

OPINION and ANALYSIS

Vol 7, Number 9: 25 November 2011

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

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Prediction: By mid-2012 everyone will be writing about the failure of the Egyptian revolution and how it has made things worse for the country and terrible for the region. Added prediction: they will be saying the same thing about Tunisia and Libya. Will this combination be enough to wake up the West to the threat of revolutionary Islamism and the catastrophic consequences of current Western policy toward the Middle East?

In pursuit of American-style democracy, Israel lost its way

Zvi Bar'el, Haaretz, 23 November 2011

<http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/in-pursuit-of-american-style-democracy-israel-lost-its-way-1.397180>

We've always wanted to be America. Neither England nor France inspired the Israeli dream. After all, we have a great culture of our own. We believed that America was a nation that invented itself. A nation of immigrants that became a world power in terms of wealth and military might. Most of all we were envious of American politics: two parties rather than 20, divided by well-defined ideology and, most important, a president who is the CEO of the country, bound by a well-made system of checks and balances.

We believed that's how a proper democracy should look, and we began our journey of imitation. First of all military might, "the strongest army in the Middle East," then money, big money, and finally democracy, too. But like imitation Levis and Gap and cover versions of top singers, it takes a lot of imagination, or serious myopia, to say what we have produced is similar to America; especially when it comes to its democracy, and in particular everything connected to government.

Israel has gone a step further. Instead of two parties, or 20, we have become a one-party regime, a conglomerate. This party bears many names - Likud, Yisrael Beiteinu, Shas or Labor - but it has a single core: a nationalist religious party that benefits from a total absence of an alternative, competition or an opposition, and can count on the fact that even if it changes its names, it will continue to run the country for years to come.

As in several countries in the region, we have a "ruling party" that apparently cannot be replaced by means of a democratic process - only a civil revolution can do that. The same was true of Mapai [the forerunner of Labor], but while Mapai always faced a tough ideological opposition, which never abandoned its aspiration to offer an alternative, even during the years when there seemed to be no such chance, the present "ruling party" has no rival willing or able to enter the fray.

The next quasi-American imitation was to construct for ourselves a presidential regime. Not an ordinary presidential type who hosts outstanding soldiers and Hadassah ladies, but a genuine political strong man. Here, too, the imitation has surpassed the original. Instead of adopting the American model, we got lost along the way and got a Putin. A presidential prime minister. One who is not only the head of the executive arm, subject to the instructions of parliament and in awe of the judicial system, but also a "leader of the faithful" with a secular appearance, who has turned Judaism into an entrance requirement to his club of loyal followers.

This is a president who aims to change the composition of the court to silence human rights organizations and to determine the sphere of activity of the media - all of which has been done by presidents in Egypt, Syria, Uganda and Iraq; the Israeli model also determines the dosage of ideology necessary for him and his ruling party to survive forever. For example, our presidential prime minister ordered in effect a freeze on the draft bill requiring a hearing for judges, because it seemed too right-wing to him, and demanded that the nonprofit organizations bill be reworded to make a clear distinction between "political NPOs" and "socially oriented NPOs." In doing so he marked the limits of right-wing "ideology," without any real opposition from the initiators of these laws.

Just so he defined the limits of left-wing "treason." His 1997 whisper into the mystic ear of Rabbi Yitzhak Kaduri, when he asserted that "the leftists have forgotten what it means to be Jewish," has developed into a political philosophy to be applied everywhere, from the Supreme Court to tenants' committees. Not recklessly, but with "determination and sensitivity," as befits an elegant ruling party. After all, nothing is urgent, the ruling party and its president are not leaving tomorrow.

The Israeli presidential model also exempts the parliament from responsibility for shaping democracy. When the right-wing parties know how to read the signals from the prime minister and to act accordingly, and the left-wing parties have no need whatsoever for the ability to read (or speak), the prime minister can play the role of the sultan concerned about only one thing: preventing the nation from taking to the city squares and beginning to think for itself. Now we'll see who is envious of whom: Israel of America, or vice versa. Who said that dreams don't come true?

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Palestinian reconciliation 'next to impossible'

Douglas Bloomfield, Jerusalem Post, 23 November 2011

<http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Columnists/Article.aspx?id=246755>

Mahmoud Abbas has given up making shalom with Israel for the foreseeable future and is trying once again to make salaam with Hamas.

The Palestinian president and Hamas leader Khaled Mashaal, are scheduled to meet this week in Cairo to try to revive the power-sharing agreement that was signed in May but never implemented. They will also attempt to name a caretaker government to prepare for elections in about six months.

Chances of success are only slightly higher than they were six months ago, said Robert Danin, former head of Tony Blair's Jerusalem Quartet mission and a former senior State Department and National Security Council Middle East specialist. The two parties are far apart but there is strong popular support for unity, and the leaders fear being "consumed" by the unrest sweeping the Arab world, he added.

Danin cautioned against Washington and Jerusalem overreacting to talk of Palestinian unity, even if the two Palestinian factions smile and embrace for the cameras.

"It's one thing to reach an agreement and another to implement it," he said. "There are so many details that will be next to impossible to reconcile."

One of Hamas' core demands is replacing Prime Minister Salaam Fayyad with a Gazan of its choosing.

It blames him for the tough crackdown on its supporters on the West Bank by the new professional security forces. Those police, trained under the US-financed Dayton program, have won high marks from their Israeli counterparts.

That's not the only reason that outside the West Bank Fayyad is the most highly respected figure in the Palestinian Authority. He is also the driving force behind reforming the PA's economy, fighting corruption, implementing political reforms and developing the institutions of statehood.

Fayyad has said he is willing to step down rather than "be used as a pretext for continuing the split."

But that could endanger support from the donor nations whose money keeps the PA solvent.

ABBAS, for his part, has said there's no reason for Jerusalem and Washington to be concerned because Hamas will not be part of the government. He is being disingenuous when he says the reconciliation pact would create an apolitical caretaker government of technocrats. Hamas and Fatah might not formally hold ministries but they will select the ministers and wield considerable influence, and that means they will effectively be running the government.

Abbas may say he's anxious to meet with Mashaal, but he knows the real threat to his and Fatah's survival is Hamas, not Israel; he recognizes the reality that the Israeli Army, as well as the PA security forces, is keeping Hamas from taking over the West Bank.

Fatah's declared goal is to establish a secular national state living in peace with Israel, while Hamas wants to destroy both Israel and Fatah, and to create an Islamic republic not unlike that of its Iranian patrons.

Jordan's King Abdullah II made a surprise trip to Ramallah Monday to urge Abbas to resume talks with Israel as proposed by the Quartet. Although he spoke publicly of Palestinian unity, it is reported that he privately urged Abbas not to form a unity government with Hamas. He is worried that a collapse of the Abbas government and a takeover by Hamas in the West Bank would be a direct threat to Jordan, which has a Palestinian majority and a large Muslim Brotherhood presence.

A day earlier Deputy Secretary of State William Burns went to Ramallah to tell Abbas that the Obama administration opposes a unity government with Hamas and would cut off funding unless the Islamic group, which the United States classifies a terrorist organization, meets Quartet demands that it recognize Israel's right to exist, renounce violence and abide by all prior Israeli-Palestinian agreements.

A Hamas victory in the next election is not out of the question, and that could lead to a break in relations with the United States and Israel. If the PA is squeezed too hard, there is a danger the security forces, which are considered critical to keeping order, could collapse or turn on Israel.

Israeli analyst Yossi Alpher, a coeditor of Bitterlemons.org, said integrating Hamas into a Palestinian unity government reflects a trend in the Arab world that has Arab Islamist movements entering government.

The Netanyahu administration's approach toward the Islamists may be changing.

"One of the elements pushing Abu Mazen [Abbas' nom du guerre] is the perception that in the wake of the Schalit [prisoner swap] deal the Israelis are interested in dealing with the Islamist parties," Danin said.

Abbas sees Netanyahu as willing to deliver over 1,000 prisoners to Hamas and none to Fatah, enhancing the Islamic group's public stature at his expense, while also withholding tax funds Israel collected for the PA despite warnings from Israeli security officials not to undermine the Abbas government.

The army and intelligence establishment feel it is against Israel's interest to strangle the PA, but rightwing members of Netanyahu's coalition, led by Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, overruled the PM's attempt at Sunday's cabinet meeting to release the funds.

If Palestinian reconciliation breaks down and with no new negotiations likely, Alpher said, 'The only real question is whether, where and to what extent large-scale violence will return.'

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Ethiopian Israelis and the need for dialogue

Yael Rosen, Jerusalem Post, 23 November 2011

<http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Op-EdContributors/Article.aspx?id=246760>

Today, thousands of Ethiopian Israelis will celebrate Sigd, the annual holiday marking their

ancestral desire to return to Zion over the generations.

The actual date of the holiday is the 29th of the Hebrew month of Heshvan, but because this year's holiday falls on Shabbat, celebrations are pushed up to Thursday.

Many revelers will travel to the Armon Hanatziv neighborhood in Jerusalem for a festive reenactment of their annual ascent to a high hill in Ethiopia where they prayed for the end of their long, bitter exile and a swift return to the Promised Land.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, whole Jewish communities left their lives in Ethiopia behind and started walking toward Jerusalem. The journey was treacherous and many lost family members along the way. The dream of Zion clashed with the harsh realities of aliya, with numerous repercussions still being felt today.

As a commemoration of a traditional event from the "old country," Sigd highlights the ever-growing chasm between the two generations of Israel's Ethiopian Jews: those who made the journey from Ethiopia, and their children and grandchildren born into the Israeli reality. While the holiday still holds much importance for the elders, symbolizing their fulfilled dreams for the Land of Israel, much of the younger generation does not share those sentiments.

Though children of immigrants often drift away from their cultural heritage when joining a new society, the rift in the Israeli Ethiopian community extends well beyond the familiar phenomenon. For many families, the generation gap has led to a communication breakdown between parents/grandparents and their Israeli-born children.

Language barriers often exist within the household. The children often do not understand their parents' Amharic and Tigrinya and are not always able to express themselves in a way their parents will comprehend.

While the Western culture embraced by the younger generation promotes sharing and expressing one's feelings, the elders are used to an Ethiopian culture that lauds internal dialogue and limited sharing.

Furthermore, constant social and economic troubles, coupled with a noticeable lack of expressed interest from Israeli society regarding their hardships (past and present) has led the older generation to bury their experiences within themselves, never letting on to their children and grandchildren the sacrifices they had to undergo to reach Israel.

As a result, you've got some of Ethiopia's bravest men and women, people who risked their lives for the loftiest of ideals and the opportunity to build a better life for the next generation, but they are seen by those very same successors as foreigners and outcasts. No recognition as heroes. No national or familial pride in their unprecedented courage.

Nothing but scorn and rejection.

The distress and despondency is palpable, and our national mission is clear. We must stem the tide and create effective programming that encourages intergenerational dialogue in the Israeli Ethiopian community with emotional and technical support on both sides of the conversation.

Such programming will allow parents and grandparents to delve into their pasts, unburdening themselves while restoring their rich Ethiopian heritage and bridging the cultural divide. THIS OPEN dialogue will also help children and grandchildren gain a new appreciation for their elders as well as an improved sense of self and pride in their families and their community. With the Ethiopian community often portrayed as underprivileged and unable to fend for itself, personal accounts of their elders' bravery, sacrifice and determination will give Israel's Ethiopian youth the inspiration and encouragement they need to fulfill their ancestral destiny – honoring the past while building the future.

As the coordinator of a project that introduces high school students to the littleknown stories of “Prisoners of Zion” (those jailed for Zionist activity or affiliation) from Ethiopia, I have seen the effects of such programming firsthand. While the Prisoners of Zion are presented with a rare opportunity to share their stories with the younger generation and receive the recognition and respect they richly deserve, the students are introduced to compelling elements of their cultural legacy and are empowered to carry the torch forward.

More often than not, meetings with the Prisoners of Zion prompt the students to ask their own parents and grandparents to recount their family’s aliya stories. And sometimes it is the parents who break the silence, taking advantage of the project as an “opening” to regale their children with in-depth accounts of the journey to Israel. For many, it is their very first dialogue about the topic.

The encounters also help the participants see the older generation in a new light. As they begin to understand the trials and travails of the Ethiopian aliya, and the leadership positions assumed by the Prisoners of Zion – and sometimes their own parents and grandparents – to help others make it through the arduous journey, they begin to develop a sense of pride in their families and the community.

For them, living in Israel has always been a given. But knowing that their elders fought and sacrificed to establish this life changes everything.

The students often speak about what they take from the stories and how they assimilate this bravery into their own lives. They understand that they must never despair, and that their dreams are always within reach as long as they believe in themselves.

This newfound inner strength helps them believe that they can accomplish anything and generally encourages them to succeed in life.

As one student participant mentioned, “The Prisoner of Zion that we interviewed worked hard to bring us to Israel. His actions inspire me to act, even in the hardest of times. I am proud of my community and it gives me hope for the future.”

What a difference a simple discussion can make. Our national mission is clear, and the time to act is now.

With our help, the Sigd holiday can become a celebration of intergenerational understanding, a platform for deep appreciation of the past, and the launch pad for an impassioned push towards the brightest of futures for Israel’s Ethiopian community.

After Egypt's revolution, Christians are living in fear

Andre Aciman, New York Times Sunday Review, 19 November 2011

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/20/opinion/sunday/after-egypts-revolution-christians-are-living-in-fear.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all

The images streaming from Cairo’s streets last month were not as horrifying as those of the capture and brutal death of Col. Muammar el-Qaddafi, but they were savage all the same. They were a sobering reminder that popular movements in some parts of the world, however euphorically they begin, can take disquieting and ugly turns.

When liberal Muslims joined Coptic Christians as they marched through Cairo's Maspero area on Oct. 9 to protest the burning of a Coptic church, bands of conservative Muslim hooligans wielding sticks and swords began attacking the protesters. Egyptian security forces who had apparently intervened to break up the violence deliberately rammed their armed vehicles into the Coptic crowd and fired live ammunition indiscriminately.

Egyptian military authorities soon shut down live news coverage of the event, and evidence of chaos was quickly cleared from the scene. But the massacre, in which at least 24 people were killed and more than 300 were wounded, was the worst instance of sectarian violence in Egypt in 60 years.

Confusion and conflicting narratives abound. Some claim to have overheard an announcer on television encourage "honorable Egyptians" to come to the rescue of soldiers under attack by a mob of Copts. Others heard a Muslim shouting that he had killed a Christian.

Unable to explain exactly why events turned violent, Egypt's interim prime minister, Essam Sharaf, claimed that the wholesale slaughter of civilians was not the product of sectarian violence but proof that there were "hidden hands" involved.

I grew up in an Egypt that was inventing hidden hands wherever you looked. Because of my family's increasingly precarious status as Jews living in Nasser's Egypt, my parents forbade me to flash my flashlight several times at night or to write invisible messages with lemon ink in middle school. These were a spymaster's tricks, and Jews were forever regarded as spies after the 1954 "Lavon Affair," in which Israeli intelligence recruited Egyptian Jews to bomb targets in Egypt.

Sadly, the phrase "hidden hands" remains a part of Egypt's political rhetoric more than 50 years later — an invitation for every Egyptian to write in the name of his or her favorite bugaboo. Rather than see things for what they are, Egyptians, from their leaders on down, have always preferred the blame game — and with good reason. Blaming some insidious clandestine villain for anything invariably works in a country where hearsay passes for truth and paranoia for knowledge.

Sometimes those hidden hands are called Langley, or the West, or, all else failing, of course, the Mossad. Sometimes "hidden hands" stands for any number of foreign or local conspiracies carried out by corrupt or disgruntled apparatchiks of one stripe or another who are forever eager to tarnish and discredit the public trust.

The problem with Egypt is that there is no public trust. There is no trust, period. False rumor, which is the opiate of the Egyptian masses and the bread and butter of political discourse in the Arab world, trumps clarity, reason and the will to tolerate a different opinion, let alone a different religion or the spirit of open discourse.

"Hidden hands" stands for Satan. And with Satan you don't use judgment; you use cunning and paranoia. Cunning, after all, is poor man's fare, a way of cobbling together a credible enough narrative that is at once easy to digest, to swear by, and pass around. Bugaboos keep you focused. And nothing in the Middle East can keep you as focused (or as unfocused) as the archvillain of them all: Israel.

Say "Israel" and you've galvanized everyone. Say Israel and you have a movement, a cause, a purpose. Say "Israel" and all of Islam huddles. Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah and now Turkey.

What is good about the episode in Maspero is that, in the exhilarating and unusual spirit of the events of last spring in Tahrir Square, Muslims joined the Coptic demonstrators who were eager to exercise the right to build churches — a right that has always been grudgingly granted to Egypt's Copts.

What is terrible about the episode, however, is the inability of the government to take the blame for the slaughter of the Copts. Similarly, in September, it failed to intervene in good time when a large mob attacked the Israeli embassy in Cairo, broke down its walls and nearly slaughtered those inside.

The friendly army that Copts embraced during the Arab spring has turned its guns on those who embraced it. Your pal today, your killer tomorrow.

There are no rules and there is no trust. The poor man on the street, if he is to think for himself — which is a tall order in a country that has no history of free speech — must either wear warped lenses to see through wholesale agitprop or surrender to blind fanaticism.

COPTS represent approximately 10 percent of Egypt's population and are the direct descendants of the ancient Egyptians. Yet, sensing danger while everyone else in Egypt and in the West was busy celebrating the fall of Mr. Mubarak during the much-heralded Arab Spring, 93,000 Copts have already fled Egypt since March. In light of the events in Maspero, it is thought that another 150,000 Copts may leave their ancestral homeland by the end of 2011.

When Mr. Mubarak was in power, the Copts were frequently the victims of violent attacks and official discrimination — the New Year's bombing of a Coptic Church in Alexandria that left 21 dead is the most recent instance. Now, with Mr. Mubarak gone, Copts fear that an elected Muslim majority is likely to prove far less tolerant than a military dictatorship.

Conditions were by no means good for the Copts when Mr. Mubarak was at the helm. The most risible instance occurred in 2009 when, in an absurd effort to prevent the spread of swine flu, the government decided to slaughter all pigs in Egypt.

But since neither contact with pigs nor eating pork spreads swine flu, why kill the poor pigs? The answer is very simple. Slaughtering the pigs, as it turns out, was probably meant to inconvenience the Copts who farmed them and ate them. This constituted another of those petty measures intended to harm the Copts financially.

Today, Egypt is doing the same with Israel. Under the pretext of preserving its national agricultural patrimony, it has forbidden the sale of palm fronds to Israel. Palm fronds are used ceremonially by Jews during the holiday of Sukkot, and since Israel doesn't grow enough palm trees, it imports the fronds from Egypt. Whom did the ban hurt? The Egyptians who grow palm trees. Whom did the slaughter of pigs hurt? None other than the Cairenes themselves, because pigs, which eat tons of organic waste, used to play an important role in clearing trash from the streets of Cairo.

What doesn't occur to most Egyptians is that the Copts represent a significant business community in Egypt and that their flight may further damage an economy saddled with a ballooning deficit.

But this is nothing new for Egypt. The Egyptians have yet to learn the very hard lesson of the post-1956 departure of its nearly 100,000 Jews, who, at the time, constituted one of the wealthiest Jewish communities in the Mediterranean region.

The Egyptian economy never recovered from this loss. While blaming Zionism and the creation of Israel or turning to Islamic leadership may take many people's minds off the very real financial debacle confronting Egypt and help assuage feelings of powerlessness, the hard lesson has not been learned yet.

The Arab Spring was a luminous instance of democratic euphoria in a country that had no history of democracy or euphoria. What happened to the Copts this fall cast a dark cloud, which the interim government, whatever its true convictions, would do well to dispel.

Egypt should not lose its Copts. For if that is what autumn brings, then, to paraphrase Shelley, winter may not be far behind.

Muslim Brotherhood makes fools of naive West:

Barry Rubin, PJ Media, 3 November 2011

<http://pjmedia.com/barryrubin/2011/11/01/as-the-muslim-brotherhood-makes-fools-out-of-a-naive-west-the-two-smartest-egyptians-fear-the-future/>

Can you imagine this? The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood lied! And can you imagine this: the two civilians who are Egypt's greatest hope for avoiding an Islamist dictatorship are very worried.

Let's start with the Brotherhood. First, it promised to run candidates for only one-third of the parliamentary seats, saying this would prove its moderation and willingness to share power.

But a little later, it raised that number to 50 percent but said that's all and they wouldn't run a candidate for president. Again, we were told: they're moderate!

Next, it created a front party to run a candidate for president. For months the Western media generally told us that this party was independent of the Brotherhood, had split off from the Brotherhood to run a candidate for president. That made this party even more moderate than the moderate Brotherhood.

Finally, now that the media admits this is a Brotherhood-controlled party, it announces, too, that it will run candidates for all the parliamentary seats.

How do we know they are moderate? Well, because they say so. For example, the Brotherhood has announced that it will not run on the slogan, "Islam is the solution!" Their new official slogan is:

"We bring good [things] for Egypt."

How moderate can you get?

Some details. The Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party dominates the 11-party Democratic Alliance (again, a nice "moderate" name). The Alliance will run candidates in the 76 multi-candidate proportional representation districts and in the 113 single-seat districts. Incidentally, two of its partners are leftist parties, including al-Ghad.

As in Tunisia (and Turkey and in the Palestinian elections won by Hamas some years ago), the opposition is divided, disorganized, and some of its members are ready to make a deal with the Islamists.

The opposition 21-party Egyptian Bloc has collapsed after only two months of existence. Only three determined secular-oriented parties remain in it: the genuinely liberal Free Egyptians Party (drawing mostly Christian support), the tiny Egyptian Social Democratic Party, and the radical leftist Tagammu Party.

The “Facebook kid” left-liberal Justice Party has formed its own bloc called The Revolution Continues while the Salafis (openly radical Islamists) are trying to combine in the Nour Party.

The three main “liberal” parties—Wafd, Free Egyptians, Justice—are all running against each other. They’ll split the vote and in district after district the Islamists will win.

Moreover, the Brotherhood is following a brilliant strategy to build a united front for Sharia, bringing in other clerics and gradually winning over more and more of the religious establishment to an Islamist position. The proportion of non-Islamist forces among observant Muslims thus steadily declines. Religious Islam as it has been actually practiced and political Islamism have not been the same thing but they are increasingly becoming the same thing as the Islamists win the battle of interpretation.

As a result of all of these factors, I’m changing my prediction. A poll misread by American “experts” supposedly claimed that the Brotherhood had only 13 percent support and was no threat. I analyzed the poll as putting them at 33 percent. A new poll by the Danish-Egyptian Dialogue Institute puts the Brotherhood at 39 percent. I am now predicting that the Brotherhood and other radical Islamists may get to almost 50 percent.

Am I being too alarmist? Well let’s listen to the two most interesting non-Islamist political figures in Egypt. Amr Moussa, who might well be Egypt’s next president though it seems he will have to await elections in 2013, is one of the smartest politicians in the Arabic-speaking world.

A former foreign minister and head of the Arab League, he is also an intemperate, radical Arab nationalist who knows how to use demagoguery and populism to rally support for himself. Of course, that’s also why he’s the great black-white-red (the Arab nationalist colors) hope to defeat the green of the Islamists.

So it’s worth listening to his reading of the current situation. Briefly, Egypt will elect a parliament on November 28—probably with the Muslim Brotherhood as the biggest party—that will choose a constitution-writing committee in April 2012. Only after a constitution is completed, no earlier than the summer of 2013, will a president be elected. Thus decrees the military junta. Since he’s already 75, Moussa is understandably in a hurry.

Amr Moussa says that in the interim he fears Egypt could be plunged into a terrible crisis by growing violence and economic disaster (the country has lost an estimated \$10 billion due to the revolution and subsequent disruption). That makes sense. “My biggest fear is anarchy,” says Moussa. “A long transitional period...will create an opportunity for all those who want to play havoc with the Egyptian society.”

Right. Islamists will continue to attack Christians, whom the government and army won’t protect. The Brotherhood will complain that if only it was in charge and could implement a policy of hope and change everything would be great. Islamists and liberals will join together to bash the junta as anti-democratic and intending to keep power for itself.

The junta’s decision to create dual power—a military executive alongside an elected legislature—is understandable since it is horrified at the rise of Islamism and violence. But this is likely to be a turbulent situation.

Then there’s Naguib Sawiris, a billionaire, Christian, and the founder of the Free Egyptians’ Party, the only group that’s likely to fight Islamism. He has just given a fascinating interview to Bloomberg Business News.

The problem is that while the party has many Muslims in the leadership and membership (two-thirds, it claims) most of its votes will probably come from Christians, the only large sector of the population willing to battle for secularism.

Sawiris is not a man who is easily intimidated, ignoring the many death threats. Yet on the national stage he is merely an uppity dhimmi, albeit one with 139,000 followers to his Twitter account. He also has a sense of humor, posting a picture of Mickey and Minnie Mouse in Islamic garb. The Islamists, however, don't have a sense of humor, launching a costly boycott of his businesses.

Last July, an Islamist preacher said on cable television, "We will kill him even if he repents." You see, Sawaris lives in luxury and has massive business interests and power. But here's how a revolutionary Islamist thinks: For all that, he's just another infidel and one swing of the sword will cut through even the most expensive tailor-made collar.

Sawiris thinks Egypt may well end up like Iran. He watches as Christians are attacked, Islamist terrorists released from prison. and a rising demagoguery targets Israel as Egypt's main problem.

Prediction: By mid-2012 everyone will be writing about the failure of the Egyptian revolution and how it has made things worse for the country and terrible for the region. Added prediction: they will be saying the same thing about Tunisia and Libya. Will this combination be enough to wake up the West to the threat of revolutionary Islamism and the catastrophic consequences of current Western policy toward the Middle East?

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NOTE: The views expressed in certain articles are not necessarily those of the SA Zionist Federation

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