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Article 1.

The New Republic

The Long Road to a Moderate Hamas

Nathan Brown

November 18, 2012 -- The latest eruption of fighting between Israel and Hamas has forced the long-festering Israeli-Palestinian conflict back on the international agenda. However damaging the violence and shrill the rhetoric, the current round is likely to be anything but decisive. The most likely outcome is a return to something like the status quo ante: a Palestinian movement that rejects a permanent settlement with Israel well

entrenched in Gaza, and an Israeli leadership determined to bottle up that movement in that tiny enclave. But is there room for hope beyond that kind of stalemate? Is there any chance that after the smoke clears and a tenuous cease fire returns, there can be some hope that Hamas can be gradually transformed by its assumption of political responsibility for the Gaza statelet into a normal political actor and a negotiating partner in an internationally-sponsored effort to resolve the underlying conflict?

The answer is clear: Yes, but. Yes, it is possible that Hamas can change and evolve. In some ways, it already has. But further evolution, if possible, is hardly inevitable, and the process is likely to be extremely slow and uncertain. In order to understand what change is possible, it is important to note two clear but generally unspoken developments in the Israeli-Hamas relationship since Hamas's 2006 electoral triumph and 2007 seizure of Gaza.

First, Israel and Hamas have agreed to negotiate. Israel continues to insist that it will not speak to Hamas, but that fiction is maintained largely to discourage other international actors from treating Hamas as a legitimate interlocutor. (The Israelis themselves have dropped any pretense about indirect negotiations. “The Egyptians have been a pipeline for passing messages,” Israel's vice prime minister recently announced. “We are in contact with the Egyptian defence ministry. And it could be a channel in which a ceasefire is reached.”) Similarly, Hamas also insists that it will never negotiate with Israel—but when the Egyptian prime minister showed up in the midst of the current fighting not only to demonstrate support but also to underscore Egyptian mediation efforts, he was warmly welcomed.

Second, neither Hamas nor the Israeli leadership has anything like a viable long-term plan for dealing with the other side. Israeli leaders offers only glum, limited, and even cynical cooperation with the cadaverous “peace process.” Hamas offers its people outright intransigence coupled with hope that its boat will rise together with a regional Islamist tide. Israel and Hamas are capable of negotiating about almost anything short-term (exchnage of prisoners; cease fire), but absolutely nothing long-term. In this sense, Hamas is a victor: It has always insisted that it was open to the idea of a long-term truce but closed to a permanent settlement. Plenty of truces have been achieved between the two sides, though they have been unwritten, shaky, and frequently violated. Clearly, Hamas can not be expected to change overnight. But there is still reason to hope that Hamas can change incrementally. However odd it may seem, Hamas has always boasted of its pragmatism. It continues to claim to be a “wasati” movement—the term means “centrist” and is used by Islamists who want to communicate their responsiveness to the interests of the public rather than their devotion to the strictest version of religious teachings. And it is clear that in the first few years after winning elections in Gaza in 2006, some Hamas leaders, confronted with intense regional pressure and a fiscal crisis, and the knowledge that they would have to face the Palestinian voters again in 2010, took initial steps in a more moderate direction. Unfortunately, the elections they were anticipating were never held (and the primary culprits in that regard were President Mahmud Abbas who threatened constantly to use an utterly imaginary authority to dissolve the parliament and Western actors who supported him in those threats). When a Palestinian civil war erupted in June 2007, the governments in the West Bank and Gaza became more explicitly

autocratic, to the detriment of Palestinians in both territories. Hardly anyone harbors expectations any longer of free elections: On those rare occasions when Hamas and the leaders of the West Bank have had half-hearted conversations about reuniting, elections haven't been a meaningful part of the negotiations. Any hopes since then that Hamas would moderate have been squandered. The changing regional environment after the Arab upheavals of 2011 seemed to offer brief hope that Hamas would reposition itself away from the “resistance” camp in the region and toward the camp of Islamist movements in North Africa that were dedicated to making political Islam the basis of a practicable governing system. That would have required taking reconciliation with Israel a bit more seriously, interpreting “resistance” a bit more flexibly to encompass popular mobilization more than armed action, and presenting a friendlier diplomatic face to the rest of the world. But the effort, led by Khalid Mish'al, was derailed by Hamas leaders who didn't want to risk their hold on the government in Gaza. There is a possible path forward out of this dreary political landscape. The most promising way to force Hamas to become more moderate is to force it to be more responsive to its own public. (As a leading Muslim Brotherhood parliamentarian in neighboring Egypt told me when I asked him whether Hamas would ever accept a two-state solution: “They will have to. Their people will make them.”) And the most promising way to ensure such responsiveness is to speed up the reconciliation between the governments in the West Bank and Gaza, so that those governments can agree to hold elections rather than jealously hold on to their own fiefdoms in a fit of paranoia. But that, in turn, will require that Israel and the international community show a greater willingness to countenance Palestinian

reconciliation. There is no denying that cultivating rapprochement between the West Bank and Gaza poses real dangers. One is that it will make any conflict-ending peace process with Israel impossible in the immediate future; pending the formation of a new unity government in Palestine, the Palestinian leadership would not be in the position of engaging in negotiations. But most residents of the region would react to losing the “peace process” the same way as they would treat the news that they had lost an eight-track tape collection—the phrase itself belongs to a long-gone era.

A second risk is that reconciliation would have to allow Hamas to come out of hibernation in the West Bank. An Israeli leadership that has successfully bottled Hamas up in Gaza and a Palestinian leadership in Ramallah that has rooted Hamas out of Palestinian institutions over the past five years will hesitate to allow Hamas to come out into the open there. Of course, their own past efforts to destroy Hamas can be likened to that of someone trying so desparately to remove a stain from an article of clothing that he only sets it more permanently within the fabric.

The path is a risky one, to be sure. But Hamas is beckoning for a new approach. If the definition of insanity is trying the same thing over and over while expecting different results, the current fighting certainly qualifies as madness.

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Article 2.

Foreign Policy

How Hamas Won the War

Aaron David Miller

November 19, 2012 -- Cruel Middle East ironies abound. And here's a doozy for you.

Why is it that Hamas -- purveyor of terror, launcher of Iranian-supplied rockets, and source of "death to the Jews" tropes -- is getting more attention, traction, legitimacy and support than the "good" Palestinian, the reasonable and grandfatherly Mahmoud Abbas, who has foresworn violence in favor of negotiations? Since the crisis began, President Obama seems to have talked to every other Middle Eastern leader except Abbas.

The Israeli operation against Hamas may yet take a large bite out of the Palestinian Islamist organization in Gaza, but the "Hamas trumps Abbas" dynamic has been underway for some time now and is likely to continue. I'd offer four reasons why.

Feckless Fatah

Abbas's party is in disarray. The Islamists' victory in the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections, its takeover of Gaza in 2007, Fatah's own sense of political drift, and the absence of a credible

peace process created an opening for Hamas -- the religious manifestation of Palestinian nationalism. Had Yasir Arafat still been alive, Hamas would never have come as far as it has.

Arafat's death left a huge leadership vacuum in a political culture where persona, not institutions, figures prominently. Abbas had electoral legitimacy but he lacked the authority, street cred, and elan of the historical struggle. And in a Palestinian national movement without direction and strategy, it didn't take much to create an alternative to a tired, divided, corrupt, and ineffective Fatah.

Hawks Rule the Roost

We don't like to admit it, but Middle East politics is the domain not of the doves but of hard men who can sometimes be pragmatists -- but certainly not in response to sentimental or idealized desires.

Peacemaking on the Israeli side has never been -- and is likely never to be -- owned by the left. From Israeli premiers Menachem Begin to Yitzhak Rabin (breaker of bones during the first Intifada) to Ariel Sharon and Benjamin Netanyahu, the story of the Arab-Israeli negotiations is one of tough guys whose calculations were reshaped by necessity and self-interest, and who could deliver something tangible to the other side while getting away with it politically at home.

Abbas may well be the best Palestinian partner Israel has ever had. But if he can't deliver, well, Houston we have a problem.

Being the darling of the West counts for something. For good reason, Abbas and his reality-based prime minister, Salam

Fayyad, emerged as the great hope among the peace-making set: Here were reasonable, moderate men who eschewed violence and were actually interested in state-building. But could they actually deliver what various Israeli governments wanted?

Irony of ironies, it was Hamas that emerged as the object of Israel's real attentions -- the Islamist nationalists, it turned out, had what Israel needed and could deliver it. When Israel wanted a ceasefire, who did it negotiate with? Hamas, not Abbas. When Israel wanted Gilad Shalit back, who did it negotiate with? Hamas, not Abbas. Indeed, the astute Israel journalist Aluf Benn wrote last week that Israel killed the de facto head of Hamas's military wing -- Ahmad al-Jaabari -- because he was no longer willing or able to play the role of Israel's policeman, squelching Hamas and jihadi rocket fire into Israel. In exchange for doing so, Benn posits, Israel shipped in shekels for Gaza's banks and support for Gaza's infrastructure. Jaabari had street cred and delivered for four years -- Abbas has little and couldn't.

Netanyahu's Comfort Zone

Bibi is who he is. Right now, he's a legitimate Israeli leader who may well be the only political figure capable of leading the country. Whether he can lead Israel to real peace with the Palestinians is another matter entirely.

It's politically inconvenient to admit it, but given Bibi's world view -- which is profoundly shaped by suspicion and mistrust of the Arabs and Palestinians -- he's more comfortable in the world of Hamas than of Abbas. This is a world of toughness, of security, and of defending the Jewish state against Hamas rockets, incitement, and anti-Semitism. Hamas's behavior merely

validates Netanyahu's view of reality -- and it empowers him to rise to the role of heroic defender of Israel.

Netanyahu didn't seek out a war over Hamas's rockets, which threaten an increasing number of Israeli towns and cities. But he is truly in his element in dealing with it. Sure he'd like to destroy Hamas and negotiate with Abbas -- but on his terms. Indeed, the world of a negotiation over borders, refugees, Jerusalem is a world of great discomfort for Netanyahu, because it will force choices that run against his nature, his politics, and his ideology.

Hamas isn't a cheap excuse conjured up to avoid negotiating with the Palestinians, of course. But the fact that Abbas can't control Hamas and that Arab states, particularly Egypt, now embrace it openly is precisely why Bibi believes he must be cautious in any negotiations. He may intellectually accept the possibility that the absence of meaningful negotiations actually empowers Hamas. But never emotionally. If you see the world through an us vs. them filter, you're rarely responsible for the problem -- it's almost always the other guy's fault.

The Islamist Spring

Even while their publics identified with the Palestinian cause, the Arab states never really trusted the Palestinian national movement and its organizational embodiment, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).

With the exception of Egypt, every Arab state bordering Israel had a bloody conflict with the PLO. For these states, Palestinians represented a threat either from refugee populations or from the possibility that the Palestinian armed struggle would drag the Arabs into an unwanted or untimely war.

Tensions and differences still persist. But the Arab -- really Islamist -- Spring has created a major new realignment.

The real diplomatic coup for the Palestinians isn't Abbas's effort toward winning statehood recognition at the United Nations. It's the victories and growing influence of Islamists in Arab politics, which have given Hamas greater respectability and support. Two of Israel's most important Middle East friends -- Turkey and Egypt -- are now running interference for Hamas as their own ties with the Israelis have gotten colder. And these new allies aren't outliers like Iran and Syria. They are friends of the United States and very much in the center of the international community.

Where's Waldo?

It's testament to the weakness of Abbas and the PLO that it is Hamas's rockets, not Abbas's diplomacy, that has placed the Palestinian issue once again on center stage. The Palestinian president is nowhere to be found.

For all the attention paid to Abbas's statehood initiative this month at the U.N. General Assembly, it seems truly irrelevant now. And once again, this is confirmation of the fact that events on the ground determine what's up and down in Israel and Palestine. And Hamas is getting all the attention. Within the last month, the Qatari emir traveled to Gaza bearing gifts and cash, the Egyptian prime minister visited, and an Arab League delegation is planning to arrive soon. Turkey's foreign minister is also talking about a visit of his own.

So where does all of this go? The Middle East is notorious for rapid reversals of fortunes. Hamas is hardly 10 feet tall and a

master of strategic planning. It can no more liberate Palestine or turn Gaza into Singapore than Abbas could. And maybe the Israelis will succeed in delivering it a significant blow in the coming days. You have to believe that Abbas hopes so and is feeding them targeting info.

And since so many people have a stake in the idea of the two-state solution, Abbas will continue to play a key role. It would be nice to imagine that somehow, in some way, Fatah and Hamas would unify -- with Abbas in the driver's seat -- producing a national movement that had one gun and one negotiating position, instead of a dysfunctional polity that resembles Noah's Ark, with two of everything. And it is a wonderful thought that the so-called Islamist centrists would lean on Hamas to do precisely that.

But this isn't some parallel universe of truth, brotherhood, and light that offers up clear and decisive Hollywood endings. It's the muddle of the Middle East, where risk-aversion and the need to keep all your options open all too often substitutes for bold, clear-headed thinking -- guaranteeing gray rather than black and white outcomes.

Hamas and Fatah will survive, even as they both remain dysfunctional and divided. Both serve a perverse purpose -- keeping resistance and diplomacy alive, respectively, but not effectively enough to gain statehood. Israel will continue to play its own unhelpful role in this enterprise. And for the time being neither Palestinian movement is likely to give the Israelis any reason to change their minds.

The conundrum is crystal clear: Hamas won't make peace with Israel, and Abbas can't. The way forward is much less so.

New York Daily News

The Fuel for The Flames

Dennis Ross

November 18, 2012 -- As I sit here in Jerusalem and watch not just a war of words but also exchanges of rockets and air strikes between Israel and Hamas, it feels as if we are at one of those hinge points in the Middle East. The Arab Awakening has initiated changes without transformation. It has produced new governments, principally Islamist-led, but no certainty about how the region will ultimately evolve.

Will these new governments be driven by their ideological beliefs and aspirations that are inherently anti-western and anti-Israel? Or will they rationalize that long-term Islamist aims can and must wait in order for them to act in a way that will be necessary to improve their economies, lest they lose the legitimacy they may currently have with their publics -- publics that now have an expectation that their needs and hopes should count for something?

Nowhere are these questions more likely to be put to the test than in Egypt today, particularly with the events in Gaza. Hamas is quite literally an outgrowth of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. They are not just sister parties, they are organically linked.

Emotionally, ideologically and even politically, given the mood on the Egyptian street as pictures of Palestinian casualties in Gaza provoke anger, President Mohamed Morsi instinctively supports Hamas.

And, so, without any recognition that Israeli civilians are targeted by Hamas rockets from a territory Israel left completely in 2005, Morsi has condemned the Israeli "aggression" in Gaza and recalled Egypt's ambassador to Israel. He has sent his Prime Minister, Hesham Kandil, to Gaza to express solidarity and strong support.

But he may well have conveyed something else in private, namely: Find a way to bring this to an end; we are not going to war with Israel over you, and if you provoke the Israelis with continuing rocket attacks on Tel Aviv or Jerusalem, you are on your own.

Why might that be his message? Because the last thing Morsi needs is a conflict that drags on and actually leads to Israel feeling it has no choice but to send ground troops into Gaza and root out Hamas in a bloody, prolonged conflict.

Egypt's public would probably demand that he break the peace treaty under such circumstances. But the treaty is not a favor that Egypt does for Israel; it has saved countless Egyptian lives. Leaving aside over \$60 billion in U.S. assistance that Egypt received over the years, monies the Muslim Brotherhood may erroneously claim went to Mubarak and not the Egyptian people, it is the treaty that remains the linchpin for making it possible for Egypt to receive essential assistance, loans and investment that it needs to confront its collapsing economy.

Who is going to invest in Egypt if there is no peace treaty and in its place is the prospect of conflict and confrontation? Morsi understands that, and that is why, with all his tough rhetoric toward Israel, he is not saying he will revoke the treaty.

But it is one thing for him to recognize that reality, and it may be another to sustain this posture under pressure. Hamas, after all, has acted to provoke Israel, and Israel has decided to draw a line. Realities on the ground may well escalate, and Egypt's new leaders are being tested -- and the U.S., Europeans and even the Saudis and others in the Gulf will need to let Morsi know that he cannot let Hamas dictate Egypt's future.

Let's be clear. Hamas triggered this latest eruption of conflict. In the last two weeks, it loaded a tunnel with a massive amount of explosives and blew it up along the fence with Israel seeking to kill the Israeli forces in the vicinity. It fired an anti-tank rocket at an Israeli jeep wounding four Israeli soldiers again on the Israeli side of border.

This followed a pattern of increasing rocket fire from Gaza. Though Islamic Jihad, the Popular Resistance Committee and Salafis may have been responsible for most of the rocket fire coming out of Gaza during the course of this year, Hamas in the last weeks was doing far less to prevent it, and suddenly it began to assume responsibility for the attacks.

While it is probably true that Hamas leaders felt pressure to show they had not given up resistance against Israel -- their only real strategy and claim to rule -- there is more to the shift in Hamas' behavior. With a new Egypt led by the Muslim Brotherhood, Hamas leaders felt they could do more to carry out

attacks against Israel and demonstrate their "resistance" credentials.

They doubted that they would face much pressure from Egypt, instead believing that they could put pressure on Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood colleagues to do more to break relations with Israel.

Moreover, with Israel facing elections and preoccupied with Iran, they may well have calculated that Israel would not want to escalate and that Hamas could, thus, create a new normal and Israel would adjust to it.

But Hamas miscalculated and was surprised by the Israeli reaction. The best proof of that is Israel was able to track and kill the head of the Hamas military wing, Ahmed Jaber, who would have gone underground quickly if he thought Israel was about to strike.

For its part, Israel was not about to let Hamas define a new normal that would prevent Israeli forces from patrolling along the security fence separating Israel from Gaza -- nor was it about to allow Hamas to fire or permit groups like the Iranian-armed Islamic Jihad to shoot rockets from Gaza and force up to a million Israelis in southern Israel to move in and out of shelters.

So Israel acted to re-establish its deterrence and not let it erode. In killing Jaber, Israel eliminated a man not simply responsible for the deaths of dozens of Israelis, but the leader of the most militant part of Hamas who was also instrumental in planning all attacks against Israel.

But the Israeli attacks have also been guided by a strategic

rationale to set back Hamas' ability to launch its longer-range rockets against Israel. So Israel has been striking Hamas' weapons infrastructure and the sites of the Fajr 5 rockets capable of hitting Tel Aviv and even Jerusalem.

To this point, Israel has been targeting these capabilities, not Hamas fighters. This is the best indication that Israel would like to keep this conflict limited with the aim of re-establishing its deterrence, destroying a significant part of Hamas' long-range arsenal, and restoring calm.

That, however, could change. Israel's call up of reservists is designed to put more pressure on Hamas to stop the conflict. But should Hamas keep firing rockets at Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, it will cross an Israeli red-line. Bringing life to a standstill in Israel's heartland will not be tolerated. The IDF could launch ground forces into Gaza, and Israel's war aims could expand -- and that could happen sooner rather than later.

That is probably the last thing that Hamas' leaders want. Their hold on power could be shaken. The irony is that Israel and Hamas probably both want to keep this conflict limited. Israel does not need to get caught up in a long bloody conflict in Gaza, with high casualties and growing international pressure on it to stop. Hamas leaders have no desire to lose their grip on power. Logic would argue for the conflict to be brought to an end with some understandings that would prevent it from resuming soon.

But logic does not always work in the Middle East. Neither side wants to appear that they needed the ceasefire. Both will want to claim victory, and the longer it takes to broker a ceasefire, the greater the danger of this spinning out of control, particularly if Hamas keeps firing at Israel's largest cities.

For our part, we can put pressure on Egypt and mobilize others, like the European Union and even the Saudis, who have no interest in Hamas shifting the focus in the Middle East away from Syria, to do the same. Egypt has many pressing internal needs, and Hamas is the junior partner in their relationship.

No doubt, Hamas will ask the Egyptians to open a free trade area with Gaza, and get assurances from Israel that may include ending its practice of blocking what can enter Gaza from the sea. Israel, in turn, will seek assurances from Egypt not only about Hamas stopping all fire out of Gaza but also about Egypt preventing the smuggling of arms through the Sinai into Gaza.

Is Egypt up to or even willing to play this role? Much will depend on what matters most to Egypt's new leaders: their ideology or the country's economic needs. How they resolve this question may affect not only when this conflict ends -- and on what terms -- but also tell us much about the direction of Egypt during this time of transition in the Middle East.

Dennis Ross is counselor at The Washington Institute.

Article 4.

Stratfor

Israel and Gaza: Then and Now

November 19, 2012 -- Four years ago on Nov. 4, while Americans were going to the polls to elect a new president, Israeli infantry, tanks and bulldozers entered the Gaza Strip to dismantle an extensive tunnel network used by Hamas to smuggle in weapons. An already tenuous truce mediated by the Egyptian government of Hosni Mubarak had been broken. Hamas responded with a barrage of mortar and rocket fire lasting several weeks, and on Dec. 27, 2008, Israel began Operation Cast Lead. The military campaign began with seven days of heavy air strikes on Gaza, followed by a 15-day ground incursion. By the end of the campaign, nearly 1,000 poorly guided shorter-range rockets and mortar shells hit southern Israel, reaching as far as Beersheba and Yavne. Several senior Hamas commanders and hundreds of militants were killed in the fighting. Israel Defense Forces figures showed that 10 IDF soldiers died (four from friendly fire), three Israeli civilians died from Palestinian rocket fire and 1,166 Palestinians were killed -- 709 of them combatants. The strategic environment during the 2008-2009 Operation Cast Lead was vastly different from the one Israel faces in today's Operation Pillar of Defense. To understand the evolution in regional dynamics, we must return to 2006, the year that would set the conditions for both military campaigns.

Setting the Stage

2006 began with Hamas winning a sweeping electoral victory over its ideological rival, Fatah. Representing the secular and more pragmatic strand of Palestinian politics, Fatah had already been languishing in Gaza under the weight of its own corruption and its lackluster performance in seemingly fruitless negotiations with Israel. The political rise of Hamas led to

months of civil war between the two Palestinian factions, and on June 14, Hamas forcibly took control of the Gaza Strip from Fatah. Just 11 days later, Hamas kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalt and killed two others, prompting a new round of hostilities with Israel. In what appeared to be a coordinated move, Hezbollah on July 12 launched its own raid on Israel's northern front and kidnapped two additional soldiers, kicking off the month-long Second Lebanon War. As Israel discovered, Hezbollah was well-prepared for the conflict, relying on an extensive tunneling system to preserve its launching crews and weaponry. Hezbollah made use of anti-tank guided missiles, improvised explosive devices that caught Israel Defense Forces by surprise and blunted the ground offensive, and medium-range rockets capable of reaching Haifa. Hezbollah incurred a heavy toll for the fight, with much of the infrastructure in southern Lebanon devastated and roughly 1,300 Lebanese civilian casualties threatening to erode its popular support. Casualty numbers aside, Hezbollah emerged from the 2006 conflict with a symbolic victory. Since 1973, no other Arab army, much less a militant organization, had been able to fight as effectively to challenge Israel's military superiority. Israel's inability to claim victory translated as a Hezbollah victory. That perception reverberated throughout the region. It cast doubts on Israel's ability to respond to much bigger strategic threats, considering it could be so confounded by a non-state militant actor close to home.

At that time, Hamas was contending with numerous challenges; its coup in Gaza had earned the group severe political and economic isolation, and the group's appeals to open Gaza's border, and for neighbors to recognize Hamas as a legitimate political actor, went mostly unheeded. However, Hamas did take

careful note of Hezbollah's example. Here was a militant organization that had burnished its resistance credentials against Israel, could maintain strong popular support among its constituents and had made its way into Lebanon's political mainstream. Hezbollah benefited from a strong patron in Iran. Hamas, on the other hand, enjoyed no such support. Mubarak's Egypt, Bashar al Assad's Syria, Jordan under the Hashemites and the Gulf monarchies under the influence of the House of Saud all shared a deep interest in keeping Hamas boxed in. Although publically these countries showed support for the Palestinians and condemned Israel, they tended to view Palestinian refugees and more radical groups such as Hamas as a threat to the stability of their regimes. While Hamas began questioning the benefits of its political experiment, Iran saw an opportunity to foster a militant proxy. Tehran saw an increasingly strained relationship between Saudi Arabia and Hamas, and it took advantage to increase funding and weapons supplies to the group. Forces from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force, along with Hezbollah, worked with Hamas to expand the group's weapons arsenal and build elaborate tunnels under the Gaza Strip to facilitate its operations. Israel soon began to notice and took action toward the end of 2008.

Operation Cast Lead

Hamas was operating in a difficult strategic environment during Operation Cast Lead. Hezbollah had the benefit of using the rural terrain south of the Litani River to launch rockets against Israel during the Second Lebanon War, thereby sparing Lebanon's most densely populated cities from retaliatory attacks. Hamas, on the other hand, must work in a tightly constricted geographic space and therefore uses the Palestinian population as cover for its rocket launches. The threat of losing popular

support is therefore much higher for Hamas in Gaza than it is for Hezbollah in southern Lebanon. At the same time, operating in a built-up urban environment also poses a considerable challenge for the Israeli military. During Operation Cast Lead, Cairo did little to hide its true feelings toward Hamas. Though Egypt played a critical role in the cease-fire negotiations, it was prepared to incur the domestic political cost of cracking down on the Rafah border crossing to prevent refugees from flowing into Sinai and to prevent Hamas from replenishing its weapons supply. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, then in the opposition, took advantage of the situation to publicly rally against the Mubarak regime, but its protests did little to change the situation. Hamas was boxed in by Egypt and Israel. The rest of the region largely avoided direct involvement. Turkey was focused on internal affairs, and Saudi Arabia remained largely aloof. Jordan's Hashemite rulers could afford to continue quietly cooperating with Israel without facing backlash. The United States, emerging from an election, was focused on shaping an exit strategy from Iraq. Many of Hamas' traditional wealthy Gulf donors grew wary of attracting the focus of Western security and intelligence agencies as fund transfers from the Gulf came under closer scrutiny. Iran was the exception. While the Arab regimes ostracized Hamas, Iran worked to sustain the group in its fight. Tehran's reasoning was clear and related to Iran's emergence as a regional power. Iraq had already fallen into Iran's sphere of influence (though the United States was not yet prepared to admit it), Hezbollah was rebuilding in southern Lebanon, and Iranian influence continued to spread in western Afghanistan. Building up a stronger militant proxy network in the Palestinian territories was the logical next step in Tehran's effort to keep a

check on Israeli threats to strike the Iranian nuclear program. In early January 2009, in the midst of Operation Cast Lead, Israel learned that Iran was allegedly planning to deliver 120 tons of arms and explosives to Gaza, including anti-tank guided missiles and Iranian-made Fajr-3 rockets with a 40-kilometer (25-mile) range and 45-kilogram (99-pound) warhead. The Iranian shipment arrived at Port Sudan, and the Israeli air force then bombed a large convoy of 23 trucks traveling across Egypt's southern border up into Sinai. Though Israel interdicted this weapons shipment -- likely with Egyptian complicity -- Iran did not give up its attempts to supply Hamas with advanced weaponry. The long-range Fajr rocket attacks targeting Tel Aviv and Jerusalem in the current conflict are a testament to Iran's continued effort.

The Current Geopolitical Environment

Hamas and Israel now find themselves in a greatly altered geopolitical climate. On every one of its borders, Israel faces a growing set of vulnerabilities that would have been hard to envision at the time of Operation Cast Lead.

The most important shift has taken place in Egypt, where the Muslim Brotherhood carefully used the momentum provided by the Arab Spring to shed its opposition status and take political control of the state. Hamas, which grew out of the Muslim Brotherhood, then faced an important decision. With an ideological ally in Cairo, Egypt no longer presents as high a hurdle to Hamas' political ambitions. Indeed, Hamas could even try to use its ties to the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood to achieve political legitimacy. When unrest spread into Syria and began to threaten Iran's position in the Levant, Hamas made a strategic decision to move away from the Iran-Syria axis, now on the decline, and to latch itself onto the new apparent regional trend:

the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood and its Islamist affiliates across the Arab world. This rise of the Muslim Brotherhood spread from Egypt to Syria to Jordan, presenting Israel with a new set of challenges on its borders. Egypt's dire economic situation, the political unrest in its cities, and the Muslim Brotherhood's uneasy relationship with the military and security apparatus led to a rapid deterioration in security in Sinai. Moreover, a Muslim Brotherhood government in Cairo on friendly terms with Hamas could not be trusted to crack down on the Gaza border and interdict major weapons shipments. A political machine such as the Muslim Brotherhood, which derives its power from the street, will be far more sensitive to pro-Palestinian sentiment than will a police state that can rule through intimidation. In Syria, Israel has lost a predictable adversary to its north. The balkanization of the Levant is giving rise to an array of Islamist forces, and Israel can no longer rely on the regime in Damascus to keep Hezbollah in check for its own interests. In trying to sustain its position in Syria and Lebanon, Iran has increased the number of its operatives in the region, bringing Tehran that much closer to Israel as both continue to posture over a potential strike against Iranian nuclear facilities. To Israel's east, across the Jordan River valley, pressure is also growing on the Hashemite kingdom. An emboldened Muslim Brotherhood has been joined by disillusioned tribes from the East Bank in openly calling for the downfall of the king. High energy costs are severely blunting the kingdom's ability to contain these protests through subsidies, and the growing crisis in Gaza threatens to spread instability in the West Bank and invigorate Palestinians across the river in Jordan. Beyond its immediate periphery, Israel is struggling to find

parties interested in its cause. The Europeans remain hostile to anything they deem to be excessive Israeli retaliation against the Palestinians. Furthermore, they are far too consumed by the fragmentation of the European Union to get involved with what is happening in the southern Levant.

The United States remains diplomatically involved in trying to reach a cease-fire, but as it has made clear throughout the Syrian crisis, Washington does not intend to get dragged into every conflagration in the Middle East. Instead, the United States is far more interested in having regional players like Egypt and Turkey manage the burden. The United States can pressure Egypt by threatening to withhold financial and military aid. In the case of Turkey, there appears to be little that Ankara can do to mediate the conflict. Turkish-Israeli relations have been severely strained since the 2010 Mavi Marmara incident.

Moreover, although the Turkish government is trying to edge its way into the cease-fire negotiations to demonstrate its leadership prowess to the region, Ankara is as wary of appearing too close to a radical Islamist group like Hamas as it is of appearing in the Islamic world as too conciliatory to Israel. Saudi Arabia was already uncomfortable with backing more radical Palestinian strands, but Riyadh now faces a more critical threat -- the regional rise of the Muslim Brotherhood. Islamist political activism poses a direct threat to the foundation of the monarchy, which has steadfastly kept the religious establishment out of the political domain. Saudi Arabia has little interest in the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood encouraging Hamas' political rise, and Riyadh will thus become even more alienated from the Palestinian theater. Meanwhile Gulf state Qatar, which has much less to lose, is proffering large amounts of financial aid in a bid to increase its influence in the Palestinian territories.

Iran, meanwhile, is working feverishly to stem the decline of its regional influence. At the time of Operation Cast Lead, Iran was steadily expanding its sphere of influence, from western Afghanistan to the Mediterranean. A subsequent U.S. military buildup in the Persian Gulf and an intensifying U.S.-led economic warfare campaign slowed Iran down, but it was the decline of the al Assad regime that put Iran on the defensive. An emboldened Sunni opposition in Syria, backed by the West, Turkey and the Arab Gulf states, could spill into Lebanon to threaten Hezbollah's position and eventually threaten Iran's position in Iraq. With each faction looking to protect itself, Iran can no longer rely as heavily on militant proxies in the Levant, especially Palestinian groups that see an alignment with Iran as a liability in the face of a Sunni rebellion. But Iran is also not without options in trying to maintain a Palestinian lever against Israel. Hamas would not be able to strike Tel Aviv and Jerusalem with long-range rockets had it not been for Iran, which supplied these rockets through Sudan and trained Palestinian operatives on how to assemble them in Gaza. Even if Hamas uses up its arsenal of Fajr-5s in the current conflict and takes a heavy beating in the process, Iran has succeeded in creating a major regional distraction to tie down Israel and draw attention away from the Syrian rebellion. Iran supplied Hezbollah with Zelzal rockets capable of reaching Haifa during the 2006 Second Lebanon War. Hamas was limited to shorter-range Qassam and Grad rockets in Operation Cast Lead but now has Iranian-made Fajr-5s to target Israel's most cherished cities. Hamas is now carrying the mantle of resistance from Hezbollah in hopes of achieving a symbolic victory that does not end up devastating the group in Gaza. Israel's only hope to deny Hamas that victory is to eliminate Hamas' arsenal of these rockets, all

the while knowing that Iran will likely continue to rely on Egypt's leniency on the border to smuggle more parts and weaponry into Gaza in the future. The Hamas rocket dilemma is just one example of the types of problems Israel will face in the coming years. The more vulnerable Israel becomes, the more prone it will be to pre-emptive action against its neighbors as it tries to pick the time and place of battle. In this complex strategic environment, Operation Pillar of Defense may be one of many similar military campaigns as Israel struggles to adjust to this new geopolitical reality.

Article 5.

The Washington Post

The callousness of Hamas

Richard Cohen

19 November -- Of all the points of disagreement between Israel and Hamas, maybe the most profound is this one: Israel cares more about sparing innocent lives — including those of Palestinians — than does Hamas. Not only have Hamas and other militant groups this year sent more than 700 rockets crashing haphazardly into southern Israel, but also Hamas instigated yet another war where the chief loser will certainly be its own people. If hell has a beach, it's located in Gaza.

The Gaza Strip is a congested, fetid place. It is densely populated and in the slums and housing blocks, Hamas has hidden its weapons, explosives and rocket launchers. Israel has

gone out of its way to avoid civilian casualties. Its air force has used new, highly accurate ammunition aiming for rocket-launching sites and government installations. For the most part, it has succeeded.

For Hamas, civilian casualties are an asset. Palestinians love and grieve as do other people, but Hamas leadership knows that the world has gotten impatient with Israel. Increasingly, many people now see Israel as the aggressor, as Gaza's occupying power (never mind the 2005 pullout), and they overlook such trifles as the Hamas charter, which is repellently anti-Semitic and cites the discredited forgery "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion." In the Hamas cosmology, Jews are so evil that somehow "they also stood behind World War II, where they collected immense benefits from trading with war materials." This, you would have to concede, is a wholly original take on the Holocaust.

Many in the West heroically ignore such nonsense. They embrace Hamas as the champions of a victimized Third World people. In recent days, some editorialists have bemoaned the war and Hamas' role in inciting it. But then comes the inevitable "however." "However, the government of Benjamin Netanyahu must also take much blame for stoking resentment among Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank for so long," opined the Financial Times. The New York Times' caveat came lower down in its initial editorial on the war: "But it would be easier to win support for retaliatory action if Israel was engaged in serious negotiations with Hamas' rival, the Palestinian Authority." Apparently, 700 rockets are not enough.

Look, let us stipulate: Palestinians have suffered greatly. They

have legitimate grievances. Israel has at times been a bully, and the slow and steady march of West Bank settlements is both wrong and destructive of the (nonexistent) peace process. But for all this, it is insane to apply the Officer Krupke rule (from “West Side Story”) to Hamas: “We ain’t no delinquents, we’re misunderstood. Deep down inside us there is good.” There is little good in Hamas.

Hamas is not the passive party in this struggle. It rules Gaza by force. The other day it murdered — please don’t say “executed” — an alleged collaborator without the inconvenience of a trial, shooting the man on a crowded street. It chose to make war by allowing more militant groups to use Gaza as a launching pad for rockets and firing off the occasional rocket itself. No nation is going to put up with this sort of terror. The rockets do some, not a lot of damage, but that’s not the point. The point instead is that people who have the wherewithal will not continue to live in a place where even the occasional rocket can come down on your kids’ school. This is not a mere border problem. For Israel, this is an existential threat.

What various editorial writers and others seem not to understand is that the very peace agreement they accuse Israel of forestalling is, in fact, impeded by Hamas’ use of violence. Who wants to make peace with extremists? Who wants to give up land for the promises of peace offered by zealots who read Hitler for inspiration? Israel pulled out of Gaza once already. Abandoned greenhouses were refurbished by Jewish philanthropists in America. The greenhouses were trashed and with them what now seems like naive optimism. Soon, Hamas took control and the rockets started hitting Israel.

This war between Arabs and Jews, between Israelis and Palestinians, is well over 100 years old. Both sides have a case and both sides have proved to be indomitable. But both sides are not equally right in all instances. Hamas sent rockets into Israel, not caring if they hit a chicken coop or a group of toddlers jumping in and out of a sprinkler. You want balance? Here's balance. Hamas didn't care if its own people died either.

Article 6.

The Wall Street Journal

Israel's Iron Dome

Editorial

November 19, 2012 -- However Israel's latest war with Hamas ends, the Gaza conflict will long be remembered for images of a military feat in the skies above Israel. Israeli interceptors have eviscerated the Iranian-supplied Hamas missiles heading for population centers. Chalk up an important strategic and technological win for missile defense.

The Jewish state's Iron Dome system was conceived after the 2006 war with Lebanon, when nearly 4,000 Hezbollah missiles

killed 44 civilians in northern Israel; it was deployed only last year. Missile defenses have had vocal doubters since Ronald Reagan championed them in the 1980s, and Israeli critics focused on the price—around \$50,000 for each Tamir interceptor—and supposedly dubious reliability. The last week ends that debate.

Iron Dome is designed to protect crowded civilian areas from short-range missiles. A radar attached to each battery determines whether an incoming volley threatens a population center to ensure that interceptors aren't wasted on unthreatening missiles.

Israel's system is modest, with five batteries deployed so far. Yet in only six years they've managed to make Tel Aviv and other cities nearly impregnable to missile attacks. The hit rate approaches 90%. About a thousand missiles have come from Gaza so far, and according to an official cited by Time magazine, 300 or so were deemed worth intercepting.

The engineering achievement has saved countless lives, but the strategic benefits are also significant. By limiting civilian casualties, missile defenses provide more options and more time for military and political leaders to decide how to respond. If missiles were landing willy-nilly in Israeli cities, the pressure would be great either for a ground incursion into Gaza, or a possibly humiliating accommodation with Hamas. Much as the late strategist Albert Wohlstetter predicted, defenses can deter aggressors and offer the chance to make war less destructive.

There's a lesson here as well for the U.S. In an overlooked study in September, the National Research Council pointed out shortcomings in current American missile-defense strategy,

saying the U.S. needs to do more to protect the homeland against long-range attacks from Iran, North Korea and other countries. The report specifically recommended an additional defense site on the U.S. East Coast to augment interceptors in California and Alaska.

Three years ago, the Obama Administration pulled the plug on a site in Poland and the Czech Republic, bending to Russian pressure. In its place, the White House decided to protect Europe from a short- and medium-range Iranian missile with Aegis interceptors initially based at sea and later on land.

The revised plan's last, fourth stage would eventually address the long-range threat by putting interceptors in Central Europe. But that's the issue that President Obama famously promised Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev that he'd have "more flexibility" on in a second term. Missile defense could also suffer from budget cuts.

With missiles proliferating and the world unprepared to stop Iran's nuclear program, missile defenses are becoming more urgent than ever for the U.S. The Israelis are showing the importance of being protected in an era of rogue missiles.

Article 7.

Yale-Global Online Magazine

An American President in the Age of Globalization

Strobe Talbott

19 November 2012 -- The announcement by the Norwegian Nobel Committee in October 2009 that Barack Obama had won the Peace Prize came as a surprise to just about everyone, including the recipient. The president, barely nine months into his new job, knew that the award was an encouragement of his aspirations, not recognition of his accomplishments. He said as much in accepting the prize at the Oslo ceremony two months later. Over the ensuing three years, Obama negotiated a new strategic arms treaty with Russia, made progress in stamping out the high command of Al Qaeda, and coped deftly with “black swan” events like the Arab Awakening. But on two challenges of existential importance, he has come up short: strengthening the global nuclear non-proliferation regime and leading an international effort to slow the process of climate change. Obama had given priority to both goals in his 2008 campaign and first inaugural address but was thwarted on both, largely because of partisan opposition in Washington. Obama had hoped to use momentum generated by the 2010 ratification of the “New Start” arms treaty to persuade the Senate to do something it should have done 11 years earlier: ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, CTBT, a pact that would, if it had entered into force, be the culmination of a 50-year American initiative. Instead, the dynamic on Capitol Hill was the opposite of momentum: Republicans who had reluctantly approved New Start opposed CTBT, largely so as to deny Obama another victory. On climate change, the House of Representatives passed a bill to reduce carbon emissions in 2009; but the Senate, then controlled by Democrats, never voted on the House bill or a

Senate version because they could not break a Republican filibuster. Some GOP stalwarts – notably including Richard Lugar of Indiana, Lindsey Graham of South Carolina and Susan Collins of Maine – had long acknowledged the threat posed by climate change. But they were outnumbered by colleagues who saw the alarm as a hoax designed to enlarge government’s role. That view was reinforced by polls at the time showing a decline in the number of Americans who accepted the overwhelming scientific evidence that the peril was real and growing worse by the year. Republican hostility to a sitting Democratic president during Obama’s first term has been more intense, sustained and unified than anything we’ve seen in modern times. During Obama’s inauguration, senior Republicans met privately to develop a strategy to ensure failure in virtually everything he hoped to do. Shortly before the Democrats lost control of the House of Representatives in 2010, the Republican leader in the Senate, Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, stated outright that his top political priority was to deny President Obama a second term. This breathtaking rejection of the principle of compromise – call it the audacity of irresponsibility – reflects the extreme polarization of American politics, which in turn reflects the dark underside of what’s most uplifting about the Obama phenomenon. The same attributes of the 44th president that have made him a prodigy in the eyes of many Americans – and much of the rest of the world – have also made him a target of unprecedented mistrust and hatred. Campaigning in 2008, Obama drew appreciative laughter from friendly audiences when he referred to himself as “a skinny black guy with a funny name.” His victory was as much a credit to the evolution of the country as it was to him. But there was still a race barrier for him to overcome, and it remained four years later. Obama is not

just an African-American – he’s half-African, and he spent part of his childhood in Indonesia to boot. His middle name isn’t funny to Americans who associate it with the late unlamented dictator of Iraq. For some, the name screams “not one of us” – a red flag to nativists, birthers and the 17 percent of Americans who believe their president is Muslim. During the 2008 campaign, he identified himself as a “citizen of the world.” Obama is not the first president to make that claim. Jack Kennedy and Ronald Reagan did, too. But Obama is the first to do so before he was elected. Moreover, he did it on foreign soil, at the Tiergarten in Berlin in July 2008. The venue was part of his message: He was campaigning for the leadership of his own nation by demonstrating his appeal to and identification with people of other nations, regions and cultures. In the early 1980s, when Obama was in his 20s, he worked as a community organizer in Chicago. On several occasions during his campaign he cited that experience as a lesson useful to organizing the community of nations in an increasingly interdependent world. In short, Obama supports global governance, even though he carefully avoids that phrase since it makes many Americans think of black helicopters and is even more toxic than “citizen of the world.” For all these reasons, Barack Hussein Obama has – by virtue of his identity, his biographical narrative, and his worldview – the ideal credential to lead the US in the age of globalization. For many Americans, his ascension to the White House has been a dream come true. For others, however, it continues to be a nightmare, a confirmation of their deepest fears about Obama and globalization itself.

So what now? Will Obama succeed in his second term where he was frustrated in his first? The answer depends on how hard he

tries and how willing the Republicans in Congress are to work with him.

On global warming, Obama's hand may be strengthened. His tenure in office no longer depends on voters in the coal-producing precincts of Ohio and Pennsylvania. Also, as of this past summer, opinion surveys show an upward trend in public concern about climate because of what people experience firsthand: freak droughts in the Corn Belt, falling water tables in the Southwest, catastrophic fires in the Rockies and a tropical storm devastating the Northeast in late October. Ironically, Sandy provided an election-eve pair of boons for Obama: Michael Bloomberg, an Independent and New York City's mayor, endorsed the president; and Chris Christie, Republican governor of New Jersey, praised Obama for his handling of the disaster.

Another test of Obama's courage of his convictions is whether he makes an all-out effort to ratify the CTBT.

The overarching question about Obama's second term is whether he can reassure his domestic constituency and his global one that America is governable. Traveling around the world, I've been struck by the level of interest in – and anxiety about – this year's US elections. The suspense wasn't just about who would win, but whether winners and losers in the races for the White House and Congress can break the multiple impasses that have so crippled national governance in recent years.

Much will depend on whether the federal government can avoid hurtling over the edge of the so-called fiscal cliff. If so, it will augur well not just for the US economy but for the world's. It

will also help restore American leadership of global governance, by that or any other name. While that won't get Obama another Nobel Prize, it will make him, and the Norwegians, feel better about the one he collected three years ago.

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