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YOM KIPPUR WAR ANNIVERSARY

AS ISRAEL, JEWISH PEOPLE REMEMBER OCT., 1973, TODAY EGYPT (POST-MORSI) & ISRAEL COOPERATE MILITARILY IN SINAI

Contents:

Middle Israel: The Last War: [Amotz Asa-El, *Jerusalem Post*, Sept. 13, 2013](#) — The establishment's subsequent transition from secular socialists to traditionalists and capitalists; the disappearance of the European-born generation that led Israel in its first three decades; and the passage of the settlement ideal from the kibbutzim's liberal farmers to the West Bank's messianic rabbis, make the Yom Kippur War a watershed in practically all aspects of Israeli history.

'Incalculable Consequences': [Erol Araf, *National Post*, Oct 7, 2013](#) — Forty years ago today, Israel stood on the brink of catastrophe. The day before — Oct. 6, 1973, the Day of Atonement — Egypt and Syria had launched a surprise and spectacularly successful offensive against Israel. Israeli forces were retreating, or being annihilated, at the Suez Canal and the Golan Heights. Faced with the prospect of Arab armies moving into Israeli population centres, the government began to consider unleashing Armageddon on its enemies.

Israel-Egypt Forge New Ties Over Sinai: [Geoffrey Aronson, *Al-Monitor*, Sept. 13, 2013](#) — Last week, Egypt embarked on its most extensive military operation in the Sinai peninsula in almost half a century. The target of this unprecedented deployment is an array of disaffected Egyptians and jihadi foreigners intent upon defying the seat of Egyptian power and sovereignty centered in Cairo.

Is this the End of the Failed Muslim Brotherhood Project?: [Hussein Ibish, *The National \(UAE\)*, October 5, 2013](#) — Is the Muslim Brotherhood dying? In Egypt and throughout the Arab world, Brotherhood-affiliated parties are suffering an unprecedented series of setbacks that cast real doubt on the long-term viability of that version of Islamist politics.

On Topic Links

Lessons from the Yom Kippur War: [Daniel Greenfield, *Front Page Magazine*, Oct. 7, 2013](#)

51 Dead in as Egyptians Celebrate 40th Anniversary of Yom Kippur War: [Jewish Press, Oct. 7th, 2013](#)

Who Is Egypt's Next President?: [Bassem Sabry, *Al-Monitor*, Sept. 22 2013](#)

MIDDLE ISRAEL: THE LAST WAR

Amotz Asa-El

[Jerusalem Post](#), Sept. 13, 2013

It started at 2 p.m. As if echoing the thunders that once paralyzed their forebears at Mount Sinai's foothills, 436 Israeli troops scattered in 16 outposts along the Suez waterfront were showered out of the blue with 10,000 shells spewed from 2,000 artillery barrels, while 8,000 Egyptian troops emerged from the water and 240 warplanes descended from the sky. By day's end, with nearly half of the soldiers in those outposts dead, vast Egyptian armies parked at Sinai, and 1,400 Syrian tanks on the Golan Heights — one fact hovered above the battlefield's thick fog: Israel had been stunned.

Forty years on, the war that cost 2,522 Israeli fatalities, traumatized a generation and profoundly impacted the Jewish state's society, politics, economy and psyche, refuses to go away.

The warriors, now mostly grandfathers, are writing memoirs, holding spontaneous reunions and retrieving diaries, photographs, recordings and even rare footage taken with the era's bulky 8- mm. Kodaks, in what adds up to a collective quest for closure.

The rest of Israel, surveying where it has since journeyed, has reason to proverbially enter these makeshift group therapies, place a hand on the shoulder of each of the Yom Kippur War's veterans, look them in their wrinkling faces, and quietly tell them Jeremiah's consolation to Rachel: "There is a reward for your labor."

STRATEGICALLY, the war will be counted among military history's grand surprises, alongside Pearl Harbor and Operation Barbarossa. Israel was caught off-guard in almost every respect. It underestimated the enemy's intentions, abilities, weaponry and motivation. The leaders misinterpreted Egyptian president Anwar Sadat as a babbler, the generals did not enlist the reserves, the pilots were humbled by the radar-guided SA missile and the tankists by the shoulder-carried Sagger. Then again, not only did the IDF ultimately prevail, in 40 years' hindsight it emerged from the war with long-term strategic gains that dwarf the its immediate setbacks.

Tactically, the war's tide was turned on both fronts: on the Golan Heights, the vastly outnumbered Seventh Brigade managed to fend off the Syrian armored thrust, and thus open the IDF's path to Damascus; and in Sinai, the Egyptian Third Army was encircled and the Suez Canal was crossed as the IDF reached within an hour's ride from Cairo. Yet what at the time seemed like heroism that merely decided one war, actually went much farther.

First, the recollection of prevailing even under such duress, and of successful improvisations along the entire hierarchy – from foot soldier to general – helped foster a culture of inventiveness from which Israel benefitted in other tests. But far more important, following the Armageddon that included some of history's largest armored battles, Israel's enemies never again unleashed on it a conventional army.

The realization that Israel prevailed even in a war waged, from the Arab viewpoint, under ideal conditions, convinced Arab leaders to abandon traditional war, and opt for assorted alternatives – from guerrilla and terror wars to peace deals. While far from reflecting a pro-Zionist conversion, the Arab abandonment of the traditional military option is a major strategic gain for Israel, and a direct result of the Yom Kippur War.

WHEN THE fighting ended, it turned out that one outpost of those that initially confronted the Egyptian onslaught, the northernmost, endured the entire war. Having emerged from it intact and returned home bewildered, Capt. Motti Ashkenazi went to Jerusalem, stood outside prime minister Golda Meir's office and demanded that she and her cabinet resign.

Ashkenazi was soon joined by thousands who felt a deep sense of disillusionment and were now spontaneously forming Israel's first effective protest movement. By the time Golda Meir resigned the following year, it was clear that the repercussions of the Jewish state's Pearl Harbor would exceed the narrow realms of warfare, and include Israel's politics, society and state of mind.

Politically, the future was hinted at in the first postwar election, when the newly established Likud won more of the soldiers' votes than Labor. In the following election Labor lost power for the first time, and its political hegemony for good.

The establishment's subsequent transition from secular socialists to traditionalists and capitalists; the disappearance of the European-born generation that led Israel in its first three decades; and the passage of the settlement ideal from the kibbutzim's liberal farmers to the West Bank's messianic rabbis, make the Yom Kippur War a watershed in practically all aspects of Israeli history.

Back in autumn '73, all protagonists of this gathering transformation shared a sense of crisis and agony, some because they felt they were losing their grip on Israeli society, and some because they could hardly wait to seize it. Gradually, the Yom Kippur War came to be seen as an engine of a great schism. It wasn't.

THE MOST notable realm where Israeli pragmatism and resilience prevailed is the economy. Back when the war ended, Israel was financially strapped. The knowledge that it was won thanks to emergency arms shipments from America; the consequent dependency on American aid; the inflation that began that year and soon spun out of control; and envy of Arab oil wealth which those days cast a shadow over the global economy – all generated an economic pessimism that complemented the overall atmosphere of cynicism and despair.

Forty years on, Israel's is among the world's strongest currencies, its growth rate is among the world's highest, its unemployment, inflation and interest rates are among the world's lowest, and its innovations are the toast of investors from Tokyo to New York. On top of that, for more than 15 years, Israel has no longer been accepting US civilian aid. These accomplishments belong collectively to Israelis of all persuasions and backgrounds, who meet daily in workplaces where they do together what a seriously divided society could never create.

The same can be said of Israeli culture, which over the past 40 years has seen the previously unthinkable rise of religious authors and filmmakers, symbolized by novelist Haim Sabato, a rabbi and rosh yeshiva who emerged from the war a prize-winning novelist. In fact, the cultural traffic ignited by the war proved to a two-way street. The sense of perplexity, enhanced by David Ben-Gurion's death five weeks after the cease-fire, was expressed by the era's popular songs, three of which became timeless, and inspire a melancholy that moves Israeli hearts to this day.

One, penned by songwriter Haim Hefer, a veteran of the War of Independence who wrote some of its most popular hits, now had an unnamed soldier promise his little girl – “in the name of the pilots who thrust into angry battle,” and the gunners “who were the pillars of fire along the front,” and “all the fathers who went to battle and never returned” – that 1973's would be the last war.

A second song, by “Jerusalem of Gold” writer Naomi Shemer, placed “a white sail in the horizon, opposite a heavy black cloud,” and “holiday's candles shimmering in dusk's windows,” while asking “What is the sound of war I am hearing, the sound of shofar and drums,” and then praying, “If the announcer stands at the door, place a good word in his mouth, if only all we ask – would be.”

The whisper of prayer that both songs shared was the zeitgeist, so much so that it even arrived in Kibbutz Beit Hashita – whose veterans included diehard Marxists and atheists. Tucked in the Jezreel Valley north of Mount Gilboa, where the biblical Saul and Jonathan died in battle, this community lost 11 of its sons in the war.

Having lived in their midst at the time of their grief, composer Yair Rosenblum wrote a tune for U'Netane Tokef, the prayer which states that on Rosh Hashana God drafts, and on Yom Kippur he seals, the verdict of every man: “Who will live and who will die, who is in his end and who is not, who by water and who by fire, who by sword and who by beast, who by hunger and who by thirst.”

The tune brought together Zionism's epitomes of the New Jew, the atheist warriors of the kibbutzim, with Rabbi Amnon of Mainz, the prayer's writer and the ultimate Old Jew, a sage whom legend says was killed without a fight after refusing a demand to convert. Animating the most solemn moments in Judaism's holiest days, the tune has since come to be sung annually in thousands of synagogues throughout Israel, and has even been performed by some ultra-Orthodox singers and cantors.

THE YOM KIPPUR WAR, then, had more effects on Israeli society besides political divisions, and the most decisive of these was humility. The arrogance and swagger that followed the Six Day War were initially followed by anger and acrimony, but what for a moment seemed like despair soon gave way to a sense of appeasement and constructive soul searching. This humility is particularly evident where it is needed most, namely in the way Israeli generals speak and think.

Forty years on, it is clear that Israeli society was not debilitated by the Yom Kippur War and in fact, soon resumed its development in earnest.

Having left us while the war's trauma was fresh, one feels like updating Ben-Gurion that since his departure: no Arab army again waged war on Israel; there are two peace agreements; the population has more than doubled and the economy more than quadrupled; there are more Jews here than in any other country; the number of Israeli Jews has just crossed, for the first time, the charged figure of 6 million, Soviet Jewry is here, and the Soviet Union is gone; and Israeli society, while varied and complex, remains intact even when the rest of the region is ablaze with civil wars – and that U'Netane Tokef, as written in medieval Germany and composed in Kibbutz Beit-Hashita, will tomorrow echo from Metulla to Eilat.

[Contents](#)

'INCALCULABLE CONSEQUENCES'

Erol Araf

[National Post](#), Oct 7, 2013

Forty years ago today, Israel stood on the brink of catastrophe. The day before — Oct. 6, 1973, the Day of Atonement — Egypt and Syria had launched a surprise and spectacularly successful offensive against Israel. Israeli forces were retreating, or being annihilated, at the Suez Canal and the Golan Heights. Faced with the prospect of Arab armies moving into Israeli population centres, the government began to consider unleashing Armageddon on its enemies.

Many documents pertaining to the nuclear crises that took place during the 1973 Arab-Israel War remain classified; participants who have written about the war are still vague. Over the years, however, numerous books and studies have been written, ranging from Seymour Hersh's dubious *The Sampson Option*, alleging that Israel used the threat of nuclear war to pressure the U.S into sending massive quantities of munitions, to an exhaustive research project by the U.S.-based research group CNA, entitled *The Israeli "Nuclear Alert" of 1973: Deterrence and Signaling in Crisis*, published last spring. Thanks to these sources, we have enough facts at our disposal to construct a narrative that makes clear that between Oct. 7-25, there were three distinct nuclear crises featuring deceptions, miscalculations, existential panic and missile launches that could easily have triggered a worldwide nuclear war.

The first crisis relates to the Israeli nuclear alert itself.

In the hours and days after the surprise attack, tank battles fought on the Golan Heights were comparable in size and intensity to the largest such clashes during the Second World War. Not even the indomitable Israeli Air Force could turn the tide. In the north, 177 Israeli tanks stood between Haifa and 1,460 Syrian armoured vehicles. In the south, Egyptian soldiers armed with hand-held anti-tank missiles knocked out 300 Israeli tanks in the first hours of the war. On that day, the ancient lines from the Book of Yom Kippur resonated with apocalyptic portent as reservists were raced to their mobilization centres: "On Rosh Hashanah it is written and on the day of the fast of Kippur it is sealed ... who shall live and who shall die ... who by water and who by fire ... who by the sword."

Howard Blum, in his book *The Eve of Destruction*, tells how Moshe Dayan, the Israeli Defense Minister, told Prime Minister Golda Meir on Oct. 8, two days into the fighting, that Israel must prepare to fight "to the last bullet" on the streets of Tel Aviv. He also urged the arming of Israeli's ultimate weapon, code-named Temple. Ms. Meir gave the green light to arm 13 Jericho missiles with nuclear warheads. Nuclear bombs were also loaded onto six Phantom F-4 attack aircraft at the Tel Nof air base.

Israel's actions were quickly spotted, and just as quickly understood. William B. Quandt, who was a member of the U.S. National Security Council staff, confirmed that the U.S. knew that Israel had placed its nuclear arsenal on alert. He wrote; "It was also conceivable that a nuclear threat might be made if Egyptian troops broke through ... None of this had to be spelled out in so many words by the Israelis." The Americans found out about the nuclearization of Israeli missiles, according to Russell Warren Howe's book *Weapons*, when a U.S. Air Force SR-71 spy plane, specifically designed to monitor nuclear activity, flew over Israel. An American KH-11 intelligence satellite also detected missile launchers that had been left in

the open specifically to signal Jerusalem's resolve. The Soviets, too, were monitoring the situation on the ground with their COSMOS satellites.

The U.S. reaction to the possibility that Israel might go nuclear was twofold: Henry Kissinger, President Richard Nixon's National Security Advisor and newly sworn-in Secretary of State, authorized a badly needed conventional munitions resupply effort — after all, the Soviets were arming the Arabs. The U.S. also informed Moscow about Jerusalem's nuclear alert in an emergency hotline conversation between Nixon and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. The Americans were eager to make sure that there were no understandings that might lead to a nuclear exchange between the superpowers.

In response to Israel's nuclear mobilization, the Soviets decided to deploy their own nuclear weapons, under strict Soviet control, to Egypt, to dissuade Israel from going nuclear. But they didn't rush things, choosing a deliberately slow deployment to make sure that the Israelis would clearly see their activity, and understand that the Soviets were serious. Kissinger privately warned the Soviets that further Syrian advances into northern Israel, which could cut the country in two, would pose such an existential threat to Israel that the Soviet deterrence might not be sufficient to prevent Israel from going nuclear. The message was clear: Don't let their early successes spur your allies into pushing so hard that Israel felt it had to strike back.

The message was heeded. As Charles Wakebridge wrote in *Military Review* in 1976, the sudden Syrian halt when they could have advanced into Israel on Oct. 7 and 8 was one of the most intriguing and inexplicable decisions of the war. It is reasonable to infer from the Syrian decision to stop at the Jordan River, when they could have advanced all the way to Haifa, was due to the Israeli nuclear alert. The river was a red line that Damascus would not risk crossing.

The second crisis occurred between Oct. 17-22, when the Soviet nuclear warheads arrived. Some were conspicuously deployed deep inside in Egypt, to deter any rash Israeli act. But the Soviets also deployed conventionally armed SCUD missiles in the Sinai, where Israeli forces were on the counteroffensive against the Egyptian invaders. The Israelis, quite reasonably, assumed that the Sinai SCUDs were also nuclear tipped. In Jerusalem's and Washington's view, this constituted dangerous escalation from a deterrence-based posture to war-fighting deployment.

Israel had to respond. The CNA researchers wrote that “[Israeli] Chief of Staff General Elazar ordered the deployment of an Israeli missile battery in an uncamouflaged fashion in such a way that Soviet satellites would be likely to detect the deployment and assume that such missiles were nuclear-capable.” Officials in Washington and Jerusalem were both worried that the Soviets, under pressure from their Egyptian allies, might escalate a conflict that was rapidly, and remarkably, evolving into a major Israeli conventional military victory.

On Oct. 22, hours before a UN Security Council ceasefire resolution was set to go into effect, the situation suddenly became even more tense when Egypt launched SCUD missiles at Israeli targets. In his book *Inside the Kremlin during the Yom Kippur War*, senior Soviet diplomat Victor Israelyan relates that the authority to launch the missiles was given by Soviet Defense Minister Andrei Grechko to the Soviet ambassador in Cairo, Vladimir Vinogradov, in an emergency telephone conversation. “Go the hell and fire it!” was Gecko's response to the Egyptian request for authorization. The Egyptians fired.

Senior officials in Moscow were shocked, and outraged. “A few minutes later there was a call to Vinogradov from Moscow — [Foreign Minister Andrei] Gromyko was on the line,” Israelyan recounts. “‘What did you talk about with Grechko?’ he asked. When he learned of Grechko's order, Gromyko was outraged and strictly prohibited Vinogradov from carrying out the order. ‘I am sorry, Andrei Andreyevich, I can't help it,’ was the reply. ‘The missiles have already been fired.’” The normally phlegmatic Gromyko was profoundly disturbed by this development — he had a bad feeling that things would soon get out of control. He was right. The third crisis was at hand.

Forty-eight hours later, the Soviets and Americans found themselves facing the gravest nuclear crisis since the Cuban Missile Crisis. Despite the UN ceasefire having come into effect, the Egyptian Third Army,

which had been completely surrounded by Israeli forces, was still fighting, desperately attempting to break out and avoid a humiliating surrender. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat was demanding the Soviets save his army. After lengthy deliberations, Brezhnev informed Nixon that the Soviets were considering “taking appropriate steps unilaterally.” The Soviets began mobilizing troops and equipment. In all, 50,000 Soviet soldiers were readied for a possible intervention to save Egypt and, to be sure, a great deal of Soviet prestige.

Kissinger was furious with the Israelis for forcing Moscow’s hand, but could not possibly allow the unilateral introduction of Soviet forces into the Sinai. He responded to Brezhnev’s quasi-ultimatum by writing to Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin. “We must view your suggestion of unilateral action as a matter of grave concern,” he said, “involving incalculable consequences.” After a lengthy National Security Council meeting, the U.S. raised the alert level of U.S. forces worldwide, including its nuclear forces, to Defense Condition [DEFCON] 3. Fifty nuclear-capable B-52 bombers moved from bases in Guam closer to the Soviet Union. Airborne tankers were prepared and dispersed. The carrier USS John F. Kennedy and its battle group sailed into the eastern Mediterranean. The 82nd Airborne Division was put on alert and told to be ready for action in the Sinai.

At that point two unrelated developments helped to swiftly reduce tensions: Kissinger demanded that Israel allow essential non-military supplies to reach the encircled Egyptian Third Army and desist from further military action or lose U.S. support at the UN; meanwhile, Sadat, having realized that his call for Soviet intervention had pushed the superpowers to the brink of war, opened direct negotiations with the Israelis. This unprecedented step by an Arab leader led to the establishment of a true peace between Egypt and Israel, and also saved Sadat’s Third Army from annihilation or capitulation. With Israeli forces rapidly driving the Syrians back to Damascus, when the UN ordered another ceasefire, all sides saw fit to end the fighting. The superpowers stood back from the brink.

The modern Middle East was changed by the events of 40 years ago. And the Soviet Union, of course, is history. But to those closely following the U.S.-Russian brinkmanship over Syria’s use of chemical weapons and Iran’s drive to develop its own nuclear weapons, it’s hard to ignore the similarities between now and then. Moscow and Washington butting heads of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East is nothing new. And Israel, as ever, must remain wary of what its neighbours may be planning.

[Contents](#)

ISRAEL-EGYPT FORGE NEW TIES OVER SINAI

Geoffrey Aronson

[Al-Monitor](#), Sept. 13, 2013

Last week, Egypt embarked on its most extensive military operation in the Sinai peninsula in almost half a century. The target of this unprecedented deployment is an array of disaffected Egyptians and jihadi foreigners intent upon defying the seat of Egyptian power and sovereignty centered in Cairo.

Israel is a key partner in this Egyptian effort. Ironically, the anarchy in Sinai has prompted a new era of enhanced security cooperation between Israel and Egypt. The promise of the Arab Spring may be uncertain, but the Jerusalem-Cairo axis is one arena where a newly energized system of relations is being forged on the crumbling foundations of the old order. Egypt and Israel are creating a new basis for mutually beneficial relations, in the process ignoring not only key aspects of their historic peace treaty signed in 1979, but also reducing the role of what was once deemed to be the critical actor in that relationship — the United States.

For two generations the United States was at the center of a strategic partnership between Cairo and Jerusalem. Washington built its regional security strategy around the rapprochement that followed the October 1973 War and invested heavily in its vitality. Economic and military aid to the two nations dwarfed similar US programs elsewhere. “Investing in peace” established a solid security and political rationale for supplying billions to both Egypt and Israel.

An iconic photograph taken at the treaty signing ceremony, showing a beaming US President Jimmy Carter standing between Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, their hands outstretched in a tripartite handshake, said it all. The United States was the critical midwife of this relationship, and its support was vital to its maintenance.

The photograph is now well into middle-age. It has yellowed and its corners are brittle and worn from use. So too the old order of things that it celebrated. Like the photo, the structure that Washington championed reflects the hope and concerns of a bygone era — one that is not so much collapsing as evolving to accommodate seismic changes in the challenges confronted by a revolutionary Egypt and the new security environment along Israel's southern border, shared with its troubled neighbor. In this new picture, the United States is no longer at the center of things. In some key respects it is not even in the picture. In a path-breaking departure from past practice, Washington is viewed in both Cairo and Jerusalem as an obstacle to be overcome or ignored rather than a key player in solving the shared problems at the top of their mutual security agenda.

Washington was long viewed by all parties as the glue that cemented what was often a bloodless bilateral relationship. True, Washington and particularly Congress, always viewed Egypt as the junior partner in this *menage a trois*, but today, ambivalence if not outright hostility define the bilateral relationship between Washington and post-Mubarak Egypt. The Obama administration can't quite decide whether Egypt is friend or foe. "I don't think that we would consider them an ally, but we don't consider them an enemy," President Barack Obama observed in September last year, soon after violent demonstrations at the US Embassy in Cairo.

Today, it is Israel that finds itself in the awkward position of trying to convince Washington's skeptical political (if not security) class to reaffirm a partnership that it once sponsored. Yet, Washington's imprimatur is far less important today to the vitality of the Israel-Egypt relationship than it was in the past. Israel and Egypt, first during the short-lived rule of President Mohammed Morsi and now under Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, are redefining their relationship to address the shared concerns of this new era.

The lawless region of Sinai and to a lesser extent the Gaza Strip top this list in both Cairo and Jerusalem today. In each of these areas the US-sponsored treaty, constructed to address problems that have not so much disappeared as been overcome by the new realities on the ground, has nothing to contribute. The security situation in Sinai — defined by a local and growing wide-ranging insurgency against the central government — is unlike anything envisioned in the treaty, which was focused on preventing a classic conventional war between Israel and Egypt. The treaty tools available to Egypt to address today's war are inadequate and unsuited to the task. The treaty does not enhance, but in some respects acts as a break on solving the problems both parties face today. And so it is being ignored by Israel and Egypt alike.

In the past few years, Egypt, with Israel's consent, has deployed almost a division of army forces — close to 5,000 men — to the peninsula to combat the insurgency. Egyptian battle tanks have been transported over the Suez Canal for the first time since the peace agreement. Egyptian aircraft deployed in Rafah fly intelligence missions, careful however not to peek across the border into Israel. Apache helicopters are deployed against local and jihadi forces, and even overfly the southern Gaza Strip on occasion.

These deployments are a clear violation of the terms of the treaty that all but prohibited the introduction of regular Egyptian troops across the Suez Canal — a perfect example of how the treaty was designed to prevent the last — October 1973 — war. For years, Israel refused the efforts of Egyptian generals, chafing at the indignity of being denied the right to redeploy its forces in sovereign Egyptian territory.

But a new chapter was opened when Israel retreated from the Gaza Strip and ended its control over the border between Gaza and Egypt along the "Philadelphi" border in 2005. By mutual agreement, Egypt and Israel agreed to the introduction of new Egyptian forces in Sinai in numbers that have been progressively increased as the anarchy in Sinai has grown from limited concerns about the transfer of arms from Egypt to

Gaza to a systemic loss of Egypt's sovereign control over large parts of the peninsula. The United States has not played a central role in these deliberations.

And where it does — notably the deployment of the Multinational Force of Observers (MFO) — the revolutionary transformation of security realities in Sinai, and a sour mood in Washington, call into question the future of the US-led contingent. The troops and experts of the MFO were established by the 1979 treaty to monitor compliance with the terms of the treaty. The force's creation was both a clear symbol of the US commitment to the new regional security framework and the importance that all parties attached to such a visible US role in maintaining the peace.

A decade ago, cost-cutters at the Pentagon, including then-Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, argued for the MFO's elimination as an expensive and unnecessary expense. Their hardheaded view failed to prevail over those, including leaders in Cairo and Jerusalem, who argued against the signal such a US retreat would send about a reduced US commitment to the strategic alliance.

Today, the MFO is hunkered down, focused on force protection in the Wild West that Sinai has become. Its mission to monitor violations to the treaty — when Egypt and Israel have agreed to do so as a matter of policy — is passe. The MFO is hostage, figuratively and literally, to the new environment in Sinai. And what is to be said about the US commitment to the regional security framework that the MFO symbolizes when serious consideration is being given in Cairo and Washington to ending US-Egyptian aid and security ties? The question to be asked is increasingly not whether the MFO will remain, but whether anyone will notice if it doesn't.

Geoffrey Aronson writes regularly on Middle East issues for Al-Monitor.

[Contents](#)

IS THIS THE END OF THE FAILED MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD PROJECT?

Hussein Ibish

[The National \(UAE\)](#), Oct. 5, 2013

Is the Muslim Brotherhood dying? In Egypt and throughout the Arab world, Brotherhood-affiliated parties are suffering an unprecedented series of setbacks that cast real doubt on the long-term viability of that version of Islamist politics. The blow the Brotherhood has received in Egypt is exceptionally severe. Most of its senior leaders are under arrest, and its ability to mount mass protests appears debilitated. There is a pending court order mandating its disbanding and the seizure of its assets. And none of this seems to bother most Egyptians. It's not clear when or how the Brotherhood in Egypt can recover from this unprecedented crisis.

What is less widely understood, however, is that Brotherhood-affiliated parties across the region — many of which recently seemed to be on the brink of the political successes they have craved for decades — are suffering extreme setbacks. The Brotherhood's crisis in Egypt may be particularly dramatic but it is also merely the tip of the iceberg.

A quick regional survey can show how damaged this movement currently is. In Morocco, the Justice and Development Party might be in the best shape of all, currently occupying the ineffective office of prime minister. But, while ostentatiously praising the King, it is loudly insisting that it is in no sense whatsoever a Muslim Brotherhood party, or affiliated with it at all except insofar as both identify as Islamist. This is untrue. They only find it necessary to disavow Brotherhood connections so vigorously because of how regionally discredited the movement has become.

In Tunisia, a coalition of secular political and labour movement forces has forced the Brotherhood Ennahda party government to agree to resignation. Ennahda may still be the largest political party in Tunisia, but it's unlikely that it could repeat its 2011 parliamentary electoral success since secular and non-Islamist forces

are becoming much more organised and coordinated. And it's always been clear it would be exceptionally difficult for Ennahda to beat a consensus secular candidate in a two-person presidential election or run-off.

The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood, which seemed to be growing from strength to strength a mere year ago, is in utter disarray. The Syrian Brotherhood was the most influential political force in the opposition after the uprising against the Damascus dictatorship began. But now they seem to have virtually no influence on the conflict or its likely outcome. Hamas in Gaza is undergoing an unprecedented crisis. It bizarrely made no effort to convince the new Egyptian government that it was not a hostile force, especially with regard to security in Sinai. It is therefore being treated like one. Egypt has imposed an unparalleled blockade, leaving the economy in shambles. For the first time since 2007, it is now possible to imagine a Gaza no longer under Hamas control.

And in those parts of the Gulf in which the Brotherhood has some presence, its affiliates are coming under intense scrutiny and increasing pressure. But all of this hardly means that Islamism across the board is enduring a nadir. In several Arab societies, Salafists are either outflanking Brotherhood groups or reaping the benefits of the Brotherhood's crises....

If the ideology and practices of more moderate Brotherhood parties have proven unworkable and popularly unacceptable in power, that can only apply far more intensively to Salafist groups. The plausibility of Salafist rule in any post-dictatorship Arab society is, for those two reasons, virtually nil. This may not be the end of the Muslim Brotherhood but its region-wide crisis is so severe that significant ideological and practical adaptation will be unavoidable for those flexible enough to learn any lessons. The Moroccan and Tunisian branches are already unhappily compromising to survive.

But the Muslim Brotherhood may be dying at least in the sense that what ultimately emerges from the current wreckage will be unrecognisably different. Only a radical change in fortunes across the region is likely to forestall such a process. So during the very period in which many Arabs and westerners alike expected Brotherhood domination in many Arab countries, we may instead be witnessing the death throes of a nearly 100-year-old failed experiment.

Hussein Ibish is a senior fellow at the American Task Force on Palestine.

ON TOPIC

[Lessons from the Yom Kippur War:](#) [Daniel Greenfield, Front Page Magazine, Oct. 7, 2013](#)—Forty years ago, Israel experienced the most devastating war in its modern history. Israel not only suffered its worst casualties during the Yom Kippur War, but actually came close to being destroyed with Defense Minister Moshe Dayan warning that “The Third Temple is falling.”

[51 Dead in as Egyptians Celebrate 40th Anniversary of Yom Kippur War:](#) [Jewish Press, October 7th, 2013](#)—Deadly clashes erupted in Cairo on Sunday as pro-Morsi marches protesting the military junta rule headed to Tahrir Square, where thousands were cheering the same junta, celebrating the 40th anniversary of the army's 1973 “victory” against Israel. Confrontations there and outside Cairo resulted so far in the death toll rising to 51, according to Al Ahram, with 268 injured.

[Who Is Egypt's Next President?:](#) [Bassem Sabry, Al-Monitor, Sept. 22 2013](#)—If the current roadmap holds, Egypt could see its next presidential elections to select its fifth head of state sometime in the second quarter of 2014. A minority has been calling for holding the presidential elections earlier before the parliamentary polls, but all signs indicate the current administration is adamantly opposed to amending its roadmap.