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Article 1.

Spiegel

## **Cairo's Balancing Act**

**Ulrike Putz**

**11/16/2012 – Beirut -- The outbreak of Israeli-Palestinian violence poses a delicate diplomatic challenge for the Egyptian government. While the powerful Muslim Brotherhood is sympathetic to Hamas and public anger is swelling in Egypt against the Israeli military operation in Gaza, President Morsi is also under international pressure to help broker a ceasefire and safeguard peace in the region.**

**Egyptian Prime Minister Hisham Kandil spent three hours visiting the Gaza Strip on Friday morning. Despite agreeing to a ceasefire during Kandil's brief visit with Hamas leaders, Israeli air strikes continued there, while Hamas fired further rockets at Israel.**

**Three days into what Israel is calling "Operation Pillar of Defense" the prime minister traveled to the region to mediate a truce between Israel and Hamas. A further reason Egyptian President Mohammed Morsi -- a former Muslim Brotherhood leader -- dispatched the prime**

**minister to Gaza was to show solidarity with the Palestinian people.**

**It remains to be seen if Kandil's efforts to broker a ceasefire will be successful. But his very presence in Gaza is evidence that Egyptian President Morsi is acutely concerned about the ramifications, particularly in light of the Arab Spring, of this latest flare-up in Israeli-Palestinian violence.**

### **Changing Power Structures**

**The current conflict recalls the war of 2008-2009, when Jerusalem chose to retaliate with a military strike against continued rocket and mortar fire from Gaza shortly after a US election and just months ahead of an election in its own country.**

**But there has been a shift in power structures since 2008. When "Operation Cast Lead" was launched, Egypt was still led by its long-standing despot, President Hosni Mubarak, a friend to Israel in its fight against the Palestinian Islamists he himself had reason to fear, and a staunch upholder of the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty signed in 1979.**

**In 2007, when Hamas seized power, he ignored the plight of the civilian population and closed Egypt's border to Gaza --**

**shrugging off the objections of the Egyptian people.**

**Morsi is taking a different approach. His power base is sympathetic to the Palestinians and to Hamas, and he cannot afford to ignore their demands.**

**Hence Morsi's condemnation of the murder of Hamas' military leader Ahmed Jabari on Wednesday and of Israel's ongoing assault on the Gaza Strip. Cairo recalled its ambassador from Tel Aviv the same day, with Morsi urging both the UN Security Council and the Arab League to react immediately.**

**Hamas welcomed Egypt's response. "This is a new Egypt," said Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh on Thursday. But for many in Egypt, Morsi has not gone far enough. Thousands took to the streets of Cairo on Thursday calling on the government to take a stronger stance against its neighbor.**

#### **A Diplomatic Balancing Act**

**Cairo's western allies have made it clear that they expect Egypt to exert diplomatic influence on Hamas. Whether or not Morsi manages to bridge the gap between the expectations of his supporters and the demands of Egypt's international alliance policies will indicate where Cairo's Muslim**

**Brotherhood is planning to position itself in the Middle East's political landscape.**

**On Friday, the Egyptian media reported that Kandil was planning to present Hamas with a ceasefire plan which foresees Egypt committing itself to opening its Rafah border crossing with Gaza to goods. For the time being, it is only open to people, which means that Israel controls imports into Gaza -- and therefore, effectively, the entire economy of territories that are home to 1.5 million Palestinians.**

**If Hamas has its way, this will change. The Islamists will only be able to remain in power if the economic situation in Gaza improves. An open border with Egypt and a reliable market for products "Made in Gaza" would guarantee the movement's political survival. Some observers assume that Hamas renewed its firing of rockets on Israel in summer specifically in order to provoke an Israeli offensive, in the hope that it would end with a ceasefire with more favorable terms.**

**According to Egyptian media reports, Morsi's plan is to take Hamas to task on the Sinai question in return for opening the Rafah border crossing. The Sinai Peninsula is home to extremists, some of whom have**

**ties to al-Qaida, which poses a growing problem for Egypt. It would be in Cairo's interest if Hamas relinquished its support of these Islamist militias.**

**On Wednesday, Israel launched an assault against targets in the Gaza Strip which has already claimed 20 Palestinian lives. Its aim is to stop Palestinian rocket attacks on Israel. In recent days, hundreds of rockets have rained down on the south of the country, killing 3 Israelis. On Friday, as Hamas militants in Gaza said they had fired long-range rockets at Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, Israel appeared to be edging closer to a ground invasion, with the army calling up 16,000 reservists.**

Article 2.

**Foreign Policy**

## **A Pillar of Problems**

**Jonathan Schanzer**

**November 16, 2012 -- Israel's Operation Pillar of Defense, after three days of air strikes on Hamas targets in Gaza, could be entering into a new phase of a larger ground invasion. While the war has been**

**dissected six ways to Sunday, there are still gaping holes in our understanding of it, and several questions remain unanswered. Here are eight of them.**

**1. Was there an Israeli intelligence failure? There is reason to believe that the Israelis were surprised that so many Iranian-made Fajr-5 missiles had found their way into Gaza. Of course, the Israelis cannot account for every single item smuggled through the tunnels connecting the Sinai Peninsula to the Gaza Strip. And the Israelis appear to know exactly what they are hunting for. But the existence of these rockets -- which one senior Israeli intelligence official calls "game changers" -- is a red line for the Israelis. The very fact that they made it into Gaza without being intercepted or destroyed, and that some have subsequently been fired deep into Israeli territory, represents a failure on some level. This could prompt an official inquiry in Israel, where the brass put a premium on learning from mistakes.**

**2. Did Turkey, Qatar, and Egypt ever have a handle on Hamas? In recent months, Turkey, Qatar, and Egypt, all closely aligned with the Muslim Brotherhood, have drawn closer to Hamas, which is itself a**

**splinter of that group. These three governments have, in one way or another, been working to politically rehabilitate the Islamist movement and integrate it into the new regional order of the Arab Spring. From all appearances, Washington tacitly approved of this; it certainly did not publicly oppose it. The assumption was that, in light of a precipitous drop in Iranian financing and Hamas' subsequent departure from its headquarters in Syria, the group was perhaps prepared to evolve into a more pragmatic entity. With this recent round of violence, and the use of Iranian long-range missiles, we can draw two broad conclusions: Either Hamas' new patrons are behind its latest violence, or they were blindsided by it. If the latter, did they ever have Hamas under control?**

**3. Did Iran ever relinquish its grip on Hamas? To put it another way, the reports of the demise of the Axis of Resistance (Iran-Syria-Hamas) may have been greatly exaggerated. The ties between Iran and Hamas' military apparatus, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, date back to the early 1990s, when Hamas trained in Sudan with Iranian cooperation and assistance. With the knowledge that Iranian Fajr-5 missiles**

**made their way to Hamas, it is reasonable to wonder if Iran ever left the scene.**

**4. Did the Israelis target a cache of Fajr-5's in Sudan? Speaking of Sudan, it is widely believed that the Israeli Air Force targeted an Iranian weapons factory in Khartoum last month. Were the Israelis targeting Fajr-5 rockets there? Sudan has long been known to serve as a point of origin for Middle East smuggling routes delivering weapons to Gaza. After that operation, it is possible that Israel realized that a number of those "game-changer" missiles had already reached Gaza, suggesting the aforementioned intelligence failure. Was Gaza part two of a two-part operation that began in Sudan?**

**5. Will Hamas Upstage the PLO? Even with an arsenal of more lethal rockets in its possession, Hamas has no way of winning a war with Israel. If past is prologue, Hamas' leaders know that drawing Israel into conflict will elicit punishing reprisals. So why bother? One plausible explanation is that the war is just as much about Hamas' domestic arch-rivals, the PLO, as it is about Israel. The PLO is preparing to upgrade its mission at the United Nations later this month, and in the process,**

**claiming to speak for the Palestinian people as a whole. This current round of violence steals the thunder of the PLO; has anyone even talked about the U.N. maneuver since this round of violence erupted? It also sends a pointed message: while the PLO concocts crafty legal schemes in New York, Hamas is doing battle with Israel in the name of the Palestinian cause. Was this the intended message? If so, Washington needs to be paying closer attention to what's happening on the ground.**

**6. Where's Washington? Despite long-standing tensions between President Barack Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the White House has come out in full support of the Israeli operation in Gaza, citing Israel's right to respond to the hundreds of rockets that Hamas and other jihadis have fired off in recent days. Admittedly, many administration officials appear to be in Asia right now, but the overall message is a green light for Israel. How long will this support last?**

**7. Will this impact the Israeli elections in January? Netanyahu detractors charge that the Israeli leader is using the operation in**

**Gaza as a means of increasing voter support ahead of the upcoming elections. In reality, Bibi is the front-runner by a wide margin, and scarcely needs to rally the Israeli public around the flag. If anything, military missteps could weaken his position. As a shrewd student of Israeli politics, Bibi has undoubtedly been weighing the costs of the Gaza operation every step of the way. The Israeli voting public will tell him how he did in about two months' time.**

**8. Can a ceasefire last? On Friday, Israel's ambassador to Washington, Michael Oren, stated that the Israelis had knocked out most of the long-range missiles they were hunting, indicating that perhaps the primary mission had been accomplished. The Israelis say they want a ceasefire, even as they call up 75,000 ground troops. They say it all depends on Hamas halting the rocket fire. But even if the two primary actors agree, will the other factions in Gaza acquiesce? The Iran-sponsored Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Popular Resistance Committees, along with Salafi groups and even the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade -- a splinter of the secular Fatah faction under PLO leader Mahmoud Abbas -- have been**

**firing rockets on a freelance basis. Will they continue to fire on Israel even if Hamas halts? If so, the conflict could last a lot longer.**

*Jonathan Schanzer, a former terrorism finance analyst at the U.S. Department of the Treasury, is vice president for research at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.*

Article 3.

The Atlantic

## **The Iron Dome, Press Bias, and Israel's Lack of Strategic Thinking**

Jeffrey Goldberg

**Some observations as the Gaza crisis continues to unfold:**

- 1. The Iron Dome anti-rocket and missile defense system seems to work better than most people expected. Israel is becoming very good at shooting down missiles.**
- 2. Israel also seems to be getting better at not killing civilians in Gaza. The numbers are of**

**course too large, and this could change in an instant, but right now the casualty rate is much lower than in Operation Cast Lead. And yes, of course, much smaller than the numbers from the American drone war in Pakistan. Hamas, of course, is trying to maximize civilian casualties. Which brings me to:**

**3.The media is biased against Israel. Yes, got it. Yes, Israel is being judged harshly. Yes, I know that probably 300 people have been murdered in Syria since this Gaza affair started, and no one cares. An acquaintance of mine, a Syrian living in Beirut, wrote me in frustration about this last night. "We get very little interest from the international press compared to the Palestinians. What should we do to get more attention?"**

**My advice is to get killed by Jews. Always works. That said, what do pro-Israel people want? And what does Israel itself want? Israel is more powerful than its Palestinian adversaries, and the press almost axiomatically roots for the underdog. There is much greater sympathy for the Palestinian cause than before, which is partially Israel's fault -- if Israel didn't**

**appear to be a colonizer of the West Bank, it would find more sympathy. Jews, and certainly a Jewish state, are never going to win popularity contests, but the situation wouldn't seem quite so dire to Israelis and their friends if people plausibly believed that the Netanyahu government was interested in implementing a two-state solution.**

- 4. Barack Obama hasn't turned against Israel. This is a big surprise to everyone who has not paid attention for the last four years, or who had decided, for nakedly partisan reasons, to paint him as a Jew-hater.**
- 5. Israel's media campaign -- Gamify? -- is disgraceful. David Rothkopf just pointed out to me that people are most influenced by their enemies. In this case, the braggadocio of the IDF is beginning to resemble the braying of various Palestinian terror outfits over the years. All death is tragic, even the deaths of your enemies.**
- 6. I'll be asking the same question over and over again the coming days: What is Israel's long-term strategy? Short-term, I understand: No state can agree to have its**

**civilians rocketed. But long-term, do Israeli leaders believe that they possess a military solution to their political problem in Gaza? There is no way out of this militarily. Israel is not Russia, Gaza is not Chechnya and Netanyahu isn't Putin. Even if Israel were morally capable of acting like Russia, the world would not allow it. So: Is the goal to empower Hamas? Some right-wingers in Israel would prefer Hamas's empowerment, because they want to kill the idea of a two-state solution. But to those leaders who are at least verbally committed to the idea of partition, what is the plan? How do you marginalize Hamas, which seeks the destruction of Jews and the Jewish state, and empower the more moderate forces that govern the West Bank?**

**Here's one idea: Give Palestinians hope that Israel is serious about the two-state solution. And how do you do that? By reversing the settlement project on the West Bank. It is not unreasonable for Palestinians to doubt the sincerity of Netanyahu on the subject of the two-state solution, when settlements grow ever-thicker. There's no way around this: The**

**idea of a two-state solution will die if Israel continues to treat the West Bank as a suburb of Jerusalem and Kfar Sava, and not as the future location of the state of Palestine.**

Article 4.

**The Christian Science Monitor**

**For both Hamas and Israel,  
there are reasons to  
escalate**

**Dan Murphy**

**November 16, 2012 -- Israel and Palestinian militants in the besieged Gaza Strip are veering dangerously close to getting locked into a cycle of retaliation and revenge that could run for weeks.**

**Though many are wondering why both sides don't simply stand down now to avoid further loss of innocent life (since, after all, it's fairly clear that a major shift in the**

**status quo will be the outcome of the bombardments that are now in their third day), the grim logic of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is convincing men on both sides that more death is what's needed now to secure their own interests. For Hamas, the Islamist militant group and political party that has governed Gaza separately from the West Bank based Palestinian Authority since 2007, the pressure comes in weighing its reputation of resistance and endurance against the mounting human cost to civilians. Standing down completely, capitulation, would look weak to many of its supporters, perhaps opening a door for other militant groups in the Gaza Strip, like Islamic Jihad, to accrue more power for themselves. For Israel, the costs in life to its own side are lighter than for its much weaker foe, but still serious enough. Three Israeli civilians died when a rocket hit their apartment building in Kiryat Malachi in southern Israel on Thursday morning. (See the Monitor's report from Kiryat Malachi Thursday.) Meanwhile, 19 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli mortar and air strikes, the balance of them civilians, since the war began on Wednesday.**

**But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his war cabinet have in some ways locked themselves into a broader conflict, based on the public logic they have provided in the past few days: Rockets from Gaza are intolerable, and force must be used to stop them. Since there have now been 500 or so rockets fired at Israel since the assassination of Hamas military leader Ahmad Jabari on Wednesday, compared with 723 in total fired in the first 10 months of the year, that logic of escalation of force calls for yet more escalation.**

**Further, Hamas fired long-range Fajr rockets, known to be in their arsenal but never used before, in response to Israeli's bombing raids yesterday. Those longer-range rockets struck within eight miles of Tel Aviv, Israel's business and cultural capital, and both yesterday and today, air raid sirens wailed throughout the coastal Mediterranean city for the first time since 1991, when Iraq's Saddam Hussein lobbed scud missiles at Israel during Gulf War precipitated by his invasion of Kuwait. And in the late afternoon, the first air raid sirens in memory were reported to be going off in Jerusalem.**

**Hamas being able to threaten Tel Aviv from the air is, as they say, a game-changer. The Tel Aviv metropolitan area is home to about 40 percent of Israel's 7.7 million people, and its cafes and beach life have long provided a comfortable cocoon, far from conflicts over Israeli settlements in the West Bank or the threats of Hamas in Gaza.**

**The residents of southern Israel, near Gaza, have long lived with the terror of rocket attacks, and in many ways have grown used to it. The residents of teeming Gaza, hemmed in by both Israel and Egypt, are likewise used to the terror of far more powerful Israeli bombs that rain down on towns and cities in response to Palestinian rocket attacks.**

**Where the red line lies**

**But a permanent extension of that envelope of fear to Tel Aviv, which attracts foreign investment to its high tech industries, would be intolerable for Israel. It could have an impact on both investment in the country and on the immigration of Jews to Israel, who are often urged to make aliyah (return) to the Jewish state under the argument that it's the only place where Jews can be truly safe.**

**That's why 16,000 Israeli army reservists were called up this morning. If more long-range rockets strike deep into the center of Israel, the argument for a ground incursion will grow stronger for Netanyahu. The IDF says most of the 300 bombs it has fired into Gaza have targeted long-range launching sites and warehouses for the Iranian made Fajr rockets. But has it got most of them? Or just a few?**

**The costs of escalation are also clear, beyond the casualties. The last Israeli war with Gaza was in 2008, then as now within weeks of the election of President Obama. The war, which Israel called Operation Cast Lead, claimed 13 Israeli lives and more than 1,200 Palestinian lives. Yes, Israel now has the Iron Dome defense system, which has shut down about 100 Israeli rockets so far at a cost of \$40,000 a pop (the least expensive of the Palestinian rockets cost about \$500). But all missile defense systems are prone to being overwhelmed by sheer numbers, if the opponent has sufficient supply. Damage to international image While Israeli's political support from the US remains staunch -- the Obama administration has placed responsibility for**

**the outbreak squarely on Hamas's shoulders and repeatedly said that Israel has the right to defend itself -- the enormous imbalance in casualty rates when Israel fights Palestinians always does damage to the country's international image, which in the long term can extract a political toll.**

**And the region is a far different place than it was in 2008, when Hosni Mubarak led Egypt and could be counted on to quietly back Israel against Hamas. Now, Egypt is led by the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohammed Morsi. Hamas was originally an offshoot of the Brotherhood, and they are ideological kindred spirits. Today, Egyptian Prime Minister Hisham Qandil briefly entered Gaza at the Rafah border, an unprecedented visit at a time of conflict. He toured Shifa Hospital in Gaza City and met with Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh.**

**"We are all behind you, the struggling nation, the heroic that is presenting its children as heroes every day," Mr. Qandil said at the panicked hospital, filled with casualties. The LA Times reported that an emotional Qandil held up a blood-stained sleeve, saying it came from one of the**

wounded, as Haniyah said ""That's Palestinian blood on Egyptian hands." This is not to say that Egypt is going to break its longstanding peace agreement with Israel or get directly involved in the conflict. But the Morsi government will be under pressure not to be as reliable a guardian of its Sinai border with Gaza as Mr. Mubarak was after this latest outbreak of hostility. That border is, after all, where much of the weapon and financial resupply of Gaza passes through. Mr. Morsi warned today that Israel should stop offensive operations now or "it won't be able to stand up to" Egypt's anger.

And there were already signs that Gaza was better armed and prepared this time around than in 2008. Then, about 600 missiles were fired at Israeli during three weeks of fighting before a truce was called. So far, 500 missiles have been fired in three days, 80 percent of the total four years ago.

To be sure, peace could still break out. Perhaps the Egyptians, or the Turks, can convince Hamas that their point has been made. Perhaps the US can convince Israel of the same.

But why the logic of peace seems obvious

**to outsiders, combatants run along different logic. This crisis will run for days yet.**

**Article 5.**

**Foreign Policy**

## **The Peace Process Isn't Dead**

**Daniel Kurtzer**

**November 15, 2012 -- In Jerusalem last week with my Princeton University students, I hailed a taxi one day from my hotel to the Israeli Foreign Ministry. The driver asked whether I would need him for the rest of the day. "If you can take me to Ramallah," I replied, "that would be great. Otherwise, no thanks."**

**My driver's reaction was symptomatic of what I was hearing from many Israelis. "Ramallah!" he gasped. "Why would you go there? They're all rich and spoiled and hate us. They build big houses and then complain that we don't treat them well. You shouldn't go there."**

**The current spasm of violence in Gaza had not yet begun -- his concern was not due to current events, but a general disapproval**

**of ever venturing into the West Bank. I tried to explain the poverty rampant in Palestinian society and especially the dismal conditions in the refugee camps, one of which my students and I had visited the previous day. Yes, there are some wealthy Palestinians, but most do not live all that well under occupation. Settlements are a particular problem. We rode the rest of the blessedly short trip in silence. Later that week, my students and I took two taxis from the hotel to Abu Dis, a West Bank village just outside the security barrier that surrounds Jerusalem. What should have been a 15-minute ride took about 40 minutes, as the taxis had to travel in a wide loop to circumnavigate the wall. As we approached the office of the Palestinian official we were to meet, the driver in my taxi started to laugh. "My friend [the second driver] is in a panic. He doesn't want to be here. He's scared and doesn't want to go further." Indeed, when we reached our destination, the second driver took off in a flash, clearly feeling imperiled to be driving in a Palestinian village, even one just minutes from downtown Jerusalem. The ongoing conflict in Gaza, of course, is**

**only going to deepen such fears. As Israel and Hamas pummel each other in yet another sadly predictable spasm of violence, their political visions seem as irreconcilable as ever. It is the story of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: The two sides live so near each other, yet can seem so far away.**

**But while achieving a lasting peace may seem impossible at the moment, the Gaza conflict drives home once more why the United States cannot walk away from this part of the world. Gaza will be a periodic war zone unless a way is found to move Israelis and Palestinians toward reconciliation and peace.**

**My trip was part of a study being conducted by my students on whether the two-state solution is still viable and whether there are alternative ways of achieving peace. It is increasingly vital to detail not only what happened during the past 20 years of Arab-Israeli negotiations, but also to look ahead and argue why an ambitious peace policy is important for the United States. It seems so logical in Jerusalem and Ramallah to think this way; not so in Washington.**

**As analysts and pundits suggest what the**

**U.S. president's priorities should be in the months and years ahead, the Middle East peace process figures on few lists. The arguments range from "it's too hard" to the familiar "we can't want peace more than the parties." The assumption is that the status quo will hold while incremental steps are taken -- steps designed to smooth the roughest edges off the occupation's restrictions on mobility, economic activity, or institution-building. These critics direct a blind eye at Israeli settlement activity and rocket fire from Gaza, as though these ongoing, chronic behaviors can be ignored or managed. As the recent outbreak of violence proves, this is mistaken. The status quo is not sustainable.**

**Those counseling a hands-off approach are also equally blind toward history, which proves time and again that inactivity by the United States allows the situation on the ground to heat up until it boils over -- and that active, agile, and persistent diplomacy by the United States actually has a chance of making things better.**

**The current escalation in Gaza illustrates the point. The course of this conflict is actually fairly clear: Israel and Hamas will**

**pound each other, and when the fighting stops each side will declare "victory." Israel will have degraded Hamas's military capacity, and Hamas will have killed some Israeli civilians, disrupted life in southern Israel, and lived to fight another day. There will be a lull in the violence, and the clock will start ticking until the next confrontation. The idea of making peace -- real, lasting peace -- will not occur to the leaders in the region. It is time for a fresh American initiative. There is no need for fancy plans or gaudy conferences, but rather a well-structured, fair, and balanced policy aimed at driving the peace process toward resolution. Failure to do so will handicap everything else Barack Obama's administration tries to accomplish in the Middle East. If the United States is willing to put in the effort, it may actually yield surprising and positive results.**

***Daniel Kurtzer, a former U.S. ambassador to Egypt and Israel, is professor of Middle Eastern policy studies at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. He is editor of Pathways to Peace: America and***

*the Arab-Israeli Conflict and co-author of  
The Peace Puzzle: America's Quest for Arab-  
Israeli Peace, 1989-2011.*

Article 6.

Los Angeles Times

## Middle East peace takes a beating

Editorial

**November 16, 2012 -- After months of relative quiet — broken, in this country, only by the pandering of the presidential candidates — the century-old Palestinian-Israeli conflict has burst back into the news. It began last week when the Palestinian Authority revived its plan to seek an upgrade in the United Nations to "non-member observer status." On the face of it, that's hardly a game-changing power grab, and it seems unlikely to dramatically alter the regional balance of power. Nevertheless, Israel instantly deemed it an unacceptable unilateral action that would undermine negotiations and could lead to war crimes prosecutions of Israelis in the International Criminal Court. Senior Israeli officials warned Tuesday of grave**

consequences, threatening to expand settlements as a punishment or even to "cancel" the peace process altogether. Well, excuse us, but what negotiations and peace process are they referring to? For all intents and purposes, the process has been dead for several years. Palestinians refuse to participate in talks because of continued settlement expansion. Israelis won't commit to a moratorium on settlement building. The two sides live behind walls and checkpoints in an atmosphere of smoldering hostility and sporadic violence. The United Nations bid — expected to be presented to the General Assembly on Nov. 29 — is certainly a unilateral move, and maybe it will turn out to be a counterproductive one, but the underlying problem is that bilateralism, at the moment, isn't going anywhere. That was last week. This week, Israel launched an intense air assault on the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip in response to the more than 750 rockets that have been fired into southern Israel this year, resulting in relatively few casualties but destroying property and terrorizing the population. The Israeli counterattack that began Wednesday has so far killed the

**Hamas military leader, Ahmed Jabari, and at least 15 other people in Gaza; a Palestinian rocket on Thursday killed three Israelis in an apartment building in the small town of Kiryat Malachi. President Obama and U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, among others, have called for restraint and de-escalation.**

**Israel unquestionably has the right to defend itself against rockets fired by militants in Gaza. No nation is obliged to suffer such attacks without responding. And this year, according to Israeli Foreign Ministry officials, there have been twice as many rocket attacks as last year.**

**But as it responds, Israel would be wise to remember the brutal war it fought in Gaza four years ago that killed 1,200 Palestinians without successfully dislodging Hamas or permanently stopping the militants and their rockets. Israel was condemned around the world for that disproportionate assault and gained little. Going back down that familiar path would be catastrophic.**

**Solving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is strategically critical to the creation of a stable, peaceful Middle East. Successive American presidents have recognized that**

**and have, with few exceptions, spent substantial time and resources trying to bring the parties together. We would certainly empathize with Obama if he were tempted to walk away in frustration from a situation that appears to offer little political upside, but it would be a mistake. It would be particularly dangerous to ignore the conflict at a moment when Egypt's first post-Arab Spring president, Mohamed Morsi, is rethinking his country's relationship with Israel, when an unpredictable civil war is raging just over the Israeli border in Syria and when Iran is continuing its anti-Israel bluster (or at least we hope it's bluster).**

**The two-state solution has taken a beating in recent years. It's no longer in fashion. But it remains the only viable solution that's been put forward. Instead of scowling, with arms crossed, from their own ends of the playground, the belligerent parties must be persuaded to resume direct talks and get back to the difficult business of building an economically viable, politically stable Palestine that can live alongside a safe and secure Israel.**

Article 7.

The New York review of Books

## **Is There a Jewish Gene?**

Richard C. Lewontin

*Legacy: A Genetic History of the Jewish  
People*

*by Harry Ostrer*

*Oxford University Press, 264 pp., \$24.95*

*The Genealogical Science: The Search for  
Jewish Origins and the Politics of  
Epistemology*

*by Nadia Abu El-Haj*

*University of Chicago Press, 311 pp., \$35.00*

**December 6, 2012 -- The question of ancestry has been of human concern in virtually all cultures and over all times of which we have any knowledge. Whether it be a story about the origin of a particular tribe or nation and its subsequent mixture with other groups, or curiosity about a family history, there is always the implication that we understand ourselves better if we know our ancestors and that we, within ourselves, reflect properties that have come to us by an unbroken line from past generations. As treasurer of the**

**Marlboro Historical Society in Vermont, I am the recipient of requests for printed copies of the Reverend Ephraim Newton's mid-eighteenth-century history of our town, 70 percent of whose pages consist of "Genealogical and Biographical Notes" and a "Catalog of Literary Men." Over and over our correspondents write of the "pride" they have in descending from these early settlers.**

**Surely pride or shame are appropriate sentiments for actions for which we ourselves are in some way responsible. Why, then, do we feel pride (or shame) for the actions of others over whom we can have had no influence? Do we, in this way, achieve a false modesty or relieve ourselves of the burdens of our own behavior? As a descendant of late-nineteenth-century Eastern European immigrants I cannot depend on Reverend Newton's pages to explain my frequent contributions to The New York Review, but neither have the extensive "begats" in Genesis 10 or Matthew 1 been more enlightening.**

**My own skepticism notwithstanding, the belief is widespread that knowledge about the personal characteristics of ancestors**

who have never directly entered into our lives is relevant to our own formation. Moreover, that relevance is seen not simply as arising from our conscious knowledge about those ancestors, but from a deeper source, our genetical inheritance, which also would operate to form us in part, irrespective of our consciousness of the past. That belief is summed up in the title of Harry Ostrer's book, *Legacy: A Genetic History of the Jewish People*. It is also implied in the title of a book by Raphael Falk, *Zionism and the Biology of the Jews*, whose English translation from the Hebrew original has yet to appear.<sup>1</sup> While the term "race" is not used explicitly in these titles, in large part because the term is so loaded, there is considerable discussion of the Jews as a race or, using a less charged word, as a "people."

"Race" is a term of uncertain etymology and many meanings. It may refer to a whole species (the "human race"), a collection of loosely related individuals with a common appearance (the "white race"), a nation (the "race of Englishmen"), or a single family ("he was the last of his race"). Compounding the ambiguity is the substitution of "people" or "tribe" that

**seems to shed the historical fardels with which "race" is burdened. Are the Navajo a tribe, a people, or even a race? In a former time, when the classification of humans depended on manifest physical features like skin color, facial and hair form, and skull shape, members of a "race" as opposed to a "people" were claimed to be recognizable as such by the external physical features common to all individuals of the same "race."**

**In all these usages the implication is one of common ancestry tracing back ultimately to some relevant founding group, but obviously all such ancestries must incorporate members of other groups at various times in their histories. Even Cain managed to find a wife in the Land of Nod or else he married his sister. For the German National Socialists, having more than two Jewish grandparents was sufficient to define a Jew. But if every defined human group necessarily has, at any moment in its history, some ancestry from a variety of other collections of humans, how are we to delineate those groups and reconstruct their family histories?**

**Ordinary genetics is not sufficient. Each of**

**us has one copy of our chromosomes from our mother and one copy from our father. But of the chromosomes I got from my mother, half of those came from her mother and half from her father so, roughly speaking, I resemble my maternal grandmother only in a quarter of my genes. It doesn't take many generations before I resemble a particular remote great-grandparent in a very small fraction of my genes. If one of my ancestors four generations ago were black, there is a good chance I would have inherited none of her pigment genes or so few that they would not be apparent in my own skin color.**

**This random inheritance of genes makes it very difficult to reconstruct the variety of ancestors in remote past generations. Fortunately for those interested in the reconstruction of ancestry there are two useful exceptions to the rule that we inherit only a random one of the two sets of genetic information possessed by each of our parents. One of those exceptions is the single Y chromosome carried by males but not by females. The Y chromosome carries very few genes. We know this to be true because, very rarely, an individual is**

**born having received, as usual, one X chromosome from the female parent but, abnormally, neither an additional X chromosome nor a Y chromosome from the male parent. This individual, called an "XO" type, is a sterile female but otherwise is normal. This general normality in the face of having only a single X chromosome but no Y chromosome tells us that the usual effect of a Y chromosome is essentially only to cause a switch from female to male development.**

**As a consequence, variation among Y chromosomes can be used to reconstruct ancestry without the confounding effect of possible natural selection for one or another variant. Every son inherits his father's Y chromosome, which was passed, intact, through the sequence of male ancestors to the present generation. Thus, by examining the Y chromosome DNA from a group of males in some generation and comparing it to the Y chromosomes of various other populations, we can reconstruct the contribution of males from various sources in previous generations to the present population. In particular we can ask what proportion of the Y chromosomes in a given population came**

**from some particular group of historical interest. For example, we can estimate how much Arab slave traders contributed genetically to the present black populations of southeast Africa if the Y chromosomes of the Arabs contain characteristic DNA sequences that are rare or absent elsewhere, but in unusually high frequency among the present African inhabitants of Tanzania.**

**The other exception to random inheritance is not in the chromosomes, but in cellular particles called ribosomes that contain not DNA but a related molecule, RNA, which has heritable variation and is of basic importance to cell metabolism and the synthesis of proteins. Although the cells of both sexes have ribosomes, they are inherited exclusively through their incorporation in the mother's egg cell rather than through the father's sperm. Our ribosomes, then, provide us, both male and female, with a record of our maternal ancestry, uncontaminated by their male partners.**

**Harry Ostrer, who is a professor of genetics at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and Raphael Falk, who is one of Israel's most prominent geneticists, depend heavily on**

**our ability to trace ancestry by looking at the DNA of Y chromosomes and ribosomes. Their books are responses to the widespread desire to trace that ancestry and to describe the degree to which the world's present distribution of Jews consists, with a few possible exceptions like the Kaifeng Jews of China, of people with ancient common roots. For Falk, as the child of German Jews threatened with the Final Solution, the longing for Zion was expressed, as in his parents' case, "primarily as a wish for relief from the persecutions and other hardships of Jewish life in the Diaspora." For Ostrer, on the other hand, as he writes in his preface: Having a 3000-year genetic legacy can be a source of group identity and pride in the same way that having a shared history, culture, and religion can be sources of pride.**

**Once again we have the question of why having knowledge of remote ancestors and a shared history makes us "proud." Is it that preening ourselves before the glass of history seems less egotistical than inspecting our images in the glass of fashion?**

**The difference between the motivations of**

**the authors is manifest in the properties each assigns to heredity. The element of "pride of ancestry" that permeates Ostrer's text leads him, especially in his chapter on "Traits," to extensive discussions of intellectual and professional accomplishment and the degree to which they may reflect innate biological capacity. While he can hardly be described as a naive biological determinist, it seems clear that he leans in the direction of attributing some importance to the biology of the Jews in forming their social accomplishments. He asserts that accidents of birth, wealth, privilege, and education are not sufficient to explain who will become outstanding lawyers or physicists.**

**Nevertheless, Ostrer does not offer any evidence that the intellectual qualities that make so many Jews into lawyers and physicists are a consequence of their genetic superiority. Indeed, we know nothing about the genetics of nonpathological variation in the cognitive capacities of the brain. An attempt to determine whether intellectual life is genetically heritable would require a large adoption study in which infants would be**

reared in a controlled environment in circumstances that prevented their caretakers from knowing their family or social origins. Moreover, given the sensitivity of central nervous system development to nutritional and other external factors, the study would have to begin with newborn infants and we would still miss the effects of prenatal circumstances. We should not be surprised that such a study has not been done. Ostrer's view of the causes of the high frequency of intellectual careers among Jews is purely speculative. After more than a century of claims that high intellectual or artistic accomplishment is somehow rooted in heredity and, more specifically, in the possession of "genes for high intelligence" or "genes for creativity," there is no credible evidence for their existence. Indeed, the search for genetic superiority has largely given way to an extensive effort to find the genetic basis for a host of physiological debilities. There is a certain irony in claiming an undemonstrated biological superiority for a group, six million of whom were slaughtered for their claimed natural degeneracy. Despite this interest in the social and

**intellectual characteristics of Jews, to which he devotes about a fifth of his text, Ostrer's chief concern is with the history of the Jews, as revealed in their actually known genetic similarities to and differences from other populations. These similarities and differences occur thanks to various proportions of alternative genetic forms rather than being absolute differences between populations. There is no known "Jewish gene," and the same comments I have made about the evidence concerning genes for "high intelligence" and "creativity" apply to the existence of those properties in alternative genetic forms.**

**As an Israeli, Falk's motivation is directly connected to the political issue of Zionism and the claim of Jews for a national state: In this book I wish to discuss two issues: the claim that there is a biology of the Jews on the one hand, and the attempts to integrate this claim into a consistent history of national-political Zionism, on the other hand.**

**For him the biology of the Jews enters not as a determinant of their cognitive abilities but as a tool for defining the Jews as a collection of related people who can lay a**

**claim to a geopolitical existence, and for attempting a reconstruction of their history:**

**In the present world of scientific-technocratic reasoning, biological research is a major tool that demonstrates and validates links between present-day Jews and the land that for centuries has been, unequivocally, the glue of their socio-cultural bonds.**

**An example of the ultimate irony of personal history is that the author of *The Genealogical Science*, which deals with the immense complexity of Jewish ancestry, is the occasionally church-attending daughter of a Protestant mother of Northern European ancestry and a father whose name, Abu El-Haj, tells us that a forebear made the pilgrimage to Mecca.**

**Nadia Abu El-Haj's avowed purpose is to make clear "the ways in which 'the past' is understood to be a constitutive element of the self." The key word here is "understood." Her emphasis, over and over, is on how the knowledge of ancestry, revealed by modern techniques of genetics, may serve as a basis for and a legitimation of a self-image. For her, to ignore the genetic information about ancestry "is to**

**abandon a historically authentic self that I carry around within."**

**Once again, as in works on the genetics of race, we encounter the concept of an "authentic" self that lies hidden and unexpressed, but which in some sense is the essence of what I am, even if unperceived and without a basis in any scientific demonstration. The concept of a self that is an authentic essence, but not clearly perceived, suggests that my manifest properties and attitudes are a mere patina and that, in ways that I do not recognize, my inherited inner self is struggling to assert itself. The Austrian Catholic Mendel and the Austrian Jew Freud meet on the speculative ground of our inner being.**

**None of the books being considered claims that there are genetic elements that are characteristic of all or even a large majority of Jews. The closest thing to a "Jewish gene" is an element on the Y chromosome of males that has been passed down at least for several millenia in the male line of the Cohanim family, and whose presence in a man's genome is evidence of descent from the priestly class. The frequency of this "CMH" (Cohanim**

**Modal Haplotype) is around 50 percent among the members of the Cohen line. This haplotype is by no means exclusive to the Jews. It is found in some other Middle Eastern groups in frequencies of around 20 percent. More unexpected is the very high frequency of the CMH type among the Lemba of southern Africa. These black Africans also have a culture that excludes the eating of pork and the mixing of milk and meat, and includes the circumcision of male children. They claim descent from migrants from the region of what is now Yemen. However, it seems more likely, as Ostrer also concludes, that it was, in fact, the Arab slave traders who spread this culture as Islamic tradition.**

**In Henry M. Stanley's account of his passage through southeastern Africa from the region of Dar es Salaam in search of Livingstone, he tells of following the old Arab slavers' routes through village after village in which the chief was referred to by the title "Sheikh." Moreover, in a practice very different from the Jewish one, male circumcision among the Lemba occurs not in early infancy but around the age of eight, a practice characteristic of Muslim groups. If one takes account not**

**only of the CMH but of all the genetic variation known on the Y chromosome, the Lemba fall halfway between other sub-Saharan Africans and the populations of the Middle East.**

**The same kind of questions that are asked about the chain of male ancestry by looking at our Y chromosomes can be investigated in both men and women by studying the mitochondrial RNA we have derived in an unbroken chain from our line of female progenitors. It turns out that there is much more variation in the mitochondrial RNA of Jewish women than in the Y chromosomal DNA of Jewish men. This is understood by Falk and Ostrer to mean that when the Jews fled ancient Palestine to found the Diaspora, it was not whole families that fled but largely the men, who then found new local mates in the places to which they migrated. Thus, most of the mothers of these founding communities were not themselves Jews but were sources of new genetic variation, and the present genetic variation among Jews is consequently much greater than it was in Palestine three millennia ago. Y chromosomal DNA or mitochondrial RNA is used by anthropologists and historians**

precisely because they are each passed down intact from parent to child through the line of parents of one sex unmixed by the genetic information about the parents of the other sex. But what is, on one hand, an advantage for historical information about an ancestor in the remote past is devoid of information about subsequent history, a history that may dominate the present. To satisfy the curiosity of a former student of mine, now the director of the National Geographic Society's project to reconstruct the history of human migrations using patterns of present human genetic variation, I let him determine that I carry the CMH Y chromosome. Thus, my son, James, also carries it, as does his son. But my wife is of Scandinavian/English ancestry and my son's wife is of similar stock so, although my grandson must also carry the CMH Y chromosome, his X chromosome is Northern European, as is, given my ignorance of my own distant ancestry, at least three quarters of the rest of his genome. Even the Nuremberg Laws would have exempted him from what would have been my own fate. Why, then, should he, like most people, be

interested in his ancestors? What is the logic of family pride or family shame? He may simply be curious, as so many are. Abu El-Haj, perhaps because of her own mixed ancestry, has a very sophisticated view of the motivations for and consequences of investigating one's origins. She argues that the molecular evidence "generates, grounds, and authenticates...narratives of origins, kinship, and history" but its purpose is not to claim that any particular human nature flows from those origins. Rather, she sees such evidence as a manifestation of her belief that the consciousness of being a member of any genetically related ethnic group somehow tells us something fundamental about who we really are, about the solution to our quest for self-knowledge, and requires that one actively embrace that "ancestry," that one learn about and fashion oneself according to its cultural or religious principles, thereby transforming ancestry into identity or selfhood. While this belief in the fundamental importance of a knowledge of ancestral origins is undoubtedly widespread, it is far from universal. Yet an indifference to

ancestry is sometimes taken as a rejection of one's "real" identity, even of "self-hatred." It seems clear that while one may see oneself as "embracing" one's ancestry, one may also be indifferent to such ancestry, or reject it. No one, including Abu El-Haj, claims that the genetic facts by themselves exert a force obliging people to take one conscious position or another. Abu El-Haj was at the center of an academic controversy that arose from her first book, *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society*, which appeared in 2001, a year before she became a nontenured member of the faculty in the Department of Anthropology at Barnard, followed several years later by her additional appointment as director of graduate studies at Columbia's Department of Anthropology. However, when she was being considered for promotion to a tenured professorship in 2007, a bitter struggle over her scholarship was induced by a widely circulated petition claiming that *Facts on the Ground* was a dishonest, inferior, and biased work that knowingly misrepresented the quality and content of archaeological work on ancient sites in Israel.

**The originator of the petition was a graduate of Barnard, Paula Stern, who had emigrated to Israel,<sup>2</sup> but her campaign against El-Haj developed considerable support among Barnard and Columbia alumni and some faculty members, as well as a number of writers, political activists, and academic supporters of Israel both inside and outside of Columbia. In the end the campaign against Abu El-Haj failed to prevent her promotion to a tenured position in 2007.**

**The last chapter of The Genealogical Science considers "the implications of treating DNA as 'a history book' for our understandings of both 'history' and of its relationship to the self." For Abu El-Haj, genetic history is an example of a general belief in the "importance and knowability of the past" because, for her, "fundamental aspects of who one is are determined by one's past" and moreover one can know and reconstruct the past on the basis of remainders of that past, including genetic mutations.**

**Thus, there is a "fundamental continuity between race science and anthropological genetics" and a belief that "who we really are collectively and individually is given by**

and legible in biological data.” But she ends by insisting, as in the conclusion about something like embracing “one’s ancestry,” earlier stated, that the choice to learn about myself, to remain who I am or to realign my sense of self vis-à-vis new revealed bodily facts about who I have always already been, remains mine to make.

What is revealed here in her reference to “bodily facts about who I have always already been” is an underlying biological determinism that seems to make her present persona a cosmetic, deliberately applied to the face of an underlying “authentic self.” What is not revealed in her book is what she regards as the nature of that self.

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**1. Zionut Vehabiologia Shel Hayehudim (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2006). ↵**

**2. A detailed history of the campaign against El-Haj's promotion can be found in Jane Kramer, "The Petition," The New Yorker, April 14, 2008. ↵**