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From: Office of Terje Rod-Larsen
Sent: Tue 3/13/2012 2:15:03 PM
Subject: March 11 update

11 March, 2012

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Article 1.

The Daily Star

For Israel, it is about walls and war

Rami G. Khouri

March 10, 2012 -- The recent visit of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the United States received the lion's share of publicity about Israel's position in the Middle East and the world. However, the real story about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict rests elsewhere.

The great tale that goes largely unrecognized reflects that combination of bubbling forces around the world – grassroots,

professional, political – that achieve two important things: to assert that the world will not forever acquiesce in the systematic denial of the national rights of the Palestinian people, and to apply new forms of pressure on Israel to end its systematic oppression of Palestinians that more and more is routinely compared to apartheid South Africa.

Two simultaneous developments brought this to mind last week, one in Beirut and the other in many countries. In Beirut, I was struck by the force of a two-day conference on health conditions of Palestinians in and outside Palestine. The conference was organized by the AUB Faculty of Health Science, Bir Zeit University, and The Lancet – the London-based leading international journal on public health. The gathering of 75 or so health researchers from around the world was impressive, especially the opening remarks of Lancet editor Richard Horton.

Horton discussed research as a tool for social justice, equity and as means of addressing power and inequity in Palestine, in the refugee camps around the region, and throughout the world. He observed that research and universities could play an active role in promoting justice, citizenship and accountability, and could generate knowledge in the service of “defending universal principles of human rights and human dignity.”

Specifically addressing The Lancet’s interest in disseminating research about health conditions of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation, he described university research as a form of peaceful resistance and nonviolent protest against forces using health or medicines as an instrument of war. Researchers have an obligation to analyze and expose such inhuman practices, and, where possible, to oppose them. Researchers who do this,

he said, should aim to report on and help bring an end to an “epidemiology of terror.”

The only thing more powerful than knowledge, I thought, is a committed human being who uses that knowledge in the service of justice.

At the same time, scattered developments around the world reinforced my sense that we might see new momentum soon for resolving the Palestine issue equitably, and working for a just Arab-Israeli peace. More specifically, these developments suggest that the political balance of power of the past four decades that saw Zionism subdue and dominate Arabism in this region and abroad may be entering a historic stage where there will be greater equilibrium between the two.

Here are some intriguing developments that make me think this way:

A new poll among citizens across 12 Arab countries, conducted by the Qatar-based Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (reported by Marwan Bishara on Al-Jazeera’s website, in advance of the poll’s full release), shows that three out of four respondents see Israel and the United States as the two most threatening countries. A total of 84 percent believe the Palestinian question is the cause of all Arabs and not just that of the Palestinians, and reject the notion of their states recognition of Israel. Only 21 percent support, to a certain degree, the peace agreement signed between Egypt, Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organization with Israel. Less than a third agree with their government’s foreign policy.

A second indicator is that several recent conferences at

American and Canadian universities on the boycott, sanctions and divestment strategy against Israel, and for a “one-state” solution, giving Israelis and Palestinians equal rights in a single country, faced stiff opposition from pro-Israeli zealots. In all cases the conferences went ahead.

In Washington, President Barack Obama openly challenged the Israeli desire for war on Iran now, and was widely supported by many in American society, despite the intense efforts of the maniacs in the pro-Israel lobbies. The power of those lobbies is slowly being confined to members of Congress and journalists who remain deeply vulnerable to the intimidation tools of the lobby groups. Others in American society have learned that they can push back and survive.

Netanyahu is increasingly seen as a thug whose heavy-handedness in the United States and repeated references to the Holocaust as a reminder of what he sees as threats to Israelis and Jews today have even bothered some fellow Israelis and Jews. His combination of insincerity, lies, exaggeration and arrogance has brought Israel to the point where its foreign policy, sadly, is essentially based on building walls and threatening wars.

Palestinians and fellow activists are working hard to make the Global March to Jerusalem scheduled for March 29 the new face of nonviolent resistance to Israeli colonial expansion and apartheid-like Zionist ethnic privileges. The combination of these developments mentioned above, and others, may well comprise a historic transformation in the Arab-Israeli conflict. We will find out in the coming months.

Al Jazeera

Gauging Arab public opinion

Marwan Bishara

08 Mar 2012 -- The first of its kind - a poll conducted in 12 Arab countries, representing 84 per cent of the population of the Arab world, in an attempt to gauge the region's political mood - has arrived at some interesting results.

Organised by the Arab Centre for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS), face-to-face interviews by Arab surveyors with 16,731 individuals in the first half of 2011 revealed majority support for the goals of the Arab revolutions and notably, for a democratic system of government.

The countries surveyed included Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Sudan, Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco and Mauritania, with the help of local institutions and research centres.

While people seem generally split on the question of separation of state and religion, a majority supports the non-interference of religious authorities in politics.

And by a 15-1 ratio, Israel and the US are seen as more threatening than Iran. However, this ratio is lower among those

living in proximity to Iran.

Opinions differ on certain issues from country to country and region to region, but there's clearly a trans-national, trans-border public consensus when it comes to questions of identity and national priorities.

The data generated by the poll, the largest conducted so far in the region, is a treasure trove for those looking to better understand the political environment in the Arab world.

Main conclusions

- A majority describe themselves as religious, but they mostly don't support the interference of religious authorities in citizens' political choices.
- 71 per cent say they don't distinguish between religious and non-religious people in their economic and social relations.
- 77 per cent trust their military, half trust their police, 47 per cent trust their governments and 36 per cent trust their local councils before the revolutions.
- A high 83 per cent believe corruption is widespread in their countries.
- Only 19 per cent see their states implement the law equally among its citizens.
- Three quarters of those polled believe that Arab states should take measures to bring their nations closer. An equal percentage believes that states should lift restrictions on free travel and 67 per cent are not satisfied with Arab-Arab co-operation.
- Contrary to mainstream global media coverage, 73 per

cent of those polled see Israel and the US as the two most threatening countries. Five per cent see Iran as the most threatening, a percentage that varies between countries and regions.

- A high 84 per cent believe the Palestinian question is the cause of all Arabs and not the Palestinians only.
- A high 84 per cent reject the notion of their state's recognition of Israel and only 21 per cent support, to a certain degree, the peace agreement signed between Egypt, Jordan and the PLO with Israel. Less than a third agree with their government's foreign policy.
- When it comes to WMD, 55 per cent support a region free of nuclear weapons and 55 per cent see Israel's possession of nuclear weapons as justifying there possession by other countries in the region.

Moreover, a majority of Arabs support the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions, and believe revolution came about because of corruption, dictatorship and lack of justice and equality. A majority also believe they belong to one Arab nation.

Nuances and caveats

The majority doesn't approach democracy as merely a Western notion. Rather, it provides a clear definition of a democratic system that includes political plurality, freedom of expression, rule of law, et cetera.

When it comes to specifics, a rather slim majority of 57 per cent supports the rule of a political party they disagree with.

While people are generally supportive of democracy, a minority doesn't truly understand or accept its main tenets.

A relatively high 36 per cent wouldn't support those they disagree with in their political platform to take power, a percentage that doesn't bode well for democracy.

This shows that while there is an intention to move towards pluralism among most people, there is resistance to pluralism and diversity among a certain minority.

A high majority in Egypt and Tunisia are optimistic that their countries will fare better in three years than during the rule of Mubarak and Ben Ali.

It remains to be seen to what degree the opinions expressed in the poll are a reflection of excitement about the revolutions, and how far people are ready to go to establish democratic systems.

But that's precisely why an annual sequel to this poll, as promised by ACRPS, is indispensable for better understanding of Arab thinking beyond mood swings and abrupt changes.

Polls have originally been the tools used to gauge consumerist tendencies, priorities in Western societies and business. They were developed into advanced tools to monitor the public's political mood, required for certain political confidence, societal openness and stability.

To what degree Arab respondents express their minds freely and without any fear remains to be seen. However, for the first time in decades, people seem more willing and able to share their political sentiments, thanks to the revolutions.

The substantial size of the poll certainly helps obtain better results. But it's not only quantitative.

The methodology used by ACPRS pollsters - a 40-minute face-to-face interview with each respondent - allows for more accurate results than the usual quick phone interviews.

The approach here contrasts sharply with Western-type polls in the Arab world that project Western, not Arab, priorities, and/or are centered around slogans and clichés.

This is not a poll that asks people whether they feel Muslim or Arab, or whether they support the women's veil or democracy.

The poll, the first to be conducted after the Arab upheavals, shows a people in tune with the change that swept the Arab region.

But how does the poll square with the election results in various Arab nations where Islamists have made serious advances - such as Egypt, where conservative and ultra-conservative Islamist parties won 70 per cent of the vote?

The two are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, the polls discussed give a better and deeper explanation of the vote patterns and of the opinions of those who thus far have remained silent.

Marwan Bishara is Al Jazeera's senior political analyst and the author of The Invisible Arab: The promise and peril of the Arab revolutions, now available in bookstores.

The Iranian-Turkish struggle for Syria

Sami Moubayed

Mar 10, 2012 -- One of the aftershocks of the Syrian uprising is an abrupt end to a Turkish-Iranian honeymoon, which started shortly after the Justice and Development Party came to power in Turkey almost 10 years ago. For many years Turkey and Iran - heirs to two strong empires - found plenty in common thanks to Syria. They now have a million reasons to disagree, also because of Syria.

The countries cooperated on post-Saddam Hussein Iraq, worked side-by-side to crush Kurdish separatists, and united efforts on Lebanon and Gaza after the wars of 2006 and 2008 respectively.

That marriage of convenience began to fall apart - rather rapidly - when the Syrian uprising began in March 2011. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan took a radically anti-Damascus stance, calling for the regime's downfall, whereas Iran stood firmly behind its Syrian ally, with whom it has held strategic relations since 1979. It all boils down now to a Persian-Turkish struggle for Syria.

Historical background

According to Daphne McCurdy, a senior researcher associate with the Project on Middle East Democracy: "Turkey has traditionally viewed Iran, unlike how it has viewed other Middle East countries, as a large and important nation-state that must be managed, rather than confronted."

Back in 1979, for example, the Turks were among the very few regional heavyweights who did not panic when the Islamic Revolution took place in Tehran. It also became one of the first countries in the world to recognize the Khomeini government, and to refuse to impose sanctions upon it, after the 1979-1981 US hostage crisis at the American Embassy in Tehran.

Turkey did this, it must be noted, despite a systematic Iranian campaign to tarnish the image of the Turkish Republic's founder, president Kamal Ataturk, and his strong brand of secularism. In the 1990s, the two countries signed a US\$24 billion gas deal, despite mutual accusations of backing the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

After the Israeli war of 2006, Prime Minister Erdogan saw to it that \$50 million worth of aid was provided for the reconstruction of south Lebanon, a Hezbollah stronghold, which was music to the ears of Iranian officialdom.

In June 2010, Turkey voted against a US-backed UN Security Council resolution imposing further sanctions on Iran. Despite the slump in political relations since mid-2011, Turkey still relies on Iran for one-third of its oil supply.

Differences surface

One view says that Tehran and Ankara soon realized that apart from short-term political issues, the two countries had very little in common, thanks to Syria. Another view, of course, speaks the exact opposite, claiming that economic interests overshadow political differences between Ankara and Tehran.

The truth, of course, lies somewhere in-between. Turkey's AKP was indeed a religious party that marketed a strong brand of moderate Sunni Islam, whereas Iran was a Shi'ite theocracy bent on marketing radical political Shi'ite Islam to the world, automatically challenging countries like Turkey.

Last November, Turkey agreed to host an early warning radar as part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's missile defense system, infuriating the Iranians, who saw it as a direct threat to their security. The Europe Missile Shield, after all, was originally created to intercept Iranian missiles.

Turkey of course only agreed to host the defense shield in September 2011 after tensions had begun to mount between the two countries over Syria. The head of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard's aerospace division, General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, snapped that, "should we be threatened, we will target NATO's missile defense shield in Turkey and then hit the next targets."

Then came a statement by Ali Akbar, senior advisor to Iran's Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who said that Turkey's model of "secular Islam" was actually a "version of Western liberal democracy that is unacceptable for countries going through an Islamic awakening". In response, Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Arinc said: "I am addressing the Islamic Republic of Iran: I do not know if you are worthy of being called Islamic; have you said a single thing about what is happening in Syria?"

Iran realizes that although it has the ear of top Syrian officials, its popularity on the Syrian street is very thin when compared with that of Turkey.

It has tried non-stop since 1979 to boost people-to-people relations through tourism, cultural exchange, and investment projects in Syria. Religious tourism did indeed flourish, for example, but it was one-sided, from Iran to Syria and not vice-versa. Few Syrian tourists went to Tehran for sightseeing.

However, in Turkey's case, where Syrian tourists visiting Turkey jumped from 332,847 in 2007, for example, into almost 900,000 in 2010. In Iran's case, 800,000 Iranians came to Syria

in 2010, for example, but the Iranian Ministry of Tourism refrained from mentioning how many Syrian tourists visit Iran per year.

Turkish soap operas have been translated into Arabic and are very popular in Syria, but the same cannot be said for the numerous Iranian works translated into Arabic - and an entire Iranian channel dedicated to broadcasting Iranian works dubbed from Persian into Arabic. This of course is namely due to joint Syrian-Turkish history, intermarriage, and the fact that Turks are Muslim Sunnis while Iranians are Muslim Shi'ites, creating an invisible religious barrier that is very difficult to transcend.

Iran feels outsmarted by Turkey at a grassroots level, although Tehran has been trying to win affection of the Syrian people for over 30-years, while the Turks have been doing it only since 2003.

The Turks managed to win affection of ordinary Syrians - regardless of politics - despite 80 years of indoctrination in Syrian media against the Ottoman Empire and its legacy in the Arab world. There was no such indoctrination ever against Iran - and yet, Syrians prefer to do business with Ankara and to go sightseeing in Turkey rather than Iran. This is noteworthy, although Iran is a breathtaking country with magnificent history, breathtaking tourist attractions and plenty of wealth.

The crux of the struggle today, therefore, is Syria. Relations will continue cooperating on bilateral trade, regardless of how much politics divides them, but Syria remains a sticking point in Iranian-Turkish relations.

Iran is worried that regime change in Syria would give the Turks unlimited access to Syria, excluding Tehran from all political, military, cultural, and economic influence. The Turks after all,

are strongly allied to the opposition Syrian National Council (SNC), which was established in Istanbul last summer, and currently host the Free Syrian Army (FSA).

All talk about a no-fly zone on the Syrian-Turkish border raises red sirens in Tehran, but at the end of the day, the Iranians are unable to go to war for Syria. If the Syrian Army ventures into the northern Syrian city of Idlib, as it did in Homs, then this would place it dangerously near the Turkish border, and the Turks are ready to act, invoking Article 51 of the UN Charter, being "self-defense".

In fact, Erdogan might even see it as a blessing in disguise, giving him the pretext to put his loud words into action. That explains why Iran is very worried. They realize that contrary to what they believed, there is an entire street in Syria, being the majority, that doesn't like them, and has little affection anymore, for Hezbollah.

That doesn't mean the Syrian street likes Erdogan any better. On the contrary, ordinary Syrians are beginning to view him also with plenty of suspicion and scrutiny for saying nothing but loud words since the Syrian uprising began in mid-2011.

Supporting the resistance in Lebanon, however, is no longer enough for Iran to win the minds and hearts of the Syrian people. Also, loud words in favor of the Syrian rebels are also no longer enough for Erdogan to score points with ordinary Syrians.

The two countries - and both Mahmud Ahmadinejad and Recep Tayyip Erdogan - will have to do things differently from now on to win over ordinary Syrians. Otherwise, both will be viewed as nothing but hot air balloons. Turkey may have the upper hand at a grassroots level, but politically speaking, both countries are losing ground within Syria, both with ordinary

Syrians, and against each other, rather rapidly.

Sami Moubayed is a university professor, historian, and editor-in-chief of Forward Magazine in Damascus.

Article 4.

The Weekly Standard

Politicizing Intelligence on Syria

Elliott Abrams

March 11, 2012 -- The Obama administration is politicizing intelligence on Syria. What does “politicizing intelligence” mean? Using intel, or more often partial intel, to produce an effect in line with White House policies rather than giving a full picture of a particular situation. The most recent proof is a story that the Associated Press carried on March 10, written by intelligence reporter Kimberly Dozier. Dozier reported straight what she was told—but therein lies the tale. Sometimes reporters get a scoop or a special insight by finding one or two members of the intel community who are willing to talk if guaranteed anonymity. In this case, Dozier was among several reporters briefed by three senior intelligence community officials. That kind of organized, orchestrated briefing requires clearance at the top. What did the senior three intel officials

tell reporters about the military situation in Syria? That “President Bashar Assad commands a formidable army,” “has assembled a highly professional, 330,000-man army plus reserves that was built and trained to invade Israel,” and has “formidable” air defenses.

Now, compare what a top military analyst, Anthony Cordesman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, wrote about the same Syrian military in a monograph in 2007. Here are some of the nicer quotations:

"Manpower numbers have little meaning as a measure of military capability or merit. ... Syria's conventional forces are the impoverished stepchild of the region ...[and have] become something of a military museum—a problem compounded by poorly organized technical and maintenance support and the failure to modify and update much of its equipment. ... Syria, however, has compounded these problems with corruption, nepotism, and an occupation of Lebanon that further politicized and corrupted its forces. ... Some Special Forces and armored units are exceptions, but promotion is highly dependent on favoritism and nepotism. ... Syria, with the largest numbers, has one of the least capable air forces. Certainly, it is the worst air force per plane in service. ... Syria's [air defense] system is generally obsolete in weapons, sensors, and command and control capability. It also has a weak command and control system, as well as training and readiness problems. ... Much of Syria's conventional force posture is now obsolescent or obsolete, and its failure to properly modernize and ‘recapitalize’ its forces has reached the crisis level. ... Syria has effectively created hollow forces. ... On paper, Syria had one low-grade reserve armored unit with about half the

effective strength of its active divisions, plus 31 infantry, three artillery reserve regiments, four armored brigades. Most of these Syrian reserve units are poorly equipped and trained..."

To be fair, those words are five years old, and Syria has modernized its air defense systems in the interim—to some degree at least. Certainly whatever air defenses they had in 2007 were no great problem for Israel when it destroyed Syria's North Korean-built nuclear reactor. But Cordesman's analysis is a reminder about spin: When the three senior intel officers mentioned the reserves, did they tell reporters what awful shape they are in? Did they discuss how much of the Syrian Army is a poorly trained force of Sunni conscripts on which the regime cannot rely? How could they possibly have described this Syrian army as a "highly professional force of 330,000"? The goal of the briefing seems clear: to justify doing nothing. If Syria's forces are huge and "highly professional," the chances that our support for the opposition will be fruitful are small. It's basically hopeless, you see. But Cordesman's descriptions tend to contradict that conclusion, and to suggest that a decently organized and armed opposition might make headway against the Syrian military, especially when the ethnic factor is added. The opposition is primarily Sunni, and Sunnis make up about 75 percent of Syria's population. In testimony last week, Defense Secretary Leon Panetta and other Obama administration officials continued to give a very gloomy view of the opposition in Syria. "It is not clear what constitutes the Syrian armed opposition—there has been no single unifying military alternative that can be recognized, appointed or contacted," Panetta said. He also said we are now—in mid March 2012—considering non-lethal aid to that opposition.

Consider this: Suppose the administration had not sat on its thumbs and had started delivering non-lethal aid one or two or six months ago. By now, we would in fact know a great deal more about the opposition: Who is real and who has no military capacity, who can get things into Syria and who can't, who is corrupt and who is effective. The ignorance behind which Panetta hides is in large part a self-inflicted wound.

Fourteen months after the rebellion in Syria began, that we know so little about the opposition is not so much an intelligence failure as a deliberate policy. So is the use of the intelligence community for orchestrated briefings designed to justify inaction by making Assad's military sound like the Wehrmacht. That's the politicization of intelligence, and the House and Senate Intelligence Committees would do well to find out who ordered that briefing, and ask the Director of Central Intelligence and the Director of National Intelligence why they permitted it.

Article 5.

NYT

German Leader and I.M.F. Chief Split Over Debt

Nicholas Kulish and Annie Lowrey

March 9, 2012 — With a deal on Greek debt finally done, Europe will shift its attention to two of its most powerful women, friends who have dueling views about what needs to be done to prevent future Greek-like meltdowns from spreading to other economies.

The International Monetary Fund's managing director, Christine Lagarde, who is French, finds herself on a collision course with Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany, posing a test for the unusually close relationship between the two leaders. They have opposing stances on how much money is needed to protect vulnerable economies, and how it should be raised.

Ms. Lagarde says Europe needs at least \$1 trillion in emergency funds and is pressing for a much more robust European contribution before the I.M.F. commits to raising more money from its members. She has worked hard to drag along Ms. Merkel, who is hamstrung by a domestic constituency sharply opposed to committing more money to rescue neighbors.

In spite of the sometimes tough negotiations, colleagues and confidants describe a warmth and chemistry between the two leaders that transcends policy differences. They are on a first-name basis. They frequently exchange text messages. Shortly after Christmas, Ms. Lagarde brought Ms. Merkel a trinket from Hermès and received a recording of the Berlin Philharmonic playing Beethoven from Ms. Merkel, a classical music lover.

“There are many circles and many forums where it’s only the two of us who are women,” Ms. Lagarde said in an interview.

“So there’s a sense of recognition, complicity, solidarity.”

Yet for all that personal solidarity, the two leaders have come to represent competing philosophies for solving the debt crisis that has punished European economies and threatened the financial stability of the rest of the world.

Their opposing worldviews may well come from formative experiences. As a high school student, Ms. Merkel traveled from East Germany to Moscow to take part in a Russian language competition; Ms. Lagarde attended a prominent girl’s school in suburban Washington, complete with an internship on Capitol Hill.

Ms. Lagarde, nicknamed l’Américaine in her native France, has been vocal in support of pro-growth policies on the part of the richer European countries to help their more indebted neighbors. She has pressed Europe to make its firewalls — the pools of money available to keep borrowing rates at sustainable levels — so enormous that they scare off would-be speculators.

Since becoming the head of the I.M.F., and in stark contrast to her public statements in her prior job, as French finance minister, she has repeatedly castigated Europe for doing too little, too late, and lacking focus on spurring higher growth rates.

Ms. Merkel, who declined to be interviewed for this article, has argued that free-spending governments got many European countries into trouble in the first place, and that the path to stability runs through austerity. Large firewalls, in this view, only give countries like Greece a false sense of security and an excuse to ease up on the painful measures demanded of them.

Ms. Merkel has demanded assurances that all European countries bring their finances under strict control before the governments of the European Union agree to free up resources to help.

Their differences were brought into sharp relief in January when Ms. Lagarde gave a speech at the German Council on Foreign Relations in Berlin in which she demanded that Germany step up its efforts to save the world from “a 1930s moment.” Switching from her fluent English to halting, phonetic German, she concluded with a line by the German poet Goethe. “It is not enough to know, we must apply,” Ms. Lagarde told the audience. “It is not enough to will, we must do.”

The speech made headlines around the world, evidence of a backroom dispute breaking out into the open. Yet Ms. Lagarde had arrived in Berlin on the eve of her address with a copy of the speech, for Ms. Merkel to read, before Ms. Lagarde delivered it in front of the political and foreign-policy establishment. The two women debated the crisis in private over a dinner of veal tenderloin in the modern Chancellery’s eighth-floor dining room.

Ms. Lagarde also brought Ms. Merkel an orange-blossom-scented candle from the French perfumer Fragonard. The candle represented “hope,” Ms. Lagarde said. “Because we had tough discussions,” she said, there “was an element of symbolism about it.”

Ms. Lagarde, 56, and Ms. Merkel, 57, appear to be opposites, the glamorous, Chanel-clad French extrovert and the grounded German introvert, recently spotted doing her own grocery

shopping in the same suit jacket she had worn to sign the new European fiscal pact in Brussels earlier that day.

“I’ve been in government and know what securing parliamentary support means,” Ms. Lagarde said. “And equally she appreciates that I speak from a position where I have to think about not only Germany but also the whole of Europe and the stability of the international scene.”

German officials are less skeptical of Ms. Lagarde, as a former French finance minister, than they are about American officials, who they believe are focused on President Obama’s re-election. Ms. Lagarde’s close relationship with Ms. Merkel makes it easier to bridge the gap between the United States and Germany, making her a more effective mediator.

Ms. Lagarde is “one of those policy makers that Ms. Merkel would listen to,” said a French official who worked with her. “There is a relationship of trust, even if there may be issues on which their views differ.”

Indeed, people close to the negotiations say that German leaders have given tacit promises that Europeans will raise more money for their firewall, given enough time to build consensus in Europe. Officials also say the I.M.F. should have little trouble raising \$500 billion in lending capacity once that happens.

Analysts have noted that the austerity Ms. Merkel has pressed on other European countries has long been the I.M.F. prescription, while tough talk from Ms. Lagarde could help Ms. Merkel sell unpopular measures at home. “I have a suspicion that the two ladies are not as far apart as it appears, or is made to appear, in public,” said Stephan Richter, president of the

Globalist Research Center in Washington.

In the years it has taken to reach consensus on how to handle the crisis, critics say the toll to business confidence, financial markets and economic growth has been unnecessarily high. Hope for a long-term solution to Europe's debt crisis could well rest on the ability of these friends to bridge differences before Europe's chronic problems flare up again.

Though Europeans of the same generation, Ms. Merkel and Ms. Lagarde once had lives as divided as the continent they grew up on. Separated throughout their youths by the Iron Curtain, the odds they would meet as politicians at the highest levels was improbable.

Ms. Lagarde was a member of France's national team for synchronized swimming. Ms. Merkel famously needed to spend an entire swimming class mustering the courage to jump off the diving board. The prospects under Communism for a pastor's daughter like Ms. Merkel in politics were dim at best, and she became a physicist. Ms. Lagarde became a lawyer and rose to the top of an American corporate firm.

Once they entered politics, their climbs were similarly swift. Ms. Merkel was head of Germany's largest party, the Christian Democrats, just 10 years after joining in 1990. She beat out career politicians to win the chancellorship five years later in 2005. Ms. Lagarde won the top I.M.F. post a mere six years after joining the French government as trade minister in 2005.

The personal relationship between them was nurtured when Ms. Lagarde became the first and only member of a foreign government to sit in on a German cabinet meeting in March

2010, taking her place across the Chancellery conference table from Ms. Merkel. “It was a very moving moment, because she made a point of inviting me and nobody else,” Ms. Lagarde said.

For Ms. Lagarde, sorting through the differences requires patience, as well as understanding for Ms. Merkel’s deeply analytical, scientific approach. “You have to continuously explain, rationalize, dissect the whys, the pros and the cons and plead your case,” Ms. Lagarde said. “It’s the lawyer and the physicist. I will continue to grit my teeth and smile and keep up the work.”

Nicholas Kulish reported from Berlin, and Annie Lowrey from Washington. Liz Alderman contributed reporting from Paris.

Article 6.

The Diplomat

Why China, India Clash

Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan

March 9, 2012 -- India-China relations are often seen through the prism of their bilateral disputes. Indeed, the border dispute between the two is generally seen as the biggest hurdle to improving ties. But it could be argued that disagreements such as that over the border in Arunachal Pradesh are only a symptom of the larger problem that exists between these two Asian giants, namely the inevitable and increasing competition between two rising powers.

While the simultaneous rise of powers need not always result in a clash, the four major powers in Asia – established powers Russia and Japan, and newly rising China and India – have had troubled historical relations, contributing to deep-rooted mistrust and mutual suspicion. With the exception of India-Russia and India-Japan relations, the baggage of history is weighing on almost all bilateral relations. It may be true that this century will be an “Asian century,” but it can’t be said with certainty that it’s going to be a stable and peaceful one.

India and China have certainly gone through their share of ups and downs in their relations over the last six decades. Currently, their relations are probably on an upward curve, but one based on trade and raw economics. And while their bilateral trade has climbed to \$60 billion, there has been a simultaneous rise in tensions. Improved economic relations don’t necessarily mean better ties overall, as has been demonstrated with U.S.-China relations, as well as those between Japan and China and Taiwan and the mainland.

So, if improved trade ties haven't resulted in better political and strategic relations, what are the key issues that are holding the two back? Historically, it used to be the border issue, China's relationship with Pakistan and the rest of South Asia in general, and China's policy on Jammu and Kashmir specifically. But over the past decade, the emerging Asian strategic framework and the global role for each of these rising powers has been an important factor.

Sadly, this is only likely to get worse. As India's influence increases within Asia and beyond, there are bound to be problems between Beijing and New Delhi as the two are seen competing for influence and resources. For instance, China is increasingly wary of India's closer engagement with Japan, South Korea and some Southeast Asian countries. The Chinese leadership appears equally wary of India's "Look East" Policy as it seems to believe that this will dilute Chinese influence in the region. India has improved its trade ties with Japan, South Korea and ASEAN countries, and there appears to be an increasingly strategic component to relations.

On the other hand, India has remained concerned about China's ever-growing reach into South Asia, particularly in Pakistan. Of all the South Asian countries, it is Islamabad that most closely shares China's strategic interests, and their interests vis a vis India have been crucial in cementing relations between the two. For Pakistan, Kashmir is an unfinished item on the agenda of the partition of the subcontinent. India's sensitivity over Kashmir is matched by China's worries about Tibet. China believes that New Delhi has ulterior motives regarding Tibet, and the very fact that the Dalai Lama and as many as 150,000 Tibetan refugees live in India continues to irk Beijing. For a

country that's actively engaged in image building as a responsible power, the shortcomings of China's ethnic policy isn't something China likes to be reminded about.

Complicating India's relations with China was the fact that the George W. Bush administration saw a greater role for India and Japan in the emerging Asian strategic framework. The U.S.-India Nuclear Deal in 2005 furthered China's anxieties, and the fact that the United States took the lead in altering the global rules so that India could engage in international nuclear commerce wasn't well received by Beijing.

Ultimately, it's India's increasing role and influence that's the crux of the issue. Although India and China both acknowledge the role of the other in the emerging Asian strategic order, they have different conceptions over how this will all pan out. India has continued to adopt an accommodative and inclusive approach in shaping this new architecture, while China has followed an exclusivist approach that appears to be directed against India, Japan and the United States.

Beijing has argued that its rise is peaceful, but as China's military and economic strength grows, India may not be prepared to see an Asian order dominated by any single power. Given such trends, it's likely that competition for influence between these new powers will be a significant feature of the Asian century.

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