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Article 1.

NYT

A Middle East Twofer

Thomas L. Friedman

April 3, 2012 -- There is so much going on in the Middle East today, it's impossible to capture it all with one opinion. So here are two for the price of one.

Opinion One: Haaretz, the Israeli newspaper, reported last week that the imprisoned Palestinian leader Marwan Barghouti "released an unusual statement from his cell. He called on his people to start a popular uprising against Israel, to stop

negotiations and security coordination and to boycott [Israel]. Barghouti recommended that his people choose nonviolent opposition.” Barghouti, as Haaretz noted, “is the most authentic leader Fatah has produced, and he can lead his people to an agreement. ... If Israel had wanted an agreement with the Palestinians it would have released him from prison by now.”

I had gotten to know Barghouti before his five life sentences for involvement in killing Israelis. His call for nonviolent resistance is noteworthy and the latest in a series of appeals to and by Palestinians — coming from all over — to summon their own “Arab Awakening,” but do it nonviolently, with civil disobedience or boycotts of Israel, Israeli settlements or Israeli products.

I can certainly see the efficacy of nonviolent resistance by Palestinians to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank — on one condition: They accompany any boycotts, sit-ins or hunger strikes with a detailed map of the final two-state settlement they are seeking. Just calling for “an end to occupation” won’t cut it.

Palestinians need to accompany every boycott, hunger strike or rock they throw at Israel with a map delineating how, for peace, they would accept getting back 95 percent of the West Bank and all Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem and would swap the other 5 percent for land inside pre-1967 Israel. Such an arrangement would allow some 75 percent of the Jewish settlers to remain in the West Bank, while still giving Palestinians 100 percent of the land back. (For map examples see: the Geneva Parameters or David Makovsky’s at: <http://washingtoninstitute.org/pubPDFs/StrategicReport06.pdf>.)

By Palestinians engaging in nonviolent civil disobedience in the West Bank with one hand and carrying a map of a reasonable two-state settlement in the other, they will be adopting the only strategy that will end the Israeli occupation: Making Israelis feel morally insecure but strategically secure. The Iron Law of the peace process is that whoever makes the Israeli silent majority feel morally insecure about occupation but strategically secure in Israel wins.

After Anwar Sadat flew to Jerusalem, Israelis knew there was no way morally that they could hold onto the Sinai and strategically they did not feel the need to any longer. The first intifada, which focused on stone-throwing, got Palestinians Oslo. The second intifada, which was focused on suicide bombing of restaurants in Tel Aviv, got them the wall around the West Bank; Israelis felt sufficiently strategically insecure and morally secure to lock all Palestinians in a big jail. Today, nothing makes Israelis feel more strategically insecure and morally secure than Hamas's demented shelling of Israel from Gaza, even after Israel unilaterally withdrew.

Unabated, disruptive Palestinian civil disobedience in the West Bank, coupled with a map delineating a deal most Israelis would buy, is precisely what would make Israelis feel morally insecure but strategically secure and revive the Israeli peace camp. It is the only Palestinian strategy Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu fears, but it is one that he is sure Palestinians would never adopt. He thinks it's not in their culture. Will they surprise him?

Opinion Two: One of the most hackneyed clichés about the Middle East today is that the Arab Awakening, because it was not focused on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, only proves that this

conflict was not that important. Rather, it is argued, the focus should be on Iran 24/7. The fact is, the Arab Awakening has made an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement more urgent than ever for two reasons. First, it is now clear that Arab autocracies are being replaced with Islamist/populist parties. And, in Egypt, in particular, it is already clear that a key issue in the election will be the peace treaty with Israel. In this context, if Palestinian-Israeli violence erupts in the West Bank, there will be no firewall — the role played by former President Hosni Mubarak — to stop the flames from spreading directly to the Egyptian street.

Moreover, with the rise of Islamists in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Syria, Israelis and Palestinians have a greater incentive than ever to create an alternative model in the West Bank — a Singapore — to show that they, together, can give birth to a Palestinian state where Arab Muslims and Christians, men and women, can thrive in a secular, but religiously respectful, free-market, democratic context, next to a Jewish state. This is the best Palestinian leadership with which Israel could hope to partner.

One reason the Arab world has stagnated while Asia has thrived is that the Arabs had no good local models to follow — the way Taiwan followed Japan or Hong Kong. Fostering such a model — that would stand in daily contrast to struggling Islamist models in Gaza and elsewhere — would be a huge, long-term asset for Israel and help to shape the world around it.

The Washington Post

Muslim Brotherhood officials aim to promote moderate image in Washington visit

William Wan

April 4 -- Members of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood began a week-long charm offensive in Washington on Tuesday, meeting with White House officials, policy experts and others to counter persistent fears about the group's emergence as the country's most powerful political force.

The revolution that ousted Hosni Mubarak has rapidly transformed the Brotherhood from an opposition group that had been formally banned into a political juggernaut controlling nearly half the seats in Egypt's newly elected parliament.

With its rise, however, have come concerns from Egypt's secularists as well as U.S. officials that the Islamist group could remake the country, threatening the rights of women and religious minorities. Such fears were only exacerbated by the Brotherhood's recent decision to field a candidate in upcoming presidential elections, despite previous pledges that it would not do so.

In meeting with U.S. officials, Brotherhood representatives were expected to depict the organization as a moderate and socially conscious movement pursuing power in the interest of Egyptians at large.

“We represent a moderate, centrist Muslim viewpoint. The priorities for us are mainly economic, political — preserving the revolution ideals of social justice, education, security for the people,” Sondos Asem, a member of the delegation, said Tuesday in an interview with reporters and editors of The Washington Post.

In the interview, members of the delegation defended the decision by the group’s political wing, the Freedom and Justice Party, to field a presidential candidate.

“We approached people outside of the Brotherhood that we respected, like people in the judiciary, but none of them would agree to be nominated,” said Khaled al-Qazzaz, foreign relations coordinator for the party.

Qazzaz and others said that a candidate elected from outside the Brotherhood could have instituted radical changes and dissolved the parliament.

But the Brotherhood’s rise has caused it to spar with liberal and secular groups. Liberals and Coptic Christians who were chosen to be part of the effort to draw up a new constitution recently walked out of meetings in protest, saying the body was unbalanced, with an overwhelming number of representatives from Islamist groups such as the Brotherhood.

“We believe there is a dire attempt to hinder efforts of the constitutional assembly because its success would mean that we are on the right track, that the democracy is working and government is changing,” Asem said. In addition to allaying American fears about their political ambitions, the Brotherhood is hoping to mend U.S.-Egypt relations in the aftermath of

Egypt's decision to prosecute American and Egyptian pro-democracy advocates. Outrage over the prosecutions had prompted lawmakers to press the Obama administration to withhold \$1.3 billion in U.S. aid to Egypt's military. "This mistrust is a wall that needs to come down, but it can't just be one side that brings it down. It has to be both sides," said Abdul Mawgoud R. Dardery, a lawmaker and member of the Brotherhood delegation. It is unclear how representative the visiting delegation is and how closely the values its members described mirror those of the core leaders of the Brotherhood. Those sent on the trip said they were chosen in part for their fluency in English and their familiarity and ease with American culture. But the delegation did not include the decision makers at the top of the Brotherhood's leadership.

On two of the biggest questions among U.S. observers — the Brotherhood's relationship with Egypt's military and its position on U.S. aid to the military — the visiting delegation gave only vague answers.

For months, rumors have swirled that the Brotherhood was secretly talking with the military about sharing power in the new government, but of late, the two sides have seemed increasingly hostile, with the Brotherhood demanding that military leaders dissolve the interim government they appointed.

Members of the Brotherhood delegation, who met with White House officials Tuesday, are scheduled to meet with more U.S. officials in coming days and attend several events at think tanks.

At those events, they are likely to be scrutinized as representatives of Egypt's ruling party.

“People will be looking to see how much they are really beginning to act like a political party in power, whether they are thinking in concrete policy terms,” said Marina Ottaway, a Middle East expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace who arranged the delegation’s visit. “Do they have any answers to question to economic problems? How much do they understand the world as it exists today and the concerns of other countries?”

“You have to remember, many of the people now in charge of the Brotherhood spent the last years in jail, isolated from what was going on,” Ottaway said. “They are only now emerging, and so there’s a great desire among them for acceptance and legitimacy as players on the international political scene.”

Article 3.

The Christian Science Monitor

Israel is not the threat, Mr. Obama. Iran is.

John Bolton

April 3, 2012 -- The Obama administration appears to be conducting an organized campaign of public pressure to stop Israel from attacking Iran’s well-developed nuclear-weapons program. So intense is this effort, and so determined is President Obama to succeed, that administration officials are now leaking highly sensitive information about Israel’s intentions and capabilities into the news media.

The president’s unwillingness to take preemptive military action

against Tehran's nuclear efforts has long been evident, notwithstanding his ritual incantation that "all options are on the table." Equally evident is his fixation to ensure that Israel does not act unilaterally against Iran, a principal reason why Washington's relations with Jerusalem are at their lowest ebb since Israel's 1948 founding.

Indeed, the only conclusion to be drawn from Mr. Obama's actions and rhetoric is that he fears an Israeli military strike more than he fears Iran achieving nuclear-weapons capability.

Current and former Obama advisers have repeatedly contended that a satisfactory negotiated outcome is possible, one where Iran will continue to develop a "peaceful" nuclear capability under international monitoring. How they can cling to this belief after years of Iran deceiving the International Atomic Energy Agency, going so far as to demolish buildings and excavate and remove thousands of cubic yards of rock and soil to try to conceal traces of radiation, is hard to fathom. Nonetheless, Team Obama still believes that Iran's military-theocratic regime is capable of holding Pandora's box but never opening it.

Equally disconcerting, administration officials, past and present, argue that a nuclear-capable Iran can be contained and deterred. Although Obama himself insists that containment is not his policy, I believe that assertion is true only in a limited sense: It is not his policy today. It is his policy for tomorrow, his Plan B, after the current sanctions and diplomacy fail to stop Iran. This is perhaps even more delusional than dreaming about Iran benignly pursuing "atoms for peace."

Deterrence against the Soviet Union worked precariously and

unnervingly at times, with some very narrow escapes from catastrophe, only because of a confluence of calculations between Washington and Moscow. There is no realistic prospect that Tehran's religious autocracy will develop the same calculus of caution.

Still worse, even if Iran could be contained and deterred, there will undoubtedly be wider proliferation in the Middle East once Iran achieves nuclear weapons. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton herself has said that a weaponized Iran certainly means that Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, and perhaps others will seek their own nuclear capabilities. Thus, in a relatively short period, five to 10 years, there could be half a dozen or more nuclear-weapons states in the region.

Accordingly, stopping Iran from getting nuclear weapons in the first place must be America's top priority. The prolonged failures of diplomacy and sanctions have brought the United States to the point where, realistically, there are only two alternatives: Either Iran's mullahs get the bomb, or someone stops them militarily beforehand. This is the dilemma that leads Obama to pressure Israel against even thinking about the second alternative.

Three years of merciless private pressure against Israel having obviously failed to extract a commitment not to use force, the Obama administration looks to have determined two months ago to go public. The first salvo was Defense Secretary Leon Panetta's assertion that Israel might well strike Iran between April and June of this year. Nothing like letting the target know when to expect the attack. Next came leaks to an author at Foreign Policy magazine's Web site that Israel had secured

basing rights from Azerbaijan, on Iran's northern border, for possible use during a campaign against Tehran's weapons program. Launching strikes just a few hundred miles away from several likely targets – such as the Isfaham uranium conversion facility and the Natanz uranium enrichment plant – rather than having to attack from domestic airfields would give Israel both enormous tactical surprise and a critical leg up logistically.

One can assume with some confidence that Iran was not focused on the risk of Israeli bases in Azerbaijan, so hearing about it from US administration sources is a gift almost beyond measure. And one can also confidently assume that if that leak is not enough to make Israel bend its knee, more public revelations directed by the White House are only a matter of time.

Even now, Obama advisers could be revealing additional information to other governments behind closed doors. Perhaps we could ask Dmitri Medvedev.

Not only is this not the way to treat a close ally facing an existential challenge, it is directly contrary to America's national interests. Israel is not the threat, Mr. President: Iran is.

John Bolton, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, served as US ambassador to the United Nations in 2005-06.

Article 4.

Stratfor

Israel's New Strategic Environment

George Friedman

April 3, 2012 -- Israel is now entering its third strategic environment. The constant threat of state-on-state war defined the first, which lasted from the founding of the Jewish state until its peace treaty with Egypt. A secure periphery defined the second, which lasted until recently and focused on the Palestinian issue, Lebanon and the rise of radical Sunni Islamists. The rise of Iran as a regional power and the need to build international coalitions to contain it define the third.

Israel's fundamental strategic problem is that its national security interests outstrip its national resources, whether industrial, geographic, demographic or economic. During the first phase, it was highly dependent on outside powers -- first the Soviet Union, then France and finally the United States -- in whose interest it was to provide material support to Israel. In the second phase, the threat lessened, leaving Israel relatively free to define its major issues, such as containing the Palestinians and attempting to pacify Lebanon. Its dependence on outside powers decreased, meaning it could disregard those powers from time to time. In the third phase, Israel's dependence on outside powers, particularly the United States, began increasing. With this increase, Israel's freedom for maneuver began declining.

Containing the Palestinians by Managing Its Neighbors

The Palestinian issue, of course, has existed since Israel's founding. By itself, this issue does not pose an existential threat to Israel, since the Palestinians cannot threaten the Israeli state's

survival. The Palestinians have had the ability to impose a significant cost on the occupation of the West Bank and the containing of the Gaza Strip, however. They have forced the Israelis to control significant hostile populations with costly, ongoing operations and to pay political costs to countries Israel needs to manage its periphery and global interests. The split between Hamas and Fatah reduced the overall threat but raised the political costs. This became apparent during the winter of 2008-2009 during Operation Cast Lead in Gaza when Hamas, for its own reasons, chose to foment conflict with Israel. Israel's response to Hamas' actions cost the Jewish state support in Europe, Turkey and other places.

Ideological or religious considerations aside, the occupation of the territories makes strategic sense in that if Israel withdraws, Hamas might become militarized to the point of threatening Israel with direct attack or artillery and rocket fire. Israel thus sees itself forced into an occupation that carries significant political costs in order to deal with a theoretical military threat. The threat is presently just theoretical, however, because of Israel's management of its strategic relations with its neighboring nation-states.

Israel has based its management of its regional problem less on creating a balance of power in the region than on taking advantage of tensions among its neighbors to prevent them from creating a united military front against Israel. From 1948 until the 1970s, Lebanon refrained from engaging Israel. Meanwhile, Jordan's Hashemite regime had deep-seated tensions with the Palestinians, with Syria and with Nasserite Egypt. In spite of Israeli-Jordanian conflict in 1967, Jordan saw Israel as a guarantor of its national security. Following the 1973 war, Egypt

signed a peace treaty with Israel that created a buffer zone in the Sinai Peninsula.

By then, Lebanon had begun to shift its position, less because of any formal government policy and more because of the disintegration of the Lebanese state and the emergence of a Palestine Liberation Organization presence in southern Lebanon. Currently, with Syria in chaos, Jordan dependent on Israel and Egypt still maintaining the treaty with Israel despite recent Islamist political gains, only Lebanon poses a threat, and that threat is minor.

The Palestinians therefore lack the political or military support to challenge Israel. This in turn has meant that other countries' alienation over Israeli policy toward the Palestinians has carried little risk. European countries opposed to Israeli policy are unlikely to take significant action. Because political opposition cannot translate into meaningful action, Israel can afford a higher level of aggressiveness toward the Palestinians.

Thus, Israel's strongest interest is in maintaining divisions among its neighbors and maintaining their disinterest in engaging Israel. In different ways, unrest in Egypt and Syria and Iran's regional emergence pose a serious challenge to this strategy.

Egypt

Egypt is the ultimate threat to Israel. It has a huge population and, as it demonstrated in 1973, it is capable of mounting complex military operations.

But to do what it did in 1973, Egypt needed an outside power

with an interest in supplying Egypt with massive weaponry and other support. In 1973, that power was the Soviet Union, but the Egyptians reversed their alliance position to the U.S. camp following that war. Once their primary source of weaponry became the United States, using that weaponry depended heavily on U.S. supplies of spare parts and contractors.

At this point, no foreign power would be capable of, or interested in, supporting the Egyptian military should Cairo experience regime change and a break with the United States. And a breach of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty alone would not generate a threat to Israel. The United States would act as a brake on Egyptian military capabilities, and no new source would step in. Even if a new source did emerge, it would take a generation for the Egyptians to become militarily effective using new weapon systems. In the long run, however, Egypt will remain Israel's problem.

Syria

The near-term question is Syria's future. Israel had maintained a complex and not always transparent relationship with the Syrian government. In spite of formal hostilities, the two shared common interests in Lebanon. Israel did not want to manage Lebanon after Israeli failures in the 1980s, but it still wanted Lebanon -- and particularly Hezbollah -- managed. Syria wanted to control Lebanon for political and economic reasons and did not want Israel interfering there. An implicit accommodation was thus possible, one that didn't begin to unravel until the United States forced Syria out of Lebanon, freeing Hezbollah from Syrian controls and setting the stage for the 2006 war.

Israel continued to view the Alawite regime in Syria as preferable to a radical Sunni regime. In the context of the U.S. presence in Iraq, the threat to Israel came from radical Sunni Islamists; Israel's interests lay with whoever opposed them. Today, with the United States out of Iraq and Iran a dominant influence there, the Israelis face a more complex choice. If the regime of President Bashar al Assad survives (with or without al Assad himself), Iran -- which is supplying weapons and advisers to Syria -- will wield much greater influence in Syria. In effect, this would create an Iranian sphere of influence running from western Afghanistan to Iraq, Syria and into Lebanon via Hezbollah. It would create a regional power. And an Iranian regional power would pose severe dangers to Israel.

Accordingly, Israel has shifted its thinking from supporting the al Assad regime to wanting it to depart so that a Sunni government hostile to Iran but not dominated by radical Islamists could emerge. Here we reach the limits of Israeli power, because what happens in Syria is beyond Israel's control. Those who might influence the course of events in Syria apart from Iran include Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Both are being extremely cautious in their actions, however, and neither government is excessively sensitive to U.S. needs. Israel's main ally, the United States, has little influence in Syria, particularly given Russian and, to some extent, Chinese opposition to American efforts to shape Syria's future.

Even more than Egypt, Syria is a present threat to Israel, not by itself but because it could bring a more distant power -- Iran -- to bear. As important, Syria could threaten the stability of the region by reshaping the politics of Lebanon or destabilizing Jordan. The only positive dimension for Israel is that Iran's

military probably will not be able to deploy significant forces far from its borders for many years. Iran simply lacks the logistical or command capabilities for such an operation. But developing them is just a matter of time. Israel could, of course, launch a war in Syria. But the challenge of occupying Syria would dwarf the challenge Israel faces with the Palestinians. On the other side of the equation, an Iranian presence in Syria could reshape the West Bank in spite of Shiite-Sunni tensions.

The United States and the Europeans, with Libya as a model, theoretically could step into managing Syria. But Libya was a seven-month war in a much less populous country. It is unlikely they would attempt this in Syria, and if they did, it would not be because Israel needed them to do so. And this points to Israel's core strategic weakness. In dealing with Syria and the emergent Iranian influence there, Israel is incapable of managing the situation by itself. It must have outside powers intervening on its behalf. And that intervention poses military and political challenges that Israel's patron, the United States, doesn't want to undertake.

It is important to understand that Israel, after a long period in which it was able to manage its national security issues, is now re-entering the phase where it cannot do so without outside support. This is where its policy on the Palestinians begins to hurt, particularly in Europe, where intervention on behalf of Israeli interests would conflict with domestic European political forces. In the United States, where the Israeli-Palestinian problem has less impact, the appetite to intervene in yet another Muslim country is simply not there, particularly without European allies.

Iran

This is all compounded by the question of Iranian nuclear weapons. In our view, as we have said, the Iranians are far closer to a controlled underground test than to a deliverable weapon. Israel's problem is that Iran appears on the verge of a strategic realignment in the region. The sense that Iran is an emerging nuclear power both enhances Iran's position and decreases anyone's appetite to do anything about it. Israel is practicing psychological warfare against Iran, but it still faces a serious problem: The more Iran consolidates its position in the Middle East and the closer it is to a weapon the more other countries outside the region will have to accommodate themselves to Iran. And this leaves Israel vulnerable.

Israel cannot do much about Syria, but a successful attack on Iranian nuclear facilities could undermine Iranian credibility at a time when Israel badly needs to do just that. Here again, Israel faces its strategic problem. It might be able to carry out an effective strike against Iran, particularly if, as has been speculated, a country such as Azerbaijan provides facilities like airfields. However, even with such assistance, Israel's air force is relatively small, meaning there is no certainty of success. Nor could Israel strike without American knowledge and approval. The Americans will know about an Israeli strike by technical intelligence. Hiding such a strike from either the Americans or Russians would be difficult, compounding the danger to Israel.

More important, Israel cannot strike Iran without U.S. permission because Israel cannot guarantee that the Iranians would not mine the Strait of Hormuz. Only the United States could hope to stop the Iranians from doing so, and the United

States would need to initiate the conflict by taking out the Iranian mine-laying capability before the first Israeli strike. Given its dependence on the United States for managing its national security, the decision to attack would have to be taken jointly. An uncoordinated attack by Israel would be possible only if Israel were willing to be the cause of global economic chaos.

Israel's strategic problem is that it must align its strategy with the United States and with anyone the United States regards as essential to its national security, such as the Saudis. But the United States has interests beyond Israel, so Israel is constantly entangled with its patron's multiplicity of interests. This limits its range of action as severely as its air force's constraints do.

Since its peace treaty with Egypt, Israeli dependence on outsiders was limited. Israel could act on issues like settlements, for example, regardless of American views. That period is coming to an end, and with it the period in which Israel could afford to deviate from its patron. People frequently discuss any U.S.-Israeli rift in terms of personal relations between U.S. President Barack Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, but this is mistaken. It is uncertainty in Egypt and Syria and the emergence of Iran that have created a new strategic reality for Israel.

George Friedman is the founder of the private intelligence corporation Stratfor. He has authored several books, including The Next 100 Years, The Next Decade, America's Secret War, The Intelligence Edge, The Coming War With Japan and The Future of War.

Agence Global

The Irrational US-Iran-Israel Dynamic

Rami G. Khouri

4 Apr 2012 -- BEIRUT -- Why does most of the world continue to lose respect for the United States and its conduct of foreign policy? Two developments in the past week shed some light on this, and -- not surprisingly -- they both relate to Washington's relations with Iran and Israel, an arena in which American rationality, fairness, consistency and integrity go out the window, and hysteria takes over the controls.

Last Friday President Barack Obama announced that his analysis of global oil trading led him to conclude that there were sufficient supplies of crude oil in the market for the United States to implement previously announced sanctions on countries that buy oil from Iran. If third countries do not reduce or stop their oil purchases and commercial dealings with the Central Bank of Iran, those countries would not be allowed to do any business with the United States.

Two rather extraordinary aspects of this decision deserve note. The first is the presumptuous American government attitude that Washington can decide on its own whether the global oil market is sufficiently robust to allow the United States to unilaterally

issue orders to other sovereign countries about where they can or cannot buy oil. This American sense of global arrogance already extends to several other domains in which lawmakers in Washington -- most of whom are deeply ignorant of the world beyond their borders -- presumptuously issue reports and rankings about the status of human rights, religious freedoms, press freedoms, democracy or other such issues around the world.

The United States does not see itself as a leading power among equally sovereign states around the world; it sees itself as the definer and guarantor of global behavior, and the enforcer of norms that it sets on its own. Most of the world rejects and resents this.

The second more problematic aspects of the oil sanctions and commercial trading decision is that the United States will now enforce a secondary boycott against countries that buy Iranian oil via transactions with the Iranian central bank. My problem with this is not that the United States should not impose such a secondary boycott, which all countries are free to use. My problem is that the United States explicitly and vehemently opposed such a secondary boycott when the Arab countries did exactly the same thing in relation to third country companies that invested in or appreciably assisted the Israeli economy, because of the active state of war between Arabs and Israelis. Washington rejected this rationale and said that the Arab boycott had to be opposed and busted.

Now the United States applies exactly the same principle, totally abandoning the values that it summoned when it opposed the Arab boycott of Israel. The continuing insistence by Washington that its foreign policy should operate according to a different set

of rules than the rest of the world -- especially when Israel is concerned -- is a major reason why so many people and governments around the world look at American foreign policy with disdain and disrespect.

The second noteworthy development last week helps explain why this kind of behavior occurs. It was an opinion article in the Washington Post by Dennis Ross and David Makovsky, of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), entitled, "The U.S. can meet Israel halfway on Iran."

It laid out a series of reasons why and how the United States and Israel should closely coordinate their diplomacy, negotiations, sanctions, threats and potential military attack on Iran, noting that: "Because Israel is the only country that Iran has repeatedly threatened to 'wipe off the map,' it is reasonable for it to have some input into the objectives of diplomacy and the timetable for progress in negotiations. The more Israelis feel their views are being taken into account, the more inclined they will be to give diplomacy a chance to work before resorting to force. Israel should also understand that if diplomacy fails and force proves necessary, the context in which force is used will be critical."

This is not surprising coming from WINEP, which is a highly effective pro-Israel think tank in Washington, D.C. that has exceptional influence among U.S. officials, as do most other such institutions that broadly reflect the positions of the Israeli government and the pro-Israel lobby groups in the United States. What is surprising is the rather explicit call from the heart of Washington, D.C. for American policy on Iran to be so closely coordinated with Israeli views. Coordination is a normal tool for diplomatic action, but many people in the United States and around the world feel that the line between cooperation and coercion has been badly blurred in U.S.-Israeli relations, as

America's Mideast policies seem increasingly subservient to Israeli concerns.

Dennis Ross was a central figure in American policies on Arab-Israeli and, more recently, Iranian issues -- policies that have totally failed in almost every respect. Is it perhaps due in part to the fact that American officials and lawmakers often confuse Israeli concerns with American interests? Are we seeing this principle in action again these days on policy towards Iran, where coordination and coercion seem especially confused?

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Article 6.

The Diplomat

Is Africa the Next Asia?

Richard Aidoo

April 3, 2012 -- The rhetoric surrounding Africa, or at least the continent's economic development, appears to be changing.

Despite the ongoing global economic turmoil, a number of African nations have been making impressive strides in their development, a point underscored by The Economist's decision

recently to run a leader describing Africa as the “hopeful continent,” drawing a clear contrast to its cover story “The Hopeless Continent” a decade ago.

And the continent’s leaders are now looking east for their inspiration. Rwandan President Paul Kagame, for example, has said he hopes to eventually transform his country’s economy into the “Singapore of Central Africa.” Such sentiments tap into the vast and growing repository of Afro-optimism, an optimism that sees sustained economic growth as the future, even as the north of the continent is embroiled in domestic political turmoil and uprisings.

So, is it Africa’s time to replicate the economic growth feats of Asia? This may seem like a herculean task, but given the recent economic gains made in countries like Ghana, which posted 13.5 percent growth last year as it casts off the failed economic policies of the 1980s and 1990s, as well as the success of recent BRICS addition South Africa, there’s now hope for an “African miracle.”

But if Asia is the guide for Africa’s economic miracle, then the Asian foundations of a strong state and supporting institutions must be made a reality in Africa. The examples of China and Japan loom large in the minds of many African leaders and elites. Yet in contrasts with these two Asian giants, the post-independent African state is still encumbered with significant structural weaknesses, a lack of professionalism and an excess of cronyism, patronage and other corrupt practices that would make even officials involved in some of China’s most notorious cases of corruption blush. This lingering image has undermined efforts to settle on a positive economic agenda in Africa, even

when visionary leaders of developmentally-oriented states such as Mauritius and Botswana have emerged.

Some argue that the East Asian model of state-driven economic growth might not be suitable for African states, given the apparent weaknesses in their leaders' characters (this isn't to mention the somewhat troubling view that Africans are inherently not up to the task of producing sustained and healthy economic growth). With this in mind, some argue that the social, historical and structural weaknesses demonstrated by many African states suggest that their economies would instead be better off relying on market incentives, i.e., the Southeast Asian path beaten by Singapore and Indonesia.

Regardless of the model that African nations choose to follow, achieving the enviable growth patterns of some Asian economies will require the strengthening of intra-regional trade. Africa's recent economic gains have been mainly driven by external trade, especially with emerging economies such as China, India, Brazil and South Korea. A recent report by the McKinsey Global Institute puts intra-African trade at a lowly 12 percent, about half that achieved in Latin America. This is despite almost a billion consumers residing in the African continent, meaning that intra-African trade should no longer be perceived as an insignificant element of any country's economy, but rather a potential path toward market consolidation and leverage for African markets in the global economy. China and other Asian economies offer clear examples of the benefits of looking local as well as outside the region.

Another vital element in Africa's future that chimes with the Asian experience is industrialization. This is where African

governments really need to shift the economic discourse, away from a focus simply on commodities to a more diversified economic base that adds value to these products. Achieving this will require efficient and ultimately well-maintained infrastructure, a challenge that African leaders must face up to and address quickly. Interestingly, it is on this very issue that Asia, particularly in the form of increased Chinese investment, is able to offer practical assistance toward achieving this goal (although African nations must also be careful that they don't miss out on opportunities to develop their own manufacturing sectors, rather than relying on imports and expertise from China).

Another key to African success will be following best practice in success stories like Singapore, particularly the city-state's merit-based approach to bureaucracy. Whether its growth is state-driven or laissez-faire, a well-organized bureaucratic system should recognize and reward genuine talent. If Africa wants to replicate Asia's success stories, it will need to work harder to ensure that merit displaces cronyism and elitism as the determiner of progress.

African nations are in a better position to achieve and maintain economic growth than at any time in their post-independent histories. And, in spite of the sporadic political and civil conflict that persists in parts of the continent, there have been many signs of a growing political maturity. With political discipline and a focus on merit-based critical institutions, the social cohesion necessary for sustained economic growth is gradually emerging, which should allow the continent to take advantage of its rich natural resources.

And, looking ahead, Africa has another potential advantage – a youthful population with a hunger for change. Many of the uprisings in support of democracy across the continent have been championed by disaffected young people bitten by the technology bug and anxious for opportunities. For these young and driven Africans, change isn't a distant hope, but something achievable. The memories of colonial exploitation are receding further into the rearview mirror as young Africans look forward.

Ultimately, of course, building on Africa's current economic gains will take a mix of optimism and dispassionate study of success stories like China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea. But even though the historical settings may differ, the promises of some African leaders to chart a course similar to Asia's should be seen as the best way of lifting millions of Africans out of poverty – and beyond.

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Article 7.

The Moscow Times

Kremlin Sees Obama as Weak

Vladimir Ryzhkov

04 April 2012 -- U.S. Ambassador Michael McFaul has

encountered a much chillier reception than he apparently anticipated when he agreed to come to Moscow. Rather than accolades, respect and words of endearment from the Russian authorities, the man who is an architect of U.S. President Barack Obama's "reset" with Moscow instead found himself the object of a Kremlin-sponsored media campaign aimed at discrediting, pressuring, provoking and defaming him.

Fed up with all of this, McFaul issued a strong statement against NTV — the channel controlled by Gazprom, a state-owned company with close ties to President-elect Vladimir Putin — and famous for its aggressive "exposés" about the Russian opposition and the supposed U.S. subversive activities aimed at destabilizing Russia.

In particular, McFaul expressed indignation over the airing of "The Anatomy of Protest," a pseudo-documentary hatchet job created by the channel's journalists and based on deliberate misrepresentations in the best case and blatant lies in the worst. Among other things, the program made the patently false charge that Washington directly funds Russian protests and the opposition.

McFaul, who has been hounded by NTV journalists wherever he goes, was particularly perplexed as to how the journalists were aware of the time and location of each of his scheduled meetings, enabling them to bombard him with questions, cameras rolling, as he got out of his car and walked to these meetings. McFaul suggested that NTV learned of his work schedule by tapping his telephone and e-mail.

Of course, NTV representatives angrily repudiated

the suggestion that the channel had engaged in illegal surveillance, claiming instead that it relied on a "wide network of informants" for its information. It was not a very convincing argument considering that the only people with access to the ambassador's schedule are his personal aides and the rights activists and opposition members with whom he had scheduled meetings — none of whom is likely to be part of NTV's trusted "network of informants."

McFaul noted that any other leading capital in the world would consider such treatment of a U.S. ambassador unthinkable. He specifically pointed out that "only in Russia" was such behavior possible. Meanwhile, the U.S. State Department issued statements in defense of its ambassador.

But all of this did not stop Obama from being kindly disposed toward President Dmitry Medvedev during a security conference in Seoul. During a conversation that was caught on a hot mic, Medvedev promised to deliver Obama's kind words and intentions to Putin, the man who effectively pulls the strings at Gazprom and its media subsidiaries.

But in reality, many of McFaul's problems in Moscow are rooted in Obama's policy toward Russia.

The Kremlin sees the Obama administration as weak and indecisive, making it a perfect, nonthreatening partner that can be bullied and provoked using the same tools Moscow routinely employs against opposition leaders and civil and human rights activists at home. This was the approach that the Kremlin used against the Estonian ambassador to protest the relocation of a monument to Soviet soldiers from downtown

Tallinn. By Moscow's reasoning, if such tactics are permissible when dealing with "weak" Estonia, why not use the same methods against a "weak" United States? Why should Putin and his cohorts show respect for the U.S. ambassador? On the contrary, it is better to put him in his place.

McFaul's situation was complicated by the fact that he arrived in Moscow in the midst of the most perilous political crisis of Putin's rule — at a time when mass street protests over election fraud had severely aggravated the Kremlin's paranoid fears of a color revolution. Fearing the potential might of the protest movement, the Kremlin renewed its crackdown on nongovernmental organizations, focusing on those that receive their funding from Washington. At the same time, Kremlin propagandists were in desperate need of a "foreign enemy," and the United States was a logical choice since it has historically played this role quite effectively.

This explains why, for example, a routine meeting at the U.S. Embassy between several opposition leaders and Deputy Secretary of State William Burns was depicted by the state-controlled media as if the United States were entering another Munich Pact — only this time not with Hitler but with leaders of the Russian opposition and human rights groups.

McFaul was further hurt by the fact that he is a well-known academic expert on democracy and the transition of authoritarian regimes to democracy. As a scholar, McFaul clearly opposes autocracy and is an ally of the democratic movement. As a diplomat and key figure in Obama's Russia policy, he supports the realpolitik practiced by former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. As an architect of the reset

policy, McFaul found himself vulnerable to Moscow's provocations and pressure given Washington's conciliatory stance toward Russia.

Former ambassadors carefully maneuvered between the Scylla of an authoritarian Kremlin and the Charybdis of U.S. democratic values. The Kremlin disliked the strong Alexander Vershbow, ambassador to Russia from 2001 to 2005, and also attempted to exert powerful pressure on him. But Vershbow openly criticized Putin's authoritarian ways, finally leaving Moscow with his head held high. The Kremlin's Nashi youth movement harassed former British Ambassador Antony Brenton because he dared to take part in a forum sponsored by the loathed opposition group The Other Russia.

McFaul should be aware that the authorities have tapped the phones and are reading the e-mails of the U.S. Embassy as well as the political opposition, just as he should be aware that top officials in the Kremlin and those trained by the KGB only understand the language of firmness and strength. At the same time, they hold in contempt anyone who shows even the slightest sign of weakness and compliance.

Vladimir Ryzhkov, a State Duma deputy from 1993 to 2007, hosts a political talk show on Ekho Moskvyy radio and is a co-founder of the opposition Party of People's Freedom.

4 April, 2012

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Article 1.

NYT

A Middle East Twofer

Thomas L. Friedman

April 3, 2012 -- There is so much going on in the Middle East today, it's impossible to capture it all with one opinion. So here are two for the price of one.

Opinion One: Haaretz, the Israeli newspaper, reported last week that the imprisoned Palestinian leader Marwan Barghouti "released an unusual statement from his cell. He called on his people to start a popular uprising against Israel, to stop negotiations and security coordination and to boycott [Israel]. Barghouti recommended that his people choose nonviolent opposition." Barghouti, as Haaretz noted, "is the most authentic leader Fatah has produced, and he can lead his people to an agreement. ... If Israel had wanted an agreement with the Palestinians it would have released him from prison by now."

I had gotten to know Barghouti before his five life sentences for involvement in killing Israelis. His call for nonviolent resistance

is noteworthy and the latest in a series of appeals to and by Palestinians — coming from all over — to summon their own “Arab Awakening,” but do it nonviolently, with civil disobedience or boycotts of Israel, Israeli settlements or Israeli products.

I can certainly see the efficacy of nonviolent resistance by Palestinians to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank — on one condition: They accompany any boycotts, sit-ins or hunger strikes with a detailed map of the final two-state settlement they are seeking. Just calling for “an end to occupation” won’t cut it.

Palestinians need to accompany every boycott, hunger strike or rock they throw at Israel with a map delineating how, for peace, they would accept getting back 95 percent of the West Bank and all Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem and would swap the other 5 percent for land inside pre-1967 Israel. Such an arrangement would allow some 75 percent of the Jewish settlers to remain in the West Bank, while still giving Palestinians 100 percent of the land back. (For map examples see: the Geneva Parameters or David Makovsky’s at: <http://washingtoninstitute.org/pubPDFs/StrategicReport06.pdf>.)

By Palestinians engaging in nonviolent civil disobedience in the West Bank with one hand and carrying a map of a reasonable two-state settlement in the other, they will be adopting the only strategy that will end the Israeli occupation: Making Israelis feel morally insecure but strategically secure. The Iron Law of the peace process is that whoever makes the Israeli silent majority feel morally insecure about occupation but strategically secure in Israel wins.

After Anwar Sadat flew to Jerusalem, Israelis knew there was no way morally that they could hold onto the Sinai and strategically they did not feel the need to any longer. The first intifada, which focused on stone-throwing, got Palestinians Oslo. The second intifada, which was focused on suicide bombing of restaurants in Tel Aviv, got them the wall around the West Bank; Israelis felt sufficiently strategically insecure and morally secure to lock all Palestinians in a big jail. Today, nothing makes Israelis feel more strategically insecure and morally secure than Hamas's demented shelling of Israel from Gaza, even after Israel unilaterally withdrew.

Unabated, disruptive Palestinian civil disobedience in the West Bank, coupled with a map delineating a deal most Israelis would buy, is precisely what would make Israelis feel morally insecure but strategically secure and revive the Israeli peace camp. It is the only Palestinian strategy Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu fears, but it is one that he is sure Palestinians would never adopt. He thinks it's not in their culture. Will they surprise him?

Opinion Two: One of the most hackneyed clichés about the Middle East today is that the Arab Awakening, because it was not focused on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, only proves that this conflict was not that important. Rather, it is argued, the focus should be on Iran 24/7. The fact is, the Arab Awakening has made an Israeli-Palestinian peace settlement more urgent than ever for two reasons. First, it is now clear that Arab autocracies are being replaced with Islamist/populist parties. And, in Egypt, in particular, it is already clear that a key issue in the election will be the peace treaty with Israel. In this context, if Palestinian-Israeli violence erupts in the West Bank, there will be no firewall — the role played by former President Hosni Mubarak

— to stop the flames from spreading directly to the Egyptian street.

Moreover, with the rise of Islamists in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt and Syria, Israelis and Palestinians have a greater incentive than ever to create an alternative model in the West Bank — a Singapore — to show that they, together, can give birth to a Palestinian state where Arab Muslims and Christians, men and women, can thrive in a secular, but religiously respectful, free-market, democratic context, next to a Jewish state. This is the best Palestinian leadership with which Israel could hope to partner.

One reason the Arab world has stagnated while Asia has thrived is that the Arabs had no good local models to follow — the way Taiwan followed Japan or Hong Kong. Fostering such a model — that would stand in daily contrast to struggling Islamist models in Gaza and elsewhere — would be a huge, long-term asset for Israel and help to shape the world around it.

Article 2.

The Washington Post

Muslim Brotherhood officials aim to promote moderate image in Washington visit

William Wan

April 4 -- Members of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood began a week-long charm offensive in Washington on Tuesday, meeting with White House officials, policy experts and others to counter persistent fears about the group's emergence as the country's most powerful political force.

The revolution that ousted Hosni Mubarak has rapidly transformed the Brotherhood from an opposition group that had been formally banned into a political juggernaut controlling nearly half the seats in Egypt's newly elected parliament.

With its rise, however, have come concerns from Egypt's secularists as well as U.S. officials that the Islamist group could remake the country, threatening the rights of women and religious minorities. Such fears were only exacerbated by the Brotherhood's recent decision to field a candidate in upcoming presidential elections, despite previous pledges that it would not do so.

In meeting with U.S. officials, Brotherhood representatives were expected to depict the organization as a moderate and socially conscious movement pursuing power in the interest of Egyptians at large.

"We represent a moderate, centrist Muslim viewpoint. The priorities for us are mainly economic, political — preserving the revolution ideals of social justice, education, security for the people," Sondos Asem, a member of the delegation, said Tuesday in an interview with reporters and editors of The Washington Post.

In the interview, members of the delegation defended the decision by the group's political wing, the Freedom and Justice Party, to field a presidential candidate.

"We approached people outside of the Brotherhood that we respected, like people in the judiciary, but none of them would agree to be nominated," said Khaled al-Qazzaz, foreign relations coordinator for the party.

Qazzaz and others said that a candidate elected from outside the Brotherhood could have instituted radical changes and dissolved the parliament.

But the Brotherhood's rise has caused it to spar with liberal and secular groups. Liberals and Coptic Christians who were chosen to be part of the effort to draw up a new constitution recently walked out of meetings in protest, saying the body was unbalanced, with an overwhelming number of representatives from Islamist groups such as the Brotherhood.

"We believe there is a dire attempt to hinder efforts of the constitutional assembly because its success would mean that we are on the right track, that the democracy is working and government is changing," Asem said. In addition to allaying American fears about their political ambitions, the Brotherhood is hoping to mend U.S.-Egypt relations in the aftermath of Egypt's decision to prosecute American and Egyptian pro-democracy advocates. Outrage over the prosecutions had prompted lawmakers to press the Obama administration to withhold \$1.3 billion in U.S. aid to Egypt's military. "This mistrust is a wall that needs to come down, but it can't just be one side that brings it down. It has to be both sides," said Abdul

Mawgoud R. Dardery, a lawmaker and member of the Brotherhood delegation. It is unclear how representative the visiting delegation is and how closely the values its members described mirror those of the core leaders of the Brotherhood. Those sent on the trip said they were chosen in part for their fluency in English and their familiarity and ease with American culture. But the delegation did not include the decision makers at the top of the Brotherhood's leadership.

On two of the biggest questions among U.S. observers — the Brotherhood's relationship with Egypt's military and its position on U.S. aid to the military — the visiting delegation gave only vague answers.

For months, rumors have swirled that the Brotherhood was secretly talking with the military about sharing power in the new government, but of late, the two sides have seemed increasingly hostile, with the Brotherhood demanding that military leaders dissolve the interim government they appointed.

Members of the Brotherhood delegation, who met with White House officials Tuesday, are scheduled to meet with more U.S. officials in coming days and attend several events at think tanks.

At those events, they are likely to be scrutinized as representatives of Egypt's ruling party.

"People will be looking to see how much they are really beginning to act like a political party in power, whether they are thinking in concrete policy terms," said Marina Ottaway, a Middle East expert at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace who arranged the delegation's visit. "Do they have any answers to question to economic problems? How much do they

understand the world as it exists today and the concerns of other countries?

“You have to remember, many of the people now in charge of the Brotherhood spent the last years in jail, isolated from what was going on,” Ottaway said. “They are only now emerging, and so there’s a great desire among them for acceptance and legitimacy as players on the international political scene.”

Article 3.

The Christian Science Monitor

Israel is not the threat, Mr. Obama. Iran is.

John Bolton

April 3, 2012 -- The Obama administration appears to be conducting an organized campaign of public pressure to stop Israel from attacking Iran’s well-developed nuclear-weapons program. So intense is this effort, and so determined is President Obama to succeed, that administration officials are now leaking highly sensitive information about Israel’s intentions and capabilities into the news media.

The president’s unwillingness to take preemptive military action against Tehran’s nuclear efforts has long been evident, notwithstanding his ritual incantation that “all options are on the table.” Equally evident is his fixation to ensure that Israel does not act unilaterally against Iran, a principal reason why Washington’s relations with Jerusalem are at their lowest ebb since Israel’s 1948 founding.

Indeed, the only conclusion to be drawn from Mr. Obama's actions and rhetoric is that he fears an Israeli military strike more than he fears Iran achieving nuclear-weapons capability.

Current and former Obama advisers have repeatedly contended that a satisfactory negotiated outcome is possible, one where Iran will continue to develop a "peaceful" nuclear capability under international monitoring. How they can cling to this belief after years of Iran deceiving the International Atomic Energy Agency, going so far as to demolish buildings and excavate and remove thousands of cubic yards of rock and soil to try to conceal traces of radiation, is hard to fathom. Nonetheless, Team Obama still believes that Iran's military-theocratic regime is capable of holding Pandora's box but never opening it.

Equally disconcerting, administration officials, past and present, argue that a nuclear-capable Iran can be contained and deterred. Although Obama himself insists that containment is not his policy, I believe that assertion is true only in a limited sense: It is not his policy today. It is his policy for tomorrow, his Plan B, after the current sanctions and diplomacy fail to stop Iran. This is perhaps even more delusional than dreaming about Iran benignly pursuing "atoms for peace."

Deterrence against the Soviet Union worked precariously and unnervingly at times, with some very narrow escapes from catastrophe, only because of a confluence of calculations between Washington and Moscow. There is no realistic prospect that Tehran's religious autocracy will develop the same calculus of caution.

Still worse, even if Iran could be contained and deterred, there

will undoubtedly be wider proliferation in the Middle East once Iran achieves nuclear weapons. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton herself has said that a weaponized Iran certainly means that Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, and perhaps others will seek their own nuclear capabilities. Thus, in a relatively short period, five to 10 years, there could be half a dozen or more nuclear-weapons states in the region.

Accordingly, stopping Iran from getting nuclear weapons in the first place must be America's top priority. The prolonged failures of diplomacy and sanctions have brought the United States to the point where, realistically, there are only two alternatives: Either Iran's mullahs get the bomb, or someone stops them militarily beforehand. This is the dilemma that leads Obama to pressure Israel against even thinking about the second alternative.

Three years of merciless private pressure against Israel having obviously failed to extract a commitment not to use force, the Obama administration looks to have determined two months ago to go public. The first salvo was Defense Secretary Leon Panetta's assertion that Israel might well strike Iran between April and June of this year. Nothing like letting the target know when to expect the attack. Next came leaks to an author at Foreign Policy magazine's Web site that Israel had secured basing rights from Azerbaijan, on Iran's northern border, for possible use during a campaign against Tehran's weapons program. Launching strikes just a few hundred miles away from several likely targets – such as the Isfaham uranium conversion facility and the Natanz uranium enrichment plant – rather than having to attack from domestic airfields would give Israel both enormous tactical surprise and a critical leg up logistically.

One can assume with some confidence that Iran was not focused on the risk of Israeli bases in Azerbaijan, so hearing about it from US administration sources is a gift almost beyond measure. And one can also confidently assume that if that leak is not enough to make Israel bend its knee, more public revelations directed by the White House are only a matter of time.

Even now, Obama advisers could be revealing additional information to other governments behind closed doors. Perhaps we could ask Dmitri Medvedev.

Not only is this not the way to treat a close ally facing an existential challenge, it is directly contrary to America's national interests. Israel is not the threat, Mr. President: Iran is.

John Bolton, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, served as US ambassador to the United Nations in 2005-06.

Article 4.

Stratfor

Israel's New Strategic Environment

George Friedman

April 3, 2012 -- Israel is now entering its third strategic environment. The constant threat of state-on-state war defined the first, which lasted from the founding of the Jewish state until

its peace treaty with Egypt. A secure periphery defined the second, which lasted until recently and focused on the Palestinian issue, Lebanon and the rise of radical Sunni Islamists. The rise of Iran as a regional power and the need to build international coalitions to contain it define the third.

Israel's fundamental strategic problem is that its national security interests outstrip its national resources, whether industrial, geographic, demographic or economic. During the first phase, it was highly dependent on outside powers -- first the Soviet Union, then France and finally the United States -- in whose interest it was to provide material support to Israel. In the second phase, the threat lessened, leaving Israel relatively free to define its major issues, such as containing the Palestinians and attempting to pacify Lebanon. Its dependence on outside powers decreased, meaning it could disregard those powers from time to time. In the third phase, Israel's dependence on outside powers, particularly the United States, began increasing. With this increase, Israel's freedom for maneuver began declining.

Containing the Palestinians by Managing Its Neighbors

The Palestinian issue, of course, has existed since Israel's founding. By itself, this issue does not pose an existential threat to Israel, since the Palestinians cannot threaten the Israeli state's survival. The Palestinians have had the ability to impose a significant cost on the occupation of the West Bank and the containing of the Gaza Strip, however. They have forced the Israelis to control significant hostile populations with costly, ongoing operations and to pay political costs to countries Israel needs to manage its periphery and global interests. The split between Hamas and Fatah reduced the overall threat but raised

the political costs. This became apparent during the winter of 2008-2009 during Operation Cast Lead in Gaza when Hamas, for its own reasons, chose to foment conflict with Israel. Israel's response to Hamas' actions cost the Jewish state support in Europe, Turkey and other places.

Ideological or religious considerations aside, the occupation of the territories makes strategic sense in that if Israel withdraws, Hamas might become militarized to the point of threatening Israel with direct attack or artillery and rocket fire. Israel thus sees itself forced into an occupation that carries significant political costs in order to deal with a theoretical military threat. The threat is presently just theoretical, however, because of Israel's management of its strategic relations with its neighboring nation-states.

Israel has based its management of its regional problem less on creating a balance of power in the region than on taking advantage of tensions among its neighbors to prevent them from creating a united military front against Israel. From 1948 until the 1970s, Lebanon refrained from engaging Israel. Meanwhile, Jordan's Hashemite regime had deep-seated tensions with the Palestinians, with Syria and with Nasserite Egypt. In spite of Israeli-Jordanian conflict in 1967, Jordan saw Israel as a guarantor of its national security. Following the 1973 war, Egypt signed a peace treaty with Israel that created a buffer zone in the Sinai Peninsula.

By then, Lebanon had begun to shift its position, less because of any formal government policy and more because of the disintegration of the Lebanese state and the emergence of a Palestine Liberation Organization presence in southern

Lebanon. Currently, with Syria in chaos, Jordan dependent on Israel and Egypt still maintaining the treaty with Israel despite recent Islamist political gains, only Lebanon poses a threat, and that threat is minor.

The Palestinians therefore lack the political or military support to challenge Israel. This in turn has meant that other countries' alienation over Israeli policy toward the Palestinians has carried little risk. European countries opposed to Israeli policy are unlikely to take significant action. Because political opposition cannot translate into meaningful action, Israel can afford a higher level of aggressiveness toward the Palestinians.

Thus, Israel's strongest interest is in maintaining divisions among its neighbors and maintaining their disinterest in engaging Israel. In different ways, unrest in Egypt and Syria and Iran's regional emergence pose a serious challenge to this strategy.

Egypt

Egypt is the ultimate threat to Israel. It has a huge population and, as it demonstrated in 1973, it is capable of mounting complex military operations.

But to do what it did in 1973, Egypt needed an outside power with an interest in supplying Egypt with massive weaponry and other support. In 1973, that power was the Soviet Union, but the Egyptians reversed their alliance position to the U.S. camp following that war. Once their primary source of weaponry became the United States, using that weaponry depended heavily on U.S. supplies of spare parts and contractors.

At this point, no foreign power would be capable of, or interested in, supporting the Egyptian military should Cairo experience regime change and a break with the United States. And a breach of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty alone would not generate a threat to Israel. The United States would act as a brake on Egyptian military capabilities, and no new source would step in. Even if a new source did emerge, it would take a generation for the Egyptians to become militarily effective using new weapon systems. In the long run, however, Egypt will remain Israel's problem.

Syria

The near-term question is Syria's future. Israel had maintained a complex and not always transparent relationship with the Syrian government. In spite of formal hostilities, the two shared common interests in Lebanon. Israel did not want to manage Lebanon after Israeli failures in the 1980s, but it still wanted Lebanon -- and particularly Hezbollah -- managed. Syria wanted to control Lebanon for political and economic reasons and did not want Israel interfering there. An implicit accommodation was thus possible, one that didn't begin to unravel until the United States forced Syria out of Lebanon, freeing Hezbollah from Syrian controls and setting the stage for the 2006 war.

Israel continued to view the Alawite regime in Syria as preferable to a radical Sunni regime. In the context of the U.S. presence in Iraq, the threat to Israel came from radical Sunni Islamists; Israel's interests lay with whoever opposed them. Today, with the United States out of Iraq and Iran a dominant influence there, the Israelis face a more complex choice. If the regime of President Bashar al Assad survives (with or without al

Assad himself), Iran -- which is supplying weapons and advisers to Syria -- will wield much greater influence in Syria. In effect, this would create an Iranian sphere of influence running from western Afghanistan to Iraq, Syria and into Lebanon via Hezbollah. It would create a regional power. And an Iranian regional power would pose severe dangers to Israel.

Accordingly, Israel has shifted its thinking from supporting the al Assad regime to wanting it to depart so that a Sunni government hostile to Iran but not dominated by radical Islamists could emerge. Here we reach the limits of Israeli power, because what happens in Syria is beyond Israel's control. Those who might influence the course of events in Syria apart from Iran include Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Both are being extremely cautious in their actions, however, and neither government is excessively sensitive to U.S. needs. Israel's main ally, the United States, has little influence in Syria, particularly given Russian and, to some extent, Chinese opposition to American efforts to shape Syria's future.

Even more than Egypt, Syria is a present threat to Israel, not by itself but because it could bring a more distant power -- Iran -- to bear. As important, Syria could threaten the stability of the region by reshaping the politics of Lebanon or destabilizing Jordan. The only positive dimension for Israel is that Iran's military probably will not be able to deploy significant forces far from its borders for many years. Iran simply lacks the logistical or command capabilities for such an operation. But developing them is just a matter of time. Israel could, of course, launch a war in Syria. But the challenge of occupying Syria would dwarf the challenge Israel faces with the Palestinians. On the other side of the equation, an Iranian presence in Syria could reshape the

West Bank in spite of Shiite-Sunni tensions.

The United States and the Europeans, with Libya as a model, theoretically could step into managing Syria. But Libya was a seven-month war in a much less populous country. It is unlikely they would attempt this in Syria, and if they did, it would not be because Israel needed them to do so. And this points to Israel's core strategic weakness. In dealing with Syria and the emergent Iranian influence there, Israel is incapable of managing the situation by itself. It must have outside powers intervening on its behalf. And that intervention poses military and political challenges that Israel's patron, the United States, doesn't want to undertake.

It is important to understand that Israel, after a long period in which it was able to manage its national security issues, is now re-entering the phase where it cannot do so without outside support. This is where its policy on the Palestinians begins to hurt, particularly in Europe, where intervention on behalf of Israeli interests would conflict with domestic European political forces. In the United States, where the Israeli-Palestinian problem has less impact, the appetite to intervene in yet another Muslim country is simply not there, particularly without European allies.

Iran

This is all compounded by the question of Iranian nuclear weapons. In our view, as we have said, the Iranians are far closer to a controlled underground test than to a deliverable weapon. Israel's problem is that Iran appears on the verge of a strategic realignment in the region. The sense that Iran is an emerging

nuclear power both enhances Iran's position and decreases anyone's appetite to do anything about it. Israel is practicing psychological warfare against Iran, but it still faces a serious problem: The more Iran consolidates its position in the Middle East and the closer it is to a weapon the more other countries outside the region will have to accommodate themselves to Iran. And this leaves Israel vulnerable.

Israel cannot do much about Syria, but a successful attack on Iranian nuclear facilities could undermine Iranian credibility at a time when Israel badly needs to do just that. Here again, Israel faces its strategic problem. It might be able to carry out an effective strike against Iran, particularly if, as has been speculated, a country such as Azerbaijan provides facilities like airfields. However, even with such assistance, Israel's air force is relatively small, meaning there is no certainty of success. Nor could Israel strike without American knowledge and approval. The Americans will know about an Israeli strike by technical intelligence. Hiding such a strike from either the Americans or Russians would be difficult, compounding the danger to Israel.

More important, Israel cannot strike Iran without U.S. permission because Israel cannot guarantee that the Iranians would not mine the Strait of Hormuz. Only the United States could hope to stop the Iranians from doing so, and the United States would need to initiate the conflict by taking out the Iranian mine-laying capability before the first Israeli strike. Given its dependence on the United States for managing its national security, the decision to attack would have to be taken jointly. An uncoordinated attack by Israel would be possible only if Israel were willing to be the cause of global economic chaos.

Israel's strategic problem is that it must align its strategy with the United States and with anyone the United States regards as essential to its national security, such as the Saudis. But the United States has interests beyond Israel, so Israel is constantly entangled with its patron's multiplicity of interests. This limits its range of action as severely as its air force's constraints do.

Since its peace treaty with Egypt, Israeli dependence on outsiders was limited. Israel could act on issues like settlements, for example, regardless of American views. That period is coming to an end, and with it the period in which Israel could afford to deviate from its patron. People frequently discuss any U.S.-Israeli rift in terms of personal relations between U.S. President Barack Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, but this is mistaken. It is uncertainty in Egypt and Syria and the emergence of Iran that have created a new strategic reality for Israel.

George Friedman is the founder of the private intelligence corporation Stratfor. He has authored several books, including The Next 100 Years, The Next Decade, America's Secret War, The Intelligence Edge, The Coming War With Japan and The Future of War.

Article 5.

Agence Global

The Irrational US-Iran-Israel

Dynamic

Rami G. Khouri

4 Apr 2012 -- BEIRUT -- Why does most of the world continue to lose respect for the United States and its conduct of foreign policy? Two developments in the past week shed some light on this, and -- not surprisingly -- they both relate to Washington's relations with Iran and Israel, an arena in which American rationality, fairness, consistency and integrity go out the window, and hysteria takes over the controls.

Last Friday President Barack Obama announced that his analysis of global oil trading led him to conclude that there were sufficient supplies of crude oil in the market for the United States to implement previously announced sanctions on countries that buy oil from Iran. If third countries do not reduce or stop their oil purchases and commercial dealings with the Central Bank of Iran, those countries would not be allowed to do any business with the United States.

Two rather extraordinary aspects of this decision deserve note. The first is the presumptuous American government attitude that Washington can decide on its own whether the global oil market is sufficiently robust to allow the United States to unilaterally issue orders to other sovereign countries about where they can or cannot buy oil. This American sense of global arrogance already extends to several other domains in which lawmakers in Washington -- most of whom are deeply ignorant of the world beyond their borders -- presumptuously issue reports and rankings about the status of human rights, religious freedoms, press freedoms, democracy or other such issues around the

world.

The United States does not see itself as a leading power among equally sovereign states around the world; it sees itself as the definer and guarantor of global behavior, and the enforcer of norms that it sets on its own. Most of the world rejects and resents this.

The second more problematic aspects of the oil sanctions and commercial trading decision is that the United States will now enforce a secondary boycott against countries that buy Iranian oil via transactions with the Iranian central bank. My problem with this is not that the United States should not impose such a secondary boycott, which all countries are free to use. My problem is that the United States explicitly and vehemently opposed such a secondary boycott when the Arab countries did exactly the same thing in relation to third country companies that invested in or appreciably assisted the Israeli economy, because of the active state of war between Arabs and Israelis. Washington rejected this rationale and said that the Arab boycott had to be opposed and busted.

Now the United States applies exactly the same principle, totally abandoning the values that it summoned when it opposed the Arab boycott of Israel. The continuing insistence by Washington that its foreign policy should operate according to a different set of rules than the rest of the world -- especially when Israel is concerned -- is a major reason why so many people and governments around the world look at American foreign policy with disdain and disrespect.

The second noteworthy development last week helps explain why this kind of behavior occurs. It was an opinion article in the Washington Post by Dennis Ross and David Makovsky, of the

Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP), entitled, "The U.S. can meet Israel halfway on Iran."

It laid out a series of reasons why and how the United States and Israel should closely coordinate their diplomacy, negotiations, sanctions, threats and potential military attack on Iran, noting that: "Because Israel is the only country that Iran has repeatedly threatened to 'wipe off the map,' it is reasonable for it to have some input into the objectives of diplomacy and the timetable for progress in negotiations. The more Israelis feel their views are being taken into account, the more inclined they will be to give diplomacy a chance to work before resorting to force. Israel should also understand that if diplomacy fails and force proves necessary, the context in which force is used will be critical."

This is not surprising coming from WINEP, which is a highly effective pro-Israel think tank in Washington, D.C. that has exceptional influence among U.S. officials, as do most other such institutions that broadly reflect the positions of the Israeli government and the pro-Israel lobby groups in the United States. What is surprising is the rather explicit call from the heart of Washington, D.C. for American policy on Iran to be so closely coordinated with Israeli views. Coordination is a normal tool for diplomatic action, but many people in the United States and around the world feel that the line between cooperation and coercion has been badly blurred in U.S.-Israeli relations, as America's Mideast policies seem increasingly subservient to Israeli concerns.

Dennis Ross was a central figure in American policies on Arab-Israeli and, more recently, Iranian issues -- policies that have totally failed in almost every respect. Is it perhaps due in part to the fact that American officials and lawmakers often confuse Israeli concerns with American interests? Are we seeing this

principle in action again these days on policy towards Iran, where coordination and coercion seem especially confused?

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Article 6.

The Diplomat

Is Africa the Next Asia?

Richard Aidoo

April 3, 2012 -- The rhetoric surrounding Africa, or at least the continent's economic development, appears to be changing.

Despite the ongoing global economic turmoil, a number of African nations have been making impressive strides in their development, a point underscored by The Economist's decision recently to run a leader describing Africa as the "hopeful continent," drawing a clear contrast to its cover story "The Hopeless Continent" a decade ago.

And the continent's leaders are now looking east for their inspiration. Rwandan President Paul Kagame, for example, has said he hopes to eventually transform his country's economy into the "Singapore of Central Africa." Such sentiments tap into

the vast and growing repository of Afro-optimism, an optimism that sees sustained economic growth as the future, even as the north of the continent is embroiled in domestic political turmoil and uprisings.

So, is it Africa's time to replicate the economic growth feats of Asia? This may seem like a herculean task, but given the recent economic gains made in countries like Ghana, which posted 13.5 percent growth last year as it casts off the failed economic policies of the 1980s and 1990s, as well as the success of recent BRICS addition South Africa, there's now hope for an "African miracle."

But if Asia is the guide for Africa's economic miracle, then the Asian foundations of a strong state and supporting institutions must be made a reality in Africa. The examples of China and Japan loom large in the minds of many African leaders and elites. Yet in contrasts with these two Asian giants, the post-independent African state is still encumbered with significant structural weaknesses, a lack of professionalism and an excess of cronyism, patronage and other corrupt practices that would make even officials involved in some of China's most notorious cases of corruption blush. This lingering image has undermined efforts to settle on a positive economic agenda in Africa, even when visionary leaders of developmentally-oriented states such as Mauritius and Botswana have emerged.

Some argue that the East Asian model of state-driven economic growth might not be suitable for African states, given the apparent weaknesses in their leaders' characters (this isn't to mention the somewhat troubling view that Africans are inherently not up to the task of producing sustained and healthy

economic growth). With this in mind, some argue that the social, historical and structural weaknesses demonstrated by many African states suggest that their economies would instead be better off relying on market incentives, i.e., the Southeast Asian path beaten by Singapore and Indonesia.

Regardless of the model that African nations choose to follow, achieving the enviable growth patterns of some Asian economies will require the strengthening of intra-regional trade. Africa's recent economic gains have been mainly driven by external trade, especially with emerging economies such as China, India, Brazil and South Korea. A recent report by the McKinsey Global Institute puts intra-African trade at a lowly 12 percent, about half that achieved in Latin America. This is despite almost a billion consumers residing in the African continent, meaning that intra-African trade should no longer be perceived as an insignificant element of any country's economy, but rather a potential path toward market consolidation and leverage for African markets in the global economy. China and other Asian economies offer clear examples of the benefits of looking local as well as outside the region.

Another vital element in Africa's future that chimes with the Asian experience is industrialization. This is where African governments really need to shift the economic discourse, away from a focus simply on commodities to a more diversified economic base that adds value to these products. Achieving this will require efficient and ultimately well-maintained infrastructure, a challenge that African leaders must face up to and address quickly. Interestingly, it is on this very issue that Asia, particularly in the form of increased Chinese investment, is able to offer practical assistance toward achieving this goal

(although African nations must also be careful that they don't miss out on opportunities to develop their own manufacturing sectors, rather than relying on imports and expertise from China).

Another key to African success will be following best practice in success stories like Singapore, particularly the city-state's merit-based approach to bureaucracy. Whether its growth is state-driven or laissez-faire, a well-organized bureaucratic system should recognize and reward genuine talent. If Africa wants to replicate Asia's success stories, it will need to work harder to ensure that merit displaces cronyism and elitism as the determiner of progress.

African nations are in a better position to achieve and maintain economic growth than at any time in their post-independent histories. And, in spite of the sporadic political and civil conflict that persists in parts of the continent, there have been many signs of a growing political maturity. With political discipline and a focus on merit-based critical institutions, the social cohesion necessary for sustained economic growth is gradually emerging, which should allow the continent to take advantage of its rich natural resources.

And, looking ahead, Africa has another potential advantage – a youthful population with a hunger for change. Many of the uprisings in support of democracy across the continent have been championed by disaffected young people bitten by the technology bug and anxious for opportunities. For these young and driven Africans, change isn't a distant hope, but something achievable. The memories of colonial exploitation are receding further into the rearview mirror as young Africans look forward.

Ultimately, of course, building on Africa's current economic gains will take a mix of optimism and dispassionate study of success stories like China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and South Korea. But even though the historical settings may differ, the promises of some African leaders to chart a course similar to Asia's should be seen as the best way of lifting millions of Africans out of poverty – and beyond.

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Article 7.

The Moscow Times

Kremlin Sees Obama as Weak

Vladimir Ryzhkov

04 April 2012 -- U.S. Ambassador Michael McFaul has encountered a much chillier reception than he apparently anticipated when he agreed to come to Moscow. Rather than accolades, respect and words of endearment from the Russian authorities, the man who is an architect of U.S. President Barack Obama's "reset" with Moscow instead found himself the object of a Kremlin-sponsored media campaign aimed at discrediting, pressuring, provoking and defaming him.

Fed up with all of this, McFaul issued a strong statement against

NTV — the channel controlled by Gazprom, a state-owned company with close ties to President-elect Vladimir Putin — and famous for its aggressive "exposés" about the Russian opposition and the supposed U.S. subversive activities aimed at destabilizing Russia.

In particular, McFaul expressed indignation over the airing of "The Anatomy of Protest," a pseudo-documentary hatchet job created by the channel's journalists and based on deliberate misrepresentations in the best case and blatant lies in the worst. Among other things, the program made the patently false charge that Washington directly funds Russian protests and the opposition.

McFaul, who has been hounded by NTV journalists wherever he goes, was particularly perplexed as to how the journalists were aware of the time and location of each of his scheduled meetings, enabling them to bombard him with questions, cameras rolling, as he got out of his car and walked to these meetings. McFaul suggested that NTV learned of his work schedule by tapping his telephone and e-mail.

Of course, NTV representatives angrily repudiated the suggestion that the channel had engaged in illegal surveillance, claiming instead that it relied on a "wide network of informants" for its information. It was not a very convincing argument considering that the only people with access to the ambassador's schedule are his personal aides and the rights activists and opposition members with whom he had scheduled meetings — none of whom is likely to be part of NTV's trusted "network of informants."

McFaul noted that any other leading capital in the world would consider such treatment of a U.S. ambassador unthinkable. He specifically pointed out that "only in Russia" was such behavior possible. Meanwhile, the U.S. State Department issued statements in defense of its ambassador.

But all of this did not stop Obama from being kindly disposed toward President Dmitry Medvedev during a security conference in Seoul. During a conversation that was caught on a hot mic, Medvedev promised to deliver Obama's kind words and intentions to Putin, the man who effectively pulls the strings at Gazprom and its media subsidiaries.

But in reality, many of McFaul's problems in Moscow are rooted in Obama's policy toward Russia.

The Kremlin sees the Obama administration as weak and indecisive, making it a perfect, nonthreatening partner that can be bullied and provoked using the same tools Moscow routinely employs against opposition leaders and civil and human rights activists at home. This was the approach that the Kremlin used against the Estonian ambassador to protest the relocation of a monument to Soviet soldiers from downtown Tallinn. By Moscow's reasoning, if such tactics are permissible when dealing with "weak" Estonia, why not use the same methods against a "weak" United States? Why should Putin and his cohorts show respect for the U.S. ambassador? On the contrary, it is better to put him in his place.

McFaul's situation was complicated by the fact that he arrived in Moscow in the midst of the most perilous political crisis of Putin's rule — at a time when mass street protests over

election fraud had severely aggravated the Kremlin's paranoid fears of a color revolution. Fearing the potential might of the protest movement, the Kremlin renewed its crackdown on nongovernmental organizations, focusing on those that receive their funding from Washington. At the same time, Kremlin propagandists were in desperate need of a "foreign enemy," and the United States was a logical choice since it has historically played this role quite effectively.

This explains why, for example, a routine meeting at the U.S. Embassy between several opposition leaders and Deputy Secretary of State William Burns was depicted by the state-controlled media as if the United States were entering another Munich Pact — only this time not with Hitler but with leaders of the Russian opposition and human rights groups.

McFaul was further hurt by the fact that he is a well-known academic expert on democracy and the transition of authoritarian regimes to democracy. As a scholar, McFaul clearly opposes autocracy and is an ally of the democratic movement. As a diplomat and key figure in Obama's Russia policy, he supports the realpolitik practiced by former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. As an architect of the reset policy, McFaul found himself vulnerable to Moscow's provocations and pressure given Washington's conciliatory stance toward Russia.

Former ambassadors carefully maneuvered between the Scylla of an authoritarian Kremlin and the Charybdis of U.S. democratic values. The Kremlin disliked the strong Alexander Vershbow, ambassador to Russia from 2001 to 2005, and also attempted to exert powerful pressure on him. But Vershbow

openly criticized Putin's authoritarian ways, finally leaving Moscow with his head held high. The Kremlin's Nashi youth movement harassed former British Ambassador Antony Brenton because he dared to take part in a forum sponsored by the loathed opposition group The Other Russia.

McFaul should be aware that the authorities have tapped the phones and are reading the e-mails of the U.S. Embassy as well as the political opposition, just as he should be aware that top officials in the Kremlin and those trained by the KGB only understand the language of firmness and strength. At the same time, they hold in contempt anyone who shows even the slightest sign of weakness and compliance.

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