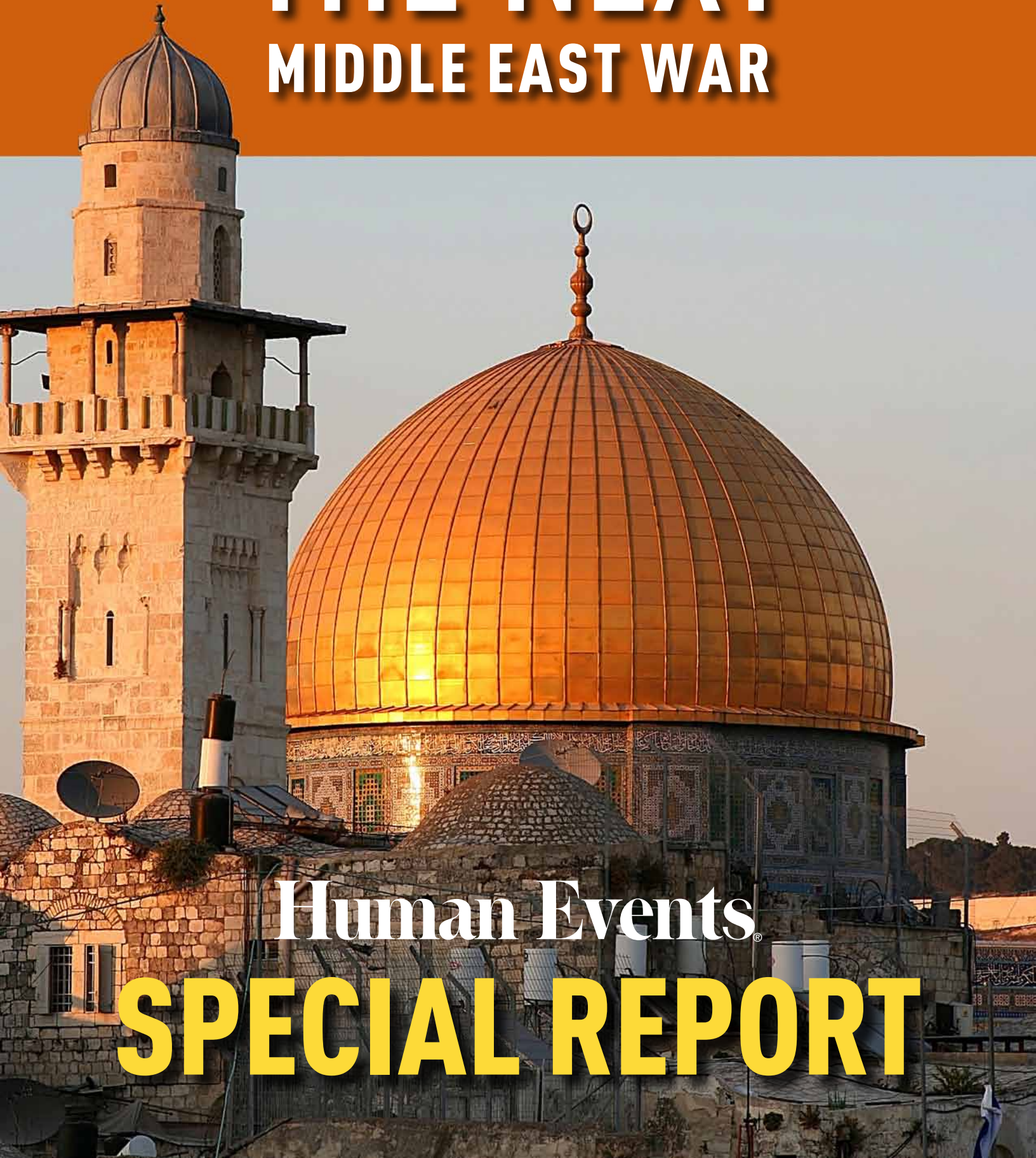


THE NEXT MIDDLE EAST WAR



Human Events[®]

SPECIAL REPORT

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THE NEXT MIDDLE EAST WAR

by Chuck DeVore

The Middle East, a tense region in the best of times, has been rocked by unrest since January 2011.

The U.S. has significant national security interests in the Middle East. Beyond energy, America's interests include the well-being of her allies, the intentions of her enemies, and, as some policy makers hold, human rights too.

As the so-called "Arab Spring" unfolds, the simmering Arab-Israeli conflict has been pushed to the background. But action in this arena continues apace, with rockets regularly being fired into Israel from the Gaza Strip, terror attacks against Israeli citizens, Israeli counterstrikes and arrests of terror suspects, unity talks between the Palestinian terror group Hamas¹ and the former terror group Fatah², and widespread expectations of a pending Palestinian unilateral declaration of statehood.

Despite the Arab Spring, or perhaps because of it, the Arab-Israeli conflict is likely to explode onto America's front pages and the top of Google News later this year.

This special report on the Middle East,

1 Hamas is an Arabic acronym for Harakat al-Muqawamat al-Islamiyyah, or "Islamic Resistance Movement," an Islamist Sunni Arab terror group that is the Palestinian wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.

2 Fatah is a reverse acronym derived from "Palestinian National Liberation Movement." By reversing the acronym, "Fatah" becomes "victory," while also referring to the rapid and violent spread of Islam in its first few centuries. Relative to Hamas, Fatah is considered to be more secular.



Chuck DeVore on Israeli TV in March, one of dozens of interviews on the Middle East by DeVore since January, when his *Investor's Business Daily* piece predicting the turmoil in Egypt ran weeks before the unrest began. DeVore studied at American University in Cairo, Egypt, served as a Reagan-appointed special assistant for foreign affairs in the Defense Department, and is a U.S. Army (retired) Reserve lieutenant colonel of military intelligence. He served in the California State Assembly from 2004 to 2010.

exclusive to *Human Events*, will explore the why, how, and when of the coming dangerous escalation of violence in this important region.

The Coming Conflict: An Overview

September 2011 is a pivotal month, with two key converging events: the Egyptian parliamentary elections and an expected Palestinian unilateral declaration of statehood in the United Nations (UN).

These events are likely to be preceded by conflict precipitated by Hamas in Gaza and potentially Hezbollah³ in southern Lebanon.

Unremarked by most Western observers in the media is the fact that Hamas in Gaza and the disputed territories of the West Bank is the same political party as the Muslim Brotherhood⁴ in Egypt. This isn't a minor point. It means that Hamas may trigger violence as a means to boost a Muslim Brotherhood parliamentary victory in the September elections. In addition, Hamas may see a conflict with Israel as a way to generate support in the UN and the European Union (EU) for Palestinian statehood.

One impact of the Muslim Brotherhood's hijacking of the Egyptian revolution is the lifting of Egypt's cooperation in enforcing the arms embargo against Hamas, with Egyptian authorities saying in late April that they will reopen Gaza's Rafah border crossing, shut since June 2006 at Israel's request. This will allow advanced military equipment to be shipped into Gaza from Iran and Syria. One such problematic weapons system are Chinese-designed, Iranian-made anti-ship cruise missiles.

3 Hezbollah (sometimes rendered Hizballah) means "Party of God," a Lebanese Shiite terror group and political party heavily supported by the Islamic Republic of Iran and used by Syria to maintain its influence in Lebanese politics. Before 9/11, Hezbollah was responsible for killing the largest number of Americans (259) of any terror group, with its 1983 bombings of the Beirut barracks and U.S. Embassy in Lebanon as well as the hijacking of TWA Flight 847 in 1985.

4 The Muslim Brotherhood was formed in 1928 in Egypt. Also known as the *Ikhwan*, the Muslim Brotherhood sees democracy as the means to the end of an "Islamic State by the will of the people" vs. al-Qaeda's desire to achieve the same ends through violent revolution. The groups are considered rivals. Hamas' founding charter states that it is the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine.

In March, Israel intercepted an Iranian-chartered cargo ship with a number of these cruise missiles destined for Hamas.

In the meantime, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is working to release a peace initiative with the Palestinians. Even if all Palestinian demands were met, less the elimination of Israel itself, this effort will fall on deaf ears, as Hamas feels empowered now that the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood is influencing policy in Cairo.

Any Hamas-initiated conflict with Israel would be greatly enhanced by cooperation with Hezbollah in Lebanon. On the surface, such cooperation would seem unnatural: Hamas is a Sunni Arab terror group while Hezbollah is a Shiite Arab terror group backed by non-Arab Iran. But, in the Middle East, the enemy of my enemy is my friend—Hamas has benefited in recent years from a constant flow of military equipment from Iran. Further, Hezbollah's hand may be prematurely forced by the pending release of the UN's Hariri assassination report⁵, widely expected to indict high-level Hezbollah leaders, as well as by the ongoing unrest in Syria, a secular but brutal regime with close ties to Hezbollah and Iran.

5 Rafic Hariri was the popular former Sunni prime minister of Lebanon whose assassination in 2005 was largely believed to be the work of Hezbollah at the behest of Syria and Iran. Hariri was a leader of the anti-Syrian faction in Lebanon in what is known as the "Cedar Revolution," a democratic and nationalist awakening in Lebanon that might properly be called the harbinger of today's "Arab Spring." After Hariri's assassination, several other anti-Syrian Lebanese leaders were also assassinated. The UN report on Hariri's assassination is expected to trigger violence by Hezbollah both inside and outside of Lebanon as a distraction from the report's conclusions.

Scenario

September 2011 appears to be the key month. The last two conflicts between Israel and Hamas and Hezbollah lasted 23 days and 34 days respectively. To achieve maximum political effect in the Egyptian elections and in the UN in September, Hamas, newly united (at least on paper) with the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, would have to begin the campaign in mid- to late-August. An earlier attack would draw an Israeli counterstroke that might be completed too soon, minimizing its political impact.

Projecting future military operations from past corollaries is always risky (for the forecasting analyst), but Israel's response to Hezbollah aggression in 2006 and its 2008 response to increased Hamas rocket attacks, known as "Operation Cast Lead," offer examples if updated with the current situation.

In 2006, Hezbollah used an anti-ship cruise missile to seriously damage an Israeli warship. Now, Hezbollah has more of these potent weapons, and Hamas has them too. These missiles, if used properly, can blockade Israel's two main ports: Haifa and Ashdod. Using these missiles against Israeli naval vessels and commercial shipping would mark a historic escalation of the ongoing attacks on Israel, one that would threaten the Israeli economy. Using anti-ship missiles to blockade Israel also provides Hamas and Hezbollah with the optics of engaging in traditional statecraft, placing them on par with Israel and the Western powers. This is in contradistinction to the terror groups' usual practice of firing unguided rockets at Israeli population centers—an action seen more as terror bombing than as a legitimate exercise of

force. Thus, a likely trigger of the coming war will be an announcement by Hamas, Hezbollah, or both, of a blockade of Israel.

The coming conflict may unfold like this: Hamas and Hezbollah declare a blockade against Israel and start attacks on shipping. Israel targets the anti-ship batteries that will be located in densely populated areas. The terror groups invite the international press to report on Israel's "atrocities" against civilians. Hamas and Hezbollah initiate massive rocket barrages on Israel's cities and towns in "retaliation." Israel responds with a 30-day air-ground operation to occupy and destroy the rocket launching areas and military headquarters.

Israel wins the battle, but likely loses the diplomatic and political war.

A Hamas/Hezbollah blockade of Israel presents a threat of a different kind. Hamas and Hezbollah are far better armed and have better training than they did the last time they faced an Israeli ground attack. Further, both groups should benefit from the assistance of Iranian al-Quds Brigades force teams in Gaza and southern Lebanon. The net result would be collateral damage to the civilian populations that would greatly exceed what was seen in 2006 and 2008. Of course, Hamas and Hezbollah view these thousands of civilian deaths as well worth the cost, seeing the innocents as expendable martyrs in the grand jihad of delegitimizing Israel.

What If?—A Time Line

Gaza, Friday, Aug. 19, 2011: The Palestinian unity government announces the blockade of Ashdod, one of Israel's two main ports, until Israel formally agrees to



A deceptive calm: Southern Lebanon, home to 40,000 Hezbollah rockets, as seen from northern Israel in March 2011. Snow-capped Mount Hebron can be seen to the right. © 2011 Jennie E. DeVore

lift its blockade of Hamas-led Gaza.⁶

Beirut, Saturday, Aug. 20, 2011: Hezbollah announces it is joining the Hamas blockade of Israel, warning international shipping to stay away from Haifa, Israel's largest port.

Naqoura, Lebanon, Sunday, Aug. 21, 2011: Hezbollah, with Iranian special operations al-Quds Brigades advisors, fire a Chinese-designed, Iranian-improved and manufactured C-802 anti-ship missile at a Greek-registered container ship 20 miles west of Haifa. Its 363-pound warhead blasts a gaping hole in the side of a commercial ship, killing three crew members. The ship capsizes 45 minutes later.

London, Monday, Aug. 22, 2011: Commercial shipping insurance rates soar for ships intending to dock at Haifa or Ashdod. Only Eilat in Israel's far south, with about one-tenth of the capacity of Haifa,

remains open to shipping.

Brussels, Monday, Aug. 22, 2011: The EU proposes negotiations to resolve Israel's blockade of Hamas in Gaza and the joint Hamas-Hezbollah blockade of Israel.

Haifa, Monday, Aug. 22, 2011: The port of Haifa, able to accommodate 600,000 cruise ship passengers every year, closes to cruise ship traffic. Passengers on two ships currently in port are stranded.

The Mediterranean, 15 miles southwest of Ashdod, Monday, Aug. 22, 2011: An Israeli Sa'ar 4.5-class missile boat, the INS *Yaffo*, is struck by a C-802 missile, one of three that was fired at the boat by Iranian al-Quds Brigades troops operating in Gaza. The boat sinks with most of its crew of 53.

Gaza, Monday, Aug. 22, 2011: Israeli F-16 fighter jets bomb suspected anti-ship missile batteries, all of which were located in densely populated apartment blocks and a mosque filled with "human shield volunteer martyrs." A Hamas spokesman says 150 civilians were killed, a claim the Western media repeat without verification.

⁶ Israel's blockade of Hamas, until recently upheld by Egypt on Gaza's southern land border, is aimed at keeping weapons and other militarily useful items out of the hands of Hamas. One of Hamas' main objectives has been to break or circumvent this blockade so as to embark on a significant buildup of offensive weaponry, as has been done by Hezbollah on Israel's northern border.

Beirut, Tuesday, Aug. 23, 2011: Hezbollah warns Israel that further strikes on “civilian targets” will lead to a “massive retaliation” that will include both Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

The Mediterranean, 10 miles west of Haifa, Tuesday, Aug. 23, 2011: An Israeli-flagged cargo ship making for Haifa under Israeli naval escort is struck by an anti-ship cruise missile. A second missile is shot down by the U.S.-designed Phalanx close-in weapons system (CIWS) onboard the INS *Hanit*, a Sa’ar 5-class corvette, the same ship that was struck and heavily damaged in 2006 by a Hezbollah anti-ship missile. Rendered dead in the water by the attack, the Israelis attempt to tow the ship to port, but Hezbollah unleashes a major barrage on the rescue effort, sinking the cargo ship, a tugboat, and damaging the *Hanit*.

Naqoura, Lebanon, Wednesday, Aug. 24, 2011: Israeli F-16s strike suspected anti-ship cruise missile sites, all of which were located in schools, mosques, and houses. A Hezbollah spokesman claims 75 civilians were killed. The Western media repeat the claim, first aired on Al Jazeera.

New York, Wednesday, Aug. 24, 2011: Egypt’s ambassador to the UN calls for an immediate cease-fire and the termination of the Israel’s blockade of Hamas in Gaza as well as the ending of the Hamas and Hezbollah blockade of Israel.

Beirut, Wednesday, Aug. 24, 2011: Hezbollah’s secretary general, Hassan Nasrallah, announces that Hezbollah will retaliate for the civilian deaths caused by Israel. That night, Hezbollah launches 144 Katyusha rockets at the Israeli town of

Morad HaHar in northern Israel, killing six civilians and wounding 23 more.

Jerusalem, Thursday, Aug. 25, 2011: Israel’s Prime Minister Netanyahu warns Hezbollah and the newly unified Palestinian Authority⁷ that Israel will be forced to take “decisive action” to defend its people and its interests. Israel carries out additional strikes on anti-ship missile launching sites.

Cairo, Thursday, Aug. 25, 2011: Al Jazeera broadcasts scenes of destruction from Gaza, showing bloodied women and children. Large crowds begin filling Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt, chanting, “God is great!” and “Death to Israel, death to America!” Mohamed Morsy, the leader of the Freedom and Justice Party—the newly rebranded name of the Muslim Brotherhood—calls for immediate military and humanitarian aid for their “brothers in Gaza.” Morsy goes on to say that such aid “will be a test for Egypt’s interim military government. All Egyptians will know whether the military stands with our brothers or with the Jews, and will be able to render their judgment on such matters in the election or, if the election is stolen, on the streets.”

Ramallah, West Bank, Thursday, Aug. 25, 2011: Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, also known as Abu Mazen, announces that it will lift its blockade of Israel if Israel lifts its blockade of Gaza.

Ankara, Turkey, Thursday, Aug. 25, 2011: The Turkish foreign minister announces that Turkey formally recognizes the Palestinian

⁷ Fatah and Hamas reached a unification accord on April 27, 2011. The implementation of this unification between rival Palestinian wings is supposed to be completed before September, but many tangible differences remain and past efforts at unification have failed.

Authority's blockade of Israel, becoming the first nation to provide de facto recognition of the Palestinian Authority's effective statehood. Oman, the United Arab Emirates, and Russia follow suit in the next few days.

Cairo, Friday, Aug. 26, 2011: Egypt's military council announces that the road to Gaza is open for all goods and that it will station anti-aircraft batteries next to Gaza to protect trade and commerce "from Israeli attack." Further, Egyptian natural gas shipments to Israel, amounting to about half of Israel's requirements, are shut off. Boisterous crowds in Tahrir Square chant, "Al-Quds [Jerusalem], we are coming for you!"

Jerusalem, Friday, Aug. 26, 2011: Israel's economy begins to slow, increasing pressure on Israeli leadership for decisive action.

Washington, D.C., Friday, Aug. 26, 2011: Obama administration officials call for a "comprehensive settlement" regarding the "Palestinian question." Rumors abound that the U.S. won't oppose a unilateral Palestinian declaration of statehood expected in the coming weeks.

Southern Lebanon, Saturday, Aug. 27, 2011: Israeli leadership decides to break the northern blockade, calculating that Sunni Egypt won't come to the aid of Shiite Hezbollah. Israeli jets, helicopter gunships, and commandos raid anti-ship cruise missile sites in Hezbollah-controlled Lebanon.

Israel, Saturday, Aug. 27, 2011: Hezbollah immediately responds by launching more than 1,000 rockets into Israel's northern population centers, including three Iranian-made Zelzal-2 rockets with giant 1,200-pound warheads aimed at Tel Aviv. Israel's Arrow anti-tactical ballistic missile

system destroys two of the three rockets, with the third landing harmlessly in a park in central Tel Aviv. However, scores of Israelis are killed or wounded in northern Israel. Israel begins mass evacuations from towns in the north.

Jerusalem, Sunday, Aug. 28, 2011: Israel mobilizes its reserves.

Ramallah, West Bank, Sunday, Aug. 28, 2011: Palestinian Authority President Abbas calls for solidarity with Hezbollah and appeals to Egypt to formally recognize a Palestinian state and provide aid.

Northern Israel, Sunday, Aug. 28, 2011: Hezbollah fires 1,200 rockets into Israel, killing 15 and wounding more than 100.

Southern Lebanon, Monday, Aug. 29, 2011: Israel begins a ground assault on Lebanon to destroy missile-launching sites. Hezbollah fires 1,300 rockets into Israel, killing 13 and wounding 80. International media begin circulating video of civilian casualties in Lebanon.

New York, Monday, Aug. 29, 2011: The UN Security Council meets to call for a cease-fire.

Cairo, Monday, Aug. 29, 2011: Egypt's Freedom and Justice Party ratchets up pressure on the military council to "teach Israel a lesson."

Ramallah, West Bank, Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2011: Palestinian Authority President Abbas, flanked by Hamas leaders, announces the formation of the Palestinian state. Little-noticed by the media is that its founding charter includes the intent to destroy Israel and institute Islamic (or Sharia) law.

Northern Israel, Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2011:

Hezbollah fires 700 rockets into Israel, killing four and wounding more than 35. Hezbollah threatens a major rocket attack on Jerusalem.

Cairo, Tuesday, Aug. 30, 2011: Protests build in Egypt against Israel. Several American businessmen are beaten by mobs. One dies. Egyptian Islamists torch several Coptic Christian churches in Cairo and Alexandria.

Northern Israel, Wednesday, Aug. 31, 2011: Hezbollah fires 400 rockets into Israel, killing 2.

New York, Wednesday, Aug. 31, 2011: Using the “Uniting for Peace”⁸ mechanism, the UN General Assembly begins to consider Palestinian statehood. The U.S. hints that it might not be opposed to a formal recognition of Palestinian statehood if Israel does not show more “restraint.”

Northern Israel, Thursday, Sept. 1, 2011: Hezbollah fires 300 rockets into Israel.

Gaza and West Bank, Thursday, Sept. 1, 2011: Palestinians launch rockets against civilian population centers in Israel including several rockets launched from the West Bank. Israel warns of “serious consequences.” Media footage out of Gaza shows civilian deaths.

Cairo, Thursday, Sept. 1, 2011: Egypt’s Freedom and Justice Party, in a reversal of previous statements, announces it is now considering running a candidate for



A simple concrete barrier serves as a rocket shelter in Sderot, Israel, known as “Qassam City” after the sometimes daily rocket attacks launched from Gaza since January 2001.

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president in November if Egypt’s military council continues to “side with Israel.”

Haifa, Friday, Sept. 2, 2011: For the first time in 12 days, a cargo ship bearing an Israeli flag, docks to unload. It is damaged by surface-to-surface rockets fired from Lebanon.

Cairo, Friday, Sept. 2, 2011: More than a million people throng Tahrir Square, calling for action. Egypt’s military council is paralyzed, concerned about a much stronger than expected showing by the Muslim Brotherhood proxy party, but also concerned about its ability to prevail in a military contest with Israel, not to mention losing its valuable U.S. military and food aid.

Gaza and West Bank, Sunday, Sept. 4, 2011: Israel launches a ground operation to neutralize missile launching sites.

New York, Monday, Sept. 5, 2011: The UN again calls for a cease-fire.

Southern Lebanon, Gaza and West Bank, Monday, Sept. 12, 2011: Israel’s military

⁸ “Uniting for Peace” is a UN Security Council work-around developed in November 1950 by the U.S. and its allies during the Korean conflict as a way to accomplish UN business while the Soviet Union was opposing action from its position as a veto-wielding permanent member of the UN Security Council.

action has slowed rocket attacks to a trickle, while the anti-ship missile threat has been broken. Shipping into Israel resumes.

Aftermath

Egypt's Freedom and Justice Party wins just more than half of the seats in the new parliament and announces a candidate for president in the November elections, in a reversal of its previously stated intention not to contest that election. The UN General Assembly votes to recognize Palestine as a state and demands the deployment of UN peacekeepers to Gaza and the West Bank.

Regional Overview

The core of the Middle Eastern region consists of 15 nations along with the Gaza Strip and the disputed territories of the West Bank. In all but three of the nations, Israel, Iran, and Turkey, Arabic is the primary language. The table on page 9 overviews the region, with nations sorted by economic power in descending order. Figures on population, economic strength, and religion are taken from the most recent entries in the CIA World Factbook.⁹ The freedom ranking is taken from Freedom House's annual 2010 rankings, in which they measure "Political Rights" defining it as how much open political competition there is, as well as "Civil Liberties," which measures things such as rule of law and protection of minority rights. The rating goes from a high of 1 to a low of 7. Western democracies generally enjoy a 1 ranking in each category. North Korea rates a 7 in each category. The corruption ranking is taken from Transparency International's 2010 Corruption Perceptions Index. In this rating, a 10 is "very clean," regarding measures such as lack of

⁹ Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is calculated as Purchasing Power Parity (PPP).

bribery and undue political influence, while a 0 indicates a fully corrupt society. "Alignment" is the author's summary of the nation's alignment in the regional and world scene.

Israel

Israel's main imperative is survival. Founded mainly by European Jews fleeing ahead of the Holocaust or survivors of it and the frequent pogroms that presaged it, Israel is focused on its own safety.

The modern State of Israel came into existence on May 14, 1948 out of a mandate from the UN that was passed on from the defunct League of Nations. The territory of Israel, like that of Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan, was formerly part of the Ottoman Empire before its defeat in World War I in 1918. As victors, France and Britain administered the former territories of the Ottoman Empire as League of Nations mandates. Interestingly, early Jewish emigrants to the area that is now Israel had the approval of the Ottoman Empire, which saw their capital and improvements as beneficial.

The world situation in 1948 was highly unsettled. Some 56 million people perished in World War II, and there were 100 million refugees globally. Britain and France vacated large tracts of their empires in a hasty rush of postwar decolonization.

Only three months after India gained its independence from Britain and was partitioned, leading to more than 7 million Muslims being displaced to Pakistan while a like number of Hindus fled to India, the UN approved General Assembly Resolution 181, the partition plan for Palestine. The plan divided the territory of western Palestine into majority Jewish and majority Arab states,

Nation	Pop. in millions	GDP in billions	Per-capita GDP	Religion	Freedom ranking	Corruption ranking	Alignment
Turkey	77.8	\$958.3	\$12,300	Muslim 99.8% (mostly Sunni), other 0.2% (mostly Christians and Jews)	Polit. 3 Civil 3 Partly free	4.4	The Islamist "Justice and Development Party," or AKP, views itself as a leader of Islamic states in the region.
Iran	77.9	\$863.5	\$11,200	Muslim 98%, Shia 89%, Sunni 9%	Polit. 6 Civil 6 Not free	2.2	A Shia theocracy, Iran sees itself as the chief rival of Saudi Arabia and the U.S.
Saudi Arabia	26.1	\$622.5	\$24,200	Muslim 100%, substantial Shia population in the east	Polit. 7 Civil 6 Not free	4.7	Saudi Arabia is a Sunni monarchy and main rival to Iran. It is generally pro-U.S., but elements in the country support Salafist terrorists.
Egypt	82.1	\$500.9	\$6,200	Muslim (mostly Sunni) 90%, Coptic 9%, other Christian 1%	Polit. 6 Civil 5 Not free	3.1	Formerly a pro-U.S. authoritarian secular power, Egypt is trending Islamist.
Israel	7.5	\$217.1	\$29,500	Jewish 75.5%, Muslim 16.8%, Christian 2.1%, Druze 1.7%, other 3.9%	Polit. 1 Civil 2 Free	6.1	Pro-Western. Closely aligned with the U.S.
United Arab Emirates	5.1	\$199.8	\$40,200	Muslim 96% (Shia 16%), other (including Christian, Hindu) 4%	Polit. 6 Civil 5 Not free	6.3	UAE is heavily influenced by Iran.
Kuwait	2.5	\$144.3	\$51,700	Muslim 85% (Sunni 70%, Shia 30%), other (includes Christian, Hindu, Parsi) 15%	Polit. 4 Civil 4 Partly free	4.5	Kuwait is generally pro-Western and aligned with Saudi Arabia.
Qatar	0.8	\$122.2	\$145,300	Muslim 77.5%, Christian 8.5%, other 14%	Polit. 6 Civil 5 Not free	7.7	Qatar has been a chief sponsor of political Islamism. Al Jazeera's HQ is here.
Iraq	30.4	\$117.7	\$3,600	Muslim 97% (about 65% Shia, 35% Sunni), Christian or other 3%	Polit. 5 Civil 6 Not free	1.5	Iraq has significant religious ties to Iran and these provide avenues for influence.
Syria	22.5	\$106.4	\$4,800	Sunni Muslim 74%, other Muslim 16%, Christian, 10%	Polit. 7 Civil 6 Not free	2.5	A totalitarian, secular government that is closely aligned with Iran.
Oman	3.0	\$76.5	\$25,800	Ibadi Muslim 75%, other (includes Sunni Muslim, Shia Muslim, Hindu) 25%	Polit. 6 Civil 5 Not free	5.3	Physically close to Iran, Oman is also considered diplomatically close to that regional power.
Yemen	24.1	\$61.9	\$2,600	Muslim including Sunni and Shia, small numbers of Jewish, Christian, and Hindu	Polit. 6 Civil 5 Not free	2.2	A somewhat pro-U.S. authoritarian secular power that has been fighting tribal challenges to its power as well as al-Qaeda elements.
Lebanon	4.1	\$58.7	\$14,200	Muslim 59.7% (Shia, Sunni), Christian 39%, other 1.3%	Polit. 5 Civil 3 Partly free	2.5	Under heavy domination by Syria and Iran, Lebanon has been struggling to free itself from their malign influence.
Jordan	6.5	\$33.8	\$5,300	Sunni Muslim 92%, Christian 6%, other 2%	Polit. 6 Civil 5 Not free	4.7	Jordan's monarchy is cautious and generally pro-U.S. It is under popular Islamist pressure.
Bahrain	1.2	\$29.8	\$40,400	Muslim 81.2% (of which 70% is Shia), Christian 9%, other 9.8%	Polit. 6 Civil 5 Not free	4.9	The Sunni monarchy is aligned with Saudi Arabia. The masses look to Shia Iran.
Gaza/ West Bank	1.7/2.6	\$12.8	\$2,900	Muslim (99.3% Sunni), 0.7% Christian/Muslim 75%, Jewish 17%, Christian and other 8%	Polit. 6 Civil 6 Not free	Not rated, but highly corrupt	Hamas in Gaza is aligned with Islamists and receives support from Iran. The Palestinian Authority is supported by the West.

leaving “Greater” Jerusalem and Bethlehem under international control. Palestine’s Jews accepted the agreement, as did King Abdullah of Jordan, who planned on conquering and annexing the West Bank, which soon he did. The Arab League opposed the agreement. Meeting in Cairo, Egypt, the Arab League resolved to seek a military victory to ensure Arab primacy over all of Palestine.

With the UN partition plan in place, the British pulled out of Palestine, and Israel declared itself an independent state. Immediately, Jordan, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq attacked Israel.

In a little more than a year of war, Israel lost 6,373 people, about 1% of its population. Arab losses, including Palestinians, are estimated as high as 15,000 people with about 600,000 refugees being displaced (some encouraged to leave by neighboring Arab states, some expelled by the Israelis). The cease-fire line, known as the “Green Line,” resulted in an Israel about 50% larger than the initial UN partition proposal. This Green Line, Israel’s de facto border from 1948 to 1967, more or less paralleled much of the UN partition border—interestingly, the Palestinians use this cease-fire line as if it were an international border when, if the Arab armies had been victorious, the line would have been in the Mediterranean Sea.

The Palestinians call the war and its aftermath *Al-Nakba*, or “The Catastrophe.”

So, any consideration of a lasting settlement between the Palestinians and Israel starts and ends within the mutually exclusive context of the Palestinian’s *Al-Nakba* and the Jewish Holocaust.

Many Palestinian grievances are real. Lives

were lost. Land was seized. People became refugees. About half a million Palestinians became refugees from Israel, many encouraged to leave by what were expected to be conquering Arab armies. They were not allowed to integrate into neighboring Arab nations and instead have grown into millions of stateless people. This fact is also central in understanding the intractable nature of the conflict.

Conversely, millions and millions of Jews were expelled from the Arab world in 1948 and 1967, making their way to Israel, where they were assimilated.

Europe had tens of millions of refugees in the wake of WWII, yet today there are no European refugees remaining from the most destructive conflict in history. Most of the Palestinians refugees became such 63 and 44 years ago, and in the meantime, generations of Palestinians have grown up with their hatred officially fostered as part of their formal education. That no one points out the discrepancy between the European and the Palestinian refugee experience is odd.

Regardless of how Palestinians became refugees in 1948–49, it is interesting to note that during the 1949 Lausanne Conference, Israel proposed allowing about 100,000 Palestinian refugees to return to Israel to join the few hundred thousand who did not flee the creation of the new nation. In return, Israel asked for a complete peace and the territory it had captured. The Arab states rejected the offer and even refused to negotiate face-to-face with the Israelis—they did not want to do anything to acknowledge Israel.

Palestinians’ claim to nationhood has not gotten much of a boost from their

neighbors. King Abdullah I of Jordan thought so much of Palestinian statehood that he agreed with the UN's 1947 partition plan and then promptly annexed the West Bank. Egypt, on the other hand, ruled the Gaza Strip from 1948 to 1967 as a military territory, with an iron hand that restricted Palestinian rights and travel.

Today Israel is a boisterous parliamentary democracy, a New Jersey-sized nation of 7.5 million people (1.7 million of whom are Arab). Israeli citizens, including Arab Muslims, Christians, Druze, and Bedouin, vote. In the 120-member parliament, called the Knesset, two distinctly Arab political parties have seven members—although many Arab voters no doubt vote for one of the many other Israeli political parties.

Israel's economy, now the fifth-largest in the region, behind Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, is considered a high-tech market economy. It wasn't always this way, starting life burdened by the socialist ideals of its European founders. In 2003, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon appointed Benjamin Netanyahu as finance minister. This was a sink-or-swim opportunity for Netanyahu, who quickly reformed Israel's economy. Critics called him "Thatcherite." But the free market worked, causing Israel to see its longest sustained period of high economic growth, with per-capita income (purchasing power parity) rising an average of 6% a year from 2004 to 2008.

Comparing Israel's economic progress with that of the Muslim world yields some interesting data. In the five years ending in 2007, Israel filed 7,082 international patents. The 28 majority Muslim nations, representing almost 1.2 billion people—155

times the population of Israel—were granted 2,071 international patents in the same time. Narrowing the comparison to the 17 Muslim nations of the Middle East from Morocco to Iran and down the Arabian Peninsula, the 409 million people in that region generated 680 patents in five years.¹⁰ This means that the Arab and Iranian world produced about one patent per year for every 3 million people compared with Israel's output of one annual patent for every 5,295 people, an Israeli rate some 568 *times* that of its neighbors and sometime enemies.

Turning to the free market in a nation with decent rule of law compared with its neighbors, has allowed Israel's per-capita output, gauged at 41% of America's in 1984, to reach 56% of U.S. per-capita output in 2010. By contrast, Egypt, before the unrest hammered its mostly state-run economy in 2011, saw its per-capita output as compared with the U.S. rise from 5% to 6% in the same time.

Israel's quest for peace, or at least coexistence, with its neighbors has been a long and difficult process. Israel wants to exist. Its neighbors variously want to destroy Israel, now or later. To a degree, this challenge is captured in two different Arabic words that are routinely translated as "peace" by the West: "Salaam"¹¹ and "Sulloh." According to traditional Islamic statecraft, a "Salaam" peace is only possible between two Muslim nations. It is a true peace. "Sulloh" is different, an armistice only, between a Muslim nation and infidels. A

¹⁰ The comparison excludes Turkey, a nation which filed 965 international patents in the five-year period ending 2007.

¹¹ "Salaam" comes from the same Semitic root word as the Hebrew word "Shalom."

“Sulloh” peace can only be temporary; done for tactical reasons. It is understood that a “Sulloh” peace will end and war (jihad) will be taken up at a time when the correlation of forces shifts in favor of the Islamic side.

Understanding this is the key to understanding Israeli difficulties in achieving a lasting peace with its neighbors. On one hand, Israel’s leaders can offer concession after concession. Their “Sulloh” peace partners will gladly accept these, then press for more—only to take up arms to destroy Israel at some convenient point in the future. In the meantime, all that politicians and diplomats want in the West is for Israel to play nice and negotiate in good faith—as if it were possible to negotiate in good faith with your would-be executioner.

Fatah and the Palestinian Liberation Organization

Fatah is the largest Palestinian faction within the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). It has a left-wing Arab nationalism orientation. As such, it is considered secular. Mahmoud Abbas is the leader of Fatah, the PLO, and the Palestinian Authority. Fatah was founded in 1959 by the late Yasser Arafat. Arafat created the PLO in 1964 as a paramilitary umbrella organization for the various militant Palestinian factions. Some 100 nations recognize the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people. Before 1991 and after 2004, the U.S. considered the PLO to be a terrorist organization. However, in 1993, the PLO recognized Israel’s right to exist—which is likely one of the main reasons why Hamas, Fatah’s rival, is not a part of the PLO.

The philosophical founder of the PLO



The Grand Mufti reviewing Muslim troops of the 13th Waffen SS Division

was Amin al-Husayni, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, sometimes referred to as “Hitler’s Mufti.” Al-Husayni was the leader of the 1936 Palestinian uprising against British rule in the Mandate. He received financial assistance from the Italian Fascists and the Nazi Secret Service. Under his leadership, the Arab Higher Committee, a proto-PLO, assassinated hundreds of moderate Arab leaders. The cycle of violence unleashed by al-Husayni continues to this day in Palestinian culture.

Al-Husayni fled Palestine in 1937, going to Lebanon. After WWII started, al-Husayni quickly aligned himself with the Axis, engineering the failed Iraqi coup against the British on May 10, 1941. When the coup fizzled out, al-Husayni flew to Germany. He urged Hitler to accelerate the “Final Solution” to exterminate European Jewry. Al-Husayni also helped recruit Bosnian Muslims into the 13th Waffen SS Division, an elite part of the Nazi war machine responsible for killing some 80% of Bosnia’s 14,000 Jews. In one of al-Husayni’s Nazi propaganda broadcasts to the Arab world, he said, “Arabs, arise as one man and fight

for your sacred rights. Kill Jews wherever you find them. This pleases God, history, and religion. This saves your honor. God is with you.”

After the war, al-Husayni escaped to Egypt, where he helped organize the Palestinian Field Commands—the forerunner to the PLO. He died in 1974, unpunished for his war crimes.

The late PLO chairman Yasser Arafat was a cousin of the al-Husaynis. Arafat studied under the Grand Mufti’s guidance, where he learned much of his virulent anti-Semitism directly from a contemporary of Hitler.

After the failed Arab attempt to destroy Israel at its founding in 1948, and further Arab military setbacks in the 1967 “Six Day War,” Palestinians were purposefully made refugees. No Arab nation moved to assimilate them, seeing them as both a danger to their own stability as well as a convenient weapon with which to maintain attacks on Israel.

From 1969 to 1970, Jordan allowed the PLO to attack Israel from bases on its soil in the “War of Attrition.” Israeli countermeasures and growing PLO strength resulted in the king of Jordan ordering his army to eject the PLO in September 1970, a time known as “Black September.”

The bulk of the PLO moved to Lebanon, where they unraveled that nation’s delicate demographic and political balance, setting off the Lebanese civil war. By 1982, terror attacks on Israel from a chaotic Lebanon became so severe that Israel invaded that nation. The U.S. intervened to save the PLO, shipping much of the leadership to Tunisia.

Ironically, it was Israel’s intervention in Lebanon that many analysts cite in the growth of Hezbollah (the section on them follows), the terror group that was responsible for the 1983 bombing of the Marines’ Beirut barracks and the U.S. Embassy.

Squeezed between the failure of violence to his left and even harder-line rejectionists to his right, Yasser Arafat began his first tentative moves toward peace with Israel in the mid-1970s. Exile in Tunisia made the PLO less effective, and by 1987, when the “First Intifada,” or uprising, happened in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the PLO found itself out of the loop. It was in 1987, with this non-PLO-led unrest, that Hamas was born out of Palestinian frustration with the impotence and corruption of the PLO.

Hamas

Hamas, a Palestinian Sunni Muslim terror group, has run the Gaza Strip, an area of 1.6 million people adjacent to southern coastal Israel, since 2006, when it won election over its more secular rival, Fatah. Hamas is an Arabic acronym for “Islamic Resistance Movement.”¹²

¹² The 1988 Hamas Charter states that it is the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, or *Ikhwan*, is an Islamist group that shares al-Qaeda’s goals, namely, the destruction of Israel and Western civilization, but differs on method, hence the mistaken view in the Western media that it is “moderate.” Hamas, born in the crucible of conflict, is more frequently seen as a militant group by the West than is Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood. The Hamas Charter calls for the destruction of Israel and claims tolerance of other religions as long as they are not in opposition to Hamas. The Hamas Charter repeats the debunked lies of the “Protocols of the Elders of Zion” and states that giving up any part of Palestine is akin to giving up Islam, thus binding religion to the cause of destroying Israel.

Where Fatah has its origins in Arab socialism and nationalism, with roots reinforced by Nazi ideology, Hamas is fully Islamist. Fatah uses religious terminology to bolster its secular power. Hamas uses modern anti-Semitism, perfected by the Nazis, to boost its power. In this, Hamas is more traditionally Islamic, because classical Islam cannot separate the faith from the state: They must be unified.

Hamas' formal origins date to 1987, when the PLO, battered and exiled to Tunisia, was seen as ineffective and ready to negotiate with Israel from a position of weakness. Prior to that, as Israel worked to neutralize the secular PLO, it saw Islamist Palestinians as a useful counterweight to the secular Fatah. Israel allowed the Muslim Brotherhood to form in Gaza (Egypt's military rulers had repressed the Brotherhood in Gaza until their defeat in the 1967 war). Israel even formally recognized a Brotherhood charity in 1979.

Israel completed a full military and civil evacuation of the Gaza Strip in September 2005, forcibly removing Israeli citizens who lived there.

By 2006, as the PLO invested much of its authority in the Palestinian National Authority (more on that entity later), resentment built among many Palestinians, especially those in Gaza, over the PLO, its chief faction Fatah, and their endemic corruption and repression.¹³ As a result, Hamas beat Fatah in the January 2006 parliamentary elections, at least in Gaza.

¹³ The PLO is thought to be among the richest of terrorist organizations, with assets of \$50 billion and annual income of \$2 billion from foreign aid, bribes, drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and other criminal enterprises.

This victory directly led to a bloody round of score-settling in Gaza 17 months later—violence that likely represents a more true face of Arab “democracy” in which the winners of an election utterly subjugate the losers.

After Hamas ejected Fatah security forces and gained complete control of Gaza, it stepped up its attacks on Israel, mostly by rocket. The southern Israeli town of Sderot, population 20,700, was hit so frequently by short-range Hamas rockets that it became ironically known as “Qassam City.”¹⁴ Egypt brokered a cease-fire (a “Sulloh” peace) in June 2008, but on Dec. 18, Hamas declared an end to the cease-fire, launching more than 20 rockets into Israel.

Increasing domestic pressure to protect the lives of civilians in the south led Israel to launch Operation Cast Lead on Dec. 27, 2008. The operation's purpose was to destroy Hamas weapons-smuggling and clandestine infiltration tunnels as well as rocket manufacturing and launching sites. A cease-fire went into effect on Jan. 18. Israel pulled out on Jan. 21, 2009, 26 days after the formal start of the operation.

The conflict resulted in as many as 1,417 Palestinian and 13 Israeli deaths.¹⁵ More

¹⁴ By November, 2007, 6,311 Hamas rockets and mortar shells had fallen on Sderot since Israel's pullout from Gaza. In December, the pace quickened to as many as 20 rockets a day.

¹⁵ In any conflict involving Israel, it is interesting to note that Israel suffers from the greatest infestation of foreign correspondents of any nation, with 900 accredited to that land. This is because it is safe to report out of Israel, which has press freedoms, as compared with Syria or Iran. This results in a disproportionate amount of coverage. For instance, about 1,430 Palestinians and Israelis died in the 26 days of Operation Cast Lead. By comparison, drug violence has claimed 34,600 lives in Mexico over the past four years, with more than 15,000 deaths in 2010 alone, some 1,250 people a month, a death rate comparable

than half of the deaths on the Palestinian side were those of armed militants and Hamas police, despite extensive and deliberate collocation of Hamas military assets in civilian homes, schools, mosques, and hospitals. This Hamas policy of purposefully trying to maximize civilian or “collateral” damage to enhance the propaganda value against Israel bore fruit with the UN’s September 2009 “Goldstone Report,” by South African jurist Richard Goldstone. The “Goldstone Report” accused both Hamas and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) of war crimes. Much of the world, expecting as much from a terrorist group, focused its ire on Israel. Many nations downgraded their diplomatic presence in Israel as a result. That Goldstone was to later repudiate his report after discovering, to his chagrin, that Hamas had misled him, was irrelevant. The international damage to Israel’s reputation was done, and a template to delegitimize Israel during future conflicts was verified.

As Hamas has tightened its control on Gaza, it has methodically imposed Sharia law on what was a fairly secular population. The Arab Spring has fomented some unrest in the Gaza Strip, but Hamas brutally repressed these stirrings while attacking foreign correspondents who tried to report on the protests—apparently, the foreign media is only allowed to file stories that promote the Hamas line.

Hamas’ annual budget was about \$540

million in 2010, equal to about \$340 of “government spending” per person in Gaza. Some 90% of Hamas funds came from secret foreign sources. Iran provided Hamas with about \$30 million per year until the U.S. and the EU cut off aid to the Palestinian Authority in the wake of Hamas’ electoral win in 2006. Iranian funding is said to have made up the difference—showing flexibility on the part of what would otherwise be religious and cultural rivals.

Hamas has now agreed to unify with the Palestinian Authority and its president, Mahmoud Abbas, something thought impossible just months ago. This unification will be problematic either to the Palestinian Authority or to Israel, as Hamas has not rescinded its public goal of destroying Israel, while the Palestinian Authority, by the rationale of its very existence, must acknowledge Israel’s legitimacy.¹⁶

Some Middle East observers have speculated that Hamas’ agreement with Fatah had to do with building resentment in Gaza at Hamas’ incompetence, corruption, and inability to do anything to improve the lot of Palestinians. With the Arab Spring as a backdrop, Hamas may be feeling the heat—of course, the same can be said of Fatah in the West Bank.

16 The Hamas/Palestinian Authority unification shows itself to be a stretch in foreign affairs too. Immediately after U.S. SEAL team members killed al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, Hamas’ leader, Ismail Haniyeh, said, “We ask God to offer him mercy with the true believers and the martyrs,” and, “We condemn the assassination and the killing of an Arab holy warrior,” while the U.S. pursues a policy of “oppression and the shedding of Arab and Muslim blood.” The Palestinian Authority spokesman, on the other hand, said, “Getting rid of bin Laden is good for the cause of peace worldwide, but what counts is to overcome the discourse and the methods—the violent methods—that were created and encouraged by bin Laden and others in the world.”

The Palestinian National Authority, or Palestinian Authority (PA)

The Palestinian Authority grew out of the Oslo Accords of 1993 brokered by the PLO's Yasser Arafat, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and President Bill Clinton. Formed in 1994, it was to be a five-year interim body leading to a negotiated two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians.

The very existence of the Palestinian Authority is seen as anathema by Hamas, as the Palestinian Authority's purpose—an eventual two-state solution—countenances the survival of Israel. In spite of this, Hamas participated in the Palestinian Legislative Council's elections on Jan. 25, 2006, scoring a plurality win of 44.45% of the vote under the banner of the "Change and Reform" party and claiming 74 of 132 parliament seats to Fatah's 41.43% that resulted in 45 seats. Whether the vote reflected popular opinion, or simply on the ground organizational strength through ballot fraud, the result was that Hamas "won" in Gaza, while Fatah "won" in the West Bank.

Hamas' winning the majority of seats on the Palestinian Legislative Council resulted in a rapid cutoff of aid from the U.S. and the European Union—about \$1 billion a year. This aid was resumed through the Palestinian Authority's West Bank offices, bypassing Hamas.

The Palestinian Authority has control over both security and political matters in the urban areas populated by Palestinians in the disputed territories of the West Bank, while controlling only the political and civil matters in the rural areas, Israel's security

forces having primacy in these regions. The status of East Jerusalem was excluded from the Oslo Accords.

The Palestinian Authority's security forces, with U.S. training and about \$400 million in U.S. funds from 2007 to 2010, have been moderately effective in stanching the pace of terror attacks directed at Israel.¹⁷

After a three-month attempt at Hamas-Fatah unity collapsed in June 2007, Hamas forcibly ejected Fatah from Gaza, killing about 120 Fatah officials.

The Fatah-backed Palestinian Authority carried on without Hamas, scoring recognition from Egypt (which moved its embassy from Gaza to the West Bank), Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and others—essentially being seen as a proxy for the PLO, which already enjoyed recognition from these states and some 100 others.

As the Arab Spring swept Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, and Libya, the Palestinian Authority came under increasing pressure to show results. It floated a plan for a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood in September—a plan that immediately picked up the support of a newly receptive government in Egypt.

A formal second try at reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas was reached in Cairo on April, 27, 2011, when the two agreed to form a unity government and hold elections within a year of forming a unity government.

¹⁷ Prior to the effort to increase the professionalism of the Palestinian Authority's security forces, Israel had completed a security barrier to protect its civilian populations from terror attacks originating from Palestinian controlled areas. The security barrier had already reduced terror attacks by more than 90%.

The Near-Term Prospect for Peace between Israel and the Palestinians

Likely frustrated at the pace of peace negotiations with Israel and worried about his own power base, Palestinian Authority leader Abbas combined two gambits: unification with Fatah's deadly rival Hamas and a unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood. The latter is coincidentally timed with Egypt's September parliamentary elections.

While Abbas' olive branch to Hamas plays well in internal Palestinian politics and even in the larger Arab world, his *rapprochements* with Hamas destroys the viability of his peace efforts with Israel. After all, Hamas is still dedicated to Israel's destruction, and Israel, the U.S., and the European Union all officially list Hamas as a terrorist group.

A Hamas-Fatah unity government, assuming no public change in Hamas' hard-line stance, allows the Israelis the ability to convince the international community that such a government should not receive formal recognition in September. Further, the Israelis can claim that Fatah's accommodation with Hamas may allow jailed Hamas terrorists to enjoy freedom of action to attack Israel from the West Bank after they are released from Palestinian Authority custody. On the other hand, many in the West view Palestinian unity as the needed missing ingredient for peace.

Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu has told the Palestinian Authority that it must choose between peace with Israel or peace with Hamas. With the new reality in the Middle East, it's easy to see which side Abbas will take—and it isn't the path of peace. This tack appears to be validated by Hamas Prime Minister Haniyeh's stated

expectation that the PLO will soon annul its acknowledgement of Israel's right to exist. Other senior Hamas officials have urged Abbas to reject American aid and Israeli tax remittances—the latter being made easier by Israel's withholding of some \$100 million in tariffs collected on behalf of the Palestinian Authority since its announced intent to unify with Hamas.

Hezbollah

Prior to 9/11, the terror group that had killed the largest number of U.S. citizens was Lebanon's Hezbollah (Party of God). Hezbollah carried out the 1983 bombings of the U.S. Embassy in Lebanon, killing 17 Americans and 46 others, and the Marine Corps barracks in Beirut, killing 241 Marines in addition to the 1985 hijacking of TWA Flight 847.

As with Hamas, Hezbollah was paradoxically created out of Israel's attempts to defend itself against the PLO during its 1982 invasion of Lebanon. As Israel dislodged the PLO from Lebanon, Hezbollah arose, with assistance from newly revolutionary theocratic Iran, as an organic resistance group.

Since then, Hezbollah has transformed itself from a terrorist group to a Shiite Muslim political party that routinely uses violence, terror, and assassinations to achieve its ends. In 2005, Hezbollah assassinated Rafic Hariri, a well-regarded former Lebanese prime minister who was a strong nationalist figure in opposition to Syrian domination of Lebanese politics. The pending release of the UN report assigning blame for the Hariri assassination, expected to fall squarely on Hezbollah leadership, has sharply divided Lebanon into two camps. Depending on the

report's timing and its impact on Lebanese politics, Hezbollah may be incentivized to start a conflict with Israel to divert attention.

Hezbollah is financed to the tune of \$400 million a year by the Islamic Republic of Iran, which also ships it an increasing array of arms. Hezbollah has become more sophisticated in drug smuggling too, working with the Mexican drug cartels as a method of financing its operations.

Hezbollah has stated, "It is an open war until the elimination of Israel and until the death of the last Jew on Earth." It also stands in opposition to Western civilization.

In 2006, Hezbollah staged a raid into Israel to capture Israeli soldiers, killing three, wounding two, and kidnapping two. Israel responded with a 34-day conflict that saw some 1,200 Lebanese and 158 Israeli deaths. Hezbollah fired as many as 4,200 rockets into Israel, targeting civilian areas. Hezbollah successfully hit and severely damaged an Israeli naval vessel with an Iranian-supplied anti-ship cruise missile, demonstrating a new and militarily significant capability.

During the war, Hezbollah positioned military assets in civilian homes, schools, hospitals, and mosques. The result was twofold: collateral damage to Lebanese civilians and harsh international criticism of Israel for civilian deaths.

Hezbollah's lesson learned was simple: Increase the collocation of rockets, ammunition dumps, and command nodes with civilians. The result: Hezbollah's 40-50,000 Iranian-supplied rockets are aimed at Israel from densely populated civilian areas.

The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood

The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood was formed in 1928, and, while not as rejectionist as the strain of Arab resistance founded by Amin al-Husayni, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, it saw the existing state of leadership in the Muslim world in need of reform and revitalization.

The Egyptian military toppled the constitutional monarchy in 1952, gradually extending its power into every corner of politics and the economy. And while the Muslim Brotherhood was behind the assassination of President Anwar Sadat in 1981 because he made peace with Israel, it is important to note that the military is not secular, but rather Islamist. Egyptian expert Daniel Pipes notes that the "Free Officers [who overthrew the monarchy] emerged out of the military wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, and through the decades have been in competition with the civilian wing."

Pipes also contends that the Muslim Brotherhood has a weak ground game, with no more than 100,000 members in a nation of 82 million people.

However, with unrest continuing in Egypt, the military government will likely use the threat of a Muslim Brotherhood takeover to manipulate both domestic and foreign opinion.

Into this volatile mix is an Egyptian economy that has been hammered, with crime tripling since President Hosni Mubarak's ouster. Tourism, accounting for 11.3% of the economy, has shriveled. Unemployment has surged. Child kidnapping is commonplace. Militant

Islamists now operate in the open, brazenly attacking Egypt's large Christian minority and moderate Muslims alike.¹⁸

A recent Pew Research Center poll of 1,000 Egyptians shows that most want the Koran to be the source of laws—Sharia. Recent polling has also shown that Egyptians have become more religiously conservative over the past 40 years, and now yearn for the incorporation of religious parties in government, albeit religiously “moderate” parties, such as the Muslim Brotherhood.

The poll doesn't hold out much hope for the masses of students and other secular Egyptians who toppled President Mubarak. Nor does it encourage Egypt's sizable Christian minority—only 36% asked think it “very important” for Christians and other minorities to freely practice their faith.

As for peace with Israel, more than half would like to see the peace agreement with Israel canceled. Only 20% of Egyptians had a good opinion of the U.S., up from 17% last year.

With this as a backdrop, is it any wonder that the Muslim Brotherhood is calling for an end to the peace treaty with Israel, along with proposing “modesty police”—both calls mirroring actions taken by Hamas.

To contest Egypt's September parliamentary elections, the Muslim Brotherhood is forming a new party, called “Freedom and Justice,” and in late April announced it is increasing the number of seats it plans to contest in the election from one-third to half. This, after Egypt's existing parties had

tentatively agreed to limit the number of seats they would run for in advance of the election, so as to divide up the representative pie before the election. Egypt's secular parties are said to be alarmed at the Muslim Brotherhood's move to take more power.

As the date for the September election approaches, it is not at all hard to imagine that the Muslim Brotherhood will seek the tactical cooperation of its Hamas brethren. Egypt is a very nationalistic nation, with a heightened sense of pride. A war between Israel and Hamas, with the Egyptian military seen as helplessly standing to the side, might be just the tonic the new Freedom and Justice Party needs to win a parliamentary majority—and perhaps the presidency two months after that.

Conclusion

Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia have been wracked by turmoil, much of it with Islamist roots. Might America, and its Middle Eastern ally Israel, be on the precipice of a stunning strategic defeat? It would appear so.

Al-Qaeda and its myriad Salifist affiliates represent a strain of Islamist thought that is impatient, hyper-violent, and views itself as much at war with the apostate Muslim world as it is with the infidel West.

The Muslim Brotherhood and its franchises differ from al-Qaeda in method, not outcome. The Muslim Brotherhood sees the existing Muslim order in need of revival rather than bloody revolution, to be followed by confrontations with Jews, Christians, and the West.

What is important for U.S. policy makers

¹⁸ Muslim mobs burned two Coptic Christian churches in early May, leading to more than 238 people being injured.

to know is that neither al-Qaeda nor the Muslim Brotherhood is interested in the modern reformation of Islam, allowing for a separation of church and state in a pluralistic, tolerant, moderate, and democratic society.

Into this mix, the Turks, mindful of their historic role as the protector of Islam for centuries, are under the leadership of an Islamist political party. Turkish support of Hamas in Gaza and the distancing of their once-close relations with Israel are part of Turkey's effort to burnish its pan-Islam credentials in the region.

The Iranian Shiite theocracy is making a play too, encouraging unrest in Bahrain and oil-rich eastern Saudi Arabia. Iran is also watching with interest as the U.S. and NATO work to topple Libya's longtime dictator, a rival, hoping that Gaddafi is replaced with an Islamist government. Iran's one defensive effort is to ensure that its secular client state Syria remains firmly in control of President Assad in the face of anemic Western efforts to dislodge him. The Iranians are dangerously escalating the military capabilities of both Hamas and Hezbollah by clandestinely supplying both with Silkworm anti-ship missiles to threaten the Israeli navy and commercial shipping. And, while meddling in other nations' affairs, the Iranians continue to develop their nuclear weapons and advanced missile programs.

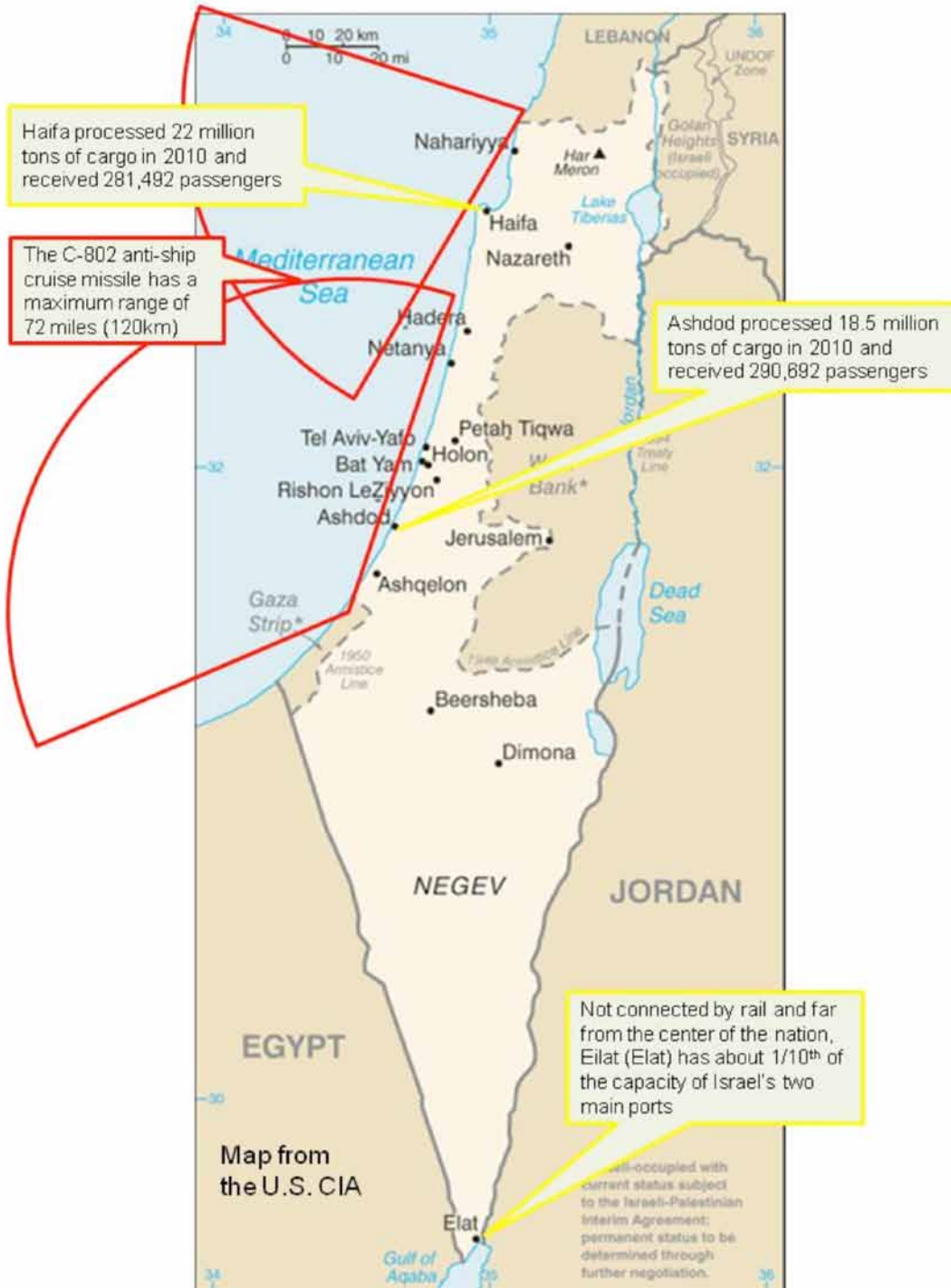
Saudi Arabia is viewing all of this with growing alarm. Unlike President Obama and his foreign policy advisers, the Saudis appear wholly uninterested in the Palestinian question at present. Rather, they are focused on Iran, Libya, Yemen, and al-Qaeda's growing presence in the latter two

nations. Had the Obama administration listened to Saudi and Israeli concerns, it wouldn't have fired cruise missiles at Libya; rather, it would have saved them for Iran.

Meanwhile, the Obama administration leads an ineffective and wholly unneeded war in Libya, is apparently ignoring or is powerless to counter Iran's diplomatic and subversion offensive, and is instead concentrating on fixing the "Palestinian problem." Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said in April, "The status quo between Palestinians and Israelis is no more sustainable than the (Egyptian and Tunisian) political systems that have crumbled in recent months." These misplaced priorities threaten to force Israel to restart peace talks with a unified Palestinian government newly pledged to Israel's destruction. Further, the U.S. has hinted that, in the absence of Israel's capitulation to Palestinian demands, it may, along with the three other powers of the Quartet on the Middle East—the European Union, Russia, and the United Nations—endorse the formation of a Palestinian state based on the 1948 armistice line, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The Obama administration's preoccupation with the insignificant (Libya) and the intractable (the Palestinian question) can only serve to encourage the insidious (Iran) and the iniquitous (Hamas).

Blockade: C-802 anti-ship cruise missile range fans show the possibility of an effective Hamas/Hezbollah blockade of Israel.



Most of Israel's population centers are now under threat of missile attack, but the most severe threat is in northern Israel.



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