

ARAB SPRING AND ISRAELI SECURITY: THE NEW THREATS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the article is to evaluate Israel's security perceptions about the Arab Spring. The study argues that The Arab Spring is the reshuffling of the Middle East by re-aligned U.S.-Turkish common policies. For Israel the devil you know is more acceptable than the unknown future. Bearing in mind all the results of the surveys showing that Arabs can easily fall into radical Islam, Israel prefers not to enter such a dangerous and risky game for toppling down the old dictators and establishing new regimes. Israel could resist such a change and force U.S. to postpone or cancel their new policies if it were a decade ago, but today she is extremely isolated in international arena thanks to Bibi's government. On the other hand, Israel struggles to counter the Turkish offenses in diplomacy, has to avoid the "Iranian Trap" that is being set by Iran slowly and carefully for the past few years, and also domestically facing serious crises. All those dynamics are forcing Israel to remain silent unless it breaks the isolation that it fell, and watch carefully the games played by U.S., Turkey and Iran in the Middle East.

Key words: Israeli Politics, Arab Spring, Radical Islam, Israel's Security Perception, Iran's Foreign Policy.

ARAP BAHARI VE İSRAİL GÜVENLİĞİ: YENİ TEHDİTLER

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı İsrail güvenlik algısının Arap Baharına nasıl baktığını analiz etmektir. Bu çerçevede çalışma, İsrail'in güvenlik perspektifi bağlamında, Ortadoğu'da çıkan karışıklıkları bölgeye belirsizlik ve istikrarsızlık getireceği için temkinli baktığını iddia etmekte ve İsrail'in bölgedeki otoriter rejimlerin yıkılmasını, siyasal İslam tehlikesinden kendisine tehdit oluşturduğunu düşünmektedir. İsrail daha çok bölgede önemli rol oynayan 3 aktörün –ABD-Türkiye-İran- hareketini izlemektedir. İsrail Türkiye'nin bölgede kendine uyguladığı diplomasiye ve İran'ın Tel Aviv'i tuzağa düşürecek olan politikalarına karşı bölgede izole olduğu için ABD'nin Ortadoğu politikalarına karşı çıkmamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: İsrail Siyaseti, Arap Baharı, Radikal İslam, İsrail'in Güvenlik Anlayışı, İran Dış Politikası.

A MOMENT OF DEMOCRACY IN THE ARAB WORLD

Rising food prices and harsh economic conditions has fueled the protests in Arab states just like in Europe of 1848 when initial spark in France caused a chain reaction of unrest in Austria, Italy, Spain, Romania, Prussia, Saxony and Bavaria. This year historically low Russian wheat harvest resulted with high grain and bread prices worldwide. However the revolutions are not only about rising food prices, but also against the dictatorships and corruption. The uprisings are supported widely by poor and middle class, many times together with even upper middle class. Analysts who were talking about the “domino effect” were to some extent right. At the very first period of Arab revolutions, some were claiming that there wouldn’t be a dramatical change in the region since oil prices are tolerably high, security services loyal, elections thoroughly manipulated, Islamists repressed, international support strong.¹ But it turned out to be wrong. True, the mass movements cannot be compared to Eastern Europe in 1980s, but it is surely an important cornerstone for Arabs, Israel and U.S..

The wrath of Arab people under the autocratic regimes has finally exploded by the year 2011. As some call this an “Arab Spring”, which is a hope for bringing democracy to Arab countries, these protests and changes are raising the security concerns for Israel. After the 1979 Peace Treaty with Egypt and 1994 Peace Treaty with Jordan, Israel was no more surrounded by a circle of fire, but these so-called “Arab Spring” can return everything to 30 years back if simply “things go wrong”. Not surprisingly, Israel is once again accused for “pushing the button” and conspiracy theories are floating around, as Yemen’s Ali Abdullah Saleh has claimed “There is an operations room in Tel-Aviv with aim of destabilizing Arab world and this is run by the White House.”² Latest reports are saying that even Aden is surrounded by Jihadists, some linked to Al Qaeda³, but still Israel is being accused for each and every single thing taking place in international arena, as usual.

For the first time in a generation, it is not religion, nor the adventures of a single leader, nor wars with Israel that have energized the region. Across Egypt and the Middle East, a somewhat nostalgic notion of a common Arab identity, intersecting with a visceral sense of what amounts to a decent life, is driving protests that have bound the region in a sense of a shared destiny.⁴ For an Israeli this is something like an Iranian revolution that is supported by Al Jazeera for whatever the reason is and Barrack Obama is stupidly allowing what is taking place in the Arab streets. A very radical regime changes in Israel’s neighbors may even result with renewed wars; historically, revolutionary regimes become more radical in response to international conflict. Jacobins gained the power thanks to war with Austria while Iran found

a chance to drive out Iran's seculars with the Iraq war. Radicals hijacking contemporary revolutions may lead to new provocations⁵ and Israel is fully aware of this possibility.

When Tunisian protests started, Israel was alarmed immediately. Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Silvan Shalom expressed that the Tunisian events might lead to regime change in other countries. Originally from Tunisia himself, Shalom expressed disquiet that a more democratic Middle East might not share the same concern with Tel-Aviv on fighting radical fundamentalists, who he said threaten Israel.⁶ Tunisia itself can be seen as a marginal concern but as another Israeli official says, Israel cannot afford dramatic changes in Egypt or Jordan⁷ which are the only states that has a peace agreement with Israel sharing a border. There are plenty of reasons to be alarmed. Iranian Islamic Revolution began as a revolt against tyranny of Shah, but the strength of socialists in the Iranian streets couldn't prevent a theocratic regime. Such fears are worsened by the triumphant return to Egypt of Sheikh Yusuuf al-Qaradawi (who supports suicide bombings against all Israelis, including women and children), the most prominent Sunni scholar in the Arab world with longstanding ties to the Muslim Brotherhood.⁸

A moment of democracy during the revolutions does never mean it will result with a democratic regime. Washington has insisted 2006 Palestine elections to be free and fair but what they got was a victory of Hamas in Gaza. Same goes for Lebanon, after the assassination of Prime Minister Rafik Hariri in 2005, "Cedar Revolution" drove Syria out of the country and pushed Hezbollah to the periphery. Today both are back.⁹ After the free elections in Lebanon, militant Shi'ite Hezbollah backed by Iran and Syria has a bigger say in national politics than ever.¹⁰ Frankly speaking, apart from theoretical discussions about whether democracy is the ideal regime or not, it's obvious that free elections does not guarantee peace and prosperity. Eyal Zisser, senior research fellow at Tel-Aviv's Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, points to another historical analogy. "This is not like eastern Europe in the late 1980s," he says. "This is not a region where stable dictatorships can be replaced with stable democracies. Here the alternative means chaos, anarchy and -radicalism."¹¹ Netanyahu in Knesset also shared his concerns on "democracy":¹²

"...recent history shows us many cases in the Middle East when extreme Islamist elements abused the rules of the democratic game to gain power and impose anti-democratic regimes. It happened in Iran; it happened in Lebanon; and it happened when the Hamas took over the Gaza Strip. Does Iran enjoy freedom? Is there a real democracy in Gaza? Does Hezbollah promote human rights?"

We must ensure that this does not happen again. We must do everything in our power to ensure that peace triumphs.”

Prime Minister Netanyahu is right. It is still unclear where these revolution will lead, but an August 2010 Brookings poll showed that only 10 per cent of Arabs regard Iran as a threat; instead they consider the U.S. (77 per cent), and even more Israel (88 per cent) as the major threats.¹³

During the protests Arab opposition movements have not made overt and covert cooperation with Israel a central issue, if for no other reason to mobilize Arab masses; Israel was an issue frequently but not the central one. Israel was not the rallying point.¹⁴ Yet, a democratic election campaigns following the toppled governments can easily manipulated by populist leaders, and the same old anti-Israeli slogans (though those slogans were banned during Cairo protests)¹⁵ can catch the votes of Arabs who has a deep fear, even a paranoia, towards Israel.¹⁶ Israeli government has already said that over the next two decades: "Security needs will increase and security budgets will be enlarged."¹⁷ This is a very clear example of security dilemma, Arabs regarding Israel as the major threat, Israel increases security budget, and the mutual suspicions results with continuous tensions.

Between 1949 and 1979, every revolution against a sultanistic regime resulted with left-wing pro-communist or an Islamist government. Yet since 1980s, these models are widely perceived as failures at producing economic growth and popular accountability, two major goals of all recent anti-sultanistic revolutions. However, for all western analysts, memories of the 1979s Tehran Syndrome, the 1992 Algiers Syndrome are still fresh and the danger is very close.¹⁸ In both cases pro-western dictators are thought to be replaced by free and democratic elections, but it simply failed. Both states radicalized and torpedoed regional stability. Algerian revolution had limited impact, but Iran, center of Shia Islam under Shah was pivotal for U.S. strategic and geopolitical interests across West Asia, was lost. Today Egypt, center of Arab World, is also the centerpiece of American stability in the Arab world and center of gravity in the Arab-Israeli peace process. Loosing Iran was a serious blow, but has been balanced as time passed by. However if Egypt will be lost like Iran, all U.S. policies in the region will collapse.¹⁹

An autocrat firmly in charge can make concessions more easily than can a weak, elected leader – just witness the fragility of Mahmoud Abbas’s West Bank government. And again, it was democracy that brought the extremists of Hamas to power in Gaza.²⁰ Another point; it was not the democratic leaders but autocrats such as Anwar Sadat or King Hussein who made the peace with Israel. Six years ago Condoleezza Rice in Cairo quoted that United

States pursued stability at the expense of democracy in the region, but now with taking a different course they were now supporting the democratic aspirations of all people.²¹ Though these words will only float in the air as American national interests are above everything including democracy, for Israel it is a serious anxiety to hear such a policy decision even if it will never be realized. At the final, when it comes to the aspirations of ordinary Arabs for genuinely participatory politics and true self-determination, those vaunted American values are suspended, even when "special relationships" and hydrocarbon riches are not directly at issue.

Seeing other Arab people bringing down a dictator, streets from Morocco to Yemen has filled with masses. The success of the rebellions doesn't lie in numbers but in the unity and persistence. It never got to be more than 300.000 people or so in Tahrir Square, the crowds of Arab revolutions cannot be compared to Eastern Europe in 1989 or Iran in 1979.²² Before the Arab Spring, similar revolts such as the protests in Iraq for electricity during the summer of 2010 couldn't succeed because of ideological divisions at the political level, mostly encouraged by foreign powers to divert Arabs from their real common interests.²³ Now the "revolution trend" that took place in Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia and similar countries has spread to Arabs, but in a region of powder keg one must pay closer attention to events taking place in Middle East.

Egypt: A Democratic Revolution or Military Coup?

It is hard to call what happened in Egypt as a "revolution". Tahrir Square was some kind of a political chess, awaiting the opponents' next move. A true revolution cannot "play games" with the crowds. What we saw was a military intervention that used the cover of protests to force Mubarak out of office in order to preserve the regime. When Mubarak finally showed that he was not going to step down, military staged a coup and forced for resignation.²⁴ Today Egyptian military cracks down all Tahrir Square protesters after the overthrow of Mubarak. Not surprisingly military took over the existing regime by a military council. This is similar case to what happened in Mexico after Díaz was overthrown, Jean-Claude Duvalier's departure in Haiti, Marcos' fall in Philippines and after Suharto's overthrow in Indonesia.²⁵

While Israeli and U.S. intelligence did "predict" possible civil unrest and/or regime change in the Middle East (namely Egypt and Saudi Arabia) and a possible mass uprising that would be caused by either high food prices or lack of water supplies, "a popular uprising like

this was completely unexpected."²⁶ IDF intelligence chief is being criticized for failing to predict the "timing" of the current popular uprising in Egypt.²⁷

An immediate change in Egyptian foreign policy is not expected since officer corps of Egyptian military has been educated at U.S. defense colleges for 30 years. Army has American arms, which some of them such as M1A1 Abrams tanks to be built on Egypt.²⁸ Egypt is by far one of the biggest countries that have U.S. foreign aid for the military. Egyptian army has mostly dependent on American equipment and the spare parts or contractors. Unlike 1970's, there is no Soviet Union to replace the military staff, or an alternative power that would patron Egyptian military (probably China or Russia) will need decades of re-equipment and training process which will limit the power of army, meaning that breaking the Camp David accords will not be possible. According to the Congressional Research Report submitted to Congress in September 2009, the U.S. had subsidized the Egyptian regime with over 64 billion dollars since it signed the peace treaty with Israel in 1979, including \$40 billion in military hardware and security gear²⁹, second only to Israel in that respect.³⁰

Though U.S. has been claiming that it supports "democracy" in the region more than ever, at the end it needs a friendly Egypt no matter how or who rules it. Whether the issue is Israel-Palestine, Hamas and Gaza, Lebanon, Iran, security for Gulf oil supplies, Sudan, or the spread of Islamist fundamentalist ideas, Washington wants Egypt, the Arab world's most populous and influential country, in its corner. That's the political and geostrategic bottom line.³¹ For the U.S. interests, peace treaty with Israel must be maintained, Suez Canal must preserve its status quo and guaranteeing American passage freely, allow American military to stage major operations from its bases and Cairo must continue to give its intelligence support which started after 9/11 which helped to undermine al Qaeda.

An Israeli official told Agence France-Presse, "It is in the fundamental interests of Egypt to maintain its privileged ties with the West, and maintaining peace with Israel." An Israeli researcher took a fallback position. "Even if the Muslim Brotherhood, who have criticized 'illegal ties with Israel' come to power, the army and Egyptian security services would oppose it with all their might."³² It is true that Egyptian security services, at least in short and middle term will stay pro-western thanks to the military bureaucracy established by U.S.. No surprise that Military Council which is the de-facto ruler of Egypt is saying that Egypt will continue to respect international treaties it has signed.³³ Not only Egyptian but also Tunisian revolutions were aborted, the overthrown dictators were replaced by people or

groups who were either part of the old regime or have not effectively embraced the goals of the popular revolutions.³⁴

Pessimists have enough reasons to fear from a possibility of radical Egypt. Compared with Tunisia, it has 85 million people with explosive untapped potential, increasingly demanding civil rights, literacy rate of only 66 per cent and a miserable GDP of only 22,70\$.³⁵ Post-Mubarak Egypt is even worse, security vacuum has led to a dramatic surge in crime, economic problems are deepening, productivity has been disrupted during protests, exports are hit and tourists are scared. All those factors, together with corrupted politicians and elites make Egypt a time bomb. A recent poll found that 59 per cent of Egyptians favor democracy (probably “democracy” is only something equal to “free elections” for Egyptians) in almost all situations, 60 percent is very or somewhat worried about the specter of religious extremism in their society and also 61 per cent do not even think there is a struggle between modernizers and religion in Egypt. Among the ones who see a struggle (which makes up 31 per cent in the poll) 59 per cent favored religious forces while 21 per cent favored the modernizers. For the optimists, the statistics shouldn't be misread, only 59 per cent of 31 per cent is 18 per cent of the whole Egyptian population who favor fundamentalists over modernizers.³⁶

The other half of the coin is very pessimistic. Half of Egyptians support Hamas according to polls. Thirty percent supports Hezbollah and 20 per cent support Al Qaeda. Moreover, 95 per cent of them would welcome Islamic influence over their politics. 82 per cent of Egyptians support executing adulterers by stoning, 77 per cent support whipping and cutting the hands off thieves. 84 per cent supports executing any Muslim who changes his religion.³⁷ Demography of Egypt and the polls indicates clearly that a fundamentalist Egypt in near future is possible. Yoram Meital, Middle East analyst quotes the main Israeli concern:³⁸ "Be careful what you wish for – you may get something worse. The biggest geopolitical nightmare for Israel is to have the most populous Arab country on its doorstep with political instability. Believe me, it changes the whole balance of the Middle East. It makes everything else look very simple because suddenly we go back 30 years."

Going back 30 years may not mean much for an outsider, but Israeli people who are tired of living in a terror environment will have an extremely negative psychological effect once they see a hostile post-Mubarak Egypt. Israeli military might as well as an excellent intelligence service is still there, and though lacking manpower, IDF's quality to fight against a joint attack from its neighboring states and terrorist organizations is enough. But peace treaties with Egypt, and also Jordan, had not only given a strategic military advantage to

confront Syria and terrorist groups, but also gave hope to Israeli people that peace, even if it is a “cold peace” (a really cold one, where Israeli books are forbidden in Egypt), was possible. Going back to 30 years will simply shatter the optimism of moderate Israelis and give the hawks, which are already becoming more and more powerful every day, an upper hand. But at the same time, Israel must also ask itself what, exactly, it has done in the 30 years in which peace with Egypt has opened up the opportunity to reach other peace agreements.³⁹

Peace Treaty with Egypt is one of the most important pillars of the Israel’s national security. 1948, 1967 and 1973 “wars of existence” for Israel had always contained a threat coming from Egypt. Today a joint attack of Arabs without Egypt will not even have a blueprint. Wars without participation of Egypt are only a matter of interests, but not survival, like 1982 and 2006. Israel was able to crush Palestinian uprisings between 1987-1991 and 2000-2003, carried operations in Iraq (1981), Tunisia (1988), Syria (2007) and various times in Gaza without thinking about Egyptian army. If Egypt abrogates the Camp David agreement and starts building a force whose only objective is to carry an offense against Israel, Yoram Meital’s words will come into reality and everything will be turn back to 30 years ago. Reiterating that Israel has military power enough to counter the attacks, unlike the 1973 war it does not have military capability (due to limited manpower) to occupy and control Sinai. Leaving much of its southern borders to mainly border guards, a hostile Egypt will force Israel to shift some of its forces from other fronts and its power will be divided. The uncertainties in Egypt already caused a major re-deployment of forces to Philadelphi Corridor between Sinai and Gaza, which is the major route for Palestinian terrorists to use supplies. Israeli analysts have already speculated that Israel might need to revamp its operational doctrine and to beef up its forces in the south.⁴⁰

Sinai Peninsula, the “Wild West” of the Egypt, is the most important short-term threat for Israeli national security. Before the uprisings the biggest trouble was the flow of immigrants, mostly Sudanese, Ethiopian and Eritreans via Sinai desert. It may seem quite controversial, but while harassing most of the travelers for the sake of “security” at Ben Gurion Airport, Israel did not take any precautions at Sinai border at all, except endless plans talked for years on “monitoring better” the Sinai borders.

However, the type of threat coming from Sinai has dramatically changed within past few months. In August 18 attacks in southern Israel left eight Israelis dead. Israeli government claimed that the attackers were from Gaza Strip and crossed into Israel through Sinai border. As retaliation Israel attacked various locations in both Gaza and Egypt, which resulted with five dead Egyptian soldiers and several injuries. On the same day another attack was carried

by a suicide bomber who blew himself up at Egyptian checkpoint next to Gaza and killing an officer. Most of the police and security forces fled shortly after the continuous attacks on police stations and Bedouins stormed the Sinai Prisons, freeing unknown number of Bedouin smugglers and Palestinian militants without any resistance from prison staff. Local Bedouins are well armed and was already in conflict with Egyptian authorities for smuggling activities before the uprisings. Sinai do not carry an important role for only Israeli security, but it is also traditionally important for Egypt. Though starting from the very beginning of Egyptian Dynasty, it has always been accepted a part of Egypt for several thousands of years, but also regarded apart from the Nile Delta and mainly hold for military and strategic reasons, resulting with the failure of integration of local population to rulers based on Nile.

Lately it became more than a tradition, some kind of a culture, for Bedouins of Sinai to smuggle. Ibrahim al-Menaei, a leader of the Swarkeh tribe of Bedouins has honestly expressed that “he will not let a single police officer into this region until they give in to their demands” and added that he get 50 dollars for every Palestinian he smuggles into Sinai, explaining that Hamas supervises the smuggling operation from the Gaza side of the border.⁴¹ This smuggling “culture” has been politicized lately as the interaction between Islamic movements and Sinai Bedouins are higher than ever. The cooperation between Bedouin and Gazan smugglers is growing and apart from goods and arms, Salafi ideology is also exported to Sinai.

Also Al-Qaeda finds this as a golden chance to extend its influence; Gaza is a barren land with only a little control of Egyptian forces and according to Camp David accords Egyptian military presence is very weak in the region. Another thing is natives of the Sinai Peninsula are not socially, politically or even economically integrated to Egypt and have always criticized Cairo for discrimination towards Bedouins, while the Egyptian presence can be traced back to the First Dynasty, thousands of years ago.⁴² The “Bedouin” identity is still strong, and though they have the same ethnicity, language and culture with the Egyptians they are struggling in poverty, government still sees the region only from a perspective of military and strategical point while having no efforts at all to control unruly, armed Bedouins and no steps have taken to solve social problems of the people.

In the absence of security forces and power vacuum, Al-Qaeda and the movements sympathetic for it, such as al-Shabaab al-Islam, have formed in the Peninsula. On July 29, the residents of el-Arish found a flier labeled “A statement from Al-Qaeda in the Sinai Peninsula” distributed throughout their neighborhoods.⁴³ Demands of the Salafi groups and Al-Qaeda sympathizers are for Sharia, revocating the Camp David and other treaties with Israel,

establishment of an Islamic Emirate in Sinai and Egyptian military intervention to the conflict between Palestinians and Israel.

For the short term, hands of the Egyptians are tied because of the Camp David accords. Well-armed Bedouins has nothing to fear for now though Cairo has sent 2000 troops from the Egyptian Second Division backed by police and border guards to al-Arish.⁴⁴ The only good thing for Israel is aside from suspicions of Israeli involvement to the unrest, some Egyptian commentators see the hand of Hamas behind the disturbances in the Sinai.⁴⁵ It can be expected a temporary revocations in the Camp David accords (mutually agreed with Israel) until the return of status quo before the uprisings in Egypt. It also would not be surprising Egyptian government to tolerate basic smuggling activities of Bedouins except supplying arms to terrorist organizations.

Israel also faces the threats of simultaneous attacks from all fronts. Israeli General Avriel Askhenazi recently said Palestinian resistance cannot occupy Negev, and Hezbollah cannot occupy Galilee.⁴⁶ Of course a terrorist organization following guerilla tactics cannot control a specific area against a regular army since it will be simply a suicide. But even discussing such a possibility and answering terrorist assertions by General Staff members shows the psychological dynamics of Israel. Regretfully, Israel is on the defense against the terrorism today, thanks to its international isolation.

Not a very short term expectation, but once Israel breaks its isolation, and solves the manpower problem in the army (possibly by recruiting Orthodox Haredim or by a new immigrant wave), it can consider reoccupying Sinai if the U.S. will be unable to exert its influence in radicalized Egypt. Looking from the other side of the coin, Egypt may seek to restore its sovereignty in Sinai by renegotiation of the Camp David Accords. Ayman Nour, former presidential candidate during Mubarek regime has weighed against Camp David accords. Even Mohammad Al Baradei, former head of the UN Atomic Agency and an important key figure in the country running for presidency declared that upon his election he would consider going to war with Israel for protection people of Gaza.⁴⁷

A passive Egypt under Mubarak was in full harmony with Israeli security strategies. This is why Benjamin Netanyahu has campaigned among world leaders to go easy on Mubarak during the protests, the Israeli Ha'aretz daily newspaper reported⁴⁸. Another leading politician put it, "Israel cannot do anything about what is happening there. All we can do is to express our support for Mubarak and hope the riots pass quietly."⁴⁹ According to some others, Israelis sent planes with full of supplies to the Egyptian security forces.⁵⁰

Being the center of gravity and the trendsetter in the Arab world, any changes within Egypt will result with the change of dynamics in the Arab World. For many decades Arab nations thought they could rise up only with the Egypt. However 2006 war and Tunisian revolution showed that Arabs can, and should, do it without Egypt. Egypt has lost its leading role in Arab and International affairs during the three decades of Mubarak's rule. The country had no visions during these years. Economic developments can be impressive, but it lacked an ideological or symbolic mission which it traditionally had.

However post-Mubarak Cairo has opted for normalization of relations with Iran; begun whittling down security cooperation with Israel; and in a stunning move reconciled the Palestinian groups without consulting to U.S., Saudi Arabia and Israel and is probably encouraging them to seek United Nations recognition for Palestinian statehood.⁵¹ A delegation of Egyptian academics and civil society leaders visited Iran in June 2011 and one delegate, Mustafa Nagar, expressed the view that "Iranians believe Egypt is a strong country, not only to put Israel under pressure, but to benefit from the Egyptians themselves, that's why Egypt must restore ties with this great civilization".⁵² Official discourse has also changed recently. Egyptian Foreign Ministry's spokesman, Mehna Bakhom, declared that "We are prepared to take a different view of Iran. The former regime used to see Iran as an enemy, but we don't."⁵³ This reconciliation is one of the last things that Israel likes to see. "We are troubled by some of the recent actions coming out of Egypt," said one senior Israeli official, citing a "rapprochement between Iran and Egypt" as well as "an upgrading of the relationship between Egypt and Hamas." "These developments could have strategic implications on Israel's security," the official said.⁵⁴

Energy security of Israel is also in a deep trouble after Egyptian uprisings. One of the main reasons that light the fuse anti-Mubarak protests with slogans such as "Leave, leave you traitor, you sold your country to Israel"⁵⁵, was exporting gas to Israel for a fixed price of 1.25\$ per million British thermal units (Btu) – while Global gas prices in the meantime jumped to 4\$ per million Btu for 15 years.⁵⁶ Egypt was subsidizing Israel with hundreds of millions of dollars in energy purchase until Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz exposed the secret and reported that Israel was receiving gas from Egypt at a 70 per cent discount. The scandal was swept aside by the former Egyptian prime minister who refused to divulge to the parliament the terms of the contract. Subsequently when the government was sued, a judge ruled against it and invalidated the contract, which the government totally ignored it.⁵⁷ However, according to Israelis, this is yet another manipulation of the truth - as Israeli National Infrastructure Minister Uzi Landau pointed out last week, "The price Israel pays Egypt for the gas isn't low,

it's twice as much compared to [what] Syria, Jordan and Lebanon [pay Egypt]. The rate the Israel Electric Corporation pays the Egyptian gas company is identical to the rate it pays Israel gas suppliers."⁵⁸

As we stated earlier, even under the authority of Mubarak, The Sinai Peninsula was a de facto red zone, security is weak, local Bedouins rules here, weapon smuggling to Gaza and to other parts of Middle East flows through Sinai. According to SITE Intelligence group, which monitors Al Qaeda and other Islamist websites, jihadists are suggesting Muslims in Sinai to take advantage of Egyptian unrest. Israel is receiving 40 per cent of its natural gas from Egypt in accordance with the peace agreement⁵⁹ and jihadists are calling for striking at the pipelines that deliver the gas supplies. Jihadist calls found the answer, security weakness has shown its first sights by the blown up of Arish-Ashkelon gas pipeline⁶⁰ and the pipeline has continuously been attacked until now. Some 36 per cent of Israel's power generation supply is fueled by natural gas and two fifth of this comes from Egyptian East Mediterranean Gas Pipeline.⁶¹ For all those reasons Israel has already started following a new Energy Security policy. Israel and Egypt are renegotiating the gas prices, while simultaneously Israel searches for alternative options. A recently discovered Tamar gas field has enough supplies at least for a decade, but it is uncertain when it will be operational. There are also Hezbollah claims for Tamar gas field and Hezbollah openly warned that they wouldn't hesitate to use weapons to defend it. Coal, which already makes 62 per cent of the energy generation, is a solution for short term but it is already polluting the environment too much. A different alternative can be Liquefied natural gas but it is very expensive and can be only used for some kind of "insurance".⁶² Israel will be accepting paying to pay a higher amount for Egyptian gas in short term, until Tamar gas field be operational.

One WikiLeaks cable helped fueling the anger of masses, Mubarak's intelligence chief and briefly vice-president told the Israelis they were "welcome" to invade the Philadelphi Route, a narrow strip of land between Egypt and Gaza, to deter arms smuggling by Hamas.⁶³ Tel-Aviv has openly described Mubarak as an ally, and he has shown himself to be the Israel's hammer against Gaza by blocking it for three years aimed at weakening Hamas government. This is why Hamas imams in Gaza has described Mubarak regime as dictatorship and offered strong support to overthrow him.⁶⁴ Shaykh Hussein bin Mahmud, a Salafi-Jihadi ideologue expresses the common feeling of Arabs. He accuses Egypt for "protecting the Jews from outside [Israel's] borders" by preventing entry of mujahedeen into Palestine, and suggests a military campaign should begin outside Israel, since any mujahedeen must fight with Arab border guards in order to enter Israel.⁶⁵ Salafi ideology not only targets

Jews but also Christian Copts too. 100.000 Copts have left Egypt since March. According to Naguib Gabriell, the director EUHRO, "they (Copts) are coerced into that by threats and intimidation of hard line Salafists, and the lack of protection they are getting from the Egyptian regime."⁶⁶ Salafi slogans are becoming more and more provocative everyday against Copts and seculars Arabs.

Calls similar to Shaykh Hussein bin Mahmud's will not turn into reality, but it is certain that Egypt will not play the role of Israel's strategic partner anymore. Rather, Egypt is likely to begin treating its relations with Israel as a bilateral matter. This in turn will place significant pressure on Israel's relations with other Arab states, as well as the framework for domination through negotiation established with the Palestinians.⁶⁷ Mubarak and Palestinian Authority tried to silence and suppress the relations between Egyptian and Palestinian people for a long time, but the links cannot be broken in such a short period of time. Recently thousands of Egyptian protesters gathered in front of the Israeli Embassy in Cairo and stormed inside demanding an end to ties with Israel⁶⁸.

There is great deal of concerns in Israel that the political opening is being made for Muslim Brotherhood. Brotherhood is the oldest and largest Islamist movement in the world founded in Egypt in 1928, having ties in nearly every Muslim country having supporters in Europe and U.S.. Egyptians knows and to the great extend approves fact that Muslim Brotherhood opposes Camp David accords and doesn't recognize Israel in many of their statements.

Muslim Brotherhood during the anti-Mubarak protests formed people's committees to protect public properties and coordinated demonstrators activities including supplying them with food, beverages and first aid.⁶⁹ Currently the Muslim Brotherhood is the strongest political alternative, but is weak and more ideological than practical⁷⁰, facing troubles transforming from a social religious movement into a political movement. Even so, Muslim Brotherhood will probably have a very dominant role in parliament if free elections are hold. U.S., already accepting Brotherhood as "moderate", may be planning to shift Egypt into a somewhat Pakistani model, a politically Islamic regime under U.S. control that cooperates in military and intelligence affairs. If the plan goes well and Brotherhood will be under covert U.S. patronage, Israel will be left free to control West Bank,⁷¹ but at the same time radical change in Egypt will probably mean a radical change in Palestine as well.

An uncontrolled Brotherhood potentially creates similar fears for U.S., Israel and Iran. Iran is extending its influence with radical Islam and already became the emerging center of it. However, if Egypt under Brotherhood becomes radicalized⁷² this will not be welcomed by

Iran. Egypt is geographically much closer to Israel, Gaza and West Bank and can easily become the magnet for Arabs. A radical Egypt and Iran are not expected to be allies. It's true that Syria is currently the best ally of Iran and Shiite-Sunni differences does not seem to be a matter at all, but this alliance is only a necessity more than sharing common aims. This is why, in the long term when Egypt will be competing with Iran in the region, she will be more attractive partner for Syria, especially against Israel. An Islamist Egypt would be a catastrophe for Israel and U.S.. When Sadat left its alliance with Soviets and formed a new one with U.S. it undermined Soviet military and strategical strategies in East Mediterranean and Middle East and changed the balance of power for the favor of the West.

The crucial point is that the Brotherhood is adamantly opposed to violence against civilians - and thus resolutely dismisses Al-Qaeda. Abu-Futouh in one of his interviews expressed that "We as the Muslim Brotherhood know that the Jews in Israel are human beings and we know they should live, and should not be killed."⁷³ Deep in their hearts, Muslim Brotherhood may hate Israel, but they also know they have to respect the geopolitics and see the limits of their powers. As an established party of political Islam, the Muslim Brotherhood could not be a better antidote to Al Qaeda style fanatics.⁷⁴ "The Brotherhood hates Al Qaeda and Al Qaeda hates the Brotherhood," said Shadi Hamid, director of research at the Brookings Doha Center in Qatar. "So if we're talking about counterterrorism, engaging with the Brotherhood will advance our interests in the region."⁷⁵ Right now, the Brotherhood is exposed to foreign manipulations; it has been facing with splits and many minor groups that are leaving Brotherhood are establishing new groups.⁷⁶ Not only Brotherhood, but also the approximately 200 "Revolution Coalitions" and Egypt's traditional opposition parties are seeing a great degree of fragmentation.⁷⁷

Though American State Department suggests that Brotherhood poses no threat as it has adopted a low profile and becoming secularized⁷⁸, one should never forget that Hamas is an outgrowth of Muslim Brotherhood. The Egyptian police, at least for some period after the rebellion, no longer patrolled on the Rafah border crossing into Gaza. Hamas armed men are entering into Egypt and are closely collaborating with the Muslim Brotherhood.⁷⁹ If Egyptians was successful for not only overthrowing Mubarak but also in forcing a real regime change, Hamas would be already dramatically increasing its power. Linked to an anti-Israel, pro-Hamas Cairo, the Gaza Strip returns to its old status as a bayonet pointed at Tel-Aviv. Certainly, it would be a base for operations and a significant alternative to Fatah.⁸⁰ Hamas was rearmed in a very short period of time while the border was closed. With the open borders now it will increase its firepower in a very short period of time.

If all goes well and pro-Western factions wins the struggle in Egypt, they'll be primarily concerned with domestic issues. They are secular and would not want to return to the wartime state prior to Camp David, because that would simply strengthen the military. If they win power, the geopolitical arrangements would remain unchanged.⁸¹

Another point is a kind of Egyptian nationalism – rather than Islamism – has made itself felt at the demonstrations.⁸² It is a double edged sword for Israel, a new ideology of nationalism can seek an “external enemy” and aggressive nationalist feelings can be turned towards Israel, as usual. On the other hand, abandoning the Islamism can lead Egypt to a rapid modernization process on social life and the new “Egyptian Nationalism” can leave Palestine issue apart in the Middle Eastern affairs of Egyptian state.

Fall of Mubarak has also been welcomed by AKP government and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Mubarak has always perceived Turkey as a rival and a “dangerous model” for Arabs, especially after the Erdoğan government which is labeled as “moderate Islam”. Turkey, already distanced from the west and put itself into the Middle Eastern swamp, has been playing a complex set of games with Hezbollah, Hamas and Iran, without a strong rival such as Egypt to counter its actions. Egypt may also follow the policies of Erdoğan in its foreign affairs, especially while Egyptian people are willing to do this. Erdoğan was greeted by thousands of people during his visit to Egypt and people chanted the slogans “Erdoğan, Erdoğan, a real Muslim, not a coward”, and “Turkey and Egypt are single fist”.⁸³ Egyptian reconciliation with Iran and Hamas “will not undermine the security of the Gulf States because the security of Gulf States is important to Egypt’s national security” according to an Egyptian official.⁸⁴ It is a sign of multidimensional policies that Egypt will follow. It may be expected to play a leading role amongst Arab states and Palestinian affairs again and counter Iran, Turkey and Syria which have filled the power vacuum of Egypt in the last decade.

But beyond all, the new foreign policy priorities are already given; Sudan was the first destination for Prime Minister Essam Sharaf. This is not a coincidence; one of the most important documents expressing the strategies of Israel is the article of Oded Yinon’s entitled “A Strategy for Israel in the Nineteen Eighties”.⁸⁵ The commentary argues that Israel must put its efforts for the division of the whole area into small states by dissolution of existing states into ethnic or sectarian based states and make them Israel’s satellites. Sudan has been a center of the Israeli strategies for a long time; in the 1960s and 1970s Israel supported Southern Sudanese rebels as a reward for keeping Sudanese Army out of Six Days War, and today as Southern Sudan is preparing for declaration of statehood, it is viewed potential serve as a non-Arab ally along the periphery of the Middle East.⁸⁶ Sudanese Minister Hag Majid Swar has

warned that disintegration of South is a new plot to create another Israel in the region⁸⁷. Many states, including Egypt have declared their intention to recognize Southern Sudan. No matter what happens in domestic affairs or in Middle East, Nile River has always the highest priority for Egypt, as its military has many times made it clear that it considers any effort to disrupt the flow of the Nile a *casus belli*. The Egyptians claims that their share from Nile will not be reduced as Sudan's share will be divided between north and south after the new borders, but already being under the Israeli influence, Southern Sudan can always create troubles for Egypt in such a case, especially if Egyptian-Israeli relations gets tense in the future.

Yinon's Plan is also applicable to Libya. Cities such as Benghazi and Darnah always had association with Islamic movements, while many of them found their way to Iraq to join the insurgency against U.S.⁸⁸ Now Benghazi based Transnational Council controlling most of the Libya, it has a chance to break up just as Yugoslavia, where many people worries it may be a "giant Somalia". Most probably China and Russia will oppose the ongoing split and will try to unite Libyan tribes and opposition, but break up of Libya may work for Israel just as it did in Sudan for similar reasons.

Iran: Extending the Influence

The uprisings in Arab World are a golden opportunity for pursuing Iran's short and long term interests on political and military domination of the Gulf and East Mediterranean. Militarily, politically and ideologically Iran started accumulating its capabilities, a process started after the fall of Iraq and accelerated after Hezbollah-Israel war. It is the only serious threat for Israel at the moment. U.S. is also aware of rising power of Iran; "There's much more upside than downside for the U.S.," said Martin S. Indyk, the vice president for foreign policy at the Brookings Institution. "We have an interest in counterbalancing the advantages Iran has gained in the rest of the region. That makes it an unusual confluence of our values and interests."⁸⁹

Iran has extended its influence even to Gaza Strip after the 2006 war between Israel and Hezbollah. Sunni Arabs of Gaza has expressed admiration of Hezbollah and Hassan Nasrallah, ignoring his Shiite cleric status after the war which is celebrated as a victory against Israel. Sunni dictators are trying to lower the image of Hezbollah without success since Iran is already stealing the flag of Arab nationalism while Sunni dictators had sold out on all the causes Arabs cared about.⁹⁰

Iranian presence in Gaza and West Bank goes back to early 1980s when Islamic Jihad Organization in Palestine was established by Dr.Fathi Shaqaqi, receiving most of its funding

from Iran in the form of “charities” operating in the Gaza Strip such as al-Ahsan and the Fathi Shafaqi Forum.⁹¹ The charitable activities until now have resulted with large number of people that has converted to Shiism after the Hezbollah-Israel war of 2006. Iranian activities in Gaza have led indirectly to sympathy for the Shiite concept and identification with Hezbollah and the Army of the Guardians of the Islamic Revolution (Revolutionary Guards). It is not surprising to see Shiite ritual ceremonies such as Hussainia in Gaza, which is completely contrary to the Sunni faith as normally practiced in Gaza.⁹² Hamas has very little to do against the conversions to Shiism and been caught in a dilemma. Iranian support to Hamas with funding and weapons⁹³ can be in danger if Hamas plays a strong hand against the Shia activism as it will be perceived as an hostile action by Iran, but simply ignoring these conversions can lead to harsh reactions from Sunni countries towards Hamas.

Iranian “Shiitization” is a silent, but quite dangerous threat. Apart from Gaza, especially conversion rates to Shiism Syria are rapidly increasing. Shia missionaries are targeting economically vulnerable regions and are succeeding on their goals. In a 2009 discussion with two tribal leaders, the Baggara Sheikh stated that fully 25 per cent of his tribe had converted to Shiism.⁹⁴ Also, those who have been in Southern Iraq can see Ayatollah Humeyni’s posters inside the police stations, which is a clear sign that many parts of Iraq is de-facto ruled by Iran.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah gives a great leverage to Tehran-Damascus alliance. Now Hezbollah is not “a state within a state” anymore but the most powerful political force of Lebanon. Not only has Hezbollah rearmed, with Iran and Syria's assistance, since its month-long war in 2006 with Israel, amassing an estimated 40,000 rockets. It now has longer-range rockets, some with the range to reach Tel Aviv, boosting its leverage over Israel by making the stakes of any future confrontation that much higher. Needless to say, Hezbollah has the power to undermine any Israeli-Palestinian peace talks today.⁹⁵

Coming to Egyptian coup, Iran is without doubt happy to see it beleaguered by domestic troubles as it will have little energy to counter Iran’s nuclear program. Iran did not directly involve to protests in Egypt. However an alarmed Israel for an Egypt with an unknown future leaves more room for Iranian maneuver. Until the final solution, Israel’s attention will remain on Egypt more than Iran.

Though there is no clear proof, yet Iran is accused for encouraging Egyptian protesters and having presence in Cairo streets by its intelligence members, and trying to destabilize Mubarak regime two years ago by sending some Hezbollah members to Egypt via Gaza.⁹⁶ It is true that Iranians are excellent for using their covert capabilities to shape the political

realities in countries. Anywhere that Iran has presence in the Middle East, it gathers intelligence against primarily Israel, and uses their influence to encourage public for anti-Israeli feelings. Also militarily, now Iran is an important player though it has a poorly disciplined army that has mostly obsolete weapons. However, during the Iran-Iraq war “culture of martyrdom” is professionalized and unorthodox tactics on the battlefield are frequently used, resulted with an asymmetrical warfare doctrine, inspiring many terrorist organizations.

Animosity between Arab regimes and Iran after the 1979 Islamic revolution had long acted as a buffer for Israel, and its security apparatus rested comfortably in intimate relations with autocratic leaders forged by the signing of the peace treaty with Egypt in the same tumultuous year. Three decades of confidence have now been shattered in the revolutionary wave sweeping the Middle East.⁹⁷ Before the Arab “Revolutions” not only Israel but regional Arab powers such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan were worried about Iranian nuclear arsenal. Saudi Arabia, as a traditional rival of Iran may continue to worry for a nuclear Iran but a democratically elected and a more radical Jordan and Egypt are expected to welcome Iranian nuclear arms to counter Israeli deterrence, even though they would continue to compete for hegemony with Iran.

Tehran will continue to use the opportunities to establish closer ties with the Arab states exposed to rebellions and to break the regional isolation and encirclement imposed by U.S.. There is already a Tehran sponsored government in Baghdad and a Hezbollah dominated politics in Beirut. Unlike 10 years ago, there is also a harmony with Turkey. Hamas is now the voice of resistance after the Al Jazeera leaks the secret talks between Abbas, U.S. and Israel.

Notwithstanding, politically Iran is losing many battles, particularly in the Security Council. In long term it is very hard to export Iranian regime while there is a moderate Islamic Turkish model out there, which takes more attention from Arabs. Shiitization worries many Sunni Arabs but it is not an easy task.⁹⁸ But from a wider perspective, Iran is not isolated strategically. Iraq and Lebanon are in the Iran’s sphere (even Iranian Revolutionary Guards were found dead in 2006 Lebanon War)⁹⁹, has great influence on Afghanistan, an ally of Syria and backing Hezbollah and Hamas while having the Turkish diplomatical support as we stated above.

Iranian state from official mouths expresses their sympathy to rebellions in Egypt. Iran’s Supreme Leader Seyyed Ali Khamanei stated that: “This is what was always referred to as the Islamic awakening created by the victory of the great Revolution of the Iranian nation”.

Mirhoussain Mousavi said “The slogans of the Iranian nation who took to the streets in 2009 . . . have reached Egypt”. Speaker of Iran’s Parliament Ari Larijani tells “What is happening these days in Tunisia and Egypt is a kind of Islamic awakening that the Westerners should pay attention to”.¹⁰⁰ Mass media also has a keen interest and will to perceive these rebellions something similar to 79’ Islamic Revolution.¹⁰¹ From now on it will be hard for Israel to trust an Egyptian government torn apart by internal strife.”¹⁰² And Israel has full rights for not trusting to Egypt; the new military rulers just after they held the power have approved the passage of two Iranian naval vessels through Suez Canal to Syrian Latakia Port.¹⁰³ On March 15 Israeli navy have intercepted a freighter carrying arms, apparently from Syria, bound for Iranian-backed Palestinian militants in the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip, and the freight sailed from the same port, Latakia.¹⁰⁴ Together with the hundreds of Islamic radicals escaped from prison during uprisings and many of them made their way to Gaza Strip,¹⁰⁵ Israel is right on its concerns. As we stated before, a radical change is not expected for the reasons written in the previous parts, but there are plenty of reasons to be wary.

In near future Iran may cause Israel to face even more acute regional isolation. A commentator in the Israeli daily Ha'aretz newspaper noted, "The fading power of ... Mubarak's government leaves Israel in a state of strategic distress. Without Mubarak, Israel is left with almost no friends in the Middle East; last year Israel saw its alliance with Turkey collapse and Assad has expressed the plans for Iran, Syria and Turkey to rise together.”¹⁰⁶ It is clear that the Iranian trap, which is carefully planned and played, is successful and neither Israel, nor other Middle Eastern states has a counter-plan for Iranians.

Saudi Arabia: The Loyal Ally of Israel & US

As we stated, Iran benefits from the growing assertiveness of Shiites. Shiism is not at all monolithic and Iran cannot speak on behalf of all Shiites. However, the Shiites in all countries (except Iran and Azerbaijan) have the common faith of facing with discrimination. Bahrain is a typical example with a Shiite population of some 70 per cent, under the rule of a Sunniroyal family. Shiites have been long arguing about their discrimination at work, education and politics. Mass demonstrations that took place in Bahrain centered on these issues. Some Bahraini protestors carried pictures of Iran's Ayatollah Khamenei and Lebanon’s Hasan Nasrallah.¹⁰⁷ The head of the largest Shiite party, Al Wefaq said his party rejected Iran’s Islamic regime, but Shiites of Bahrain, as all other Shiites in the region, is falling into the Iranian trap slowly.¹⁰⁸

Shiite card also is highly profitable for Iran. Uprising in Bahrain places the US 5th Fleet's basing in jeopardy, puts U.S. in a difficult position and threatens the stability of Arab states in the Gulf. A "Safavid Plan" is said to be successful in Iran, Yemen is being taken via Houthis, and Kuwait is becoming divided while Kuwaiti Shiite television channel al-Anwar showed Kuwaiti Shiite demonstration for supporting Shiites in Bahrain. Kuwaiti state officers also claimed to have uncovering Iranian intelligence members and investigations are made for Iranian intervention on the events.¹⁰⁹

From Morocco to Indonesia, Saudis are watching the Iranian cleric's activities with eyes full of fear, and trying to establish their own religious propaganda in the same places. Egypt, after losing Iraq, was the last pillar for preventing Iran to enter the Middle East at all. Wikileaks cables revealed that Saudi King Abdullah repeatedly implored Washington to "cut off the head of the snake" (Iran) while there was still time.¹¹⁰ Recently Saudi Arabia has conducted tests to stand down its air defenses to enable Israeli jets to make a bombing raid on Iran's nuclear facilities.¹¹¹ As a result, Saudi Shiites are holding protests in the kingdom's oil-producing Eastern Province and other Shiite populated regions. Saudis fear that Bahrain protests can lead larger Shiite demonstrations in the oil wealth regions¹¹² and has sent its military (together with Jordan) to Bahrain for suppressing demonstrators¹¹³ and according to King Abdullah "The security of Bahrain and Saudi Arabia is indivisible – two bodies with one soul."¹¹⁴ Saudi Arabia seems to be ready for any kind of uprisings as in September U.S. announced the biggest ever arms sale to Saudi Arabia, including Uh-60 Blackhawk and MH-6 Little Bird helicopters which are extremely useful in counter-insurgency operations.

Saudis have backed Mubarak until the 11th hour. Frankly, Egypt was the last strategic hope of Saudi Arabia. Lebanon, Iraq, Palestine, Syria had all fallen into hands of the "hostiles" (namely Iran and Turkey) before stepping down of Mubarak. Now Saudi Arabia is alone, just like its boss Israel, and has no power at all except invading midgets of the region such as Bahrain. Israel needs Saudi Arabia to delay any international or Arab plan to pressure Israel on establishing a Palestinian state cannot be done anymore.¹¹⁵

An expert in international affairs with the RAND Corporation Alireza Nader said that Saudis are worried that they're encircled by Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, with an unstable Yemen and Bahrain. "They worry that the region is ripe for Iranian exploitation. Iran has shown that it is very capable of taking advantage of regional instability" he adds.¹¹⁶ Saudis may even use their covert capabilities for a Saudi-led counter revolution in the countries which falls under the Iranian influence, but Iranians proved that they are far better in covert activities.

Jordan: An Island of Stability?

Stability of Jordan is also questionable. Again the rising food prices are the main cause for the demonstrations and most of the slogans in Jordanian protests are imported from Tunisia.¹¹⁷ King Abdullah has a popular support (thanks to the legacy of his father), but he and Queen Rania are being subjected to criticism for a long time. During Abdullah's tour on Coronation Day (Anniversary of Great Arab Revolt), crowds in the supposedly loyalist city of Tafileh greeted the king with rocks and bottles.¹¹⁸ Arabs may protest the monarchies, but rarely do they make calls to end monarchies. Yet, the latest protests are early warning for the monarchs in the region. Democratic pressure may force King Abdullah to give more power to Islamists and Palestinians in Jordan.¹¹⁹ In such an era while all states and nations are becoming radicalized, it is expectable to see Jordanian people calling King not to follow pro-Western policies and peace with Israel anymore.

Currently "Arab Spring" seems to bypass Jordan, but if there will be strong protests, the real trouble will be the control of Jordan by Salafis, which view Alawite Syrian regime as a government of infidel Nuseiris. A Sunnite controlled Syria and Salafi controlled Jordan will smuggle weapons from Jordan or Lebanon or simply to reverse the smuggling routes into Iraq's Anbar province. This could lead to tensions with Hezbollah in Lebanon and with the regime in Iraq. Civil unrest in Syria will spread to Lebanon easily in this case.¹²⁰

The most important reason for Arab Spring to bypass Jordan (for now) lies in the "Jordanian Identity" and power of Monarchy. Monarchy in Jordan dominates the role of Cabinet, Parliament and Judiciary in accordance with the Articles 26,34,35,36 and 98. Article 30 of the constitution further states that "The King is the Head of the State and is immune from any liability and responsibility", while Article 195 of the Penal Code criminalizes any criticism of the King making it punishable by a prison sentence of one to three years.¹²¹ Jordanian identity is pre-loaded with the pre-requirement of complete loyalty to the regime. Any opposition who wants to change this identity will automatically be considered as "Palestinian" (which makes up nearly 1/3 of the Jordan population).

It will be the real nightmare if Jordan will also be lost and Monarchy is toppled, but if this will lead to Jordan to be controlled by "Palestinians", it'll be more than welcome by Israel. Ariel Sharon in 1970 claimed "Jordan is Palestine"¹²², and many Israeli right wings are advising that Palestinians has already got a state, which is called Jordan. A Palestinian state in the future can include Jordan, Gaza and "most of the West Bank", leaving the large settlement blocks to Israel.

The Peace treaty with Israel is like the Sword of Damocles for Monarchy. The Jordanian-Palestinian identity “split” in the country has arisen as a result of the forced migration of Palestinians displaced by the Israeli occupation of their land and homes in Palestine.¹²³ Palestinians in Jordan acquired nationality, citizenship and makes up nearly half of the population. Two people can easily unite against a common threat, which are generally the fears for expansionist policies of Israel. The struggle for justice, equality and individual rights may also be a uniting force. However, the prejudices amongst two identities are quite strong to work for a common aim, at least for now.

The Spring for Palestine: Unification

A poll by the Nablus An-Najah University on 24-26 February among Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, revealed that 70-90% of the Palestinians in the occupied territories support the new Arab revolutions and believe they will help towards ending the occupation. At the same time, only a minority (22-29%) at present considers a similar upheaval in the West Bank or the Gaza Strip to be possible.¹²⁴

The challenge of Hamas to PLO was a chance for Israel to split Palestinian resistance. It is true that PLO has been fatally weakened by the coup in Egypt, but Hamas, thanks to international community and media lacking to understand the realities in Gaza, is now seen by “freedom fighters” struggling to break the open-air prison and save Palestinians. The public image of PLO hits the bottom when the police allowed a small pro-Mubarak demo to take place in early February, but violently dispersed a larger anti-Mubarak demo at the same spot in Ramallah.¹²⁵

The results of Arab Springs have a few dimensions for Palestinian politics. First of all, no one can deny the mass protests and their effect on the new unity between Hamas and Fatah. Palestinian youth have launched their own “revolution” for unity via facebook and twitter organized protests. Freed from the pacifist Mubarak, Cairo is following a more active role in Arab affairs, and Egypt pushed for reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah.¹²⁶ The clues of the new dynamic role of Egypt can be seen from the words of Ambassador Menha Bakhom, spokeswoman for the Foreign Ministry. “Egypt is resuming its role that was once abdicated.” Invitation of Hamas leaders to HQ of Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs instead of merely meeting at a hotel or the intelligence agency is a signal that Egypt is now prepared to treat Hamas as a diplomatic partner rather than a security risk.¹²⁷ Both Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas continuously complained for Syrian and Iranian interference to Palestinian politics, which prevented reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah. Now Syria losing its power on Palestinian politics, Hamas is moving its HQ from out of Syria¹²⁸ though

Iranian interference is increasing every day and Egypt is said to be “resuming” its role on Palestinian politics.

The protests and mass marches on Israeli borders are another result of the Arab revolutions. It can be also said that the attempts to breach Israel border are supported by the current autocrat regimes to draw attention from rebellions back to Israel (Syria in particular is accused by Israel¹²⁹), and with people shot, to cause another international pressure on Israel. Every person killed today is the martyr of tomorrow’s funeral, the funeral itself becoming a violent protest, and its victims, in turn, becoming the next day’s martyrs.¹³⁰ A rise in casualties will negatively affect the already notorious image of Israel and cause more international pressure. In response to mass marches to Israeli soil, IDF is completing a new operational doctrine¹³¹ and has already started planting new landmines along the Golan Heights.

Another issue is the declaration of Palestinian State. It can be said that Palestinians became more determined for going to United Nations and ask for a formal declaration of statehood, where Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak has warned of an impending “diplomatic tsunami”. The poll results of Nablus University makes it clear that an upheaval is not expected in Palestine, but the Palestinians after the mass demonstrations in Arab world (and with post-Mubarak Egypt) has full confidence for declaration of statehood in autumn. The declaration will have no use in peace process and even make the things more complex, especially for Jewish settlements. However if declaration will be postponed, there are rumors for coming of a third intifada. Once Palestinians fill the streets, the anger can also be directed towards corrupted Abbas government and he can be toppled down. "After Egypt and Tunisia, God knows who might be next," said Abbas in a speech in and added "Don't laugh. It might be me." Abbas is surely not joking and knows the rage of Palestinians towards his government.¹³²

Palestinian terrorist groups may also be thinking a limited, but sharp shock to take international attention away from Arab revolutions and back to Palestinian problem. Hamas will use the Israeli responds to terror attacks in order to launch a broader Arab movement focused on Israel. Coming to Israel and the armed conflict, it is trying to limit retaliations with a few airstrikes and trying to avoid a large assault on Gaza, since another assault might generate forces that benefit Hamas. But given the political situation in Israel, its ability to carry another large scaled operation is limited, which Hamas is counting on.¹³³ Israeli hard-liners, too, may calculate that a short war could serve their purpose: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right government may sense weakness and quietly dream of finishing off

Hamas once and for all.¹³⁴ If Netanyahu follows a weak and hesitant policy, Israel's red lines will turn to pale pink lines and this will break the psychology of war-weary Israelis, and cause to bow down to international pressure. If one may remember, the release of IDF maps of Hezbollah positions in civilian areas of Lebanon were clear messages to Hezbollah that Israel is preparing an international ground for a "justified" strike. Mossad is convinced that Hezbollah can fire about 400-600 rockets daily in the next round of hostilities and in two months it can send 24000-36000 rockets, 6000 targeting Tel Aviv.¹³⁵ An excellent mobile air defense system, Iron Dome, provides Israel protection for limited attacks until serial production and full deployment takes place and until then, the number of missiles in Hezbollah's hands cannot be tolerated by Israel. However, Nasrallah recently declared that they will not be provoked and are not seeking a new battle.¹³⁶ Nasrallah assures that overtime demographic factors would intervene, the Israeli economy would decline, the IDF's ability to strike its enemies hard, and at will, would be voided by mutually assured destruction and enough Jews would leave Israel out of pure self-interest and fear - or agree to democratic power sharing - that a new, unified state of Palestine would come into being.¹³⁷ To prevent a surprise attack, Israel may even carry a simultaneous operations on Hezbollah and Hamas by choosing the right time for itself, as it is now more prepared for an operation thanks to upgraded Merkava Mk4 tanks with active protection system against RPG's and Iron Dome.

Syria: A Deadlock

Syria is the only country that used to have decent food sovereignty and security, under a central planned economy. The bread prices did not hit Syria as Egypt or Tunisia. Also freedom of belief is seriously respected issue in Syria for many decades. In Syria "there is a solution for everything, except two things: Do not involve into politics, do not make religious propaganda and discriminate other beliefs". Syria for last two decades has largely remained stable in domestic and international affairs, but couldn't prevent the uprisings in 2011.

Some 400.000 Palestinian lives in Syria, they have got many factions settled there. Assad has blamed Palestinians for unrest in Syria.¹³⁸ Eyewitnesses to protests in Syria are reporting that all the protesters are from Muslim Brotherhood or Palestinian refugees. "Christians to Beirut, Alawites to Coffin"¹³⁹ slogans are chanted by these two groups. One must carefully note that Muslim Brotherhood in Syria is financed by Saudi Arabia, and maybe by also U.S.. There are also ongoing rumors that Palestinians are randomly firing Kalashnikovs in Alawite neighborhoods and afterwards doing the same in Sunni districts to create a sectarian clash. All the arrested people are reported to be Palestinians in Lazkiya,

according to witnesses. However the demonstrations are not widely spread to the country and the only serious demonstrations were made in Darra, where Palestinian population is dense. Again according to locals arms used in the protests are provided from Jordanian border and financial and other logistical support is supplied by Saudis.

It's surely not a coincidence for Israel to remain silent largely over the events in Syria. True, both states are technically at war and Israel normally should not miss a chance to overthrow a leader with the strongest anti-Israeli stance in the region. But an unknown future of post-Mubarak Egypt doubles the fear of unknown Israel for a possible unknown post-Assad Syria. Every step of Syria at Assad's hands is predictable. This is why the demands of George W. Bush's top Middle East adviser Elliot Abrams to Israel for bombing Syria during 2006 war were rejected.¹⁴⁰ Lately, US politics also tried to break the ice between two states, Assad, in January Barack Obama bypassed congress and sent an ambassador to Damascus in five years. Hillary Clinton says "There's a different leader in Syria now. Many of the members of Congress from both parties who have gone to Syria in recent months have also said they believe he's a reformer."¹⁴¹ U.S. supported Assad by remaining largely silent to protect Israel's northern borders. Another scenario that both Americans and Israelis fear is the fall of Assad's will lead to Sunni extremism to fill vacuum and make Damascus more radical.

However "infollution" is always there. Some media resources are claiming that US, Israel, Jordan and Saudi Arabia formed joint operational headquarters in the Saudi Embassy in Belgium to direct the riots in southern Syria. Abdul Halim Khaddam, who held the highest political, executive and information posts in the Syrian government for more than 30 years, is said to have been transferred from Paris to Belgium to direct the unrest. It is also reported that Jordan is equipping Muslim Brotherhood in the two cities with logistical facilities and personal weapons.¹⁴² U.S. probably demanded some reforms from Assad and gave limited support to protesters for blackmailing him, but as time passed by it put all the pressure on Syria via Turkey. Geopolitical stance of Russia also limits the American power in Syria. Syria provides Russia its only naval port (Tartus) in Mediterranean and traditionally cordial relations Syrian-Russian relations continues, which immunizes Syrian regime towards a large scale American covert operation.

In post-Mubarak Egypt, the secret visit undertaken by the new Egyptian intelligence chief who succeeded Omar Suleiman, Brigadier General Murad Mawafi, to Syria and his meeting with senior Syrian officials to discuss the areas of security and strategic coordination between the two countries over several files is highly interesting. Also the Hamas leaders in Gaza Strip to leave for Damascus via Cairo clearly shows that there will be no more

blockades.¹⁴³ These may be accepted as signals for the new chapter between Egypt, Syria and Iran.

Unlike Egypt, few Syrians look at the army as a benign institution. Rather, it is as a palace guard, meant to keep the ruling Alawite sect in power.¹⁴⁴ Assad is aware of its military weakness and cannot confront Israel in a battle between two states. His main goal is to keep the current status-quo, make the toughest anti-Israeli stance in the region, keeping Lebanon as its “colony” and patronize fundamentalist movements against Israel. There are at least 10 Palestinian factions including Hezbollah, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad operating in Syria. This tacit support comes not from interest in Arab causes but a desire to gather cards to play against Israel and U.S. in negotiations to win back the Golan Heights.¹⁴⁵ Assad’s tough stance towards Israel has contributed his popularity domestically and in the region, as a Syrian says “He is the only president in the Arab region that did not accept any offers from Israel, like other presidents. I, and most Syrians, if not all, can't accept a president who will hold hands with Israel.”¹⁴⁶

Contemporary Syrian-Iranian alliance seems to trouble Israel, however Shiite politics aside secular-Baathist Syria and Islamist Iran are not ideological allies nor are they true Shiite brethren — they came together and remain allied for mostly tactical purposes, to counter Sunni forces.¹⁴⁷ No matter what lies in the future, Iran has full support for Syria today. Iran's IRNA state news agency reported from Damascus that a group of “agitators” had confessed on Syrian state television they had been hired by Israel to create disturbance and insecurity in Syria.¹⁴⁸ Israel said on Sunday it was worried that Iran might be participating in the suppression of protesters in Syria.¹⁴⁹ It’s no secret that Israelis were, and probably still, training the Iraqi Kurdish forces for information gathering, sabotage and destabilization operation in Iran and Syria as Seymour Hersh revealed in 2004. The Kurdish and Druze population are probably Israel’s only tools to destabilize Syria today, and it has little or no control at all amongst protestors in Syria.

A weak possibility may give Israel an upper hand. If a democratic, less hostile, and probably a Lebanon-like regime which would grant full and equal rights to all Sunni, Druze, Kurds, Palestinians and Alawites can open a door for peace with Israel. In such a case Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran will be seriously weakened. It probably may fall under the Saudi influence and Turkish-Syrian entente will take a final deathblow. It is also possible to see the end of Turkish-Syrian entente within next months with a point of no return. Assad feels betrayed by Turkey, since Erdoğan government seems to be cutting all its ties with Syria, and propagates Turkish public with ongoing “Syrian massacres” made by Assad’s forces, calling

protests as a “fight for freedom”, hosting conferences of Syrian opposition and organizing them. There are even rumors of Turkish government is supplying arms and training opposition members at Antakya.¹⁵⁰

Right now Syrian uprising is deadlocked. If Assad successfully crushes the opponents, and Iran prefers an alliance with only concentrated on Egypt rather than Syria, he also may seek to strengthen ties with Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates for economic reach¹⁵¹, and start efforts to revive ties with Washington especially after the Hillary Clinton’s expressions for negotiations on Golan Heights.

Conclusion

One must know that the outcome of rebellions will not determine by those who launched it. There is also a great danger for revolutions to be hijacked by certain Jihadist groups like Al-Qaeda. More than two decades Al-Qaeda called Arab dictators as puppets of west. True, when uprisings started Bin Laden’s popularity was very low in the Arab street. Lacking to start an Islamic uprising, Al-Qaeda danger may begin at next level. Knowing the highly-effective propaganda techniques they use, it is easy for Al-Qaeda to agitate societies.

The Arab Spring indirectly affected Israeli domestic politics too. Still having a way more life quality and economics compared to Arab States, things surely do not go well in Israel. Officially 27 per cent of Israeli workers are earning minimum wage or less, while in the reality numbers are seem to be much higher. 25 per cent of Israelis are considered officially poor.¹⁵² Rents in Israel has skyrocketed in past few years, it is a really exceptional thing for a young Israeli to find a permanent job, gasoline, electricity and water prices has increased dramatically. Though the construction of public housing has ended, West Bank settlers are enjoying the benefits of Israel as a welfare state; public housing, state controlled prices on main products, tax exemption, loans with low interests, cheaper transportation and an extraordinary security precautions taken by the army. Ultra-Orthodox community, which makes up most of the settlers in the West Bank, has always been criticized by most of the Israelis since most of them does not go to military service, makes many children and do not work but only “pray” for the State of Israel. The social solidarity amongst Israelis are still strong due to external pressure, but Tel-Aviv had no chance to face with the nationwide protests calling for social justice. Mass protests have taken place not only in major cities, but also in periphery for a long time.

The major effect of the protests was the opening of communication channels between Israeli Jews and Arabs. Many Arabs have showed their support by joining demonstrations at the major cities and has joined the night-long discussions at Rotschild Avenue. For the first

time both sides talked to each other not from a nationalist lens. Both sides are on a common understanding that they all suffer from Bibi's right-wing economic policy, and feel that they're on the same boat. The protests stopped after a long time, but the common understanding and dialogue between two communities are surely undermining the ongoing Israeli hardline policies mainly lead by Liebermann.

Iran is clearly the winner for the moment. Shiite card is played quite well in Iraq and Lebanon, as well as ongoing Shiitization process, and all diplomatic games of Iran ended with success. The "Safavid Plan" of Iran cannot be challenged by any U.S. or Israeli policies, but could only be countered by neo-Ottomanist utopia of AKP government.

The Arab Spring is the reshuffling of the Middle East by re-aligned U.S.-Turkish common policies. The contemporary situation clearly shows that "The Greater Middle East Project" is on the track, a unitary state with a nation-state model is forced to be changed and Turkey has become the pawn of U.S. in this sense. Americans are by far the most hated nation in the Middle East excluding Israel, and any of their activity or plans would simply backfire. Knowing all the negative image that U.S. carries, today Turkey has undertaken the role of U.S. in the Middle East while the Arab street has full support of Erdoğan-led Turkey as a subcontractor of U.S. projects on the region. Erdoğan is ranked the most admired world leader in a 2010 poll of Arabs by the University of Maryland in conjunction with Zogby International. In countries where young people have risen against dictatorial regimes, many cite Erdoğan as the kind of leader they would like to have instead.¹⁵³

As we have expressed before, for Israel the devil you know is more acceptable than the unknown future. Bearing in mind all the results of the surveys showing that Arabs can easily fall into radical Islam, Israel prefers not to enter such a dangerous and risky game for toppling down the old dictators and establishing new regimes. Israel could resist such a change and force U.S. to postpone or cancel their new policies if it were a decade ago, but Israel is extremely isolated in international arena, has to counter the Turkish offenses in diplomacy and domestically facing serious crises. These all force Israel to remain silent unless it breaks the isolation it has fallen, but watch carefully the games played by U.S.-Turkey and Iran just beyond its borders.

END NOTES

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