

From: Office of Terje Rod-Larsen <[REDACTED]>
Subject: May 2 update
Date: Fri, 02 May 2014 14:15:32 +0000

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The Weekly Standard

Getting Ready for a Bad Deal - Israel's security establishment steps up

Elliott Abrams

May 12, 2014 -- The world's attention was largely turned to Ukraine last week. To the extent that the Middle East was on the front pages, the focus was the new agreement between the PLO and Hamas, its implications for the "peace process," and John Kerry's comment about Israel as an "apartheid state."

But in Israel a different subject was getting a lot of attention: Iran's nuclear program. April 28 was Holocaust Remembrance Day, and that was the context in which Prime Minister Netanyahu spoke about Iran at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial.

Netanyahu discussed the world's blind refusal to see what was coming in the 1930s despite all the evident warnings: "How is it possible that so many people failed to understand reality? The bitter, tragic truth is this: It is not that they did not see. They did not want to see." He then asked, "Has the world learned [from] the mistakes of the past? Today we again face clear facts and a tangible threat. Iran calls for our destruction. It is developing nuclear weapons."

Netanyahu turned then to the current negotiations with Iran and drew the analogy:

This time too, the truth is evident to all: Iran seeks an agreement that will lift the sanctions and leave it as a nuclear threshold state with the capability to manufacture nuclear weapons within several months at most. Iran wants a deal that will eliminate the sanctions and leave its capabilities intact. A deal which enables Iran to be a nuclear threshold state will bring the entire world to the threshold of an abyss. I hope that the lessons of the past have been learned, and that the desire to avoid confrontation at any cost will not lead to a deal that will exact a much heavier price in the future. I call on the leaders of the world powers to insist that Iran fully dismantle its capacity to manufacture nuclear weapons, and to persist until this goal is achieved. He then repeated a pledge he has made in the past that Israel will not tolerate Iran as a nuclear threshold power: "The people of Israel stand strong. Faced with an existential threat, our situation today is entirely

different than it was during the Holocaust. . . . Today, we have a sovereign Jewish state. Unlike the Holocaust, when the Jewish people were like a wind-tossed leaf and utterly defenseless, we now have great power to defend ourselves, and it is ready for any mission.”

Of course, Netanyahu has been saying these things for years, and listeners may wonder whether this is just more of the same: rhetoric, or at best a kind of “psy-op” meant to toughen the American position at those talks with Iran. After all, though Netanyahu is said to have come close to ordering a strike at Iran in the summer of 2012, it didn’t happen. In addition to feeling great American pressure against acting, Netanyahu clearly did not have a consensus in the Israeli security establishment for such a grave decision.

Those who consider Netanyahu’s words just more rhetoric should consider, then, two additional statements made last week—by two key figures in the security establishment, both viewed as balanced and sensible voices.

On April 23, five days before Netanyahu spoke, retired general Amos Yadlin, the former head of Israeli Military Intelligence and now director of the Institute for National Security Studies, wrote a piece for the Jerusalem Post. Like Netanyahu, he objected to a deal with Iran that would allow it to preserve its nuclear weapons program—and said that appears to be where the West is headed. The Iranian “concessions” are not real, he wrote: “Iran is trying to portray itself as a country prepared to make fundamental concessions, but at the same time it is preserving the core abilities in both routes it is developing for a nuclear weapon.”

Yadlin rejected the view that inspections alone could prevent Iran from cheating: Inspections are “insufficient. The international inspection systems are not perfect and have always been known to fail. They already failed in the past to discover on time the efforts made by Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Syria, and Iran to secretly develop a military nuclear program. These systems can cease to exist in case of a unilateral Iranian decision—like what happened with North Korea.”

So what should a deal with Iran contain?

The powers must demand that Iran will dissolve most of the centrifuges and leave a symbolic number of non-advanced centrifuges. They must demand that the uranium enrichment stockpile in Iran will be limited to a low level and symbolic amount (less than the amount required for one

bomb). They must also demand the dismantlement of the enrichment site inside a mountain near Qom, which aims to guarantee a protected site immune to a quick breakthrough towards a bomb. They must demand that the Arak reactor will be altered so that it would not be used for military purposes and demand an answer to the open questions regarding the military dimensions of the Iranian nuclear program.

Yadlin said the mark of an acceptable deal with Iran is that “the time it takes Iran to develop a nuclear weapon, if it decides to do so, will be measured in years rather than in months.”

General Yaakov Amidror, the former Israeli national security adviser and before that head of research for Israeli Military Intelligence, wrote a piece for the Jerusalem Post one day later. Like Yadlin, he brushed aside assurances that inspections and intelligence will spot any Iranian moves toward making a bomb: “There is no such thing as a monitoring system that cannot be sidestepped. There is no way to guarantee that the world will spot Iran’s efforts to cheat. American intelligence officials have publicly admitted that they cannot guarantee identification in real time of an Iranian breakout move to produce a nuclear weapon.”

And what if Iranian cheating is discovered? “Anyone who thinks that a U.S. administration would respond immediately to an Iranian agreement violation, without negotiations, is deluding himself. . . . Israel cannot accept the existential threat caused by this delusion.” The determination of the P5+1 to stop Iran will erode in future years, he argues, just as it has eroded in the past few years as the demands being made of Iran have steadily been reduced. Requirements considered essential a few years ago have already been dropped, including the demand that Iran simply stop enriching uranium.

Amidror also dismissed the idea that Iran won’t cheat and try to build a bomb out of fear of the likely American reaction: “Does anyone believe that the use of force is a possible option for the United States? What are the chances that the United States would obtain the support of the Security Council for the use of force against Iran? What are the chances that Washington would act without U.N. support?” Amidror argued that optimistic assumptions about a deal with Iran cannot be sustained —“neither the assumption that a monitoring regime can guarantee identification, in real time, of Iranian violations; nor the assumption that

the United States will act with alacrity if a breach is identified; nor the assumption that, in the real world, Iran will truly be deterred by U.S. threats.”

Where does this argument lead? Amidror concluded: “With such a flimsy agreement, I wonder what will be left of Western commitment to preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. And Israel will have to draw its own conclusions.”

These three statements, from Israel’s prime minister and two of its leading security figures, are of course meant to toughen the American position in the coming talks. Watching the P5+1 effort to conclude a deal with Iran by the July deadline, the three men are urging tougher terms than many in the West (not to mention Russia and China) seem willing to require. They are restating the point that a bad deal is, as American officials have agreed at least in principle, worse than no deal, because it would offer false assurances that we’ve stopped Iran while strengthening the Islamic Republic through the elimination of economic sanctions. And they are reminding us, yet again, that while the P5+1 may be willing to take a chance and let Iran progress a bit more slowly toward a bomb, Israel may make a different calculation and “draw its own conclusions.”

It may be difficult to think of Israel acting alone in the face of a widely celebrated nuclear deal with Iran or even in the face of continuing negotiations that function as a cover for Iran’s progress toward a usable weapon. But watching Israel’s prime minister deliver his warning from Yad Vashem, on Holocaust Remembrance Day, is a reminder that Jewish history has taught Israel’s leaders powerful lessons about the past—and the dangers the future holds.

Elliott Abrams is a senior fellow for Middle Eastern studies at the Council on Foreign Relations and author, most recently, of [Tested by Zion: The Bush Administration and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict](#).

[Article 2.](#)

NYT

Why Abbas Reconciled With Hamas

Ali Jarbawi

May 1, 2014 -- Ramallah, West Bank — A week before the deadline expired on the stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace talks sponsored by John Kerry, the Palestinian factions Fatah and Hamas announced an end to their seven-year split. The announcement paved the way for the formation of a Palestinian unity government in the coming weeks, with elections following at least six months later.

The unity deal was greeted in Palestinian circles with a mixture of joyous relief and caution. The split has proved harmful to Palestinians, and has increased their collective suffering over the past seven years. It has also distracted them from major issues like ending the Israeli occupation and establishing an independent state. Indeed, for seven years, ordinary Palestinians have demanded that the two factions reconcile.

Despite the optimism, there is a pervasive fear that this latest deal will be reconciliation in name only. After all, the latest announcement doesn't contain anything new; it merely declares that earlier agreements will be upheld. This has led many to wonder: Why now? Is this latest agreement more serious than earlier ones? Does it signal a change in strategy on both sides? Or is it merely a necessary tactical step whose effects will soon fade away?

All the apprehensiveness has been exacerbated by Palestinian leaders' political flailing and bumbling. Since the breakdown of the Kerry-sponsored talks, a current of opinion has emerged demanding that the Palestinian leadership stop negotiating and approach the United Nations, which has led to Palestinian moves to join several international agreements and treaties. Meanwhile, there are ongoing attempts to save the negotiations and extend them.

To add to the tension, there is a discrepancy between growing hints that the Palestinian Authority will be dissolved and calls to hold Palestinian general elections.

After all, what would be the point in agreeing to form a national unity government and holding elections a few months from now if there's a plan to dissolve the Authority?

Many analysts believe that the unity agreement is a necessary way out of the dire straits that both the Authority's president, Mahmoud Abbas, and Hamas leaders currently find themselves in. The tightening of the siege on

Gaza and the concomitant drying up of Hamas's international financial pipelines, as well as the closing of most of the tunnels between Gaza and Egypt, have forced Hamas to accept this deal. From its viewpoint, even if the agreement doesn't achieve much, the group doesn't stand to lose anything.

The situation is more complicated for Mr. Abbas. He had firmly believed that the negotiations were the only way to reach a settlement with Israel, and he stood against armed struggle, sticking to his position even during the armed intifada that broke out in 2000.

Mr. Abbas now finds himself in a sticky situation. The negotiations that he worked so hard for have reached a dead end, due to Israeli recalcitrance. Mr. Abbas would have been prepared to continue the negotiations process, as long as it achieved the barest sliver of acceptable gains for the Palestinians. But it has become clear that the current Israeli government is not prepared to cede even that bare minimum. As a result, Mr. Abbas has reached a conclusion he'd long refused to accept: that the negotiations process won't bear fruit. Of course, this is hugely disappointing on two levels. First, because the negotiations haven't achieved what he expected of them. Second, because internal dissent has mounted and he has been personally blamed for setting back the national cause, the legitimacy of his leadership has eroded.

This may explain why Mr. Abbas has endorsed Palestinian applications to join international treaties, as well as his recent recurrent statements that he wants to step down. He appears to have embarked upon two divergent paths simultaneously, despite the fact that they are contradictory. He has done so in the hope, perhaps, that one of them will stick.

Reconciliation with Hamas means that the option of dissolving the Authority has been dropped. Furthermore, a general election after several months gives Mr. Abbas a final opportunity to find a way to resume negotiations — his preferred option — or finally quit. His tactics are rather obvious, but Israel and the United States are ignoring his signals.

Instead, the unity deal has created a furor within the Israeli government. Because of the agreement, the bitterest vitriol has been poured on Mr. Abbas, who has been portrayed as someone who doesn't want peace with Israel and as a terrorist. Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and the members of his government seem to have forgotten that Israel itself

made a deal with Hamas (to free prisoners) not so long ago. They also seem to have forgotten that they once refused to recognize Mr. Abbas as an acceptable negotiating partner, claiming that, due to the schism with Hamas, he didn't represent all Palestinians. Now they consider him unacceptable for the opposite reason.

It's clear that the Israelis and Americans want to leave Palestinians with no choice but to acquiesce to Israeli demands. However, it's also clear that the Palestinian people will no longer accept the ongoing continuation of absurd, fruitless negotiations.

The reconciliation agreement with Hamas will ensure that the Palestinian Authority continues to exist after Mr. Abbas steps down. However, Israeli and American threats could lead to the Authority's eventual collapse. Is this what Israel and the United States really want?

Ali Jarbawi is a political scientist at Birzeit University and a former minister of the Palestinian Authority.

[Article 3.](#)

The Washington Post

On Syria, reality-check time

[David Ignatius](#)

2 May, 2014 -- Rabah Al-Sarhan, Jordan -- The Syrian border is just a few miles north of this processing station for [refugees](#). Syrian rebel commanders had invited me to travel with them inside their country, entering through a crossing point near here, but the Jordanian government emphatically said no. So this account is based on interviews with Syrians I met in Jordan or who talked with me from inside Syria by phone.

My Syrian contacts described a bitter stalemate: President Bashar al-Assad holds on to power, but he has lost control of major parts of the country. The rebels fight bravely, but they lack the organization and heavy weapons to protect the areas they have liberated. Meanwhile, al-Qaeda extremists fester in the shadows. The opposition remains so fragmented that some rebels frankly admit they aren't ready to govern, even if Assad should fall.

“We still need to find a leader,” conceded one rebel commander. “We are headless inside the country.”

Rebel fighters spoke honestly about three key issues: First, their military wing remains diffuse and disorganized; the southern front has more than 55 brigades but lacks a unified command-and-control structure. Second, Muslim extremists are gaining a foothold in the south, just as they did two years ago in northern Syria. [Jabhat al-Nusra](#), linked with al-Qaeda, has set up checkpoints on some roads just north of the Jordanian border. Finally, Assad’s forces have regained control of many Damascus suburbs, essentially by starving the residents into submission.

With [Ahmad al-Jarba](#), the political leader of the Syrian opposition, to visit Washington next week for meetings with U.S. officials, it’s reality-check time. The current American approach is contributing to the grinding, slow-motion death of Syria. What should be changed? There are two obvious possibilities, but each has problems:

- Strengthen the opposition. Saudi Arabia wants the United States to expand its covert training program to create a real rebel army, armed with anti-aircraft missiles. Such a force could hold off Assad and protect rebel-held areas. But the rebels would be fighting for a draw and an eventual political settlement. They are too fractured politically to triumph and rule.
- Negotiate with Assad to create a successor regime. Some in Jordan and Washington argue that, for the sake of stability, the friends of Syria should open back-channel contacts with Assad. “We might have to eat some hard crow,” [Ryan Crocker](#), the widely respected former U.S. ambassador to Syria and Iraq, said at a think-tank gathering in Washington on Thursday. “As bad as the regime is, there is something worse — which is extreme elements of the opposition.”

But cutting a deal with Assad’s regime strikes me as an unrealistic strategy, in addition to being an amoral one: Assad has so angered many Syrian citizens that he has probably lost any chance of rebuilding a unified country. As one U.S. official noted, “It’s like asking Humpty Dumpty to put himself back together.”

The United States needs a strategy for a long fight. If the goal is an eventual political balance in Syria, the opposition will need training and military assistance to stabilize the areas it controls. In return for help, the moderate opposition will have to break with al-Nusra, just as it has done

with the even more extreme group known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

A fighter from the [Daraa](#) region explained the simple reason his forces cooperate with al-Nusra: “They have a lot of support.” This opportunistic alliance has to change; otherwise, the moderates are doomed.

In framing a sustainable strategy, the Obama administration should listen to Jordanians when they complain that they have a powder keg next door.

Jordan is nominally part of a covert plan to assist the rebels made by intelligence chiefs from the United States, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and other key countries. But this pact masks a deep uneasiness.

Even some rebel leaders know Jordan’s tight border is better than Turkey’s porous frontier. “The smugglers and kidnappers can’t operate along the Jordan border. The extremists can’t enter. We feel safe at our backs,” says a fighter with the Yarmouk Brigade in southern Syria.

The victims in this war are paying a terrible cost. A man shows you the wounds of torture — the stump of a finger chopped off and a red welt of stitch marks where his leg was broken. A delicately beautiful young woman walks with a severe limp because her leg was snapped by prison guards.

Syria policy should be made with a cool head, but it can’t be heartless to such human suffering.

[Article 4.](#)

The Washington Post

Obama’s foreign policy of denial

[Charles Krauthammer](#)

2 May, 2014 -- Barack Obama’s 949-word response Monday to a question about foreign policy weakness showed the president at his worst: defensive, irritable, contradictory and at times detached from reality. [It began with a complaint](#) about negative coverage on Fox News, when, in fact, it was the [New York Times’ front page](#) that featured Obama’s foreign policy failures, most recently the inability to conclude a trade agreement with Japan and the collapse of Secretary of State John Kerry’s Middle East negotiations.

Add to this the collapse of not one but [two Geneva conferences](#) on Syria, American helplessness in the face of Russian aggression against Ukraine and the Saudi king's humiliating dismissal of Obama within two hours of talks — no dinner — after Obama made a special 2,300-mile diversion from Europe to see him, and you have an impressive litany of serial embarrassments.

Obama's [first rhetorical defense](#), as usual, was to attack a straw man: "Why is it that everybody is so eager to use military force?"

Everybody? Wasn't it you, Mr. President, who [decided to attack Libya](#) under the grand Obama doctrine of "responsibility to protect" helpless civilians — every syllable of which you totally contradicted as [150,000 were being slaughtered](#) in Syria?

And wasn't attacking Syria for having crossed your own chemical-weapons "red line" also your idea? Before, of course, [you retreated abjectly](#), thereby marginalizing yourself and exposing the United States to general ridicule.

Everybody eager to use military force? Name a single Republican (or Democratic) leader who has called for sending troops into Ukraine.

The critique by John McCain and others is that when the Ukrainians last month came asking for weapons to defend themselves, Obama turned them down. The Pentagon offered instead MREs, ready-to-eat burgers to defend against 40,000 well-armed Russians. Obama even denied Ukraine such defensive gear as night-vision goggles and body armor.

Obama retorted testily: Does anyone think Ukrainian weaponry would deter Russia, as opposed to Obama's diplomatic and economic pressure? Why, averred Obama, "in Ukraine, what we've done is mobilize the international community. . . . Russia is having to engage in activities that have been rejected uniformly around the world."

That's a deterrent? Fear of criticism? Empty words?

To think this will stop Putin, liberator of Crimea, champion of "New Russia," is delusional. In fact, Putin's popularity at home has [spiked 10 points](#) since the start of his war on Ukraine. It's now [double Obama's](#).

As for the allegedly mobilized international community, it has done nothing. Demonstrably nothing to deter Putin from swallowing Crimea. Demonstrably nothing to deter his [systematic campaign](#) of destabilization, anonymous seizures and selective violence in the proxy-proclaimed

People's Republic of Donetsk, where Putin's "maskirovka" (disguised warfare) has turned Eastern Ukraine into a no-man's land where Kiev hardly dares tread.

As for Obama's vaunted economic sanctions, when he finally got around to applying Round 2 on Monday, the [markets were so impressed](#) by their weakness that the ruble rose 1 percent and the Moscow stock exchange 2 percent.

Behind all this U.S. action, [explained the New York Times](#) in a recent leak calculated to counteract the impression of a foreign policy of clueless ad hocism, is a major strategic idea: containment.

A rather odd claim when a brazenly uncontained Russia swallows a major neighbor one piece at a time — as America stands by. After all, how did real containment begin? In March 1947, with Greece in danger of collapse from a Soviet-backed insurgency and Turkey under direct Russian pressure, [President Truman went to Congress](#) for major and immediate economic and military aid to both countries.

That means weaponry, Mr. President. It was the beginning of the Truman Doctrine. No one is claiming that arming Ukraine would have definitively deterred Putin's current actions. But the possibility of a bloody and prolonged Ukrainian resistance to infiltration or invasion would surely alter Putin's calculus more than Obama's toothless sanctions or empty diplomatic gestures, like the preposterous Geneva agreement that wasn't worth the paper it was written on.

Or does Obama really believe that Putin's thinking would be altered less by antitank and antiaircraft weapons in Ukrainian hands than by the State Department's [comical #UnitedforUkraine Twitter campaign](#)?

Obama appears to think so. Which is the source of so much allied anxiety: Obama really seems to believe that his foreign policy is succeeding.

Ukraine has already been written off. But Eastern Europe need not worry. Obama understands containment. He recently dispatched [150 American ground troops](#) to Poland and each of the Baltic states. You read correctly: 150. Each.

[Article 5.](#)

The National Interest

Thucydides Trap 2.0: Superpower Suicide?

Patrick Porter

May 2, 2014 -- Though Russian troops gather on Ukraine's border, and civil war devastates Aleppo, the view from Washington still sees the 'big story' of this century as the rise of China and the mischief it entails. The big question is about the potential switch from an American to an Asian century and the bloody reckoning this could bring with it. Are America and China on collision course in the tradition of Athens and Sparta, or Imperial Germany and Edwardian Britain?

Some observers, such as Graham Allison and Joseph Nye of Harvard University, and recently strategist Zbigniew Brzezinski, sense that the problem is all Greek. They turn to the Athenian general and historian Thucydides, and his history of the Peloponnesian conflict that long ago tore apart the Hellenic world and wrecked Athenian power. As Thucydides wrote, Athens' growing power frightened Sparta, determined to hold the status quo. The power shift bred suspicion, and suspicion bred war. Likewise, unless they strike a bargain, Washington and Beijing might walk into a 'Thucydides trap.'

Thucydides did portray a trap, and his account of an ancient war warrants attention. But the trap he spoke of was more insidious and closer to home. His prime theme wasn't with the external origins of superpower war. The real snare in his History was not the murder of great powers, but their suicide.

Sparta-Athens comparisons often come to the lips of American strategic thinkers. That Thucydides did not lay out a sustained explicit theory, and that his opinion is hard to extract from the arguments he recreated, does not stop people from ransacking his history for lessons. During the Cold War, some looked to Athens as America's surrogate, a democratic, dynamic naval power confronted by the Soviet land empire and garrison state. It is a discomfiting analogy. When Henry Kissinger spoke of the Soviets as 'Sparta to our Athens,' a journalist asked 'Does that mean we're bound to lose?' During hot 'small' wars, debate turned to Athens' calamitous Sicilian expedition as a parallel to Vietnam or Iraq. But with an emerging power challenging the existing strategic order of the Far East, attention turns back to the Greek precedent of bipolar rivalry.

Through the lens of 'China anxiety,' Thucydides' history stands as a perpetual reminder of the dangers of power transition. It is hard, pessimists fear, for one power to rise and the other to decline without clashing as they pass. The deeds of Beijing and Washington suggest an escalating rivalry that will get harder to keep within limits. For all the soothing rhetoric about pivots, rebalancing and the protection of norms, the hard reality is a tightening ring of American alliances and an ever-more-assertive Asian heavyweight pressing its territorial claims and pushing out its defense perimeter. And deny it all he likes, Obama isn't shifting over half of American naval assets to the Asia Pacific to contain pirates.

But contrary to fatalists, power transitions do not necessarily lead to wars. [As James Holmes argues](#) [3], Britain avoided clashes with imperial France, the United States and Japan before 1914. Thucydides made a different lamentation that should resonate for the United States: about the way Athens' foreign policy disaster was born in civil strife. Growing power led to a loosening of restraint and the corruption of language. The 'root cause' was not the hegemonic challenger's rise, but Athens' own growth, generating a lust for power and destructive politics with 'national security' as the totem. Foreign-policy debate suffered. In the debased rhetoric of the time, hardliners and opportunists treated the prudential regard for limits as unpatriotic cowardice.

In Book Three, Thucydides' description of wartime rhetoric bears resemblance to today's gridlocked politics. 'Words had to change their ordinary meaning....Reckless audacity came to be considered the courage of a loyal ally; prudent hesitation, specious cowardice; moderation was held to be a cloak for unmanliness; ability to see all sides of a question, inaptness to act on any...The advocate of extreme measures was always trustworthy; his opponent a man to be suspected.' An aristocrat exiled by the people's vote, Thucydides portrayed a volatile Athenian population misled by demagogues that whipped it up. Even allowing for his disdain for unruly democracy, we can recognize in his History a useful warning. Power generates an obsession with status and the projection of strength, mutates into imperial swagger, and coarsens domestic politics. Domestic political spite in the imperial capital leads to moral and strategic failure, precisely because it makes sober debate difficult.

So, in today's democratic superpower, restraint is labeled 'timidity.' A reluctance to risk more American casualties in peripheral wars is 'fecklessness.' Concern that a state with a multitrillion dollar debt should shift some burdens to rich allies, scale back some ambitions, and bring its commitments and power into balance is 'isolationism.' Despite sanctioning and negotiating with Iran, strengthening ties with East Asian states, attempting to broker peace in the West Bank and Syria, critics charge the Obama administration with 'turning inward' and a 'global retreat.' For Condoleezza Rice, reductions in the defense budget and failure to leave a residual presence in the Iraq she helped Pyrrhically to liberate add up to a forsaking of 'leadership.'

Such rhetorical poison runs in both directions. President Obama might break a wintry smile at Thucydides' description of intemperate rhetoric. But his own party has its share of opportunists more concerned to appear tough than get serious. The lack of serious opposition to the dogmatically conceived invasion of Iraq flowed in part from the reluctance of many congressional Democrats to ask difficult questions, or even read the intelligence reports. Only when the body count rose and intelligence failures emerged did they discover that the Neoconservatives made them do it. A climate of hysterical accusation prevents the formation of a party of caution, and impedes the measured consideration of hard choices, including one of the hardest choices of all—whether to pursue primacy or balance in Asia.

The mutual spiral of domestic disarray and strategic error loomed soon after the United States became a superpower. Journalist Walter Lippmann warned during the Korean War that the crisis of the escalation of the war into a dangerous clash with China rose from a fatal symbiosis between growing strength and bitter domestic politics. The unwise expansion of the war into northern Korea, the agitation for taking the war into China and the rise of McCarthyist politics fed off each other. Truman was judged harshly—but by the very standards his own over-reaching Doctrine raised, trapped in a set of crusading images of his own making. This 'Lippmann Gap', between means and ends, fed and was fed by the kind of partisan rancor that today resurfaces in American politics.

Since then, every major, prudent move of retrenchment and adjustment has drawn charges of appeasement and weakness, from President Richard

Nixon's realignment with China, to Ronald Reagan's arms control negotiations with the Soviet Union. Both Thucydides and Lippmann were pessimistic about democracy, believing that it needed elite guardians to steady the ship. But one need not reject democracy to agree with their diagnosis. Effective statecraft, and its unraveling, begins at home. A glance at the history of major powers suggests that their fall originates more in self-inflicted wounds than in the challenge of rivals. As Steven Van Evera writes, since 1815, great powers have been conquered on eight occasions. On six of those occasions, the aggressors were fuelled by 'fantasy-driven defensive bellicosity.' A nuclear-armed, distant maritime-air heavyweight and liberal democracy like America may not go the way of Imperial Japan, Wilhelmine Germany or Napoleonic France. But by falling prey to its own fears, it could become its own worst enemy. Avoiding a clash will take compromise from both America and China, and a willingness to reconsider their security horizons and renegotiate their universe. This difficult adjustment will need the formation of coalitions at home. Rhetorical absolutes, and the hollow vocabulary of 'retreat' and 'leadership', are particularly unsuitable to the nature of the Asia-Pacific, because that region makes sheer dominance difficult. For China, as for the United States, a maritime military balance will make conquest by anyone difficult. While a rising China will be constrained by a neighborhood of wary adversaries, the United States with its debt-deficit problem will be lucky if its unipolarity lasts. This difficult equilibrium is the reality. A milder language, therefore, is needed for America to pick its way through the chaos, and dodge the trap.

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[Article 6.](#)

The Washington Post

Why the United States shouldn't support Egypt's ruling generals

[Robert Kagan](#)

One wonders how much further the United States will allow itself to be dragged down into the deepening abyss that is today's Egypt. Those in the Obama administration and Congress who favor [continued U.S. military aid to the dictatorship in Cairo](#) insist that although such aid may run counter to American ideals, it does serve American interests. I would argue the contrary, that American interests are being harmed every day that support continues.

Far from aiding the United States in the struggle against terrorism, as the Egyptian military dictatorship and its supporters claim, the military's brutal crackdown on [Egypt's Islamists](#) is creating a new generation of terrorists. Whatever one thought of the government of Muslim Brotherhood leader Mohamed Morsi, and there was much to criticize, it came to office by fair and legitimate electoral means, just as U.S. policy had demanded, and it was headed toward a second election that it probably would have lost. Although [the Morsi government did use force against demonstrators](#), that was nothing compared with the [military's killing of thousands](#) and [imprisonment of tens of thousands](#) since the military coup last summer. [Terrorism](#) since the coup has killed more than 10 times as many people as it did in the year Morsi was in office. And it's not surprising that terrorism has been on the upswing. The military's crackdown, in which [hundreds may be condemned to death](#) in an hour-long trial, will leave some Islamists believing that their only choice is to kill or be killed. For every jihadist the military may kill in the Sinai Peninsula, it creates many more future jihadists throughout the nation.

Certainly all political avenues have been closed. "One man, one vote, one time" used to be the charge leveled at Islamists. It turns out that was the Egyptian military's policy, and now the United States', too. A generation of Egyptian Islamists will turn to other means to seek power. And who will be the target of these future jihadists? Not only the Egyptian military dictatorship but also the superpower that is paying the Egyptian military to repress them.

How is this in America's interest? If the United States wanted to tame Islamism and make it safe for the modern world, it has not merely squandered that opportunity; it has been complicit in crushing that opportunity and all but ensuring that there will never be another chance. Nor is it in the United States' interest to be acting so transparently contrary to its stated principles. While some hypocrisy is unavoidable in international affairs, the level of Orwellian doublespeak has been extraordinary in the past few months. As the military dictatorship of Egypt has rapidly and steadily expanded the scope and violence of its repression of all dissent, [persecuting journalists](#) and Egyptian liberals, [taking obstreperous comedians off the air](#) — not to mention ruthlessly cracking down on the Muslim Brotherhood and its followers — senior U.S. officials have nevertheless blithely referred to Egypt's "[democratic transition](#)" and have spoken sympathetically of the government's move toward elections, even though everyone knows that the military's leaders have no intention of creating a democracy in Egypt. No doubt officials feel compelled to use the strange language about "democratic transition" because Congress has required that the administration certify that Egypt is moving toward democracy in order to continue providing military assistance.

Despite this, Congress has been complicit in supporting military dictatorship in Egypt. Anti-Islamist sentiment runs high in the United States. There is a feeling across much of America that the best policy in Egypt, Syria and elsewhere in the Middle East is simply to let the Muslims kill each other. "[Let Allah sort it out](#)," as Sarah Palin so pithily put it. There is sympathy for any Arab state attempting to crush the Brotherhood and little concern about the torture, persecution and killing that the government uses to accomplish this objective.

Many members of Congress also believe that by backing the Egyptian military they are helping Israel, which, through the [American Israel Public Affairs Committee](#), has actively lobbied Congress for full restoration of military aid. Even though the Morsi government did not pull out of the Camp David Accords or take actions hostile to Israel, the mere presence of a Muslim Brotherhood government in Egypt frightened the Israeli government.

To Israel, which has never supported democracy anywhere in the Middle East except Israel, the presence of a brutal military dictatorship bent on the

extermination of Islamism is not only tolerable but desirable. Perhaps from the standpoint of a besieged state like Israel, this may be understandable. A friendly observer might point out that in the end Israel may get the worst of both worlds: a new Egyptian jihadist movement brought into existence by the military's crackdown and a military government in Cairo that, playing to public opinion, winds up turning against Israel anyway.

Israel has to be the judge of its own best interests. But so does the United States. In Egypt, U.S. interests and Israel's perceptions of its own interests sharply diverge. If one believes that any hope for moderation in the Arab world requires finding moderate voices not only among secularists but also among Islamists, America's current strategy in Egypt is producing the opposite result. If one believes, as President Obama once claimed to, that it is important to seek better understanding between the United States and the Muslim world and to avoid or at least temper any clash of civilizations, then again this policy is producing the opposite result.

And if one believes that just as the days of Hosni Mubarak's regime were numbered, and so the idea of a Mubarak 2.0 can never achieve stability in Egypt, no matter how ruthless its brand of authoritarianism, then our current policy is only drawing us closer to the day when a new revolution will rock Egypt. The next revolution will almost certainly be both more radical and more virulently anti-American than the last.

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[Article 7](#)

NYT

Why Economics Failed

[Paul Krugman](#)

May 1, 2014 -- On Wednesday, I wrapped up the class I've been teaching all semester: "The Great Recession: Causes and Consequences." And while teaching the course was fun, I found myself turning at the end to an agonizing question: Why, at the moment it was most needed and could have done the most good, did economics fail?

I don't mean that economics was useless to policy makers. On the contrary, the discipline has had a lot to offer. While it's true that few economists saw the crisis coming — mainly, I'd argue, because few realized how fragile our deregulated financial system had become, and how vulnerable debt-burdened families were to a plunge in housing prices — the clean little secret of recent years is that, since the fall of Lehman Brothers, basic textbook macroeconomics has performed very well.

But policy makers and politicians have ignored both the textbooks and the lessons of history. And the result has been a vast economic and human catastrophe, with trillions of dollars of productive potential squandered and millions of families placed in dire straits for no good reason.

In what sense did economics work well? Economists who took their own textbooks seriously quickly diagnosed the nature of our economic malaise: We were suffering from inadequate demand. The financial crisis and the housing bust created an environment in which everyone was trying to spend less, but my spending is your income and your spending is my income, so when everyone tries to cut spending at the same time the result is an overall decline in incomes and a depressed economy. And we know (or should know) that depressed economies behave quite differently from economies that are at or near full employment.

For example, many seemingly knowledgeable people — bankers, business leaders, public officials — warned that budget deficits would lead to soaring interest rates and inflation. But economists knew that such warnings, which might have made sense under normal conditions, [were way off base under the conditions we actually faced](#). Sure enough, interest and inflation rates stayed low.

And the diagnosis of our troubles as stemming from inadequate demand had clear policy implications: as long as lack of demand was the problem, we would be living in a world in which the usual rules didn't apply. In particular, this was no time to worry about budget deficits and cut spending, which would only deepen the depression. When John Boehner, then the House minority leader, [declared in early 2009](#) that since American families were having to tighten their belts, the government should tighten its belt, too, people like me cringed; his remarks betrayed his economic ignorance. We needed more government spending, not less, to fill the hole left by inadequate private demand.

But a few months later [President Obama started saying exactly the same thing](#). In fact, it became a standard line in his speeches. Nor was it just rhetoric. Since 2010, we've seen [a sharp decline in discretionary spending](#) and [an unprecedented decline in budget deficits](#), and the result has been anemic growth and long-term unemployment on a scale not seen since the 1930s.

So why didn't we use the economic knowledge we had?

One answer is that most people find the logic of policy in a depressed economy counterintuitive. Instead, what resonates with the public are misleading analogies with the finances of an individual family, which is why Mr. Obama began echoing Mr. Boehner.

And even supposedly well-informed people balk at the notion that simple lack of demand can wreak so much havoc. Surely, they insist, we must have deep structural problems, like a work force that lacks the right skills; that sounds serious and wise, even though [all the evidence says that it's completely untrue](#).

Meanwhile, powerful political factions find that bad economic analysis serves their objectives. Most obviously, people whose real goal is dismantling the social safety net have found promoting deficit panic an effective way to push their agenda. And such people have been aided and abetted by what I've come to think of as the trahison des nerds — the willingness of some economists to come up with analyses that tell powerful people what they want to hear, whether it's that [slashing government spending is actually expansionary](#), because of confidence, or that [government debt somehow has dire effects on economic growth](#) even if interest rates stay low.

Whatever the reasons basic economics got tossed aside, the result has been tragic. Most of the waste and suffering that have afflicted Western economies these past five years was unnecessary. We have, all along, had the knowledge and the tools to restore full employment. But policy makers just keep finding reasons not to do the right thing.

[Article 8.](#)

The Washington Post

How U.S. billionaire Sheldon Adelson is buying up Israel's media

Ruth Eglash

May 1 -- Jerusalem — Las Vegas casino magnate and GOP super donor Sheldon Adelson is gambling on a new venture. On Wednesday, after the Israeli antitrust authority approved his purchase of two more news outlets, the Jewish American billionaire [upped his ante](#) in the country's media market.

Adelson already owns one of the four mainstream newspapers here, a [free daily tabloid](#) called Israel Hayom (Israel Today). He started that newspaper in 2007 and helped it grow to have [the largest circulation](#) in the country. With his latest purchases, Adelson will now also control the main religious daily, Makor Rishon, which caters to Israel's Zionist religious right, and NRG, the news Web site of the Maariv newspaper, which has faced a multitude of financial woes in the past few years.

While the antitrust authority decided that Adelson's acquisitions are not crossing any competitive red lines, media watchdogs (and not a few political pundits) worry about Adelson's growing influence. Adelson is an avid supporter and long-time friend of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

“As a very strong backer of Prime Minister Netanyahu – not that there's anything wrong with it – Adelson owns a paper that is rarely, if ever, critical of the PM,” [wrote Shmeul Rosner](#), an Israeli commentator, in Jewish Journal. “He now owns two papers, and one might suspect that now two papers will never be critical of Netanyahu.”

Israel's news media are lively, but venues are not infinite, with four main national newspapers, three television news broadcasters and a handful of radio and news Web sites vying to inform and sway public opinion in a country known for its rough-and-tumble politics.

An [investigative report](#) by Channel 10 aired last year claimed that Adelson's newspaper Israel Hayom was spinning the news to show Netanyahu in a more positive light. The newspaper's editor, Amos Regev, [dismissed the report](#), saying, “This so-called evidence doesn't prove anything other than the routine workings of a news organization.”

Adelson's new ventures are seen as a good thing for Netanyahu. Israel's media is often very critical of Netanyahu — and loves engaging in what the Prime Minister calls “psychobabble” about his motives. Though he makes plenty of public pronouncements, Netanyahu [rarely grants on-the-record interviews](#) or does not host regular news conferences. Adelson's purchase might also be a plus for Netanyahu's wife, Sara, who regularly faces media scrutiny for what critics call her [imperial lifestyle](#) (she recently came under fire for yelling at a staffer for buying bags of milk instead of a proper carton). Adelson has [played a big role](#) in GOP politics and is vocal about his support for Israel. In 2012, he spent millions backing the presidential candidacy of Mitt Romney, not only in a bid to beat President Obama but also to ensure strengthened support for Israel in domestic U.S. politics. And, more recently, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie (R) apologized to Adelson after referring to the West Bank as “occupied territories” in [a speech](#) at the spring leadership meeting of the Republican Jewish Coalition, an event Adelson hosted at his Venetian Hotel in Las Vegas.