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2 April, 2012

Article 1.	Foreign Policy <u>The Muslim Brotherhood's Presidential Gambit</u> Marc Lynch
Article 2.	The Daily-News Egypt <u>Al-Shater nomination seen to only benefit candidates of old regime</u> Mai Shams El-Din
Article 3.	The Washington Post <u>Why America should stop funding Egyptian regime</u> Jackson Diehl
Article 4.	NYT <u>Ghosts of Iraq Haunting C.I.A. in Tackling Iran</u> James Risen
Article 5.	Los Angeles Times <u>A nuclear Iran is too much to risk</u> Alan J. Kuperman
Article 6.	The Wall Street Journal <u>Obama and the Eisenhower Standard</u> Fouad Ajami
Article 7.	The Washington Post <u>Book review: 'The Crisis of Zionism,' by Peter Beinart</u> Alana Newhouse

Article 1.

Foreign Policy

[The Muslim Brotherhood's Presidential Gambit](#)

[Marc Lynch](#)

April 2, 2012 -- The Muslim Brotherhood resolved months of speculation this weekend by announcing its [intention of nominating](#) Deputy Supreme Guide Khairat al-Shater for Egypt's Presidential election. It may not seem so surprising for a country's largest political force and the largest Parliamentary faction to field a Presidential candidate. But it was. The announcement sent an earthquake through Cairo's already wildly careening political scene. ■■■ happy to admit that I was taken by surprise. What was the Brotherhood thinking? The nomination of Shater seems to have been a response to threats and opportunities in a rapidly changing political arena, rather than the hatching of a long-term plan. But many Egyptians would disagree, seeing it instead as the culmination of a long-hatching conspiracy with the SCAF. I think it will reveal itself to be a strategic blunder which has placed the Brotherhood in a no-win situation. But clearly they had their reasons for making such an uncharacteristically bold move. How will it affect the endlessly turbulent and contentious Egyptian political transition? And could Khairat al-Shater really replace Hosni Mubarak as the President of Egypt? I've been studying Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood for many years, and have interviewed most of its senior leaders (including Shater) multiple times. And I'll admit that I was surprised. So were most other MB-watchers I follow. That's in large part because it contradicts what I had heard for months from Brotherhood leaders in private and in public, and has dubious political logic. What's more, the decision appears to have been controversial inside the Brotherhood's leadership, and seems to have taken even many of its own top people by surprise. There are at least three reasons to consider the Brotherhood's move surprising, despite the obvious temptation that any political party would have to seek the top political position which it believes it can win: its promises to not field a candidate; the strategic risks of seeking the Presidency; and the stakes of nominating Shater himself. First, the Muslim Brotherhood had promised for months to not field a Presidential candidate. They left little room for ambiguity in their promises. Indeed, it held this position so strongly that senior reformist leader Abd al-Moneim Abou el-Futouh had broken bitterly with his organization over his determination to run, and the Brotherhood leadership had in turn threatened to expel any members who worked on his campaign. This was not a minor, off-handed promise --- it had been a central, often-repeated feature of the Brotherhood's political message for

many months. The Brotherhood-bashing over this reversal may have been a bit over the top ("Boo hoo. Call the wahmbulance. Politics ain't beanbag", [quipped FP's house cynic](#) in response to the finger-pointing). But putting forward a candidate didn't simply break a frequently repeated public promise. It also fit a broader narrative (justified or not) about the Brotherhood's steadily creeping ambitions and broken vows. Many of these complaints were themselves exaggerated, particularly over the Brotherhood's alleged conspiracies with the SCAF and over-performance in the Parliamentary elections. But the accusations took on a new intensity this month as a [wave of liberals and independents quit](#) the Constitutional Assembly in protest over perceived Islamist domination. The second reason for surprise was that the move carries significant political risks for little obvious advantage. The Brotherhood has long worried about the perception that it seeks to dominate Egyptian politics and sought to avoid triggering the crystallization of an anti-Islamist front. Most analysts expected the Brotherhood to practice self-restraint in order to avoid provoking these fears, and this was generally the message which Brotherhood leaders attempted to signal. But there's no question that the Brotherhood [has become increasingly assertive](#) as it has established its power in the transitional environment, and less willing to back away from confrontation or back away from its own preferences.

Advancing a candidate, while in line with this newly found willingness to flex its muscles, nevertheless creates a no-win situation for the Brotherhood. Backing an acceptable but non-Brotherhood Presidential candidate would have protected their core interests without triggering fear in others. If a Brotherhood candidate wins, then the movement would control the Parliament, the Constitutional Assembly, and the Presidency. It would therefore stand alone in the face of the military, and would bear full responsibility for whatever happened in Egypt's economy, politics and society in the coming period. If it loses the election, then it would conclusively shatter its own carefully cultivated air of invincibility. And victory is not certain. I've been genuinely impressed with Shater's forceful presence, confidence, and intellect when I've interviewed him. In person, he is charismatic and impressive, calm and careful but capable of dominating a discussion. But Shater is not a charismatic front-man likely to enthrall the mass Egyptian public on television or in public speeches. He

might find it tough going to unite an Islamist Presidential field already divided, at least for now, between Abou el-Fotouh, [the surprisingly omnipresent](#) Hazem Salah Abou Ismail, and Mohammed Salim al-Awwa. In contrast to the Parliamentary elections, Muslim Brotherhood members alone would not likely be enough to carry the day in a high-turnout Presidential election -- and Shater has not proven an ability to appeal beyond the organization he dominates. Finally, his presence in the race could well galvanize the non-Islamist vote to rally behind a consensus candidate such as Amr Moussa. The third reason for surprise was the candidate himself. If the Brotherhood needed to field a candidate, then it could have turned to one of its well-known political leaders. Choosing Khairat el-Shater raises the stakes considerably. Shater is the Deputy Supreme Guide, and in the view of most MB-watchers the real power behind the throne. Either his victory or his defeat would have more serious potential negative repercussions for the Brotherhood as a whole than if a less central figure had been offered up as a candidate. There can be no doubting that with Shater, the Brotherhood has gone all-in for victory. And that in turn puts the organization's reputation very much on the line, win or lose. So why did the Brotherhood do it? There are two, diametrically opposed arguments circulating --- each, of course, firmly held as the obvious truth by its proponents. The first is that Brotherhood's hand had been forced by the SCAF's mismanagement of the political process and alleged targeting of the Brotherhood. Some Islamist leaders seemed to share [overheated fears of an approaching "1954 moment"](#) in which the army again cracked down on Islamists and reasserted authoritarian rule. While expected, the Brotherhood's attempts to use its Parliamentary power to rein in the SCAF and the SCAF's counter-moves to block Parliamentary action were, by this reading, pushing Egypt towards a political showdown. The MB has turned sharply against the Ganzoury government in recent weeks, after initially cooperating with it. Shater's nomination is therefore in this scenario a response to threat, the next step in an escalating conflict between the Brotherhood and the SCAF.

A second popular argument, held by many of the Brotherhood's critics, is precisely the opposite: that Shater's nomination represents the culmination of the long-standing collusion between the Brotherhood and the SCAF. In this reading, Shater's assuming the Presidency will complete a bargain by

which the former will be handed political power in exchange for guarantees of the latter's core interests. The public spats are dismissed as political theater designed to camouflauge the conspiracy. But in this reading, the fix is in and the Brotherhood is set on seizing the opportunity. The reality is likely some combination of threat and opportunity, as the Brotherhood seeks to navigate Egypt's turbulent politics. They may have preferred to find a candidate to support from outside the organization, but couldn't find a suitable one among the contenders. Perhaps they feared what the leading alternatives might do with regime power: Moussa perhaps rallying anti-Islamist forces and rolling back their gains, Abu Ismail capturing Islamist sympathies and votes and shunting the Brotherhood to the sidelines. They may have realized that they were at the peak of their power right now, with Parliament under their control and other parties in disarray, and may never get another shot at the Presidency. Or maybe it's all of the above, and more.

The next two months are going to be a wild period for Egyptian politics which will make or break its deeply troubled but still -- just barely -- viable transition. The Constitution is supposedly to be drafted, the President elected, and power transferred from the SCAF to a civilian government within this short time frame. Meanwhile, the economy continues to badly struggle, frustrated activists continue to protest, and relations with the U.S. are badly strained. Shater's entry into the Presidential race just introduces one more wild card into this loaded deck. At least Egyptian politics won't be boring.

Marc Lynch is associate professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington University.

Article 2.

The Daily-News Egypt

Al-Shater nomination seen to only benefit candidates of old regime

Mai Shams El-Din

April 1, 2012 -- CAIRO: The surprising nomination of Deputy Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood Khairat Al-Shater for the presidential elections will only be in favor of candidates affiliated with the former regime as it will split the Islamist vote, analysts concluded.

"Candidates belonging to the former regime are the ones who are benefiting the most from Al-Shater's nomination, because simply it will split the vote of the Islamist candidates who are willing to confront the old regime remnants," researcher in Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies Nabil Abdel Fattah told Daily News Egypt Sunday. In a press conference aired live on Saturday, Supreme Guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, Mohamed Badie, said that the group had to change its previous decision of not contesting the presidential race due to drastic changes in the political scene.

"We have witnessed obstacles standing in the way of parliament to take decisions to achieve the demands of the revolution," said Mohamed Morsy, head of the Freedom and Justice Party.

"We have therefore chosen the path of the presidency not because we are greedy for power but because we have a majority in parliament which is unable to fulfill its duties in parliament," he said announcing the decision to put Al-Shater's name forward.

Badie read a statement by Al-Shater declaring his resignation from his post as deputy supreme guide to run for presidency.

"After it was decided to field my name in the presidential elections, I can only accept the decision of the Brotherhood. I will therefore resign from my position as deputy chairman," Al-Shater's statement said.

"There is a real threat to the revolution and to the democratic process," the Brotherhood's Secretary General Mahmoud Hussein said during the conference explaining the reasons that led to the U-turn in the group's decisions.

The group that dominates a majority in the parliament decided earlier to sack its veteran member Abdel Moneim Abol Fotoh when he decided to run for the top post, fiercely opposing his presidency and threatening its members of a similar fate if they decided to back him.

In addition to Abol Fotoh, Salafi candidate Hazem Salah Abou Ismail enjoys wide popularity among the ultraconservative community. Due to

numerous statements critical of the ruling military council, both are described by supporters as revolutionary figure.

With Al-Shater in the race, both candidates are expected to lose votes from Egypt's Islamist constituency.

"Al-Shater's nomination will harm Abou Ismail more than Abol Fotoh," Abdel Fattah said.

The target voters of Abol Fotoh, the analyst explained, are not from the same category as Al-Shater's.

"Abol Fotoh targets youth and those who adopt a moderate thinking of Islam, while the target of Abou Ismail is very similar to those of Al-Shater," he said.

Abdel Fattah believes that the Salafi community, main target voters of both Abou Ismail and Al-Shater, will be split between both of them.

"We have to put in mind that 52 in the MB Shoura Council voted against the decision to nominate El-Shater, those votes will definitely go to Abol Fotoh," Abdel Fattah added. Fifty-six members of the decision-making council of the group voted for Al-Shater.

Professor of political science at the American University in Cairo (AUC) Rabab El-Mahdy agreed with Abdel Fattah, but said that Abol Fotoh and Abou Ismail will be equally harmed.

"In the parliamentary elections, 70 percent of the total voters simply voted for Islamists to counter the remnants of the old regime. Now after Al-Shater is nominated, this bloc will split to the three strong Islamists, leaving more space for the remnants to win," explained El-Mahdy, who also works with Abol Fotoh's campaign.

"Both Abol Fotoh and Abou Ismail will be affected. The Salafi Al-Nour Party and most of the Salafi Sheikhs will go for Al-Shater, and some of the MB members who intended to vote for Abol Fotoh will go for Al-Shater," El-Mahdy added.

The ultraconservative Al-Nour Party is yet to announce its candidate of choice.

Researcher of Islamic movements Abdel-Reheem Ali told DNE that Al-Shater's nomination will only affect the Islamist vote as liberals, leftists, and the revolutionary youth will never vote for him.

"Al-Shater's candidacy will not just split the votes for the sake of the candidates affiliated with the former regime, but it will encourage those

who voted for the Islamists in the parliamentary elections not to do the same in the presidential race," he explained.

The decision to nominate Al-Shater despite earlier pledges not to has put the credibility of Islamists in general on the brink, and this will fuel reluctance to vote for Islamists, Ali added.

"Islamists now will be seen in general as not fulfilling their promises, failing to achieve the demands of the revolution inside the parliament, which will be in favor for the old regime-affiliated candidates," he said.

Al-Shater's nomination: confrontation or a deal?

The general consensus, which also relied on previous Brotherhood statements, was that the group was reluctant to shield all political responsibility at this critical stage. Many relied on this theory to prove that the Brotherhood won't contest the presidential race. Generally conservative in its politics, the group was also seen as treading a fine line of diplomacy with the ruling generals. An alleged power-sharing deal has been repeatedly denied by both sides.

The recent development, which came a week after the group started an exchange of critical statements with the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, accusing it of backing the "failing" Cabinet of Ministers and a jab at the revolution, left analysts confused between two theories.

Some saw Al-Shater's nomination as a clear confirmation of a deal between MB and the SCAF to weaken the chances of the two outspoken Islamist candidates in favor of the candidates affiliated with the ousted regime, which would better serve SCAF's interests.

Others saw the nomination as an escalation in the confrontation with SCAF, challenging the generals' plans to dominate the scene after officially ceding power.

"This is not only a breach of their promise, but deliberate defiance of the SCAF," a Western diplomat told Reuters, adding the U-turn suggested the group was worried others could disrupt its rise to power.

"The Brotherhood is so close to power they can smell it, but they are so scared that someone else will snatch it from them," the diplomat said.

The Brotherhood and its political arm, the Freedom and Justice Party, have become increasingly critical of the army-appointed Cabinet, led by Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzoury. The group wants to form a new government under its leadership, citing the FJP's majority in parliament. The SCAF on

the other hand rejected these attempts, citing powers granted by the constitutional decree it wrote to appoint and sack the ministers.

"The truth is that they are proving each day that power is their only goal," Ahmed Said, head of the liberal Free Egyptians Party, told CBC TV, saying the Brotherhood appeared to have taken the decision when it found "that it can't control the government."

"Al-Shater is the real power center and he is struggling to expand the group's powers within Egypt's system and institutions against the generals' will," expert on Islamist movements Khalil El-Anani told AP.

"The heart of the conflict is the new political arrangement, the power sharing scheme and what share the Muslim Brotherhood would have," El-Anani said. "The Al-Shater card will complicate the game and push the relationship with the ruling military council to risky ends."

The legal stance of Al-Shater further complicates the situation. He received two different prison sentences by a military court under ousted president Hosni Mubarak. One of which was in 1995 from which he was officially pardoned by SCAF.

He was pardoned by SCAF for the 1995 conviction. The latest ruling, which was handed down in 2006, is still on his record. While he was released for health reasons last year after the uprising that ousted Mubarak, Al-Shater was yet to receive another pardon by SCAF before his Saturday nomination. The Brotherhood lawyer said Sunday that Al-Shater had indeed received the second pardon.

"His nomination is definitely a declaration of a fiery political war against the SCAF, as the MB will be depicted as attempting to manipulate all the state branches and the process of drafting the constitution," Abdel Fattah explained.

"The keys of the game are now only in the hands of the ruling military council," he added.

Ali, on the other hand, said that the deal scenario was not realistic; adding that presidency for the MB now is their last resort if the parliament is dissolved.

The High Administrative Court referred to the Supreme Constitutional Court a recommendation to deem the candidacy of a third of the parliament members as unconstitutional as this third was initially allocated for the individual seats to be contested only by independents.

Members affiliated with political parties contested these seats, and the third became mostly dominated by Islamists as well.

The same court will also issue another verdict against the formation of the Islamist-dominated constituent assembly to draft the constitution, as 50 percent of the panel is chosen from inside the parliament, which critics regard as contradicting to the constitutional declaration.

"What if the parliament is dissolved and constituent assembly was deemed unconstitutional? What's left for the MB then? They have to run for presidency to make sure they still have their grip on the power," Ali theorized.

"The MB is aiming for the worst case scenario. They cannot even form a deal with another candidate from outside the group, because this candidate may break the deal once he wins the top post," Ali added.

Article 3.

The Washington Post

Why America should stop funding Egyptian regime

[Jackson Diehl](#)

April 2 -- Democrats as well as Republicans in Congress [protested](#) when the Obama administration announced that it was handing the Egyptian military the full \$1.3 billion of its annual U.S. aid despite its blatant violations of human rights. Organizations such as [Freedom House argued](#) that the United States was breaking faith with the Americans and Egyptians facing criminal trial in Cairo this month for promoting democracy.

But I doubt that staffers at the State Department and National Security Council heard a more scalding indictment of [their decision](#) than that delivered last week by a 26-year-old Egyptian blogger named Maikel Nabil Sanad. "[The statement](#)" announcing the decision "was a series of lies," Nabil told them, and repeated to me. "It was a way of accepting the blackmailing of the Egyptian military, by trying to say the relationship is good, when relations are going in the wrong direction and Egypt is going in the wrong direction."

Who is this skinny guy, with his thick shock of swept-back hair, and what makes him think he can lecture American policymakers so impertinently? Well, Nabil earned his Washington meetings the hard way: by spending 302 days in prison during the past year. He had the distinction of being the [first person jailed](#) on political charges after the downfall of Hosni Mubarak supposedly put an end to dictatorship in Egypt.

Nabil turned out to be right about where the Egyptian generals were headed. In March of last year, just weeks after the revolution, the activist posted an [essay](#) on his [blog](#) contending that, contrary to the slogan shouted in Cairo's Tahrir Square during the revolution, "the Army and the people were never one hand." In deposing Mubarak, Nabil argued, the military was merely protecting its own interests — and seeking to preserve its preeminent position of power in Egypt.

For writing this, Nabil was arrested, hauled before a special military court and summarily sentenced to three years in prison, for "insulting the armed forces." At first, few Egyptians supported him: Like the Obama administration, they believed that the Supreme Military Council that replaced Mubarak was committed to establishing a democracy and yielding to civilians.

Moreover, Nabil was an outlier, even among Egypt's secular democrats. He is not just of Coptic Christian origin but an avowed atheist; not just anti-military, but a conscientious objector who refused to serve; not just pro-Western, but [pro-Israel](#) — a stance than almost no one in Egypt dares to espouse.

"There are still 20 beliefs in Egypt that are considered crimes," Nabil told me. When I asked how many of them he held, he grinned: "Probably the majority of them."

Yet over the course of his imprisonment last year — as the military staged thousands more summary trials, censored the press, tolerated the sacking of the Israeli embassy, opened fire on a peaceful march by Christians, and finally raided and shut down pro-democracy nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) — "people realized that I was right," Nabil said.

"Lots of people moved to my side and started to support me. I turned into a hero — and the military hated to see their opponent turned into a hero." In January, after 130 days of a hunger strike, [Nabil was released](#).

Now he is [trying to explain to Americans](#) why it is wrong to continue funding the generals. Start, he says, with the first sentence of the State Department's explanation, that Egypt "is meeting its obligations under its peace treaty with Israel." Actually, Nabil points out, the military is systematically whipping up hostility to Israel inside Egypt and using the treaty to "blackmail both Egyptians and U.S. taxpayers" by hinting that the loss of aid — or a democratic government's control of the military — will mean its rupture.

What about the "strategic partnership" that State says it wants to preserve with Egypt? "Another lie," says Nabil: How can a military council that is lacing state media with vile [anti-American propaganda](#) and [prosecuting U.S. NGOs](#) be a strategic partner?

Most dangerous, says Nabil, is the administration's conviction that Egypt is headed toward democracy. In fact, he says, "the same dictatorship of the last 60 years is still in power." Even if the generals hand over titular authority in July to an elected president, as promised, "they will continue to be the most powerful force in Egypt. They control 40 percent of the economy. They have about one-third of the budget. They control the media and the judiciary. They have five intelligence agencies."

U.S. aid — especially when granted unconditionally — simply reinforces the military's position and encourages [the persecution of genuine pro-American liberals such as](#) Nabil. His [REDACTED]. escorts said that the officials he met didn't say much in answer to him. Perhaps they were ashamed.

Article 4.

NYT

Ghosts of Iraq Haunting C.I.A. in Tackling Iran

[James Risen](#)

March 31, 2012 — At the nation's top spy agency, the ghosts of [Iraq](#) are never far away.

One [C.I.A.](#) analyst who had helped develop some of the intelligence about Saddam Hussein's supposed weapons of mass destruction had a breakdown months after the Iraq war began; he had participated in the post-invasion hunt there that found the weapons did not exist. When he eventually was given a new assignment assessing [Iran's nuclear program](#), he confided a fear to colleagues: that the intelligence community might get it wrong again.

"He felt enormous guilt that he had gotten us into the war," said one former official who worked with the analyst. "He was afraid it was going to be déjà vu all over again."

Today, analysts and others at the C.I.A. who are struggling to understand the nuclear ambitions of [Iran](#) are keenly aware that the agency's credibility is again on the line, amid threats of new military interventions. The intelligence debacle on Iraq has deeply influenced the way they do their work, with new safeguards intended to force analysts to be more skeptical in evaluating evidence and more cautious in drawing conclusions.

Former intelligence officials say that this shows appropriate vigilance in dealing with often murky information, while some detractors argue that the agency is not just careful but also overly skittish on Iran, reluctant to be blamed for any findings that might lead the United States to bloodshed.

"For a lot of people in the intelligence community, there is a feeling that they don't want to repeat the same mistake," said Greg Thielmann, a former State Department intelligence analyst who resigned to protest what he considered the Bush administration's politicization of the prewar Iraq intelligence. "The intelligence community as a whole has better practices now partly because of the scar tissue they still have from Iraq," added Mr. Thielmann, now a senior fellow at the [Arms Control Association](#) in Washington.

Paul Pillar, a former senior C.I.A. analyst on the Middle East, says he believes that analysts are guided by the facts in making their assessments about Iran, but that they almost certainly have Iraq weighing on them.

"Because intelligence officials are human beings, one cannot rule out the possibility of the tendency to overcompensate for past errors," said Mr. Pillar, now the director of graduate studies at the [Security Studies Program](#) at Georgetown University.

Top intelligence officials have said that analysts believe that Iran has been moving to expand its infrastructure and technological ability to become a nuclear power, but that the Iranian leadership has not made a decision to build an atomic bomb.

Current and former senior American officials acknowledge, though, that there are significant gaps in their knowledge, and that they may not be able to quickly detect any decision to restart Iran's weapons program, which they concluded had been halted in 2003.

After the misjudgments on Iraq, the C.I.A. and other intelligence agencies imposed new checks and balances, including a requirement that analytical work be subjected to "red teaming." That means a group of analysts would challenge the conclusions of their colleagues, looking for weaknesses or errors.

The intelligence community also now requires that analysts be told much more about the sources of the information they receive from the United States' human and technological spies. Analysts were left in the dark on such basic issues in the past, which helps explain why bogus information from fabricators was included in some prewar intelligence reports on Iraq. And, when they write their reports, they must include better attribution and sourcing for each major assertion.

"I think the Iraq experience gave them thicker skins," said one former senior intelligence official, who like several others quoted in this article would speak only on the condition of anonymity about internal agency matters. "There was a lot of work done to tighten up the tradecraft."

Unlike the prelude to the Iraq war, when many critics accused Bush White House officials of cherry-picking the intelligence to conform to their policy, some outside analysts say they do not see evidence of the Obama administration pushing intelligence officials to come up with predetermined answers.

"The intelligence was so heavily politicized on Iraq," said Joseph Cirincione, the president of the [Ploughshares Fund](#), a global security foundation. "The higher up the chain in the government the intelligence reporting went, the more it got massaged, and the doubts and caveats got removed."

But now, he said, "I haven't heard any complaints about the administration pressuring the intelligence community to tilt the intelligence."

He added that while conservative political leaders in the United States and Israel had complained about the intelligence assessments on Iran, such outside criticism did not have the same impact it would coming from the White House.

“It’s one thing to have the prime minister of another country come to town and say time is short, but it’s another thing to have the vice president go to Langley and pressure people,” he said, referring to former Vice President Dick Cheney’s repeated visits to C.I.A. headquarters before the Iraq war. But some conservatives who support more aggressive action to prevent Iran from gaining a nuclear weapon argue that the C.I.A.’s restraint has, in fact, been influenced by political pressure exerted by the Obama administration. President Obama has said he would use military force only as a last resort against Iran, and conservatives argue that the Obama administration does not want the intelligence community to produce any reports suggesting the Iranians are moving swiftly to build a bomb.

“The intelligence analysts I’ve dealt with have always been willing to engage in debates on their conclusions, but there is top-down pressure to make the assessments come out a certain way,” said John R. Bolton, a senior fellow at the [American Enterprise Institute](#) and a former ambassador to the United Nations in the Bush administration.

Memories of Iraq have clouded [the debate on Iran](#) ever since the United States intelligence community first concluded in 2007 that Iran had halted its weapons program four years earlier. In late 2007, Michael McConnell, then the director of national intelligence, took a new [National Intelligence Estimate](#) — the consensus of analysts at the government’s 16 intelligence agencies — to the White House to brief President George W. Bush about the report’s startling new findings.

Officials at the White House, still stung from the criticism on Iraq, quickly realized that they would face a firestorm of protest if they did not make the findings public, according to former administration and intelligence officials. A classified version of the new assessment would go to the Congressional intelligence committees, where lawmakers would see that analysts had reached a sharply different conclusion about Iran than they had two years earlier, when they had concluded that Iran’s weapons program was still under way.

News of the shift would probably leak to the news media, and White House officials feared that the administration would then be accused of suppressing intelligence on Iran, just as it had been criticized for doing on Iraq, according to the former officials. White House officials also worried that they would be accused of tainting the intelligence process, so they pressed Mr. McConnell to have the intelligence community write and issue its own declassified summary. Some senior intelligence officials who rushed to write the document over a weekend objected to disclosing their conclusions, but to no avail. “I was told that I didn’t get it; this wasn’t a request,” one official recalled. Once published, the report created an uproar. Conservative critics blasted C.I.A. officials, saying that the intelligence community was freelancing and trying to influence the political debate, and to make up for its shortcomings on Iraq by now trying to stop a war with Iran. Among them was Mr. Bolton, who dismissed the 2007 assessment as “famously distorted” and called on Congress to investigate its politicization. Stung by those attacks, and the aftershocks of the poisonous political debate over the role of the intelligence community on Iraq and Iran, officials at the C.I.A. and other agencies did not release a public version of the 2010 assessment on the Iranian nuclear program, which concluded that while Iran had conducted some basic weapons-related research, it was not believed to have restarted the actual weapons program halted in 2003.

Thomas Fingar, who was chairman of the [National Intelligence Council](#) at the time of the 2007 assessment on Iran, said that analysts had to be willing to make tough calls based on fragmentary evidence, and not get distracted by what he called the rare instances of political pressure or their own previous lapses. “Learning from past mistakes is imperative,” he said. “Worrying about them is pointless.”

Article 5.

[Los Angeles Times](#)

A nuclear Iran is too much to risk

Alan J. Kuperman

April 1, 2012 -- As calls mount, especially in Israel, for military action against Iran's nuclear program, the main counterargument has been seductively simple: Iran is rational. Indeed, our country's top military official, Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, recently rejected the need for airstrikes because, as he put it, "We are of the opinion that the Iranian regime is a rational actor."

By this logic, we should not risk war to prevent Iran from going nuclear because even if Iran acquired nukes, it would never use them offensively, never share them with terrorists and never utilize them as a shield for regional adventurism. To do so would risk nuclear retaliation, which would be irrational.

Although I disagree with the general's conclusion that we shouldn't take action, I do believe his underlying assumptions are mainly right. The Iranian regime is mostly rational most of the time. Its rhetoric is blustery, but its actions typically are moderated to avoid provoking retaliation. For example, Iran has so far avoided kicking out international inspectors and launching a crash program to build nuclear weapons, the steps most likely to provoke airstrikes. Instead, Iran permits inspectors to verify that it is enriching uranium to a significant degree, in direct contravention of Security Council resolutions, in amounts for which it has no civilian need but that would facilitate a bomb program.

Although this strategy has provoked economic sanctions, it has also permitted Iran to both proceed steadily toward a nuclear weapons capability and avoid military retaliation. According to the latest inspection, Iran is producing enough 20%-enriched uranium each year to fuel its one nuclear research reactor for 15 years, which would make no sense. But that production rate is also sufficient for one bomb per year, if further enriched for just a few weeks, which suggests a perfectly rational strategy.

The problem is that Iran does not always act quite so rationally. Rarely, but repeatedly over the years, it has launched attacks that seemed to invite massive retaliation, for apparently little gain. Iran's targets have included the U.S. Embassy and Marine barracks in Lebanon in 1983, the Israeli Embassy and a Jewish community center in Argentina in the early 1990s, and the U.S. military's Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia in 1996. Just last year, the Iranians were behind a botched scheme to assassinate the Saudi ambassador in the United States.

Some might argue that even these attacks were rational because Iran avoided massive military retaliation. But that was partially luck, and in any case Iran did suffer significant economic and diplomatic punishment. By any objective measure, the Iranian regime ran risks that greatly exceeded expected material benefits, the very definition of irrationality.

We don't know exactly why Iran acts so irrationally from time to time. One possibility is that the regime itself is rational but lacks full control, so that extremist factions act autonomously on occasion. Another is that domestic politics drive the regime to appease extremist factions from time to time. Or it's possible that the regime's own radical Islamist ideology sometimes overwhelms its rationality.

Whatever the reason, the reality is that Iran seems to act rationally most — but not all — of the time. This has two major strategic implications.

First, if Iran acquired nuclear weapons, it probably would not use them, share them or ramp up regional aggression with them. Yet there is a nontrivial chance — let's call it 5% — that Iran would utilize its nuclear weapons in such an aggressive fashion.

Second, if Israel or the United States launched surgical strikes on Iran's key nuclear facilities, Iran probably would act rationally by not retaliating broadly against U.S. interests, which would risk provoking a major U.S. military escalation that could end the Iranian regime. Yet there is a nontrivial chance — again, perhaps 5% — that Iran would retaliate in such a broad manner, drawing the United States into a larger military conflict. This clarifies the strategic choice for the United States: a small chance of Iran using nuclear weapons offensively in the future if we don't launch airstrikes fairly soon, or a small chance of escalated conventional war with Iran in the near term if we do.

Is it a 2% chance? A 10% chance? We can't know; but we do know, based on Iran's past irrational actions, that it's not zero.

So, which of the two should President Obama choose? The small chance of an escalated conventional war against Iran, in which we would enjoy overwhelming military superiority? Or a similarly small, but significant, chance that Iran would use nuclear weapons aggressively, inflicting massive casualties?

Is there really any question?

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Article 6.

The Wall Street Journal

Obama and the Eisenhower Standard

[Fouad Ajami](#)

April 1, 2012 -- On Nov. 6, 1956, Election Day, to be precise, President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent a brief message to British Prime Minister Anthony Eden: "We have given our whole thought to Hungary and the Middle East. I don't give a damn how the election goes."

Eisenhower could afford that kind of attitude—he was a genuine American hero in World War II, and there was no chance of his losing his bid for a second term to the inconsequential Adlai Stevenson. But the election came, as the historian David Nichols put it, during a "perfect storm." Britain and France had invaded Egypt under the guise of bringing to a halt fighting in the Suez Canal between Egypt and Israel, and the Soviet Union had deemed this the right time to crush a Hungarian bid for freedom.

Ours is a different world. Barack Obama isn't to be held to the Eisenhower standard. Indeed, as a fortunate "off-mic" moment recently revealed, this president bargains with Russian errand boy Dmitry Medvedev over something as trivial as protecting Europe with a missile defense system. I will have more "flexibility," the leader of the Free World says, with my last election behind me.

Thankfully, we don't live in the shadow of a nuclear showdown. But from its very beginning, this presidency has been about the man himself and his personal ambition, and less so his duty to democracy.

So what's to be said of Mr. Obama's foreign-policy accomplishments? Has he, like Eisenhower, given his whole thought to the troubles of the Middle

East? As a candidate, he declared Afghanistan the "war of necessity." But the war does not detain or torment him, nothing here of the anguish of LBJ over Vietnam. He ordered his own surge in Afghanistan but took away so much of its power by announcing a date for American withdrawal in 2014—two good, safe years after his second presidential bid. This way peace could be had with the Taliban who could wait us out—and with the "progressives" at home who have no use for this war but are willing to grant the president prosecuting it time and indulgence.

In the same vein, the primacy of electoral politics over the necessities of strategy had driven the decision to quit Iraq and give up our gains in that vital country. Mr. Obama gave the Iraqis an offer they were meant to refuse. The small residual force he said he would accept, a contingent of somewhere between 3,000 and 5,000 soldiers, could hardly defend itself, let alone be of any use to the Iraqis.

No one was fooled. The American president had given every indication that he had no interest in Iraq and its affairs. A decade of sacrifices lay behind us in Iraq, the new order was too fragile to stand alone. We could have had an appreciable presence in Iraq—the Kurds, the Shiites, the Sunnis would have all been glad for the American protection. This presence would have served us well as a hedge against the hegemonic ambitions of Iranian theocracy, and an Iraq in the orbit of U.S. power would have been less likely to cast its fate with the embattled House of Assad in Syria.

For a year now, the people of Syria have been in the midst of a heroic struggle against a tyrannical regime, but no American help has come their way. Moral considerations aside, Syria is now a strategic battleground, a place where Iranian power challenges, by proxy, the moderate order of nations in the region. For three decades, the Iranian radical theocracy has waged campaigns of terror away from its soil.

In Syria, the mullahs are determined to prevail in the face of the moderate Arabs and Western democracies. Much of the order of the region hangs in the balance. Were the Iranian bid for regional hegemony to be broken in Syria, the Middle East would change for the better.

As the noted scholar of strategy Charles Hill put it, Syria is the ideal place to rattle the turbans. Were the Assad regime to bite the dust, the stranglehold of Hezbollah over Lebanon would come to an end. In "the

East" there is that age-old instinct for reading the wind and riding with the victor.

It had taken some five months for President Obama to call on Bashar al-Assad to relinquish power, but once that call was made we were reduced to mere spectators of the Syrian calamity. We exaggerated the might of the Assad killing machine, belittled the opposition, and doubting their purpose and cohesiveness, refrained from arming the defectors.

American intelligence and policy statements could never get it right: Assad was, alternately, a dead man walking or firmly in the saddle. When a measure of ambiguity about American intentions could have aided the Syrian rebellion, the Pentagon and State Department went out of their way to reassure the despot in Damascus that there was nothing to worry about in Washington. No wonder the suspicion has grown that the Obama administration is content to see Assad ride out the storm.

From this great contest, the administration wishes to be spared. Were Assad to fall, the claim could be made that the Obama wisdom had been vindicated, that an "organic" Arab rebellion had prevailed. In the meantime, the agony of Homs and Hama, the popular upheaval against a monstrous tyranny, is left untended.

Mr. Obama has never owned up to the fact that the cruel regimes in Tehran and Damascus were the ones he had been eager to court at the dawn of his presidency. Read the Wikileaks from Damascus in early 2009—they are full of false hope that the olive branch extended to the Damascus dictatorship had altered its ways.

History is perhaps forgiving nowadays, the Syrian rebellion could be crushed without Mr. Obama paying an appreciable political price. It is a sad truth that the president has become the embodiment, and the instrument, of our retreat from distant shores—and concerns. He trades away strategic American assets in the hope that the American people will not care or notice. On the face of it, he exudes a sublime confidence that the world could be held at bay—at least until November, past that last election.

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The Washington Post

Book review: ‘The Crisis of Zionism,’ by Peter Beinart

Alana Newhouse

March 30 -- Many books have been written on the Israeli-Palestinian struggle — by reporters, elected officials, diplomats, novelists, poets, human rights workers, Nobel laureates and ordinary citizens. But Peter Beinart’s “[The Crisis of Zionism](#)” stands out not least for the avalanche of attention it has received even before publication. It is also unusual because it offers little in the way of personal reporting on the Israelis or the Palestinians themselves. Instead, Beinart’s book is mainly about the response to this searing and seemingly intractable conflict among American Jews, who, though living far from the dusty battlegrounds, are nonetheless regarded as the linchpin by certain people on both ends of the political spectrum.

Beinart frames his book as a passionate polemic on the fatal threat that Israel’s occupation of the West Bank poses to that country’s liberal democratic ideals. The object of his jeremiad is not Israeli rightists or Palestinian terror groups but the American Jewish establishment — presented here as a monolithic cartel of powerful groups and individuals who Beinart tells us have closed their eyes to the disintegration of Israel’s higher ideals while lobbying Congress and the administration for whatever their benighted Middle Eastern brethren desire.

Beinart, once nearly a card-carrying member of this group, has come to abhor it. Israel, he argues, must find a way to be a homeland for one particular minority group — Jews — and still adhere to the strict imperatives of American-style liberal democracy. “Today, it is failing,” he writes, “and American Jews are helping it fail.”

“The Crisis of Zionism” is most interesting when seen for what it is, at least in part: a political stump speech for an attractive young candidate who is seeking the job of spokesman for liberal American Jews. In the pre-

publication run-up, Beinart has been doing quite well, having gained the enthusiastic endorsement of certain sectors of the American Jewish community as well as former president Bill Clinton (who blurbed the book) and Jeremy Ben-Ami, leader of the self-defined liberal pro-Israel organization J Street.

Beinart has many points in his favor: He is young but seasoned, he edited the *New Republic*, he is active in his Orthodox synagogue. It is easy to see why many younger Jews might prefer to see him featured on CNN as a Jewish spokesman in place of the balding men in suits or enraged Israeli consular officials who are often, by whatever baffling process, chosen to fill that role.

But after reading his book, I am sorry to say that I will not be pulling the lever for Beinart. This is may be surprising, since I heartily endorse many of his talking points about the moral and political corruption that the occupation has engendered — a position that, in fact, places us both among the vast majority of American Jews. Yet I cannot subscribe to the book's fundamental thrust, which suggests something disappointingly problematic about Beinart's campaign.

"The Crisis of Zionism" is, in part, a history of a specific current of American Jewish life: the small, liberal Zionist groups that have, for decades, opposed the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Beinart tells this tale in a lively, character-driven narrative that underscores the moral and political urgency of the issues. He then uses this history as a foundation for eloquent denunciations of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, highlighting the mistakes and general misguidedness of some very powerful Jewish groups and ruing the dissolution of Israel's once-noble cause.

In between, he devotes an extended section to a defense of President Obama against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. In a chapter titled "The Jewish President," Beinart presents Obama as the good Jew (he learned about certain Jewish notions of social justice from an activist Reform rabbi in Chicago) and Netanyahu as the bad Jew. This device allows Beinart to attach Jewishness to the leader most aligned with him politically, reimagining Obama in a way that's bound to tickle some liberal American Jews.

But think hard about this: The impulse to involuntarily convert the president into a Jew is sweet but disturbingly tribalist, not to mention ultimately disrespectful of the background Obama does have. The president is not a Jew, just as Clinton was not our first black president.

So why assert it? Because Beinart has identified Obama, who garnered overwhelming Jewish support in the last election and will probably do so in the next, as his best chance for disconnecting American Jews from the current Israeli administration. But this raises a question: If American Jews, even older ones who fill the leadership ranks of Jewish organizations, are in fact quite liberal and capable of holding nuanced political positions about two separate countries, why is Beinart presenting them as a group of single-minded partisans?

The answer is that it allows Beinart to elevate himself as the standard-bearer of all good liberal citizens of America — Jewish or not — who want to think of Israel as a decent place but who can't stomach the conflict with the Palestinians and who of course don't want anyone to think they are anti-Semites, as indeed the vast majority of them are not.

That's fine. Beinart's obvious politicking makes him neither better nor worse than his fellow claimants — every politician is ambitious for the job he seeks. The problem is his basic argument. In the end, his book is largely a restatement of Zionist dovishness, one ironically drained of its potential power in part by a glaring absence. From this book you would think that Palestinians are just the passive and helpless victims of Israeli sadism, with no historical agency; no politics, diplomacy or violence of their own; and no responsibility for the miserable impasse of the conflict.

Beinart's view is basically this: Israel must save the Palestinians, and American Jews must save Israel. By saving the Palestinians, Israel will save itself, and by saving Israel, American Jews will save themselves.

“Liberal American Jews must feel a special commitment to Israel's ethical character because they feel a special commitment to being Jewish,” Beinart writes. “They must see their own honor as bound up with the honor of the Jewish state.”

But American Jewish life does not stand or fall with Netanyahu, and the relationship of young Jews to Zionism, like their relationship to traditional affiliations of all sorts, takes many shapes and has many causes.

Should American Jews take stands on Israel's future? Of course. But whatever the reality of Jewish power in America, it's fantasy to imagine that American Jews can pressure Israel into making any significant movements its leaders do not want to make. "For those of us who aspire to raise our children as both Zionists and liberals . . . the impending collapse" of Israel as a liberal and Jewish democracy is "a tragedy of incalculable proportions," Beinart writes. "We must resist it with every fiber of our being." However frustrating this is to accept, Israel is its own country, with its own voters — and we are not among them.

Still, Beinart's voice is heard far and wide. He publishes much-discussed newspaper op-eds, his book will be widely reviewed, and his speaking tour will undoubtedly take him to many Jewish community centers and synagogues. Those who don't get to see him in the flesh can click on his new blog devoted entirely to this topic on the Daily Beast.

And yet for his most passionate followers, the attention will not be enough until Beinart's views are read and wholly accepted by every self-identified liberal. Late last month, Andrew Sullivan — a blogger with an enormous following — was presenting Beinart as an unheeded prophet speaking truth to a monolithic, repressive Jewish power center: "Repeat after me what the greater Israel lobby and its acolytes will be chanting for the next few weeks: Ignore. Peter. Beinart."

While his book is based almost entirely on newspaper clippings and other second-hand sources, Beinart and his supporters must be credited with some real creativity. They have introduced their own repressive litmus test, this one to determine who can be considered both a liberal American and a Zionist: If you disagree with the current Israeli administration but don't regard it as a font of evil and corruption, you are blind, deaf and dumb. "Acting ethically in an age of Jewish power," Beinart writes, "means confronting not only the suffering that gentiles endure but the suffering that Jews cause" —which he follows with a set of very specific prescriptions, including a controversial partial boycott of goods made in what Beinart calls "nondemocratic Israel."

And so against what they see as the self-satisfied and delusional monolith of the American Jewish establishment, Beinart and his supporters are now erecting their own self-satisfied and delusional monolith, calculated to appeal to disillusioned Jewish summer camp alumni, NPR listeners and

other beautiful souls who want the Holy Land to be a better place but do not have the time or ability to study the issues, learn the languages or talk to the people on both sides whose hearts have been broken over and over again by prophets making phony promises.

Here is what those people know: Peace will be made only by Israelis and Palestinians together, and when it comes, the American Jewish community will support it, as it has every effort toward peace in the past. American Jews will not save Israel, and Peter Beinart will not save American Jews. With “The Crisis of Zionism,” Beinart has indeed transformed himself into a spokesman for some. But in the process, he has ruined his chance to be a leader for many.

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