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29 February, 2012

Article 1.	NYT <u>There Be Dragons</u> Thomas L. Friedman
Article 2.	Hurriyet <u>Gaza, Jerusalem, Nicosia, Baku</u> Burak Bekdil
Article 3.	TIME <u>Hamas Signals Break with Iran, But Is That Good for Israel?</u> Tony Karon
Article 4.	Politico <u>Do Israelis support a strike on Iran?</u> Shibley Telhami
Article 5.	Foreign Affairs <u>The Most Controversial Israeli Settlements</u> Oren Kessl
Article 6.	Agence Global <u>Deciphering the Qatar Enigma</u> Patrick Seale
Article 7.	Heritage Foundation

	<u>Dealing With Syria's WMD</u> <u>James Phillips & James Jay Carafano</u>
Article 8.	Wall Street Journal <u>Harvard's Latest Assault on Israel</u> <u>Ruth Wisse</u>

Article 1.

NYT

There Be Dragons

Thomas L. Friedman

February 28, 201 -- In medieval times, areas known to be dangerous or uncharted were often labeled on maps with the warning: "Beware, here be dragons." That is surely how mapmakers would be labeling the whole Middle East today.

After the onset of the Arab awakenings, it was reasonable to be, at worst, agnostic and, at best, hopeful about the prospect of these countries making the difficult transition from autocracy to democracy. But recently, looking honestly at the region, one has to conclude that the prospects for stable transitions to democracy anytime soon are dimming. It is too early to give up hope, but it is not too early to start worrying.

Lord knows it is not because of the bravery of the Arab youth, and many ordinary citizens, who set off these awakenings, in search of dignity, justice and

freedom. No, it is because the staying power and mendacity of the entrenched old guards and old ideas in these countries is much deeper than most people realize and the frailty or absence of democratic institutions, traditions and examples much greater. “There is a saying that inside every fat man is a thin man dying to get out,” notes Michael Mandelbaum, the foreign policy expert at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. “We also tend to believe that inside every autocracy is a democracy dying to get out, but that might not be true in the Middle East.”

It was true in Eastern Europe in 1989, added Mandelbaum, but there are two big differences between Eastern Europe and the Middle East. Many Eastern European countries had a recent liberal past to fall back on — after the artificially imposed Soviet communism was removed. And Eastern Europe also had a compelling model and magnet for free-market democracy right next door: the European Union. Most of the Arab-Muslim world has neither, so when the iron lid of autocracy comes off they fall back, not on liberalism, but Islamism, sectarianism, tribalism or military rule.

To be sure, we have to remember how long it took America to build its own liberal political order and what freaks that has made us today. Almost four years ago, we elected a black man, whose name was Barack, whose grandfather was a Muslim, to lead us out of our worst economic crisis in a century. We’re now considering replacing him with a Mormon, and it all

seems totally normal. But that normality took more than 200 years and a civil war to develop.

The Arabs and Afghans are in their first decade. You see in Syria how quickly the regime turned the democracy push there into a sectarian war. Remember, the opposition in Syria began as a largely peaceful, grass-roots, pan-Syrian movement for democratic change. But it was deliberately met by President Bashar al-Assad with murder and sectarian venom. He wanted to make the conflict about his Alawite minority versus the country's Sunni Muslim majority as a way of discrediting the opposition and holding his base.

As Peter Harling and Sarah Birke, experts on the Middle East who have been in Syria, wrote in a recent essay: "Rather than reform, the regime's default setting has been to push society to the brink. As soon as protests started ... state media showed staged footage of arms being found in a mosque in Dara'a, the southern city where protests first broke out, and warned that a sit-in in Homs ... was an attempt to erect a mini-caliphate. This manipulation of Syrians meant the regime was confident that the threat of civil war would force citizens and outside players alike to agree on preserving the existing power structure as the only bulwark against collapse."

You see the same kind of manipulation of emotions in Afghanistan. U.S. troops accidentally burned some Korans, and President Obama apologized. Afghans nevertheless went on a weeklong rampage, killing innocent Americans in response — and no Afghan

leader, even our allies, dared to stand up and say: “Wait, this is wrong. Every week in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq, Muslim suicide bombers kill other Muslims — holy people created in the image of God — and there’s barely a peep. Yet the accidental burning of holy books by Americans sparks outbursts and killings. What does our reaction say about us?”

They need to have that conversation.

In Egypt, every day it becomes clearer that the Army has used the Tahrir uprising to get rid of its main long-term rival for succession — President Hosni Mubarak’s more reform-minded son, Gamal. Now, having gotten rid of both father and son, the Army is showing its real hand by prosecuting American, European and Egyptian democracy workers for allegedly working with “foreign agents” — the C.I.A., Israel and the Jewish lobby — to destabilize Egypt. This is a patently fraudulent charge, but one meant to undermine the democrats demanding that the Army step aside.

The Arab/Muslim awakening phase is over. Now we are deep into the counter-revolutionary phase, as the dead hands of the past try to strangle the future. I am ready to consider any ideas of how we in the West can help the forces of democracy and decency win. But, ultimately, this is their fight. They have to own it, and I just hope it doesn’t end — as it often does in the land of dragons — with extremists going all the way and the moderates just going away.

Hurriyet

Gaza, Jerusalem, Nicosia, Baku

Burak Bekdil

February/29/2012 -- Since Turkey decided to isolate Israel in the aftermath of the Mavi Marmara raid in which Israeli commandos killed eight Turks and one Turkish-American in May 2010, the events have not exactly taken the route Ankara wished them to take.

A well-deserved apology for the Israeli fiasco and the unnecessary loss of life has never arrived. Nor has compensation for the families of the victims. And the termination of Israel's naval blockade of the Gaza Strip remains a Turkish dream.

Meanwhile, two-way trade between Turkey and Israel rose by nearly 30 percent to \$4.449 billion last year from \$3.440 billion in 2010. In the same period, Turkish imports from the Jewish state rose more than 50 percent.

Turkey's "brotherly" relations with its southern and eastern Muslim neighbors – Syria, Iraq and Iran – have metamorphosed into something reminiscent of relations among brothers claiming the Ottoman throne. In the meantime, Israel has cultivated closer ties with Balkan countries such as Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Greece. It has also put in more effort to strengthen ties with Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, India and China.

And sitting on an estimated 25 trillion cubic meters of

natural gas finds in its waters, Israel has also found a new Mediterranean partner, Cyprus, with which it is inching toward exploration of an estimated 230 billion cubic meters of gas in Cypriot waters. It is the same Cyprus that is preparing to take over the European Union's term presidency. It is the same EU which Turkey has isolated itself from, most recently due to an Armenian genocide denial bill. And it is the same bill under which a Swiss prosecutor is investigating EU Minister Egemen Bağış.

But the brawl goes on. In December, an Israeli defense company, Elbit, canceled a sale of hi-tech surveillance systems to the Turkish Air Force. More recently, Turkey imposed tighter restrictions on Israeli cargo flights entering the Turkish airspace, leading to economic losses for Israeli companies.

Most ironically, as the Turkish Parliament condemned the Khojaly Massacre, in which Armenian troops killed more than 600 Azeris in Khojaly, Nagorno-Karabakh, and more than 20,000 Turks, including Interior Minister İdris Naim Şahin, staged a colorful protest rally at Taksim Square in Istanbul, Israeli defense officials said Israeli Aerospace Industries had secured a \$1.6 billion contract to sell drones and anti-aircraft and missile defense systems to Azerbaijan.

Now, this does not much fit into the famous slogan, "one nation, two states," between Turkey and Azerbaijan. It also does not look like Israel has been terribly isolated because a major arms client, Turkey, no longer buys weaponry made in Israel.

If the "Israeli defense officials" chose the timing to

announce the lucrative Azeri deal, they must have a genuine sense of humor: A \$1.6 billion handshake between Israel and “one nation-two states” Azerbaijan on the same day when the other of the (one nation) two states was exhibiting solidarity for the Azeri victims of Karabakh in demonstrations previously unseen!

If there is one region that is the ostensible reason for all this reshuffling of political balances in this part of the world, it is Gaza (see Ömer Çelik, deputy chairman of Turkey’s ruling party, who said that the “Gaza conflict is Turkey’s domestic issue”). If there should be another, it is Jerusalem.

Now we have Deputy Prime Minister Beşir Atalay swinging his sword in the Battle for Jerusalem. A few days ago, Mr. Atalay said Jerusalem had to be freed of Israeli occupation if a lasting settlement was to reign in the Middle East. “Without the liberation of Jerusalem,” he said, “No real peace and stability can be achieved.” Speaking at the International Conference for the Defense of Jerusalem in Doha, Qatar, Mr. Atalay described Jerusalem as “a captive city in the hands of Israel.”

Ah, the hunt and the hunter...

Article 3.

TIME

Hamas Signals Break with Iran, But Is That Good for Israel?

Tony Karon

February 29, 2012 -- A popular Washington illusion once held that the right combination of incentives and punishments might “peel off” Syria’s President Bashar al-Assad from Iran’s “Axis of Resistance,” but nobody would have predicted that the weak link in Iran’s alliance of radicals would turn out to be the Palestinian Islamists of Hamas. Yet, Tuesday’s announcement that the Hamas leadership has officially relocated from Damascus, and its public declarations of support for the Syrian rebels, suggest a dramatic political break with Iran — and with it the end of any illusion Tehran might have harbored of exerting influence in the new revolutionary Arab mainstream. Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal is now ensconced in Qatar’s capital, Doha, while deputy leader Moussa Abu Marzouk has set up shop in Cairo. And Hamas leaders used last Friday’s midday prayers to publicly salute what Gaza Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh called “the heroic people of Syria who are striving for freedom, democracy and reform.” Iran, Hamas knows, is not amused. But that appears to be a diminishing concern for the movement. Hamas’ relationship with Assad, Tehran’s key Arab ally, began to sour last year when the Palestinian group resisted pressure to stage pro-regime events in refugee camps in Syria. “Our position on Syria is that we are not with the regime in its security solution, and we respect the will of the people,” Marzouk told The Associated Press. He also acknowledged that “The Iranians are not happy with our position on Syria, and when they are not happy, they don’t deal with you in the same old way.”

The “same old way” would be financial: While Israeli p.r. likes to portray Hamas as a satellite of Tehran, a glance at the organization’s history, ideology, social base and political DNA offers a reminder that Iran’s relatively recent emergence as Hamas’ key regional supporter was a marriage of convenience for Hamas amid desperate circumstances some six years ago. Although Iran had supported Hamas’ rejection of the Oslo peace process in the early 1990s, the Shi’ite theocracy wasn’t exactly an ideological soulmate of the Sunni Islamist Palestinian movement founded in the 1980s by Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood. But when the Bush Administration — desperate to reverse the results of the 2006 Palestinian legislative election that had made Hamas the ruling party in the Palestinian Authority — demanded that its Arab allies support a blockade on any funds that might reach a Hamas government, Iran seized the opportunity and stepped up with cash to fill the void. Today, still, Hamas depends on Iranian largesse to make its payrolls in Gaza, just as the West Bank Palestinian Authority depends on Western donor funds to do the same. For Tehran, supplying the resources that enabled Hamas to confound U.S.-Israeli efforts to destroy it burnished Iranian leadership claims in the Arab world, showing up Arab leaders willing to do Washington’s bidding at the Palestinians’ expense. But Hamas’ options and prospects have been altered by the revolutionary tide that has swept aside some key Arab autocracies and empowered Muslim Brotherhood organizations that remain Hamas’ natural political kin.

The Palestinian public is solidly behind the Syrian rebellion, in which the Muslim Brotherhood is a key element. And like-minded parties have won elections in Tunisia and Egypt, and look set to be the main beneficiaries of the democratic wave throughout the Arab world.

If the Arab rebellion has made nonsense of Iran's claim to speak on behalf of a silenced Arab public, it has also rubbished the Bush-era scheme of uniting moderate Arab autocrats (including Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas) in alliance against Iran and its Axis of Resistance. Key moderate autocrats like Hosni Mubarak of Egypt have been swept from the stage, while the Gulf monarchs are waging a regional Cold War against Iran that divides the region on sectarian rather than moderate vs. radical lines. None of the traditional U.S. Arab allies follows Washington's lead these days, and key emerging regional players such as Turkey and Qatar don't share the U.S. and Israel's aversion to Hamas. (Nor do they share Washington's strategy of isolating and pressuring Iran, even if they're in political competition with the Islamic Republic throughout the region.) Qatar has already stepped over the wreckage of the U.S.-Israeli effort to smash Hamas and brokered a unity agreement between the movement and Abbas' rival Fatah party, although its implementation remains bedeviled by deep rivalries and internal splits in Hamas over its terms. And nobody ought to be too surprised if Qatar steps in to make good on any financial shortfall arising from a withdrawal of Iranian

funds.

Hamas clearly believes it is no longer so isolated among the region's governments that it can't get by without Iran's support. The newly empowered Muslim Brotherhood parties, however, are going to be too busy governing some very complex and challenging societies to want war with Israel — even if they're not going to help Israel throttle or pound Gaza the way Mubarak had done. The price of joining the Brotherhood mainstream for Hamas may be embracing its terms, seeking political rather than military strategies to advance the Palestinian cause. Meshaal has certainly made a number of statements hinting at a shift away from arms towards “popular resistance,” although such matters are likely to be a matter of some contention within Hamas' ranks.

Don't expect Israel's leaders to cheer Hamas' departure from Damascus, however. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has long used the claim that Hamas is Iran's proxy as Exhibit A in making his case that Israel can't be expected to make territorial compromises with the Palestinians any time soon. A Hamas that moves towards a moderate Islamist mainstream may be less of a military threat to Israel (although it has for some time now been largely observing a cease-fire), but it could pose more of a political challenge (although there's no sign of Hamas or any other Palestinian faction offering any coherent strategic vision at the moment).

Still, the Palestinian Islamists will fancy their chances of prospering politically by realigning themselves with

the new Arab mainstream. Fatah's strategy of negotiating under U.S. auspices long ago hit a wall. Even as it gestures towards the U.N., it finds itself locked into security arrangements with Israel that effectively reinforce the status quo and its ability to provide a model of good governance intended to contrast with the misery of Gaza is floundering as Western donor aid dries up. Hamas' break with Syria and Iran and its welcome in Cairo, Doha and even Amman will certainly give Abbas cause for concern: Sure, the shift will move Hamas to a more mainstream orientation, but that could boost its challenge to Fatah's traditional monopoly on power. By adroitly jumping ship in Syria, Hamas may have ensured that even if it suffers short-term financial pain, it could ultimately do better after the Arab rebellions than its Fatah rivals have done. And that's a prospect that won't please Israel — or the United States.

Article 4.

Politico

Do Israelis support a strike on Iran?

Shibley Telhami

February 28, 2012 -- When President Barack Obama meets Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Washington next week, Iran's nuclear program is

likely to top their agenda. With increasing signals that Israel may be contemplating a strike against Iran's nuclear facilities, the United States and its European allies have made no secret of their opposition.

In the face of this mounting public disapproval, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman declared that the issue is no one else's business and that the allies' opposition won't influence Israel's decision. But how do the Israeli people feel?

They don't support a strike without U.S. backing, a new poll shows, even though they are not fearful of Washington's retribution if they go against U.S. advice. They appear less influenced by the rhetoric of U.S. politicians competing for their embrace, and contrary to conventional wisdom, the Obama administration's reluctance to support a military strike against Iran has apparently not affected their preference for Obama as the next president. In fact, their views seem to partly reflect the White House's assessment of the consequences of war and the problems created by military action.

Only 19 percent of Israelis polled expressed support for an attack without U.S. backing, according to a poll I conducted — fielded by Israel's Dahaf Institute Feb. 22-26 — while 42 percent endorsed a strike only if there is at least U.S. support, and 32 percent opposed an attack regardless.

This does not appear to be because of Israeli worries about potential American punishment. In fact, Israelis remain confident the U.S. would support them, at least diplomatically (38 percent), or join the war on Israel's

behalf (27 percent) — even if Israel struck Iran without Washington's approval. Only 15 percent expect reduced American support. What seems behind these attitudes is an assessment of the consequences of an Israeli attack.

A majority of Israelis polled, roughly 51 percent, said the war would last months (29 percent) or years (22 percent), while only 18 percent said it would last days. About as many Israelis, 44 percent, think that an Israeli strike would actually strengthen Iran's government as think it would weaken it (45 percent). Two-thirds of Israelis, meanwhile, believe Hezbollah would most likely join Iran in retaliation against Israel — even if Israel did not strike Hezbollah forces. An additional 27 percent believe Hezbollah would join only if attacked.

What would be the outcome for Iran's nuclear program? Only 22 percent of Israelis said a strike would delay Iran's capabilities by more than five years, while an additional 31 percent said it would delay its capabilities by one to five years, 18 percent said it would not make a difference and 11 percent said it would actually accelerate Iran's capabilities. In a similar poll I conducted (also with Dahaf) last November, 90 percent of Israelis expressed the view that Iran will eventually acquire nuclear weapons. Since the Israeli public appears not fearful of losing U.S. backing if Israel strikes without a green light from Washington, these results are probably related to the lack of confidence in the Israeli government's own assessment of the consequences of an attack. If U.S.

and European allies have a different estimate of the likely results of a strike, the Israeli public, in turn, has less confidence in its own government's evaluation. Reinforcing this interpretation are Israeli public attitudes toward the Obama administration. In the current U.S. campaign rhetoric, Obama is often portrayed as less supportive of Israel — even its detractor. Shortly before this poll was fielded, one story in the Israeli press cited Republican presidential candidate Rick Santorum saying that Obama “was throwing Israel under the bus” and “helping Iran obtain nuclear weapons.”

Not surprisingly, what Obama and the Republican candidates are saying about Israel and Iran is often a lead story in Israel. It is, of course, hard to assess the direct impact of these stories on Israeli public preferences about U.S. politics. No country matters more for Israel than the U.S. — and no country gets more scrutiny in the Israeli press. So whom do Israelis want to see as the next U.S. president?

In our recent poll, Israelis were asked whom they preferred in a paired competition between Obama and each remaining GOP candidate. Not surprisingly, a significant minority of Israelis expressed no opinion or chose none of the candidates. Though the results were sometimes close — within the margin of error — Obama was the preferred candidate over every potential Republican rival among Jewish-Israelis, and ahead of all among a combined sample of Arab- and Jewish-Israelis, except for tying Mitt Romney. Overall, Obama led Santorum 33 percent to 18

percent; former House Speaker Newt Gingrich 32 percent to 25 percent; Ron Paul 32 percent to 21 percent; and tied Romney at 29 percent. It is noteworthy, that Paul performed slightly better — but within the margin of error — than Santorum, despite his strong opposition to a U.S. role in a military strike against Iran.

What does all this add up to? Contrary to the current discourse in our presidential elections, the Israeli public is neither enthusiastic about the prospect of war with Iran nor swayed by the seeming embrace of Israel by our GOP presidential candidates.

It has to live with the consequences of war and appear to take the U.S. assessment of these consequences seriously in forming its opinions.

With all the white noise surrounding the Iranian nuclear issue, the best service the Obama administration can provide — certainly to American interests and the cause of peace but also to Israelis — is to be faithful to the facts and the professional analysis of what's at stake if Israel strikes Iran. Israeli leaders may decide to strike without U.S. support, but their public wants them to follow Washington's lead — and Israelis appear to be influenced by America's judgment.

Shibley Telhami is Anwar Sadat professor for peace and development at the University of Maryland and nonresident senior fellow at the Saban Center of the Brookings Institution.

Foreign Affairs

The Most Controversial Israeli Settlements

Oren Kessl

February 27, 2012

HEBRON AND KIRYAT ARBA

Hebron is the largest city in the West Bank, perched atop the Judean Hills in the very center of the territory's southern portion. The city is home to 165,000 Palestinians, as well as 500 Israeli settlers who have taken up residence in and around its old quarter since 1968. Hebron is the one West Bank city not transferred to Palestinian control under the Oslo Accords; a separate agreement signed in 1997 placed 120,000 Palestinians under full Palestinian Authority control, with the remainder staying under Israeli jurisdiction.

Hebron is home to the Tomb of the Patriarchs, where tradition says Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and their respective wives are buried. Like the city itself, it is divided down the middle. The tomb complex is the second holiest site in Judaism, but roughly half of it is consecrated for Muslim worship as the Ibrahimi Mosque.

Hebron has had a Jewish population for centuries, but British colonial authorities evacuated the entire

community in the 1930s after Arab rioters killed 67 Jews and wounded dozens more. In 1968, settlers unilaterally reconstituted the city's Jewish presence and ultimately received the backing of the Labor government of the time. Authorities went one better, establishing a town on Hebron's outskirts called Kiryat Arba that now numbers 7,200 people.

Hebron is one of the most sensitive nodes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In 1994, in the wake of the Oslo Accords, a Brooklyn-born Kiryat Arba resident named Baruch Goldstein opened fire on Muslims at prayer in Ibrahimi Mosque, killing 29 worshippers and wounding 125.

ARIEL

Unlike many settlements, Ariel was founded on a site with no particular Jewish historical or religious significance. Its origins were purely strategic: In the late 1970s, the government authorized the creation of an urban settlement in Samaria (the northern portion of the West Bank) opposite Israel's main population center in and around Tel Aviv. Ariel's purpose was to offset Israel's slender waistline (10 miles across at its narrowest) and obstruct a Jordanian invasion route in any future war.

Ariel's location, 11 miles east of the Green Line, makes it one of Israel's most contentious settlements -- both to the international community and to many Israelis. In 2010, 60 leading Israeli actors, writers, and directors signed a petition refusing to perform in Ariel's new state-funded performing arts center. Today, Ariel has a population of 17,600 -- 7,000 of

whom are immigrants who arrived in Israel over the last two decades in the exodus of Jews from the former Soviet Union. It is the most populous community in the so-called Ariel bloc, a 40,000-strong chain of 15 settlements (Karnei Shomron, Knesset member Michael Ben-Ari's home, is one of them). Israel views Ariel Bloc as one of five "consensus blocs" it will be able to retain even after a final agreement with the Palestinians. But records of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations leaked to Al Jazeera last year (the so-called Palestine Papers) showed the Palestinian Authority (PA) had refused to let Israel keep Ariel, even while agreeing to Israel's annexation of three of the other "consensus blocs."

MAALE ADUMIM

Maale Adumim is the other "consensus bloc" that, according to the Palestine Papers, PA negotiators refused to let remain in Israel. Palestinians say the settlement's location -- east of Jerusalem en route to the Dead Sea -- cuts off the West Bank's northern and southern portions from one another.

Maale Adumim, which today has a population of 39,000, began as an army outpost after Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Six-Day War. The site was occupied a few years later by settlers from the religious-Zionist Gush Emunim movement; in the late 1970s, it was authorized by Prime Minister Menachem Begin's Likud government. Today, it is the West Bank's third-largest settlement, drawing many secular Israelis attracted as much by its striking desert landscape as its housing prices.

HAR HOMA

Har Homa is one of the five "ring neighborhoods" Israel built around Jerusalem after capturing the West Bank and East Jerusalem in the Six-Day War. Today, Israel draws a distinction between West Bank settlements and areas of Jerusalem built after 1967 -- the Palestinian Authority does not. (The label "East Jerusalem" can be misleading. It is generally applied to any land beyond the meandering pre-1967 Green Line, even if it is actually north or south of Israeli West Jerusalem.)

Har Homa is the youngest ring neighborhood, created in 1997 during the first administration of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The United States at first resisted U.N. pressure to stop construction there, vetoing two Security Council resolutions condemning building there. In recent years, Washington's stance has toughened. When in 2010 the Israeli government announced plans to build 1,025 more units there, U.S. President Barack Obama's administration said it was "deeply disappointed."

The PA complains that Har Homa -- whose population has grown to 13,000 -- obstructs travel between East Jerusalem and Bethlehem. It was the only one of the ring neighborhoods that, according to the leaked memos, the Palestinians refused to let Israel keep.

GILO

Another "ring neighborhood," Gilo was established in 1973 on land southwest of downtown Jerusalem that Israel says was Jewish-owned prior to the 1948 war. Today, its population of 40,000 is a mix of secular,

traditional, and ultra-Orthodox Israelis.

The Obama administration reacted to Israel's 2009 decision to build new units in Gilo with "dismay" and was "disappointed" with a similar announcement last year. Israel maintains the new units would be built within Gilo's existing limits and that the neighborhood will in all likelihood remain in Israel's hands even after a final peace deal. The Palestine Papers showed the Palestinians willing to contemplate continued Israeli control over Gilo, even though they charge that like Har Homa, it compromises travel between East Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

Oren Kessler is Middle East affairs correspondent of the Jerusalem Post.

Article 6.

Agence Global

Deciphering the Qatar Enigma

Patrick Seale

28 Feb 2012 -- Of all the actors in the Arab Spring, one of the most effective -- and perhaps the most intriguing -- has been the state of Qatar. Protruding from the eastern flank of Saudi Arabia, this mini-state points a plump finger of waterless desert at Iran on the opposite side of the Gulf. Situated between these two regional giants -- with each of whom it entertains

somewhat wary relations -- little Qatar's remarkable achievement has been to carve out an independent and ambitious role for itself.

How has this pocket-sized state become a world-class mover and shaker? And what is it seeking to achieve? Any visitor to Doha, Qatar's glittering sea-front capital-city, is bound to ask himself these questions so great is the contrast between the country's global ambitions and its limited human resources. Its foreign service, active on numerous fronts across the world, is staffed by a mere 250 diplomats. Its native population numbers only some 200,000. These fortunate few – whose annual per capital income of over \$100,000 is said to be the highest in the world – are served, pampered and supported by an immigrant Arab and Asian population of 1.7 million.

Over nearly two decades, Qatar has built a considerable reputation for itself in the tricky and often tedious field of conflict mediation. It has tried, and usually succeeded, in calming tempers and forging agreements between opponents – whether between Eritrea and Yemen in their dispute over the Hamish Islands in 1996; or between Eritrea and Sudan a couple of years later; or between Yemen and its Huthi rebel movement in 2007; or between rival Lebanese factions in 2008, which ended 17 months of crisis and prevented a return to civil war; or between Sudan and Chad in 2009; or between Eritrea and Djibouti in 2010; or between feuding Palestinians factions in early February 2012, to name only some of its many endeavours in the cause of peace.

This past year, however, has seen a major change in Qatari diplomacy: From being an impartial mediator, praised by all parties, it has begun to take sides in Middle East conflicts. For example, it played a key role in the overthrow of Libya's dictator Muammar al-Qadhafi, pouring into the civil war hundreds of its own well-equipped troops and some \$400m in aid to the rebels. In Syria, Qatar has led the assault against President Bashar al-Asad, pressing for his condemnation and boycott in the Arab League while arming and funding the opposition.

Even more significantly, Qatar has been a major backer of the Muslim Brothers in their recent rise to power across the Arab region. This has caught the West by surprise, in particular the United States. Having spent the past fifteen years fighting the Islamists, Washington is now scrambling to come to terms with -- and even befriend -- these new political actors, whether in Egypt, Tunisia, Syria, Morocco and elsewhere. Unlike Qatar's earlier mediations, this switch to activist policies inevitably makes enemies as well as friends. Not the least of Qatar's contradictions is that while it embraces progress and modernity with open arms, it also promotes radical Islamic movements, for example giving ample airtime on Al Jazeera to the tele-preacher Yusuf al-Qaradawi.

In waging its battles, Qatar deploys many assets, of which the first is undoubtedly the vigour and daring of its leadership. Four members of its ruling autocracy deserve special mention. The Emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, 60, a graduate of Britain's

Sandhurst military academy and former Defence Minister, deposed his father in a bloodless coup in 1995, setting the country on its path to spectacular development. The Emir's right-hand man is his distant cousin, Sheikh Hamad bin Jasim Al Thani, 53, who has served as Foreign Minister (since 1992) and also as Prime Minister (since 2007), acquiring a formidable reputation as an international diplomatist but also as a remarkable financier with major stakes in Qatar Airways, in the London department store Harrods, and dozens of other real-estate, commercial and industrial enterprises. He is the owner of the 133-metre yacht al-Mirqab, said to be the eighth largest super-yacht in the world, valued at over \$1bn. Some sources estimate his personal fortune, perhaps with a touch of hyperbole, at \$35bn.

Another major figure is the Emir's second wife, Sheikha Mozah, widely admired for her elegance, energy and culture, who chairs the Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development. One of her five sons is Crown Prince Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, a clever, highly-popular, French-speaking young man in his early thirties. Sheikha Mozah's Foundation has brought numerous foreign universities to Qatar's 'Education City' and sponsors many training and leadership programmes, as well as the lively Doha Debates on Al Jazeera television, Qatar's brilliant media arm -- a powerful agent of its world-wide influence.

Needless to say, all this would be vain were it not for the prodigious revenues Qatar derives from exporting oil

and liquefied natural gas. Its oil reserves of 25 billion barrels would enable continued output at current levels for the next 57 years, while the reserves of its offshore gas fields are estimated at 250 trillion cubic feet, the third largest such reserves in the world. Gas provides 85% of Qatar's export earnings and 70% of government revenue.

Qatar's skill has been to acquire a wide variety of foreign friends without being overly dependent on any of them. Since his 1995 coup, the Emir has forged especially close ties with France, which supplies some 80% of the country's military equipment. He has purchased one of France's top football clubs, Paris Saint Germain (PSG) -- perhaps as a prelude to hosting the 2022 World Cup -- as well as a score of valuable properties across the French capital. Serious investments have been made in major French firms such as Veolia and Lagardère. Qatar also has warm relations with Britain, the former colonial overlord of the Gulf until its withdrawal in 1971, and is bound militarily and industrially to the United States.

Qatar's Al Udeid Air Base is the forward headquarters of the United States Central Command, which oversees a vast area of responsibility extending from the Middle East to North Africa and Central Asia. CENTCOM forces are deployed in combat roles in Afghanistan as well as at smaller bases in Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Oman. No doubt the presence of CENTCOM provides Qatar with some protection, but it also runs the risk of attracting hostility if, for example, Qatar were to allow itself to be sucked into

the quarrel now raging between the United States and Israel on one side and Iran on the other. A regional war could deal a catastrophic blow to Qatar's prosperity and development.

Qatar has become a global brand name as well as a global player. These are clearly the goals its leaders have striven to achieve. But this mini-state operates in a turbulent region, a situation which demands constant vigilance and nimble footwork. Many might wish it had restricted itself to its noble role as a peace-maker.

Patrick Seale is a leading British writer on the Middle East. His latest book is The Struggle for Arab Independence: Riad el-Solh and the Makers of the Modern Middle East (Cambridge University Press).

Article 7.

Heritage Foundation

Dealing With Syria's WMD

James Phillips & James Jay Carafano

February 28, 2012 -- Syria's embattled regime is likely to hold out for many more months but eventually could implode with many dangerous consequences for the surrounding region. One of the risks is that chemical weapons—and possibly radioactive materials from its nuclear program—could fall into the hands of terrorists. The U.S. needs a strategy for the worst-case

scenario. Washington must closely monitor the evolving situation in Syria and make contingency plans in cooperation with allies to prevent the proliferation of such dangerous weapons, if necessary.

Keeping the Lid on Pandora's Box

Syria's Baathist dictatorship developed and stockpiled a lethal arsenal of chemical weapons including blister agents such as mustard gas and even more dangerous nerve agents. These chemical munitions can be delivered by artillery, rocket launchers, Scud ballistic missiles, and aircraft. Damascus also cooperated with North Korea (and probably Iran) to develop a covert nuclear program, which Israel partially destroyed in a 2007 air strike. Radioactive materials from this program could become ingredients for a "dirty bomb" if they fall into the hands of terrorists.

While little is known about the status of Syria's nuclear facilities, U.S. officials believe that there are at least 50 chemical weapon production and storage facilities inside Syria. Director of National Intelligence James Clapper testified before Congress last week that the Syrian regime has maintained security at these sites, many of which are located in rural areas separated from the urban areas that have seen the bulk of the fighting. Pentagon officials reportedly assess that the regime has shown no sign that it is considering the use of chemical weapons or has relaxed its guard over WMD assets, which are likely treated as its crown jewels.

But as the situation inside Syria deteriorates, there is a growing possibility that the regime could lose control

over facilities as its chain of command breaks down and weapons or dangerous materials fall into the hands of defectors, looters, various rival opposition groups, or terrorists.

Those initially at risk would probably be local populations exposed to the haphazard handling of hazardous materials. The most significant danger is that these materials might be removed from the country and fashioned into improvised explosive devices elsewhere. That would require a degree of organization and infrastructure. Iran already has the means and capability to do this, using Revolutionary Guards from the Quds Force or Hezbollah, its Lebanese terrorist surrogates. Al-Qaeda, which has established a front inside Syria, has expressed an interest in the past at conducting these kinds of attacks and could seek materials in Syria if the opportunity arose.

This threat is not analogous to concerns expressed in the run-up to the Iraq War. Then, the primary concern was that Saddam Hussein's regime would use weapons against another country or deliberately transfer them to a terrorist group. Further, it was suspected that Iraq might have far greater WMD capabilities and means to employ them than Syria currently has in its possession. The Syrian threat is different, and the U.S. response needs to be calculated according to a different set of risks and U.S. interests. Here, the principal danger is that the regime might lose control of materials that eventually could find their way to terrorists if the regime collapses.

In some respects, the potential worst-case scenario is more like Libya, where the Muammar Gaddafi regime lost control of mustard gas supplies and huge stockpiles of modern weapons. While the mustard gas, stored in bulk containers, reportedly was secured, large numbers of arms including Man-Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS) were seized by many different groups. Some were smuggled out of the country and could pose a threat to civil aviation.

Military Intervention Would Be Costly and Difficult

The conditions for an outside military intervention, however, are far different from Libya. Syria would be a much more difficult military intervention than Libya due to the greater size and capabilities of the Syrian armed forces, which have remained relatively intact, unlike in Libya. Moreover, the Assad regime has more foreign allies than the isolated Gaddafi regime. It can rely on Moscow to block U.N. efforts and Iran and Hezbollah to help it resist a foreign intervention. Such differences would make any military intervention in Syria a much riskier and potentially costly exercise. Pentagon officials estimate that it could require more than 75,000 ground troops to secure Syria's chemical warfare facilities, according to CNN.[1] It is clear that even such a limited intervention, much less a full-blown humanitarian intervention launched amid a civil war, would be an enormously costly and risky enterprise.

While the potential for hazardous materials being smuggled out of the country is a legitimate concern, the risks associated with deploying U.S. troops inside

Syria currently are greater. There are prudent measures that the U.S. can take to mitigate the risk that hazardous materials will “leak” out of the country without putting U.S. boots on the ground.

A Prudent U.S. Policy

Washington should privately warn the Assad regime not to use its chemical weapons and that such a move will trigger much greater U.S. support, possibly including arms, for the opposition. This declaration should be a private warning, because that would increase the chances that the Assad regime might take heed, whereas a public warning could lead it to react provocatively to show it is standing up to the U.S. The message could be delivered through Syria’s U.N. ambassador.

Washington separately should make it clear to all Syrian opposition groups that they will be held responsible for any chemical weapons, radioactive materials, or MANPADS that fall into their hands. They should know that they will be rewarded if they turn these over to the U.S. or allied governments and punished if they retain them or pass them on to terrorists.

The U.S., its allies, and the “Friends of Syria” contact group should establish an intelligence-sharing mechanism to monitor Syrian WMD sites and track the movement of loose weapons in an effort to intercept them before they can be transferred to terrorist groups. The United States is already using satellite intelligence and drones to monitor Syrian military activities and should build up its intelligence-

gathering network inside Syria. Other countries may be able to contribute important human intelligence that the U.S. lacks.

It is especially important to coordinate counter-proliferation and counterterrorism efforts with Syria's neighbors to prevent terrorist groups or smugglers from moving dangerous weapons out of the country. Turkey, which has extensive ties with the Syrian opposition, can play a critical role. Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Iraq could also make important contributions in detecting and intercepting weapons leaking out of Syria. Particular attention should be paid to preventing them from being transferred to Hezbollah and Iran or falling into the hands of al-Qaeda. Washington should also develop contingency plans with these countries and the Syrian opposition to prepare a disaster response plan for the possible use or accidental detonation of chemical or radiological weapons.

Rapid-Response Plans Needed

Because air strikes against chemical weapons facilities could release toxic plumes that would threaten nearby civilians, bombing would be a desperate and dangerous means to prevent proliferation. If the U.S. receives actionable intelligence that terrorists have obtained or are about to obtain WMD materials, then it should launch a targeted CIA or military operation, if practical. For example, the Pentagon should prepare to act on contingency plans for the rapid insertion of Special Forces personnel to secure, remove, or disable hazardous materials that might fall into terrorist hands.

The U.S. government should also plan to help a Syrian successor government secure, destroy, and disable the Assad regime's WMD stockpile and production facilities, along with loose conventional weapons such as MANPADS.

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Harvard's Latest Assault on Israel

Ruth Wisse

28, 2012 -- In 1948, when the Arab League declared war on Israel, no one imagined that six decades later American universities would become its overseas agency. Yet campus incitement against Israel has been growing from California to the New York Island. A conference at Harvard next week called "Israel/Palestine and the One-State Solution" is but the latest aggression in an escalating campaign against the Jewish state.

The sequence is by now familiar: Arab student groups

and self-styled progressives organize a conference or event like "Israeli Apartheid Week," targeting Israel as the main problem of the Middle East. They frame the goals of these events in buzzwords of "expanding the range of academic debate." But since the roster of speakers and subjects makes their hostile agenda indisputable, university spokespersons scramble to dissociate their institutions from the events they are sponsoring. Jewish students and alums debate whether to ignore or protest the aggression, and newspapers fueling the story give equal credence to Israel's attackers and defenders.

A featured speaker at Harvard's conference is Ali Abunimah, creator of the website Electronic Intifada, who opposes the existence of a "Jewish State" as racist by virtue of being Jewish. A regular on this circuit, he also keynoted a recent University of Pennsylvania conference urging "Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions" (BDS) of, from and against Israel.

Ostensibly dedicated to protecting Palestinian Arabs from Israeli oppression, BDS has by now achieved the status of an international "movement," some of whose branches exclude Israeli academics from their journals and conferences.

But the economic war on Israel did not start with BDS. In 1945, before the founding of Israel, the Arab League declared a boycott of "Jewish products and manufactured goods." Ever since, the Damascus-based Central Boycott Office has tried to enforce a triple-tiered boycott prohibiting importation of Israeli-origin goods and services, trade with any entity that does

business in Israel, and engagement with any company or individual that does business with firms on the Arab League blacklist. Although the U.S. Congress took measures to counteract this boycott, and the Damascus Bureau may be temporarily preoccupied on other fronts, the boycott momentum has been picked up by Arab students and academics.

Freedom of speech grants all Americans the right to prosecute the verbal war against Israel. But let's differentiate toleration from abetting. Harvard may tolerate smoking, but its medical school wouldn't sponsor a conference touting the benefits of cigarettes because doctors have learned that smoking is hazardous to health. The avowed mission of the Harvard Kennedy School of Government, host of the upcoming conference, "is to strengthen democratic governance around the world by preparing people for public leadership and by helping to solve problems of public policy." How farcical that instead of seeking to strengthen democratic governance, its students hijack its forum for "studying" how to destroy the hardiest democracy in the Middle East.

The pattern of anti-Israel attack, administrative embarrassment, Jewish confusion, and media exploitation of the story will continue until all parties realize that the war against Israel is fundamentally different from biases to which it is often compared. Once Americans acknowledged the evils of their discrimination against African-Americans, they abjured their racism and tried through affirmative action to compensate for past injustice. Arab and

Muslim leaders have done the opposite. Having attempted to deny Jews their right to their one country, they accused Jews of denying Arabs their 22nd. After losing wars on the battlefield, they prosecuted the war by other means.

Students who are inculcated with hatred of Israel may want to express their national, religious or political identity by urging its annihilation. But universities that condone their efforts are triple offenders—against their mission, against the Jewish people, and perhaps most especially against the maligners themselves. Smoking is less fatal to smokers than anti-Jewish politics is to its users. Remember Hitler's bunker.

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