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Subject: April 17 update
Date: Thu, 17 Apr 2014 11:18:31 +0000

17 April, 2014

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[Article 1.](#)

The New Yorker

The United States and Israel: What Now for the “Honest Broker”?

[John Cassidy](#)

April 16, 2014 -- Was there ever a more predictable end to a Middle East peace effort than the demise of John Kerry's recent initiative? Earlier this year, in a rare [effort to be optimistic](#), I suggested this could be the Secretary of State's year, noting that "his biggest advantage, perhaps his only advantage, is that all sides know this may well be the last chance for a peaceful settlement." I should have stuck with my dour Yorkshire skepticism.

Even before Kerry could get the two sides to sit down and negotiate, the Israeli government gave him the bum's rush, approving a new wave of settlement construction and delaying a release of Palestinian prisoners. The Palestinians reacted by applying for membership to various international organizations, and that was that. Not even dangling the possible release of Jonathan Pollard, the Israeli spy, could rescue things for Kerry. And when he pointed out the simple truth that the failure to release the prisoners and the announcement about the settlements had [precipitated the collapse](#) in the peace process, [he faced accusations from prominent Israelis, not for the first time](#), of being biased, and possibly even anti-Semitic.

In this country, the postmortems are still coming, including [a despairing column](#) by Tom Friedman, a longtime observer of the Middle East, in Wednesday's New York Times. "We're not dealing anymore with your grandfather's Israel, and they're not dealing anymore with your grandmother's America either," Friedman writes. "Time matters, and the near half-century since the 1967 war has changed both of us in ways neither wants to acknowledge — but which the latest impasse in talks only underscores."

That's at least half right. As Friedman points out, Israel has become a much more religious and stridently ethnocentric country over the years, and it's got to the stage where, he notes, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who originally came to power on a platform of rejecting concessions to the Palestinians, is regarded as a moderate conservative. The settler movement is central. At the time of the Camp David peace agreement, there were less than a hundred thousand Israelis in West Bank settlements. Now, there are close to half a million, with the number growing by the day.

What hasn't changed is U.S. policy toward Israel, and the way that it is marketed. From James Baker to Madeline Albright and now Kerry, senior

U.S. diplomats have tried to present the United States as an “honest broker” between the two sides, interested only in the promotion of peaceful coexistence. About the only people who take this idea seriously are U.S. officials and commentators. The United States isn’t, and can’t be, a neutral mediator in the Middle East. It has long acted as Israel’s closest ally, biggest benefactor, and ultimate guarantor of its security. In [an op-ed in the Times](#) earlier this year, Avi Shlaim, the eminent Israeli historian who teaches at Oxford, pointed out some awkward realities:

The simple truth is that Israel wouldn’t be able to survive for very long without American support. Since 1949, America’s economic aid to Israel amounts to a staggering \$118 billion and America continues to subsidize the Jewish state to the tune of \$3 billion annually. America is also Israel’s main arms supplier and the official guarantor of its “quantitative military edge” over all its Arab neighbors....

In the diplomatic arena, Israel relies on America to shield it from the consequences of its habitual violations of international law.... America poses as an honest broker, but everywhere it is perceived as Israel’s lawyer. The American-sponsored “peace process” since 1991 has been a charade: all process and no peace while providing Israel with just the cover it needs to pursue its illegal and aggressive colonial project on the West Bank. Shlaim’s op-ed appeared in the International New York Times, formerly the International Herald Tribune, rather than in the American print edition of the paper (though it was available online). In this country, a type of cognitive dissonance rules. Politicians of both parties fall over each to express their undying support for Israel. At the same time, though, the U.S. government insists that it wants to participate in the peacemaking game as an umpire rather than as the primary backer of one of the teams.

Occasionally, somebody in authority questions whether unqualified fealty to Israel is in the national interest. In 2010, General David Petraeus, who was then the head of U.S. Central Command, warned that Israel’s intransigence on settlements, and the U.S. government’s failure to do anything about it, was [undermining U.S. influence](#) elsewhere in the Middle East. But nothing really changes, and Netanyahu and his allies are well aware of this. In 2010, they humiliated Vice-President Joseph Biden by [unveiling a plan](#) for new settlements during one of his official visits. This time, it was Kerry’s turn to be swatted aside like an annoying bee.

It's been clear for years that the one thing that might—and only might—change the Israeli government's thinking is a credible threat by the United States of pulling away, cutting back its military aid, and joining an international effort to isolate the Jewish state. If the United States were to remove the universal presumption that, ultimately, it will always take Israel's side, it could actually play the role of honest broker. But what are the chances of that happening?

A [recent article](#) in The Economist raised the possibility of the United States “ditching” Israel, but that was just speculation. The Israel lobby in Washington is as strong as ever, and recent polls show that a sizable majority of Americans believe the United States [should continue to support Israel](#), or even support it more vigorously.

With little public pressure for a shift in policy, it's hard to see why one might come about. As Israel continues to build settlements in the West Bank and establish unalterable “facts on the ground,” the United States will continue to back it up militarily and economically. Since that stance appears to reflect what most Americans want, it can be, and will be, rationalized as a reflection of public opinion. But, please, let's end the pretense that the United States doesn't take sides.

John Cassidy is a British-American journalist, who is a staff writer at The New Yorker and a contributor to The New York Review of Books, having previously been an editor at The Sunday Times of London and a deputy editor at the New York Post.

[Article 2.](#)

Al Jazeera

The ineptness of geopolitics

John Bell

16 Apr 2014 -- Between 1814 and 1815, ambassadors from five great European countries sat together in the Congress of Vienna to find a balance of power in Europe after the Napoleonic Wars. They succeeded, and set a model for diplomacy and managing state interests that persists to this day. The paradigm included territorial trade-offs, and the premise that rational

men - and it is almost always men - trading interests can find answers to contests of power.

Two hundred years later, in a far less august setting, in a business school in Madrid, a young man asked speakers discussing the geopolitics of the Middle East whether they could not get beyond grand narratives of power, and consider paradigms that would actually meet the needs of people. Some criticised him for talking out of place, and diluting a debate on the battle of nations, but his question haunted the rest of the discussion, casting an invisible shadow on whether classical geopolitics and traditional diplomacy can meet people's basic needs.

Today, beyond lingering problems, such as the open wound in Palestine and the tensions in North Korea, Syria continues to disintegrate, Ukraine is shaken from Donetsk to Crimea, and serious tensions are rising between China and its neighbours in the East and South China Seas. More globally, the most recent report of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change states that, if we do not shift massively away from fossil fuels, tripling global use of renewable energy sources, global temperatures will rise by 2 degrees Celsius by 2030. That's a mere 16 years away. The likelihood that 19th century diplomatic habits will resolve any of these tensions and challenges is low.

Case in point, the senior diplomat of the largest global power, US Secretary of State John Kerry, is exerting enormous diplomatic energy and incurring vast movements across the globe with tepid results. All the pushing and pulling with the Russians signify no end to the Syrian tragedy, only an agreement on chemical weapons that leaves all other means of killing available. All the efforts in Israel and Palestine are to get the parties to the table, not to conclude durable solutions for Jerusalem, and the long-suffering refugees. The jury's out on Iran and the nuclear file, but agreements with China over the disputed islands are very unlikely, and any geopolitical deals over Ukraine to satisfy Russia's anger and pride (justified or not) risk ignoring the interests and needs of the large majority of Ukrainians.

'Thucydidean Trap'

Lanxin Ziang, a fellow at the Transatlantic Academy, has called this obsession with balance of power the "Thucydidean Trap" and blames the

US for falling into it against China. Yet, none - neither China, nor the US or Russia - appear to show any capability, or desire, to avoid this habit. The chance that trade-offs between states will resolve the larger global challenges of our time, such as water and food shortages, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, economic inequalities and climate change, is close to nil. From energy security in Europe, to tensions in the western Pacific to the very lives of millions of Syrians, the classical process of diplomacy seems insufficient. National interests are too entrenched, and national obsessions too self-serving to permit the necessary greater gains. Political trade-offs and arguments inside countries are often as problematic as those between nations. Even if solutions are found, who is to say that the sum of the compromises will equal the required solution to an issue as critical and complex as climate change?

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Another dark force also haunts international relations. Diplomacy is a clever game, for the clever, by the clever. Indeed, it can be so much so that diplomats get lost in its attractive labyrinths, forgetting their original virtuous purpose. Some point to the intelligence of Russian President Vladimir Putin in Game Theory and encourage others to beat him at his own game. Meanwhile, as the game of power reels on, the real world erodes and people continue to suffer by the wayside.

The tragic situation in Syria is instructive. All involved - Syrians, regional parties and beyond - are stuck in an international geopolitical gridlock, unable to move forward or backward in a congested intersection, as the Syrian people are crushed in the process. It is an understatement that traditional diplomacy and its twin, geopolitics, have not helped on this issue.

Is there a way forward? No one can envisage being rid of geopolitics or gamesmanship; however, a new reality must also set in. National powers and governments must shed the pretence that they have the power to meet the needs of their citizens on matters of global import and complexity. Today, there may simply be challenges which nation-states cannot handle

in the classical manner of the Congress of Vienna - some national powers must be given up for a greater good, as well as for the welfare of the very citizens national powers claim to protect.

Interests and excesses

Secondly, leaders and citizens must differentiate between interests and excesses. Is it in Syria's interest for President Bashar al-Assad to destroy his country in order to save it? Do Russia's damaged pride or US fears after 9/11 warrant creating havoc in other countries? The case can be made that these cases involve excess more than interest, and citizens, above all, must recognise that difference.

Indeed, although a rare leader may seize these imperatives, the citizen ultimately has the decisive role. Desmond Tutu has recently said regarding climate change that "people of conscience need to break their ties with corporations financing the injustice of climate change". So citizens must also vote out governments that don't deliver on such a crucial file, and call the bluff of leaders who use jingoism as an excuse for not pursuing real solutions. The traditional notion that each nation can get through the coming problems by just banding more and more together is an illusion that citizens can start to see through.

Thirdly, regarding the practitioners of diplomacy, Dag Hammarskjold stated they "must not seek the appearance of influence at the cost of its reality". The "game", as appealing as it is, is only useful if it serves a larger human interest. The young man in Madrid was right. The old paradigms do not efficiently serve people's needs, material or emotional, and political systems are in need of redesign towards that end.

There is another hidden quality built into the game of power and geopolitics. Classical diplomacy often works when context permits it to, ie, when the circumstances shift and provide space for it to settle the score. To cite two examples, it is no coincidence that the Congress of Vienna succeeded after the tribulations and agonies of the Napoleonic wars, and peace between Egypt and Israel came after the 1973 war. The historical change permits the success of classical diplomacy, not the other way around.

Unfortunately, we cannot afford to wait for such future agonies in order to solve our problems. They may be of a scale and complexity previously

unexperienced. We cannot let the ineptness of an old habit remain our master when other roads are possible.

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[Article 3.](#)

The Washington Post

The U.S. must stand behind its security obligations

Michael Chertoff

April 16 -- On the eve of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003, [Gen. James Mattis admonished the 1st Marine Division](#) to “[d]emonstrate to the world there is ‘No Better Friend, No Worse Enemy.’ ” That motto could serve as a guiding principle for sound national security policy. Regrettably, our allies wonder whether the United States is demonstrating the reverse. Since leaving as secretary of homeland security in January 2009, I have talked with officials from friendly nations in Asia and the Middle East. Increasingly, I hear skepticism about whether the United States remains a reliable ally our friends can trust for support against attacks. These private conversations echo public statements by leaders in the Persian Gulf states and Asia expressing concern that they may have to fend for themselves in the face of military challenges from Iran, China or North Korea. The deterrent value of alliances and treaties depends on convincing potential adversaries that we will respond to aggression against our partners as firmly as if aggression were directed against ourselves. Establishing that as a credible warning means being measured in what we say and matching our deeds to our words. Often, we have done neither. U.S. intervention in Libya was prompted not by an alliance or treaty commitment but by a humanitarian impulse. Our insistence on multilateral action was sensible, but the characterization of this as “leading from behind” unfortunately implied that we were trying to hide behind our allies. This echoed the perception that U.S. security policy prioritized

exiting Iraq and Afghanistan and avoiding all but surgical military action in the future.

More serious is the perception that the U.S. approach to Syria has been a combination of bluster and retreat. In August 2011, President Obama said that “[the time has come for President Assad to step aside](#).” We invested little in aid or support to effect this. One year later, the president articulated his [red line on Bashar al-Assad’s use of chemical weapons](#). Rightly or wrongly, he did so without obtaining a promise of congressional backing. But when [proof of that use](#) became unmistakable, the president abruptly decided that he should [seek legislative approval](#). And when that became chancy, he seized upon a Russian “off ramp” that has succeeded in entrenching Assad’s status and, according to the March update from the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, [has not come close to eliminating Syria’s chemical weapons](#) or [weapons capability](#).

One Asian official with whom I spoke this year expressly pointed to Syria as a reason to doubt U.S. willingness to stand with allies against an increasingly assertive China. Interestingly, he also cited the recent [memoir by former defense secretary Robert Gates](#) to question whether U.S. aversion to conflict means shaky commitments in what is an increasingly risky region. Even at home, 70 percent of Americans believe the United States is less respected than in the past, according to a [December Pew Research poll](#). Not surprisingly, Russian President Vladimir Putin appears to have read our passivity as a license to [pursue control](#), if not conquest, of his neighbors. He has effectively repudiated the [1994 Budapest memorandum](#) on security assurances in which Ukraine agreed to give up its nuclear arsenal in exchange for commitments from the United States, Britain and Russia to ensure its political independence and territorial sovereignty. U.S. disregard for those security assurances, which were [renewed in 2009](#), suggests that Russia may regard them as empty promises. Of course, diminished U.S. credibility is a result of more than administration policy. Some neo-isolationist Republican lawmakers and advocacy groups have repeatedly disparaged the value of standing with our allies or been dismissive of aggression on the other side of the globe. They have supported budget cuts that seriously diminish U.S. military capabilities and contradict our promises of support for allies. Make no mistake: A world that doubts whether the United States will stand with its

allies is a much more dangerous world. If nations in the Middle East and Asia believe that we are irresolute in our security commitments, they will make their own arrangements. The risk of miscalculation leading to conflict will increase. Some nations will take the lesson that securing themselves requires obtaining nuclear capability. And when countries believe our red lines are revocable or mere bluffs, the danger that they will provoke a war increases, as did Saddam Hussein's misreading of U.S. intentions in 1990, which led to the invasion of Kuwait. A strategy reset requires that we define and articulate real red lines, that we maintain the soft and hard power to enforce those red lines and that when red lines are crossed, we respond with strong economic action, military assistance or even military action. A clearly articulated alliance strategy backed with resolute action is the only way to restore lasting stability that promotes security at home and around the globe.

Michael Chertoff was secretary of the Department of Homeland Security from 2005 to 2009. He co-founded and is chairman of the Chertoff Group, a global security and risk management advisory firm.

[Article 4.](#)

Washington Post

Existential Crisis for Obama Too

[David Ignatius](#)

April 16, 2014 -- As President Obama looks at the Ukraine crisis, he sees an asymmetry of interests: Simply put, the future of Ukraine means more to Vladimir Putin's Russia than it does to the U.S. or Europe. For Putin, this is an existential crisis; for the West, so far, it isn't -- as the limited U.S. and European response has demonstrated.

Putin has exploited this imbalance, seizing Crimea and now fomenting unrest in eastern Ukraine, perhaps as a prelude to invasion. But in the process, Putin may be tipping the asymmetry in the other direction. For Obama, this is now becoming an existential crisis, too, about maintaining a rules-based international order.

Here's the risk for Putin: If he doesn't move to de-escalate the crisis soon, by negotiating with the Ukrainians at a meeting in Geneva Thursday, he could begin to suffer significant long-term consequences. German Chancellor Angela Merkel will oppose Russia's use of force, and even the Chinese (who normally don't mind bullying of neighbors) are uneasy. As Russian agents infiltrate eastern Ukraine, backed by about 40,000 troops just across the border, the White House sees Putin weighing three options, all bad for the West:

-- A federal Ukraine that would lean toward Moscow. The acting government in Kiev signaled this week it might move in this direction, following the turmoil in eastern Ukraine. Putin wants a decentralization plan that grants so much power to the Russian-speaking east that Russia would have an effective veto on Ukraine's policies.

-- Annexation of eastern Ukraine, along the model of Crimea. The pro-Russian "demonstrators" who have seized buildings in Donetsk, Kharkiv and other eastern cities have already demanded a referendum on joining Russia, which was the prelude in Crimea. The State Department says the protesters' moves are orchestrated by the Russian intelligence service.

-- Invasion, using the pretext of civil war in eastern Ukraine. If the acting government in Kiev (which on Tuesday reclaimed an airport in the East) tries to crack down hard, Putin might use this as a rationale for Russian military intervention. (U.S. intelligence analysts think Russian troops would have invaded several weeks ago if the West hadn't threatened serious sanctions.)

U.S. analysts believe that Putin would rather not invade. He prefers the veneer of legitimacy, and his instincts as a former intelligence officer push him toward paramilitary covert action, rather than rolling tanks across an international border. But Russian troops are provisioned for a long stay -- a warning sign that Putin will keep the threat of force alive until his demands are met.

Obama had regarded Putin as the ultimate transactional politician, so the White House has been flummoxed by Putin's unbending stance on Ukraine. In phone conversations with Obama, most recently Monday, Putin hasn't used strident rhetoric. Instead, he offers his narrative of anti-Russian activities in Ukraine. Putin is now so locked in this combative version of events that space for diplomacy has almost disappeared.

Obama's critics will argue that he has always misread Putin by failing to recognize the bullying side of his nature. Even now, Obama is wary of making Ukraine a test of wills. He appears ready to endorse a Cold War-style "Finlandization" for Ukraine, in which membership of the European Union would be a distant prospect and NATO membership would be off the table.

This in-between role for Ukraine would probably be fine with Europeans. They've had such trouble absorbing the current 28 EU members that they don't want another headache. Like Obama, the Europeans stumbled into this crisis, overpromising and underdelivering.

Obama doesn't want to turn Ukraine into a proxy war with Russia. For this reason, he is resisting proposals to arm the Ukrainians. The White House thinks arming Kiev at this late stage would invite Russian intervention without affecting the outcome. The U.S. is providing limited intelligence support for Kiev, but nothing that would tilt the balance.

Obama's strategy is to make Putin pay for his adventurism, long term. Unless the Russian leader moves quickly to de-escalate the crisis, the U.S. will push for measures that could make Russia significantly weaker over the next few years. Those moves could include sanctions on Russian energy and arms exports, deployment of U.S. NATO troops in the Baltic states, and aggressive efforts to reduce European dependence on Russian gas.

Obama's task now is to convince allies and adversaries alike that maintaining international order is something he's ready to stand up for. Unless he shows that resolve, Putin will keep rolling.

[Article 5.](#)

The American Interest

Strategy after Crimea Playing Putin's Game

Walter Russell Mead

April 15, 2014 -- Whatever the ultimate outcome of Vladimir Putin's Crimean Gambit, now threatening to become a Donbas Gambit, it reminds us that the United States still has some unfinished business in Europe. Putin's dramatic move into Crimea, and his subsequent sporting with Ukraine like a cat playing with a wounded mouse, is devastating to liberal

aspirations about the kind of Europe, and world, we would like to live in. It affronts our moral and political sensibilities, and it raises the specter of a serious and unfavorable shift in the regional balance of power. But so far, Western leaders have signally failed to develop an effective response to this, to them, an utterly unexpected and shocking challenge.

Since the end of the Cold War, when the Soviet Union, successor state to the old Tsarist empire, fell apart, the former Russian empire has been divided into eleven separate republics. The closest parallel, an ominous one to many of these states, would be to what happened the last time the Russian state collapsed, in 1917-1919. Then as in 1990, the former empire splintered into a collection of separate republics. Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan, the Central Asian states and the Baltic republics set out on an independent existence. Then, as Lenin and his heirs consolidated power in Moscow, the various breakaway republics returned (in some cases more willingly than others) to the fold. By 1939, when Soviet troops invaded the Baltic Republics, from Central Asia to the Baltic Sea, almost all of the far-flung dominions of the Romanovs were once more under a single flag.

Only Poland and Finland were able to resist incorporation into the Soviet Union, and the Poles were forced into the Warsaw Pact.

Lenin and Stalin were able to rebuild the tsarist empire first because they succeeded in creating a strong state in Russia, second because many of the breakaway states were divided and weak, and finally because a permissive international environment posed few effective barriers to the reassertion of Moscow's power.

There should be little doubt in anyone's mind today that the Kremlin aims to repeat the process, and from President Putin's desk it must look as if many of the pieces for a second restoration are in place. Many of the ex-Soviet republics are weak, divided and badly governed. Many are locked in conflicts over territory or torn by ethnic strife. President Putin, whatever one may think of his methods or of the long-term prognosis, has rebuilt a strong Russian state that is able to mobilize the nation's resources in the service of a revisionist foreign policy. And the international environment, while not perhaps as permissive as in the immediate aftermath of World War One (when Lenin gathered many of the straying republics back to Russia's bosom) or the prelude to World War Two (when Stalin completed the project), nevertheless affords President Putin some hopes of success.

At the military level, the United States now has its weakest military presence in Europe since the 1940s, and with large defense cutbacks built into budget assumptions and significant commitments elsewhere, it would be extremely difficult for the United States to rebuild its military presence in Europe without a 180 degree turn by the Obama administration. The European members of NATO, meanwhile, have continued their generational program of disarmament even as Russia rebuilt its capacity. Russia's military capacity is limited and its ability to project power over significant distances is small, but the military balance of forces in the European theater hasn't been this favorable to the Russians since the end of the Cold War.

But Putin doesn't need military parity or anything like it. Lenin and Stalin were much weaker than their potential opponents when they rebuilt the Russian empire under the Soviet flag, but leaders read world politics shrewdly enough to understand that their opponents' greater military power wouldn't actually come into play. Once Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire collapsed, the western allies of World War One could have imposed almost any settlement they liked on eastern Europe, had they been willing to back their designs with military force and sustained political energy. But war weary publics at home, divided counsels among the allies, and a western preoccupation with the chaos elsewhere in Europe allowed Lenin and Trotsky to regain much of what was lost in the chaos of transition and civil war. Similarly, the grotesque parody of foreign policy that shaped British and French designs during the illusion-ridden 1930s ultimately created a situation in which Moscow could act in the Baltic, despite its military weakness and economic difficulties.

Putin today must believe that western division and confusion offer him solid assurances that he can disregard the prospects of western military intervention as long as his activities are confined to the non-NATO republics of the former Soviet Union. It could be worse. Under certain circumstances, he may think that the Baltic Republics are fair game. While all government officials will unite in a hissing of denunciation and denial if anyone says it out loud, there isn't a lot of appetite in any of the NATO governments west of Poland for military action on the Baltic coast. If Russia moved quickly across a Baltic frontier to 'liberate' some ethnic Russians, would NATO send troops to drive the Russians back out? We are

no doubt telling the Russians that the frontiers of NATO countries are another one of our now-famous red lines, but Putin may think he knows us better than we know ourselves.

From Putin's point of view, the EU must present a particularly contemptible picture. Paralyzed by the poisonous consequences of the euro, divided north and south by the question of debt and east and west by the question of immigration, the EU is even less effective and fast moving than usual. George Soros (whose views, one believes, the Kremlin follows carefully even if it loathes his influence) argues that the minimalist 'solutions' the EU adopted to prevent the euro crisis flaring into devastating financial crises have locked the Union into a path of gradually worsening political crises over austerity and its consequences. While developments like the Greek return to the bond markets suggest that even in Europe bad times don't last forever, Putin apparently not only believes the Soros analysis; he is acting on it. Russia is pursuing an aggressive, influence-expanding program inside the EU and NATO as well as outside it. Linking up with anti-Brussels, anti-Berlin politicians like Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban, Russia is developing deeper financial, economic and even political links well inside the divided Union. With business and especially the energy business increasingly converted into an arm of state power, Russia is developing the kinds of connections inside the EU that have proved so effective in the post-Soviet space still outside it.

The staggering incoherence of European energy policy (with Germany racing to dismantle nuclear reactors even as Putin brandishes his energy weapons) is another sign to the Kremlin that the Europeans are likely to remain both divided and ineffective against anything short of a tank offensive aimed at the Fulda Gap. As Lilia Shevtsova [demonstrates](#), the German intellectual and diplomatic worlds now re-echo with excuses for and rationalizations of Putin's new course.

Meanwhile, it is not at all clear that the key members of the Union view the eastern borderlands in the same way. For Poland and the Baltic states, the new Russian activism is close to an existential threat. Others may actually welcome a newly assertive Russia as the answer to what is perceived in some quarters as an over-mighty Germany in the EU. This would not be the first time that influential voices in Paris called for an entente with an

ugly regime in Russia in the interests of the European balance of power. It was in 1891 that the archconservative Tsar Alexander III stunned the world by standing as a French naval band played La Marseillaise at Kronstadt; the secular French Republic was willing to side with an Orthodox absolute monarch to balance the scales against Bismarck's Germany.

A century later in 1989 there were many in France who questioned the wisdom of breaking up the Soviet Union while uniting Germany. The last 20 years cannot have lessened French doubts about the wisdom of that course, and French qualms about the proper policy toward Russia find echoes elsewhere. Italy and the members of Club Med will not want money spent in the east that could go to the south.

None of this would suggest to President Putin that he has much to fear from Europe; despite the ritual war dances and expressions of hostility in Washington, one doesn't see much happening here that would change his calculation about western plans. Is there a groundswell of public support to boost US deployments in Europe? Are voters circulating petitions to position US forces on the border of the Baltic states? Is there a serious move to sign bilateral defense treaties with the endangered states (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus) or to bulk up the US presence in Central Asia?

No, there is not, and President Putin knows it very well. The United States is a stronger power in the military sense than Russia, but there is no thirst for war. The United States today is no more willing to contest Russian power in ex-Soviet space than it was to stop Hitler's march into the Sudetenland in 1938.

Policy must always begin with facts, and as western leaders grapple with the new Russia, western division, weakness and lack of will are where we must begin. Thumping our chests and making rash, hypocritical boasts about a devotion to freedom and international law which we do not, in fact possess—at least if it involves spending real money or running real risks—will only set us up for more humiliating failures. The strategist must know himself, warns Sun Tzu; we must stop pretending to ourselves at least that we are more united and strong willed than we really are.

We must also acknowledge the pervasive failure of the Ukrainians and many of their neighbors to build strong states. It's not simply that their governments are corrupt and incompetent and that they aren't very

effective at problem solving or policy making. It's not simply that any aid we send them is at high risk of being stolen or wasted. It means that their institutions and their national establishment are riddled top to bottom with people whose loyalty has been or can easily be suborned by the Kremlin. It also means that their military establishments are overwhelmingly likely to be poorly prepared, badly trained, incompetently led and corruptly managed. There are no doubt exceptions to these dismal generalizations, but we cannot plan without taking a hard look at the real state of affairs. Whatever can be said about the medium to long term, in the here and now we have allowed ourselves to be outmaneuvered and outwitted, and we don't have many good cards to play. Imposing what sanctions the Europeans will accept, and gradually tightening them over time, may be the best we can do right now; if so, Washington needs to remember that barking loudly when you can't bite will be seen as a sign of impotence and incontinence rather than as exhibiting high principles and moral commitment.

The West has a Russia problem, and we need to think clearly about our overall strategic relationship with Russia as the first step in formulating a response to Putin's aggression against a peaceful neighboring state. There are two issues here; America's generic attitude to Russia as a great power independent from the question of who wields power there and what his policies are, and America's specific attitude toward Vladimir Putin's regime.

It is on the question of America's generic relationship to Russia considered abstractly that the 'realists' who would like to reconcile with Putin as quickly as possible have the strongest case. The Obama administration's attempt to reset relations with Russia was an embarrassing failure, but it was rooted in real truths about American interests. While there are and always will be problematic aspects to the relationship of the United States with all strong and vigorous powers around the world whose interests and values sometimes run athwart our own, a strong Russia is or at least can be a good thing from an American point of view. We would like to see a government in Moscow that is strong enough to undertake such necessary tasks as the protection and guardianship of its nuclear arsenal, able to prevent the spread of terrorism, anarchy or organized crime across its vast territories, and able to play a strong and effective role in ensuring that the

balance of power in northeastern Asia contains a large number of significant powers. A healthy oil and gas industry in Russia is by no means necessarily a thorn in America's flesh; Russian production both stimulates global prosperity by helping to keep prices lower than they would otherwise be and limits the danger that supply disruptions in the Middle East can create global economic crises.

The failed reset policy recognized that American policy toward Russia after the Cold War has been consistently flawed. It was an error of the Clinton administration to proceed with the construction of a post-Cold War Europe that had no real place for Russia, and the rise of Putin and Putinism can in part be ascribed both to unwise western policies and to the attitudes of arrogance and condescension against which Putin and his allies so vigorously rail.

From these facts, some are already constructing the case for appeasement. Our bad behavior in the past has made Russia angry and resentful—perhaps angrier than in strict justice it has the right to be, but emotions often run high. We can and should now soothe Russia's frayed sensibilities, flatter its self esteem, and demonstrate that it has nothing to fear by our generous and far sighted behavior. We should welcome a strong and perhaps somewhat larger Russia into the circles of great power and turn as blind an eye as possible to the dismemberment of Ukraine and to future Russian expansion in the ex-Soviet space. As Putin realizes that the United States and its allies have repented of our past errors and are willing to allow Russia some 'reasonable' room for expansion and assertion, we can move to a pragmatic new relationship based on a more stable balance of interest and power.

If only this were true, so that with a small, almost unnoticeable sacrifice of principle and honor we could buy a quiet life. But life isn't that easy. Putin, as I have said before, is no Hitler. But neither is he an Adenauer or Brandt, ready to stand in partnership to build a liberal world. As Lilia Shevstova [notes on this site](#), Putin has chosen the path of repression at home and war abroad because these in his view offer the best hope of preserving his power. Because of the logic of his domestic situation, he has chosen the dark path of fascism, and is out to change the way the world works in ways that the United States must, out of its interests as well as its values, resist.

Victories like those Putin has notched up in Ukraine will awaken rather than slake his ambition. He needs triumphs abroad to vindicate and justify his rule and his repression at home, and foreign policy victories are like cocaine when it comes to their impact on public opinion: the buzz of each hit soon wears off, leaving only the craving for another and larger dose. Putin has grown and will grow hungrier and more reckless with each gain notched, each victory achieved. His contempt for the moral and political decadence of the West will be confirmed, his ideas of what he can attempt will grow more audacious, and his power to advance his agenda will grow as weakness and concession undermine our alliances and tilt the political balance in a growing number of states to lean his way. And other leaders around the world will have observed that the world order so laboriously erected on the ruins of World War Two by the United States and its allies is a hollow façade.

We are on track to repeat all the follies of the tragic period between the two world wars. At Versailles and through the 1920s, the West fanned the flames of German rage by treating the defeated enemy with open contempt and by erecting a new European order that flagrantly ignored German wishes and interests. This is how we treated Russia in the 1990s. The West provided economic aid to the “Weimar Russia” of Boris Yeltsin much as the Young and the Dawes plans helped Germany relaunch its economy in the 1920s. But in the 1990s as in the 1920s the West was uninterested in addressing nationalist grievances or in strengthening genuine moderates. For democratic Weimar politicians, the West had nothing to offer on the Rhineland, nothing on the Saar; for Hitler, all of that plus Austria and the Sudetenland were suddenly on the table. We weakened our friends and empowered our enemy. We cannot and must not repeat this mistake now. Russia may have legitimate grievances and it certainly has interests that ought to be taken into account, but as long as Vladimir Putin stands at the head of affairs, Moscow must expect no favors from the West. Our message should be that the West will concede nothing to Putin, but is prepared to work constructively with a different Russian government to make Russia powerful and respected at home and abroad. Through continuing study and reflection in the West combined with track two exchanges and back channel conversations, we should develop a joint vision for an attractive and realistic Russian future so that Putin will be

seen more clearly as what he is: an obstacle to rather than an instrument of Russian national power and prestige.

Back to the Basics: NATO and Hard Power

Our new policy towards Putin's new Russia must begin with NATO.

Before we can hope to induce Putin's Russia to respect anything else, we must teach it that NATO is real and that we are in earnest. This probably cannot be done at this point without substantial and visible upgrades to NATO's presence in the periphery states of the alliance. There will have to be more NATO installations and more US troops in places like Estonia and Romania. Right now, there is a non-negligible chance that Russia might try to create facts on the ground inside one or more of the Baltic Republics. The border defenses of those republics must be reinforced to make that impossible. That move may infuriate Putin but it will also be a healthy reminder of his impotence in the face of genuine allied resolve, and will make a serious war crisis less likely. There is a real security threat to the Baltic states, and any failure to address that proactively would be reckless imprudence. There are burglars in the neighborhood and the windows and doors must be bolted shut.

Words, given the plethora of empty ones we have uttered in the recent past, are no longer enough by themselves, but as we take effective steps to shore up NATO's defenses, the President should ask both houses of Congress to pass resolutions reaffirming America's solemn commitments to its treaty allies. It would be the duty of Republicans who are serious about defense to support him in this. One cannot expect unanimity in a large, diverse and free country like ours, but rallying the nation to the cause of NATO is in the President's job description now, and it is incumbent on Republicans to support any constructive steps the President takes to shore up the national defense. Every manifestation of public unity and political will around the Atlantic alliance will have an impact on the Kremlin's calculations, especially when these are backed by concrete steps to secure the frontiers. That does little for Ukraine, and this is regrettable, but Ukraine never requested much less obtained membership in NATO. There is a fundamental difference between countries who are members of an alliance and those who are not; we are not obliged (beyond the gauzy sentiments of the UN Charter) to defend every country in the world against every predator. Reinforcing the boundaries of NATO will demonstrate the value

of an American alliance to current and potential allies. In that way, we can transform Putin from NATO's aspiring gravedigger to its chief publicist; if we now bolster NATO to make our allies safe we can still emerge from this crisis with an invigorated rather than a weakened alliance network. There are things the United States can and should do to help the people of Ukraine in this time of crisis, but in the immediate future our military measures must aim at reinforcing our existing alliances rather than expanding them.

Additionally, President Obama should review planned cuts in the defense budget and, while continuing to eliminate waste, scale back planned cuts in American forces. Even anti-tax Republicans in Congress should agree to raise new revenues to cover these costs; few things would send as powerful a signal of American purpose as a bipartisan commitment to raise taxes in support of our alliance obligations. If far Left Democrats and isolationist Republicans want to oppose these measures, let them do so—but the sensible center can and should prevail.

It is also worth remembering the role that Ronald Reagan's high tech military buildup played in bringing the Soviet leaders of the 1980s down to earth. The United States has the ability to deprive Russia's nuclear arsenal of much of its utility through improved missile defense and the development of other high tech weapons and systems. Russian nationalists might rethink their strategy if it was clear to them that provoking the United States triggers a response that further undercuts Russia's military claims to strategic parity.

Beyond NATO: American Policy in Europe

The United States has tried to disengage from Europe three times since the end of the Cold War, and each time the disengagement failed. The Clinton administration tried to outsource Yugoslavia to the Europeans in the 1990s and was ultimately pulled into the Balkans. George W. Bush tried to conduct foreign policy around and over the heads of "Old Europe"; the experience was not a success. President Obama has similarly sought to relegate America's European engagement to the rearview mirror, and President Putin has demonstrated yet again that the consequences of American disengagement are bad.

European peace and prosperity without close American engagement and support has been impossible since World War One, and since World War

One it has been impossible for the United States to ignore the consequences when things go badly for Europe. Perhaps after more than a century it is time to face up to the reality that our political and military as well as our commercial interests are tangled up in Europe for the long run and that we must manage our engagement more effectively and actively than we've done for some time.

Given what we've seen in Ukraine, the US and the EU need to work much more closely together on policy vis a vis the non-Russian former Soviet states. This policy can't be seen as simply legalistic or commercial, expanding free trade zones or supporting the rule of law and the development of institutions; security issues are also involved.

More, Europe's failure to develop coherent energy policy is clearly a contributing factor to Putin's transparent contempt for the bloc as well as to Europe's continuing vulnerability to Russian pressure. Europe's countries have many voices when it comes to energy policy; the United States needs to play a larger and more constructive role in the continent's musings over energy policy, and the new American reserves now coming on line could be part of a long term strategy to reduce Europe's vulnerability to energy blackmail.

The US may also need to consider how it can play a more useful role in Europe's internal debates over economic policy. Europe's weakness before Russian pressure is both directly and indirectly attributable in part to the fallout from the euro disaster. Economic pain has divided the union, alienated many voters both from Brussels and their national authorities, reduced Europe's energy and resources for external policy ventures, contributed to the bitterness over immigration and fueled the rise of the extreme right wing parties Putin now seeks to mobilize. Important American interests have been seriously harmed by the monetary muddle in Europe, and Washington needs to think more carefully about how it can play a more consequential and constructive role.

The rise of fascist and near fascist parties across the European Union is a much more serious concern of American policymakers now that President Putin has embraced the toxic cocktail of ultra-nationalism, street violence and open hatred of liberal order as part of his international program. Russia is once again prepared to wage ideological war against the liberal west as it did in Soviet times, and a significantly enhanced and upgraded Ministry of

the Dark Arts is now working overtime to spread propaganda, recruit supporters and make mischief for the liberal west whenever and however it can. In Europe and elsewhere, the United States and its allies will once again have to dust off some of our Cold War methods and programs, and here we are currently operating at a serious disadvantage. Putin the old KGB man has made substantial investments in the Dark Arts; they are cheaper than other forms of power projection, they build on the considerable legacy of the Soviet era, and they exploit the weaknesses of open societies. Today's neo-fascism is capable of uniting the far Left and the far Right in anti-liberal 'popular fronts' in various ways and in Europe and elsewhere, the United States will once again engage in ideological battles with an unscrupulous and intelligent foe.

The Troubled East

Naked Russian aggression in Ukraine and the potential that Russian adventurism will spread chaos in the rest of the neighborhood have drawn world attention to the former Soviet states on Europe's frontiers. Europe's eastern problems don't begin where the EU and NATO end. In Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania, the process of European expansion has run into deep trouble, and the situation in many of the former Yugoslav territories leaves much to be desired. Greece and Cyprus remain alienated from the west, members of the EU but drawn to Russia through cultural and in some cases economic ties.

It is difficult to guess Putin's next steps, and it is far from clear that he is acting from a master plan rather than improvising in the heat of battle. Nevertheless, the most important objective for him may not be the southeast of Ukraine, where his forces are running rampant through the country's industrial heartland. Instead the great prize may be the southwest, an area that includes the Black Sea port of Odessa and gives him a boundary not only with the pro-Russian breakaway Transnistrian statelet, but with NATO and the EU itself. To fan the forces in the EU that resent the technocratic dictates of Brussels, to cultivate a sense of pan-Slavic unity that looks to Mother Russia, and to provide aid and encouragement for anti-western leaders like Hungary's Orbán would suit Putin very well. The EU is currently struggling in the southeast of Europe. The Balkans and Hungary are not doing well, and efforts to build western style states and institutions in countries with very different histories and traditions have not

had the hoped for success. The euro crisis did not affect these countries directly, as none of them other than Cyprus and Greece have the exquisite happiness of belonging to the currency union, but the continental recession and crisis dealt a damaging blow to western prestige. Western countries who can't agree on much else agree that welfare-scrounging immigrants from the Balkans are a curse and scourge, and the list of western countries looking to limit immigration from the southeast is long. This does not go over well with public opinion in the Balkans. Should Russia continue to gain economic clout and work more consciously to build political relationships with important parties and leaders in these EU and NATO member states, both NATO and the European Union could soon become houses much more divided than they already are, and Russia could gain significant influence in the internal councils of the EU, not to mention de facto vetoes over decisions like NATO expansion. We should not confuse all of this with a global contest on the scale of the Cold War; even if Putin succeeds in uniting all the ex-Soviet states under the Russian flag, his Greater Russia would be a smaller and more poorly situated power than the Soviet Union. Germany remains united, Poland is free, and Russia cannot hope to dominate Central Europe as the USSR once did.

European fecklessness dragged the Clinton administration kicking and screaming into the morass of the bloody wars of the Yugoslav succession; the Obama administration, despite its eagerness to scale back, is already feeling the tidal pull back into a larger and potentially even more difficult region at a time when the options are all unappealing. Appeasing Putin won't work; opposing him is going to be difficult and expensive, but ignoring him will be impossible.

President Obama once hoped he could manage a kind of global triage. We could pivot away from a Europe that didn't need us and a Middle East that didn't want us into an Asia that both needed and wanted our presence. These days the White House is facing a harder but perhaps more durable truth: the United States needs to pivot back toward the world.

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Egypt's Enduring Passion for Soccer

Alaa Al Aswany _

April 16, 2014 -- Cairo — Egyptians are attached to soccer the way the French are to wine. It's well-nigh impossible to find an Egyptian who is not a fan. When major matches are being broadcast, Cairo turns into a quasi ghost town. The only sounds are the shouts of the fans huddled in front of televisions when a goal is scored.

Well-to-do Egyptians play soccer in private clubs, whereas the poor play in the street with a type of ball they have improvised from scraps of old socks and pieces of sponge. These street games are the training ground from which most soccer stars emerge. Every large club has a scout whose job it is to go watch these ad hoc matches and sign up talented players. That's when the fate of a whole family changes, as they say goodbye to poverty and set out on the road to riches.

When did Egyptians start playing soccer? Possibly, in ancient times: The Greek historian Herodotus, who is thought to have visited Egypt in about 460 B.C. and again in 448 B.C., described the sight of young men kicking around a ball made from goatskin and straw. In 1863, the laws of the game were adopted by the Football Association in England; 19 years later, the British occupied Egypt and gave Egyptians the codified version of what became the national game.

Psychology provides some explanation for this Egyptian passion. Professor Allen R. McConnell of Miami University proposes that soccer fans — yearning to be part of something greater than their limited world — gain a sense of belonging from their soccer club. Professor Ronald F. Levant of the University of Akron believes that identifying with a sports team is a way to enjoy triumph when life is difficult and personal success elusive. Both theories have a resonance for Egyptians, who have long despaired of obtaining their rights because of tyranny and corruption. For a game's 90 minutes, they can forget their feelings of injustice. On the field at least, there are rules.

The identification of Egyptian soccer fans is so strong that they believe it is their duty to support their team even in times of crushing defeat. Such absolute loyalty often leads to altercations between the closest of friends or even family members. When their team's reputation is at stake, the most tolerant people turn into fanatics.

A complicating factor is that team loyalties sometimes overlap with political allegiances. The two largest clubs in Egypt were established in a partly political context. Al Ahly has symbolized popular sentiment in Egypt since its founding in 1907. Early on, the revolutionary Saad Zaghloul was appointed an honorary president of the club, a post later filled by Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1956, who became president of Egypt that year.

In contrast, Zamalek, which was founded in 1911 and known as the "mixed club" because it included both Egyptians and foreigners, was presided over by General Mohammad Haidar Pasha, aide-de-camp to King Fuad I; in 1940, his successor granted the club permission to call itself "Farouk I" — after himself. Following the army coup of 1952, it was renamed Zamalek.

Generally, soccer altercations in Egypt have a performative and entertaining aspect, but they have on occasion led to a national crisis. In a 1971 match between Ahly and Zamalek, a forward named Farouk Gaafar seemed about to score when the Ahly goalkeeper, Marwan Kanafani, intercepted the ball and fouled him. The referee awarded a penalty, which Farouk Gaafar took. When he scored, Ahly fans stormed the pitch.

The match was suspended, and all Egypt was plunged into days of bitter dispute over the incident — and the press wrote of little else. The popular anger kept rising until an Ahly star, Saleh Selim, stepped in to calm fans' tempers by publicly acknowledging that the penalty call had been correct. Egypt's rulers have often used soccer as a means of diverting the attention of the masses or controlling them. No Egyptian president has been as attached to the game as Hosni Mubarak was. He always attended the national team's matches and was often seen yelling advice to the players. His sons, Alaa and Gamal, fraternized with Egypt's top players.

Mr. Mubarak's propaganda machine made sure that before a match, supporters were treated to patriotic songs and sloganeering. These displays were useful for deflecting dissatisfaction with the regime, but they also fueled an ugly chauvinism.

In the aftermath of a 2009 match between Egypt and Algeria held in Sudan, the Egyptian state media claimed that Algerian fans had attacked some Egyptians. The Egyptian and Algerian media traded the vilest of insults, and this led to angry demonstrations in both countries. The Algerian Embassy in Cairo was besieged, while Egyptian businesses in Algeria were set on fire.

Only much later did Mr. Mubarak's foreign affairs minister admit that the Algerian supporters had not, in fact, attacked any Egyptians and that the media had concocted the whole thing. The rumor was that the press had done so to curry favor with Gamal and Alaa Mubarak, who had been angered by some hostile jeering from Algerian fans.

When the 2011 revolution took place, soccer fans discovered some new hard truths: Apart from a small number of players who sided with the revolutionaries, most Egyptian soccer stars, who owed their wealth and fame to the masses, declared their support for the dictator — even as his police officers were shooting demonstrators dead. Mr. Mubarak also enjoyed the support of a number of managers and media people for whom soccer represented a cash cow.

The president did not have all the supporters behind him. Some of the most intense fans, known as the “ultras,” played an outstanding role in the revolution. These young people used their long experience of confronting police violence to defend the demonstrators in Tahrir Square with astonishing courage and effectiveness.

The way the ultras transitioned from the cause of soccer to that of revolution caused great anxiety to those in power after the fall of Mr. Mubarak. During the post-Mubarak period of rule by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, in February 2012, the Ahly ultras of Cairo were attacked at a match in Port Said in disturbances in which 74 died — bloodshed that their leaders believe was planned by the security apparatus to punish them for their revolutionary role.

As with everything in Egypt now, soccer is a mirror that reflects the fierce struggle between the ancien régime and the revolution, between the old vested interests and those who dream of the future. That future will arrive eventually no matter how some try to stop it.

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WSJ

Book Review:

'Temptations of Power' by Shadi Hamid

James Traub

Temptations of Power
By Shadi Hamid
(Oxford, 269 pages, \$27.95)

April 16, 2014 -- In 2007 I spent several weeks in Egypt interviewing members of the Muslim Brotherhood, including the group's leaders in Parliament. They were, I wrote at the time, just about the only Egyptians I met who took the legislative process seriously. This provoked a lot of disbelief among readers, Western as well as Egyptian, who saw the Brothers as single-minded religious ideologues. The reassurance I always offered was: "Don't worry, they'll never be in power."

I was dead wrong. So, it turns out, was the Brotherhood itself. As Shadi Hamid writes in "Temptations of Power: Islamists and Illiberal Democracy in a New Middle East," the Islamist group had learned to thrive under decades of autocratic repression and was hopelessly unprepared to rule Egypt. But following the overthrow of [Hosni Mubarak](#) in February 2011, that is exactly what it wound up doing until President Mohammad Morsi was overthrown in a coup last summer. The Brotherhood government's fecklessness, as well as its resort to repressive measures, raises the question: Are Islamists fit to govern at all? Mr. Hamid, a scholar at the Brookings Institution who has been writing thoughtfully about Islamists since before the first stirrings of the Arab Spring, is not quite convinced that they are.

The Islamists are a confounding political phenomenon, and Mr. Hamid is acute on the paradoxes they present. He points out, for example, that repression and jail, which the Brothers have endured intermittently since Hassan al-Banna founded the group in 1928, actually made them more

moderate and not more radical, as one would expect. After a fierce campaign against the Brotherhood in the early 1990s, Mr. Hamid notes, the Brotherhood in Jordan and Egypt issued "foundational texts" endorsing political pluralism and human rights and scanting all mention of Shariah law. Both groups held internal elections designed to demonstrate the sincerity of these commitments.

As Mr. Hamid explains, the reason for this reform is that the Brotherhood is, or rather was, not a partisan entity but a kind of parallel state, providing a range of social services that serve as the foundation for its political popularity. Crackdowns threaten those institutions; thus the Brothers react by demonstrating that they pose no harm to the state. This is why I found secular liberals so contemptuous of the Brotherhood: They believed, perhaps rightly, that the group had found a *modus vivendi* with the Mubarak government.

Yet as Mr. Hamid observes, such appeasement didn't work, since brittle autocratic regimes feel more threatened by moderate Islamist parties than by radical ones. In 2005 Brotherhood candidates, running as independents since the organization was formally banned decades before, won 88 seats in Parliament. By scrupulously avoiding moral and theological issues and emphasizing democracy and good government, the Brothers significantly raised their standing among Egyptians. Terrified of the group's rising popularity, the regime began a process of midnight arrests. By the time the popular uprising against Mr. Mubarak began in 2011, the organization's leadership had been decimated. It was the Arab Spring that sprang them. The other great paradox is what Mr. Hamid calls, lifting a phrase from Fareed Zakaria, the "illiberal democracy" that the Islamists champion. Groups such as the Brotherhood, he writes, "are interested in fashioning religiously oriented states through democratic means and maintaining them through democratic means." Their commitment to democracy, he insists, is real, not tactical. What makes this commitment possible is the knowledge that free elections in a society like Egypt will favor Islamists. Mr. Hamid cites a 2011 poll, which found that 88% of Egyptians favor the death penalty for apostasy, and a 2012 survey, which found that Egyptians prefer the Saudi fundamentalist model to the Turkish secularized one, 61% to 17%. Beyond polling, the real proof that Egyptians are with the Islamists

came in 2012, when Islamists of one stripe or another won three-quarters of the seats in parliamentary elections.

The Brotherhood really is committed to majoritarianism; but it is also really committed to Islamic rule. Once in power, and vying for favor with more extremist Salafists, the Brotherhood government showed growing contempt for the country's liberal minority and sought to instill Islamic principles in a revised constitution. Its highhanded rule awakened long-standing fears about the Brotherhood's secret designs, and the old guard in the military, the bureaucracy and the judiciary was relentless in undermining Mr. Morsi. Ultimately, the Morsi government never got the chance to succeed—or fail.

But overthrowing Mr. Morsi wasn't enough for the old guard: In March, a court sentenced 528 of his supporters to death. Indeed, the whole Arab world is now in the grip of a hysteria over the Brotherhood. I wish Mr. Hamid had addressed the strange spectacle of the secular government of the United Arab Emirates last year prosecuting dozens of Islamists as alleged members of a fifth column, while Saudi Arabia's Wahhabi government—far more theologically reactionary than the Brothers—declares the group a terrorist threat. The Brotherhood has become a pan-Arab "other"

for regimes seeking to tighten their grip on restive citizens.

That's not Mr. Hamid's subject, which is, at bottom, whether the Arab world can have democracy and whether its form of democracy could be compatible with liberalism. This is the great, as-yet-unanswered question of the upheaval once hopefully known as the Arab Spring. Mr. Hamid observes that while the illiberal democrats of, say, Uganda or Nicaragua are simply power-hungry, Islamists are illiberal by ideological design. Even the most moderate among them, Rachid Ghannouchi, the founder of Tunisia's Nahda party, has written, according to Mr. Hamid, that Islamic governance "is the dividing line between faith and disbelief."

I don't think this is where Mr. Hamid, who urged U.S. policy makers to work with the Brotherhood government, wanted to come out. But he is to be commended for delivering complicated news to no one's liking—not the Brothers, not their modestly hopeful fans in the West, and not their fire-breathing enemies either.

Mr. Traub writes the weekly column Terms of Engagement for [REDACTED] He is writing a biography of John Quincy Adams.