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Article 1.

Hurriyet

Turkish-Israeli ties on brink of collapse

Semih Idiz

September 1, 2011 -- It is clear that the Mavi Marmara incident will color Turkish-Israeli ties, or the increasing lack of them, for the foreseeable future. This is the rock upon which a relationship that was once considered vital for both countries due to the many practical advantages it brought will have finally foundered.

It remains to be seen whether the historical ties between Turks and Jews can survive this falling out. We have emotional nations on both sides and a sense of mutual animosity has filtered down to the consciousness of ordinary people on the street.

The bottom line is that for many Turks, Israel is run by a pack of trigger happy killers of unarmed civilians, while for many Israelis, Turkey is run by a terrorist supporting group of Islamic fundamentalists hell bent on seeing the destruction of their country. There appears to be no intermediary tones in this respect and neither government appears to have the political wisdom to find a way out of the morass. It remains to be seen whether the much talked about "Palmer Report" on the incident, commissioned by [redacted]. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, will finally be released today - as some media reports indicate.

The release of the report has already been postponed a number of times due to either Turkey's or Israel's request (depending on whose media one believes). At any rate it is more than clear at this stage that whatever this report says, Israel is not going to apologize for killing nine Turkish activists on the Mavi Marmara in May 2010, even if this has to be done for the sake of broader strategic consideration.

It is equally clear that Turkey will not let the matter rest either politically or legally until the apology, compensation and lifting of the Gaza blockade by Israel it is demanding is forthcoming.

The bottom line is that both governments - which are religious and/or nationalist hard-liners in their own right - appear to have made a strategic decision about these ties, which also takes a historic severance of relations between the two nations into account. True to the often irrational Middle East, both countries are more concerned today about "national pride" than a rational settlement for the sake of future interests.

So who will lose more as a result of this? It is noticeable that there is hardly any debate about this particular question in Turkey, while the Israel media is rife with commentary about the pros and cons of "apologizing to Turkey." Perhaps the answer to this question lies in this fact.

There are also commentators abroad who believe Israel - whose international isolation will become even more pronounced following the UN vote on Palestinian independence this month - stands to lose out significantly as a result of this situation.

An op-ed piece in the Boston Globe (Aug. 29) by Alan Berger is a case in point, and must be taken as reflecting some of the official thinking in Washington. Berger had the following to say on the matter:

"From Homer's Iliad to Machiavelli to Don Corleone, it has long been clear that a wise leader should divide his enemies and unify his allies. But when the government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently declined to apologize to Turkey for killing nine Turkish nationals last year aboard a flotilla headed for Gaza, it was breaking that fundamental rule of statesmanship."

Pointing to the souring of ties between Ankara and Damascus over Bashar al-Assad's brutal crackdown against demonstrators, Berger

added, “Netanyahu ought to welcome Turkey’s invitation to repair relations, thereby strengthening a tacit Arab-Turkish-Western-Israeli alliance working to end the Assad dynasty - and roll back the Iranian tide.”

It seems however that back in Israel, where the best that senior government officials can do is come up with populist remarks such as “God forbid that we apologize to Turkey,” no one is listening.

Article 2.

Guardian

A State of Palestine would backfire on its own people

Mehdi Hasan

1 September 2011 -- Rejoice! On 20 September, the United Nations will welcome a new member: the "State of Palestine". Senior Palestinian Authority (PA) officials believe they have secured the support of enough countries to pass a resolution in the UN general assembly recognising a Palestinian state. There is, however, little to celebrate. For the first time in my life, I find myself in agreement with Binyamin Netanyahu. The loathsome Israeli prime minister is opposed to the Palestinian bid for statehood – and so, reluctantly, am I. But for very different reasons to "Bibi".

The Palestinians are walking into a trap of their own making. With the so-called "peace process" going nowhere, and with the number of Israeli settlements on the rise, the UN vote is an act of desperation, not strength, on the part of the Palestinian leadership. The risks are high; the benefits few and far between.

Proponents of statehood hide behind a series of spurious arguments. Some argue that statehood will give Palestinians a greater voice. Mahmoud Abbas, the PA president whose electoral mandate expired more than two years ago, has said that "when the recognition of our state on the 1967 borders happens, we will become a state under occupation, and then we would be able to go to the UN [with demands]".

Yet Abbas also happens to be chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organisation. The PLO, in its capacity as "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people", has had observer status at

the UN since 1974 and been allowed to participate in security council debates since 1976. So Abbas can already raise whatever issue he likes at the UN. Why has he not, for instance, gone back to the international court of justice, which has previously declared Israeli settlements to be "illegal and an obstacle to peace", for further rulings? Why has he not pushed for a security council debate on the Goldstone report, which accused the Israelis of committing war crimes in Gaza?

Such initiatives would do more to advance the decades-long Palestinian struggle for freedom than a change in nameplates at the UN building in New York. That Abbas has failed to use the powers he possesses speaks volumes about his own weakness; it does not strengthen the case for a make-believe Palestinian state.

Then there are those who believe statehood would offer the Palestinians a legal shield against Israeli aggression. PA official Nabil Shaath has said that if a Palestinian state were to gain UN recognition, the Israelis would then "be in daily violation of the rights of a fellow member state and diplomatic and legal consequences could follow, all of which would be painful for Israel". Who is he kidding? Consider the experiences of Lebanon and Syria. The former had its southern strip occupied by Israel for 22 years, from 1978 to 2000; the latter lost the Golan Heights to the Jewish state in 1967. Did "statehood" protect Lebanon from Israeli assault? Has membership of the UN general assembly helped Syria regain the Golan Heights?

There is also a lazy assumption that if the Israelis are opposed to Palestinian statehood, then it must be the correct course of action. However, some of the shrewdest members of Israel's foreign policy elite take a different line to Netanyahu. Gidi Grinstein, a member of Ehud Barak's negotiating team at Camp David in 2000, has bluntly spelled out the strategic benefits of Palestinian statehood… for the

Jewish state. "A declaration of a Palestinian state in September includes the possibility of a diplomatic breakthrough as well as significant advantages for Israel," he wrote in Haaretz in May. "The establishment of such a state will help anchor the principle of two states for two peoples, shape the permanent situation with Israel controlling the security assets and the new state's surroundings, and diminish the refugee problem by marginalising UNRWA [the United Nations relief and works agency] and limiting refugee status."

This issue of refugees is crucial. In recent years, much ink has been spilled on the divide between Palestinians in the Fatah-led West Bank and Hamas-ruled Gaza. But the real divide is between Palestinians living in the occupied territories and Palestinian refugees living abroad. The majority of the world's nine million or so Palestinians live outside the West Bank and Gaza, with three out of four members on the Palestinian National Council, the PLO's legislative body, representing the diaspora.

Yet a hard-hitting, seven-page legal opinion on the consequences of Palestinian statehood, published recently by Guy Goodwin-Gill, a professor of international law at Oxford University, concluded that "the interests of the Palestinian people are at risk of prejudice and fragmentation" and the refugees in the diaspora risk losing "their entitlement to equal representation" and "their ability to vocalise their views, to participate in matters of national governance, including the formation and political identity of the state, and to exercise the right of return".

Why? According to Goodwin-Gill, the PLO's UN status would be transferred to the new state of Palestine after the vote on 20 September: a state confined to mere segments of the West Bank and perhaps Gaza; a state which most Palestinian refugees would have little or no connection to; a state which, lest we forget, does not actually exist. To have a PA-led fantasy state representing only West

Bank and Gaza residents replace the PLO – representing all Palestinians – as Israel's chief interlocutor would be a disaster. Numerous Palestinian representatives and civil-society groups have expressed their concerns. Karma Nabulsi, the Oxford academic and former PLO official, says that by "losing the PLO as the sole legitimate representative at the UN, our people immediately lose our claim as refugees to be part of our official representation". The Palestinian American journalist and blogger Ali Abunimah has dismissed the UN bid as a "charade".

It is difficult to disagree with him. Will "statehood", after all, stop the relentless colonisation of Palestinian land by Israeli settlers? Will membership of the UN general assembly stop the targeted assassinations of Palestinians? Will it result in the closure of a single checkpoint or the release of a single detainee?

The truth is that, whether or not Abbas succeeds in his bid for statehood, the life of the ordinary Palestinian on the ground in Ramallah, Nablus, Bethlehem or, indeed, Gaza City, will change not a jot. The residents of the occupied territories will continue to be killed and maimed. The members of the Palestinian diaspora, meanwhile, could find themselves voiceless; a people disenfranchised and delegitimised.

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Article 3.

Asharq Alawsat

The Mullahs' fear of tsunami

Amir Taheri

02/09/2011 -- Eight months after the start of the "Arab Spring", the ruling mullahs in Tehran are still wondering how to respond to a tsunami that is changing the political landscape of the region.
Initially, the mullahs, who believe that history consists of a succession of conspiracies, saw the Arab revolt as a plot hatched by Western intelligence services.
Official media echoed a view expressed by American conspiracy theorist Noam Chomsky. According to that view "the Imperialist powers" wanted to change their "Arab lackeys" who had grown old and out of touch. In the case of Libya, Chomsky claimed, the US wanted to topple Gaddafi because he had become "unruly".
The mullahs' media reminded their audience that, in 2009, the American "Great Satan" had also tried to topple the Khomeinist regime with a master-plan written by US and European philosophers, among them Michael Ledeen and Jurgen Habermas, with financial support from businessman George Soros.
When it became clear that the Habermas-Ledeen-Soros trio could not have produced a firestorm in a dozen Arab countries, the Khomeinist media started looking for another explanation.
The most plausible analysis came from Ali Motahari, a member of the Islamic Majlis, the ersatz parliament in Tehran, who is often sane enough to make one wonder what he is doing in that bedlam.
He suggested that, perhaps, Arabs had revolted because they were fed up with "oppression and poverty."

However, that analysis, deemed too dangerous by the regime's powers-that-be, was quickly abandoned. The reason was simple. If Arabs had the right to revolt against "oppression and poverty" how could anyone deny the same right to Iranians who also suffer from that double whammy?

Things became more complicated when the revolt spread to Syria, a client state of the Islamic Republic.

By June, the official line was that revolt in all Arab countries was legitimate except Syria. Thus, the conspiracy theory was valid only for Syria that, according to daily Kayhan, was "punished because it had embraced the teachings of Imam Khomeini."

However, that claim was hard to sustain. Even the most gullible Iranians would not be persuaded that the only Arab country to have a "perfect government" was Syria simply because its leaders were on Tehran's payroll.

Last month, the mullahs' media launched a new analysis. This is based on the claim that the Arab revolt had is inspired by the late Ayatollah Khomeini. According to this analysis, the American "Great Satan" fomented a revolt in Syria to counter the tide of Khomeinist victories in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Yemen among other places.

That theory, too, is hard to sell. Most Arab youths who spearheaded the revolts were not even born when the ayatollah seized power 32 years ago. Some may not have even heard of Khomeini.

And, yet, in an editorial on 24 August, Kayhan, which reflects the view of the "Supreme Guide" Ali Khamenei, claimed that what Arab revolutionaries want is a government based on the Khomeinist model.

Kayhan certainly knows that even its readers might see that claim as a joke. Why should Arabs, even if they wanted a religious government, imitate the witches' brew produced by a semi-literate Iranian mullah rather than developing their own model?

Anticipating that question, Kayhan quotes two "eminent authorities" in support of the claim that Arab revolutionaries want "Walayat al-Faqih" or despotism in the name of religion.

The first "authority" is Fahmi Howeydi, presented as " the leading Egyptian thinker" who is a frequent visitor to the Islamic Republic. This is what Howeydi told Kayhan:" The leadership of Imam Khomeini, and after him, Imam Khamenehei (sic.) in the past 30 years and Iran's powerful overcoming of plots and conspiracies has taught Muslim nations that power, pride, independence, freedom, scientific advancement, mounting to the summits of technology, and powerful presence in international domains are all possible... Today, the Islamic ummah will not swap this model for any other."

The second "authority" is someone named as "the leading American thinker Immanuel Wallerstein". Kayhan quotes him as saying: "We must lament the fact that our efforts to change the world faces an insurmountable hurdle in the form of Walayat al-Faqih in Iran, preferred by most nations to our model of democracy."

Well, now you have it. Arabs who have been demonstrating and dying for the past eight months do not want democracy. What they want is Walayat al-Faqih!

The Kayhan editorial may be a sign of what psychiatrists call an inversion. This happens when a victim of ill treatment persuades himself that what he most fears is, in fact, what he most desires. A woman who is beaten black and blue starts feeling that the man who beats her loves her dearly.

The mullahs know that the system they have created is a banal form of despotism with a thin veneer of superstition sugar-coated as religion. Now dominated by the military-security machine with the "Supreme Guide" as its public face, The Islamic Republic, is as much of a police state as Ben Ali's Tunisia or Gaddafi's Libya, not to mention Bashar al-Assad's Syria.

Howeydi and Wallerstein know that, relative to its population, the Islamic Republic has the largest number of political prisoners in the world and that it is second in the number of people executed each year, after China. No Arab despot created a cult of personality as scandalous as that built around Khamenei.

Under the Khomeinist regime even the most senior personalities of the regime are not safe. Two former presidents, Hashemi Rafsanjani and Muhammad Khatami have had their passports withdrawn and denied the right to travel. Mir-Hussein Mousavi, the man who, as Prime Minister, led Iran through the eight-year war with Iraq, is under house arrest. Each time I visit Paris, London or Washington I am surprised by a wave of new arrivals from Tehran: former Khomeinist officials fleeing from Walayat al-Faqih.

Mr. Huweydi's shining city on the hill is a figment of his imagination. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Iran today is poorer than it was before the mullahs seized power. This is why Iran, which had never been a country of mass immigration, has become the source of "the biggest brain drain in history", according to IMF.

The Khomeinist leadership is in a state of panic. It fears that it, too, may find itself on the path of the tsunami of change.

Amir Taheri was born in Ahvaz, southwest Iran, and educated in Tehran, London and Paris. Taheri has published 11 books, some of which have been translated into 20 languages. He has been a columnist for Asharq Alawsat since 1987. Taheri's latest book "The Persian Night" is published by Encounter Books in London and New York.

Article 4.

The Financial Time

The big questions China still has to answer

Robert Zoellick

September 1, 2011 -- The world's economic leaders need to "rebalance" their thinking as well as their economies. Fiscal and monetary policies have dominated. That makes sense to a degree: decisions on deficits, debt and the eurozone this autumn may well determine whether the global economy slides deeper into danger, or begins the long climb back. But these policies are insufficient for sustained growth: we need action on the structural dynamics to generate jobs, higher productivity, and a sustainable long-term rebalancing. What happens in China is as important as Europe, Japan, or the United States.

China's growth has been a source of strength in the crisis, but its leaders know their growth model is unsustainable. For 30 years, China has enjoyed average annual growth of about 10 per cent. In 1990, its income per capita was 30 percent lower than the average for Sub-Saharan Africa – today, it is three times greater, over $4,000. By 2030, if China reaches a per capita income of $16,000 – a reasonable possibility – the effect on the world economy would be equivalent to adding 15 of today's South Koreas. It is hard to see how that expansion could be accommodated within an export and investment-led growth model, so China will need to rebalance through boosting domestic demand, lowering savings and increasing consumption. Without fundamental structural changes, China is in danger of becoming caught in a "middle income trap" – exacerbating the world's growth problems. In the short term, there is the risk

of inflation driven by food prices. In the longer term, the drivers of China's meteoric rise are waning: resources have largely shifted from agriculture to industry; as the labour force shrinks and the population ages, there are fewer workers to support retirees; productivity increases are declining, partly because the economy is exhausting gains from the transfer of basic production methods. Then there are other challenges, including serious environmental degradation; rising inequality; heavy use of energy and production of carbon; an underdeveloped service sector and an over-reliance on foreign markets.

China's policymakers are well aware of "what" they need to do. Their 12th five-year plan points the way. Their challenge now is "how" to do it. Together, China's Development Research Center of the State Council, its Ministry of Finance and the World Bank are working to turn "what" into "how" for a report later this year. Our starting point is a vision of China in 2030 as one of the high income countries, while also protecting its environment and natural resources, encouraging creativity and innovation, and sharing responsibilities in the global economy.

This weekend in Beijing, a high-level group of Chinese and international experts will be discussing possible reforms and how to implement them, step by step.

A critical question is how China can complete its transition to a market economy. A broad agenda needs to include redefining the role of the government and the rule of law, expanding the private sector, promoting competition, and deepening reforms in the land, labour, and financial markets.

To unleash human potential, China will need to accelerate the pace of open innovation, so that competition encourages Chinese firms to invent products and processes– not only through China's research and development, but also by participating in global networks.

China can "grow green" through a mix of market incentives, regulations, public and private investments, standards, and institutional development. China also aims to deliver equality of opportunity and social security to all its citizens. To do so, it needs to consider how best to deliver more and better quality public services, ensure effective and efficient social safety nets, and mobilise the private and public sectors to share responsibilities in financing, delivering, and monitoring the delivery of social services.

China will weigh how to strengthen its fiscal system – bringing all public resources "on budget" and connecting resources to different levels of government expenditures. Yet without mobilising additional resources, including from state-owned enterprises, it will be difficult to advance reforms. We will also discuss how China can embrace its global role. China is already an important stakeholder in the international system – yet a cautious one. In the future its leaders can be a key partner for global solutions.

Even while coping with today's economic turmoil, world leaders need to design the engines of growth for tomorrow. That agenda will also build market confidence that can provide a boost today. China's quest to find a sustainable growth model will contribute to other developing countries, regional and global growth, and the stability of the international economy. China is preparing to address its challenges. Developed countries would be wise to look ahead at their structural growth challenges too.

The writer is World Bank president.

Article 5.

Guardian

A guide to Libya's new political landscape

Ghaffar Hussain

1 September 2011 1 -- The ousting of the Gaddafi clan and the collapse of their jamahiriya system, has left many feeling unsure about Libya's political future. After all, the National Transitional Council (NTC) is not a political party and won't exist beyond the first elections. Many of its members, being having been officials in Gaddafi's regime, are unlikely to seek executive political positions. The systematic suppression of civil society and all forms of opposition by Gaddafi has also left the country weak and fragile. So who will dominate Libya's political scene in the coming years?

The political scene in Libya today comprises four broad camps: nationalists, liberals, Islamists and secularists, according to Noman Benotman, an analyst at the Quilliam Foundation who is also a former member of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group.

The nationalist camp, being the largest of these factions by far, contains 40%-50% of Libya's political activists. These are largely non-ideological players who will seek to establish a civil state based on Libyan culture and democracy. They have no strong views on the role of Islam in the state but do see it as an integral part of Libyan culture.

Many key defectors, such as Abdel-Salam Jalloud and Mustafa Abdul Jalil, are nationalists and currently the most high-profile political figures in Libya. As such, they could quite easily appeal to the masses, create a large power base and dominate the political scene.

The liberals, comprising 20%-25%, support an open democratic system with a free market economy. They will seek to create a civil state rooted in liberal values and encourage a socially liberal climate.

However, they are viewed as elitist by most Libyans and could struggle to galvanise the masses. Their perceived elitism also makes them rather unpopular with other political factions.

Then there are the Islamists comprising around 20%. These can be subdivided into jihadists (2%), salafists (12%) and Muslim Brotherhood-style political Islamists (6%). The jihadists will most likely alienate the masses if they make a direct push for power – their harsh and crude approach will, inevitably, prove unpopular – but they are still capable of creating chaos and disorder.

The jihadists, with their uncompromising attitude, are unlikely to stand in elections or be part of a coalition and should, therefore, be viewed more as a security threat than serious political contenders.

The salafists share the jihadist vision of creating a society dominated by a very strict and ultra-conservative interpretation of Islamic scripture, but they don't endorse terrorism. Rather, they believe they can achieve their vision through preaching and converting the masses.

The political Islamists, being influenced and inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood in neighbouring Egypt, are guided by the notion that Islam itself is an all-encompassing political ideology that Muslim-majority countries around the world are obliged to introduce. They reject terrorism as a political tactic and prefer a more pragmatic approach. As such, they will seek to be part of a democratic process and are capable of building alliances and entering into a coalition. Like the nationalists, they also are able to appeal to the masses and are highly likely to play a role in Libya's political future.

Finally, there are the secularists who make up 2%-5%. Inspired by the likes of Mustafa Ataturk, they would ideally like to introduce an ultra-secular state with religion playing no role whatsoever. They are unlikely to have mass appeal with their small numbers and a political

vision that doesn't resonate with contemporary Libyan society. They will, however, be a thorn in the side of the Islamists.

As well as the political factions highlighted above, there are other existing and emerging power bases in Libya that will undoubtedly seek to assert themselves. During Gaddafi's rule, civil society was systematically undermined: NGOs, political parties and independent media outlets were banned.

The delicate and vital task of rebuilding civil society in Libya has already begun. Once civil society institutions have been rebuilt, their input will enrich the society in general and the political scene in particular. As such, Libya's success is in large part dependent upon its ability to build a vibrant civil society from the ashes of Gaddafi's regime.

While civil society was undermined under Gaddafi, Libya's extensive tribal system was emboldened. He cunningly played tribes off against one another and, predictably, took full advantage of the huge support he received from his own tribe.

Libyan tribes are non-ideological and generally not aligned to a particular political faction. They are, however, very loyal to their own kin and could be activated as huge voting blocs if political leaders belonging to the right tribes galvanise the tribal vote. They do, therefore, have the potential to play a key part.

Libya's military, having been strengthened during Gaddafi's 42-year rule, also has the potential to emerge as a power base. As in neighbouring Egypt, senior military officers have large economic interests that they will be seeking to protect. Military interference in politics in the future should not be ruled out, though it seems unlikely right now.

Ethnicity could also play a role in a post-Gaddafi Libya. Under Gaddafi's rule, Berber language and culture was suppressed while cultural and political mobilisation along sectarian lines was strongly

discouraged. Homogeneity was imposed on Libyan society and this meant Berbers were expected to adopt Arab culture while abandoning their own. Therefore, it is highly likely that the Berbers – roughly 10%-15% of the population – will be keen to reassert their identity. While they are unlikely to seek political autonomy, they are likely to throw their support behind those who acknowledge and respect their cultural and ethnic differences.

If free and fair elections are held in Libya next year, it is highly likely that nationalist based parties will dominate. Political Islamist parties also have a good outside chance if they manage to run successful election campaigns. However, with Gaddafi and his loyalists still at large, a practically nonexistent civil society and jihadists hanging in the shadows, getting to free and fair elections is going to be far from straightforward.

Article 6.

The Washington Post

Can Petraeus handle the CIA's skepticism on Afghanistan?

David Ignatius

September 1 -- When David Petraeus takes over as CIA director next week, he will confront a tricky problem: CIA analysts who will be working for him concluded in a recent assessment that the war in Afghanistan is heading toward a "stalemate" — a view with which Petraeus disagrees.

The analysts made their judgment in "District Assessment on Afghanistan," completed in July, the same month Petraeus quit his post as U.S. commander there. He disagrees with the analysts' pessimistic reading, as does Gen. John Allen, the new commander in Kabul; Gen. James Mattis, the Centcom commander; and Adm. Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The CIA assessment is "pretty harsh," said a military official who is familiar with its contents. He noted that the document used the word "stalemate" several times to describe the standoff between NATO-led forces and Taliban insurgents. Even in areas where the United States has surged troops over the past 18 months to clear insurgents, the CIA analysts weren't optimistic that the Taliban's momentum had been reversed, as President Obama and his military commanders have argued.

"Everyone looking at Afghanistan today recognizes that the challenges are real and that progress isn't easy," said a civilian official familiar with the assessment, adding that it was coordinated carefully with the military. This is the CIA's seventh such district-by-district examination of the country.

The analysts' skepticism about U.S. strategy in Afghanistan, which has been deepening over the past several years, presents challenges for Petraeus and the White House.

The test for Petraeus will be whether he can give the analysts the independence they need to provide a sound evaluation of Afghanistan strategy, which he himself created. Petraeus has his own strong views about the war and has made clear that he will continue to say what he thinks. But if the analysts are taking a different view from the boss, there's bound to be tension.

How Petraeus manages this inevitable friction — reassuring the analysts while remaining faithful to his own views — will be closely watched within and outside the CIA. This isn't a military chain of command: Intelligence analysts resent efforts by outsiders (and even superiors) to shape their reporting. If they think Petraeus is trying to steer assessments, they're sure to protest.

Petraeus maintained during his June 23 Senate confirmation hearing that he would give the analysts proper latitude in areas where he had been a commander, such as Iraq and Afghanistan. "In the Situation Room with the president, I will strive to represent the agency position," he said, adding that he would be "keenly aware that I am the leader of an intelligence agency, and not a policymaker."

Gossip about a supposed rift between Petraeus and the analysts has been circulating in Kabul during the past week, as word spread of the skeptical CIA assessment. Some speculated it was a preemptive strike by the agency bureaucracy; others saw it as a harbinger of impending change in White House policy. From my reporting, neither seems to be true. The analysts have long been skeptical on Afghanistan, but Obama has continued to support the military.

The larger challenge is for Obama. In 2009, he signed on to the limited objective of stopping al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and reversing the Taliban's momentum — but using a broad counterinsurgency

strategy to achieve that mission. If the CIA analysts' view becomes widely shared, and there's growing sentiment in Washington that the $100 billion-plus annual campaign is only buying an expensive stalemate, Obama will have to re-examine the plan and the troop levels. Ironically, if he chooses a more limited counterterrorism approach, Petraeus as CIA director would once again be at the center of the fight.

The White House for now seems comfortable with its gradual drawdown through 2014. The troubled relationship with President Hamid Karzai has improved slightly, thanks to a "reset" by the new U.S. ambassador, Ryan Crocker. There's broad agreement, too, with the judgment of Obama's sometime adviser, John Podesta, who argued after a July visit to Afghanistan for more emphasis on a political and economic transition strategy.

As with so many aspects of Afghanistan, there are echoes here of Vietnam — where CIA analysts were early and emphatic in their warnings that U.S. strategy wouldn't succeed, but were countered by generals who insisted the United States could prevail with sufficient military power.

In a technical sense, Petraeus crossed the threshold between military and intelligence roles when he took off the uniform this week, but the real transition is ahead.

Article 7.

Le Monde

The Secret Of Israel's High-Tech Success

Laurent Zecchini

August 31st, 2011 -- HAIFA - The campus of Technion sits atop one of the hills overlooking Haifa Bay. Below lies Israel's Silicon Valley, where Matam High Tech Park brings together Israeli start-ups and top American firms like Microsoft, Intel, Google, Yahoo and IBM. From this vantage point, one can see the source of Technion's power, not to mention job destinations for its students.

Facts speak for themselves: 75% of Israeli engineers come out of Technion's faculties, research centers and labs, as do 70% of start-up founders. Technion also spawned two winners of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry, world-reknown discoveries such as rasgiline, a drug that treats Parkinson's disease, new eco-friendly electricity production and water desalinization technology, recognized know-how in microsatellites building, and more.

Technion alumni are the lifeblood of Israel's society and economy, especially in fields like defense and Information Technology, but also in medicine, nanotechnology, civil and electrical engineering, management and architecture. And the list goes on: its 12,849 students can choose amongst 18 different faculties.

Medical Professor Peretz Lavie, Dean of Technion, says that "there is no other example abroad of a university with such a contribution to its country's economy." Professor Benjamin Soffer, a specialist in technology transfers, explains the secret to Technion's success: "twenty years ago, generals were the heroes of Israeli society. Today, the heroes are entrepreneurs."

Case in point: people at Technion are quick to point out that the reason 52% of Israel's exports are concentrated in high-tech is that

Israel has the highest concentration of high-tech start-ups outside of Silicon Valley. There is another, more political reason: beyond [redacted], Israel's isolation from its neighbors makes trade challenging, forcing it to seek partnerships far beyond its borders, in particular in the US.

Technion's story began in Basel, Switzerland, in 1901, during the fifth Zionist Congress. The decision to create a Jewish university deep inside the Ottoman Empire was not a natural one, but its first stone was laid in April 1912, almost a century ago.

Military resource

On more than one level, Technion served as a resource for the Israeli army, which for decades hired specialists from here. This relationship continues to play a major part in the success of Israel's first Science and Technology University, which is also the country's largest applied research center.

The army, more specifically, the obligatory national military service, aids in another way: Israeli students start university at a later age, which is a strength for Technion. "After a three-year service (two for girls) and a year spent traveling, students are at least 23 when they enroll," explains Physics Professor Eric Akkerman. "They are more mature and are more motivated than their European and American counterparts: they have no time to waste, they are here to work and to succeed."

But the student-soldier path also has its challenges. Some 1,500 students were drafted in 2006, during the second Lebanon War. It's also not unusual for people to go on reserve duties mid-studies. "Returning to civilian life can be difficult because of psychological and emotional challenges," says Sarak Katzir who runs Technion's team of psychologists.

The campus does well compared with Stanford or MIT, which Technion students consider their main reference points. One clear difference with its American counterparts is that Technion's121

hectare closed-campus area is under strict surveillance. Tuition, however, is much lower than in the US ($16,000 compared to $40,000).

Salaries are fixed by the government, making “brain drain” possibly the most acute challenge for Technion. Once their thesis is completed, many students pursue post-doctorate programs in the US, where a growing number wind up staying, since salaries are two or three times higher.

More than 70% of Technion’s operating budget is covered by public funds, but the University relies on its large alumni network to find additional resources. Jewish communities around the world provide donations via “Technion Societies,” to support labs, but also to purchase equipment, support student grants or construct new buildings. Professor Lavie puts it this way: “the Jewish diaspora sees Technion as a cornerstone of Israel’s independence and security.”

Article 8.

Plus

What is time?

Marianne Freiberger

August 23, 2011 -- In the latest poll of our Science fiction, science fact project you told us that you wanted to know what time is. Here is an answer, based on an interview with Paul Davies, a theoretical physicist and cosmologist at Arizona State University and Director of BEYOND: Centre for Fundamental Concepts in Science. Click here to see other articles on time and here to listen to our interview with Davies as a podcast.

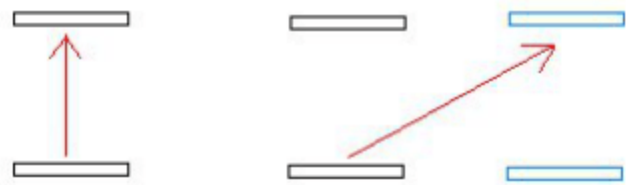
Everyone knows what time is. We can practically feel it ticking away, marching on in the same direction with horrifying regularity. Time has enslaved the Western world and become our most precious commodity. Turn it over to the physicists however, and it begins to morph, twist and even crumble away. So what is time exactly?

To many people throughout history time would have been synonymous with the rhythms of nature; the passing of the seasons and the cycles of the celestial bodies. If this idea seems naive today, it's not only because modern clocks are infinitely more accurate time keepers than the celestial bodies ever were. It's also because we've come to think of time as something universal, something that would keep marching on even if all clocks, celestial or man-made, were to stop. The notion of an absolute time, one that's measurable and the same for all observers, was expressed most succinctly by Newton: "absolute, true and mathematical time, of itself, and from its own nature, flows equably without relation to anything external."

Einstein's time

Newton's absolute time may feel like an accurate description of the beast that rules our daily lives, but in science the notion was shattered

in 1905 by Einstein's special theory of relativity. "Einstein showed that there isn't a universal time," explains Davies. "Your time and my time get out of step with each other if we move differently." In other words, the duration of time between two events can vary depending on how fast you are moving in the period between the events.



Imagine two observers, one on a train and one stationary. The traveller sends a pulse of light from a torch vertically up. The traveller's view is shown on the left: the pulse travels vertically up. The stationary observer's view is shown on the right: the position of the torch and train ceiling at the start and end of the pulse's journey are shown in black and blue respectively. The pulse travels diagonally.

At the root of this strange time warping effect lies Einstein's postulate that the speed of light should be the same for all observers, no matter how fast they are moving. Imagine two observers, one travelling on a train and the other stationary by the side of the tracks. As the two pass each other the traveller emits a pulse of light from a torch shining vertically up. The two observers will disagree on the distance the pulse has travelled when it hits the ceiling of the train, because the stationary observer perceives not just the vertical motion of the pulse, but also the horizontal motion of the train.

Since both observers measure the same speed of light, and since speed is distance per time, this implies that they must also disagree on the time it took the pulse to travel that distance. Time is relative to the observer, or as the physicist Kip Thorne prefers to put it, time is "personal". (For a more detailed description, read the Plus article What's so special about special relativity?.)

We don't notice this time dilation in daily life, but it's not so small as to be unmeasurable. "If I fly from Phoenix to London and back again, and then compare my clock with that left in the office, they will be out of step with each other by a few billionths of a second," says Davies. That's a tiny amount for humans, but it's well within the measuring capability of modern clocks.

In fact, time dilation has a real impact on the global positioning system (GPS), which many of us have come to rely on for navigating around the world. "The system works with orbiting satellites that are moving very fast," explains Davies. "If you didn't factor in this time distorting effect of motion, then your GPS would very quickly begin to accumulate errors so that in an hour or two you'd be lost. So this is a real effect, not just some sort of mad mathematician's nightmare."

But motion isn't the only thing that can distort time. In his general theory of relativity, published in 1916, Einstein showed that gravity too can slow time. Rather than thinking of gravity as an invisible force that wafts across the ether, Einstein thought of it as the effect of massive bodies distorting the very fabric of space. A famous analogy is that of a bowling ball sitting on a trampoline, which creates a dip that a nearby marble will roll into. According to general relativity, massive objects like stars and planets warp space in a similar way, and thus "attract" other bodies that pass nearby. However, Einstein realised that time and space are inextricably linked in what he called spacetime, so the warping effect of gravity does not just effect space, but also time.

"Gravity slows time, so that it runs a little bit slower in the basement of your house than it does on the roof," says Davies. "It's a tiny effect, but it can be measured, even on distances that are that small. But if you want a seriously big time warp from gravity, you have to go where there's a very big gravitational field. If you had a clock on the surface of a neutron star, for example, it would tick at about 70%

of the rate of a clock on Earth. The ultimate time warp is at the surface of a black hole, where in a sense time stands still relative to our time. If you went there, you wouldn't notice anything peculiar about time, but if you compared clocks between the two locations, they'd be enormously out of step."

Einstein drew an interesting conclusion from his results about the nature of time. In a letter to the family of a recently deceased friend, Michele Besso, Einstein wrote, "... for us physicists believe the separation between past, present, and future is only an illusion, although a convincing one." Since time is relative to the observer, it is impossible to divide it up into past, present and future in a way that is universally meaningful. In some sense, past, present and future are all there at once.

"This notion is sometimes called block time, but I like to call it the timescape because it's a bit like a landscape," says Davies. "If you look at a map, the whole of the landscape is there before you, all at once. If you add time as the fourth dimension on this map, then all of time is there at once too. The fact that nothing in physics singles out a particular 'now' is a mystery."

Incidentally, there is nothing in Einstein's theory that prohibits time travel, be it into the future or into the past. But this is a can of worms we won't open here, as you can read about it in Kip Thorne's Plus article Is time travel allowed? (or read Davies book How to build a time machine).

The arrow of time

Thinking of past and future brings us to another problem that has foxed scientists and philosophers: why time should have a direction at all. In every day life it's pretty apparent that it does. If you look at a movie that's being played backwards, you know it immediately because most things have a distinct time direction attached to them: an arrow of time. For example, eggs can easily turn into omlettes but

not the other way around, and milk and coffee mix in your cup but never separate out again.

Listen to the interview with Davies in our podcast!

The most dramatic example is the history of the entire Universe, which, as scientists believe, started with the Big Bang around thirteen billion years ago and has been continually expanding ever since. When we look at that history, which includes our own, it's pretty clear which way the arrow of time is pointing.

"But the mystery is that the laws of physics show no preference for forward time or backward time," says Davies. For example, if you can make an object move one way by applying a force, then, as Newton's second law of motion tells you, you can make it retrace its path by applying the same force in the opposite direction. So when you watch a movie of this process you wouldn't be able to tell if it's being played forwards or backwards, as both are equally possible.

"So the problem is how to account for the asymmetry of time in daily life when the laws that govern all the atoms that make up everything around us are symmetric in time," says Davies. Much has been made of this problem, which affects Einstein's physics just as it did Newton's classical description of the world.

But the answer isn't all that difficult to find. Most processes we feel are irreversible in time are those that (for whatever reason) start out in some very special, highly ordered state — Davies uses a pack of cards as an example. When you first open up a new pack the cards will be ordered according to suit and numerical value. When you shuffle them for a while they will become disordered, so it seems that, as time passes, things will always move from order to disorder.

"We might think that this is very strange because there is nothing in the act of shuffling that chooses a direction in time, yet we see a distinct arrow," says Davies.

However, there is nothing in the laws of physics that prevents the act of shuffling from producing a perfectly ordered set of cards. It's just that the ordered state is only one of a total of around 8×1067 possible states, so the chance that we come across it while shuffling the cards is vanishingly small. So small that it would never happen even within several lifetimes of shuffling.

So the apparent asymmetry of time is really just an asymmetry of chance. Systems of many components — like a cup full of milk and coffee particles or a bowl full of egg particles — evolve from order to disorder not because the reverse is impossible, but because it's highly unlikely. This, in a nutshell, is the second law of thermodynamics, which states that the entropy (a measure of the disorder) in a closed physical system never decreases. It's a statistical principle, rather than a fundamental law describing the behaviour of individual atoms. The apparent arrow of time emerges as a property of the macroscopic system, but it's not there in the laws that govern the individual particle interactions. As the physicist John Wheeler put it, "If you ask an atom about the arrow of time, it will laugh in your face."

This also applies to the whole Universe. "The Universe started out very smooth and expanding uniformly ," says Davies. From a gravitational view point the Big Bang was a low entropy state and the Universe has been increasing its entropy ever since, hence the arrow of time. The question now is why the Universe started in the way it did. "Why our Universe went bang in such an ordered state is still a mystery," says Davies. "There is no agreed answer to that, partly because there is no agreed model of cosmology. We all think the Universe began with a Big Bang and we know it's expanding. What we don't know is if the Big Bang is the ultimate origin of time or whether there was a time before that." (Read the Plus article What happened before the Big Bang? for more on this subject.)

Time disappears

One thing we have neglected to say so far is that Einstein's theory, which describes the macroscopic world so admirably well, doesn't work for the microscopic world. To describe the world at atomic and subatomic scales, we need to turn to quantum mechanics, a theory that's fundamentally different from Einstein's. Reconciling the two, creating a theory of quantum gravity, is the holy grail of modern physics.

When Schrodinger and Heisenberg formulated quantum mechanics in the 1920s, they ignored Einstein's work and treated time in Newton's spirit, as an absolute that is ticking away in the background. This already gives us a clue as to why the two theories might be so hard to reconcile. The status of time in quantum mechanics has also created profound problems within the theory itself and has lead to "decades of muddle and subtlety," as Davies puts it.

We won't go into this muddle here, but we'll note the conundrum that unfolds when you try to apply quantum mechanics to the Universe as a whole (a rather controversial approach not all physicists agree with). "If you try to write down a quantum mechanical description of the whole Universe, you find that the time parameter actually drops out [of the equations], it's not there at all," says Davies. Time is replaced by correlations. "For example, you might have a correlation between the size of the Universe and the value of some [physical] field. We would describe this by saying 'as the Universe evolves over time and gets bigger, so this field changes in value'. We use that language, but actually all you're talking about is a correlation [between physical quantities] and time can be removed completely." Some people have interpreted this to say that time doesn't exist at all, but Davies disagrees. "I think time exists just as telephones do. It's a real thing and we can measure it. But it does suggest that the way it enters into our description of the world is different from other quantities we're used to."

One possibility is that time, and also space, are emergent properties of the Universe, which are not part of the bottom level of reality. "It may be that for the extreme conditions at the Big Bang a description in terms of other variables is more appropriate. When we see the world with a well-defined space and time [or spacetime as Einstein put it] this may just be some particular state of the Universe that has emerged out of the Big Bang." Davies uses a block of rubber as an example: it's got its very own physical properties, its elasticity for example, but these properties aren't there at the atomic level. They are a result of the atoms and the laws that govern them combining in one particular way. Similarly, the Universe, as it cooled down from the Big Bang, may have just happened to give rise to spacetime. Perhaps, if it had cooled down in another way, spacetime wouldn't have come up.

But if space and time aren't fundamental, what are the fundamental properties of the Universe? There is no theory that people agree on. "We can invent words to describe them and people have, but these things are not anything we are going to encounter in daily life. So we're just resorting to [mathematical descriptions]. But even if one day we manage to explain time and space in terms of something else, that only pushes the question to another level, because you then have to explain [the something else]."

So it seems that we're no closer to understanding what time is than Newton was — perhaps we understand it even less. But then, perhaps the job of the scientist isn't to fully explain the Universe, but merely to describe it. "You postulate a theory, usually in the form of mathematical equations, and then you test it against reality," says Davies. "If it does work, you don't argue where those equations come from. It's just your best attempt to describe the world."

Whether it's fundamental, emergent, or just a set of correlations in disguise, the fact is that something we call time manifests itself

undeniably and we all know about it. As a friend of mine put it, "If you want to know what time is, just look at my face."
Paul Davies

Paul Davies is a theoretical physicist and cosmologist at Arizona State University and Director of BEYOND: Centre for Fundamental Concepts in Science. He has worked in a number of different fields, including cancer research and astrobiology (Plus has interviewed him on astrobiology in the past) and has written a large number of popular science books, including About time: Einstein's unfinished revolution and How to build a time machine.