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Article 1.

Tablet Magazine

The Triangle Connecting the U.S., Israel, and American Jewry May Be Coming Apart

Adam Garfinkle

November 5, 2013 -- American Jewry is in for a real shock: The "special relationship" between the United States and Israel is fast eroding. The strategic, cultural, and demographic alignments that gave rise to and sustained for more than half a century the special relationship between the United States and Israel are all changing. These changes have independent sources, and the relevant dynamics are playing out in different ways and at different rates. But make no mistake: They are connected to and influence one another.

The simple understanding of how the special relationship works is linear: American Jews go to bat in American politics for Israeli interests, as they understand them, because Israeli interests are believed to be inseparable from Jewish interests. This is the "lobby" model, and we recognize its appurtenances: the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, and a galaxy of smaller, sometimes explicitly partisan groups, from J Street to the Emergency Committee for Israel. In truth, however, the relationship consists of a metaphorical triangle linking American Jewry with the governments of Israel and the United States. In the natural course of political events, all three actors intermediate between the other two, for good and ill. For example, even as American Jews lobby for Israel in American politics, Israeli governments sometimes get between American Jews and their own government: Jonathan Pollard is one example, and the loan guarantee fight during the George H.W. Bush Administration is another. So is the more contemporary effort of the Israeli government to put AIPAC and other American Jewish groups much further out on their skis in advocating a hawkish policy toward Iran than either the George W. Bush or Barack Obama Administrations have considered wise. But the U.S. government sometimes musses with the relationship between Israel and American Jewry, too, even if only as a side effect of pursuing other objectives. The recent peripeties concerning the Obama Administration's prospective military strike on Syria furnish a case in point: While that awkward dance was stumbling across the floor in its earlier steps, Israel and hence AIPAC kept unusually quiet, lest taking a position in favor of a strike put them both on the wrong side of strongly opposed American public opinion. When the White House asked Israel to voice support for military action, it complied, quickly making AIPAC's soundtrack audible.

When the president did his 180, dropping his plans to strike in favor of a Russian-brokered chemical-weapons inspection regime, it left both Israel and AIPAC hung out to dry. Israel's detractors in the United States did not miss the opportunity to excoriate the Jews both here and there, deepening the division within American Jewry between those who are comfortable with AIPAC's relationship with a right-of-center Israeli government and those who are not. Over time, the dynamics of the triangular relationship have changed the character of the three actors themselves—most of all American Jewry. Let's take a side-by-side look.

1↔2: American Jewry-Israel

In the first three decades of Israel's existence as a modern independent state, there was very little daylight between it and the overwhelming majority of American Jews. The reasons were several, but chief among them was the fact that these were the same people. The majority of the American Jewish community and of the pre-state Yishuv were European Jews, and mostly Central or East European Jews. The movement out of the Russian Empire beginning in the 1880s and 1890s, after the May Laws, flowed both to North America and to Palestine. In the postwar years, religious Jews in North America felt a keen affinity with religious Jews in Israel, just as most progressive, secular, socialist-minded Jews in North America felt an affinity with Labor Zionism. When Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook figured a way to entwine Zionism with Orthodox Judaism, he helped bridge the practical gap between secular and religious, and at the same time he created a kind of stereoscopic resonance between Jews in Eretz Yisrael and Jews in America. The experience of the Shoah dramatically annealed these changes in the context of a radical shift in global Jewish demography. Even for most secular Jews, the Zionist project took on a transhistorical sense of purpose in the ashen shadow of the Holocaust. Never had divisions among Jews in the modern era seemed as insignificant as they did between 1939 and 1959. And American Jews had objective reason to take pride in the heroic history of Zionism, both before and after May 1948. That history, with its narrative of an oppressed people yearning to be free in their own land, seemed to echo many facets of the American civil religion and, in due course, the equally heroic struggle embodied in the Cold War—especially once Israel and the United States began constructing their special strategic relationship in the mid to late

1960s. Just as important, Israel's underdog status in the region resonated strongly with the underdog self-image of American Jewry; it was important that American Jews believe Israel needed them, and, in fact, it did. Finally, for first- and second-generation American Jews, intermarriage rates were vastly more modest and Jewish-educational attainments were superior on average to what they have become today, when a record percentage of self-identifying American Jews receive no religious education at all. The gossamer thread of Jewish memory that binds the generations one to another, while always thin and vulnerable, was much stronger 40 years ago than it is today.

Much else has also changed. The horrors of the Holocaust and the unalloyed heroic phase of Zionist history are fading into history, as is the sense of common kindred ties between American Jews and Jewish Israelis. As a state with a strong economy and a strong military, Israel no longer needs American Jews as it once did, even as American Jews need Israel a lot more than they once did. It has already been three and a half decades since some prominent Israelis, notably Yossi Beilin, told American Jews to stop buying Israel bonds—because the cost of processing the things exceeded the value of the money being borrowed—and to use the money instead to seriously educate their children as Jews and Zionists. American Jews eventually got the "Birthright" program out of that tête-à-tête, which has been a great success, but little else. Older American Jews still have problems getting used to the idea that Israel no longer needs their ministrations and money. Meanwhile, young American Jews are increasingly alienated from Israel in rough proportion to their lack of Jewish education and affiliation, and particularly so if they hold left-wing views that increasingly depict Israel in a negative light. The argument, however, that anti-Semitism is the main cause of assimilation is nonsense; to the contrary, the relative absence of anti-Semitism in America, certainly compared to a half century ago, removes a thick layer of in-group loyalty glue that is actually accelerating the assimilationist and intermarriage trends. Israel's domestic politics has contributed to the growing divide, too, by allowing the Orthodox rabbinate to dominate the issue of conversion to Judaism—and in increasingly ahistorical, extreme ways—thus alienating large numbers of American Jewish families with members who were converted according to Jewish law, but not by the "right" kind of rabbis.

Anyone who is honest about it knows that American Jewish demography is shattering. As the most recent Pew data vividly demonstrate, the overall weight of a numerically shrinking community is shifting to modern- and ultra-Orthodoxy, while the demographic bottom is dropping out of so-called liberal Judaism. Something similar, though not for the same reasons or in the same way, is happening in Israel, and a more visibly religious Israel is not attracting the affinity of nonreligious American Jews as the tanned and taut kova tembel-hatted kibbutzniks of the 1950s and 1960s once did. As Orthodox Jews become Israel's most fervent supporters on the American scene, less religious and less knowledgeable Jews are feeling more awkward taking up the same cause, especially if their closest gentile peers exhibit jaundiced attitudes toward Israel. The emergence of counter-lobbies like J Street, and the growing prominence in intellectual and academic circles of Jews who criticize Israel publicly in the name of a kinder, gentler Zionism, are all symptoms of the general phenomenon. J Street provides room for young liberal Jews to express support for Israel, and that is to the good. But there is no way—even for themselves sometimes—to tell if they are sincere or if they are instead subtle practitioners of what Hannah Arendt once so shrewdly described as the arts of the parvenu. The mere existence of such Jewish voices makes it more acceptable for non-Jews to criticize Israel out of a host of motives, and that in turn raises a cost for rank-and-file American Jews to be vocal supporters of Israel. That's not how it used to be. There is, in short, plenty of daylight between American Jewry and Israel, and the torrid sun is starting to burn us. There's no reason to expect any abatement of the trend.

2➷3: Israel -U.S.

The U.S. and Israeli governments under successive administrations in both countries have had a direct strategic relationship that operates on a different plain from American (and Israeli) domestic politics. That relationship between executive branches has always turned more on "hard" geopolitical considerations, while aspects of the special relationship below that level has tended to give pride of place to "soft" aspects of cultural affinity. The "hard" strategic relationship has proceeded in two major phases since 1948, with a transition period in between, but it was born in a classic Jewcentric drama when President Harry Truman rejected the advice and analysis of his Secretary of State, George Marshall, and many other

senior members of his administration to enthusiastically support the birth of the State of Israel. For Truman, the Jews of America stood for the Jewish people in history as mediated through the prism of Anglo-American Protestantism. Truman actually cried when Chief Ashkenazic Rabbi Yitzhak Herzog told him, during his White House visit on May 11, 1949, what the president had done, in broad meta-historical terms, for the Jewish people. In a private meeting after Truman left the White House, he replied to the thanks offered by the head of the Jewish Theological Seminary by answering his host, "What do you mean 'helped' create [Israel]? I am Cyrus; I am Cyrus!"

But after Truman left office in January 1953, Israel came to be viewed by official Washington as a strategic liability—a barrier to improving relations with the Arabs and other Muslim-majority countries so as to keep them safe from the designs of Soviet Communism. John Foster Dulles' delusions notwithstanding, American Jewry was virtually powerless back then to deflect that narrative from the high offices in which it had gained pride of place; it was reinforced at the time by the oil lobby, which partly explains U.S. policy during the 1956 Suez crisis. Things began to change even before the Eisenhower Administration ended and then accelerated during the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations. Again the reasons were several. By the mid-1960s the mirage of creating close relations between the United States and the "progressive" regimes of the region, especially Gamal Abdel Nasser's Egypt, had dissipated, while Israel's development successes and its Western liberal aura under successive social-democratic Labor governments aligned nicely with the ethos of the New Frontier and the Great Society.

The second phase of the relationship, in which Israel came to be considered a strategic asset, crystallized after the June 1967 war, in which Israel defeated two Middle Eastern clients of the Soviet Union and tarnished the Red star in Arab eyes. That is when the Johnson Administration first supplied Israel with major military platforms, notably its air power, after the French government cut Israel off. Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger subsequently reasoned that the United States must not allow the Soviet Union to aid its clients at Israel's expense, and so from 1969-70 onward the United States expanded military aid to Israel in most every form. The rationale was that no peace negotiation between the Jews and the Arabs

could succeed so long as the Arabs believed they had a potentially successful military option courtesy of the USSR. U.S. support for Israel, then, would defeat Soviet regional strategy and create the preconditions for peace, and peace would in turn serve U.S. interests by stabilizing the region to general Western advantage in the Cold War. The shift in U.S. strategy led first to Anwar Sadat booting the Soviet presence out of Egypt in July 1972. When the United States and Israel failed to respond to Sadat's shift, it set in motion what became the October 1973 war. But U.S. policy led ultimately to the March 1979 Israel-Egypt peace treaty. From then until the end of the Cold War, the strong U.S. position in the region validated the Nixon-Kissinger strategic narrative. Despite some prominent but highly ahistorical claims to the contrary made after 9/11, and despite several neuralgic but usually brief episodes of U.S.-Israeli friction, U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East between 1967 and 1991 was a rousing success by any reasonable measure.

With no Cold War, however, is Israel still a strategic asset to the United States? Just look around at the spate of post-1991 "greater" Middle Eastern "episodes"—Iraq, Afghanistan, Iraq again, Libya, Syria, Egypt and, prospectively, Iran. In which of these cases could Israel be aptly characterized on balance as a useful ally of the United States? It is true that Israel helps out in several general ways—intelligence sharing, joint maneuvers, weapons and tactics testing, porting—but in crises it is reduced to bystander status for the most part. In most of the episodes listed above Israel has been either irrelevant or somewhere between a complication and an inadvertent nuisance. The general lack of fit between American interests in the region and Israel's utility as an ally in the post-Cold War era helps explain why we hear so many general remonstrations about a shared interest in democracy and in fighting terrorism and countering the proliferation of nuclear and chemical weapons, especially Iranian ones. It all happens to be true, but it only needs to be articulated so publicly and so often because the opportunities for actionable strategic alignment where it counts most—at specific sparking points of geopolitical engagement—are so meager.

This also accounts for the traction the "Israel lobby" thesis has gotten recently. The argument is not remotely new. The same arguments Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer hauled out in 2008 had been rehearsed many

times before, including by George Ball, one of the most prominent American diplomats of the postwar era, in a 1992 book titled The Passionate Attachment. But none of the earlier efforts had much clout. More than a decade removed from the end of the Cold War, however, the most recent visitation of this old argument has had a tangible impact, not least in the bowels of the American military and intelligence communities. Again, whether one credits the arguments or not, the point is that they have gained traction for a reason: the tectonic shift of the strategic landscape with the end of the Cold War.

3↘1: U.S.-American Jewry

The decay of the first two sides of the triangle that constitutes the special relationship is no revelation. Honest observers know most or all of this to one degree or another. But the deterioration of the third side is less well understood or acknowledged. The relationship between American Jews—and through them Israel—and American society at large is also changing. As with Harry Truman—and Lyndon Johnson, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush after him—large numbers of Americans, from the very beginning of the European settlement of North America, came from a branch of Anglo-Protestant stock that made them sensitive to the narrative of Jewish election and the unique, divinely ordained role of the Jews in history. The Christian Zionism and generic Judeophilia of Anglo-American Protestantism is well documented. Indeed, it is not too much to say that the Christian Zionism advocated by Lord Shaftesbury, John Nelson Darby, Laurence Oliphant, William Eugene Blackstone, and many others preceded the advent of modern Jewish Zionism. We see a reflection of this thinking today, of course, in the American Evangelical community.

There has been anti-Semitism in America's past, to be sure, but there has been less of it than in any other Euro-Christian-based culture. And when it was at its most virulent in the post-mass immigration period of the 1920s and 1930s, its most notable vanguard was no Protestant but rather the Irish Catholic priest Father Coughlin. To one degree or another, all of David Hackett Fisher's hearth cultures, so brilliantly laid out in his Albion's Seed, were Judeophilic—and that habit of the heart also came down in large part to black Americans through the African-Methodist and other churches. This cultural inheritance goes far to explain the affinity of most Americans today with Israel. Ironically enough, intermarriage constitutes a new factor

pointed in the same direction, as ever more non-Jews acquire Jewish relatives and, accurately or not, presume their attachment to Israel. It also explains why politicians are reluctant to take anti-Israel positions: They are not just covetous of Jewish support; they know that there are far more Christian voters with strong feelings on the subject than there are Jews.
But this, too, is gradually but ineluctably changing. Just as the affinity between Jews and typical Americans will decline as American Jewry's public face becomes more religious, so that affinity will lessen from the other direction as American society becomes less Anglo, less avowedly religious, and especially less Protestant. Both non-Christians and non-Protestant Christians lack traditions of Judeophilia comparable to that of most Protestants, whose Abrahamic, Scripturalist focus makes them more familiar with the Hebrew Bible and more sympathetic with the rhythms and lessons of Jewish history. The percentage of Americans who identify as Protestants fell from 53 percent in 2007 to 48 percent in 2012; sometime during those years the majority of Americans ceased being Protestant for the first time since the birth of the Republic. Given immigration statistics and birthrates, that trend will not only not be reversed, it will accelerate.
The data show too that the United States as a whole is fast approaching the point where non-"white" minorities will collectively outnumber "whites," as is already the case in some states and in many large cities and counties. Political consultants for both major parties are keenly aware of these trends, of course, and are plotting strategies accordingly. It may not be fair or justifiable, but a lot of minority people think that Jews are "white" but Palestinians and Arabs are "people of color." The latter are also depicted frequently as oppressed and downtrodden at the hands of "white" Jews in Israel and "white" imperialists elsewhere. As American demography shifts away from "white" Protestants, the narrative of American electoral politics with regard to the Middle East is certain to reflect that change.
Even in the Democratic Party, the political home of the vast majority of American Jews since the days of Franklin Roosevelt, rising tones of anti-Israel sentiment can be discerned. Famously, when some delegates to the 2012 Democratic National Convention raised the idea of putting a move of the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem on the party platform, a cascade of boos and hisses erupted from the assembled delegate crowd.
Meanwhile, Jews, like most Americans, are increasingly likely to identify

as independents, and Jews have become increasingly visible in the Republican Party—a fact liable to dilute Jewish political clout as much as or more than the overall shrinking of the size of the community.

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Not all these changes will be bad. The strategic side of the triangle that connects Israel and the United States is a case in point. A little more normalcy in the U.S.-Israel relationship could have several benign effects. Israel has other potential partners in the world, and spreading out Israel's diplomatic-strategic portfolio is probably a good thing in the long term. But some of those new relationships cannot mature because Israel's ties to the United States constrain their possibilities—sales of military technology spring to mind as a case in point. The March 2002 cancellations of Israel's Phalcon AWACs deal with China is the best-known example, but there are plenty of others.

Certainly, too, as far as U.S.-Israel relations go, these changes are hardly likely to be catastrophic. There will be no complete flip from a specially intimate relationship to an especially horrendous one. Adjustments will be incremental and hardly pandemonic in character. The special relationship of the past four to five decades has been highly anomalous, and nothing that anomalous lasts for long in human affairs.

But many American Jews, who read history in very broad and emotional brushstrokes, tend not to think that way. They are often "flippists," oscillating sharply between exaltation and the darkest pessimism—which aligns with a tendency to believe that anyone who does not agree entirely with their version of Middle Eastern realities must be an enemy, whether an anti-Semite or a "self-hating" Jew. They are not so inclined, as Jews have mostly been in other places and other ages, to say, "This too shall pass." They are instead afflicted by a "gevalt complex" and so are often to be found playing Chicken Little, claiming that the sky is falling or that it fell yesterday but you are too dense to have noticed.

There is a reason for the "gevalt complex": That mode of thinking tells us that what amount to religious beliefs are at stake, but not the ones you may think. Since the 1967 War, if not before, non-halakhic Jews in America (and not a few halakhic ones as well) have created, mostly without realizing it or meaning to, a shallow politicized version of Judaism that has made Israel into a substitute deity and the Holocaust that deity's liturgy.

This explains the most recent Pew poll's finding that vastly more self-identifying Jews than before feel Jewish but are not religious and don't believe in God: Their identity ensemble has become political.
Jacob Neusner and others started warning many decades ago that this faux-Judaism is incapable of transmitting genuine Jewish memory to future generations, and they have been proven correct by all the data we now have on assimilation and intermarriage. The reasons are not hard to identify. Of God there are many mysteries, but of any and every political entity, including Israel as a real country rather than as a beatified idol, there are many misanthropies. And what healthy child wants to associate with a community seemingly obsessed with mass murder and eternal victimhood? If indeed the majority of Jews in America need Israel for purposes of their own communal coherence and individual self-esteem far more than Israel needs them, and if their corporate sense of place within American society depends to some degree on that connection, then the decay of the two sides of the triangle to which American Jewry is connected presages a tragedy of that community's own making. Less American Jewish support for a more religious, right-of-center Israel will abet a diminishing affinity between Jewish and American sensibilities that are growing apart from both ends. The erosion of these affinities falls into a strategic context in which "hard" strategic factors no longer parallel and reinforce "soft" cultural ones as they once did. The diminution of strategic closeness between the United States and Israel is doubling back to widen internal American-Jewish and American Jewry-Israel divisions, as well. We may be witnessing the intermediate stages of a death spiral, where the tighter that community wants to hold on to its image of the State of Israel, and to the state's historical prolegomenon in the Holocaust, the more damage it does to itself. That's the way, it would seem, the triangle crumbles.

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Article 2.

The Diplomat

America's Moment of Truth on Iran

Flynt Leverett and Hillary Mann Leverett

November 4, 2013 -- America's Iran policy is at a crossroads. Washington can abandon its counterproductive insistence on Middle Eastern hegemony, negotiate a nuclear deal grounded in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), and get serious about working with Tehran to broker a settlement to the Syrian conflict. In the process, the United States would greatly improve its ability to shape important outcomes there. Alternatively, America can continue on its present path, leading ultimately to strategic irrelevance in one of the world's most vital regions—with negative implications for its standing in Asia as well.

U.S. policy is at this juncture because the costs of Washington's post-Cold War drive to dominate the Middle East have risen perilously high. President Obama's self-inflicted debacle over his plan to attack Syria after chemical weapons were used there in August showed that America can no longer credibly threaten the effective use of force to impose its preferences in the region. While Obama still insists "all options are on the table" for Iran, the reality is that, if Washington is to deal efficaciously with the nuclear issue, it will be through diplomacy.

In this context, last month's Geneva meeting between Iran and the P5+1 brought America's political class to a strategic and political moment of truth. Can American elites turn away from a self-damaging quest for Middle Eastern hegemony by coming to terms with an independent regional power? Or are they so enthralled with an increasingly surreal notion of America as hegemon that, to preserve U.S. "leadership," they will pursue a course further eviscerating its strategic position?

The proposal for resolving the nuclear issue that Iran's foreign minister, Javad Zarif, presented in Geneva seeks answers to these questions. It operationalizes the approach advocated by Hassan Rohani and other Iranian leaders for over a decade: greater transparency on Iran's nuclear activities in return for recognizing its rights as a sovereign NPT signatory —especially to enrich uranium under international safeguards—and removal of sanctions. For years, the Bush and Obama administrations rejected this approach. Now Obama must at least consider it.

The Iranian package provides greater transparency on Tehran's nuclear activities in two crucial respects. First, it gives greater visibility on the conduct of Iran's nuclear program. Iran has reportedly offered to comply voluntarily for some months with the Additional Protocol (AP) to the NPT —which it has signed but not yet ratified and which authorizes more proactive and intrusive inspections—to encourage diplomatic progress. Tehran would ratify the AP—thereby committing to its permanent implementation—as part of a final deal.

Second, the package aims to validate Iran's declarations that its enrichment infrastructure is not meant to produce weapons-grade fissile material. Iran would stop enriching at the near-20 percent level of fissile-isotope purity needed to fuel the Tehran Research Reactor and cap enrichment at levels suitable for fueling power reactors. Similarly, Iran is open to capping the number of centrifuges it would install—at least for some years—at its enrichment sites in Natanz and Fordo.

Based on conversations with Iranian officials and political figures in New York in September (during Rohani and Zarif's visit to the UN General Assembly) and in Tehran last month, it is also possible to identify items that the Iranian proposal almost certainly does not include. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei has reportedly given President Rohani and his diplomats flexibility in negotiating a settlement—but he has also directed that they not compromise Iran's sovereignty. Thus, the Islamic Republic will not acquiesce to American (and Israeli) demands to suspend enrichment, shut its enrichment site at Fordo, stop a heavy-water reactor under construction at Arak, and ship its current enriched uranium stockpile abroad.

On one level, the Iranian package is crafted to resolve the nuclear issue based on the NPT, within a year. Iran's nuclear rights would be respected; transparency measures would reduce the proliferation risks of its enrichment activities below what Washington tolerates elsewhere. On another level, though, the package means to test America's willingness and capability to resolve the issue on this basis. It tests this not just for Tehran's edification, but also for that of other P5+1 states, especially China and Russia, and of rising powers like India and South Korea.

America can fail the Iranian test in two ways. First, the Obama administration—reflecting America's political class more broadly—may

prove unwilling to acknowledge Iran's nuclear rights in a straightforward way, insisting on terms for a deal that effectively suborn these rights and violate Iranian sovereignty.

There are powerful constituencies—e.g., the Israel lobby, neoconservative Republicans, their Democratic "fellow travelers," and U.S.-based Iran "experts"—that oppose any deal recognizing Iran's nuclear rights. They understand that acknowledging these rights would also mean accepting the Islamic Republic as an enduring entity representing legitimate national interests; to do so, America would have to abandon its post-Cold War pretensions to Middle Eastern hegemony.

Those pretensions have proven dangerously corrosive of America's ability to accomplish important objectives in the Middle East, and of its global standing. Just witness the profoundly self-damaging consequences of America's invasion and occupation of Iraq, and how badly the "global war on terror" has eviscerated the perceived legitimacy of American purposes in the Muslim world. But, as the drama over Obama's call for military action against Syria indicates, America's political class remains deeply attached to imperial pretense—even as the American public turns away from it. If Washington could accept the Islamic Republic as a legitimate regional power, it could work with Tehran and others on a political solution to the Syrian conflict. Instead, Washington reiterates hubristic demands that President Bashar al-Assad step down before a political process starts, and relies on a Saudi-funded "Syrian opposition" increasingly dominated by al-Qa'ida-like extremists.

If Obama does not conclude a deal recognizing Iran's nuclear rights, it will confirm suspicions already held by many Iranian elites—including Ayatollah Khamenei—and in Beijing and Moscow about America's real agenda vis-à-vis the Islamic Republic. It will become undeniably clear that U.S. opposition to indigenous Iranian enrichment is not motivated by proliferation concerns, but by determination to preserve American hegemony—and Israeli military dominance—in the Middle East. If this is so, why should China, Russia, or rising Asian powers continue trying to help Washington—e.g., by accommodating U.S. demands to limit their own commercial interactions with Iran—obtain an outcome it does not actually want?

America can also fail Iran's test if it is unable to provide comprehensive sanctions relief as part of a negotiated nuclear settlement. The Obama administration now acknowledges what we have noted for some time—that, beyond transitory executive branch initiatives, lifting or even substantially modifying U.S. sanctions to support diplomatic progress will take congressional action.

During Obama's presidency, many U.S. sanctions initially imposed by executive order have been written into law. These bills—signed, with little heed to their long-term consequences, by Obama himself—have also greatly expanded U.S. secondary sanctions, which threaten to punish third-country entities not for anything they've done in America, but for perfectly lawful business they conduct in or with Iran. The bills contain conditions for removing sanctions stipulating not just the dismantling of Iran's nuclear infrastructure, but also termination of Tehran's ties to movements like Hizballah that Washington (foolishly) designates as terrorists and the Islamic Republic's effective transformation into a secular liberal republic. The Obama administration may have managed to delay passage of yet another sanctions bill for a few weeks—but Congressional Democrats no less than congressional Republicans have made publicly clear that they will not relax conditions for removing existing sanctions to help Obama conclude and implement a nuclear deal. If their obstinacy holds, why should others respect Washington's high-handed demands for compliance with its extraterritorial (hence, illegal) sanctions against Iran? Going into the next round of nuclear talks in Geneva on Thursday, it is unambiguously plain that Obama will have to spend enormous political capital to realign relations with Iran. America's future standing as a great power depends significantly on his readiness to do so.

Flynt Leverett and Hillary Mann Leverett are authors of Going to Tehran: Why the United States Must Come to Terms with the Islamic Republic of Iran (New York: Metropolitan, 2013) and teach international relations, he at Penn State, she at American University.

Article 3.

World Affairs Journal

No Exit: Why the US Can't Leave the Middle East

Michael J. Totten

America is in a bad mood.

In the midst of the worst economy since the 1970s, we're on the verge of losing the war in Afghanistan, the longest we've ever fought, against stupefyingly primitive foes.

We sort of won the war in Iraq, but it cost billions of dollars, thousands of lives, and Baghdad is still a violent, dysfunctional mess.

The overhyped Arab Spring has been cancelled in Egypt. Liberating Libya led to the assassination of our ambassador. Syria is disintegrating into total war with bad guys on both sides and the US dithering on the sidelines, worried more about saving face at this point than having any significant effect on the facts on the ground.

A majority of American voters in both parties have had it. They're just flat-out not interested in spending any more money or lives to help out. Even many foreign policy professionals are fed up. We get blamed for every one of the Middle East's problems, including those it inflicts on itself. How gratifying it would be just to walk away, dust off our hands, and say you're on your own.

But we can't.

Actually, in Egypt maybe we can. And maybe we should.

Hosni Mubarak was a terrible leader and a lukewarm ally at best, but until the Egyptian army arrested him in 2011, Cairo had been part of the American-backed security architecture in North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean ever since his predecessor, Anwar Sadat, junked Egypt's alliance with the Soviet Union.

The election of the Muslim Brotherhood regime in the wake of the Arab Spring, though, moved Egypt into the "frenemy" column. It's still there under the military rule of General Abdul-Fattah el-Sisi, the new head of state in all but name since the army removed Mohamed Morsi.

Sisi is no less hostile to Washington than Morsi was. As Lee Smith put it shortly after the second coup in three years, Egypt's new jefe "sees the United States as little more than a prop, a rag with which he burnishes his

reputation as a strongman, a village mayor puffing his chest and boasting that he is unafraid to stand up to the Americans."

Sisi knows his country and what it takes to appeal to the masses. The whole population—left, right, and center—is as hostile toward the United States as it ever was. Never mind that Americans backed the anti-Mubarak uprising. Never mind that Washington sought good relations with Egypt's first freely elected government in thousands of years. Never mind that the Obama administration refuses to call the army's coup what it plainly was in order to keep Egypt's aid money flowing. None of that matters. The United States and its Zionist sidekick remain at the molten center of Egypt's phantasmagorical demonology.

Bribing Egypt with billions of annual aid dollars to maintain its peace treaty with Israel and to keep a lid on radical Islam makes even less sense today than it did when Morsi and the Brotherhood were in charge. Morsi needed that money to prevent Egyptians from starving to death. He had a major incentive to cooperate—or else.

But now that the Brothers are out of the picture, partly at the behest of the Saudis, Riyadh says it will happily make up the difference if Washington turns off the aid spigot.

Turn it off then, already. Our money buys nothing from Sisi if he can replace it that easily. If he gets the same cash infusion whether or not he listens to the White House, why should he listen to the White House? He isn't our friend. He's only one step away from burning an American flag at a rally. He's plenty motivated for his own reasons to keep radical Islamists in check since they're out to destroy him. And his army is the one Egyptian institution that's not at all interested in armed conflict with Israel because it would suffer more egregiously than anything or anyone else.

We're either paying him out of sheer habit or because Washington thinks it might still get something back from its investment. Maybe it will, but it probably won't.

Either way, Sisi instantly proved himself more violent and ruthless than Mubarak when he gave the order to gun down hundreds of unarmed civilians. The fact that the Muslim Brotherhood "retaliated" by burning dozens of churches, murdering Christians at random, and shooting policemen does not make what he did okay. He was, for a few days at least, no better than Bashar al-Assad. Giving him money and guns will make us

no friends but plenty of enemies, especially when his regime proves itself no more capable of halting Egypt's freefall than the last one.

Max Boot at the Council on Foreign Relations put it this way in the Los Angeles Times: "It is no coincidence that both Osama bin Laden and [al-Qaeda deputy Ayman al-] Zawahiri hailed from US-allied nations that repressed their own citizens. Both men were drawn to the conclusion that the way to free their homelands was to attack their rulers' patron. It is reasonable to expect that a new generation of Islamists in Egypt, now being taught that the peaceful path to power is no longer open, will turn to violence and that, as long as Washington is seen on the side of the generals, some of their violence will be directed our way."

Even if the Egyptian army faces the kind of full-blown Islamist insurgency that ripped through Algeria in the 1990s—which is unlikely, but possible—Cairo will still get all the help it needs from the Gulf, not because the Saudis oppose radical Islam, but because they view the Muslim Brotherhood as the biggest long-term threat to their rule.

The case for walking away from Egypt and dusting our hands off is sound. Libya, however, is another matter entirely.

Having learned in Iraq that occupying Arab lands is bad for everyone's health, the US helped free Libya of Muammar el-Qaddafi without suffering even one single casualty. We did it all from the skies. The ground was thick with indigenous rebels, so no American ground troops were required. Qaddafi had no friends to come to his rescue and he stood no chance with his feeble and outdated hardware.

But then we lost Ambassador Christopher Stevens and three others during the long Libyan aftermath, when a terrorist group tied to al-Qaeda attacked the US consulate in Benghazi. It happened on the same day—not coincidentally, on September 11th—that mobs of fanatical Salafists waving al-Qaeda flags rioted and set fires all over the region, using a ludicrous anti-Muhammad video uploaded to YouTube by a crackpot Egyptian "filmmaker" no one had ever heard of before as a pretext.

For reasons that still don't make any sense, American officials falsely claimed the Benghazi incident was the result of yet another protest riot gone out of control. But there was no protest or riot in Benghazi related to that video, contrary to Washington's initial clumsy and mendacious public statements.

Unlike in Egypt and even Tunisia, nobody in Libya protested against the United States for "allowing" a so-called blasphemous video to be uploaded to YouTube. The only demonstrations in Libya that week were against radical Islamists, against the terrorists that murdered Ambassador Stevens. The citizen groundswell against Benghazi's Islamist militia was so intense that its members had to flee into the desert.

Libya is a traditional and conservative place, but that does not mean it's Islamist. Two out of three Egyptians voted for Islamist parties in the post-Mubarak parliamentary elections, but in Libya, the National Forces Alliance, a moderate centrist party, won the most seats in 2012. The Justice and Construction Party—the political vehicle for Libya's Muslim Brotherhood—only won ten percent of the vote. The Brotherhood isn't quite as irrelevant in Libya as, say, the Green Party is in the United States, but it's close.

Libya's people are not just by and large against the Islamists. They are perhaps friendlier to the West in general and the United States in particular than anyone else in the Arab world.

It makes sense if you think about it. Under no theory can the United States be held responsible for Qaddafi's crimes and repression. He was a self-declared enemy of America on the day he took power, and [redacted] still be tormenting his hapless citizens like a sadistic mad scientist if Americans hadn't provided air support for the rebels. He received no money, no weapons, no training, no diplomatic cover—nothing—from the United States.

Every bad thing Libyans ever heard about Americans came from the internal propaganda organs of the man who kicked them in the face every day for forty-two years. At least some of their geopolitical views resemble those of Eastern Europeans under the communists—if the Americans are the enemies of our tyrannical government, how bad can they be? They are as pro-American as we could ever expect Arab Muslims to be.

Libya under Qaddafi had far too much government. Now it does not have enough. The previous regime was one of the most repressive on earth, and when it went down, most institutions—including the army—went with it. The state and its security forces are therefore too weak. They're being rebuilt from scratch and won't be finished for years.

There is no reason in the world for the US not to associate with or help Prime Minister Ali Zeidan and his colleagues. On the contrary, if the government can't establish a monopoly on the use of force in the lawless parts of the country, Libya could end up an incubator of terrorism like Somalia, Yemen, or Mali, despite the fact that most of its people want nothing to do with it.

Syria is the last country we can afford to ignore right now, even though large numbers in both parties—for perfectly logical reasons—are averse to doing anything more than shuddering at a distance.

But what happens there is our business because it affects us. Syria isn't Belize. It matters who runs that country, and it matters a lot.

Bashar al-Assad's regime is the biggest state sponsor of international terrorism in the Arab world, and it's aligned with the Islamic Republic regime in Iran, the biggest state sponsor of international terrorism in the entire world. Obviously, then, it's in our interest to see him defeated.

One of his principal enemies on the home front, though, is the al-Qaeda–linked Nusra Front. Obviously it's not in our interest to see these bin Ladenists replace Assad.

The Free Syrian Army is disgruntled at the lackluster assistance the United States has provided, but that's partly because it has been fighting against Assad alongside the Nusra Front, and also because many of its own commanders are also Islamists, even if they're moderate compared with al-Qaeda. The tactical alliance between the two groups is fracturing, and it won't outlast Assad by even a week, but it's enough to make Washington reluctant and skeptical.

Americans have always been willing to sacrifice money and lives for allies and friends, but allies and friends who are powerful enough inside Syria to affect outcomes are thin on the ground. Early in the game, the administration could have tried to arm, fund, and train a politically moderate fighting force inside Syria, but that will be a lot more difficult now that the Turks and the Gulf Arabs are backing their own proxies who don't share our interests or values.

So there are those who say let them kill each other because, as Daniel Pipes argues, it "keeps them focused locally" and "prevents either one from emerging victorious." It brings to mind Henry Kissinger's famous quip about the Iran-Iraq war. "It's too bad they can't both lose."

The operative word in Kissinger's sentence is "can't." Opposing sides don't zero each other out. That's not how wars work, or end. Wars end when somebody wins.

The worst-case scenario from an American point of view is that they both win. That's an actual possibility. Syria could fracture into pieces. In a way, it already has. An Alawite rump state backed by Iran, Hezbollah, and Russia existing alongside a Sunnistan ruled by Islamists could very well emerge as a semi-permanent reality of Middle Eastern geography. At the very least, the United States needs a policy that reduces the likelihood of that most horrible outcome.

A few months ago, I asked the Lebanese MP Samy Gemayel what he thought about Washington's confusion in Syria. "Before you can know what to do," he said, "you have to know what you want." One way or another, we should want both Assad and al-Qaeda to lose. But they aren't going to lose simultaneously. They'll need to lose consecutively. One of them first has to win.

So fight and defeat Bashar al-Assad, or support someone who will do it instead. Then fight and defeat the Nusra Front, or support someone who will do it instead.

Or face the fact that one or both are going to win. If the Nusra Front wins, we'll have an Afghanistan on the Mediterranean. And if Assad wins, he could end up under an Iranian nuclear weapons umbrella.

Some parts of the world are like Las Vegas. What happens there, stays there. Sub-Saharan Africa is the primary example. Hardly anyone outside that region has even noticed that the various wars in Congo have killed millions of people since the late 1990s, and even fewer have cared.

The Middle East isn't like that. Until cars and trucks can be powered by solar, wind, or nuclear energy, the entire world depends on the free flow of oil from the Persian Gulf region. That requires American security guarantees, which require our presence. And until radical Islamist organizations utterly lose their local appeal, we'll have little choice but to intervene periodically for reasons that have nothing to do with economics or resources. For the time being, aggravating though it may be, Americans and Arabs are stuck with each other. We can take a bit of a breather, but retirement is decades away.

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Article 4.

Los Angeles Times

Making up with Europe

Bruce Ackerman

November 6, 2013 -- President Obama is slowly extricating the U.S. from its Bush-era fixation on the Middle East. But he is turning his attention in the wrong direction. Europe, not Asia, should be his main focus.

The future of liberal democracy will depend on its ongoing success in its Enlightenment heartland. If it can overcome current troubles and thrive in Europe and the Americas, this will inspire the worldwide democracy movement over the long run. If it fails in the West, no amount of Asian realpolitik will compensate for the collapse.

The central challenge is to reconstruct the foundations of the transatlantic community. These are in urgent need of repair. The National Security Agency scandal is the latest in a series, including Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib, that has shattered America's moral standing in Europe.

The United States has also been discrediting its economic leadership. The Lehman Bros. collapse revealed America's failure to sustain its model of well-regulated capitalism. Europeans have been among the worst victims, especially young people, whose hopes have been destroyed by the economic crisis. And the debt limit fiasco underscored Washington's apparent incapacity to take its economic responsibilities seriously.

European estrangement comes just as the European Union is threatening to unravel. A British referendum on Europe is likely over the next couple of years, and the chances of a "no" vote are substantial. An exit by Britain would be bad enough, but nationalist parties may well become a major force in the European Parliament after the next elections. Such setbacks would further delegitimize the technocratic rule of Brussels and Frankfurt. With the continuing German insistence on austerity, the populist reaction

could accelerate, dissolving Europe into petty sovereignties ripe for nationalist demagogy.

A serious U.S. diplomatic effort can help contain this threat. A trade deal with the EU would dramatize the costs of exit to British voters. A breakthrough accord between the Federal Reserve and the European Bank would provide the best way to soften the austerity measures that have wreaked economic havoc on Southern Europe.

But the NSA scandal is already disrupting progress. Germany is insisting that any trade deal with America be joined to an agreement on surveillance. This threatens to paralyze the EU effort to deal with the U.S. with one voice. The Obama administration should break this impasse by making the first move to resolve the spying scandal.

Rather than quietly releasing European leaders from 24-hour surveillance, Obama should aim for a legally binding executive agreement that would grant all citizens of the U.S. and the EU the same protections against spying by both the NSA and European intelligence agencies. While Congress' efforts to rein in the NSA are likely to have a domestic focus, they would serve as a benchmark for parallel negotiations with Europe.

The new initiative would not only enhance the privacy rights of citizens on both sides of the Atlantic,it would express a renewed commitment by both sides to the rule of law.

Similarly, the administration should give priority to a law eliminating the legal authority of one house of Congress to destroy the full faith and credit of the nation. Republican and Democratic leaders have voiced support for a measure that would greatly restrict the power of the tea party to play politics with the debt ceiling.

Under their proposal, the president would announce, on an annual basis, the increase required to avoid default. Congress would retain the power to reject the president's initiative by a simple majority vote of both houses. If the president responded with a veto, two-thirds majorities could still insist on ultimate control.

Nevertheless, the statute would effectively make it impossible for Congress to undermine the 14th Amendment's command that "the validity of the public debt of the United States … shall not be questioned." The challenge, again, is for the administration to make this a high-priority matter and mobilize bipartisan leadership support.

Progress on a transatlantic agreement on surveillance and a statute on the debt ceiling would not be enough to repair the moral and economic damage of a decade. But it would help catalyze the larger breakthroughs that can sustain the transatlantic community as a powerful force for liberal democratic values in the 21st century.

Bruce Ackerman is a professor of law and political science at Yale University.

Article 5.

The Council on Foreign Relations

The Long Reach for Syrian Peace

Interview with Leslie H. Gelb

November 5, 2013 -- *The primary strategic threat to the United States and its allies in the Syrian conflict is the potential triumph of radical jihadist fighters, says CFR President Emeritus Les Gelb. He argues that Washington should pressure moderate Sunni rebels to work, at least temporarily, with the Assad government in defeating the hard-line Islamists —the "biggest threat" to both sides. "The [Assad government knows] that if the jihadis come to power, they're going to kill them all; while the mostly secular, moderate Sunnis know that if the jihadis come to power, they will impose an Islamic state with sharia law." Once the jihadist danger is eliminated, Gelb says, perhaps a power-sharing agreement between the moderate Sunni majority and the Alawite (Shiite) minority can be reached.*

Secretary of State John Kerry is in the Middle East seeking support for a Geneva II conference aimed at ending the fighting in Syria. Do you think that is even feasible at this stage?

It doesn't look like the conference can work, mainly because the principal parties to the conflict don't want to negotiate. The so-called "good" rebels —the Sunni moderates that we support, who are led by Ahmed al-Jarba and based in Turkey—are reluctant to negotiate with Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. And Assad, who's willing to show up there at some level, isn't really willing to give up anything at this point. So I don't think that Kerry

will succeed in bringing about a conference—and even if he does, it may not accomplish anything.

So, he's in a real bind it seems. Should the United States do more by increasing military aid to the rebels?

When I was testifying before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last week, most of the senators were going in that direction: let's supply more and better arms to the moderate, secular, Sunni rebels. My answer to that is to point out what's happened the last ten years. Other nations have been supplying more and better weapons to the "good rebels" while Russia and Iran have countered by supplying more and better arms to the Assad regime. And the main beneficiary of that is quite clear: the jihadis, the radical rebels. So the current U.S. policy that's trying to fix this in Geneva doesn't make any sense, while the business of saying "forget negotiations and arm the good rebels" has only produced stalemate and ever-higher levels of suffering hardship for the Syrian people.

Is there another solution out there?

I don't know if there's a solution, but there's a more sensible way of proceeding based on some reality. We should start with the question: "Who is the biggest threat to U.S. interests?" Is it Assad? Well, Assad is a miserable, nasty dictator, but we lived with him and his father, Hafez al-Assad, for decades and decades. And while he did some warlike things from time to time, basically we and our allies in the region could live with him. So are the rebels the answer? Well, we'd like to have them come to power, but there's no clear path to that. They're not threatening us, but they're not threatening Assad very much either. So the real threat, it seems to me, comes from the jihadis and al-Qaeda—the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. They aren't the numerical majority [of rebels], but they are the main fighting force and opposition to Assad. More importantly, they are a major threat to us and to our allies in the region. You ask the Israelis, the Jordanians, the Turks, the Iraqis, who they worry about most, and they'll say the jihadis and the potential for them to get control of Syria.

Are you suggesting that we make a deal with Assad?

What I'm proposing specifically is that we try to get the "good rebels" to come to a cooperative arrangement with Assad's government to fight the jihadis. Now, you're not going to be able to get an "alliance," sitting down together and working on a joint plan or anything, but you've got to get both

sides focusing on [fighting the jihadis]—because they are the biggest threat to the Alawite Assad family and the Sunni moderates. The Alawites know that if the jihadis come to power they're going to kill them all; while the mostly secular, moderate Sunnis know that if the jihadis come to power they will impose an Islamic state with sharia law. So you have to get [the Assad regime and Sunni moderates] on the same path, focusing their military efforts against the jihadis.

So the United States has to put pressure on the Sunni moderates to come to the Geneva conference?

That's right. The [United States] should tell the Sunni moderates that their first obligation is to beat these jihadis and reach a future political understanding with Assad. It could be something like: "When the battleground has settled down to some degree, let's have a political settlement based on power sharing, perhaps based on a federal state." I would propose a federal state where the Alawites would be dominant in some regions where they are the majority, and the Sunni moderates would be dominant in most of the rest of the country, and they could share power in Damascus on common interests like fiscal policy, oil and gas, and the like. And Assad would step down and wouldn't run for reelection. I think you can work something like that out. Otherwise, you're just going to have more killing with the jihadis as the main beneficiary and the Syrian people as the main victims.

Now, could the Turks really lean on them?

The Turks are sort of a mystery. At some point they were playing both sides: they were allowing aid, arms, and money to go through to the jihadis while they were allowing some arms to go through to the moderate Sunni rebels. They couldn't figure out what they wanted, and that's a reflection of what's going on in Turkey itself. Because the Turkish government is becoming increasingly Islamized, and so they're tempted to go with the Islamists in Syria. But I think they're pulling back a little. In the case of Jordan, there's no question. They hate the jihadi rebels and want to help the "good rebels." They just don't see the path for doing so.

So it's really important then to have the United States do something more with these moderate Sunni rebels?

As an incentive, I would provide them with more and better arms than we are now. I would say, "If you begin an informal cooperation with Assad

against the jihadis, we'll arm you better, and you'll be in a better position to deal with the Alawites in future negotiations."

So the hard thing is to get them into anything like an informal alliance with Assad?

It's hard, but, again, there is the common interest because both of them—the moderate Sunnis and the Alawites—fear the jihadis more than they fear each other.

And, of course, Assad's forces are doing better because of the help they're getting from Iran and the Russians.

That's right. They looked a year and a half ago as if they were going to lose, but people forgot that they had a reliable supplier and every reason to fight because if they lost, they would not just die on the battlefield, they'd die as civilians. They'd be slaughtered.

It's interesting how many of the experts in Washington and elsewhere thought Assad would be out two years ago.

Well, those experts haven't been around long enough to know that these things go back and forth and back and forth, which has been the history of most of these wars.

And many also thought that Bashar al-Assad, when he took over more than ten years ago, was a liberal, based on some of his personal history, including the fact that his wife was brought up in England, right?

Exactly. But a problem in countries like Syria—and the world is full of cases like Syria—is we don't know them. To us, they're really strategic squares on a chessboard rather than countries with cultures and histories and rivalries and whatnot. And we only seem to learn about these countries after we've made terrible investments and helped to cause a great deal of harm. Our contacts with the Syrians have been at the very highest level, but we didn't know the country at a more essential level—we just didn't know it. So it's like the Vietnam story—you make mistakes because you don't really know who you're dealing with.

And what do you make of current U.S.-Saudi relations? It was strange to see the Saudis suddenly denouncing the United States for its policy in the Middle East.

People say the Saudis are not such a big deal anymore, and that we're building up our own oil supplies and the like. That, to me, is a lot of baby

talk. The Saudis have plenty of money; they can support people we want, whether it's in Afghanistan, or in Egypt—provide some stability there. The Saudis are also a source of stability in the Gulf States. So you can't just ignore them and say "don't worry about our negotiations with Iran." That's not enough. The Saudis want to know what type of agreement the [United States] is prepared to make, and we haven't explained that. They believe we're going to give away the store. We also have to begin working on stability in Iraq. That's a big country in a strategic location, and while we can't solve their problems, we can help them avoid chaos and becoming another battleground for the jihadis.

Article 6.

Foreign Affairs

The Future of the U.S.-Egyptian Relationship Is in the Past

Robert Springborg

November 5, 2013 -- When Hoda al-Nasser, the daughter of former Egyptian President Gamal Abdel al-Nasser, recently deemed the country's current strongman, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, the rightful heir to her father's political legacy, it was worth taking her at her word. Just like Nasser, Sisi unapologetically seized power in a coup [redacted]. Also like Nasser, Sisi has followed a path in higher politics that began with a collaboration with the Muslim Brotherhood -- he seems to have conspired with President Mohamed Morsi in the removal of Field Marshal Mohamed Hussein Tantawi in the summer of 2012 -- before changing course and doing everything in his power to crush the Islamist organization. Sisi's crackdown has already resulted in the deaths and incarceration of thousands of Brotherhood activists, including Morsi, his erstwhile patron. This historical parallel might seem to bode ill for the relationship between Egypt and the United States. After all, Nasser is remembered today for his unabashed, even chauvinistic patriotism, and most policymakers in Washington are taught that the close relationship that the United States currently enjoys with Egypt traces back to the Camp David accords signed by Nasser's successor, Anwar Sadat. But Washington's history with Nasser is more auspicious than is generally remembered. Indeed, with some minor

adjustments, Washington's establishment of relations with Nasser's government can serve as the most promising template for a stable and productive relationship between the United States and Egypt today.

Sisi is no less nationalistic than his predecessor. Nasser spoke of a "role" in the Arab world "in search of a hero" -- a role that Egypt was destined to fulfill -- and Sisi makes essentially the same point in less poetic language. He asserts that Egypt must regain its position as a leader of the Arabs, and by so doing restore Arab power more generally.

It's true that Sisi's rhetoric is more pious than Nasser's avowedly secular pan-Arabism. But that is more a sign of the times than an indicator of a profound difference between the two. Indeed, the foundation for Sisi's indictment against the Brotherhood is that it offers a transnational, rather than a distinctly Egyptian, version of Islamism. A proper Islamism would be based on Egyptian traditions and institutions (including the state-supported Al-Azhar University), and thus be supportive of the country's interests -- and by extension Arab interests as a whole. Anything less would be traitorous, in Sisi's view. At the core of both men's vision lies the projection of strong personal, national, and Arab power.

But Sisi would do well to notice that Nasser, in his early years, at least, was intent on reconciling appeals to Egyptian nationalism with backing from the United States. Nasser knew that he needed American support as a counterbalance to the possibility of British intervention, following the coup, in support of their ally, the deposed King Farouk. He was equally aware that American support would be useful in projecting Egyptian power, both militarily and diplomatically, in the years ahead. Of course, Nasser was careful not to appear to be Washington's puppet. He preferred to give the impression that he was using the Americans without giving anything in return. In one widely circulated (though possibly apocryphal) tale about his dealings with the CIA, Nasser was said to have built the Cairo Tower, which transmitted the Voice of the Arabs radio station, with cash bribes from an American agent that were intended to buy his loyalty. The tall, lean tower was said to represent the young leader "saluting" the United States with his middle finger.

Equally instructive is the fact that the United States tolerated this arrangement. Then, as now, Washington's primary goal in the region was to find a strong leader in Cairo willing to work with the United States. By

1949, U.S. intelligence had deemed that Nasser was such a figure, so Washington threw its weight behind him. It stood in the way of British attempts to roll the 1952 coup back and then, more germane to the contemporary situation, it supported Nasser against democratic opposition forces whose power rose in 1953 and early 1954 in reaction to Nasser's increasingly authoritarian tendencies. In October 1954, Nasser moved to brutally subdue the final remaining element of the opposition, which was the Brotherhood. Washington had originally supported the Brothers in preference to the liberal, secular opposition, which it deemed too weak to govern, but it stood by as thousands of them were killed, imprisoned, or chased into exile.

Eventually, the relationship between Nasser's regime and the United States came undone. The failure had multiple causes. Having assisted Nasser's rise to power, and then his consolidation of it, the United States got cold feet as tensions between Egypt and Israel rose. Ultimately Nasser's outsize ambitions -- which increasingly became focused on military engagement in the Arabian Peninsula following a 1962 coup in Yemen -- exceeded what Washington could support, making the lure of Soviet support ever more attractive to Cairo. It is also possible that Nasser had tricked the Americans into believing that he was their man and would help them secure their interests in the Middle East, but from the outset had intended to use and then discard U.S. support.

The U.S.-Egyptian relationship is now essentially back to where it was in 1954, with Washington supporting an emerging military strongman who needs to demonstrate his bona fides to his most important constituency, the military, first, and to the country as a whole second. The challenge for both the United States and Sisi will be to recalibrate their expectations of the relationship so that they focus narrowly on the enduring overlap in strategic interests, rather than on trying to reconstitute the more expansive alliance that they built over the last 30 years. The United States needs a strong Egypt upon which to anchor its drifting policy in the region, while Sisi needs arms and money to fend off domestic challengers. The future is bright, so long as both sides are willing to shed aspects of the relationship beyond those basic goals.

Sisi already seems to be following that game plan. Like Nasser, he has distanced himself publicly from Washington while doing everything to

ensure its most important support. Consider his government's response to the announcement in October of a temporary suspension of U.S. military assistance for procurement of F-16s, Abrams tanks, and Apache helicopters. Sisi declared that the decision would hurt the United States more than Egypt. But he said nothing to risk the discontinuation of assistance for Egypt's counterterrorism activities, especially in the Sinai, which are of far greater and more immediate importance to the credibility of the military and its leader.

Sisi has, to be sure, allowed the government-owned and government-controlled media to become much more critical of the United States than it was under his predecessor Hosni Mubarak. But he has been careful not to cross the real red line for Washington, which is Egypt rejecting in word or deed its peace with Israel. Indeed, under Sisi, the Egyptian military has not only destroyed Hamas' tunnels under the Sinai-Gaza border but has stepped up broader counterterrorism cooperation with Israel while refraining from strong criticism of even the prickly Netanyahu government.

The key to making this a sustainable strategy may be a continued reform of the Egyptian military. As part of the reconfiguration of the U.S.-Egyptian relationship, arms sales to Egypt will need to be altered and possibly reduced, to ensure that they are designed to meet Egypt's real security threats, rather than the pecuniary interests of people on either side of the delivery chain. Procurement supported by U.S. Foreign Military Funding will have to shift from the heavy emphasis on fighter planes, attack helicopters, and tanks to equipment more suitable for threats posed by insurgencies, terrorism, border penetration, peacekeeping, natural disasters, maritime challenges, and the like. A leaner, more agile military of this sort would be more capable of deployment in the region in pursuit of Egyptian and, not coincidentally, American interests.

Mubarak had long feared that downsizing and professionalizing the military in this way would cause the officer corps to rebel, and that being seen to serve U.S. regional interests would undercut his fragile domestic legitimacy. The result was a massive military that became bloated and soft, preparing in Godot-like fashion for a war with Israel that would thankfully never come, and which was unable to project its power elsewhere. Sisi is not likely to share Mubarak's fears. He has already retired off a substantial

portion of the senior officer corps who benefitted most from systematic corruption. His appeal is to younger officers who he may calculate will remain loyal out of a shared sense of mission, rather than because of patronage. A leaner military capable of projecting Egyptian power could become essential to maintaining Sisi's popularity among the public. (For Washington's part, a mobile Arab expeditionary force capable of intervening in trouble spots in pursuit of mutually agreed objectives would be a major boon in the region.)

Of course, even if the United States and Egypt achieve a new stability, there's no telling how long it would last. Just as in the Nasser era, both sides may end up wanting too much. Having assisted the reconfiguration of the Egyptian military and the economic resuscitation of the country, Washington could become bossy, insensitive to Egyptian desires generally and the political needs of its rulers in particular. And it may only be a matter of time until a stronger and more nationalistic Egypt is tempted to flex its muscles, which is sure to elicit unpredictable reactions in the region.

Much will come down to Sisi himself, and to how far he decides to follow in Nasser's footsteps. He is clearly his predecessor's equal in his obsession with power, his tactical finesse at acquiring it, and his jealous and ruthless guarding of it. But Sisism is only just beginning to coalesce into an apparent ideology, one that draws its legitimacy through reference to nationalism, an established and conservative Islam, and a strong sense of conservative morality. Although there is nothing inherent in this outlook that would contradict a strong relationship between the United States and Egypt, that was also the view that Washington had of Nasserism back in the early 1950s. The central paradox of that previous relationship -- that the strong leader supported by Washington ultimately had to turn on his benefactor to assert his strength -- is certainly worth keeping in mind this time.

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Article 7.

The New Yorker

An Economic Vision of Peace in Israel

Bernard Avishai

November 5, 2013 -- John Kerry is back in Israel, to push for progress on Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. The American government has revealed little about what Kerry has said, but if his past comments are any indication, he may discuss the importance of peace to the Palestinian economy. He's less likely to talk about the importance of peace to the Israeli economy.

Israel's [redacted] per capita was more than thirty-three thousand dollars in 2011, and the country attracted more than ten billion dollars in foreign direct investment last year. The Bank of Israel is flush with reserves, almost eighty billion dollars, with which it can stabilize the shekel. Newly discovered gas fields are estimated to be worth billions of dollars. Last year, Israeli companies exported about sixty-two billion dollars' worth of goods. And Israeli entrepreneurship is justly famous: in June, Google announced it had bought the Israeli mapping startup Waze, reportedly for a billion dollars.

No wonder CBS's "60 Minutes" last year ran a swooning report about greater Tel Aviv, describing it as "Miami on the Med." "The recession has passed Tel Aviv by," the leftist Israeli journalist Gideon Levy told Bob Simon. It appears many on the Israeli left doubt that a continued occupation will lead to economic harm. During the summer of 2011, when hundreds of thousands took to the streets to protest social inequalities, organizers generally elided mention of the conflict. Palestinians, for their part, insist the occupation is boosting Israel's companies at the expense of Palestinian ones.

The Israeli right seems even more convinced that the occupation hasn't hurt the economy. In 1998, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told me in an interview for Fortune that Israel's military research, along with immigration to the country by Russians, would lead inexorably to prosperity. "Peace would be a useful, additional condition," he said, "but it is not the primordial, necessary condition, which is, anywhere, economic freedom." Last year, Dan Senor, an American writer and political adviser who has promoted Israel as the "Start-Up Nation," took Mitt Romney—his

candidate (and Netanyahu's)—on a pre-election trip to Jerusalem. Romney said Israel's economic progress provided a "model for others throughout the world."

The problem is that it is difficult to determine the opportunity cost of the conflict. How well might the Israeli economy have done if the conflict hadn't taken place?

Now, Yusaku Horiuchi, my colleague in Dartmouth College's government department, has applied a fascinating new method for deriving just this. Imagine, Horiuchi explained to me, that we could take a pool of countries similar to Israel in various respects—exports as a percentage of [redacted], urban population, mortality rates, consumption, government expenditure as a percentage of [redacted], and so on—and then use that pool—call it a "donor pool"— to create a "synthetic Israel" that we could track alongside the real one.

To do this, you could use known statistical methods to combine these countries' economic records, so that the weighted average record of economic performance in the pool tracked with Israel's record over, say, a generation.

True, crucial characteristics in other countries would not be like Israel's. Other [redacted]. countries are bigger; they do not have ultra-Orthodox communities; they don't have, per capita, as many edgy scientists—or drivers. But when you track the real Israel against synthetic Israel, their economies behave quite similarly, and that's what matters to the analysis.

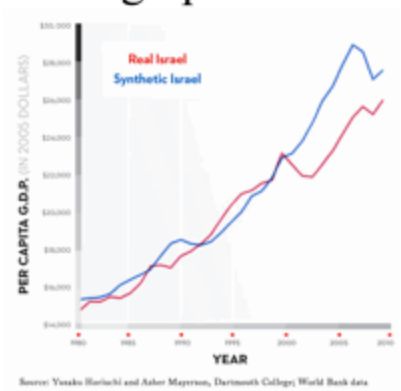
This isn't a completely new method of analysis: Horiuchi is applying to political economy an approach similar to what some asset-management companies apply to investing.

Now imagine a catalytic event that affected Israel but not synthetic Israel—an event with long-term ramifications, like an eruption of the violent conflict with the Palestinians. We could then compare Israel to synthetic Israel and see if any divergences in economic performance seem attributable to this event and its aftermath. If a demonstrable gap opens up, and is never closed, we would have a sense of the opportunity cost of the conflict's exacerbation.

I could not resist. We experienced precisely such an event in the early aughts, the Al Aqsa intifada, which disrupted a long period of hopeful normalization and kicked off a decade of tension and periodic war. As it

happens, this was precisely the decade in which the "Start-up Nation" was said to have come into its own. I suggested that we track Israel's [redacted] per capita from 1980 to 2000—which in spite of the 1982 Lebanon War, and the comparatively nonviolent intifada of 1988, was a relatively peaceful, even hopeful, time—and then build a synthetic Israel for the same period. Couldn't we then determine what Israel's [redacted] per capita might have been, if that relative peace had continued during the decade that followed? Imagine, in other words, that Ehud Barak and Yasir Arafat had come to terms at Camp David in 2000, rather than ending direct talks in frustration and mutual recrimination. How would Israel's economy have looked in 2010? What have Israeli citizens been missing?

Horiuchi and a Dartmouth student, Asher Mayerson, ran this analysis. First, they built a synthetic Israel made up of real countries: 3.7 per cent Belgium, 22.9 per cent Finland, 38.3 per cent Greece, 9.6 per cent New Zealand, 11.2 per cent Singapore, and 14.3 per cent Turkey. From 1980 to 2000, the growth of per capita [redacted] of synthetic Israel tracked with Israel's almost exactly—from about fifteen thousand dollars per year (in 2005 dollars) to about twenty-three thousand dollars. Both were entered into a graph.



Then, in 2001, the first year after the outbreak of violence, comes a startling break in the lines on the graph. By 2004, the per capita [redacted] for Israelis was $22,637, while the comparable figure for synthetic Israelis was $25,942. The gap then widened slightly and never closed. (The possibility that this deviation was the result of chance is under five per cent, Horiuchi shows.)

There could, of course, be other reasons for the divergence. Likud officials have insisted that Israel's unimpressive growth rate in the aughts had to do not with the conflict but with the bursting of the dot-com bubble. But at least a couple of the countries that make up synthetic Israel—Finland and

Singapore—had larger high-tech sectors than Israel's in 2001, as measured by the countries' high-tech exports as a percentage of total manufactured exports. Yet Finland and Singapore saw their [redacted] grow more between 2001 and 2008 than did Israel—and so, too, did synthetic Israel. The 2000 intifada, meanwhile, had such a profound impact on Israel that it would appear to have been the most significant reason for the gap between real Israel and synthetic Israel. Cumulatively, from 2001 to 2010, Israel's per capita [redacted] was $25,513 less than that of synthetic Israel's.

What is $25,513 per capita in the grand scheme of things? A great deal. For an Israeli family of four, even after income taxes, it might have meant a down payment on an apartment, a college education for a child, or a couple of new cars.

Because tax rates in Israel are generally around forty per cent, there are implications for the government, too: based on conservative estimates (assuming, for instance, that only a third of the revenue goes to taxes), the lost [redacted] could amount to nearly sixty billion dollars going to the government—a big proportion of the country's annual budget. Horiuchi's analysis ends in 2010, but if the trends have continued since then, the lost [redacted] would have grown.

That is no small matter. We are talking about a government that has been cutting desperately to cover a deficit. This is a country where only about sixty-four per cent of the adult, non-elderly population participates in the labor force (a figure that is fourteen points below that of the Netherlands and four points below that of Greece), and where forty per cent of children are, according to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, "in significant risk of falling below the poverty line," about double the [redacted] average.

The boasts from Israel's promoters also obscure tremendous inequalities in the country. In Sweden, which has progressive taxation and social-welfare policies much like Israel's, the share of income held by the top percentile was seven per cent in 2011. In Israel, it was nearly thirteen per cent. Israel's poverty rate of about twenty-one per cent is the highest in the developed world.

The repercussions are felt throughout the country: Hebrew University has made massive cuts, especially in the humanities and social sciences, to try to cover an operating deficit of about fifty-five million dollars. The Taub Center, a Jerusalem-based research institute, reports that for every ten

tenured or tenure-track faculty members at Israel's colleges and universities, there are nearly three Israelis filling similar positions in the United States. Gershom Gorenberg argued in The American Prospect that this is "a rate of intellectual exodus on a greater scale than that of any other country in the world."

Israel should be thought of as several countries in one: Tel Aviv, an advanced, global hub, could be compared to Singapore, while dozens of less developed towns, like Yerucham, have more in common with Turkey. Peace in Israel would mitigate the social tensions between the country's rich and poor. But beyond that, the rapid growth engendered by peace would allow Israel to improve social relations even more—especially as so many of the poor are Arabs.

"We can grow without progressing toward peace," Stanley Fischer, the former governor of the Bank of Israel, said back in 2007. But he added that with peace, growth would be much higher: "We are talking about the difference between four percent growth a year and growth of five to six percent a year."

Imagine, in other words, if Israel looked more like its synthetic counterpart. It would not have to invest so much more of its national budget on defense than what other [redacted]. countries spend, freeing up funds for social programs and infrastructure. Investment in its academic institutions and hospitals would likely mean an early return to Israel of scientists and physicians; the gain in intellectual capital would prompt expanded innovation.

Consider, also, the boost to tourism. (Jerusalem, in a good year, gets about three million tourists. Florence gets ten million.) An improved tourism industry, as with industries like construction, retail, and food processing—precisely those industries that a growing Palestinian state will need—would translate to jobs for Israelis who live in parts of the country that are least like Singapore.

Nor should the prospect of continuing conflict be considered a tolerable steady state. Even in the most high-tech industries, very few Israeli companies make consumer products like Waze's app. They tend, instead, to solve problems for other companies, which entails building relationships with product-development groups around the world. Venture capitalists worry that, should Israel become a political pariah, many global

corporations—potential customers for their portfolio startups—would write off dealing with Israelis as just too much trouble. On the other hand, imagine Israeli businesses, with Palestinian partners, building customer networks in Saudi Arabia and the Emirates.

That's why some of the very people Bob Simon interviewed for "60 Minutes," including the high-tech guru Yossi Vardi, later organized a conference in Amman to push for peace, under the auspices of the World Economic Forum. "We come from the field, and we're feeling the pressure," one participant told Haaretz. "If we don't make progress toward a two-state solution, there will be negative developments for the Israeli economy. We're already noticing initial signs of this. The future of the Israeli economy will be in danger."