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Article 1.

Al Monitor

Why Shimon Peres Still Matters

Shai Feldman

Sep 3, 2012 -- Some three weeks ago, on the occasion of his 89th birthday, [Israeli President Shimon Peres gave loud and clear public expression](#) to his opposition to a possible Israeli military strike against Iran's nuclear installations. This followed two years during which Peres is said to have counseled Israel's leaders in closed quarters against the ramifications of such an attack. Giving a number of separate interviews on Aug. 16, Peres did not oppose such a strike under all circumstances. Rather, he warned

against an attack that would not receive a green light from Washington. Coming after almost every former chief of Israel's defense and intelligence agencies — and a few of the serving chiefs as well — have already expressed publicly or semi-publicly their opposition to such a strike, Peres' intervention raises a good question: Why does he matter? Why does someone, who in the Israeli constitutional set-up fills no more than a ceremonial role, count? Without decision-making authority, why should Peres' voice be considered a significant addition to the already formidable chorus warning of the implications of such an attack? The significance of [Peres' intervention](#) in this debate has little to do with the office of the presidency which he now holds. Nor is it only tied to the fact that in the past few years — after a political career that now spans at least six decades — Peres has become a consensus figure in a country where almost no one enjoys such respect. Instead, it results from Peres' unique standing as the father of Israel's own nuclear efforts. The nuclear reactor in Dimona — the centerpiece of Israel's nuclear option — was an offspring of the Israeli alliance with France, forged in the mid-1950s. The architect of the alliance was then-Deputy Defense Minister Shimon Peres. It resulted not only in massive French arms sales to Israel but also in the joint attack on Egypt known as the 1956 Sinai-Suez War. The French needed Israel to help topple Egypt's President Gamal Abdul Nasser who supported their opponents in Algeria. The side payment their Socialist leaders were willing to provide Israel was a 26-megawatt nuclear research reactor. Now, some six decades later, Peres continues to be credited by the Israeli public for an option that enjoys almost total support among Israeli Jewish voters who view it as the ultimate deterrent for “a rainy day.” Moreover, Israelis intuitively understand that the option that Peres helped create is also relevant in [the Iranian context](#). Even if its nuclear facilities will be destroyed, Iran will renew its efforts and may ultimately obtain nuclear weapons. And what then? Regardless of the Israeli and U.S. rhetoric that currently excludes containment options, Israelis know that under such circumstances their country may have no choice but to rely on deterrence. Should that happen, it is to Peres that Israelis will owe a great debt because without him this option would not exist. Admittedly, this aspect of the current Israeli debate about Iran is somewhat puzzling. For if deterrence is excluded against a geographically distant adversary like Iran, what justifies

over six decades of Israeli investments in the nuclear project? Surely, this option was never meant as a hedge against Israel's very proximate Palestinian neighbors. Indeed, every reader of a physics textbook describing nuclear fallout can conclude that even deterring proximate adversaries such as Israel's immediate state neighbors is problematic. So if the project in which Israel invested considerable resources during times of great scarcity would not deter a nuclear Iran, who and what would it deter? Peres also knows well that the key to Israel's ability to maintain its ultimate strategic deterrent was the willingness of successive US presidents — whether Democrat or Republican — to view Israel as a “special case” in nuclear matters and to exclude it from the tougher stipulations of US nuclear non-proliferation policy. For this reason, Peres rightly attributes enormous significance to the legitimacy that Israel's case enjoys in the US. And it is for the very same reason that Peres should be rightly worried that exercising a military option against Iran before the US has reached the conclusion that all other options have been exhausted, risks endangering this critically important US backing. In the aftermath of the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference and as foreign minister in Rabin's government, Peres was at the front line of Israel's efforts to ward off Egypt's efforts to press Israel to sign the 1968 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). Egypt waged this campaign both regionally and internationally: In the framework of the post-Madrid multilateral negotiations on Arms Control and Regional Security (ACRS) and during the 1995 negotiations on the indefinite extension of the NPT. Egypt held the ACRS talks hostage to the nuclear issue, resulting by 1995 in the collapse of the entire multilateral process. It also threatened to block the NPT's indefinite extension. Now as president of his country some 20 years later, Peres surely remembers that if it were not for the backing it received from the US, Israel would not have been able to prevail on both occasions. Peres also knows that in the future, Israel may be subjected to similar if not greater pressures. It is therefore not surprising that he views Washington's position as critically important and that his assessments on all matters nuclear continue to count.

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Article 2.

Al-Hayat

Egypt Infiltrates the Turkish-Saudi-Iranian Trio?

George Semaan

3 September 2012 -- The new regime in Egypt has sent a signal which might further complicate the Syrian crisis, increase polarization between Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran, and add a new player on the arena of the ongoing Cold War in the region between major regional and international actors. President Mohamed Morsi called – from the heart of the Iranian capital – for the departure of President Bashar al-Assad. In his speech before the non-alignment summit, he presented a book of conditions for cooperation with the Islamic Republic, at the head of which being its relinquishing of the regime in Damascus. On the eve of the summit, he had proposed the establishment of a quartet committee including Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey to settle the crisis sweeping Syria, which constituted a first message saying that his country was ready to play its usual role.

It would be too soon to predict the ways Egypt will use to restore its status as a regional actor, just like it would be too early to predict the direction of its relations with Iran, without taking into account the circumstances, repercussions and transformations it is witnessing in the post-revolution phase, and the roles being played by Turkey and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The entry of a new player on the scene connotes change at the level of the rules of the game and its arena, as well as the availability of conditions, tools and cards.

Full diplomatic relations between Egypt and Iran have not existed since the Iranian revolution, after President Anwar al-Sadat granted political exile to Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and signed the Camp David Accords. The two countries thus settled for the presence of missions, but the situation changed with the collapse of President Hosni Mubarak's regime. The day he became Egyptian foreign minister following the revolution, Nabil al-

Arabi stated that his government did not perceive the Islamic Republic as being a hostile state and “is about to open a new page with all the countries, including Iran.” And in February 2011, the military council allowed the entry of two Iranian warships via the Canal of Suez for the first time since 1979.

When Gulf circles expressed their fears at this level, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry clarified that “Cairo is seeking normal relations with Tehran, essential and normal relations, that is all.” This statement was followed by more than one confirmation issued by Egyptian officials, stressing that the Gulf security was linked to their country’s security. And certainly, Riyadh was the first capital to be visited by President Morsi to corroborate his insistence on the historical relations between the two countries, knowing that Saudi Arabia had decided to help Cairo by providing it with \$4 billion, also to confirm its insistence on stability for Egypt and its economy.

A lot was said about the reasons behind the gradual retreat of Egypt’s role in the Middle East and Africa since the signing of the Camp David Accords, from America’s methodic policy to limit its role to the domestic arena, to the regime’s preoccupation with the fighting of the extremist movements and the fixation of its men and entourage on corruption and the preparations for succession. But this remained a temporary stage in a history whose constant principles and facts cannot be disregarded.

Pharaonic Egypt, which settled on the Nile banks, would not have hesitated for a moment to go beyond the eastern side of the river until the border with Syria and Iraq and across the Euphrates and the Tigris to preserve what it considers to be its national security in the face of those coming from the East, i.e. from the Land of the Two Rivers and behind it.

Throughout history, its people never backed down on this constant reality, from Ramses II who launched a campaign against the Hittites, to the Mamluks who embarked to Palestine to deter Tamerlane and his troops, Ibrahim Pasha who knocked on the doors of Astana through Lebanon and Palestine and President Gamal Abdul Nasser who threatened leader Abdul Karim Qassim when the latter threatened Kuwait and showed on more than one occasion determination to defend Syria in the face of the threats which used to be launched from time to time by the Turkish army in the 1950s.

This is not to forget the temporary unity between Cairo and Damascus.

Even President Hosni Mubarak never hesitated for a second to provide a cover for the international-Arab alliance which led Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait around 20 years ago, while prior to that, he had established the Arab Cooperation Council with Baghdad, Amman and Sana'a to remain a partner in the security of the Gulf where more than two and a half million Egyptians work, and where the largest Arab economy benefitting most Arab states resides. And when the Council collapsed during the Kuwait invasion, he sealed – along with Syria and the Gulf Cooperation Council states – a gathering dubbed the Damascus Declaration. When this Declaration collapsed, the ties with both Riyadh and Damascus were enhanced to maintain Cairo's role in leading any Arab project, or at least continue to be a key partner in the decision-making process. Moreover, he did not hesitate to warn against the Shiite Crescent when Iran knocked on Sinai's doors from Gaza!

With all this history, Egypt rejected the “Turkish model” that Recep Tayyip Erdogan asked it to follow the day he visited Cairo following President Mubarak's toppling, as it rejected Guide Ali Khamenei's statements in which he said that the Egyptian revolution was an extension of the Islamic one. Cairo wishes to regain its political weight in the region, from North Africa to the border with Iraq, without being a number in Ankara's or Tehran's credit. In addition, President Mohamed Morsi does not need lessons from the Islamic Republic, as he belongs to a movement which was established around 90 years ago and is considered to be the largest political Islamic power in the Arab world.

Prior to the revolution, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood stood alongside Hamas in Gaza, just like Iran which supported it among other Islamic movements. Moreover, it opposed and is still opposing the Camp David Accords, just like Tehran, throughout the last thirty years. On the other hand, a lot was said about its relationship with the Islamic Republic, knowing it definitely does not want to see the Arab-Iranian conflict prevail over the conflict with Israel. But reality does not convey that wish, seeing how direct clashes are taking place between Iran and its Arab opponents on more than one Arab arena, from Saudi Arabia to Bahrain, the Emirates, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine, among other locations scattered here and there. And unless the Arab states feel that Tehran has amended its policy, the region will continue to lack stability and become engaged in

more than one armament race whose results will be catastrophic. It would be enough to say that this race will erode the oil revenues at the expense of human and financial development in the states of the region. And in light of this situation, Egypt cannot remain idle, in the presence of national and pan-Arab interests that enjoy priority over any religious or sectarian considerations.

True, Iran succeeded in hosting the non-alignment summit and will head the group for the next three years, but what is also true is that it is completely aware of the fact that the group's member states and some countries in Latin America cannot act as its quarterback in its standoff with the United States and Europe. Only the Islamic geographic depth can provide it with the strength and political support it desperately needs. Iran could have increased its influence and improved its position, had it known how to deal with the Islamic powers that have risen and are now rising to power thanks to the Arab spring - i.e. had it relinquished its sometimes excessive Shiite rhetoric, discontinued its threats to the Arab Gulf states and stopped interfering here and there. With some wisdom and modesty, it could have established relations with its neighbors, and used them in the face of its opponents in the West and Israel. At this level, the Egyptian or Gulf gate could have constituted an important passageway, sparing it from the repercussions of the economic and political siege imposed on it.

However, Iran relied on its Persian history and allowed the prevalence of its nationalistic tendency and Shiite ideology to present itself as being a power that should dominate the region. By doing so, it provoked the Arabs and Sunni Islam alike, from beyond Pakistan to the Atlantic. In addition, it provoked fear among the superpowers over their interests in the region. Then there was the collapse of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, one which always constituted a source of concern for Tehran and distracted it from the Gulf and the Middle East, and the major gift represented by the toppling of the Baath regime in Iraq where the current government does not have the right to disagree with Iran in several areas. As to its greatest investment – i.e. the building of Hezbollah – it earned further immunity and strength following the July 2006 war.

Certainly, it will not be easy for Egypt to turn the clock backward, as it cannot simply become a quick and direct threat to this Iranian expansion. However, Tehran's sustainment of its current policies will push Cairo into

the camp of the GCC states and Turkey in the context of this Cold War, whose main headline today surrounds Bashar al-Assad's departure or stay. On the other hand, it will also not be easy for Cairo to infiltrate what was achieved by Ankara throughout a decade of its absence – which is why Ankara might have the biggest share when reaping the fruits of the Arab spring, from Iraq where Turkish presence is wide in Kurdistan, to Syria via the opposition forces, Lebanon in the future and Tunisia, not to mention Turkish presence in Central Asia and the Balkans. Moreover, it will not be easy to compete with the role that the Gulf Cooperation Council states have started to play after they learned how to use their economic and oil capabilities to assume political roles they used to avoid in the past, taking into account the extent of Egypt's ability to play on the same arena as America, Russia and China among others, and whether or not its situation, troubles and domestic disputes will allow it to cross the Nile.

Still, Egypt's alignment alongside Saudi Arabia and Turkey could help constitute an efficient trio in the region in the face of Iranian expansion and Russian stringency towards the Syrian crisis, which might eventually end with some sort of a settlement granting tripartite attention to Syria's Sunnis, while Tehran and Moscow will find a way to tend to their interest and the Alawites' affairs. But is it too late for settlements?

Article 3.

The New Yorker

Two Presidents find a mutual advantage

[Ryan Lizza](#)

September 10, 2012 -- Barack Obama and Bill Clinton have never been close. Some of their advisers concede that the two men don't really like each other. They have openly disagreed on policy issues and political strategy, and the acrimony generated during the 2008 Democratic primaries, when Hillary Clinton ran against Obama for the nomination, has yet to fully dissipate. Nevertheless, a carefully orchestrated reconciliation of sorts has been under way for some time now. The former Democratic President, long spurned by the current one, has been given a prominent speaking spot at the Convention, in Charlotte, the night before the President's speech—a spot usually reserved for the Vice-President. Joe

Biden was bumped to the following night, in the slot immediately before Obama.

The reconciliation began in earnest late last summer. Patrick Gaspard, the former White House political director, who has moved to the Democratic National Committee, approached Douglas Band, Clinton's closest political adviser and longtime gatekeeper, with some suggestions about how the former President might help with Obama's 2012 reelection campaign. Band, who, by reputation, has an acute sense for moments of political advantage, tried to explain that you don't just call up Bill Clinton and tell him to raise money and campaign for you. Band recommended that the two Presidents begin by playing golf. The next day, Obama phoned Clinton and invited him out for a round. Several Clinton associates say that this was the moment they realized that Obama truly wanted to win in 2012. Why else would he spend hours on a golf course being lectured by Clinton?

The Presidential round was played at Andrews Air Force Base on September 24, 2011, and since then Clinton has become a visible and vigorous champion of Obama's reelection. Clinton agreed to participate in several fund-raisers; he was in a documentary, released on March 15th, attesting to Obama's sound judgment in ordering the raid on Osama bin Laden; and he recently appeared in an Obama campaign ad. "President Obama has a plan to rebuild America from the ground up," Clinton says. "It only works if there is a strong middle class. That's what happened when I was President. We need to keep going with his plan." Behind the scenes, Clinton has been involved in detailed discussions about campaign strategy. For Clinton, Obama's solicitousness is a welcome affirmation of his legacy and, perhaps, an opportunity to boost his wife's Presidential prospects. For Obama, the reconciliation could help him win in November. It's also an ideological turnaround: Obama, who rose to the Oval Office in part by pitching himself as the antidote to Clintonism, is now presenting himself as its heir apparent. It's a shrewd, even Clintonian, tactical maneuver.

The relationship between a sitting President and his living predecessors is rarely easy. According to "The Presidents Club," by Nancy Gibbs and Michael Duffy, Lyndon Johnson sometimes drafted the popular former President Dwight D. Eisenhower into his publicity schemes, which frustrated Ike, who complained to aides about being used. After Johnson left office, Richard Nixon cultivated him carefully, even sending weekly

national-security briefings to his ranch, in Stonewall, Texas, by government aircraft. It worked; Johnson, who was alienated from his party because of Vietnam, mostly kept quiet during Nixon's 1972 reelection campaign, against George McGovern. Ronald Reagan treated the recently disgraced Nixon with deference, which helped start Nixon's late-career return to respectability, but the two men eventually fell out over Reagan's Soviet policy. In 1989, George H. W. Bush recruited Jimmy Carter to help with policy toward Panama; that helped revive Carter's reputation, but the relationship soured in 1991, when Carter tried to rally world leaders against Bush's invasion of Iraq. When Carter attempted to offer advice at the start of Clinton's Presidency, Clinton, with the Iraq incident fresh in memory, rebuffed him. Likewise, Obama, early in his term, ignored Clinton's advice, which is said to have left Clinton feeling wounded. Obama, throughout his career, has faced a challenge in how best to manage his political antecedent. Clinton is fifteen years Obama's senior and was the dominant figure in Democratic politics during the years of his rise. Obama had graduated from Harvard Law School and moved back to Chicago in 1991, the year before Clinton was elected. He made his first mark on Chicago politics during the 1992 campaign, running a voter-registration drive that contributed to Clinton's victory in Illinois—the first time that a Democratic Presidential nominee had won the state since 1964. Yet Obama came to share an ambivalence toward Clinton's policies that was common on the left. In 1996, Clinton, after vetoing two versions of controversial welfare-reform legislation, which he deemed too harsh, announced that he would sign the slightly modified third version. Obama, who was then practicing law at a firm well connected in progressive circles and lecturing at the University of Chicago, saw Clinton's election-year decision as a sellout. He told one newspaper that he found it "disturbing." Later, as an Illinois state senator, Obama said that he wouldn't have supported Clinton's welfare bill, and he helped pass a state law that restored benefits to legal immigrants, a group that Clinton's policy had made ineligible.

In 2000, Obama's political career was nearly derailed by Clinton. Obama was running against Bobby Rush, the incumbent congressman from the South Side of Chicago, in the Democratic primary. Rush had supported Clinton during his impeachment battle, and although Obama's challenge

was a long shot, Clinton helped insure Rush's victory with an appearance in the district just a week before primary day. Obama was so shattered by the defeat that he considered giving up politics. "It's impossible not to feel at some level as if you have been personally repudiated by the entire community," he wrote subsequently, in his 2006 book, "The Audacity of Hope," and that "everywhere you go, the word 'loser' is flashing through people's minds."

By 2004, when Obama ran for the U.S. Senate, he had softened his critique of Clinton and adopted a more centrist position. Clinton's policies, derided by the left as triangulation, had been a necessary "correction" to the liberal excesses of the Democratic Party, Obama told me in April of that year. He was developing a new theme, which helped carry him to the White House, four years later: the obstacle wasn't ideology but blind partisanship. The immediate target of the critique, unveiled during his famous speech at the 2004 Convention, was George W. Bush. But the argument could also be applied to the Clinton years, and it soon was. In a well-known remark in "The Audacity of Hope," Obama dismissed the partisan wars of the Clinton and Bush years as a baby-boomer "psychodrama."

As the 2008 Presidential campaign took shape, Obama emerged as the leader of a new, anti-Clinton wing. His "psychodrama" argument blossomed into a full-scale criticism of the Clinton Presidency. This time, though, the target was another Presidential aspirant, Hillary Clinton, who, Obama argued, was too polarizing to get anything done in Washington. Obama soon added a harsher note to the argument: that Hillary, perhaps like her finger-wagging husband, was untrustworthy. On November 10, 2007, Obama's advisers, in a private memo before a pivotal speech in Iowa, laid out the strategy. "Clinton," they argued, "can't be trusted or believed when it comes to change," because "she's driven by political calculation, not conviction."

An Obama Presidency, the candidate suggested in 2007 and 2008, would be much bolder than Clinton's. "If we are really serious about winning this election, Democrats, we can't live in fear of losing it," Obama declared in his Iowa speech, echoing the advice of his pollsters and strategists. "This party—the party of Jefferson and Jackson; of Roosevelt and Kennedy—has always made the biggest difference in the lives of the American people

when we led, not by polls, but by principle; not by calculation, but by conviction.”

The Clinton circle blames Obama’s decision to go negative for the subsequent nastiness of the 2008 Democratic primaries. Bill Clinton fumed that the press failed to call out Obama for running on a message of hope and change while attacking Hillary as untrustworthy. In New Hampshire, on January 7th, he made his most famous remarks of the race, calling Obama’s record on Iraq “the biggest fairy tale I’ve ever seen!” He added, “The idea that one of these campaigns is positive and the other is negative, when I know the reverse is true and I have seen it and I have been blistered by it for months, is a little tough to take.” Clinton urged Hillary’s campaign to fire back, and, when it wouldn’t, at least to his satisfaction, he did so on his own.

The result was an internecine war that the two men have struggled to overcome. In South Carolina, Obama’s campaign suggested that Clinton’s “fairy tale” comment had racial overtones. (It was read as a subtle rejection of the idea that an African-American could become President.) A few days later, in Nevada, Obama compared Bill Clinton unfavorably to Ronald Reagan. “I think Ronald Reagan changed the trajectory of America in a way that, you know, Richard Nixon did not and in a way that Bill Clinton did not,” he said. No doubt the rhetoric was partly strategic. Every Presidential candidate must distinguish himself from his party’s previous President, especially if the predecessor’s spouse is an opposing candidate. But Clinton “didn’t see it as a tactic,” Mark Halperin and John Heilemann write in “Game Change,” their account of the 2008 race. “He thought that Obama might actually believe that Reagan’s tenure had been superior to his own.”

Bill Clinton’s attacks hurt Hillary as much as they did Obama. The Times denounced Clinton’s fairy-tale comment as a “bizarre and rambling attack” and as exemplifying a campaign that was “perilously close to injecting racial tension” into the conversation. At a press conference in South Carolina the morning after Obama won the state, Bill Clinton seemed to dismiss the victory as a fluke of local demography. “Jesse Jackson won South Carolina in ’84 and ’88,” he said. “Jackson ran a good campaign. And Obama ran a good campaign here.” Tim Russert told me that, according to his sources, Bill Clinton, in an effort to secure an endorsement

for Hillary from Ted Kennedy, said to Kennedy, "A few years ago, this guy would have been carrying our bags." Clinton's role in the campaign rattled Obama. He told ABC News in an interview that Clinton "has taken his advocacy on behalf of his wife to a level that I think is pretty troubling." Obama's victory in the primaries was hard for Bill Clinton to absorb. For the remainder of the 2008 election, contact between him and Obama was minimal: a quick phone call on the night Hillary conceded, a private meeting in Harlem, and a joint campaign rally in Florida to excite Democratic voters. In August, on the eve of the Convention, in Denver, Clinton gave an interview to ABC in which he refused to say whether he thought Obama was prepared to be Commander-in-Chief. But he rose to the occasion at the Convention, in remarks prepared without participation from the Obama campaign. "Barack Obama is ready to be President of the United States," he said.

David Axelrod describes the Presidents' relationship as improved. "Would I be truthful if I said to you that we went through a long and difficult campaign in 2007-08 and as soon as it was over the relationship was instantly close?" he said. "I mean, that just defies human nature. But I think it's grown up over time."

Regardless of Bill Clinton's personal feelings about Obama, it didn't take him long to see the advantages of an Obama Presidency. More than anyone, he pushed Hillary to take the job of Secretary of State. "President Clinton was a big supporter of the idea," an intimate of the Clintons told me. "He advocated very strongly for it and arguably was the tie-breaking reason she took the job." For one thing, having his spouse in that position didn't hurt his work at the Clinton Global Initiative. He invites foreign leaders to the initiative's annual meeting, and her prominence in the Administration can be an asset in attracting foreign donors. "Bill Clinton's been able to continue to be the Bill Clinton we know, in large part because of his relationship with the White House and because his wife is the Secretary of State," the Clinton associate continued. "It worked out very well for him. That may be a very cynical way to look at it, but that's a fact. A lot of the stuff he's doing internationally is aided by his level of access." Bill Clinton's international diplomacy also has benefitted Obama, although the White House has been careful to control the spotlight. One rough moment occurred in 2009, when Clinton flew to North Korea to negotiate

the release of two captive journalists, Euna Lee and Laura Ling. Ling's sister Lisa had worked closely with Clinton and with the Obama Administration to obtain the women's release. In the sisters' subsequent memoir about the ordeal, "Somewhere Inside: One Sister's Captivity in North Korea and the Other's Fight to Bring Her Home," they expressed surprise that Clinton wouldn't be stepping off the plane with Lee and Ling as they greeted their families in front of reporters; the White House had asked him to remain on board. "We feel strongly about this decision," Lisa was told in a conference call with a White House official. Once the plane was on the ground, however, a State Department aide assured her that Clinton would leave the plane with the former captives, and he did. Obama called Clinton a few minutes afterward and thanked him for the mission. It was the first time the two Presidents had spoken in quite a while, Lisa was told.

Throughout 2008 and 2009, Obama rarely contacted Clinton, a decision that the Clinton circle attributes to Obama's loner personality. A Democrat deeply familiar with the relationship complained that the press has often made it seem that Clinton harbored "lingering resentments" from the primary battle: "It's always sort of implied that it's Clinton's fault." The truth, he added, "is that Obama doesn't really like very many people." He ticked off the names of some of Obama's longtime friends: the Whitakers, the Nesbitts, Valerie Jarrett. "And he likes to talk about sports. But other than that he just doesn't like very many people. Unfortunately, it extends to people who used to have his job."

Aides in both camps continue to air old grievances. Clinton's circle complains that for months the White House ignored a 2009 memo from Clinton about energy policy. When a meeting was arranged, on July 14, 2010, it turned out to be a perfunctory event with business leaders. The Obama side says that requests for help from Clinton always seemed to come with strings attached, and that Clinton sometimes seems intent on upstaging Obama. There was momentary panic at the White House when, in 2011, it was learned that Clinton was soon going to publish a book on policy. Former top Clinton aides who went to work for Obama were left feeling, as one of them put it, like children of divorce.

Still, a turning point came after the 2010 midterm elections. Obama had promised, during his campaign, to build a politics of consensus rather than

of partisan conflict, but that approach wasn't working against an increasingly right-wing Republican Party set on his defeat. Pollsters deemed Obama the most polarizing President in history, and he was rejected in 2010, much as Clinton had been in 1994. Meanwhile, the approval ratings for Clinton, who was focussed on international projects, had soared. The balance of power in the relationship began to shift as the Administration saw that enlisting Clinton might solve more than one problem.

In December, Obama negotiated a compromise tax deal with Republicans—a two-year extension of all the Bush-era tax cuts in return for some economic stimulus—that many House Democrats deplored. Liberals complained about the deal, much as Obama had criticized Clinton before 2008. What had happened to boldness? On December 10th, Clinton met alone with Obama in the Oval Office for seventy minutes, one of their longest sessions to date. Afterward, they sauntered into the briefing room, surprising reporters. Clinton gave a forceful defense of the tax deal, which helped quell the liberal uprising.

By early 2011, the White House was turning its attention to reelection. Jim Messina, the deputy chief of staff, moved to Chicago to manage the campaign, and he took charge of the Clinton account. Messina hadn't worked for Obama during the Democratic primaries in 2008 and had no interest in the old conflicts. "Jim Messina just cares about getting two hundred and seventy electoral votes—period," the knowledgeable Democrat said. "And he knows Bill Clinton helps him along that path. He doesn't care what he said in South Carolina in 2008."

Clinton, Messina told me, is one of the few people who can make the case for Obama among voters who still haven't made up their minds. "They're looking at this through an economic framework, and he's going to be incredibly important to that discussion," Messina said. "He's now effective with almost every demographic. I mean, he's in the sixties now"—meaning that more than sixty per cent of Americans view him favorably. "The current two political figures in America who have those numbers are Bill Clinton and Michelle Obama."

In November, not long after the round of golf, Messina and Axelrod made a pilgrimage to Clinton's Harlem office. Messina brought a PowerPoint slide show and briefed the former President on campaign strategy. At the

time, the Obama team was alternating between two arguments about Romney. One presented him as an inveterate flip-flopper, the other as a right-wing ideologue who would return the country to a pre-New Deal dystopia. Clinton advised them to stick with the second argument. It would help with fund-raising, he said; liberal donors would be more motivated to fight a fierce conservative. If they defined Romney as a flip-flopper, undecided voters might think that he could return to his moderate roots once he was in office. “They tried to do this to me, the flip-flopper thing,” Clinton said, according to someone in the room. “It just doesn’t work.” He told the Obama aides that voters never held the flip-flopper attacks against him because they felt that he would simply do what was right.

After Clinton agreed to appear at several fund-raisers, Obama turned him into a leading character in his stump speech. “All we’re asking is that we go back to the same tax rates that we paid under Bill Clinton,” Obama said in Boone, Iowa, recently, using a line that he repeats in most campaign speeches these days. “And you know what? That was a time when our economy created nearly twenty-three million new jobs, the biggest budget surplus in history, and millionaires did pretty good, too.”

Obama had found a way to capitalize on an unusual political development. In an effort to sell deficit reduction, many Republicans have been extolling the former President’s legacy. Even Mitt Romney has presented Clinton as a responsible centrist and a champion of welfare reform, unlike Obama.

“Almost a generation ago, Bill Clinton announced that the era of big government was over,” Romney said earlier this year, trying to magnify divisions between the two Presidents. “President Obama tucked away the Clinton doctrine in his large drawer of discarded ideas, along with transparency and bipartisanship. It’s enough to make you wonder if maybe it was a personal beef with the Clintons, but really it runs much deeper.” Former Representative Anthony Weiner, whose wife, Huma Abedin, is a top aide to Hillary Clinton, expressed surprise that the ██████ has conceded this ground. “Swing voters volunteer that under Clinton we had a big surplus,” he said. “So Clinton provides this perfect signpost in history for Obama. What’s fascinating to me is that the Republicans have seen it coming, understand it, and basically stipulate it. It’s one of those interesting moments when both sides aren’t fighting about whether it’s true.”

On April 29th of this year, Obama attended the first of the joint fund-raisers, in suburban Virginia, at the home of Clinton's good friend Terry McAuliffe. The event had the feel of a first date. "If it were an indie movie," a former Clinton aide said, "the premise would have been these two guys are set up to go out and all their friends are there trying to see if they hit it off or not." As Obama stood on a stage in the back yard with Clinton and McAuliffe, waiting to be introduced, he looked uneasy, with his arms crossed and his head occasionally down. "You could just tell he felt like 'Wow, ■■■ in the belly of the Clinton beast—Terry McAuliffe's house!'" the former aide said. "If I had to put a thought bubble above Obama's head while Clinton spoke, it would be 'What's he going to say?'" Clinton started his remarks with a humorous appreciation of McAuliffe, a fervid Democratic partisan. "I love poor Terry McAuliffe," Clinton said. "He's so laid back and repressed; he just can't express himself. I worry about him. But, I tell you what, if we had a hundred more like him we wouldn't lose as many elections." When it came to Obama, Clinton had some facts to convey. He told the donors that he hoped they would remember them and pass them along to their friends. That it takes ten years to recover from a financial crisis rooted in a housing collapse, and, by that historical standard, Obama was "beating the clock, not behind it." That Obama's stimulus plan had shaved two points off the unemployment rate. That Obama's restructuring of the auto industry had saved one and a half million jobs. That Obama's health-care law will bring consumers and employers \$1.3 billion in refunds from insurance companies. Clinton seemed at home. Obama looked coiled and reticent when he stepped forward. "Let me just say this—and I think Bill will agree with me," he said, near the end of his speech. "There's nothing more humbling, actually, than being President. It's a strange thing. Suddenly, you've got all the pomp and the circumstance and you've got the helicopters and you've got the Air Force One and—and the plane is really nice. It really is. I mean, Bill may not miss being President, but he misses that plane. Let's face it, he does. It's a great plane. And I'll miss it, too." A voice from the audience of donors suddenly interrupted the President: "But not yet!" Obama paused briefly. "But not yet," he replied, with a smile. The crowd cheered and the tension in the yard finally seemed to lift.

On June 7th, Messina went to a meeting in Chicago of the Clinton Global Initiative to make another presentation. Clinton and Messina engaged in a detailed discussion of the politics of swing states. “We talked about each one of them in depth,” Messina said. “And he has a history in all of them. It was amazing. He knew counties, he knew media markets. This is a guy who has won two Presidential elections.”

There was a price for Clinton’s general involvement. At the end of 2011, Hillary Clinton still had a quarter of a million dollars in campaign debt left from 2008. Obama had agreed to retire it, in order to secure her endorsement after the primary contest ended; he had to make good on that promise. Eventually, Matthew Barzun, Obama’s national finance chair and a former Ambassador to Sweden, raised the money, but it was a scramble —“a logistical challenge,” one Democrat told me—to drum up donors amid the Obama campaign’s own efforts to raise money. On July 25th, Obama, who was flying back from New Orleans, called Clinton, in Boston, and asked him to speak during prime time at the Convention, in Charlotte. The quasi-friendship between Clinton and Obama resembles the transactional relationship between most living Presidents. People in Clinton’s orbit portray his campaign work for Obama as that of a man going through the motions—speeches, photographs, rope lines.

Obama’s circle offers a more diplomatic assessment. “Clinton still believes that Obama doesn’t take care of his donors as he should,” a senior Obama official said, referring to Obama’s reluctance to woo his biggest financial supporters. Yet, the official added, “Clinton has a lot of respect for how honest and how supportive the President has been to his wife.” Obama’s success with health-care reform, which the Clintons failed to achieve, also resonates. “Health care means a lot to all three of those people—Hillary, Bill, and Barack,” the official said. “I think historic achievements matter to historic figures like Bill Clinton.”

As a Democratic President facing a resurgent conservative movement, Obama doubtless has come to appreciate what he once criticized as Clinton’s focus on seemingly minor issues, such as advocating for school uniforms in public schools. Although Obama once scoffed at Clinton for his small-bore initiatives, more recently, according to White House officials, he has come to realize that when a President doesn’t control Congress he must find solace in the often limited powers of his office.

With many of Obama's senior political advisers—Axelrod, Messina, Robert Gibbs, Stephanie Cutter, Ben LaBolt—now in Chicago working on his reelection campaign, the Administration in Washington has taken on the aura of a Clinton alumni association. Obama's chief of staff, Jacob Lew, and his main economic adviser, Gene Sperling, were top Clinton aides. Bruce Reed, formerly Clinton's chief domestic-policy adviser, and Steve Ricchetti, Clinton's deputy chief of staff, now work at the White House, as Biden's chief of staff and counsellor, respectively. The three top Obama Cabinet positions are held by Clinton veterans: Secretary of State Clinton, Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner, and Defense Secretary Leon Panetta. It's only a slight exaggeration to say that the many staffing changes since 2010 have resulted in the Obama camp running the campaign while the Clinton camp runs the government.

Given the political stalemate in Washington and the anemic economy, turning the campaign into a choice between the Bush years and the Clinton years makes strategic sense. And, after constant complaints by Republicans, Obama has finally stopped blaming Bush for the poor economy. Clinton can do that work instead. Embraced by both parties, he is better equipped than Obama to make the case that Bush squandered the good fortune and budget surpluses of the nineteen-nineties and left the current President with multiple crises to clean up.

For Clinton, the politics are more complicated. His associates take it as a given that he would like nothing more than to see his wife become President. Hillary Clinton will step down as Secretary of State after the campaign and begin the process of deciding whether she will run in 2016. By some measures, a defeat for Obama in November would leave Hillary the undisputed leader of her party and propel her toward the Oval Office that much faster. At least one of Clinton's closest advisers seems to be backing that strategy. According to two people with direct knowledge, Douglas Band has said that he will vote for Romney. Band declined to comment.

Now that Obama has turned the campaign into something of a referendum on Clinton's sterling record on the economy, Clinton can hardly complain. That may be part of Obama's strategy, too. Flattered by the attention, Clinton now has an incentive to work hard for Obama, who seems to have learned how to tame the former President. "In many ways, the President

has been using Bill Clinton as an economic role model,” the senior official said. “I would guess that President Clinton views that as a compliment.”

Article 4.

Spiegel

Was Yasser Arafat Poisoned?

Juliane von Mittelstaedt and Volkhard Windfuhr

9/03/2012 -- The mysterious circumstances of Yasser Arafat's death are now the subject of a criminal investigation in France. But if it is true that the Palestinian leader was poisoned, then who might have been behind his killing?

Suha Arafat says she knew it all along. Someone like Yasser Arafat doesn't die so easily because his body suddenly gives up, even if he was 75 years old. Someone like him had to have been killed, poisoned or exposed to radiation, whether from enemies or rivals. Though many have suspected the same thing, there has never been any proof. Eight years after the death of the legendary Palestinian leader, it looked like things would stay that way.

But then, two months ago, the Institute of Radiation Physics based in Lausanne, Switzerland, announced that it had found a potential contamination with a fatal amount of polonium-210 on Arafat's underwear, toothbrush and hat. The radioactive heavy-metal isotope is tasteless and almost undetectable. A dose of 0.1 micrograms is already fatal.

Suha Arafat, his now 49-year-old widow, had submitted the test samples with the assistance of al-Jazeera, the Qatar-based television network. Since then, what had been for years merely a conspiracy theory has become a bona fide criminal case -- especially since Suha Arafat lodged a criminal complaint and French prosecutors launched a murder investigation last week.

'We Will Finally Learn the Truth'

The woman who put this all in motion is hard to locate. It even took the taxi driver a long time to arrive via winding roads at Suha Arafat's home in Malta, a half-hour by car from the capital city of Valletta. The unimposing house on a hillside has a front garden which is too small for parties. A compact Korean-made car is parked out front.

Suha Arafat has lived here with her mother for over two years. Her 17-year-old daughter, Zahwa, attends a boarding school in France.

The widow opens the door wearing a dress and flat shoes. She looks much more like a housewife than the supposed she-devil the Palestinians have hated since her husband, who they think should have only been wed to the Palestinian cause, married her -- a Muslim convert who was born a Palestinian Christian in Jerusalem and raised Catholic -- in 1990. But, more than anything, she has been hated since 1995, when she moved from the Gaza Strip to Paris because she found life there more comfortable.

Suha Arafat talks about the suspicion she has carried with her since Oct. 12, 2004. That was the day when Arafat's illness reportedly began, when he had diarrhea and complained of stomach pains and dizziness. The symptoms quickly worsened and left him as thin as a rail. Finally, wearing a training outfit and a wool cap, Arafat was taken from the West Bank town of Ramallah to a military hospital near Paris, where he died on Nov. 11. Already then, many thought that the death seemed unnatural.

During a recent studio interview with al-Jazeera, a choked-up Suha Arafat demanded an investigation. Now, sitting in her living room, where a portrait of Arafat hangs on the wall, she feels she is finally approaching her goal. "I am very confident," she says, "that the entire case will reach a positive end in very little time and that we will finally learn the truth." This is not wishful thinking, she adds, noting that there are reasons for being so optimistic.

Since polonium-210 has a half-life of 138 days, things need to proceed quickly. Therefore, Arafat's body will be examined in the coming weeks, believes Saad Djebbar, one of Suha Arafat's lawyers in Paris. In a television interview, he said that the French legal system has jurisdiction because the murder began in the Palestinian territories and ended in France. He then added the curious sentence that Suha Arafat wants to prevent the Palestinian Authority from obstructing the investigation.

The Missing Piece of the Puzzle

This is a charge that enrages Tawfik Tirawi, Arafat's former intelligence chief, because it is also directed against him. For the last two years, Tirawi has headed the official Palestinian commission charged with investigating the cause of Arafat's death. Since the scandal involving possible polonium poisoning erupted, he has been repeatedly forced to explain why it was al-

Jazeera, rather than him, that came up with the idea of taking a closer look at Arafat's underwear.

During the three years leading up to his death, the Israeli siege prevented Arafat from leaving the Mukataa, his government headquarters in Ramallah. In that period, Tirawi encountered Arafat on an almost daily basis. "I saw very clearly how things got increasingly worse with him," he says. "At first, he had spots on his face. Then, he was constantly throwing up, he lost weight, and the skin on his feet dissolved so that he could only wear sandals." Then he adds: "We were always certain that the Israelis had poisoned Arafat."

As Tirawi sees it, it was just an accident that al-Jazeera discovered the last missing piece of the puzzle. He claims that his commission has tirelessly investigated the case, but that its activities have been secret because such things are obviously kept out of the public gaze. Although he is either unwilling or unable to discuss the commission's findings, he will say that it has been quite successful.

Not only Suha Arafat, but also many Palestinians in Ramallah see things differently. They believe that Palestinian Authority officials never made any real effort to solve the mystery surrounding his death. The first investigative commission was dissolved six months after Arafat's death and only reappointed in 2010.

In all of this, the Palestinians had good cause for looking into things more closely. After all, the French clinic's 558-page report on the death of their national hero raises more questions than it provides answers. For example, why did Suha Arafat refuse to allow a liver biopsy to be taken? Why didn't anyone demand that an autopsy be conducted? How can it be that even the best doctors in France didn't find the cause of this strange infection, which caused blood to coagulate and led to a stroke? Could it be that the French government wants to keep the cause of death secret?

Moreover, why is there so much missing in the report, and why does it seem like "someone has played around with it," as Avi Issacharoff, a reporter with the Israeli daily Haaretz, says? Likewise, he also finds it somewhat odd that he, an Israeli journalist, was the only one to publish the secret French medical report, rather than Suha Arafat or the Palestinian Authority.

Inconsistencies and Rumors

There are many inconsistencies and many rumors. They start with the allegation that Arafat died of AIDS or that Arafat's rivals poisoned him, and there are many more. Still, in the search for a motive to murder Arafat, it is hard to ignore Israel.

In 2002, then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon told the Israeli newspaper Ma'ariv that he regretted not having killed Arafat when Israeli forces invaded southern Lebanon in 1982. In 2003, then-Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said that murder was an option for getting rid of Arafat. But is that any proof?

When asked about this, Israeli officials say: "It has nothing to do with us." For example, Dov Weissglass, who was the bureau chief of then-Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, says: "We didn't kill Arafat when the terror had reached its high point, so why would we kill him in 2004, when he was sitting isolated in the Mukataa and his political influence was already waning?"

Still, polonium-210 is not something one finds at the grocery store. There are only a few countries that can make it, and doing so requires a nuclear reactor. What's more, Israel reportedly had some polonium in the past. Another question is: Why is all of this coming out now, eight years after Arafat's death and six years after the death of Alexander Litvinenko, the former KGB agent and Kremlin opponent, who became the first well-known victim of a polonium poisoning attack?

The Search for the Truth

Suha Arafat says she is driven by the search for the truth. But it might also have something to do with the fact that, in addition to being widely despised in Ramallah, she has also fallen into disfavor in France and Tunisia, where she is under investigation for suspicious cash flows and corruption. There is also the persistent rumor that she had a hand in the disappearance of \$300 million (€240 million) after Arafat's death. In any case, it would certainly seem opportune for her to now assume the role of the widow avenging her husband's death in the name of the Palestinian people.

Enthusiasm for the investigation is more tempered in Ramallah, partly because some people there suspect al-Jazeera of wanting to help topple Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. But, of course, Palestinian officials also realize that they can take advantage of the search for Arafat's alleged

murderer. At the moment, there are no peace talks with Israel, the economy is in a slump and there continue to be deep divisions between Hamas and Fatah, the rival Palestinian groupings ruling the Gaza Strip and West Bank, respectively. Under these circumstances, it would be a perfect time to have news of a poisoned martyr to deflect from the political deadlock and disorientation.

For these reasons, the debate might say more about the Palestinians' situation today than about Arafat's death. "To this day, we have avoided accusing Israel of being responsible for Arafat's death," says Nimr Hamad, Abbas' political adviser. "But if we find polonium in his body, it is 99.9 percent certain that it was Israel. That would help us because it proves that Israel doesn't want peace." He adds that they would demand the appointment of a special tribunal "like the one that was supposed to explain the death of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik al-Hariri. But the evidence is clearer in Arafat's case than it was in Hariri's."

When asked what the situation for Palestinians would be like if Arafat were still alive, General Tirawi guardedly says: "The situation would presumably be more difficult." Nimr Hamad, on the other hand, only smiles. There is hardly anyone these days who would want Arafat to still be president. Indeed, most of the formerly ubiquitous images of Arafat's face on the streets have disappeared.

Full of Rubble

These days, one can't even visit Arafat's mausoleum on the edge of the Mukataa. The entrance is full of rubble and men are pushing wheelbarrows. This is the last work going on in the effort to transform Arafat's formerly bullet-riddled headquarters into a smart-looking official seat of government.

"Not finished," says a security guard, shooing visitors away. The wreaths have been cleared away, and the honor guard is somewhere else. Within the cube-shaped mausoleum, there is just a single memorial stone above a burial vault housing a coffin. That coffin holds not only Arafat's body, but also the secret behind his death -- though perhaps not for much longer.

The 50 most powerful Democrats on foreign policy

September 3, 2012 -- *In an arena dominated by a handful of elites, the president of the United States unquestionably has the most important voice on foreign policy -- in his party, in the country, and (still) in the world. That has been particularly true of Barack Obama, who has tightly controlled national security matters from the White House. Because his power is so outsized, we have not included him -- or Vice President Joe Biden, the resident devil's advocate whose occasional verbal missteps belie his deep international experience -- on our list of the 50 Democrats who have the most influence over Democratic foreign policy. But the fact that so much power is centralized in the Oval Office makes those aides favored with access even more important, and Democratic control of the executive branch allows a select group of principals to control the levers of America's vast national security machine. As in our [GOP list](#), we have included only individuals with a reasonably clear party affiliation, regardless of the authority their office gives them (sorry Gen. Petraeus) -- and, of course, many of those with extraordinary influence aren't in government at all. Here, then, is the FP 50, Democrat edition -- the behind-the-scenes, in-the-media, and at-the-podium A-listers of American foreign policy.*

1. Tom Donilon

may keep a relatively low profile, but make no mistake: This backstage player is perhaps his party's most influential voice on international affairs, with both the ear of the president and hands-on ownership over the foreign-policy process. A longtime Democratic operative with close ties to Vice President Joe Biden, Donilon made his fortune as a [legal advisor](#) to firms including Goldman Sachs and Citigroup and a lobbyist for Fannie Mae. He joined the Obama administration as the quintessential gray man, a staffer renowned for his careful attention to process, but became national security advisor in 2010 after the resignation of Gen. James Jones, with whom he had [reportedly clashed](#). Now, his fingerprints can be found everything

from China policy to counterterrorism to the withdrawal from Afghanistan, which he argued should be speeded up. He [wrote the memo](#) to the CIA formally authorizing the raid that killed Osama bin Laden and [reportedly](#) led a team of U.S. officials to consult Israeli intelligence in Jerusalem before the joint cyber attack on Iran's nuclear enrichment facilities. However, [some charge](#) that he may have spilled a bit too much about such operations to journalists. One advisor to Mitt Romney's campaign has gone as far as to [directly accuse](#) Donilon of leaking classified information. Some reports have put him on Obama's short list to succeed Hillary Clinton as secretary of state, but the leaks flap could make Senate confirmation impossible.

2. Leon Panetta

As the U.S. military moves toward a smaller, leaner force, it is Defense Secretary Leon Panetta who wields the scalpel, slicing and dicing Pentagon programs to save an estimated \$490 billion over the next decade. As CIA director before his move to the Pentagon, Panetta oversaw the raid that killed bin Laden, handing Obama his signature foreign-policy achievement, and he jealously guarded his agency's turf against an attempt by Dennis Blair, then the director of national intelligence, to exert authority over the CIA. As the head of the largest federal agency, Panetta is a Washington player simply by virtue of his title, but his deep ties on the Hill and in the Obama administration make him one of the few bureaucrats with sway in nearly every part of the government. During his tenure at the Defense Department, Panetta has lobbied Congress hard to reduce cuts to the defense budget and has worked to implement the so-called pivot to Asia by shifting Navy ships to the Pacific. On Iran, Panetta has engaged in a careful piece of brinksmanship, working privately to head off a strike by Israel while talking a tough line publicly and saying that all options remain on the table. Over the course of his nearly five-decade career in Washington -- which he [came to as a Republican](#) -- Panetta has served in Congress, run the Office of Management and Budget, and worked as White House chief of staff under President Bill Clinton. That kind of resume has made the colorful Italian-American -- who

kicked off his tenure as defense secretary by telling Iraq to "[damn it, make a decision](#)" on America's troop presence -- one of the most influential of Washington insiders.

3. **Denis McDonough**

is both gatekeeper and confidant for President Obama when it comes to foreign policy. The former football safety at Saint John's University in Minnesota and House foreign affairs staffer is [said to be](#) so close to the president "that colleagues -- even his superiors -- often do not make a major move without first checking with him." McDonough, a fiendish late-night Blackberry user, is also known for his occasional saltiness: Before last year's White House Hanukkah party, for instance, he [told](#) a group of Jewish leaders that he was "really pissed off that there are people out there who doubt our resolve to stop Iran." McDonough was one of the [chief architects](#) of the 2009 surge that sent 30,000 additional troops to Afghanistan.

4. **Hillary Clinton**

Way back in 2008, the former first lady and New York senator seemed an odd choice to serve as her rival's secretary of state. But Clinton has taken to the job, [racking up visits](#) to more countries than any previous secretary, giving issues like gay rights and Internet freedom a new, prominent place in U.S. foreign policy, engaging in some very public high-stakes diplomacy over [imperiled Chinese dissident Chen Guangcheng](#), and even inspiring her very own [Internet meme](#). A liberal icon, Clinton nonetheless has tended to [side with more hawkish](#) members of the cabinet, like former Defense Secretary Robert Gates, against her former Democratic Senate colleague Joe Biden. Insiders say Clinton remains outside the president's inner-most circle and has at times been [sidelined](#) by the White House on issues such as Afghanistan and Middle East peace, but she has not clashed with the president, as some predicted. Admirers, meanwhile, point to her [high approval ratings](#) at home and abroad as a boon for U.S. diplomacy, as well as her influence on key decisions like the U.S. intervention in Libya. Clinton has said she won't serve a second term if Obama is reelected, but despite her repeated denials, buzz about another presidential run in 2016 has continued to build.

5. Susan Rice

At the United Nations, Susan Rice is the tough-talking face of the United States on the international stage. She has a reputation for bluntness but she has worked to bolster America's standing at the ██████, leading efforts to pay a decade of back dues in 2009, join the Human Rights Council, and work with fellow member states on issues including the Libya intervention, nuclear non-proliferation, and sanctions against Iran. She has had far less success convincing Russia and China to reverse their position on Syria. But if the election in November goes to Obama -- whom Rice supported in 2008 over Hillary Clinton, despite having worked for her husband through all eight years of his administration -- she's likely to remain among the president's top foreign-policy advisors; [some have suggested](#) she could even become secretary of state. It's not clear whether her famously sharp elbows will prove a help or a hindrance, though: When a fellow diplomat once pointed out that one of her positions clashed with that of then-national security advisor Gen. James Jones, Rice [retorted](#), "I outrank General Jones."

6. John Kerry

might have lost his bid for the presidency in 2004 and been passed over in 2008 for the top job at the State Department, but he is a powerful force shaping U.S. foreign policy. As chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, he was [responsible for](#) shepherding the president's nuclear agreement with Russia through ratification in 2010 -- an arduous process that culminated in an [eight-day](#) debate during which Kerry spent some [70 hours](#) on the chamber's floor. And, as "a kind of ex-officio member of Obama's national security team," [in the words of](#) FP columnist James Traub, Kerry has been an invaluable diplomatic tool for the administration, putting out fires in places like Afghanistan and Pakistan. The senator is now a [frontrunner](#) to replace Hillary Clinton if Obama wins a second term, having been tapped to deliver a key national security speech on the final night of the Democratic National Convention and to [play](#) Mitt Romney in the president's debate prep sessions. Kerry could very well be higher on this list in the years to come.

7. Bill Clinton

The 42nd president has settled nicely into an elder statesman role, whether he's traveling to earthquake-shattered Haiti with George W. Bush, securing the release of hostages in North Korea, or presiding over the annual Clinton Global Initiative meeting -- arguably a bigger draw for global leaders each September than the opening of the ██████████ General Assembly across town. Although there was some love lost between Clinton and Obama during the tense 2008 primary, Secretary Clinton's husband has been an [active campaigner and fundraiser](#) for the president's re-election and is [slated to deliver](#) a prime-time speech at the Democratic convention. And the former president is still willing to wade into foreign-policy controversies on occasion, [recently suggesting](#) that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is primarily responsible for the failure of the Middle East peace process.

8. Ben Rhodes

Behind Obama's biggest foreign-policy speeches -- his [campaign address](#) before 200,000 people in Berlin, his [2009 Cairo remarks](#) on Middle East policy, or his "[new way forward](#)" for Afghanistan and Pakistan, to name just a few -- is the pen of 34-year-old Ben Rhodes, deputy national security advisor to the president and his chief foreign-policy speechwriter. After getting an ██████████ at New York University and abandoning a novel, Rhodes gave up a publishing job and moved to Washington to write speeches for [Rep. Lee Hamilton](#), eventually [helping to draft](#) the 9/11 Commission and Iraq Study Group reports. Now advising a president known for his rhetoric, Rhodes -- credited as the [lead author](#) of Obama's [National Security Strategy](#) -- is responsible for giving voice to the administration's foreign policy, whether on drones, Iran's nuclear program, or the Arab Spring (though [he says](#) he hasn't yet given up on eventually writing novels), and that makes him by all accounts a key advisor not just a wielder of words.

9. George Soros

The Hungarian-born hedge fund billionaire George Soros, who has been promoting free expression and the rule of law through his Open

Society Foundations since 1979, has gone all in on Obama's reelection campaign this year, [pledging \\$2 million](#) to groups supporting the president's bid. Soros's support for Democratic candidates has made him a favorite bogeyman for the Tea Party right -- particularly TV host Glenn Beck. (Interestingly, the democracy promotion work Soros has funded in the former Soviet Union has also made him a figure of conspiracy theories.) Soros has made [at least four visits](#) to the White House since Obama came to office, though contrary to [some reports](#) he didn't actually meet with the president. (The two men [have met a number of times](#) at fundraisers.) Soros is the author [of more than a dozen books](#), including his most recent, Financial Turmoil in Europe and the United States, a collection of essays on the recession, and he gave a [widely cited speech](#) in June predicting that the eurozone would survive the economic crisis. Soros [has compared](#) last year's Arab Spring rebellions to the Eastern European revolutions he supported in 1989, arguing that new democracies need patience and support. "The transition from a closed society to an open society is not an easy one," he [said](#). "There's a lot more involved in democracy than just overthrowing a dictator. You have to build institutions. That takes time and actually, effort. And these countries will need a lot of support for the revolution actually to succeed."

10. Ashton Carter

may very well be the least known, most powerful man in Washington. The Pentagon's chief weapons buyer, Carter will in large part determine which weapons programs will live to fight another day and which will be scrapped in an era of shrinking defense budgets. A veteran of the Clinton administration, he came to the Pentagon with a mandate to reduce waste and improve efficiency (giving up tenure at Harvard University to stay and finish the job). So far that effort has focused on the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter project, the most expensive in the Pentagon's history and one mired in cost overruns, as well as Carter's Better Buying Power initiative, an effort to streamline Pentagon acquisitions while introducing more competition for defense contracts. Carter has tried to make Lockheed Martin pay for some of the overruns associated with the fighter, which has [complicated](#) the

effort to trim the department's budget. At a time when the military is rapidly expanding its use of drone technology, Carter has said that unmanned aircraft will become "an enduring part of the Air Force's force structure" but that they aren't an option everywhere.

"Afghanistan is obviously not a contested air environment," [he said](#) at the American Enterprise Institute in May. "You can just fly around and do what you want. And that won't be the case everywhere in the world."

11. Jon Stewart

At a time when American news organizations have cut back their foreign presence, Jon Stewart's Daily Show has only increased its attention to world affairs, with [analysis](#) of the financial crisis in Greece ("a country whose whole language is written in frat symbols"), interviews with newsmakers, like the former ambassador from Libya (or "Zazzistan," as correspondent John Oliver suggested rebels rebrand the country), and reportage from the Middle East (where the show's "senior international culture analyst" confirmed Mitt Romney's critique of the Palestinian economy). But there is seriousness behind the silliness. When news broke of Obama's "kill list," Stewart [responded with stunned silence](#) and whimpered "mama," which may perfectly encapsulate how the left feels about much of this administration's foreign policy. Nor does Stewart shy from wonkery: recent episodes have featured experts like Trita Parsi, Ahmed Rashid, and Ivo Daalder. Which means that, for all its gags, the show -- the [most popular](#) late-night TV talk show among 18- to 49-year-olds -- is one of the most influential foreign policy programs around.

12. John Podesta

Chief of staff to President Clinton and co-chair of Obama's transition team, John Podesta is the founder and chair of the Center for American Progress (CAP), the left's answer to conservative think tanks like the Heritage Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute. CAP, which Podesta has [called](#) a "think-tank on steroids," was a critical force shaping Obama's 2008 campaign and subsequent transition period; as Time magazine [put it](#), "not since the Heritage Foundation helped guide Ronald Reagan's transition in 1981 has a

single outside group held so much sway." Podesta himself has been a leading voice on climate change and, perhaps more intriguingly, declassifying official documents related to UFOs. ("It is time for the government to declassify records that are more than 25 years old and to provide scientists with data that will assist in determining the real nature of this phenomenon," he [said](#) in 2002.) Podesta exercises considerable influence in [his behind-the-scenes advisory role](#) to Hillary Clinton and a consultant to the State Department. In 2009, he accompanied Bill Clinton to North Korea to [negotiate](#) the release of two American journalists who had been sentenced to 12 years of hard labor.

13. Jake Sullivan

Despite his slight frame and tender age -- [he is not yet 40](#) -- Jake Sullivan is a definite heavyweight in the U.S. foreign policy establishment. As the head of the State Department's internal think tank, the Policy Planning office, Sullivan is the chief ideas guy in Foggy Bottom and enjoys unrivalled access to Hillary Clinton, for whom he is also the key liaison to the White House. Known as a behind-the-scenes operator, he is one of the few people in Washington charged with thinking about the legacy of U.S. leadership and how to maintain American primacy in the world 25 and 50 years down the road. Before he moved to Policy Planning, the Minnesota native and former Supreme Court clerk worked as Clinton's deputy chief of staff, a job he never gave up while adding the policy planning portfolio to his duties. But his real job, many say, is simply this: Being Clinton's indispensable man.

14. Tony Blinken

a consummate [national security insider](#) and a staffer on the National Security Council staff during the Clinton administration, was [staff director](#) of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for Joe Biden, who [called him](#) "one of the smartest guys I've ever worked with." Blinken followed his boss to the White House, becoming the most influential member of the vice president's national security team; he is [reported](#) to have encouraged the [vice president's pitch](#) to Obama for the United States to draw down in Afghanistan. Blinken has also been

an effective public advocate for the Obama administration, pushing back against criticism of the [Iraq withdrawal](#) and policy toward [Israel](#). Blinken [attends](#) the president's daily intelligence briefings along with the vice president and, in a measure of his clout, appears in the famous Situation Room [photo](#) of the bin Laden raid. Blinken [has argued](#) that there is still time to reach a diplomatic solution on Iran's nuclear weapons, [saying](#) the current U.S. policy is aimed at "buying time and continuing to move this problem into the future, and if you can do that -- strange things can happen in the interim."

15. Carl Levin

As chair of the Armed Services Committee, a position he has held since 2007, Carl Levin leads Senate oversight of the Pentagon and is at the forefront of the raging debate over the defense budget. Levin and Sen. John McCain, the committee's ranking member, agree that the \$600 billion in military cuts set to take effect next year unless a new budget passes would be, in Levin's words, "[a train wreck](#)." (Defense Secretary Panetta has preferred the more apocalyptic "[doomsday mechanism](#).") But while McCain has proposed protecting the defense budget by reducing federal spending elsewhere, Levin [has argued](#), "We should do something intelligent, which means establish priorities for any reductions but most importantly focus on revenues. You've got to have revenues." Known for leading hearings and publishing reports on the alleged torture of Guantánamo prisoners and the causes of the financial crisis, he has recently [called](#) on the Obama administration to cut the U.S. nuclear arsenal and [announced](#) a Senate investigation into possible national security leaks in the White House.

16. Haim Saban

The media mogul and self-described "cartoon schlepper" -- he [franchised](#) the Mighty Morphin Power Rangers television series, merged it with Rupert Murdoch's News Corp., and sold the whole thing to Walt Disney for \$5.3 billion -- is a staunch supporter of Israel and one of the most prodigious fundraisers for the Democratic Party. Born in Egypt but raised in Israel, Saban has changed his views on the Jewish state over the years. Once farther to the political left, he [told](#) the Israeli daily Haaretz that the failure of the Camp David summit in

2000 proved that conservative politician Ariel Sharon, then the leader of the Israeli opposition, "was right and I was wrong." He said that he has since moved "very far to the right." Nonetheless, Saban, who [donated](#) \$13 million to the Brookings Institution to found the Saban Center for Middle East Policy in 2002, has remained a steadfast supporter of the Democratic Party, personally donating thousands of dollars for Hillary Clinton's 2008 presidential bid and recently [shelling out](#) \$1 million to super PACs supporting Obama.

17. Jeremy Bash

When Leon Panetta became CIA director in 2009, he brought [one person](#) with him -- Jeremy Bash, as his chief of staff -- and Bash followed his boss when Panetta made the switch to the Pentagon in 2011. A lawyer by training, Bash was Al Gore's legal advisor during his 2000 presidential bid (a role [immortalized](#) by the made-for-TV movie Recount), where he became close [friends](#) with fellow Gore campaigners [Philippe Reines](#) and [Andrew Shapiro](#), now both in top roles at the State Department, as well as [Rajiv Shah](#), the current USAID administrator. Bash went on to be minority general counsel to the House intelligence committee and a close aide to its ranking Democrat, Rep. Jane Harman. He stays mostly out of the public discourse, but his access to the highest levels of intelligence and decision-making is undeniable (even if, according to critics, it has been problematic in at least one instance: Bash was [named](#) among the CIA officials who were said to have given special access, potentially to classified information, to Hollywood filmmakers producing a movie about the bin Laden raid).

18. Patrick Leahy

As chair of the Appropriations subcommittee for State, foreign operations, and related programs, 37-year Senate veteran Patrick Leahy essentially controls the U.S. foreign aid budget. An outspoken congressional leader on human rights issues, he's the author of the 1997 "Leahy Law," [which prohibits](#) U.S. assistance to foreign militaries deemed responsible for human rights violations. Leahy [has](#)

[advocated](#) suspending Egypt's military aid until the country fully commits to democracy and the rule of law, as well as [cutting aid](#) to Pakistan for its "[Alice in Wonderland](#)," hot-and-cold dealings with the United States. Clinton's State Department might have hoped that having Leahy chair the powerful subcommittee would keep the funds flowing, but the senator earlier this year [told Clinton](#) to expect "an allocation that is below the amount requested by the president." He argued in particular that fewer resources should be funneled to struggling U.S. efforts in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq, [calling](#) the State Department's \$4.8 billion request for the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad a "symbol of grandiose and unrealistic ambitions in that country."

19. Cheryl Mills

is as close as it gets to the Clintons, known for "[fiercely protecting their interests and keeping their secrets](#)." After serving as Bill Clinton's deputy White House counsel during his 1999 impeachment trial, Mills was a senior advisor to Hillary Clinton during her 2008 presidential campaign. The former private-practice lawyer now serves as Secretary Clinton's [right-hand woman](#) in Foggy Bottom, where she oversees operations for the State Department's nearly [60,000](#) staff, in addition to leading State's outreach to earthquake-stricken Haiti and its "[Feed the Future](#)" initiative. Mills is so close to her boss, she's been known to [clash with the White House](#) to defend her -- not to mention that she was one of only a handful of State staffers invited to Chelsea Clinton's wedding.

20. Nancy Pelosi

Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is best known as the congressional face of the Obama administration's domestic agenda, but her path to power was paved on foreign-policy issues. In 2007, Pelosi led the charge against Bush's strategy in Iraq, helping pass a key though nonbinding [resolution](#) that denounced the president's request to send additional troops to the country. In the Obama era, she has been the most influential voice in trying to push the president, who has maintained many of his predecessor's national security policies, to the left, in particular trying [to speed the U.S. withdrawal](#)

from Afghanistan. A 25-year congressional veteran, Pelosi first made headlines as an influential voice on foreign policy in 1991 when she unfurled a [pro-democracy banner](#) in Tiananmen Square. Since then, she has been a consistent critic of China's human rights record, leading the state-run Xinhua news agency in 2008 to brand her a "[disgusting figure](#)."

21. David Rubenstein

was a wonk before he was a tycoon, having served as a domestic policy advisor in the Carter administration. At a time when the Obama campaign has focused its attacks on Romney's record at Bain Capital, Rubenstein's Democratic credentials have made him the White House's favorite private equity guy. He has helped the administration [facilitate energy deals](#), and in 2011 he [scored a White House invitation](#) to meet with visiting Chinese President Hu Jintao. The Carlyle Group, the Washington-based private equity firm Rubenstein co-founded in 1987, [manages more than](#) \$160 billion, with 36 offices around the world, and has counted the likes of George H.W. Bush and James Baker as advisors. Rubenstein is also [vice chairman of the board](#) at the Council on Foreign Relations, where he has [endowed a chair](#) in energy and the environment. Having signed Bill Gates' "giving pledge" -- promising to donate the majority of his wealth to charity -- Rubenstein is perhaps best known around Washington for his [philanthropic efforts](#), including buying the sole remaining copy of the Magna Carta in order to donate it to the National Archives.

22. Kurt Campbell

When Chen Guangcheng walked out of the U.S. Embassy in Beijing this past March, it was no accident that he was [hand in hand](#) with Kurt Campbell, who led the diplomatic battle to convince the Chinese to allow the blind dissident to take refuge in the United States. Campbell, who [served](#) in the Pentagon under Bill Clinton, is responsible for U.S. policy toward some of the toughest hot spots, including China, North Korea, and Myanmar, where he has overseen a historic and surprising warming of ties. One of the authors of the U.S. "pivot" toward Asia, Campbell is likely to see his role grow more important as the United States rebalances its interests away from the

Middle East. [In 2007 he co-founded the Center for a New American Security](#), a center-left think tank that has provided a bevy of Obama foreign-policy staffers. Plus, he's half of one of Washington's top power couples: His wife, [Lael Brainard](#), is the undersecretary for international affairs at the Treasury Department.

23. Howard Berman

The most influential House Democrat on foreign affairs, Howard Berman has carved out a perch for himself on the hawkish wing of the Democratic foreign-policy establishment -- supporting, for example, a [stringent line on Iran](#) and a complete [overhaul of the foreign-aid system](#). Before the 2010 midterm elections, Berman, a three-decade congressional veteran, chaired the House Foreign Affairs Committee. He is now locked in a [tight reelection fight](#) with liberal Democrat Brad Sherman to represent their redrawn Los Angeles district. Win or lose, Berman has proven himself one of Congress's most ardent Israel supporters and earlier this year introduced legislation that would expand Israeli access to U.S. anti-missile technology. He has also served as the congressional point-person on patent and copyright enforcement, vital issues for his Hollywood constituents. Since losing the committee chairmanship to Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, he has often found himself fighting a rear-guard action against his Republican opponent, including her effort to [slash funding for the United Nations](#).

24. Arianna Huffington

Eight years ago, after George W. Bush's reelection, a well-connected crowd of Hollywood stars and media types [gathered](#) at the Brentwood, California, home of Arianna Huffington -- then best known for [leaving](#) the Republican Party more than a decade ago, before running as an independent candidate in California's 2003 gubernatorial recall race. What eventually emerged from the get-together was a liberal counterpoint to [Matt Drudge's](#) growing conservative blog empire: the Huffington Post, which has since aggregated (OK, and [reported](#)) its way to more than a billion monthly page views and three foreign editions, with [more on their way](#). It's fair to say Huffington -- who has [argued](#) that her native Greece should leave the eurozone so it has "the flexibility that it needs to actually grow the economy and not simply

play defense continuing with these austerity measures" -- helped shape the anti-Bush narrative of the late 2000s and continues to convey mostly left-leaning positions to her massive audience. Although the site's focus is often domestic, with a steady drumbeat of news about jobs and the financial crisis, Huffington has used her considerable platform to become a prominent -- and loud -- critic of America's wars, [calling](#) for the United States to get out of Afghanistan sooner: "This one is now compromising our humanity, our national security, our standing in the world, and our claim to the moral high ground."

25. Michèle Flournoy

While at the Pentagon, Michèle Flournoy provided much of the thinking behind Obama's revision of George W. Bush's Iraq and Afghanistan policies, and her policy shop in turn emerged as a serious power center within the building. As undersecretary of defense for policy, the No. 3 Defense Department position, Flournoy was the highest-serving woman in Pentagon history, helping to shape the quadrennial defense review, a key assessment of the country's long-term military strategy, before [returning to the private sector late last year](#). Prior to joining the Obama administration, Flournoy co-founded the influential think tank Center for a New American Security with Kurt Campbell (No. 22) in 2007. Rumored to be a top candidate for secretary of defense, Flournoy has become a leading surrogate for the Obama campaign, for example going toe-to-toe with Romney advisor Rich Williamson in a [July debate](#) at the Brookings Institution over national security leaks and the Obama administration's approach toward the conflict in Syria.

26. Thomas Nides

A former chief operating officer of Morgan Stanley and executive at Credit Suisse, Thomas Nides was one of Hillary Clinton's top bundlers, raising more than \$100,000 for her presidential campaign. In early 2011 he replaced Jack Lew as deputy secretary of state for management and resources. Perhaps Nides's most important function at State is shepherding the president's international affairs budget request through Congress -- a duty that draws on his experience as a

Hill staffer and gives him considerable sway over who gets funded and for what. In his bid to fend off ever-deepening State Department budget cuts, Nides has been behind efforts to brand diplomacy as both an [economic](#) and a [national security](#) imperative. "Our budget should be looked upon no differently than the Department of Defense's budget," he told FP in 2011. "We are helping countries... [become] more self-reliant and have stronger economies. By doing that, that helps our national security."

27. Rachel Maddow

Despite having led MSNBC's climb in the ratings as liberals' cable network of choice, Rachel Maddow has remained a strident critic of the Obama administration. A Rhodes Scholar, she has not been afraid to hold the administration's feet to the fire, [lambasting Obama's Afghanistan policy](#) and leading the charge to repeal the Pentagon's "don't ask, don't tell" policy. Maddow's campaign to allow gays to serve openly in the military reached its emotional climax when [Lt. Dan Choi came out on air](#), an act that ensured his firing from the Army. Amid charges that the Obama administration has clung to George W. Bush's anti-terrorism policies, MSNBC -- and Maddow in particular -- has positioned itself as a [constant thorn in the White House's side](#), attacking the president from the left and holding him accountable to his liberal base. Criticizing Obama's detention policy, [Maddow described it](#) as "a radical new claim of presidential power that is not afforded by the Constitution and that has never been attempted in American history -- even by George W. Bush and Dick Cheney." Her most recent book, [Drift](#), documents how easy it has become for U.S. presidents to wage war without congressional consent.

28. Dennis Ross

Having served under President Jimmy Carter and in every administration since (except George W. Bush's), Dennis Ross has played a bigger role in setting American policy toward the Middle East than perhaps any other official who didn't occupy the Oval Office. Most recently, Ross was special assistant to President Obama and the National Security Staff's senior director for the central region,

which includes the Middle East, Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and South Asia. The bulk of Ross's career, however, has been dedicated to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, and his work on this front remains highly controversial. Lauded by some for his [agility](#) as a one-man back channel to Benjamin Netanyahu, Ross's perceived bias toward the Israelis has made him a regular target of critics on the left. After leaving his White House post late last year, he returned to the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, where he had been a fellow from 2001 to 2009. In 2008, and again this year, Ross has sought to shield Obama from charges that he is anti-Israel, [reportedly telling](#) a group of Jewish philanthropists, "I am absolutely convinced President Obama will use force [against Iran] if all else fails."

29. Dianne Feinstein

has represented the reliably blue state of California in the Senate for two decades, but as chair of the Intelligence Committee she has been known to work with both parties on national security issues -- most recently [joining](#) Republican legislators in supporting an investigation into possible White House disclosures of classified national security information to the press and [introducing](#) her own anti-leak measure. After [pointing the finger](#) at the White House, Feinstein, who has also been called a leaker [herself](#), quickly [backtracked](#). Feinstein has not hesitated to publicly criticize spy agencies at home or abroad, [admonishing](#) Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence for apparently [failing to detect](#) bin Laden's compound or [calling](#) U.S. intelligence on the Arab Spring "way behind our times."

30. James Miller

At the beginning of this year, Jim Miller was nominated to succeed his boss, Michèle Flournoy, as head of the defense policy shop. The two also worked together at the Center for a New American Security, where Miller was a senior vice president and director of studies. Miller's background is in arms control and bioterrorism. But while at CNAS, he emerged as a [blistering critic](#) of the Bush administration's handling of the Iraq war, urging the United States to "get out of Iraq more responsibly than it got in." Miller has also been called before Congress to testify several times on progress in the withdrawal from

Afghanistan. In March 2012, he appeared on Capitol Hill to defend U.S. conduct in the war after riots sparked by the burning of Qurans by U.S. troops and a shooting rampage by a U.S. service member. Miller [argued](#), "It is critical that these tragic occurrences not blind us to the significant progress we have made." Having been instrumental in formulating the Pentagon's Nuclear Posture Review, Miller argues that the United States can safely do with [significantly fewer nuclear weapons](#).

31. Michael Froman

Between the two institutional centers of power within the White House -- the National Security Staff and the National Economic Council -- one low-key advisor's portfolio [straddles both](#): In his role as a key Obama economic advisor, Michael Froman has served as the president's "[sherpa](#)" to international economic forums, in particular the G-7 and G-20, shaping the U.S. response to the global financial crisis. Froman came to the Obama administration as a [protégé of Citigroup official Bob Rubin](#) and has served as a point person in trying to resolve international trade disputes, including managing America's [ongoing tussle](#) with China.

32. Wendy Sherman

A State Department veteran -- she worked for Secretaries Warren Christopher and Madeleine Albright -- Wendy Sherman has occupied the No. 3 spot in Foggy Bottom since last year. Under Albright, she coordinated North Korea policy, and today she is the [top U.S. negotiator](#) on another of the United States' stickiest diplomatic cases -- Iran's nuclear program -- traveling to [India](#) and [Israel](#) in recent months for talks on the issue. (Although Iran dismissed a U.S. offer to meet at an Istanbul summit in April, Sherman and her Iranian counterpart, Saeed Jalili, briefly "[paused to chat](#)" at a Baghdad meeting the following month.) Hillary Clinton has also called on the undersecretary to play a role in U.S. negotiations with Russia over the violence in Syria, with Sherman [traveling](#) to Moscow in August to urge the Russians to pressure Bashar al-Assad not to deploy chemical weapons. Sherman has strong ties to Clinton, a [longtime friend](#) whom

she helped prepare for the transition to Foggy Bottom, but she has also worked closely with the Obama White House, notably co-leading a State Department review with Tom Donilon after the 2008 presidential election.

33. Nita Lowey

A Pelosi ally and the ranking Democrat on the House Appropriations subcommittee on the State Department and foreign operations, Nita Lowey has influence that extends far beyond her suburban New York district. She has been a vocal advocate for human rights in Sudan -- co-authoring or supporting numerous bills with relief or aid provisions -- and for the global fight against HIV/AIDS. In 2008, for instance, she helped win \$800 million in relief aid for Darfuri citizens and another \$18.6 million for global health. Lowey has been a strong defender of USAID funding, [arguing](#) that too-deep budget cuts "could jeopardize relationships with allies and halt development initiatives vital to fighting terrorists' recruitment efforts." Lowey had planned to run for U.S. Senate in 2000, but she stepped aside when Hillary Clinton expressed interest in running.

34. Derek Chollet's

early gigs included helping James Baker and Warren Christopher write their memoirs, and during the Clinton years he worked for Strobe Talbott at Foggy Bottom. In the Obama administration, Chollet first served as Anne-Marie Slaughter's deputy at the State Department's Policy Planning office and then as senior director for strategic planning at the National Security Council before he was nominated to his current position in March. Chollet's new job gives him sway over defense policy in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa. The co-author of a well-received [book](#) on U.S. foreign policy during the 1990s, he and Samantha Power recently edited a [volume of writings](#) by and about one of their mentors, the late Richard Holbrooke. Chollet would seem to be a good fit for a president who promised to "reject as false the choice between our safety and our ideals" in his [inauguration address](#), having once made a similar point in an influential journal article. "The choice between realism and

idealism is a false one," he [wrote](#). "U.S. foreign policy must be firmly rooted in both national interests and values."

35. Madeleine Albright

Although it's been more than a decade since Madeleine Albright left the helm of the State Department, she has by no means retreated from Washington's elite foreign-policy circles. The 75-year-old is still [publishing books](#) and [articles](#), giving interviews everywhere from [CNN](#) to [The Daily Show with Jon Stewart](#), serving on a [dizzying](#) number of boards, and working as both a professor at Georgetown University and chair of the global strategy firm Albright Stonebridge Group. (She spends her morning commute listening to [conservative talk radio](#), "to get to know other views that are out there.") A supporter of Clinton's 2008 presidential bid, Albright served as co-chair of the [task force](#) that [helped shape](#) President Obama's recently created Atrocities Prevention Board. In 2009 and 2010, she [led](#) a review of NATO's priorities in the post-Soviet world, urging the body to address 21st-century threats, including the rise of terrorism and non-state actors, cyberwar, and climate change, and [to do so](#) by working more cooperatively with Russia and other non-member states and organizations.

36. Brian McKeon

A Biden aide since the mid-1980s, Brian McKeon was, as National Journal put it in 2007, the institutional memory of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, where he supervised the committee's legal work while his boss was chairman. In 2010, as foreign policy advisor to now-Vice President Biden, McKeon was the Obama administration's point person during the Senate's consideration of the president's nuclear treaty with Russia. Today, the unflappable McKeon manages the National Security Staff, a powerful gatekeeper position that oversees access to the national security advisor and that was previously occupied by Denis McDonough.

37. Mark Lippert

Together with Ben Rhodes and Denis McDonough, Mark Lippert, who had been by Obama's side since joining his Senate staff in 2005,

was part of the president's foreign-policy inner circle in the administration's early days. He had the president's ear and sometimes delivered Obama's decisions to more senior political appointees, according to James Mann's book *The Obamians*. However, in 2009, the Naval reservist was forced out of the White House and went on active duty after he was seen as undercutting his then-boss, National Security Adviser James Jones. But Jones would himself later be [pushed out](#), and Lippert has now returned to the administration, this time as the assistant secretary of defense. His new appointment makes him the Pentagon's point man for East Asia and the Pacific at a time whe

38. Jane Harman

served nine terms as a congresswoman from California, stepping down in 2011 to [lead the Wilson Center](#), a foreign-policy think tank partially funded by the U.S. government. While in Congress, Harman was at some point on [every](#) major national security-related committee and played a key role in debates over reform of the intelligence services. After her husband, businessman and hi-fi audio pioneer Sidney Harman (of [Harman/Kardon](#) fame), died in 2011, she took over his seat on the board of the Newsweek/Daily Beast company. Harman has recently defended the U.S. use of drone strikes against terrorists but argued that they must be accompanied by a greater emphasis on "[soft power](#)" and diplomacy. "While the drone program is an effective tool to combat al Qaeda, 'whack-a-mole' alone won't keep us safe," she wrote. "We need to win the argument."

39. Peter Beinart

An author, journalist, and former editor of the *New Republic*, Peter Beinart is an ideas man and an important voice shaping American foreign-policy debate. A onetime hawk who ardently supported the Iraq war, Beinart began moderating his views after the failure to find weapons of mass destruction and the difficulties of the occupation, ultimately admitting that he had been wrong on the first page of his 2010 book, *The Icarus Syndrome: A History of American Hubris*. Now, Beinart has possibly taken on an even more controversial subject with his new tome [The Crisis of Zionism](#), which strongly

criticizes Israeli policy toward the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and accuses the American Jewish establishment of enabling Israel's moral decline. In turn, he has earned a reputation as "U.S. Jewry's enfant terrible," [according](#) to the Israeli daily Haaretz. Beinart recently launched a group blog at the Daily Beast called [Open Zion](#), which is devoted to "Israel, Palestine, and the Jewish future." He was one of a select group of journalists [invited](#) earlier this year to consult with Obama on foreign-policy issues ranging from Afghanistan to Israel.

40. Strobe Talbott

Under Strobe Talbott's leadership, the Brookings Institution has been [consistently ranked](#) Washington's most influential think tank. Talbott landed at Brookings after a long career that has included stints as both a journalist -- he was a correspondent and editor at Time magazine for decades, as well as the author of a trilogy on Cold War nuclear negotiations -- and a government official, having served as an ambassador at large and deputy secretary of state under Bill Clinton, his Oxford roommate. Talbott's foreign-policy interests range widely, but he has lately focused his efforts on the environment, co-authoring [a 2010 book](#) on "ethics and politics in the age of global warming." His 2008 book [The Great Experiment](#) was a strongly worded argument in favor of global governance and international institutions, not likely to win him many friends across the aisle. (Talbott has also been one of the most unlikely subjects of an [Onion parody](#) and provided the name of a -based punk band.)

41. James Steinberg

The dean of Syracuse's school of public affairs, James Steinberg has held an impressive list of posts in Democratic administrations, including director of Policy Planning, deputy national security advisor, and, most recently, deputy secretary of state. Steinberg is perhaps best known for the catchphrase "strategic reassurance," a term he [coined](#) to redirect U.S.-China relations: "Just as we and our allies must make clear that we are prepared to welcome China's 'arrival,' as a prosperous and successful power," he said in a 2009 speech at the Center for a New American Security, "China must reassure the rest of the world that its development and growing global role will not come

at the expense of security and well-being of others." Steinberg had his hand in a broad range of issues at the State Department, [covering](#) Asia, Iran, and the Balkans, but some remember him for his sharp elbows and off-putting intensity. (He [reportedly](#) retained closer ties to the president than to his boss, Secretary Clinton; during the 2008 transition period, Steinberg had [advised](#) Obama on issues including Iran and the Israeli peace process, in addition to accompanying him on campaign trips to Afghanistan and Iraq.) Steinberg may have retreated into the ivory tower, but he continues to shape foreign-policy debates, [arguing](#) just last month in the Washington Post for a broader and less confrontational military strategy in the Asia-Pacific.

42. Anne-Marie Slaughter

As Hillary Clinton's director of Policy Planning from 2009 to 2011, Anne-Marie Slaughter [oversaw](#) the massive Quadrennial Development and Diplomacy Review -- the State Department's first -- and was a leading [advocate](#) of "21st-century statecraft" -- diplomacy for an age where "the measure of power is connectedness" among state and non-state actors, as well as businesses and media. More recently, though, she captured attention with her Atlantic [article](#) "Why Women Still Can't Have It All," a manifesto on momhood for the world's female leaders that chronicles Slaughter's time doing double duty at State and as the mother of two teenage boys. Even though she left Washington to return to the academic (and parenting) life, Slaughter, a [blogger](#), [frequent tweeter](#), and academic expert in international law, seems more visible than ever, injecting herself into U.S. foreign-policy debates, notably and repeatedly [exhorting](#) the president to take bolder action in Syria by arming the country's rebels.

43. Tom Malinowski

Once [considered](#) a candidate to run the Obama State Department's Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Bureau, Tom Malinowski now works White House and State contacts from the outside. A former speechwriter at the National Security Council and State Department during the Clinton administration, Malinowski today is responsible for delivering the messages of Human Rights Watch -- an international NGO that spends some [\\$50 million](#) annually -- to policymakers and

government officials in Washington. He also has an expeditionary mindset: Over the past year, Malinowski has traveled from [Myanmar](#) to Bahrain (where he was briefly [detained](#)), gathering on-the-ground insight to bring back to the capital. He has generally been [supportive](#) of the Obama administration's policies in those countries, as well as in Syria, where he [says](#) the "complexity of risk" should preclude U.S. military intervention. (Despite the often grave nature of his work, Foreign Policy readers also know Malinowski has a [sense of humor](#).)

44. Samantha Power

is, in the [words](#) of Human Rights Watch executive director Kenneth Roth, the "foremost voice for human rights within the White House." A former journalist in Bosnia, the Irish-born Power [first captured the attention](#) of then-Senator Obama after he read her 2003 Pulitzer Prize-winning book 'A Problem from Hell,' an account of the United States' failure to prevent genocides in the likes of Armenia, Cambodia, and Rwanda. Although she resigned from Obama's 2008 campaign after calling Hillary Clinton "[a monster](#)," Power returned to the president's team in the White House, where, aside from [chairing](#) Obama's new Atrocities Prevention Board, she is said to have played a [key role](#) in the president's decision to intervene in Libya last year. A staunch champion of the "responsibility-to-protect" doctrine, Power is also a Richard Holbrooke protege: She spoke at the late diplomat's memorial service and co-edited a 2011 [book](#) of essays by and about him. Having recently given birth to her second child, Power has said she plans to return to her post after maternity leave, though her husband, legal scholar Cass Sunstein, Obama's somewhat [controversial](#) regulatory chief, [recently announced](#) he would step down.

45. Heather Hurlburt

A former Clinton administration speechwriter, Heather Hurlburt serves as [executive director](#) of the National Security Network, a liberal group with close ties to Democratic congressional offices and a farm team for Obama's executive branch. In the war of foreign-policy ideas, she belongs to a group of influential liberal pundits who have shaped perceptions and media coverage of the Obama administration. During the Clinton years, Hurlburt worked on the State Department's

Policy Planning staff and as an aide to secretaries of state Madeleine Albright and Warren Christopher. [In 2001](#), Hurlburt penned a watershed Washington Monthly article in which she excoriated the Democratic Party for neglecting defense issues and failing to articulate the ideals that should underpin a liberal foreign policy, writing that "we will never learn to think straight about war until this generation of professional Democrats overcomes its ignorance of and indifference to military affairs." That article hinted at what was to come for the Democratic foreign-policy establishment: the founding of left-leaning, defense-oriented think tanks -- her NSN, as well as the Center for New American Security.

46. Michael McFaul

A Stanford University professor turned diplomat, Michael McFaul served as Obama's primary Russia advisor on the National Security Staff before taking the ambassador's post in Moscow. ([Reportedly](#), the president offered McFaul the job to talk him out of leaving the administration.) McFaul's academic research on promoting democracy has earned him the respect of both left and right, but his confirmation as ambassador encountered opposition after it became a referendum on the president's "reset" policy with Russia, of which McFaul was the primary architect. In turn, McFaul -- who has deep contacts in both the Russian government and opposition circles -- was the victim of a brutal smear campaign upon his arrival in Moscow. He maintains one of the most entertaining [Twitter feeds](#) of any U.S. ambassador. After Russia's Foreign Ministry [lambasted him](#) for a speech in May that accused Moscow of bribing Kyrgyzstan, McFaul [tweeted](#), "Still learning the craft of speaking more diplomatically."

47. Martin Indyk

Having spent years in top diplomatic posts during the Clinton administration -- U.S. ambassador to Israel (twice), assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, special assistant to president, and senior director for Near East and South Asia on the National Security Council -- Martin Indyk has government experience that's hard to match. Lately, though, the Britain-born, Australia-raised Indyk has wielded his influence from the highest ranks of Washington's think

tank world, as the head of the foreign-policy program at the Brookings Institution. (He also founded both Brookings's Saban Center for Middle East Policy and the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.) Indyk -- who [led](#) early U.S. efforts to get Libya's Muammar al-Qaddafi to give up his nuclear weapons during the Clinton administration -- has recently [weighed in](#) on U.S. policy toward Iran, declaring that the Obama administration's belief that sanctions would force Iran to give up its nuclear program was "wishful thinking." He has also [testified](#) before the Senate on the humanitarian crisis in Syria, calling on Obama to do more to prevent a "descent into chaos."

48. Vali Nasr

A leading thinker on the Middle East, Vali Nasr is the rare breed of academic who finds himself [profiled](#) on the front page of the Wall Street Journal. Just as the situation in Iraq began to deteriorate rapidly, Nasr shot to fame with a timely book, *The Shia Revival*, on the battle being waged within Islam that would come to shape Iraq's sectarian conflict. An Iranian immigrant, Nasr's family lost everything in the 1979 revolution and fled to the United States, where Nasr has become a leading advocate of a [more thoroughgoing](#) engagement with Iran. He advised Richard Holbrooke during his tenure as special representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan and, as the recently appointed dean of the School for Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins, remains an influential outside advisor to the Obama administration. His 2009 book, *Forces of Fortune*, which argued that [a growing middle](#) class across the Middle East could prompt a groundswell of opposition to the region's authoritarian leaders, arguably predicted the Arab Spring.

49. Suzanne Nossel

Before taking up her current post at the human rights advocacy organization Amnesty International, which boasts more than 3 million members worldwide, Suzanne Nossel was chief operating officer of Human Rights Watch and a State Department official. In the early 1990s, she helped implement the peace accords that ended apartheid in South Africa and worked on human rights documentation and

election monitoring in Bosnia and Kosovo. She then served under Richard Holbrooke at the United Nations. Nossel is credited with coining the phrase "smart power," the title of a 2004 Foreign Affairs [article](#) in which she wrote about combining military might with other forms of "soft power." Nossel was deputy assistant secretary of state for international organization affairs from 2009 to 2011, and under Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, "smart power" has become a defining, if nebulous, concept driving U.S. foreign policy.

50. Puneet Talwar

A longtime Middle East advisor to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Puneet Talwar moved to the White House with his [former boss](#), Vice President Joe Biden, in 2009 and took up a [post](#) as senior director on the National Security Staff, with responsibilities for Iran, Iraq, and the Persian Gulf. Back in 2001, Talwar argued in Foreign Affairs, that the Bush administration should "abandon the containment strategy [toward Iran] it inherited and embark on a new policy of moderate engagement." By gradually helping Tehran "reintegrate into the world community through various multilateral arrangements," he argued, "Washington can encourage and strengthen positive forces within Iran." It was no surprise, then, when Talwar, who is one of only a handful of Obama advisors who have actually traveled to Iran, emerged as one of the cheerleaders for the president's early (though unsuccessful) overtures to Tehran.