

From: Office of Terje Rod-Larsen [REDACTED]
Subject: June 7 update
Date: Fri, 08 Jun 2012 14:14:50 +0000

7 June, 2012

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Article 1.

The National Interest

Israel's Military Secret

[Bruce Riedel](#)

June 7, 2012 -- The not-so-secret secret is now out—Israel has U-boat submarines that can launch nuclear-tipped cruise missiles. The Israeli nuclear arsenal is a triad—it can launch nuclear war from American-built F-15s, the French-origin Jericho missile and German-built Dolphin-class U-boats. It has a survivable second-strike capability and can project power far beyond its immediate environment.

Der Spiegel, the German news magazine, broke the story after extensive interviews with German and Israeli sources. Long rumored to be nuclear-delivery systems, the underwater fleet Israel has acquired over two decades is now clearly nuclear equipped. The Israeli Navy has three operational Dolphins, a fourth will soon be operational; a fifth is under construction in Kiel; and a sixth has been ordered. Israel builds the cruise missiles that provide the delivery means for the nukes, so technically Germany is not engaging in nuclear matters. But Berlin knows what it is doing.

The Israeli press has picked up the story now that the foreign press has put it out. That is consistent with Israel's long-standing policy of not confirming its nuclear arsenal. The timing of the leak, though, is probably no coincidence, as tensions with Iran are building again. Israel may well be sending Iran a message that retaliation for an Israeli attack on Iran's nuclear facilities could lead to a dangerous escalation in which Israel holds the upper hand.

The U-boat story underscores a key fact about the Iranian nuclear threat. With or without nuclear weapons, Iran is outclassed and outgunned by Israel in both the conventional and nuclear balance of power. Israel has a far superior air force with the latest U.S. aircraft, whereas Iran's is equipped with 1960s' antiques bought by the Shah. Iran is under a comprehensive UN arms embargo, so its military has no access to modern technology. Israel gets at least \$3 billion in new equipment from America every year. Having been a nuclear power since 1968, Israel has dozens of bombs.

In short, Israel is the regional military superpower. The Arab Spring is demolishing the capabilities of Iran's key ally, Syria. Hezbollah is in danger of losing its Syrian backers, and Lebanon is in danger of slipping into another civil war exported from Damascus, which would keep Hezbollah preoccupied. The balance of power tilts decisively toward Israel, which is a success story of American diplomacy. Every president since JFK, who was

the first to sell Israel advanced arms, has helped build Israel's edge. Washington has promised to maintain Israel's qualitative superiority over its enemies for decades. Now we know it got some help from Berlin as well.

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Article 2.

The National Interest

Syria: America vs. Israel?

Giorgio Cafiero

June 4, 2012 -- The “Arab Spring” reached Syria in March 2011 when Syrian intellectuals, students, and union leaders appeared on the streets to demand greater transparency, political liberalization, and economic reforms. Although they did not participate in the initial series of demonstrations, Syrian Islamists joined the opposition after the regime responded with force to the public display of dissent. As the violence has escalated and taken over [9,000](#) lives, foreign powers have exploited the carnage to advance their geopolitical interests. The United States and other powers have used the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood as a proxy to topple the Syrian Ba’athist regime, which has governed for almost half a century. Washington’s two primary interests in Syria are to strengthen the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) vis-à-vis Iran and to undermine Russia’s power and influence in the Middle East and Mediterranean. Israel shares the U.S. interest in cutting off Iran and Russia’s reach into the Levant. However, security considerations surrounding the unknown variables of a post-Assad Syria appear to have created a divide between U.S. and Israeli strategies, as the Netanyahu government has not followed Obama’s course

on Syria. The Israeli concerns surrounding the collapse of Syria's Ba'athist party are legitimate. Washington should also consider the security consequences of Assad's ouster and avoid intervention in Syria.

U.S. Intentions in Syria

Following Syria's independence from French colonial rule, relations with the United States have been largely defined by mistrust and conflict of interest. Beginning in 1956, in coordination with Saudi Arabia, the Eisenhower administration sought to [covertly overthrow](#) Syria's left-wing nationalist government. During the late 1970s and early 1980s, through Jordan and Israel, Washington backed the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's armed uprising against the regime of Hafez Assad. Since 1982, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood has been in exile (primarily in Spain and Switzerland). However, [according to The Washington Post](#), "after three decades of persecution that virtually eradicated its presence, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood has resurrected itself to become the dominant group in the fragmented opposition movement pursuing a 14-month uprising against President Bashar al-Assad."

The U.S. alliance with an Islamist organization that espouses anti-Western views may appear strange. However, this relationship is far from historically unprecedented. Syria is only one country where Washington supported Islamists to undermine nationalist and leftist forces. This alliance between the United States and Islamist organizations was widespread throughout the Muslim world during the Cold War, as Washington deemed such forces — Zia ul-Haq in Pakistan, the Mujahideen of Afghanistan, Abu Qurah in Jordan, and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt — to be reliable partners in the effort to undermine Communism and Arab nationalism. After the Soviet Union imploded in 1991, the United States continued to foster alliances with Islamist groups to undermine governments that did not cooperate with the "New World Order." During the 1990s, Washington covertly provided [Iraqi Islamist parties](#), including the Islamic Call (Al-Dawa) and the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq, with millions of dollars to strengthen Iraqi opposition to Saddam Hussein. Today, militant Islamist organizations such as Jundullah and [Mujahadeen e-Kalk](#) target Iran. Both organizations, though [officially labeled](#) as "terrorist" organizations by the U.S. State Department, receive direct aid from Washington. In other words, Syria is not the only

country where militant Islamists have received support from the United States in their campaign to topple a regime opposed to U.S. hegemony. Present U.S. support for Syrian Islamists is part of a larger proxy war. The United States, Turkey, and the GCC are pushing for Assad's demise, while Russia, China, Iran, and Hezbollah seek to ensure Assad's survival. U.S. interest in Assad's downfall relates to its overall position vis-à-vis Iran and Russia, and by extension China. Washington is skeptical about launching a military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities. However, by toppling Iran's closest regional ally, the United States believes that it can undermine the Islamic Republic's regional influence by striking a blow to the Tehran-Baghdad-Damascus-Hezbollah axis of power from Iran to the Mediterranean, which Jordan's King Abdullah nervously [identified](#) as the "Shia crescent."

Washington is assuming that the Muslim Brotherhood, the most influential party within the Istanbul-based Syrian National Council, would end the Iran-Syria alliance if it came to power. The organization's deputy secretary, Mohammed Faruk Tayfur, [told](#) The Washington Times on January 18, 2012 that the Muslim Brotherhood rejects Iran's offers to mediate talks between the Assad regime and the opposition. The deputy secretary [defined](#) his ideology and vision for Syria by comparing Turkey and Iran's versions of political Islam. "Islamic culturally and secular politically, [Turkey] is the model for the Islamic movement ... the Iranian, on the other hand, is the worst." Then there's the religious dimension. The Assad regime is mainly composed of Syrian Alawites who adhere to a form of Islam derived from the Shiism practiced in Iran. Many orthodox Sunni, who form the majority in Syria, do not consider Alawites to be legitimate Muslims. The Islamic Republic's attempts to expand Shiism throughout the Arab world, especially in Syria, have fostered intense hatred for Iran within certain conservative Sunni circles that would likely influence the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's foreign policy vis-à-vis Iran and Hezbollah.

The collapse of the Assad regime would almost inevitably decrease Russian power in the Middle East and the Mediterranean. Syria has hosted Russia's naval base in Tartus for several decades and, since 1971, Syria has been Moscow's closest Arab ally. Syria is the largest Arab purchaser of Russian weapons and is seen by Moscow as Russia's doorstep into the Middle East and Mediterranean. The Muslim Brotherhood has condemned

Russia and China for providing Assad with weapons and diplomatic support throughout 2011 and 2012. On February 6, 2012 the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood's spokesman, Zouheir Salem, [stated](#) that his organization "consider[s] Russia, China and Iran as direct accomplices to the horrible massacre being carried out against our people." By supplying the Syrian government with weapons and/or diplomatic backing, the three countries were "directly participating in the massacre of [Syria's] defenseless people." If the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood removed Syria from Moscow and Tehran's spheres of influence and aligned Damascus with Washington, Ankara, Riyadh, and Doha, the regional balance of power would shift in favor of the United States.

Israel's Interests

Israel would welcome the decline of Iranian influence in the Levant, as Iran is Israel's gravest threat, according to Israeli leaders. However, Israel is not proactively seeking to weaken Iran by supporting Assad's opposition. Alia Brahim and George Joffe [summarize](#) Israel's Syria dilemma:

The one state that is directly implicated by the events in Syria, but which still has taken no public position is Israel. This is almost certainly because the Israeli Prime Minister would, on balance, prefer the Assad regime to continue; it is a known quantity and any new regime could severely destabilise the effective balance-of-power between two uneasy neighbours ... The hawks in Israel will see the need to determine which poses more of a threat: the "Islamic fundamentalist" Shia state, or the "Islamic fundamentalist" Sunni groups who are sure to gain a foothold in Syria if Assad's regime suddenly caves in.

Whether or not Israel would be in a stronger position with Assad or Sunni Islamists in power is the center of debate amongst geopolitical analysts. Nonetheless, Israel's reluctance to support Syria's opposition likely indicates its calculation that Assad's survival is in Israel's interest, at least for now.

Israel is not interested in the Assad regime maintaining power because of any friendship between the two states. Syria fought Israel directly in October 1973 and via proxy in Lebanon between 1982 and 2000. Since 2000, Syria has continued to support Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza. Without question, Syria remains the most, and arguably only, confrontational Arab state in the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, Israel

understands that the Assad regime will not attempt to repossess the Golan Heights by military force and will meet with Israeli leaders to negotiate for peace, which [occurred](#) in 1991, 1995-1996, 1999-2001, and 2008. How a post-Assad Syria would conduct foreign relations vis-à-vis Israel-Palestine remains a gamble.

Regarding the Muslim Brotherhood's position on Israel, [Thomas Pierret writes](#), “[the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood] seeks to ‘counter the Zionist project [the state of Israel] in its different aspects’ — a position unlikely to change before an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights. The group has also traditionally supported Hamas.” Any Syrian regime (Islamist or secular, democratic or authoritarian) will lose legitimacy if it surrenders the Golan Heights to Israel or fails to support the Palestinian struggle for statehood, as Syria has historically been the center of Arab nationalism. Regardless of which sect, ethnicity, or ideological party governs in Damascus, Syria will seek to repossess the Golan Heights, defend its sovereignty, expand trade relations, maintain deterrence capacity over Israel, and retain influence in Lebanon and the greater Arab world. Therefore, Israel is not convinced that Assad's downfall could advance its geopolitical interests.

Explaining Israel's Reluctance

Even if the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood would not take power in a post-Assad Syria, or even if it would not change Syrian foreign policy vis-à-vis Israel-Palestine once empowered, Israel may have national interests in Assad staying in power for four other reasons.

First of all, Assad's fall could lead to a disintegration of the Syrian state. Efraim Inbar, Director of its Begin-Sadat (BESA) Center for Strategic Studies, [believes](#) that “in the event that the Syrian regime collapses, Syria's advanced arsenal, including chemical weapons, shore-to-ship missiles, air defense systems, and ballistic missiles of all types could end up in the hands of ... radical elements.” The growing presence of Al-Qaeda in Mesopotamia (AQI) in Syria has been evident since the turmoil began in 2011, and the potential for AQI, or other militant groups like Hezbollah, to acquire such weapons could create new dilemmas for Israel.

The collapse of the Syrian regime would also further isolate Iran in the Middle East and potentially provide it with an additional rationale to develop a nuclear weapon. As Syria has provided Iran with the capacity to

transform Hezbollah into a force that the Israeli military cannot defeat, the loss of Syria may likely mean a weaker Hezbollah, thus decreasing Iran's ability to deter Israel from attacking its nuclear facilities. The Islamic Republic also took note of the NATO campaign against Libya's Muammar Gaddafi. The lesson learned was that if a state disbands its WMD program with the intentions of improving ties with the West, it will be vulnerable to a foreign invasion. In sum, the Libyan case has arguably pushed the Islamic Republic toward developing a nuclear weapon — and its further isolation, which would come with Assad's demise, may accelerate Tehran down that path. Such an outcome would deprive Israel of its monopoly on nuclear weapons in the region.

The emergence of a regime in Damascus that bears more legitimacy than Assad's may also permit the Syrian military to channel more resources toward external threats (primarily Israel). Currently, the Syrian military is focused on suppressing the domestic opposition and dealing with potential coup d'états and armed uprisings. Clearly, the possibility of a future regime coming to power in Damascus with more legitimacy may be an overly optimistic prospect (from the Syrian perspective). However, the Israelis would benefit from the Syrian military continuing to be bogged down in domestic affairs.

Finally, although the Muslim Brotherhood has become increasingly moderate in the last 30 years, the other radical Islamist elements in the region, such as the Salafists or even al-Qaeda, could gain influence in Syria if a power vacuum forms following prolonged violence and widespread human rights violations. Although the significance of radical Islamist forces within Syria remains a hotly debated topic, a consensus has emerged that radical Islam has gained influence in Syria over the last decade. David W. Lesch, professor of Middle East History at Trinity University, [argues that](#)

What would emerge after the dust settles down could very well be a polity that is Islamic extremist, one on the border with Israel and one that could make common cause with like-minded elements in Iraq and Lebanon. This is certainly not in anyone's interest ... Many in Syria, including Bashar, see the regime, more specifically the Baath party, as the last bastion of secularity against a seething rising tide of radical Islamic in Syria ... The

more radical Salafists in Syria are certainly a force to be reckoned with, more so than the Muslim Brotherhood.

In 2005 Lucy Ashton of The Financial Times [reported](#) on a growing trend of radical Islam in Syria:

Conservative Islam is a relatively recent phenomenon in Aleppo, known for centuries as a cosmopolitan trading city whose merchants "could sell a dead donkey skin to a king", according to a local proverb. Now, however, it is becoming a centre of Islamic radicalism, known more for its bombers than its carpet bazaar and textile weavers ... On the streets of Aleppo, secular dress was ubiquitous only a decade ago. Now, more and more children recite Koranic verses in the streets on their way to madrassahs [Islamic schools], and women are tented completely in black.

Washington's Dilemma

The Obama administration should consider these potential security dilemmas that have led Israel to avoid aiding Assad's opponents. The Syrian military's weapons falling into non-state actors' hands, the increased probability that Iran would develop a nuclear weapon to counter its growing isolation, and the possibility of radical Syrian Islamists with an anti-Western agenda rising to power would undermine U.S. interests in the Middle East.

Two U.S. senators, John McCain (R-AZ) and Joseph Lieberman (I-CT), visited the Syrian-Turkish border during April 2012 and [demanded](#) that the United States take military action against Assad to remove him from power. These were the same two voices that lobbied the Clinton and Bush administrations to topple Saddam Hussein's regime. When the United States did exactly as these senators advocated, countless unintended negative consequences ensued. Such outcomes could be expected if U.S. military action is taken against Assad. Obama would be wise to follow Israel's lead on Syria, and not the advice of McCain and Lieberman. Instead of heeding the advice of these two hawkish senators, the Obama administration should pursue a more realist foreign policy vis-à-vis Syria that prioritizes stability. Unquestionably, the headaches that this regime has caused many U.S. administrations explain the political motivations behind Obama's direct and indirect support for Syria's Islamist opposition. However, the lessons of blowback should be remembered, for the United

States armed radical forces on many occasions to advance larger geopolitical interests only to regret such alliances later.

Preventing the Syrian state from collapsing and protecting the region from the chaos that could result should be Washington's top priority. This does not mean ignoring the human rights abuses of the Assad regime or the [armed Syrian opposition](#). Rather, Washington should continue to work with regional actors such as Turkey and Iran along with Russia and China to find a political solution that holds all actors responsible for the lives lost and identifies a political solution that brings about peace, stability, and justice. The Middle East doesn't need another Iraq War or post-war crisis.

Giorgio Cafiero is a contributor to Foreign Policy In Focus.

Article 3.

Tablet Magazine

Leaking Cyberwar Secrets

[Lee Smith](#)

June 6, 2012 -- It was quite a week for cyberwarfare. First came the revelation that Iran was suffering from a virus called Flame—apparently the most powerful spyware ever created, turning computers into virtual double-agents—which has already infected at least 1,000 [computers](#) [1], nearly all of them in Iran, the Palestinian territories, Sudan, Syria, and Lebanon.

Two days later, the New York Times published an explosive story by David Sanger detailing the collaboration between Israel and the United States in its cyberwarfare campaign against Iran's nuclear weapons program. The program started under the Bush Administration, but according to Sanger "Obama decided to accelerate the attacks," code-named Olympic Games, including the Stuxnet worm that set back the Iranian nuclear program by as much as [two years](#) [2].

The [story](#) [3], adapted from Sanger’s forthcoming book, is richly reported and heavily sourced to “current and former American, European and Israeli officials involved in the program.” The story reveals that both the Bush and Obama Administrations have used cyberwarfare to wage campaigns—political and strategic—on various fronts. Stuxnet, for example, was not intended simply to disrupt the Iranian nuclear program. It was also meant to convince the Israelis that Washington recognizes the urgency of the problem and thus Israel need not attack Iran. The Times article is evidence of the Obama White House’s efforts in yet another campaign: the 2012 elections.

Given that this was the second such cyberwarfare story that the Obama Administration has fed the New York Times—the [first](#) [4] appeared in January 2011—it is obvious that this White House, like so many others before it, is using journalists to shape its image. While a number of analysts have [criticized](#) [5] the administration for jeopardizing U.S. national security by leaking sensitive material to the press, the reality is that the story is not really about the details of this ongoing intelligence operation. It’s a political narrative, intended to shape public opinion about the competence and muscularity of this White House.

The nature of the story is given away in a quote from Vice President Joe Biden, exasperated after Stuxnet mistakenly appeared on the Web in the summer of 2010, exposing the code. Biden laid the blame at the feet of the administration’s ostensible partner. “It’s got to be the Israelis,” said Biden, according to an unnamed source. “They went too far.” In other words, the Obama White House wants it both ways—to claim credit for the successes of the cyberwarfare campaign and to shift blame on the Israelis in the event that things go wrong.

Biden’s quote dovetails with a theory that’s been circulating for a few years among security experts that the Stuxnet virus was the product of collaboration between first-rate professionals and rank [amateurs](#) [6]. On this reading, the programming team was top-notch while the implementation team was less than capable.

Applying the Biden thesis, it would seem that the Israelis are the incompetent partners, responsible for the Stuxnet leak.

If the Israelis are in fact incompetent at waging cyberwar, then that’s real news, since the Israelis have always been reputed to be the best in the

business. “If Israel is incompetent then why was Stuxnet successful?” journalist Yossi Melman, co-author of the forthcoming [book](#) [7] *Spies Against Armageddon: Inside Israel’s Secret Wars*, responded when I asked him about Biden’s comment. “A thousand centrifuges were disabled, which makes it a very successful campaign.”

Melman said that according to the Israeli officials he’s spoken with, it was Israel that initiated the idea of utilizing computer viruses. “They’ve been doing cyberwarfare slightly longer than the Americans. Military Intelligence [Unit 8200](#) [8] [Israel’s equivalent of the National Security Agency in charge of signals intelligence] has been exploring the potential for offensive as well as defensive cyberwarfare capabilities for at least a decade.”

As some critics have [noted](#) [9], a cyber-attack that spread to thousands of computers unrelated to Iran’s nuclear program is at odds with the Obama Administration’s “International Strategy for Cyberspace,” a policy laid out a year ago. “The digital world,” reads the document, “is a place where the norms of responsible, just and peaceful conduct among states and peoples have begun to take hold.” So, perhaps the administration, and Biden in particular, is eager to shift the blame to avoid charges of hypocrisy: The Americans do the good stuff, it’s the Israelis who do the bad stuff.

This is the flip side of the political narrative. “It’s a disinformation campaign to present Israel’s behavior as without discretion, without patience,” a former Israeli intelligence official told me. He recalls another New York Times story about a war game that starts with an Israeli strike against Iran in which thousands of Americans are [killed](#) [10]. “The idea,” said the official, “is to present Israel as gung-ho and ready to go to war, and America has to stop it from doing something disastrous.”

It’s hard to imagine that the two sides walked into the Stuxnet campaign ignorant of each other’s abilities and limitations. “I don’t believe for a moment that such ‘teams’—if they existed as ‘teams’—didn’t have the chance to review or test each other’s code in some meaningful fashion,” said Michael Schrage, a research fellow at MIT Sloan School’s Center for Digital Business. “I suppose it’s possible that complementary teams worked independently and then released an uncoordinated worm into the wild, but that’s a pretty poor way of trying to kill or disrupt or gain intelligence around the most difficult nuclear challenge America and Israel

face. If I were an Israeli or American cyber-warrior, I would want to know the other's code and protocol or doctrine for attack.”

In other words, the chances that the White House was really blindsided by Israel, like Biden says, are virtually nil.

But Israelis, said Melman, understand that the point of this story was to enhance the president's image. “Israeli officials know that it's an election year,” says Melman. “They believe the information was leaked to glorify the Obama Administration. Israeli officials are not going to rock the boat and ruin the party.”

The Times story is part of a larger narrative being driven by the Obama team, meant to enhance the president's image in the middle of an election campaign where, according to some [polls](#) [11], the Republican candidate has pulled even with the incumbent. Forget the fact that Syria is burning, that the Russians have been emboldened by American impotence in the Middle East, or that the Iranians are tip-toeing across the finish line to get a nuclear weapon while American diplomats sit helplessly at a negotiating table. Focus rather on the image of a cool superhero commander in chief ordering clandestine attacks.

“Obama's problem,” says the former Israeli intelligence official, “is that on one hand the administration has to show that they are doing something about Iran. But on the other hand, they can't abandon their left-wing base. So, it's better to shift blame to Israel. No Israeli government is going to be criticized for releasing a virus. We know we are at war, and America does not know it's at war.”

Article 4.

The Washington Institute

America, Israel, and the Strategic Implications of the Arab Uprisings

[Robert Satloff](#)

June 2, 2011 -- The upheavals of the last 18 months have transformed an already difficult regional landscape into perhaps the most inhospitable strategic environment in modern history. As Egyptians lined up to vote in

their first contested leadership election in 7,000 years, how should we understand the speed, scope and variety of change transforming the Middle East? A year ago, the narrative was simple -- Arabs had awoken from their millennial slumber and demanded to be citizens, not subjects. But since then, change has come in all shapes and forms. Will the iconic image of the Arab uprisings be the patient queueing of Egyptian voters or, perhaps, the self-immolation of Tunisia's Mohammad Bouazizi? Or will it be something less heroic, like Gaddafi hounded like a rat out of his drainage pipe in Libya? Or something profoundly cruel, such as the YouTube video of a Syrian man buried alive by shovel-wielding Alawi thugs taunting the victim to recite "There is no God but God and Bashar is his Prophet"? Or, alternatively, will we look back and see photos of Saudi anti-riot vehicles cruising across the causeway to support the crushing of Bahrain's "Arab spring" moment as the most consequential image of the past 18 months? The reality is that that the "Arab spring" -- a misnomer of olympian proportions -- is really a catch-all concept that encompasses many different national experiences spanning a broad spectrum. To lump them together is both stupid and foolish, not least because most countries are still at act one or two of a five-act drama. In many places, it will be years before the political dust settles and we can see clearly how the uprisings of 2011-12 actually transformed the strategic orientations of Middle East regimes. Still, it is not too early for strategists to look at broad patterns. Intimate observers of the Arab Middle East -- such as Americans and Israelis -- have no choice but to connect whatever dots are available as they make judgments about the threats and opportunities. And the sad reality is that, viewed from Washington or Jerusalem, the upheavals of the last 18 months have transformed an already difficult regional landscape into perhaps the most inhospitable strategic environment in modern history.

A VIEW FROM WASHINGTON

One useful way for an American strategist to assess US standing in the Middle East is to evaluate relations with the region's three most significant countries -- Iran, Turkey and Egypt. These countries, each of which sits astride a strategic waterway, are heirs to millennia -- old cultures, with long-established national identities, large populations, and substantial economic and military influence. A central goal of US policy should be to have close relations with at least two and, if possible, all three of these

countries, as a way to project power throughout the region. For most of the post-World War II era, Washington did have excellent relations with at least two of these countries; for a brief period in the 1970s — between Anwar al-Sadat's turn to the West and the fall of the Shah of Iran -- the United States even enjoyed close ties with all three. In retrospect, that was the high water mark for US influence in the region. Since then, one after another of these countries has drifted away from the pro-American camp. First to go was Iran, when the Shah's regime was swept away in the Islamist revolution in 1979. Then, Turkey drifted away with the ascendance of the Islamist AK Party, which has neutered the once-powerful military and moved the formerly reliable NATO ally into a more neutralist position on key strategic issues. Today, it is Egypt's turn. With Islamists dominating parliament and the military expected to return to the barracks shell-shocked after a disastrous year running the country, even a victory by an anti-Islamist presidential candidate will, at most, slow Egypt's slide away from the pro-American, pro-West, pro-peace camp in the Middle East. Taken together, American strategists surveying the region will -- for the first time in the post-WWII era -- find no strong allies among any of them.

A VIEW FROM JERUSALEM

Given differences of geography, economics, and military capacity, an Israeli strategic thinker will, of course, look at the region differently from an American. But she will likely reach similarly grim conclusions. Indeed, when one compares the new landscape with the regional situations that gave rise to the two grand strategies that guided Israeli security doctrine over the past six decades, Israelis can't be faulted for scratching their heads and wringing their hands.

As designed by its founding father, David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first grand strategy was based on the idea that the fledgling Jewish state could most effectively confront hostility from neighboring Arab states by building ties with more distant non-Arab states on the region's outer rim, or "periphery." The result was that Israel quietly developed relationships with the Shah's Iran and secular Turkey, contacts that proved critical to Israel's survival in the 1950s, '60s and '70s. Two historic events in the 1970s -- Egypt-Israel peace and the Iranian revolution -- led to a fundamental change in Israel's strategic calculus. The loss of a faraway strategic partner and the gain of a

new one just across the Sinai desert gave rise to a new doctrine, most clearly enunciated by Israel's second great strategic thinker, Yitzhak Rabin. A hawkish dove, Rabin believed Israel needed to take advantage of the opportunity of peaceful relations with the Sunni Arab states of the "inner circle" as a way to forge common ground against the "outer circle" threat posed by non-Arab Iran. For the last 30 years, Israel's peace diplomacy with Jordan, Syria and the Palestinians, supported in fits and starts by the Gulf states and North Africa, was a product of this new strategic calculation. Those days are gone. Today, as a result of the transformational change of the Arab uprisings, Israel faces a new and unprecedented regional situation. For the first time in its history, both the "outer circle" and the "inner circle" are either led by radical Islamists or headed in that direction. The periphery boasts Islamic Iran under the deepening military dictatorship of the Revolutionary Guards, and an AK-controlled Turkey that has jailed fully one-third of the nation's generals and admirals, the historic allies of a strategic partnership with Israel. In the core, where Israel already has two Islamist-dominated regimes (Gaza and Lebanon) on its borders, Egypt is now poised to join the list, with the prospect that post-Assad Syria will not be far behind. When only the spine of the Palestinian Authority's Mahmoud Abbas and the pluckiness of Jordan's King Abdullah stand in the way of total encirclement by Islamist-oriented regimes, Israelis have good reason to lose sleep.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

Of course, all is not lost in the Middle East, either for America or for Israel. The United States remains the region's undisputed military power, and it has created a system of tacit and acknowledged alliances with key states, especially the Arab monarchies, that has effectively blunted Iran's quest for regional influence. For its part, Israel is the envy of the region -- in military might, economic prowess, social cohesion, and the depth of its relations with its superpower ally. Neither America's ignominious retreat from the region nor the collapse of the third Jewish commonwealth is a near-term proposition. Still, Washington and Jerusalem cannot be complacent about the direction of regional politics. There is much to be done -- separately, together, and in concert with other regional and international actors -- to slow the negative drift, to improve the chances that electoral politics eventually produces more liberal outcomes, and to bolster the remaining

pro-West forces in the region. Trying to win back at least one of the three main regional powers is an especially high priority. In practice, that means working patiently to restore some semblance of working relations between Turkey and Israel -- no easy feat when Turkish courts are indicting Israeli generals. And it means investing in the potential for the sort of transformative change inside Iran that was stifled but, one hopes, not extinguished by the regime's crackdown on the Green Movement three years ago. As for Egypt -- still in the early days of its revolutionary moment, outsiders wield little sway over the direction of its turbulent politics. With the leverage provided by \$1.5 billion in aid and an influential vote on the boards of international financial institutions being asked to loan billions to shore up the failing Egyptian economy, Washington would be wise to focus on securing its most essential security interests; not try to micromanage the political reform process or manipulate the evolving relationship between civil and military authority. For its part, Israel has already made the right decision -- build a fence along the porous Sinai border and resuscitate the moth-balled army division that once protected against invasion from the south. While a conventional attack is not likely anytime soon, Egypt is inexorably drifting into a no war/no peace posture from which anything is possible.

So, today we celebrate the relative peace, order, and fairness of Egypt's elections -- and justly so. Tomorrow, however, is another day.

Robert Satloff is executive director of The Washington Institute, a post he assumed in January 1993.

Article 5.

The Irish Times

It's not as bad as the 1930s but there are parallels

Martin Wolf

Jun 06, 2012 -- ECONOMIC COMMENT: SUPPOSE THAT in June 2007 you had been told the UK 10-year bond would be yielding 1.54 per cent,

the US treasury 10-year 1.47 per cent and the German 10-year 1.17 per cent on June 1st, 2012. Suppose, too, you had been told that official short rates varied from zero in the US and Japan to 1 per cent in the euro zone. What would you think?

You would think the world economy was in a depression. You would have been wrong if you had meant something like the 1930s. But you would have been right about the forces at work: the West is in a contained depression; worse, forces for another downswing are building, above all in the euro zone. Meanwhile, policymakers are making huge errors.

The most powerful indicator – and proximate cause – of economic weakness is the shift in the private sector financial balance (the difference between income and spending by households and businesses) towards surplus. Retrenchment by indebted and frightened people has caused the weakness of western economies. Even countries that are not directly affected, such as Germany, are indirectly affected by the massive retrenchment in their partners.

According to the International Monetary Fund, between 2007 and 2012 the financial balance of the US private sector will shift towards surplus by 7.1 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). The shift will be 6.0 per cent in the UK, 5.2 per cent in Japan and just 2.9 per cent in the euro zone. But the latter contains countries with persistent private surpluses, notably Germany, ones with private sectors in rough balance (such as France and Italy) and ones that had huge swings towards surplus: in Spain, the forecast shift is 15.8 per cent of GDP. Meanwhile, emerging countries will also have a surplus of \$450 billion (€361 billion) this year, according to the IMF.

One would expect feeble demand in such a world. The willingness to implement expansionary monetary policies and tolerate huge fiscal deficits has contained depression and even induced weak recoveries. Yet the fact that unprecedented monetary policies and huge fiscal deficits have not induced strong recoveries shows how powerful the forces depressing economies have been. This is the legacy of a huge financial crisis preceded by large asset price bubbles and huge expansions in debt.

Finance plays a central role in crises, generating euphoria, over-spending and excessive leverage on the way up and panic, retrenchment and deleveraging on the way down. Doubts about the stability of finance

depend on the perceived solvency of debtors. Such doubts reached a peak in late 2008, when loans secured against housing were the focus of concern.

What is happening inside the euro zone is now the big worry, with the twist that sovereigns, the actors upon whom investors depend for rescue during systemic crises, are among the troubled debtors. Such doubts are generating a flight to safety towards Germany and, outside the euro zone, towards countries that retain monetary sovereignty, such as the US and even the UK.

It is often forgotten that the failure of Austria's Kreditanstalt in 1931 led to a wave of bank failures across the continent. That turned out to be the beginning of the end of the gold standard and caused a second downward leg of the Great Depression itself.

The fear must now be that a wave of banking and sovereign failures might cause a similar meltdown inside the euro zone, the closest thing the world now has to the old gold standard. The failure of the euro zone would, in turn, generate further massive disruption in the European and even global financial systems, possibly even knocking over the walls now containing the depression.

How realistic is this fear? Quite realistic. One reason is that so many fear it. In a panic, fear has its own power. To assuage it one needs a lender of last resort willing and able to act on an unlimited scale. It is unclear whether the euro zone has such a lender. The agreed funds that might support countries in difficulty are limited in a number of ways. The European Central Bank (ECB), though able to act on an unlimited scale in theory, might be unable to do so in practice, if the runs it had to deal with were large enough. What, people must wonder, is the limit on the credit that the Bundesbank would be willing (or allowed) to offer other central banks in a massive run? In a severe crisis, could even the ECB, let alone the governments, act effectively?

Furthermore, people know that both banks and sovereigns are under severe stress in important countries that seem to lack any prospect of an early return to growth and so suffer the costs of high and rising unemployment. No better indication of this can be imagined than Spain's final cry for help with its banks. Political systems are under stress: in Greece, a fragile

democracy has imploded. Meanwhile, the German government seems to have reiterated opposition to more support.

How much pain can the countries under stress endure? Nobody knows. What would happen if a country left the euro zone? Nobody knows. Might even Germany consider exit? Nobody knows. What is the long-run strategy for exit from the crises? Nobody knows. Given such uncertainty, panic is, alas, rational. A fiat currency backed by heterogeneous sovereigns is irremediably fragile.

Before now, I had never really understood how the 1930s could happen. Now I do. All one needs are fragile economies, a rigid monetary regime, intense debate over what must be done, widespread belief that suffering is good, myopic politicians, an inability to co-operate and failure to stay ahead of events. Perhaps the panic will vanish. But investors who are buying bonds at current rates are indicating a deep aversion to the downside risks. Policy-makers must eliminate this panic, not stoke it. In the euro zone, they are failing to do so. If those with good credit refuse to support those under pressure, when the latter cannot save themselves, the system will surely perish. Nobody knows what damage this would do to the world economy. But who wants to find out?

Article 6.

NYT

Paralysis in Athens

Randall Fuller

June 6, 2012 -- Athens --- “WHAT are we waiting for, assembled in the forum?” asked the Greek poet Constantine Cavafy in 1904. “Why do the Senators sit and pass no laws?”

Less than two weeks before [Greece](#) holds another round of national elections, Cavafy’s famous poem “[Waiting for the Barbarians](#),” has renewed force and urgency in Athens. The elections, scheduled for June 17, will decide Greece’s fate in the euro zone and perhaps even its long-term future as a viable state. But with an excruciating choice to be made between draconian austerity measures and a departure from Europe’s

shared currency, the birthplace of democracy is paralyzed with indecision and poised to descend into chaos and economic catastrophe.

Evidence of a state tottering on the edge of complete dysfunction is apparent everywhere in Athens. Traffic signals work sporadically; a sign giving the shortened hours of one of the world's great museums, the [National Archaeological Museum](#), is haphazardly taped to the door; police officers in riot gear patrol the perimeters of the universities, where a growing population of anarchists, disaffected young people and drug addicts congregate in communal hopelessness.

"Greeks have worry beads up to here," one Athenian told me in the shadow of the Acropolis, measuring to the top of her head. "We don't know what's going to happen tomorrow."

The most visible sign of these dire, uncertain times is the proliferation of graffiti over almost every vertical space in the city. Athens has long cherished a tradition of political commentary and street art, but the recent financial crisis has spurred the young to express their discontent with nihilistic intensity.

"Wake Up!" is a ubiquitous tag in the city. "Welcome to the Civilization of Fear" reads another. One airbrushed scene portrays an Athens bus — not long ago a symbol of Greece's commitment to improving its civic infrastructure while reducing pollution — about to run off the road or crash into an oncoming vehicle.

If the young bear the harshest burden of the economic crisis — [48 percent](#) of Greeks below age 24 are unemployed — they do so with a mix of denial, frantic exuberance and a debilitating sense of the absurd. A flash mob recently appeared in Syntagma Square, not to protest the lack of jobs or the political gridlock but to dance to 'N Sync's "Bye Bye Bye." Nearby, another graffiti slogan seemed to capture the mood: "Dancing All the Time, Feeling All the Rage."

Throughout Athens I asked people of all ages what it was like to live in Greece at the moment. "Hell," one woman told me. "Terrible, terrible," said a waiter at a tavern on the Plaka.

A Greek friend sighed and admitted that he would leave the country immediately if he could: "There is no good solution to the current crisis. Austerity will damage us for years to come, and so will the return of the drachma. Either way it will get much worse before it gets better."

On a warm, lovely Saturday night two weeks before the election, the immensely appealing Greek pop star [León](#) was finishing a sound check at an outdoor space in the trendy Gazi neighborhood. Strumming a ukulele, León sang what could easily stand as an anthem for this perilous moment in Athens and the rest of Greece:

Tell me what to do when everything is changing,

Tell me what to do when you can't step on the same river twice.

If Cavafy's poem blamed national inaction and a too-easy fatalism on a long and tortuous history of invasion from without, León seemed intent on exploring ways to survive this period of gloom and impasse from within.

"The master of the ship, the leader of your mind ... you don't need them anymore," he sang.

Then the tune, a folkish number titled "[Someday \(Somewhere, Maybe Somebody\)](#)," blossomed into an infectious chorus. León's band, an eight-piece group of men and women playing electric guitars and the more traditional accordion, leaned in and sang together.

In this place where tragedy was invented, the song was joyful and sadly cathartic. The chorus had no words, but it nevertheless contained an invitation to join in the achingly beautiful melody. I still can't get it out of my head.

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Article 7.

NYT

The Age of Unsatisfying Wars

John A. Nagl

June 6, 2012 -- THIS Memorial Day, President Obama recognized veterans of all of the nation's wars, but focused on two: the war in Iraq, which came to an end, for Americans, this past year, and the Vietnam War, which began, for Americans, 50 years ago.

Mr. Obama was quiet, however, about the war in Afghanistan, the one for which he will be remembered in military history. Perhaps that's because things in Afghanistan are still muddled; will it end like Vietnam — an

abject, helicopters-flying-out-of-Kabul, people-hanging-on-the-skids defeat — or in an unsatisfying and untidy sort-of victory, like Iraq?

From a traditional point of view, neither option seems particularly attractive. But Mr. Obama should welcome an Iraq-like end to Afghanistan: as contradictory as it may seem, messy and unsatisfying are the hallmarks of success in modern counterinsurgency wars.

America can live, for example, with the current Iraqi government and its policies, and Iraq's increasing oil output will help the global economic recovery. This is an unsatisfying return on the blood and treasure we poured into Iraq, but it is not a complete loss — and it is far better than we could have imagined in 2006, when Iraq was descending into civil war and Al Qaeda had established an important foothold there.

It is not unlikely that 2015 will see a similarly reasonable Afghan government that will hold together with American money and advisers — an unsatisfying end, but not a failure, and not without promise of greater stability to come.

Unsatisfying wars are the stock in trade of counterinsurgency; rarely, if ever, will they end with a surrender ceremony and look like a conventional victory. And yet this is the sort of war we have fought, almost exclusively, for over 50 years. [President John F. Kennedy warned](#) those graduating from West Point in 1961 that they would struggle to defeat insurgent enemies: “Where there is a visible enemy to fight in open combat, the answer is not so difficult. Many serve, all applaud, and the tide of patriotism runs high. But when there is a long, slow struggle, with no immediately visible foe, your choice will seem hard indeed.”

The choices of that West Point class, and of those that would follow it into a counterinsurgency campaign in Southeast Asia, were more difficult than their young president could imagine. Although the Army made real progress in understanding and implementing counterinsurgency principles under Gen. Creighton W. Abrams Jr., the lesson of Vietnam was not to fight irregular wars in Asia.

The Army learned that lesson all too well, forgetting what it had learned in the jungle and focusing on a conventional war with the Soviet Union. The Army and Marines quickly destroyed Saddam Hussein's military in 2003, only to find themselves facing an enemy they should have expected:

insurgents, some inspired by radical Islam, but many more by simple nationalism.

Hard lessons in counterinsurgency had to be relearned before Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates and Gen. David H. Petraeus implemented a strategy that combined fighting with negotiations. The 2007 surge, employing new counterinsurgency tactics, and the mindless brutality of the insurgent group Al Qaeda in Iraq persuaded the Sunni tribes to “flip” and start fighting the radicals rather than Americans.

The surge changed the war in Iraq dramatically, even as Barack Obama, then a candidate for president, was promising to swing resources away from Iraq and into the “good war” in Afghanistan. President Obama fulfilled his campaign promise and then some, tripling American forces in Afghanistan during his first year while also doubling down on drone strikes in Pakistan.

Again, the strategy, aided by the killing of Osama bin Laden by a Navy SEAL team, worked to a degree. With Al Qaeda effectively dismantled, a government that is good enough to run the country is likely to be sufficient to achieve core American national security objectives as well.

Like any successful counterinsurgency, Afghanistan is likely to end somewhat unsatisfyingly for Americans, with a corrupt but gradually improving government in Kabul, advisers helping Afghan security forces fight a weakening but still dangerous Taliban, and a schizophrenic Pakistan alternately helping Afghan and Taliban fighters.

It may also, in the odd logic of counterinsurgency, be more likely to succeed if we leave the project somewhat unfinished. T. E. Lawrence, no slouch as an insurgent himself, advised: “Do not try to do too much with your own hands ... It is their war, and you are to help them, not to win it for them.”

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