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Article 1.
NYT

Obama, on the Trail, Plays for Time on Foreign Policy
[Mark Landler](#)

July 19, 2012 — [President Obama](#) spent a rare full day in the Oval Office after the deadly bombings in [Syria](#) and Bulgaria on Wednesday, calling the leaders of Russia and [Israel](#) and conferring with his national security staff. Then he took off again Thursday to spend the rest of the week on the campaign trail.

With the White House in campaign mode nearly 24/7, many of the administration's biggest foreign policy initiatives have been pushed to the back burner until after the election. From Syria and Iran to nuclear arms reductions and peace talks with the Taliban, the administration is mostly playing for time, trying to avoid decisions that could land the president in trouble or be exploited by his Republican challenger, Mitt Romney.

While the administration's watchword is stability, experts recall another political tradition: the October Surprise, a foreign policy event, either engineered or unexpected, that alters the closing weeks of the campaign. But the attacks in Syria and on the Israeli tourists in Bulgaria are a reminder of how little the White House can control world events.

Mr. Obama himself acknowledged in March how the election had narrowed his options when he told Dmitri A. Medvedev, then Russia's president — in a private exchange [picked up by an open microphone](#) — that he would have more flexibility after November to deal with Russian concerns over the American missile defense system.

The attempt to subordinate foreign policy to domestic politics is a quadrennial phenomenon, but “the lengthening of the political season, combined with the president's understandable desire to be re-elected, has meant a longer distraction than in previous elections,” said Martin S. Indyk, director of foreign policy at the Brookings Institution.

The White House's policy, Mr. Indyk said, can be summed up as “no wars, no engagement in risky business abroad that can cost votes with key constituencies at home, no presidential involvement unless there's an urgent requirement.”

Washington's intense polarization has compounded the problem by depriving Mr. Obama of a bipartisan constituency in Congress for any foreign policy undertaking, whether it is nuclear arms reduction or plotting an exit strategy from Afghanistan.

The administration insists that its foreign policy is driven by national security considerations, not politics. Senior officials, including Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton and the national security adviser, Thomas E. Donilon, are still traveling widely in Asia and the Middle East. But officials acknowledge that the level of presidential engagement is different, with fewer visits by foreign heads of state and fewer overseas trips by Mr. Obama.

“The president is, by definition, spending more time on the election,” said Benjamin J. Rhodes, a deputy national security adviser, who worked on the 2008 campaign. “But sometimes people paint with too broad a brush.” The casualties of the calendar include a presidential decision on how deeply to cut the stockpile of strategic nuclear warheads, even below the levels in the [New Start treaty](#) with Russia. The administration has all but completed a review of options for Mr. Obama’s consideration, officials said, but the announcement has been delayed for months.

The president, whose ultimate goal is to eliminate all [nuclear weapons](#), can choose among three options, officials said: a reduction to 1,550 warheads, as stipulated in New Start; a middle ground of about 1,000 warheads, which they describe as the leading candidate; and a radical reduction to 300 to 400 warheads.

But leading Republicans, including Senator Jon Kyl of Arizona, said they believed that Mr. Obama had already given Moscow too much sway over American nuclear weapons and missile defense policy. The White House, officials said, is wary of announcing further cuts and giving Mr. Romney or other Republicans a classic red-meat issue.

A similar dynamic is at play with the administration’s off-again-on-again peace talks with the Taliban in Afghanistan. Officials say those talks are off for the moment, largely because of a lack of progress on a prisoner swap, which in turn can be traced in part to reluctance on the American side, because of election-year politics.

Republican lawmakers denounced the prospect of releasing five Taliban fighters, even in return for the release of Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, the only American soldier known to be held by the insurgents. And Mr. Romney is likely to seize the issue if it resurfaces, having declared during the Republican primaries that “the right course for America is not to negotiate with the Taliban while the Taliban are killing our soldiers.”

State Department officials insist that they remain committed to reaching a broad settlement with the Taliban, and that the talks have been snake-bitten by a number of factors unrelated to American politics. But people who have been in touch with the insurgents' negotiators say the Taliban believe the United States has failed to deliver on its promises.

The negotiations with Iran over its [nuclear program](#) are equally complex. Critics say the White House is determined to string out the negotiations over months to push off any confrontation with Tehran until after Election Day. But Israeli officials have threatened to carry out a pre-emptive airstrike on Iran's nuclear installations if they conclude Iran is on the verge of making its uranium enrichment facilities impregnable to attack. Administration officials said the pace of the negotiations was dictated by factors that had nothing to do with the election, chiefly giving sanctions against Iran's [oil industry](#) time to bite enough to push the Iranians into serious negotiations. As one senior official said, "We wouldn't want Israel to attack Iran even if there wasn't an election."

Israel and Iran both take the election into account in their own decisions. Tehran's unwillingness to make concessions so far, some analysts argue, reflects its conviction that the United States will not precipitate a showdown as long as Mr. Obama's re-election hangs in the balance. Israel's role is even more delicate, largely because of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's threat of military action against Iran, which would have a drastic effect on the oil market and could potentially upend the election.

Mr. Romney, who has accused Mr. Obama of not adequately backing Israel, plans to visit Jerusalem at the end of the month. The White House is sending a stream of officials there, including Mrs. Clinton and Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta — in effect, sandwiching Mr. Romney. Their message is that the Israelis can hold off on a strike because the United States will not allow Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon.

In the fall, some foreign policy experts said, the tone may be different. "If, in October, the president is on the ropes, and he can score a quick win by doing something with Israel or Iran, he's going to do it," said David J. Rothkopf, chief executive and editor at large of the Foreign Policy Group.

Bloomberg

Syria's Collapse Would Reverberate Throughout the Mideast

Indira A.R. Lakshmanan

Jul 19, 2012 -- The assassination of three Syrian military leaders loyal to President Bashar al-Assad may hasten the end of his family's four-decade rule, an upheaval that would affect the security and influence of [Israel](#), [Iran](#), [Saudi Arabia](#), Jordan, Lebanon and other neighboring states.

Nabil el-Arabi, secretary-general of the [Arab League](#), expressed anxiety among [Syria](#)'s neighbors over the regional fallout from the crisis when he warned July 18 of "a collapse in the situation not only in Syria, but for the whole region."

If Assad's regime is toppled, the ensuing power struggle might bring with it revenge killings by or against his minority Shiite Alawite sect, which controls the military and the economy, said [Aaron David Miller](#), a fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in [Washington](#). Instability and sectarian violence could bleed into neighboring states such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq. Already, 125,000 Syrian refugees have fled the violence to neighboring states, with the greatest number to camps in [Turkey](#), the U.S. State Department said yesterday.

No one knows whether the bombing July 18 inside a heavily guarded military compound in the capital of Damascus is the beginning of the end for the Assad family's authoritarian regime, or what new government or chaos might follow it.

Assad's closest allies, Iran and [Russia](#), would be the likely losers if power shifts to Assad's rivals. Lebanon, Jordan and Israel would benefit if Syria's new leadership ceases to provide a conduit for arms and assistance from Iran to terrorist groups in Lebanon and along the Israeli border, such as Hezbollah, officials and analysts said.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday said Hezbollah was behind a bombing that killed at least five Israeli tourists in Bulgaria.

Power Vacuum

If Syrian power brokers don't agree to an orderly political transition, U.S. and Israeli intelligence officials worry that a power vacuum may provide

an opening for terrorists or radical Islamists.

“Over the next 24 to 48 hours, either the regime and the security apparatus will rally or real divisions will begin to manifest that would usher in even further instability,” said Aram Nerguizian, a visiting fellow at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

Nerguizian cautioned in an interview against making premature assumptions about what might follow Assad. “Even if the regime were to collapse, splinter or change, Syria is likely to be a source of regional instability for at least a decade, and there is no way to map out next phases in the crisis, which are likely to be even more sectarian in nature as the Alawites try to ensure their autonomy and political survival,” Nerguizian said.

End Game

Miller, who was a [Middle East](#) policy maker in a succession of U.S. administrations, said in an interview that the “end of Assad is not the end game,” whenever it comes. Rather, it will be the first in “a series of transitions.”

Miller said external meddling will continue from regional actors such as Iran, which has supported the Assad regime, and Saudi Arabia, which has armed his opponents.

Likewise, internal tensions -- the split among minority Alawites who control much of the country’s wealth and military assets, majority Sunnis who support the opposition, and minority Christians and Kurds “who will be asking where their future rests” -- will keep the situation unstable, he said.

“How do you share power in a country that is riven with sectarian differences against a backdrop of 17,000 dead?” Miller asked.

Retribution Ahead

In March 2011, the Syrian government began its brutal crackdown on protesters who were inspired by democratic uprisings across the Middle East. The conflict morphed into clashes between security forces with heavy weaponry and unarmed citizens, as well as the armed opposition Free Syrian Army, which has been aided by Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Whoever the winners, the major concern is, “When is the retribution going to come?” Miller said.

Many Sunnis will want to take revenge against Alawites and Christians who backed Assad, said [David Schenker](#), director of the program on Arab politics at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

“You can have a violent and bloody situation at home that creates continued refugee flows into Jordan and Turkey, and instability and sectarian tension in Lebanon,” where the Shiite Hezbollah militia, long backed by Syria and Iran, will face an emboldened Sunni and Christian population.

Hezbollah ‘Pinched’

“Hezbollah will feel pinched,” said Schenker. At least in the short run, that will benefit Israel, which will have a weaker enemy on its northern border, he and other analysts said.

The divisions among sectarian and religious groups make [Andrew Tabler](#), author of “In the Lion’s Den: An Eyewitness Account of Washington’s Battle with Syria,” worry that “there’s increasingly a chance the country is going to break into pieces.”

That makes it critical, Tabler said in an interview, that the U.S. “lay down some red lines,” making it clear that it will not tolerate mass atrocities or the use of Syria’s chemical weapons, the largest arsenal in the region. Miller said he doubts Syria will break apart. “The Arab world doesn’t offer up any example of a state that has fragmented,” he said. “It may be more like Lebanon and Iraq -- a nominal state riven by factional, sectarian and political struggles for power.”

If the current struggle continues for another year, Miller said, Saudi Arabia is likely to support the armed Sunni opposition even more actively, while Iran and Hezbollah will try to prop up Assad and the Russians “hedge their bets and try to avoid” an American-determined transition plan.

Golan Heights

The Israelis worry about security on the Golan Heights that they captured from Syria in the 1967 Mideast war and the rise of any extremist elements. Yesterday, Israel limited all military leaves to guard against growing instability in Syria.

On July 17, Major General Aviv Kochavi, chief of Israeli military intelligence, told Israeli lawmakers in a closed-door session that he is concerned about an influx of global jihadists into the Golan Heights, as

the Syrian regime moves its forces out of the border region and into the cities to fight unrest, according to a statement from the office of the Knesset committee's spokesman.

In a post-Assad Syria, Russia stands to lose its only presence in the Mediterranean Sea, a naval facility at Tartus, which analysts said is also a key intelligence-gathering operation for Russia in the region. Russia also could lose billions of dollars in arms sales to Syria.

Advanced Weapons

Israeli Defense Minister [Ehud Barak](#) told U.S. Defense Secretary [Leon Panetta](#) on July 18 that Israel believes "that the removal of the high-ranking Syrian officials will catalyze the fall of the Assad regime. In addition, we are vigilantly watching the developments and the possibility that Hezbollah might attempt to transfer advanced weapons systems or chemical weapons from Syria to Lebanon," Barak said, according to his office.

[Martin Indyk](#), a former U.S. ambassador to Israel, said a major concern for Israel is what happens to Syria's large store of chemical weapons, which the White House has said it believes is still under the regime's control.

Positive Consequences

The uprising against Assad has positive consequences for Israel, Lebanon, Jordan and other U.S. allies in the region that have seen less interference by Syria and its terrorist proxies while Assad has been consumed by a revolt at home, he said in an interview.

"Certainly there is the potential for a deluge" after Assad, said Indyk, director of [foreign policy](#) at the [Brookings Institution](#), a Washington-based think tank. "But there's also some upside: the removal of a horrendously brutal regime and the potential for a different Syria to emerge out of this, one that will be in favor of democracy, and dare I venture the thought: peace."

Indyk, a former assistant U.S. secretary of state for the Middle East, said the fall of Assad's regime will be "a profound strategic setback for Iran, regardless of what happens afterwards. There's no way that the next regime going to be pro- Iran, given the role Iran has played in defense of the Assad regime."

Iranian Conduit

Syria has been a conduit for Iranian influence into Lebanon and as far as the [Gaza Strip](#). Iran “was able to engineer Hezbollah’s takeover of the Lebanese government and turn southern Lebanon into base for potential Hezbollah attacks on Israel, arming Hezbollah with 40,000 rockets via Syria,” said Indyk, co-author of “Bending History: [Barack Obama](#)’s Foreign Policy.”

A collapse in Syria could create blowback as far as the Persian Gulf, analysts said. Iran, angry at losing its key ally, might retaliate against Saudi Arabia’s support for the Syrian opposition by fomenting sectarian trouble in Bahrain or Saudi Arabia’s oil-rich and majority Shiite Eastern Province. “The Iranians may decide to play payback,” Indyk said.

The weaker the Syrian regime gets, said Indyk, the more Lebanon, Jordan and Israel may benefit -- so long as whatever comes next isn’t worse for them. Sunni extremists are unlikely to take over in Damascus, he said, because “they’re a small part of the opposition” in a country where Islamists have been “systematically and brutally repressed and shipped out, so they don’t have the kind of grassroots political network that the Muslim Brotherhood has in Egypt.”

[Marina Ottaway](#), a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, said in an interview that it’s futile to predict the regional impact of a new Syrian government because “we don’t have the faintest idea what comes next.”

Outsiders know “very little about the resistance inside the country, and they are the ones most likely to take over if Assad goes,” she said.

Article 3.

[Al-Monitor](#)

Brotherhood and US Meet About Women, Israel and Copts in Egyp

Mansour Kamel

Jul 19, 2012 -- A Muslim Brotherhood official said that the US has secretly been communicating with the Brotherhood over the past few days. The US has focused on four main issues in its discussions:

1. The Brotherhood's ideological stance toward Israel and its vision for the future of relations between Egypt and Israel
2. The Brotherhood's stance toward supporting the Hamas government and its vision in how to deal with the [Copts](#) and their rights in Egypt
3. The Brotherhood's stance on women's rights
4. The formation of a new government in Egypt and the potentially different roles for key ministries such as the ministries of defense, interior and foreign affairs

In a statement to Al-Masry al-Youm, the Brotherhood official said, "In her latest visit to Cairo, [Secretary of State] Hilary Clinton wanted the Brotherhood's opinions and views regarding these four main issues. The Brotherhood's views are especially important now it rules Egypt and Mohammed Morsi is the president of the republic. The Brotherhood will also [most likely dominate](#) the future government, just as it controlled the dissolved parliament."

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, also said that Clinton demanded to be informed of the Brotherhood's final stance regarding the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel. The Muslim leaders' reply was clear: they respect the agreement, but they believe it needs to be modified.

"This issue has been a major cause of contention between the two parties. Hilary Clinton demanded the Brotherhood clearly state and declare that Israel has the right to establish a state on its territories. The Brotherhood rejected this demand," said the Brotherhood official.

He continued: "The Brotherhood leadership stated that although they respect the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel, they will not take any stance that is in direct conflict with the Brotherhood's ideology. Clinton then inquired about their stance toward Hamas. The Muslim Brotherhood replied that they support the Palestinian people as a whole,

not just Hamas. They believe that the Palestinians have the right to establish a state on their territories, with Jerusalem as its capital.”

Clinton also inquired into the Brotherhood’s stance on the formation of a new government, and their positions on the key ministries of “interior, defense and foreign affairs.” The Brotherhood said that the role of these ministries — particularly the Ministry of Defense — will be under negotiation.

The official said that the Muslim Brotherhood’s responses in this regard made Clinton uncomfortable. The US administration is fearful of the prospect of the Brotherhood having the right to mobilize the Egyptian army and deploy it near the Israeli borders. The US administration also expressed its desire that key ministries be kept under the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces’ (SCAF) control, rather than the control of the Brotherhood.

The official added that this issue has specifically accounted for much of the debate between Clinton, Field Marshal Tantawi and the SCAF’s leaders. The Secretary of State conveyed the US’ concern about the Brotherhood’s uncertain stance on Israel. Clinton also expressed that Washington prefers that the key ministries remain under SCAF control in order to avoid any potential tension between Egypt and Israel.

Regarding the Brotherhood’s stance on the conditions of the Copts, the US demanded the Brotherhood approve the establishment of a Coptic university, along the lines of Al-Azhar University. The Brotherhood rejected this suggestion on the grounds that establishing such a university would nurture sectarianism in Egypt. Moreover, Al-Azhar University has existed for decades.

However, regarding the issue of Coptic rights, the Muslim Brotherhood reassured the US by agreeing that the Copts may address their personal status based on their own religious customs. They also approved a unified law for all Coptic houses of worship and on allocating official positions to Coptic officials.

Regarding the issue of women’s rights, the Muslim Brotherhood confirmed that [women](#) will not be marginalized during their reign. They assured the US that they will respect and preserve women’s rights and freedoms and will also maintain all the gains that women have so far achieved.

The Challenge Facing the Islamists

Patrick Seale

17 Jul 2012 -- The triumphant emergence of Islamic movements after decades of repression is one of the more striking features of the Arab revolutions of the past 18 months. How these movements behave once they are in government will be closely watched. Each of them has an extremist fringe, apparently determined to abolish the divide between religion and politics, dear to Western opinion. The key question, therefore, is this: Will Islamic leaders now in power be able to tame the radicals in their ranks?

This is the challenge facing Mohammad Morsi, Egypt's new President, and Rashed Ghannouchi, the historic leader of Tunisia's Ennahda (Renaissance) party. Their Islamist movements both won democratic elections and are now in the driver's seat. Islamists have also made gains elsewhere. In Morocco, they wrested a share of power from the King, while in Yemen and Jordan they could score further victories in the coming year. In post-Qadhafi Libya, the Islamists, against all expectations, were defeated at this month's elections by a coalition of 58 parties led by Mahmoud Jibril, the former head of Libya's transitional council. But they hope to win at elections next May. In Syria the contest is fiercest. Islamists are engaged in a life-and-death battle with President Bashar al-Asad, whose regime rests essentially on the secular Ba'ath Party, on minorities such as Christians and Druze, on some members of the commercial and professional middle classes, and on the military force of his own Alawi community. Both sides are fighting with the utmost ruthlessness. It is kill or be killed. The outcome of the contest is still uncertain, but the wounds in Syrian society are already very deep, and must inevitably shape the nature of any successor regime.

The West may not like it, but in country after country across the Arab world the Islamists' day has come. Minorities may tremble. The educated middle classes may fear for their Western-style way of life. Liberated

women may dread being forced back into purdah. Israel may worry about the survival of its 1979 peace treaty with Egypt, which has guaranteed the regional supremacy of the Jewish state for more than three decades. But these fears may be greatly exaggerated.

Both Mohammad Morsi and Rashed Ghannouchi are highly-intelligent, modernising Muslims whose immediate priority is not to impose the shari'a but rather to create jobs for their armies of unemployed youths, provide security for all citizens, restore the authority of the state, and generally revive their economies after the ravages of the past year. Morsi has a doctorate in engineering from the University of Southern California. He spent several years studying and teaching in America. Two of his five children, born in the United States, are American citizens. Ghannouchi has had an essentially Islamic education but his open-mindedness may be seen in the careers of his daughters. One has a doctorate in astrophysics, another is a human rights lawyer who studied at Cambridge and the London School of Economics, and a third is a philosophy graduate and researcher at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London. To fulfil their daunting programmes, the Islamists in Egypt and Tunisia must form coalitions with local allies and keep fanatical extremists down. To calm the fears of women and of Christian Copts -- the latter some 10% of Egypt's population -- President Morsi has even suggested appointing a Christian woman as vice-president! Aware of the magnitude of the task facing it in Tunisia, Enahda has formed a governing coalition with two other parties -- Moncef Marzouki's Congress for the Republic, and Mustapha Ben Jaafar's Ettakatol. Marzouki is now President of the Tunisian Republic and Ben Jaafar is Speaker of the constituent assembly. At this month's Ennahda conference -- its first since its victory at the polls last October -- Rached Ghannouchi went out of his way to project an image of tolerance and moderation, which is essential if foreign investors and tourists are to be attracted back to Tunisia.

The Islamist revival across the Arab world springs from many roots. It is powered by a popular reaction against corrupt dictators and brutal security services. It is a reaction against Western domination and against leaders who seemed to give primacy to Western strategic interests over the aspirations of their people. Both Morsi and Ghannouchi are surely aware that only leaders able to assert their country's independence vis-a-vis

external powers will have the legitimacy to keep their own extremists at bay. The Islamic revival also reflects popular outrage at Israel's oppression of the Palestinians, and at the West's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, not to speak of America's lethal counter-insurgency operations in Pakistan, Yemen, Somalia and elsewhere -- all widely seen as wars against Islam.

Above all, the Islamists are reacting against decades of cruel repression in their own countries. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in 1928, was disbanded in 1948 and scores of its members jailed when they were suspected of plotting a coup against the monarch. A year later, Hasan al-Banna, the movement's founder, was gunned down at the early age of 42, almost certainly by King Farouk's security agents. When the Muslim Brotherhood tried to assassinate Egypt's revolutionary leader Gamal Abd al-Nasser in 1954, many thousands were arrested, and half a dozen of its leaders hanged. The movement was dissolved, causing many prominent members to flee abroad. Repression and mass arrests of Muslim Brothers continued under the regime of Husni Mubarak, until he was toppled last year.

In Tunisia, the Ennahda party was driven underground for a quarter of a century by President Habib Bourguiba and his successor Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali. Rached Ghannouchi himself, sentenced and jailed many times, spent over 20 years in exile in Britain. In Algeria, the army fought the Islamists in a bitter 10-year civil war in the 1990s in which more than 150,000 people perished. Some Algerian Islamists, veterans of the civil war, are today behind the insurgency in northern Mali to Algeria's great concern. In Libya, the late Colonel Muammar Qadhafi hunted down the Islamists whenever he could.

In Syria, an attempt by the Muslim Brothers to kill President Hafiz al-Asad in 1980, and overthrow his regime in a campaign of terror, was brutally crushed in 1982 with great loss of life. The movement was outlawed for the next 30 years and membership was punishable by death. Today, the Islamists dream of revenge.

In Yemen, Ali Abdallah Salih, who ruled from 1978 to last year, made use of the Islamists to defeat the Marxists and secessionists of South Yemen but, when he found himself compelled to join America's 'war on terror', he turned against them. Now that he has gone, they hope to restore their

fortunes.

Against this harsh background, it would not be surprising if Islamists embraced extremist, revanchist views. It will demand courage and vision for their leaders to embrace a moderate, tolerant Islam that recognises diversity, accepts modernity, delivers social justice, asserts national independence and sovereignty, and -- above all -- creates jobs. Only by recognising that their countries live in an inter-dependent world will they succeed.

Patrick Seale is a leading British writer on the Middle East. His latest book is [The Struggle for Arab Independence: Riad el-Solh and the Makers of the Modern Middle East](#) (Cambridge University Press).

Article 5.

NYT

Where Obama Shines

[David Brooks](#)

July 19, 2012 -- It won't help him win many votes this year, but it should be noted that Barack Obama has been a good foreign policy president. He, Vice President Joseph Biden, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and the rest of his team have created a style of policy making that is flexible, incremental and well adapted to the specific circumstances of this moment. Following a foreign policy hedgehog, Obama's been a pretty effective fox.

Some eras call for bold doctrines, new global architecture and "Present at the Creation" moments. This is not one of those eras. Today, the world is like a cocktail party at which everybody is suffering from indigestion or some other internal ailment. People are interacting with each other, but they're mostly focused on the godawful stuff going on inside. Europe has the euro mess. The Middle East has the Arab Spring. The U.S. has the economic stagnation and the debt. The Chinese have their perpetual growth and stability issues.

It's not multi-polarity; it's multi-problematicity. As a result, this is more of an age of anxiety than of straight-up conflict. Leaders are looking around

warily at who might make their problems better and who might make them worse. There are fewer close alliances and fewer sworn enemies. There are more circumstances in which nations are ambiguously attached. In this environment, you don't need big, bold visionaries. You need leaders who will pay minute attention to the unique details and fleeting properties of each region's specific circumstances. You need people who can improvise, shift and play it by ear. Obama, Clinton and the rest are well suited to these sorts of tasks.

Obama has shown a good ability to combine a realist, power-politics mind-set with a warm appreciation of democracy and human rights. Early in his term, he responded poorly to the street marches in Tehran. But his administration has embraced a freedom agenda more aggressively since then, responding fairly well to the Arab Spring, rejecting those who wanted to stand by the collapsing dictatorships and using American power in a mostly successful humanitarian intervention in Libya.

Obama has also shown an impressive ability to learn along the way. He came into office trying to dialogue with dictators in Iran and North Korea. When that didn't work, he learned his lesson and has been much more confrontational since. Early in his term, he tried nation-building in Afghanistan. When that, unfortunately, didn't work, he scaled back that effort.

Obama has managed ambiguity well. This is most important in the case of China. When the Chinese military was overly aggressive, he stood up to China and reasserted America's permanent presence in the Pacific. At the same time, it's misleading to say there is a single China policy. There are myriad China policies on myriad fronts, some of which are confrontational and some of which are collaborative.

Obama has also dealt with uncertainty pretty well. No one knows what will happen if Israel or the U.S. strikes Iran's nuclear facilities.

Confronted with that shroud of ignorance, Obama has properly pushed back the moment of decision-making for as long as possible, just in case anything positive turns up. This has meant performing a delicate dance — pressing Israelis to push back their timetable while, at the same time, embracing their goals. The period of delay may be ending, but it's been useful so far.

Obama has also managed the tension between multilateral and unilateral action. No one can say he is hesitant to work with coalitions. Look at the Libyan action, or the Iranian sanctions. But when it comes to decimating Al Qaeda, the U.S. has been quite willing to go it alone, continuing and expanding many policies of George W. Bush.

There have been failures on Obama's watch, of course. Some of these flow from executive hubris. Obama believed that he could help resolve the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. He proceeded clumsily, pushed everybody into a corner and now peace is farther away than ever.

Some failures flow from excessive politicization. An inexcusable blunder by Obama was to announce the withdrawal date from Afghanistan at the same time he announced the surge into Afghanistan. That may have kept the Democratic base happy, but it sent thousands of soldiers and Marines on a mission that was doomed to fail.

Over all, though, the record is impressive. Obama has moved more aggressively both to defeat enemies and to champion democracy. He has demonstrated that talk of American decline is hooey. The U.S. is still responsible for maintaining global order, for keeping people, goods and ideas moving freely.

And, partly as a result of his efforts, the world of foreign affairs is relatively uncontentious right now. Foreign policy is not a hot campaign issue. Mitt Romney is having a great deal of trouble identifying profound disagreements. If that's not a sign of success, I don't know what is.

Article 6.

NYT

Turkey's Human Rights Hypocrisy

Taner Akcam

July 19, 2012 -- A NEW political order is emerging in the Middle East, and [Turkey](#) aspires to be its leader by taking a stand against authoritarian regimes. Earlier this week, Turkey's prime minister, [Recep Tayyip](#)

[Erdogan](#), went so far as to denounce the Syrian government's continuing massacres of civilians as "[attempted genocide](#)."

Turkey's desire to champion human rights in the region is a welcome development, but Mr. Erdogan's condemnation of [Syria](#) is remarkably hypocritical. As long as Turkey continues to deny crimes committed against non-Turks in the early 1900s, during the final years of the [Ottoman Empire](#), its calls for freedom, justice and humanitarian values will ring false.

Turkey's attempt to cultivate an image as the global protector of Muslim rights is compromised by a legacy of ethnic cleansing and genocide against Christians and terror against Arabs and Kurds. Memories of these crimes are very much alive throughout former Ottoman territories. And Turkey cannot serve as a democratic model until it acknowledges that brutal violence, population transfers and genocide underlie the modern Turkish state.

Using documents from the Ottoman government archives in Istanbul, which were once classified as top secret, I have sought to pull back the veil on Turkey's century of denial. These documents clearly demonstrate that Ottoman demographic policy from 1913 to 1918 was genocidal. Indeed, the phrase "crimes against humanity" was coined as a legal term and first used on May 24, 1915, in response to the genocide against Armenians and other Christian civilians.

Britain, France and Russia initially defined Ottoman atrocities as "crimes against Christianity" but later substituted "humanity" after considering the negative reaction that such a specific term could elicit from Muslims in their colonies.

Today, Mr. Erdogan is seeking to be a global spokesman for Muslim values. [In June 2011, he told thousands](#) gathered to celebrate the landslide victory of his Justice and Development Party, known as the ██████████:

"Sarajevo won today as much as Istanbul; Beirut won as much as Izmir; Damascus won as much as Ankara. Ramallah, Nablus, Jenin, the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza won as much as Diyarbakir."

Speaking in support of oppressed Muslims has earned him popularity. But if Mr. Erdogan aspires to defend freedom and democracy in the region, he must also address the legitimate fears of Christians in the Middle East. Just as the European powers opted for universalism in 1915 by

denouncing “crimes against humanity,” Mr. Erdogan must move beyond his narrow focus on “crimes against Muslims.” All oppressed peoples deserve protection.

It isn't a coincidence that many Christians and other minorities in Syria support [Bashar al-Assad](#)'s Baath Party; they are willing to sacrifice freedom for security. While Turkish rhetoric appeals to the Sunni Muslim majority's demand for freedom in Syria, it does not relieve Syrian Christians' anxiety about their future. On the contrary, Syrian Christians listening to Mr. Erdogan and his denialist rhetoric are reminded of 1915, and that makes Turkey look very much like a security threat to them. Confronting the past is closely linked to security, stability and democracy in the Middle East. Persistent denial of historical injustices not only impedes democratization but also hampers stable relations between different ethnic and religious groups.

This is particularly true in former Ottoman lands, where people view one another in the cloaks of their ancestors. In addition to the reverberations of the [Armenian genocide](#), mass crimes against Kurds and Alevis in Turkey, violence against Kurds and Arabs in Iraq, and Christian-Muslim tensions in Syria and Lebanon continue to poison contemporary politics. The popularity of the ██████ in Turkey and the Muslim world affords Mr. Erdogan an opportunity to usher in an era of tolerance. By acknowledging the genocide against Christians and crimes against other groups, the Turks can become leaders in the realm of human rights. But Turkey's efforts to paint itself as a beacon of freedom and democracy will fail so long as Turkey refuses to atone for Ottoman sins.

Moral purists and hard-nosed realists mistakenly believe that pursuing justice and national interests are mutually exclusive. But acknowledging historical wrongs is not a zero-sum game.

In the Middle East, the past is the present. And truth and reconciliation are integral to establishing a new, stable regional order founded on respect for human rights and dignity. Turkey should lead by example.

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What's Stopping Women?

Anne-Marie Slaughter

19 July 2012 -- When I wrote the cover article of the July/August issue of *The Atlantic*, entitled ["Why Women Still Can't Have It All,"](#) I expected a hostile reaction from many American career women of my generation and older, and positive reactions from women aged roughly 25-35. I expected that many men of that younger generation would also have strong reactions, given how many of them are trying to figure out how to be with their children, support their wives' careers, and pursue their own plans. I also expected to hear from business representatives about whether my proposed solutions – greater workplace flexibility, ending the culture of face-time and "time machismo," and allowing parents who have been out of the workforce or working part-time to compete equally for top jobs once they re-enter – were feasible or utopian.

What I did not expect was the speed and scale of the reaction – almost a million readers within a week and far too many written responses and TV, radio, and blog debates for me to follow – and its global scope. I have conducted interviews with journalists in Britain, Germany, Norway, India, Australia, Japan, the Netherlands, and Brazil; and articles about the piece have been published in France, Ireland, Italy, Bolivia, Jamaica, Vietnam, Israel, Lebanon, Canada, and many other countries.

Reactions differ across countries, of course. Indeed, in many ways, the article is a litmus test of where individual countries are in their own evolution toward full equality for men and women. India and Britain, for example, have had strong women prime ministers in Indira Gandhi and Margaret Thatcher, but now must grapple with the "woman-as-man" archetype of female success.

The Scandinavian countries know that women around the world look to them as pioneers of social and economic policies that enable women to be mothers and successful career professionals, and that encourage and expect men to play an equal parenting role. But they are not producing as

many women managers in the private sector as the United States is, much less at the top ranks.

The Germans are deeply conflicted. One major German magazine decided to frame my contribution to the debate as “career woman admits that it’s better to be home.” Another (more accurately) highlighted my emphasis on the need for deep social and economic change to allow women to have equal choices.

The French remain studiously aloof, even a little disdainful, as befits a nation that rejects “feminism” as an anti-feminine American creation and manages to produce a leader who is simultaneously as accomplished and as elegant as Christine Lagarde, the head of the International Monetary Fund. Of course, the example of her predecessor, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, and other stories about French male behavior that would count as clear sexual harassment in the stodgy US, suggest that perhaps a bit more *femine a la Française* is in order.

Beyond Europe, Japanese women lament how far they must still go in a relentlessly male and sexist culture. The Chinese now have a generation of educated, empowered young women who are not sure whether they want to marry at all, owing to the constraints that a husband (and a mother-in-law) would place on their freedom.

Brazilian women point with pride to their president, Dilma Rousseff, but also underscore how much discrimination remains. In Australia, with its robust work-life debate, women point to the success of Julia Gillard, the first woman prime minister, but note that she has no children (nor does German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the first woman to lead her country). The global nature of this debate demonstrates at least three important lessons. First, if “soft power” means exercising influence because “others want what you want,” as [Joseph Nye](#) puts it, then women the world over want what American feminists began fighting for three generations ago. Second, Americans, not surprisingly, have much to learn from other countries’ debates, laws, and cultural norms. After all, women have ascended the political ladder faster in many other countries than they have in the US. Indeed, the US has never had a woman president, Senate majority leader, Secretary of the Treasury, or Secretary of Defense. Finally, these are not “women’s issues,” but social and economic issues. Societies that discover how to use the education and talent of half their

populations, while allowing women and their partners to invest in their families, will have a competitive edge in the global knowledge/innovation economy.

Of course, hundreds of millions of women around the world can only wish that they had the problems about which I wrote. Last week brought news of yet another murder of a women's rights activist in Pakistan; evidence that the Egyptian military may be deliberately using sexual assault to deter women from demonstrating in Cairo's Tahrir Square; a horrific report from the New York-based Women's Media Center about Syrian government forces' use of sexual violence and gang rape; and a video of a Taliban commander brutally executing a woman for adultery as his fellow soldiers and villagers cheered.

Those are just the most extreme cases of physical violence that many women face. Worldwide, more than a billion women confront grinding and overt gender discrimination in education, nutrition, health care, and salaries.

Women's rights are a global issue of the highest importance, and it is necessary to focus on the worst violations. Still, consider a recent matter-of-fact report from a sober and respected US magazine. In an article on "Women in Washington," the National Journal observed that women in the US capital have come a long way, but "still face career barriers, and often the biggest one is having a family."

If "having a family" is still a career barrier for women, but not for men, that, too, is a matter of women's rights (and thus of human rights). In the global debate about work, family, and the promise of gender equality, no society is exempt.

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