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Article 1.

NYT

U.S. to Reassess Status of Talks on Middle East

Michael R. Gordon and Mark Landler

April 4, 2014 -- Rabat, Morocco — With Israel and the Palestinians falling into a familiar cycle of tit-for-tat retribution, and a peace agreement more elusive than ever, Secretary of State John Kerry conceded on Friday that this week had been a "reality check" for the peace process.

But more than anything, it may be a reality check for Mr. Kerry himself. After eight months of diplomacy, more than a dozen trips to the region and endless late-night negotiating sessions with both sides, Mr. Kerry was forced to acknowledge that he may have hit a wall too high even for someone with his seemingly endless optimism and energy.

As he wrapped up perhaps the most grueling trip in his 14 months as secretary of state, Mr. Kerry told reporters he was flying home to Washington to meet with President Obama to reassess the peace negotiations and whether there was a path forward.

“There are limits to the amount of time and effort that the United States can spend, if the parties themselves are unwilling to take constructive steps in order to be able to move forward,” Mr. Kerry said during a visit to Morocco that had been postponed from last fall, when he rushed to Geneva to try to close a nuclear deal with Iran.

With this latest round of talks at risk of collapse, Mr. Kerry faces a setback familiar to many secretaries of state — the last dozen, to a greater or less degree, have tried and failed to broker a peace accord between Israel and the Palestinians — but one that may sting even more, given the enormous personal investment he has poured into it.

There was an echo, in Mr. Kerry’s tone, of a frustrated outburst in 1990 by James A. Baker III, secretary of state under President George Bush, who read out the number for the White House switchboard at a congressional hearing and told the Israelis and Palestinians, “When you’re serious about peace, call us.”

Mr. Kerry is not about to give up on the process. But like Mr. Baker, he is dealing with two parties that are paralyzed by intransigence and fall back on provocations: Israel announcing new Jewish settlements and refusing to release Palestinian prisoners; the Palestinians, in response, applying to join international organizations and issuing a list of new demands.

Defying the failed efforts in Mr. Obama's first term, Mr. Kerry has pushed the peace process toward the top of the administration's list of second-term foreign policy priorities. Declaring at one point that his goal was to achieve a comprehensive peace accord within nine months, he pursued it with his own brand of personal diplomacy — and with a nothing-to-lose zeal characteristic of a defeated presidential candidate who views his current job as the pinnacle of his career.

But as he made clear on Friday, the peace process is just one issue on a crowded plate, from the Iran talks to Russia's aggressive moves in Ukraine to the civil war in Syria — all of which are competing for the administration's attention. On Saturday, Afghans go to the polls to elect a successor to President Hamid Karzai; in three weeks, Mr. Obama flies to Asia to try to revive his strategic shift to that region.

"We have a huge agenda," Mr. Kerry said, adding that his commitment to the peace process was "not open-ended."

With officials and analysts in the region preparing post-mortems on his efforts — and some finding fault with how he brokered abortive talks on Israel's promised release of Palestinian prisoners — the White House rushed to signal its support for Mr. Kerry.

At a meeting with his national security team on Friday, Mr. Obama referred to reports suggesting that the White House had reservations about Mr. Kerry's approach, according to an aide in the room.

"I see a lot of senior officials quoted about Kerry and Middle East peace," the aide quoted Mr. Obama as saying, "but I'm the most senior official, and I have nothing but admiration for how John has handled this."

Kerry on 'Reality Check' in Peace Talks

Secretary of State John Kerry said Washington was evaluating whether to continue its role in the Middle East peace talks, saying it is "reality check time."

Until recently, the White House had largely left the peace process to Mr. Kerry. But last month, Mr. Obama met separately at the White House with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Palestinian Authority president, Mahmoud Abbas, to urge both to sign on to a framework that would guide negotiations toward a final agreement.

When that effort fell short, the White House authorized Mr. Kerry to offer the release of Jonathan J. Pollard, an American convicted in 1987 of spying for Israel, whose freedom Israel has long sought. As part of a quid pro quo, the talks would have been extended through 2015, and Israel would have gone ahead with the release of Palestinian prisoners and slowed down building of Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

Aaron David Miller, a longtime Middle East peacemaker who is now at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars,

said the injection of Mr. Pollard into the negotiation complicated matters for Mr. Kerry.

Mr. Miller said Mr. Kerry was also handicapped by his success in keeping a lid on leaks about the details of the talks over the last eight months. “The zone of silence masks significant, substantial advances on the substance, but he can’t talk about them,” Mr. Miller said.

Analysts in Israel, however, also said Mr. Kerry failed to dispel a perception on the part of Mr. Abbas that Israel’s release of 104 Palestinian prisoners would include Palestinian citizens of Israel. Mr. Netanyahu never agreed to that, saying it would require a separate cabinet decision because it raised sensitive questions of sovereignty.

“The seeds of this were sown at the very beginning,” an official involved in the talks said, on the condition of anonymity for fear of angering Mr. Kerry. “The gap is, what did each side hear from Kerry?”

For all that, some experts said Mr. Kerry was so committed to his Middle East initiative that it was more likely he would push for a change in diplomatic strategy, perhaps by offering an American peace plan, instead of simply walking away from the negotiations.

Robert M. Danin, a former American official involved in the Middle East now at the Council on Foreign Relations, said such a plan would be the last card Mr. Kerry has to play. But given how hard he has pushed this process, Mr. Danin said, “That suggests to me that he may be contemplating a pause but not abandonment of his peace efforts.”

Mr. Kerry, in fact, was careful to leave open the possibility that the United States would seek a course correction, not a pullback. The months he spent nurturing serious talks, he insisted, were not wasted because the two sides had narrowed their differences on some key issues.

On Sunday, American diplomats plan to meet with both Israelis and Palestinians in the region. Even so, American officials said Mr. Kerry told the two sides on Friday that they must shoulder the responsibility of breaking this impasse. Over the coming days and weeks, they said, Mr. Kerry will discuss the prospects for a new approach with members of his team and the White House.

Still, Mr. Kerry also noted that the United States was facing an array of foreign policy challenges that were preoccupying senior administration officials. And the White House made it clear that Mr. Obama's patience for peacemaking was not boundless.

"Insofar as we find fault here, it is in the inability of either side to make tough decisions," said Benjamin J. Rhodes, a deputy national security adviser. "For us to continue to invest that kind of bandwidth in the process, we'd need to see some investment from the parties."

Michael R. Gordon reported from Rabat, and Mark Landler from Washington. Jodi Rudoren contributed reporting from Jerusalem.

Article 2.

The Guardian

A boycott can jolt Israelis from their somnolence on Palestine

Harriet Sherwood

4 April 2014 -- The Rolling Stones have confirmed they will play a gig in Tel Aviv in June as part of their 14 On Fire tour. Inevitably, they are already under pressure to cancel their appearance in "apartheid Israel" by the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement,a campaign that has had mixed success. The academic rock star Stephen Hawking and Pink Floyd's Roger Waters are firmly in the boycott camp, while the author Ian McEwan and the musician Alicia Keys have resisted pressure to pull appearances.

But there's little doubt that the drive for a boycott of Israel in protest at its 47-year occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza is gathering steam. The latest body to back a boycott is Riba, Britain's leading architectural association, which last month called on the International Union of Architects to suspend Israeli membership on the grounds of "complicity in the construction of illegal settlements and other violations of international law". The boycott movement was boosted earlier this year by publicity surrounding Scarlett Johansson's endorsement of SodaStream. How many people before then even knew that SodaStream was based in Israel, let alone that its main manufacturing plant was in a West Bank settlement?

The US secretary of state, John Kerry, performed a similar service when he warned Israeli leaders of the consequences of a failure of current peace talks. "The risks are very high for Israel," he said. "People are talking about boycott. That will intensify in the case of failure."

Kerry is right: more people are now talking about boycotting Israel than ever before. The issue is gaining traction even among US academic bodies, previously thought impervious due to the oft cited "unbreakable bond" between the two countries.

Israel is angered by the boycott calls, and alarmed at the movement's momentum. The prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, recently launched an attack on Europe and its dark history. "I think the most eerie thing, the most disgraceful thing, is to have people on the soil of Europe talking about the boycott of Jews. In the past, antisemites boycotted Jewish businesses and today they call for the boycott of the Jewish state … the boycotters must be exposed for what they are. They're classical antisemites in modern garb."

This is a serious charge, and one that causes deep discomfort to many who want to bring pressure to bear on the Israeli government over its policies towards the Palestinians, but who also vigorously oppose antisemitism in any form. Opposing the occupation does not equate to antisemitism or a rejection of Jews' right to, and need for, a homeland. The repeated accusation of antisemitism does not make it true, however frequently it is levelled by those who defend Israel unconditionally.

But this is not to say that there is unity within the boycott

movement. Many draw a distinction between a settlement boycott – rejecting goods originating in Jewish colonies in the West Bank; cutting ties with settlement-based institutions; or demanding international companies divest from enterprises with links across the "green line" – and a boycott of Israel itself.

Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian president, has made his position clear. "We do not support the boycott of Israel. But we ask everyone to boycott the products of the settlements," he said in December.

Critics of Israeli policies who oppose a boycott of Israel itself argue that ordinary citizens should not be penalised for the government's actions; that dialogue with academic, business and cultural bodies is more productive than shunning them; and that the shameful history of boycotting Jews makes this option impossible to contemplate. But others – increasingly frustrated by Israel's intransigence, the dismal prospects for the peace process, and the failure of the international community to back up critical words with meaningful actions – say that only when Israeli citizens and institutions feel the consequences of their government's policies will they force change from within.

Many Israelis are shielded from the occupation. To those soaking up the sun on a Tel Aviv beach or working in a hi-tech hub in Haifa, Gaza and the West Bank feel like another planet. The daily grind experienced by more than 4 million Palestinians living under military occupation just a few dozen miles away barely registers. A boycott – whether it's the ending of academic links; the refusal of artists to perform; the divestment of international companies for reputational reasons; or a consumer rejecting Israeli produce in the supermarket – has the potential

to jolt Israelis from this somnolence.

Of course, there's a risk of such pressure entrenching Israel's stance. But Israel frequently proclaims itself to be the only true democracy in the Middle East. Should its citizens demand an end to policies that have brought them economic pain, isolation and global opprobrium, their government will surely be forced to take notice.

Harriet Sherwood is the Guardian's Jerusalem correspondent. She was previously foreign editor and home editor.

Article 3.

Agence Global

Hints for a Workable Negotiating 'Framework'

Rami G. Khouri

5 Apr 2014 -- Princeton, New Jersey—Those who have followed the last eight months of American-mediated Israeli-Palestinian negotiations have anticipated the unveiling of the United States' own "framework" for continued negotiations to achieve a permanent, comprehensive peace agreement. Whether or not this happens, for now the negotiations have hit a major

snag and may well break down completely. The consequences of a breakdown would probably be grim for both sides: Israelis will be increasingly besieged by their global political isolation, while the Palestinians will be further squeezed by Israel's choke-hold on their economy, movement, borders, and energy, food and water sources. I am disappointed that the Palestinians, Israelis and Americans have been unable to get beyond the old, failed Dennis Ross-style approach to diplomacy that saw the U.S. mediators tilt heavily towards Israeli demands rather than prod both sides to seek mutually acceptable formulas based on equal rights. Israelis and Palestinians one day will have to make the tough, historic decisions that were made by other leaders in other equally difficult conflicts, notably in Northern Ireland and South Africa—where both sides achieved their core demands because they also acceded to the core demands of the other. Perhaps we will soon see both sides agree to keep negotiating on the basis of a U.S.-crafted "framework." If so, they would do well to study the recommendations recently made by a man who knows all sides of the conflict, and in fact has proposed just such a draft framework. He is former U.S. diplomat Daniel Kurtzer, who served as ambassador to both Israel and Egypt, and in recent years has been a Professor in Middle Eastern Policy Studies at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University (where I am spending a few months as a visiting scholar and lecturer). I went to see him in his office earlier this week to explore his ideas and understand his approach in more depth. I came away impressed by a quality in both his text and his character that is missing from the public pronouncements of U.S. officials. This is the quality of trying sincerely to acknowledge and respond to the most important needs of both sides, while also remaining within

the bounds of what is politically feasible. It shows in his model framework text* which he says pushes both sides beyond their previously announced positions, while “trying to accommodate their deepest interests and concerns.”

Kurtzer outlines 12 key “parameters” for negotiation: goal, territory and borders, security, state-to-state relations, relations with neighbors, Israeli settlements, refugees, West Bank and Gaza "safe passage," places of historical and religious significance, Jerusalem, water, and implementation. He explained to me that, “a framework is like the top of a funnel that is wider than the final accord that you reach in the detailed talks.” Some of his language is necessarily broad because the details can only come from the two negotiating teams. Yet the framework should also give both sides the feeling that their key concerns and principles are addressed, so that they would have an incentive to negotiate seriously—which does not seem to be the case these days. I feel this text is worth studying and developing further because it shows how serious negotiators could go about eliciting support and concessions from both sides who would both feel equally respected. For in its key words, phrases and diplomatic references, this text gives meaningful and simultaneous gains to Israelis and Palestinians alike. Some of his text’s language in its current form will be rejected by both sides, such as the relatively soft language on Palestinian refugees’ rights and the meaning of the trauma of exile and refugeehood in 1947-48, and also the demand that Israel negotiate withdrawals from occupied territory based on the June 4, 1967 lines. Areas like these and a few others that are phrased in language that now seems unacceptable to one side or the other would have to be negotiated—which is precisely how a broad

"framework" of contested words eventually becomes a permanent peace agreement comprising mutually agreed terms and language. His suggestion for the undefined new Israeli demand of being recognized as a "Jewish state" is to have "Israel recognize Palestine as the national home of the Palestinian people and all its citizens, and Palestine will recognize Israel as the national home of the Jewish people and all its citizens."

Jerusalem would become the capital of two states, and would remain undivided and free of permanent barriers, with agreed boundaries based on predominantly Jewish neighborhoods being part of Israel and predominantly Arab neighborhoods being part of the new State of Palestine. They would agree on a special regime to administer the Old City under an international administrator they appoint.

This is a very useful starting point for serious Israeli-Palestinian negotiations with a fair mediator, which, in my view, we have never had to date.

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* http://wws.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/content/docs/Kurtzer_Parameters.pdf

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Article 4.

The Jerusalem Post

What the Patriarch Abraham can teach us about land and peace

S. Daniel Abraham

31 March, 2014 -- It sometimes seems as if the Torah set down this 3,500-year-old incident for no other reason than to offer guidance for the situation Israel is in right now.

For some Jews, the Bible is frequently cited as the source of the belief that the land of Israel belongs to the Jews, and that Israel should hold onto all this land even if doing so eliminates the possibility of peace with the Arab world.

In this understanding of the Torah, one very important Bible story is invariably ignored, a story that offers very different guidance as to how Jews, "the children of Abraham," should act.

The story occurs early in the Book of Genesis shortly after we are introduced to Abraham, the first Jew. A chapter earlier, God instructed Abraham to leave his father's house, and to go to "the land that I will show you." Abraham follows God's command and, after a brief stay in Egypt during a famine, heads with his wife Sarah and his nephew Lot, along with their cattle and workers, into the land of Canaan.

Abraham and Lot have at this point accumulated large flocks and are quite affluent. Nonetheless, "there was fighting [the sort

of fighting that can quickly lead to bloodshed] between the herdsmen of Abraham's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock." The fighting is severe – the Torah says, "and they were unable to dwell together" – and Abraham is anxious to find a solution.

Abraham approaches Lot: "Please let there be no fighting between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen.... Is not all the land before you? Please separate from me: If you go left then I will go right, and if you right then I will go left." The Bible records that Lot accepts Abraham's offer, and chooses land in the plain of Jordan.

It sometimes seems as if the Torah set down this 3,500-year-old incident for no other reason than to offer guidance for the situation Israel is in right now.

I am well aware that there are other biblical stories that reflect a more militant point of view (such as the command to destroy the Amalekites), I just want to emphasize that this is one of the first stories the Torah tells us about Abraham, and it depicts him as a man willing to compromise. And what is he willing to compromise about? Land, and avoiding unnecessary conflict about it.

Certainly, the Torah's words, "and they were unable to dwell together," seem a pretty apt description of the situation of the Palestinians and Jews today. The Palestinians of the West Bank (and in Gaza) want their own country and, like the herdsmen of Lot, are willing to fight until they get what they want.

Abraham, by the way, could certainly have instructed his herdsmen to fight back. It is clear from the Torah that Abraham

was stronger than Lot, and just one chapter later, Lot and his workers are unable to defend themselves against an attack from local Canaanite forces and are taken captive. It is his uncle Abraham and the people under his command who go on the attack and free Lot.

And yet, as noted, he chooses to compromise with his weaker nephew to avoid conflict.

Why? Not because he was afraid that Lot and his herdsmen could defeat him. They couldn't. But because he didn't want strife and bloodshed. And to avoid that happening, Abraham knew that he and his nephew needed to agree on a separation between them.

Today, of course, no one is suggesting that Israel make the same sort of offer to the Palestinians that Abraham made to Lot. The Palestinians have made it clear that they are also willing to compromise, and reach an agreement with Israel under which some 80 percent of Jewish Israelis who live beyond the 1967 line will be incorporated into the new internationally recognized borders of Israel.

Thus, all of the settlement blocs will be inside Israel. Fatah wants to reach such an agreement and settle the border issues permanently, so that they can establish the new State of Palestine.

They have also agreed that their state will be a demilitarized state without an army. And in behindthe- scenes negotiations they have made it clear that only a small, symbolic number of Palestinian refugees would be admitted to Israel, and only with Israel's agreement.

What Israel can and should say to the Palestinians can be modeled on Abraham's words to his nephew, and adapted to the present situation: "Please let there be no fighting and bloodshed between my people and your people... Please separate from me, and take the land on which so many of your people, and so few of mine, live. We have been fighting now for close to a century, and if we don't reach an agreement we will go on fighting for another century and more.

Thousands of young men on both sides have already been killed and maimed in a fight over land. We need a peace agreement more than we need those parts of the West Bank which consist overwhelmingly of Palestinians."

When I look at the parties on Israel's Right, they often speak the language of military might. Israel is, after all, militarily much stronger than the Palestinians, and in fact Israel today is probably the strongest military power on earth per capita. But all that their bravado is leading to is a Jewish state that will one day have more Arabs living in it than Jews.

Today, the time has come for the children of Abraham to start speaking the language of Abraham.

The author is an American entrepreneur and founder of the Center for Middle East Peace in Washington. Follow the center on Twitter: @AbrahamCenter

Article 5.

Al-Ahram Weekly

Did Obama succeed in Riyadh?

Al-Sayed Amin Shalabi

2 April, 2014 -- Since the Unites States established diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia in 1933, and the summit meeting between US president Franklin D Roosevelt and king Abdul-Aziz Ibn Saud on 14 February 1945, the Saudi Kingdom has been ally to the United States, where the kingdom relied on the US security umbrella and was one of Washington's instruments for fighting communism in the Middle East. Washington relied on Saudi support to the mujahideen against the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan. But troubles started with the terrorist attacks against the US on 11 September 2001, with the assumption that the executors were Arab and Muslim, among them Saudi elements.

In the debate that started in the US following the attacks, the neoconservatives argued that the ruling regimes in the Arab world, which would not allow broad political participation, were responsible for breeding extremism and exporting it globally. Adopting this theory, the US administration started to promote democracy in the Arab world. Arab regimes, including in Saudi Arabia, regarded this as an attempt to undermine Arab regimes. The US war on Iraq came amid Saudi reservations on the administration of this war, which led Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Abdullah Al-Faisal to address the US Council on Foreign Relations, saying that the policy of the US administration in Iraq provided that country on a silver platter to Iran.

The 25 January Revolution in Egypt came to broaden the cracks when the US abandoned Hosni Mubarak, which the Saudi

Kingdom considered as letting down an ally — something that might be repeated with the kingdom itself. Differences with Washington widened further when the US was seen as supporting the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic trend in Egypt, which the Saudi Kingdom — albeit religiously conservative — regarded as threatening its regime, and Gulf regimes. Contrary to the negative American attitude towards Egypt and its 30 June Revolution, the Saudi Kingdom gave its full support to the transitional regime, to the extent that it expressed its willingness to compensate Egypt for lost American military assistance.

The Syrian crisis and the US administration's reluctant position towards acting against the Bashar Al-Assad regime came to add to the sources of difference, particularly after the Obama administration retreated from its threats to strike Al-Assad's regime and engaged in a deal on Syrian chemical weapons, which gave another opportunity of survival to Al-Assad. The major source of the US-Saudi difference, however, came on Iran — particularly after the initial agreement on its nuclear programme, which Saudi Arabia regarded as a shift in American policy towards reconciling with Iran — which would strengthen, the kingdom feared, Iran's position and its expansive intentions in the Gulf region. In this context, Saudi Arabia declared its non-acceptance of a UN Security Council seat — which observers regarded as a form of protest on the American position, more than objecting to the UN Security Council itself.

Obama's visit to Saudi Arabia envisions its objective as providing explanations of American positions, and to assure that Washington will remain loyal to — and a protector of — Gulf security, and that any agreement or relations with Iran will not come at the expense of Saudi interests and those of Gulf countries.

The question now is whether Obama's efforts to reassure Saudi Arabia on its commitments in the Gulf, and on the future of its relations with Tehran, will succeed in repairing the basic imbalance in relations between the US and Saudi Arabia — namely, the kingdom's loss of trust in the US. Will relations between the two return to a familiar normality?
It is clear that the breach in trust drove Saudi Arabia, following Egypt's 30 June events and its troubled relations with Washington, to expand its international relations base and search for other options and alternatives, reflected in the turn eastward in the orientation of both Egypt and Saudi Arabia, seeking and building new relations, particularly with China and Russia. This much was clear in Field Marshal Al-Sisi's visit to Moscow, and that of Crown Prince Salman Bin Abdul-Aziz to a number of East Asian countries, including China.

The writer is executive director of the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs.

Article 6.

Hürriyet

The next battle: Presidency

Mustafa Akyol

4/5/2014 -- After yet another election victory of the ruling

Justice and Development Party (AKP) and its leader, Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkey is now turning its focus to the next battle: the presidential elections that will be held on Aug. 10, and if a second round is necessary, on Aug. 24 as well.

Notably, this will be a new experience for all Turks. Because to date, the presidency, the largely symbolic yet highest post in the republic, has been elected by the Parliament. Yet with a constitutional amendment in 2007, which came right after the election of the current president, Abdullah Gül, the system was changed and the presidency, too, became a popularly elected seat. Some political scientists have warned that this unusual system would create problems, by creating two popularly-elected top seats, but others welcomed it as more "democratization."

It has been long believed that Erdoğan wants this new, fancy presidency for himself. That is why, in fact, he pushed for a whole new constitutional system which would create a very, very powerful presidency. That has not worked so far, because Erdoğan does not have the power to change the Constitution. Yet still, many believe that he wants to get the presidency with its current powers and, with a loyal prime minister, wants to rule Turkey for 10 more years. (5+5=10. That is why Erdoğan speaks of his "2023" targets, which would not only be the centennial of the republic, but also the zenith of his then 21-year-old rule.)

But can Erdoğan win the presidency? He needs to get more than 50 percent of the votes, either in the first or second round. He won 45 percent last Sunday, and if he can get the support of Kurdish nationalists, whose votes are around 5-6 percent, along with the votes of small Islamist parties such as Felicity Party (SP), he well may secure a simple majority. The opposition would only have a chance if they unite for a single and

appealing candidate, which is easier said than done.
The key question here is the future of Gül, the current president. He is Erdoğan's historical friend, ally and "brother." They founded the AKP together way back in 2001. But Gül also has proven much more liberal and reconciliatory in the recent years. (Just this week, Gül welcomed the Constitutional Court's decision to set Twitter free, whereas Erdoğan slammed the decision as a violation of "national values," adding that he will implement the decision but not "respect" it.) That is why many liberals see Gül as the last hope to balance the growing authoritarianism and parochial nationalism among the AKP circles. Moderate but silent circles in the AKP seem to think that way as well.
Gül is also very popular, and he could easily win the presidential elections for a second term, if Erdoğan supports him. That would be scenario one. Scenario two would be Erdoğan and Gül changing places, which would give Gül more executive power as prime minister, and give the liberals a deep breath.
Scenario three would be Erdoğan winning the presidency, sidelining Gül, and appointing a fully obedient prime minister. The result would be a gigantic concentration of power.
In the next two months, we will see which option awaits Turkey. The decision will ultimately be given by Erdoğan, but only after behind-the-scenes meetings and negotiations with Gül. And it will be a very fateful decision for the decade ahead.

Article 7.

The Economist

Egypt's probable president: Pretending to be a civilian

Apr 5th 2014 -- Cairo -- In A soft-spoken television address announcing his bid for Egypt's presidency, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi intimated that his would not be a traditional election campaign. The caution seems unneeded. Few Egyptians expect that the field-marshal, a former defence minister and head of military intelligence, will have to exert himself much before coasting to victory in the polls, now scheduled for May 26th.

As leader of the coup that toppled President Muhammad Morsi last July, Mr (as he now is) Sisi is in effect the candidate of Egypt's state, backed by its 7m-strong civil service as well as the powerful army and police. He is also a hero to the many Egyptians who loathe Mr Morsi and his Muslim Brotherhood. Their fervour has generated a minor industry of Sisibilia, from T-shirts to chocolates and costume jewellery, all sporting his image. Against such momentum, rival candidates face a daunting challenge. There are few takers so far.

It helps, too, that Egyptians who might have voted against him are likely instead to boycott the polls. This includes the 20% or so who still back the Brotherhood, despite a fierce state campaign of vilification, accompanied by mass arrests and, more recently, mass trials of Brotherhood "terrorists". Likely non-voters also include a growing number, particularly among the young, who see Mr Sisi as the spearhead of a rolling counter-revolution that has slowly but steadily dashed hopes for

sweeping change raised during the heady days of the Arab spring three years ago.

Opinion polls in Egypt are notoriously unreliable, but one independent pollster, Baseera, has tracked a recent drop in support for Mr Sisi. In February, 51% of respondents said they would vote for him. This fell to 39% in March. That does not yet presage unpopularity: fewer than 1% said they would vote for anyone else, and most remained undecided. Mr Sisi, now 59, is an effective public speaker, with a gift for catchy colloquialisms, a penchant for emotional appeals to nationalism and an aura of quiet strength. Shedding his military garb, the smiling candidate recently appeared atop a mountain bike, in a training suit: hardly the profile of a stern dictator.

All this resonates well with the many Egyptians who yearn above all for stability after years of turmoil. But he must also stem the rise in poverty (see chart). Incomes have sagged as the economy stagnates. Electricity shortages now affect even the well-off. Egypt experienced the biggest drop in a UN-sponsored global "happiness" index, outstripping even bankrupt Greece, between 2006 and 2012.

Yet this mood of misery does not seem to have engendered any lingering sympathies for the fallen Brothers, whose efforts to sustain protests are met mostly with annoyance. Despite anguish over police brutality and the death of some 3,000 people since the July coup, most of them Mr Morsi's supporters, the common talk on Egyptian streets is that only a strongman can fix things.

So the presidential poll may replicate a pattern set in December, when Egyptians voted on a new constitution. It passed by an

embarrassing 98%, but the turnout of just 38% showed a society that is both apathetic and polarised.

Egyptians had puzzled over why it took Mr Sisi so long to announce his candidacy, and why the election date kept being delayed. Recent changes in the army may offer a clue. Though the sprawling institution has underpinned Egypt's state since officers seized power in 1952, taking direct charge between the revolution of 2011 that ousted Hosni Mubarak and Mr Morsi's election in mid-2012, many generals have been wary of exposing their supreme commander to the direct line of political fire.

But in March Mr Sisi shuffled the military's 25-member ruling council. Further ensuring loyalty, he raised a lower-ranking general, Mahmoud Hegazy, to the key post of chief of staff. As operational commander of the 450,000-strong force, Mr Hegazy is close to Mr Sisi, having previously been appointed by him to his own former post as head of military intelligence. Mr Hegazy's daughter happens to be married to one of Mr Sisi's three sons.

Lining up the ducks in his military pond required the skills that Mr Sisi honed as a discreet intelligence chief. A devout Muslim, he also persuaded the Muslim Brothers, during their brief rule, that he was a man to be trusted. Such canniness will be needed in future, as Egypt's next leader faces the gargantuan task of cleaning up a range of creaking institutions, from the courts and the police to failing health and education systems.

He must do this not only to rescue Egypt, but for his own sake. Trigger-happy police and judges who recently sentenced

hundreds of Brothers to death (and a farmer to a stint in prison for putting a Sisi-style hat on a donkey) may turn out to be more of a liability than an asset.

Article 8.

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

What Will a Sisi Presidency Bring for Egypt?

Foreign Policy Shaped by Donors

Michele Dunne

April 3, 2014 -- Two major factors will likely shape Abdel Fattah el-Sisi's foreign policies in the short term. The first is his fight against the Muslim Brotherhood as well as extremist groups based in the Sinai, and the second is an unprecedented economic dependence on Saudi Arabia. The two factors are linked, due to a convergence of interests between the Egyptian military and the Gulf states. Sisi needs the Gulf's financial support to strengthen Egypt's faltering economy and bolster his position vis-à-vis the Brotherhood. The Gulf needs Sisi to defeat the Brotherhood, hoping that will stave off political agitation by Brotherhood-affiliated groups in their own countries.

Egypt has relied increasingly on Gulf economic assistance since the 2011 uprising, as the government spent its reserves in order to sustain high social spending and support the Egyptian

currency amid the political turmoil that followed Mubarak's removal. In the first 18 months of the transition, during which the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) held control, Egypt received only about $2.3 billion in assistance from Gulf States (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait) despite pledges of at least $7 billion. During the Morsi presidency, Qatar stepped up to provide some $8 billion in grants and soft loans, a fact that provoked widespread concern and satire in Egypt about dependence on Gulf assistance.

Since Morsi's ouster in July 2013, Qatar is out as Egypt's patron, and Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Kuwait are very much in, a trend that seems likely to accelerate during a Sisi presidency. By early 2014, the military-backed government had received some $12 billion in various forms of assistance (including cash, petroleum, projects, and Central Bank deposits to support the Egyptian pound) from the three countries, with much more expected to arrive soon. In fact, the key initiatives of Sisi's campaign to emerge so far are Gulf-financed economic megaprojects (one in housing, another in development of the Suez Canal zone) with extensive military involvement. There is every indication that Sisi will continue to depend on infusions of cash and/or energy of roughly $2 billion per month from the Gulf in order to keep his government afloat and minimize the country's ongoing energy crisis.

So, how will President Sisi's heavy and unprecedented dependence on Gulf assistance affect his foreign policies?

Already there has been one indication that Cairo will not be able to stray far from policy lines delineated by Riyadh while this high level of economic dependence continues. When Sisi first

deposed Morsi, the transitional government quickly moved away from Morsi's support for the Syrian revolution and adopted a different approach, saying it would no longer support "jihad" in Syria and notably targeting Syrian refugees in Egypt as potentially dangerous subversives. By the time of the Arab summit in March 2014, the Egyptian government quietly brought its position on Syria more into line with its Gulf allies, noting its ongoing "contacts" with the Syrian opposition and the Gulf states.

The great unknown about Egyptian foreign policy remains whether relations with the United States will deteriorate, limp along, or strengthen during a Sisi presidency. The United States has its reservations about Egypt's current course but would like to find a way to sustain relations, and Sisi presumably would like to restore suspended U.S. military assistance in order to keep his generals happy. But Saudi Arabia not only offered to replace U.S. military assistance but apparently also to finance arms purchased from Russia. Thus Egypt is becoming a pawn in the tense relations among Washington, Moscow, and Riyadh.

In his brief speech announcing his presidential bid, Sisi sounded well-worn themes about foreign policy including the need to restore Egypt's "strength, power, and influence" in the world and its rejection of foreign meddling ("Egypt is not a playground for any internal, regional, or international party and it never will be"). But in a moment of candor, he also hinted that this high level of dependence on the Gulf cannot and should not be sustained, saying, "Egypt is a country rich in its resources and people, yet it relies on donations and assistance. This is not acceptable…"

It remains to be seen whether Sisi will undertake the internal reconciliation and courageous political and economic decisions that would allow Egypt to move beyond such dependence.

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