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Roadblocks Remain as Officials Work Toward Iranian Nuclear Pact

Michael R. Gordon <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/g/michael_r_gordon/index.html>
and Mark Landler <http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/l/mark_landler/index.html>

November 8, 2013 -- GENEVA — With Secretary of State John Kerry and other ranking Western officials converging here on Friday, negotiators wrestled with the final hurdles to a landmark nuclear agreement with Iran that would temporarily freeze its nuclear program.

But they quit shortly before midnight, still confronting several difficult issues. Among the most contentious issues during the talks have been the fate of a reactor that Iran is building near Arak, what to do about Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium and how much relief to give Iran from punishing economic sanctions.

Mr. Kerry, who cut short a Middle East tour to fly to Geneva for the talks, warned that "there are important gaps that have to be closed." But his mere presence, along with the foreign ministers of Britain, France, Russia and China, suggested that an initial deal was in reach, the first such pact between Iran and major world powers in a decade.

As a first step, Western nations are seeking to freeze Iran's nuclear program so that the West can conduct further negotiations without fear that Tehran is using the time to inch closer to a weapons capability.

"I want to emphasize: There is not an agreement at this point in time," Mr. Kerry told reporters before plunging into meetings, including one with Iran's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif. "There are still some important issues on the table that are unresolved." </=>

After Mr. Kerry's meetings had ended, a senior State Department official said: "We continued to make progress as we worked to narrow the gaps. There is more work to do. The meetings will resume tomorrow morning."

The major powers are demanding that Iran mothball the nuclear plant, a heavy-water reactor to produce plutonium that is scheduled for completion next summer, experts say. Once the reactor becomes operational, it will be difficult, if not impossible, for the West to disable it by military means for fear of igniting the plutonium, a component of nuclear weapons.

"Once the reactor starts, any hostile action will have environmental consequences," said Olli Heinonen, a former deputy director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency. "Thus the construction should be stopped at the front end of any agreement to pave the way for a long-term solution."

As a possible compromise, experts say, Iran might agree to refrain from starting up the plant for the six months of an interim agreement, while continuing some work on the installation.

Iran has made clear it has no intention of suspending the enrichment of low-enriched uranium, either under an interim agreement or as part of a comprehensive accord.

But American officials still want to curb Iran's ability to make a bomb in a matter of months. This could be done by banning Iran from enriching uranium to 20 percent and arranging for Iran to convert its current stock of such uranium into oxide form, which is harder to convert to weapons grade. Such a step, many experts say, would be more effective if it was also coupled with constraints on the number and type of centrifuges Iran is permitted to retain.

"If there aren't more constraints put on the Iranian centrifuge program, then you haven't accomplished very much at all," David Albright, the president of the Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security, said on a recent conference call organized by the Israel Project, a nonprofit organization.

American officials were believed to have sought a commitment by Iran that it would not operate sophisticated centrifuges, known as IR-2s, or install new ones. Banning Iran from manufacturing additional centrifuges of all types would also slow progress toward a bomb, but Mr. Albright said it might not be part of the Obama administration's proposal.

To induce Iran to halt its program, the United States is proposing freeing up billions of dollars in Iranian funds that have been frozen in banks overseas, and could be given to Iran in installments in return for concessions. But on Friday, an Iranian negotiator said Iran expected relief from sweeping sanctions against its oil and banking industries. "We have announced to the West that in the first phase the issue of banking and oil sanctions must be considered," said the representative, Majid Takht-Ravanchi, according to the Iranian news agency Mehr.

Mr. Takht-Ravanchi is a seasoned diplomat, but his statement seemed out of character for an Iranian delegation that has worked hard to raise expectations for an agreement.

In any event, the broader sanctions can be lifted only with congressional approval, a lengthy and political difficult process, given the strong sentiment among lawmakers to keep the pressure on Iran. The Senate, in fact, is considering additional sanctions, and agreed only to delay the bill briefly to avoid disrupting the initial rounds of talks.

News of a potential agreement prompted several Republican lawmakers to express concern that the major powers were about to reward Iran without removing its nuclear capabilities. Their criticism followed a blistering denunciation of the potential deal by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel.

"The agreement would leave Iran's nuclear infrastructure in place while undermining the sanctions pressure we worked so hard to build," said Senator Mark S. Kirk, an Illinois Republican and Iran hawk. "In short, it will increase the likelihood of war when we should be doing all we can to achieve a peaceful outcome."

Representative Ed Royce, the California Republican who is chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said he would hold hearings on the negotiations with Iran to coincide with the 100th day since the election of Hassan Rouhani as president of Iran — the political change that opened the door to the most serious diplomacy in a decade.

"Instead of toughening sanctions to get meaningful and lasting concessions, the Obama administration looks to be settling for interim and reversible steps," Mr. Royce said in a statement. "A partial freeze of enrichment, as we're hearing, is not a freeze."

If Mr. Kerry succeeds in closing an interim deal, one of his first orders of business is likely to be lobbying his former colleagues in the Senate to support the agreement and to hold off on new sanctions. Mr. Kerry had planned to visit Algeria and Morocco, but he postponed those visits to return to Washington by early next week.

One stop Mr. Kerry was retained is Abu Dhabi, in the United Arab Emirates, where he is scheduled to meet the crown prince, Mohammed bin Zayed. Abu Dhabi, like other Persian Gulf states, is worried about the specter of a nuclear Iran and has been alarmed by the reports of a potential deal.

Mr. Kerry got a taste of the political storm any deal is likely to stir up earlier on Friday when he met in Tel Aviv with Mr. Netanyahu. The Israeli leader derided the potential agreement as "the deal of the century" for Iran and said Israel rejected it unequivocally.

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Article 2.

American Enterprise Institute

A lousy Iran deal

Danielle Pletka <<http://www.aei.org/scholar/danielle-pletka/>>

November 07, 2013 -- Here are the contours of the deal the Obama administration thinks it might cut this week with the new and improved Islamic Republic of Iran:

- * A "modest rollback" of the nuclear weapons program
- * Some "suspension" of enrichment at key sites like Natanz and Fordow
- * Conversion of uranium enrichment from 20 percent to less usable fuel rods
- * No end to plutonium work at the Arak heavy-water reactor
- * No concession on Parchin military complex, where weapons research took place (but that's the IAEA's problem, insists the Obama team)
- * No agreement to ship abroad fissile material

Key questions for right now? What's a "modest rollback" exactly? How much "suspension" is suspension? Where the administration once demanded a "freeze," that's no longer on the table. Why isn't the US deal tied to what the IAEA is demanding, ie details on weaponization work? It once was. Why is it now ok to keep fissile material in Iran? Once, the administration insisted it had to go, perhaps to Russia. And what about the second route to a nuclear weapon, ie plutonium and Arak? Now, no deal at all there.

What do the Iranians get in return? Not clear, but Obama will pull out all the stops. He hasn't got much latitude because of the sanctions rammed down his throat by Congress, but sanctions under IEEPA (The International Emergency Economic Powers Act) are at the president's discretion. So he could unfreeze certain Iranian assets and potentially nod and wink to foreigners now sitting on Iranian cash to do the same. More importantly for Iran, the full faith and credit of Barack Obama would suddenly be behind them, and letters of credit to which they had no access until now could come unsuck, helping ease the pressure on their economy.

What will the Iranians have given? Nothing. Every single offer reportedly out there from the Iranians is less than what was offered mere months ago in earlier negotiations; In exchange, every concession contemplated by the Obama team is more than what was offered in earlier negotiations. Who's the better negotiator here? Did you have any doubt? Let's deconstruct for a second the technique here: The Obama folk are patting themselves on the back that diplomatic tactics they used with North Korea are working with Iran, namely the "sequencing" of concessions by each side, theoretically building confidence and allowing each side to back out in the case of bad faith. First, let's assess the value of that process with North Korea: Three nuclear tests and nuclear-ready missiles, nuclear plants online, and growing exports to rogue states. That's good stuff. Second, let's look at what Iran's giving: Every single step is reversible, even

single step will have no meaningful impact on Iran's capacity to produce a nuclear weapon within weeks or months. There will be no "rollback," merely a "slow down;" but that slow down is fine with Iran, because it already has EVERYTHING IT NEEDS FOR A NUCLEAR WEAPON, or even several.

How about the "step by step" process that is the new word for "sequencing?" The administration isn't being clear with Iran about what its bottom line is, because Obama has no bottom line. What was once a demand to end the entire nuclear weapons program has become a demand to make it smaller and hide it better. The Iranians are playing out the string, and won't agree to anything more substantial down the road, because they're getting what they need up front. They are aware that if they hold out long enough (and that's not too long), Obama will offer them a better deal: more concessions in return for less.

Finally, there's the question of Iran's secret nuclear facilities. That's right, pretty much every western state believes Iran has moved many of its weapons activities somewhere. I have no clue where, but believe the Obama team has some suspicions. Imagine this: The president reports to Congress he has achieved a "rollback" of the Iranian nuclear program, and in turn granted Tehran valuable concessions. But all the while he knew that Iran was progressing actively, elsewhere. He concealed that information from the Congress, our allies and the American people. Incredible? Not really.

As the vice president for foreign and defense policy studies at AEI, Pletka writes on national security matters with a focus on Iran and weapons proliferation, the Middle East, Syria, Israel and the Arab Spring. Her most recent study, "Iranian influence in the Levant, Egypt, Iraq, and Afghanistan," was published in May 2012.

Article 3.

The Washington Post

How Netanyahu could kill a nuclear deal with Iran

Max Fisher

November 8 -- This has been a bad week for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. His relationship with the United States is frosting over, and the world is inching closer to an Iranian nuclear agreement that he sees as foolhardy and dangerous. But while he may be increasingly isolated on the world stage, the Israeli leader still has substantial leverage in Washington, which he may be able to use to undermine U.S.-Iran talks or possibly kill them outright.

The trouble for Netanyahu started Wednesday, when Secretary of State John Kerry took some shot at the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank -- long criticized by the United States as a threat to peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians.

"We consider new and have always considered the settlements to be illegitimate," . European leaders are bullish on finding a deal with Iran and are also increasingly wary of the Netanyahu government's role in the Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, seeing it as intransigent and counterproductive. They might be willing to tolerate their disagreements with Netanyahu on one of those issues, but on both? <<http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2013/11/217272.htm>=target=>

If Netanyahu is perceived as undermining a deal with Iran or, worse, as responsible for scuttling it outright, then Europe's support for Iran sanctions could crumble

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/11/04/would-the-world-blame-israel-if-iranian-nuclear-talks-fail/> , which is the opposite of what Netanyahu wants. Further, as Jeffrey Goldberg writes at Bloomberg, Netanyahu's perceived intransigence on both Israeli-Palestinian peace talks and on Iran could leave him isolated "from the rest of the world, precisely at a moment when he needs the rest of the world to help him."

Still, Israel is not powerless. Netanyahu might be able to exert real leverage over the Iranian talks at perhaps their most vulnerable point: the U.S. Congress. The greatest hurdles to any Iranian nuclear deal will probably not be in Geneva, where the diplomats broadly agree on the contours of a final accord, but in Washington and Tehran. Domestic politics in both countries are, at best, divided on the prospect of a deal and tend to default to the status quo of mistrust and hostility. The White House and Congress are already coming into conflict; just as U.S. negotiators hint at sanctions relief, the Senate is moving forward on enacting even more sanctions <http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/US-Congress-will-not-wait-to-push-ahead-with-sanctions-on-Iran-330956> , undermining the U.S. proposal.

Many lawmakers, particularly but not exclusively Republicans, are beginning to rally around the idea that any sanctions relief would be dangerous and requires their opposition. It doesn't hurt that appearing tough on Iran is a politically popular position that poses few risks for lawmakers and substantial benefit. Keep in mind that according to public opinion polls, Americans hold highly negative views of Iran. In addition, lawmakers have been denouncing the Obama administration over Middle East policy for years. Congress successfully opposed the White House's plan for limited strikes against Syria, a reminder that the administration has a very tough time getting controversial Middle East policies through a legislative body that is not predisposed to helping him.

Given that "Baghdad" remains a rallying cry for Republican lawmakers more than a year after the attack on the U.S. diplomatic mission there, it's hard to imagine them green-lighting sanctions relief for Iran. Still, some in Congress are open to the prospect of a deal with Iran: 131 members signed a letter in July <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/07/19/u-s-congress-gestures-in-an-unusual-direction-toward-diplomacy-with-iran/> saying they backed diplomacy.

This is where Netanyahu could play a major role, and potentially scuttle any nuclear deal with Iran, should one emerge from Geneva. Sanctions relief will be controversial in Congress, and Republican lawmakers will try to draw as much attention to the issue as possible so as to rally public opposition. What they lack is a public face to put on their campaign. Netanyahu can provide that: He is popular in the United States and has demonstrated a flair for rallying Congress. He's also not particularly shy about criticizing the diplomatic outreach with Tehran. If Netanyahu continues arguing against an Iranian deal, and particularly if he does so in a way that's crafted to resonate in any domestic American debate, he could make the Obama administration's task in Congress much harder.

That doesn't necessarily mean Netanyahu would go through with this, of course. Up until the last couple of weeks, his relationship with the Obama administration had been improving, after a rough couple of years. Israel needs the United States, which Netanyahu knows; his bet, in 2008, that Mitt Romney would replace Obama in the White House failed. Still, if he decides it's worth it, he could cause Obama a lot of trouble in Congress and in the court of U.S. public opinion – perhaps shutting down any Iranian nuclear deal in the process.

Article 4.

Foreign Policy

James Traub

November 8, 2013 --Remember that moving passage in Barack Obama's 2009 speech in Cairo in which the president said, "in order to move forward, we must say openly the things we hold in our hearts, and that too often are said only behind closed doors"? I couldn't help thinking of that as I read Secretary of State John Kerry's agonizingly circumscribed remarks during his own visit to Cairo earlier this week, where he insisted that the administration was pleased with Egypt's progress towards the restoration of democracy, and thus that the decision to temporarily suspend the transfer of weapons -- jet fighters, tanks, helicopters and missiles -- was not meant as a "punishment." Kerry's trip has not, in general, been long on candor. The secretary was probably not saying what was in his heart when he traveled to Saudi Arabia and answered a question about whether Saudi women should have the right to drive by awkwardly observing that "it's up to Saudi Arabia to make its own decisions about its own social structure choices and timing for whatever events." But Saudi Arabia is an implacably authoritarian ally, and diplomacy between Washington and Riyadh has always been governed by polite evasion. Indeed, Saudi Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal returned the favor by denying that relations between the two states were "dramatically deteriorating." What is new is that the United States now feels compelled to treat Egypt with the kid gloves usually reserved for the Saudis. The inference I draw from Kerry's delicate toe-dancing is not so much that President Obama has given up on democracy promotion in the Middle East, as is often alleged, as that Egypt has changed in such a way that Washington gains almost nothing by speaking the truth. In 2005, when a previous secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, came to Egypt, she shocked the ruling elite by declaring that "the day must come when the rule of law replaces emergency decrees." But Rice had an audience: the activists who had taken to the streets to protest the autocratic rule of President Hosni Mubarak. And those activists were delighted and emboldened, at least until 2007, when Mubarak sent thugs into the street to block parliamentary elections, and the White House of President George W. Bush said nothing. What audience would Kerry have been addressing if he had spoken what one imagines -- what one at least would like to imagine -- was in his heart? Those same liberal activists, having overthrown the dictator who Rice and Bush had admonished, have collaborated with the military to depose the democratically elected leaders who replaced Mubarak. Such was the liberals' hatred of the Muslim Brotherhood government that they have accepted, at least for now, what looks very much like an autocratic restoration. It's shocking that Kerry said nothing in Cairo about the trial of former president Mohamed Morsi on trumped-up charges of incitement to murder, scheduled to begin the day after Kerry left. But if he had, he would have infuriated both the new regime and its liberal supporters. In his remarks, Kerry said as often as he could that Egypt's transition to democracy must be "inclusive," which was code for "include Islamists." But it will be no such thing. Two days after Morsi went on trial, a high court in Cairo upheld a decision to ban the Brotherhood -- in a case originally brought by a liberal secular party. Bahaa el-Din, the one senior member of the interim government who has had the temerity to call for "reconciliation" with the Brotherhood, has been shouted down, and now claims to have been misunderstood. Nor, in all likelihood, will that democracy be very democratic, since the military rulers who seized control in the July 3 coup have virtually eliminated press freedom -- the English-language Egyptian press which I read carries only the most barely-factual accounts of controversial issues -- and are planning to promulgate a law which gives the Interior Ministry the right to approve of demonstrations in advance, and to cancel or relocate them.

To assert, as Kerry did, that "we need to keep faith with the roadmap and the path ahead to continue the march to democracy" is thus an absurdity. The path Egypt is on is one of military rule with a civilian façade -- Pakistan, circa 2007 -- while embittered supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood seethe. That is a formula for instability, if not chaos. Kerry tried to change the subject by focusing on Egypt's crucial "economic choices," but the country's leaders won't have to make those choices -- so long as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the UAE are prepared to funnel billions of dollars into the treasury. It seems incredible to say so, but right now Egypt looks less likely than either Yemen or Libya to make a transition towards a more liberal and democratic form of government than it had before. Contending groups in both of those countries, and in Tunisia as well, have begun a process of reconciliation, or at least begun to talk about it. In Egypt,

the very word is treasonable. From a strictly aesthetic point of view, it would thus be preferable for Obama administration officials to discard disingenuousness in favor of the full Saudi: "It's up to Egypt to make its own decisions," etc. After all, the United States needs to stay on Egypt's good side in order to ensure immediate access to the Suez Canal, calm relations with Israel and so forth. And there's no reason to believe that Washington has any leverage with Cairo right now. Obama's decision to halt the delivery of those fighter planes, tanks, helicopters, and missiles -- baubles to which Egypt's military is addicted -- simply bounced off the hide of the generals now calling for shots in Cairo. (Egypt's foreign minister has spoken of turning to Russia for arms.) If Egypt has become -- once again -- an autocratic ally, why should Washington bother to pretend otherwise?

The answer is that Egypt is not Saudi Arabia: a people who have earned their freedom in the streets will not continue to passively accept the new military dispensation, especially once the bogeyman of the Brotherhood has lost some of its scare value. The Napoleonic aura of coup leader Abdel Fattah al-Sisi will fade, especially if he becomes president and is thus held responsible for the failures of government. If Egyptians take to the streets again to protest against their government, and are once again mowed down by Army bullets or thrown into jail for chanting in Tahrir, they will be looking to the U.S. for support, as they did in 2011. For that reason, it would be a terrible mistake for Washington to cut off all aid to Egypt and to declare the country a lost cause. In fact, the Obama administration should increase targeted economic assistance, whether or not it reduces military aid. But precisely because there is reason to hope for a better future, the United States should hold Egypt to the democratic values of the revolution -- even at a moment when so many Egyptians have lost sight of them. Diplomacy is not, of course, about saying what is in your heart; it's about saying whatever is most likely to produce the outcome you seek. Right now, nothing America says or does, positive or negative, will do much to produce the outcome it seeks in Egypt. That being so, "mutual respect," to use another expression from Obama's 2009 speech, should dictate greater honesty about Egypt's failures.

James Traub is a fellow of the Center on International Cooperation. "Terms of Engagement," his column for ForeignPolicy.com, runs weekly

Article 5.

Al-Monitor

Egypt-Ethiopia Nile talks end on sour note

Yah Aman <<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/contents/authors/ayah-aman.html>>

November 7, 2013-- Khartoum, Sudan — Disputes and disagreements erupted again between Egypt and Ethiopia concerning the Nile River dam construction, after both countries failed to reach an agreement governing the Ethiopian Renaissance Dam in their initial negotiating session. The attempt at dialogue quickly ended, while the crisis of trust between the two countries resurfaced as their fears that the other might appropriate the Nile's waters became evident.

Egyptian, Ethiopian and Sudanese ministers of water resources met in the Sudanese capital Khartoum on Sunday, Nov. 4, to begin the first round of negotiating sessions set to deal with the Renaissance Dam, as well as to consult with each other on the mechanisms needed to complete it, and how to implement the recommendations of an international committee of technical experts. The latter concluded its activities on May 27 after studying the effects of the dam on the water security of Egypt and Sudan.

The meetings began with an opening session, attended by Al-Monitor, in which the ministers of water resources from all three countries spoke about the prevailing spirit of cooperation and contentment, as well as the principle of mutual good will and a desire to prevent harm to others. Egypt's minister of irrigation affirmed in a speech that Egypt would not stand against development in countries of the Nile Basin, as long as it did not adversely affect it. The Ethiopian minister countered that his country would not cause harm to any downstream countries, meaning Egypt and Sudan.

Attitudes quickly changed, however, once the closed sessions began and disagreements mounted. As a result, the meetings were suspended and a new date for negotiations was set for Dec. 8.

"We were taken aback by Ethiopia's attempts to impose its agenda on us during the meetings, while it outright failed to recognize the international committee's recommendations pertaining to the dam. Disagreements revolved around how to establish a committee or body through which the three countries would work to implement those recommendations," an Egyptian diplomatic source who participated in the meeting told Al-Monitor.

"Egypt is of the opinion that it is necessary for Ethiopia to acknowledge that there are problems associated with the dam and that it will have negative effects on Egypt. Clear conditions must be set, and Ethiopia must commit to abide by and never circumvent them. This is why Egypt has insisted on the presence of international experts who would serve to validate Egypt's position before the international community, though Ethiopia has objected to this," added the source who requested anonymity.

Egyptian concerns about the Renaissance Dam are confined to its technical specifications, the size of the projected structure and the holding capacity of the reservoir attached to it, which might negatively affect the flow of water into Egypt and decrease the rate of electricity production at the Aswan Dam. Furthermore, Ethiopia did not submit sufficient studies concerning the dam's safety and its ecological and social impact.

"We were surprised by Ethiopia's rejection of our proposals during the meeting. We cannot support the dam without added proof of good intentions from the Ethiopian side. All options are open before Egypt, if Ethiopia does not acquiesce to our conditions," another Egyptian source present at the meetings told Al-Monitor.

"We do not want to characterize the negotiations as having failed. We will give ourselves another chance to talk and better clarify everybody's points of view," Egypt's Minister of Irrigation and Water Resources, Mohammed Abdel Moteleb, further told Al-Monitor.

Ethiopian Minister of Water and Energy Alamayo Tegno, in a statement given to Al-Monitor after the meetings, said: "The decision to build the Renaissance Dam is resolute, both by the government and the Ethiopian people. We are in complete agreement with Sudan about all the details pertaining to the completion of the dam. Egypt will certainly come to understand this and espouse our position."

"What is currently taking place is a dispute and not a difference in opinion. We have repeatedly affirmed our intention not to harm any other country. Financing difficulties will not hinder our efforts, since the Ethiopian people are mobilized in favor of building the dam. Ethiopia has now become one of the world's 10 fastest-developing countries," Tegno continued.

Cairo is currently mulling taking a number of quick steps prior to the second session of negotiations scheduled for Dec. 8. In this regard, Egypt's political leadership seemed comfortable with the matter when the Egyptian Prime Minister Hazem el-Biblawi announced before the first session was held that the Renaissance Dam could bring prosperity to Egypt. This is in direct contrast with Egypt's stance during negotiations.

An Egyptian diplomatic source told Al-Monitor that Cairo's options right now revolve around maintaining international pressure and preventing foreign funding of the dam project to slow construction until an agreement can be reached with

the Ethiopians. Egypt will also make public the official report prepared by the international committee of technical experts, which shows that the dam will have a negative impact if it is built according to the current planned dimensions.

"Continuing to follow the technical track in negotiations pertaining to the Renaissance Dam between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia will lead nowhere. A political agreement must be reached, and an official mechanism established by the senior leaders of all three countries, through which direct negotiations are held until each country's positions and decisions can be clearly defined," the source affirmed.

As the tug of war between the Egyptian and Ethiopian delegations intensified during the first negotiating session, Sudan fully and unreservedly adopted the Ethiopian position. None of the Sudanese delegation members wanted to comment about the meetings, though Sudanese Minister of Water and Energy Osama Abdallah issued a very brief news statement. In it, he said that an atmosphere of honesty and brotherhood prevailed over the meetings, while they all tried to find the best avenues to move forward. He added that they would meet again to reconsider the matter.

The door is still open to all possibilities and the upcoming negotiations between Egypt, Sudan and Ethiopia about the Renaissance Dam could either succeed or fail. Available information, however, seems to indicate that disagreements and a lack of confidence still prevail between the Egyptian and Ethiopian sides, with Sudan joining the latter's camp to safeguard its interests and receive a part of the ensuing benefits. Egypt, on the other hand, has failed to clearly state whether it will participate in building the dam, despite the positive statements issued by the country's political and diplomatic leadership in this regard.

Aya Aman is an Egyptian journalist for Al-Shorouk specializing in Africa and the Nile Basin, Turkey and Iran, and internal Egyptian social issues.

Article 6.

The Washington Institute
The Call For Rebellion Against Hamas In Gaza
Ehud Yaari

November 8, 2013 -- A new movement known as Tamarod Gaza has chosen November 11, the ninth anniversary of the death of PLO leader Yasser Arafat, as a day of mass protests, including strikes and sit-ins, aimed at ending Hamas rule in the Gaza Strip. Although many dismiss Tamarod, which coalesced mainly outside Gaza, as having very limited potential to pose a real threat to Hamas, it does constitute the most important domestic challenge ever faced by the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. Hamas indeed takes this threat quite seriously.

Tamarod Gaza is an obscure movement composed of previously unknown young activists that was formed this past April, aided by Facebook and other social-network platforms. The group emerged in parallel with the Egyptian Tamarod movement, which led the demonstrations that finally helped bring down President Muhammad Morsi. By August, encouraged by the success of their Egyptian counterparts, Tamarod Gaza's founders-- seen wearing masks in video clips -- moved to articulate their demands and outlined a course of action.

Demands On The Gaza Leadership

Tamarod Gaza's main demands, as presented in different declarations, including a letter to the secretary-general of the Arab League, include requiring Hamas to immediately allow the formation of an elections committee, "and without any delay or obstacle," to pursue speedy general elections under international Arab and Islamic supervision. The expiration of Tamarod's ultimatum of sorts has been set at sundown of November 8. More broadly, the movement has issued many statements charging Hamas with neglecting the interests of the Palestinian people, including its "constitutional right of freedom of expression and political organization." The movement has also denounced the coup

that brought Hamas to power in the Gaza Strip in June 2007. Moreover, Tamarod accuses Hamas of sabotaging all attempts to reach reconciliation between the rival Palestinian factions, of holding responsibility for the suffering of the people of the Gaza Strip, and of prioritizing its own political survival over the general needs of the Palestinian people. Some Tamarod Gaza activists are operating from Egypt, where they have support among local political parties opposed to the Muslim Brotherhood, sympathy from much of the Cairo-based media, and tacit approval from the current authorities. Such support reflects the widespread anti-Hamas sentiment in the country following the sacking of President Morsi and frequent accusations that Hamas was providing clandestine assistance to terrorists in the Sinai and violent Muslim Brotherhood protests in other provinces. Notable among the relatively few activists' names to have been made public are Hazem al-Surani, who belongs to an important Gaza clan, Hatem al-Fara, the member of an important Khan Yunis clan, Ahmed al-Afghani, and Iyad Abu Ruk. Some of these individuals have held public meetings in Daqhalia and other parts of Egypt sponsored by local politicians.

Hamas, for its part, has privately been taking the challenge seriously, despite belittling it publicly. Hamas interior minister Fathi Hamad, for example, who is responsible for internal security, has threatened on several occasions to respond to any demonstrations in Gaza with the utmost force. Media outlets have quoted Hamad, in a close meeting of the organization's top leadership, as saying that he wants "people shot in the head, not injured." The same reports claim that veteran Hamas leader Mahmoud al-Zahar quickly intervened to clarify that Hamad did not mean literally shooting people but rather "prevention of the return of chaos to the streets of Gaza." Whatever the authenticity of such exchanges, which cannot be verified, a few preventive arrests in Gaza have occurred in the past few weeks, and other suspected Tamarod sympathizers have been publicly warned not to take any chances. One was shot in both legs and evacuated to an Israeli hospital.

Furthermore, in view of the threat, Hamas has shifted overall responsibility for the stability of the Gaza Strip from its internal security apparatus under Muhammad Dababish to the movement's military branch, the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, now effectively commanded by Yahya al-Sanwar and the elusive Muhammad Deif. After a long imprisonment, Sanwar was released from an Israeli jail last year as part of the deal to free Israeli corporal Gilad Shalit. Thus, the military arm of Hamas will oversee Gaza's squares come November 11. The Qassam cadres are expected to patrol the streets instead of the local police.

Needless to say, the Palestinian Authority (PA) and others in Fatah are keeping busy in an effort to stir up trouble for Hamas. PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas and his lieutenants are well aware of the current crisis in Hamas (see PolicyWatch 2111; <http://washinst.org/12CUnw0>) and the growing discontent among the Gaza populace. The underlying causes of this unhappiness include the closing down of most tunnels connecting Rafah to the Sinai, the drying up of financial support from Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and other sources, and the bitter struggle within Hamas's top echelons. These developments have, in turn, led to continuous electricity cuts, fuel shortages, lack of cement and building materials, and delayed payment of salaries to public sector employees. Reflecting the undoubted resentment toward Hamas rule in Gaza, one poll -- of course, to be interpreted very cautiously -- shows that no less than 48 percent of Gazans now support a "revolution" there, as compared with 37 percent in 2012. And, according to the latest figures, unemployment in the Gaza Strip may reach 43 percent by the end of this year -- mainly among the young who have reached working age.

Low-Profile Support From High-Profile Figures

Three main players in Fatah are involved in quiet efforts to encourage Gazans to take to the streets against Hamas. The first is Azzam al-Ahmed, a member of Fatah's Central Committee, who was the movement's point man in the failed negotiations over reconciliation with Hamas over the past four years. Ahmed is seeking to help remaining Fatah members in the Gaza Strip regroup for action. This effort, however, has been hampered by endless disputes and splits within the different Fatah factions in Gaza, which are all under close Hamas supervision. The "Source of Authority Committee" of Fatah in the Strip, led by the aging Zakaria al-Agha, has been deterred from mounting any open opposition to Hamas. So far, Fatah has been unable to agree unanimously on a new leadership to run its affairs in Gaza. The second effort is led by PA director of General Intelligence Gen. Majid Faraj, who is trying to mobilize support for an anti-Hamas upheaval. His effort is mainly a response to the activities of Hamas's "West Bank Council," which, from Gaza, seeks to reestablish the movement's political and military structures in the West Bank. It should be noted that some Tamarod Gaza spokesmen have been identified as inhabitants of the West Bank.

The third effort is managed by Muhammad Dahlan, the ex-strongman in the Gaza Strip who fell out with Abbas and now operates from Dubai with the full support of Crown Prince Muhammad bin Zayed al-Nahyan. While engaging in venomous attacks against the PA, mainly centering on corruption and unnecessary concessions to Israel, Dahlan is keen

to keep up his following among Gazans for a future contest over Abbas's succession. Since his days as chief of Preventive Security in Gaza, Dahlan -- himself from a Khan Yunis refugee camp -- has retained a part of his power base in the area.

All three of these uncoordinated campaigns aimed at further weakening Hamas's grip on the Gaza Strip are sending considerable sums of money to Gaza to finance protests.

Prospects

It is very difficult to predict what will transpire on November 11 if Tamarod sticks to its current call for mass protests. Hamas forces will be deployed all over the Gaza Strip, and strict warnings will be issued to the population to keep away from any attempt to "cause anarchy." Clearly, many people will prefer to avoid punishment from Hamas, if possible, and will wait to see how the day develops. Thus, it is critical for Tamarod and its allies to convince substantial numbers of people to take to the streets early on -- preferably after noon prayers -- so as to illustrate the authenticity of the challenge to Hamas. At this point, however, no indications suggest any mass demonstrations will actually occur anywhere in Gaza. If, however, protestors defy these expectations and venture into the streets, they will risk encountering Hamas forces that will not hesitate to respond with firearms.

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Article 7.

Spiegel

Jews in Germany Fear Rising Anti-Semitism

Barbara Hans

11/08/2013 -- A vast survey conducted by the EU's Agency for Fundamental Rights and published Friday contains troubling results almost exactly 75 years after Kristallnacht: Jews in Germany and seven other EU countries continue to live in fear of verbal or physical abuse -- whether in public or, increasingly, online.

"I find it almost unbearable that religious services can only take place with police protection." "Anti-Semitism is one reason for me to leave Germany because I want to protect my family from any danger." "The anti-Semitic insults I have experienced were not from neo-Nazis or from leftists, but from ordinary people of the political center." What is it like for Jews to live in Europe? Are they able to practice their religion

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/topic/religion/> without restraint? Seventy-five years after the beginning of the Kristallnacht <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/berlin-exhibitions-gathers-1938-diplomatic-accounts-of-nazi-kristallnacht-a-931733.html> pogrom, also referred to as the "November pogroms," how much harassment, discrimination and hate crime do they encounter?

On Friday, the Vienna-based European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) released a report titled "Discrimination and Hate Crime against Jews in EU Member States: experiences and perceptions of antisemitism." The online survey polled 5,847 self-selected individuals who identified as Jewish in Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Sweden and the UK, states in which an estimated 90 percent of European Jews live.

Coping with Anti-Semitism

The survey's results provide insight into the perceptions, experiences and self-conception of European Jews. Rather than supplying absolute figures on anti-Semitic attacks, the study focuses on the perceived danger of such attacks and how much the anxiety this causes affects their lives. Two-thirds of respondents (66%) said that anti-Semitism is a problem in Europe, and over three-quarters (76%) noted that there had been an increase in anti-Semitic hostility in their home countries over the last five years. Close to half of respondents (46%) are afraid of being verbally attacked or harassed in a public place because they are Jewish, while a third (33%) worry that such attacks could turn physical. Roughly 50 percent of surveyed parents or grandparents of school-aged children worry that their children could be victims of anti-Semitic verbal insults or harassment at or on the way to or from school if they wore visible Jewish symbols in public. More than half of respondents (57%) said that, over the last 12 months, they had heard or seen someone claim that the Holocaust was a myth or that it has been exaggerated.

About a quarter (26%) of respondents said that they had experienced some form of anti-Semitic harassment over the previous year, while 4 percent said they had experienced physical violence or threats of attack in the same period.

Almost one-fourth (23%) said they had been discriminated against in the last 12-month period for being Jewish.

Among employed respondents, 11 percent said they are most likely to experience discrimination for being Jewish at the workplace, while 10 percent said this was the case when looking for work.

The study also examined whether these incidents made it into official statistics. The overwhelming majority of respondents (82%) said that they had not reported to any authority or organization "the most serious incident, namely the one that most affected them."

In Germany, the KPM, a service for registering crimes, has recorded a decline in anti-Semitic crimes since 2009. However, by itself, that says nothing about the perceptions of Jews living in Germany. According to the FRA report, 63 percent of the Jewish respondents in Germany have avoided "wearing, carrying or displaying things that might help people identify them as Jews in public," such as a skullcap (kipa). Likewise, 25 percent of them claimed to have considered emigrating from Germany in the last five years because they don't feel safe there.

When it comes to the relative seriousness of anti-Semitism, Germany was the only country in which a majority (61%) of respondents said it was the greatest problem. Respondents from the other seven countries believed that unemployment was the most pressing issue.

Blamed for Israeli Policies

In the report, FRA states that a survey it published in 2012 had "found evidence suggesting that events in the Middle East can act as a trigger for translating anti-Israel sentiment into antisemitic sentiment targeting Jewish populations as a whole." For the poll published Friday, 49 percent of respondents in Germany claimed to have heard or seen non-Jewish people suggest that Israelis behave "like Nazis" toward the Palestinians. The study's results seem to suggest that German Jews are viewed as proxies of the state of Israel and its policies. Indeed, it found that 81 percent of them have felt accused of or blamed for something the Israeli government had done. Moreover, it noted a close coincidence between when trouble flares up in the Middle East and when Jews in Germany perceive rising hostility.

"One reason (not the only one!) for the latent anti-Semitism is the open conflict between Israel and Palestine and other neighboring Arab countries. A peaceful solution to this conflict would also reduce the ground for anti-Semitism in other countries."

The study also found that respondents claimed that they had been increasingly exposed to negative statements about Jews online, including on blogs and social-networking sites. Three-quarters (75%) of all respondents in the eight countries identified the Internet as "the most common forum for negative statements" and a place where such statements could be made with virtual impunity. This was particularly true for respondents between the ages of 16 and 29, of whom 88 percent said that they saw or heard negative comments about Jews online. </>

Worries about suffering verbal or physical attacks, the study notes, have been found to have negative effects on physical, social and emotional well-being by prompting people to restrict their movements or activities. Almost a quarter (23%) of respondents claimed to avoid visiting Jewish events, sites or parts of their neighborhoods because they don't feel safe there or on the way there owing to their Jewish identity.

The survey also found that Jews living in Germany were particularly concerned with two issues that have sparked much debate in recent years: the prohibition of circumcision (<http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/new-circumcision-ruling-requires-doctors-to-discuss-procedure-a-924984.html>) (brit mila) and traditional Jewish rituals associated with slaughtering animals (shechita). Almost three-quarters (71%) said that banning circumcision would be a "very big" or "fairly big" problem for them, while half (50%) held the same view regarding prohibitions on traditional slaughter.

"I will wait for the developments concerning a statutory regulation on the Brit Mila. This will be crucial for my decision on whether or not to leave Germany."

* The quotations in italics are statements made by Jews living in German who responded to the survey online. Translations are taken directly from the report.

Article 8.

The Washington Post

Review of 'The Myth of America's Decline' by Josef Joffe

Carlos Lozada

THE MYTH OF AMERICA'S DECLINE

Politics, Economics, and a Half Century of False Prophecies

By Josef Joffe

Liveright. 327 pp. \$26.95

A satellite. A jungle. A gas line. A movie. An acronym.

If the American superpower stretched out on a psychiatrist's couch and revealed its private fears and most closely guarded insecurities, these are the images it would recall from its nightmares — the ones that roused it in a panic, afraid that its power and self-image were slipping away. Sputnik was first, convincing America that it was losing the space race and could lose the Cold War, no matter that it was not and would not. Vietnam followed, an anguish that would take a generation to shake off. The malaise of the 1970s, with its oil embargoes and embassy hostages, was soon

overrun by worries of an indomitable Japan. "Rising Sun,"

<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B000B8GT92?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creativeASIN=B000B8GT92&linkCode=xm2&tag=the-aspos09-20> a summer blockbuster movie based on a Michael Crichton novel, marked the height of America's Japan paranoia in the early 1990s — just as the Japanese economy was plunging off a cliff. Josef Joffe is fascinated by these bouts of self-doubt that "torment the American imagination." In "The Myth of America's Decline," <http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0871404494?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creativeASIN=0871404494&linkCode=xm2&tag=3Dthewaspos09-20>, Cold War fears dissolved into a 'Brave New World' or a heavenly place on earth like Thomas More's 'Utopia.'

<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0486295834?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creativeASIN=0486295834&linkCode=xm2&tag=thewaspos09-20> "

As his book title gives away, Joffe is more utopian than dystopian. America's overblown worries of decline persist, he says, mainly because of "linearity": the mindless extrapolation of transient trends — whether in the numbers of Soviet ICBMs or the growth of Japanese GDP — far into the future. Here Joffe could be channeling Yankee shortstop Derek Jeter, who recently complained about fans' fascination with players being "on pace for" a certain number of home runs, no matter how early in the season. "It doesn't work like that," Jeter said http://espn.go.com/new-york/story/_/id/8399887/getting-answers-derek-jeter to ESPN. "You gotta go do it. 'On pace for' is just useless." In international relations, "on pace for" is pretty useless, too. The latest linear thinking involves the all-powerful Chinese economy. Joffe dates the paranoia to 2003, when investment bank Goldman Sachs issued its now-famous report, "Dreaming With BRICs: The Path to 2050." The investment firm built on recent trends to declare that by mid-21st century, China's economy would lead the planet, with India in third. The other members of the BRIC clan (B for Brazil, R for Russia) made the challenge seem to be coming from all directions. But these countries "had nothing in common save great size and a catchy acronym," Joffe writes, "and by the early 2010s, their fantastic growth rates were dropping like, well, bricks." Joffe takes the long view; sentences such as "China and Western Europe were about even in per capita income when Christ was born" are not unusual in this book. And with China's frenetic growth already slowing, Joffe argues that, long term, China can't prevail. Its model of state capitalism — he calls it "modernitarianism," defined as "markets minus freedom" — leads to corruption, favoritism and inefficiency; its rising wages don't reflect equivalent increases in worker productivity; and its population is aging so much that "a burgeoning army of pensioners and infirm will eat up investment funds as a fire will consume oxygen."

Most important, its people's rising expectations will eventually leave Chinese leaders with no good options: They must either loosen their grip and enable a democratic transition that would further slow growth, or they must continue to repress and risk a new Tiananmen http://articles.washingtonpost.com/2013-06-02/world/39697799_1_tiananmen-square-tiananmen-protests-children, with the economic crash that would follow. "No matter how the red emperor's try to extricate themselves, they will pay the price of waning growth or worse," Joffe warns.

But he still has some convincing to do. A September nationwide survey for the financial site TheStreet.com finds <http://i.thestreet.com/files/tsc/v2008/photos/all-pics/graphics/Growth-Infographic-FINAL.jpg> that America's rate the United States as the world's dominant economy by 59 percent to 28 percent over China. But when they are asked who will be on top in five to seven years, the gap shrinks to 43 to 6 percent.

Joffe reserves an especially toasty circle of hell for the declinists

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/americas-not-in-decline-its-on-the-rise/2013/10/18/4dde76be-35b1-11e3-80c6-7e6dd8d22d8f_story.html — the politicians, historians, economists and journalists who stoke such worries and continually declare America's demise. Indeed, for long stretches, the book is less an assessment of U.S. prospects and more a trashing of those who traffic in declinism. They aren't just wrong, Joffe contends, but often maliciously so.

John F. Kennedy, Ronald Reagan and Barack Obama all peddled declinism for electoral ends, he writes: "The country is on the skids, but tomorrow it will rise again — if only you, the people, will anoint me as your leader." Doom is also an effective career-booster for Washington wonks; right now, there is no better way to sell a policy initiative to politicians or the public than to scream that the Chinese are beating us to it <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/26/AR2010022602601.html> .</=>

Joffe chides thinkers such as Yale historian Paul Kennedy ("the preeminent Declinist of the 1980s"), whose book "The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers"

<<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0679720197?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creativeASIN=0679720197&linkCode=xm2&tag=the-aspos09-20>>

Yet Joffe commits a few of the same sins. The decline he foresees in China flows in part from extrapolated demographic, economic and policy trends; so does his exalted view of the United States. He admires America's traditional openness to immigration, and he swoons over U.S. performance on indicators such as patents, investment in research and development, and articles in science and engineering journals. Where he sees less-than-stellar trends, he explains them away: Relatively low test scores for American 15-year-olds are understandable in an immigrant nation with lots of non-native families, unlike, say, in Finland. Things look better "if one corrects for these demographics," Joffe explains. Except you can't praise immigration for drawing talented foreigners to America, only to discount it when ESL students undercut your test rankings. You have to pick.</p>

Joffe also offers a retro vision of power, as though it resides almost entirely in nation-states. It's weird that a book on American power and the challenges to it doesn't bring up al-Qaeda until the 91st page and the Gates Foundation until the 225th, and fails to mention Exxon Mobil altogether.

Still, any foreign policy book is contractually obligated to debut a buzzword describing America's role in the world, and here Joffe delivers. In fact, he has so many it seems undecided. America is a "decathlon power," not first in all aspects of strength but winning the all-around competition. It is also a "default power," the country to which others look when no one else steps up. Under President Obama, it has become a "reticent power," with narrowing interests abroad and focused on building up a welfare state at home. (And this is on top of "uberpower," as he labeled the United States in a 2007 book.)</p>

Whatever kind of power America wields, Joffe doesn't see any rival overtaking it. He concedes that empires eventually fall and disappear, but in this case, "only the United States can bring down the United States," as it nearly did in the Civil War. And no superpower, he asserts, "has ever chosen decline."

I wonder whether Joffe might have tweaked that conclusion if he'd been able to include the government shutdown this fall and Congress's latest flirtation with debt default — two self-inflicted crises that provide no confidence in America as a default power, let alone a versatile decathlete able to excel in multiple arenas at once.

Joffe wishes to peek inside the mind of decline. So, how might a specialist diagnose a patient who constantly swings from elation to depression, from limitless energy to self-defeating paralysis? Or, for that matter, a nation so skilled that it can build the planet's foremost spying and surveillance system, yet such a mess that it can't launch a health-care site that works right?

Atop a unipolar world may be a bipolar superpower.

Carlos Lozada is Outlook editor of The Washington Post.