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Article 1.

The American Interest

Can Obama Make Iran Pull In Its Horns?

Walter Russell Mead

June 27, 2014 -- A fiery debate is taking place in the Iranian establishment over whether its regional policies—backing Shi'a and Shi'a-friendly forces like Hezbollah and the Assad and Maliki governments to the hilt in brutal civil wars—is working. According to The Wall Street Journal, Iranian doves are pointing to the recent regional chaos as an argument that Iran has overextended itself. Hardliners, though, probably including the Ayatollah Khamanei, feel that despite difficulties, Iran is fundamentally winning the regional power struggle and see no need to change what works.

From the Iranian perspective, its strategy so far has certainly yielded fruit: Assad is holding onto power in Syria, with help from Hezbollah, and the Maliki government in Iraq is more sectarian and more aligned with Iran—with U.S. influence in that country greatly diminished.

However, as Iran's doves note, these gains have come at a cost. There has been a remarkable consolidation of Sunni sentiment against the Shi'a as Iran and its allies make gains. The disparate Sunni terrorist and tribal groups in the Fertile Crescent have united, for now, under the banner of ISIS, which shook the region and the world by routing Iraq's army and occupying much of the country. Meanwhile, the Saudis and the Gulf States, where there is a great deal of sympathy for ISIS, are engaged in a complicated dance that certainly involves some degree of tacit backing for the anti-Shi'a force. On another front, the Saudis are so alarmed at Iranian advances that they are credibly reported to be cooperating militarily with Israel. Iran's successes, in short, have focused its regional rivals on it as the paramount enemy.

Iran's doves have seized on these points to argue that Tehran should scale back support for Assad and push Maliki toward a more inclusive approach in Iraq. We can't know what is said behind closed doors in Tehran, but they seem to be hammering on three points. First, they see Iran's regional overreach as contributing to Sunni radicalism, unity, and pushback. For instance, they see the recent entry of Hamas into a unity government with the Palestinian Authority as the loss of a strong, radical, but Sunni regional ally. And it doesn't stop there. As Saeed Leylaz, an Iranian analyst cited by the Journal, remarked, "Iran's geopolitical policies have failed. We have lost Hamas, overstretched Hezbollah in Lebanon, and now have al Qaeda spilling from Syria to Iraq."

Iran benefits most, so the doves appear to reason, when the Sunnis are not being driven into an alliance out of fear of Tehran. Iran should therefore look for policies that don't scare its religious adversaries — even at the cost of Tehran's

recognizing limits on its regional ambitions.

Secondly, they see the captain of Team Sunni, Saudi Arabia, as a dangerous adversary with close ties to terror groups, American power, and nuclear Pakistan. Some kind of détente, coo the doves, would allow things to cool down and Iran to retrench.

The third point is economic. Iraq already had two civil conflicts on its hands—the big war in Syria and the sputtering conflict in Lebanon. ISIS has now opened another full scale civil war in Iraq. Hezbollah, Assad and Maliki all need a lot of help to stay in the fight, and given Iran's weak economic foundations, that is a serious issue.

If Iran steps back, say the doves, it can reduce Sunni-Shi'a tension. Without a common Iranian menace to keep them united, the Sunni powers will split, the anti-Shi'a 'holy war' will be less intense, and Iran can move more slowly but more surely towards its longtime goals. Throw in a nuclear deal with the U.S., and the sanctions go away; a richer Iran would be able, at its leisure, to revisit the task of handling the Saudis and their allies.

For the hawks, on the other hand, the key argument appears to be something like the following: yes, the current strategy has costs and yes there are difficulties, but Iran is conquering right now. Assad is stronger than he was. Despite ISIS, or indeed to some degree because of it, Iran's influence in the parts of Iraq that it cares most about is growing. In both nations, Iran has deployed substantial advisors on the ground, and increasingly Iraq as well as Syria is looking like a client government. The Saudis, Iran's hawks can claim, may have more money than Iran, but they are currently committed to propping up Egypt,

propping up rebels in Syria, supporting anti-Shi'a forces in Lebanon, supporting (it is said, and the Iranians presumably believe that the rumors are true) ISIS. They've got the Yemen war on one side, and they can't let Jordan fall. This is a heavy burden, even for them. Iran, say the hawks, can win a war of attrition with the House of Saud.

Elsewhere, while Hezbollah may be having problems, and ISIS is ugly, Iran's hawks reason that the best way to help their friends and hurt their enemies is to avoid clever stratagems with a lot of moving parts and to concentrate instead on the simple task of helping their friends and hurting their enemies. Propping up Assad both helps Hezbollah and hurt ISIS. By working hard to strengthen the Shia in Iraq, Iran ultimately extends its power and can crush ISIS between Baghdad and Damascus.

Most importantly, the Journal piece points to clues that suggest despite the dangers, Iran's Supreme Leader is quietly moving to ensure that Iran doubles down on its current course. Recent press releases by the Fars News Agency, affiliated with Iran's Revolutionary Guard, have played up the Shiite religious obligation to fight in Iraq and shown video of what appears to be a recruitment drive. Meanwhile, Khamenei's recent personnel changes in the highest levels of power seem to indicate a strengthening of the hard line. In a country where the Supreme Leader has the final say in all the most important questions, these signs make it likely that the hawks have the upper hand.

There are several interesting, not to say alarming, considerations emerging for the United States as this process unfolds in Tehran. Most significantly, potential American reactions don't seem play a large role in Iran's strategic calculations—Iranians don't seem

to think that the success or failures of their regional policies have much to do with what the U.S. will or will not do. They are writing Washington off.

Hawks and doves alike, none of the Iranians interviewed in the Journal's saw fit to mention America in their calculations. Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and even the Palestinian Authority enter into their calculations – does DC fall dead last? This is perhaps a snapshot rather than a survey, but it seems in line with the regional views of Washington's recent impotence.

That is not the way we want the mullahs and their friends to be thinking. The more Iran thinks the success or failure of its regional policies and moreover its security from regional enemies at home depends on U.S. actions, the more likely Iran becomes to accept a true "grand bargain" with the U.S. in which Iran accepts both a nuclear compromise and a regional geopolitical compromise.

President Obama is right to want a bargain with Iran, and right, too, that we can't get such a bargain without offering Iran some incentives. The U.S. has a lot to gain from a new relationship with Tehran: the end of Iran's nuclear program, a framework for political stability in the Middle East, and a U.S.-Iran detente. And the administration also understands that it will be easier to get that kind of bargain if the doves start winning more policy arguments in Tehran.

Unfortunately, American policy hasn't been helping. The White House seems to have hoped that a quiet stance on the regional issues would give the doves new power in Tehran by removing the perception of American enmity and threat. The assumption

here is that Iran is in a defensive crouch and that it is truculent because it is fearful. Therefore, if American becomes more soothing, Iran will be mollified, the hardliners will lose power, and doves will be able to strike a bargain with the U.S. in a deal that would be an immense boost to a President whose foreign policy hasn't looked very good lately.

But the soothing strategy has a downside: instead of empowering the doves it can empower the hawks. If Iran isn't worried about American reaction (military strikes in the event nuclear talks break down, heavy support for the Sunnis in the regional war, tighter sanctions), then hawks have a strong argument for risk taking and a dynamic forward strategy. If the U.S. is trying to disengage, the hawks can argue, then Iran faces only relatively weak regional rivals, and this is an excellent time to march ahead.

The shock of the ISIS sweep across Iraq has clearly been felt at the White House; requesting \$500 million for non-ISIS rebels in Syria and sending U.S. advisors back to Baghdad are clear signs of that. Let's hope these two steps indicate that the White House understands that being "nice" to Iran is actually not the way to empower Tehran's doves. Rather, signs that Washington is as alarmed as the Sunnis by Iran's surge and that, like the Sunnis, it is looking for ways to change the balance of forces in the region would give the doves some strong new arguments — and give pause to some of the more rational hawks.

Taking a tough stance across the region against Iran's ambitions probably looks to some of the President's key advisors as a dangerous move that would heighten tensions in the Muslim world, risk greater U.S. military involvement at a time when that

is almost suicidally unpopular in the U.S., and reduce the chances of a nuclear deal and détente, which remain the holy grail of Obama's Middle East policy. Given how often their Middle East calculations haven't worked, these advisors should at least be open to the possibility that exactly the opposite is true: that pivoting away from deep engagement in the region doesn't conciliate Iran but encourages Iran's hawks, chief among whom, it would appear, is the Supreme Leader.

Americans characteristically think of their opponents more like American lawyers than like seasoned players in the real world game of thrones. We think that displays of good faith and peaceful intent will encourage others to reciprocate in kind. Those instincts aren't always wrong, and with some countries and in some situations they work very well. But the Middle East often works on a different kind of logic; strength united with willpower in the service of achievable goals gets more points than professions of friendship and elaborate displays of pacific intent.

When it comes to Iran, President Obama has and has long had the right goal. But as he and his close advisors stare at the wreckage of Iraq and of dire alternatives they now face, it's time to take another look at the strategy for getting Iran to say 'yes'. A little more tough and a little less love might get us closer to the kind of understanding that could help this tormented region cool down.

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Wall Street Journal

The Caliphate Rises

Editorial

June 27, 2014 -- The jihadists of the Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham (ISIS) continue to consolidate their grip on Sunni Iraq. They control most major cities, they took over the border crossings with Jordan this week, and now they're re-opening banks and government offices and establishing political control.

Welcome to the new Middle East caliphate, a state whose leader is considered the religious and political successor to the prophet Mohammed and is thus sovereign over all Muslims. The last time a caliphate was based in Baghdad was 1258, the year it was conquered by the ravaging Mongols. Now the jihadists aim to do the ravaging, and it isn't clear that the Obama Administration has a plan to depose them.

It's important to understand how large a setback for American interests and security this is. Establishing a caliphate in the Middle East was the main political project of Osama bin Laden's life. Current al Qaeda leader Ayman al Zawahiri once said a new caliphate would signal a turning of world history "against the empire of the United States and the world's Jewish government."

In 2005, a Jordanian journalist named Fouad Hussein wrote a

book on al Qaeda's "second generation," which focused on the thinking of terrorist Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who was killed by U.S. forces in 2006. The book described a seven-phase plan, beginning with an "awakening" of Islamic consciousness with the September 11 attacks. Among other predictions, it foresaw an effort to "clear plans to partition Syria, Lebanon and Jordan into sectarian statelets to reshape the region." In phase four, timed to happen between 2010 and 2013, the Arab world's secular regimes would be toppled.

And then? Phase five would see the "declaration of the caliphate or Islamic state" sometime between 2013 and 2016. This was to be followed by "total war," or "the beginning of the confrontation between faith and disbelief, which would begin in earnest after the establishment of the Islamic caliphate."

None of this means that events over the past decade have been dictated by an al Qaeda master plan. But you might forgive a legion of current or would-be jihadists for thinking as much. Al Qaeda is a movement driven by a combination of fantasy and fanaticism. Events that appear to corroborate the former will inevitably fuel the latter.

The plan of phases should also serve as warning that ISIS will not be content running a shambolic rump state in the desert. The group now sits on a large arsenal of weapons along with a horde of cash and gold bullion, potentially making ISIS the world's deadliest and richest terror organization. Though there are conflicting reports on whether ISIS has captured Iraq's largest oil refinery at Baiji, ISIS clearly intends to seize economic assets to operate them.

With oil and tax revenue, ISIS can dispense services and finance a jihadist army. The Journal reported this week on an ISIS recruitment video that shows armed militants speaking with British and Australian accents and extolling the virtues of jihad in Syria and Iraq. ISIS now controls territory from western Syria to the suburbs of Baghdad. Even if it doesn't try to take the Iraqi capital, it can reinforce existing positions and make any counterattack by Iraq's army costly and dangerous.

A jihadist state will also put more pressure on America's allies in Jordan who are already under siege by refugees from Syria. The same goes for the Kurds in northern Iraq, though the Kurdish peshmerga are professional fighters who ISIS would be wary of challenging now. But as the years go on, the oil in Kirkuk would be a tempting ISIS target.

One question is whether ISIS has learned from its failed reign of terror in Anbar province in 2005 and 2006, when it alienated local Sunni sheiks through sheer brutality and drove them into an alliance with the U.S. military. From Afghanistan to Egypt to Algeria, the Islamists' political Achilles' heel has always been their penchant to go too far. But it would be reckless for the Iraqi government or Obama Administration to count on them self-destructing one more time.

Then again, it isn't clear President Obama has any strategy at all. In his comments last week, we heard a lot about the need for political reform in Baghdad, along with his trademark admonition to "ask hard questions before we take action abroad, particularly military action." At no point did the President speak of "defeating" ISIS as a U.S. goal.

Perhaps Mr. Obama imagines there is no point in playing "Whac-A-Mole," as he put it, "wherever these terrorist organizations may pop up." But the core contention of all jihadist groups is that supposed superpowers like the U.S. always weary of a long fight, and that powerful weapons are of no use in timid hands.

Perhaps the government in Baghdad will pull together politically and militarily to halt ISIS and take back the cities it so swiftly seized. But hoping to get lucky is not a strategy. Meantime, brush up on your Islamic history and terminology. A mere 13 years after the U.S. chased al Qaeda and the Taliban from Afghanistan, and a mere three years after bin Laden's death, the terror master's political project is returning to life on President Obama's watch.

Article 3.

Los Angeles Times

Why it's way too soon to give up on the Arab Spring

Juan Cole

28 June -- Three and a half years ago, the world was riveted by massive crowds of youths mobilizing in Cairo's Tahrir Square to demand an end to Egypt's dreary police state. We watched transfixed as a movement first ignited in Tunisia spread from one part of Egypt to another, and then from country to country

across the region. Before it was over, four presidents-for-life had been toppled and the region's remaining dictators were unsettled. The young Arabs who made the recent revolutions are ... distinctive: substantially more urban, literate, media-savvy and wired than their parents and grandparents. - Some 42 months later, in most of the Middle East and North Africa, the bright hopes for more personal liberties and an end to political and economic stagnation championed by those young people have been dashed. Instead, some Arab countries have seen counterrevolutions, while others are engulfed in internecine conflicts and civil wars, creating Mad Max-like scenes of postapocalyptic horror. But keep one thing in mind: The rebellions of the last three years were led by Arab millennials, by young people who have decades left to come into their own. Don't count them out yet.

Given the short span of time since Tahrir Square, it is far too soon to predict where these massive movements will end. During the "Prague Spring" of 1968, let's remember, a young dissident playwright, Vaclav Havel, took to the airwaves on Radio Free Czechoslovakia and made a name for himself as Soviet tanks approached. But then, after a Russian invasion crushed the uprising, Havel had to seek work in a brewery, forbidden to stage his plays. That wasn't the end of the story, however. Two decades later, after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, Havel became the first president of the Czech Republic.

Or consider the French Revolution: Three and a half years after the storming of the Bastille, the country was facing a pro-royalist uprising in the Vendee, south of the Loire Valley, a conflict that ultimately left more than 100,000 (and possibly as many as 450,000) people dead. And let's remember that a decade

passed between the Boston Tea Party and the American victory in the Revolutionary War. There are, of course, plenty of reasons for pessimism in the short- and perhaps even medium-term in the Middle East. But when it comes to youth revolutions, it's a pretty good bet that most of their truest accomplishments will come decades later. The young Arabs who made the recent revolutions are, in fact, distinctive: substantially more urban, literate, media-savvy and wired than their parents and grandparents. They are also somewhat less religiously observant, though still deeply polarized between nationalists and devotees of political Islam. And keep in mind that the median age of the 370 million Arabs on this planet is only 24, about half that of graying Japan or Germany. While India and Indonesia also have big youth populations, Arab youth suffer disproportionately from the low rates of investment in their countries and staggeringly high unemployment rates. They are, that is, primed for action. Analysts have tended to focus on the politics of the Arab youth revolutions and so have missed the more important, longer-term story of a generational shift in values, attitudes and mobilizing tactics. The youth movements were, in part, intended to provoke the holding of genuine, transparent elections, and yet the millennials were too young to stand for office when they happened. This ensured that actual politics would remain dominated by older Arab baby boomers, many of whom are far more interested in political Islam or praetorian authoritarianism. The first wave of writing about the revolutions of 2011 discounted or ignored religion because the youth movements were predominantly secular and either liberal or leftist in approach. When those rebellions provoked elections in which Muslim fundamentalists did well, a second round of books lamented a supposed "Islamic Winter."

Yet, in Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood has been ousted (albeit through a reassertion of power by the military). In Libya, Muslim fundamentalist candidates could not get a majority in parliament in 2012. Even in Tunisia, where the religious right formed the first postrevolution government, it was able to rule only in coalition with secularists and leftists. As they wait their time, many of the millennial activists who briefly turned the Arab world upside down and provoked so many changes are putting their energies into nongovernmental organizations, thousands of which have flowered, barely noticed. Others continue to coordinate with labor unions to promote the welfare of the working classes. In this way, they are learning valuable organizational skills that — count on it — will one day be applied to politics. Their dislike of nepotism, narrow cliques and ethnic or sectarian rule has already had a lasting effect on the politics of the Arab world. And two or three decades from now, the twentysomethings of Tahrir Square and the Casbah in Tunis and Martyrs' Square in Tripoli will, like the Havels of the Middle East, come to power as politicians.

We haven't heard the last of the Middle East's millennial generation.

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A strategic stopover

Hussein Haridy

25 June 2014 -- It is usually common for heads of states to make stopovers while flying from one destination to another.

Normally, the places chosen for such stopovers are friendly countries and they last for a couple of hours, the time for refuelling or a quick meeting with the heads of states or governments concerned. In most cases, these stopovers are called technical stopovers. In short, they do not constitute either an official visit or a working visit.

On 20 June 2014 this rule was broken.

On his way back from Morocco, where he was spending a vacation, to Riyadh, the Custodian of the Holy Places, King Abdullah Ben Abdel-Aziz of Saudi Arabia, made a stopover in Cairo International Airport where he met the newly elected Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi. The Saudi king was the first head of state to pay an “official visit” to Cairo after the swearing in of the Egyptian president. The Saudi royal house issued a statement on 20 June in which it announced that the Saudi king would pay an official visit to Egypt.

The meeting between the two took place on the royal plane, which took many by surprise. I received some queries from journalists about how convenient it was, from a protocol point of view, to hold official talks between a visiting head of state and the president of the host government on the plane of the former. Of course, it is not customary but the fact that the

Egyptian president went up the Saudi royal plane is, in itself, a symbol of how developed and strong Egyptian-Saudi relations have become after political developments in post-June Egypt. And this renewed alliance between the two strongest Arab powers grabbed headlines in the Arab world. The strategic significance of the Cairo visit heralds a new chapter in Arab and regional politics.

On the bilateral level, the visit will give a very strong boost to relations between the two countries in almost all fields. The Saudi king proposed earlier this month, on the occasion of the election of the Egyptian president, a donors' conference to help the Egyptian economy. The proposal definitely reflects Saudi preoccupation with the impact of the critical economic situation in Egypt, after three years of political upheaval, on the stability and security of the country and the success of the new government in gaining added legitimacy. The Saudis, as well as other Gulf countries, like the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, realise full well that the Egyptian economy could prove to be the Achilles heels of the new political set up in Cairo.

According to press reports, the response to the proposal has been favourable, and although no date has been fixed yet for convening the conference, the guess is that it could take place before year's end. Undoubtedly, this conference in itself will be a vote of confidence in the new Egyptian government, and provided the new Egyptian cabinet submits a well-detailed economic plan, it would give a great push for the struggling economy. The political weight and financial clout of Saudi Arabia will be of great value and relevance for Egypt in this conference. If the conference takes place, it will be a golden chance for the Egyptian government to secure international and

Gulf backing for putting the Egyptian economy back on track. There is no denying that Saudi support is extremely crucial in this respect. The visit of King Abdullah to Cairo last Friday incarnates such support.

The talks between the two heads of state came in a widely changing regional landscape. Ten days before the Egyptian-Saudi meeting, Iraq, the Middle East and the whole world was jolted by the fall of Mosul, the second largest Iraqi city, to the group known as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The threat of the territorial disintegration of Iraq and Syria has become real for the world. The Arab response to this unprecedented tragedy has been disappointingly slow. Hopefully, the Egyptian-Saudi talks last Friday could lay the foundation for a new Arab policy, not only towards the unfolding events in Iraq, but also Syria and Libya.

The positions of the two countries on all these issues are not identical, but the threats posed by transnational mobility of terrorist organisations affiliated to Al-Qaeda, or ISIS, compel Egypt and Saudi Arabia to lead the Arab world with the objective of reshaping solutions to Arab crises. The last three years and a half have proven disastrous to two major Arab powers — namely, Syria and Iraq. The question today is not about democracy or human rights, however important they are on the theoretical level, but rather the territorial integrity and sovereignty of these two pillars of stability in the Levant and the Gulf region.

One of the major differences in the positions of Egypt and Saudi Arabia in this respect is how to perceive and deal with Iran in the years to come, especially if a final agreement on the Iranian

nuclear programme is signed next month. Such an accord would open the way for the reintegration of Iran both in the international system but also in the Middle East and the Gulf through the expected normalisation of relations between Iran and the West, particularly the United States. Already, Washington has been open to the idea of cooperating with Tehran in stopping the advance of ISIS towards the Iraqi capital.

Egyptian diplomacy should try hard to prevent a costly and fruitless showdown between Shiites and Sunnis across the Levant and the Gulf. A case in point, Moqtada Al-Sadr, the well-known Shiite cleric who had fought American forces in Iraq before the American withdrawal in 2011, called on his Mahdy Army to parade in the streets of the Iraqi capital on Saturday, 21 June. Watching them on TV screens, I came away with the impression, based on my military experience as a former army officer, that they are much better trained than the volunteers that headed for a one day training to face the better-trained and battle-hardened ISIS.

I am afraid that the outbreak of a possible confrontation between Sunnis and Shiites would make Arab crises intractable.

Another question that needs more coordination between the Egyptian and Saudi positions is the situation in Syria. It is an open secret that the Saudis have been funding and supporting armed groups to topple the Assad regime. Taking into consideration the fast-changing situation on the ground in Iraq, and the resilience of the Syrian government, I think the time has come to reconsider priorities in Syria. In other words, I doubt very much that bringing down the Syrian regime has any strategic significance today either for Saudi Arabia or for other

Arab powers who have worked tirelessly for the overthrow of the present government in Damascus.

Things have changed. We cannot continue business as usual, for what is at stake is no less than the idea of the nation-state in the Arab world. It is no surprise that upon taking Mosul, ISIS wrote on its website, “Bye, Bye, Sykes-Picot.” In other words, they are out to bring down not only the Syrian and Iraqi regimes but also the Arab system itself. President Bashar Al-Assad had said, in an interview with a Lebanese paper two weeks ago, that Damascus has received messages from Western governments lately.

The Saudi royal visit to Egypt is a clear message to international and regional powers that Egypt does not stand alone, that there is a more powerful configuration of forces in the Middle East and the Arab world engineered around the Cairo-Riyadh axis. Axis, in this respect, should not be taken to mean that this new configuration of forces is directed towards other powers, whether within the region or without, but rather a configuration aimed at defending Egypt in the first place, and the Arab system as a whole in consequence, in face of threats of disintegration amid the onslaught of terror and mayhem under the meaningless slogan of resuscitating a mythical Islamic caliphate.

The visit of King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia to Egypt augurs well not only for the future of bilateral relations between Egypt and Saudi Arabia, but also for the Arab world and Muslim countries. The new alliance between the two Arab heavyweights should encourage forces of moderation across Arab and Muslim countries and help in containing forces of extremism and terrorism, and ultimately defeating them.

The writer is former assistant to the foreign minister.

Article 5.

The Hoover Institution

Obama's World Disorder

Victor Davis Hanson

June 28, 2014 -- Amid all the talk of the isolationism that supposedly characterizes the Obama administration's foreign policy, we forget that since World War II, the global order has largely been determined by U.S. engagement. The historically rare state of prosperity and peace that defined the postwar world were due to past U.S. vigilance and sacrifice.

Germany in the last 150 years has been at the center of three European wars, winning one, losing another, and destroying much of Europe and itself in the third. Yet present-day Germany has the largest economy in Europe and the fourth largest in the world. It is a global leader in high technology and industrial craftsmanship. For seventy years Germany, even after its second historic unification in 1989, has not translated such economic preeminence into military power, much less aggression. In fact, the strategic status quo of postwar Europe-with Britain and France, and their relatively smaller and weaker economies, as the continent's two sole nuclear powers-remains mostly

unquestioned.

That strange fact is due almost entirely to the U.S.-led NATO's determination to protect the Eastern flank of Europe from potential enemies, to reassure Germany that it need not rearm to enjoy pan-European influence, and to quietly support the European nuclear monopolies of Britain and France. While the U.S. has always talked up the American-inspired United Nations, its first allegiance has always been to assure liberal democratic states in Europe of unshakeable American support. Any weakening of the latter might send Europe back into the tumultuous twentieth century.

A similar paradox exists in Asia. Pakistan and North Korea are two of the weakest economies and most unstable political systems in the region. Yet both nations are nuclear—despite rather than because of U.S.-led efforts at nonproliferation. In comparison, by any logical measure, far wealthier and more sophisticated states like Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Australia, and perhaps the Philippines should all be nuclear, given their expertise, dangerous locales, and the looming shadows of three proud, and sometime aggressive nations—China, India, and Russia—in their midst. Yet none have. That fact too is largely because of American security guarantees.

Why, then, has the Obama administration sought to negotiate nuclear arms reduction agreements solely with the Russians? The latter does not have any responsibilities resembling the host of American dependents and clients in Asia and Europe that could become nuclear, but choose not to, only because of U.S. guarantees of their strategic security.

Economically successful but non-nuclear Asian nations claim a portion of the U.S. deterrent force as critical to their own survival. Any failure to reassure our Asian and Pacific partners that our own nuclear forces are pledged to their survival would lead to a sizable increase in the world's nuclear family.

In addition to protecting postwar Europe and the Pacific, the United States has traditionally sided with historically persecuted and vulnerable peoples, who, in the calculations of realpolitik, might not otherwise warrant such staunch friendship. U.S. security guarantees to Israel-a mere 7 million people, until recently without oil reserves, and surrounded by a host of more numerous and oil-wealthy enemies-for a half-century have assured the viability of the Jewish state.

For all the present acrimony over the Iraq War, we forget that one dividend was the emergence of a semi-autonomous and largely constitutional Kurdistan of some 7 million people, whose recent tragic history had been one of ethnic cleansing, gassing, and slaughter. Only prior liberation by and current support from America keep viable the small landlocked province.

The same is largely true of Taiwan. While the current security guarantees accorded Taiwan by the U.S. are nebulous, even such uncertainty for now continues to keep Taiwan autonomous amid constant Chinese pressure. Also consider tiny Greece, a country that has been alternately friendly and hostile to the United States. But its long unhappy history is a testament to the dangerous neighborhood of this country of 12 million inhabitants: the turmoil of the Arab spring is to its south, an ascendant Islamist and neo-Ottoman Turkey are to the east, and the ethnic powder keg in the Balkans lie to the North, capped by

understandably unsympathetic European Union creditors. Only Greece's NATO membership-a euphemism for an omnipresent American 6th fleet-has offered the Greek people both security and the opportunity to chafe at its dependence on U.S. arms.

In fact, there are a host of tiny moderate nations, which, while not formally allied with the U.S., count on American friendship in extremis, from Jordan and Kuwait to Chile and Colombia. Any American recessional puts at risk all such vulnerable states. The Obama administration's policy of forcing concessions from the Israelis, pulling out all constabulary troops from an unstable postwar Iraq, and cozying up to an increasingly absolutist and Islamist Turkey makes no sense.

Then there is the rogue's gallery. Just as Rome once put down nationalists, insurrectionists, and challengers of the Pax Romana, such as Ariovistus, Boudicca, Cleopatra, Jugurtha, Mithridates, Vercingetorix, and Zenobia, so too the United States has gone after state and non-state enemies of the postwar system, both during and after the Cold War. Sometimes authoritarians sent their armies across national borders or were guilty of genocide; at other times, unhinged nation-states and free-lancing zealots sponsored or committed acts of international terrorism. In response, the U.S.-sometimes successfully, sometimes not so much-has gone to war or at least gone after the likes of Moammar Gaddafi, Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden, Slobodan Milosevic, Ho Chi Minh, Manuel Noriega, Kim Il-sung, and the Taliban. Like it or not, only the United States can prevent the theocracy in Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, the Assad dictatorship from gassing its own people, or al Qaeda from staging another 9/11 attack.

The United States offered resistance to illiberal and autocratic regional powers that have at time challenged the protocols of the postwar order. And that pushback has allowed weaker nations—such as Poland or the Baltic States—to escape the orbit of post-Soviet Russia, while in the Pacific ensuring that an Australia, New Zealand, or the Philippines is not bullied into subservience by China.

This strange postwar world ushered in the greatest advancement in prosperity amid the general absence of a cataclysmic world conflagration or continental war since the dawn of civilization. For the first time since the rise of the Greek city-state, most nations have been able both to prosper and to assume that their boundaries were inviolate and their populations mostly free from attack. A system of international communications, travel, commerce, and trade is predicated on the assumption that pirates cannot seize cargo ships, terrorists cannot hijack planes, and rogue nations cannot let off atomic bombs without a U.S. led coalition to stop them from threatening the international order.

For the U.S. to continue this exceptional role of preserving the postwar system in times of economic weakness and spiritual exhaustion, it is critical for the Obama administration to articulate to the American people exactly what the United States has accomplished, how the postwar order arose, and what precisely are the benefits that justify such enormous sacrifices in blood and treasure.

Unfortunately, it has not offered systematic defense of the world order it inherited. For all the grand talk of working with the United Nations, the Obama administration ignored it in Syria, vastly exceeded its no-fly-zone and humanitarian aid resolutions

in Libya, and misled it when it asserted to the General Assembly that a video-maker had prompted the violence against U.S. facilities in Benghazi. Moreover, Obama's foreign policy team has serially faulted the prior administration as unilateral, forgetting that it obtained UN resolutions to retaliate in Afghanistan, tried desperately to obtain them for the Iraq invasion, and then assembled a large and diverse group of allies.

The Obama administration's reset with Russia paid no attention to our Eastern European friends, who were eager to work with America on missile defense and integration within the West. It also ignored that reset essentially undid the punishments accorded Vladimir Putin for his 2008 invasion of Georgia. Meanwhile, China is angry and confused that the U.S. suddenly warns it to behave in the Pacific, after turning a blind eye for five years as it bullied most of its neighbors.

After assembling a coalition to beef up sanctions against Iran, the U.S. eased them to begin new negotiations with the theocracy-without prior consultation with our allies. The Obama administration has gone after al Qaeda through drone attacks, but such terrorists have spread throughout the Mideast in the wake of U.S. retrenchment and a misguided and euphemistic outreach to radical Islam.

No one in Latin America knows to what degree, if any, the U.S. opposes the creeping spread of authoritarian Marxist governments. No one in the Middle East knows quite what the evolving American position is on Iranian nuclear proliferation. And no one quite knows whether the United States is distancing itself from Israel while gravitating toward its enemies.

The Obama administration declares climate change the chief global threat. That new inanimate target is welcome news to aggressive nations that had once feared that their own reckless behavior might have been so singled out.

Americans did not fully appreciate the costly postwar global order that the United States had established over the last seventy years. Maybe they will start to as they witness it vanish.

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