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Article 1.

The Economist

Greek politics: Slouching towards the drachma

May 16th 2012 -- PITY Karolos Papoulias. The 82-year-old president of Greece has spent over a week trying to persuade the country's fractious political leaders to form a government after a

general election on May 6th failed to produce a clear winner. Mr Papoulias, a soft-spoken former foreign minister, handed out mandates to various party leaders, none of whom could deliver, and made a three-day effort of his own, before finally giving up yesterday.

Success would have given Greece breathing space, if only for a few months, to pursue urgent reforms—such as recapitalising its insolvent banks and getting on with privatisation—to help restore its credibility with European partners and financial markets. Instead, another election now looms, on June 17th. Until then the country will be run by a caretaker government under Panagiotis Pikrammenos, Greece’s most senior judge. Lucas Papademos, the ex-European central banker who has run a coalition government for the last six months, overseeing a €206 billion sovereign-debt restructuring and Greece's second bail-out, was not asked to stay on.

The transcripts of Mr Papoulias’s last three meetings, made public at the request of Alexis Tsipras, the leader of Syriza, a hard-left coalition, and Greece's rising political star, reveal a disturbing lack of vision among the men who are supposed to be Greece's leading politicians. Rather than tackle serious issues, such as how to keep Greece in the euro, they swapped insults and shrugged off a warning that a bank run was imminent. “They’re all irresponsible, none of them is capable of ending this crisis,” says Aristomenes Antonopoulos, a lawyer. “How to vote now?”

Support among Greeks for staying in the euro is up from 70% to 80% over the past three months, according to opinion polls. Yet fears that prolonged political instability could trigger a “Grexit”

are also increasing. Greek savers withdrew €3 billion from local banks—about 2% of total deposits—as hopes of forming a coalition collapsed. Greece has seen a steady erosion of bank deposits over the past two years, yet few bankers were prepared for such a rapid acceleration of withdrawals. Deposits had increased in March and April, thanks to smooth handling of Greece's partial default.

Today, cash was being taken away from the banks in orderly fashion. There were no queues outside branches in central Athens or its suburbs. Customers ordered cash by telephone and picked it up 24 hours later. Some went straight into safety-deposit boxes at the same bank; some was stashed beneath mattresses in case Greece has to re-adopt the drachma. "People are taking preventive measures," says one veteran banker. "If you own a pile of euros, you'll feel rich in a drachma environment."

Despite their enthusiasm for holding on to the euro, Greeks are fed up with the austerity that German politicians say is the price of continued membership. Syriza suggests that such views are compatible, arguing that Greece can stay in the euro but also reverse the reforms imposed by the "troika" (the European Union, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund).

This is a message Greek voters appear to like. A recent poll found that Syriza would win the next election with 20.5% of the vote, just ahead of the pro-euro New Democracy party on 19.4%, but well short of an overall majority. The PanHellenic Socialist Movement (Pasok), the only other electable party that supports reform, would come a distant third with 11.8%.

Mr Tsipras is reorganising his party and renewing his campaign, neighbourhood by neighbourhood, in Athens and other cities. His rhetoric is sharper than ever, yet his dream of forming a left-wing government is no closer to being realised than at the previous election. Potential partners have sounded more cross than co-operative since Mr Tsipras bounced into second place behind New Democracy on May 6th.

Antonis Samaras, the New Democracy leader, will pull out all the stops. If his centre-right party cannot form a government this time, his career will be over. A new alliance with a small liberal party should give him another couple of percentage points at the election. As for Evangelos Venizelos, the Pasok leader and a potential coalition partner, he is struggling to prevent more voters defecting for Syriza.

Even with the extra 50 seats that go to the party that comes first, the two pro-bailout parties will still struggle to form a government after the second election. The long-suffering Mr Papoulias is likely to be back in action on June 18th.

Article 2.

The Moscow Times

Why Putin Is Afraid of the People

Vladimir Ryzhkov

16 May 2012 -- After Moscow's large protests on May 6 and the following days, we can easily dispel two widely held opinions — that the protest movement had fizzled out and that Putin had overcome his fear of demonstrations. As it turns out, the protest mood among Russians is stronger than ever and the paranoia of the ruling regime is getting worse.

On the way to his inauguration on May 7, Putin's motorcade traveled along completely empty Moscow streets. Minutes later, he accepted the oath of office in marble- and gold-bedecked Kremlin halls, where he was met by a more than 3,000 members of his loyal political elite who owe their privileged status to his generous patronage.

While jubilant supporters of French President Francois Hollande filled the streets to celebrate his victory on May 6, the deepening chasm between Putin's regime and the people resounded with an ominously hollow echo along Moscow's empty streets a day later.

Despite his claims that the people adore him, Putin has become even more frightened of them. After the inauguration and the chilling reception in Moscow, it is no surprise that he rushed off to Nizhny Tagil — an island of pro-Putin supporters only because it is home to the Uralvagonzavod tank and train-car plant that prospers because of generous government contracts ordered by Putin himself. Putin is afraid to meet with people who are not dependent upon his largesse. Private-sector workers are still the majority of Moscow's population, and that is why Putin fears Muscovites most of all. This explains why he didn't want to encounter them on the day he ascended the Russian throne for the third time.

Few thought that the March of a Million rally on May 6 would have a large turnout. Only 7,000 people had registered to attend on Facebook, and it seemed that most opposition-minded Muscovites would leave the city for the weekend to take advantage of the rare warm weather for early May. But more people showed up on May 6 than they did on Pushkin Square and Novy Arbat in March.

In addition to the large protest on May 6, writers Boris Akunin and Dmitry Bykov and musician Andrei Makarevich led about 15,000 people on Sunday on a writers' walk from Pushkin Square to Chistiye Prudy. All of this shows that dissatisfaction with Putin and his regime remains high and that people are prepared to take to the streets, even at the risk of being beaten by police. Another, perhaps even larger protest rally could take place in Moscow on Russia Day, a national holiday on June 12.

The May 6 protests could have ended in serious violence. The more radical protesters happened to be at the front of the crowd and seemed to be eager to clash with riot police. The authorities, for their part, were well prepared for a confrontation. Riot police carried tear gas and gas masks, and behind police cordons several water-cannon trucks stood ready. The situation could easily have degenerated into a massive, deadly riot. Fortunately, the violence did not escalate, although many were injured.

In contrast to rallies in December, February and March, the May 6 rally was not well organized. What's more, some of the leaders planned beforehand that they would remain at the site after the approved time for the rally had expired. This led to clashes with police, who broke up the unauthorized action.

The authorities also took advantage of the poor coordination by rally organizers to create an artificial bottleneck, leaving only a narrow corridor for thousands of protesters to enter Bolotnaya Ploshchad. This caused havoc and provoked demonstrators to clash with police. Most of the blame for the violence lies with the authorities, but the event organizers are partially to blame as well.

For the first time since Dec. 10, a protest rally ended with police disbursing demonstrators before they could formulate explicit demands to the authorities. Coverage by state-controlled television focused on protesters clashing with the police, but it ignored the opposition's political motivation behind the rally. It is even possible that provocateurs were planted in the crowd to trigger the violence. They were active in previous opposition rallies. After all, it is advantageous for the authorities to portray demonstrators as anarchists or radicals who commit gross violations of law and order in an attempt to lead the country into chaos and revolution. Not surprisingly, that is exactly how the state-controlled media described the events of May 6.

The radicalization of the protest movement plays into Putin's hands. It gives him a carte blanche to unleash both the state-controlled media and the police force against demonstrators. By contrast, the regime is threatened by peaceful rallies with clearly defined political demands, where organizers maintain order and hand over provocateurs to the police.

The country's leaders have no arguments to oppose the opposition's demands and complaints, and are helpless in the face of large, peaceful rallies. We should learn lessons from the May protest to make the June one larger and even more

effective.

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

Article 3.

The Washington Post

Muslim Brotherhood presidential candidate an underdog in Egypt

Ernesto Londoño

May 17 -- CAIRO — Had Egypt's post-revolutionary political winds held steady, Mohammed Morsi, the Muslim Brotherhood's presidential candidate, would have been coasting to victory in this month's election.

Instead, he's running an underdog campaign. The group's prodigious political machine, which turned the once-besieged opposition movement into the dominant force in parliament early this year, has to contend with an uncharismatic candidate and a shift in public opinion as many Egyptians have soured on the venerable Islamist organization.

The Brotherhood's political stock is plunging, analysts and ordinary Egyptians say, because its political party has backtracked on promises and accomplished little since a predominantly Islamist cadre of lawmakers was sworn in in

January.

In the working-class Cairo neighborhood of Abbasiya, where the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party campaigned vigorously in the weeks before the parliamentary elections, shopkeeper Abbas Helmi, 58, put down a Koran he was reciting softly to talk politics. On the eve of those elections, he said, Freedom and Justice campaigners set up stalls to sell residents subsidized meat and vegetables, drawing large crowds.

“People went and bought their meat,” Helmi recalled. “But after the vote, [the party workers] disappeared, and the people felt deceived.”

The backgrounds of the two front-runners — a former foreign minister who served under now-deposed Hosni Mubarak and a moderate Islamist who broke away from the Brotherhood — suggest that Egyptians may want a statesman who is more inclusive and less dogmatic about the role of Islam in governance than the devout politicians who control parliament.

But experts caution that it would be a mistake to dismiss Morsi's chances outright. His rivals might be generating more enthusiasm and doing better in the polls, they say, but none has the Brotherhood's mighty machinery or its network of allied preachers and local operatives.

“They go into full mobilization mode on Election Day,” said Shadi Hamid, an Egypt expert with the Brookings Doha Center who has studied the Muslim Brotherhood for years. “They play old-fashioned bare-knuckles politics, and they're in it to win it.”

In addition to its robust get-out-the-vote campaign, the

Brotherhood's endurance of decades of oppression under Mubarak probably helped it to win sympathy during the parliamentary elections. But the group's short stint in power has proved largely disappointing.

The Brotherhood-dominated parliament has passed no laws of consequence since its January inauguration. Many Egyptians have been disenchanted by the Brotherhood's refusal to prioritize the repeal of the reviled emergency law, which has been used for decades to crack down on dissidents.

The Brotherhood's handling of another controversial issue, the use of military trials to prosecute civilians, has angered human rights activists. Parliament recently restricted the president from referring civilians for prosecution in military court, but it stopped short of also barring the armed forces from doing so.

Despite occasional public statements criticizing the ruling military council, the Brotherhood has had a surprisingly cooperative relationship with the generals who were once instrumental in keeping the group oppressed and politically disenfranchised. The Brotherhood has often discouraged its followers from joining protests against the military, infuriating other political factions, which view the Islamist group as opportunistic.

'Renaissance' candidate

Senior Brotherhood officials acknowledged in interviews that Morsi might lack charisma, but they disputed the notion that his campaign for the two-day election next week is floundering.

"Egypt doesn't need a charismatic president," said Essam el-

Erian, an influential Brotherhood legislator. “It needs a president who can deal with the government and with the parliament.”

In recent weeks, some rallies for Morsi have seemed tailor-made for ultraconservative Muslim voters, whom the campaign is trying to woo. It has also enlisted radical clerics to rally voters, in an apparent attempt to excite and broaden the party’s base.

Morsi, 60, has dismissed as flawed polls that show him lagging and has pointed to large turnouts at campaign rallies nationwide as evidence that his presidential bid is not doomed.

He is branding himself a “renaissance” candidate and the only contender who would bring impeccable Islamist credentials to the presidency. A vote for him, Morsi has assured Egyptians, is a way to ensure that the spirit of the revolution that ousted Mubarak from the presidency in February 2011 endures.

“I want the revolution to stay alive after the president is elected,” Morsi said at a recent rally. “We will not allow another dictator to control Egypt.”

Morsi was not the Brotherhood’s first choice when the group reneged on its vow not to field a presidential candidate. The group says it broke the promise because it believes the military council that replaced Mubarak has mismanaged the transition to democratic rule.

The Freedom and Justice Party nominated Khairat el-Shater, the Brotherhood’s top strategist and biggest bank roller, as its candidate in March. Anticipating that Shater could be disqualified, Morsi’s name was registered as a backup.

Shater was among 10 contenders disqualified last month by the country's presidential election commission, an unexpected move that forced the Brotherhood to thrust little-known Morsi into the spotlight. Shater was disqualified because the commission ruled that the time he served as a political prisoner during the Mubarak regime made him ineligible.

Morsi, an engineer with a doctorate from the University of Southern California, had a relatively low profile until he became the Freedom and Justice Party's chairman when the long-banned Muslim Brotherhood was allowed to register as a political party after Mubarak's ouster.

'Not sticking to their word'

A senior Brotherhood leader who offered his candid assessment of the Morsi campaign on the condition of anonymity said there is deep angst about the race among the movement's old guard.

"I think they made a mistake in making too many promises and then not sticking to their word," the veteran Brotherhood figure said. "As Islamists, they should have stuck to their word. People are now calling the Muslim Brotherhood dishonest."

Besides reneging on its promise not to field a presidential candidate, Brotherhood leaders have raised eyebrows by warming up to Washington and suggesting that they would honor Egypt's unpopular peace deal with Israel.

Morsi's main competitors are former foreign minister Amr Moussa, the Arab League's erstwhile chief whose appeal stems largely from his name recognition and his hard-line stance against -Israel, and Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, a former

Brotherhood leader who is regarded as a moderate Islamist. Aboul Fotouh supporters have sought to disparage the Brotherhood. New billboards that have gone up around Cairo in support of Aboul Fotouh call the candidate's former group the "Machiavellian Brotherhood."

Abdul Ghamed Ahmad Abdel, a 69-year-old taxi driver, said the Brotherhood's popularity has slipped in his district of Imbaba in Cairo.

"They took control of the parliament because they are deeply entrenched in the rural areas," he said. But their lackluster performance in office is sure to hurt them, he added. "They've been exposed for what they are."

Article 4.

Guardian

In Egypt, Mubarak's repression machine is still alive and well

Hossam el-Hamalawy

16 May 2012 -- A little over a week ago, in Obour City, hundreds of Egypt's notorious Central Security Forces (CSF) conscripts mutinied over torture received at the hands of their officers. The conscripts took to the highway, blocked the road, and even started chanting a famous anti-police song composed

by the Ultras White Knights, one of the country's football fan groups. The mutiny was put down quickly by the army, together with concessions and promises offered.

This was not the first time such a mutiny has occurred since the January 2011 revolution. Several mutinies occurred on the "Friday of Anger". The following day, I met a guy in Mohamed Mahmoud Street while marching on the interior ministry who was a CSF conscript who escaped from his camp to join the protesters. Repeated mutinies were reported in Cairo, Alexandria and elsewhere over the course of the following months, over ill treatment by officers, long working hours and bad food. The CSF is the interior ministry's army, and its central arm in crushing street dissent. Those conscripts are poorly paid, poorly fed, tortured, and made to do the state's dirtiest job. The last time they undertook a full-scale mutiny was in 1986. It was brutally crushed by Mubarak who sent in the army.

Civil servants at the interior ministry have also been on strike, over pensions, pay and abusive treatment of civilians by police officers. That follows a national strike by police corporals, over pay, work conditions and again, ill-treatment by officers. The corporals demanded an end to military tribunals in the police force. Workers at eight factories owned by the interior ministry, producing consumer goods for officers, have also gone on strike over contracts.

Make no mistake, Mubarak's interior ministry is still alive and well. We dealt some heavy blows to it on the Friday of Anger and the police were heroically fought on several occasions, including the mini uprising in November 2011. But still, the CSF, the SS (or what's now called Homeland Security) and most

of the repression machine is intact, and moreover is receiving the direct help of the military police and the army's intelligence services.

Even if the ruling army generals manage to crush the ongoing police protests and prevent them from spreading, the objective conditions for another 1986-style mass scale mutiny are still there. Those new waves of conscripts are not only the sons of poor peasants and workers, who have no love for their middle-class officers, but the context is one of revolution. Those new conscripts have witnessed it, and could well have participated in it prior to their conscription.

The interior ministry will not be able to restructure its CSF. There is not the political will; the current police generals who belong to Mubarak's interior minister Habib el-Adly's clique are more than happy to see the status of their army of slaves remain unchanged. The army generals too would love to see Mubarak's CSF revived and for it to take charge of putting down protests instead of having to involve the military police. As we continue to organise and fight against the interior ministry, in an effort to dissolve it and replace it with community policing, such strikes and mutinies by the conscripts, corporals and civil servants should be supported by the revolutionary forces to create more fractures in this machine of repression.

Hossam el-Hamalawy is an Egyptian journalist from Cairo. He blogs at arabawy.org

Article 5.

The Washington Post

Pakistan blew its chance for security

David Ignatius

May 17 -- As America begins to pull back its troops from Afghanistan, one consequence gets little notice but is likely to have lasting impact: Pakistan is losing the best chance in its history to gain political control over all of its territory — including the warlike tribal areas along the frontier.

Pakistan has squandered the opportunity presented by having a large U.S.-led army just over the border in Afghanistan. Rather than work with the United States to stabilize a lawless sanctuary full of warlords and terrorists, the Pakistanis decided to play games with these outlaw groups. As a result, Pakistan and its neighbors will be less secure, probably for decades.

This is a catastrophic mistake for Pakistan. Instead of drawing the tribal areas into a nation that finally, for the first time since independence in 1947, could be integrated and unified, the Pakistani military decided to keep the ethnic pot boiling. It was a triumph of short-term thinking over long-term; of scheming over strategy.

America has made many blunders in Afghanistan, which will have their own consequences. But U.S. problems are modest compared with those of Pakistan, which nearly 65 years after independence still doesn't have existential security as a nation. Like most big mistakes people make in life, this is one that Pakistan's military leaders made with their eyes wide open.

The Group of Eight and NATO will hold summits in the coming days and announce the exit strategy from Afghanistan.

Fortunately, President Obama is planning a gradual transition, with at least 20,000 U.S. troops remaining until 2024, if necessary, to train the Afghan army, hunt al-Qaeda and steady Afghans against the danger of civil war.

But what can Western leaders say when it comes to Pakistan? Basically, the Pakistanis blew it. By playing a hedging game, they missed a moment that's not likely to return, when a big Western army of well over 100,000 soldiers was prepared to help them. Instead, Islamabad used the inevitability that America would be leaving eventually as an argument for creating a buffer zone that was inhabited by a murderous melange of the Taliban, the Haqqani network and other Pashtun warlords.

Yes, it would have been hard to bring under Pakistani law the rebellious badlands known as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. I have a shelf full of books describing how the process of pacification eluded the British raj and was gingerly handed over to the new government of Pakistan like a bag of snakes. But hard is not impossible — especially when you have modern communications and transportation and the most potent army in history ready to help.

What comes through reading these old books is how long the problem has persisted. A 1901 British "Report on Waziristan and Its Tribes" lists the tribes, clans and sub-clans the British were paying off more than a century ago through their political agents, rather than risk a fight with these stubborn warriors. After their disastrous Afghan wars, the British decided that

payoffs made more sense than shootouts — a decision the Pakistanis have repeated ever since, at the price of permanent insecurity.

The notion of the tribal areas as a warrior kingdom, impenetrable to outsiders, has a romantic “Orientalist” tone. I was disabused of it in 2009 when I met a group of younger tribal leaders who had gathered in Islamabad to tell U.S. special envoy Richard Holbrooke that the region needed economic development, good governance and less hanky-panky from the central government. In a move that embodied everything that’s wrong with the Pakistani approach, these brave young men were intercepted on the way home by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and quizzed about why they had dared talk to the farangi.

Surely the most foolish move the Pakistanis made was to compromise with the terrorist Haqqani network, which operates from its base in Miran Shah, a few hundred yards from a Pakistani military garrison. This was like playing with a cobra — something the Pakistanis seem to imagine is an essential part of regional realpolitik. No, you kill a cobra. If the ISI had been up to the task, it would have had some formidable snake-killing allies.

The Pakistanis lost a chance over the past decade to build and secure their country. It won’t come back again in this form. That’s a small problem for the United States and its allies, but a big problem for Pakistan. What a shame to see a wonderful nation miss its moment so completely.

Foreign Policy

Israel's Image Revisted

Aaron David Miller

May 16, 2012 -- Writing in the Wall Street Journal this week on the occasion of Israeli Independence Day, Israeli Ambassador Michael Oren penned a powerful op-ed on the erosion of Israel's image.

His conclusion: Israel's image has deteriorated in large part because of a "systematic delegitimization of the Jewish state."

"Having failed to destroy Israel by conventional arms and terrorism," he writes, "Israel's enemies alit on a subtler and more sinister tactic that hampers Israel's ability to defend itself, even to justify its existence."

First, some full disclosure. I like and respect Michael Oren. He's a remarkably talented historian, astute analyst, and able diplomat.

I also have no doubt that there are efforts to delegitimize Israel, that anti-Semitism pervades some of the anti-Israel rhetoric, that Israel is one of the few countries in the world that's judged by impossibly high standards, and that the perception and reality of

its power causes many to ignore the realities of its vulnerability.

But I just don't buy the argument that Israel's image has eroded principally because of a dedicated campaign to delegitimize it.

Three other factors drive Israel's very bad PR: the realities of nation-building, the image of the asymmetry of power, and Israel's own actions, which, like those of so many other countries, value short-term tactics over long-term strategy.

City on a Hill?

If Israel was created to be a paragon of virtue and a "light unto the nations" -- the proverbial city on the hill -- it picked the wrong hill.

Whatever the Zionist ideologues who founded Israel may have intended, the creation of the state of Israel and the realities of nation-building quickly became a quest for normalcy in highly unusual and abnormal circumstances.

Unlike the United States, which had non-predatory neighbors to its north and south and fish to its east and west, Israelis perceived themselves to have had no security space and little margin for error, let alone the quiet miracle of a normal life. Born in war, Israel has remained in an active conflict zone ever since. That it has succeeded in creating as much normalcy as it did is a remarkable testament to its leaders and the capacities, strength, and will of its people.

But along with that normalcy came the normal aging process of a small state built on socialist and Zionist values turning into a modern industrialized nation focused on material advancement and modern comforts. Israel's idealized image of itself -- the one

idealized by its founders and much of the American Jewish community -- could only change for the worse.

For Israel, part of being normal has also meant acting like a normal state, with all of the contradictions, political expediency, hypocrisies, and self-justifying policies that such normalcy entails in a world that is still ruled by power and self-interest. Israel's loyal ally, the United States, operates in that world too.

Why would anyone believe that Israeli behavior would be any different? Are the Israelis more ethical, democratic, and moral than we are? Israel's image has eroded because it lives in the real world as a flawed and imperfect nation. And frankly, though it's only 60-plus years old, its abuses and flaws have yet to rival any of the European colonial powers, let alone the Russians or the Chinese.

Big and Small

The erosion of Israel's image is also inextricably linked to its emergence as a regional power with a vibrant economy, a dynamic high-tech sector, and a powerful military. The images in Leon Uris's classic book *Exodus* and the Hollywood movie version with Paul Newman leading a ragtag Israeli militia against a sea of hostile Arabs have now been reversed. David has become Goliath.

In the eyes of the world, Israel has shed its image of a small state struggling against impossible odds. Israel now has "security needs" and "requirements" rather than existential fears; its power obligates it to be more magnanimous and forthcoming on peace issues; its strength should produce restraint, not excess.

Indeed much of the erosion of Israel's image is driven by the realities and perceptions of an asymmetry of power that now pits the nation with a per capita GDP of \$31,000, 100 companies on the NYSE, and nukes in triple digits against a weak Palestinian quasi-state and an Arab world that's dysfunctional and imploding.

There's much truth in this image of Israeli might, and anyone who denies that capacity trivializes what the Israelis have accomplished and does them a grave disservice by portraying them as victims.

But there's also truth in Israel's vulnerabilities, too. But the asymmetry of power doesn't work in Israel's favor here, either. Remember the summer of 2006, when 5,000 Hezbollah fighters equipped with rudimentary rockets shut down the northern half of the region's strongest military power for 33 days? The day before the war ended, Hezbollah fired more rockets than on any previous day. Nuclear weapons and overwhelming force don't add up to much if they can't be used and don't deter.

Israeli Actions

Finally, Israel's eroding image flows from its own actions and behavior. These seem to fall into three categories.

The first are those actions that are legitimate expressions of Israel's real security needs, but for which Israel is roundly and unfairly criticized (the 1981 attack on the Iraqi reactor; the 2007 preemptive strike on the fledging Syrian one).

Second are those policies that not only make little sense morally or strategically but are deemed to be ideological and undercut

other Israeli goals, such as peace with the neighbors (see: settlements).

Third are those that are dumb, arbitrary, or disproportionate in terms of loss of life (see: Ehud Olmert's massive invasion of Lebanon in 2006, as well as many of Israel's occupation policies that humiliate Palestinians, including collective punishment, housing demolitions, and so on). And many of these derive from the reality that small powers, particularly those with 32 different governments in 60-plus years, don't have long-range policies and strategies. Instead, they maneuver, react, and preempt to buy time and space.

The notion that Israel's unfavorable image is a result of some evil cabal that plots daily against it infantilizes the Israelis and takes them out of history as real-world actors who sometimes do well in pursuit of their interests and at other times screw up badly. Israel is a remarkable state that has sought to preserve its moral and ethical soul in a cruel and unforgiving world. But it is still only a nation of mortals trying to survive in that world.

Israeli founding father David Ben Gurion reflected the mood and mindset perfectly: It doesn't matter what the goyim say; what matters is what the Jews do. For better and almost certainly worse, Israel will be judged accordingly.

Aaron David Miller is a distinguished scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

The Washington Institute

Secret Hamas Elections Point to Internal Struggle

Ehud Yaari

May 16, 2012 -- The ongoing Hamas elections will strengthen the military wing, weaken Khaled Mashal, make reconciliation with the PA more difficult, preserve close collaboration with Iran, and, perhaps, forge closer ties with Egypt.

The secretive elections for new Hamas leadership bodies are unofficially scheduled to continue until later this month, but it is already safe to point out some emerging trends as the movement struggles to cope with fierce debate over its future course. Top leader Khaled Mashal has been considerably weakened as his rivals in Gaza gain more influence and commanders in the military wing assume a much broader political role. In all likelihood, these developments will further complicate the group's stalled reconciliation efforts with the Palestinian Authority, accelerate its dash to achieve mass self-production of longer-range, more accurate missiles, and prevent -- at least for the foreseeable future -- a political divorce from Iran.

UNPRECEDENTED TURNOVER

As a rule, Hamas does not publish any election details, including the names of candidates, the number of voters, the location of polling stations, the institutions for which elections are held, or the results. Citing "security considerations," the group keeps all

such information secret and prohibits campaigning. Despite these efforts, a fairly complete picture of the group's internal political struggle is already emerging. According to one senior Hamas official, more than 30 percent of members in the organization's different leadership institutions have been replaced by new faces. That is a dramatic change for a conservative movement that has been very reluctant to oust veteran figures.

Initially, separate elections were to take place in each of the movement's four designated regions. Two of these "regions" are now expected to bypass voting and instead select their representatives through a process of "consultations" (e.g., appointments).

First, Hamas prisoners will no longer choose their delegates through a complex system of mouth-to-ear ballot casting as they did in the past. Instead, those who already serve as the "command" for Hamas inmates -- usually in dealings with the Israeli Prison Service -- will be nominated as members-in-absentia to the movement's supreme bodies. Among these nominees will be convicted arch-terrorists such as Ibrahim Hamed, former chief of the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades in the West Bank; Abbas al-Sayyed, mastermind of the 2002 Passover Eve massacre in Netanya; Hassan Salameh, architect of the group's suicide bombings in the 1990s; and Jamal Abu al-Haija, former Qassam commander in the Jenin district. Their participation in leadership deliberations will be limited to occasional requests for their opinions, submitted through their lawyers and family visitors. Yet it should be pointed out that during recent negotiations to end a prison hunger strike, these leaders of "the prisoners movement" -- as it is known in

Palestinian political jargon -- essentially dictated to the rest of the Hamas leadership the terms for a deal with Israel, brokered by Egyptian intelligence.

Second, the West Bank is likely to skip Hamas elections for the first time ever given the difficulties posed by continuous harassment and detention of group members by both PA and Israeli security agencies. Saleh al-Aruri, who founded the Qassam Brigades in the West Bank and was released from an Israeli prison in March 2010, is now the key man in determining which Hamas members in the defunct Palestinian Legislative Council will be selected to fill this region's quota in the leadership bodies. Aruri has been operating for some time out of Turkey -- with Ankara's tacit blessing -- in an effort to resurrect Hamas infrastructure in the West Bank. He is now recognized as the group's de facto top leader in the West Bank at the expense of veteran local political figures, and has thus acquired important standing in the new Hamas hierarchy.

In the third region—Gaza—elections were concluded in late April, with 12,000 voters delivering a severe defeat to supporters of Mashal, head of the Hamas Executive Committee (a body established in 2009 yet never proclaimed as the official replacement for the old Political Bureau). Few if any Mashal loyalists made it to the different elected institutions: namely, the various district shura councils, the seventy-seven-member Gaza Shura Council (expanded from fifty-nine seats), and the fifteen-member Gaza Political Bureau (Salah al-Bardawil, Muhammad al-Jumasi, Issam Daghlas, and other key members lost their seats in the latter body). So-called moderates such as Ahmed Yousef and Ghazi Hamad were defeated, while sworn Mashal rivals enjoyed victories: Imad al-Alami -- former chief of the "military

(or intifada) committee" who recently returned from Damascus after long years of tension with Mashal -- was elected deputy to Hamas prime minister Ismail Haniyeh in the latter's unannounced other capacity as head of the local Political Bureau.

MILITARY ASCENDANCE

Although Haniyeh once again proved to be the most popular Hamas leader in Gaza, he is quite reluctant to claim overall leadership and often avoids controversy by letting more outspoken colleagues speak their minds. Alami, now widely perceived as a potential future successor to Mashal, better represents the most salient trend: the "Pasdaranization" of Hamas. Similar to the way the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (or Pasdaran) have managed to take over Iran's state apparatus over the past decade, the Hamas military wing is now assuming control over the movement's political course.

For example, perhaps the biggest winners at the Gaza polls (which are usually placed in mosques or charities) were Qassam Brigades commanders and their political partners. Muhammed Deif -- the behind-the-scenes Qassam shadow supremo who has yet to fully recover from the severe injuries he suffered during an Israeli assassination attempt ten years ago -- did not run himself, preferring to maintain his traditional low profile. Yet others won impressive victories on their way to the Political Bureau: Qassam leaders Ahmed Jabari and Marwan Issa; Yahya al-Sinwar and Rawhi Mushtaha, Qassam commanders who were released from Israeli prison as part of the Gilad Shalit deal; and Hamas interior minister Fathi Hamad, a close collaborator with the military chiefs. Aside from Mahmoud al-Zahar (who

managed to overcome military attempts to subvert his candidacy), all of the other elected "civilians" were supported by the significant percentage of votes controlled by the Qassam Brigades, including such figures as Khalil al-Hayya and Nizar Awadallah.

"OUTSIDE" MEMBERS STILL VOTING

At present, Hamas is still conducting elections in the fourth region, which consists of a few thousand "outside" members (including around a thousand from the group's disbanded Damascus headquarters, currently scattered in different Arab and Muslim countries). Voting is taking place at Hamas branches in the Persian Gulf states, Lebanon, Sudan, Yemen, and Europe, and the expectation is that at least some of Mashal's lieutenants may lose their seats in the fifteen-member "outside" Political Bureau. One key outside member -- Mustafa al-Leddawi, a first-generation Hamas leader deported from Gaza by Israel -- was the first to come out publicly against Mashal, and was subsequently kidnapped for a few days in late April from his home in the Yarmouk refugee camp near Damascus. The unknown gunmen who seized him were widely believed to be enforcers employed by the remnants of Mashal's entourage.

The main challenge to Mashal's faction in the outside region comes from his deputy and rival Mousa Abu Marzouk, whom Egyptian authorities permitted to settle in Cairo after the dissolution of the Damascus headquarters, whereas Mashal was compelled to pitch his tent in Doha, Qatar. A native of Rafah in southern Gaza, Abu Marzouk has cultivated much closer contacts with the Gaza leadership than Mashal (originally from a West Bank village) can hope to achieve. The rivalry between the

two stems not from ideological differences, but mainly from longstanding personal competition, since Mashal replaced Abu Marzouk as Hamas chief when the latter was detained in the United States.

IMPLICATIONS

In the end, a combination of the Gaza military and the Abu Marzouk camp will likely control the top leadership institutions: that is, the Hamas General Shura Council, composed of sixty members from all regions, and the nineteen-member Executive Committee, which runs the group's daily affairs.

For his part, Mashal will enjoy the support of most, but not all, of the West Bank representatives, though he will not command a majority. There are some indications that he may be reelected as Executive Committee head even though he announced in a secret Hamas gathering in Khartoum early this year that he does not intend to run for a third term. He was apparently hoping that his colleagues would plead with him to change his mind, but that did not happen. Still, his rivals aim not to depose him, but rather to limit his room for maneuver and submit him to majority rule. They have no interest in creating an open divide in the movement, and even his harshest critics realize the extent of his popularity among Palestinians.

Prior to the elections, Mashal sought to lead Hamas toward comprehensive reconciliation agreement with Fatah and was willing to sacrifice the movement's monopoly of power in Gaza to this end. His hope was to win future elections in the West Bank and take over the Palestine Liberation Organization. This policy was vehemently rejected and, in the end, foiled by his

opponents in Gaza, who refused to dismantle the Hamas government there. They view the strip as a captured "fortress" that should never be relinquished, and as "the shortest route to al-Aqsa Mosque," in Haniyeh's words.

Moreover, while Mashal aspires to reshape Hamas as a Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood in line with the Arab Spring trend in other countries, his adversaries want to maintain the movement's standing as an armed resistance. Like some Gaza members, Mashal also believes that Hamas should maintain its distance from Iran despite receiving some \$400 million annually from Tehran. Yet the military wing, and certainly Alami, see no alternative to close collaboration with the Islamic Republic as their main supplier. They also want to curb intensive Iranian support for Palestinian Islamic Jihad's military buildup in competition with the Qassam Brigades.

Before deciding to leave Damascus, Mashal had an advantage over Hamas officials in Gaza, since he held the purse strings and supervised arms smuggling to the strip. The center of gravity has now shifted back to the Gaza leadership, which is capable of developing its own network of foreign support given the upheaval in neighboring Egypt.

As a result, Mashal's capacity to lead the movement has been severely impaired. He is no longer first among equals, but more of a figurehead. Every move he makes from now on will need to be approved by his partners in Gaza beforehand, and military interests will likely trump political calculations in many situations.

Regarding specific issues, Hamas will no doubt resume the

dialogue with Mahmoud Abbas, but reconciliation will now need to be reached on Gaza's terms. The group is also bound to be more attentive to Egyptian priorities, especially in maintaining the de facto ceasefire with Israel and avoiding open clashes with Cairo's interests in the Sinai. One may also assume that Qatar's influence will grow as its contributions to the Hamas treasury increase beyond the \$200 million provided last year. Finally, in much the same way that the PA's establishment sidelined the PLO, the local Gaza leadership is now gaining ground at the expense of the outside leadership.

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Article 8.

The Washington Post

Is the U.S. going too far to help Israel?

Walter Pincus

May 17, 2012 -- Should the United States put solving Israel's budget problems ahead of its own?

When it comes to defense spending, it appears that the United States already is.

Ehud Barak, Israel's defense minister, will meet Thursday in Washington with Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta to finalize a

deal in which the United States will provide an additional \$680 million to Israel over three years. The money is meant to help pay for procuring three or four new batteries and interceptors for Israel's Iron Dome short-range rocket defense program. The funds may also be used for the systems after their deployment, according to the report of the House Armed Services Committee on the fiscal 2013 defense authorization bill.

The Iron Dome funds, already in legislation before Congress, will be on top of the \$3.1 billion in military aid grants being provided to Israel in 2013 and every year thereafter through 2017. That deal is part of a 10-year memorandum of understanding agreed to in 2007 during the George W. Bush presidency.

"Those funds are already committed to existing large-ticket purchases, such as the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, C-130J transport planes and other items," according to George Little, spokesman for Panetta. He also said the Israelis had increased their own spending on Iron Dome this year and the U.S. funds are to "augment" their funding.

And there's more money involved. The House committee version of the defense authorization bill, up for debate on the House floor this week, includes an additional \$168 million "requested by [the] Government of Israel to meet its security requirements," according to the panel's report. This money is to be added to three other missile defense systems that have been under joint development by the United States and Israel. The \$168 million is in addition to a separate \$99.9 million requested by the Obama administration for those programs.

Israel has had its own debate over what its defense budget should fund. Given its economic problems, the country has cut its defense budget for this year by roughly 5 percent, with another 5 percent cut planned for next year. Its defense experts have debated whether it is more important to put scarce funds into offensive weapons that could destroy enemy missiles or into missile defense systems to protect civilian and military targets. In contrast to the United States, it has raised taxes on wealthier citizens and upped its corporate tax rate.

The Israeli military has long-term plans to deploy 13 to 14 Iron Dome batteries to defend military and civilian targets against rockets launched from the Gaza Strip and Lebanon. If there is any doubt that the U.S. Congress will continue to support the program, one only has to look at the Iron Dome Support Act. The bill was introduced in the House in March by Rep. Howard L. Berman (D-Calif.), the ranking minority member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, along with the panel's chairman, Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.). A companion measure is in the Senate.

The first four batteries of Iron Dome, deployed last year in towns near the Gaza Strip, have proved successful in protecting against Hamas's rocket attacks. Israeli military sources have said the system had more than a 70 percent success rate last month against incoming rockets.

In early 2007, then-Israeli Defense Minister Amir Peretz chose Iron Dome to meet the short-range rocket threat. Testing began in 2008, and by January 2010 the system showed it could be effective.

In May 2010, President Obama said he would ask Congress to add \$205 million to the fiscal Pentagon budget for the production phase of Iron Dome. The funds were approved, and in March 2011 the Israel Defense Forces declared the first batteries operational.

Iron Dome was developed and built by Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Ltd., an Israeli-government-owned, profit-making company that since 2004 has been headed by retired Vice Adm. Yedidia Yaari, the former commander in chief of the Israel navy. Rafael's board chairman is retired Maj. Gen. Ilan Biran, former general director of the Ministry of Defense. In August, Rafael joined Raytheon Co. to market the Iron Dome system worldwide. The two are already partners in one of the other anti-missile systems being jointly run by Israel and the Pentagon. The House committee report noted that the United States will have put \$900 million into the Iron Dome system if the full \$680 million is used on the program "yet the United States has no rights to the technology involved." It added that the Missile Defense Agency director, Lt. Gen. Patrick J. O'Reilly, should explore opportunities to enter into a joint production arrangement with Israel for future Iron Dome batteries "in light of the significant investment in this system." So here is the United States, having added to its own deficit by spending funds that it must borrow, helping to procure a missile defense system for Israel, which faces the threat but supposedly can't pay for the system alone.

To add insult to injury, Pentagon officials must ask the Israeli government-owned company that is profiting from the weapons sales - including Iron Dome - if the United States can have a piece of the action.