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The Washington Post

In Gaza, Hamas rule has not turned out as many expected

[Karin Brulliard](#)

April 19 - GAZA CITY — The housing stipends, promised by Hamas social workers after much of Umm Mohammed's neighborhood was demolished in an Israeli military assault three years ago, never came. The water barrels pledged by municipal authorities seemed to go only to Hamas cadres. Electricity is a rarity.

And as Israeli airstrikes targeting Palestinian militants pounded the Gaza Strip last month, the housewife said, the enclave's Hamas rulers watched from "their chairs" — lingo here for cushy seats of power.

"They say they are the resistance against the enemy," said Umm Mohammed, 26, bouncing a baby on her knee. "Where is the resistance?" The militant Islamist movement surged to a surprise victory in [Palestinian elections in 2006](#) with promises of clean governance and a reputation for terrorist tactics against Israel, which had withdrawn from Gaza the year before. But after five years of Hamas administration, many in this besieged strip say it has lived up to neither. Hamas is fast [losing popularity](#), and recent surveys indicate that it would not win if elections were held in Gaza today.

As enthusiasm for Islamist parties grows in the Arab world and prompts questions about what shape political Islam will take, some say Hamas's path from violent opposition movement to de facto government could be instructive: The Gaza-based rulers, many analysts say, have become more pragmatic and more self-interested — a bit more like common politicians. Whether that means Hamas, an offshoot of Egypt's [Muslim Brotherhood](#), has altered its extremist ideology is far from clear.

Israel and the United States, which deem Hamas a terrorist organization, are unconvinced. Israeli military officials say the movement remains dedicated to Israel's ruin, as stated in its charter, and is hoarding arms for future offensives. Although some Hamas leaders voice admiration for

Turkey's moderate and democratic Islamism to foreign audiences, others unfurl militant, anti-Israel rhetoric to chanting supporters.

Corruption and patronage

Ideology aside, the Hamas that won control of this Mediterranean strip, isolated by an economic siege and hobbled by 30 percent unemployment, no longer looks the same to many Gazans. It secured once-lawless streets, as promised. But hopes of Islam-guided fairness and an end to the graft that had tainted the tenure of the secular Fatah party have turned to widespread griping about Hamas corruption and patronage.

Hamas has hired more than 40,000 civil servants, and analysts say the top tiers are filled by loyalists. Members of the Hamas elite are widely thought to have enriched themselves through investment in the dusty labyrinth of [smuggling tunnels](#) beneath the border with Egypt and taxes on the imported goods. That money has been channeled into flashy cars and Hamas-owned businesses that only stalwarts get a stake in, critics say. Street-level umbrage has risen in recent months alongside tax increases and a crippling power crisis that has caused 18-hour blackouts and [gas station lines](#) that snake around corners. It began after Egypt stopped providing subsidized fuel for vehicles and Gaza's sole power plant through the tunnels. Analysts — and ordinary Gazans — say the crisis has been prolonged by Hamas's refusal to import pricier fuel through an Israeli-controlled crossing.

Yet some diesel is making its way through Hamas-connected tunnels to Gaza's black market, where it sells for as much as \$30 a gallon.

“Can you smell that? Diesel,” one tunnel manager said on a recent morning as he crouched in the passage, a half-mile-long cylinder little wider than a water slide. Fifty gallons had just come through, a process the manager said was “eased” because one of the tunnel's owners has a brother in government.

“Many aspects of the siege are imposed by Hamas,” said the manager, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of fears of losing his job.

‘A police state’

If Hamas has not delivered clean governance, neither has it fully Islamized society, as some feared. Alcohol and belly dancing have been banned. But efforts to require schoolgirls to wear veils, prohibit women from smoking water pipes or prevent “un-Islamic” behavior on the strip's breezy beaches

largely failed amid criticism from the public, which is generally conservative but “didn’t like Hamas or the government telling them how to behave,” said Gaza-based political scientist Mkhaimar Abusada. Authoritarianism has come more in the form of quashed dissent and arrests of perceived political opponents, actions that even Hamas supporters concede have cost the group support.

“We became like a police state,” said Ahmed Yousef, a former adviser to Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh. “They became scared of any rally or demonstration.”

Hamas, eager to preserve its rule, has also become wary of provoking a new Israeli offensive in Gaza, costing it credibility in some quarters. Although Gaza’s cement-block buildings are papered with posters of gun-toting fighters, and Hamas allows Islamic Jihad and other militant factions to fire rockets into Israel, Hamas itself has mostly adhered to an unofficial cease-fire since the 2008-2009 Israeli offensive.

“The people did not accept that Islamic Jihad was left alone on the battlefield,” an Islamic Jihad spokesman who goes by the nom de guerre Abu Ahmed said of Hamas’s decision to abstain as Israel [battled](#) Palestinian militants last month.

Islamic Jihad’s performance — it lobbed hundreds of rockets toward civilian targets in Israel and lost 14 fighters — increased the group’s appeal, Ahmed boasted, noting that Hamas now has “different calculations and bigger responsibility. . . . It has a lot to lose.”

‘Policy incoherence’

Indeed, as political Islam rises in the region, Hamas has essentially [abandoned](#) longtime patron Syria, and a fairly public divide has emerged between Hamas hard-liners and those seeking a more pragmatic approach that might help relieve Gaza’s isolation.

“A lot of these groups are now having to do this difficult dance and straddle these two constituencies,” Shadi Hamid, research director at the Brookings Doha Center, said of Hamas and other Islamist organizations in the region. “That leads to considerable policy incoherence.”

Where that is heading is unclear, and Hamas leaders are noncommittal. Taher al-Nunu, a spokesman for the movement, said Hamas leaders restrained fighters last month because they thought Israel was trying to

provoke them to learn about their weapons arsenal, not because they have abandoned armed tactics.

“We are not working by remote control like Israel wants,” he said.

But Nunu said Western powers have ignored symbolic moves by Hamas, such as Haniyeh’s decision to make his first official trip abroad, in January, to Turkey — a country whose electoral democracy and moderate Islamism are serving as a “model” to a growing number of Hamas leaders, Yousef said.

One month after that trip, though, Haniyeh visited Iran, another longtime Hamas benefactor.

Despite public discontent, Hamas officials seem unruffled. The movement’s grip inside Gaza remains near-total, in part because a [unity deal](#) with Fatah, which could lead to elections, is on ice.

That leaves Abu Khaled, an unemployed former shopkeeper, to seethe in his 11th-floor apartment in Gaza City. Khaled, 55, said he voted for Hamas because it promised change and justice, which he figured meant there would be jobs.

But only those who “pray in a Hamas mosque” get work, he said, adding that the movement’s leaders look as though they have gotten comfortable with their mini-state and have forgotten about fighting for Palestinian independence.

“We used to take taxis, now we walk. We were eating, now we are not. We must admit, things changed — but for the worse,” Khaled said wryly, speaking through coils of cigarette smoke. “Hamas is controlling us. They are responsible for us.”

Article 2.

Foreign Policy

Middle East diplomacy is a lot trickier without dictators

Aaron David Miller

April 18, 2012 -- Dorothy had it right. We're not in Kansas anymore. In little more than a year, a powerful tsunami of rebellion and revolt has washed away much of what was familiar to America in a region it thought it had finally come to understand.

But for the United States, life in this new Middle Eastern Oz differs from Dorothy's tale in one fundamental respect: It's bereft of wizards and witches.

Many of the big and not-so-big men who held America in thrall and their own people hostage are now gone or going. Indeed, none of the larger-than-life leaders who dominated Arab politics for nearly half a century still strut the Arab stage.

Their passing carries enormous consequences for Arabs -- and for Americans, too. The real danger is not that the United States will confront Arab strongmen, but that it will confront regimes without truly democratic institutions or strong, responsible leaders.

Once upon a time, two kinds of Arab leaders held sway. The first type were the acquiescent authoritarians, those presidents and kings on whom America depended to help protect its interests. They were constant, if not always agreeable, companions. Egypt's Mubarak, Jordan's King Hussein, Tunisia's Ben Ali, Yemen's Ali Saleh, Morocco's King Hassan II, Saudi Arabia's kings Fahd and Abdullah. The PLO's Yasir Arafat rounded out the group photo.

America's arrangements with the acquiescents (and their sons, relatives, and successors) weren't pretty, but they were clear: In exchange for their cooperation in matters of war, peace, oil, and security, the United States supported them and looked past their prodigal ways, human rights abuses, authoritarian behavior, and faux reforms.

Then there were the adversarial authoritarians. Here, a smaller group photo featured Iraq's Saddam Hussein, Syria's Assads (father and son), and Libya's Muammar al-Qaddafi. America sought to check and constrain their power, even removing one through invasion. But at times, the United States found common ground with them too. (See: cooperation with Saddam against the Iranian mullahs, and dancing with Assad on the peace process.) As pure and unadulterated dictators, however, they were incorrigible, beyond reform and redemption.

From Washington's vantage point, the Arab world wasn't so much divided into countries as it was broken down into personalities. Each of Americas' authoritarians had a role to play and a dramatic persona to accompany it. There was the good King Hussein, the wily but indispensable Arafat, the enigmatic yet much-courted Assad, the cruel Saddam, the crazy (like a fox) Qaddafi, and the plodding but reliable Mubarak.

The United States built its policies on these men and their regimes without much regard to broader political and social forces within their societies. At best, parliaments, parties, trade unions, and public opinion were of interest to regional specialists, academics, and human rights advocates, but not terribly relevant to presidents and secretaries of state. We did pay attention to the Islamists, but only because we feared them.

If you had a problem you wanted fixed, you went to the top. I can't tell you how many times I either heard or said myself: "Get the chairman, call the president, contact the king." What was brewing at the bottom was not deemed to matter all that much given how dependent we had become on the top.

Much of this world is now gone. The rest may yet be redefined and changed too. The Arab kings have fared considerably better than the presidents of the phony republics. Oil wealth in some cases, Islamic legitimacy and more enlightened policies in others, have spared the royals for now and given them more time to figure out how to adjust and survive. Still, the proverbial bell may yet toll for them too. Challenges abound. The Saudi rulers are sclerotic and aging. King Abdullah is 89; Crown Prince Nayef is 79 and ill; and even Minister of Defense Prince Salman is no spring chicken at 76. The Saudi youth bulge is underemployed and increasingly unhappy.

Next door, egged on by the Saudis, the Bahraini royal family represses rather than reforms; and without the sure hand of his father, Jordan's King Abdullah is facing an increasingly unhappy East Bank constituency angry about corruption and their own dwindling perks. Only in Iraq, untouched by the Arab Spring, does the strongman of yesteryear in the person of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki seem to live on, though in a much more constrained form.

So what are the consequences of an Arab world bereft of powerful authoritarians? Four stand out in particular.

1. Not enough 411.

In the new Middle Eastern Oz, we don't know much. The advantage of dealing primarily with one guy was that you didn't have to know much; alternatively, with only one real wizard, you thought you knew more than you did. One strongman was good enough, particularly if he was seen to be working for you. We became pretty chummy with all these guys. Traveling with secretaries of state, we always went to Cairo first to consult with our good friend Hosni. Successive CIA station chiefs had very close personal relationships with the king of Jordan. There was little need to delve deeper, and it was a risk to do so. Indeed, in Egypt, we were actively discouraged from cultivating contacts among the Islamists and other opposition figures. Now, reliable information on who's up and who's down in Egypt is much harder to find. Who's really in charge? And who are the prospective comers among the military and the Islamists? Whether there's a charismatic and ambitious younger military officer with a broad base of support or ties with the Islamists waiting to emerge is both a fascinating and worrisome question. And we really know very little about the decision making of the secretive and highly disciplined Muslim Brotherhood, and even less about the Salafis.

In other places, like Syria and Libya, acronyms (SNC, Syrian National Council; FSA, Free Syrian Army; TNC, Transitional National Council) have replaced the big men. That wouldn't be so bad if these groups were cohesive and well-organized. But in the case of the external Syrian leadership they're not. The United States Institute of Peace's Steven Heydemann, who follows these matters closely, talks of the SNC as an umbrella organization with an executive committee of about 10, a general secretariat of 35, and a General Assembly of maybe 300, plus an additional 11 bureaus whose membership isn't well known. Inside Syria, the situation is even more confusing and opaque. Insurgencies are by definition loosely organized. But the relationship between those armed elements doing the fighting and the Free Syrian Army, nominally headquartered in Turkey, is not at all clear when it comes to chain of command or formal affiliation. And we know very little about foreign fighters or al Qaeda's presence. Joseph Holiday, whose report "[Syria's Armed Opposition](#)" is about the best study on the subject, admits that his research was based largely on reports on YouTube and other opposition media outlets.

2. The king is dead, long live the ???

Not even the Arabs themselves know how to complete that sentence. In some revolutions, leaders appear early or emerge from committees or juntas. Modern Arab history offers precedents of fathers handing over power to sons and relatives, and colonels and generals replacing one another.

In the new Arab Oz, the recent rebellions were strangely leaderless. So far, no single individual or leader has emerged to command a mass, popular following that could be converted into real staying power. In Egypt, the young Googlers and liberals who played such a key role early on have been marginalized by better organized and more disciplined forces, namely the military and the Muslim Brotherhood, while the death of the Coptic pope last month leaves the country's 8 million Copts leaderless at a critical moment. In Yemen, Saleh's successor, a weak interim president (dubbed Mrs. Saleh by some) presides over a precarious transition. If there are strong leaders waiting to emerge, they're not yet even in the wings.

Perhaps the absence of big men (women continue to be increasingly marginalized and excluded in the new Arab politics at senior levels) is not such a bad thing. The arc of change in the Arab world will be a long one. The last thing we need now is a charismatic new messiah either in uniform or wearing a turban who will hijack these movements to create a new brand of authoritarianism around another personality cult. After all, what's important now is the development of institutions that are credible, accountable, and inclusive. Democratization and political pluralism must be built from the bottom up if it's to endure.

It all makes so much sense -- assuming the institutions of governance aren't hijacked and subverted again. This time the danger isn't so much from the Arab version of the caudillo, but from the corporatists. And I don't mean Hewlett-Packard. What is happening in Egypt is much less a revolution or a fundamental transformation of power than a more transactional rivalry where corporate groups, in this case the military and the Islamists, compete for advantage to protect their interests or impose their vision.

There's nothing wrong with that. Competition is the essence of politics in a democratic polity, as long as it's nonviolent and played out according to accepted and legitimate rules of the game.

In the Egyptian case, however, the rules are being skewed by these two groups before the game really gets going. Liberals and independents secured roughly 25 percent of the new parliament, and they have been weakened and marginalized both by their own deficits and by the superior organizational prowess and discipline of the Islamists. After all, Egypt is a very traditional society. In a country of 85 million, you have to wonder how much of it the Facebook kids, the secularists, and the liberals of Tahrir Square actually represented. The future of the 100-member constituent assembly charged with drafting the all-important constitution is now uncertain, but one thing is clear: The dominant forces in Egyptian politics will continue to be the military and the Islamists.

3. Don't look for strong, national leaders anytime soon.

So how do you make the transition from authoritarian rule to democratic governance? How do you produce credible leaders who are accountable to accepted and legitimate institutions and empowered to take big decisions for the good of the country as a whole?

In the Arab world, the answer is very, very slowly. For the past half century, the Middle East has lacked truly competitive democratic politics, let alone established and broadly accepted channels that might produce such leaders.

But leaders will be necessary all the same. You can't run a society with a Facebook page.

Getting leaders who can see beyond the narrow corporatist or party interests will be a real challenge. In May, Egypt will have a first round of presidential elections. Candidates representing the Islamists, the left, and the old order will run. The fact that former intelligence chief Omar Suleiman came forward as a candidate and was disqualified reflects Egypt's love/hate relationship with strongmen; it also reveals the challenge of creating credible institutions, including a legitimate electoral process. The risk is that Egypt gets neither strong leaders nor credible institutions. No matter who wins, the new president will be sandwiched between a strong, Islamist-dominated parliament and a military determined to protect its economic stake and its influence over national security policy. A popularly elected president will start off with some legitimacy. But how he'll gain the real legitimacy of modern politics -- producing and delivering what people want and need -- is another matter. It may be just as well that

Egypt now has group politics rather than individual leaders. The economy is a mess; security is deteriorating. Governing the country is next to impossible. Who would want the responsibility?

Egypt has always found a way to muddle through without imploding. Tunisia, smaller and more Western-oriented, represents a bright spot in the region, but even there, tensions between Islamists and secularists guarantee a bumpy road ahead. In places like Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen, where repression, sectarian violence, tribal and provincial tensions, and lack of real institutions now prevail, it's still a mystery how credible, enlightened leaders will emerge. There's a real danger that the hopes and aspirations of the Arab Spring -- already hijacked -- will get lost and swallowed up in an Arab version of the Bermuda Triangle. Middle Eastern leaders are masters of acquiring power; they're not so good at sharing it. And yet share it they must if they are to improve the fortunes of the vast majority of their peoples.

4. America's bind: Where are its partners?

America's traditional friends are either gone, trying to get by, or increasingly unhappy with Washington's policies.

The oil-for-security bargain that cemented the U.S.-Saudi relationship has been weakened, and the Saudis are still upset over America's reform agenda in Bahrain and have long been unhappy over its policy toward Israel and the Palestinians. A weak Yemeni president can't be a reliable partner on counterterrorism, and the recent brouhaha over the NGOs and military aid to Egypt heralds troubled days ahead. America is reaching out to the Islamists, but the Brotherhood's vision for Egypt, let alone the Salafist one, is one that America won't easily abide. The Palestinians, who have no strategy themselves to gain a state, have all but given up on the possibility that Barack Obama has one.

The Arabs still want America's security assistance and military hardware. And the Iranian bogeyman guarantees that the Gulf states still want and need American protection. There remain dim hopes among Arabs that Washington will at some point come to its senses and stick it to the Israelis. But it won't be easy for the United States to make new friends easily, particularly now that public opinion will play a greater role in the debate. In 1934, Franklin D. Roosevelt allegedly quipped about the Nicaraguan strongman Anastasio Somoza that he may be a son of bitch, but he's our

son of a bitch. Those days are over for America in the Middle East. SOB's may still emerge, but they won't be ours. That may prove to be very good thing. But for now, America is in for a very rough patch in the new Middle Eastern Oz. And unfortunately, unlike Dorothy, we can't just click our heels and go back to Kansas.

Article 3.

Foreign Policy

Can the Brotherhood Win In Egypt Without Its No. 1 Star?

Ashraf Khalil

April 18, 2012 -- CAIRO -- Last week, the Muslim Brotherhood's leading light, Khairat al-Shater, looked like a confident front-runner in Egypt's presidential race. On the night of April 12, more than 5,000 men -- and another 1,000 or so women, in their own section -- packed into a huge canvas-walled enclosure in the working-class district of Shubra al-Kheima, a Brotherhood stronghold, to hear what their candidate would do upon capturing the Egyptian presidency.

The rally, one of Shater's first since announcing his candidacy, managed to be both tightly organized and raucous -- Muslim Brotherhood cadres of all ages drowned out the noise from the neighboring multi-lane roadway. Supporters brought dozens of rolled white flags declaring a coming "Egyptian renaissance," which they joyfully unfurled on cue. Meanwhile, senior officials at the head table drank from coffee mugs emblazoned with Shater's rather imposing headshot. Shater's last name means "clever" in Arabic -- a fitting moniker for the self-made millionaire -- and one handmade sign carried by a young woman declared, "Egypt needs someone clever!"

A tall broad-chested man who spent years in prison under the Mubarak regime, Shater commanded the room without even rising from his seat. He barely talked religion, instead focusing on rebuilding the economy, the country, and Egyptian pride. "My brothers, we need to feel like we're at the

beginning of a true renaissance," he said. "We want to build our country. We're coming out of a period of looting." As befits a frontrunner, Shater generally avoided attacking his political rivals. However, he made one notable exception: He repeatedly called out [Omar Suleiman](#), Egypt's longtime intelligence chief and Hosni Mubarak consigliere, who had recently thrown his hat in the political race. "Omar Suleiman and Hosni Mubarak's intelligence men are trying to drag us backwards," he half-shouted. They want to "steal the revolution and forge the elections." Just over 48 hours later, Suleiman was out of the race. But so was Shater -- and the landscape of Egypt's post-revolutionary transition had morphed yet again. On April 14, Egypt's electoral commission disqualified the two strongest Islamist candidates and Suleiman, the most potent symbol of the old regime. Suleiman was eliminated due to mistakes in his gathering of signatures to qualify as a candidate; Shater is out because he had recently served a jail sentence for membership in the Brotherhood and money laundering to finance the organization (he was released after the revolution); Salafist Hazem Abu Ismail was disqualified due to evidence that his late mother had [taken U.S. citizenship](#) several years ago. The commission [rejected](#) the appeals of the three candidates on the night of April 17, paving the way for the announcement of a final candidate list on April 26. A relatively short campaign season will then follow before the election of May 23 and May 24, with a run-off election that will carry over through mid-June. With just over a month to go before the vote, Egypt's first post-Mubarak presidential election has progressed very much like the post-Mubarak year that preceded it. There is a feeling of mass confusion and polarization -- as well as the nagging fear that nobody is really at the wheel of the Egyptian state. Suleiman's actual appeal as a candidate always remained uncertain. He carried a tremendous amount of political baggage, from his warm public relationships with successive generations of Israeli officials to his tight association with Mubarak. But his candidacy also carried with it the societal assumption that he would be backed by the quiet but very real support of the ruling Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF). Also, some Egyptians may have voted for Suleiman because of his obsessive opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood, seeing him as a necessary authoritarian bulwark against the Islamist takeover that secularists fear is already well underway. While Suleiman's popularity is

debatable, Abu Ismail and Shater would have been clear electoral powerhouses. Abu Ismail's posters are still omnipresent around Cairo -- he had become the primary boogeyman for Egypt's secularist activists, many of whom didn't conceal their glee at his downfall due to a modified "birther" scandal. Shater was essentially the frontrunner from the moment the Brotherhood announced it would renege on its oft-stated promise and field its own presidential candidate. In a Wednesday afternoon press conference, Shater called his disqualification ["both funny and sad,"](#) but gave no indication he would contest the decision any further. The remaining contenders are unlikely to provoke the same sort of polarization as those caught up in the electoral commission's cull. Handicapping their electoral odds remains a murky endeavor, but each will now be auditioning for the various constituencies left adrift by the commission. Former Arab League chief Amr Moussa and former Muslim Brother Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh now resume their frontrunner status almost by default. Fringe Islamists like [Muhammed Selim al-Awa](#) will work to draw in Abu Ismail and Shater voters. Former Air Force commander and Mubarak's final prime minister, Ahmed Shafiq, will similarly try to appeal to the stability/anti-Islamist bloc that might otherwise have voted for Suleiman. Perhaps the only candidate left who qualifies as a secularist without regime ties is longtime Nasserist MP [Hamdeen Sabahi](#), who boasts opposition credentials dating back to his days as a student activist under the late President Anwar Sadat. But the Muslim Brotherhood is [still in this race](#), and shouldn't be counted out. Knowing in advance that Shater's disqualification was a possibility, the organization nominated a second candidate, Muhammad Morsi. A longtime member of the Brotherhood's leadership ranks, Morsi emerged as one of the public faces of the organization after the revolution [as head of the Freedom and Justice Party](#). While he doesn't have nearly the stature or charisma of Shater, Morsi will enjoy the full and formidable backing of the Brotherhood. After a solid year of publicly swearing it had no interest in the presidency, the vaunted Islamist organization seems to badly want the executive branch. Indeed, Egyptian politics on the eve of the presidential election is increasingly dominated by an all or nothing logic -- the rival camps appear disinterested in sharing power in the name of post-revolutionary solidarity. So far, judging from the parliamentary results and the [increasingly messy](#)

[process](#) of drafting the new constitution, all sides in the Egyptian playing field seem to be playing a zero-sum game at a time when the country desperately needs some big-tent consensus building. At Shater's pre-disqualification rally in Shubra Al-Kheima, one of his supporters argued passionately that the Brotherhood needed to control both the legislative and executive branches in order to counter an active and pernicious counter-revolution.

"Without executive power, it wouldn't matter what the [Brotherhood-controlled] parliament did. They just won't implement the law," said Muhammed Aql, a 27 year-old accountant in a pinstriped Oxford shirt. "To ask the Brotherhood to protect the revolution in those circumstances would be like tying a man's hands together and ordering him to start swimming."

Ashraf Khalil is a Cairo-based journalist and author of [Liberation Square: Inside the Egyptian Revolution and the Rebirth of a Nation](#).

Article 4.

[Los Angeles Times](#)

Egypt's looming showdown

Rajan Menon

April 18, 2012 -- Like savvy boxers with knockout punches, Egypt's Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, or SCAF, and the Muslim Brotherhood have circled each other warily since the Arab Spring toppled President Hosni Mubarak in February 2011. But after the SCAF-appointed election commission's banning last week of 10 candidates for the May presidential elections, including the Brotherhood's nominee, Khairat Shater, the phase of circumspection may be ending. Egyptians could be in for rougher times.

The SCAF abandoned Mubarak only after it realized that Egyptian protesters would not succumb to intimidation and force. But it feared the popular uprising and believes that its main consequence has been to empower the Brotherhood. Despite the Brotherhood's reassurances about democracy and religious tolerance, the generals remain convinced that its

goal is an Islamic state. The military high command and the intelligence services no doubt worry that their record of repression during Mubarak's long reign would inevitably be investigated in a Brotherhood-governed Egypt, and that there would be score-settling, not least because the group's leaders were hounded, imprisoned and tortured.

The military-intelligence complex has reacted by trying to engineer a post-Mubarak polity that protects its vast economic empire and guarantees the army a political role. So it was shaken when the parliamentary election results were announced in January: The Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party and its allies won more than 45% of the 508 seats, the Salafists' Al Nour and its partners, 25%.

The Brotherhood's strategy has been to avoid giving the SCAF an excuse for a crackdown. Thus it hung back during some of the demonstrations that continued after Mubarak's fall, even at the risk of fanning fears that it was colluding with the generals. And despite its success in the parliamentary elections, it declined to field a candidate for president and prohibited its members from running. When senior party official Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh disobeyed and entered the contest last summer, he was summarily expelled. Not until March 31 did the Brotherhood, frustrated by the SCAF's political machinations and worried about the appeal of the ultraconservative Salafists' presidential nominee, Hazem Salah abu Ismail, change course and nominate Shater.

The election commission's move has raised the political temperature, even though it also banned Omar Suleiman, a longtime Mubarak confidant, vice president in the last days of Mubarak's rule and head of intelligence for 18 years before that. Suleiman is reviled because of his past, and he's widely considered a SCAF ally. Rumors of fraud were rife after he managed to gather more than the mandatory 30,000 signatures from 15 provinces within a few days of entering the presidential race.

But the Brotherhood won't be mollified by his disqualification, nor will many Egyptians. They understand that the SCAF knew that Suleiman could never win and that the generals encouraged his run and then stopped it so that they could appear evenhanded while pursuing their true goal: shutting out Shater, as well as Ismail, both charismatic figures capable of mobilizing voters. Other candidates have been banned, including the liberal Ayman Nour — who, like Shater, was imprisoned under Mubarak — but

the Islamists are the SCAF's true targets, and few Egyptians buy the tortured legal rationales for the bans against them.

The election commission Tuesday rejected the appeals of the banned candidates, including those of the three main contenders — Shater, Ismail and Suleiman. We will now see whether the Brotherhood-SCAF detente is dead. If it is, the Brotherhood can bring thousands of supporters into the streets. The Salafists would also mobilize their followers. But because of the widespread belief that the generals are hijacking the political process, the crowds will also contain Egyptians of other political persuasions. The SCAF's calculation may be that the remaining 13 candidates will divide the vote, denying anyone a decisive win. Then a non-Islamist, perhaps Amr Moussa, Mubarak's foreign minister and a former head of the Arab League, could win the second round. That would be a far better outcome for the military-intelligence complex than a Brotherhood president, particularly now that the Islamists control parliament. If this is indeed the SCAF's gambit, it amounts to a big, dicey gamble. Should the streets overflow with protesters and the generals eventually unleash the army and police, massive violence could follow, and the SCAF and the Brotherhood could decide to go for broke. Egypt's uncertain move toward democracy could then be derailed and the country left in turmoil for a long time. If Washington really wants democracy in Egypt, given its long-standing ties to the Egyptian military and intelligence services, now would be a good time to speak up.

Rajan Menon is a professor of international relations at Lehigh University.

Article 5.

Wall Street Journal

The Risk of Exaggerating the China Threat

[Michael Eastman](#)

April 18, 2012 -- As American military planners examine national security in light of shrinking budgets and legitimate concerns such as the rise of China, they must not neglect other strategic realities.

Prudence demands preparing for a possible challenge in the Pacific, but it's important to distinguish between threats that are most dangerous and threats that are most likely. Especially during challenging fiscal times, the U.S. should not tailor its military capabilities for the Pacific at the expense of the rest of the world—particularly the Middle East, where economic, demographic and political trends make conflict far more likely than conventional wisdom suggests.

Global demand for oil is projected to rise over the next two decades, fueled by the expanding Chinese and Indian economies. By 2030, half of all global supply will be concentrated in the Middle East (up from 42% today). Assuming even stable prices, oil-producing Middle Eastern states will have little cause to diversify their economies. Their dominant practice will remain the redistribution of oil revenues, whether as social welfare or government patronage, further retarding the development of a viable middle class. The gap between rich and poor will persist as a source of popular dissatisfaction.

To make matters worse, by 2030 more than half the Middle East's population will still be under 34. This persistent "youth bulge" will challenge even efficient regimes, as demands for jobs, social services and upward mobility are met with limited opportunities, silence and repression. Alienated young people are potential recruits to radical Islam.

As recent events have demonstrated, predictions of a Middle Eastern shift toward democracy are premature at best. But rapid political change is frequently accompanied by violence. With numerous countries in political transition, the likelihood of future regional conflict must be considered high.

Iran, meanwhile, is likely to develop low-yield nuclear weapons despite Western efforts to stop it. Emboldened by a nuclear deterrent, Iran will become increasingly prone to exerting its influence abroad. Unable to satisfy its restive populace, the regime will be tempted to divert attention by remaining a persistent force for regional and global instability.

These factors underscore the importance of American land forces, which retain significant roles that we cannot perform if we tailor the military

solely for the Pacific.

One such role is building military-to-military partnerships. This will remain a priority of American policy in the Middle East, as it is a proven method for encouraging moderation, opening communication channels, and reducing the risks of miscalculation. U.S. Army land forces are central to such military-to-military relationships because ground troops constitute 87% of all Middle Eastern armed forces. Unduly reducing American ground forces, then, risks creating a vacuum between Middle Eastern militaries and our own.

Nor is access to the region guaranteed once American forces complete their withdrawal from current conflicts and consolidate in smaller numbers on the periphery. Absent some forward presence, it will be increasingly difficult to carry out counterterrorism operations. Precision air strikes remain an option, but without ground forces we forfeit the ability to detain terrorists and extract intelligence. And as the moral legitimacy of remote strikes comes under greater attack from the international community, sole reliance on them will erode support for our strategic objectives.

America should retain sufficient ground forces to deter, and if necessary defeat, regional aggression. Urbanization, combined with the penchant of militants to blend into the population, vastly increases the complexity of future warfare. While air power can rapidly defeat a heavily armored force, it doesn't readily address other, more likely scenarios: separating warring factions, for example, enforcing a neutral zone, or defeating insurgents. Relying on proxy forces backed by American air power, which many advocate as a cost-effective option, has its own risks. When we do so, as demonstrated in Libya, we risk losing the ability to shape even minor conflicts. Forces committed to preserving Middle Eastern stability must have the capability to set conditions for positive outcomes.

As a demonstration of intent, few actions carry the weight of American boots on the ground. Frequently, deploying ground forces can prevent conflicts from escalating without destroying an adversary's arms or infrastructure.

To secure American interests in a rapidly changing world, the U.S. military must be balanced and capable of operating across the full spectrum of conflict. Prudent investment in air and sea power ensures access to the global commons, but an objective strategic assessment clearly argues for

retaining significant land forces. Preserving stability in the Middle East requires a military that can partner with allies, deter aggression, and defeat a predominantly land-based range of threats.

Col. Eastman, U.S. Army, is a fellow at the Institute of World Politics.

Article 6.

NYT

NATO After Libya

Editorial

April 18, 2012 -- NATO can be proud of the role it played in supporting the overthrow of Libya's murderous dictator, Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi. But the alliance's own confidential assessment, reported in [The Times on Sunday](#), pointed out that European members, who were among the first to call for military action, could never have pulled it off without extensive American involvement.

The Libya campaign was supposed to be a demonstration of European leadership. But even Europe's most sophisticated militaries lacked the specialized aircraft and trained personnel needed to intercept Libyan government communications and verify potential targets, and they quickly ran short of precision-guided munitions.

The Pentagon stepped in to provide what Europe could not. But that experience is one more reminder that Europe is still not ready for prime time — and, no matter how important the stakes, European militaries are unable to conduct sustained air operations on their own, even in their own neighborhood. Without urgent efforts to remedy these shortcomings, NATO faces a bleak future of military marginalization and trans-Atlantic rancor.

Europe has never shouldered its fair share of NATO's collective military burden. But, while Washington and the American taxpayer were prepared to put up with such free-riding during the cold war, patience is running out. Last year, the United States devoted 4.8 percent of its gross domestic product to military spending. European NATO members averaged only 1.6

percent. While the Pentagon needs to be far more disciplined in its own spending, the Europeans need to spend more on their militaries and spend it more rationally.

The operational failures in Libya grow directly out of Europe's chronic military underinvestment and out-of-date strategic priorities. Most European allies failed to invest adequately in military modernization when budgets were flush. And too much of what Europe did spend went to vanity projects like the independent nuclear deterrents maintained by Britain and France. Too little has been spent preparing for more realistic security challenges like combating transnational terrorist networks and deflecting the rampages of cornered dictators, like Qaddafi and, a decade before that, Slobodan Milosevic of Serbia. Military force is not always the best answer. But, when it is, Europe must be able to provide its share.

With all European governments committed to arbitrary and unrealistic deficit reduction targets, military spending is again being slighted. But by continuing to shortchange overdue military investments, Europe is undermining the alliance on which its security depends.

We are encouraged that earlier this year, [NATO decided to acquire](#) a new air-to-ground surveillance system and to expand member countries' aerial refueling fleets. That's a good start. But it won't be enough.

Next month's [NATO summit meeting in Chicago](#) will likely feature speeches celebrating the alliance's past glories. It must be accompanied by hard private bargaining about better burden-sharing and addressing the yawning gaps exposed in Libya. NATO's credibility is on the line. And that is a serious problem for Europe and for the United States.

Article 7.

Newsweek

The Next Hillary; Handicapping the race for secretary of state

Leslie H. Gelb

April 30, 2012 -- Next to guessing whom Mitt Romney will pick as his running mate, there's no more delicious fruit on Washington's tree of gossip than the identity of the next secretary of state. It remains a position of transcendent importance, especially in a new world where everyone seems to live and throw garbage in everyone else's backyard. The prospects generally lack the public presence and star power of most Foggy Bottom occupants--Henry Kissinger, Colin Powell, and Condi Rice, for example. And they certainly don't rival Hillary Clinton, who is determined both to stay until January and not be a lame duck. Doubt not that she has the will, standing abroad, and popularity at home to walk from office with head high.

The contenders for both President Obama and Romney are basically inside professionals, very well known and respected by peers and foreign leaders. But they lack the stage presence of their immediate predecessors.

Obama's list centers on John Kerry, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice; and National Security Adviser Thomas Donilon. According to insiders, Obama is thinking Kerry would travel a lot and successfully, and interfere least with policymaking. Susan Rice's blend of soft and hard line sits well in the Oval Office. Donilon is regarded as the wisest policy and political head.

The Republican contingent is somewhat elusive, because Romney's attention has been on the primaries, and because his international experience mainly revolved around his key role in the 2002 Winter Olympics held in exotic Mormon Utah. In other words, he is not intimate with the foreign-policy crowd, even compared with Obama four years ago, who at least sat for two years on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Almost certainly, however, Romney's possibles include Robert Zoellick, the outgoing president of the World Bank; Stephen Hadley, national security adviser to George W. Bush; and Richard Haass, president of the Council on Foreign Relations (an organization familiar to this author). All held senior jobs in recent Republican administrations.

Don't count out two big surprises, neither identified with a political party: William Burns, the current deputy secretary of state; and Nicholas Burns, who held the No. 3 job at State under Condi Rice. Bill and Nick--both Irish, but unrelated--have impressive skills.

The competition for this storied position follows carefully established informal rules. It takes place in whispers, careful put-downs (larger ones might get back to the prospect), and considered maneuvers. It is said (notice the circumlocution) that Donilon suggested to Obama naming Susan Rice to replace Zoellick at the World Bank. It was a justifiable move, given America's difficulties in holding onto the bank's presidency. But it would also have removed Rice, perhaps Clinton's likeliest successor at this point, from the race. Hadley is taking the route above party politics. He's serving on Clinton's policy advisory board and not attaching his name to partisan attacks on Obama. But his Republican credentials are so solid that he is widely regarded as Romney's likeliest choice. John Kerry has adopted a low profile to avoid controversy.

For all the attention paid to who will be the next president's face in foreign affairs, being secretary of state isn't what it used to be. Frightening problems still flourish. There's always the danger of being sucked into hellholes like Iran, Syria, and North Korea. The Middle East seems more explosive than ever. China now looms as the challenging superpower. At seminal moments in American history, the secretary of state stepped forward to formulate the nation's strategic path. The memorable strategists include George Marshall for President Truman, Henry Kissinger for Nixon, James Baker for George H.W. Bush. But for almost two decades now, policymaking power has been concentrated increasingly in the White House—under George W. Bush and Vice President Cheney and today very much in the controlling hands of Barack Obama. The secretaries do the diplomacy and the execution, but the policy is made in a very centralized manner in the Oval Office.

In fact, the American cognoscenti should be focusing much more on who will be the next treasury secretary than next secretary of state. In 21st-century international affairs, GDP counts more than military might in most situations. Clinton has been acutely aware of this and is endeavoring to frame a new foreign economic policy for her successor. Old habits, however, die hard, and the most influential lips in Washington still whisper about the next Hillary rather than the next Tim Geithner.