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Article 1.

NYT

The Truth About Obama and Israel

Haim Saban

September 4, 2012 -- AS an Israeli-American who cares deeply about the survival of Israel and the future of the Jewish people, I will be voting for

President Obama in November. Here's why.

Even though he could have done a better job highlighting his friendship for Israel, there's no denying that by every tangible measure, his support for Israel's security and well-being has been rock solid.

Mitt Romney claims Mr. Obama has "thrown allies like Israel under the bus," but in fact the president has taken concrete steps to make Israel more secure — a commitment he has described as "not negotiable."

When he visited Israel as a candidate he saw firsthand how vulnerable Israeli villagers were to rocket attacks from Gaza. As president, he responded by providing full financing and technical assistance for Israel's Iron Dome short-range anti-rocket defense system, which is now protecting those villagers. In July, he provided an additional \$70 million to extend the Iron Dome system across southern Israel. That's in addition to the \$3 billion in annual military assistance to Israel that the president requests and that Congress routinely approves, assistance for which Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has expressed deep personal appreciation.

When the first President Bush had disagreements with Israel over its settlement policy, he threatened to withhold loan guarantees from Israel. Mr. Obama has had his own disagreements with Mr. Netanyahu over the settlers but has never taken such a step. To the contrary, he has increased aid to Israel and given it access to the most advanced military equipment, including the latest fighter aircraft.

Ask any senior Israeli official involved in national security, and he will tell you that the strategic relationship between the United States and Israel has never been stronger than under President Obama. "I can hardly remember a better period of American support and backing, and Israeli cooperation and similar strategic understanding of events around us," the defense minister, Ehud Barak, [said last year](#), "than what we have right now."

That cooperation has included close coordination by intelligence agencies — including the deployment of cyberweapons, as recent news reports have revealed — to thwart Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Mr. Romney conveniently neglects to mention that Mr. Obama's predecessor, George W. Bush, diverted American attention from Iran — the greatest threat to Israel's existence — to Iraq, even helping to put a pro-Iranian leader in power in Baghdad. In contrast, through painstaking diplomacy, Mr. Obama persuaded Russia and China to support harsh

sanctions on Iran, including an arms embargo and the cancellation of a Russian sale of advanced anti-aircraft missiles that would have severely complicated any military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities. Mr. Obama secured European support for what even Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, called "the most severe and strictest sanctions ever imposed on a country."

Mr. Romney has never explained how he would prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons; Mr. Obama not only has declared that all options are on the table, but he has also taken the option of merely "containing" a nuclear-armed Iran off the table. He has directed the military to prepare options for confronting Iran and has positioned forces in the Persian Gulf to demonstrate his resolve.

Israel necessarily has a thinner margin of security than the United States, given differences in size, geography and military capabilities. Iran's leaders are not threatening to destroy the United States, but their threats to destroy Israel must be taken seriously. As Iran approaches the nuclear weapons threshold, Israel's nervousness is understandable. But Mr. Obama has assured Mr. Netanyahu that he will "always have Israel's back." Americans who support Israel should take the president at his word.

Finally, Mr. Obama has been steadfast against efforts to delegitimize Israel in international forums. He has blocked Palestinian attempts to bypass negotiations and achieve United Nations recognition as a member state, a move that would have opened the way to efforts by Israel's foes to sanction and criminalize its policies. As a sign of its support, the Obama administration even vetoed a Security Council resolution on Israeli settlements, a resolution that mirrored the president's position and that of every American administration since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

So what's the case against Mr. Obama? That he hasn't visited Israel since he was a candidate in 2008? Perhaps these critics have forgotten that George W. Bush, that great friend of Israel, didn't visit Jerusalem until his seventh year in office.

Yes, Mr. Obama should have gone there, especially after his 2009 speech in Cairo, addressed to the Arab world. He should have showered Israelis with more love and affection. He could have done more to allay Israel's worries that there might one day be an American president who would take

a different approach to the Middle East in general, and Israel in particular; Mr. Obama should have made it clear he isn't that president.

But as John Adams said, facts are stubborn things. The facts back up the president's staunch support of Israel — facts that even \$100 million from a [casino magnate](#) can't refute. (Full disclosure: I have contributed to Democratic campaigns this political cycle, though not nearly to that extent.)

When I enter the voting booth, ■ going to ask myself, what do I prefer for Israel and its relationship with the United States: meaningful action or empty rhetoric? To me the answer is clear: I'll take another four years of Mr. Obama's steadfast support over Mr. Romney's sweet nothings.

[Haim Saban](#) is a private equity investor, the chairman of the Spanish-language media company Univision and a founder of the [Saban Center for Middle East Policy](#) at the Brookings Institution.

Article 2.

The National Interest

U.S., Israeli Interests Diverge on Iran

[Robert W. Merry](#)

September 5, 2012 -- A Reuters dispatch says that Israel's most widely read newspaper, Yedioth Ahronoth, reported on Monday that the Obama administration had approached Iran through two European intermediary countries with a remarkable proposal. The Israeli newspaper said the United States promised to refrain from any involvement in an Israel-Iran war triggered by an Israeli attack on Iran. In exchange, said the report, the United States wanted assurances that Iran would not go after U.S. military positions in the region following an Israeli attack.

It's difficult to fathom what to make of such a report, and there are ample reasons to question the veracity of an item suggesting the United States is prepared to embrace a diplomacy that separates itself so starkly from Israel. But, whatever its veracity, the report suggests a new reality has

emerged in U.S.-Israel relations. The interests of the two countries have diverged on the question of war with Iran. This new reality is reflected also in a [Time](#) [3].[\[3\]report](#) [3] over the weekend that the United States in February postponed a massive joint U.S.-Israel military exercise that had been scheduled for a time when U.S. concerns were growing over a unilateral Israeli military strike against Iran. The exercise, according to the report, was rescheduled for October, but Washington has severely reduced its participation, with perhaps 1,500 or even just 1,200 U.S. military personnel now scheduled to take part instead of the originally planned 5,000.

Time quotes one senior Israeli military official as suggesting the United States downsized its role to distance itself from Israel's constant drumbeat for war with Iran. "Basically," the official told the magazine, "what the Americans are saying is, 'We don't trust you.'" This raises a question: If President Obama truly believes the two countries' interests have in fact diverged in serious ways, what can he do about it? What should he do about it?

Consider first the likely consequences of a unilateral Israeli attack on Iran—the Syrian civil war exploding into a region-wide sectarian conflict; destabilization of such nations as Bahrain, Jordan and Lebanon; obliteration of the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement; a new Intifada in the occupied Palestinian lands; expanded terrorist activity against the West; a doubling or tripling of oil prices; a likely economic meltdown in Europe and China, with huge subsidiary damage to the U.S. economy. All of these things easily could be triggered simply by an Israeli attack on Iran; all of them likely would be worse if America got dragged into the resulting Israeli-Iranian conflict.

Second, what kind of country would America be if it ceded its sovereignty in matters of war and peace to a tiny ally that seems bent on manipulating American decision making by manipulating American domestic politics? It's one thing to have Israel thwart America's efforts to foster a peaceful settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, based on Israel's perception of its own interests; it's quite another to allow Israel to pull the United States into a war that the American people are not prepared for and that likely would severely harm America's economic and geopolitical interests.

In political terms, the geopolitical and economic chaos that would be unleashed by such a war probably would upend any president who lacked the fortitude to prevent it. If a global recession and all of its resulting anguish could be attributed, in retrospect, to the president's pusillanimous inability to stand up to an errant ally, new opposition forces would emerge to deal a blow to the incumbent party that could last a decade or more. A good object lesson would be Woodrow Wilson, whose war decisions unleashed such devastation upon the American polity that voters in 1920 repudiated the incumbent party with a magnitude seldom seen in American history.

All of this argues for the American president—either Obama or his successor—to separate his government starkly from the Israeli government on the matter of an attack on Iran. But what about the political backlash? It would be fierce, as anti-Iran hawks and friends of Israel throughout America go on the attack. The pro-Israel lobby would mobilize, and evangelical Christians would swarm into political action like angry hornets. Journalists would speculate widely that the president had destroyed his political standing with Jewish voters. But all this would miss the big picture. On fundamental issues, the politics of national interest often trump the politics of parochial interest. The president would have to explain his action to the American people, but he would move the polls dramatically if he could explain effectively the national stakes involved—a merely restive Middle East vs. absolute chaos; at least a chance for an ongoing, if slow, economic recovery vs. the certainty of a global recession; a proud America protecting its sovereign command over decisions of war and peace vs. a country that cedes those decisions to others; presidential leadership that protects the interests of the American people vs. leadership that loses sight of such things.

The essence of the argument would have to be that it isn't in America's interest to go to war with Iran while the president is pursuing his regimen of economic sanctions and seeking a negotiated solution through the ongoing talks involving Iran and the so-called P5+1 (the United States, Britain, France, China, Russia and Germany). And he isn't willing to cede to other nations U.S. decisions that could result in perhaps thousands of combat deaths for young Americans in an already stretched U.S. military.

The president would win that argument, but first he would have to demonstrate the fortitude to take it forcefully and deftly to the American people.

Such a political victory in turn would transform U.S. relations with Israel. The conventional wisdom in Washington is that interest-group politics, and particularly ethnic-group politics, drive events. That's often true, but not when a national consensus emerges that runs counter to the parochial interests of particular groups. As Woodrow Wilson once wrote, "If [the president] rightly interpret the national thought and boldly insist upon it, he is irresistible."

We have seen in recent years an Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, who sought to outmaneuver the U.S. president by mustering political sentiment against him through speeches to the U.S. Congress and to the AIPAC lobbying group. But that's possible only if pro-Israel Americans can make the case that America's interests and Israel's are always identical, and thus any president who isn't in sync with Israel's national leadership is perforce on the wrong side of domestic politics. Of course the interests of any two nations are never always identical. And if the president successfully can convince the American people that the two nations' interests not only can diverge but have, then the balance of influence in the relationship will change in America's favor. And Netanyahu would have to ponder carefully whether he wants another shot at taking on the U.S. president on his own turf. That's assuming that the diplomatic chastisement represented by the new U.S. diplomacy hasn't led to the collapse of his government in the meantime.

So let's assume Obama believes U.S. and Israeli interests have diverged over Iran and strongly believes his job requires him to protect his country from the consequences of an Israeli strike. What can he do about it? One possibility would be actions akin to what was reported by Yedioth Ahronoth—an understanding with Iran that America would not involve itself in any Israeli attack and would remain neutral in any subsequent Israel-Iran war. This would have the virtue of protecting American interests without impinging upon Israel's own range of options in protecting itself from perceived threats. But it seems unrealistic to think the Iranians would believe America would in fact remain aloof from Israel in such

circumstances or that it could not bring to bear sufficient pressure to forestall such an Israeli attack. This seems like a nonstarter.

That leaves what might be called the Brzezinski option, named after former White House national-security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, who has argued for a U.S. stance that declares firmly and clearly that America will not accept an Israeli attack on Iran because the consequences would be “disastrous” for America and the world—and for Israel too. As Brzezinski points out, polls in Israel show a large majority there opposes a unilateral Israeli strike, particularly if it would harm Israel’s relations with America, and hence a firm American stance would generate serious political pressures on Netanyahu within his own country.

Of course, it isn’t clear that Obama or any future president actually will see events with sufficient clarity to conclude that the United States and Israel are on divergent paths on the matter of Iran. But they are. And, when it comes to America’s vital national interests—particularly when the expenditure of American blood is on the line—the president’s job is to see events with crystal clarity.

Robert W. Merry is editor of [The National Interest](#) and the author of books on American history and foreign policy. His most recent book is [Where They Stand: The American Presidents in the Eyes of Voters and Historians](#) [5] (Simon & Schuster, 2012).

Article 3.

Agence Global

The Collapse of Turkey’s Middle East Policy

Patrick Seale

04 Sep 2012 -- The ‘Arab Spring’ will undoubtedly go down in history as an important moment in the liberation of the Arab peoples from tyranny. But, like most major political upheavals, it has had a number of unfortunate and largely unforeseen consequences.

The economies of Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen have suffered serious damage; Syria’s on-going civil war has resulted in heavy -- and mounting -- civilian casualties and material destruction; in the Sahel, violence and chaos have followed the overthrow of Libya’s Muammar al-Qadhafi,

especially in Mali where Touareg rebels backed by Islamist groups have seized a great chunk of the country; sectarian tensions have sharpened across the region causing all minorities to feel less secure; the Palestine cause has been consigned to the margins of international attention, while Israel, fully backed by the United States, proceeds undisturbed with its land grab.

Turkey is yet another victim of the unforeseen consequence of the Arab Spring: Its ambitious Middle East policy has collapsed. Two years ago, Turkey could claim to be the most successful country in the region. Its economy was booming. Its charismatic Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in power since 2002, enjoyed popularity at home and respect abroad. The Turkish combination of democracy and Islam was hailed as a model for the region. Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, an academic turned statesman, was credited with devising a peaceful regional order, based on the principle of “zero problems with neighbours.” A key pivot of Davutoglu’s new regional order was a Turkish-Syrian partnership, both commercial and political, which soon expanded into a free-trade zone embracing Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan. Visas with these countries were abolished. Meanwhile, Turkish construction companies were active in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, as well as in Qadhafi’s Libya (where contracts were estimated at some \$18bn for roads, bridges, pipelines, ports, airports and much else besides.) Buoyed by these successes, Turkey set about seeking to solve some of the region’s most obdurate conflicts. It tried hard to bring Syria and Israel to the negotiating table. Together with Brazil, it made what seemed a promising advance towards solving the problem of Iran’s nuclear programme. In Afghanistan, Turkish troops were the only foreign forces welcome, which seemed to presage a role for Ankara in negotiating a settlement with the Taleban. In addition, Prime Minister Erdogan had hopes of reaching an entente with Turkey’s old rival, Greece, and of making peace at last with Armenia (a country still smarting from the harsh treatment of Armenians by the Ottoman Turks.) Above all, the Turkish Prime Minister seemed ready to make major political concessions to the Kurds of eastern Anatolia in a bid to end, once and for all, the long and violent struggle with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK), which has claimed tens of thousands of lives.

Then the whole thing fell apart.

The deal which Turkey and Brazil negotiated with Iran over its nuclear facilities was rejected by Washington. Turkey's overtures to Armenia got nowhere: The border remains closed. Turkey quarrelled violently with Israel when Israeli commandos boarded a Turkish ship, the Mavi Marmara, in international waters, and killed nine activists, most of them Turks, who were trying to break Israel's cruel siege of Gaza. Israel has refused to apologise for its brutal behaviour. Turkey's hopes of better relations with Greece were dashed by Greece's economic collapse. Moreover, having quarrelled with Turkey, Israel hurried to embrace Greece, as well as the Greek-speaking Republic of Cyprus, joining with it in the exploitation of gas finds in the eastern Mediterranean, to the anger of Turkish-speaking northern Cyprus and of Turkey itself. On the commercial front, Qadhafi's overthrow put an end to several big Turkish contracts in Libya, while Turkey's expanding business with Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf states was dealt a harsh blow by the disruption of road traffic across Syria due to the uprising there. Turkey's once friendly relations with Iran suffered because they now found themselves on opposite sides of the Syrian conflict, while Turkish relations with Iraq suffered because of Turkey's close ties with the autonomous Kurdish Regional Government in northern Iraq (including providing the KRG with facilities to export oil direct to Turkey, to the fury of Baghdad.) Instead of "no problems with neighbours," Turkey is now beset with grave problems on almost every front. Inevitably, Ahmet Davutoglu's star has waned. No longer the master strategist, he is seen as an amateur politician struggling to survive. The real turning point was Turkey's impetuous decision to back the Syrian rebels against President Bashar al-Asad's regime. At a stroke, Turkey's partnership with Syria collapsed, bringing down the whole of Turkey's Arab policy. Instead of attempting to resolve the Syrian conflict by mediation -- which it was well placed to do -- Turkey took sides. It provided house room in Istanbul for the civilian Syrian opposition and camps for the Free Syrian Army and other fighting groups. Under Turkish protection, the Syrian rebels now control a narrow strip of territory of some 70 kilometres along the Syrian-Turkish border. Turkey and Syria are virtually at war. In retaliation for Turkey's role in channelling funds, weapons and intelligence to the rebels, Syria seems to be encouraging the PKK -- and its Syrian affiliate, the PYD -- to turn up the heat on Turkey.

The PYD has occupied five largely Kurdish towns in northern Syria, from which Syrian government forces were deliberately withdrawn. If Syria's Kurds gain anything like the autonomy already enjoyed by Iraq's Kurds, then Turkey's own Kurds are bound to press their claims for political rights and freedoms. In eastern Turkey, the PKK's 28-year insurgency seems to be springing back to life with deadly ambushes against military targets, such as last Sunday's attack which killed a dozen Turkish soldiers. The struggle to put a lid on Kurdish militancy could once again become Turkey's most painful and disruptive domestic problem.

A real headache for Turkey is the massive influx of Syrian refugees. To stem the flood, Turkey has closed its frontier with Syria for the time being. Syrian refugees in Turkey are said to number over 80,000, lodged in nine tented camps. Five more camps are under construction, which could house another 30,000 refugees. Turkey says it cannot realistically take in more than about 100,000, without help from other countries and international organisations. Hosting the refugees has already cost Turkey an estimated 135 million euros -- and no doubt will cost a great deal more.

Should Turkey revise its Syria policy? Instead of joining in Washington's (and Israel's) war against Tehran and Damascus, Ankara might be well advised to revert back, step by step, to a more neutral stance. Lakhdar Brahimi, the new UN peace envoy, needs Turkey's help in his difficult task of mediating a peaceful resolution of the Syrian conflict. That would be the way to restore Turkey's Middle East policy to its former glory. Turkey needs urgently to rethink its relations with all its neighbours -- Syria first among them.

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Article 4.

The American Interest

Israel and the New Egypt – Is it all bad news?

September 4, 2012 Not surprisingly, Israelis are alarmed at the prospect that their southern neighbor will now be led by the Muslim Brotherhood. Israel lost “the devils it knew”: not only Mubarak, but also his top lieutenants, such as General Omar Suleiman, head of Egypt’s General Intelligence Directorate, with whom Israelis have been dealing for years. They fear that in the new Egypt it may no longer be possible to “close deals” with a very small number of individuals located in the Office of the President and in the security services. They also worry that public opinion will now matter more, and that Egyptian policy toward Israel will be affected to a far greater extent by the sentiments in the Egyptian street, whose hostility toward Israel was given expression by the ransacking of the Israeli Embassy in Cairo in September 2011. Finally, there is fear that Egyptian-Israeli relations will experience a sharp and rapid deterioration. This fear is understandable, given the Brotherhood’s history of rejecting Israel’s right to exist, as well as its formal and vocal opposition to the 1978 Camp David Accords and the 1979 Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty. President Morsi’s August 12 sacking of the top commanders of the Egyptian Military and intelligence services only exacerbates these Israeli concerns. The sacking signaled a further tilt in the internal balance of power in favor of Egypt’s new Brotherhood-dominated civilian leadership at the expense of security chiefs with whom Israel has had decades-long relations.

While these fears and concerns remain valid, the picture emerging some months after the Muslim Brotherhood’s ascent is more complex, presenting risks but also opportunities. Israel and the new Egypt share some important interests that may help preserve the two countries’ relations. These interests are important because Egypt’s new leaders are likely to follow not only their ideological inclinations but also the geostrategic interests of the Egyptian state. (One such key interest is preserving Egypt’s close ties with the United States.) Whether these opportunities will be utilized to preserve if not improve Egyptian-Israeli ties depends not only on the complexities of post-revolutionary Egypt but also on the manner in which Israel will conduct itself—in its relations with Egypt, as well as in other realms that affect Egyptian-Israeli bilateral relations.

The following are a number of key areas where an Egyptian-Israeli shared agenda may emerge.

Hamas in Gaza

Since Hamas was born as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, underestimating the importance of the ideological affinity between the two movements would be a grave mistake. However, the new leadership in Cairo shares with Israel a common interest in avoiding another violent explosion between Israel and Gaza. Israel's interest is clear: It wishes to avoid developments that endanger its citizens in the south and disrupt their daily lives. But Egypt also fears such explosions, because it seeks to avoid developments that might push the problems of Gaza and its population into its own lap. Egypt's concern is that such responsibility would pull it into an unwanted confrontation with Israel instigated by some Hamas action.

One important way to avoid such explosions is for Israel and Hamas to reach a tacit understanding on "rules of the game." This would minimize the danger that, by initiating terror and other attacks, small extremist groups would succeed in embroiling Hamas and Israel in an escalating conflict. Egypt's new leaders have an opportunity to play a positive role here. Whereas until now Egypt's mediation between Israel and Hamas has been limited to negotiating ceasefires and the Shalit prisoner-exchange deal, the new environment offers an opportunity for Egypt to help Israel and Hamas reach such broader understandings.

The understandings suggested here would need to include the creation of mechanisms that would allow Israel and Hamas to explain to one another the steps they may take in an evolving crisis, so as to avoid misunderstandings that lead to inadvertent escalation. Such escalation has occurred in recent past, when Israel reacted to attacks launched by small extremist groups in the Sinai by punishing elements of Hamas in Gaza. Another important possible task for Egypt would be to play a more effective role in fostering internal Palestinian reconciliation. Playing such a role in a manner that does not clash with Israel's interests would require that both Israel and Hamas reframe their approaches to this issue. Israel would need to acknowledge that it has an interest in such reconciliation producing a single Palestinian address with which Israel can reach understandings, even if limited to practical matters falling short of full

resolution of the conflict. Within this context, Israel should further liberalize the arrangements guiding movements of goods to and from Gaza. In turn, Hamas would need to allow the creation of a new Palestinian government that would not be committed to implementing Hamas' ideology and would not include acknowledged members of the movement. In the latter case, Israel would need to reciprocate by accepting that the Quartet's three preconditions for engagement would apply to the post-reconciliation new Palestinian government, not to the Hamas movement.

The Sinai Peninsula

The chaos in the Sinai Peninsula challenges both Israel and Egypt. As has already been demonstrated, extremist groups exploiting the chaos in the Sinai to launch terror attacks against Israel can exact a heavy toll on the Jewish state. In addition, chaos in the Sinai invites human trafficking, thus exacerbating Israel's problem of rising illegal immigration. Yet such chaos also challenges Egypt directly, as was made clear by the August 5 attack on an Egyptian army outpost, which claimed 16 Egyptian lives. More broadly, Egypt's sovereignty over Sinai—the restoration of which cost the Egyptians tens of thousands of lives during the 1970 War of Attrition and the 1973 War—has now been compromised, surrendered to an odd amalgamation of Bedouin tribes, Palestinian extremist groups, and al-Qaeda affiliated cells.

Thus Egypt and Israel share an interest in preventing the Sinai Peninsula from becoming a base for, and a magnet attracting, radical groups. For this reason, Israel has a national security interest in Egypt's taking measures to restore and reassert its sovereignty over the Sinai. At the same time, Israel fears that an Egyptian deployment of forces in the Sinai that significantly exceeds the limitations stipulated in the 1979 Peace Treaty would be a slippery slope. Forces ostensibly deployed against radical groups in the Peninsula may "forget" to leave.

Muslim Brotherhood spokesmen have argued that, at a minimum, the security protocol of the 1979 treaty needs to be revised. This represents a turn to pragmatism, as the Brotherhood's leaders no longer call for abrogating the treaty. Yet Israelis understandably fear that opening up the treaty for revisions may prove to be just as slippery a slope.

A different Israeli approach might transform this risk to an opportunity. This could be the case if such a discussion would result in the new

affirmation of the treaty, this time by an Egypt led by the Muslim Brotherhood. Indeed, the added legitimacy bestowed by the Brotherhood's tacit acceptance of the treaty may even be worth some Israeli acceptance of changes in its security protocol.

Syria and Iran

On matters related to Iran and Syria, the geostrategic interests of Israel and Egypt do not collide. In his inaugural address, and more recently in his [August 30 speech at the Non-Aligned Movement in Tehran](#), President Morsi placed Egypt squarely with the opponents of Bashar Assad's regime and thus in opposition to Iran's efforts to save it. Indeed, with regard to the challenges that the civil war in Syria present, Israel and Egypt seem to share two important objectives: defeating Iran's efforts to expand its influence in the region, and avoiding Syria's becoming even more chaotic than the Sinai and thus an even more dangerous magnet for the most extreme Islamist groups and cells, al-Qaeda-affiliated or not.

Egypt under Muslim Brotherhood leadership seems to view the Syria issue from two perspectives. As a leader of the Sunni Arab world, Egypt was clearly unhappy with the inroads that Shi'a Iran has made in the region, especially after the balance of power in the Gulf was destroyed by the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Iran's support of Hezbollah was particularly troubling, culminating in the April 2010 discovery of a Hezbollah cell in Egypt. And Assad's Syria was seen as an indispensable transport route for Iran's support of Hezbollah.

Equally challenging are the prospects that post-revolutionary Syria would become a focal point for the region's Sunni Arab extremists in much the same way Iraq has experienced in the aftermath of the 2003 invasion. The reemergence of such groups, this time in Syria, will challenge the Brotherhood as the leading authority in the world of Sunni political Islam. While Ennahada in Tunisia and the Brotherhood in Egypt have now come to represent one way to replace the old autocratic regimes of the Arab world, al-Qaeda represents the opposite approach.

These two critically important Egyptian interests are not incongruent with the manner in which Israel's view of the Syrian scene has evolved in recent months. In turn, this provides an opportunity for Israel and Egypt's new leaders to share their assessments, directly or through their respective professional bodies. While these shared interests would not necessarily

translate into practical modes of cooperation, they at least point to the possibility that Israel and new Egypt may have common regional perspectives.

Palestinian-Israeli Peace?

Possibly the most intriguing question is whether Egypt can play a positive role in resuscitating the efforts to achieve Palestinian-Israeli Peace. The individuals handling the Palestinian file in Mubarak's Egypt were sensitive to Israel's concerns but not uncritical of Israeli policies. As noted earlier, the political leaders of post-Mubarak Egypt have very different sentiments. While clearly problematic from Israel's standpoint, the Brotherhood's track-record also gives it an opportunity to play a positive role in an effort to rekindle the stalemated peace process. Enjoying a level of credibility and influence with Hamas that the Mubarak regime lacked, Egypt's new leaders can help renew the peace efforts by impressing upon Hamas the utility of joining such efforts instead of opposing them.

Yet for this more positive potential role for Egypt to materialize, Israel would need to adopt a more nuanced and creative approach. While not blind to the risks involved in trying to bridge or at least tactically bypass its ideological differences with Hamas and the broader Brotherhood movement, a new Israeli approach would need to recognize the enormous benefits of any agreement with the Palestinians that would win the acceptance, if not endorsement, of the leading forces of political Islam. The suggestions here point to the possibility that, despite the ideological gap dividing Israel and the new Muslim Brotherhood-led Egypt, they may have interests that coincide. This in turn opens new opportunities for preserving the two countries' relations, if not necessarily improving them. Due to the sensitivities involved, exploiting these opportunities would require that Israel approach this task with a great deal of finesse and a willingness to act quietly.

Article 5.

The Daily Beast

Giving Up

Peter Beinart

September 4, 2012 -- When it comes to Israel, the American Jewish right won't take yes for an answer. Today the Democrats released their party platform, and almost instantly, neoconservatives became apoplectic, with the Washington Post's Jennifer Rubin [dubbing](#) it the "most radically unsupportive statement of policy on Israel by a major U.S. party since the founding of the state of Israel."

The reason? In 2008, the Democratic [platform](#) said America and its allies would "continue to isolate Hamas until it renounces terrorism, recognizes Israel's right to exist and abides by past agreements." This time, the [platform](#) merely said that "we will insist that any Palestinian partner must recognize Israel's right to exist, reject violence, and adhere to existing agreements" but didn't mention Hamas by name. In 2008, the platform said that "Jerusalem is and will remain the capital of Israel" and that the city's status "is a matter for final status negotiations." This year, the platform didn't mention Jerusalem at all.

But in their desperation to paint Obama as Norman Finklestein in a better suit, Rubin and co. are missing the reality under their nose: The main difference between the 2008 and the 2012 platforms is that the latter deemphasizes the Palestinian issue altogether. The real message of the Democrats' 2012 platform is exactly the one Republicans have been longing to hear: We give up.

Compare the 2008 and 2012 platforms side by side. In 2008, the Democrats began their Israel section with the peace process: "For more than three decades, Israelis, Palestinians, Arab leaders, and the rest of the world have looked to America to lead the effort to build the road to a secure and lasting peace." Then it went on to say how much America loves Israel. The 2012 platform, by contrast, starts with Israel love and spends an entire paragraph elaborating on it without ever mentioning the Palestinians. In 2008, in other words, America's support for Israel was defined as a means towards the larger goal of Israel-Palestinian peace. In 2012, support for Israel is an end in itself.

And even when the 2012 platform does mention the peace process, it doesn't convey nearly the same urgency. In 2008, the Democrats pledged to "take an active role to help secure a lasting settlement of the Israel-

Palestinian conflict.” In 2012, the word “active” is gone, replaced with the weaker formulation: “President Obama and the Democratic Party seek peace between Israelis and Palestinians.” In 2008, the platform insisted that “sustained American leadership for peace and security will require patient efforts and the personal commitment of the President of the United States.” This year, there is no such pledge of “personal” presidential “commitment,” just a formulaic promise to “continue to encourage all parties to be resolute in the pursuit of peace.”

In fact, the Israel-Palestine section of this year’s platform is about 70 words shorter than it was in 2008. That’s the reason it doesn’t specifically mention Jerusalem and Hamas. It’s not that Obama and company are hatching a bold plan to force Israel into concessions more dramatic than the ones they wanted in 2008. They’re not hatching anything at all, which is why this Democratic platform—unlike the last one—doesn’t go into detail about the terms of a two state deal.

At root, the 2012 platform is an admission of defeat. In 2008, the Israel section began with a rousing declaration of American leadership: “For more than three decades, Israelis, Palestinians, Arab leaders, and the rest of the world have looked to America to lead the effort to build the road to a secure and lasting peace.” Now there’s no such statement. And for good reason: Today the world no longer looks to America to lead a peace process. From Europe to Turkey to Egypt, America’s current and former allies have largely given up on the U.S.-led peace process, and the 2012 platform is yet more evidence that the Obama administration has essentially given up on it too.

So don’t fret, Jennifer Rubin. Rejoice! Team Obama is all but acknowledging that in a second term, the two state solution will be an afterthought. Which should make Hamas very happy indeed.

Article 6.

Project Syndicate

Asian Nationalism at Sea

Joseph S. Nye

3 September 2012 -- Will war break out in the seas of East Asia? After Chinese and Japanese nationalists staged competing occupations of the barren landmasses that China refers to as the Diaoyu Islands and Japan calls the Senkaku Islands, angry demonstrators in the southwestern Chinese city of Chengdu chanted, "We must kill all Japanese."

Likewise, a standoff between Chinese and Philippine vessels in the Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea led to protests in Manila. And a long planned step forward in cooperation between South Korea and Japan was torpedoed when the South Korean president visited the barren island that Korea calls Dokdo, Japan calls Takeshima, and the United States calls the Liancourt Rocks.

One should not be too alarmist. The US has declared that the Senkaku Islands (administered by the Okinawa Prefecture when it was returned to Japan in 1972) are covered by the US-Japan security treaty. Meanwhile, the standoff over the Scarborough Shoal has calmed down, and, while Japan recalled its ambassador from South Korea over the Dokdo incident, it is unlikely the two countries would come to blows.

But it is worth recalling that China used lethal force to expel Vietnamese from the Paracel Islands in 1974 and 1988. And China prevailed upon the Cambodian host of this year's ASEAN summit to block a final communiqué that would have called for a code of conduct in the South China Sea – the first time in the ten-member association's four-decade history that it failed to issue a communiqué.

The revival of extreme nationalism in East Asia is both worrisome and understandable. In Europe, while Greeks may grumble about the terms of German backing for emergency financing, the period since World War II has seen enormous progress in knitting countries together. Nothing similar has happened in Asia, and issues dating back to the 1930's and 1940's remain raw, a problem exacerbated by biased textbooks and government policies.

The Chinese Communist Party is not very communist any more. Instead, it bases its legitimacy on rapid economic growth and ethnic Han nationalism. Memories of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 and Japanese aggression

in the 1930's are politically useful and fit within a larger theme of Chinese victimization by imperialist forces.

Some American defense analysts view China's maritime strategy as being clearly aggressive. They point to increasing defense expenditures and the development of missile and submarine technology designed to cordon off the seas extending from China's coast to "the first island chain" of Taiwan and Japan.

Others, however, see a Chinese strategy that is confused, contradictory, and paralyzed by competing bureaucratic interests. They point to the negative results of China's more assertive policies since the economic crisis of 2008. Indeed, China's policies have damaged its relations with nearly all of its neighbors.

Consider the Senkaku incident in 2010, when, after Japan arrested the crew of a Chinese trawler that had rammed a Japanese coast guard vessel, China escalated its economic reprisals. The result, as one Japanese analyst put it, was that "China scored an own goal," immediately reversing what had been a favorable trend in bilateral relations under the ruling Democratic Party of Japan. More generally, while China spends billions of renminbi in efforts to increase its soft power in Asia, its behavior in the South China Sea contradicts its own message.

I have asked Chinese friends and officials why China follows such a counterproductive strategy. The first and formal answer is that China inherited historical territorial claims, including a map from the Nationalist period that sketches a "nine-dotted line" encompassing virtually the entire South China Sea. Today, with technology making underwater as well as fisheries resources more exploitable in the area, it is impossible to abandon this patrimony. In 2009-2010, some mid-ranking officials and commentators even referred to the South China Sea as a sovereign "core interest" like Taiwan or Tibet.

But China's leaders have never been clear about the exact location of the "nine-dotted line," or about whether their claims refer only to certain land features, or also to more extensive continental shelves and seas. When asked why they do not clarify their claims, my Chinese interlocutors sometimes say that to do so would require difficult political and bureaucratic compromises that would provoke domestic nationalists.

Moreover, sometimes they say that they do not want to give away a bargaining chip prematurely. In 1995, and again in 2010, the US declared that the waters of the South China Sea should be governed by the 1982 United Nations Law of the Seas Treaty (which, ironically, the US has not yet ratified), but that the US takes no position on the territorial claims. Instead, the US urged that competing claims be resolved through negotiation.

In 2002, China and ASEAN agreed on a legally non-binding code of conduct for managing such disputes, but, as a large power, China believes that it will gain more in bilateral rather than multilateral negotiations with small countries. That belief was behind China's pressure on Cambodia to block ASEAN's final communiqué this summer.

But this is a mistaken strategy. As a large power, China will have great weight in any circumstance, and it can reduce its self-inflicted damage by agreeing to a code of conduct.

As for the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, the best proposal comes from The Economist. China should refrain from sending official vessels into Japanese waters, and use a hotline with Japan to manage crises generated by nationalist "cowboys." At the same time, the two countries should revive a 2008 framework for joint development of disputed gas fields in the East China Sea, and Japan's central government should purchase the barren islands from their private owner and declare them an international maritime protected area.

It is time for all countries in East Asia to remember Winston Churchill's famous advice: "To jaw-jaw is always better than to war-war."

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Article 7.

NYT

It's Mitt's World

[Thomas L. Friedman](#)

September 4, 2012 -- Mitt Romney has been criticized for not discussing foreign policy. Give him a break. He probably figures he's already said all that he needs to say during the primaries: He has a big stick, and he is going to use it on Day 1. Or as he put it: "If ■■■ president of the United States ... on Day 1, I will declare China a currency manipulator, allowing me to put tariffs on products where they are stealing American jobs unfairly."

That is really cool. Smack China on Day 1. I just wonder what happens on Day 2 when China, the biggest foreign buyer of U.S. debt securities, announces that it will not participate in the next Treasury auction, sending our interest rates soaring. That will make Day 3 really, really cool.

Welcome to the Romney foreign policy, which ■■■ call: "George W. Bush abroad — the cartoon version."

I know Romney doesn't believe a word he's saying on foreign policy and that it's all aimed at ginning up votes: there's some China-bashing to help in the Midwest, some Arab-bashing to win over the Jews, some Russia-bashing (our "No. 1 geopolitical foe") to bring in the Polish vote, plus a dash of testosterone to keep the neocons off his back.

What's odd is that Romney was in a position to sound smart on foreign policy, not like a knee-jerk hawk. He just needed to explain what every global business leader learned long before governments did — that, since the end of the cold war, the world has become not just more interconnected but more interdependent, and this new structural reality requires a new kind of American leadership. Why?

In this increasingly interdependent world, your "allies" can hurt you as much as your "enemies." After all, the biggest threats to President Obama's re-election are whether little Greece pulls out of the euro zone and triggers a global economic meltdown or whether Israel attacks Iran and does the same.

In this increasingly interdependent world, your rivals can threaten you as much by collapsing as by rising. Think of what would happen to U.S. markets and jobs if China's growth slowed to a crawl and there was internal instability there?

In this increasingly interdependent world, we have few pure “enemies” anymore: Iran, North Korea, Cuba, Al Qaeda, the Taliban. But we have many “frenemies,” or half friends/half foes. While the Pentagon worries about a war with China, the Commerce Department is trying to get China to buy more Boeing planes and every American university worth its salt is opening a campus in Beijing; meanwhile, the Chinese are investing in American companies left and right. President Hugo Chávez of Venezuela is the biggest thorn in America’s side in Latin America and a vital source of our imported oil. The U.S. and Russia are on opposing sides in Syria, but the U.S. supported Russia joining the World Trade Organization and American businesses are lobbying Congress to lift cold war trade restrictions on Russia so they can take advantage of its more open market. Think of Egypt. I was critical of Egypt’s new president, Mohamed Morsi, from the Muslim Brotherhood, for attending the Nonaligned Movement summit meeting in Iran. I argued that he was giving legitimacy to an Iranian regime that had crushed the very kind of democratic movement that brought Morsi to power. But Morsi surprised me, for the better, by using his visit to Tehran to call out the Iranian leadership for supporting Syria’s “oppressive” regime. The Iranians were livid. You can be sure that, on other days, Morsi will say and do things that will give us indigestion. We still need Egypt’s strategic support in the region. It still needs our economic aid. But a more democratic, Muslim Brotherhood-led Egypt will not behave like the automatic ally it was before. We’ll need a new kind of relationship. It will be complicated.

But that’s today’s world, and the leadership challenge it poses is easy to describe but hard to pull off. If the world is more interdependent, how do we create healthy interdependencies so we rise together, rather than unhealthy interdependencies so we fall together? The 2008 global economic crisis was an example of an unhealthy interdependency. So is the failure to reach any kind of global climate agreement. When we bring Russia into the World Trade Organization, we’re creating a healthy interdependency. When Russia protects Syria’s dictator, even when he’s crushing his own people, it’s creating an unhealthy interdependency.

The best way for an American president to forge healthy interdependencies is, first, to get our own house in order and gain the leverage — in terms of resources and moral authority — that come from leading by example. For

instance, Romney is right: there are unhealthy aspects to the U.S.-China interdependency that need working on, but they are not all China's fault. We would have more leverage to build a more healthy relationship if we saved more, consumed less, studied harder and got our own banks to behave less recklessly.

Republicans love to criticize Obama for "leading from behind." But if you're not leading by example in an interdependent world, you can lead from the front or behind — no one will follow you for long.