

Opinion and Analysis - Week ending 12 July 2013

(1) The Brothers won't take this lying down

Dr Reuben Berko, Israel Hayom, 7 July 2013

Egypt's economy is declining rapidly. There is no foreign investment and tourism has ground to a halt. The Suez Canal management says shipping traffic continues as usual, but in Sinai a state of emergency has been declared due to ongoing Islamist violence

http://www.israelhayom.com/site/newsletter_opinion.php?id=4899

(2) From the war in Iraq to the battle against Israel boycotters

Lazar Berman, The Times of Israel, 7 July 2013

One group is taking an approach used by US special forces and applying it in its struggle against the BDS movement in America.

http://www.timesofisrael.com/in-iraq-lessons-for-the-fight-against-the-boycott-israel-set/?utm_source=The+Times+of+Israel+Daily+Edition&utm_campaign=ead79899c3-2013_07_07&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_adb46cec92-ead79899c3-54493913

(3) On Hamas, Fatah and the squandered years when unity loses its meaning

Ramzy Baroud, Foreign Policy Journal, 6 July 2013

The Gaza talks held on June 5th were another futile exercise to breathe unity between political factions that were never united to begin with, nor did they possess the minimal requirement of a shared political platform, let alone vision.

<http://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2013/07/06/on-hamas-fatah-and-the-squandered-years-when-unity-loses-its-meaning/>

(4) Egypt's revolution Part II

Thomas Friedman, NY Times, 4 July 2013

It would be premature to say that this era of political Islam is over, but it is definitely time to say that the more moderate, non-Islamist, political center has started to push back on these Islamist parties and that citizens all across this region are feeling both more empowered and impatient.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/04/opinion/friedman-egypts-revolution-part-ii.html?pagewanted=all&r=1&>

(5) Arab Spring is still here

Yoram Meital, YNetNews, 3 July 2013

Many in the opposition circles say that the president has failed to deal with internal problems because he is committed to the agenda of the Muslim, Brotherhood, a movement of which he was one of the leaders until recently. The Islamization of the country and society is the issue at the heart of the battle between the president's supporters and opponents.

<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-4399685,00.html>

(6) American “guarantees” are a foolish offer
Shoshana Bryen, Gatestone Institute, 2 July 2013

How much territory does Israel need to be secure in the absence of peace with its Palestinian neighbours? Is that different from how much security Israel is entitled to under that circumstance? Who decides? And why is an American general trying to find out? These are not trick questions -- they should be.

<http://www.jewishpolicycenter.org/4432/american-guarantees-foolish-offer>

(7) Is there a third intifada around the corner?
Yossi Mekelberg, Al-Arabiya, 1 July 2013

Very few would argue that expanding the settlements in the West Bank does not present an obstacle to peace both practically and symbolically. A very small territory of less than 6000 square kilometers is home to more than 2.5 million people. Thus, any Israeli settlement expansion gobbles up more territory, which harms the viability of a contiguous Palestinian state. Moreover, it undermines whatever trust remains among Palestinians that the Israeli government is genuine in its intention to make territorial concessions for peace. Hope for political settlement is disappearing rapidly together with the visible loss of land.

<http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2013/07/01/Is-there-a-Third-Intifada-around-the-corner-.html>

(8) Why I am a Bedouin middleman
Uri Dromi, The Jewish Chronicle Online, 28 June 2013

A situation where both sides are right, can lead either to a sharp conflict or to a compromise. A good compromise leaves both sides equally dissatisfied. I pray that both the government and the Bedouin will have the courage to settle for less than everything.

<http://www.thejc.com/comment-and-debate/analysis/109047/why-i-am-a-bedouin-middleman>

(9) Obama’s ‘proxy’ war on Mideast Christians
Raymond Ibrahim, Middle East Forum, 27 June 2013

With the recent decision to arm the opposition fighting Syrian President Assad, the United States has effectively declared a proxy war on Syria's indigenous Christians—a proxy war that was earlier waged on Christians in other Mideast nations, resulting in the abuse, death, and/or mass exodus of Christians.

<http://www.meforum.org/3546/obama-proxy-war-christians>

(1) The Brothers won’t take this lying down

The Muslim Brotherhood's counterrevolution is picking up pace and energy in Egypt's squares. The

shock that the movement's leadership was thrown into after the military coup fell on them out of the blue, has dissipated and coalesced as anger and pride into the hearts of throngs of its supporters. Mohammed Badie, the supreme guide of the Muslim Brotherhood, has set the tone for the next chapter: Large numbers of supporters of ousted President Mohammed Morsi will not leave the squares until he is reinstalled in his seat. In his fiery speech from the podium at Rabaa Al-Adawiya mosque in Cairo, Badie said that Morsi's ouster, the dissolution of his government and other moves were null and void."

Badie remains free for now, but many other senior leaders in the movement such as his deputy Khairat el-Shater and hundreds more are under arrest. The movement's broadcasting stations have been blocked. Intelligence services raided the Cairo offices of Al-Jazeera -- which has been perceived as pro-Muslim Brotherhood -- confiscating equipment and arresting, then releasing, management and journalists. In his speech, Badie said the Brotherhood would not accept any other regime except Morsi's, which was democratically elected. He demanded Morsi's unconditional release from prison and his reinstatement. "Our president is Mohammed Morsi and we will not accept any alternative. We will carry him on our shoulders and sacrifice our lives for him," Badie said.

In his speech, Badie put the blame on three sources for the current crisis: Al-Azhar's Grand Imam Ahmed el-Tayeb, Coptic Pope Tawadros, and the Egyptian Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. Badie first pointed his finger at el-Tayeb, who in his speech during the coup aside SCAF leader Col. Gen. Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi, gave his backing to Morsi's ouster by saying the move was "the lesser evil."

Badie, who represents an extreme interpretation of Islam, slammed el-Tayeb, who represents the country's religious institutions (and moderate Islam in general), saying that although he was a religious symbol, he did not have a monopoly on the people's will. "You are no longer entitled to speak in the name of Muslims," Badie said, referring to the grand imam. For his part, el-Tayeb has issued an order for calm, and for the preservation of life and property and against violence. Badie's statements represents a direct challenge to el-Tayeb and the religious order in Egypt in general.

The Coptic pope, probably because he had no real choice, openly supported the coup during his short speech at Sissi's side. Badie said Tawadros was a religious symbol but does not represent the majority of Egypt's Copts. "Pope Tawadros, you also are a symbol but you can no longer speak in the name of Copts. They have right to speak for themselves through voting," Badie said. Even at this early stage it is clear that no good will come to the Copts from this second revolution. The Copts are in a trap: had they stood aside the new secular regime would have hated them. But due to their support for the overthrow of the Brotherhood's Morsi, the Islamists hate them. In general, the Copts have played the part of regular scapegoat for the Muslim Brotherhood's and other Islamists' frustrations, and now they have been marked anew by Badie, with some sophistication.

In his reference to the military, Badie urged the SCAF not to intervene in politics. Badie demanded that Sissi release all of the Brotherhood's prisoners and reinstate Morsi to his position, which was "stolen" from him. If these demands are not fulfilled, the masses will remain in the squares. Badie added that once all the demands are carried out and the situation returns to what it was before, there will be room for dialogue. But in the meantime, the masses of Islamists are crying out "remove Sissi the traitor," dozens of people have been killed and injured in violent clashes with the army, whose commanders say they are not taking sides and not using live ammunition.

Egypt's economy is declining rapidly. There is no foreign investment and tourism has ground to a halt. The Suez Canal management says shipping traffic continues as usual, but in Sinai

a state of emergency has been declared due to ongoing Islamist violence, most recently against army positions near the Rafah border [which has been closed]. Rockets have also been fired at El Arish International Airport.

The events in Egypt are reverberating in other Muslim countries. Iran condemned the coup, and Turkey's leaders are preparing a pro-Morsi rally. In the U.S., they don't like the means but they do like the result. It seems as if the show in Egypt is just beginning.

(2) From the war in Iraq to the battle against Israel boycotters

Can an idea honed on the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan prove effective in defending against assaults on Israel's legitimacy in North America? David Dabscheck, deputy managing director of the Israel Action Network, thinks so.

The idea, in the words of General Stanley McChrystal — commander of the US Joint Special Operations Command — that “it takes a network to defeat a network” played a central role in his concept for fighting insurgents in the Middle East.

It was late 2003, and al-Qaeda in Iraq was running an extremely effective campaign against American troops and their allies. McChrystal met with his team in a small base near Baghdad, determined to understand the enemy. He quickly realized they were battling an adversary that did not adhere to the traditional military structure, but formed a decentralized network, made up of nimble, independent nodes.

“It became clear to me and to many others that, to defeat a networked enemy, we had to become a network ourselves,” [McChrystal recalled in Foreign Policy](#). “We had to figure out a way to retain our... levels of knowledge, speed, precision, and unity of effort that only a network could provide.”

IAN came to the same conclusion.

“We realized we were facing a different type of challenge,” reflected Dabscheck. “We faced a decentralized challenge originating from different groups.”

“If this is a network challenge,” he said, echoing McChrystal, “it takes a network to defeat.”

Anti-Israel activists in the United States create local, autonomous groups that communicate and cooperate with a variety of likeminded organizations. But the Jewish community has a network no less impressive. The Jewish Federations of North America consists of 157 local federations, and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs boasts 125 local community relations councils. Add to those figure campus Hillels and the religious organizations from the four major streams of Judaism, and the potential of that network starts to become clear.

But who would harness the potential synergy of the Jewish communities across the country?

IAN, a two-year-old strategic initiative of the Jewish umbrella organizations, seeks to leverage that network of semi-autonomous alliances at the local level to craft appropriate responses to anti-Israel initiatives, and to share lessons across the country.

“Every community faces unique issues,” said Dabscheck, “and the message has to be tailored accordingly.”

IAN staffers travel to Jewish communities around the country, offering training on strategic planning, messaging, and advocacy. They have provided guidance to over 50 communities on how to effectively respond to boycott, divestment, and sanctions campaigns, editorials, billboards, and conferences.

The message is adapted to each community’s specific challenges and demographics in a number of ways, Dabscheck explained. “We ask, ‘What’s the message?’ America is broadly pro-Israel, but there are certain constituencies that are susceptible to anti-Israel messages — college campuses, mainline Protestant churches, labor unions, minority groups, the LGBTQ community. Communities need to tailor their messages to each one.”

They also put emphasis on who delivers the message. “We look for people with credibility within that community — for example, labour leaders speaking to labour leaders.”

IAN urges local groups to invest in relationships with other constituencies. By so doing, they try to build a firewall against anti-Israel campaigns, broadening the local mainstream pro-Israel consensus, and marginalizing the hostile extreme that they say tries to co-opt well-intentioned people.

The strategy of building relationships proactively proved timely for the Jewish community in Portland, Oregon. They are one of four pilot communities for the “Community Impact Partnership” program, in which the IAN initiates a series of visits to the community to train advocates in building partnerships with key local constituencies. “We trained people to visit mainline Protestant churches and give the mainstream Jewish view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,” explained Bob Horenstein, the Portland Federation’s Community Relations and Allocations Director.

In April, the local BDS chapter published a letter charging that the Federation’s “Food for Thought” program, which raised money for local food banks during Israel Independence Day celebrations, was inappropriate given Israel’s alleged responsibility for food shortages in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The letter was fairly standard, but what concerned Horenstein were the signatures of several local mainline Protestant clergymen on the letter. The IAN-trained community members are now reaching out to their contacts within those churches to explain why they see the BDS movement as harmful to the vision of a peaceful solution to the conflict.

Taking advantage of the Jewish community network, when they see what works in one community, IAN is able to share those lessons with their counterparts across the country, who then craft it for their specific challenges.

“IAN played the unique role of being able to reflect the national and international landscape of the delegitimization movement,” said Hindy Poupko, Director of Israel and International Affairs at the Jewish Community Relations Council in New York, who has worked with IAN to fight a number of BDS initiatives. “They are also able to alert us to things not yet on our radar.”

The initiative has managed to bring together organizations from both the political right and the left. While the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (USA) met in Pittsburgh to discuss a boycott proposal, JStreet’s Jeremy Ben-Ami [wrote in the Huffington Post](#) that “the one-sided, extreme rhetoric that accompanies the Global BDS Movement makes a mutually agreeable solution more

difficult to achieve, not less.” Individuals involved with AIPAC and Hasbara Fellowships sit on the same local committees to fight BDS. “We are not debating Israeli government policy here,” Dabscheck said.

The network has achieved some signal successes in its short existence.

In 2009, BDS activists began a campaign to get the Park Slope Food Co-op in Brooklyn to stop buying Israeli goods. They tried to position themselves as anti-occupation, instead of anti-Israel, in an attempt to win over well-meaning members who were not deeply invested in the issue.

In 2012, IAN partnered with the JCRC-NY to enlist local clergy, create an ad campaign positioning the anti-BDS side as the supporters of a two-state solution, and assemble a panel discussion of progressive organizations opposed to BDS. It resulted in a resounding win, with 60 percent voting the BDS measure down.

“They were helpful in sharing appropriate and effective messaging that had worked in the past, and we were able to tailor their tested messaging to our local context,” recalled Poupko.

IAN has also managed to mobilize partner organizations to help defeat divestment resolutions in the United Methodist Church and the Presbyterian Church (USA). In their 2012 conferences, small dedicated groups of activists pushed resolutions calling divestment from corporations operating in Israel, including Motorola, Caterpillar, and Hewlett-Packard.

Thirteen-hundred rabbis from across the religious spectrum signed a statement opposing BDS, called “Letter in Hope,” that was sent to conference delegates. The idea, said Dabscheck, was to show that the Jewish community across the country — including the local leaders that the Christian delegates engage with regularly — opposes BDS efforts and sees it as an impediment to interfaith cooperation.

Though the effort paid off in 2012, he expects a renewed BDS push in the 2014 church conventions, especially in Canada.

The LGBTQ community has been a lead target for efforts that seek to paint Israel as using its gay rights record to hide its human rights abuses, known as “pinkwashing.” IAN has worked extensively with [A Wider Bridge](#), an organization dedicated to connecting the Israeli and American LGBTQ communities

A Wider Bridge tried bringing Israeli LGBTQ leaders to Seattle to meet with the local gay community, but BDS activists convinced groups not to sit with the Israelis. IAN worked with the Seattle Jewish Federation to reach out to those groups and secure their agreement to sit with the Israeli delegation.

Still, not every effort is an outright success. In April, the University of California Berkeley student senate voted 11-9 to pass a divestment bill. “Whenever BDS ends up in the newspaper, it’s not a win for us,” Poupko pointed out.

Facing an adversary whose tactics and targets are always changing, Dabscheck tries to anticipate the next battleground. He foresees a rash of resolutions being brought before student governments, especially in the U-Cal system. BDS proponents will also shift the scope of their campaigns. “From

broad approaches like a general boycott,” said Dabscheck, “they have been trying to narrow their focus on specific companies.”

He expects anti-Israel activists to co-opt the language of socially responsible investment aimed at corporations. They will challenge companies on their alleged connection to IDF actions, asking them to look at other factors beyond profit.

“This is a new type of advocacy,” Dabscheck emphasized. “Real advocacy is not us speaking to ourselves. It is going outside ourselves, and sensitizing ourselves to what is effective.”

(3) On Hamas, Fatah and the squandered years when unity loses its meaning

When Hamas and Fatah representatives met in Gaza on June 4, there was little media fanfare. In fact, neither party expected much attention to their ‘unity talks’ aside from the occasional references to ‘national reconciliation’, ‘building bridges’ and the ‘obstacles’ along the way.

And since then, there was yet more proof that the Gaza talks were another futile exercise to breathe unity between political factions that were never united to begin with, nor possess the minimal requirement of a shared political platform, let alone vision.

Ample analysis has been offered by way of anchoring the Hamas-Fatah split to a specific point in time. Some of these references point to the January 2006 parliamentary elections in which Hamas won the majority vote, to Palestinian Authority (PA) president Mahmoud Abbas’ decision to dissolve the last unity government on June 14, 2007, or to the bloody ousting of Fatah from Gaza after a brief, but bloody fight the following month.

None of this, however, can fairly explain the underpinning of that split. Palestinians in Gaza, in particular, remember a different narrative, one that goes back years before the failed talks, the civil war and even the Oslo accord itself.

It is important to note that Hamas was formed in 1987 to challenge what they perceived as the secular nature of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Its founders, in part, wanted to offer themselves as an alternative to Fatah’s unchallenged reign over the Palestinian political culture. The Hamas alternative received a huge boost following Fatah’s eventual failure, not merely to achieve Palestinian rights, but to unabashedly exchange them for imagined political perks, international aid - translated to personal wealth - and much more.

The underlying problem is that Hamas’ own inception was predicated on the constant contrasts with Fatah and its ideology - perceived as ‘ilmaniya’, meaning secularism. Its successes were almost always coupled with Fatah’s shortcomings. It impressed ordinary Palestinians with its armed resistance at a time when the Fatah leadership disowned armed struggle which at one point had been the cornerstone of its manifesto. In other words, whenever the Fatah stock dropped, the Hamas stocks grew. And whenever Fatah leaders made an unconditional ‘compromise’ to Israel under American pressure, the Hamas stock skyrocketed.

For over 25 years this political saga manifested itself in numerous other ways. It is embedded in the very culture to which supporters of both factions subscribe: in the language

they use, historical references they make, the songs they sing, the symbols they adhere to, even the mosques in which they pray and the type of attire they wear. A whole volume is needed to even scratch the surface of the culture split within which Palestinian society has subsisted for many years. To imagine for a fleeting moment that Palestinians can reconcile through some obscure meetings that bring Fatah's central committee member Nabil Shaath and Hamas' Imad Alami - or any other combination - together, is too frivolous a thought to be taken seriously.

Last May, both factions had agreed to a timetable that didn't exceed three months, during which they formed a unity government and prepared for elections. However, they did much to counter these very efforts, as both sides indulged in using the same polarizing language, dismissing the other with complete impunity, arresting each other's members and so on. Moreover, both factions carried on with a political line that was contrary to the many promises made since the reconciliation treaty signed over two years ago, and all other meetings, statements and press conferences held since then.

Also since then, Abbas formed a short-lived government - so short-lived in fact that future historians are likely to omit the uneventful week or so when addressing the PA's uninspiring past. Moreover, the Fatah PA leader is willingly walking into another 'peace process' pretense, this time under the auspices of US Secretary of State John Kerry. The American diplomat is giving little details about the nature of his latest shuttle diplomacy efforts, starting June 28. But this was his fifth trip to the region and it is being compared to Henry Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy of the 1970s. History has taught us that little good can be expected from all of this, of course, but, unsurprisingly, Abbas is playing along, to the dismay of Hamas.

Following a Friday prayer sermon in Gaza, Hamas' Prime Minister Ismail Haniya implored: "We ask brothers in the Palestinian Authority and Abu Mazen (Abbas) not to fall yet again into the trap of talks." Before talking to Israel, Haniya insisted, Abbas must "build a Palestinian strategy based on reinstating unity and ending division."

Of course, Hamas is doing little to tone down the rhetoric or to truly work towards achieving that coveted 'unity.' The Islamic group is politically evolving in its own direction, with self-preservation topping its agenda, and almost completely independent from the rest of Palestinian factions. It is formulating a political program that is predicated on essentially exclusive priorities: capitalizing on the current political remake of the Middle East, thriving with financial and political support emanating from rich Gulf countries, and forming its own political alliances from Doha to Istanbul.

Such an approach would not have been as problematic if it were not for the fact that it is evolving in a direction that is perhaps beneficial to Hamas as a movement, but hardly to the Palestinian national project, whose dimensions transcend political geography, ideology, or religion.

Unity talks between two factions with track records that give greater priority to the faction over the collective interest of a nation will not succeed, even if they seemingly succeed. Fatah has historically been the dominant faction, and over the years has morphed into a culture that can only accept dominance over all the others. Hamas was formed to counteract the Fatah culture and to offer an equally overriding narrative. Their problem is too deep to disentangle with simple terminology and overcome with wishful thinking.

The problem is principally Palestinian and can only be resolved using national platforms that appeal to the individual, free from factionalism, and to the collective, free from the confining symbolism and polarizing discourses. A national debate must start soon so that it can address the Palestinian

national identity and truly unite Palestinians around common objectives. This should have already been the case for many years, rather than the investment in fragmentation and self-serving politics.

(4) Egypt's revolution Part II

Watching the toppling of the Muslim Brotherhood-led government in Egypt, the most interesting question for me is this: Will we one day look back at this moment as the beginning of the rollback of political Islam?

I don't know the answer to that question, but I've been reading the newspapers – and I have visited both Turkey and Egypt in the past few weeks – and here is what I've seen: I've seen a rebellion of the non-Islamist center and army in Egypt against the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood. I've seen a rebellion of the secular, urbanized youth in Turkey against the Islamist Justice and Development Party there. I've seen an Iranian election where Iranian voters – who were only allowed to choose between six candidates pre-approved by Iran's clerical leadership – quickly identified which of the six was the most moderate, [Hassan Rowhani](#), and overwhelmingly voted for him. And I've seen the Islamist Ennahda party in Tunisia forced by voters there to compromise with two secular center-left parties in writing a constitution that is broad based and not overly tilted toward Shariah law. And just a year ago in Libya, I saw a coalition led by a Western-educated political scientist beat its Islamist rivals in Libya's first free and fair election.

Again, it would be premature to say that this era of political Islam is over, but it is definitely time to say that the more moderate, non-Islamist, political center has started to push back on these Islamist parties and that citizens all across this region are feeling both more empowered and impatient. The fact that this pushback in Egypt involved the overthrow of an elected government by the Egyptian army has to give you pause; it puts a huge burden on that army – and those who encouraged it – to act in a more democratic fashion than those they replaced. But this was a truly unusual situation. Why did it come about and where might Egypt go from here?

To understand the massive outpouring of grassroots opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood, which spurred the Egyptian army to evict President Mohamed Morsi from office on his first anniversary of taking power, it is best to avoid the language of politics – Was it an army coup? Was it a popular revolt? – and focus instead on the language of law and order. In talking to Egyptians in recent weeks there is one word that best captures the mood of that country and that word is “theft.”

Always remember: Morsi narrowly won the Presidency by 51 percent of the vote because he managed to persuade many secular and pious but non-Islamist Egyptians that he would govern from the center, focus on the economy and be inclusive. The Muslim Brotherhood never could have won 51 percent with just its base alone. Many centrist Egyptian urban elites chose to vote for Morsi because they could not bring themselves to vote for his opponent, Ahmed Shafik, a holdover from the regime of Hosni Mubarak. So they talked themselves into believing what Morsi was telling them.

As it gradually became apparent that Morsi, whenever he had a choice of acting in an inclusive manner – and pulling in all sectors of Egyptian society – or grabbing more power, would grab more power, a huge chunk of Morsi voters, Islamists and non-Islamist, started to feel cheated by him. They felt that he and his party had stolen something very valuable – their long sought chance to really put Egypt on a democratic course, with more equal growth.

The non-Islamist youth, who mounted the revolution in Tahrir Square in 2011, more than any others, felt that their revolution had been stolen by the Muslim Brotherhood, who became much more

focused on locking themselves and their cronies in power than fixing Egypt's economy and making its government more representative. Meanwhile, the rural and urban poor resented the fact that instead of delivering jobs and bread, as promised, Morsi delivered gas lines and electricity cuts. Egypt's Coptic Christians, some of whom were key supporters of the revolution against Mubarak, never trusted Morsi, who seemed to turn a blind eye to attacks on Christians.

That widespread sense of theft is what brought so many Egyptians into the streets, which is why it was quite ironic that President Morsi's last words before being toppled – words he conveyed in a short video over a presidential Web site – were: "The revolution is being stolen from us."

The thief was calling 911. Unfortunately for him the Egyptian Army answered. Its leaders had already been called by a significant swath of the Egyptian people, so it is now Morsi who finds himself in custody.

Historians will surely ponder over why the Muslim Brotherhood behaved so foolishly. The short answer seems to be that character is destiny. It has always been a Leninist-like party, with a very strict hierarchy and a conspiratorial view of political life honed from long years in the underground. The very characteristics that enabled it to survive repeated hammerings and arrests for 80 years by Egypt's military regimes worked against any spirit of inclusiveness once it was in power. That is not to say that the remnants of the old regime and its security services didn't do everything they could to make Morsi fail. It is to say that he made it easy for them to turn the Egyptian people against him.

Meanwhile, the Obama Administration was largely a spectator to all of this. The Muslim Brotherhood kept Washington at bay by buying it off with the same old currency that Mubarak used: Arrest the worst Jihadi terrorists on America's most-wanted list and don't hassle Israel – and the Americans will let you do whatever you want to your own people.

Two critical questions now hang over Egypt: Will the Egyptian Army, which again revealed itself as the real power broker, insist that the new government be more inclusive than Morsi's -- and to what end? Egypt will never be stable unless it has a government that represents all the main political forces in the country -- and that still includes the Muslim Brotherhood, which probably still enjoys support from at least 25 percent of the voting public. It has to be part of any new government. But the Egyptian Army has detained many Muslim Brotherhood activists today. Will it allow them to be included in Egypt's political future? And will the Egyptian army, which has its own vast network of economic interests that it is focused on protecting, open itself up to any reforms?

Inclusion can be paralyzing or powerful, depending on whether everyone included can agree on a roadmap going forward. Egypt today is in such a yawning and deep economic hole. It has wasted so many years of development. Can its main political actors (including the Army) reach a democratic consensus on the wrenching set of economic, security and political reforms required to set Egypt on a growth trajectory, or can they only agree that the latest president must go?

(5) Arab Spring is still here

The tough battle led by different groups in [Egypt](#) against [Mohamed Morsi](#)'s presidency is reaching its peak these days. The current wave of protests is at a scale which has not been seen since the uprising that [toppled](#) the [Mubarak](#) regime.

The rivalry between the camps supporting and opposing the president is splitting the Egyptian society in an unprecedented manner, and attempts to bridge between the parties

have not borne fruit. Army and police forces are deployed on a large scale, prepared for the possibility of violent clashes and even a scenario in which the army will be forced to intervene in running the country's affairs.

In a national address he gave last week, Morsi expressed his determination to take different measures in order to guarantee that he will remain in power, stressing to the army commanders that "the president is the supreme commander of the armed forces."

A year ago, the presidential elections were decided by the votes of citizens who do not belong to the religious parties' public of voters. In the victory speech he delivered at Tahrir Square, Morsi vowed to serve as president of all Egyptians and work to achieve the goals of the January revolution.

The steps he took were controversial and his policy failed to pull Egypt out of the serious crisis it is in. The economic situation and the internal security went from bad to worse. The markets are experiencing a shortage of products, mainly fuel and diesel oil. The standard of living indices, the inflation and unemployment rates have broken records. The local currency and the Cairo Stock Exchange indices have lost dozens of percentage points in value. The external aid, especially from Qatar, just slightly reduced the government deficit, which has climbed to a troubling rate of some 12% of gross national product.

Many in the opposition circles say that the president has failed to deal with internal problems because he is committed to the agenda of the [Muslim Brotherhood](#), a movement he was one of the leaders of until recently. The Islamization of the country and society is the issue at the heart of the battle between the president's supporters and opponents.

Morsi's critics point to the president's faulty conduct during the preparation of the new constitution and the decrees he issued, granting himself unusual authorities. They further complain about the senior appointments he approved, which led to the takeover of key positions in the government systems by officials affiliated with the Islamist camp. Morsi's descriptions of his accomplishments were presented by his rivals as an expression of his complete detachment from reality in Egypt.

The opposition's sharp criticism was led by the National Salvation Front, a coalition of several parties led by prominent figures which is finding it difficult to come up with an accepted and effective action plan. This political partnership is based on firm opposition to President Morsi's rule and to the involvement of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in shaping the governmental order in Egypt.

The plans in the public arena were disrupted by a group of young people not affiliated with any party, which became active only two months ago. They launched a campaign under the banner "Rebellion," and managed to get more than 20 million signatures of citizens in favour of moving up the presidential elections. They also called for a protest at the entrance to the presidential palace on the anniversary of Morsi's election. In light of the huge support for the campaign, its organizers declared the establishment of the June 30 Front and presented a road map for running the state's affairs the day after the president is toppled.

The Islamist camp sees that campaign and the protests against the president as an attempt to overthrow a democratically-elected government. The Statements made by President Morsi and the speakers of the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists indicate that they plan to take all measures, including the use of force, to thwart the opposition's campaign.

This camp, which has the support of millions of citizens, understands that toppling the Morsi regime will deal a crushing blow to political Islam in Egypt. As far as they are concerned, there are much more significant interests at stake than the president's character.

The end of the protests and clashes between the rival camps in Egypt cannot be foreseen. Nonetheless, it is possible to point to several scenarios that could take place separately or combined:

One – the rival parties will reach a compromise which will leave President Morsi in power, replace the government and announce a date for parliamentary elections in the near future. Two – President Morsi and his regime will survive the wave of protests, but the clashes between the sides will grow worse and Egypt will find itself in a dead end. Three – the army will intervene and its leaders will take charge of the government and declare a transition period of several months, followed by general elections for all government institutions.

One important conclusion can definitely be drawn. The civil society forces which toppled President Mubarak's regime remain a critical factor in the battles over the shape of the new regime. The show of force presented these days by the civil society proves that the forecasts that the Arab Spring has turned in Egypt into an "Islamic winter" were simplistic and detached from the processes of social and political change taking place in the land of pyramids.

(6) American "guarantees" are a foolish offer

How much territory does Israel need to be secure in the absence of peace with its Palestinian neighbours? Is that different from how much security Israel is entitled to under that circumstance? Who decides? And why is an American general trying to find out? These are not trick questions -- they should be.

General John R. Allen, USMC (ret.) has been made a "[special advisor](#)" to both Secretary of State Kerry and Secretary of Defence Hagel, ostensibly to determine Israel's "objective" security requirements. But in fact, his mission is yet another attempt to determine what American or international security guarantees would induce Israel to withdraw from territory in the absence of a durable Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement. According to a source in *The Washington Post*, "The rationale behind reaching understandings on U.S. security guarantees at this point is to render certain Israeli security demands from the Palestinians moot and thus remove them from the negotiating table." *The Post* added, "Allen's team was dismayed by the initial Israeli discussions, which participants described as less substantive and less cooperative than U.S. officials were expecting, given that Allen's job was created to address Israeli security concerns."

The military team was "dismayed" in part because the only way to "render Israeli security demands moot" and "address Israeli security concerns" is to resolve the problem that leads Israel's neighbour to threaten its security. If an independent Palestinian State is born believing that the Mediterranean Sea is its proper western border, it cannot coexist with the State of Israel. *That* is the problem that needs to be resolved. Under the circumstances, American "guarantees" are foolishly offered and wisely rejected.

General Allen is not the first American military officer to be tasked with this un-doable mission, and history is instructive here.

The 1993 Oslo "peace process" was predicated on the assumption that political and economic movement toward Palestinian statehood in some part of the territories acquired by Israel in 1967 would induce the Palestinians to drop their objection to Israeli sovereignty in the rest of Israel. That was not correct, but parallelism informed American thinking right through the beginning of the so-called "second intifada" in 2000. Amid the terror campaign that ultimately cost more than 1,000 Israeli lives, [The Mitchell Report](#) presented to President Bush in 2001 asked both parties equally to stop the violence, take confidence-building steps and resume negotiations.

Since the violence wasn't equally distributed, however, Secretary of State Colin Powell – himself a retired Army General – asked retired [Marine General Anthony Zinni](#) to find a path to security for Israel even as the war continued. By the end of 2001, Zinni's [frustration](#) was a matter of public record; he could not get the Palestinians to stop the violence and, under the circumstances, he could not get Israel to make security concessions.

[Parenthetically, it should be noted that in 2000, the Clinton Administration posited U.S. troops to sit on the Golan Heights to give Israel the "confidence" to cede the high ground to the Syrians. The Israelis – and a number of American military officers – opposed the plan, and their wisdom is increasingly evident.]

Israel won the 2000-2004 war by re-establishing Israeli security control in the West Bank and beginning construction of the Security Fence. But the notion of "helping" Israel address its security concerns grew into a second track.

Americans had done some early training of Palestinian "police" to teach them to "dismantle the terrorist infrastructure"-- as if they would. Training ended when it was discovered that American training and radios were much in demand by Palestinians fighting Israelis. In 2005, with the "intifada" tamed, U.S. Army [Lt. Gen. William Ward](#) was asked to "reform" the "police," but by the end of the year, with the Hamas-led violence in Gaza following the Israeli Disengagement, Ward turned the job over to U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Keith Dayton. Dayton's problems were compounded by the Palestinian civil war and the takeover of Gaza by Hamas in 2007; what he oversaw was a major increase in the [size and capability](#) of the West Bank, PA-controlled security forces. In 2007, the [Jordan Times](#) reported American plans to train a 50,000-person police force (a 7-fold increase), which a [Reuters piece](#) estimated would cost of \$4-7 billion. Dayton turned a much different force over to Lt. Gen. William Moeller, USAF in 2010.

As General Dayton was building up the Palestinian police, and as Israel was under rocket attack from Gaza, Secretary of State [Condoleezza Rice](#) pondered the problem of Israeli security next to a Palestinian state at war with it:

If, in fact, [the Israelis] are going to be asked to withdraw from the West Bank at some point, what does that mean for the security of Israel? That's a fair question. It really is. And so one of the things that I take back is that we are going to need to spend a lot of time thinking about how this state [Palestine], if we are fortunate enough to be able to bring it into being, how it is going to relate to the security of its neighbour and vice versa.

It appears not to have occurred to her that, under the circumstances, Palestinian statehood was incompatible with Israeli security and that Israeli withdrawal was therefore inconceivable. She appointed [former NATO Commander and Marine Corps Commandant James Jones](#) to find a way. After considerable heated discussion with Israeli military and political leaders, Jones produced a plan in 2008 for the [stationing of NATO and U.S. troops](#) in the West Bank in exchange for an Israeli withdrawal. Prime Minister Netanyahu shelved the plan when he took office in 2009.

General Allen, it appears, has come to resurrect it at the direction of the current U.S. administration. He will have no more success than his predecessors – all excellent, honorable military men, but all unable to find an external military solution to a war one side insists upon waging. The political leadership should stop asking them to do it.

As long as the Palestinian Authority believes that Israel sits on, governs, and flies its flag over "Palestinian land," Israel is at war. As long as the Palestinian Authority teaches its children that Jews have no sovereign rights in the Middle East, that Israeli soldiers killed Mickey Mouse, and that their highest aspiration should be to wrest the land from the "occupiers," Israel is at war. As long as the Palestinian Authority honors terrorists and their mothers as the best of Palestinian citizens, naming schools, squares and sport teams for them, Israel remains at war.

In which case, Israeli security needs are best met by the Israel Defence Forces, not American "guarantees."

(7) Is there a third intifada around the corner?

As the airplane of Secretary of State [John Kerry](#) landed in Tel Aviv on Thursday night, he received two striking reminders as to why his efforts to restart peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians are so essential. First, a planning committee, in an almost customary Israeli 'welcome' for such visits, has approved a plan to build an additional 69 housing units in the controversial East Jerusalem settlement of Har Homa. Second, the Israeli commander of the Central Command Major-General Nitzan Alon, warned that as the stalemate in the political process continues, an outbreak of violence in the occupied West Bank is increasingly likely and could potentially lead to a third Intifada.

Very few would argue that expanding the settlements in the West Bank does not present an obstacle to peace both practically and symbolically. A very small territory of less than 6000 square kilometers is home to more than 2.5 million people. Thus, any Israeli settlement expansion gobbles up more territory, which harms the viability of a contiguous Palestinian state. Moreover, it undermines whatever trust remains among Palestinians that the Israeli government is genuine in its intention to make territorial concessions for peace. Hope for political settlement is disappearing rapidly together with the visible loss of land.

Kerry must at times have similar doubts as to whether Netanyahu's recent declarations of support for a two-state solution are not merely a charade to appease the U.S. and the rest of the international community.

Alternatively, one might argue that Israel is conducting its affairs in mysterious and contradictory ways with no long term strategy. Part of the answer to this is that Netanyahu, despite what some of his right wing critics in Israel say, has not changed ideologically, but negotiates for a two state solution on the basis of two main fears, the fear of international isolation and the fear of a bi-national state. He is fighting between his instinct and rationale. Instinctively he distrusts the Palestinian leadership, and everyone else for that matter, and he yearns to keep the West Bank under Israeli control both for historical and security reasons. His head tells him that the occupation is unsustainable in the long term, hence maintaining the occupation is not only compromising Israel's Jewish and democratic character, but inevitably will lead to a new generation of disenchanting Palestinians to take to the streets.

If and when a third Intifada should outbreak, it would not be solely as a result of the Israeli occupation, but also due to the dire economic situation, the lack of progress in reaching a political solution, and the incompetence and mismanagement of Palestinian affairs by its own leadership. Nonetheless, the overarching context for militant resistance would no doubt be the oppressive Israeli occupation, as was the case in the first two Intifadas.

The deep resentment for a divided Palestinian leadership, which falls short of delivering political or economic achievements provides an additional impetus for an uprising. In a recent public poll conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PSR) in Ramallah, Palestinians expressed a widespread malaise regarding the conditions both in Gaza and the West Bank. Perception of corruption among the Palestinian leadership is prevalent in both the West Bank and Gaza – 77 percent perceive PA institutions as corrupt and 61 percent perceived public institutions of Hamas in Gaza as corrupt. Many express their dissatisfaction with the absence of reconciliation between the PA and Hamas.

The polls show how deep the despair is with 42 percent of the population in Gaza and 27 percent of the population in the West Bank wanting to immigrate to other countries. Yet, despite the fact that the poverty, unemployment and disunity are regarded as the most serious problems that Palestinians face, the vast majority see ending the occupation and addressing the refugee issues as their most significant national priority. To be sure, it is not surprisingly that under these circumstances different surveys show an increased support among the Palestinians in the renewal of the armed struggle against the Israeli occupation.

Israel faced two very different Palestinian uprisings and did not necessarily always learn the right lessons from either of them. The First Intifada was the result of a genuine popular uprising, which for the first time involved large segments of the society in violent, though not indiscriminate killings. Consequently, the uprising enjoyed international support, while also pushing many Israelis to rethink the character of and the logic behind the occupation. It left the Israelis portrayed as the Goliaths and the Palestinians as the Davids of the conflict.

This was not a comfortable position for a country that thrived on the perception of itself as eternal underdogs and victims. The Second Intifada, in contrast, was extremely violent and indiscriminate in nature, resulting in a very harsh response by the Israeli security forces. The suicide campaign had not only a devastating impact in terms of casualties, but also led to long term psychological fear and distrust. In nearly five years more than 3000 Palestinian and more than 1000 Israelis lost their lives, with many injuries on both sides, in a horrendous cycle of violence. If the suicide bombing destroyed any trust on the Israeli side, the harsh measures taken by the Israelis, including mass arrests, demolition of houses, siege and curfews, left no trust on the Palestinian side either. Whatever sympathy the Palestinians received from the First Intifada, they lost in the second because of the nature of suicide bombing. The peace process was left in tatters and has never really recovered since. Even if a third Intifada looks increasingly likely, what form it would take and who would lead it remains an enigma.

The relative calm of the last few years, with the occasional outburst of deadly violence in Gaza, lulled many Israelis into a false sense of security that the measures taken, including building the security barrier, guarantees their safety. However, what they fail to see is that their security comes at the expense of the basic human rights of other people, who live a stone's throw away from them. On the part of the Palestinians there was a conscious decision that suicide bombings were strategically counterproductive. Part of this collective denial in Israel is based also on the assumption that fatigue among the Palestinians combined with an Arab World in a state of flux, leaves Israel safe from a third intifada.

This Israeli complacency and misperception of the situation is bound to lead to further procrastination in advancing a comprehensive peace agreement, which in turn will increase the frustration among Palestinians. Nevertheless, returning to the armed struggle and resorting to violence could prove to be a double edged sword. On one hand it could break the deadlock and lead to a political process, but it might also usher in another era of bloodshed. The second option is especially likely if more extreme ideological elements take over, and could result in the obliteration of any peace process for many years to come.

(8) Why I am a Bedouin middleman

When the JC asked me to write about the Bedouin bill, which narrowly passed its first reading in the Knesset this week, I should have declined, for more than one reason.

First of all, my good friend, Major General (Ret) Doron Almog, is the chair of the committee to implement the Cabinet plan for the Bedouin sector in the Negev, which would resettle some 30,000 Bedouin into cities and resolve around 12,000 land claims.

For years, this brave man served our country in uniform, and now, as a civilian, he is on the front line again, not to fight enemies of Israel but to help solve a huge national problem: how to help the state regain its sovereignty over the vast territory in the south, while alleviating the standards of living of the local Bedouin community, which is the poorest in Israel.

I hate to criticise such an ambitious endeavour, especially when led by a friend. However, there is even a more serious reason why I should have declined. My wife, Dr Dalia Dromi, is the director general of Bimkom, an association of planners that defends planning rights.

Working with the Bedouin for years, Bimkom is opposing the government plan because, as their website states, "its implementation will cause the displacement and forced eviction of dozens of villages and tens of thousands of Bedouin residents, dispossessing them of their property and historical rights to the lands, destroying the social fabric of their communities, and sealing the fate of thousands of families into poverty and unemployment". Anything I say to refute this will put me in greater trouble than with Almog.

To the uninformed but fair Israeli observer, who is not automatically opposed to anything the government does, and on the other hand is not biased against the Bedouin, it looks like both sides have a point. Both agree that, for decades, Israel has neglected the Bedouin community and allowed it to remain at the lowest socio-economic level.

This is while Bedouin soldiers, as pathfinders, risked their lives to save the lives of their Jewish comrades.

The supporters and opponents of the government plan further agree that the time has come to put an end to the present, awkward, situation in the Negev. However, they are divided sharply on how to do it.

The government believes in grouping the Bedouin in large townships which will be economically and socially sustainable. The opponents of the plan call for allowing the Bedouin to stay where they are, while improving the infrastructure of their present villages.

A situation where both sides are right, can lead either to a sharp conflict or to a compromise. A good compromise leaves both sides equally dissatisfied. I pray that both the government and the Bedouin will have the courage to settle for less than everything. As I said before, I have a personal stake here.

(9) Obama's 'proxy' war on Mideast Christians

With the recent decision to arm the opposition fighting Syrian President Assad, the United States has effectively declared a proxy war on Syria's indigenous Christians—a proxy war that was earlier waged on Christians in other Mideast nations, resulting in the abuse, death, and/or [mass exodus of Christians](#).

Ironically (if not absurdly) this proxy war on Christians is being presented to the American people as a war to safeguard the "human rights" and "freedoms" of the Syrian people. Left unsaid by the Obama administration is the egregiously *inhuman* behaviour these jihadis visit upon moderate Syrians in general Christians in particular, from bombed churches to kidnapped (and often beheaded) Christians. Days ago they [massacred an entire Christian village](#).

Nor can one argue that the Obama administration is unaware that Christian persecution is an ironclad aspect of empowering jihadis. Both past precedents and current events repeatedly demonstrate this.

In Libya, the administration armed/supported the "freedom fighters" fighting Gaddafi, even though it was common knowledge that many of them were connected to al-Qaeda. Again, the rationale was "our responsibilities to our fellow human beings," as Obama [declared in April 2011](#), and how not assisting them "would have been a betrayal of who we are."

Soon after their empowerment, some of our U.S.-supported "fellow human beings" decided to rub America's face in it by attacking the U.S. consulate—on the anniversary of September 11, no less—resulting in the [murders and possible rape](#) of American diplomats, even as Obama tried to attribute the attack to American freedom of speech (a la a YouTube flick).

Lesser known, however, is that [Libya's small Christian minority is also being targeted](#). Among other things, the very few churches there are [under attack and bombed](#); nuns that have been serving the sick and needy since 1921 have been harassed and forced to flee; foreign Christians possessing Bibles have been [arrested and tortured](#) (one recently died from his torture).

In Egypt, Obama and Hillary joined the bandwagon to eject Hosni Mubarak, America's most stable and secular ally for thirty years. Then the administration cozied up to the Muslim Brotherhood—an Islamist organization that until recently was banned in Egypt and which no U.S. president would have been involved with. Among other "achievements," the Brotherhood produced Sayyid Qutb, who is idolized by al-Qaeda as the chief theoretician of modern jihad and issued a [1980 fatwa](#) calling on the destruction of Coptic churches in Egypt.

As expected, since the Brotherhood came to power, the persecution of Copts has practically been legalized, as unprecedented numbers of Christians—men, women, and children—have been arrested, often receiving more than double the maximum prison sentence, under the accusation that they ["blasphemed" Islam and/or its prophet](#). It was also under Brotherhood rule that another unprecedented scandal occurred: the St. Mark Cathedral—holiest site of Coptic Christianity and home of the pope himself—was [besieged in broad daylight](#) by Islamic

rioters. When security came, they too joined in the attack on the cathedral. And the [targeting of Christian children](#)—for abduction, ransom, rape, and/or forced conversion—has also reached unprecedented levels under Morsi.

And now as millions of Egyptians prepare to protest Muslim Brotherhood rule on June 30, U.S. ambassador Anne Patterson has asked the Coptic Pope to [dissuade the Copts from joining in the protests](#)—proving yet again that administration is more concerned about the wellbeing of the Brotherhood than the "human rights" of those they most abuse, Christian minorities.

Outside the Mideast, where Muslims are often not majorities, the administration wages its proxy war on Christians in other ways. For example, in Nigeria, where more Christians have been slaughtered and churches bombed by Boko Haram jihadis [than all throughout the world combined](#), after the Nigerian government went on a serious offensive to neutralize Boko Haram, John Kerry warned it [not to violate the "human rights" of the jihadis](#)—the same jihadis daily abusing the human rights of Christians, often in most *inhuman* ways.

The meaning of Boko Haram's name—"Western education is a sin"—is also a reminder that those Muslims who attack Christians naturally also hate the West, seeing the two as one and the same, all infidels. In other words, wherever the U.S. has empowered anti-Christian Islamists, it has also empowered anti-American forces. Put differently, Muslim persecution of Christians is the litmus test of how "radical" an Islamic society has become. Thus, in all those Mideast nations that the Obama administration has interfered—Egypt, Libya, and now Syria—the increase of Christian persecution in those countries is a reflection of the empowerment of forces hostile to the U.S. and Western civilization.

At this point, some may well raise that old question: is Obama a secret Muslim doing all he can to empower Islam? In fact, this is an irrelevant question. For even if he was, what more could he possibly do than he is doing right now—under the gaze of a somnambulant America?

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