinton or George W. Bush.**

There's no question that Obama understands and appreciates the special relationship between Israel and the United States. But Obama isn't Bill Clinton or George W. Bush when it comes to Israel -- not even close. These guys were frustrated by Israeli prime ministers too, but they also were moved and enamored by

them (Clinton by Yitzhak Rabin, Bush by Ariel Sharon). They had instinctive, heartfelt empathy for the idea of Israel's story, and as a consequence they could make allowances at times for Israel's behavior even when it clashed with their own policy goals. Obama is more like George H.W. Bush when it comes to Israel, but without a strategy.

If Obama is emotional when it comes to Israel, he's hiding it. Netanyahu obviously thinks he's bloodless. But then again, the U.S. president can be pretty reserved on a number of issues. Obama doesn't feel the need to be loved by the Israelis, and perhaps American Jews either. Combine that with a guy who's much more comfortable in gray than in black and white, and you have a president who sees Israel's world in much more nuanced terms, which is clearly hard for many Israelis and American Jews to accept. In Obama's mind, Israel has legitimate security needs, but it's also the strongest regional power. As a result, he believes that the Israelis should compromise on the peace process, give nonmilitary pressures against Iran time to work, and recognize that despite the uncertainties of the Arab Spring, now is the time to make peace with the Palestinians.

If Obama had a chance to reset the U.S.-Israel relationship and make it a little less special, he probably would. But I guess that's the point: He probably won't have the chance. If he gets a second term, he'll more than likely be faced with the same mix of Middle East headaches, conflicting priorities, narrow maneuvering room, and the swirl of domestic politics that bedevils him today. If the U.S. president fails to get an Israeli-Palestinian peace, it will be primarily because the Israelis, the Palestinians, and Barack Obama wouldn't pay the price, not because the pro-Israel community in America got in his way.

*Aaron David Miller is a distinguished scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. His new book, Can America Have Another Great President?, will be published this year.*

Article 2.

Foreign Affairs

## **Turkey Vs. Iran**

Mustafa Akyol

March 21, 2012 -- In a speech last August, Ayatollah Hashemi Shahroudi, who was Iran's chief justice from 1999 to 2009 and is now a member of the Guardian Council, argued that "arrogant Western powers are afraid of regional countries' relations with [Iran]." He went on to assert that, in their fear, those same powers were backing "innovative models of Islam, such as liberal Islam in Turkey," in order to "replace the true Islam" as practiced by Iran.

Leaving aside his conspiratorial tone, recent developments in the Middle East have somewhat confirmed Shahroudi's concerns. The Arab Spring has heightened the ideological tension between Ankara and Tehran, and Turkey's model seems to be winning. Last spring, Iran often claimed that the Arab revolutions were akin to the Iranian one decades before and would usher in similar governments. Yet in Tunisia and Egypt, for the first time,

leading figures in mainstream Islamist parties have won elections by explicitly appealing to the "the Turkish model" rather than to an Iranian-style theocracy. What's more, in December 2011, the Palestinian movement Hamas salted the wound when a spokesman announced the organization's shift toward "a policy of nonviolent resistance," which reflected its decision to distance itself from Syria and Iran and to move closer to Egypt, Turkey, and Qatar.

The clash between Turkey and Iran has been more than just rhetorical. Tehran has been Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's biggest supporter, whereas Ankara has come to condemn the regime's "barbarism" and put its weight behind the opposition, hosting the Syrian National Council and the Free Syrian Army, the rebel government and army in exile. In Iraq, Iran is a patron of the Shias; Turkey is, at least in the eyes of many in the Middle East, the political and economic benefactor of the Sunnis and the Kurds. And the two countries have had tensions over the missile shield that NATO deployed in Turkey in September 2011. The Turkish government insists that the missile shield was not developed as a protection against Iran. Nevertheless, in December, an Iranian political official warned that his country would attack Turkey if the United States or Israel attacked Iran.

The falling-out between Iran and Turkey discredits those political commentators in the West who, since the Justice and Development Party (AKP) rose to power in Turkey in 2002, have lamented Turkey's shift from the West to the East. After Turkey brokered a nuclear fuel swap deal with Iran and Brazil in May 2010, the West appeared even more concerned. Dozens of columns, including one in *The New York Times* by Thomas Friedman, a columnist for the paper, decried Turkey's new

outlook as "shameful [2]." And when Turkey voted against new sanctions on Iran at the UN Security Council a month later, Con Coughlin, the executive foreign editor of The Telegraph, saw it as a sign of an emerging and dangerous Turkish-Iranian alliance, asking "Does Turkey really want to be the country responsible for launching a war between Iran and the West? [3]"

In fact, over the past decade, Turkey's foreign policy has been nothing so simple as a crude choice between East and West, or between Iran and the United States. Instead, Turkey's foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoglu, has pursued a third way, by strengthening Turkey's economic and political ties to all of its neighbors. In doing so, he has attempted to walk between the region's "radicals," such as President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran, and its "moderates," such as former President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt.

The West, of course, preferred the moderates, but often failed to see that empowering them only spurred on the radicals. The West's favorite Arab rulers, such as Mubarak and Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, the former president of Tunisia, received praise for being not just moderate but also secular, but were brutal and corrupt dictators who lacked legitimacy in the eyes of their people. They were not elected, and, since they often appeared to be Western puppets, they actually served the agenda of the radicals, who looked genuine and noble in comparison.

The AKP's third way stakes its claim to moderation and modernism not on good relations with the West (although it tries to keep on decent terms) but on its democratic system and its pragmatism. Although the cadre at the top of the party is generally pious, it has not imposed sharia rule in Turkey, as

some secularist Turks have feared, and has not geared its foreign policy toward spreading Islamism. Instead, it has focused on soft power and economic interests. For example, although Islamist parties often call for an "Islamic economy," free of interest, the AKP has chosen to integrate into the global economy and follow fairly liberal economic policy. The government has avoided any actions that would dampen trade and investment, striving to have "zero problems with neighbors."

Further evidence of Turkey's pragmatism can be seen in its behavior toward Iraqi Kurdistan, a region that the country's former secular establishment used to see as a lethal threat because of its fears that Turkey's own Kurds could agitate to form a Greater Unified Kurdistan with Kurds in Iraq. The AKP has viewed the region more as a zone of economic opportunity. In the past decade, Turkish companies flooded Iraqi Kurdistan, and the Turkish government gradually befriended Iraqi Kurds. In 2011, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan opened a Turkish-built international airport and a government consulate in Arbil, the Kurdish capital. Radicals and would probably have wanted to destabilize Iraq, in order to stress American loss.

However, although it would be wrong to say that Turkish policy has Islamist overtones, it certainly does have Muslim overtones. Ankara cares about what happens in Egypt, Gaza, and Tunisia partly because people there have deep religious and historical ties to Turkey. Even then, the AKP has tried to be as pragmatic as possible, and generally avoided taking sides in sectarian splits in the Gulf, Lebanon, Syria, and especially in Iraq. "I am neither a Shiite nor a Sunni; I am a Muslim," Erdogan said in his July 2008 visit to Iraq. Accordingly, in March 2011, he visited Iraq's Shia shrines -- apparently a first for a Sunni statesman -- and

even the modest residence of the Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, the spiritual leader of Iraq's Shia community. To put it differently, Iran envisions itself as the patron of the Shia and Saudi Arabia sees itself as the patron of the Sunnis, but Turkey has tried to engage with both of these camps -- and with the Christians and the secular, besides.

Yet the realities of the region challenge Turkey's mix of pragmatism and ecumenical idealism. First, for now, the country has not been able to bridge the gap between Iran and the West on the nuclear issue. Second, despite its attempts to avoid being perceived as a Sunni power, it has failed to build lasting ties with Shia in the region, who look up to Tehran rather than Ankara. In Iraq, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, a Shiite and an ally of Iran, repeatedly spoke against "Turkish interference" in the politics of Baghdad. And in Syria, where Assad's Alawi regime is violently oppressing a Sunni majority, the dichotomy became even clearer: Turkey stands on the side of the opposition, whose dominant component is the Sunni community, including the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood.

Despite these problems, and its shortcomings at home, Turkey is still a source of inspiration for the region, particularly for Islamist parties that want to participate in democratic politics and form governments that will deliver to their people. This is because the AKP's third way, while having clear Muslim cultural tones, also enshrines values that are more universal: democracy, human rights, and the market economy. The way Erdogan defines these concepts is not as liberal as the West might like -- especially when it comes to freedom of speech -- but neither is it unhelpful. In [a recent survey](#) [4], TESEV, a liberal Turkish think tank, found that the majority of Arabs see

Turkey as "a model country," because "it is at once Muslim, democratic, open, and prosperous."

Understanding the value of these aspects of his country's policies, Erdogan has placed more emphasis on them since the beginning of the Arab Spring. In visits to Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya last year, to the surprise of some Arab Islamists, he defended the secular state as a state "at an equal distance to all religious groups, including Muslim, Christian, Jewish, and atheist people." And last week, Turkish President Abdullah Gül, reaffirmed the sentiment in a visit to Tunisia. In his address to the Tunisian parliament, he emphasized the need for a regional synthesis of Islam and "democracy, the market economy and modernity."

Meanwhile, in Syria, Ankara has taken a stand against the Assad regime, with which Turkey had developed a good and profitable relationship before the Arab Spring. Through close cooperation with the Obama administration on the Syrian matter, Erdogan has also shown that a pious and independent Muslim leader can work with the West on common goals. And finally, within Turkey, Erdogan's AKP has demonstrated that a political movement inspired by Islamic values need not impose those values.

So, the Iranians seem right to be concerned about "liberal Islam in Turkey" and its appeal in the region. To be sure, Iran's own destiny is a matter that Turkey cannot affect. However, the Islamic Republic's regional influence, which sprang from its image as an Islamic hero in a world of Western puppets, is now overshadowed by that of AKP-led Turkey. And for all those who wish to see a more peaceful, democratic, and free Middle East,

this should be good news.

*MUSTAFA AKYOL, a Turkish journalist, is the author of Islam Without Extremes: A Muslim Case for Liberty [1] (W. W. Norton, 2011).*

### **Links:**

[1] <http://www.amazon.com/Islam-without-Extremes-Muslim-Liberty/dp/0393070867>

[2] <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/26/opinion/26friedman.html>

[3] <http://blogs.telegraph.co.uk/news/concoughlin/100043002/turkeys-alliance-with-iran-is-a-threat-to-world-peace/>

[4]

[http://www.tesev.org.tr/UD\\_OBJS/PDF/DPT/OD/YYN/Perception\\_of\\_Turkey\\_2011.pdf](http://www.tesev.org.tr/UD_OBJS/PDF/DPT/OD/YYN/Perception_of_Turkey_2011.pdf)

Article 3.

Foreign Policy

## **Top 10 Lessons of the Iraq War**

Stephen M. Walt

March 20, 2012 -- This month marks the ninth anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq. Regardless of your views on the wisdom of that decision, it's fair to say that the results were not what most Americans expected. Now that the war is officially over and most U.S. forces have withdrawn, what lessons should Americans (and others) draw from the experience? There are many lessons that one might learn, of course, but here are my

## Top 10 Lessons from the Iraq War.

### **Lesson #1: The United States lost.**

The first and most important lesson of Iraq war is that we didn't win in any meaningful sense of that term. The alleged purpose of the war was eliminating Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction, but it turns out he didn't have any. Oops. Then the rationale shifted to creating a pro-American democracy, but Iraq today is at best a quasi-democracy and far from pro-American. The destruction of Iraq improved Iran's position in the Persian Gulf -- which is hardly something the United States intended -- and the costs of the war (easily exceeding \$1 trillion dollars) are much larger than U.S. leaders anticipated or promised. The war was also a giant distraction, which diverted the Bush administration from other priorities (e.g., Afghanistan) and made the United States much less popular around the world.

This lesson is important because supporters of the war are already marketing a revisionist version. In this counternarrative, the 2007 surge was a huge success (it wasn't, because it failed to produce political reconciliation) and Iraq is now on the road to stable and prosperous democracy. And the costs weren't really that bad. Another variant of this myth is the idea that President George W. Bush and Gen. David Petraeus had "won" the war by 2008, but President Obama then lost it by getting out early. This view ignores the fact that the Bush administration negotiated the 2008 Status of Forces agreement that set the timetable for U.S. withdrawal, and Obama couldn't stay in Iraq once the Iraqi government made it clear it wanted us out.

The danger of this false narrative is obvious: If Americans come

to see the war as a success -- which it clearly wasn't -- they may continue to listen to the advice of its advocates and be more inclined to repeat similar mistakes in the future.

**Lesson #2: It's not that hard to hijack the United States into a war.**

The United States is still a very powerful country, and the short-term costs of military action are relatively low in most cases. As a result, wars of choice (or even "wars of whim") are possible. The Iraq war reminds us that if the executive branch is united around the idea of war, normal checks and balances -- including media scrutiny -- tend to break down.

The remarkable thing about the Iraq war is how few people it took to engineer. It wasn't promoted by the U.S. military, the CIA, the State Department, or oil companies. Instead, the main architects were a group of well-connected neoconservatives, who began openly lobbying for war during the Clinton administration. They failed to persuade President Bill Clinton, and they were unable to convince Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney to opt for war until after 9/11. But at that point the stars aligned, and Bush and Cheney became convinced that invading Iraq would launch a far-reaching regional transformation, usher in a wave of pro-American democracies, and solve the terrorism problem.

As the New York Times' Thomas Friedman told Ha'aretz in May 2003: "Iraq was the war neoconservatives wanted... the war the neoconservatives marketed.... I could give you the names of 25 people (all of whom are at this moment within a five-block radius of this office [in Washington]) who, if you had exiled

them to a desert island a year and half ago, the Iraq war would not have happened."

**Lesson #3: The United States gets in big trouble when the "marketplace of ideas" breaks down and when the public and our leadership do not have an open debate about what to do.**

Given the stakes involved, it is remarkable how little serious debate there actually was about the decision to invade. This was a bipartisan failure, as both conservatives and liberals, Republicans and Democrats all tended to jump onboard the bandwagon to war. And mainstream media organizations became cheerleaders rather than critics. Even within the halls of government, individuals who questioned the wisdom of the invasion or raised doubts about the specific plans were soon marginalized. As a result, not only did the United States make a bone-headed decision, but the Bush administration went into Iraq unprepared for the subsequent occupation.

**Lesson #4: The secularism and middle-class character of Iraqi society was overrated.**

Before the war, advocates argued that democracy would be easy to install in Iraq because it had a highly literate population and a robust middle class, and because sectarianism was minimal. Of course, the people who said things like this apparently knew nothing about Iraq itself and even less about the difficulty of building democracy in a country like Iraq. This failure is especially striking insofar as Iraq's turbulent pre-Saddam history was hardly a secret. But a realistic view of Iraq clashed with the neocons' effort to sell the war, so they sold a fairy tale version instead.

## **Lesson #5: Don't listen to ambitious exiles.**

The case for war was strengthened by misleading testimony from various Iraqi exiles, who had an obvious interest in persuading Washington to carry them to power. Unfortunately, U.S. leaders were unaware of Machiavelli's prescient warnings about the danger of trusting the testimony of self-interested foreigners. As he wrote in his Discourses:

"How vain the faith and promises of men who are exiles from their country. Such is their extreme desire to return to their homes that they naturally believe many things that are not true, and add many others on purpose, so that with what they really believe and what they say they believe, they will fill you with hopes to that degree that if you attempt to act upon them, you will incur a fruitless expense or engage in an undertaking that will involve you in ruin."

Two words: Ahmed Chalabi.

## **Lesson #6: It's very hard to improvise an occupation.**

As the Army's official history of the occupation notes dryly: "conditions in Iraq proved to be wildly out of sync with prewar assumptions." Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Co. assumed that standing up a new Iraqi government would be quick work and that the light U.S. force would head home almost immediately. But when conditions deteriorated, U.S. leaders -- both civilian and military -- were extremely slow to realize that they faced a wholly different situation. And, as FP colleague Thomas Ricks has documented, once the U.S. military found itself facing a genuine insurgency, it took years before it began to adjust its tactics and strategy in a serious way. We tend

to think of the U.S. military as a highly intelligent fighting force -- after all, we've got all those intelligence services, think tanks, in-house analysis operations, war colleges, etc. -- yet this case reminds us that the defense establishment is also big and unwieldy organization that doesn't improvise quickly.

**Lesson #7: Don't be surprised when adversaries act to defend their own interests, and in ways we won't like.**

This lesson seems obvious: Adversaries will pursue their own interests. But the architects of the Iraq war seem to have blindly assumed that other interested parties would simply roll over and cooperate with us after a little bit of "shock and awe." Instead, various actors took steps to defend their own interests or to take advantage of the evolving situation, often in ways that confounded U.S. efforts. Thus, Sunnis in Iraq took up arms to resist the loss of power, wealth, and status that the collapse of the Ba'thist regime entailed. Syria and Iran took various measures to strengthen anti-U.S. forces inside Iraq, in order to bog us down and bleed us. Al Qaeda also tried to exploit the post-invasion power-vacuum to go after U.S. forces and advance its own agenda.

Americans had every reason to be upset by these various responses, because they helped thwart our aims. But we should hardly have been surprised when these various forces did what they could to resist us. What else would you expect?

**Lesson #8: Counterinsurgency warfare is ugly and inevitably leads to war crimes, atrocities, or other forms of abuse.**

Another lesson from Iraq (and Afghanistan) is that local identities remain quite powerful and foreign occupations almost

always trigger resistance, especially in cultures with a history of heavy-handed foreign interference. Accordingly, occupying powers are likely to face armed insurgencies, which in turn means organizing a counterinsurgency campaign. Unfortunately, such campaigns are extremely hard to control, because decisive victories will be elusive, progress is usually slow, and the occupation force will have distinguishing friend from foe within the local population. And that means that sometimes our forces will go over the line, as they did in Haditha or Abu Ghraib. No matter how much we emphasize "hearts and minds," there will inevitably be abuses that undermine our efforts. So when you order up an invasion or decide to occupy another country, be aware that you are opening Pandora's Box.

### **Lesson #9: Better "planning" may not be the answer.**

There is little question that the invasion of Iraq was abysmally planned, and the post-war occupation was badly bungled. It is therefore unsurprising that U.S. leaders (and academics) want to learn from these mistakes so as to perform better in the future. This goal is understandable and even laudable, but it does not necessarily follow that better pre-war planning would have produced a better result.

For starters, there were extensive pre-war plans for occupying and rebuilding Iraq; the problem was that key decisionmakers (e.g., Rumsfeld) simply ignored them. So planning alone isn't the answer if politicians ignore the plans. It's also worth noting that had Americans been told about the real price tag of the invasion -- i.e., that we would have to send a lot more troops and stay there longer -- they would never have supported the invasion in the first place.

But more importantly, better plans don't guarantee success, because trying to do "statebuilding" in a deeply divided society is an immense challenge, and opportunities to screw it up are legion. As Minxin Pei and Sara Kasper of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace concluded from [their study](#) of past attempts of "nation-building," "few national undertakings are as complex, costly, and time-consuming as reconstructing the governing institutions of foreign societies."

For example, having more troops on the ground might have prevented the collapse of order, but the U.S. army could not have kept a sufficiently large force (350,000 or more) in Iraq for very long. Moreover, an even larger U.S. presence might have increased Iraqi resentment and produced an insurgency anyway. Similarly, critics now believe the decision to disband the Iraqi army and launch an extensive de-Bathification process was a mistake, but trying to keep the army intact and leaving former Bathists in charge might easily have triggered a Shi'ite uprising instead. Lastly, state-building in countries that we don't understand is inherently uncertain, because it is impossible to know *ex ante* which potential leaders are reliable or competent or how politics will evolve once the population starts participating directly. We won't know enough to play "kingmaker," and we are likely to end up having to prop up leaders whose agendas are different from ours.

In short, as Benjamin Friedman, Harvey Sapolsky, and Christopher Preble [argue here](#), better tools or tactics are probably not enough to make ambitious nation-building programs a smart approach. Which leads to Lesson #10.

**Lesson #10: Rethink U.S. grand strategy, not just tactics or**

## **methods.**

Because it is not clear if any U.S. approach would have succeeded at an acceptable cost, the real lesson of Iraq is not to do stupid things like this again.

The U.S. military has many virtues, but it is not good at running other countries. And it is not likely to get much better at it with practice. We have a capital-intensive army that places a premium on firepower, and we are a country whose own unusual, melting-pot history has made us less sensitive to the enduring power of nationalism, ethnicity, and other local forces.

Furthermore, because the United States is basically incredibly secure, it is impossible to sustain public support for long and grinding wars of occupation. Once it becomes clear that we face a lengthy and messy struggle, the American people quite properly begin to ask why we are pouring billions of dollars and thousands of lives into some strategic backwater. And they are right.

So my last lesson is that we shouldn't spend too much time trying to figure out how to do this sort of thing better, because we're never going to do it well and it will rarely be vital to our overall security. Instead, we ought to work harder on developing an approach to the world that minimizes the risk of getting ourselves into this kind of war again.

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coauthor J.J. Mearsheimer, *The Israel Lobby* (2007).

Article 4.

Council on Foreign Relations

## **Surprising Arab Views of the “Turkish Model”**

Robert M. Danin

March 21, 2012 -- A recent poll conducted by YouGov asked respondents across the Arab world what type of political system would be best suited for Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya—countries where the governments had been overthrown during the Arab uprisings. The results are startling.

Some three-fourths of the Arab respondents reportedly believe the Turkish political system would be “a right model” for the “new Arab states” to emulate. The “Saudi model” barely polled in the double digits, though it is still ahead of the U.S. model.

The pollsters did not define their terms, so it is not clear what exactly people believe they are supporting when they refer to the Turkish model. The best insight into that comes with the respondents’ explanations for their preferences. The three top reasons cited were: 1) cultural affiliation: respondents cited Turkey as very close to the Arab world in terms of culture, religion, and traditions; 2) international respect: those who favored the Turkish model argued that its political system has earned the Eurasian republic international respect; and 3) the

role of religion, suggesting that the Turkish model involves Islam in politics. Somewhat surprisingly, less than a quarter of Turkey's Arab fans cited its democracy as reason for wanting its system to be adopted in the Arab world. Interestingly, even though the majority of those polled cited cultural affinities between Arabs and Turks, very few saw similarities between the Ankara regime and most Arab regimes. That is, the Arab respondents saw a suitability of the Turkish model, even though they see it as rather different from the regimes in the Arab world. That does not indicate a very high degree of satisfaction with the available models in the Arab world.

What can we conclude from these findings? First, the poll suggests that time has indeed moved on in the Arab world. A century after the hostile breakup of the Ottoman order, the Arab world has apparently shed its longstanding grudge against its former occupier. Attitudes have evolved. The Arab nationalism that led the backlash against Ottoman rule has run its course. Second, the findings rebut determinist views of the Arab world as forever destined to harbor certain resentments. Attitudes can and do change over time in the Arab world, as they do elsewhere. The success of attractiveness, and the attractiveness of success, both seem to be at play when it comes to Arab attitudes toward Turkey. Third, and as the Arab uprisings have suggested, many Arab peoples do not, generally speaking, see attractive models of governance within their midst. That Arabs are more attracted to the so-called Turkish model reflects displeasure with existing Arab forms of government. It should serve as a sobering wake-up call to today's Arab rulers, if any such call is needed more than one year since the outbreak of the region-wide Arab uprisings.

To be sure, this is but one poll, and over-extrapolation is dangerous. Yet it is noteworthy that with the turmoil sweeping the Arab world now in its second year, Arabs are looking outward, not just inward, for ideas and role models, contrary to what so many commentators about the region have been suggesting.

*Robert M. Danin* *Eni Enrico Mattei Senior Fellow for Middle East and Africa Studies.*

Article 5.

Council on Foreign Relations

## **Can China Change?**

Interview with Minxin Pei

March 21, 2012 -- *China is facing fresh international demands to loosen its grip over its economy, highlighted by a recent World Bank report calling into question the country's growth model. At the same time, China is in the midst of a once-a-decade Communist Party leadership transition that has fueled domestic pressure for political reforms. For China to maintain its current growth trajectory, it must "revive economic reform and start political change," says Minxin Pei, a China expert at Claremont McKenna College. But, he adds, there is currently a rift within the party, as the recent sacking of Chinese leader Bo*

*Xilai demonstrates. "The rift is over power, not necessarily over ideology," he explains. "From the party's point of view, they want unity." It is therefore difficult to predict whether the party will implement significant reforms when new leaders come to power, Pei argues.*

**The World Bank came out with a new report in conjunction with China's Development Research Center, calling China's current economic model unsustainable. How significant is this report, and what are the main takeaways?**

That report is a very significant argument. It's a very careful analysis of the challenges China faces ahead in sustaining its economy and avoiding the so-called middle-income trap. The main takeaway is that China's fundamentals are strong, but these fundamentals alone cannot take China to the next level. China will have to implement a set of very tough structural [and] institutional reforms. What is new about the World Bank's report is that it has lent its own political authority [and] technical expertise to this point of view. And the fact that its partner is a research center of the State Council, that the report reflects the views of quite a few people inside the Chinese bureaucracy, [is significant].

**What are some of those structural and institutional reforms that need to be made?**

The state has to progressively withdraw from the economy because the state sector remains too strong, draining too many resources in China, and it distorts the market. Another [piece

of] advice is that China will need to increase its investment in social services--practically double its current social standing in order to strengthen its human capital stock and improve the environment. And China needs to encourage innovation. China also has to invest in new technology--special green technology--to reduce the pressure on the environment. [The World Bank] also asked the Chinese government to reform its public finance sector, because right now the public finance sector is too heavily skewed toward the central government.

**Within the Chinese leadership, what is the appetite for reforms, both economic and political?**

Nobody knows. It is a very sensitive period in China, and typically on the eve of transition, leaders would like to keep their cards close to their chest. They don't want people to know what they are really up to, because if they are going to implement some of those reforms, the interest groups who will be hurt by these reforms will be opposed. So leaders are understandably very cagey about their intentions.

The rhetoric is definitely heating up, the rhetoric about reform. I've not seen something like this for a long, long time. The urgency attached to reform is much stronger. Leaders talk more about reform, the press talks more about reform, even the intelligentsia--China's punditry--talks more about reform. So the intellectual pressure and the media pressure are building. But the official response so far is rather muted, other than rhetoric.

**The Chinese Communist Party leadership last week fired rising star Bo Xilai, the party chief of Chongqing. How was this move significant?**

It shows there is a rift within the party. And the rift is over power, not necessarily over ideology, even though the guy may be a leftist. From the party's point of view, they want unity, they want stability. In their eyes, someone like Bo can undermine unity and stability. That's why they decided to get rid of him. But whether getting rid of him will bring in somebody who can change direction in the party, nobody knows.

**Outgoing Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao recently called for structural political reforms to eliminate the remaining excesses of Mao's Cultural Revolution. How do you read his comments?**

The premier, in terms of rhetoric, did not depart from what he has been saying all along. What is notable is whether the premier is saying this all by himself, or his senior colleagues were saying the same thing. And this time, he was saying it all by himself. His other colleagues did not follow him. And that shows that, probably, he is not expressing the collective voice of the Communist party. That means that, probably, you're not going to see real reform in the short term.

**In terms of U.S.-China relations, what do both sides need to do to resolve some of their bilateral tensions and disputes, including those over currency and trade issues?**

Currency and trade issues are easy to resolve because these are business decisions. If you look at the numbers today, they are better than they used to be, so the market forces do have a role to play. If China continues with an economic policy [that] hurts its growth, employment, efficiency, economic well-

being, that policy will be changed. I'm much more worried about strategic conflict, security conflict. Because that's about fear; that's about distrust; that's about status--much more difficult to resolve than issues of price.

**What are the major strategic issues?**

China's military modernization, America's deployment in East Asia, the U.S. pivot toward East Asia--all of these things.

**What do you see as challenging the relationship most in the coming years?**

One is this relative decline of the United States--that the gap between the U.S. and China continues to shrink. That can create overconfidence on the part of China, and insecurity on the part of the U.S., and that's a very dangerous dynamic. The other is the intensifying ideological conflict--that China represents a one-party state capitalist model; the U.S. represents a liberal, democratic model. The ideological conflict between these two models can cloud the relationship and makes it very difficult for the leaders on both sides to trust each other.

**Looking forward, what does China need to do to maintain a strong trajectory and remain an important world power?**

China is so far not a dominant power. It's a rising power; it's very influential in the world. The U.S. is the dominant power, the only dominant power, across a wide range of areas. What China needs to do in order to maintain its current trajectory is to revive economic reform and start political change. Because if China doesn't do anything, if it simply coasts along, as the

World Bank report has warned, China's growth is not sustainable. That means the current political system will not be sustainable. There will be no social stability in China either. For China, reviving reform, not just economic, but also political, is its most urgent task.

*Minxin Pei, Director, Keck Center for International and Strategic Studies, Claremont McKenna College.*

Article 6.

The National Interest

## **The World America Didn't Make**

Amitai Etzioni

March 21, 2012 -- Robert Kagan's book, The World America Made [3], is refocusing the debate on whether the United States is declining as a global power—and speculation about whether other powers will step in to assume the responsibility for sustaining a liberal, rule-based international order. Kagan is known as a brilliant conservative observer, and even President Obama is reported to be reading this tour de force of U.S. foreign policy.

Most of the debate about the book is centered on the question of whether the United States is indeed declining and if China is ready to buy into the liberal order. But more attention

should be dedicated to the question of whether there is such an order in the first place.

Much of the discussion simply assumes that there is a liberal order and that the United States formed it and is nurturing it. Actually, this view reflects a rather romantic, self-congratulatory perception of our foreign policy and global role. It is one more sign of what might be called a Multiple Realism Deficiency Disorder (MRDD), which reflects a mixture of idealism and hubris. The disorder makes us think that we know what is good for the world and can remake it in our image. But a simple reality check shows that we live in a much darker world—a world we have never been able to align with our designs.

One of the major elements of the liberal order is said to be the spread of democracy and human rights. Indeed, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it did seem—for a few years—as if all nations were rushing to embrace our kind of government. Recently, the Arab Spring seemed to provide new evidence that this was truly where the world is heading.

The reality is not as bright. China has become more authoritarian, when one compares the last five years to the previous five. Russia's regime is definitely sliding back. The record in Latin America is rather mixed. Most Arab states remain authoritarian. And for every Burma, an authoritarian regime giving way to more open government, there is a Venezuela, Cuba, North Korea and Iran. Even the democratic ideal itself is tarnished; the governments of Europe and the United States are seen by many in the Third World as gridlocked while China is heralded as a new model for strong

economic growth, effective political management and stability.

Free trade is another key element of the liberal order. I leave it for another day to ask whether less managed trade (nobody ever had or came close to having free trade) has all the virtues claimed for it by those who write economics textbooks. It suffices to note that in the world in which we live, China is manipulating its currency, is still allowing many violations of intellectual property and imposing numerous limits on those who seek to do business in China. The United States used public funds to bail out the car industry and banks, subsidizes the exporting farm sector and provides tax incentives to corporations that bring jobs home from overseas. All the other governments are engaged in one form or another (actually, in multiple forms) of trade management. A realistic narrative would ask under what conditions these trade limitations could be curtailed rather than pretending treaties such as those Washington just formed with South Korea, Colombia and Panama create “free-trade” zones.

Even such a simple matter as free passage on the high seas, which is a particular matter of pride to the United States, is not as simple as is often assumed. Most seas are wide open—because few nations see any benefit or reason to close their shipping lanes or confront other nations’ vessels. In March 2010, however, North Korea sank a South Korean ship, killing forty-six crew members. Later that same year, North Korea fired on South Korea’s Yeonpyeong Island. In the wake of this attack, which hit both military and civilian targets and killed four South Koreans, Admiral Michael Mullen, then chairman of the Joint Chiefs, counseled moderation. This was wise counsel but one that hardly bespoke of a global power, let

alone a hegemony of the seas. Indeed, when confronted with a bunch of barefooted youth—traveling in primitive skiffs and armed with a few guns and grenade launchers—who terrorize the ships of many nations, kidnap scores upon scores of travelers and hold them for ransom for years, our navy has been unable to stop the marauders. Our warships are said to be ready for attacks by swarms of speed boats belonging to Iran’s Revolutionary Guards, as well as Iranian anti-ship missiles (which disabled a major Israeli ship during Israel’s last incursion into Lebanon), but this bravado remains to be tested.

Before thinkers like Kagan can ask who the custodian for the global liberal order is, who is challenging it and who may next be ready to shore it up, they must develop a much more realistic perception of what the world is really like—and accept our limited ability to order it. Without this realism, the United States will continue to squander the limited capital for change that it does command.

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Article 7.

The Moscow Times

## **Why Putin Has Begun Abandoning**

# Assad

Alexander Shumilin

22 March 2012 -- Here's an interesting bit of news: According to information attributed to WikiLeaks and published in Britain's Guardian newspaper, Syrian President Bashar Assad wrote to his wife that he is not serious about his promised democratic reforms, has consulted with Iran about ways to put down the protests and prefers the shedding of blood to other options.

Of course, much of this was already known through previous leaks. But what is important is that, had the news been reported back in, say, mid-February, the Russian state-controlled media would have branded it as a bunch of lies.

Now, after Vladimir Putin's "triumph" in the March 4 presidential election, the Foreign Ministry and media have done an about-face. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov is saying Assad "has been slow with reforms." His ministry says it is "not defending Assad at all" and is actually trying to give all Syrians equal opportunities to reform the political situation in the country.

I take some pride in saying this is exactly what I had predicted would happen. I believed that after March 4, the Foreign Ministry would suddenly "discover" so many problems with Assad that a change in Moscow's policy on Syria would inevitably follow.

Prior to Russia's presidential election, everything was just

the opposite. Moscow claimed that Assad was besieged by rogue terrorists who refused to participate in the reform process that the Syrian president had proposed. In every one of his anti-Western and anti-U.S. proclamations, Putin effectively said: "We'll stand by our friend, Assad."

The implication was that Moscow must first defend Assad and later Russia itself from color revolutions sponsored by foreign states like the United States. In other words, the authorities used every trick they could think of to mobilize Putin's electorate, even at the risk of isolating Russia from the Arab world.

I recently attended an IFRI conference in Paris that was ostensibly dedicated to the Arab Spring movement but that also addressed events in Russia. In the eyes of European analysts, the two "springs" are increasingly merging into a single powerful protest movement against entrenched leaders who have seized power through fraudulent elections. European analysts view events in the Arab world and in Russia as a single phenomenon stemming from similar causes — no matter how much Moscow tried to convince them otherwise at its latest Valdai Club meeting in Sochi attended by Russian and foreign political analysts. Of course, there are some differences, but they are only superficial: Russian protesters had to battle the cold in addition to the authorities and there has been no shooting on the streets of Russian cities — although the riot police turned out in greater force in Moscow than did the police in Cairo and Tunisia. However, the Russian police have employed excessive force against peaceful demonstrators, so it all evens out. For that matter, police did not fire on protesters in Bahrain, Tunisia or Egypt — where it

has yet to be conclusively proven that the army brought arms to bear against demonstrators. It is also worth noting that demonstrations in the Arab world have not always led to regime change. The leadership of Bahrain remains firmly entrenched, and protests in Yemen only prompted a "castling move" in which the president switched jobs with his deputy. So the simple fact that Putin remains in power does not exclude his regime from the list of autocracies shaken by large-scale protests. After long hours in discussions with my European colleagues, I realized that after a year of turmoil in the Arab countries, Europe is beginning to resign itself to the changes there and is establishing contacts with the new ruling elites. They are not in the least panicky about it either. They understand that moderate Islamists coming to power — as compared to seizing power — does not necessarily mean those governments will undergo a radical change in behavior. The main thing is that none of those countries plans to set up an Iranian-style Islamic republic in which the clerics hold a monopoly on power. On the contrary, they are creating and developing the mechanisms of Western-style democracy — at least for now. In fact, representatives of those moderate Islamist powers, such as the Ennahda Movement in Tunisia, took part in the conference in Europe. It is in their interest to dispel potential European fears regarding the nature of their movements' goals and methods. Thus, Europeans have adapted to and are even welcoming the changes taking place in countries affected by the Arab Spring. It is quite another matter concerning the "Russian Spring" — or more specifically, Putin's increasingly militaristic rhetoric about the threat from Europe and the United States. This, combined with the mechanics of the recent presidential election, is even

more alarming to Europeans than the Arab Spring. Europeans are seriously concerned that Putin's victory could signal the continent's return to the Cold War, a new split with Russia and a strengthening of the real threat that Russia poses to Western civilization.

Putin, Lavrov and Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin will have their work cut out for them if they want to allay those European fears. It is no coincidence that U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton took satisfaction in announcing on March 14 that the Russian and U.S. positions on Syria have moved considerably closer.

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