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Article 1.

Foreign Affairs

Turkish Populism Goes to the Polls - The Limits of the Country's Regional Resurgence

Piotr Zalewski

June 10, 2011 -- On Sunday, Turkey will head to the polls in parliamentary elections. Although issues such as the economy, a new constitution, and the conflict in the Kurdish-majority southeast have featured most prominently in the campaigning, Turkey's foreign policy has emerged as a central rallying point for the Justice and Development Party (AKP). But the populist streak that has given a boost to the party's support over the past years has also had consequences for relations with longtime allies. In distancing itself from the United States, the European Union, and Israel, the Turkish government has done considerable damage to its relations with the West. This may be changing, however: Amid the political turmoil sweeping the Middle East, there are signs that the populist and anti-Western strand in Turkey's foreign policy may have run its course. Once election season is over, Turkey is likely to rediscover the importance of engaging with the United States and the European Union. Well into the 1990s, Turkey did not really have a foreign policy. Instead, it had an orientation, or what analysts have in mind when they speak of "Turkey's turn from the West" or "Turkey's shift eastward." With the country's powerful military running the show, the lines were fixed. Turkey was a stalwart NATO ally, a Western outpost, a country happily divorced from its Ottoman past and, by extension, from the entire Arab world. It was also a country removed from its citizens. Aside from cases when public opinion had to be mobilized -- renewed fighting in Cyprus, say, or tensions with Greece --

foreign policy was rarely up for open discussion. Over the past decade, however, the government of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan has considerably trimmed the military's influence over political life, foreign policy included. To meet EU accession criteria, Erdogan's AKP stripped the army of its majority on the National Security Council, for years the most important body in charge of foreign policy. Building on the work of its predecessors, the AKP government replaced a foreign policy based on security with one focused on engagement, soft power, and trade, in the process diffusing tensions with neighboring countries such as Iran, Iraq, and Syria (known as the "zero problems" policy). Other changes have come from the bottom up. As the domestic political arena expanded and democratization took root -- thanks in no small part to the EU accession process -- the media, business interests, NGOs, religious groups, and other parts of civil society have taken on a much more visible stand on issues that had traditionally been the remit of state elites and the military establishment. Civil society groups, for example, pushed aside traditional concerns of national security to pave the way for Turkey's reconciliation with Greece in the late 1990s and helped shift the domestic debate on Greek Cyprus in 2003 and 2004. Never before in Turkey's modern history has foreign policy been so directly wedded to domestic politics: The architects of Turkey's foreign policy used to answer to the generals; these days, policymakers answer to the public. And never before has a Turkish government staked so much of its reputation on its international accomplishments, real or hypothetical. On the campaign trail, the AKP's senior members have consistently championed the party's foreign outlook. At a speech in April, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu said, "Our ideal is to make this country a pioneer in the world, like our predecessors who carried out their goal of order for the whole world." Erdogan has made similarly proud and sweeping

rhetorical gestures, telling supporters last month that "those who want democracy, those who want freedom, those who want to be rid of tyranny, oppression, and exploitation, now look to Turkey." A few days later, he added, "Now it is Turkey that sets the agenda. It's Turkey's word that everyone awaits." The AKP, expected to win Sunday's vote by a landslide, has reason to trumpet its foreign policy accomplishments. Under the "zero problems" policy, Turkey's relations with its Middle Eastern neighbors are better than at any time since the founding of the republic. Regional trade is booming: Turkey's exports to the Middle East more than doubled between 2002 and 2010 as a share of total exports, now reaching 20 percent. (The share of exports to Europe has dropped over the same period by about 10 percentage points, to about 45 percent.) Turkish diplomats, meanwhile, have taken on a more active role in the region. Some Turkish initiatives have been successful (the effort to free four New York Times journalists captured in Libya); some were said to have almost succeeded (the 2008 talks between Syria and Israel); some have been dismissed by allies (including the proposed nuclear swap deal with Iran in 2011); and some have been stillborn (a road map for Libya that failed to call for Muammar al-Qaddafi's departure). But all have been universally seen as evidence of Turkey's growing clout and ambitions. As Ziya Öniş, a professor at Koç University, told me, the government "has used its assertive foreign policy and its popularity in the Arab world" to build popular support. Indeed, 65 percent of those Turks responding to a recent poll by the Turkish think tank TESEV back the AKP's foreign policy; around 80 percent of those surveyed said that they believe that Turkey can be a model -- cultural, political, and economic -- for the countries of the Middle East. Yet the populism inherent in the AKP's foreign policy has a hidden danger: Fuelling anti-Western and anti-Israeli sentiment may win Erdogan a few nationalist or Islamist votes, but it is also costing him some

valuable friends, from European politicians to the U.S. congressional representatives. The infamous showdown between Erdogan and Israeli President Shimon Peres at the 2009 World Economic Forum in Davos is a case in point. Erdogan accused Peres of "knowing well how to kill," and then stormed off the stage and boarded a plane to Istanbul. He returned to a hero's welcome. The highly publicized spat earned the AKP a badly needed boost ahead of local elections in March 2009. Erdogan's anti-Israeli rants reached new heights last May, when Israeli troops stormed the Mavi Marmara, a Turkish ship carrying aid to Gaza, and killed eight Turkish activists and one U.S. citizen of Turkish origin. The West's initial sympathy for Turkey quickly melted away when Erdogan accused Israeli of "state terror," refused to label Hamas a terrorist organization, and claimed that the world "now perceived the swastika and the Star of David together."

The anti-Israeli rhetoric has certainly damaged Turkey's profile in Washington. In March 2010, Robert Wexler, the former chairman of Congress' Turkey caucus, noted that Erdogan's "outlandish" and "bizarre" comments on Israel were doing the Turkish government "far greater discredit in America than you can imagine." Over the following months, especially in the wake of Turkey's response to the Mavi Marmara incident, a number of U.S. congressmen withdrew their support for Ankara on important policy issues. For example, Anthony Weiner (D-N.Y.) argued that Turkey's membership in NATO should be "called into question," while Shelley Berkley (D-Nev.), threatened to speak "actively" against Turkey's bid to join the European Union. In late May, on the eve of the coming elections and just before the first anniversary of the storming of the Mavi Marmara, Davutoğlu dismissed pleas by the United Nations and others to prevent a new flotilla from departing for Gaza. (Fifteen ships, including the Mavi Marmara, are planning to do so in late June.) Instead, he warned that Turkey would give the "necessary response"

to any "act of provocation" by Israel. Erdogan, meanwhile, has accused his main opponent, Kemal Kiliçdaroğlu, the head of the Republican People's Party, of being insufficiently tough on Israel. Kiliçdaroğlu had criticized Erdogan's government for letting the 2010 flotilla go ahead and putting Turkish lives in harm's way. If Kiliçdaroğlu were brave enough, said Erdogan, he would "criticize the Mediterranean pirates instead of being a sycophant." (Kiliçdaroğlu has replied in kind, criticizing Erdogan for accepting a prize from a U.S.-based Jewish group.) Europe has also been the target of much criticism this campaign season. With support for joining the European Union among Turks plummeting from 71 percent in 2004 to 47 percent last year, according to a Eurobarometer poll, there are few votes to be won by campaigning in favor of EU accession. The AKP has only aggravated the situation with combative rhetoric. As much as it has done to advance EU reforms, and as much it may still affirm its commitment to working toward membership, the AKP has made a habit of accusing the European Union of double standards, suggesting that all European opposition to Turkish accession is a symptom of Western Islamophobia. In doing so, it is in danger of boxing itself into a corner: Inadvertently or not, it is stoking popular expectations that Turkey should walk away from accession talks. Under the AKP, the Turkish government has inserted identity politics, particularly religion, into foreign policy. (It is revealing that Erdogan refers to Europeans as "partners" or "friends" but to Arabs and Iranians as "brothers.") Two years ago, Erdogan proclaimed Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir, who was indicted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes in Darfur, innocent of genocide -- Muslims, he argued, "are incapable of such a thing." At the same time, Ankara, quick to condemn any use of force by Israelis, has been much more indulgent toward its Arab allies, Syria and Libya included. Turkey has struggled to formulate a coherent response to

the uprisings shaking the Arab world. Erdogan was one of the first world leaders to call on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak to step down, yet one of the last to ask the same of Libya's Qaddafi. In Syria, meanwhile, the Turkish government remains unable to let go of Bashar al-Assad: It has condemned the violence but not the perpetrator. This paralysis reveals an unintended consequence of both deepening ties with autocratic regimes in the Arab world and establishing credibility in the eyes of Arab populations. As Davutoğlu himself told journalists in May, "We have felt the pressure of being entrapped between the two successes." On the heels of the "Arab spring," Joost Lagendijk, a senior adviser at the Istanbul Policy Center and a former EU parliamentarian, told me that foreign policy has become "a bit of a problem" for the Turks. "Zero problems" has turned out to be an illusion, he said. "Turkey is not in control of everything ... Turkey does not always have the answer, does not always know where to go." Such a realization in Ankara may lead to a substantial reassessment of Turkish foreign policy right after the elections. Turkey already appears more cautious. As Lagendijk said, the Turks "have seen that there are limits to what they can do on their own." With the Middle East in flames and the limits of its leverage in the region laid bare, Turkey may have no choice but to reengage with the European Union and the United States. The policy of "zero problems" has not really worked out too well with Qaddafi and Assad. It might be time to try it out with the West.

PIOTR ZALEWSKI is the Turkey correspondent for the Polish news magazine Polityka and a contributor to Foreign Policy, The Atlantic.com, and The National.

Article 2.

The Heritage Foundation

Turkey after the Elections: Implications for U.S. Foreign Policy

Sally McNamara and Ariel Cohen

June 8, 2011 -- Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) is on course to secure a third consecutive victory in parliamentary elections this weekend. Polls are predicting that the AKP could secure up to 48 percent of the vote. However, a two-thirds majority of the 550-seat assembly is needed for the prime minister to realize his ambition of changing the constitution without referendum and creating a new executive presidency for himself. The collapse in support for the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) following the release of sexually explicit videos involving its senior politicians makes it unclear whether the MHP will clear the 10 percent threshold required to enter parliament, which means the AKP could pick up additional seats. The outcome of these elections will have implications for more than that country's political model, however. U.S. foreign policy in the region and Turkey's future in Europe will also be affected as prominent foreign and domestic policy issues await the next Turkish government, including a democracy deficit; the war in Afghanistan; Ankara's role in NATO's future missile defense architecture; Turkey's stalled EU accession bid; deteriorating Turkish-Israeli relations; Turkey's support of Hamas; and the worrying Turkish-Iranian rapprochement.

Election Background

These elections have been conducted in the shadow of violations of media and political freedoms. Dozens of journalists and hundreds of

regime opponents have been jailed in connection with an alleged plot to overthrow the government. The arrest of four journalists who worked for the Web-based Oda TV caused the U.S. ambassador to Turkey, Francis Ricciardone, to criticize the AKP. The State Department said: “We do have ongoing concerns about...trends regarding treatment of journalists within Turkey...And we’ll be watching this case rather closely.” Reporters Without Borders places Turkey 138th in the *World Press Freedom Index* (from a list of 178 countries)—only just ahead of Ethiopia (139th) and Russia (140th). The AKP’s Islamist-based politics is gradually leading Turkey away from Ataturk’s legacy of secular democracy toward religious-based authoritarianism, which should be a major concern for the U.S. and Europe.

Foreign Policy and U.S. Interests

With the second-largest military in NATO, Turkey has been a significant actor in many NATO operations and continues to stand alongside the U.S. in Afghanistan. However, Ankara’s burgeoning closeness to Tehran and the AKP’s hostility toward Israel undermine Turkey’s reliability as a regional partner for the U.S. and Europe.

Afghanistan. Ankara was among a handful of NATO members that increased commitments in Afghanistan in response to President Barack Obama’s request for additional resources in December 2009. Although Turkish troops are heavily concentrated in Kabul, Ankara has put the bulk of its resources into training the Afghan army and police, which the alliance has identified as a top priority. It has also complemented its police and army training teams with two civilian-led Provisional Reconstruction Teams. As a trusted partner in Afghanistan, it is important that Turkey continues to work closely

with the U.S.-led coalition and maintain its strong support for the mission.

Missile Defense. NATO's 2010 Strategic Concept identifies comprehensive ballistic missile defense (BMD) as a core competency of the alliance. Turkey insisted that no one country be identified as a threat—which demonstrated that Ankara is too cozy with Tehran. It is unclear what specific role Turkey will play in either a NATO-wide BMD system or as a partner in the U.S.'s European Phased Adaptive Approach (PAA). However, negotiations are likely to be protracted, especially over issues of geographical coverage and command-and-control decisions. Ankara must signal to Washington that it stands behind its NATO commitments and that it is willing to shoulder its share of the burden for NATO's core competencies.

The European Union. The EU formally granted candidate status to Turkey in 1999, and membership negotiations began in 2005. However, progress has been painfully slow. France and Germany especially oppose full Turkish membership in the EU, proposing instead a privileged partnership between Ankara and Brussels—which Erdogan has dismissed as insulting.

There is a pervasive sense in Ankara that the EU is negotiating in bad faith, and Turkish public backing for EU membership fell to just 47 percent in 2010. In a sign of growing confidence, Ankara's chief EU negotiator, Egemen Bağış, warned Brussels that the EU needs Turkey more than Turkey needs Europe. In fact, the AKP has cherry-picked which EU-mandated liberalizations best reinforce its power base and undermine Turkey's military and bureaucracy—the pillars of secular republicanism. The EU's contrived negotiating position has provided the AKP with an opportunity to pursue an agenda that better reflects

Erdogan's ideological preferences, while at the same time claiming that Turkey is still pursuing a Western-oriented path.

Libya. Prior to the outbreak of violence in Libya, Prime Minister Erdogan was awarded the Al-Gaddafi International Prize for Human Rights. Erdogan refuses to renounce the award, even in light of Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi's horrific human rights abuses. Libya granted Turkey approximately \$23 billion in construction contracts. Turkey has, however, supported the NATO mission in Libya, deploying six warships to enforce the arms embargo. Turkey also negotiated the release of four American journalists who were being held by Libyan authorities. Ankara continues to press for a diplomatic resolution of the Libyan crisis in opposition to the NATO allies. It is imperative that Ankara understands that Qadhafi's removal from office is non-negotiable and that it cannot just press for a cease-fire at any cost.

The Middle East. Under Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu's "zero problems with neighbors" policy, Turkey has strengthened its ties with several problematic actors in the Middle East:

- Under Syrian President Bashar el-Assad, whose regime has reportedly killed more than 1,100 opponents since March, Turkey and Syria have established close relations. In 2009, Ankara and Damascus signed a strategic cooperation agreement, conducted joint military exercises, and launched military industrial cooperation. They also introduced visa-free travel.
- Turkey's rapprochement with the Tehran theocracy saw Ankara partner with Brazil and vote against limited U.N. sanctions on Iran in October—sanctions which even Russia and China supported. Iran is becoming Turkey's leading oil supplier, and plans are afoot to triple the trade between the two countries.

- Turkey's traditionally strong relationship with Israel has declined dramatically in recent years. The Turkish government-supported IHH Islamist organization is preparing to launch a second flotilla to Gaza despite the fact that the embargo is over, and this will only further inflame relations between the two countries. The AKP government has also continued to support Hamas, which Washington and Brussels classify as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO).

Guidelines for the U.S.–Turkey Relationship

The U.S. should continue to cooperate with Ankara on issues such as Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq, and missile defense. However, Washington should also express its strong concerns to Ankara over the AKP's growing violations of political freedoms, as well as other contentious issues, including its rapprochement with Iran and its anti-Israeli/pro-Hamas policies. After the elections, Washington should tell Ankara that Turkey cannot consider itself a strategic ally of the U.S. while pursuing policies that undermine American and allied interests.

Sally McNamara is Senior Policy Analyst in European Affairs in the Margaret Thatcher Center for Freedom, a division of the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for International Studies, and Ariel Cohen, Ph.D., is Senior Research Fellow in Russian and Eurasian Studies and International Energy Policy in the Douglas and Sarah Allison Center for Foreign Policy Studies, a division of the Davis Institute, at The Heritage Foundation.

Article 3.

NYT

Talking Truth to NATO

Editorial

June 10, 2011 -- Defense Secretary Robert Gates spoke bluntly to America's NATO allies on Friday. They needed to hear it.

America's key strategic alliance throughout the cold war is in far deeper trouble than most members admit. The Atlantic allies face a host of new and old dangers. Without more and wiser European military spending — on equipment, training, surveillance and reconnaissance — NATO faces, as Mr. Gates rightly warned, “a dim if not dismal future” and even “irrelevance.” The secretary is retiring at the end of this month, which is likely one of the reasons he jettisoned the diplomatic niceties. But not the only one. As he made clear, this country can no longer afford to do a disproportionate share of NATO's fighting and pay a disproportionate share of its bills while Europe slashes its defense budgets and free-rides on the collective security benefits. NATO's shockingly wobbly performance over Libya, after the Pentagon handed off leadership, should leave no doubt about the Europeans' weaknesses. And while America's NATO partners now have 40,000 troops in Afghanistan (compared with about 99,000 from the United States), many have been hemmed in by restrictive rules of engagement and shortages of critical equipment. Too many are scheduled for imminent departure. The free-rider problem is an old one but has gotten even worse over the last two decades. During most of the cold war, the United States accounted for 50 percent of total NATO military spending; today it accounts for 75 percent. Mr. Gates was right when he warned of America's dwindling patience with allies “unwilling to devote the necessary resources or make the necessary changes to be serious and capable

partners in their own defense.” Decades of underinvestment, poor spending choices and complacent denial about new challenges have created what Mr. Gates called a “two-tiered alliance.” He is right that too many of its members limit themselves to “humanitarian, development, peacekeeping and talking tasks,” and too few are available for the combat missions the alliance as a whole has agreed to assume. Libya, a mission much more directly linked to the security of Europe than of the United States, strikingly illustrates the consequences. Fewer than half of NATO’s 28 members are taking part in the military mission. Fewer than a third are participating in the all-important airstrikes. British and French aircraft carry the main burden. Canada, Belgium, Norway and Denmark, despite limited resources, have made outsized contributions. Turkey, with the alliance’s second-largest military, has remained largely on the sidelines. Germany, NATO’s biggest historic beneficiary, has done nothing at all. Even fully participating members have failed to train enough targeting specialists to keep all of their planes flying sorties or to buy enough munitions to sustain a bombing campaign much beyond the present 11 weeks. That should frighten every defense ministry in Europe. What if they had to fight a more formidable enemy than Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi’s fractured dictatorship? Combat is not always the best or only solution. NATO needs those European development and peacekeeping capabilities. All alliance members must also have at least the basic military capacities to meet common threats. Without that, the alliance will grow increasingly hollow — a fact that enemies will not miss. Mr. Gates was right to speak out. We hope his likely successor, Leon Panetta, will keep pushing hard. A two-tiered military alliance is really no alliance at all.

Article 4.

Foreign Policy

The Fall of the House of Assad

Robin Yassin-Kassab

JUNE 10, 2011 -- "Selmiyyeh, selmiyyeh" -- "peaceful, peaceful" -- was one of the Tunisian revolution's most contagious slogans. It was chanted in Egypt, where in some remarkable cases protesters defused state violence simply by telling policemen to calm down and not be scared. In both countries, largely nonviolent demonstrations and strikes succeeded in splitting the military high command from the ruling family and its cronies, and civil war was avoided. In both countries, state institutions proved themselves stronger than the regimes that had hijacked them. Although protesters unashamedly fought back (with rocks, not guns) when attacked, the success of their largely peaceful mass movements seemed an Arab vindication of Gandhian nonviolent resistance strategies. But then came the much more difficult uprisings in Bahrain, Libya, and Syria. Even after at least 1,300 deaths and more than 10,000 detentions, according to human rights groups, "selmiyyeh" still resounds on Syrian streets. It's obvious why protest organizers want to keep it that way. Controlling the big guns and fielding the best-trained fighters, the regime would emerge victorious from any pitched battle. Oppositional violence, moreover, would alienate those constituencies the uprising is working so hard to win over: the upper-middle class, religious minorities, the stability-firsters. It would push the uprising off the moral high ground and thereby relieve international pressure against the regime. It would also serve regime propaganda, which against all evidence portrays the unarmed protesters as highly organized groups of armed infiltrators and Salafi terrorists.

The regime is exaggerating the numbers, but soldiers are undoubtedly being killed. Firm evidence is lost in the fog, but there are reliable and consistent reports, backed by YouTube videos, of mutinous soldiers being shot by security forces. Defecting soldiers have reported mukhabarat lined up behind them as they fire on civilians, watching for any soldier's disobedience. A tank battle and aerial bombardment were reported after a small-scale mutiny in the Homs region. Tensions within the military are expanding.

And a small minority of protesters does now seem to be taking up arms. Syrians -- regime supporters and the apolitical as much as anyone else -- have been furiously buying smuggled weapons since the crisis began. Last week for the first time, anti-regime activists reported that people in Rastan and Talbiseh were meeting tanks with rocket-propelled grenades. Some of the conflicting reports from Jisr al-Shaghour, the besieged town near the northwestern border with Turkey, describe a gun battle between townsmen and the army. And a mukhabarat man was lynched by a grieving crowd in Hama.

The turn toward violence is inadvisable but perhaps inevitable. When residential areas are subjected to military attack, when children are tortured to death, when young men are randomly rounded up and beaten, electrocuted, and humiliated, some Syrians will seek to defend themselves. Violence has its own momentum, and Syria appears to be slipping toward war.

There are two potential civil-war scenarios. The first begins with Turkish intervention. Since Syrian independence in 1946, tensions have bubbled over into Turkey's Hatay province, known to Syrians as Wilayat Iskenderoon, the Arab region unjustly gifted to Kemal Ataturk by the French. War almost broke out in 1998 over Syria's hosting of Kurdish separatist leader Abdullah Ocalan, who now sits in a Turkish prison. Yet since the ascension of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey

and Bashar al-Assad's inheritance of the Syrian presidency, relations have dramatically improved. Turkey invested enormous financial and political capital in Syria, establishing a Levantine free trade zone and distancing itself from Israel.

Erdogan extracted promises of reform from Bashar at the onset of the protests and then watched with increasingly visible consternation as the promises were broken. He warned Syria repeatedly against massacres and their consequences (on June 9, he described the crackdown as "savagery"). Syria's response is reminiscent of Israel's after last year's Mavi Marmara killings: slandering its second-most important ally with petulant self-destructiveness.

Turkish military intervention remains unlikely, but if the estimated 4,000 refugees who have crossed the border thus far swell to a greater flood, particularly if Kurds begin crossing in large numbers, Turkey may decide to create a safe haven in north or northeastern Syria. This territory could become Syria's Benghazi, potentially a home for a more local and credible opposition than the exile-dominated one that recently met in Antalya, Turkey, and a destination to which soldiers and their families could defect. A council of defected officers might then organize attacks on the regime from the safe haven, adding military to economic and diplomatic pressure.

The second scenario is sectarian war, as seen in neighbouring Iraq and Lebanon. Although most people choose their friends from all communities, sectarianism remains a real problem in Syria. The ruling family was born into the historically oppressed Alawi community. The Ottomans regarded Alawis as heretics rather than as "people of the book," and Alawis -- unlike Christians, Jews, and mainstream Shiite Muslims -- were therefore deprived of all legal rights. Before the rise of the Baath and the social revolution it presided over, Alawi girls served as housemaids in Sunni cities. Some Alawis fear those times are returning and will fight to prevent

change. The social stagnation of dictatorship has made it difficult to discuss sectarian prejudice in public, which has sometimes kept hatreds bottled up. Some in the Sunni majority perceive the Assads as representatives of their sect and resent the entire community by extension.

None of this makes sectarian conflict inevitable. Class and regional cleavages are perhaps more salient than sect in Syria today. Sunni business families have been co-opted into the power structure while disfavored Alawis have suffered as much as anyone else. The protesters, aware of the dangers, have consistently chanted slogans of national unity. And in Lebanon and Iraq the catalysts for civil war were external interventions, not internal upheaval.

The catalyst in Syria may be the regime itself. Simulating sectarian war is one of the regime's preferred tactics. In March, Syrian friends have told me, its shabiha militia tried to spark social breakdown in Latakia by pretending to be a Sunni mob while it shot up Alawi areas and an Alawi mob as it terrorized Sunni neighborhoods. Syrians say the regime is arming Alawi villages and wishfully thinking of a repeat of the 1980s, when it faced a genuinely violent sectarian challenge in the form of the Muslim Brotherhood, which it defeated at the Hama massacre in 1982.

The danger of the simulacrum is that it could become reality. If the regime doesn't disintegrate quickly, the state will disintegrate gradually, and then the initiative could be seized by the kind of tough men who command local loyalty by providing the basics and avenging the dead. If violence continues at this pitch for much longer, it's easy to imagine local and sectarian militias forming, with the Sunnis receiving funding from the Persian Gulf.

Such a scenario would be a disaster for Syrians of all backgrounds. The ripple effects would be felt in Lebanon (which would likely be sucked into the fray), Palestine, Iraq, Turkey, and beyond. It could

also give a second life to the Wahhabi-nihilist groups currently relegated to irrelevance by the new democratic mood in the region. Let's hope the boil bursts before either of these wars occurs. The economy may collapse catastrophically, at which point almost every Syrian would have to choose between revolution and starvation. Under continued pressure, the regime may destroy itself through internecine conflict, or it may surrender when mass desertions make the military option unfeasible. The manner of bringing the boil to eruption remains obscure. What seems certain is that the regime will not be able to bring Syria back under its heel.

Robin Yassin-Kassab is author of The Road from Damascus, a novel.

Article 5.

The Washington Post

Obama's partnership deficit

David Ignatius

June 10 -- There was some head-scratching in Washington last week at the presentation of the Medal of Freedom to German Chancellor Angela Merkel. The previous foreign recipients included Pope John Paul II, who championed the freedom of Eastern Europe; Nelson Mandela, who triumphed over apartheid in South Africa; and Helmut Kohl, who reunited Germany.

Did Merkel, for all her good qualities, really fit in that group?

"Why roll out the red carpet and present this honor to someone who has been a reluctant partner at best?" asks Stephen Szabo, who heads the German Marshall Fund's Transatlantic Academy in Washington. The truth is that the medal for Merkel was an aspirational award, similar in many ways to the premature 2009 Nobel Peace Prize for President Obama. It signaled hopes for the future, rather than actual performance. As Szabo says, the administration decided to "celebrate the partner it wants, not the partner it has." (Full disclosure: I'm a trustee at the fund, where Szabo works.)

Merkel's visit highlighted an interesting problem for Obama, which I would describe as his "partnership deficit." It's a paradox that this genuinely multilateralist administration, eager to break with the unilateral policymaking of George W. Bush, has had trouble finding reliable partners. Merkel is a case in point, despite all the nice words Obama spoke about her at last week's state dinner.

Defense Secretary Bob Gates slammed home the point in a speech Friday in Berlin, where he said the United States is tired of fighting for Europeans who "don't want to share the risks and the costs."

This is a world that resents American domination but is also wary of sharing the burden. Our allies don't want to be followers, certainly, but they don't want to share leadership, either. This deficit exists in every region, and it complicates Obama's desire to offload some responsibilities at a time when U.S. financial resources are stretched. Let's start with Europe: Administration officials want the alliance with Europe to be a "catalyst for global change." But in reality, this has been a relatively moribund period for the transatlantic relationship. Europe is preoccupied with its own problems. It talks about collective action through the European Union in Brussels, but policy decisions are still almost entirely centered in the national capitals. The European Union today is a study in frustration more than a catalyst.

The Libya mission illustrates the mixed blessings of shared responsibility. France and Britain are leading the NATO military effort, with the United States deliberately taking a back seat after the first week. But the fitful course of the campaign has many analysts wondering whether a successful NATO operation is possible if the United States isn't at the steering wheel. The lack of German support underscores the frailty of the NATO collective response.

Then take China, which is a recurring demonstration of the difficulty of partnering on security issues. The Obama administration has repeatedly said that it wants Beijing's help in dealing with the erratic nuclear-armed menace that is North Korea. The Chinese talk the language of shared responsibility in Sino-American meetings, but they never quite step up to the task of jointly solving problems. It seems they prefer to let things fester rather than take decisive action. Henry Kissinger argues in his new book, "On China," that the Chinese are culturally unfamiliar with the experience of being allies. Other nations were regarded chiefly as a source of tribute payments to the Middle Kingdom, and China didn't even have a foreign ministry

until the 19th century, Kissinger says. The Obama administration may be asking for a kind of cooperation that China does not yet know how to give.

The same partnership deficit has existed with India, Asia's other rising power. A big test for Obama will be whether he can encourage India to step up and join a regional framework for stabilizing Afghanistan as America withdraws troops.

America had close alliances during the Cold War, but Fred Kempe, president of the Atlantic Council, notes that the partnership was often contentious. In his just-published book, "Berlin 1961," Kempe notes that President John F. Kennedy had to cope with a British prime minister who talked conciliation, a French president who talked belligerence and a German chancellor who mistrusted the new American president. The lesson, says Kempe, is that "when it comes to historic inflection points, America has to lead."

Obama came to office rightly convinced that America needed to exercise power through global institutions and alliances, rather than unilaterally. But he has discovered that it's easier to give medals than get results. "Leading from behind," as a White House official described Obama's style of strategic reticence to the New Yorker, isn't necessarily a bad idea. It just doesn't work in today's world.

Article 6.

The Daily Beast

Obama's Secret Afghan Exit Formula

Leslie H. Gelb

June 11, 2011 -- By July 15, President Obama will unveil a plan to reduce U.S. forces in Afghanistan by upward of 30,000, but to withdraw them slowly under military guidance over 12 to 18 months, according to administration officials.

In sum, the quick exiters get the big 30,000 or so number, and the die-harders get one last year-plus at near full strength to weaken the Taliban. Ain't democracy grand? Officials caution that since no announcement will be made for almost a month, and since Obama is still being battered from all sides, the projected withdrawal total and end dates could change somewhat. No one, not even Obama's most intimate national-security aides—Tom Donilon, Denis McDonough, and Ben Rhodes—can be certain of their boss' final calculations, but key officials feel confident that the president's secret thinking will generally hold.

Sorting out the formula is for chess players. The U.S. now deploys about 100,000 troops, in addition to about 40,000 NATO troops. NATO, including Washington, recently announced that it will remove all combat forces by January 2015 (i.e., three and a half years from now). The 30,000 U.S. troops to be withdrawn beginning this July constitute the full amount deployed in the so-called surge decision of late 2009. Their departure will still leave 70,000 U.S. armed personnel in country. All these numbers, to say nothing of the situation on the ground in Afghanistan, make for intriguing maneuvering in Washington. The exact number of forces to be reduced and the precise time frame for their withdrawal will be determined during the review that will get underway later this week.

The positions of senior officials in this process reflect a mixture of serious thought and gamesmanship. Vice President Biden along with NSC Adviser Tom Donilon mark the center—there is no left. They're pressing for a July announcement of 30,000 in cuts over 12 months. Tellingly, Obama already gave public voice to their rationale. "We will begin a transition this summer," he said a week ago. "By killing bin Laden, by blunting the momentum of the Taliban, we have now accomplished a lot of what we set out to accomplish 10 years ago." In other words, most of the job is done, and the United States and NATO now can safely transition from a counterinsurgency approach, with a lot of troops and a lot of nation-building, to a more limited and focused counterterrorist strategy. Interestingly, the Biden-Donilon approach expects little from negotiations with the Taliban and seeks to proceed with troop cuts regardless of these negotiations. Their bottom line: Start transferring responsibility for the war to where it practically and ultimately belongs, to the Afghans.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton hasn't settled on a formula but tends to share Pentagon concerns about withdrawing too quickly and reopening doors for a Taliban surge. She is likely to emerge somewhere between the key White House clan and the military brass; that is, somewhere between the 3,000 to 5,000 desired by the military and the full 30,000 wished for by Biden. She also might seek a compromise on the withdrawal timetable. Clinton wants to push ahead on the negotiating front as well, though with a special twist. She wouldn't talk solely with the Taliban leadership; rather, she'd also attempt to split off as many individual tribal leaders as possible. As for departing Secretary of Defense Bob Gates, there isn't much mystery about his dearest preference: the lowest possible reduction in the longest possible time. Barring that, he'd go along with a reduction figure of about 15,000 over 18 months with emphasis on backloading the withdrawal of combat troops and frontloading

support forces. U.S. forces, he insists, can tip the scales militarily. “[I]f we can hold on to the gains we’ve made over the last year or so and expand security further,” Gates said last week, “then we may be in a position where we can say we’ve turned the corner by the end of this year.” This line of reason, expressed publicly, tends to box in Obama politically, and won’t be easy to neutralize. It reinforces mounting criticism that Obama is “abandoning” Afghanistan, a false and nasty charge.

One lion has yet to roar: General David Petraeus, commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan and soon-to-be CIA director. Everyone knows his position likens to Gates’. But just maybe, Obama and Petraeus have agreed that the general will say his piece in full only in the privacy of the Oval Office. If he would talk publicly only of options, that would relieve some pressure on the White House. The outgoing CIA director and incoming Defense Secretary Leon Panetta will remain low-key during this round. He doesn’t want to alienate his new Pentagon home or undercut Obama. As for President Karzai of Afghanistan, his course is certain: Scream against large-scale withdrawals.

One final piece of the July formula that remains to be developed is the policy to explain the withdrawals and guide future actions. To begin with, Obama should assert the truth: He has accomplished America’s primary goal of “defeating” al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. At the same time, he should remind all that the Taliban was vital only insofar as it provided safe haven to al Qaeda, and that any future Taliban threat can be blunted by the “rebuilt” Afghan forces along with a small residual U.S. force and other means. He should also repeat Gates’ line that the Taliban has already been weakened and add that after 10 years, it’s time for America’s Afghan allies to step up with some U.S. help. He’s got to define this help in terms of a small residual U.S. force, a level of about 15,000 troops to be reached

in late 2013, to provide logistics, intelligence, and pinpoint military punches when necessary. Of equal import, he's got to lay out a diplomatic strategy of containing and deterring extremism in Afghanistan by partnering with India, China, Russia, Pakistan, and even Iran. These are all states that can partner around their shared fear of Taliban religious extremism and the drug trade.

Nor should the president shy away from establishing the centrality of the U.S. economy in U.S. national security. Saving money in Afghanistan is nothing to run away from, as White House press secretary Jay Carney sought to do last week. "Obviously every decision is made with a mind toward cost," he said, "but this is about U.S. national-security interests, primarily."

Quite the contrary—reducing America's debt is essential to maintaining U.S. military strength and diplomatic power. Obama could save more than \$100 billion a year on the Pentagon budget just by sequestering savings after exiting the Iraq and Afghan wars. That goal is a good reason to start the withdrawal process this July at 30,000 and remove them within a year—and then take most of the remaining forces out by the end of 2013. Whatever happens in Afghanistan now or five years from now won't determine America's future; what happens with America's crushing debt will.

Leslie H. Gelb, a former New York Times columnist and senior government official, is author of Power Rules: How Common Sense Can Rescue American Foreign Policy (HarperCollins 2009), a book that shows how to think about and use power in the 21st century. He is president emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations.