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The New York Times

Tripping on His Own Red Line?

[David E. Sanger](#)

August 31, 2013 -- IT started with just 20 words, intended to keep Barack Obama out of a war. The tens of thousands dying in Syria was a global

tragedy, he told reporters a year ago, when the worst horrors were still months away, but as commander in chief he had to focus on American strategic interests and could not intervene in every humanitarian tragedy around the world.

Then he offered his one caveat. “A red line for us,” [he said](#), “is we start seeing a whole bunch of chemical weapons moving around or being utilized.”

A year later, a president famously inclined to disentangle himself from the Middle East now finds himself trapped by that seemingly simple declaration. To do nothing in the face of images of children killed by poison gas would cripple his credibility in the last three years of his presidency. As Secretary of State John Kerry [said](#) on Friday, in making the case for a military strike, “it matters if nothing is done,” not least because of the signal it sends to the Iranians, the North Koreans and others who are measuring Mr. Obama’s willingness to enforce other red lines on far worse weapons. For those countries, it remains an open question — even after the drone strikes against terrorists and cyberattacks on nuclear facilities — if a president elected to get America out of wars is willing to take the huge risks of enforcing his lines in the sand.

Yet the sharply limited goals Mr. Obama has described in explaining his rationale for taking military action now — “a shot across the bow” to halt future chemical attacks, he told PBS — pose risks of their own. If President Bashar al-Assad emerges from a few days of Tomahawk missile barrages relatively unscathed, he will be able to claim that he faced down not only his domestic opponents but the United States, which he has charged is the secret hand behind the uprising.

In the words of one recently departed senior adviser to Mr. Obama, “the worst outcome would be making Assad look stronger.”

How did Mr. Obama find himself in this trap? Partly, it was an accident of history: in the early, heady days of the Arab uprisings, no one bet that Mr. Assad would survive this long, in a country where his Alawite sect is a minority.

But there is an argument that Mr. Obama’s own caution about foreign interventions put him in this box. Horrific as the Aug. 21 chemical weapons attack was, it was no more horrific than the conventional attacks that caused the deaths of 100,000 Syrians. Those prompted only a minimal

American response — international condemnations, some sporadic arms shipments for a ragtag group of rebels, and an understandable reluctance by an American president to get on the same side of the civil war as Al Nusra Front, an affiliate of Al Qaeda.

Now the crossing of the red line has forced Mr. Obama's hand. He says he is intervening to stop the use of a specific weapon whose use in World War I shocked the world. But he is not intervening to stop the mass killing, or to remove the man behind those attacks. "This is not like the Bush decision in 2003," Benjamin J. Rhodes, a deputy national security adviser, said on Thursday. "That intervention was aimed at regime change. This is designed to restore an international norm" against the use of poison gases.

It is a major difference. But the limitation on the use of force may also prove a paralyzing one, undercutting the long-term success of the application of American firepower. That has been the chief critique of those who argue that the only thing worse than getting America entangled in another Arab uprising whose inner dynamics we barely understand is to get involved in one and make no difference. "The argument has been that you can do a strike, call it a day, and say, 'We taught them a lesson,' " said Eliot A. Cohen, a Johns Hopkins professor of strategic studies who wrote "Supreme Command," about the uneasy relationship between presidents and the militaries they direct. "I fear it will be a symbolic use of power," added Mr. Cohen, who served as a counselor to Condoleezza Rice when she was secretary of state.

MR. OBAMA does not seem to share the same fear, or at least he does not give voice to that concern. He told his staff during recent Situation Room meetings as American naval and air power was moved into the eastern Mediterranean that no United States intervention would alter the long-term balance of power in the Syrian civil war. That was the bitter lesson of the Iraq and Afghan wars for Mr. Obama: any American president who thinks that, by dint of force or example, he can change the nature of societies is bound for a comeuppance. For him, that was the fatal flaw of the George W. Bush presidency, an unquestioning belief that once America defeats a dictator, a newly freed populace will step in to shape the wreckage into a country more in the American image.

That was a bad bet in Iraq and a worse one, Mr. Obama has argued, in Syria. It explains why, when he justified the Libya intervention in 2011 on

humanitarian grounds, he was quick to explain that the United States could not move to oust every despot — only the ones, he seemed to suggest, who could be ousted with minimal risks to Americans.

But Syria looks nothing like Libya. It cannot be won from the air, or with missile strikes. Thus Mr. Obama’s insistence that any action in Syria has to be divorced from the civil war that has torn the country to shreds. Instead, the president wants to fight on territory more directly linked to American interests: the notion that once weapons of mass destruction are used in ordinary conflict, the potential for disaster — for America, and certainly for its allies and partners on Syria’s borders — rises dramatically.

That is an easier policy to explain to a war-weary public and offers a way for the president to exercise a version of his “light footprint” strategy (the fight-at-a-distance strategy behind drones and cyberweapons) without getting mired in another Middle East nightmare.

The problem, of course, is that many conflicts don’t lend themselves to light footprints. Mr. Assad has already survived in office for two years since the president declared that he must go. And at some point, it becomes hard to separate the use of chemical weapons from the dictator who, as an American intelligence briefer told reporters on Friday, sees chemical weapons as just one more bullet in his arsenal.

“A lot of people, including some in the administration, think that the chemical warfare argument is an excuse to get Assad himself,” said Christopher R. Hill, Mr. Obama’s first ambassador to Iraq, and now dean of the Korbel School at the University of Denver. Among them, without doubt, is Mr. Assad himself, who is unlikely to reconsider the value of international treaties.

The chief Washington correspondent for The New York Times.

[Article 2.](#)

Foreign Policy

[The Gamble](#)

[David Rothkopf](#)

AUGUST 31, 2013 -- For a man who is often so Hamlet-like he seems he should be attending meetings in a black velvet doublet and whose Syria policy in particular seems to have been defined primarily by actions not taken and decisions not made, Barack Obama made one of the most profound and momentous decisions of his presidency on Saturday. By announcing that he would require congressional approval before taking action against Syria's regime for gassing its own people, he took a step that seemed certain to have multiple, potentially profound ramifications. Here are just five:

1. A Syria attack isn't a sure bet.

Military action against Syria that seemed a "certainty" on Friday is no longer assured. And if air strikes do take place, their delay -- despite Obama's protestations to the contrary -- make them likely to be less effective. While the president, and particularly Secretary of State John Kerry in his effective remarks on Friday, have made a compelling case for American action in Syria, one can never underestimate this Congress's ability to find reasons for inaction, partisanship, or unproductive caviling. The far right and left of the respective parties are disinclined toward intervention. The more hawkish are disinclined toward actions that are too limited. And many Republicans are disinclined to do anything that might help Obama. What is more, developments in the interim -- like hesitation by other allies -- could make the United States appear more isolated or the likely impact of attacks seem less desirable. All these things could contribute to a "no" vote that would make it very difficult for the president to reverse course and take action anyway.

If the administration persuades Congress to support military action, it will be seen as a victory for the president, to be sure. But it may also have given the Assad regime another two or three weeks to redeploy assets and hunker down -- so that the kind of limited attack currently envisioned has even more limited consequences.

2. Red lines ain't what they used to be.

The president has hemmed and hawed regarding his supposed "red line" on chemical weapons use yet again, further undercutting his credibility. When Obama first suggested a red line, he cited movement or use of chemical weapons as being intolerable. But movement and use have, according to credible reports, occurred on multiple occasions since then -- and the

United States took no action. This latest incident on August 21 was so egregious it was impossible to continue looking the other way. (And it was followed, apparently, by another on August 26.) Taking action seemed the only way to restore a sense that the president was a man who meant what he said. But then, late this week, as Britain balked at supporting Washington and domestic public opinion was seen to oppose any U.S. involvement in Syria, a spirit of hesitation seemed to grab the administration, culminating in Saturday's bombshell. Even if the attacks do take place, a new caveat will have been added to any future warning the president may choose to make: We will act -- if the most feckless Congress in memory chooses to go along with him.

3. He's now boxed in for the rest of his term.

Whatever happens with regard to Syria, the larger consequence of the president's action will resonate for years. The president has made it highly unlikely that at any time during the remainder of his term he will be able to initiate military action without seeking congressional approval. It is understandable that many who have opposed actions taken by the president without congressional approval under the War Powers Act would welcome Obama's newly consultative approach. It certainly appears to be more in keeping with the kind of executive-legislative collaboration envisioned in the Constitution. While America hasn't actually required a congressional declaration of war to use military force since the World War II era, the bad decisions of past presidents make Obama's move appealing to the war-weary and the war-wary.

But whether you agree with the move or not, it must be acknowledged that now that Obama has set this kind of precedent -- and for a military action that is exceptionally limited by any standard (a couple of days, no boots on the ground, perhaps 100 cruise missiles fired against a limited number of military targets) -- it will be very hard for him to do anything comparable or greater without again returning to the Congress for support. And that's true whether or not the upcoming vote goes his way.

4. This president just dialed back the power of his own office.

Obama has reversed decades of precedent regarding the nature of presidential war powers -- and whether you prefer this change in the balance of power or not, as a matter of quantifiable fact he is transferring greater responsibility for U.S. foreign policy to a Congress that is more

divided, more incapable of reasoned debate or action, and more dysfunctional than any in modern American history. Just wait for the Rand Paul filibuster or similar congressional gamesmanship.

The president's own action in Libya was undertaken without such approval. So, too, was his expansion of America's drone and cyber programs. Will future offensive actions require Congress to weigh in? How will Congress react if the president tries to pick and choose when this precedent should be applied? At best, the door is open to further acrimony. At worst, the paralysis of the U.S. Congress that has given us the current budget crisis and almost no meaningful recent legislation will soon be coming to a foreign policy decision near you. Consider that John Boehner was instantly more clear about setting the timing for any potential action against Syria with his statement that Congress will not reconvene before its scheduled September 9 return to Washington than anyone in the administration has been thus far.

Perhaps more importantly, what will future Congresses expect of future presidents? If Obama abides by this new approach for the next three years, will his successors lack the ability to act quickly and on their own? While past presidents have no doubt abused their War Powers authority to take action and ask for congressional approval within 60 days, we live in a volatile world; sometimes security requires swift action. The president still legally has that right, but Obama's decision may have done more -- for better or worse -- to dial back the imperial presidency than anything his predecessors or Congress have done for decades.

5. America's international standing will likely suffer.

As a consequence of all of the above, even if the president "wins" and persuades Congress to support his extremely limited action in Syria, the perception of America as a nimble, forceful actor on the world stage and that its president is a man whose word carries great weight is likely to be diminished. Again, like the shift or hate it, foreign leaders can do the math. Not only is post-Iraq, post-Afghanistan America less inclined to get involved anywhere, but when it comes to the use of U.S. military force (our one indisputable source of superpower strength) we just became a whole lot less likely to act or, in any event, act quickly. Again, good or bad, that is a stance that is likely to figure into the calculus of those who once feared provoking the United States.

A final consequence of this is that it seems ever more certain that Obama's foreign policy will be framed as so anti-interventionist and focused on disengagement from world affairs that it will have major political consequences in 2016. The dialectic has swung from the interventionism of Bush to the leaning away of Obama. Now, the question will be whether a centrist synthesis will emerge that restores the idea that the United States can have a muscular foreign policy that remains prudent, capable of action, and respects international laws and norms. Almost certainly, that is what President Obama would argue he seeks. But I suspect that others, including possibly his former secretary of state may well seek to define a different approach. Indeed, we may well see the divisions within the Democratic Party on national security emerge as key fault lines in the Clinton vs. Biden primary battles of 2016. And just imagine Clinton vs. Rand Paul in the general election.

David Rothkopf is CEO and editor at large of Foreign Policy. He is the author of [Running the World: The Inside Story of the National Security Council and the Architects of American Power](#).

[Article 3.](#)

Al-Monitor

How Will Hezbollah Respond To a Western Strike on Syria?

By: [An Al-Monitor Correspondent in Beirut](#)

August 31. -- About three months ago, Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah [decided](#) to send his elite military units to Syria to support the military efforts of the regime of President Bashar al-Assad in facing opposition forces. Deputy Russian Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov [reported](#) that Nasrallah had told him, when he met with him on April 27 during a visit to Lebanon, "I intervened in Syria to save the regime, which was on the verge of collapse." Hezbollah's participation in the battle of Qusair — which, according to sources here in Beirut, included approximately 3,000 fighters — led to a change in the balance of the military conflict in Syria in favor of the regime. According to a Hezbollah

source speaking with Al-Monitor on condition of anonymity, it was assumed that, according to the plan, the regime would continue its cooperation with Hezbollah to gain control of the outskirts of Damascus, via a battle in eastern and western Ghouta, as well as through beginning another battle in the Qalamoun region. The latter is adjacent to the Lebanese border facing the western Bekaa valley, and is characterized by rugged terrain. It was also assumed that these two battles would be followed by a battle for Aleppo, which is seen as a battle that would, to a large extent, decide the overall internal Syrian conflict. However, this plan, by which the Syrian army — along with strong operational military support from Hezbollah — would take the reins of the military battle, stopped the day after the [US declared](#) that it was prepared for a military strike against the regime against the backdrop of Western accusations that it had used chemical weapons in the Damascus countryside. Within Hezbollah, this development is seen as a very dangerous turning point affecting all paths of the Syrian crisis from its outbreak until now. The same source said that the international dimension of the Syrian crisis has entered a new phase. Its role is transforming into direct intervention in the events, whereas it previously involved indirect action through providing arms and intelligence to the Syrian opposition. But that same source said that the expected Western military strike will bring the whole region into the conflict and will result in the collapse of red lines. For US President Barack Obama isn't the only one in the region who has red lines. The Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ali Khamenei also has red lines, most importantly preventing the fall of the regime in Syria and protecting the Islamic resistance in Lebanon.

The Hezbollah source believes that, at this moment, the region is heading toward a conflict between Obama's red line and Khamenei's opposing one. It is worth recalling here that an official in the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, an institution characterized as the strongest and most ideological in Iran, [threatened](#) that if Syria comes under attack from the West, the fire would reach Israel.

Sources close to Hezbollah clarified to Al-Monitor that the party, in the event of an American attack, would likely act according to one of the following scenarios:

1. At a minimum, Hezbollah would help to protect cities in areas where the regime has regained control, to prevent any attempt by the opposition to take advantage of the results of the US strike to make progress on the ground in Syria.

2. The next, middle-range option would be for Hezbollah to resort to directing a security message at Washington, through carrying out special security operations. The nature of such operations cannot be predicted at this time, because they would be intended as surprises in the war. The party, however, would only resort to this option when Hezbollah, and first and foremost Iran, were certain that the American strikes were not limited in time and aimed at providing military cover for the opposition's movement on the ground.

3. Finally, at the extreme end, Hezbollah would bomb Israel if it became clear to Tehran that Washington was military engaged in a battle to bring down the regime.

One can confidently predict that the Syrian regime will not be alone in facing any Western strike, or even an American invasion, in the event that things developed for the worst. During the last year of conflict in Syria, the forces defending the regime have not been limited to the Syrian Arab Army, but rather standing beside it — and sometimes in front — were tens of thousands of fighters from Lebanese Hezbollah, [Iraqi Hezbollah](#) and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard. As the conflict shifts from a battle within Syria to a war with American and Iran, these [foreign groups] will take the opportunity to demonstrate that their cause is justified, and that the accusations that they are fighting with the regime against the will of the Syrian people are incorrect. This battle will emphasize that they are fighting on the correct front, which is legitimate and consistent with their doctrine that is hostile to America and Israel and their ambitions in the controlling the region. No observer can imagine that the start of a US war on Syria would not have repercussions on neighboring countries, particularly Lebanon and Israel. Hezbollah is no long a party that is merely affected by the development of events in Syria. Rather, following its announcement that it was involved in the fighting there, it became a concerned party, and assumed responsibilities for the management of the country's conflict equivalent to those assumed by the Assad regime itself. There is information that the party, during recent hours, has raised its

level of mobilization and alert among all units, whether those in Syria or in Lebanon. The party is preparing itself to fight on two fronts at once, in both Syria and Lebanon.

At the heart of this fight, which is expected to erupt within the next few days, will be the prominent role played by the possession of rockets. This comes as part of the embodiment of the Iranian threat, which warned that any Western strike on Syria would lead to igniting the fire in Israel. In a statement made on Aug. 27, [Iranian Defense Minister Hussein Dehghan said](#), "A strike on Syria would threaten the security and stability of the region." Moreover, [the Iranian Foreign Ministry warned](#) that using military means against Syria would have severe repercussions on the entire region.

In light of the current circumstances, Hezbollah is in a very complicated position. On the one hand, it is facing an internal attack from numerous Lebanese political forces that accuse the party of being responsible for dragging the security repercussions of the Syrian crisis into the Lebanese interior. On the other hand, it faces an intense regional political and media attack from the Arab Gulf States, which accuse it of working for Iran, against the interests of the Lebanese people and against the will of the Syrian people wishing to overthrow the Assad regime. From another, fundamental angle, Hezbollah is finding that it may now be forced to fight on two fronts at the same time: against a broad military coalition of NATO countries — led by the US — and against Israel. The arena for such a conflict would stretch from Syria to Lebanon, from the Syrian-Turkish border all the way to Lebanon's border with Israel.

This means that the party must spread its forces — which comprise more than a hundred thousand fighters supported by missile systems, including ground-to-ground missiles, ground-to-sea missiles and perhaps ground-to-air missiles, using the type that are carried on one's shoulders — throughout this entire area that could ignite following an expected Western strike on Syria. There are military experts in Lebanon who expect that, in the event such a war began, it is likely that Hezbollah would demonstrate surprising military capabilities, such as those demonstrated in the 2006 war. In particular, a Hezbollah land-to-sea missile [hit an Israel battleship](#) that was bombarding Beirut from off the Lebanese coast.

Moreover, Hezbollah [used Russian anti-tank Kornet missiles](#) to stop Israeli tank attacks in al-Khayyam, which resulted in heavy losses.

Hezbollah sources revealed to Al-Monitor that the party prefers, as a result of the strategic developments witnessed in the Near East following the Syrian events, to be a partner in a regional and international war, instead of fighting a war with Israel by itself. In the latter case, it would be forced to fight with only weak logistical support from Syria, given Damascus' preoccupation with its own internal problems. Yet, in the case of a regional war, it would be part of a broad front along with Syria, and would receive the same support that the Assad regime is receiving from Iran and Russia. These same sources revealed that Hezbollah is now realizing that its decision to fight in Syria was correct. Had it continued to follow a disassociation policy regarding what was happening there until this point, this would have led to a catastrophe when when the US announced that it is coming to the region with its allies to strike Hezbollah's strategic partner. These sources concluded by saying that the most dangerous thing that could have happened would have been for the Iranian axis in the Near East to allow America to isolate its parties. Now, however, the parties of this axis stand over a unified field. A response to "US aggression" will not occur only on Syria territory, but on a front stretching from Syria's border with Turkey all the way to Lebanon's border with Israel.

[Article 4.](#)

[The Observer](#)

Jordan fears the worst as Syria conflict threatens to destabilise wider region

[Peter Beaumont](#)

1 September 2013 -- In the northern [Jordan](#) villages – some almost split by the border with [Syria](#) – people who have watched the flow of refugees into their country are "holding their breath".

The sentiment is the same as in the other neighbouring countries, [Lebanon](#), [Turkey](#), [Israel](#) and [Iraq](#): a fear that the Syrian conflict, which has already claimed more than 100,000 lives could spill over and destabilise the wider region.

The fear is not unfounded. Already the consequences of the Syrian war are being felt beyond its borders.

Worst affected so far have been Lebanon and Iraq, which – because of their own political fragility and sectarian competitions – have already seen violence and increasing instability.

Britain has advised against all but essential travel to Lebanon, where bomb attacks in the northern city of Tripoli killed 42 people last week, and as regional tensions grow over a possible US military strike on Syria.

On Friday, Lebanon charged five men, including a Sunni Muslim cleric close to the Syrian government, over the bomb attacks on two mosques in Tripoli.

Two other men, including a Syrian military officer, were charged in absentia with placing the bombs.

In Iraq concern has been mounting for months as the violence in its neighbour – in which Sunni jihadi groups linked to those in Iraq have been participating – has escalated.

And amid fear that a US strike could have wider repercussions, Jordan, Turkey and Israel have raised their level of military readiness.

The Jordanian newspaper Al-Ghad underlined the sense of fear, quoting people in the country's northern areas speaking of their concern that their country might be hit in a revenge attack and discussing whether to move to the south.

Turkey has also seen similar rising fears, not least because of its government's strong opposition to Syrian president Bashar al-Assad, which has already seen cross-border fire and the planting of bombs. Last week the country began distributing gas masks and deployed a large team of chemical warfare experts close to the border.

According to sources, [Saudi Arabia](#)'s defence readiness has been raised and leave for the armed forces cancelled. In [Kuwait](#), lawmakers have asked their government to inform them about plans for readiness to deal with repercussions of a strike on Syria, Kuwaiti newspapers have reported.

And in Israel, which some fear might be the target of any retaliatory attack, the government has moved extra anti-missile batteries to the country's north, bordering Syria, issued gas masks to citizens and called up a limited number of reservists, including cyber warfare specialists.

Other countries advising citizens to quit Lebanon included Bahrain, Kuwait and France, while Austria told its people to contact its embassy in Lebanon before travelling there.

Bahrain and Kuwait also urged its nationals in the country to leave immediately, their state news agencies reported.

A senior security source in Lebanon said that around 14,000 people had left the country on Thursday alone, mostly Europeans.

[Article 5.](#)

Project Syndicate

Autumn's Known Unknowns

Nouriel Roubini

31 August 2013 -- During the height of the Iraq war, then-US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld spoke of “known unknowns” – foreseeable risks whose realization is uncertain. Today, the global economy is facing many known unknowns, most of which stem from policy uncertainty.

In the United States, three sources of policy uncertainty will come to a head this autumn. For starters, it remains unclear whether the Federal Reserve will begin to “taper” its open-ended quantitative easing (QE) in September or later, how fast it will reduce its purchases of long-term assets, and when and how fast it will start to raise interest rates from their current zero level. There is also the question of who will succeed Ben Bernanke as Fed Chairman. Finally, yet another partisan struggle over America’s debt ceiling could increase the risk of a government shutdown if the Republican-controlled House of Representatives and President Barack Obama and his Democratic allies cannot agree on a budget.

The first two sources of uncertainty have already affected markets. The rise in US long-term interest rates – from a low of 1.6% in May to recent peaks above 2.9% – has been driven by market fears that the Fed will taper QE too soon and too fast, and by the uncertainty surrounding Bernanke’s successor.

So far, investors have been complacent about the risks posed by the looming budget fight. They believe that – as in the past – the fiscal showdown will end with a midnight compromise that avoids both default

and a government shutdown. But investors seem to underestimate how dysfunctional US national politics has become. With a majority of the Republican Party on a jihad against government spending, fiscal explosions this autumn cannot be ruled out.

Uncertainties abound in other advanced economies as well. Germany's general election appears likely to produce a repeat of the current government coalition of Chancellor Angela Merkel's Christian Democratic Union and the Free Democrats, with opinion polls suggesting that a grand coalition between the CDU and the Social Democrats is less likely. In the former case, current German policies toward the eurozone crisis will not change, despite austerity fatigue in the eurozone's periphery and bailout fatigue in its core.

Political risks in the eurozone's periphery include the collapse of Italy's government and a fresh election as a result of former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's criminal conviction. Greece's ruling coalition could collapse as well, and political tensions may rise even higher in Spain and Portugal. On monetary policy, the European Central Bank's forward guidance – the commitment to keep interest rates at a low level for a long time – is too little too late and has not prevented a rise in short- and long-term borrowing costs, which could stifle the eurozone's already-anemic economic recovery. Whether the ECB will ease policy more aggressively is also uncertain.

Outside of the eurozone, the strength of the United Kingdom's recovery and the Bank of England's soft forward guidance have led to similar “unwarranted” increases in interest rates, which the BoE, like the ECB, seems unable to prevent in the absence of more muscular action. In Japan, the policy uncertainty concerns whether the third arrow of Abenomics – structural reforms and trade liberalization to boost potential growth – will be implemented, and whether the expected rise in the consumption tax in 2014 will choke economic recovery.

In China, November's Third Plenum of the Communist Party Central Committee will show whether China is serious about reforms aimed at shifting from investment-led to consumption-led growth. Meanwhile, China's slowdown has contributed to the end of the commodity super-cycle, which, together with the sharp rise in long-term interest rates (owing

to the scare of an early Fed exit from QE), has led to economic and financial stresses in many emerging-market economies.

These economies – the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) and others – were overhyped for too long. Favorable external conditions – the effect of China’s strong growth on higher commodity prices and easy money from yield-hungry advanced-economy investors – led to a partly artificial boom. Now that the party is over, the hangover is setting in.

This is especially true in India, Brazil, Turkey, South Africa, and Indonesia, all of which suffer from multiple macroeconomic and policy weaknesses – large current-account deficits, wide fiscal deficits, slowing growth, and above-target inflation – as well as growing social protest and political uncertainty ahead of elections in the next 12-18 months. There are no easy choices: defending the currency by hiking interest rates would kill growth and harm banks and corporate firms; loosening monetary policy to boost growth might push their currencies into free-fall, causing a spike in inflation and jeopardizing their ability to attract capital to finance their external deficits.

There are two major geopolitical uncertainties as well. First, will the looming military strikes by the US and its allies against Syria be limited in scope and time, or will they trigger a wider military confrontation? The last thing that a fragile global economy needs now is another round of peak oil prices.

Second, a year ago the US convinced Israel to give its non-military approach to Iran’s nuclear-weapons ambitions time to bear fruit. But, after a year of economic sanctions and negotiations with no result, Israel’s patience on what it regards as an existential issue is wearing thin. Even short of an actual military conflict – which could double oil prices overnight – the resumption of saber-rattling by Israel and the war of words between the two sides could lead to a sharp rise in energy costs.

The looming known unknowns are plentiful. Some outcomes may be more positive, or at least less damaging, than expected. But the realization this autumn of even some of the risks described here could derail the global economy’s still-wobbly recovery. And the meta-risk of policy mistakes and accidents remains very high.

Nouriel Roubini, a professor at NYU's Stern School of Business and Chairman of Roubini Global Economics, was Senior Economist for International Affairs in the White House's Council of Economic Advisers during the Clinton Administration. He has worked for the International Monetary Fund, the US Federal Reserve, and the World Bank.

[Article 6](#)

Ahram

Tamarod campaigns in the Arab world reflect local woes

Nadeen Shaker

31 Aug 2013 -- In the weeks following the 30 June protests in Egypt, spearheaded by the Tamarod (Rebel) campaign, distinct yet fundamentally similar namesake campaigns sprang up in the Arab world. The Rebel campaign, turned grassroots movement, led to the removal of elected former president Mohamed Morsi. In Tunisia, Bahrain, Libya, Syria, Morocco, and Palestine, different versions of the Tamarod campaign took root, each born out of the experiences and political demands of its own country.

Tunisia

Inspired by Egypt, Tunisia was the first to follow suit after Egypt in early July, beginning with a nationwide signature drive.

Mahdi Saaied, spokesperson for Tamarod Tunisia, told Ahram Online that Tamarod Tunisia aims at reaching two million signatures, with 1,600,000 gathered by 26 August. Though the signature drive mirrors that of Egypt, Tamarod Tunisia eyes a different end goal. "We differ from the Egyptian experience in that we don't want the military to intervene in political affairs," Saaied said. "Our military is much-respected in the capacity of defending and protecting our country."

Speaking to Ahram Online, Meriem Dhaouadi, a Tunisian youth activist, expresses the campaign's clear-cut demands, which comprise of calling for the formation of a consensual government, dissolving the elected National Constituent Assembly charged with drafting the constitution and creating a "body of experts" to replace it.

Though such demands still stand, the movement added another goal after the watershed date of 25 July: to find out who is behind two political assassinations in Tunisia. Parliamentarian and NCA member Mohamed Brahmi was shot dead by unidentified gunmen outside his home in the exact way in which political opposition member Chokri Belaid lost his life 6 February. On 27 August, the Tunisian government declared the ultra-Salafist group Ansar Al-Sharia responsible for the two killings, additionally citing the group's links to Al-Qaeda. "This is only half of the truth," says Saaied. "Since the first assassination of Belaid, we already knew that Ansar Al-Sharia was behind it. What is new and should be revealed is that Ennahda (the ruling coalition) conspired in these murders, along with the interior ministry. This is stagecraft, a play to divert blame from Ennahda," Saaied added. Mehdi believes the security establishment in Tunisia is working with Ennahda to cover up its role in the assassinations. Saaied says that Tamarod supporters are to continue an open-ended demonstration in front of the Constituent Assembly, floating additional demands such as disbanding militias and removing Tunisian President Moncef Marzouki. Protestors have clashed with security forces on several occasions, including 29 July, when many were injured. Standing intransigent on the NCA's dissolution has pitted the campaign against the government, which has recently gone into negotiations with trade unions and the opposition, promising the formation of a consensual government.

Mabrouka Mbarek, a Congress for the Republic NCA member, said that asking the government to resign is a legitimate demand, but calling for the dissolution of the NCA is "irresponsible." "The government was not able to prevent the assassination of a politician," she asserted.

Bahrain

Tamarod Bahrain was launched 14 August, Bahrain's Independence Day from the British in 1971 – an anniversary that the regime refuses to recognise. The campaign called for partial civil disobedience in cities in Bahrain and its capital after police, in anticipation of that day, had warned of a harsh response.

Only weeks earlier, the Bahraini parliament presented a set of 22 recommendations to curb "all forms of violence and terrorism." Those included "applying all punitive laws" and penalties related to committing acts of terrorism, the harshest of which is stripping instigators of their

citizenship, and banning sit-ins and rallies in the capital Manama.

“Democracy,” a highly symbolic demand, was what pushed people to take to the streets on the day of the anniversary, Tamarod Bahrain spokesperson Hussein Youssef said, adding that “that was in itself the campaign’s objective.”

“We created a different model of Tamarod than that of Egypt. We did not collect signatures, but rather brought together nationalists and streamlined different groups under a popular, pro-democracy framework. It didn't matter if a group called for the total overhaul of the system or just reform. We wanted to create a new equation on the ground [between the people and the regime],” Youssef explained.

Only attempting to gauge people’s response, Youssef deemed the campaign successful, with a 60-65 percent participation rate in the capital, and 58 percent in other areas.

Youssef is now under UN protection in Beirut after the Bahraini government requested his deportation. “We will continue to respect the laws, but laws presented by parliament and the regime are unjust and do not fit a country aspiring for democracy,” he said.

Syria, Libya, Morocco, and Palestine

“We are not against Hamas as a resistance movement , but we are against its complicity in seeking to spearhead [Muslim] Brotherhood projects in the region, and dissolve national issues, including the Palestinian cause. We are against Hamas’s policies because they aim to scrap a true liberation movement which only belongs to the people,” Qais El-Baroudi, spokesperson for Tamarod Gaza, told Ahram Online.

The Gaza campaign began with a marginalised group of youth — four of which were later arrested — who were fed up with Hamas fostering, in their view, an environment devoid of democracy and civil participation. Their first appearance was a homemade video of masked men railing against Hamas.

How the campaign is to develop is linked to the volatile situation in Gaza. “Tamarod Gaza is not a copy-paste of the Egyptian campaign for several reasons. We do not collect signatures because, in Gaza, we have no independent judiciary and army to protect us as in Egypt, for example. Therefore, the movement will take up its character in response to the facts on the ground,” El-Baroudi said.

A separate Tamarod Facebook page for Palestine was created on 1 July, calling for an end to division and corruption.

Another for Libya vaunts the banner: "Revolution is our unity and parties are our division."

Syria's Tamarod campaign action centres around gathering signatures against the Syrian National Coalition, which has fallen short of delivering on its promises to Syrians, organisers say.

In Morocco, a local Tamarod campaign began with the call to bring down the Islamist government of the Justice and Development Party, and is finding support from people across the political spectrum.