
From: Office of Terje Rod-Larsen <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday, November 9, 2012 10:27 PM
Subject: November 9 update

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Article 1.

Foreign Affairs

Why the U.S.-Israeli Alliance Is Good for America

Michael Eisenstadt and David Pollock

November 7, 2012 -- At the final presidential debate of the 2012 campaign season, President Barack Obama and Governor Mitt Romney mentioned Israel some 30 times, more than any other country except Iran. Both candidates called the Jewish state "a true friend," pledging to stand with it through thick and thin. Some political commentators criticized these effusive declarations of support as pandering, suggesting that the candidates were simply going after Jewish and pro-Israel votes.

But if support for Israel is indeed such a political winner, then it's at least in part because the voters know best. The U.S.-Israeli alliance now contributes more than ever to American security, as bilateral cooperation to deal with both military and nonmilitary challenges has grown in recent years. The relationship may not be symmetrical; the United States has provided Israel with indispensable diplomatic, economic, and military support totaling more than \$115 billion since 1949. But it is a two-way partnership whose benefits to the United States have been substantial. The other, less tangible costs of the U.S.-Israeli alliance -- mainly, damage to Washington's reputation in Arab and Muslim countries, a problem also caused by American interventions and decades of U.S. support for authoritarian leaders in the Middle East -- pale in comparison with the economic, military, and political gains it affords Washington.

U.S.-Israeli security cooperation dates back to heights of the Cold War, when the Jewish state came to be seen in Washington as a bulwark against Soviet influence in the Middle East and a counter to Arab nationalism. Although the world has changed since then, the strategic logic for the U.S.-Israeli alliance has not. Israel remains a counterweight against radical forces in the Middle East, including political Islam and violent extremism. It has also prevented the further proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the region by thwarting Iraq and Syria's nuclear programs.

Israel continues to help the United States deal with traditional security threats. The two countries share intelligence on terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and Middle Eastern politics. Israel's military experiences have shaped the United States' approach to counterterrorism and homeland security. The two governments work together to develop sophisticated military technology, such as the David's Sling counter-rocket and Arrow missile defense systems, which may soon be ready for export to other U.S. allies. Israel has also emerged as an important niche defense supplier to the U.S. military, with sales growing from \$500 million per year before September 11 to \$1.1 billion in 2006, due to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Israel's military research and development complex has pioneered many cutting-edge technologies that are transforming the face of modern war, including cyberweapons, unmanned vehicles (such as land robots and aerial drones), sensors and electronic warfare systems, and advanced defenses for military vehicles.

The U.S.-Israeli alliance has paved the way for the countries to cooperate on far more than just traditional security issues. In part because of the long-standing political and security relationship between the United States and Israel, most Israelis know the United States and harbor positive feelings toward it. Israeli companies looking for a global market for their products have often viewed their American counterparts as partners of choice. So today, Israeli civilian technological innovations are helping the United States maintain its economic competitiveness, promote sustainable development, and address a range of non-military security challenges.

Dozens of leading U.S. companies have set up technology incubators in Israel to take advantage of the country's penchant for new ideas, which is why Bill Gates observed in 2006 that the "innovation going on in Israel is critical to the future of the technology business." Likewise, Israeli high-tech firms often turn to U.S. companies as partners for joint production and marketing opportunities in the United States and elsewhere, creating tens of thousands of American jobs. And although Israelis make up just three percent of the population of the Middle East, in 2011 Israel was the destination of 25 percent of all U.S. exports to the region, having recently eclipsed Saudi Arabia as the top market there for American products.

U.S. companies' substantial cooperation with Israel on information technology has been crucial to Silicon Valley's success. At Intel's research and development centers in Israel, engineers have designed many of the company's most successful microprocessors, accounting for some 40 percent of the firm's revenues last year. If you've made a secure financial transaction on the Internet, sent an instant message, or bought something using PayPal, you can thank Israeli IT researchers.

Israeli innovators have also come up with novel solutions to the water and food security challenges posed by population growth, climate change, and economic development. By necessity, given the geography of the Middle East, Israel is a world leader in water conservation and management and high-tech agriculture. Israel recycles more than eighty percent of its wastewater -- the highest level in the world -- and has pioneered widely used techniques of conserving or purifying water, including drip irrigation and reverse osmosis desalination. And a number of Israeli companies are leaders in the development of renewable energy sources; BrightSource Industries, for example, is building a solar power plant in California using Israeli technology that will double the amount of solar thermal electricity produced in America. These innovations, bolstered by the substantial American investment in Israel, contribute to long-term U.S. domestic and foreign policy objectives relating to sustainable development.

To be sure, the alliance with Israel has not been without risks or costs for Washington. The 1973 War between Israel and its neighbors brought America to the brink of conflict with the Soviet Union and prompted an Arab embargo on oil exports to the United States. Following the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the Reagan administration dispatched U.S. marines to help stabilize the country, which ultimately resulted in costly attacks on American diplomats and military personnel there. And U.S. diplomatic and military support for Israel has reinforced negative attitudes toward the United States in many Arab and predominantly Muslim countries.

But these costs should not be overstated. Beyond leading to largely symbolic UN votes against U.S. positions, Washington's support for Israel has hardly damaged the United States' ties with its Arab and Muslim allies. Standing with Israel certainly has not hobbled U.S. policy toward the region as much as the war in Iraq or Washington's backing of autocratic Arab regimes. Meanwhile, no Arab ally of the United States has ever, as a result of its pro-Israel posture, refused to cooperate with Washington on counterterrorism or denied its requests for access, basing, or overflight rights.

In fact, the U.S.-Israeli alliance has at times helped spur closer U.S.-Arab relations, on the theory that only the United States could convince Israel to make concessions in negotiations; this was part of the logic behind Egypt's shift away from the Soviet Union and toward the United States in the 1970s. And even during the past decade of close U.S.-Israeli cooperation, and despite an impasse in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, Arab ties with the United States have largely flourished: bilateral trade and investment are booming as U.S. exports to the Middle East in 2011 reached an all-time high of \$50 billion. Defense cooperation is as close as ever, indicated by the several multi-billion-dollar arms deals that Washington has struck with Gulf allies in recent years. Moreover, several states, including Egypt and Jordan, along with the Palestinian Authority, share intelligence with Israel and at various times have worked behind the scenes to enlist Israel as an intermediary with Washington. This has been the case even with Egypt's post-revolutionary government. All this underscores the fact that self-interest, not ideology, is the primary driver of the Arab states' relations with Washington.

Despite the ties that continue to bind the United States and some Arab countries, the last two years of upheaval have brought turmoil to many of Washington's traditional allies in the region. At a time of great uncertainty, particularly as

tensions with Iran mount, the United States is even more likely to depend on its somewhat stable nondemocratic allies, such as Saudi Arabia, and its stable democratic allies, such as Israel and Turkey, to secure its interests in the region. If anything, recent events have reinforced the logic underpinning U.S.-Israeli strategic cooperation.

The benefits to the United States of its relationship with Israel belie the argument that the alliance is based solely on the two countries' shared democratic values, on the popularity of Israel in American politics, or on the elusive pursuit of progress in the peace process. It is a relationship based on tangible interests -- and will remain so for the foreseeable future.

It isn't always easy being Israel's ally (and Israeli actions don't always make it easy). The country faces many challenges, including the unresolved conflict with the Palestinians, internal socioeconomic gaps, voices around the world that deny its right to exist, and now Iran's nuclear program. Israel has made uneven progress toward addressing these issues and needs to do more to remain an attractive partner for the United States. But its past successes in incorporating huge numbers of immigrants, bridging deep social divides, and showing remarkable resilience in the face of war and terrorism provide reason to believe that Washington can continue to count on its closest partner in the Middle East, and will continue to benefit from its alliance with the Jewish state.

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Article 2.

Guardian

Jordan: threatened by the drama next door

David Hirst <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/profile/davidhirst>>

8 November 2012 Wissam Hassan, the Lebanese intelligence chief, and the sharpening of tensions it produced, was the most recent, dramatic illustration of it. Turkey's far-reaching support for the Syrian opposition has bred retaliation from President Assad in the form of renewed support for the PKK, the separatist Kurdish militants, who are on the warpath again. As for Iraq, it becomes ever clearer that the "Syrian crisis" -- a full-scale civil war -- and its own "crisis" -- involving endemic tensions among Kurds, Sunnis and Shiites that fall short of that but constantly seem to threaten it -- are intimately bound up with each other. But is a fourth neighbour, Jordan, going the same way? Perhaps the most artificial of the region's western-created states, surrounded by much larger, stronger or richer ones, it was always peculiarly exposed to influences from beyond its borders. "Can Jordan survive?" was once a regular headline in western newspapers.

Yet, to begin with, Jordan weathered the upheaval that is the Arab spring with relative ease. The country, presided over by the Hashemite monarchy, was a typical Arab autocracy, with some of its typical flaws -- not least corruption and cronyism -- yet never in the same degenerate league as the republics, born of those "revolutions", of which Syria's was one of the worst. King Abdullah, like his father Hussein, retained some real legitimacy in his people's eyes. True, the

people took to the streets, but, unlike elsewhere, their rallyin= cry was never "the people want the downfall of the regime"; rat=er, they wanted its "reform".

Nor does Jordan suf=er from those sectarian antagonisms that have disfigured what, in Syria, b=gan as a popular, peaceful movement for freedom and democracy. It has no K=rds; it is almost uniformly Sunni. Most of its people favour the Syrian rebels; but the regime itself has sou=ht "neutral" ground between the two sides, fearing reprisals fro= one or the other if it didn't. But events of the past two weeks show just=how serious Jordan's exposure to the drama next door could become. These include the first death of a Jordanian soldier http://www.msnb=.msn.com/id/49501704/ns/world_news-mideast_n_africa/t/jordanian-soldier-ki=led-clash-syria-bound-militants/ along the Syrian-Jordanian border; clashes=between the army and groups of jihadists seeking to cross it; and the unma=king of an alleged al-Qaida plot and the arrest of 11 men – all Jordania=s – planning multiple bomb and mortar attacks on high-profile targets in Amman. The noted Jordanian columnist Ur=yb al-Rintawi recalled the 2005 bombings that killed 60 people in three Am=an hotels. These were staged by the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian= from his base in Anbar – the western, exclusively Sunni province of Iraq – then a virtual fief of al-Qaida. Fo= Jordan, Rintawi said, Syria now risked becoming "Anbar 2" – bu= an "Anbar" with only 100km of populated territory between it an= Jordan's capital, rather than 1,000km of empty desert away.

Disturbing, of cour=e. Yet terrorism on its own never really works; it requires the "righ=" context to be effective. And, in the final analysis, it is on Jorda='s basic political, social and economic health that its ability to resist the Syrian contagion depends. And Jordan's heal=h is, in fact, looking increasingly poor. The relationship between ruler a=d ruled is deteriorating, as the latter intensify their pressures for refo=ms and the former persists in efforts to dilute or block them altogether.

On the constitution=l front, King Abdullah has made what are seen as minor, cosmetic changes t=at do little to transfer ultimate authority from the palace to parliament =nd the people.

He also insists on =reserving an electoral law that favours the Transjordanian segment of the =opulation – the minority from which the monarchy traditionally derived i=s support – at the expense of the urban one. That penalises the numerically larger, better educated, economically =ore productive segment, the Palestinians. They have long considered themse=ves second-class citizens and, if things got bad, this faultline could be =s dangerous as those sectarian and ethnic ones now playing havoc in neighbouring countries.

The law also disadv=ntages the Muslim Brotherhood, Jordan's most powerful political party, who=e support is strongest in urban areas and especially among the Palestinian=. It now seems headed for a major confrontation with the regime over parliamentary elections due at the end of the year. I=, as threatened, it boycotts these, that will produce a parliament with no=real legitimacy, making a mockery of Abdullah's reformist pretensions.

Then there are the =alafis. Some of Jordan's have gone to Syria to fight the heretic Alawite r=gime, now a prime target for Sunni jihadists everywhere. After at first se=ming to turn a blind eye to this, Jordan is now seeking to prevent it, for it threatens to boomerang against itself= As the alleged al-Qaida plot shows, for some Jordanian Salafis jihad in S=ria is merely a preparation before returning home to take on their own reg=me which – orthodox Sunni though it is – is impious on other grounds.

Whatever the outcom= of the Syrian civil war, Jordan's own reform-related troubles are now suc= that it might make little difference whether Assad survives or falls. For=Abdullah both alternatives look bad. If Assad survives, with at least the perceived connivance of Jordan, that =ill increase the hostility of Jordan's Islamist-led opposition towards the=throne. If he falls, that will greatly strengthen them, because they will =ave the full support of the new order – doubtless heavily Islamist – that will emerge in Assad's place= In either case the more stubbornly the king resists the clamour for =eaningful reform, the more the opposition will be inclined to go the whole=hog and raise the slogan: "The people want the downfall of the regime."

Article 3.<=p>

Egypt divided= a reading into a crisscrossed map

Hani Shukrallah

8 Nov 2012 -- Triumphant revolutions tend to unite the majority of the population. Not so stalled revolutions. Nearly two years after the great 18-day popular uprising, Egypt is a deeply divided nation

The Egyptian revolution blew the top off a deeply divided society. It did much more, as its creators recreated themselves, the few thousands became hundreds of thousands and a nation in which political space had all but withered away, found itself politicized in ways and to such a degree, unprecedented for generations, possibly since the birth of politics on the banks of the Nile in the mid-to-late 19th century.

Yet, if anything, the revolution sharpened the schisms already extant in Egyptian society, which had been blunted, controlled, manipulated and hidden away under the all encompassing lid of the Mubarak police state, held tightly and seemingly incontrovertibly for 30 years via the twin instruments of unbridled repression and wide-ranging clientism. The revolution did so even as it gave birth to new, massive and profound cleavages which not only created new battle lines, but redrew all of the old ones.

Revolutions, by definition, are never made by the whole people; rather by a critical mass of the most aware, most courageous, and most socially and politically conscious members of the society. To succeed at all they need to secure the sympathy, and/or neutrality of a considerable majority of the people.

The Egyptian revolution easily fulfilled these two conditions. An estimated seven million out of Egypt's population of 82.5 million (a critical mass by any criteria) took an active part in the revolution, while, as Brookings Institution scholar H.A. Hellyer indicated in an article on Ahram Online not long ago, Gallup polls taken multiple times during 2011 showed 8 out of 10 Egyptians supported the revolution.

The Egyptian revolution, nevertheless, was largely an urban phenomenon, not so much different in this respect from the seminal revolution of modern history, the great French Revolution of 1789. Rural Egypt, which accounts for some 42% of the population, stood for the most part on the sidelines during the heroic 18 days of January/February 2011. Triumphant revolutions, by virtue of their seizure of state power, tend to pull the stragglers along, which in turn enables them to offer the languid peasantry a share of the fruits of revolution, freeing them (to this or that extent) from the yoke of the big landowners, and giving them greater access to what peasants everywhere most desire, ownership, real or de facto, of the land they till. (The French Revolution gave them as well, revolutionary war, foreign conquest, including not least, Egypt, and for a period, empire.) Not so, a revolution hijacked: First by the military, soon after by a military-Muslim Brotherhood alliance, briefly by the military on its own, and finally by a Muslim Brotherhood-military alliance. The results of the first round of presidential elections in post-revolution Egypt are remarkably revealing of the urban-rural divide, as of many other features of the nation's political map – in so far as they provided us with our first sense of the real configuration of forces, leanings and inclinations in the country.

Overall, the revolution won the great cities of the country while rural Egypt was split – literally down the middle – between the military's formal (Mubarak regime remnant) candidate, Ahmed Shafiq, and the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohamed Morsi.

Non-Islamist revolutionary candidate Hamdeen Sabbahi easily won Cairo, Greater Cairo, Alexandria, and came well ahead in the combined vote of the nation's coastal cities. If we add his vote to that of the other main revolutionary candidate, democratic Islamist Abdel-Monem Aboul-Fotouh, we are faced with a landslide victory for the revolutionary vote in all these regions, accounting for over 40 percent of the total national vote, compared to 25 percent for Morsi and 23 for Shafiq.

The countryside, including a great many provincial towns went the other way. So glaring was the urban-rural electoral divide that Palestinian political writer Azmi Bishara commented in a tweet at the time, describing the Egyptian elections as evidencing "classical political sociology", with the great urban centres going for the revolution, while the countryside continued to be held in the grip of both religion and the state.

No less interesting was the rural divide itself. Give Egypt's first-round presidential electoral map various colours: say, red for the revolutionary vote, represented by both Sabbahi and Abul-Fotouh, blue for the counter-revolution, represented by Shafiq and green for the Muslim Brotherhood/Salafist vote, represented by Morsi, and you get an amazing picture. Huge deep red circles engulfing Greater Cairo and Alexandria, stretching out to cover the whole Beheira province, a red band running down the Suez Canal coast, a large swath of green covering Upper Egypt, and the Delta in blue.

Retrospectively, it makes a lot of sense. Upper Egypt, socially and culturally conservative, interminably neglected by central governments in Cairo, and administered by bureaucrats who'd much rather be elsewhere, goes for the Brotherhood, while the Delta, an arm's throw of the central government, continued to be held in the tight grip of state patronage, for decades administered by the erstwhile ruling NDP and associated state bodies.

Notwithstanding the January Revolution, elections in the Egyptian countryside remained fundamentally about patronage, not politics.

Mainstream fundamentalist Islamism as an ideological and political current is unique in that it draws on the destitution, degradation and profound feelings of injustice among the poor, while being in possession of extraordinarily rich organizations, well able to provide extensive patronage networks of their own, including employment in a large array of Islamist owned businesses, a host of social services, more often than not mosque linked, as well as direct bribes to real and potential voters, e.g. the famed "gift" bags of sugar and bottles of cooking oil.

The numbers from the first presidential electoral round reveal a host of other divisions crisscrossing the nation's political map. Among these is the Islamist/non-Islamist divide. The combined vote for non-Islamist candidates accounted for a surprising 57 percent of the total vote, compared to 43 percent for the Islamist candidates, including Aboul-Fotouh, whose electoral base embraced a great many non-Islamists, who chose him both in his capacity as a revolutionary candidate, and as an Islamist democrat who could unite the nation.

For its part, the second and final round of the presidential election showed a nation split practically down the middle. The mere fact that 48 percent of the electorate voted for a verbally challenged, corruption-tainted "emanant" of the Mubarak regime, who moreover had pledged – if in his own largely garbled vernacular – to stamp out a revolution that 8 out of 10 Egyptians said they supported, was a stark indication of the depth of dread in which nearly half the voters held Brotherhood rule.

Urban versus rural, Upper versus Lower Egypt, revolution versus counter-revolution, the revolutionaries and the families of the martyrs versus the security and military bodies that killed, maimed and tortured thousands among them, Islamists versus non-Islamists, the poor versus the filthy rich, labour versus state and private sector owners, democratic Islamists versus authoritarian Islamists, pragmatic Islamists versus Salafi Islamists, Jihadists versus everybody, patronage versus politics, Muslims versus Copts, the valley versus the outlying Bedouin regions, the profound, revolution-based yearnings for democracy and freedom versus the powerful tendencies towards authoritarianism – the divisions run every which way, and they run deep.

The power structure, for its own part, remains deeply fractured. The military has taken a back-seat, but continues to be a principal, even a paramount partner in the configuration of power in the country. (There is substantial evidence that SCAF's ouster was much more an internal military "reshuffle" than the ostensibly "brilliant coup" claimed by President Morsi's fan-club.) Meanwhile, the old oligarchs of the Mubarak regime will continue to vie with the up-and-coming oligarchs of the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood itself is increasingly rent with divisions, between the Gama'a and the party, and the party and the president, to name but the most prominent.

And the domestic security bodies remain an unknown quantity, which seems to answer to various mainstays of the power structure at the same time and on to itself a lot of the time. It seems happy to do the president's bidding when it suits its inherently repressive, vicious inclinations, while all the time playing dirty little games of its own, both upon request (of whichever source) and gratuitously.

A nation so deeply and so extensively divided is a nation that can be saved only through an inclusive democracy. It is only through democracy in the fullest sense of the word (not just the ballot box); only through the widest provision and protection of the civil liberties of all citizens, can the various social, political and cultural orientations and interests crisscrossing the nation peacefully compete, negotiate, build bridges, and ultimately create and recreate new syntheses of social and political order.

Mr Morsi, a word to your ear: authoritarianism simply will not work.

Hani Shukrallah is managing editor of Egypt's top newspaper, the daily Al-Ahram. He is also the Chief Editor of Al-Ahram Online.

Article 4.

AL-MONITOR

Abu Mazen Pressured By New Hamas Alliances

Nervana Mahmoud

Nov 8. -- It may be subtle, it may be slow, but undoubtedly the uprisings in the Arab world -- particularly in Egypt -- have resulted in new dynamics on the Palestinian front. Hamas, whose members were once shunned and isolated by the Egyptian leadership under former President Hosni Mubarak, is now slowly gaining strength and support, not just from the Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan, but also from Turkey and Qatar.

The visit of the Emir of Qatar to Gaza (<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2012/10/qatars-emi-calls-for-palestinian-unity-on-gaza-visit.html>), and his planned business support projects, together with the declaration of the Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan (<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2012/02/what-will-hamas-bring-to-turkey.html>) of his intention to visit Gaza are just some of many examples of Hamas's change of fortune.

The group that once was an example of cross-sectarian alliance, Sunni and Shia, within the "resistance camp" (Iran, Syria, and Hezbollah), is now solidly part of a newly emerging Sunni Islamist camp in the Middle East. Hamas, it seems, has chosen its side in the regional sectarian war playing out in the region. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas (<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2012/09/abbas-latest-chance-in-new-york.html>), who has continued to labor for peace with Israel and a state for Palestine (<http://www.al-monitor.com/cms/contribute/default/en/sites/almonitor/contents/articles/politics/2012/10/airing-complete-abbas-interview-only-way-to-save-face.html>), is now perceived as a man of a bygone era that does not fit with the Islamist agenda and rhetoric that has animated Hamas and its new patrons.

No one understands that better than Abu Mazen [Abbas] himself. Two intriguing news items have surfaced in the Arab media that might help understand Abbas' mindset. Palestinian chief negotiator Saeb Erekat (<http://www.al-monitor.com/cms/contribute/default/en/sites/almonitor/contents/articles/politics/2012/10/the-ball-is-in-netanyahus-court.html>) accused Hamas of secretly negotiating with Israel through mediators in Switzerland while Hamas's Abu Marzook denied that such negotiations ever happened. Regardless of what is really happening behind the scenes, Erekat's statement speaks volumes about the anxieties of the leadership in Ramallah.

Currently, Abbas is a lonely man; he has lost many of his traditional supporters, and neither Israel nor the new Arab leaders take him seriously. His perceived ambiguity on the right of return (<http://www.al-monitor.com/cms/contribute/default/en/sites/almonitor/contents/articles/politics/2012/10/abu-mazen-has-given-up-the-right.html>) could be to steer a successful negotiation with Israel, and he seems to miscalculate his moves. This may be as much his limitations, or more having to deal with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (<http://www.al-monitor.com/cms/contribute/default/en/sites/almonitor/contents/articles/politics/2012/10/defense-establishment-poised-to-go.html>), who has never met him halfway.

Nonetheless, Abu Ma=en remains committed to negotiations as a way to end the conflict, an= to achieve a Palestinian state through peaceful means. His hints on the r=ght of return should be welcomed, not rejected by the Israeli leadership. The fact that Netanyahu dismissed Abbas' comm=nts reflects how Netanyahu — in a rather ironic way — shares Hamas' =isdain towards Abbas and his perceived concessions.

Regardless of wheth=r the news of secret negotiations in Switzerland is true or false, undoubt=dly, Netanyahu is familiar with former IDF general Giora Eiland <<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2012/10/the-caro=-the-stick-and-who-come.html>> 's suggest=on that Israel stop undermining Hamas. What Eiland has suggested seems to make sense to some in Israel. The West Bank =s currently calm, at a relatively low cost, and most of the earaches come =rom the southern region due to rockets attacks from Gaza. Therefore, a rob=st truce with a strong Hamas in Gaza could stop the escalation at the southern front and warm the cold rel=ationships with Morsi's Egypt and Erdogan's Turkey while ending the dre=m of a possible two-state solution. It is unclear whether Netanyahu endors=s Eiland's views or not, but his attitude toward Abbas is highly indicative that the former general may have&nb=p;struck a chord with his views.

But is the view of = deal with Hamas correct or even realistic? An answer can be fou=nd in Jordan. In a TV interview with Al Arabiyah, Jordanian Musli= Brotherhood deputy leader Zaki Bani Rsheid said that the Brotherhood will complete its regional 'crescent' when the S=rian regime collapses.

Eiland's views co=ld work well if Hamas's power and influence remain solely in Gaza and&nb=p;not spread to the West Bank. However, by the end of 2013, it is highly p=obable that Israel might find itself surrounded by Muslim Brotherhood-ruled governments along four of its five borders: Ga=a, Egypt, Jordan, and, at the very least, a civil war in Sy=ia. The once isolated, weak Hamas could find growing popularity and s=pport in all these countries.

Hamas and its Jorda=ian supporters understand this fact very well. The group is in no rush and=is willing to wait for years until it finds the perfect opportunity. The J=rdanian "spring" might or might not happen, but the Brotherhood crescent may soon [and] is a work in prog=ess for Qatar and Turkey.

An Islamic Sp=ing in Palestine and Jordan would put further strain on King Abdullah II. =slamic agitation in Jordan would soon become correlated with Palestinian a=ger against the Israeli occupying forces, under an Islamic banner.

Abandoning Mah=oud Abbas out of spite, negligence, or the whiff of a deal with Hamas=could be a tragic Israeli strategic error. The Jordanian river was once th= route for the Israelites heading to the Holy Land; it can now serve a new front in the Arab-Israeli contest. This =nce far-fetched scenario has its patrons; if it happens, only then would N=tanyahu yearn for the days of Abbas and the negotiations for a two-state s=lution.

Nervana Mahmoud =s a blogger and writer on Middle East issues.

Articl= 5.

TIME

The Anti-Assa= Offensive: Can the West Oust Syria's Strongman?

Vivienne Walt <<http://world.time.com/author/viviennewalt>=>

Nov. 08, 20120 <<http://world.time.com/2012/11/08/the-anti-assad-offensive-can-t-e-west-oust-syrias-strongman/#comments>> -- Scarcely hours after his re-election, President Obama was under pressure from U.S. allies to take stronger action on Syria <<http://topics.time.com/syria/>> . Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron <<http://topics.time.com/david-cameron/>> told reporters on Nov. 7, during a visit to a Syrian refugee camp in Jordan, that "one of the first things I want to talk to Barack about is how we must do more to try and solve this crisis." French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius added to the clamor on Nov. 8, telling reporters he planned to call for more urgency from Washington on Syria at a planned meeting later in the day with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton <<http://topics.time.com/hillary-clinton/>> , promising that the message would be reinforced by "swift and necessary" talks between President François Hollande and Obama. On Syria, said Fabius, "The Americans have recently been in the background a little."

Some hope that the Obama Administration may be less risk-averse in the wake of the election and possibly more inclined to arm Syria's rebels. Until now, the U.S. has offered only nonlethal support to Syria's disparate rebel groups, largely for fear that weapons could end up in the hands of elements — which make up a substantial part of the Syrian insurgency — hostile to U.S. interests and allies in the region. While such concerns remain, "there is now less risk aversion," believes Shashank Joshi, a research fellow at the Royal United Services Institute, a defense think tank in London. "Before, if the weapons got into the wrong hands in October and turned on the Turkish forces, for example, all those things would have been hugely embarrassing for the Administration at a moment when they wanted to avoid all risk," he says. "It is less important that Obama has won than that someone has won."

There are still anxieties about arms being turned against U.S. interests, including possibly in future attacks against Israel. And yet the anti-Assad offensive is intensifying. Cameron seemed to move ahead of his more cautious U.S. allies this week, announcing on Nov. 7 that Britain would open direct ties with Syrian rebel leaders, which was interpreted by many as opening the way to more military support for the insurgency.

A Libya-style Western military intervention remains highly unlikely, partly because Russia and China would deny such an operation legal authority in the U.N. Security Council and partly out of fear of being drawn into an open-ended civil war that has already spilled over Syria's borders into Lebanon, Iraq and Turkey. Lesser forms of intervention, such as training and equipping rebel groups or enforcing a no-fly zone over territory they control, would still require substantial military commitment from Western forces. "The British don't want to do this unilaterally, without trying to get the Americans on board," says Salman Shaikh, an analyst at the Brookings Doha Center. "Cameron will try to get Obama to step up."

But whether Cameron, Hollande or anyone else can persuade Obama to commit U.S. assets to a more direct role in the Syrian conflict remains to be seen. The British Prime Minister and his fellow Western leaders would prefer that the problem simply go away, in the form of Syrian President Bashar Assad's accepting defeat and choosing exile. Midway through his Middle East trip, Cameron told al-Arabiya television in Abu Dhabi that leaders were desperate for "anything, anything, to get that man out of the country," adding, "I am certainly not offering him an exit plan to Britain, but if he wants to leave he could leave. That could be arranged."

Not that easily, of course, given that even Cameron later added that he supports the call for Assad to face charges at the International Criminal Court for his role in unleashing the violence that has claimed upward of 20,000 Syrian lives over the past 18 months. The prospect of an ICC indictment and life in prison would remove any incentive for Assad to accept defeat. Says Joshi: "If you don't drop the idea of the ICC indictment, why would he ever leave?"

Not that Assad sees any reason to pack his bags, having retained the support of his key backers, Russia and Iran, and effectively fighting the rebellion to a military stalemate — albeit one that leaves him in control of much less of Syria than he was two years ago. The Syrian strongman has already rejected two proposals, one from Tunisian President Moncef Marzouki last April and the second from the Arab League in July, for safe passage abroad. Asked during a Russia Today television interview on Thursday whether he might leave the country, Assad fumed, "I am Syrian. I was made in Syria. I have to live in Syria and die in Syria."

Of course, Assad's calculations might change if the rebels acquired the weapons, particularly surface-to-air missiles, that might neutralize some of the regime's military advantages. That, together with the efforts of Obama and others, could influence Russia's President Vladimir Putin to persuade his Syrian client to step down. But that may be some time in coming. Until then, the killing is likely to continue.

Article 6.

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Why Japan Still Matters

James Schoff <<http://www.realclearworld.com/authors/?author=James+Schoff&id=1557>>

November 8, 2012-- With Japan's lackluster economic growth and seemingly relentless political turmoil, it's easy to think that Tokyo's relevance is falling with no end in sight. But Japan remains a vital part of Asia and it will be a major player in shaping the region's future. The United States needs to remember Japan's importance.

It is true that the number of Japan optimists have thinned significantly over the last decade with their numbers ravaged by Japan's persistent economic stagnation and looming demographic crisis. Others have been converted or distracted by China's spectacular rise.

The reported disappointment of Japan's once-hopeful champions even prompted JPMorgan economist Jesper Koll to suggest he might be the last remaining optimist leftover from the plethora of scholars and business leaders who praised Japan's policies and accomplishments in the 1980s and 1990s. But Koll is not the last Japan optimist.

Optimists persist among U.S. manufacturers, investors, and farmers who exported over \$110 billion worth of goods and services to Japan in 2011 (up about 28 percent since 2002). Japan optimists also dwell in America's science and engineering communities, they occupy high positions at the U.S. Departments of State, Treasury, and Defense, and they roam the hallways of international and regional finance and political organizations.

One can forgive Koll for feeling lonely, but before the optimists are declared an endangered species, we should think more comprehensively about what it means for a country to succeed in Asia in the future. Being "number one" is less important than it used to be. More critical is how the states of the region interact to further common interests and protect public goods. As happened in Europe, the region is beginning to coalesce as a productive complement of economies, centers for innovation and finance, and military capabilities, but this is a fragile process.

Japan is essential for Asia's success in this regard, while failure on this front could be devastating. Thus, a binary view of Japan as either "in decline" or "on the rise" is an unhelpful way for the United States to consider policy options in the future. The important point is how the two countries act as catalysts for cooperative strategies across a range of sectors.

Japan's Troubles

There is no doubt that Japan is suffering on a number of fronts. Economic growth has been anemic for almost two decades-including five recessionary periods-and an aging population will continue to drag down growth and consume national wealth. These challenges are most acute in Japan's countryside. The lack of opportunity has driven younger residents to big cities, feeding a vicious economic cycle for rural towns and prefectures.

Fiscal stimulus options for the central government are limited after years of deficit spending and Japan now spends nearly one-quarter of its national budget on debt servicing (compared with about 7 percent in the United States).

Moreover, Japan's tragic triple disaster-the earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear accident-in March 2011 will require taxpayer support for an extended recovery period. The country faces a chronic energy shortfall after the earthquake shook Japan's faith in nuclear power and cut a quarter of its electricity production.

This is all made more difficult given the domestic political environment. Petty political gamesmanship and gridlock exacerbate these problems and delay effective solutions.

Japan's Strengths

But it's not all bad news out of Japan, and the situation is not as black and white as it seems. After all, part of the reason that Japan will soon have the world's highest median age is because it leads the world in life expectancy, thanks in large part to a solid healthcare system, low crime rate, and high per capita GDP. The demographics are both an economic challenge and a sign of success.

There is also sufficient fertile ground for Japan to reinvent itself economically. Japan continues to innovate in the fields of manufacturing, renewable energy, and healthcare. One sign of this is Japanese firms and individuals receive the most U.S. patents of any country outside of the United States, accounting for about one-fifth of the total and three times the number of its closest rival, Germany.

In addition, Japan boasts eleven Nobel Prize laureates since 2000, spanning chemistry, physics, physiology, and medicine. And basic research in areas such as advanced materials and stem cells could have dramatic economic and social impacts, provided Japan can keep making progress fostering entrepreneurship that capitalizes on this work.

Japan's economy is still the third largest in the world. It has a well-educated, productive population and an adaptive and globally connected corporate sector, despite the headwinds buffeting some of Japan's most famous brands such as Sharp and Panasonic. Less well known are small but highly profitable Japanese firms created in the past two decades such as Axell and Simplex. Japan is also an important investor overseas, becoming the world's second largest source of foreign direct investment outflows in 2011 and China's biggest investor.

Such interdependence in East Asia is one of the few positive factors helping to mitigate regional conflict over long-standing territorial and historical disputes.

Vital Partner in Asia

A key question is how this interdependence will evolve and how actively Japan, the United States, and others will try to shape it in a coordinated and inclusive fashion. Declining trade barriers and the diversification of economic growth in East Asia could help bolster the sense of community, but only if the politics of regionalism can be managed effectively.

Regional networking and rulemaking strategies that smack of Chinese containment (or that dwell too much on military maneuvers) will be counterproductive, so a broader institutional approach that includes China will be necessary.

Japan can be helpful here as it continues to contribute significantly to global and regional institutions. It is the second largest contributor to the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund, and it contributes the most to the Asian Development Bank and other regional funds such as the Asian Bond Fund. Japan can also be an important U.S. ally for shaping and strengthening the emerging regional architecture that includes the ASEAN Regional Forum and the East Asia Summit.

Americans often underestimate how well respected Japan is in most parts of Asia, notwithstanding the territorial and historical disputes that are fueling regional tensions today. Many Southeast Asian nations in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s looked up to Japan as the "lead goose" in their flock of aspiring economies and they emulated Japanese industrial policies.

As the rest of Asia modernizes and grows wealthier, Japan might now be simply joining the flock, but it should maintain an influential voice given its democratic and free market traditions as well as its non-confrontational diplomatic approach. That is, of course, if Japan revives itself in a way that supports regionalism and continues to engender respect in the region.

Asia's Future

Competition will always be fierce in Asia, but if the region is able to build institutions and cooperative frameworks to tackle common economic, environmental, and even political and security challenges, it is a good bet that Japan and the United States will be key players in that process. Economic and demographic factors might prompt Japan over time to become a relatively low-growth and high-tax nation similar to many in northern Europe, but it should remain a stable and well-connected leader in East Asia.

This is a formative time in Asia's history, and now is not the time for Washington to overlook Japan's potential to reinvent itself. Japan's political and business leaders have a lot of work ahead of them to overcome the challenges facing the country, but Japan's future is still brighter than its recent past if it can strengthen relations with its neighbors and foster more openness and entrepreneurship in the country.

Working in concert with others in Asia, Japan will remain a valuable partner for the United States as it not only adjusts to new geopolitical dynamics in the region, but also tries to shape them.

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