



OPINION and ANALYSIS

Week ending 15 July 2013

**A selection of some of the more challenging and thought-provoking
local and international writings on the Middle East**

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Opinion and Analysis:

(1) Why are we so obsessed with Israel?

Leo Jung, Esquire Magazine, August edition

Jerusalem is everywhere. No matter where you are, Jerusalem is. The power of that holy city intrudes into the strangest and most profane of places.

<http://www.esquire.com/features/thousand-words-on-culture/america-israel-obsession-0813>

(2) Arab Spring: Mirror mirror on the wall

Abdulateef al-Muhlim, Arab News, 9 July 2013

It is impossible to analyze and forecast the outcome of the Arab Spring. The Arab world never looks at mirrors. We don't like to say mirror, mirror on the wall because mirrors don't lie and we don't want to know the truth. We can't handle it. During the Arab Spring, I read a lot of analyses about the root of the Arab Spring — it is decades of hiding from reality, chasing a mirage of enemies, conspiracies and blaming the outside world.

<http://arabnews.com/news/457444>

(3) Do you think the Muslim Brotherhood will go away quietly after the coup?

Erick Stakelbeck, Glenn Beck Blog, 9 July 2013

If Egypt becomes a failed state, which it is this close to becoming right now, the whole world is going to feel it. That's one reason why you over here need to care about what happens over there. Events in Egypt are spiraling out of control very quickly, and that could create a few potentially nasty consequences for America.

<http://www.glennbeck.com/2013/07/11/erick-stakelbeck-do-you-think-the-muslim-brotherhood-will-go-away-quietly-after-egypt-coup/>

(4) New Christian Arab party seeks to change face of Israeli society

Dror Eydar, Israel Hayom, 9 July 2013

Israel appears to be the only country in the (Middle East) region whose Christian community does not have a negative emigration ratio as its members flee West in pursuit of a more promising life.

http://www.israelhayom.com/site/newsletter_article.php?id=10569

(5) If Israel can't protect its private sector from hackers, who can?

Gwen Ackerman, Bloomberg Business Week, 9 July 2013

In an orchestrated cyber-attack on Israel -- not by a few kids and Anonymous, but a nation-backed attack -- Israel could find itself in a bad way if it doesn't do something about its exposed civilian 'cyber' vulnerabilities.

<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2013-07-09/if-israel-cant-protect-its-private-sector-from-hackers-who-can>

(6) Islamists see Egypt as proof that violence is the only way to power

Mitchell Prothero, JWR, 8 July 2013

The lesson these Islamist groups appear to be drawing from events in Egypt is that democratic engagement with opponents is pointless. And that doesn't bode well for countries with strong Islamist movements as they push, and often fight, to end autocratic rule by elites in favour of more representative governance

http://www.jewishworldreview.com/0713/violence_only_way_to_power.php3

(7) Iran's incoming president and the new Middle East cold war

Gregory Gause, Brookings Institute, 8 July 2013

The new Middle East cold war is being played out in the domestic politics of these newly weak Arab states, joining historically weak but less strategically central Arab states like Lebanon and Yemen where foreigners have been intervening for decades.

<http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/iran-at-saban/posts/2013/07/08-iran-saudi-middle-east-cold-war>

(8) The Muslim Brotherhood

Eric Trager, FATHOM, 26 April 2013

Both trends within the Brotherhood ultimately subscribe to the same ideological vision: to Islamise society as a first step towards establishing an Islamic state, and ultimately creating a 'global Islamic state.

<http://www.fathomjournal.org/reviews-culture/the-muslim-brotherhood/>

(1) Why are we so obsessed with Israel?

Leo Jung, *Esquire Magazine*, August edition

Jerusalem is everywhere. No matter where you are, Jerusalem is. The power of that holy city intrudes into the strangest and most profane of places. I remember once driving to the Hustler Casino in Los Angeles, draped in the paper they give you at In-N-Out Burger, the kind that covers your whole lap while you gorge and drive, and I turned on the radio to hear a local Christian preacher's extensive, in-depth analysis of Israel's latest settlement policies and their relation to the Book of Acts. For some reason, it made me think of "Pearl," a religious allegory written seven centuries ago, the subject of which is also Jerusalem. The Middle East has always been a place for Anglo-Saxons to project their various fantasies onto, no matter how far away, no matter how dim the dreamers' grasp of its reality. And yet, after Iraq and Afghanistan, America and the West in general already have been disengaging from the Middle East intellectually as well as militarily. That blessed time when we don't care anymore can't come soon enough

Because what is there really to talk about anymore? The issues that originated the obsession with the region have all been either solved or stalemated. North American energy independence is within reach. The hope for a blossoming Arab democratic movement leading to stability and prosperity has withered to ashes. American political and military involvement do not seem to decrease the chance of terrorism at home or abroad. As for whether America will go to war on humanitarian grounds, Syria has put that question to the ultimate test, and the answer so far has been a resolute no. Israel has made it clear that it will deal with a nuclear Iran itself, and frankly, when all is said and done, Israel probably knows best. Its existence is at stake. As for the notion of a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian struggle, there is no hope and therefore no pressing reason for intervention. So why bother? Why talk about it?

And yet the obsession continues — and not merely for the religious. Israel as a symbol transferred into the realm of secular politics during the rise of political correctness in the 1980s. For the Left, distancing itself from Israel is a way of working through issues of colonialism in a safely remote space. Israeli Apartheid Week is now a fixture on American campuses, even though any historical comparison between South Africa and Israel cannot survive even the slightest scrutiny. Support for Israel can often be equally dubious: born of apocalyptic fantasies borrowed from Revelation or the Book of Mormon, a counter-reaction to liberal elitism, or a way to be on the side of the powerful. Israel has no shortage of enemies, and with friends like these.

Peter Beinart's recent book, *The Crisis of Zionism*, argues that young American Jews are falling out of love with Israel, which may well be true, but their newfound indifference doesn't particularly matter one way or the other. The political choice faced by American voters is between a party that is really quite pro-Israel indeed and another that is so pro-Israel it hurts. The influence of the Israeli lobby on Democrats and of the evangelical lobby on Republicans are nearly total; they can't grow any greater and show no sign of abating. The foreign-policy debate surrounding the Middle East is increasingly a phantom one politically. Try explaining that to the preacher on the radio.

Scott Anderson's new book, *Lawrence in Arabia: War, Deceit, Imperial Folly and the Making of the Modern Middle East*, renders painfully clear how deeply the political structure of the Middle East has been born of eccentric fantasies. Those can include Lawrence's irresponsible self-deification and Gertrude Bell's drawing of the borders of Iraq: The Middle East has always been a moving token in a game of transcendence.

The time has come to step away from this game altogether. This summer, John Kerry will do what American secretaries of state have wasted fifty years doing: try to fix the Israeli

situation. In the spring, the poor man went four separate times to Israel, each a special mission, a "historic opportunity" to make peace. President Obama, during his first campaign, defined political insanity as doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result. America's Middle East policy is the comical extreme of this description, a zombie exercise undertaken in the name of hope for its own sake.

The obsession has gone on long enough. Journalists traditionally do not report suicides, even though it's perfectly legal for them to do so, because of what is known as the Werther Effect. If you report suicides, more people take their own lives. The world's obsession with Israel and Palestine has had a similar effect. Israelis and Palestinians believe they are iconic of something global, something larger than their own limited, momentary concerns. They reason that peace, when it comes, will be imposed by some distant, deferred force beyond their borders. Therefore the important thing is to win the war of global symbolism. That war, because it is ethereal, ghostly, can never be won, and because it can never be won, it will never end.

Standard foreign-policy wisdom holds that Israel is the key, that once the crisis there is solved, everything else in the whole of the Muslim world will improve. The terrorists will no longer have the necessary symbolism for recruitment. But the only thing that would satisfy the terrorists is Israel's ceasing to exist, and Israel, rather gauchely, insists on existing. The symbolism cannot be solved; only its power can be diminished. The real historic opportunity at the moment is for the secretary of state to stop going to Israel, and for everybody else to stop talking about what there's no point discussing.

(2) Arab Spring: Mirror mirror on the wall

In the past, whenever an American secretary of state arrived in any Middle Eastern country, it would be primetime news. He would meet the highest political figures and his/her visit would be given the maximum news coverage with everyone hoping for an end to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

John Kerry, the current US secretary of state, came and went and no one knew about his many visits. He wanted to restart the negotiation process, but the Arabs are busy with their never-ending Arab Spring and the Israeli military and political figures are in no rush because they are watching Arabs kill each other. Whenever they have extra time, they watch an Arab TV show called, the "Arab Idol."

Ofir Gendelman, spokesman for the Israeli prime minister and Avichay Adraee, Israeli Defence Forces spokesman, said it is part of their job to watch "Arab Idol." I thought their job is to keep an eye on the threat that Arab Spring countries pose to Israel. However, why would the Syrians have killed hundreds and thousands of their own people and displaced more than four million? The Israelis couldn't pull something like this off, but the Arab Spring did it for them.

According to news media, the Arab Spring caught the world by surprise on Dec. 18, 2010. I will, however, add that the Arab Spring didn't come out of the blue. It is an accumulation of years of political corruption, human rights violations, sectarianism, poor education systems and unemployment. To sum it all up, the Arabs were not fighting the enemy, they were sleeping with it. This is why it is impossible to analyze and forecast the outcome of the Arab Spring. The Arab world never looks at mirrors. We don't like to say mirror, mirror on the wall because mirrors don't lie and we don't want to know the truth. We can't handle it.

During the Arab Spring, I read a lot of analyses about the root of the Arab Spring - it is decades of hiding from reality, chasing a mirage of enemies, conspiracies and blaming the outside world. We never blamed our systems for the many failures to develop the Arab mind. We talk about Sykes-Picot, imperialism and Zionism, but we never look at the mirrors on the wall. Some people, however, did.

On June 15, 2013 a Saudi columnist who I have never met wrote an article in the Saudi newspaper Al-Sharq titled "*Israel, the everlasting Arab treasure.*" The columnist, Abdusalam Alwael, is a very highly educated Saudi who gained a bachelor's degree from a Saudi university, his master's degree from a university in California and his doctorate degree from a university in Virginia. He said that Israel was a bounty for Arab dictators who use the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to rule their countries and make a lot of money by just issuing hollow threats to Israel. Israel is a moneymaking machine for Arab dictators and many Palestinian corrupt officials. In other words, the Arab dictators have forgotten to develop their countries and innocent people have paid for it with their own lives. This is the reality of the Arab Spring.

Everyone knows the truth, but we won't admit it. During the Arab Spring, we saw our real faces in the mirrors. It showed that the Arabs were never united and are now divided beyond anybody's imagination. We hate each other more than we hate the outside enemy. This is why no one in the Arab world showed any sympathy to the Syrians when Israeli planes attacked Syrian targets a few weeks ago. As a matter of fact, even hardcore anti-Israelis wished the Israeli planes had continued eastward and attacked the Syrian Presidential Palace and killed an Arab leader named Bashar Assad. In other words, many in the Arab world sided with Israel against an Arab country. After the attack, we saw many Syrians approach the Israeli-fortified checkpoints in the Golan Heights, not to attack Israeli soldiers, but to seek refuge and get medical attention. I am not talking about simple medical care. I am talking about major surgeries like the four-year-old Syrian girl who got a heart transplant at Wolfson Hospital in Holon, Israel.

This is the real Arab Spring. Syrians are hurting Syrians and the Israelis are the ones who treat the Syrian wounds. Yes, the Arab Spring is a joke and I mean a very bad joke. The Arab Spring is not about seeking democracy, it is about Arabs killing Arabs. And this is why Israeli soldiers are busy on the Golan Heights. They are not busy with loading ammunition; they are busy picking cherries and other fruits. What is more, they are also busy giving guided tours to show the world Syrian planes targeting civilians, Scud missiles destroying villages and tanks attacking schools and mosques. What goes inside Syria is more horrific. Syrian men humiliate Syrian women in front of their relatives, rape and kill them. It is not only the killing that is ugly. We saw a Syrian kill another Syrian and then open his chest with a knife and take a bite of his heart. It can't get any uglier.

Now, mirror, mirror on the wall, who is the ugliest of them all? Well, they are all ugly. It has turned out that the Arab Spring is not about a search for democracy, social justice and better standards of living. The Arab Spring is all about hate and sectarian violence. The world didn't hear anything about rebuilding the countries or eradicating poverty. The talk is all about fighting among the same people from the same country.

Just look at the land of one of the oldest civilizations, Egypt. A country that failed to bring one, just one iconic figure like Nelson Mandela or Martin Luther King - individuals who talk about peace and harmony and are respected the world over. Not someone who enjoys destroying his own country and killing his own people.

(3) Do you think the Muslim Brotherhood will go away quietly after the coup?

Well, I was on vacation last week down the Jersey shore. The good part, no Snooki sightings, and as I'm on the beach playing with my two young daughters, a family member comes up to me looking excited. He says, "Hey, did you hear the news? The Muslim Brotherhood guy in Egypt, Morsi, he got kicked out. He's gone. The army's in charge now." And there goes my vacation.

Look, I live and breathe this stuff. My new book about the Muslim Brotherhood comes out next Monday, July 15. It's called *The Brotherhood: America's Next Great Enemy*. So, as you might imagine, I'm all over this issue. But what struck me during my vacation as all of this was unfolding in Egypt, was that friends and family members who aren't political junkies were very interested in what was happening.

I spent a good part of my week answering questions about Egypt and about everything that's going on right now in the Middle East. Look, when you have three million people in the streets of Cairo, three million, the largest demonstration in human history, that should be enough to make anyone stand up and take notice that something massive is happening, or so you would think.

A lot of Americans still seem to believe that what happens over there stays over there. Hey, Honey Boo Boo is on the tube, and Kim Kardashian is getting married. In a way, I guess, I can't totally blame them. They're just following the example of our elected leadership. As Egypt was in the middle of a historic upheaval last week, President Obama was seen on the golf course at Camp David, and his Secretary of State, John Kerry, the man who's supposed to be the driving force behind our foreign policy, was out on his yacht.

There they are, ladies and gentlemen, your crack foreign-policy team. Don't you feel safer knowing they're on the case? These are the same folks who helped to create this whole violent mess in Egypt by backing the Muslim Brotherhood at every turn. Now, Egypt is on fire, and it's only going to get worse. Civil War is a real possibility, and remember, this is the most populous and most influential Arab nation, the recipient of billions in U.S. aid.

This isn't Somalia or Yemen, some medieval backwater. If Egypt becomes a failed state, which it is this close to becoming right now, the whole world is going to feel it. That's one reason why you over here need to care about what happens over there. Events in Egypt are spiraling out of control very quickly, and that could create a few potentially nasty consequences for America.

The Muslim Brotherhood waited 84 years to gain power. They had it finally. Sharia law was about to be enforced. Women were going to be covered from head to toe. Christians were in the crosshairs, and war with the hated Jews loomed. All of the Brotherhood's sick dreams were about to be realized and with the full backing of the United States to boot. And then it was all wrenched away from them suddenly and violently after just one year in power.

Do you really think the Brotherhood is just going to go quietly now and accept this turn of events? Folks, this is the granddaddy of them all when it comes to Islamic terrorist groups. They started the entire modern Islamic jihadist movement. The Brotherhood spawned Al Qaeda. I outline in my new book how Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, every major Al Qaeda figure you can think of belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood before they joined Al Qaeda.

That's no coincidence. The Brotherhood is the gateway drug for jihad, the ideological driving force behind all of the terrorist madness you see today. Oh, and did I mention that Hamas is the Brotherhood's Palestinian wing? And is it surprising that the Boston bombers attended a

mosque controlled by a group that federal prosecutors say is an arm of the Muslim Brotherhood in America?

This is a fact: Without the spread of Muslim Brotherhood ideology, of conquering the world for Allah, killing the infidel, and reestablishing a Caliphate, 9/11 would've never happened. I repeat, if the Muslim Brotherhood had never been created in Egypt back in 1928, 9/11 would've never happened. There would be no war on terror. You'd even be able to keep your shoes on at the airport.

Every single Al Qaeda leader worth his suicide belt was inspired by the teachings and writings of Muslim Brotherhood ideologues like Hassan al-Banna and especially Sayyid Qutb. Remember that name. They laid the groundwork starting with the Brotherhood's official motto, "Allah is our objective. The Prophet is our leader. The Qur'an is our law. Jihad is our way. Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope."

Now, pay particular attention to those last two lines – jihad, military conquest, is our way. Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope. Folks, they ain't going quietly. That's very bad news for us for a few reasons. The last time the Brotherhood was in this situation in the late 1940s and the 1950s, they carried out a wave of terrorism across Egypt and assassinated Egyptian leaders.

Finally they were crushed by Nasser and banned. But like jihadi vampires, they wouldn't go away. Their backs are up against the wall now once again. Just today, it was announced that there is an arrest warrant for the Brotherhood's supreme leader, Mohammed Badie. Morsi and other Brotherhood leaders are under house arrest, and the Egyptian military has killed dozens of Brotherhood supporters over the past week alone.

Look for the Brotherhood and its allies to respond to all of this with terrorism and violence. Bet on it. And folks, if they target the Suez Canal with terror attacks and shut it down, oil prices will go through the roof. That affects you. All of that Middle Eastern oil travels through the Suez before reaching Europe. Do you think the Brotherhood and its allies are unaware of this?

And how about the possibility of the Brothers and other Islamist groups provoking a military confrontation with Israel? Jihadists are launching attacks out of Egypt's Sinai Peninsula against Israel practically every day now. If the Egyptian military can't control them, Israel will eventually have to take action to defend its borders. But it's not just the Islamists who could start a war with a hated Zionist entity.

Writing in the Tablet Magazine last week, respected Middle East analyst Lee Smith said, "The Egyptian army has only one card left to play...Egypt may be headed to war with Israel in the not-too-distant future. But as the country implodes, war has become the easy way out..."

Smith wrote, "A short war today – precipitated by a border incident in Sinai, or a missile gone awry in the Gaza Strip, and concluded before the military runs out of the ammunition that Washington will surely not resupply – will reunify the country and earn Egypt money from an international community eager to broker peace. Taking up arms against Israel will also return Egypt to its former place of prominence in an Arab world that is adrift in a sea of blood."

Ask yourself what would a new Middle East war do to oil prices and the global economy? It's coming. The only question is whether Egypt, Syria, or Iranian nukes will be the trigger. What also could be coming is Egypt in total collapse with people literally starving. That's how bad

the Egyptian economy is right now. A Civil War, the kind the Islamists want to provoke, would be a death knell.

And who would be left to pay the bills to help try to lift Egypt out of total chaos and collapse? That's right, you and me, American taxpayers. And by the way, speaking of America, just a little reminder, the Muslim Brotherhood is here in your backyard. As we've seen on TheBlaze TV in the groundbreaking documentaries, *The Project* and *Rumors of War III*, the Brotherhood has devised plans to destroy America from within.

Our government knows about these plans, yet Brotherhood supporters are guests in the White House, advising the Obama administration on its counterterrorism and Middle East policies. In my new book, I call them "terrorists in suits." I've interviewed them around the world, face to face. They are slick, well educated, well spoken, and well dressed. They are dangerous. Right now, because of what happened to Morsi, they're also angry.

We saw hundreds of Morsi supporters take to the streets in Chicago earlier this week to call for Morsi's return as president. Folks, you need to know about this group and not the mainstream media version. Pick up my book, *The Brotherhood*, when it comes out on July 15. Pick it up.

And you know, it gives me no pleasure to deliver tough news and unpleasant facts, but if you're watching TheBlaze, I'm pretty sure you'd rather know what's coming than not know. And you're going to be just fine as a result.

(4) New Christian Arab party seeks to change face of Israeli society

The events in the Middle East have unleashed deep sociological and ideological processes, of which we are only seeing the beginning. It is not only political Islam in the eye of the media storm. Throughout the various Arab countries in the region, the bruised and battered Christian community is raising its voice. Israel appears to be the only country in the region whose Christian community does not have a negative emigration ratio as its members flee West in pursuit of a more promising life.

Recent newspaper headlines involve Christian Israelis who are setting themselves apart from their Muslim counterparts, disproving the traditional perception of Israel's Arab population as homogenous. They want to join the Israel Defense Forces.

Against the backdrop of hysteria expressed by Arab MKs who object to national service of any kind, but particularly in the army, the comments emanating from Israel's Christian Arab community sound like a cultural and social declaration of independence.

Now comes the next phase in the independence process: forming a political party. As of today, the Arab Christian party will be named *Habrit Hahadashah* (*The New Alliance* -- the word "brit," which also means covenant, references the New Testament).

This is a historic turning point with profound and far-reaching consequences for Israeli society. If the party is successful, it will provide an alternative for that sector of Israel's Arab population that seeks full partnership in Israeli society, and which sees a Jewish democratic Israel as its home.

Israel Hayom sat down with the leader of the initiative, professional ship captain Bashara Shlayan (58) from Nazareth.

"The entire thing started from the fact that I wanted to get my nephew into the army and there were difficulties, they really didn't want him to integrate. Today he is a major in a combat unit," Shlayan says.

"When I wanted my son to join the army we decided to create a forum for Christian enlistment. We also invited priests from the church to a conference we held in Nazareth Illit. One of them is the Church patriarch, Father Gabriel Nadaf [who has drawn the ire of Arab MKs recently for encouraging Christian Arab youth to join the **IDF**] who preferred [our way] and said we were right."

Shlayan is proud that the forum was able to get a representative from the community assigned to work at the IDF's enlistment offices.

"We saw that we needed to create a political party," he says. "There were articles about us published in the Arab newspapers and it sparked interest throughout the region that there is an Arab Christian in Israel who recognizes the land of Israel as belonging to the Jews."

How do you define yourselves?

"Firstly we are completely Israeli, and then comes religion."

Shlayan is not fooling himself. In fact, he gives the impression that he was pushed into this position for lack of an alternative. He says he has also been met with skepticism that anything can actually be changed.

"People see what is happening now in Lebanon, Egypt and Syria. They understand where we are living. I tell them, 'For 65 years we have given to the Arab communist parties; 65 years and they have done nothing!' Give me three years, I will manage and solve their problems."

They haven't done anything?

"Look at what the Arab parties have done. Just talking nonsense about nothing but communism; [MK Dov] Khenin and [MK Mohammad] Barakeh (Hadash), what have they done for us? They want us to disappear and are not acting according to the integrity of their country's citizens."

What integrity?

"The integrity is very simple. A person belongs to his country. This is the integrity. You need to be like any citizen. If you were in America, you wouldn't be an American? At least in Israel, those who stayed here have been given the right to be a citizen and to integrate. But Israel's first demand, which I support -- and which needs to be understood -- is that Israel is the home of the Jewish people."

What is your opinion about the automatic position taken by the Arab parties against Israel and in support of the Palestinians?

"It's stupidity. You can be against something pertaining to a certain matter, but the state does a lot of things, so be a partner! Don't always be against. They think being against Israel

is Arab nationalism, that it is the manly thing. But if you oppose this way of thinking, you are a traitor. This is what needs to be changed. It's stupidity. So I demand that we, the Christians, be recognized as loyal citizens of the state."

(5) If Israel can't protect its private sector from hackers, who can?

Israeli computers are already among the most targeted -- and best protected -- in the world, with thousands of cyber-attacks on government sites fended off daily.

That's all well and good, but what about the private sector, where drug and food manufacturers and Internet service providers offer hackers relatively easy targets?

"In an orchestrated cyber-attack on Israel -- not by a few kids and Anonymous, but a nation-backed attack -- we could find ourselves in a bad way if we don't do something about our exposed civilian 'cyber' vulnerabilities," said Gabi Siboni, military and strategic affairs program director at Tel Aviv's Institute for National Security Studies.

The institute is hosting a cyber-security conference this week, where Siboni spoke today. Yaakov Perry, the Israeli minister of science, technology and space, and Eviatar Matania, the head of the National Cyber Bureau, are also scheduled to speak at the conference. It's Israel's second major cyber-security convention in the last month.

"Why should an assailant attack what we call critical infrastructure like Israel Electric Corp, when he knows he will need to exert himself to penetrate it because it is a national infrastructure that is regulated and protected?" Siboni said. "He's better off going after the unprotected that may do less damage but nonetheless harm Israel."

Just knowing it's at risk puts Israel ahead of the rest of the world as Siboni said he wasn't sure any country had an organized approach on how best to protect the civilian sector from hackers. In the U.S., the National Institute of Standards and Technology this month sought feedback on a voluntary framework to secure critical infrastructure from cyber-attacks by Iran and its proxies: Lebanon's Hezbollah and the Palestinian Hamas.

Israel's awareness is piqued by a rise, reported last month by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in such attacks by Iran, Lebanon's Hezbollah and the Palestinian Hamas. In April, hackers briefly shut down several government websites in a coordinated assault protesting Israel's treatment of the Palestinians. Last year during fighting in the Gaza Strip, millions of attacks on websites were deflected.

Israel established the National Cyber Bureau two years ago to protect vital computer systems from attack. The Israel Security Agency, also known as the Shin Bet, also has a unit focused on the issue. The two should merge so one operation is responsible for defending the civilian sector, Siboni has proposed to policy makers. The organization would establish information-security standards for businesses that will be similar to those that ensure adequate safety measures for fires.

An official at the Cyber Bureau declined to comment on Siboni's remarks.

"Let's say they attack all news providers," said Siboni. "What happens if no one knows what is going on?"

(6) Islamists see Egypt as proof that violence is the only way to power

Whatever signal the Egyptian military wished to send with its reboot of the 2011 revolution, which led to the nation's first democratically elected president, the decision to remove Mohammed Morsi from power and the subsequent arrest of many of his party officials is resounding throughout the world of political Islam.

The verdict? The proponents of Salafi jihadism and other ideological underpinnings commonly referred to as al-Qaida-style have taken pleasure in the failure of their more moderate co-religionists from the Muslim Brotherhood to hold on to power.

The lesson these Islamist groups appear to be drawing from events in Egypt is that democratic engagement with opponents is pointless. And that doesn't bode well for countries with strong Islamist movements as they push, and often fight, to end autocratic rule by elites in favour of more representative governance.

Sheikh Abu Abdullah Ahmad al Jijali, a noted ideologue in North Africa's al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb, issued a reminder to his followers on the pitfalls of mankind ruling itself on several prominent jihadi Internet forums in the wake of Morsi's fall.

"The expected happened, and the military turned on the choice of the Muslim Egyptian people, with international collusion," he said, singling out the United States, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates as the nations that wanted Morsi to fall

He went on to compare what happened in Cairo to what had taken place earlier in Algeria, where an Islamist victory at the polls was overturned by the country's military, ushering in years of brutal civil war that killed thousands. "The Egyptian military committed the stupidity of turning upon a popular revolution, with a revealed cover, and a symphony that was played in the streets of the Algerian capital 22 years ago," he wrote.

The comparison will resonate among like-minded Islamists as they note that the Islamist group Hamas also came to power in parliamentary elections in the Gaza Strip in 2006 only to see the region and the world unify to marginalize it.

Those elections had been pushed by the United States, and they were universally declared fair. But when Hamas, a virtual political and military offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood that the United States has labelled a terrorist organization, defeated its Fatah Party rivals in a rout, the United States and Israel imposed an economic blockade.

Jijali prescribed patient but violent action to pull the community of Muslims from the Egyptian military's grasp.

"The youth of Egypt should learn that the price of applying principles on the ground is a mountain of body parts and seas of blood, because evil must be killed and not shown mercy," he wrote.

Will McCants, an expert on international Sunni Muslim groups and their ideology who teaches at Johns Hopkins University, put it in less bloodthirsty but still dire terms.

"Since the beginning of the Arab Spring, al-Qaida and other jihadi groups have argued that the Muslim Brothers and the Salafis are fools to engage in electoral politics because the West and its local proxies in the Middle East will never allow them to govern," he said. "The events of the past few days in Egypt have made that argument far more persuasive."

Morsi's sudden fall may have ramifications in Jordan, where Islamists are being pressed by the country's ruler, King Abdullah, to engage in democratic reforms. Sheikh Hamzeh Mansour, the leader of Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood, voiced outrage at what had taken place.

"What happened in Egypt was clearly a military coup with all the meaning of the word," he told McClatchy from his home in Jordan. Asked whether this might end the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood's willingness to engage with the king on democratic reforms, Mansour was noncommittal but hardly optimistic, saying that, "The matter requires revision and thought, and it is too early to be given an answer."

Thomas Hegghammer, a researcher on radical Islam at the Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, said these deliberations might well lead to somewhat moderate elements taking a violent stand, particularly if the Egyptian military crackdown led to oppression and violence, as it appears from early stages that it might.

"I think a lot of radicals have been sitting on their hands these past two years and wouldn't mind getting their equipment out," he said. "The threat can be contained, but at the cost of human rights. I see a distinct risk that the new regime will be drawn into a downward spiral toward Mubarak-style authoritarianism as it tries to manage the security threat."

Syrian jihadists responded with some smugness, with one follower of the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front pointing out in a forum that "We have never seen a jihadi group finished in 48 hours". Addressing the Muslim Brotherhood, the unidentified posters said it was "your time to rethink. The solution is Islam, not democracy."

(7) Iran's incoming president and the new Middle East cold war

The election of Hassan Rouhani as president of Iran has generated a boomlet of optimism, not only about the prospects for a deal on the nuclear question but also about the chances for a rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia regarding the increasingly intense and increasingly sectarian regional struggle for influence. . President Rouhani himself went out of his way to signal his willingness for a new relationship with Riyadh. Even Saudis skeptical about Iranian intentions are encouraged by the new Iranian president.

One source of this boomlet was Rouhani's involvement in a past, successful effort at improving Saudi-Iranian relations. As a top aide to former President Rafsanjani, Rouhani negotiated directly with the Saudis in the mid-1990's in an effort to improve relations after the Iran-Iraq War, where Riyadh supported Saddam Hussein's Iraq against Iran. That effort continued under President Khatami, who was elected in 1997, culminating in the signing of an agreement to cooperate on criminal issues like smuggling and drug trafficking during a visit to Tehran by Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayif in April 2001. Note that this was a bilateral agreement on criminal matters, not a security alliance or even a common understanding of regional international politics. It represented an improvement in bilateral relations, but not a meeting of the minds on foreign policy.

While Rouhani's election is certainly cause for optimism, it is important to note that the regional geopolitical circumstances of the late 1990's Saudi-Iranian rapprochement are substantially different from those today. Both the Saudis and the Iranians could at least agree then that

Saddam Hussein was a bad guy. The fall in oil prices in the late 1990's brought the two together, with other OPEC and non-OPEC producers, to cut oil production and push prices back up. Riyadh and Tehran had plenty of disagreements, but they also had a few common interests. It is hard to see those common interests today.

The most important geopolitical difference between now and then, though, is the collapse of authority in Syria and Iraq. In the 1990's Saddam still ruled Arab Iraq, not well or civilly, but he controlled it. Likewise for his fellow Ba'thist Hafez al-Assad in Syria. They suppressed local opponents and kept a tight lid on their domestic politics, making it impossible for foreigners to successfully meddle in their domestic politics. The American invasion of 2003 took the lid off Iraqi politics, allowing Iran (most successfully), Turkey, Saudi Arabia and other regional parties to play into Iraqi politics. They did not have to force themselves onto the scene. Local Iraqi parties, fighting for dominance in the new Iraq, invited foreign support. The same is now happening in Syria. Once players in the regional game, both Iraq and Syria are now playing fields.

The new Middle East cold war is being played out in the domestic politics of these newly weak Arab states, joining historically weak but less strategically central Arab states like Lebanon and Yemen where foreigners have been intervening for decades. Saudi and Iranian involvement in these states is driven not just by ambition, but by the structure of regional international relations. To stay out of these messy civil conflicts risks ceding the field to your rivals and placing yourself at a dangerous disadvantage. No matter how open President Rouhani is to better relations with Saudi Arabia, he is unlikely to cede Iranian gains in Iraq. No matter how much the Saudis want to turn a new page with Rouhani, they won't leave the field in Syria just

as a goodwill gesture.

Since there is little hope in the short to medium term that the Iraqi and Syrian states will become stronger, and thus able to close off their territory to foreign meddling, the chance for a real Saudi-Iranian rapprochement are slim. However, there are important reasons to hope, even in these pessimistic structural circumstances, that Rouhani and the Saudis might be able to ratchet down the intense sectarian nature of their competition.

Sectarianism is a fact of life in the Iraqi and Syrian conflicts, no doubt. But Saudi Arabia and Iran in their own ways are pushing the sectarian line, to rally their followers and discredit their enemies, in ways that are poisoning the politics of the entire region. The sectarianization of the region works against long-term Saudi and Iranian interests both. For the Saudis, it alienates their own Shia minority, pushes Arab Shia toward Iran and encourages Sunni jihadists who will eventually, as they have in the past, turn on Riyadh. For Iran, it emphasizes their minority status in the Muslim world and limits their influence. The United States also loses from an increasingly sectarian Middle East, both because it drives further regional instability and because sectarian conflict provides a breeding ground for al-Qaeda type organizations to thrive. If Rouhani can bring about an improvement in the atmospherics of Saudi-Iranian relations that leads both sides to downplay the sectarian nature of their contest for influence, everyone will benefit in the long run.

(8) The Muslim Brotherhood: From opposition to power

In the decade following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Western analysts' search for a 'moderate Islamist' alternative to Al-Qaeda often brought them to the Muslim Brotherhood, whose rhetorical rejection of terrorism and embrace of electoral politics was seductive. Much of the resulting literature thus touted the Brotherhood's supposedly 'democratic' and 'non-violent' nature, all of which left the international community wholly unprepared for the very undemocratic and violent reality now emerging in Brotherhood-ruled Egypt.

Thankfully, however, not all analysts were so deluded. In her excellent book, *The Muslim Brotherhood: From Opposition to Power*, Alison Pargeter offers a much-needed dose of realism, weighing the Brotherhood's lofty assertions against its aggressive actions. Through her examination of the Brotherhood's early history in Egypt and subsequent spread throughout the Middle East and Europe, Pargeter depicts an organisation that faces the constant dilemma of either widening its base through pragmatic outreach or solidifying its base through a more hardline approach. And, as Pargeter tells it, the Brotherhood has almost always embraced the latter, favouring its 'conservative' tendencies over its more 'reformist' ones.

This dilemma dates back to the early decades of the Brotherhood's existence. According to Pargeter, founding Supreme Guide Hassan al-Banna, who established the Brotherhood in 1928, 'struggled to strike a balance between engaging with [Egypt's] establishment and appeasing his followers.' In this vein, al-Banna's various concessions to the authorities, such as his reluctant support for the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty that legitimised Britain's presence in Egypt, greatly upset the Brotherhood's most ardent members. So to keep them in the fold, al-Banna permitted the establishment of an internal paramilitary organisation known as the 'secret apparatus,' which represented the organisation's commitment to jihad and participated in various acts of political violence. This decision, Pargeter correctly notes, challenges the common view of al-Banna as a 'beacon of moderation,' since 'he was always willing to accommodate the more militant elements within his movement.' It was also a fatal mistake: two months after a young Muslim Brother gunned down Prime Minister Mahmoud Nuqrashi, al-Banna was himself assassinated, in February 1949.

The story of Brotherhood radicals triumphing over reformists repeats itself constantly in Pargeter's narrative, albeit in different forms. For example, in the 1950s, members of the 'secret apparatus' successfully thwarted second Supreme Guide Hassan al-Hodeibi's attempt to dissolve the paramilitary unit. Its confrontational posture against the emerging Nasser regime, that ran counter to al-Hodeibi's more conciliatory instincts, ultimately catalysed a broad crackdown in which many of the organisation's top leaders were either jailed or exiled.

In the 1990s, hardline Brotherhood leaders, including many veterans of the 'secret apparatus,' resisted younger members' calls for greater engagement with non-Islamists and more transparent internal election procedures. When these younger members ultimately responded by forming their own political party called al-Wasat, the Brotherhood banished them. Later, when Brotherhood reformists rejected a 2007 draft 'platform' that prohibited women and Copts from running for president, among other controversial provisions, the Brotherhood's hardliners responded by removing one of the organisation's foremost reformists from the Guidance Office and stacking its leadership with so-called 'Qutbists'.

That is not to say that the radicals always prevailed. During the 1980s, Supreme Guide Omar al-Tilmisani acceded to reformists' demand for participation in parliamentary elections, and the Brotherhood broke character by aligning with non-Islamist parties during the 1984

and 1987 races. However, as Pargeter notes, this period coincided with a Mubarak regime crackdown that sent many of the Brotherhood's hardliners into exile. When these figures returned in the early 1990s, the Brotherhood quickly reverted to form.

While Pargeter accurately captures the ongoing struggle between the Brotherhood's two competing impulses, the distinction between 'reformist' and 'conservative' is, in fact, more blurry than her narrative acknowledges. For example, while she describes former Supreme Guide Mehdi Akef as 'more sympathetic to the reformist wing' and current deputy supreme guide Mahmoud Izzat as a 'senior traditionalist,' the latter is the former's son-in-law. Similarly, although Pargeter frequently describes current Brotherhood political leader Issam al-Ariyan as a 'reformist,' she fails to reconcile this descriptor with al-Ariyan's persistent rise within the organisation, despite the dominance of 'conservatives' in the Brotherhood's leadership.

For the most part, these distinctions are blurry because, at their core, 'reformists' and 'conservatives' differ only in tactics. Indeed, in Pargeter's narrative, the 'reformists' seek immediate political participation and desire engagement with non-Islamists to broaden their appeal; 'conservatives,' by contrast, fear that this approach will water down the Brotherhood's Islamist authenticity and thus undermine organisational integrity. Yet both trends ultimately subscribe to the same ideological vision: they seek to Islamise society as a first step towards establishing an Islamic state, and ultimately creating a 'global Islamic state,' in the words of deputy supreme guide Khairat al-Shater. This is why even those young 'reformists' whom Brotherhood hardliners banished in 1996 for forming al-Wasat are now the Brotherhood's closest parliamentary partners. The two groups merely disagreed on *when* the Brotherhood should form its own party, not on *what* that party's goals should be.

And yet despite its eighty-five year existence, the Brotherhood's ideology remains remarkably vague. As Pargeter correctly notes, the Brotherhood has produced only one 'true scholar' – the radical theorist Sayyid Qutb – while its supreme guides, al-Banna included, left a rather thin literary record. For the most part, this has been a tactical decision: 'the absence of detail is a deliberate means of protecting the Brotherhood from factionalism,' writes Pargeter.

Still, whenever circumstances have forced the Brotherhood to articulate specific positions, the Brotherhood has typically embraced extremes. As Pargeter observes, the Brotherhood has supported suicide bombings against Americans in Iraq and against Israelis, believes that religious law should precede individual freedoms, and promotes intolerance towards non-Muslims as well as Shiites. In other words, the Brotherhood's ideological content, insofar as it exists, is a series of rabble-rousing reflexes, not an intellectual framework through which its stated goal of 'implementing the sharia' has ever been considered, let alone fleshed out.

To be sure, these reflexes allowed the Brotherhood to 'posit itself as the authentic voice that can bring Islam to the core of every aspect of life,' as Pargeter writes, and therefore win post-revolutionary elections in both Tunisia and Egypt. However, reflexes do not constitute a governing philosophy, much as the ability to win elections hardly implies the competence to rule. Meanwhile, the Brotherhood's ultimately 'conservative' impulses remain unchanged: rather than embracing 'reformist' outreach, it has continued to prioritise the organisational prerogative of power consolidation. And, as much as this 'conservative' tendency has long catalysed dissent within the Brotherhood's own ranks, it is now angering a broader society that is increasingly in rebellion against its reign.
