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Article 1.

NYT

Egypt Widens Crackdown and Meaning of ‘Islamist’

David D. Kirkpatrick

August 24, 2013 -- CAIRO — Having crushed the Muslim Brotherhood, the Egyptian authorities have begun cracking down on other dissenters, sometimes labeling even liberal activists or labor organizers as dangerous Islamists.

Ten days ago, the police arrested two left-leaning Canadians — one of them a filmmaker specializing in highly un-Islamic movies about sexual politics — and implausibly announced that they were members of the Brotherhood, the conservative Islamist group backing the deposed president, Mohamed Morsi. In Suez this month, police and military forces breaking up a steelworkers strike charged that its organizers were part of a Brotherhood plot to destabilize Egypt.

On Saturday, the chief prosecutor ordered an investigation into charges of spying against two prominent activists associated with the progressive April 6 group.

When a journalist with a state newspaper spoke publicly about watching a colleague's wrongful killing by a soldier, prosecutors appeared to fabricate a crime to punish the journalist. And the police arrested five employees of the religious Web site Islam Today for the crime of describing the military takeover as a coup, security officials said.

Police abuses and politicized prosecutions are hardly new in Egypt, and they did not stop under Mr. Morsi. But since the military takeover last month, some rights activists say, the authorities are acting with a sense of impunity exceeding even the period before the 2011 revolt against Hosni Mubarak.

The government installed by Gen. Abdul-Fattah el-Sisi has renewed the Mubarak-era state of emergency removing all rights to due process or protections against police abuse. And police officials have pronounced themselves "vindicated." They say the new government's claim that it is battling Islamist violence corroborates what they have been saying all along: that it was Islamists, not the police, who killed protesters before Mr. Mubarak's ouster.

"What is different is that the police feel for the first time in two and a half years, for the first time since January 2011, that they have the upper hand, and they do not need to fear public accountability or questioning," said Heba Morayef, a researcher for Human Rights Watch.

In the more than seven weeks since Mr. Morsi's ouster, security

forces have carried out at least three mass shootings at pro-Morsi street protests, killed more than a thousand Morsi supporters and arrested at least as many, actions Ms. Morayef characterized as “massive police abuse on an unprecedented scale.” But even beyond the Islamists, she said, “anyone who questions the police right now is a traitor, and that is a protection that they did not have even in 2010,” when public criticism was tolerated and at least a few complaints were investigated.

Prosecutors had already begun investigating Mohamed ElBaradei, the liberal former United Nations diplomat, for “betraying the public trust.”

President Obama has said the new government is on a “dangerous path” marked by “arbitrary arrests, a broad crackdown on Mr. Morsi’s associations and supporters” and “violence that’s taken the lives of hundreds of people and wounded thousands more.”

Warning that “our traditional cooperation cannot continue as usual when civilians are being killed in the streets and rights are being rolled back,” the president canceled a planned joint military exercise. He pledged a review of the \$1.3 billion a year in military aid to Egypt, and the State Department took steps to hold back some of the roughly \$200 million in nonmilitary aid. But mindful of Egypt’s importance in the region, he stopped short of declaring the takeover an illegal “coup” or cutting off the aid, instead urging an early return to democracy.

Officials of the new government insist they are committed to establishing the rule of law, as soon as they overcome what they

describe as the mortal threat to Egypt of violence by the Brotherhood and other Islamist supporters of Mr. Morsi.

The police appear to be rounding up Brotherhood members on the basis of their affiliation, without other publicly known evidence of crimes. Mr. Morsi is being held incommunicado at an undisclosed location. But government spokesmen insist that every individual, including Mr. Morsi, will be tried by a court and released if acquitted.

“It is up to the courts,” Nabil Fahmy, the interim foreign minister, said in a recent interview. All will be handled “in accordance with the rule of law,” he said.

But some of the recent charges, like those against the two Canadians, strain credibility. Tarek Loubani, a Canadian physician with Palestinian roots and a history as a liberal and pro-Palestinian activist, was in Egypt on his way to the Gaza Strip to provide training to Palestinian doctors. John Greyson, a liberal Toronto filmmaker whose work often focuses on cosmopolitan sexual themes, was with him, documenting the trip for a possible movie. A lawyer for the two said they were stopped at a checkpoint near a street battle, trying to walk back to their hotel after the 7 p.m. curfew.

“They were just in the wrong place at very much the wrong time,” the lawyer, Khaled El-Shalakany, said Saturday.

The exact circumstances of their arrest were unclear. In a public statement, Egyptian prosecutors accused them of “participating with members of the Muslim Brotherhood” in an armed assault

on a police station and “taking part in bloody crimes of violence.” Prosecutors told reporters at the time that the police had detained 240 Brotherhood “members,” including two Canadians. (Mr. Shalakany said they remained in jail as “overwhelmed” prosecutors tried to deal with a backlog of hundreds of arrests in the crackdown.)

At the Suez steel plant, workers started a sit-in several weeks ago over compensation, health care and the firing of about a dozen employees. On Aug. 12, state news media reported that the Egyptian military had tried to force an end to the strike, arresting two of its leaders. “They picked the ones with beards!” a bystander shouts in a video of the arrests.

An army statement at the time used unmistakable coded language to blame the Islamists, charging that “infiltrating elements” who were “exploiters of religion” were trying to poison the workers’ meetings “in the name of religion.”

A state-run newspaper quoted the interim labor minister, Kamal Abu Eita, saying that security forces had found Brotherhood members from another factory involved in the strike. A privately owned newspaper supporting the military takeover, Youm El Saba, quoted Mr. Eita blaming the Brotherhood for inciting strikes in several cities.

Among some supporters of the new government, “Islamist” has become a popular indictment. After Mr. Obama criticized Egypt’s crackdown on the Islamists, Tahani el-Gebali, a former judge close to the military, publicly accused him of having ties to the Brotherhood, claiming his Kenyan half brother directed investments for the group.

The activists with the April 6 group being investigated for spying, Asmaa Mahfouz and Esraa Abdel Fattah, were associated with the group when it was working in opposition to Mr. Mubarak. State news media reports on Saturday indicated the charges were a revival of old allegations that the group had worked on behalf of Western powers to stir unrest in Egypt. The notion was first floated by Mubarak intelligence agencies and the generals who succeeded him, no evidence has emerged to support the claims, and the group has denied the charges.

The journalist who spoke out about his colleague's killing had been driving with the colleague, Tamer Abdel Raouf, the head of the local office of the official newspaper, Al Ahram, in the delta province of Beheira. When their car was at a checkpoint, soldiers enforcing the 7 p.m. curfew shot and killed Mr. Abdel Raouf.

The authorities have granted journalists a curfew exemption, and Mr. Abdel Raouf was driving a car bearing an official press badge from a meeting with the governor. A military spokesman offered no apology, only condolences, and warned others not to try to speed through checkpoints.

The next day, the journalist who had been in the passenger seat, Hamed al-Barbari, began giving television interviews contradicting the spokesman. Rather than speeding, Mr. Barbari said, his colleague was shot in the head while slowly turning his car in response to a soldier's instructions. "A foolish act" by one soldier, said Mr. Barbari, who was injured when the car crashed.

About two hours after he spoke, a prosecutor arrested Mr. Barbari in the hospital and placed him in custody for four days,

for allegedly possessing an illegal shotgun in the car at the time of the episode.

Prosecutors set a court date to begin investigating a citizen complaint against Mr. ElBaradei after he quit as vice president to protest the police violence against the Islamists. (A conviction could carry only a fine, and he had already left the country.)

Last week, a prosecutor even opened an investigation into some of the young organizers behind the protests calling for the military to remove Mr. Morsi. The prosecutor was weighing a complaint of “disturbing the public order” because they criticized the release from prison of Mr. Mubarak.

Such a case would be an attack on the new government’s first supporters. Prosecutors have not yet begun a full investigation of the complaint and could still set it aside.

“It is ridiculous,” said Mai Wahba, a leader of the group.

Article 2.

World Politics Review

Indecision on Egypt Leaves U.S. Interests at Risk

Nikolas Gvosdev

23 Aug 2013 -- As the Obama administration grapples with what to do next in Egypt, it may be instructive to review the U.S.

efforts of the past decade to bring about fundamental political and economic change in Egypt and the other countries of the greater Middle East.

The events of 9/11 were a deadly wake-up call to Washington that the status quo in the region—the perpetuation of sclerotic autocracies that provided no meaningful outlet for the economic and political aspirations of the populace—was not sustainable. Indeed, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was later to note—in June 2005, speaking in Cairo, no less—that "For 60 years, my country, the United States, pursued stability at the expense of democracy in this region here in the Middle East—and we achieved neither." The U.S. was now committed to pushing for change, though not at the expense of sacrificing key American security interests in the area. For the past 10 years, the challenge has been how to create more representative, inclusive systems of governance that would remain aligned with Washington.

The first post-9/11 strategy, pursued by the Bush administration during its first term, was to push for massive transformations. U.S. military power would be used to destroy rogue regimes and terrorist networks; U.S. diplomacy would solve outstanding disputes and conflicts that had kept the region in a state of turmoil; and U.S. economic power would create the basis for prosperity and the emergence of solidly pro-American middle classes, who would, for instance, benefit from free trade agreements that guaranteed access to U.S. markets. The Iraq War was designed to "shock and awe" that nation's ruler and to convince other opponents of the U.S., in Damascus and Tehran, especially, that they could be next. Meanwhile, it was hoped that once a pro-Western, democratic Iraq stabilized, it would give the U.S. leverage to pursue "tough love" with other American allies,

including Hosni Mubarak and the House of Saud, to push for reforms in their countries. The 2004 G-8 Sea Island Summit was also, in theory, supposed to lay the foundations for massive new efforts to support political reform and economic liberalization across the Middle East.

By the middle of the second term of the Bush administration, transformation had given way to a much more modest strategy. In places like Egypt and Libya, the emphasis was on trying to replicate the Taiwan model: to have elderly autocrats lay the foundations for liberalizing heirs to undertake reforms. Hopes for change now rested with Gamal Mubarak in Egypt and Saif-al-Islam Gadhafi in Libya being able to take the reins of power. This strategy continued during the first years of the Obama administration, and Gamal Mubarak, in particular, was winning accolades from the West for his efforts to promote a more open, free-market oriented economy in Egypt.

The sudden outbreak of the Arab Spring forced a change in plans. Now the emphasis was on promoting a managed transition, where the existing rulers might agree to an orderly handover of power, a scenario that guided U.S. policy most closely in Yemen, where the long-standing president, Ali Abdullah Saleh, handed over power to his vice-president, Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi, in late-2011. For a time, this seemed to be the U.S. approach in Egypt as well, and the comments of President Barack Obama's special envoy to Egypt, Frank Wisner, seemed to confirm that Washington would throw its weight behind a transition managed in Egypt by Mubarak's vice president and the military.

Instead, the decision was made to embrace "people power" in Tahrir Square—and the launch of the fourth strategy for Egypt—taking a gamble that a *modus vivendi* could be found

with the Muslim Brotherhood. Washington's pressure on the military to allow full and free elections meant that the Brotherhood, as the most organized political force in the country, would end up being the likely beneficiary, and in return the Obama administration hoped that the Brotherhood, once in power, would preserve most aspects of U.S.-Egypt cooperation and would be prepared to share power with other groups. Contrary to some early predictions, the government of Mohammed Morsi did not abrogate the Egyptian peace treaty with Israel, nor did it seek to interrupt relations with the United States, although it did move to distance itself to some extent from Washington. In some areas, notably in calls for the international community to offer substantive aid to the anti-Assad opposition in Syria, the Morsi government found itself in partial agreement with U.S. policy preferences. However, there were also troubling signs that Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood were not fully committed to democratic principles and were prepared to act as if their narrow margins of victory at the polls gave them carte blanche to remake Egyptian society. From late-2012 onward, there were rumblings from the military and from other political and economic groups that Morsi was moving in a more authoritarian direction. On July 3, the Egyptian military suspended the constitution and removed Morsi from office. This decision opened up real fault lines in Washington. Some, like Wisner, have argued that the military acted on behalf of a silent majority of Egyptians. Some members of Congress have argued that the Muslim Brotherhood was using democratic processes to create a nondemocratic regime, and that the army's decision to remove Morsi gives Egypt another chance at creating a secular democracy. Others, starting with Sen. John McCain, have called the army's action a

coup d'etat, a removal of a democratically elected government, and argue that aid should be suspended until a new government empowered by popular election returns to power.

The administration seems caught in a quandary. A formal declaration that a coup has occurred would, by U.S. law, trigger an automatic suspension of aid. However, U.S. aid is not proffered out of any sense of altruism but as a means to secure concrete benefits for U.S. national security, starting with maintaining the Camp David Accords but also including U.S. overflight rights and priority use of the Suez Canal for U.S. warships—both critical elements of America's ability to rapidly project power in the region. At the same time, the army's crackdown on protesters—resulting in large numbers of civilian casualties—is deeply disturbing to Washington and raises troubling questions about America's double standards. Some Russians, for instance, have questioned U.S. criticisms of Moscow's assistance to Bashar al-Assad in Syria while U.S. aid to the Egyptian military remains unsuspended. (In an attempt to split the difference, U.S. aid may now be officially placed "on hold" but not formally cut off.)

Now the Obama administration must choose what strategy to follow. Push for a restoration of the Morsi government and be prepared to cut off aid to Egypt if this is not forthcoming, in the hopes that strategy No. 4 can be revived—or shift gears once again and go back to a variant of the third strategy, namely supporting a military-led transition even if it leads to more deaths in the short term, as being more likely to produce a liberal government that will remain pro-American. Hesitant to make this choice, it seems that the United States will oscillate between these two options—an approach that is only likely to guarantee that whoever comes to power in Cairo in the future

will be anti-American.

Nikolas K. Gvosdev is the former editor of the National Interest and a frequent foreign policy commentator in both the print and broadcast media. He is currently on the faculty of the U.S. Naval War College. The views expressed are his own and do not reflect those of the Navy or the U.S. government.

Article 3.

NYT

Foreign Policy by Whisper and Nudge

Thomas L. Friedman

August 24, 2013 -- IF you follow the commentary on American foreign policy toward Egypt and the broader Middle East today, several themes stand out: People in the region argue: “Whatever went wrong, the United States is to blame.” Foreign policy experts argue: “Whatever President Obama did, he got it wrong.” And the American public is saying: “We’re totally fed up with that part of the world and can’t wait for the start of the N.F.L. season. How do you like those 49ers?”

There is actually a logic to all three positions.

It starts with the huge difference between cold-war and post-cold-war foreign policy. During the cold war, American foreign

policy “was all about how we affect the external behavior of states,” said Michael Mandelbaum, the Johns Hopkins University foreign affairs expert. We were ready to overlook the internal behavior of states, both because we needed them as allies in the cold war and because, with the Russians poised on the other side, any intervention could escalate into a superpower confrontation.

Post-cold-war foreign policy today is largely about “affecting the internal composition and governance of states,” added Mandelbaum, many of which in the Middle East are failing and threaten us more by their collapse into ungoverned regions — not by their strength or ability to project power.

But what we’ve learned in Bosnia, Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq, Egypt and Syria is that it is very hard to change another country’s internal behavior — especially at a cost and in a time frame that the American public will tolerate — because it requires changing a country’s political culture and getting age-old adversaries to reconcile.

The primary foreign policy tools that served us so well in the cold war, said Mandelbaum, “guns, money, and rhetoric — simply don’t work for these new tasks. It is like trying to open a can with a sponge.”

To help another country change internally requires a mix of refereeing, policing, coaching, incentivizing, arm-twisting and modeling — but even all of that cannot accomplish the task and make a country’s transformation self-sustaining, unless the people themselves want to take charge of the process.

In Iraq, George W. Bush removed Saddam Hussein, who had

been governing that country vertically, from the top-down, with an iron fist. Bush tried to create the conditions through which Iraqis could govern themselves horizontally, by having the different communities write their own social contract on how to live together. It worked, albeit imperfectly, as long as U.S. troops were there to referee. But once we left, no coterie of Iraqi leaders emerged to assume ownership of that process in an inclusive manner and thereby make it self-sustaining.

Ditto Libya, where President Obama removed Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi's top-down, iron-fisted regime, but he declined to put U.S. troops on the ground to midwife a new social contract. The result: Libya today is no more stable, or self-sustainingly democratic, than Iraq. It just cost us less to fail there. In both cases, we created an opening for change, but the local peoples have not made it sustainable.

Hence the three reactions I cited above. People of the region often blame us, because they either will not or cannot accept their own responsibility for putting things right. Or, if they do, they don't see a way to forge the necessary societal compromises, because their rival factions take the view either that "I am weak, how can I compromise?" or "I am strong, why should I compromise?"

As for blaming Obama — for leaving Iraq too soon or not going more deeply into Libya or Syria — it grows out of the same problem. Some liberals want to "do something" in places like Libya and Syria; they just don't want to do what is necessary, which would be a long-term occupation to remake the culture and politics of both places. And conservative hawks who want to intervene just don't understand how hard it is to remake the

culture and politics in such places, where freedom, equality and justice for all are not universal priorities, because some people want to be “free” to be more Islamist or more sectarian.

“With the traditional tools of foreign policy, we can stop some bad things from happening, but we cannot make good things happen,” noted Mandelbaum.

For instance, if it is proved that Syria has used chemical weapons, American officials are rightly considering using cruise missiles to punish Syria. But we have no hope of making Syria united, democratic and inclusive without a much bigger involvement and without the will of a majority of Syrians.

And too often we forget that the people in these countries are not just objects. They are subjects; they have agency. South Africa had a moderate postapartheid experience because of Nelson Mandela and F.W. de Klerk. Japan rebuilt itself as a modern nation in the late 19th century because its leaders recognized their country was lagging behind the West and asked themselves, “What’s wrong with us?” Outsiders can amplify such positive trends, but the local people have to want to own it.

As that reality has sunk in, so has another reality, which the American public intuits: Our rising energy efficiency, renewable energy, hydraulic fracturing and horizontal drilling are making us much less dependent on the Middle East for oil and gas. The Middle East has gone from an addiction to a distraction.

Imagine that five years ago someone had said to you: “In 2013, Egypt, Libya, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen and Iraq will all be in varying states of political turmoil or outright civil war; what do you think the price of crude will be?” You’d surely have

answered, “At least \$200 a barrel.”

But it’s half that — for a reason: “We now use 60 percent less energy per unit of G.D.P. than we did in 1973,” explained the energy economist Philip Verleger. “If the trend continues, we will use half the energy per unit of G.D.P. in 2020 that we used in 2012. To make matters better, a large part of the energy used will be renewable. Then there is the increase in oil and gas production.” In 2006, the United States depended on foreign oil for 60 percent of its consumption. Today it’s about 36 percent. True, oil is a global market, so what happens in the Middle East can still impact us and our allies. But the urgency is gone. “The Middle East is China’s problem,” added Verleger.

Obama knows all of this. He just can’t say it. But it does explain why his foreign policy is mostly “nudging” and whispering. It is not very satisfying, not very much fun and won’t make much history, but it’s probably the best we can do or afford right now. And it’s certainly all that most Americans want.

[Article 4.](#)

[Los Angeles Times](#)

A report card for U.S. policy in the Mideast

Aaron David Miller

August 25, 2013 -- Think the United States is fairing badly in the Middle East? Convinced that our policy is chaotic, confused and contradictory, from North Africa to the Persian Gulf?

Think again. It may not be politically correct to admit it, but when it comes to furthering America's core national interests, Washington isn't doing badly at all. And here's why.

Defining U.S. national interests is a critically important task, and not enough attention is paid to it. If you don't know where you're going, the old saw goes, any road will get you there. And we've seen the consequences of that in Afghanistan and Iraq.

America's interests in the Middle East have changed over the years. But in 2013, in addition to ensuring the security of Israel, the U.S. has five vital ones and a couple that are less so. Here's the report card on them:

Getting out of Iraq and Afghanistan early: A-

The two longest and among the most profitless in U.S. history, these two wars have claimed more than 6,000 U.S. dead; tens of thousands wounded, many grievously; billions of dollars expended; and shattered credibility from one end of the Middle East to the other. The process of extrication isn't pretty, nor is what America will leave behind. But leaving is crucial. Considering what the U.S. sacrificed and what we've gotten in return, we stayed far longer than necessary.

Preventing an attack at home: A-

The organizing principle of a nation's foreign policy is to protect the homeland. Despite a few near misses and some deadly and tragic lone-wolf attacks since 9/11, the efforts of the Bush and Obama administrations have prevented another Al Qaeda spectacular against the U.S. at home. This is no small accomplishment given the vast size of the country, its

vulnerabilities and the determination of a number of groups emanating from the Middle East and South Asia to inflict catastrophic damage on the United States.

Reducing U.S. dependence on Arab hydrocarbons: B

In 2011, the U.S. imported 45% of the liquid fuels it used, down from 60% just six years earlier. As energy guru Daniel Yergin points out, a new oil order is emerging. And for the U.S., that means the rise of Western Hemispheric energy at the expense of the Middle East. Between new oil in Brazil, oil-sands production in Canada and shale-gas technology here at home, by 2020 we could cut our dependence on non-Western Hemisphere oil by half. Combine that with the rise in national oil production and greater focus on fuel efficiency and conservation, and the trend lines are at least running in the right direction.

Preventing Iran from getting a nuke: I for incomplete

There's only one thing worse than Iran with nukes, and that's actually going to war with Tehran to prevent it and failing. Therein lies the Obama administration's conundrum. Sanctions have hurt and to a degree imposed a serious cost on Iran. The question for 2013 and beyond is whether diplomacy and the threat of force will be able to bring Iran to the table and to a negotiated deal. The fact is, had the shah not been toppled by the mullahs, Iran would have already been a nuclear power, albeit a pro-Western one. And without changing the government, the best the West is likely to do is to keep the Iranians several years away from weaponizing.

But given the fact that only one country can stop Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons (Iran itself, if it concludes that the

cost of acquisition is too high a price to pay), it's hard to see how the Obama administration can do much more than outline clearly what Iran has to give up and what it will gain if it does.

In addition to these objectives, we have two more discretionary interests: brokering Arab-Israeli peace and supporting democratization in the Arab world. They are discretionary not because they lack importance but because America's capacity to significantly shape their outcomes is limited without local ownership and resolve. Whether it's the Syrian civil war or the recent violence and turmoil in Egypt, these are long movies that will take years to play out. And America is not the central actor.

As Secretary of State John F. Kerry's recent effort has shown, the Israeli-Palestinian issue still offers a greater possibility for a consequential role. But that depends almost entirely on whether Israel and the Palestinian Authority come to own their negotiations and really want to get something done.

That America's report card looks pretty good doesn't mean we should be happy about the current state of affairs. U.S. credibility and its image in the Middle East have taken a real beating. And our policy on the so-called Arab Spring, or what's left of it, is pretty much at sea, largely because we can't shape the internal dynamics of these societies.

Still, on many things that really count and those we can actually affect, the situation isn't as gloomy as many suppose. We are now less bogged down in the Middle East than ever before. That growing independence — along with a recognition that there are limits to U.S. power and we can't fix everything — is a good thing. And it couldn't have come at a better time, particularly for a nation whose own house is so badly in need of repair.

NYT

Pressure Rises on Hamas as Patrons' Support Fades

Jodi Rudoren

August 23, 2013 -- Gaza City — The tumult roiling the Arab world had already severed the lifeline between the Palestinian militant group Hamas and two of its most important patrons, Iran and Syria.

Now, the dismantling of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood by the new military-backed government that ousted the Islamist president has Hamas reeling without crucial economic and diplomatic support. Over the past two weeks, a "crisis cell" of ministers has met daily. With Gaza's economy facing a \$250 million shortfall since Egypt shut down hundreds of smuggling tunnels, the Hamas government has begun to ration some resources.

Its leaders have even mulled publicly what for years would have been unthinkable — inviting the presidential guard loyal to rival Fatah back to help keep the border with Egypt open. (They quickly recanted.)

The mounting pressure on Hamas has implications beyond the 141 square miles of this coastal strip that it has ruled since 2007.

It could serve to strengthen President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority and his more moderate Fatah faction that dominates the West Bank just as Washington-orchestrated peace talks get under way. It also adds another volatile element to the rapidly changing landscape across the region, where sectarian tensions have led to bloodshed and the Islamists' rise to power through the ballot box has been blocked.

“Now, Hamas is an orphan,” said Akram Atallah, a political analyst and columnist, referring to the fact that the movement sprang from Egypt's Brotherhood a quarter century ago. “Hamas was dreaming and going up with its dreams that the Islamists were going to take over in all the capitals. Those dreams have been dashed.”

The tide of the Arab Spring initially buoyed Hamas, helping bolster Iran and Syria, which provided the Gazan leadership weapons and cash, while undermining President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, who was deeply distrustful and hostile to the group. But Hamas eventually sided with the Sunni opposition in the civil war in Syria — alienating President Bashar al-Assad and his Iranian backers. That was offset when Mr. Mubarak was replaced by Mohamed Morsi, a Muslim Brotherhood leader and ideological ally who relaxed the borders and brokered talks between Hamas and the hostile West as well as its Palestinian rivals.

With Egypt's military crackdown, Mr. Morsi in detention and the Brotherhood leadership either locked up, dead or in hiding, smuggling between Gaza and Egypt has come to a virtual halt. That means no access to building materials, fuel that costs less than half as much as that imported from Israel, and many other

cheap commodities Gazans had come to rely on.

Egypt kept the Rafah crossing point closed for days — stranding thousands of students, business people, medical patients, foreigners and Gazans who live abroad. Adding to Hamas's isolation, the new emir of Qatar, another benefactor, is said to be far less a fan than his father and predecessor.

In interviews here this week, as well as in public speeches, several Hamas leaders insisted that the Egypt crisis makes repairing the Palestinian rift more urgent. Instead, it already appears more elusive, with the loss of Cairo as the host and broker for reconciliation talks.

Seizing on its opponent's weakness, the Fatah Revolutionary Council plans to consider declaring Gaza a "rebel province" at a leadership meeting Sunday with President Abbas, which would tighten the noose by curtailing Palestinian Authority financing of operations in the strip. Officials in Fatah and Hamas said that both have increased arrests of the other's operatives in recent weeks. The Hamas leaders here blame Fatah for what they call a "vicious campaign" against them in the Egyptian news media.

"You can feel the heat because of what's happening in Egypt," said Ahmed Yousef, a former aide to Ismail Haniya, the Hamas prime minister of Gaza, who now runs a Gaza research group called House of Wisdom. "The tense relations between Gaza and Ramallah has been intensified. Everybody is suspicious."

In separate interviews this week, three senior Hamas leaders — Ziad el-Zaza, the finance minister and deputy prime minister; Ghazi Hamad, who handles foreign affairs; and Mahmoud al-Zahar, a hard-liner — said they were taking a "wait and see"

approach to Egypt, hoping that perhaps the tide could turn their way. They imagined that a public backlash against what they called a coup could yet lead to the Brotherhood's resurgence.

“Our policy right now is to keep the people quiet,” Mr. Zahar said. “We have to keep our people highly immunized against the extreme attitude.”

Mr. el-Zaza, the finance minister, declined to say what spending was being cut beyond the use of government cars and expense accounts. All three said Hamas had been through worse: Israeli bombings and assassinations, exiles from Arab capitals, months-long closures of the Rafah crossing during Mr. Mubarak's reign. “The region is in labor,” Mr. Hamad said. “It's a time of difficulty, time of challenges.”

The opposition here has been emboldened by the events across the border. A new youth movement called Tamarod — Arabic for rebellion — after an Egyptian group that helped bring down Mr. Morsi, released a YouTube video urging the overthrow of Hamas and a Facebook page calling for mass demonstrations on Nov. 11. An engineering student who is among the group's founders and spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals said that Hamas had detained at least 50 of Tamarod's Facebook fans this week, and that he and several others had been jailed, placed under house arrest and had their mobile phones and computers seized. “Maybe Hamas leaders are afraid of what happened in Egypt,” he said.

Several experts said toppling Hamas would be tough. Unlike the Brotherhood, Hamas controls the security forces and service institutions in Gaza as well as its politics. And so far, the rhythm of life appeared to carry on.

Qatar-financed workers were widening the main north-south road this week. Kiosks were crammed with cartoon-character backpacks ahead of school opening on Sunday. The Ferris wheel at a Hamas-run amusement park continued to turn. But at the Rafah crossing, hundreds of desperate would-be travelers waited in vain for days. The gleaming, air-conditioned terminal opened last year was empty but for a handful of Hamas workers watching Al-Jazeera, its baggage carousel idle, a sign flashing “Welcome to Gaza” to nobody.

Egypt reopened the border on a limited basis Saturday, after not allowing anyone to leave since Aug. 15, after the government’s deadly raids on two Islamist protest camps.

While Gazans have suffered from intermittent Rafah closures for years, this time many dismissed the ostensible security rationale and saw it as collective political punishment.

“The governments are fighting, and we pay the price,” said Ahmed Muqat, 20, who was trying to get back to medical school in Turkey. “Things are going from worse to worse.”

Dalia Radi, 22, got married Aug. 15, but instead of a honeymoon, spent the week sitting on plastic chairs in a parking lot outside the crossing. For Ms. Radi, whose new husband has lived in Norway for six years, it would have been her first time leaving Gaza.

For Mayy Jawadeh, a 21-year-old student at the University of Tunisia, it may be the last.

“I will never come back again to Gaza,” Ms. Jawadeh said. “Here, no rights for humans — no electricity, no water, you

can't travel. Hamas interferes in Egypt and we bear the brunt.”

Fares Akram contributed reporting from the Gaza Strip, and Said Ghazali from the West Bank.

[Article 6.](#)

The New York Times

In Syria, America Loses if Either Side Wins

Edward N. Luttwak

August 24 - ON Wednesday, reports surfaced of a mass chemical-weapons attack in the Damascus suburbs that human rights activists claim killed hundreds of civilians, bringing Syria's continuing civil war back onto the White House's foreign policy radar, even as the crisis in Egypt worsens.

But the Obama administration should resist the temptation to intervene more forcefully in Syria's civil war. A victory by either side would be equally undesirable for the United States.

At this point, a prolonged stalemate is the only outcome that would not be damaging to American interests.

Indeed, it would be disastrous if President Bashar al-Assad's regime were to emerge victorious after fully suppressing the

rebellion and restoring its control over the entire country. Iranian money, weapons and operatives and Hezbollah troops have become key factors in the fighting, and Mr. Assad's triumph would dramatically affirm the power and prestige of Shiite Iran and Hezbollah, its Lebanon-based proxy — posing a direct threat both to the Sunni Arab states and to Israel.

But a rebel victory would also be extremely dangerous for the United States and for many of its allies in Europe and the Middle East. That's because extremist groups, some identified with Al Qaeda, have become the most effective fighting force in Syria. If those rebel groups manage to win, they would almost certainly try to form a government hostile to the United States. Moreover, Israel could not expect tranquillity on its northern border if the jihadis were to triumph in Syria.

Things looked far less gloomy when the rebellion began two years ago. At the time, it seemed that Syrian society as a whole had emerged from the grip of fear to demand an end to Mr. Assad's dictatorship. Back then, it was realistic to hope that moderates of one sort or another would replace the Assad regime, because they make up a large share of the population. It was also reasonable to expect that the fighting would not last long, because neighboring Turkey, a much larger country with a powerful army and a long border with Syria, would exert its power to end the war.

Edward N. Luttwak is a senior associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and the author of "Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace."

The National Interest

Between Russia and China, a Demographic Time Bomb

Taylor Washburn

August 23, 2013 -- In his recent commentary, "The Avoidable Russia-China Romance [3]," Nikolas Gvosdev provides a strong case that despite recent examples of teamwork between the two powers, a sustained collaboration is hardly inevitable. Gvosdev focuses on the ways in which the United States can limit the risk that a "Eurasian entente" will arise in the near term, refuting the notion that such an alignment is historically determined.

Regarding the Sino-Russian relationship through a wider temporal lens not only reinforces Gvosdev's conclusion, but suggests that the tide of history may begin to drag the two nations towards contention rather than conspiracy. Recent instances of tactical and diplomatic cooperation between Beijing and Moscow show why Washington should remain open to working with each, yet these initiatives also hide an obstacle in the path to partnership. Set when Russia acquired a portion of Manchuria in the nineteenth century, a demographic time-bomb may bring any marriage of convenience to an unhappy end.

In the grand scope of Chinese history, Russia's presence in

Northeast Asia is a recent development. Until the reign of Ivan III, which ended in 1505, Muscovy held less than 3 percent of present-day Russia, and it was not until 1639, at the end of the European Age of Discovery, that Russian explorers would first reach the Sea of Okhotsk. Russia arrived in the region in an era of tumult, as the sinking Ming Dynasty tried to contain a peasant rebellion and stave off waves of incursions by Manchu horsemen, who finally captured Beijing in 1644, establishing the dynasty that would become known as the Qing.

During the late seventeenth century, Cossacks would clash with Manchu forces along the Amur River, which today separates the Russian Far East from the northeastern Chinese provinces of Heilongjiang and Jilin. The Manchus mostly got the best of the interlopers, and the first Sino-Russian treaty, signed in 1689, awarded the Qing territory north of the Amur in exchange for Russian traders' access to Chinese markets. Henceforth, Moscow would adopt a canny strategy of free-riding, slowly advancing when the Qing faced other external or internal threats, but it would need to wait nearly two centuries, until China's final imperial dynasty had entered its death spiral, to capture all of coastal Manchuria.

In contemporary China, it is known as the "century of humiliation": the period starting with Britain's victory in the First Opium War in 1842 and lasting at least until Mao Zedong's declaration of the People's Republic in 1949. Beginning in the 1850s, Russians seized advantage of Chinese disarray to pressure the Qing's northern frontier, from restive Muslim Xinjiang in the west to the Amur River in the east. Two "unequal treaties" in 1858 and 1860 gave Russia more land than it had conceded to the Manchus two hundred years earlier,

including the vast region then called Outer Manchuria. The southern part of this concession would become Russia's maritime province, Primorsky Krai, where the city of Vladivostok ("Ruler of the East") was chartered in 1880.

The century that followed Moscow's "Amur annexation" introduced dramatic changes to Northeast Asia's political landscape, but did not erase Chinese resentment over this lost territory, which was to become a significant irritant during the Sino-Soviet split. What started as an ideological dispute between the world's two largest communist states led to a set of border clashes, the most explosive of which occurred along an Amur River tributary in 1969. Five years earlier, Mao had infuriated Moscow when he told visiting Japanese reporters that much of the Russian Far East was stolen land; now, he instructed Chinese premier Zhou Enlai to press this inflammatory line in emergency talks with his Soviet counterpart. The risk of war passed despite Beijing's provocative rhetoric, but Chinese bitterness did not—as Henry Kissinger would learn during his first meeting with Deng Xiaoping in 1974, when the topic of a U.S.-Soviet arms summit in Vladivostok prompted the future Chinese leader to lecture him on Russian rapacity.

Considering this background, as well as China's unresolved boundary disputes with other neighbors, it is remarkable that Beijing and Moscow have since been able to settle all their territorial differences. Although the decisive round of border talks started before the formal disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Kremlin's unfamiliar weakness vis-a-vis Beijing helped to shape their outcome. Some western spats were removed from the table by the independence of the Central

Asian states, but disputes over small pieces of land along the Manchurian frontier were generally resolved in China's favor. Beijing, for its part, did not contest the basic validity of the "unequal treaties" of 1858 and 1860, leaving the Russian Far East untainted by controversy.

Such, at any rate, goes the official line. For although China currently maintains no claims to Russian land, many in Moscow remain [4] convinced that Beijing has not given up on the Far East forever. Fueling Russian fear is a fantastic population imbalance and [5]a wave of illegal Chinese immigration [5] which could eventually render European Russians a regional minority. With 110 million residents—and 65 million in the border provinces of Heilongjiang and Jilin alone—the northeast holds only 8 percent China's population but is more than three quarters the size of Russia's, which is heavily concentrated west of the Ural Mountains. With around 6 million people, the Russian Far East is among the most vacant places on earth and is only growing emptier, as [6]nationwide demographic collapse [6] is compounded by out-migration. Endowed with oil, gas, coal and timber, the region is the opposite of nearby China: rich in resources while starved for labor and capital.

Thus, although Moscow and Beijing recently staged their [7]largest-ever joint naval drill [7] off the coast of Primorsky Krai, Russia has continued to run exercises which appear to be aimed at China—including a 2010 ground drill tailored to repel an invasion by an unnamed foe resembling the People's Liberation Army, and [8]massive war games [8] held just last month. In addition, the Kremlin has maintained its time-honored partnership with India, and has also sought to improve ties with China's archnemesis Japan, [9]pledging to negotiate a long-

delayed World War II peace treaty [9], which would not only sow the seeds for additional Japanese investment in Far East oil and gas fields, but could provide a hedge against Chinese economic and military coercion.

The idea that Beijing might march on Vladivostok is obviously far fetched, but it is not terribly hard to imagine well-placed hawks musing about the legitimacy of Russia's borders if the two powers should find themselves at odds, just as Mao and Zhou did in the 1960s. (In a more recent example of such irredentist escalation, scholars at a state-backed Chinese think tank [10]questioned Japan's claim to Okinawa [10].) Indeed, far beyond Manchuria, possible sparks already abound: from Central Asia, where booming trade with China threatens to erode Moscow's traditional sphere of influence, to the South China Sea, where Russia has worked closely with Vietnam to develop and safeguard energy resources claimed by Beijing. "In the parts of the world that matter to them most," [11]Jeffrey Mankoff has noted [11], "Russia and China are more rivals than allies."

The fact that it would be self-defeating for Beijing to undermine one of its greatest diplomatic achievements of the last several decades by resurrecting the treaties of 1858 and 1860 is one reason to think the issue will remain interred. At the same time, however, China has exhibited a perplexing tendency to poke its neighbors in the eyes, a strategy some experts have dubbed "self-containment [12]." Even since 2010, when Beijing's aggressive posture in its near abroad produced a significant diplomatic backlash, China has continued to press and provoke. This year alone, Beijing has [13]heightened the stakes [13] in a dangerous standoff with Tokyo over the Senkaku Islands, and Chinese

patrols have [14]repeatedly strayed across the line of control [14] in areas disputed with India. While Chinese nationalists loathed the Manchu Qing in the early twentieth century, they are now inclined to embrace its capacious borders—and if Beijing’s hawks grow louder in an era of slowing growth, some may recall the Russian indignities that Mao and Deng never forgot.

Needless to say, none of this promises an immediate end to Russo-Chinese collusion, nor does it obviate the need for Washington to pursue pragmatic policies designed to avert such a partnership. Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping will continue to seek common ground, if only as a result of their shared discomfort in an international system built and maintained by the United States and its allies. As Leslie Gelb and The National Interest publisher Dimitri Simes [15]noted in [15]The New York Times [15]last month [15], both nations “appear to have decided that, to better advance their own interests, they need to knock Washington down a peg or two.” Especially on the UN Security Council, the two authoritarian powers will continue taking positions that reflect their interest in curtailing American influence and thwarting what they each view as meddling in sovereign nations’ internal affairs.

On the other hand, relentless demographic trends in Northeast Asia suggest that any collaboration between Moscow and Beijing will operate under a cloud, which could grow darker as China’s relative military strength increases. Even if Chinese leaders try to reassure Moscow that its hold on the Far East is secure, both states surely know that the growth of the region’s Chinese population amidst Russian decline may place the other in a bind, with nationalist pressure setting constraints on compromise. While Putin and Xi grip and grin, the demographic

time-bomb between them is ticking—and if it goes off, a shared suspicion of the United States may prove a brittle bond.

Taylor Washburn is a lawyer studying at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, and was previously a visiting professor at the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology.