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The Washington Post

Maliki's Iraq disaster

David Ignatius

June 12 -- The stunning [gains](#) this week by Iraq's Sunni insurgents carry a crucial political message: Nouri al-Maliki, the Shiite prime minister of Iraq, is a polarizing sectarian politician who has lost the confidence of his

army and nation. He cannot put a splintered Iraq together again, no matter how many weapons the Obama administration sends him.

Maliki's failure has been increasingly obvious since [the elections of 2010](#), when the Iraqi people in their wisdom elected a broader, less-sectarian coalition. But the Obama administration, bizarrely working in tandem with Iran, brokered a deal that allowed Maliki to continue and has worked with him as an ally against al-Qaeda. Maliki's coalition triumphed in April's elections, but the balloting was boycotted by Sunnis.

Given Maliki's sectarian and authoritarian style, a growing number of Iraq experts are questioning why the Obama administration continues to provide him billions in military aid — and is said to be weighing his plea for lethal Predator drones. The skeptics include some who were once among Maliki's champions.

“I believe that Maliki has never had the energy or intent” to unify Iraq, says Derek Harvey, a professor at the University of South Florida who advises Centcom and is one of the leading U.S. experts on Iraq. “He was a bad choice in the beginning and our embrace of him was an error.”

A retired U.S. four-star commander asks in an interview: “How in the world can you keep betting on this number [Maliki] given what's happened?” He believes Maliki is incapable of retaking the territory he has lost, and he wonders when Iran's Quds Force will intervene to rescue Maliki's collapsing army.

Maliki's U.S.-trained army has suffered a series of crushing defeats, as Sunni insurgents from an offshoot of al-Qaeda captured the northern Sunni cities of Mosul and Tikrit and swept toward Baghdad. Already the Sunni extremists control most of western Iraq.

The Shiite-led Iraqi military has crumpled in battle, fleeing the battlefield and leaving behind tanks, Humvees and other vehicles. In cities such as Fallujah, cleared by American troops at great cost, al-Qaeda and its progeny are now dominant.

Maliki's sectarian political style has helped create this disaster. He has gutted the army of the commanders he suspected of plotting against him. One U.S. expert likens him to Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, who purged the Red Army on the eve of World War II.

“He has replaced his generals with Shiite commanders who represent not competency, but political loyalty” to Maliki and his Dawa Party, says

Harvey.

The victors belong to an extremist Sunni faction known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. These pitiless, battle-hardened fighters, remnants of what was known as al-Qaeda in Iraq, have attracted jihadists from around the world. One of their most effective commanders in Mosul is said to have been a Georgian-born Chechen known as [Omar al-Shishani](#). The Chechen was also a key ISIS commander in recent battles around the Syrian city of Aleppo — an illustration of the group’s potent cross-border reach.

ISIS forces have swept south along Highway 1 from Mosul, swelling their ranks by liberating 2,000 to 3,000 jihadist fighters from a prison in Nineveh province. The jihadists have captured so much U.S.-made equipment that it’s reportedly hard to distinguish friend from foe along the chaotic highway south.

Maliki’s forces are said to be drawing their battle lines just above a huge arms depot at Taji, about 20 miles north of Baghdad, which was a key U.S. logistics base during the American occupation, from 2003 to 2010. By consolidating his forces so far south, Maliki is, in effect, conceding the northern cities. Harvey argues that only the pesh merga fighters of Iraqi Kurdistan are strong enough to retake Mosul, but some experts doubt they would launch such a battle unless it was a prelude to a fully independent Kurdistan.

Senior Obama administration officials said Thursday they recognize that Maliki is seen by Iraqi Sunnis as a sectarian figure, and they are pressing him to expand his base in “unity government.” But they said there is no “conditionality” in the U.S. offer of military assistance and that the overriding goal short term is to help Malilki stop the Sunni extremists and prevent the fall of Baghdad.

As the fabric of the Middle East rips apart along sectarian lines, the United States and its allies face a fundamental strategic choice: Can they convene a regional peace conference — which would seek to reconcile Sunni and Shiite forces and their key backers, Saudi Arabia and Iran — in some new security architecture?

Restitching the fabric of Iraq and Syria may be Mission Impossible. But with its focus on counterterrorism and weapons supplies, the Obama administration seems to have decided to treat the region simply as a shooting gallery.

The Daily Beast

Iraq Is Vietnam 2.0 and U.S. Drones Won't Solve the Problem

Leslie H. Gelb

12 June 14 -- When the jihadis took over the city of Mosul and began their march towards Baghdad, Washington was of course shocked. But officials, legislators, and policy experts in that fair city should not have been shocked. What happened in Iraq was history as usual. The U.S. fights in Iraq and Afghanistan and Libya and Vietnam and other places (maybe next in Syria), provides billions of dollars in arms, trains the friendly soldiers, then begins to pull out—and what happens? Our good allies on whom we've squandered our sacred lives and our wealth fall apart. That's what's happening in Iraq now.

And before the U.S. government starts to do the next dumb thing again, namely provide fighter aircraft and drone attacks and heaven knows what else, it should stop and think for a change. If America comes to the rescue of this Iraqi government, then this Iraqi government, like so many of the others we've fought and died for, will do nothing. It will simply assume that we'll take over, that we'll do the job. And when things go wrong, and they certainly will, this cherished government that we're helping will blame only America. Don't think for a moment it will be otherwise. Don't think for a moment that the generals and hawks who want to dispatch American fighters and drones to the rescue know any better today than they've known for 50 years.

Sure, ■■■ in favor of helping governments against these militant, crazy and dangerous jihadis. But first and foremost and lastly, it's got to be their fight, not ours. As soon as the burden falls on the United States, our "best friends" do little or nothing and we lose. If they start fighting hard, and we'll know it when we see it, there will be no mistaking it. Then the military and other aid we provide will mean something.

Just look at the situation in Iraq these past months. We helped the Shiited government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to field an Iraqi army

that was the 20th-largest in the world, with more than a quarter million soldiers and a million-man Iraqi security force including counter-terrorism troops and police. By psychedelic contrast, jihadi forces in Iraq probably number several thousand.

Now take a look at exactly what happened in Mosul. While reports are sketchy, there were likely tens of thousands of Iraqi security forces of all types in and around Mosul. They had tanks and mortars and all sorts of armaments provided by the American taxpayer. On the other hand, the jihadis who won the battle probably numbered, according to the BBC, hundreds to around a thousand troops. Apparently they had no tanks or heavy artillery. The jihadis started firing, and the Iraqi security forces took off their uniforms, gave up their weapons and started running. All this after a decade of Americans fighting and dying and training and equipping them at the cost to the United States of well over a trillion dollars.

So what's the problem? The problem is not that these Iraqis weren't well trained and equipped, it was they did not have a government worth fighting for. The Maliki government is Shiite, exclusionary and anti-Sunni. It is corrupt and inefficient. In sum, like most of these great freedom-fighting government we've backed over the decades—corrupt and inefficient. And certainly non-inclusive in its politics, certainly not welcoming of potential opponents, certainly ill-disposed to give non-Shiites a legitimate share of power. So the Iraqi troops throw down their arms and run away.

No amount of U.S. air and drone attacks will alter this situation. This kind of outcome was inevitable for Iraq given the political lay of the land in that country. It is almost certainly what's going to happen in Afghanistan. There too, we've fought and died, equipped and trained hundreds of thousands of Afghan troops. The Kabul government is a corrupt mess not worth fighting for. There too, Americans should not be surprised if the Taliban soon regains the offensive and Afghan troops take off their uniforms, lay down their arms and run. Remember Vietnam? The South Vietnamese had a million and a half men under arms and despite the unconscionable Congressional cutoff of future aid, these armed forces had plenty to fight with. But they gave up too. And to be sure, the United States and friends are not providing a great deal of arms and equipment to friendly Syrian rebels. But then, then, the jihadis didn't have much to fight with or many men to do the fighting and they seem to be doing all too well in Syria.

Why don't our "good guys," our plentiful men in arms, our decently to very well-equipped security forces fight as well as the jihadis in Syria or Iraq or as well as the Taliban in Afghanistan or the North Vietnamese in Vietnam? It's that motivation that is central to victory. If our "good guys" can't supply this motivation for themselves, Americans should have learned by now that we in our goodness and kindness and sacrifice cannot supply it for them. That's the central lesson of warfare for more than half a century. That's the essential moral Americans can't seem to learn.

Again, Washington should be prepared to help the "good guys" who are fully willing to help themselves. ■ not against that at all. I am against making these American wars because it simply does not work.

I am in favor of trying and trying the diplomatic route, which we seem to approach as a last resort, not a first one. In Iraq, this means Washington's offering up some version of the federal plan that then-Senator Joe Biden and I proposed almost a decade ago. The idea was to keep the country whole, but to let each major group essentially run affairs in its own region. The Kurds are already doing so in the north, and many Shiites are doing so in the south. With some prompting from Washington, Maliki needs to empower a Sunni region in the center and give it its fair share of Iraq's oil revenues. Then, maybe, the majority of moderate Sunnis and the Shiite soldiers will stand up to the crazed jihadis. A similar decentralized approach might be the only way to lessen or eventually stop the fighting in Syria and to provide some measure of peace in the future Afghanistan. Before the United States jumps off another cliff, let's simply stop and take note of the bloody realities of more than fifty years. These internal civil wars, including the fights against these terrible extremists, are won and can only be won by the people Americans want to help—not by American troops, planes, drones, trainers, equipment and arms. And in the interest of a great majority of people in these countries who suffer from these wars, Washington owes it to them to try, just try, the diplomatic path of decentralization and federalism.

[Leslie H. Gelb](#), a former New York Times columnist and senior government official, is author of [Power Rules: How Common Sense Can Rescue American Foreign Policy](#) (HarperCollins, 2009), a book that shows how to

think about and use power in the 21st century. He is president emeritus of the [Council on Foreign Relations](#).

[Article 3](#)

The Washington Post

U.S. must act to prevent extremists' victory in Iraq

James M. Dubik

June 12 -- The war in Iraq was not over when the United States withdrew from Iraq in 2011. We just pretended that it was. Like it or not, our departure left a diplomatic and security vacuum that contributed to the crisis unfolding there. The government of Iraq floundered in that vacuum, promulgating the wrong domestic policies and allowing the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to backslide to pre-2007 performance levels. The net result has been that al-Qaeda in Iraq has not only reconstituted but expanded drawing in many of those disenfranchised and disillusioned by Iraq's domestic policies. Worse, it has morphed into the [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria \(ISIS\)](#), whose stated ambition is to create a new Islamic state, absorbing parts of Syria and Iraq. As the past few days have amply demonstrated, ISIS is already more than capable of taking territory and governing.

In much of eastern Syria, ISIS serves as the de facto government. Is it [advancing rapidly](#) into northern, central and western Iraq. This week [it seized Mosul](#), Iraq's second-largest city; most of Baiji, home of one of the largest oil facilities in Iraq; and Tikrit. Now it is moving south toward Samarra and Baqubah, en route to Baghdad. It is already entrenched in [Fallujah and Ramadi](#) as well as in most of Iraq's western desert. Its terror campaigns are destabilizing Baghdad and threatening Salahuddin, Tamin and Diyala provinces — the territory between Mosul and Baghdad that it wants to seize next.

While we have been debating whether ISIS fits our definition of a threat, the on-the-ground realities have been passing us by. If ISIS achieves its goal, Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Iran will have a radical, fundamentalist Islamic state on their borders. Iraq will be split in two,

Israel threatened and the security of the United States and the rest of the West put at significantly greater risk. The question isn't whether ISIS is part of al-Qaeda. Rather, the question for the United States and its allies is: Do we keep pretending that the war is over or acknowledge that events in Iraq are rapidly moving in a direction at odds with our security interests? What's our plan?

There is no use debating whether the present state could have been prevented if the United States left a sufficient residual force in place in 2011; neither Baghdad nor Washington could muster the domestic support for that. But the fact is that the Iraqis cannot succeed by themselves. If they could, the situation would not be as dire as it is.

So, what can we do now? Providing Iraq more "military stuff" isn't a real answer, nor is the reintroduction of large numbers of U.S. or coalition troops. We have no easy options, but to start, the United States and its allies must commit to preventing an ISIS victory and assist the government of Iraq in halting and reversing ISIS's progress. Although the long-term solutions for Iraqi stability are diplomatic and political, unless the Iraqi government can stop the ISIS offensive, such actions will be moot.

Halting the offensive is Iraq's nearest-term objective. What is needed is a coordinated air and ground action consisting of both a heavy dose of precisely applied firepower and a sufficiently executed ground defensive. The Iraqis are incapable of such action alone. The firepower will have to be delivered by United States and allied aircraft augmented by Iraqi assets. The Iraqis will also need a small group of advisers to target air support correctly and to help identify or create capable, well-led units that are properly employed and backed by sufficient sustainment capacity. The advisory and support effort must be substantial enough to help the Iraqis conduct an initial defense and then plan and prepare a series of counter-offensive campaigns to regain lost areas. This will be a multi-year effort, but it cannot become a second surge.

These security actions must be taken within the context of an aggressive diplomatic and political effort. The United States and its allies must insist that Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki dissolve the nefarious Office of the Commander-in-Chief, which has been one of the primary causes of the erosion of the ISF. The prime minister must also cease being the de facto ministers of defense and interior. Centralizing security ministries and

running security operations from his office have all but ended development of both ministries, politicized the police and the military and reduced the performance of the ISF. Finally, the government of Iraq must change policies so that fewer Iraqis feel excluded. The failure to do so has helped create the crisis of confidence in Iraq's government.

But, again, unless the ISIS offensive campaign is stopped and reversed, none of this will matter.

These would be drastic actions, and they can succeed only if Iraq is convinced that it is facing an existential threat and must change course. The United States and its allies, too, must be convinced that an ISIS state poses a national security threat. No one likes the options before us, but we'll like even less what happens if we do nothing or take only ineffective action.

James M. Dubik is a retired Army lieutenant general and a senior fellow at the Institute for the Study of War. He commanded the Multi National Security Transition Command-Iraq from 2007 to 2008.

[Article 4.](#)

Al-Ahram Weekly

How to help Egypt

Abdel-Moneim Said

11 June 2014 -- If there is a pure image of the Arab spirit of magnanimity it is to be found in the telegram sent by King Abdullah Ben Abdel-Aziz to President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi congratulating him on his recent electoral victory. Not only did the message reflect the historic strategic relations between Egypt and Saudi Arabia, their Islamic and Arab bonds, the collective sacrifices in oil and blood in the October 1973 War and the war to liberate Kuwait in 1991, and the fact that more than a million Egyptians live and work in Saudi Arabia and more than half a million Saudis have chosen Egypt as a second place of residence, as a place to study or as a favourite tourist destination. It also embodies the nobility and chivalry evoked by the term "authentic Arab values". These values were also clearly and abundantly evident in the congratulatory telegrams from UAE

President His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Ben Zayed as well as those from the heads of state of Kuwait, Bahrain, Jordan, Morocco and Algeria. The space here is insufficient to fully express one's gratitude to all those who moved to demonstrate their support for Egypt at a critical historic moment, especially at a time when the Western press and Western leaders drip poison into their honey-worded congratulatory messages.

In all events, what concerns us here is that the Arab telegrams all contained an essential idea, which is that it is necessary to help Egypt through collective Arab and international efforts. In addition to the values mentioned above, this idea rests on three highly strategic premises. First, to these Arab countries, led by Saudi Arabia, UAE and Kuwait, the Egyptian experience led by President Al-Sisi cannot be allowed to fail. Second, the success of the Egyptian experience will be the natural prelude to the revival of stability and development in the Arab region after three years of upheaval, violence and terrorism. Third, the success in Egypt will also herald the defeat of the project of political terrorism in Islamic guise that propelled Arab countries and the Middle East as a whole towards disasters that destroyed nations, divided others and laid the foundations for racial discrimination, the suppression of rights and freedoms and the horrors of religious fascism. Egypt's battle is, ultimately, a battle for the future. If we have learned anything from the history of the past two centuries it is that change in Egypt has always precipitated other changes — whether for better or worse — elsewhere in the region.

Arab efforts to help Egypt seek to win this battle, which is now spearheaded by a new leadership that has arrived after years of leadership drought, whether due to lack of the ability to lead and inspire or, more recently, due to the travesty in which the reins of government fell into the hands of a secret organisation that only knew how to work underground even when it was in power. This time, the leadership was ushered in by an unprecedented level of grassroots support. Moreover, and more importantly, President Al-Sisi also brought with him a clear programme for realising national development. It is founded on the pillars of hard work, major investment, incorporating the whole of Egypt (especially the southern provinces) from the Nile Valley to the Red Sea and Mediterranean into the development vision, and the rule of law. Another crucial pillar is the creation of a regional security order with Egyptian-Gulf relations as its

backbone. In addition to its strategic/military aspects, this system also features an economic dimension that entails helping Egypt to recover its economic health and, hence, its ability to participate effectively in this order free from the blackmail of Western nations and international financial institutions.

We should note that this is not a new experience in Egyptian-Gulf relations. In the late 1980s, the Egyptian economy took a dangerous plunge against a political backdrop charged by Central Security Forces conscript riots. National reserves reached an unprecedented low, the Egyptian pound plummeted against the dollar and the national debt soared to \$50 billion. However, following the war to liberate Kuwait, Egypt and the countries that offered to help it agreed that Cairo would undertake a number of radical economic reforms so as to deregulate the economy. In exchange it would have half its national debt written off and it would receive a large bundle of aid and grants. The Egyptian economy was thus able to enter a period of growth, which averaged five per cent over the next two decades. National reserves climbed to \$52 billion by 2010, 30 new cities were constructed, foreign investment in Egypt surpassed \$46 billion during the last five years of Mubarak's rule, and in the last year of that regime the country hosted more than 14 million tourists. The experience that followed the war to liberate Kuwait was an unmitigated success. Nor was Egypt the only country to benefit, as Arab investment accounted for over 22 per cent of the total investment made in Egypt in that period.

Today, we can repeat that experience, albeit with some essential modifications that essentially involve contributing to the implementation of President Al-Sisi's programme, which furnishes the ingredients for comprehensive economic and social development while averting those failures and shortcomings in reforms that occurred during the Mubarak era. As was the case in the past, Egypt still has the duty to further liberate the economy from the grips of bureaucratic restrictions and outdated regulations, and from wasteful subsidies. It must simultaneously assist the poor through development, especially in Upper Egypt and the border governorates in Sinai and on the Red Sea and Mediterranean coasts. This will require excellent organisational capacities and the ability to sustain the drive towards the realisation of these goals. More importantly, the drive in

the long term will rest on investment that can assure a good level of interest and profit to investing parties. Aid and grants might be necessary in emergencies or to solve problems in the short term, but they do not generate a stable economic relationship or sustained development in the middle and long terms.

The Arab countries have much to offer Egypt based on their own areas of expertise in development. For example, the expertise that Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait have acquired in large-scale water desalinisation could be perfectly suited to Egypt's coastal regions in Sinai and along the Mediterranean and Red Sea. We already have a practical example of Gulf-assisted urban development: the city of Marsa Alam that was founded with Kuwaiti investment. This model can be duplicated on a broader scale in the cities of Safaga on the Red Sea, Al-Alamein on the Mediterranean and Al-Arish in Sinai. The age has passed in which Egyptians can rely on the Nile alone as their source of water and life. Arab countries can help us, through joint Egyptian-Arab projects, to repeat the experiences of Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Al-Jubail and Yanbu in the development of industry, services and tourism.

In a word, "investment" sums up the way to help Egypt. However, such help can only have lasting and sustainable effects if it promotes the welfare and financial interests of all parties involved.

Abdel Monem Said is the director of Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies in Cairo.

[Article 5.](#)

Ahram Online

The dilemmas of Egyptian foreign policy

Nael M Shama

11 Jun 2014 -- Although Egypt is a political powerhouse in the Middle East, its foreign policy hardly reflects that. Under its longtime president Hosni Mubarak, Egypt receded into a long phase of quietism and withdrawal. Mubarak is gone, but "Mubarakism without Mubarak" has persisted, even under the short-lived rule of Islamist president Mohamed Morsi. As soon as he steps into the presidency, Egypt's new ruler, Field

Marshal Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi, will find himself on the horns of multiple foreign policy dilemmas. The way he tackles them will shape the substance, orientation and purpose of Egypt's foreign policy in the near future.

Resources and aspirations

Egypt traditionally sees itself as the natural leader of the Arab world. In his manifesto "The Philosophy of the Revolution," former Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser (ruled 1954-1970) rambled about a leading role in the region that is "wandering aimlessly about seeking an actor to play it." This role, he added, "should at last settle down, weary and worn out, on our frontiers, beckoning us to move, to dress up for it and to perform it since there is nobody else who could do so." The foreign policy of Nasser's successor, Anwar El-Sadat, particularly the go-it-alone peace deal with Israel, led to Egypt's ostracisation in the region. But Sadat was confident that Egypt's isolation in its sphere of influence was only temporary, and that Arabs were bound to follow in its footsteps. Although Mubarak was not interested in the flamboyance of leadership, preferring instead to be a distant, bureaucratic president of a status quo state, he still clung to a vital Egyptian involvement in the Palestinian problem.

The recent rise of El-Sisi in Egyptian politics revived nationalist sentiments and ambitions after decades of dormancy. Fostered by state institutions and the pro-regime mass media, ostensibly as a bulwark against Islamism, these nationalist sentiments bred a wave of great expectations. In Egypt's cafes and on television shows analogies are frequently drawn between El-Sisi and Nasser, the leader whose reign witnessed the most dynamic and change-oriented Egyptian foreign policy in modern times. Great hopes are pinned on El-Sisi's leadership. He will be another Nasser, his supporters wish, taking on the mantle of leadership, defying international powers and restoring Egypt's wounded prestige in the world. But times have massively changed. Capitalising on political determination and the availability of resources, Nasser could, with relative ease, fund revolutionary movements in Africa, provide support for Arab states against Israel and lead the developing world, under the umbrella of the Non-Aligned Movement, against the plots of superpowers. His electrifying charisma added an element of inspiration and magic to his foreign policy.

For more than 10 years (1956-1967), the role Nasser had envisaged as a young officer rested indeed on Egypt's shores.

Egypt's dire economic situation today inhibits its ability to play the same role. Three years of political turmoil took a great toll on its economy, slowing down economic growth and foreign investment flows and reducing tourism and export earnings. In foreign affairs, the economic crisis increased Egypt's vulnerability and deepened its dependence on Gulf states, especially Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE, who together provided more than \$20 billion in various forms of assistance to Egypt since Morsi's ouster. As a result, Egypt's foreign policy has been increasingly wedded to the interests of Gulf states, with less autonomy and a narrow margin of manoeuvrability being the outcome.

The change in Egypt's stance toward the Syrian conflict is proof of this. Morsi had vocally supported the Syrian "revolution." He severed diplomatic ties with Syria's regime during a rally in which hardline Islamists called for "jihad" against Bashar Al-Assad. But a few weeks after the coup, Egyptian Foreign Minister Nabil Fahmy announced that Egypt was re-evaluating its relationship with Syria, adding that Morsi's decision to cut diplomatic ties with Damascus would be "re-examined." In the following months, Cairo's policy on Syria came closer to that endorsed by its Gulf allies, indicating a policy that is "shaped by donors."

El-Sisi must find a creative answer to this predicament: How to reconcile needed economic aid from donors with an independent foreign policy? Without aid, Egypt's ailing economy will continue to suffer, but for a populist president like El-Sisi, dependency on — or worse, acquiescence to — the small oil sheikhdoms will come at a huge cost: diminished popularity and reminiscence of the notorious days of Mubarak, not Nasser.

Authoritarianism and the outside world

The ouster of Morsi and the subsequent crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood unleashed all the demons of the authoritarian state that had been dormant since Mubarak's overthrow in 2011. In the name of combating terrorism and restoring the "prestige" of the state, thousands have been killed and arrested in the span of a few months, an Orwellian protest law was issued, and dissent has been quashed using all possible means. Such draconian measures cannot take place in today's globalised, interconnected world — which attaches great importance to liberties and

human rights issues — without international ramifications.

Indeed, widespread human rights abuses in Egypt elicited major responses from various international players. The African Union, for instance, suspended Egypt's membership days after Morsi's removal in July 2013. As a result, Egypt (along with international pariahs Zimbabwe and Sudan) was in January excluded from attending the high-profile US-Africa Leaders Summit, which will take place in Washington in August. Also, a joint declaration was issued in March by 27 member states of the UN Human Rights Council, expressing concern over Egypt's excessive use of force against protestors and asking the Egyptian authorities to hold those responsible for the abuses to account. In the same vein, the outcry of the international media over the trial of the journalists of Al-Jazeera's Cairo office continues unabated, causing embarrassment for the Egyptian government in major world capitals.

El-Sisi will soon be caught between internal and external allies. A large segment of his power base rejects any conciliation with the Muslim Brotherhood, and advocates continuing — or even escalating — the crackdown on dissidents, Islamists and revolutionary youth alike.

Moreover, any attempt to reform state institutions, especially the gigantic security apparatus, will be resisted by a state that has become too old and too corrupt to change its notorious ways. On the other hand, blatant authoritarianism at home will continue to strain Egypt's relations with the outside world, especially the United States and European countries, undermining foreign aid, investment and Egypt's international reputation.

Few allies, many antagonists

Egypt has few allies in the region: the Gulf states. With the exception of Qatar, which dances to a different drum, these states have an abundance of petrodollars and harbour an abundance of antipathy towards Islamist movements — the perfect allies of today's Egypt. Conversely, because of their support for the Muslim Brotherhood, Turkey, Qatar and Hamas are seen in Cairo as barefaced adversaries. Egypt's relations with neighbouring Libya and Sudan are cordial, but fraught with tension. Sudan did not toe the line of Egypt over Ethiopia's Renaissance Dam, which Egypt regards as a menace to its share of Nile water. The inability of Libya's government to curb arms trafficking across the border, and to control Islamic militias that are hostile to Egypt's regime, and the latter's reluctance to extradite

members of Gaddafi's regime who live in Egypt are causes of friction in Egyptian-Libyan ties. Egypt's formal diplomatic relations with Iran have been severed since 1980 and their restoration is nowhere on the horizon. Egypt therefore is semi-isolated in the region where it is centered, the Middle East. Proximate powers such as Libya, Qatar, Sudan and Hamas — and, in the wider region, Turkey, Iran and Ethiopia — are not allies. They all fall within the scope of hostile, unfriendly or, at best, neutral states. In response to this inimical milieu, the strategy of the post-Morsi regime has rested on escalation. Cairo expelled the Turkish ambassador in November, recalled its ambassador to Doha in January, and an Egyptian court labeled Hamas a terrorist organisation in March. Media assaults on Ankara, Doha and Hamas have verged on hysteria, reflecting how distant reconciliation is.

However, not only cannot a strategy that is premised on confrontation survive, especially for a pivotal country with leadership aspirations, but it could also be very detrimental. For instance, suffocating Hamas for too long might drive its radical elements to forge ties with the Islamist insurgents in Sinai. Also, Egypt will not be able to mediate between the belligerent Palestinian factions, Fatah and Hamas, or between Israel and the Palestinians if it continues to boycott Hamas. Moreover, the legitimacy of Egypt's new president will be undercut if he is seen at home as colluding with Israel against the besieged and poverty-stricken Palestinians. Likewise, a protracted state of tension with two regional powers like Turkey and Iran is neither constructive nor conducive to regional stability.

Which strategic formula will El-Sisi embrace to confront these threats, break out of this isolation, and restore Egypt's stature in the region? Escalation may undermine Egypt's national security and ignite a new Arab Cold War, to whose ill winds no state would be immune, but inaction could be costly, too. So will El-Sisi manage to strike a balance between both courses of action, with skill, intellect and prescience? Foreign policy victories and failures were kingmakers and breakers in Egypt. The nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company and the "Crossing" in 1973 made Nasser and Sadat national heroes. In contrast, the 1967 defeat heralded Nasser's political demise, and Sadat's separate peace with Israel 10 years later precipitated his assassination. Undoubtedly, El-Sisi

will soon be put to serious tests. Will his foreign policy be his crowning glory or his knockout punch?

The writer is a political researcher and author of Egyptian Foreign Policy from Mubarak to Morsi.

[Article 6](#)

Al-Monitor

Sinai Peninsula remains security headache for Sisi

June 12, 2014 -- Sheikh Zuweid, Egypt — The Sinai Peninsula has become one of the most dangerous places in Egypt. It used to be an example of calm and relaxation before 2004, when the Sinai's people remained far from the wave of terrorism that hit Egypt in the 1990s. Since 2004, the Sinai Peninsula has been hit by a number of terrorist incidents, the first of which were three [simultaneous bombings](#) in Taba, Nuweiba and Ras Shaitan in October 2004. That triple bombing killed 34 and wounded 125, most of them Israeli tourists. Then in July 2005, Sharm al-Sheikh was struck by three bombings that killed more than 88 people. There was another attack in April 2007 with three bombings that killed 23 people in the city of Dahab.

As a result of these terrorist attacks, the Ministry of Interior began massive [security crackdowns](#) by having the state security services lead a campaign of mass arrests affecting thousands of people in the Sinai Peninsula. The arrests were made without evidence of involvement in the attacks, creating conflict between the security forces and Sinai residents. Many were sentenced in absentia, causing a series of violent incidents in the area. Political activists in the Sinai Peninsula said that the security practices caused those convicted in absentia to form groups and flee to rugged desert areas, where many extremist and violent organizations emerged under different banners.

Since the January 25 Revolution, these armed extremist elements found a favorable opportunity to move on the ground. They conducted a number of

cross-border [rocket attacks on Israel](#) and bombed the Egyptian [gas pipeline](#) to Israel more than 15 times.

When Muslim Brotherhood member Mohammed Morsi became president, he was able to contain these elements and gave them a free hand to operate [Sharia courts](#) in the Sinai Peninsula. But after Morsi was ousted on July 3, 2013, these organizations — under the banner of a terrorist organization called Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis — conducted dozens of quality operations and started targeting, for the first time, military and security headquarters in the Sinai Peninsula, killing and injuring [more than 400 security elements](#).

Egyptian authorities renewed their campaign to eliminate these armed groups via [expanded military operations](#) on Aug. 7, 2013, using large combat formations as well as helicopters and rocket batteries.

With the start of [President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's](#) era on June 9, the Sinai Peninsula is still mired in continuous armed attacks on security members and headquarters. Meanwhile, Sinai citizens are languishing under an extremely sensitive and dangerous security situation because the peninsula is close to Israel and the Gaza Strip.

Sinai activists agree that managing security there is extremely complex and will test the ability of Sisi and his administration to restore stability to a very important place within Egyptian national security, without leaving deep wounds in a place with highly sensitive demographic considerations. Hassan Hantoush, a political activist in the border area in northern Sinai, told Al-Monitor, “The growing feeling among [Sinai] inhabitants is that they are being ignored and discriminated against by the Egyptian authorities. The lack of development, the authorities using [harsh] security measures and the fact that many Sinai inhabitants are being arbitrarily arrested by security forces have helped make Sinai an ideal place to host violent ideas and organizations from the various parts and governorates of Egypt.”

He said, “The new regime should establish security and restore the citizens’ confidence that the state cares about them. That will definitely not be achieved unless [the state] provides decent services and employment opportunities, which have decreased after the smuggling tunnels and illegal trade were halted. The war on the armed groups has also severely affected [employment].”

Mustafa Singer, an Egyptian researcher who is from the Sinai Peninsula, told Al-Monitor, “Security in the Sinai flared because the government lost the moderates and left the area [as a ground for] violence. This is one of the most important areas of the republic, and there may be a catastrophe there.”

Singer said, “The government must establish a real timetable to compensate citizens in the Sinai for the damage and heavy losses caused to them and to their property in the past months. This timetable must be put in place before talking about strategic plans to develop the region.”

Ahmad Saqr, former assistant chief of the Sinai reconstruction agency, told Al-Monitor, “Sisi will face more security challenges in the Sinai in the coming period, especially since the remnants of the radical terrorist ideology that have fled the military battles will work to exploit the [harm suffered by] noncombatants during military operations, to attract and recruit the relatives of those affected.”

Sinai novelist and activist Massaad Abu Fajr wrote on his [Facebook page](#): “Sinai has been suffering from a strategic vacuum since the latter part of [Hosni] Mubarak’s time. ... That strategic vacuum is continuing and will continue to generate forms of unrest and instability.”

Abu Fajr said that the real problem lies in the deterioration of the situation in the Sinai Peninsula as a result of the presence of what he called the “lying barrier” between the citizen and the state, adding, “The state looks at the Sinai map and says if there were no Bedouins it would have been better. That is made glaringly clear when the people in Sinai are deprived of all their rights.”

Abu Fajr noted in another Facebook post on his page: “The situation is not reassuring. Peace causes stability, progress and life. Peace is democracy, citizenship and respect for human rights.”

He said, “Bullets will never defeat bullets. They may silence them for a while. For example, in 2004 the state launched a massive offensive on Sinai and violence almost ended. But it returned in 2007. And it returned today, after Morsi’s fall, in a bloodier way. And if it pauses again, it will restart in a more violent way. If we want a solution, we must cure the disease from its roots ... by recognizing the rights of the Sinai people in their country, the state and the wealth.”

The Sinai people acknowledge that the coercive security practices are the main cause for terrorism in the Sinai Peninsula. As long as the Egyptian government continues to pursue a security-focused approach to the region while neglecting its other needs, the Sinai will continue to undermine Egyptian security.

[Article 7](#)

The Atlantic

The Shame of Shuhada Street

Ayelet Waldman

Jun 12 2014 -- Hebron, West Bank—I first saw the boys through the rearview mirror of the car I was riding in, as they approached Shuhada Street. One of them was about the age of my daughter, who became a bat mitzvah last week. The other might have been 16 or so, like my older son. The boys hesitated at the top of the street and seemed to take a breath. Then they stepped into the void.

Shuhada Street, lined with small shops whose owners typically lived upstairs, was once among the busiest market streets in this ancient city. But in 1994, in response to a horrific massacre that left 29 people dead and 125 injured, the Israel Defense Forces began clamping down on Shuhada Street. They welded shut the street-facing doors of all the homes and shops, and by the time of the Second Intifada in 2000, had turned the bustling thoroughfare into a ghost street on which no one was permitted to set foot. No one, that is, who is Palestinian. Israeli Jews and foreign visitors are free to come and go along the road—to snap photos and make their way to Hebron's three Jewish settler outposts, Beit Hadassah, Beit Romano, and Avraham Avinu. But there is nothing to buy, nothing to see, no reason to tarry. The stores are all closed. The few Palestinians who remain have been barred from the street where they live. If they want to enter their homes, they must do so through back doors, which in many cases involves clambering over rooftops.

One might be tempted to view Shuhada Street as just another casualty in an endless cycle of violent retribution. A Palestinian kills dozens of Hebron's Jews, so Israel punishes the Palestinians of Hebron by closing Shuhada

Street. But that is not, in fact, what happened. The victims of the massacre that [impelled](#) the Israeli government to shutter Shuhada were not Jews. They were Palestinians—unarmed Palestinians gunned down as they prayed at the nearby Cave of the Patriarchs by Baruch Goldstein, an American-born Jewish zealot with Israeli military training and a Galil assault rifle, who stopped firing only when he was overcome and killed by survivors of his attack. You can add Shuhada Street, and the vibrant urban life it once sustained and embodied, to the list of Goldstein’s victims. My visit to Hebron had begun at Goldstein’s tomb, in a small park in the Jewish settlement of Kiryat Arba on the city’s outskirts. The grave has become a site of pilgrimage and ecstatic veneration for some religious Israelis and sympathetic foreigners despite the Israeli government’s prohibition on monuments to terrorists. The massive slab of marble is inscribed with the words, “He gave his life for the people of Israel, its Torah and land.” On the day I visited, the gravestone was littered with small stones, placed there in homage in accordance with Jewish tradition. After puzzling over the epitaph (I was born in Jerusalem but my family emigrated to Canada before I learned to read), I brushed away the commemorative stones. A mass-murderer deserves no such honor. An Israeli army jeep rumbled alongside the park and I stepped back, nervous that I would be harassed for my action. The Israeli military presence in Hebron is intense—between 600 and 650 soldiers, military police, and commanders, or at least one for every settler—and its role is very clear: The security forces are there to protect the settlers, regardless of how brutal or inflammatory the latter’s actions may be, and regardless of the fact that, as Goldstein’s homicidal cowardice makes clear, it is the Palestinians who often need protection against settlers who, sure of support from the Netanyahu government, seek to make permanent their incursion into the city.

My companions and I then made our way to Shuhada Street, where an Israeli soldier checked our passports to ensure both that we were not Palestinian and that we understood the omnipotence of Israeli military authority. We passed the new Beit Hadassah museum, an exhibit of curated propaganda dedicated to legitimizing the presence of Jewish settlers in the city. Then we came to the end of the street, and I happened to glance in the rearview mirror, where I saw the two boys. I didn’t need to be the mother

of children their age to fear for their lives and safety. I only needed to have been following the news.

Less than a week before, on Nakba Day, when Palestinians commemorate the displacement that preceded and followed Israel's declaration of independence, there had been a protest in front of Ofer military prison in the West Bank town of Beitunia. After the protest was dispersed, two Palestinian teenagers had been shot and killed by the Israeli army. Video of the killings [had surfaced](#) on the Internet, and in my hotel room in Jerusalem I had watched as another Arab boy my son's age, carrying the kind of backpack my son carries, doing nothing more than crossing a street—crumpled and pitched forward, motionless.

Now, several days later, I watched these Shuhada Street boys risk death for the sake of a liberty so rudimentary and fundamental that my own children are not even aware of its existence, or its importance, or its simple human beauty: the right to walk down the street.

I should have gotten out of the car and joined them. I should have taken out my cell phone and started filming. But I just sat in the car and fretted.

Thankfully, the Israeli soldiers on duty that day did nothing more than lift their weapons and motion the boys back to permitted ground, and the boys obeyed. It was one of many such interactions—petty indignities and tiny acts of courage. It was nothing as dramatic as an incident, [viewable on YouTube](#), in which settler girls take advantage of a school holiday to lie in wait for Palestinian children on their way home from school, then curse the other children and throw rocks at them while Israeli soldiers look on, periodically urging the rock-throwers to stop but doing little to protect the victims of the violence. Nothing as dramatic as another encounter, also [captured on video](#), in which a female settler, flanked by soldiers, lobs curses at a Palestinian woman who had the temerity to walk out the front gate of her own house. “Whore! Whore!” the settler hisses.

I ended my visit to Hebron at a small community center run by Palestinian peace activists, where we shared plates of hummus and fresh vegetables and tried to find inspiration in the tiny outpost of hope. But the bright murals painted by Palestinian activists had been disfigured by Jewish settlers with splashes of gray paint, and we ate under the stony gaze of soldiers assigned to guard settlers whose vandalism is among the least of their offenses.

The litany of Hebron's many immiserations is long. I could write paragraphs about the racially differentiated access to water, and about how settlers sometimes spray the ground with their hoses, taunting Palestinians who have severely limited access to water for drinking or cooking or bathing. I could describe the ugly anti-Arab graffiti I saw, the bumper stickers plastered onto walls with messages like, "Arab! Don't even dare to think about a Jewish woman!" I could describe the achingly torturous journey an elderly resident of Shuhada Street must make just to leave her house, with its front door welded shut, because one day in 1994 a hate-filled fanatic massacred her townspeople.

But out of respect for the people who escorted me down the tragic length of Shuhada Street, I will try to close on a note of hopefulness. My guides were a couple of Jewish Israelis, raised in religious homes, who had served as soldiers in the West Bank and who, as a result of what they saw and what they did, now devote their lives to raising awareness about the injustices of the Occupation. My guides described in painful detail the structural inequality of a land where one ethnic group lives under oppressive military rule, and another under democratic, civilian authority. They described receiving explicit instruction to make Palestinians feel as if they were constantly under surveillance, constantly pursued, constantly harassed. They said their role, as described by Moshe Ya'alon, the current defense minister and former army chief of staff, was to "sear the hearts and minds of the Palestinians." My guides told me of instances in which they were involved in "Straw Widow" actions, where they invaded a Palestinian home, shut the family into a single room, and then made free use of the house. Ostensibly these home invasions were conducted for security reasons, but just as often they were simple training exercises. Sometimes the homes were chosen because they had a satellite dish, and an important soccer match was on TV. "What hope is there?" I asked them, in response. They replied that they named their organization Breaking the Silence because they fervently believe that once people know what is happening in Hebron and the rest of the Palestinian territories, change is inevitable.

■ not sure that I share their faith in the power of knowledge to create justice, but I want to. And that's why, as Bibi Netanyahu's right-wing government [broadcasts](#) its contempt for the U.S. State Department's commitment to working with the new Palestinian unity government, and

[announces](#) the construction of 1,500 new settlement housing units in the West Bank, I, a Jewish American born in Israel, who believes in Israel's right to exist within its own borders, am breaking my own silence.

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