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Article 1.

The New York Times

Another Israel-Gaza War?

Editorial

November 15, 2012 -- No country should have to endure the rocket attacks that Israel has endured from militants in Gaza,

most recently over the past four days. The question is how to stop them permanently.

On Wednesday, Israel launched one of the most ferocious assaults on Gaza since its invasion four years ago. At least 20 targets were struck and a Hamas military commander, Ahmed al-Jabari, was killed. Israeli leaders also threatened another ground war.

Hamas has controlled Gaza since Israel withdrew in 2007. The group has mostly adhered to an informal cease-fire with Israel after the war there in the winter of 2008-09. But, in recent months, Hamas has claimed responsibility for participating in rocket firings, and last week it took credit for detonating a tunnel packed with explosives along the Israel-Gaza border while Israeli soldiers were working nearby.

Israel has a right to defend itself, but it's hard to see how Wednesday's operation could be the most effective way of advancing its long-term interests. It has provoked new waves of condemnation against Israel in Arab countries, including Egypt, whose cooperation is needed to enforce the 1979 peace treaty and support stability in Sinai.

The action also threatens to divert attention from what Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has repeatedly described as Israel's biggest security threat: Iran's nuclear program.

Engaging in a full-scale ground war is especially risky. Israel's last major military campaign in Gaza was a three-week blitz in 2008-09 that killed as many as 1,400 Palestinians, and it was widely condemned internationally. It did not solve the problem. Hamas remains in control in Gaza and has amassed even more

missiles.

Some Israeli commentators have suggested that Mr. Netanyahu's decision to order the operation is connected to elections in January. But there are other options. Israel could have asked Egypt, whose new Islamist-led government has close ties to Hamas, to mediate a more permanent cease-fire. On Monday, Hamas hinted that it was open to that. Or Israel could have responded as it usually has in recent years, avoiding high-profile assassinations while attacking rocket-launching squads, empty training sites and weapons manufacturing plants.

Hamas is a dangerous adversary that may never accept Israel's right to exist. But it would be easier to win support for retaliatory action if Israel was engaged in serious negotiations with Hamas's rival, the Palestinian Authority, and working toward a durable peace agreement.

Article 2.

Foreign Policy

Operation Cast Lead 2.0

Hussein Ibish

November 14, 2012 -- Israel's assassination of Hamas military commander Ahmed al-Jaabari in a missile attack has shattered

the short-lived and fragile calm in the Gaza Strip, and could be another step in the transformation of the basic balance of power within Hamas -- and even the broader Palestinian national movement. The attack is the most significant escalation since Operation Cast Lead, the offensive Israel launched in Gaza in December 2008, and which cost an estimated 1,400 Palestinian and 13 Israeli lives.

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) announced that Jaabari's killing was the first strike in "a widespread campaign" to "protect Israeli civilians and to cripple the terrorist infrastructure" -- and indeed, the IDF hit a number of targets across Gaza in the hours that followed, killing at least eight Palestinians. It's possible that these developments are laying prelude to another Israeli ground intervention in Gaza. On Nov. 11, Israel's Home Front Defense Minister Avi Dichter declared, "Israel must perform a reformatting of Gaza, and rearrange it" -- but gave no indication of what that dire-sounding phrase might mean in practice.

It is impossible to know how the conflict will unfold in the days ahead, but what is clear is that the outbreak of violence is the result of a swirl of events that are reshaping power structures within Hamas and its relationships with regional forces, including with Israel and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank.

During most of the period since Cast Lead, the Hamas rulers in Gaza have refrained from attacks against Israel and tried to prevent other militant groups from launching attacks as well. But as 2012 has progressed, that policy has changed -- largely due to internal transformations within the group itself.

The internal dynamic of Hamas has traditionally been that leaders in its Politburo, which is based almost entirely in neighboring Arab countries, were more militant than their compatriots inside Gaza. It was the leaders in exile who maintained close relations with the radical regimes in Iran and Syria, while the Hamas government in Gaza was more restrained because it had more to lose from violence with Israel.

That calculation has been inverted in recent months as Hamas's foreign alliances have undergone a dramatic transformation and its domestic wing has made a bold attempt to assert its primacy. Hamas's relationship with Damascus completely collapsed when the group came out in opposition to President Bashar al-Assad's regime. The Politburo had to abandon its Damascus headquarters, and is now scattered in capitals throughout the Arab world. This has also created enormous strains with Iran, which is apparently supplying much less funding and material to Hamas than before.

Hamas leaders in Gaza, meanwhile, have increasingly been making the case that the Politburo does not represent the organization's paramount leadership -- but rather its diplomatic wing, whose main role is to secure aid and support from foreign governments. It is the Hamas government and paramilitary force in Gaza, they argue, that are in the driver's seat, because they are actually involved in fighting Israel.

The desire to be the tip of the spear against Israel explains why Hamas involved itself in rocket attacks against Israel earlier this year, and has done much less to prevent other groups from launching attacks in recent weeks. The attacks are part of the case for the transfer of paramount leadership away from the

exiles and to the Hamas political and military leadership in Gaza, which portrays itself as doing the ruling and the fighting.

This internal struggle has been given renewed urgency by the September announcement from the group's current head, Khaled Meshaal, that he would step down. The two contenders for the top spot are Hamas's de facto leader in Gaza, Ismail Haniyeh, and the present Politburo number two, the Cairo-based Musa Abu Marzook. A Haniyeh victory would cement the transfer of power within Hamas to Gaza, while Abu Marzook represents continued hopes that Hamas's fortunes hinge on benefiting from the region-wide "Islamic Awakening" -- the group's interpretation of what others call the Arab Spring.

These rocket attacks don't just come at a time of intense internal wrangling within Hamas, but also Israel's upcoming election in January. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his government have been under enormous pressure to forcefully respond to the continued rocket fire -- more than 800 rockets so far this year, according to Israeli officials -- and Jaabari's assassination sends the most powerful of messages. Netanyahu has made his political career on security issues, but even if he hopes to limit the conflagration, it could spiral out of everyone's control.

The third vital context for Wednesday's offensive is the upcoming initiative by the Palestine Liberation Organization to formally request an upgrade at the U.N. General Assembly to "non-member observer state status." Israel is vehemently opposed to this resolution, which is certain to win a majority if it is submitted. Jerusalem has reacted with a series of dire threats -- including cutting off the tax revenues it collects on behalf of the

Palestinian Authority, declaring the Oslo Agreements "null and void," overthrowing Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, greatly expanding settlement activity, or even unilaterally annexing parts of the occupied West Bank.

Israel has also been marshaling U.S. and European opposition to the PLO's statehood bid, apparently with a great deal of success. Together, they have been able to paint the move as "unilateral" and provocative, setting the stage for retaliatory measures. But the Israelis must be aware that any further financial, diplomatic, or political blows to the badly ailing Palestinian Authority -- which is currently unable to meet the public employee payroll, on which the majority of Palestinians in both the West Bank and Gaza depend -- can only strengthen Hamas.

During last year's PLO initiative at the United Nations, Hamas was in such disarray from its growing crisis with Syria and Iran that it was in no condition to exploit Israeli "punishment" of the PLO. This time, however, Hamas is in an entirely different position: It appears to be on the brink of achieving considerable regional and international legitimacy. The emir of Qatar recently visited Gaza, becoming the first head of state to do so, and promised \$400 million in reconstruction aid to the de facto Hamas government there. Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan is also reportedly considering a formal visit to Gaza. Egypt, too, is vying for Hamas's affections, although President Mohammed Morsy's government has done little to practically help the group.

Hamas can claim, for the first time in many years, to have a vision for the future, reliable patrons, and regional momentum as the primary beneficiaries of a wave of Islamist political

victories across the Middle East. The PLO, Hamas can argue, has no money, no friends, no vision, and no future.

If the PLO goes forward with its initiative at the United Nations and Israel and the West react with significant punitive measures, Hamas is better positioned than ever to be the direct political beneficiary. Indeed, it will never have been closer to its cherished aim of seizing control of the Palestinian national movement -- and possibly even the PLO itself -- from its secular nationalist rivals.

The people of Israel will not find peace and security through endless wars with an ever-evolving array of Palestinian militants -- the inevitable consequence of the lack of a peace agreement. For all its death and destruction, Operation Cast Lead failed to solve any of Israel's security issues and did nothing to weaken Hamas's grip on power in Gaza. But it did expose Israel to unprecedented international condemnation regarding its targeting of civilian and non-military targets, alleged war crimes, and excessive use of force. Those who fire rockets from Gaza, or countenance such attacks must also be held responsible for what they know full well will be the Israeli response -- the price of which will, as always, be primarily paid by ordinary, innocent Palestinians.

Make no mistake: Jaabari's assassination is a major blow to Hamas's military wing, which lost its long-standing leader. And even if this is the beginning of a "reformatting" of Gaza, Israel could once again end up winning the battle but losing the war: If it is not careful, developments on the Gaza battlefield could end up strengthening rather than weakening Hamas. Worse still, it could empower extreme, new Palestinian jihadist organizations

that have begun to crop up in Gaza. The potential for miscalculation on all sides -- bringing another round of mayhem that only makes matters worse for everyone -- is grave.

Hussein Ibish is a senior fellow at the American Task Force on Palestine.

Article 3.

Foreign Policy

Islamist-In-Chief

Mohanad Hage Ali

November 14, 2012 -- Even as opponents of President Bashar al-Assad have gained ground inside Syria, the political opposition in exile has remained famously divided. The Syrian National Council, a body formed more than a year ago with the goal of uniting all opposition groups, was the poster child for these failures: Many of its most prominent members resigned in anger over the Muslim Brotherhood's domination of its top ranks and the council's detachment from groups inside the country.

However, recent developments have prompted a burst of optimism about the state of Syria's opposition. On Nov. 11, anti-Assad groups met in Doha, Qatar, where they hashed out an agreement, under U.S. and Qatari auspices, to form the National

Coalition of Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces. The new rebel coalition was hailed as the first truly representative opposition body -- and its new leader, Sheikh Ahmed Moaz al-Khatib, was widely praised as the perfect figure to represent the opposition to the world.

Syria's opposition received an immediate diplomatic boost after the formation of the new coalition. France recognized it as the sole legitimate representative of the Syrian people, and pledged to reexamine the possibility of shipping arms to the rebels. The Arab League also recognized the body, with Secretary General Nabil al-Araby hailing it as a "glimmer of hope." By dispelling Western fears of growing jihadist influence within the Free Syrian Army, the rebels hope, the new coalition can open the door to increased financial and military assistance from the international community.

The election of the Cairo-based Khatib, a former imam of Damascus's historic Umayyad Mosque who was imprisoned under Assad, is a crucial part of this strategy. Western media outlets such as the BBC were quick to declare him "a respected figure within Syria" who holds "moderate" political views, citing his trips to Britain and the United States, as well as his teaching experience at the Dutch Institute in Damascus, as evidence. However, public statements posted on the clergyman's website, darbuna.net, paint a different picture.

Khatib's website features numerous instances of anti-Semitic rhetoric. In one of his own articles, he writes that one of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's positive legacies was "terrifying the Jews." He has also published others' anti-Semitic observations on his site: In one article, written by Abdul Salam Basiouni,

Jews are described as "gold worshipers." Finally, in an obituary of a Gaza sheikh copied from IslamSyria, Jews are dubbed "the enemies of God."

While Khatib used his post-election speech to call for equal rights for "all parts of the harmonious Syrian people," his previous rhetoric toward his country's minorities has been nothing short of virulent. One of his articles describes Shiite using the slur rawafid, or "rejectionists"; he even goes further, criticizing Shiites' ability to "establish lies and follow them." Such language, needless to say, will hardly reassure the country's Alawite community, a Shiite offshoot to which Assad belongs.

Khatib's animosity toward the West is similarly evident in his writing. In one article, written in 2011, the new coalition leader speaks of "stupid American, cunning British, and malignant French diplomacy." He also accuses Western powers of propping up the old Egyptian regime and working to weaken the country for their own ends. "The collapse of the Egyptian regime is the beginning of the international regional system's descent," he writes. "The collapse of Egypt itself is an enormous Israeli desire [emanating] from its frightening project to split the region into repugnant sectarian entities."

The new Syrian opposition leader doesn't hesitate to stoke Muslims' fears of persecution at the hands of the West. He posted on his website a flamboyant Dutch Radio report on the imminent ethnic cleansing of Europe's Muslim minorities, based on statements by right-wing European figures and Rached Ghannouchi, the leader of the Tunisia's Islamist Al-Nahda party, which is now a major partner in the country's coalition

government.

Khatib is also a fan of Qatar-based Egyptian televangelist cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi. His website places Qaradawi on equal footing with Tunisia's Mohamed Bouazizi, whose self-immolation set off the Arab revolutions, and praised the Egyptian preacher as "our great Imam." Qaradawi is a controversial figure who has been denied entry to France and Britain for his support of suicide bombings -- he has described such attacks, when used against Israel civilians, as "evidence of God's justice." Given Qaradawi's Qatari connections, Khatib's praise of the cleric may be an indication of where his loyalties lie.

In certain instances, Khatib's conspiratorial language even mimics the regime's own rhetoric. In an article titled "Facebook, is it an American-Israeli intelligence website?" he claims that users of the social networking website involuntarily become Israeli or American spies through information-sharing. Khatib warns against the potential use of exchanges of a sexual nature on Facebook, which he says could be "weak spots" used to recruit spies. The Assad regime previously used the same logic when it banned Facebook, arguing that the site allowed Israel to make contact with Syrian youth.

Taken as a whole, these statements raise disturbing questions about whether Syria's new opposition leader is truly as "moderate" as he has been described in the press. His religious and political views appear divisive and at odds with the reassuring image Syria's opposition is trying to present -- both domestically and on the international front. Rather than a positive step forward, Khatib's leadership suggests that Syria's

opposition is poised to repeat the same mistakes that have bedeviled it since the beginning of the revolt.

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Article 4.

Al-Shabaka Policy Brief

Palestinians Imposing Agenda on Abbas

Leila Farsakh

14 November 2012 -- Palestinian demonstrators at home and initiatives by Palestinians worldwide have imposed a different discourse on the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Palestinian Authority (PA), as revealed by the evolution of PLO Chairman Mahmoud Abbas' speeches to the United Nations General Assembly between 2011 and 2012. With Abbas heading back to the UN to seek Observer State status for Palestine this month, Al-Shabaka Policy Advisor Leila Farsakh analyzes the evolution of Palestinian civil society demands and the attempts by the PA to accommodate their political message while keeping control of the content of the Palestinian political project and the future of the Palestinian political struggle.

Palestinian Civil Society's Agenda

The Arab uprisings emboldened a new language of politics in the Middle East, one that prioritizes the rights of citizens to freedom and dignity. Although the power of this language has been diluted with the violence in Libya and then Syria, it is still strong among activists determined to defend their right to hold their governments accountable. Among Palestinians living under Israel's prolonged and brutal occupation, the Arab uprisings sparked an ongoing struggle between the youth and other sectors of the population on the one hand and the political leadership and elites on the other. Each side is seeking to define the parameters of what constitutes "rights" in the Palestinian context and how best to protect them.

Palestinians living in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) went to the streets as early as February 2011 in support of the Egyptian revolution. What soon became known as the March 15 movement included youth groups, independent politicians, and numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs.) At that time their main demand was an end to the division between Fatah and Hamas that has since 2007 kept the former in control of the West Bank and the latter of Gaza. Yet the various reconciliation agreements signed by Fatah and Hamas failed to produce national unity and each party continued to consolidate its turf while further alienating the population.

Palestinians in the OPT continued to go to the streets, reinvigorating and giving greater visibility to a growing non-violent protest movement based on the work of various civil society groups such as Stop the Wall Campaign, the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, human rights

NGOs, women's associations, and prisoner support groups as well as trade unions, independent politicians and parties. Whether demonstrating at Al-Muqata'a (the seat of the PA,) marching towards Kalandia, campaigning on social media, or striking against increases in food prices, Palestinian protestors have since May 2011 focused on three key issues they want the Palestinian leadership to address.

First, they are calling for the protection of Palestinian national rights. These, in their view, do not simply include the right to a state but above all the right of return, freedom, and equality. This was most evident during the anniversary of the Nakba (catastrophe) marking Israel's creation on 15 May 2011 when Palestinian youth together with Stop the Wall Campaign, the Palestinian NGO network (PNGO) and the popular committees in various West Bank villages organized demonstrations along major checkpoints and along Israel's Separation Wall to reaffirm the Palestinian right of return. They also coordinated with Palestinians inside Israel, who staged remembrance days in a number of the 1948 destroyed villages. In a non-hierarchical fashion, and through the use of social media, they joined forces with youth groups in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon seeking to enter Israel through the borders of those countries to affirm their right of return and assert the centrality of the right of return in popular activism.

The second demand is a call for new elections and resumption of the democratic process in the Palestinian polity at large. Indeed, this demand is not confined to new elections for the PA presidency or the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) in the West Bank and Gaza. Al Herak al Shababi (youth movement,) Palestinians for Dignity, Gaza Youth, and other youth groups,

have specifically called for new elections to the Palestinian National Council (PNC) of the PLO, which represents Palestinians in the OPT and the diaspora as well as the Palestinian citizens of Israel. Since 1988, when it formally adopted the two-state program, the PNC has been politically marginalized by the Oslo peace process.

The demand by the youth movement in the OPT for the reinvigoration of the PNC joins that made by various Palestinian groups in the Diaspora over the years, which have been working on creating cross-border coalitions in an attempt to reunify the Palestinian body politic that the Oslo peace process fragmented. It is also an attempt to reactivate the democratic processes from the bottom up and give voice to the various Palestinian constituencies that Oslo silenced.

The third demand of Palestinian activists in the OPT is an end to the Oslo peace process and to cooperation with Israel. Palestinian youth from Al Herak and Palestinians for dignity, among others, demonstrated against the indirect talks between Israeli and Palestinian officials in Amman in early 2012 (see Al Herak al Shababi's Facebook page.) They also staged protests against a joint meeting of Israeli-Palestinian peace activists in Jerusalem and Ramallah in January 2012, and called for resistance to normalization efforts until Palestinian rights were secured. Many activists and intellectuals went so far as to call for the PA to be dismantled given Oslo's failure to bring about independence and the futility of reaching an agreement with an Israeli government focused on colonization and dispossession. Since the summer of 2012, Palestinians have demonstrated against the PA's austerity measures and against Oslo's Paris Protocol.

In the Palestinian context, thus, the Arab uprisings, while not leading to the toppling of the PA, have emboldened popular demand to end the Oslo peace process and with it the two-state solution. Palestinian activists are emphasizing the rights-based discourse of the BDS Campaign launched by over 170 civil society organizations in 2005, which spelled out fundamental Palestinian rights as self-determination, an end to occupation, the right of return and the right of the Palestinian citizens of Israel to equality. In short, Palestinian activists today are reframing the Palestinian struggle as one of fighting against an apartheid Israeli regime and for inalienable Palestinian rights, not for a state per se.

Abbas & the PA Respond

The PA's decision to seek UN membership for the Palestinian State declared by the PNC in 1988 can be read as an attempt not only to bypass the stalemate in Israeli-Palestinian negotiations but also to meet the people's protests against the Oslo peace agreements and dissatisfaction with Fatah's and Hamas' rule. Comparing Abbas's 2012 speech to the UN General Assembly with the one he presented in 2011 reveals the extent to which the PA has been trying to accommodate the demonstrators' language and demands while attempting to control the content of the political protests as well as the terms of the debate about what constitutes "rights" in the Palestinian context.

In 2011, the PLO submitted a request for full UN membership for the State of Palestine to the Security Council, a strategy that failed because the Palestinian request did not gather the nine votes necessary due to active opposition by the United States. In 2012, Abbas is submitting a request for non-member Observer

State status to the General Assembly, which would upgrade the PLO's present status of permanent observer and put it on a par with the Vatican. Such an upgrade could allow the State of Palestine to become member of the International Criminal Court, potentially enabling the PLO to pursue claims of war crimes and other violations against Israel. The new status would not of course define the boundaries of the State of Palestine, its relationship to the PLO, the means by which the occupation will end, or the way the right of return would be realized.

In both of his UN speeches in 2011 and 2012, Abbas sought to stamp the Palestinian "spring" with the quest for statehood and independence and deflect the challenge to the PA and demands for democracy. "At a time when the Arab people affirm their quest for democracy – the Arab Spring – the time is now for the Palestinian Spring, the time for Independence", he stated on September 23, 2011. Abbas argued in both in 2011 and 2012 that an independent Palestinian state on 22% of historic Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, would provide relative justice to the injustice created by the Nakba. It would be the price Palestinians would pay to reach peace with Israel and be in accordance with the international consensus, since UN resolution 181, on the partition of Palestine.

He reminded his Palestinian listeners that this state was what the PNC approved in its 1988 declaration of independence, thereby seeking to reassert the national legitimacy of the Palestinian State project. Abbas further affirmed the unity of the Palestinian people that he represented as the head of the PLO, not simply the PA, and emphasized that it was the PLO and not the PA making the UN bid, thus addressing dissent about his prerogative to speak in the name of all Palestinians. He

mentioned Palestinian refugees, those under occupation, Palestinian citizens of Israel, and those in the Diaspora. He asserted the right of return under UN resolution 194 as forcefully as the right to equality and freedom, which a state would be well placed to protect.

Both speeches also sought to engage the international community by asking it to fulfill its responsibility towards the Palestinian people. In fact, the innovative element in Abbas' UN bid is his attempt to re-internationalize the conflict, by bringing back the UN, and thereby shaking, if not ending, U.S. monopoly of the peace process. As he put it in 2011: "We aspire for and seek a greater and more effective role for the United Nations in working to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in our region that ensures the inalienable, legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people." Abbas may thereby be signaling a decision to rely on an international legal strategy to protect Palestinian rights, perhaps not dissimilar from the one used with the International Court of Justice in 2005 against Israel's building of the separation wall inside the West Bank.

However, there is a difference in tone and attitude between the 2011 and 2012 speeches. In the 2012 UN speech, Abbas draws more directly on the discourse used by Palestinian protestors. He describes Israel not simply as "settler colonial" as in 2011, but also as implementing "apartheid" policies and "ethnic cleansing" in East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied territories, terms he had avoided using up until then. Whereas in 2011, Abbas was still trying to extend his "hand to the Israeli government and the Israeli people for peace making ...based on parity and equity between two neighboring states - Palestine and Israel," in 2012 he squarely puts the blame on the Israeli

government, which, in his words, “rejects the two states solution” and is “emptying the Oslo accords of their meaning.” Israel, he adds, has weakened the PA and “is promising the Palestinians a new catastrophe, a new Nakba.”

By so doing, Abbas is responding to popular outrage at Oslo and the futility of negotiating with Israel while the occupation continues and settlements expand. His stronger tone in 2012 reflects also his frustration at Israel’s intransigence during the last round of informal negotiations under Jordan’s sponsorship in January 2012, in which the PLO participated despite the continuation of settlement construction. At that time Israel reiterated its refusal to share Jerusalem or cede control over the Jordan Valley, while affirming its intention to annex all major settlements block in the West Bank in any future agreement. The final map and borders that Israel is offering the Palestinian, Abbas informed the UN in 2012, is one of “enclaves ...subject to full dominance of military colonial occupation only packaged under new names, such as the unilateral plan for a so-called state with provisional borders.”

The 2012 Abbas UN speech also expressed anger towards the international community. Unlike the 2011 speech where Abbas invites the international community to play a role to reignite the peace process, in 2012 he laments that it has allowed Israel to continue “to be permitted to evade accountability and punishment”, providing Israel with a de facto “license for the occupation to continue its policy of dispossession and... entrench its system of apartheid against the Palestinian people.” He calls upon the international community to uphold its responsibilities and apply UN resolutions to implement a Palestinian state now that the World Bank and IMF have

testified to its institutional viability.

Moreover, Abbas mentions for the first time that the only way to reach peace “must first and foremost be predicated on the understanding that racial settler colonization must be condemned, punished and boycotted in order for it to be completely halted.” In this respect, he appears to have heard the Palestinian BDS Call, as this goes beyond his reiteration, in 2011, that Palestinians remain commitment to steadfastness and non-violent resistance. It remains to be seen whether this new stand will be translated into a PA strategy to engage the UN in implementing an international boycott campaign against Israel.

Will Observer State Status Make a Difference?

There is skepticism that Abbas’ new language can translate into a new political agenda, and Palestinians worldwide greeted his stronger tone with apathy. The recent municipal elections held in the West Bank affirmed the PA’s – and Fatah’s – disarray and the rejection of the status quo. And Abbas’ recent remarks about the right of return – in which he gave up his right to return to his hometown of Safed – caused a furor.

The PLO is likely to secure Observer State membership at the UN given the majority support it holds in the General Assembly. The question remains as to how the PLO will use this new status. Abbas could conceivably recover his capacity to set the agenda if he takes two steps. First, if he and the PLO respond creatively and forcefully to the expected backlash from the U.S., Israel and their allies to the PLO’s upgraded status. And, second, if the PLO does indeed use its enhanced status to follow an effective legal strategy in international forums such as the

ICC. By so doing, Abbas would counter Palestinian skepticism given the PLO's neglect of the powerful ICJ Advisory Opinion in the legal arena, as well as its attempts to bury the Goldstone Report,

In all cases, the Palestinian civil society drive for rights is likely to strengthen, both within and outside the OPT, as is the global BDS movement. Palestinians will find new ways to impose the quest for rights on the political agenda. As the PLO sees it, the UN observer state member bid is the last chance for the two-state solution. It would be an ironic twist of fate if its efforts to push for a state instead contribute to a rights-based discourse that propels a movement for a single democratic state of Israel/Palestine in all of mandate Palestine.

Leila Farsakh is associate professor in political science at the University of Massachusetts Boston. She is the author of Palestinian Labor Migration to Israel: Labor, Land and Occupation, (Routledge, Fall 2005). Dr. Farsakh has since 2008 been a senior research fellow at the Center for Development Studies at Birzeit University, in the West Bank. In 2001 she won the Peace and Justice Award from the Cambridge Peace Commission, in Massachusetts, U.S.

Article 5.

The Daily Beast

Riots Erupt in Jordan: The End of Absolute Monarchy

Christopher Dickey

Nov 14, 2012 -- The blue-eyed king and beautiful queen of Jordan are facing the biggest crisis of their reign. On Tuesday night, riots and protests broke out in many of the country's cities. Some in the crowd shouted "the people want the fall of the regime." Others burned the monarch's portrait. One longtime supporter of the royals even suggested privately "it's not a question of if but when" King Abdullah's rule will end. That may well be an overstatement. The protests included only a few thousand people all told. But the pressures for truly major political reforms are mounting.

"I think this ushers in the beginning of the end of absolute monarchy, not the monarchy," says Labib Kamhawi, 61, a former political science professor at Jordan University who is now a spokesman for an umbrella group of opposition parties and movements. (Kamhawi is facing sedition charges from the nervous regime for, as he puts it, "saying what I am saying to you.")

Monarchies traditionally rely on a mystique that blends bloodlines with patriotism, and throughout history the wisest royals have been those who managed to remain above the fray of day-to-day politics. The latest riots, which started over a hike in fuel prices, show that the 50-year-old Abdullah is finding that game increasingly hard to play.

One buffer after another between Abdullah and popular anger has fallen away: he has named four prime ministers in the last year alone. His powerful intelligence chiefs have toppled repeatedly since he succeeded to the throne in 1999, as he first relied on them for his survival, then fired them and threw them in prison.

In the past, protests often focused on Queen Rania, a brilliant and beautiful woman commonly seen as a power behind the throne. Although Rania's humanitarian and educational work was known and appreciated around the world, her frequent appearances at fashion shows and in lavish photo spreads among other celebrities in magazines like Hello! made her an easy target for domestic resentments.

Rania is of Palestinian descent. Jordanians from traditional tribal backgrounds, always uneasy about the growing power and influence of the country's Palestinian population, fantasized that she and the coterie of young businesspeople around her were plotting somehow to turn the country into a Palestinian state. (The king, who got his blue eyes from his British mother and whose Arabic was not entirely native, also has suffered from the impression that while he ruled over Jordan he was not entirely of Jordan.)

After Rania's lavish celebrity-studded birthday party in 2010, attacks on her status and her motives grew more pointed, with a group of former generals publishing a letter that denounced her influential role in the monarchy. Allegations of corruption against her brother, always denied and never proved, grew so intense that he eventually moved out of the country.

King Abdullah, having failed to defend his prime ministers and turned on successive spymasters, did little to protect his wife's reputation. But as she adopted a much lower profile, Abdullah's prestige did not rise. Instead, discontent focused on the king. Now the monarch himself is increasingly alone before the people, and reliant more than ever before on foreign support.

The money Jordan's government once received from the Gulf monarchies has grown increasingly scarce. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has a long and problematic record of tensions with the Jordanian monarchy, which is one of only two Arab governments to have signed an unpopular peace treaty with Israel. So American support for the Hashemite monarch is more important than ever.

Abdullah has promised political reforms, not least to shore up support in Washington. But the new electoral law was written in such a way that even after parliamentary elections scheduled for January, there will be no chance for the opposition to form a government without the king's active approval. As a result, this cosmetic liberalization has done little or nothing to stem protests.

In Jordan, as in Egypt and many other Arab countries, the Muslim Brotherhood is a strong political force, and its members may be encouraging the current unrest. But the bedrock problem is economic. The financial demands on Jordan just keep growing. To maintain a vital agreement for support from the International Monetary Fund, Jordan must pare back its hugely expensive government subsidies for basic goods. But those make the difference for many Jordanians between hovering above the poverty line and sinking below it.

“There is a consensus that people are suffering already without having to bear added hardships,” says opposition leader Kamhawi. As in many other Arab countries, young people find it almost impossible to find good jobs. “They look at their future as being devastated by such measures while the government does nothing about corruption.”

In one of those twists that is typical of the Middle East and common in Jordan’s history, the fact that a horrendous civil war is going on next door in Syria may actually work to Abdullah’s benefit in the short term. To be sure, some 200,000 refugees have flooded into the country of 6 million people. But the threat to regional stability is such that no Western government or Arab power wants to see the Hashemite monarchy go down right now. “The Syrian situation is most important for the outside world,” says Kamhawi, suggesting that fact may have led the king to believe he has more room to maneuver politically and economically.

But the fates of other leaders who thought they were indispensable to Washington provide several cautionary examples, among them the fallen dictators of Tunisia, Yemen, and Egypt.

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Carnegie Endowment

Pharaoh Reloaded?

Michael Meyer-Resende and Vitalino Canas

November 8, 2012 -- The Constituent Assembly of Egypt, after a tortuous process, released its first complete draft of the new constitution on 14 October. The chapters on the system of government have drawn the attention of analysts eager to assess the level of power the presidency would retain. At first glance, the draft establishes a system that has been described by assembly members and legal scholars as semi-presidential. This, however, is a misrepresentation: the semi-presidential system can create an extremely powerful president if the role of the prime minister is weak or ill-defined, and if the president is afforded broad powers. This is the case of Egypt's draft constitution.

According to the draft, the directly elected president heads the executive and the state, serves as the supreme commander of the armed forces and names high-ranking officials. He has the power to call parliament into session, veto legislation, propose laws, dissolve the House of Representatives, and appoint up to

one-fifth of the members of the Senate, the upper house of the bicameral parliament with equal legislative power as the lower house. The president names the prime minister and chairs cabinet meetings. He also appoints the heads of independent institutions and chairs the National Defense Council, which reviews the military budget without significant parliamentary oversight.

The president, under this draft, enjoys significant powers vis-à-vis all other actors: parliament is not autonomous because the president calls its sessions and proposes bills. Parliament's accountability to the electorate is weakened by the fact that the president appoints a part of the senate. The president can also call binding referenda on issues related to "supreme interests of the state" without any restrictions. Furthermore, the draft is vague about whether the constitution could be amended through such referenda, giving the president a potential weapon to change the rules of the game.

The Egyptian draft seems to be based on the French model, a regime with one of the most powerful presidents in the democratic world, but in fact gives even more power to the president. The most conspicuous hole in the political system is the vague role afforded to the prime minister. In France, the requirement of countersignature—presidential decisions need to be co-signed by the prime minister to be valid—establishes a check on presidential power. The Egyptian draft contains no such requirement. Reportedly, the role and status of the prime minister, who is accountable to the president and parliament, is being intensively discussed in the Constituent Assembly.

Past authoritarian presidencies in the region selectively picked

elements of presidentialism and semi-presidentialism that enabled them to consolidate their own power. Many of these elements existed in one democracy or other, but combined, they result in quasi-dictatorial rule. The Egyptian draft follows this logic. It seems that Egypt's 1971 constitution also provided inspiration for this new draft constitution. In fairness, the Constituent Assembly, operating under the threat of dissolution by court decision, has been in a hurry to complete its work. Using historical precedent can be a way of narrowing the debate and saving drafting time.

By combining the features of a presidential system with those of a semi-presidential arbiter the constitution of Egypt would lead to a concentration of legal and de facto power in the presidency, in particular if the president hails from the majority party in parliament. Almost paradoxically, the system could tilt from power concentration to political gridlock if the president were faced with a parliamentary majority of opposing political forces. In such a case, the vagueness of the text would invite endless political and judicial battles over issues such as the role and accountability of the prime minister and the cabinet, the manner of electing parliament, the right to schedule parliamentary sessions, the review of the military budget, and presidential referenda.

A system of government that is likely to tilt either to the concentration of executive power or to intra-governmental gridlock lacks the balance required for establishing sustainable democracy. It is a poor choice for any country, and particularly for Egypt, which has seen concentration of executive power since Nasser and has been through an all-out battle between institutions of government since Mubarak's demise.

Recalibrating this system to establish a stable balance of power requires that the Constituent Assembly redefine the role of the president as an active head of the executive or an arbiter between political institutions, and that it clarify the role of the prime minister to establish electoral accountability and parliamentary autonomy. The text still being in flux and negotiations in the Constituent Assembly underway, this can still be addressed.

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Article 7.

Los Angeles Times

Growing ties between Egypt, Turkey may signal new regional order

Jeffrey Fleishman

November 13, 2012 -- Cairo — Egypt and Turkey are forging an alliance that showcases two Islamist leaders maneuvering to reshape a Middle East gripped by political upheaval and passionate battles over how deeply the Koran should penetrate public life.

The relationship may foreshadow an emerging regional order in which the sway of the United States gradually fades against Islamist voices no longer contained by militaries and pro-Western autocrats.

Each country has a distinct vision of political Islam, but Turkey, which straddles Europe and Asia, and Egypt, the traditional heart of the Arab world, complement each other for now. Turkey's strong economy may help rescue Egypt from financial crisis, while Cairo may further Ankara's ambition to rise as a force among Islamic-backed governments.

What bonds and rivalries may ensue is unclear, but they are likely to affect what rises from the bloodshed in Syria, the influence of oil nations in the Persian Gulf, future policies toward Israel and the volatile divide between moderate and ultraconservative Islamists. The nations offer competing story lines playing out between the traditional and the contemporary.

"Turkey has done a good job so far of balancing the relationship between the religion and state. It is secular," said Ahmed Abou Hussein, a Middle East affairs analyst in Cairo. "This is not the case in Egypt. We haven't found the balance between religion and state yet. We're all confused, not only the Islamists."

The two countries recently conducted naval exercises in the Mediterranean Sea. Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi visited Ankara in September and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan is expected to arrive in Cairo this month with promises of closer cooperation and a financial aid package that may reach \$2 billion.

"Our history, hopes and goals bind us together to achieve the

freedom and justice that all nations are struggling for," Morsi said on his trip.

The nations' deepening ties come amid international and domestic pressure emanating from revolutions that are recasting political rhythms in the Middle East and North Africa.

Erdogan is moving to fashion Turkey's democracy into a model for Arab governments even as he has been criticized by human rights groups for the arrest of thousands of Kurdish activists. Morsi is seeking to restore Egypt's global stature after years of diminishment under deposed leader Hosni Mubarak.

Turkey's diplomatic finesse and economic allure have allowed it to deftly exert its regional influence. But the civil war in Syria has shredded relations between Ankara and Damascus and left Erdogan, who has threatened Syrian President Bashar Assad with wider military action, searching for a plan to end the conflict on his border.

Turkey has also drawn the ire of Iran, a Syrian ally, for signing on to a U.S.-backed missile shield. And Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Maliki this year called Turkey a "hostile state" and accused it of agitating sectarian tension in his country.

Erdogan, who learned his wiles as a boy selling sesame buns on the streets of Istanbul, is more flamboyant than Morsi, the son of a peasant farmer. But Morsi has proved a canny politician: In a visit to Tehran in August, he signaled a thaw in Egyptian-Iranian relations while at the same time angering Iran by condemning Assad's crackdown on dissent.

Egypt's deeper problems bristle on the home front, including

unemployment, poverty, crime and decrepit state institutions that became more glaring after last year's overthrow of Mubarak. Both Morsi and Erdogan, who rose to power nearly a decade ago, curtailed the political influence of their nations' generals, but each has been accused by secularists as having authoritarian streaks tinged with Islam. The countries have a tendency to harass and arrest dissidents and journalists.

A closer fusion of Cairo and Ankara stems in part from the influence Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood had on Islamist organizations across the region, including Erdogan's Justice and Development Party. While the Brotherhood was being persecuted by Mubarak, a brash Erdogan riveted the "Arab street" with his populism and chiding of leaders, such as Mubarak, for their compliance toward the West.

The question is, how will Erdogan and Morsi maneuver the politics of a Middle East that both want to influence, and which Egypt regards as its historic and strategic territory?

"I don't think Egypt even under the Muslim Brotherhood would appreciate a Turkey that would nose around on Egypt's political turf," said Kemal Kirisci, a professor of political science and international relations at Bogazici University in Istanbul.

But Turkey offers Egypt a pragmatic — some analysts suggest modern — approach to the West, the global economy and stability. A member of NATO, Turkey is aspiring to join the European Union. Its talks with the EU have been strained, but the process forced economic and social reforms that have benefited Erdogan as he increasingly looks to the Middle East and North Africa to expand commercial interests. Arab news

media have reported that Turkey's trade with the Arab world is targeted at \$100 billion over next five years.

"What is interesting about Turkey's success is its commitment to practical visions and plans," said Seif Allah el Khawanky, a political analyst. "Morsi's administration doesn't have this."

Both countries are working toward new constitutions. Turkey's politics spring from a secular democracy and a history of defined political parties that have tempered the influence of Islam. Turkish women who wear hijabs are banned from political office. Egypt's Islamist-dominated government, however, is pushing for a constitution firmly rooted in sharia, or Islamic law, and there is little inclination among conservatives to import the Turkish model.

That difference is partly defining the immediate aftermath of the Arab Spring. Islamist groups long suppressed by Mubarak and other autocrats are imposing their political and religious visions on nations with underdeveloped or divided secular parties.

"The Islamist parties in Turkey are past implementing religious ideologies. They're working more on economic policies and reform," Hussein said. "The Muslim Brotherhood and Salafis will have to change their rhetoric to fit the needs of Egypt and the world.... The Turks refer to their example as the Turkish experience. They are brilliantly trying to sell this so-called experience in Syria, Egypt and other Arab countries."

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fellow at Harvard. He is author of "Promised Virgins: A Novel of Jihad" and "Shadow Man," which will be published in 2012.

Article 8.

Project Syndicate

The Emerging World's Education Imperative

Shashi Tharoor

14 November 2012 -- New Delhi – Official delegations from the world's nine most populous developing countries just met in New Delhi to discuss a subject vital for their countries' futures: education. The meeting of ministers and others from Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan, known as the E-9, is the latest in a series of encounters held every two years to fulfill the pledge of "education for all" by 2015.

The E-9 account for 54% of the world's population, 42.3% of children not in school, 58% of young illiterates (aged 15-24), and 67% of adult illiterates (two-thirds of whom are women). So the challenges are enormous: children, from families too poor to think about education, beyond the reach of schooling and too malnourished to study; and too few schools, classrooms, teaching resources, and adequately trained teachers. Rampant illiteracy underpins other problems, including exploding populations, gender imbalances, and widespread poverty.

India provides a good example of how these problems should be

addressed. A decade ago, 30 million Indian children were not in school; today, the figure is three million. A far-reaching Right to Education Act, obliging the state and central governments to provide (as a constitutional right) eight years of free and compulsory education to all children between six and 14, has had a large impact. And free mid-day meals at school are a powerful incentive to children from poor families to attend school and stay there.

This does not mean that all enrolled students will emerge prepared for the information age; but getting children into school is a start. India also needs a relevant curriculum and skilled teachers who can motivate students to learn it – in short, an overdue emphasis on quality, in addition to officials' understandable focus on access and inclusion.

There are 540 million Indians under the age of 25. The labor force is expected to increase by 32% over the next 20 years, whereas it will decline by 4% in industrialized countries and by nearly 5% in China. India's favorable demographic profile can add significantly to its economic-growth potential for the next three decades, provided that its young people are educated and trained properly.

Otherwise, the same young people will swell the ranks of the frustrated and unemployed, with unimaginable consequences in terms of social unrest and the risk of organized violence. Maoist groups already target such people for recruitment. If India is to avoid an apocalyptic fate, it must give them a better chance of gainful employment through more and improved educational opportunities.

India has one of the largest higher-education systems in the world, and ranks second in terms of student enrollment. But, while the country now has 621 universities and 33,500 colleges, only a few are world-class institutions, including the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) whose graduates have flourished in America's Silicon Valley. But such institutions are still islands in a sea of mediocrity.

India is entering the global employment marketplace with a self-imposed handicap of which we are just beginning to become aware. For far too long, we were complacent, having produced, since the 1960's, the world's second largest pool of trained scientists and engineers. They were more than our then-protected economy could absorb, so many tens of thousands of them left to make their fortunes elsewhere, founding companies in Silicon Valley, inventing the Pentium chip, and even winning a couple of Nobel Prizes.

Their success meant that IIT was soon mentioned alongside MIT. But it also masked another reality – that there just are not as many of them as there should be. Senior Indian executives whose businesses require them to recruit competent scientists or engineers complain that demand for such talent vastly exceeds the supply. Once the elite institutions are accounted for, what remains is decidedly uneven in quality.

A World Bank Survey in 2009 highlighted that 64% of employers are “only somewhat satisfied,” or worse, with the new engineering graduates they hire. I have spoken to many CEOs who tell me that many, if not most, of their new employees require remedial training before they can begin work, in order to compensate for the shortcomings of their university education.

Indeed, companies like Tata and Infosys are hiring people whom they do not consider to be up to par – and spending 6-9 months, sometimes longer, to educate them properly for their jobs.

The need for education reform has never been clearer, and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's government has recognized it. Still, India's spends only 1.2% of its GDP on higher education, compared to 3.1% in the US or, closer to home, 2.4% in South Korea. The figure should be higher. So, too, is India's 3.3% share of global output of academic research far too low for a country with 17% of the world's brains.

Education is now recognized as a national priority. More resources are being committed, the corporate sector is being encouraged to get involved, and there is a welcome emphasis on innovation. International cooperation, exemplified by the mutual learning implicit in the E-9 exercise, is also being tapped.

The next ten years could witness a dramatic transformation of education in India. But it will not happen without a huge national effort. The rest of the E-9, engaged in similar endeavors, will be watching.

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