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Article 1.

The Washington Post
Israel's false choice
Fareed Zakaria

February 16, 2012 -- We are hearing a new concept these days in discussions about Iran - the zone of immunity. The idea, often

explained by Ehud Barak, Israel's defense minister, is that soon Iran will have enough nuclear capability that Israel would not be able to inflict a crippling blow to its program. In fact, while the specifics are fresh, this is not a new strategic concept at all. Nations have often believed that they face a closing window to act, and almost always such thinking has led to disaster. The most famous example, of course, was Germany's decision to start what became World War I. The German General Staff believed that Russia - its archenemy - was rearming on a scale that would soon nullify Germany's superior military strength. The Germans believed that within two years - by 1916 - Russia would have a significant, and perhaps unbeatable, strategic advantage. As a result, when turmoil began in the Balkans in June 1914, Germany decided to act while it had the advantage. To stop Russia from entering a "zone of immunity," Germany invaded France (Russia's main ally) and Belgium, which forced British entry into the war, thus setting in motion a two-front European war that lasted four years and resulted in more than 37 million casualties. Now, I am not suggesting that an Israeli attack on Iran would have anything close to these consequences. But I am suggesting that it is profoundly shortsighted to base a major decision - to go to war - on narrow technical considerations like windows of vulnerability. Many in Washington in March 2003 insisted that we could not wait for nuclear inspectors to keep at their work in Iraq because we faced a closing window - the weather was going to get too hot by June and July to send in U.S. forces. As a result, we rushed into a badly planned military invasion and occupation in which soldiers had to endure combat in Iraq for nine long and very hot years. Israeli officials explain that we Americans cannot understand their fears, that Iran is an existential threat to them. But in fact we can understand because we have gone through a very similar experience ourselves. After World War II, as the Soviet Union approached a nuclear capability, the United States was seized by a

panic that lasted for years. Everything that Israel says about Iran now, we said about the Soviet Union. We saw it as a radical, revolutionary regime, opposed to every value we held dear, determined to overthrow the governments of the Western world in order to establish global communism. We saw Moscow as irrational, aggressive and utterly unconcerned with human life. After all, Joseph Stalin had just sacrificed a mind-boggling 26 million Soviet lives in his country's struggle against Nazi Germany. Just as Israel is openly considering preemptive strikes against Iran, many in the West urged such strikes against Moscow in the late 1940s. The calls came not just from hawks but even from lifelong pacifists such as the public intellectual Bertrand Russell.

To get a sense of the mood of the times, consider this entry from the Nov. 29, 1948, diary of Harold Nicolson, one of the coolest and most sober British diplomats of his generation: "[I]t is probably true that Russia is preparing for the final battle for world mastery and that once she has enough bombs she will destroy Western Europe, occupy Asia, and have a final death struggle with America. If that happens and we are wiped out over here, the survivors in New Zealand may say that we were mad not to have prevented this. . . . There is a chance that the danger may pass and peace can be secured with peace. I admit it is a frail chance, not one in ninety."

In a speech at the Boston Navy Yard in August 1950, Navy Secretary Francis Matthews argued that, in being "an initiator of a war of aggression," the United States "would become the first aggressors for peace."

In the end, however, the global revolutionaries in Moscow, the mad autocrats in Pyongyang and the terrorist-supporting military in Pakistan have all been deterred by mutual fears of destruction. While the Iranian regime is often called crazy, it has done much less to merit the term than did a regime such as Mao's China. Over the past decade, there have been thousands of suicide bombings

by Saudis, Egyptians, Lebanese, Palestinians and Pakistanis, but not been a single suicide attack by an Iranian. Is the Iranian regime - even if it got one crude device in a few years - likely to launch the first?

"Israel is finally confronting the sort of choices the United States and Great Britain confronted more than six decades ago," says Gideon Rose, the editor of Foreign Affairs. "Hopefully it, too, will come to recognize that absolute security is impossible to achieve in the nuclear age, and that if its enemies' nuclear programs cannot be delayed or disrupted, deterrence is less disastrous than preventive war."

Article 2.

Foreign Policy

Interview with Amr Moussa

Adel Abdel Ghafar

February 16, 2012 --Amr Moussa has emerged from Egypt's revolutionary tumult as the front-runner in the upcoming presidential election. But for this quintessential establishment man -- he served as foreign minister under Hosni Mubarak, and then as secretary-general of the Arab League -- capturing the top seat in Egyptian politics is fraught with pitfalls. The revolutionaries on the streets scorn his ties with the previous regime, and the new kingmakers in Cairo -- the Islamists and the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces -- are sure to demand concessions in return for their support.

It's not easy to walk that line, particularly with all the hot-button issues in Egypt's future. Here, Moussa tackles them all in an exclusive interview with Foreign Policy: the military's future rule in politics, the Egypt-Israel peace treaty, and the upcoming U.S. presidential election, among others. In his discussion with Adel

Abdel Ghafar, he says that certain aspects of pact with Israel should be "revisited" and admits that he would vote to give President Barack Obama another term in office -- but only because his misgivings about Obama's Republican challengers.

Foreign Policy: Do you believe the Egyptian army should ultimately be under civilian control?

Amr Moussa: A state is a state. It has one head, not two. It has one legislative institution, not two. It has one government, not two.

FP: There are several examples of how countries transitioned from military to civilian rule -- Indonesia, some Latin American countries, even the Turkish experience is noteworthy. In Egypt, do you think we will ever get rid of military interference in public life, or will there always be a presence of the military institution?

AM: A revolution occurred on Jan. 25 that transitioned us from "dictatorial rule"

to democratic rule. This democratic government will not be far away from the military, as this is the military of Egypt -- an integral and original part of the Egyptian administration. We do not say that the military will leave -- no, they will take their own path as one of the integral Egyptian institutions.

We shouldn't frame the debate within a provocative context such as you suggested, with Indonesia and the Latin American countries. We have passed this stage and are moving forward on a democratic path not ruled by military forces. The military exists to defend Egypt and is a force for stability in any country, therefore we have to approach the relationship between the military and the state from a positive side rather than a negative, provocative way.

FP: In your view, do the Camp David Accords [signed between Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin in 1978] need adjustment?

AM: First of all, Camp David is not what is applied now. Camp David ended as a background paper. What governs the relationship between the two states is the Egyptian-Israeli treaty [signed in 1979]. And I believe that we should adhere to this treaty, as we do with all of our international commitments and treaties, as long as the other party adheres to it too.

However, within a security context in Sinai, the treaty has to be revisited. Unfortunately, the treaty in its current form has led to the Egyptian government's inability to enforce the rule of law in Sinai and on the border. Egypt as a sovereign state should be able to fully secure its borders.

FP: Some people are calling to cut the natural gas supply to Israel, while others are calling on modifying its prices. Where do you stand?

AM: We have to modify the prices according to global prices. This is not only an issue with Israel -- we also export natural gas to Jordan. It is in our national interest to price the natural gas according to global prices, and today's prices are much higher than the prices agreed on.

FP: What do you think of the Islamist majority in parliament? Does it worry you, as it worries many people in Egypt who fear religious rule?

AM: Let me tell you, worrying is a part of politics, especially in such a crucial period like this. However, we said we will go down the democratic path. Democracy produced the current parliament. You cannot have democracy and reject its results.

But we have to decide what would be our 'modus operandi' in dealing with these results, and this is what preoccupies me. On what basis do we deal with the Islamist forces? We do not live through normal circumstances now that we can play politics. Therefore I would be looking to cooperate and work with the parliament.

FP: As a previous foreign minister, how do you think Egyptian foreign policy should evolve following the revolution?

AM: Egyptian foreign policy collapsed over the past several years. It has to be rebuilt for it to play its rightful role.

The Arab world will not be led by Turkey or Iran; it has to be led by the Arab countries themselves. And Egypt, as the largest Arab country, should have a leadership role in that regard. This will require a new type of leadership in the 21st century -- you cannot lead if you are not advanced technologically, you cannot lead if you have no real development program.

FP: The massacre that occurred in Port Said is currently under investigation, and there are a lot of conspiracy theories surrounding the events there. What are your initial impressions of what occurred in Port Said?

AM: What occurred is not normal. A city has a football team, and its team wins, why does this chaos occur? People should celebrate after winning, not kill each other.

Setting aside conspiracy theories, what happened was politically motivated and was intended to create chaos. When 74 people die and hundreds are injured in a sporting event, it simply doesn't add up. You can call it a conspiracy theory -- whatever you call it, it is clear that there is a group that encourages chaos in Egypt.

These violent incidents have occurred at [the Balloon Theater](#), [Maspero](#) [the state television building], [Mohammed Mahmoud St.](#), [Parliament St.](#), [Port Said](#) -- then the most recent clashes on Mohammed Mahmoud St. again. Six incidents, no proper investigation with a clear outcome, no report. This attitude has to stop. The families demand answers, and we as citizens also demand to know what happened.

FP: As you note, there were [more clashes](#) on Mohammed Mahmoud St. following the Port Said massacre. How do you suggest that Egypt avoid such violence in the future?

AM: I believe that the revolutionaries of Jan. 25 are not the ones responsible for the latest clashes. There are forces of chaos that have infiltrated the lines of the revolutionary forces. When I watched on TV people climbing the tax department building and attempting to put it on fire -- this is not a revolution, this is chaos. The people responsible for chaos should be dealt with using the full force of the law, and the state has to be present to prosecute them. It is unacceptable that the state use live rounds and victims fall, but nonetheless the state has to be forceful in bringing those responsible to justice through legal prosecution.

FP: You mention the revolutionaries. Are there tensions between yourself and the revolutionary forces?

AM: No. First of all, there are a lot of different revolutionary forces, and I have relations with several of them. Perhaps some of them have the point of view that I was a foreign minister during the previous regime, and so on, but that does not mean that all revolutionary forces perceive me this way. I have very good relations with several of these forces and we meet frequently.

FP: What do you think of U.S. President Barack Obama's first term in office?

AM: In all honesty, I am disappointed.

FP: If he is re-elected, do you think that this would give the United States another opportunity to show renewed international leadership?

AM: Our previous experience shows that there are no differences, or only minor differences, between the first term of an American president and his second.

However, from what I know of other candidates, should I be eligible to vote in the United States, I would have voted for Obama. Some of the other candidates have really strange ideas about Arabs. For example, look at what Newt Gingrich said about Palestine, when he stated that there are [no Palestinian people](#). These positions are unacceptable and cannot be reasoned with.

Amr Moussa is an Egyptian presidential candidate, and a former Egyptian foreign minister and secretary general of the Arab League.

Adel Abdel Ghafar is a [REDACTED] student at the Australian National University.

Article 3.

[Los Angeles Times](#)

A sudden new wave of anti-Americanism is thriving in Cairo

David Schenker

February 15, 2012 -- As 16 U.S. citizens await trial in Egypt for accepting foreign financing to promote democracy, for the first time in more than 30 years there is a serious debate in Washington about whether to end the \$1.3-billion annual military assistance to Cairo. There's no debate in Egypt, however. More than 70% of Egyptians, according to a recent Gallup poll, no longer want U.S. funding.

By deciding to prosecute Americans, post-Mubarak Egypt has intentionally provoked a bilateral crisis. But the legal assault on U.S.-funded nongovernmental organizations and personnel is merely a symptom of a larger, more serious problem. In Egypt today, all major political forces — the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, or SCAF, the Muslim Brotherhood and the government — are embracing anti-American populism.

The new atmosphere in Egypt leaves the Obama administration — and Congress — with some stark choices. Washington can employ the nuclear option — cut the assistance and test the durability of the U.S.-underwritten 1979 Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty — or continue to fund an increasingly hostile and unstable state in hopes that democracy will take root.

In this environment, prospects for democracy in Egypt appear slim. Worse, with reportedly as little as \$11 billion remaining in foreign reserves depleting at a rate of \$2 billion a month, Egypt is on the precipice of an economic crisis. At the same time, a spate of kidnappings in Cairo and mob violence at a Port Said soccer match this month, which killed more than 70 people, point to a deteriorating security situation.

But instead of concentrating on security and economics, in a classic case of Nero fiddling while Rome burns, the civilian government appointed by SCAF is focused on trying the American staff of U.S.-funded NGOs that promote democracy. The allegations against them are a politically driven and incendiary distraction, unmistakably conceived by the SCAF-appointed minister of planning and international cooperation, Fayza Mohamed Aboulnaga, who has emerged as a symbol of the new populist politics of post-revolution Egypt.

Aboulnaga has been in charge of Egypt's NGO file for decades and has been butting heads with U.S. officials for years. WikiLeaks cables from Cairo abound with diplomats' laments over her ability to "fend off" U.S. efforts to promote "even minor reforms" in Egypt. This stance toward Washington seems to have held her in good stead: Aboulnaga is practically the only one among her senior colleagues from the Mubarak era to have survived the transition. She has consolidated her position by promoting crass conspiracy theories, suggesting a U.S. role in the current instability plaguing Egypt. In her public testimony this year before the Ministry of Justice committee investigating foreign funding of NGOs, Aboulnaga claimed U.S. government-funded democracy promoting organizations operating in Egypt were engaged in subversive activities. "The funds that entered Egypt recently amount to \$200 million to fund unknown activities," she said, "raising doubts and fears of these funds' use in acts of sabotage."

After 30 years and \$66 billion in U.S. funding later, these claims of U.S. subversion are insulting. Meanwhile, Abounaga says she's wearing the case like a "medal on my chest." Clearly she sees utility in continuing her populist America-baiting, blaming "foreign hands" for Egypt's problems.

So do the Islamists.

This month, for example, a senior Muslim Brotherhood official published an open letter invoking the "American-Zionist" conspiracy and warning that U.S. democratization funds had been channeled to "suspicious institutions." Going one step further, the Brotherhood's more militant cousin, the Salafist party Al Nour, accused the American NGOs of trying to "create discord between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafis." Based on the court documents, one Al Nour official observed, the NGO workers "can be considered spies."

Despite the prevalent view that the United States — in league with Israel — is a pernicious and destabilizing force in Egypt, Muslim Brotherhood leaders still say American dollars should continue to flow. As Khairat al Shater, a senior official in the Muslim Brotherhood, told the Washington Post, U.S. support to Egypt serves as "compensation for the many years [the U.S.] supported a brutal dictatorship." More ominous, Shater has warned that a cutoff in aid might result in Egypt changing the terms of its peace treaty with Israel.

Shater is pragmatic. Because of the economic situation, Egypt cannot afford to lose foreign funding. At the same time, though, the Brotherhood does not want to be out of step with its constituency. By staking out this position, Shater hopes to both antagonize Washington and keep the aid.

Whether the current xenophobia is ideologically based or cynical populism to distract from the deteriorating conditions at home makes little difference. Either way, there is little Washington can do at this point to change the bilateral dynamic. Indeed, even if Cairo

reversed its ill-advised campaign against the American NGOs, funding would still remain in jeopardy.

The problem, alas, is not Egypt's relentless attack against foreign and domestic liberal democratic organizations. No doubt, SCAF, the government and the Islamists have little need for pro-democracy NGOs, but the investigation of the NGOs is a symptom rather than the root of the bilateral crisis. Notwithstanding the parliamentary elections, Egypt today is dominated by a coalition of military authoritarians and aspiring theocrats that views Washington with great suspicion.

Facing extreme challenges at home and in need of distractions, anti-Americanism has become Cairo's preferred populist recourse. Although a solution might be found for this particular controversy — with or without U.S. foreign assistance — this bilateral dynamic assures that the next crisis is not far off.

David Schenker is director of the program on Arab politics at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and the author, most recently, of "Egypt's Enduring Challenges: Shaping the Post-Mubarak Environment."

Article 4.

The Washington Post

A 'cosmic wager' on the Muslim Brotherhood

[David Ignatius](#)

February 16 -- President Obama's outreach to the Muslim Brotherhood began three years ago in his famous [June 2009 speech in Cairo](#).

Ten members of the Brotherhood were invited to listen to the address, and they heard a passage crafted especially for them:

"America respects the right of all peaceful and law-abiding voices to be heard around the world, even if we disagree with them. And we will welcome all elected, peaceful governments — provided they govern with respect for all their people."

Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak didn't attend the speech, but there was a message tailored for him, too, when Obama said: "Suppressing ideas never succeeds in making them go away."

Obama certainly had that right.

The Obama administration has made what might be described as a "cosmic wager" on the Muslim Brotherhood's peaceful intentions. By courting them in 2009, the United States helped legitimize their political aspirations; by refusing to come to Mubarak's rescue during the Tahrir Square protests a year ago, the United States all but guaranteed that the Brotherhood would emerge as a dominant political force in a new Egypt.

The Brotherhood is now ascendant, with its "Freedom and Justice Party" having won nearly 50 percent of the seats in Egypt's post-revolutionary parliament. Its officials have issued soothing statements and pro-free-market position papers. There's even a [Muslim Brotherhood rap video](#) on YouTube, with a catchy beat and this benign refrain: "Freedom we will protect, and justice we will maintain."

It all sounds reassuring. But the Brotherhood's reliability as a partner is still largely untested, and even administration officials concede that the democratic transition in Egypt has gone worse than expected. Meanwhile, the Brotherhood is driving the opposition movement in Syria.

The Brotherhood is so important to the future of the Arab world — and is, still, such a mysterious organization in the West — that it's useful to review its history. What's clear is that from its inception, the Brotherhood has stressed the importance of liberating Muslims from Western manipulation. This aspiration for dignity and

independence is the Brotherhood's strongest appeal, but it may make the organization a difficult partner.

The Brotherhood was formed in 1928 by Egyptians who opposed British colonialism. The founder, a schoolteacher named Hassan al-Banna, gathered six friends who worked for the Suez Canal Co. To fend off informers, the group developed elaborate initiation procedures.

The movement, at once political, cultural and religious, took off quickly: By one estimate, it grew to 200,000 members by 1938. Banna was assassinated in 1949, after the Brotherhood had attacked the corrupt monarchy of King Farouk.

The anti-Western message was honed by the Brotherhood's other great martyr, Sayyid Qutb. He was a brilliant essayist whose encounter with the United States in the late 1940s proved poisonous. After visiting New York, Washington, Colorado and Los Angeles, he concluded that "the soul has no value to Americans." Qutb's abhorrence of the open sexuality he saw in the United States is clear in this passage quoted in ["The Looming Tower" by Lawrence Wright](#): "A girl looks at you, appearing as if she were an enchanting nymph or an escaped mermaid, but as she approaches, you sense only the screaming instinct inside her, and you can smell her burning body, not the scent of perfume but flesh, only flesh." When Qutb returned to Egypt, he joined the Brotherhood. He refused all efforts by the government of Gamal Abdel Nasser to recruit or co-opt him, and he was executed in 1966.

Facing unrelenting repression, the Brotherhood's mainstream gradually evolved into a political movement that, on paper at least, disavowed violence; it put down deep roots in Egypt's professional organizations and won about 20 percent of the seats in parliament when it was allowed to run in 2005. It learned to speak a more conciliatory language.

It was in this tone of reassurance that Brotherhood officials said that they would contest only 30 percent of the seats in the recent

parliamentary elections; in fact, they ran in nearly every district and won a near-majority. The Brotherhood also organized a decisive 77 percent win in last March's constitutional referendum, which they pegged as a vote to protect language that promises the Islamic sharia as "the main source of legislation."

Olivier Roy, a French expert on the Muslim world, argues that the Brotherhood will learn democracy by doing it: "Democratic culture does not precede democratic institutions; democratic culture is the internalization of these institutions," he says. That, in essence, is the wager Obama has made.

Article 5.

Zaytuna Center

Strategic Assessment : Prospects for an Israeli War on the Gaza Strip

Feb. 15th -- The escalation of media campaigns between the Palestinian resistance and Israel, coupled with the latter's occasional military strikes against the Gaza Strip (GS), suggests that a war is to be waged soon. However, the factors pressing for launching an Israeli war on GS or urging the resistance to end the truce are still limited. In addition, the changes in the Arab world are not in favor of Israel's going to war whilst the international environment is not yet ready for such a war in light of the developments in the Arab region. Moreover, the Palestinian resistance is in dire need for calm to regain its military and political strength in light of the disparity in the balance of power with the Israeli side and till the crystallization of the Arab landscape. Therefore, it is likely for both sides to adhere to calm in the short

run and while Israel might resort to limited targeting of the GS, the resistance might engage in limited retaliation.

The Israeli Conduct

Despite the statements of Israel's leaders and the media, a new GS war is unlikely in near future. The Jerusalem Post, for example, has mentioned, on 16/1/2012, that the Israeli army "General Staff has ordered the Southern Command to prepare for a possible large Gaza operation that could occur within the next few months."

Matter of fact, the current relative calm on this front and the absence of a domestic, Arab or international environment pushing for war, defuse any possible escalation.

Media Escalation

Shortly before the third anniversary of Operation Cast Lead, a new wave of belligerent Israeli declarations was launched against the GS. On 5/12/2011, the retired Israeli Major General Yoav Gallant said that "in the end, we'll have to go in there [GS] with bulldozers." For his part, Chief of Staff Benny Gantz said that "sooner or later" another GS war will be launched, and that it will be "swift and painful."

Therefore, tension increased due to this escalatory tone that was coupled with some Israeli provocations which prompted the resistance factions to retaliate. A report issued by Israel Security Agency showed that 30 Palestinian military operations were launched from GS during December 2011 compared to 11 in November of the same year. This, accordingly, revived the idea of launching an Israeli war against GS.

The Israeli Justifications for Launching a War on the GS

1. Israel's discomfort with Hamas persistent control of the GS. For Hamas is an enemy that does not recognize Israel and is against the peace process.

2. Hamas and other Palestinian factions' continuous rearmament and accumulation of weapons and ordnance.
3. The continued threat of rockets from GS which has a negative impact on the security of around a million Israelis in the vicinity of GS and on the possibility of building a stable economic life.

The Israeli Justifications for Maintaining the Status Quo

1. The disruption of the peace process due to Israel's refusal to stop settlement building activity, which is considered a violation of the conditions of the PLO, the PA and the Quartet. This has also weakened Israel's relation with the PA and led to its isolation on the international level. Ultimately, any war launched by Israel would exacerbate its position. Thus, Israel wants a breakthrough in the peace process, where Mahmud 'Abbas would return to the negotiating table.
2. The overthrow of the Hamas-led government in the GS and the consequent transfer of power to the PA in Ramallah might not be desirable in the current stage. In fact, Israel still favors the Palestinian schism and seeks to undermine reconciliation in order to impose its conditions on the Palestinian side or to claim that there is no unified side which represents all the Palestinians.
3. There is no justification for war in the current time since there is no real threat given the lull which prevailed since Operation Cast Lead. This is clear from the number of rockets and mortar shells launched from the GS, where Israel counted 680 during 2011 compared to 3720 in 2008 prior to Operation Cast Lead although the latter year witnessed a six-month truce. In addition, there was an average of 50-70 daily rockets launched after the end of the truce.

4. The continued GS siege and the failing attempts to break it. Israel maintains land and maritime restrictions on GS coupled with the Egyptian restrictions on the Rafah crossing.
5. The relative success achieved by the Iron Dome in intercepting Palestinian rockets. The Israeli army reported 75% success of the system during the escalation period at the end of 2011.
6. The lack of an Arab environment suitable for war in light of regime change in some countries including Egypt. Thus, the resort to war by Israel might lead Islamic trends to unite their efforts to serve the Palestinian cause and the resistance factions especially Hamas, a development which Israel strongly fears.
7. The lack of international environment suitable for war as the US administration is busy with the attempts to rearrange its priorities in the region, particularly after pulling out its troops from Iraq. In addition, the US is busy with the preparations for presidential elections and the attempts to overcome its economic crisis.

The Palestinian Conduct

After operation Cast Lead, most of the Palestinian factions were committed to calm with Israel. Despite Hamas' control of GS, the movement did not want, and perhaps was not able, to prevent some factions from retaliating to Israeli assassinations. Besides, there are some small groups which cannot be controlled. Their conduct may lead to a mutual military escalation but it has not developed to a war yet.

The calm environment in GS allows the military factions, especially Hamas, to develop their capabilities and focus on breaking the siege and the reconstruction of GS. Further, the popular and factional atmosphere in GS does not want to rush into paying prices for another war without tangible results on the ground.

It seems that the Palestinian side, especially Hamas which is directly involved in the administration of GS and whose military readiness is mainly of defensive nature, is unwilling to go to a war which seems to bring more harm than good at the current stage.

Possible Scenario

Based on the above, it is not likely for Israel to wage an all-out war on GS or reoccupy a part of it in the foreseeable future. Apparently, such a step would conflict with other political and tactical calculations not to mention the lack of domestic, regional and international environment. Therefore, the possible scenario is for Israel to proceed with launching limited strikes on GS and to limit the impact of missiles on the settlements and cities through the use of the Iron Dome system.

Al-Zaytouna Centre thanks Wael Sa'ad for authoring the original text on which this Strategic Assessment was based.

Article 6.

Bloomberg

How Iran Nuclear Standoff Looks From Saudi Arabia

Mustafa Alani

Feb 15, 2012 -- The most likely victims of a nuclear armed Iran are not the U.S. or [Israel](#), but the Gulf states -- countries that are engaged in intense competition with the regime in Tehran, but that lack the power to deter any threat or aggression with a nuclear-

strike capability of their own. That, at least, is how it looks from [Riyadh](#) and other Gulf capitals. Saudi Arabia has kept a low public profile amid the heated international debate regarding the nature and ultimate objectives of the Iranian nuclear program, and the country isn't yet ready to back a military strike. But that reticence hides deep and genuine concern, demonstrated by the speed with which Saudi Arabia and the [United Arab Emirates](#) pledged to fill any shortfall in global oil supplies that planned [European Union sanctions](#) on [Iran's](#) energy exports may cause. A complete EU boycott of Iranian oil would result in the disappearance of about 2.5 million barrels per day from the international oil market, driving up prices sharply and damping the global economy as it struggles to escape a slump. To start with, the Saudis strongly believe that if Iran is able to militarize its nuclear program while it remains a signatory to the 1968 [Treaty](#) on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, or NPT, this would render the treaty worthless. The likely Saudi response would be to seek a nuclear capability of its own.

The Nuclear Path

Saudi and other Gulf country officials have made this point clear to Western governments, though not in public. They have told their Western counterparts that if Iran acquires a nuclear weapon, they would feel themselves under no legal or moral obligation to adhere to the treaty's principles. In other words, they would be free to go down the nuclear path. From the Saudi point of view, the success or failure of the international community in restraining [Iran's nuclear program](#) will determine whether the global nonproliferation regime survives.

Nor do the Saudis distinguish between Iran acquiring nuclear capability and actually producing the bomb. In their view, an unassembled nuclear weapon on the shelf is no less dangerous and intimidating than a completed one in storage. The dominant feeling in the Gulf region is that U.S. policy, wittingly or unwittingly, has gifted Iran with painless and costless strategic gains over the past

decade. When the U.S. removed the Taliban from power in [Afghanistan](#) and then toppled [Saddam Hussein](#)'s Baath regime in [Iraq](#), it lifted what had been for Iran a state of siege and containment, imposed by the two hostile regimes on its long eastern and western borders. U.S. mishandling of the postwar situations in Afghanistan and Iraq handed a further bonus to Iranian policy. Iran's release from that vise is worrying to [Saudi Arabia](#) and other Gulf nations because they believe their Persian neighbor represents a hegemonic state that is attempting to implement aggressively interventionist and potentially expansionist policies. So far, these policies have successfully established states-within-a-state in both Lebanon and Iraq. Iran is now vigorously trying to repeat those experiences in other Arab countries that have Shiites among their populations.

Iran's expansionist goals are exemplified in the occupation of [three islands](#) in the Gulf that belong to the UAE. Second-tier Iranian officials in recent years have also begun to revive Iran's territorial claim to Bahrain. In addition, Iran has threatened repeatedly to "punish" the Gulf states and to close the [Strait of Hormuz](#), an important international waterway for global oil supplies.

Iran as Troublemaker

The perception within this region is that Iran without nuclear capability is a troublemaker and that with a nuclear bomb it would probably become still more aggressive and irresponsible. From the Saudi perspective, Iran doesn't need [nuclear weapons](#) for deterrence because, like other states in the region, it doesn't face a nuclear threat. Israel, Pakistan and [India](#), of course, all have nuclear weapons, but in the Saudi view these countries do not pose an offensive threat. Israel, for example, has a well-established superiority in conventional weapons and therefore does not depend on nuclear deterrence. Only as a state that has hegemonic aspirations and a misguided superiority complex would Iran need the bomb. Since 2003, when Iraq ceased to be an

effective regional counterweight to Iran, the Gulf states have invested heavily in high-tech conventional-weapons systems in an effort to redress the regional military imbalance. A nuclear Iran would make those acquisitions moot, upsetting the delicate regional equilibrium. That would be a new ballgame that none of the Gulf states feels equipped to handle. Saudi Arabia and its neighbors have no specific vision for how to deal with the issue of Iran's nuclear program. At this point, they don't favor a military option. They want first to see serious and effective non-military pressure on Iran intensified in quality and quantity. Should these measures fail to halt Iran's progress toward the bomb, the Gulf states would reluctantly support military action, despite all its negative consequences for the region. If Iran is determined to militarize its nuclear program at any cost, they reason, then the international community must be equally determined to prevent that outcome at any cost. Otherwise, the entire Gulf region would go nuclear.

Mustafa Alani is the director of the security and defense studies department at the Geneva-based Gulf Research Center.

Article 7.

The New-Yorker

Xi's American Journey

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February 16, 2012 -- On September 23, 1959, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev waded potbelly-first into a cornfield in Coon Rapids, Iowa. It was the height of the Cold War: Sputnik had shaken American confidence, and Khrushchev had promised to "bury" the West, pounding his shoe at the United Nations in defense of Soviet foreign policy. He had nevertheless accepted Ike's invitation, and ██████ come to Iowa to glimpse a high-tech American farm, with a swarm of reporters. Not everything went perfectly. At one point,

aides [hustled Mr. K out of the path](#) of an oncoming tractor, which promptly dumped a load of corn on the press corps. The proud Ukrainian peasant in Khrushchev couldn't help but see things he admired. "You are very intelligent people, but God has helped you," he told his hosts. The farmer, a prosperous corn king named Roswell (Bob) Garst, [had a mixed message of his own:](#)

"You know, for a peasant, you're a damned poor horse trader." The farm visit was, by the standards of the time, a success—"one of the most folksy and jovial days of his visit," a reporter wrote—and has come to be credited for helping to humanize the superpowers at a moment of rising tension.

When Xi Jinping, China's vice-president, touched down in Iowa this week for a farm visit of his own, the trip embodied a very different kind of rivalry. This is not the Cold War, and Xi is no shoe-pounder, but it is a moment of immense and uncertain potential. If everything goes according to the script, Xi will take over his country this fall, as president and head of the Communist Party, at a time when China is riven by contradictions. It is asserting its diplomatic power across Asia and around the world, but struggling to contain explosive tensions at home.

The White House has chosen to greet Xi with an unprecedented level of pomp for a man who technically remains only a vice-president: a flag-lined military honor cordon; a performance by Joshua Bell; meetings at the Oval Office, Pentagon, and Capitol Hill. Chinese brass don't usually stray far, but Xi has a soft spot for Iowa because he visited in 1985 as director of the Feed Association of Shijazhuang Prefecture. This time, he is being treated to a spread that is the Iowan equivalent of imperial cuisine: bacon-wrapped pork tenderloin, Angus beef tenderloin, bacon-lettuce-and-tomato bites, and potatoes stuffed with white cheddar. It's a menu intended to celebrate the prospects for American agricultural exports to China, though the scale of it —[nutritionists have objected to no avail](#)—is likely to remind some of Xi Jinping's

pointed comment a few years go about “a few foreigners, with full bellies, who have nothing better to do than try to point fingers at our country.... China does not export revolution, hunger or poverty; nor does China cause you any headaches. What else do you want?”

With the Romney campaign seeking to outflank the Administration on China, the White House has balanced the red-carpet treatment with blunt criticism, delivered through smiles: At a State Department lunch, Vice-President Biden used his champagne toast to unroll a long list of grievances—theft of intellectual property, jailed dissidents, human-rights abuses, China’s veto to prevent sanctions against Syria—while Xi looked on with the Mona Lisa smile that distinguishes him from his dour predecessor, Hu Jintao. It is a strange sight, a combination of red-carpet treatment and candid disapproval that is guaranteed to leave both China’s boosters and critics uneasy.

In China, the pageantry, of course, got heavy play on the evening news, but it had been scrubbed of any hint of Biden’s criticism. It leaked out on to the Chinese Web, and commentators complained about the censorship: “[We thought they were kissing Xi’s feet!](#)” On Weibo, the Chinese version of Twitter, messages about Xi’s visit were closely monitored and removed if they carried hints of criticism. And yet they popped up faster than the censors could handle. Chinese commentators ticked off how many times the censors cut the satellite feed—sending the screen to black—to block any images of Tibetan protesters in the streets of Washington. They mocked Xi’s repeated rote declaration that China will democratize only on its own cautious schedule. “I can only hope I’ll see it in my lifetime,” [one commentator wrote](#).

Those comments, appearing and vanishing from screens, are crucial; they are symptoms of China’s splintering dictatorship over the facts that its people consume. When Nixon came to China in 1972, and when Deng Xiaoping visited the United States in 1979,

the leader of the Communist Party had total authority to shape perception of the event. That age is over, and it is not coming back. Xi faces other pressures as well. Even within the government, he must contend with competition over interests and power. Lest you think he has consolidated power, the People's Daily still followed protocol and trumpeted the [most important news of the day](#): Hu Jintao presided over a State Scientific and Technological Award ceremony in Beijing. (Xi didn't even rate the second-most important headline—that was Premier Wen Jiabao's [comings and goings](#)—leaving Xi to come in third.) When Xi and the other members of the new Politburo—the Fifth Generation, as its known—take power this fall, they will be the first Chinese leaders not handpicked by Mao or Deng. That creates, in theory, the possibility that they will push for faster political changes, but it also constrains their ability to do so. When Xi was elected to the Party Central Committee, in 1997, he finished dead last of the three hundred and fifty-seven members and alternates of the Party Central Committee, because people resented men like him who grew up with the privileges and Party pedigree [bestowed by famous fathers](#).

All of this matters when we ask what kind of leader Xi will, and can, be. He has the background of a leader who realizes that China must undertake real political reform or face an existential threat from the dissatisfaction of its own people—that it will never achieve the soft power it covets as long as it locks up dissidents and broadcasts propaganda. ([Just ask Joe Nye](#).) At this point, it's not at all clear that Xi has the will or power to overcome the powerful voices in the Chinese system who will seek to prevent that, but the responsibility will fall to him to try.

When Khrushchev marched into an Iowa cornfield, the Soviet leadership was facing its own list of tensions, the "seeds of its own decay," as George Kennan put it. For America, Kennan concluded, the response should be neither confrontation nor acquiescence, but

instead something more complex: the “adroit and vigilant application of counter-force at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points.” America, today, faces a different kind of rival but a familiar challenge: to nudge China in all the ways that it can, while allowing the transformative processes underway to continue. It will satisfy neither extreme of the political spectrum, and that is good news.