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Article 1.
NYT

Nuclear Mullahs

[Bill Keller](#)

September 9, 2012 -- IRAN has returned to the front pages after a summer hiatus. Negotiations aimed at preventing the dreaded Persian Bomb have

resumed their desultory course. Iran, although suffering from the international sanctions choreographed by the Obama administration, keeps adding new arrays of centrifuges while insisting the program is strictly nonmilitary. Israel is — or maybe isn't — edging closer to a unilateral strike. The U.S., we learn from The Times's reliable David Sanger, is considering more and bigger bouts of cybersabotage. Meanwhile, the mullahs are shipping arms to their embattled fellow despots in Syria.

This strikes me as a good time to address an unnerving question that confronts any concerned student of this subject: Can we live with a nuclear Iran? Given a choice of raining bunker-busting munitions on Iran's underground enrichment facilities, or, alternatively, containing a nuclear-armed Iran with the sobering threat of annihilation, which is the less bad option? As the slogan goes in Israel: "Bomb? Or The Bomb?" The prevailing view now is that a nuclear Iran cannot be safely contained. On this point both [President Obama](#) and [Mitt Romney](#) agree. They can hardly say otherwise; to even hint that a nuclear Iran is acceptable would undermine the efforts aimed at preventing that outcome. But I tend to think they mean it.

However, there are [serious, thoughtful people who are willing](#) to contemplate a nuclear Iran, kept in check by the time-tested assurance of retaliatory destruction. If the U.S. arsenal deterred the Soviet Union for decades of cold war and now keeps North Korea's nukes in their silos, if India and Pakistan have kept each other in a nuclear stalemate, why would Iran not be similarly deterred by the certainty that using nuclear weapons would bring a hellish reprisal?

Anyone who has a glib answer to this problem isn't taking the subject seriously. Personally, I've tended to duck it, taking refuge in the hope that the tightening vise of international pressure — and a few cyberattacks — would make Iran relent and spare us the hard choice. But that could be wishful thinking. So I've spent some time reading and questioning, trying to report my way to an opinion.

Let's assume, for starters, that Iran's theocrats are determined to acquire nuclear weapons. Western analysts say there is no evidence yet that the supreme leader has made that decision. But if you ruled a country surrounded by unfriendly neighbors — Persians among the Arabs, Shiites

among the Sunnis — a country with a grand sense of self-esteem, a tendency to paranoia and five nuclear powers nearby, wouldn't you want the security of your own nuclear arsenal?

Let's assume further that diplomacy, sanctions and computer viruses may not dissuade the regime from its nuclear ambitions. So far, these measures seem to have slowed the nuclear program and bought some time, but Iran's stockpiles of enriched fuel have grown in size and concentration despite everything a disapproving world has thrown at them so far. So, then what?

A pre-emptive bombing campaign against Iran's uranium factories would almost certainly require major U.S. participation to be effective, and would not be neat. Beyond the immediate casualties, it would carry grave costs: outraged Iranians rallying behind this regime that is now deservedly unpopular; Iran or its surrogates lashing out against American and Israeli targets in a long-term, low-intensity campaign of retaliation; a scorching hatred of America on the newly empowered Arab street, generating new recruits for Al Qaeda and its ilk; an untimely oil shock to a fragile world economy; an unraveling of the united front Obama has assembled to isolate Iran. All that, and a redoubled determination by Iran's leaders to do the one thing that would prevent a future attack: rebuild the nuclear assembly line, only this time faster and deeper underground. There is a pretty broad consensus that, short of a full-scale invasion and occupation of Iran, a preventive attack would not end the nuclear program, only postpone it for a few years.

Now imagine that Iran succeeds in making its way into the nuclear club. Despite the incendiary rhetoric, it is hard to believe the aim of an Iranian nuclear program is the extermination of Israel. The regime in Iran is brutal, mendacious and meddlesome, and given to spraying gobbets of Hitleresque bile at the Jewish state. But Israel is a nuclear power, backed by a bigger nuclear power. Before an Iranian mushroom cloud had bloomed to its full height over Tel Aviv, a flock of reciprocal nukes would be on the way to incinerate Iran. Iran may encourage fanatic chumps to carry out suicide missions, but there is not the slightest reason to believe the mullahs themselves are suicidal.

The more common arguments against tolerating a nuclear Iran are these:

First, that possession of a nuclear shield would embolden Iran to step up its interference in the region, either directly or through surrogates like Hezbollah. This is probably true. But as James Dobbins, a former diplomat who heads security studies for the RAND Corporation, told me, the subversive menace of a nuclear Iran has to be weighed against the lethal rage of an Iran that had been the victim of an unprovoked attack. A second worry is that a Persian Bomb would set off a regional nuclear arms race. This is probably an exaggerated fear. A nuclear program is not cheap or easy. In other parts of the world, the proliferation virus has not been as contagious as you might have feared. So the Saudis, who regard Iran as a viper state, might be tempted buy a bomb from Pakistan, which is not a pleasant thought. But Egypt (broke), Turkey (a NATO member) and the others have strong reasons not to join the race.

Most worrisome, I think, is the danger that a crisis between Israel and Iran would escalate out of control. Given the history of mistrust and the absence of communication, some war planner on one side or the other might guess that a nuclear attack was imminent, and decide to go first. "You would have a very unstable deterrent environment between Israel and Iran, simply because these are two states that tend to view each other in existential terms," said Ray Takeyh, an Iranian-American Middle East scholar at the Council on Foreign Relations, who is not an advocate of containment. Against this fear, history suggests that nuclear weapons make even aggressive countries more cautious. Before their first nuclear tests, India and Pakistan fought three serious conventional wars. Since getting their nukes they have bristled at each other across a long, heavily armed border, but no dispute has risen to an outright war.

At the end of this theoretical exercise, we have two awful choices with unpredictable consequences. After immersing myself in the expert thinking on both sides, I think that, forced to choose, I would swallow hard and take the risks of a nuclear Iran over the gamble of a pre-emptive war. My view may be colored by a bit of post-Iraq syndrome.

What statesmen do when faced with bad options is create new ones. The third choice in this case is to negotiate a deal that lets Iran enrich uranium for civilian use (as it is entitled to do under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty), that applies rigorous safeguards (because Iran cheats), that

gradually relaxes sanctions and brings this wayward country into the community of more-or-less civilized nations.

That, of course, won't happen before November. Any U.S. concession now would be decried by Republicans as an abandonment of Israel and a reward to a government that recently beat a democracy movement bloody. We can only hope that after the election we get some braver, more creative diplomacy, either from a liberated Obama or (hope springs eternal) a President Romney who has a Nixon-to-China moment. Because a frank look at the alternatives of (a) pre-emptive war and (b) a nuclear Iran should be enough to focus all of our intelligence and energy on (c) none of the above.

Bill Keller is an Op-Ed columnist for The New York Times and writes for The New York Times Magazine. He is the author of "The Tree Shaker: The Story of Nelson Mandela," published in January, 2008, by Kingfisher.

Article 2.

[Los Angeles Times](#)

The West's 'hard power' deficit

Gary Schmitt

September 11, 2012 -- When it comes to "hard power," the West is in steep decline. Virtually every nation in Europe is cutting its defense budget. Japan refuses to spend more than 1% of its gross domestic product on defense. And Australia is slashing its military budget, leaving it at just 1.5% of GDP, the smallest ratio in more than seven decades. Now add in the cuts of more than \$800 billion in current and planned spending on U.S. defenses, with the prospect of nearly \$500 billion more over the next 10 years. The result is a Western defense capability that is rapidly shrinking in size, has too little invested in future technologies and is increasingly wary of any conflict that would require sustained operations. The situation is especially dire in Europe. In the early 1990s, NATO allies averaged 2.5% of GDP for defense expenditures — not great but passable. Today, it is closer to 1.5% — even though, a decade ago, members had agreed to a 2% minimum. According to NATO figures, last year only two countries were above that line: Britain at 2.6% and Greece at 2.1%. No doubt Greece no longer belongs in that club.

As Stephen Hadley, former President George W. Bush's national security advisor, has pointedly remarked: "Europe has become so enamored with soft power that it has stopped investing in hard power. In terms of hard security, it makes Europe a free rider." Strong words from someone who has been deeply committed to keeping transatlantic ties strong.

Nor is the picture much better in Asia. While China has been increasing its defense budget by double-digit rates annually for two decades, Taiwan and Japan have allowed their defense budgets to decline or to stay essentially flat. In Japan's case, it's the 11th consecutive year the defense budget has been cut. With the world's third-largest economy, Japan's 1% still buys a lot of capabilities, but, arguably, it isn't enough to keep up with China's growing military might. And although Australia cannot be said to have been a free rider given the sustained contribution it has made on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan, the planned cuts to its military will mean a sharply reduced capacity to act as a force multiplier as the United States pivots to Asia. Even South Korea, which faces a nuclear-armed, unpredictable state on its doorstep, has not seen its defense burden rise above 3% of GDP for nearly 20 years.

Measuring defense spending as a percentage of GDP does not, of course, give you a perfect picture of the defense effort of a country because it cannot measure the quality of the existing force or the willingness of a country to use force. That said, the GDP measure does give you a generally accurate sense of the burden the government and its citizens are willing to sustain when it comes to the military and, as such, the priority a country gives to defense relative to other matters.

And here, "the tale of the tape" is revealing. According to the European Union's accounting from 1995 to 2010, French spending on defense — broadly defined as including the base defense budget, civil defense, and foreign military aid — had risen by 33%. At the same time, spending on the environment increased 143%, on housing and community amenities by 103%, on health by 80% and on social protection (old age, disability, unemployment, etc.) by 81%. In Germany, while defense spending declined over the last two decades, Berlin's spending on health increased by 81% and on social protection by 70%. Germany also saw an approximately 50% increase in other areas, such as public services, education, recreation and culture. As for Britain, over the same time

frame, expenditures for the environment, health, public services, education and social protection have exploded — each well over 100%, with health increasing by 188% and environmental spending almost tripling. In the meantime, defense spending was increasing by a little over a third.

In short, if there is a fiscal crisis among our allies, it has not been brought about by an untenable level of spending on defense.

As the figures indicate, spending decisions are political choices. The United States faces similar choices as the rise of entitlement benefits and healthcare begin to squeeze out other items, such as defense.

Compounding the problem, at least among NATO allies, is the perception that they face no significant conventional security threat. What's missing in this focus on immediate and obvious threats is the role the West's militaries play in maintaining a largely stable world order. It is the West, with the U.S. in the lead, that has both kept the great power peace for 60 years and kept rogue states from disrupting that order in critical areas. It is this stability that has allowed globalization to flourish and, in turn, help generate unprecedented economic growth around the world.

Of course, military power alone has not produced this prosperity. But take away the safety net the West's military predominance has established and everyone will be looking at, and planning for, a far more Hobbesian global environment.

The good news is that this predominance does not require a return to Cold War-era spending levels. Yet, given the uncertain consequences of China's rise, continued instability in large parts of the Middle East and Central Asia, and a revanchist Putin-led Russia, it does require more than is currently being budgeted. As then-Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates said in his farewell address to allies in Brussels a year ago, "This imbalance in burden sharing is not sustainable in a world where projecting stability is the order of the day."

America's allies like to tell themselves that they can always spend their defense monies more efficiently, but that is true only up to a point. The fact is that smaller budgets almost always mean less capability and, implicitly, more loaded onto America's shoulders. Politically, this is getting more and more difficult to sustain in the United States. While the U.S. base defense budget — minus funds for the war in Afghanistan —

amounts to 3.4% of GDP, current projections see it falling to less than 3% in the decade ahead.

If the Polish government can mandate that its defense budget not slip below 1.95% of GDP, it hardly seems unreasonable to ask that other allies meet that standard. Otherwise, we are headed for a strategic train wreck, with the U.S. looking for more help on the world stage and allies providing even less.

Gary Schmitt is a resident scholar and the director of the Marilyn Ware Center for Security Studies at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington.

Article 3.

Ahram Online

UN warns of global food crisis, but is Egypt prepared?

Marwa Hussein

10 Sep 2012 -- As the United Nations issues warnings over soaring global food prices, Egypt may have more to worry about than most.

A net food importer and the world's biggest consumer of foreign wheat, the Arab world's most populous country would be wise to keep an eye on consumer prices indices as well as its budget, say experts.

In late August, three UN agencies made a joint statement suggesting the world could be on the brink of a repeat of the 2007-8 food crisis, citing "sharp increases" in the prices of maize, wheat and soybean caused by summer droughts and scorched crops across the globe.

Global food prices soared a monthly 10 per cent in July, the World Bank said in August as it warned of the effect on domestic prices.

"Africa and the Middle East are particularly vulnerable, but so are people in other countries where the prices of grains have gone up abruptly," the Bank said.

Egypt has bitter experience of such events.

Between 2007 and 2008, soaring global prices meant the country's food import bill nearly doubled. The government's allocation for food subsidies

in the budget were revised upwards in the middle of the financial year, and inflation reached a record high of some 23 per cent.

A repeat is a worrying prospect for Egypt, but just how likely is it?

According to some experts, Egypt is already starting to feel the effect from rises in global cereal prices.

Hany Genena, head of research at Pharaohs Securities Brokerage, says one of the lesser-noted effects has been on the Egyptian poultry industry whose profit margins have been squeezed due to an increase in prices for grain-based fodder.

Some domestic poultry producers have passed on the cost to consumers, Genena says, but have had to limit such moves due to competition from Brazil and Saudi Arabia.

He says Egypt's poultry companies have reported declines in profits for the second quarter of 2012 as a result.

Genena also casts doubt on the possibility of a short-term surge in year-on-year inflation, saying food prices for the same period last year were also high.

But he doesn't rule out a monthly rise in September if the current trend of rising international food prices continues.

"There's a positive side and there's a negative one," said Genena, pointing to the relative stability of the local currency as a plus, but suggests the US-Israel crisis with Iran, which hits standard energy prices, could lead to an increase in biofuel production.

Using crops for fuel would have an obvious effect on supplies for other uses, likely sending food costs soaring.

A new focus on using crops for biofuels rather than food was one of the main causes of the 2007-8 crisis, Genena warns.

Noamany Noamany, deputy head of the General Authority for Supply Commodities (GASC), Egypt's state-owned wheat buyer, believes things are under control.

"We are covered for the coming six months and wheat prices are expected to dip," says Noamany, explaining that the GASC already has strategies to limit the effects of global price hikes.

"First of all, in time of great price fluctuations we take advantage of the slides to purchase bigger quantities," he told Ahram Online.

The General Authority for Supply Commodities made its biggest purchase

of the year last week by buying 355.000 tonnes of mainly Russian wheat. The shipments should arrive in Egypt between 11 and 20 October.

Noamany is also optimistic that an increase in domestic wheat production means Egypt can gradually wean itself off imports.

Egyptian is importing 1.1 million fewer tonnes in the 2012-13 financial year, with local agriculture filling the gap, he claims.

"Egypt will only import 4.6 million tonnes [in 2012-3], which is the least it has imported in many years," Noamany says.

In addition, Egypt's main source of wheat is Russia, says Noamany, not the United States where a summer of drought has affected spring wheat due to be harvested in September.

Over the past decade, Russia has gradually replaced the United States as Egypt's main source of wheat, except in 2007/8 when Russian yields fell. Last year, Egypt imported 67.5 per cent of its wheat imports from Russia versus around 10 per cent from the United States. Its other sources are Ukraine, Argentina, France and Romania.

"Russian wheat is \$40 cheaper than American, that's already a plus," Noamany said proudly.

GASC has a flexible budget and is able to spend more to secure the same quantities, should price hikes occur.

Egypt's Ministry of Finance has not revealed the wheat price it is relying upon in the 2012-13 budget.

However, allocations for total food subsidies have reached LE26.6 billion (\$5.2bn), which include wheat, sugar, oil and rice.

The budget also shows Egypt's bread subsidy -- which relies on wheat -- rising to LE16 billion, 50 per cent higher than in 2011/2012, and 60 per cent of total food subsidies.

The data for staple foods may seem worrying. The prices of internationally traded maize and soybeans reached all-time peaks in July. Wheat prices have also soared to levels comparable to 2011 peaks, although still below their record highs.

It's not all bad news. Last Thursday, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said that global food prices had remained steady in August, following a 6 per cent jump in July.

An overall FAO index of food prices averaged 213 points last month, the same level as in July.

Egypt may have been spared the worst -- for now.

Article 4.

The Diplomat

[The Interview: Zbigniew Brzezinski](#)

Zachary Keck

September 10, 2012 -- *The Diplomat's Assistant Editor Zachary Keck sat down with former U.S. National Security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski to discuss America's role in world affairs, the shifting geopolitics of the Asia-Pacific, the feasibility of eliminating nuclear weapons, and rising powers growing involvement in America's backdoor.*

In [Strategic Vision](#) you argue that in today's world no one power will ever be capable of dominating Eurasia in the way Harold Mackinder famously envisioned. Taking that argument at its face, this represents a tectonic shift for U.S. foreign policy given that, [long before](#) Washington was able to meaningfully affect the balance of power in Eurasia, its leaders saw preventing a hegemon from dominating it as a key strategic necessity. If the U.S. no longer has to concern itself with safeguarding Mackinder's "world-island" from a potential hegemon(s), what should be the main objective of U.S. engagement in Europe and Asia going forward?

The main objective of U.S. engagement in Europe and in Asia should be to support an equilibrium that discourages any one power from acting in an excessively assertive fashion towards its neighbors. In the foreseeable future, it is, in any case, unlikely that any single power will have the military superiority that would enable it to assert itself in a hegemonic fashion on as a diverse, complex, and complicated mega-continent such as Eurasia. Having a close relationship with Europe, though maintaining a complex partnership with China and an alliance with Japan, will provide the United States with sufficient foci for a strategic engagement designed

to maintain a relatively stable even if delicate equilibrium on the so-called “world island.”

In the book you state that the U.S. should act as a neutral arbitrator between Asia’s major powers, with the possible exception of Japan. The Obama administration has usually heeded this advice but recently diverged from it [by issuing a harsh statement about the South China Sea that singled out China](#). What do you see as the reasoning behind doing this and do you think it was a mistake?

I think the United States’ position on freedom of navigation is generally correct, but it has been pursued lately in a clumsy fashion. It is to be regretted that it was announced in the context of a so-called “strategic pivot,” implying in the process that it involves an augmentation of American military power in Asia as a necessary response to the newly emerging geopolitical realities in the Far East. In brief, it is not surprising that the Chinese understood it to mean that the United States is beginning to fashion a coalition against China, something which at this stage at least is premature and runs the risk of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.

In [Strategic Vision](#) you come out strongly against an Indo-U.S. formal alliance, criticize the 2006 nuclear deal, and note many of the internal challenges that New Delhi faces. You have been remarkably consistent on these points over time, yet seem to be at odds with much of the U.S. foreign policy establishment that sees a stronger relation with India as undeniably in the national interest. Why are they wrong?

I disagree with much of the foreign policy establishment in regard to the need for a strong relationship with India which, prima facie, would be directed at China. I think American interests, as well as stability in the Far East would be better served by America staying free of any binding ties with competing powers on the Asian mainland. Last, but not least, the future stability, not to mention power potential, of India is problematic and in my view too many people have been mesmerized simply by the fact that India is as massively populated as China.

In August Secretary of State Hillary Clinton took a 10-day trip to Africa (with many arguing) to counter China’s growing influence

there. In *Strategic Vision* you discuss in relation to Mexico, but which could reasonably be extended elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere, how growing ties with China and other emerging powers could combine with other issues to create an increasingly tense U.S.-Mexican relationship. Given that U.S. hegemony over the Western Hemisphere has been the overarching goal of U.S. foreign policy since at least as far back as 1823, and a reality since 1898, is the U.S. doing enough to counter China and other rising powers' penetration of its traditional sphere of influence? If not, what should it be doing?

I do not think the U.S. needs to do "enough to counter China and other rising powers' penetration of its sphere of influence" in South America because the countries of South America are obviously intent at this stage on becoming more autonomous in their relations with the United States. A policy predicated on the premise which I have just quoted would force the Latin American countries to line up either with or against the United States, and that would hardly be in the U.S. interest, especially given the prevailing and changing public mood in a number of Latin American countries.

You have long advocated negotiating seriously with Iran, something the Obama administration at least came into office intent on doing. Before talks got underway, however, street protests broke out in Tehran following the 2009 Presidential election. While the administration claimed this came as a complete shock to them, I imagine it was less so for you given that in 2007 you stated that Iran "is a country that may be confronting serious internal problems once Iranians don't feel that the outside world, and particularly the United States, is subjecting them to a siege." You also have personal experience with handling street demonstrations in Tehran. How did the Obama administration do in responding to the 2009 Iran protests in your opinion? What about the uprising that latter swept through much of the Arab world?

I do not feel that the United States had much freedom of action insofar as a response to the upheavals in Iran and more generally in the Middle East is concerned. These processes are inherently connected with social

change within the region, and especially so in regards to the phenomenon of massive political awakening of their younger populations. The rhetoric that is used in that connection by many of the spokesmen involved in the upheavals tends to be democratic, but democracy is not necessarily the real object of mass political aspirations. The aspirations are rooted in historical resentments, social discrimination, financial envy, and sheer frustration. The result tends to be assertive populism which is not to be confused with imminent institutionalization of democratic processes.

Many of the U.S.'s most celebrated diplomats, including many of your contemporaries, have strongly endorsed abolishing nuclear weapons. In [Strategic Vision](#) you discuss at length the potential dangers of horizontal proliferation-particularly from quasi-nuclear weapon states like Japan, South Korea, and Germany- as well as the vertical proliferation threat from countries like Russia, China, and India. At the same time it seems to me that you were [somewhat less enthusiast](#) about the global zero movement, although [more recently](#) you have on occasion cautiously endorsed it. I am therefore wondering if you could elaborate a bit on your thinking on this issue. For instance, do you see other more viable alternatives for preventing the spread of nuclear weapons?

I have no problem with the global nuclear zero movement but I think that it is an objective that will be achieved only slowly, with a gradual settling down of the current era of turmoil, and perhaps in a context in which the major powers of the world will find it more feasible and productive to engage in a genuinely serious cooperation. The prospects for that in the short run are relatively tenuous and not very hopeful, and as a result I do not see much point in becoming very actively involved in what I view otherwise as a positive aspiration.

With Hillary Clinton repeatedly saying she would not stay on as Secretary of State in a second Obama administration, the U.S. is likely to get a new top diplomat regardless of the outcome of the election in November. Who are some of the people ████████ recommend the President-elect interview for this position? If you are unwilling to

name names, perhaps you could at least say what characteristics you think are most important for the candidates.

I do not want to engage in advocacy of particular names because I suspect that such advocacy by me could even be counterproductive. There are a number of people on the scene, including some from the Senate, as well as in public life, who would make very competent Secretaries of State. However, a great deal depends also on what role the next President envisages for his Secretary of State: is the nominee to be in fact the prime shaper of American foreign policy, or is the nominee expected more to be the foreign minister for external relations, with the word “relations” all important. I have recently seen some detailed but silly analyses of how many miles respective Secretaries of State have traveled in recent years, and that to me indicates precisely the need to differentiate between foreign policy shaping and engaging in active foreign policy relationships.

Article 5.

The Wall Street Journal

As China Muscles Into the Pacific, the U.S. Lacks a Strategy

[John Bolton](#)

September 10, 2012 -- China's assertive territorial claims in the East and South China Seas have flared intermittently over the years into diplomatic and even physical confrontations. Until recently, however, these incidents—seizures of islands, reefs or rock outcroppings, or naval vessels ramming one another—have subsided after a flurry of tactical responses. That pattern is changing permanently. Whoever becomes president in January will require a policy of sustained American involvement and leadership, not merely the watchful attitude we have long maintained. The U.S. is already perilously close to the point strategically where China will

simply run the table with its claims. Potential hostilities are no longer hypothetical.

Last week in Beijing, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton repeated the usual U.S. bromides, namely: resolving the region's maritime disputes peacefully through negotiation consistent with international-law principles regarding freedom of navigation.

Foreign Minister Yang Jeichi replied bluntly that China was sovereign over the territories, and government media mouthpiece Xinhua warned the U.S. that "strategic miscalculations about a rising power could well lead to confrontations and even bloody conflicts, like the war between ancient Athens and Sparta. To avoid such a catastrophic scenario, Washington has to change its obsolete and doubt-ridden thinking pattern and cooperate with Beijing to settle their differences."

China sees these waters through a prism of increasing confidence based on geographical proximity; the weakness of, and competition among, the other territorial claimants; decreasing U.S. Navy capabilities due to draconian budget reductions; President Obama's diffidence in protecting U.S. interests abroad; and, for most Americans, the uninspiring abstractness of "freedom of the seas."

In Washington today, these disputes appear distant, almost trivial, akin to Neville Chamberlain's 1938 description of Czechoslovakia as "a faraway country of which we know little." Such lassitude must give way to a strategic approach based on three key elements.

First, the U.S. must decide unequivocally that Beijing's expansionism in the East and South China Seas is contrary to American national interests. There are high, tangible stakes for us and our Asian and Pacific friends, ranging broadly from Japan and South Korea to Australia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) including Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and the Philippines. The stakes include undersea mineral resources and sea lanes of communication and trade critical to U.S. and global prosperity.

Sweet-sounding platitudes about international law will not prevent Beijing's looming hegemony in these waters. While not every Chinese claim is illegitimate, we must prevent the country's sheer mass and presence from prevailing. The ██████-sponsored Law of the Sea Treaty—which may be passed by the lame-duck Congress this fall after going

unratified for three decades—will be inconsequential, as the regional parties, particularly China, fully understand. This is about power and resolve.

Second, we must rapidly rebuild America's Navy, without which any shift in strategic thinking is hollow. This is a maritime problem at the operational level, demanding adequate resources. Today we have about 285 warships at sea, a scarcity of vessels not seen since World War I. China is building its own blue-water navy for the first time in centuries, actively pursuing anti-access, area-denial tactics and weapons systems intended to push the U.S. back from the Western Pacific. Unless we increase the Navy's capabilities, or essentially abandon other ocean spaces, the negative direction and ultimate outcome in the waters off China are clear.

America's current approach—watching while initially minor incidents risk escalating—puts us at a distinct disadvantage. Passivity will allow Beijing to prevail repeatedly, incident after incident, until U.S. weakness becomes so palpable that there is no doubt of China's across-the-board success.

Third, we must work diplomatically, largely behind the scenes, to resolve differences among the other claimants. In the East China Sea, Japan is the major competitor, while Beijing butts heads with Vietnam, the Philippines and other Asean members in the South China Sea. These regions are distinct geographically and politically, but for China both are part of the same strategic picture. So it must be for America.

China's goal is to split the seams, pitting Vietnam against the Philippines; isolating Japan; neutralizing Taiwan, and otherwise sowing discord among its competitors. The more intra-Asean disputes we can eliminate, the greater the potential for a common position. This pragmatic diplomatic strategy of resolving non-Chinese competing claims hardly guarantees positive results, but it beats repeating academic mantras about international law. (Taiwan could also help politically by renouncing China's outlandish claims to disputed territories.)

The Obama administration argues that its "pivot" from the Middle East to Asia, combined with Secretary Clinton's frequent-flier miles, will resolve these problems. Not so. America is a global power, with continuing interests everywhere. We don't pivot like a weather vane from one region

to another, especially since it is folly to believe the Middle East is so tranquil that we can pay it less attention.

America's China policy should be comprehensive, agile and persistent, but one fixed element must be that the international waters around China will not become Lake Beijing.

Mr. Bolton, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, is the author of "Surrender Is Not an Option: Defending America at the United Nations" (Simon & Schuster, 2007).

Article 6.

NYT

Why Men Fail

[David Brooks](#)

September 10, 2012 -- You're probably aware of the basic trends. The financial rewards to education have increased over the past few decades, but men failed to get the memo.

In elementary and high school, male academic performance is lagging. Boys earn three-quarters of the  and F's. By college, men are clearly behind. Only 40 percent of bachelor's degrees go to men, along with 40 percent of master's degrees.

Thanks to their lower skills, men are dropping out of the labor force. In 1954, 96 percent of the American men between the ages of 25 and 54 worked. Today, that number is down to 80 percent. In Friday's jobs report, male labor force participation reached an all-time low.

Millions of men are collecting disability. Even many of those who do have a job are doing poorly. According to Michael Greenstone of the Hamilton Project, annual earnings for median prime-age males have dropped by 28 percent over the past 40 years.

Men still dominate the tippy-top of the corporate ladder because many women take time off to raise children, but women lead or are gaining

nearly everywhere else. Women in their 20s outearn men in their 20s. Twelve out of the 15 fastest-growing professions are dominated by women.

Over the years, many of us have embraced a certain theory to explain men's economic decline. It is that the information-age economy rewards traits that, for neurological and cultural reasons, women are more likely to possess.

To succeed today, you have to be able to sit still and focus attention in school at an early age. You have to be emotionally sensitive and aware of context. You have to communicate smoothly. For genetic and cultural reasons, many men stink at these tasks.

But, in her fascinating new book, "The End of Men," Hanna Rosin posits a different theory. It has to do with adaptability. Women, Rosin argues, are like immigrants who have moved to a new country. They see a new social context, and they flexibly adapt to new circumstances. Men are like immigrants who have physically moved to a new country but who have kept their minds in the old one. They speak the old language. They follow the old mores. Men are more likely to be rigid; women are more fluid. This theory has less to do with innate traits and more to do with social position. When there's big social change, the people who were on the top of the old order are bound to cling to the old ways. The people who were on the bottom are bound to experience a burst of energy. They're going to explore their new surroundings more enthusiastically.

Rosin reports from working-class Alabama. The women she meets are flooding into new jobs and new opportunities — going back to college, pursuing new careers. The men are waiting around for the jobs that left and are never coming back. They are strangely immune to new options. In the Auburn-Opelika region, the median female income is 140 percent of the median male income.

Rosin also reports from college campuses where women are pioneering new social arrangements. The usual story is that men are exploiting the new campus hookup culture in order to get plenty of sex without romantic commitments. Rosin argues that, in fact, women support the hookup culture. It allows them to have sex and fun without any time-consuming distractions from their careers. Like new immigrants, women are

desperate to rise, and they embrace social and sexual rules that give them the freedom to focus on their professional lives.

Rosin is not saying that women are winners in a global gender war or that they are doing super simply because men are doing worse. She's just saying women are adapting to today's economy more flexibly and resiliently than men. There's a lot of evidence to support her case.

A study by the National Federation of Independent Business found that small businesses owned by women outperformed male-owned small businesses during the last recession. In finance, women who switch firms are more likely to see their performance improve, whereas men are more likely to see theirs decline. There's even evidence that women are better able to adjust to divorce. Today, more women than men see their incomes rise by 25 percent after a marital breakup.

Forty years ago, men and women adhered to certain ideologies, what it meant to be a man or a woman. Young women today, Rosin argues, are more like clean slates, having abandoned both feminist and prefeminist preconceptions. Men still adhere to the masculinity rules, which limits their vision and their movement.

If she's right, then men will have to be less like Achilles, imposing their will on the world, and more like Odysseus, the crafty, many-sided sojourner. They'll have to acknowledge that they are strangers in a strange land.