From: Office of Terje Rod-Larsen <[redacted]>
Subject: March 24 update
Date: Mon, 24 Mar 2014 09:18:03 +0000

---

24 March, 2014

Article 1.	NYT **Confronting Putin's Russia** Michael A. Mcfaul
Article 2.	The Washington Post **Obama's aim to shift U.S. foreign policy runs up against an old Cold War rival** Scott Wilson
Article 3.	Boston Globe **John Kerry's Mideast initiative bogs down, but talks must be saved** Editorial
Article 4.	The Washington Post **Obama is setting up Israel to take the fall** Jennifer Rubin
Article 5.	Al Arabiya **Tough time to have an Arab League meeting?** Dr. Theodore Karasik
Article 6.	The New York Review of Books **Turkey Goes Out of Control** Christopher de Bellaigue

Article 1.
NYT

Confronting Putin's Russia

Michael A. Mcfaul

March 23, 2014 -- The decision by President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia to annex Crimea ended the post-Cold War era in Europe. Since the late Gorbachev-Reagan years, the era was defined by zigzags of cooperation

and disputes between Russia and the West, but always with an underlying sense that Russia was gradually joining the international order. No more. Our new era is one defined by ideological clashes, nationalistic resurgence and territorial occupation — an era in some ways similar to the tragic periods of confrontation in 20th-century Europe. And yet there are important differences, and understanding the distinction will be critical to a successful American foreign policy in the coming decades.

We did not seek this confrontation. This new era crept up on us, because we did not fully win the Cold War. Communism faded, the Soviet Union disappeared and Russian power diminished. But the collapse of the Soviet order did not lead smoothly to a transition to democracy and markets inside Russia, or Russia's integration into the West.

Some Russians pushed forward on this enormous agenda of revolutionary change. And they produced results: the relatively peaceful (so far) collapse of the Soviet empire, a Russian society richer than ever before, greater protection of individual rights and episodically functioning democratic institutions.

But the simultaneity of democracy's introduction, economic depression and imperial loss generated a counterrevolutionary backlash — a yearning for the old order and a resentment of the terms of the Cold War's end. Proponents of this perspective were not always in the majority. And the coming to power of an advocate of this ideology — Mr. Putin — was not inevitable. Even Mr. Putin's own thinking changed over time, waffling between nostalgia for the old rule and realistic acceptance of Russia's need to move forward.

And when he selected the liberal, Western-leaning Dmitri A. Medvedev as his successor in 2008, Russia's internal transformation picked up the pace. Though Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008 isolated Russia for a time, its integration into the existing international order eventually regained momentum.

In my first years in government, I witnessed President Medvedev cooperating with President Obama on issues of mutual benefit — a new Start treaty, new sanctions against Iran, new supply routes through Russia to our soldiers in Afghanistan and Russian membership in the World Trade Organization. These results of the "reset" advanced several American vital national interests. The American post-Cold War policy of engagement and

integration, practiced by Democratic and Republican administrations alike, appeared to be working again.

When Mr. Putin became president again in 2012, this momentum slowed, and then stopped. He returned at a time when tens of thousands of Russians were protesting against falsified elections and more generally against unaccountable government. If most Russians praised Mr. Putin in his first two terms, from 2000 to 2008, for restoring the state and growing the economy, some (not all) wanted more from him in his third term, and he did not have a clear response.

Mr. Putin was especially angry at the young, educated and wealthy protesters in Moscow who did not appreciate that he (in his view) had made them rich. So he pivoted backward, instituting restrictions on independent behavior reminiscent of Soviet days. He attacked independent media, arrested demonstrators and demanded that the wealthy bring their riches home.

In addition to more autocracy, Mr. Putin needed an enemy — the United States — to strengthen his legitimacy. His propagandists rolled out clips on American imperialism, immoral practices and alleged plans to overthrow the Putin government. As the ambassador in Moscow, I was often featured in the leading role in these works of fiction.

The shrill anti-Americanism uttered by Russian leaders and echoed on state-controlled television has reached a fanatical pitch with Mr. Putin's annexation of Crimea. He has made clear that he embraces confrontation with the West, no longer feels constrained by international laws and norms, and is unafraid to wield Russian power to revise the international order.

Mr. Putin has made a strategic pivot. Guided by the right lessons from our past conflict with Moscow, the United States must, too, through a policy of selective containment and engagement.

The parallels with the ideologically rooted conflicts of the last century are striking. A revisionist autocratic leader instigated this new confrontation. We did not. Nor did "Russia" start this new era. Mr. Putin did. It is no coincidence that he vastly weakened Russia's democratic institutions over the last two years before invading Crimea, and has subsequently moved to close down independent media outlets during his Ukrainian land grab.

Also, similar to the last century, the ideological struggle between autocracy and democracy has returned to Europe. Because democratic institutions

never fully took root in Russia, this battle never fully disappeared. But now, democratic societies need to recognize Mr. Putin's rule for what it is — autocracy — and embrace the intellectual and normative struggle against this system with the same vigor we summoned during previous struggles in Europe against anti-democratic governments.

And, as before, the Kremlin has both the intention and capacity to undermine governments and states, using instruments like the military, money, media, the secret police and energy.

These similarities recommend certain policy steps. Most important, Ukraine must succeed as a democracy, a market economy and a state. High on its reform list must be energy efficiency and diversification, as well as military and corruption reforms. Other exposed states in the region, like Moldova and Georgia, also need urgent bolstering.

Also, as during the 20th century, those states firmly on our side must be assured and protected. NATO has moved quickly already, but these efforts must be sustained through greater placement of military hardware in the front-line states, more training and integration of forces, and new efforts to reduce NATO countries' dependence on Russian energy.

And, as before, the current regime must be isolated. The strategy of seeking to change Kremlin behavior through engagement, integration and rhetoric is over for now. No more membership in the Group of 8, accession to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development or missile defense talks. Instead there must be sanctions, including against those people and entities — propagandists, state-owned enterprises, Kremlin-tied bankers — that act as instruments of Mr. Putin's coercive power. Conversely, individuals and companies not connected to the government must be supported, including those seeking to take assets out of Russia or emigrate.

Finally, as during World War II and the Cold War, the United States and our allies can cooperate with Mr. Putin when our vital interests overlap. But this engagement must be understood as strictly transactional, and not as a means to pull Russia back into accepting international norms and values. That's how he will see this engagement. So should we. At the same time, many important differences distinguish this new confrontation in Europe from the Cold War or interwar eras. Most help us. A few do not.

For one thing, unlike Communism or even fascism, Putinism has little appeal beyond Russia. Even inside Russia, brave civil society leaders still defy autocracy, war and nationalist fervor, and have managed to mobilize tens of thousands against Mr. Putin's intervention, while a larger but quiet section of society will lament the advent of this new era. I met these silent skeptics — in government, business and society — every day in my last job. Citizens rally round the flag during crises, and propaganda works. But Mr. Putin's nationalism is fueled primarily by a crude, neo-Soviet anti-Americanism. To continue to spook Russians about American encirclement and internal meddling will be hard to sustain. They are too smart. Second, Mr. Putin's Russia has no real allies. We must keep it that way. Nurturing Chinese distance from a revisionist Russia is especially important, as is fostering the independence of states in Central Asia and the Caucasus.
Another difference is that Russian military power is a shadow of Soviet might. A new global conflict is unlikely. But Russia's military can still threaten Russian border states, so Europeans must bolster their defenses, and Western governments and companies must stop assisting Russia's military modernization. One obvious difference is that the Internet did not exist during the last standoff. Recent Kremlin moves to cut off citizens from independent information are disturbing, but the communications revolution ensures that Russians today will not be as isolated as their grandparents. Greater exposure to the world gives Russians a comparative analysis to judge their situation at home. This is a powerful tool, which needs to be nurtured through educational exchanges, peer-to-peer dialogues and increased connectivity between the real Russian private sector and its international partners.
But there are two important differences that weaken our hand. First, the United States does not have the same moral authority as it did in the last century. As ambassador, I found it difficult to defend our commitment to sovereignty and international law when asked by Russians, "What about Iraq?" Some current practices of American democracy also do not inspire observers abroad. To win this new conflict, we must restore the United States as a model.
Second, we are enduring a drift of disengagement in world affairs. After two wars, this was inevitable, but we cannot swing too far. As we pull back, Russia is pushing forward. Leaders in Congress and the White House

must work together to signal that we are ready to lead the free world in this new struggle.
The United States — together with Russians who want to live in a prosperous and democratic Russia — will win this new conflict in Europe. Over the last century, democracies have consolidated at a remarkable pace, while autocracies continue to fall. Especially in educated, rich, urban societies like Russia, democracy eventually takes hold. A democratic Russia will not always define its interests as we do, but will become a more stable partner with other democracies.
We cannot say how long the current autocratic government in Russia will endure. But a sober, realistic strategy to confront this new threat will help to shorten the tragic era we just entered.

Michael A. McFaul, a Hoover fellow at Stanford, served for five years in the Obama administration, as a special assistant to the president at the National Security Council and as ambassador to the Russian Federation.

Article 2.
The Washington Post

Obama's aim to shift U.S. foreign policy runs up against an old Cold War rival

Scott Wilson

March 24, 2014 -- President Obama has long said he intends to push the country's approach to the world into the 21st century and away from the power politics of the past. But now his effort to make U.S. foreign policy more modest and cooperative and less reliant on military power has run into the nostalgic nationalism of Russian President Vladimir Putin, who was a KGB officer as the Soviet Union began its collapse. Putin's annexation of Crimea is complete, and the Obama administration has shifted its focus to preventing a deeper Russian military incursion into eastern and southern Ukraine.
Obama is seeking to discourage any escalation by squeezing Putin's friends and supporters with financial sanctions and by threatening to take broader action against the Russian economy. He will seek to shore up support for

that strategy during meetings with skittish allies in the Netherlands, where he lands on Monday at the start of a weeklong trip abroad. But Putin is animated by nationalist impulses and historic grievances that have proved immune to the modern tools of diplomacy that Obama is employing. While U.S. officials cite a sliding ruble and dipping Russian stock market, Putin enjoys strong approval at home and celebrates the "truth and justice" of Crimea returning to Russia after generations apart. Whether the pressures of global capitalism — a system that Putin spent much of his life fighting — will discourage his expansionist brand of nationalism is now the question at the center of Obama's new containment policy. "What will be clear for the entire world to see is that Russia is increasingly isolated and that the United States is leading the international community in supporting the government of Ukraine and the people of Ukraine," Susan Rice, Obama's national security adviser, told reporters Friday, "and in imposing costs on Russia for its aggression against Ukraine." Since taking office, Obama has argued that technology and an increasingly borderless economy, stateless terrorism and aspiring regional powers have changed the world since the Cold War, which ended when he was a student at Harvard Law School. "The basic principles that govern relations between nations in Europe and around the world must be upheld in the 21st century," Obama said last week in announcing a new and tougher round of sanctions against Russia. "That includes respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity — the notion that nations do not simply redraw borders, or make decisions at the expense of their neighbors simply because they are larger or more powerful."

The turn in Obama's posture has been swift. He once supported Russia's greater inclusion in the global economy, advocating for its successful bid to join the World Trade Organization in 2012.

That same year, Obama said that "the 1980s are now calling to ask for their foreign policy back" after Mitt Romney, the Republican presidential nominee, called Russia "without question our No. 1 geopolitical foe." Explaining the policy now, Rice said it "was predicated on an expectation that Russia would play by the rules of the road, the economic and security rules of the road, international law" — that is, the system Obama believes is replacing the one that existed in the last century. "What we have seen in Ukraine is obviously a very egregious departure from that," Rice said.

Obama has never appeared comfortable with the idea of nationalism, including his country's own version of it. Early in his presidency, Obama was asked at an international summit if he believed in American exceptionalism, an expression of U.S. nationalism that holds that the country's revolutionary roots and democratic ideals set it apart from all others.

"I believe in American exceptionalism, just as I suspect that the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism," Obama said, dismaying conservatives, who believed his answer diminished the idea.

He added, "[redacted] enormously proud of my country and its role and history in the world."

But conservatives continued to criticize Obama through the 2012 campaign for failing to fully embrace the concept, even though he said repeatedly that the United States is exceptional. At times, he appeared as confused — and frustrated — by the debate as conservatives were over his early answer.

On the international front, Obama has sought to emphasize shared interests over strictly national ones, hoping to avoid the unproductive fights that have defined some important relationships in the past.

Although he has demanded better from China on human rights, he has made a shared interest in a functioning global economy central to his agenda with the Asian power. And in attempting to "reset" relations with Russia before the Ukraine intervention, Obama pursued diplomacy with Putin over Iran's uranium enrichment program, nuclear nonproliferation, and international economic integration, with varying degrees of success.

Leading up to the Ukraine intervention, Putin had been showing some signs of subscribing to Obama's view of the world.

He spent more than $50 billion to stage the Winter Olympic Games in Sochi, released businessman Mikhail Khodorkovsky and members of the protest band Pussy Riot from prison, and took other steps to make his government more internationally acceptable.

But after the pro-Russian government in Kiev collapsed, Putin said he had been betrayed by the West — whose governments supported the new pro-European interim leaders — and moved swiftly into Crimea.

“This is not the first step in a highly sophisticated strategy to reconstruct the Russian empire,” said Michael McFaul, Obama’s most recent ambassador to Moscow, who returned recently to his teaching post at Stanford University. “And therefore I think it gives space to the kinds of threats and warnings that President Obama is giving in regards to eastern Ukraine. It will play a part in Putin’s thinking.”

But McFaul said he doesn’t “think anybody has any illusions — or at least nobody should have any illusions — that the sanctions applied the way they have been so far are going to compel Putin to reverse course in Crimea.”

The success of Obama’s approach to Putin will depend largely on whether he can persuade European leaders to rally behind more severe sanctions, given the present fears of Russian military ambitions and economic reprisals.

The European Union last week authorized measures that could target Russia’s energy and banking sectors, and Obama announced a similar move by the United States that he warned “could also be disruptive to the global economy.”

Obama will meet Monday night with members of the Group of Seven nations — Russia’s membership in the Group of Eight is currently suspended — on the sidelines of the Nuclear Security Summit in The Hague.

The summit itself is focusing on how to prevent nuclear terrorism, an issue Russia has an interest in addressing as well. Although Putin will not attend, a lower-level Russian delegation will.

Obama will then travel to Brussels for his first visit there with European Union leaders and deliver what advisers call the trip’s “signal speech” on transatlantic relations, with the Ukraine crisis as backdrop.

He will conclude the trip with a visit to Rome — where he will meet with Pope Francis to discuss the widening gap between rich and poor — and to Saudi Arabia, which is aggrieved over Obama’s failure to use military force in Syria, the negotiations with Iran on its nuclear program, and shifting support for autocratic U.S. allies during the Arab Spring.

Jeremy Shapiro, a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution, said Obama and European leaders are likely to stress unity in public on the steps taken against Russia.

“Privately, Obama, I think, will push the Europeans to consider further sanctions, and particularly to think in advance about reactions to further Russian escalations in Ukraine,” said Shapiro, who worked in the State Department on European issues earlier in the Obama administration. “It’s very clear that U.S. sanctions aren’t effective without the Europeans.”

Any new European sanctions would have to balance the interests of the major European economies, something Obama will probably be asked to mediate during his meetings in Brussels. Shapiro said Britain will demand “burden-sharing,” meaning not paying more for sanctions than the French and Germans.

“This will be a slow process,” Shapiro said. “It will not be as satisfying as the military moves that the Russians might do.”

Obama’s economy-focused approach has shown success in places such as Iran, a smaller country hit by far broader sanctions than Russia is facing so far. The measures, started by the Bush administration and expanded by Obama, effectively severed its oil-rich economy from world markets.

Iran’s leadership is moving to rejoin global markets through negotiations over its nuclear program, although it’s unclear whether those talks will be successful. Putin’s brand of nationalism, though, is different from the religiously inspired and more regional ambitions of Iran.

His interest — or so Europeans fear — is in restoring Russia’s national power and global authority. Since his move on Crimea, his domestic popularity has never been higher amid international condemnation.

Putin has long argued that Russia’s wealthy, including some of those named in recent U.S. sanctions, should keep their money inside Russia and away from a global economy controlled by Western interests.

Obama’s sanctions may actually give weight to his case by sharpening Russian sentiment against the United States. After the Obama administration announced sanctions against Bank Rossiya, Putin said pointedly that he would begin to have his salary deposited there.

That confidence could change, though, if economic sanctions tighten in the months ahead.

McFaul said Putin “is a highly motivated interlocutor right now given that he has just pivoted against his own strategy” of seeking greater economic integration with Europe and the world.

"Putin is the main player there, but he is not the only player," he said. "And over time, and sanctions always take time, that's when they will have their effect."

Scott Wilson is the chief White House correspondent for the Washington Post. Previously, he was the paper's deputy Assistant Managing Editor/Foreign News after serving as a correspondent in Latin America and in the Middle East.

Article 3.

Boston Globe

John Kerry's Mideast initiative bogs down, but talks must be saved

Editorial

March 24, 2014 -- Secretary of State John Kerry's goal of brokering a peace deal between Israel and the Palestinian Authority within nine months always looked overly optimistic, since the two sides had not sat down at the negotiating table in years. But it's a worrisome sign that Kerry has steadily downgraded expectations; instead of a peace deal, the current objective is a "framework" for a deal. Now, as the April deadline looms, US officials are scrambling just to get agreement to extend the talks for another nine months. Even that modest goal is far from certain. But these talks must be saved.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who met with President Obama on Monday, threatened to walk away from the talks if Israel fails to follow through with the release of another batch of Palestinian prisoners, a move that's wildly unpopular in Israel. US officials are far from certain whether the release will take place, or whether they can keep the talks from collapsing if it doesn't.

Even with another nine months, there is no guarantee of success. Most members of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party openly oppose the creation of a Palestinian state, and so far he has shown little willingness to forge the new political alliances to make a peace deal work. Although Netanyahu's tone has softened considerably, he has done

little to prepare the Israeli public for a deal that he probably does not think will come to pass. Meanwhile, many Palestinians feel that they should wait Netanyahu out, in the hopes that they will get better deal from a future Israeli government.

Another huge obstacle is the recent upheaval in the Middle East. The Arab world is painfully divided on a host of issues, from the treatment of the Muslim Brotherhood to the crisis in Syria to negotiations over Iran's nuclear program. The league had been playing a constructive role but can no longer be counted on to speak with one voice in support of the steps needed to create a Palestinian state.

In the face of all this doom and gloom, Kerry soldiers on, so relentlessly that Israel's defense minister famously called him "messianic." As hopeless as this effort might seem, there is value in this kind of sustained personal investment from the secretary of state.

Even if he does not get a peace deal, Kerry's team can help lay the foundation for a future agreement by identifying and testing creative solutions — for instance, on cooperative security mechanisms and water management — to bridge the gap between the two sides. They can help Israelis understand that resolving the Palestinian issue, rather than continuing the status quo indefinitely, is a core American national security interest. And they can help Palestinians understand that they need to develop greater transparency and accountability in their own institutions, so that Palestinians are capable of governing their own affairs when they finally achieve a state.

Article 4.

The Washington Post

Obama is setting up Israel to take the fall

Jennifer Rubin

March 23 -- In advance of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's recent visit to the United States, President Obama gave an interview in which he viciously attacked Israel, suggesting that Israel was the cause of the peace process failure, that the United States could no longer protect

Israel if the peace process failed and that Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas was a man of peace.

This past week, Abbas came to visit Obama at the White House. In advance of his trip, Obama made no statements expressing displeasure with the Palestinian Authority's intransigence and its continued demonization of Israel. Just before the meeting Obama told the assembled press corps:

I have to commend President Abbas. He has been somebody who has consistently renounced violence, has consistently sought a diplomatic and peaceful solution that allows for two states, side by side, in peace and security; a state that allows for the dignity and sovereignty of the Palestinian people and a state that allows for Israelis to feel secure and at peace with their neighbors. . . . I also want to point out that the Palestinian Authority has continued to try to build strong institutions in preparation for a day in which the Palestinians have their own state, and I will continue to emphasize the importance of rule of law, transparency, and effective reform so that not only do the Palestinians ultimately have a state on paper, but, more importantly, they have one that actually delivers on behalf of their people.

In fact, Abbas last year forced out the only true Palestinian reformer Salam Fayyad, has refused to hold elections and occupies the presidency beyond the legally allotted term. Moreover, as former deputy national security adviser Elliott Abrams explains: "By making the 'right of return' a personal right for each Palestinian, Abbas is saying the PLO has no right to negotiate over it and no right to sign an agreement that defeats or even limits that 'right.' If that's really the PLO position, there will never be an agreement."

How did the Abbas-Obama meeting go? The Times of Israel reports:

On his trip to Washington this week, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas rejected US Secretary of State John Kerry's framework document for continued peace talks with Israel, and issued "three no's" on core issues, leaving the negotiations heading for an explosive collapse, an Israeli TV report said Friday. . . .

Specifically, the report said, Abbas rejected Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's demand that he recognize Israel as a Jewish state. He also refused to abandon the Palestinian demand for a "right of return" for millions of Palestinians and their descendants — a demand that, if

implemented, would drastically alter Israel's demographic balance and which no conceivable Israeli government would accept. And finally, he refused to commit to an "end of conflict," under which a peace deal would represent the termination of any further Palestinian demands of Israel. We can therefore see that Obama's words are entirely at odds with the conduct of the parties in the region. He either chooses to misrepresent the facts or he is blinded by unremitting hostility to Israel. In any event, he indulges the PA's intransigence despite replete evidence that this only worsens the divide between the parties. The inescapable takeaway is that Obama lacks real affection for the Jewish state and when things fail intends to blame Israel. In that vein, Jonathan Schanzer of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies predicts:

Led by Secretary of State John Kerry and managed by veteran diplomat Martin Indyk, Washington has labored to restart the peace process. And while the administration has placed significant pressure on Israel to make concessions on borders, Jerusalem and settlements, one of the major demands on the Palestinians has been to halt the international bid for recognition.

Skeptical of the entire process after decades of fruitless negotiations, the Palestinians have nevertheless abided by this demand. But they have also made it clear that they continue to study steps to join UN treaties and bodies. . . . Abbas himself has threatened, "If we don't obtain our rights through negotiations, we have the right to go to international institutions." Palestinian official Hanan Ashrawi also warned that the Palestinian leadership was ready to join sixteen agencies beginning in April 2014. "Everything is in place and will be set in motion," Ashrawi claimed. By late December, Saeb Erekat told Maan News Agency that there were no less than sixty-three member agencies of the UN that the PLO sought to join. While Schanzer concludes that "it is clear that the Palestinians have a ready-made policy to pursue should the current talks break down. Unlike in 2000, when the collapse in diplomacy prompted a violent intifada, this failure will yield a diplomatic intifada, whereby the Palestinians pressure Israel using their leverage with the international community. It's nonviolent, but its war by other means." And it is equally clear that the administration will be a willing partner in assigning blame to Israel. The

president is setting Israel up, and Israel and its friends should be prepared to vigorously and publicly reveal the president's mendacity.

Jennifer Rubin is an American neoconservative columnist and a blogger for the Washington Post. (Wikipedia)

Article 5.

Al Arabiya

Tough time to have an Arab League meeting?

Dr. Theodore Karasik

23 March 2014 -- This week the Arab League is holding its annual meeting entitled "Solidarity for a Better Future" in Kuwait. The timing of the event is of additional value. From the security perspective, the growing rift between the GCC states and the transition in Egypt and Libya is troublesome, and challenges the entire concept of solidarity.

The changing situation in Syria is weighing on all participants' minds as well. It is quite doubtful that the Qatar issue will appear publically while the Damascus problem may be part of the final communiqué in terms of humanitarian necessities.

The fact that Syria is not an active member, having been kicked out of the group for President Bashar Al-Assad's regime's military actions, is important because opposition will also not be present, leaving the inability to agree on an official representative.

According to reports from Kuwait City, the Arab League summit is most likely to focus on ways to enhance the Arab League, the establishment of an Arab court for human rights, the activation of the council for peace and security to address conflicts that could threaten Arab security, the setting up of a crisis management center in cooperation with the European Union, the identification of goals to boost trade, ways to eliminate illiteracy and unemployment and improving the Arab League charter.

For the first time, a representative from South Sudan will attend the Summit to give a report on the progress the country is making on stability and prosperity. The Summit intends to provide the troubled country a

springboard for Arab integration. Thus, the agenda is robust and full of numerous goals to be agreed upon.

The Brotherhood issue

But if the GCC issue springs up, there may be a clear delineation and split within the Arab League over the Muslim Brotherhood, setting a dangerous precedent. A Them versus Us mentality may emerge over who supports the Ikhwan and who sees the Brotherhood as terrorists, and most importantly, if states give "sanctuary" to the Ikhwan being "state sponsors of terrorism." Such statements will likely come from the mouths of pundits and not officially from Arab League official attendees. We will all know for sure if there is a major dispute behind the scenes if there are empty chairs around the table.

The recent history of the annual Arab League meeting has focused on rallying Arab states around the need for economic and social welfare and improvement in correcting the disparity between member states. Palestine is always a main, unifying cause. In the wake of the Arab Spring, the Arab League seemed to be trying to emerge as a stronger regional organization because of the Syrian conflict, but appeared to fail to follow through because of internal regional disputes between member states.

Uniting the Arab countries

For some Arab observers, the Arab League is a debate club with little power. Hopefully, this year's summit will be a bit more exciting and policy relevant. As such, two Egyptian journalists called to end the divisions among the Arab countries in order to pave way for stability and security for the Arab people. They argued that Arab leaders needed to activate a Defense Agreement in order to address violence and thus end divisions marring the Arab world.

One of the journalists asserted: "The Arabs should be united against the West's vision to partition countries of the Arab world" and cited the 1916 Sykes-Picot Agreement, which led to the division of Turkish-held Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine into various French- and British-administered areas." This type of mentality may be counterproductive at this critical juncture in the regional environment.

This year, the Arab League Summit may add more "energetic words" to the final communiqué. It is interesting to note that last year's conference in Doha is being linked to the Kuwait Summit. Qatar's Arab Summit in 2013

approved decisions aimed at solving Arab economic and social issues, especially those that hinder the establishment of an Arab free zone. According to Kuwaiti officials, in order to complete the Arab free trade zone, it is of utmost importance to make progress in the Arab trade services agreement by setting up a timeframe to eliminate non-customs' restrictions and agreeing on unified custom tariffs in order to launch the Arab Custom Union. However, actions will speak louder than words in the current environment. Given regional turmoil, implementing such unifying economic reforms is going to be a tall order.

Identity crisis

Overall, all of the intentions of the above goals are well, good, and notable. The problem is that the Arab League appears to be racked by an ongoing identity crisis. There are religious, ethnic, secular, political differences that affect the ability of the Arab League to function in unison.

And the issues are only getting tougher with the changing geo-politics of the region and the impact that events in Ukraine and Iran's negotiations with the West are having on Arab states. The good news is that Kuwait is a respectable location for such an event at this particular juncture.

Given Kuwait's own unique political system and the willingness of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his royal court and advisors to act as mediators in all types of regional disputes, the Kuwait Summit may make one step forward but may also take two steps backwards depending on the assertiveness and agendas of attending states.

Dr. Theodore Karasik is the Director of Research and Consultancy at the Institute for Near East and Gulf Military Analysis (INEGMA) in Dubai, UAE. He is also a Lecturer at University of Wollongong Dubai.

Article 6.

The New York Review of Books

Turkey Goes Out of Control

Christopher de Bellaigue

The Rise of Turkey: The Twenty-First Century's First Muslim Power

by Soner Cagaptay
Potomac, 168 pp., $25.95

Gülen: The Ambiguous Politics of Market Islam in Turkey and the World
by Joshua D. Hendrick
New York University Press, 276 pp., $49.00

I'mamin Ordusu [The Imam's Army]
by Ahmet Şık
298 pp., available at theopinions.info/thearmyoftheimam.htm

April 3, 2014 Issue -- Protesters with placards of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the US-based Turkish cleric Fethullah Gülen during a demonstration against corruption, Istanbul, December 25, 2013. The text on the placards says 'We will cast them down!'

Two pilots who are flying an airplane together start punching each other in the cockpit. One ejects those members of the crew whom he believes to be close to his rival; the other screams that his copilot isn't a pilot at all, but a thief. At that moment, the plane spins out of control and swiftly loses height, while the passengers look on in panic.

These are lines from a recent newspaper column by Can Dündar, a Turkish journalist, and I can think of no clearer aid to understanding the perverse, avoidable, almost cartoonish confrontation that has engulfed Turkey since last December, and that threatens to undo the political and economic gains of the past decade.

The parties to the confrontation are the prime minister, sixty-year-old Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and a Turkish divine, Fethullah Gülen, thirteen years his senior. Erdoğan leads the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), and works in the political hurly-burly of Ankara, the country's capital. Gülen is Turkey's best-known preacher and moral didact. He lives in seclusion in Pennsylvania, reportedly in poor health (he has heart trouble). Gülen presides loosely but unmistakably over an empire of schools, businesses, and networks of sympathizers.

It is this empire that Erdoğan now depicts as a "parallel state" to the one he was elected to run, and he has undertaken to eliminate it. The feud began in earnest last December and has had a remarkably destructive effect. Many

of Gülen's followers work within the government and have had much power. Now large parts of the civil service have been eviscerated, much of the media has been reduced to unthinking carriers of politically motivated revelation and innuendo, and the economy has slowed down after a decade of strong growth. The Turkish miracle is over.

Erdoğan's AKP government and the Gülen movement share a modernizing Islamist ideology, and although relations between them have been deteriorating for some time, before the current crisis it was possible to be affiliated with both. Coexistence ended abruptly on December 17, when more than fifty pro-AKP figures, including the head of Halkbank, a state-owned bank, a construction magnate, and the sons of three cabinet ministers, were taken in for questioning by prosecutors who are regarded as Gülen's men.

The raids were allegedly carried out by Gülenist policemen and they were given much attention by newspapers and TV stations with a similar pro-Gülen bent. Allegations that the well-connected detainees were guilty of bribery, smuggling, and other crooked activities were tweeted and retweeted in a frenzy of condemnation; the Gülenist assault from within the government as well as outside it had been well planned. Incriminating evidence was indeed uncovered, including some $4.5 million kept in shoeboxes in the home of the Halkbank chief executive, along with indications of payments to ministers. It soon emerged that a second phase of the same investigation would touch the prime minister's son.

The speed and vigor of Erdoğan's reaction to these events indicate that he regarded them as a precursor to his own destruction. He immediately began clearing out compromised or potentially traitorous members of his entourage, and within a few days had replaced half his cabinet, including those members whose sons had been taken into custody. The purge has spread to far points of the civil service. As part of Erdoğan's campaign against the influence of Gülen, thousands of policemen have been moved from their posts, as well as senior prosecutors involved in the corruption case, and bureaucrats associated with the departed ministers have also been shuffled or dismissed.

Earlier in February the government began investigating Gülenist police officers on suspicion of "forming an illegal organization within the state." Erdoğan stopped the judicial investigations and instead took direct action.

Two months shy of municipal elections, and six months away from a presidential election he hopes to contest, he survives. But the political tradition he represents, a synthesis of Islamism and the free market, is hurt, the prime minister has been badly damaged, and there will be more damage to come.

Before the Erdoğan–Gülen confrontation started to show itself, in early 2013, and certainly before last summer's nationwide protests, when Turkish liberals took to the streets against their authoritarian prime minister, Turkey's modernizing Islamist current enjoyed much goodwill. Erdoğan personified it. He came to power in 2003, after a decades-long struggle by Islamists against the oppressive tactics of the country's long-entrenched secular institutions, notably the army and judiciary. Within a few years of becoming prime minister, Erdoğan seemed to be rectifying many of the country's problems. Exploiting the strong majority enjoyed by the AKP in parliament, he stabilized and liberalized the erratic, semi-planned economy, making Turks richer than they had ever been, and introduced numerous liberal reforms (such as ending torture and giving increased rights to the Kurds). Perhaps most important of all, he brought under control of the elected civil authorities the armed forces, which had overthrown no fewer than four elected governments since 1960.

All along, the AKP was in an unofficial coalition with less visible Islamists, and their most powerful coalition partner was the movement of Fethullah Gülen. His schools turned out well-behaved, patriotic, pious Turks, and the government welcomed them into the bureaucratic and business elites that gradually displaced the old secular guard. Erdoğan and Gülen seemed to embody the longing of many Turks for an Islam in harmony with electoral democracy, entrepreneurship, and consumerism. And the Islamic element in the formula was supposed to guarantee high standards of ethics and behavior. For years, public life had been venal, loutish, and appetite-driven; the Islamists promised to do things differently. But the Islamists, too, do not lack for appetites. Shortly after the initial detentions by Gülen's police allies in December, a video purporting to show a senior AKP figure in flagrante delicto was posted on the Internet. (Abdurrahman Dilipak, a leading pro-government columnist, claimed there were forty more such "doctored" tapes in existence.) Recorded phone conversations involving Gülen have also been leaked and heard by

millions. In one he is deciding which Turkish firm should receive a contract offered by a foreign government. In another, he and a lieutenant discuss the likelihood that three "friends" (i.e., followers) in senior positions at Turkey's banking regulatory body will protect a Gülen-affiliated bank, Bank Asya, from government investigation. (Shortly after the leak, the three officials in question lost their jobs.) All this seemed a long way from the image of a frugal sage ailing gently in the hills of Pennsylvania that Gülen has cultivated.

The tone of the conflict is unrestrained, and is being set from the top. Erdoğan refuses to utter Gülen's name in public, but when he talks of "false prophets, seers, and hollow pseudo-sages," his target is clear. In one of the frequent sermons that Gülen delivers from his home, reaching big audiences in Turkey by means of supportive television stations and the Internet, the exiled preacher recently placed a malediction on his enemies, beseeching God to "consume their homes with fire, destroy their nests, break their accords." Allegations of extensive government corruption, many of them involving rigged contracts for construction projects and the violation of zoning laws, have been repeated by the Gülenist media often enough for many of them to stick. On February 24, recordings of telephone conversations between the prime minister and his son, Bilal, in which the two plan the hiding of tens of millions of euros, were posted on YouTube. The prime minister has called the recordings fabricated, but the posting in question was viewed some two million times in the twenty-four hours after it was uploaded. Even if Erdoğan's purges of the judiciary and the police mean that there will not be successful prosecutions (and Turkey's parliamentary immunity will protect some of Erdoğan's allies), it is hard to imagine the government regaining its former reputation for probity.

The terrain of the dispute is as much commercial as political. The government has accused the Gülen-affiliated Bank Asya of buying $2 billion in foreign currency shortly before December's police operations, the implication being that bank officials had been tipped off and anticipated the ensuing fall of the Turkish lira. The bank is now struggling to contain a run on deposits that saw its share price fall by 46 percent between December 16 and February 5. Even non-Gülenist financial experts believe that the government has orchestrated the withdrawals in an attempt to ruin Bank Asya, heedless of the collateral damage, both to small depositors and

the banking system as a whole, that this would cause. Turkish capitalism is only tenuously governed by the rule of law.

Erdoğan's image is suffering. Last summer's protests disclosed to the public a prime minister ruled by rage and fear, as he reacted to the dissatisfaction of a largely secular minority not with magnanimous gestures, which would have satisfied many of the protesters, but with baton charges, tear gas, and denunciations of a plot by outside powers, sustained by a sinister "interest rate lobby," to deny Turkey its rightful place in the sun. By "interest rate lobby" Erdoğan means unscrupulous Western speculators—Jews, by implication—and his remarks speak to older memories, among them of Turkey's indebtedness to European bankers in Ottoman times, which weakened the empire before its collapse in World War I. But he is also evoking the grim 1990s, when an inflationary, debt-ridden, and unproductive economy was the plaything of investors who took profits when the markets were up and reentered after the inevitable crash—benefiting from real interest rates that averaged 32 percent.

These traumas have informed Erdoğan's approach to the monetary aspects of the crisis. Even before December 17, a combination of the Federal Reserve's tapering of bond purchases, the threat of rising global interest rates, evidence that the Turkish economy was cooling, and political jitters caused by last summer's protests had reduced the value of the lira by 9 percent. The decline accelerated after the December arrests, but the prime minister only endorsed a hike in interest rates after the value of the currency had fallen by a further 13 percent, and Turkish companies, with their heavy exposure to short-term, dollar-denominated debt, were struggling to meet financial obligations. Finally, on January 28, the Central Bank raised rates and the lira's fall was arrested.

Erdoğan's ideological resistance to raising rates has cost Turkish companies dearly. In the words of Inan Demir, an economist at Finansbank, in Istanbul:

There was no choice but to hike, or there would have been full-scale panic, but it should have been done earlier. Now Turkish companies have the worst of all worlds, with continuing difficulties in meeting redemptions, due to the weak lira, and higher financing costs because of the rate hike.

In the space of just four months, Finansbank has revised its growth forecast for 2014 from 3.7 percent to 1.7 percent—after a decade of growth

averaging more than 5 percent.

For all its troubles, Turkey's economy is still big, its citizens 43 percent better off than they were when Erdoğan came to power. This more successful country is the subject of The Rise of Turkey: The Twenty-First Century's First Muslim Power, a new book by Soner Cagaptay, a Turkey expert at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. One sympathizes with Cagaptay, who finished his book long before the present crisis, but even then his tone might have struck one as triumphal—a reminder of the tendency of many observers, captivated by the spectacle of Turkey shedding the complexes of the past, to downplay the perils of the future. Cagaptay dwells at length on the political and economic advances of the Erdoğan years, but he does not go into the tensions within Turkish Islamism, which are likely to define the country's politics for some time, or the corruption that underlies the country's capitalist successes.

The Rise of Turkey is also quiet about the Gülen movement—except for its part in organizing a glittering international conference, attended by Cagaptay, on Turkey's "leadership role in the Arab Spring." Such a conference would be unthinkable now, for Erdoğan's Muslim Brotherhood allies have been bundled out of power in Egypt and his Syrian policy, predicated on a swift overthrow of Bashar al-Assad, is in disarray. Cagaptay is far from the only academic to have accepted hospitality from the Gülen movement, and his description of it as "prestigious" cannot be contested. But there is more to Fethullah Gülen than prestige.

Gülen: The Ambiguous Politics of Market Islam in Turkey and the World is by an American sociologist, Joshua Hendrick, who worked for seven months as a volunteer editor at a Gülen-affiliated publishing house in Istanbul. As someone who recently spent a couple of days in the company of Gülenists, and who found their beaming, radiant, unswervingly solicitous manner perplexing at first, and then somewhat wearing, I can only admire Hendrick's longevity. It has paid off, for this is a helpful and detailed account of a movement that is defined, if such a thing is possible, by obfuscation.

Fethullah Gülen denies that he heads a movement or that he has any institutional link to the organizations that revere him. His followers—as many as five million, according to some estimates—say that they do not form a network but are united by their respect for the Hocaefendi, or

"esteemed teacher," and moved by his vision of a modern, tolerant Islam that values knowledge and material progress as well as piety and charity. Companies owned or supported by Gülenists do not identify themselves as such, even if there is an association, the Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists, whose members confess their admiration for him. Consequently it is hard to know how many billions of dollars they are worth. Gülen's picture does not beam from the walls of the more than one thousand private schools, in more than 120 countries, that have been set up by his adherents, or from the masthead of the Gülen-affiliated Zaman newspaper, Turkey's biggest.

As Hendrick points out, many people do not even realize that they are in Gülen's orbit—a parent sending his daughter to a Gülen-affiliated charter school in South Africa, for instance, or a subcontractor working with a Gülenist construction company in Russia. Deniability and ambiguity have been "crucial to the [movement's] uninterrupted growth for three decades." The other factor is Gülen himself. His personal magnetism has been winning followers since the 1960s, when as a young mosque imam he was known for his emotional preaching style, breaking down in tears and even throwing himself onto the floor. A follower who had just returned from visiting the Hocaefendi in the US described him to Hendricks as having "powers that an average educated person…could not possibly imagine. It is God-given." In some ways Gülen is revered in the same way as a Sufi "pole," a human being who has been singled out by God to diffuse divine truth, but the Gülen movement is too worldly to be considered a Sufi movement. "Action" is the Gülenists' declared guiding principle, not detachment and introspection.

Drawing on the teaching of a twentieth-century Turkish divine, Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, Gülen believes that humanity needs to be saved from sin and shown the path of Koranic revelation and prophetic example. From the same starting point, other Muslim revivalists in the twentieth century, notably Egypt's Sayyid Qutb, justified violence and a harsh application of holy law. Gülen leans the other way. He calls for "embracing people regardless of difference of opinion, worldview, ideology, ethnicity, or belief," and for "democracy, universal human rights and freedoms"—anathema to Qutb.

Gülen's worldview goes some way to explain his movement's internationalism, the emphasis on language-learning at its schools, and its pursuit of inter-faith dialogue through conferences and university endowments. Unlike many other Islamic organizations, the Gülen movement does not raise money solely for fellow Muslims, but for non-Muslims too (the victims of Haiti's earthquake, for instance). Gülen and his lieutenants go to immense pains to distance themselves from anti-Semitism, and even from criticism of Israel. This has eased the movement's efforts to establish itself in the United States, where it has around 135 charter schools, and where it has cultivated powerful allies in politics, education, and the arts. Even so, the Gülenists are nowadays the object of increased scrutiny by the American parents who send their children to his charter schools, and who are concerned by the opacity of their aims and methods, and, more generally, by observers who are uncertain what Gülen stands for.

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, education has been the preoccupation of the Muslim reformers—with particular emphasis on the sciences—and the Gülen movement is no different. In Turkey it controls eight universities, dozens of private secondary schools, and some 350 crammers that prepare children for university entrance exams. The state education system in Turkey is poorly regarded, so parents scrimp and save in order to send their child to a crammer.

At one such institution, immaculate, well equipped, and Gülenist, a senior educator told me that Gülen-affiliated crammers send pupils to the country's best universities, and that they offer 15 percent of their places to poor pupils on a scholarship basis. He broke off our conversation to go to the mosque across the road to say his prayers, before returning with two nice, polite male students (the girls' section is separate). They told me about the "big brother" system, whereby moral and practical support is provided to pupils far from home who are billetted in the crammer's dorms. One of the boys remarked that the teachers treat him "like their own son." The Gülen movement is fond of family analogies. It does not like nine-to-fivers; dedication is prized in both students and teachers.

Wealth, success, the thrill of being party to a sublime truth—the Gülen movement energetically proselytizes, and these are its inducements. It is easy to imagine the debt of obligation felt by the poorer Gülenists after

they are lifted into this shiny, cosmopolitan, and above all close-knit world. As much as through the books and speeches of the Hocaefendi, it is through friendship that they are drawn in, and if their families will not accompany them then a choice must be made—between the old family and the new one.

Cults and closed organizations the world over have used similar methods, and the results are not always happy. A psychologist in Istanbul told me about a poor boy, the son of a concierge in the city's most expensive district, who had visited her after an experience with a group of Gülenists. They had befriended him, inviting him into the home they shared, introducing to him to the Hocaefendi's ideas, and making him feel clever, accomplished, and accepted. Then one day when the others were out, he was idly flicking through some DVDs and put one on. It was a guide to ensnaring recruits, explaining tactics that he recognized as having been used on him. This is how he ended up visiting my psychologist friend.

Near the beginning of his book, Hendrick reproduces part of a leaked video transcript that was part of the prosecution's case against Gülen in 2000, when he was being tried in absentia—he had already fled Turkey for the US—for conspiracy against the secular state. In this famous excerpt, Gülen tells his supporters:

You must move in the arteries of the system, without anyone noticing your existence, until you reach all the power centers…. You must wait until such time as you have gotten all the state power.

But Hendrick does not go deeply into the various accusations that have been leveled at Gülen over the years; as a sociologist, he may not feel it is his job to do so.

Claims that Gülen has been trying to take over the organs of the state, particularly the judiciary and the police, date back at least to 1971, when he served a seven-month jail sentence for undermining secularism. These claims rest on an important distinction between the Gülen movement and Turkey's other Islamist traditions. While the latter reacted in an orthodox way to the legal and political obstacles placed before them, contesting elections and fighting charge sheets, the Gülenists tried to remain on the right side of the secular institutions (not always successfully, as Gülen's imprisonment shows), while gradually infiltrating them. In 2011, a journalist called Ahmet Şık brought out a book, The Imam's Army, that

shows how the Gülenists took control of the police force over a period of two decades.

The Imam's Army is full of fascinating details. It contains a directive that was allegedly issued to Gülenist policemen in the late 1990s, at the height of a campaign by the secular authorities against Turkish Islamists. In this directive, Gülen's followers in the force are ordered to remove his books from their homes, leave empty beer cans around the place, and tell their wives to remove their headscarves so as to give a secular impression. Şık also writes about the transfers and demotions that are the fate of any senior policeman or prosecutor who tries to take on the Gülenists, and the campaigns of vilification waged against them by the Gülen-affiliated media, the newspaper Zaman in particular.

Şık drew some of his material from an earlier book by a former chief of police, Hanefi Avcı. In September 2010, two days before he was due to substantiate his claims in a press conference, and despite his right-wing sympathies, Avcı was arrested and charged with membership in a leftist organization. Şık was arrested the following year, shortly before the planned publication of The Imam's Army. (Despite the efforts of the police to destroy every digital copy of the book, it was posted on the Internet and was downloaded 100,000 times in two days.) More journalists were arrested, on various pretexts, and the cases of all were folded into a huge investigation into an alleged conspiracy against the government by the old secular establishment. The conspiracy was named Ergenekon, after the mythical Central Asian name of the Turkish nation.

When it was launched in 2007, the Ergenekon investigation was welcomed by many Turks as a chance for the country to draw a line under the abuses that had been committed by the armed forces and their allies. But long before the investigation reached its climax last August, with the jailing of 242 people, including a former chief of the general staff, for belonging to the "Ergenekon terrorist organization," blatant irregularities in the case had caused some to change their minds. Convictions were secured on the basis of illegal wiretaps; there were numerous instances of incompetently planted evidence. Perhaps most egregious of all, in a related case, 330 serving and retired members of the armed forces were jailed for plotting a coup in 2003—even though the prosecution's case rested on a single CD whose formatting showed it used the 2007 version of Microsoft Office.

Ergenekon was to have been the final vindication of Turkey's long-suppressed Islamists and Erdoğan as their leader; but there is good reason to argue that there never was an organization called Ergenekon and that the legal process was motivated by malice and revenge. According to Gareth Jenkins, a British scholar who has penetratingly analyzed the case, it was put into operation not by Erdoğan but by a "cabal of Gülen's followers in the police and lower echelons of the judiciary." As it went on, Jenkins maintains, the Gülenists' misuse of it to victimize their enemies increased. Jenkins believes that Ahmet Şık, Hanefi Avcı, and the other arrested journalists—some of whom still await sentencing—have been punished because they are "critics, opponents or rivals of the Gülen movement." Back in 2006, Fethullah Gülen was acquitted of trying to take over the Turkish state, but Erdoğan, his former ally, has revived the idea. Having been a supporter of the Ergenekon investigation, Erdoğan is now keen for the files to be reopened, no doubt with a view to exposing judicial abuses by the Gülenists. Last month Erdoğan responded with an abuse of his own, steering legislation through parliament that gives the government increased control over judges and prosecutors. The two men's dispute marks the end of a partnership that brought Islamism to power in Turkey, and it challenges the belief, once entertained even by some liberals, that if Turkey was more responsive to its pious majority it would also be more just.

Christopher de Bellaigue is a journalist who has worked on the Middle East and South Asia since 1994. His work mostly chronicles developments in Iran and Turkey. (Wikipedia)