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Aktuelles aus israelischen Tageszeitungen

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1. Der Sturz von Hosni Mubarak

Nach 18 Tagen anhaltender Proteste erreichten ägyptische Demonstranten eines ihrer wichtigsten Ziele: Hosni Mubarak, seit fast 30 Jahren Präsident und autokratischer Herrscher des Landes, trat zurück. An seiner Stelle hat nun das Militär, das auch vorher Mubaraks wichtigste Stütze war, die Macht übernommen. Eine Kommission zur Ausarbeitung einer neuen Verfassung ist ernannt worden. Menschenrechtsorganisationen kritisierten jedoch deren Zusammensetzung aus Mitgliedern des alten Regimes und der Muslimbruderschaft.

In Israel sorgen sich Politiker und Öffentlichkeit in erster Linie um die Aufrechterhaltung des Friedensvertrages mit Ägypten. Das ägyptische Militär versicherte jedoch, das alle abgeschlossenen Verträge weiterhin gültig seien.

A new era in Egypt

"Egypt's popular revolution [...] herald[s] a new era in Middle East history. It's an era in which the people demand to be heard and be allowed to help shape their fate [...]. A political revolt like this, in which unarmed citizens overthrow a ruler they hate, had never taken place in a an Arab country. [...]"

Now Israel has to get used to Egypt's new rulers. The dramatic change over the border naturally gives rise to fears, but Israel must not interfere in its southern neighbor's affairs. Egypt has no conflict with Israel and must not be presented as an enemy. [...] The revolution in Egypt did not stem from the ties with Israel, and Netanyahu would do well to keep quiet and give this neighboring country a chance to establish a democracy."

HAA 13.02.11 Editorial

The Muslim brotherhood waits in the wings

"The Egyptian revolution [...] was mainly motivated by the demand of the masses for economic justice. [...] Hope for political stability hangs on the mistaken impression created by the western media that the

demonstrators were the 'Facebook generation' [...] - that is to say people like us. The truth is that there are millions of university educated young Egyptians who are unemployed and hungry. [...]"

If Egypt cannot deal with its poverty and create a structure of social justice acceptable to the majority, the Muslim Brotherhood will inevitably become more powerful."

Ehud Kaufman, GLO 13.02.11

Egypt is not Gaza

"The Egyptians are unlike the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, the West Bank or Jordan; nor are they like the Shiites in Lebanon. This is a proud, modest people which has never been in the thrall of religious fanaticism, despite the Islamic revolutions that have swept the region. Thus, the prospect that Egypt will join the so-called axis of evil whose base is Iran is slight. Even if the Muslim Brotherhood rises to power under the cover of democratic elections - it is not an organization that can be likened to Hamas. Religious enthusiasm does not spawn political developments in Egypt which can be comparable to those prompted elsewhere in the Arab world."

Yom-Tov Samia, HAA 07.02.11

Egypt is not Iran

"Egypt is a Muslim country with an Islamic scent, though unwilling to submit to the totalitarian suffocation by religious rulers. [...] The Muslim Brotherhood is not destined to come to power in Cairo. Islam is a central part of the life of Egyptians though not the ideal of their political vision. [...] The pride that Egyptians feel for their country, which burst out in the revolutionary élan, is a compelling sign that Iran as a model and precedent is alien to their national ethos. [...] So the Egyptian revolution, hardly violent at all, is willing to sustain and dignify Islam but not succumb to its preachers and principles."

Mordechai Nisan, JED 16.02.11

Israel is out of touch

"Perceived by many Israeli commentators as a movement shifting Egypt toward extremism, the developments of the past few days belie such characterizations of the protesters' intentions. The almost total lack of anti-Israeli and anti-American slogans and placards in the past fortnight has been striking, as has been the lack of Islamic content. [...]

In Israel, it has become the norm to view any regional development that it has not preordained with knee-jerk pessimism, if not outright panic, the assumption being that disaster is imminent. Yet the events in Cairo and the statements from the Egyptian military demonstrate something quite different, and should thus be welcomed.

Hagai M. Segal, JPO 15.02.11

Hosni and me

"Anyone who thinks Cairo's calls for freedom will lead to rapid democratization is dangerously naive. For starters, Egypt's military has controlled the nation for more than 60 years – long before Mubarak. And outside of his own authoritarian circle, there are no political leaders capable of taking the helm immediately. [...]

Egypt's current ruling military triumvirate will remain in power – and Tahrir's mobs will be forced go home. [...] Be assured, the Egyptian military is not about to surrender full control of Egypt – at least not now."

R. Chesnoff, JPO 14.02.11

Mubarak no friend of Israel

"We must admit that Egypt's ousted president, Hosni Mubarak, did not have a pro-Israel agenda. [...] Mubarak kept the ties with Israel at the lowest possible level required to maintain the peace treaty. The bonfire of peace he created was so small that any wind could have extinguished it. [...] Had he wanted it, throughout his presidency President Mubarak could move closer, embrace us, speak warmly and leave behind him the kind of legacy that would ensure that the peace treaty is maintained even after he leaves. The fact is that at this time, nothing is guaranteed any longer in respect to Israel-Egypt ties."

Nechama Duek, JED 14.02.11

My tears for Mubarak

"All the senior Western leaders [...] hurled at us [...] a series of nice words – 'democracy,' 'civil rights,' and so on. [...] Their devotion to 'democracy,'

'popular power' and 'civil rights' is lip service in this case. They think that by resorting to nice words they will save themselves and their peoples from the radical wave threatening to sweep them. They fear that in a year or five years, the al-Tahrir protestors will show up at their own squares and boulevards. At this time already, these leaders see the pioneers walking as though they are the masters of the house in Paris, London and Berlin. [...]

It is very possible that Hosni Mubarak was not an ideal leader. It is very possible that the regime in Cairo was corrupt and not enlightened. [...] Yet Mubarak and his people understood something that 100 Obamas will not understand even 50 years from now: Mubarak and his regime were apparently the last obstacle in our conflicted world in the face of the Islamist tsunami, a predator that is already devouring some European states."

Eitan Haber, JED 13.02.11

Can Israel refuse to revisit the cornerstone?

"Although the military has offered assurances that the country will respect the [peace] treaty [with Israel], the army's voice in a democratic Egypt may not be the only one that counts. Unfortunately, the sounds coming from erstwhile civilian leaders are not reassuring. [...]

The question Israel might soon face is whether the provisions of the treaty Egypt could ask to renegotiate are worth the costs that Egypt might seek to unilaterally impose. Some concessions are not unthinkable. [...]

Welcome or not, the new era will present both pitfalls and opportunities. Israeli diplomacy will have to be flexible and creative to ensure that when its neighbors break their age-old chains and overthrow their overseers, it is not at its expense as well. In this light, however inopportune, Israel may decide that the cornerstone of its security must be resurfaced without being removed."

M.M. Lieberman, JPO 20.02.11

2. Unruhen in der arabischen Welt

In Tunesien und Ägypten haben Volksbewegungen die Herrscher bereits gestürzt. Diesen Beispielen folgend gehen in immer mehr arabischen Ländern die Menschen auf die Straße und fordern Reformen. Der jordanische König nahm einen Regierungswechsel vor, in Bahrain und Jemen wurden Gehälter erhöht, in Algerien wurde der seit 1992 verhängte Ausnahmezustand gestoppt während in Libyen Gaddafi auf die Demonstranten schießen lässt und

dabei Tote in steigender Anzahl in Kauf nimmt, um sein Regime zu retten.

In Israel werden diese Entwicklungen mit großer Aufmerksamkeit und zugleich mit viel Skepsis beobachtet. Die größte Angst besteht dabei vor "demokratischen" Wahlen, die islamistische Regierungen hervorbringen und die Stabilität in der Region gefährden könnten.

A diplomatic revolution

"The revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, the demonstrations in Iran and Bahrain and the general feeling of an earthquake rumbling across the Middle East have thus far conferred a sense of deliverance on Israel, as it has managed to escape the spotlight. [...] Yet the shock waves in the Middle East actually obligate us to quickly rev up our strategic thinking. For those same Arab publics that succeeded in ousting two dictators, and have not yet uttered their last word, will eventually demand that their new governments pursue a vigorous foreign policy – or in other words, reexamine their relationship with Israel. [...] [Israel] would do better, in contrast to its usual policy, to view the changes in the Middle East as an opportunity and to preemptively propose a diplomatic initiative – one that will make it clear to the Arab states [...] that it is ready to be part of the new reality."

HAA 16.02.11 Editorial

A big leap for the Israeli psyche

"While Israel certainly has cause for anxiety, I believe that at this point it has no choice but to bet on [...] the broadening of democratization in the Arab world. Israel must address its own fears and prejudices rather than hoping for a perpetuation of the status quo, which was unstable to begin with. [...]

Israel must do its share to convince the Arab world that we are not haughty, arrogant and completely devoid of respect for Islam and for Arab culture. The Arab world has good reasons to think that Israel is incapable of relating respectfully to Arabs, given settlement construction, expropriation of Palestinian property and other unilateral steps. Our government can start building confidence this very moment by stopping such acts immediately."

Carlos Strenger, HAA 02.11.11

Knock, knock: History calling

"What is really happening in Egypt – and Tunisia, Iran, Yemen, Bahrain, Libya and a whole host of other countries – is unknown. [...] Middle-class Iranians, all living in Tehran, have assured me that

their fight is not with Israel, but with the ayatollahs' regime – but can they speak for the poor, the religious or the residents of remote villages? [...]

It is too early to say what will be. Is this [...] similar to the fall of the former Soviet Union? Political observers are describing the latest chain of events as a domino effect, but as we watch each block fall we could be missing the greater picture."

Liat Collins, JPO 20.02.11

What's in it for Turkey?

"One of the less-expected consequences of unrest in the Middle East is the elevation of Turkey's role, making Ankara a potential regional power. [...]

Now, while the Brotherhood is emerging as a key player in Egyptian politics, the AKP, as an advocate for this movement, has found an ally in Cairo. The same also applies to Tunis, where the local Brotherhood has emerged from the shadows since the fall of Tunisia's dictator. Moreover, if unrest in other Arab countries were to topple more dictatorships, or at least force them to recognize the opposition, the AKP would gain additional allies. [...]

[...] The party will not only continue to break rank with the West on issues such as Sudan and Hamas, but will also have a receptive audience and power to support such policies in Cairo and elsewhere. After nearly a decade of disappointment, the AKP's Turkey is now emerging as a regional power, thanks to the Arab winter of 2011."

Soner Cagaptay, JPO 20.02.11

Afraid of its own people

"When Arab leaders looked at the uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia, they felt the flames of revolution lapping at their heels. To protect themselves, they rushed to make preemptive concessions, handing out cash, rolling back subsidy cuts and promising new elections.

Iranian leaders, on the other hand, chose to respond in precisely the opposite way. Instead of granting their people what they might otherwise demand, the government chose to protect itself by killing even more of its opponents [...]. In short, Iran's reaction to the Arab revolt of 2011 puts the regime's fears, along with its objectives, in sharp relief. [...]

They vowed to spread their revolution across the Muslim world. Popular uprisings against secular Arab governments – which have long despised the Iranian regime – give Tehran hope the ground will be fertile for more Islamic revolution.

So far, however, the young pro-democracy activists in the Arab world find more inspiration in the Iranian protests of 2009 than in the revolution of 1979."
Frida Ghitis, JPO 16.02.11

America's unique ally

"The seismic developments [...] throughout the Arab Middle East highlight Israel's unique contribution to vital US interests.

The significance of Israel's strategic added-value is underlined by uncertain and shifty Arab ideologies, policies, alliances and allegiances, by the increasing vulnerability of pro-US Arab regimes, the intensifying unruly nature of Arab societies, the exacerbation of Islamic terrorism, the Iranian nuclear threat, the deepening penetration of the Arab Middle East by Russia and China, the recent erosion of the US posture of deterrence and the expected US evacuation of Iraq and Afghanistan. Israel's reliability, capability, credibility, stability, democracy and non-conditional alliance with the US are anomalous in the Middle East."

Yoram Ettinger, JED 18.02.11

3. Ernennung eines neuen Generalstabschefs

Am 14. Februar hat Generalmajor Benny Gantz das Amt des Generalstabschefs der israelischen Armee von seinem Vorgänger Gabi Ashkenazi übernommen. Gantz war allerdings nicht der erste für diesen Posten vorgesehene Kandidat. Ursprünglich hatte Generalmajor Yoav Galant das Amt antreten sollen. Ihm wird jedoch vorgeworfen, sich staatliches Land widerrechtlich für seinen privaten Wohnsitz angeeignet zu haben. Nachdem Generalstaatsanwalt Yehuda Weinstein erklärte, dass Galants Ernennung vor dem Obersten Gerichtshof nicht standhalten könne, zogen Premierminister Netanyahu und Verteidigungsminister Barak seine Kandidatur zurück. Zunächst hieß es dann, es werde für einige Monate einen vorläufigen Generalstabschef geben, weil Barak eine Verlängerung von Ashkenazis Amtszeit grundsätzlich ablehnt. Schließlich wurde die Ernennung von Benny Gantz beschlossen.

Morality isn't everything

"What in fact do we want from a military leader - that he be white as snow in his private life, or that he win battles? [...] To win in battle, a leader needs a rare combination of characteristics. A military leader has to hack his way to the top; he has to make thou-

sands of soldiers follow him through fire [...], he has to make snap decisions, and above all he has to surprise the foe by trickery. [...] On the battlefield there are no rules: This is the dirtiest of life's games. [...]

The conclusion is not that criminals or religious fanatics should be appointed chiefs of staff. However, in considering candidates for supreme commander, it is necessary above all to look at their ability to win wars, and only then at their personal morality [...]. A military leader's personal morality is important in a civilized country, but victory in battle is more important."

Gabriel Herman, HAA 11.02.11

A targeted assassination

"The participants in the public discourse taking place over this issue must honestly ask themselves whether the candidate's real estate assets are the essence here.

An army chief is appointed and nobody shows any interest in whether he is the most suitable candidate in terms of skill. Nobody asks for his views on striking Iran's nuclear program or on negotiations with Syria. Yet the picture of his villa drives everyone crazy. [...] The entanglement in appointing the army chief does not only embarrass the IDF General Staff. The first to be embarrassed is Ehud Barak. In the bottom line, the defense minister has been defeated again. [...] You saw what Barak did to the Labor Party. He just did the same to the IDF. Israel can manage without one party or another. It would be hard to carry on without the IDF."

Nahum Barnea, JED 28.01.11

The fish stinks from the head

"Once it became clear to even Barak and Netanyahu [...] that Galant's position was untenable, they then first attempted to foist an unworkable solution on the army in the form of a temporary chief of General Staff rather than ask Ashkenazi to extend his term. Belatedly, they came to their senses, but at the cost of having Maj.-Gen. Benny Gantz's promotion being greeted more with a sense of relief that the distractions of the past few months are behind us, rather than a feeling that the best man has been chosen for the job.

Given the irresponsibility shown by our leaders during his appointment process, Gantz bears a heavier burden than most incoming IDF commanders. He needs to quickly impose his leadership on his battered General Staff colleagues, who have suffered the collateral damage of the inept chan-

geover process, and project his vision for the IDF down through the ranks."

Jeff Barak, JPO 13.02.11

The army chief's challenge

"The incoming chief of staff is facing a much greater burden than what his predecessor faced. While Gabi Ashkenazi arrived as a savior, nobody is cheering Gantz on. The disputes at the top reduced the status of the army chief's office, yet the IDF chief is still the main bolt in our defense work [...].

In 2011, [...] we need a chief of staff [...] with foresight, broad vision, the ability to prioritize, and sound judgment; a man who can execute and take decisions. Otherwise, he will be pushed to the side and someone else will do his thinking for him. [...]

The political leadership needs to look up to him, and not the other way around. He needs to help them take risks, make it clear what comes at the expense of what, and present them with solutions rather than questions."

Alex Fishman, JED 14.02.11

Benny's return to the alfalfa

"Gantz has no hidden agenda or worldview that he is trying to advance through war. [...] The problem for Gantz will be with the Israeli leadership, which did not want him until the last minute. [...] When politicians find themselves in a weak position before elections, two instincts awaken: the economic one (to lower taxes), and the military one. [...] Gantz will require enormous mental fortitude and precise statesman-like conduct to identify the fine line between carrying out the orders of the elected civilian leadership, and maintaining loyalty to those who may try to use him for their political goals."

Amir Oren, HAA 14.02.11

4. Preissteigerungen und Streikandrohungen

Das Wirtschaftswachstum in Israel betrug im letzten Quartal 7,8 Prozent. Israel stand damit an fünfter Stelle der am schnellsten wachsenden Wirtschaften in der OECD. Diese Zahlen, die von Finanzminister Yuval Steinitz mit Stolz verkündet wurden, können jedoch nicht über die Unzufriedenheit der Bevölkerung über die Wirtschaftspolitik der Regierung hinwegtäuschen. Zu heftigen Protesten – auch unter Ministern – war es gekommen, nachdem Premierminister Benjamin Netanyahu und Steinitz zusätzliche Steuern auf Benzin und Preissteigerungen von Grundnahrungsmitteln angekündigt hatten. Der

Vorsitzende der Gewerkschaftsdachverbandes Histadrut Ofer Eini und der Arbeitgebervertreter Shraga Brosh drohten daraufhin mit einem Generalstreik. Netanyahu suchte den Kompromiss und verkündete schließlich mehrere Maßnahmen, um rapide steigende

Lebenshaltungskosten auszugleichen. So wurde die Benzinsteuern zurückgezogen und die Erhöhung des Mindestlohns angekündigt.

Waiting for our Day of Social Justice

"Our government's 'policy' of handing out candies to make us feel better worked this time round, too. The prime minister declared a 'benefit package' to help relieve financial pressure on the public; the Finance Ministry rushed within 24 hours to lower gasoline prices by 23 agorot; and the public protest that had awakened for a moment ended – until the next outcry and the next round of treats are handed out. [...] One in every four Israelis lives today in poverty – double the average in the West. [...] The level of inequality in Israel is one of the highest among developed nations. [...]

The writing is on the wall: There is no policy here that promotes social justice. The prime minister and finance minister like to talk about how our economy is continuing to grow, unemployment is low and the GNP is on the rise. When called upon to discuss the issues of poverty and gaps in equality, they have a much harder time."

Tali Nir, HAA 18.02.11

Eating the cake and affording it, too

"If we want to lower prices, we first need to create more wealth – increase production, innovation, supply. And if we want to do this, we need to free the market, not impose further restrictions on it. One does not need a Nobel Prize in economics to understand that with higher minimum wages, fewer people will be employed, and as a result fewer goods will be produced.

And in a welfare state like Israel, those without employment receive government handouts, which will require more taxes and therefore higher prices. Higher taxes will be imposed on fuel, water, bread, cars and homes. How else can the government pay for those in need? [...]

For the rich as well as the poor to prosper, more wealth has to be created. The producers of wealth – the creators of affluence – are the business people, manufacturers and inventors, not the union leaders and politicians. [...] Everyone will benefit – rich and

poor – if the government takes a step back and limits its interference in the market."

Tal Ben-Shahar, JPO 15.02.11

No hocus-pocus

"Now Eini wants to negotiate with Netanyahu over bringing to a conclusion the labor dispute declared by the union boss. He and his buddies want to see [...] the price of subsidized breads slashed, and the minimum wage for the entire public sector increased. Eini, Brosh and Buchbut demand all these additional benefits without a concomitant cut to the state budget. In other words, a sort of hocus-pocus, in which something is created out of nothing. If that happens we will shortly find ourselves returning to the great budget deficits of the 1980s and the hyper-inflation that went with them."

HAA 14.02.11 Editorial

No glass ceiling in Israel

"The data point to economic growth, the Israeli economy is stable, and foreign investment is growing. What does this mean for individual citizens? Seemingly nothing. However, one cannot examine government policy only through individual eyes. Israel is a capitalist country. This means that we shall always have poor people, wealthy people, and a middle class. A failed capitalist state is one that does not afford individuals the opportunity to improve their economic situation. Yet Israel is not like that. I look around me and despite the complaints see people who work hard and are able to make progress. I meet people who were born into poverty yet found their way out of it. [...] There is no glass ceiling in Israel, and this is so thanks to our economic growth."

Yoaz Hendel, JED 11.02.11

What exactly are you celebrating, Steinitz?

"On the face of it, the announcement [...] of the economic growth figures should be cause for celebration, and that indeed was Minister of Finance Yuval Steinitz's reaction. [...] However anyone who reads the whole announcement, and analyses all the components of growth in the economy, must reach the conclusion that we are on the way to something far from happy. [...]"

What do the growth figures tell us? First of all, that the real estate bubble is still swelling, until the bitter end. [...] Meanwhile, the economy's competitiveness has been eroded, and not just because of exchange rate developments. Exports rose at an annual rate of 3.7%, while inflation is on the rise, and resources

are being diverted to satisfy local demand. Tax receipts have risen sharply and the fiscal deficit, but this is a phenomenon that depends completely on the real estate boom, and on local demand, and when that ends, the result is liable to be a fiscal hole that will have to be filled through very severe spending cuts. Instead of recognizing this reality, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insists on talking about tax cuts, when he ought to take urgent action on the deficit."

Avi Temkin, GLO 16.02.11

Terrific growth figures don't tell the full story

"Much of the seemingly splendid growth, on closer inspection, was fueled by increased local spending – including via greater imports and a further swelling of the already engorged real estate bubble. The sort of expansion experienced here in recent months isn't necessarily the healthiest, therefore. It indicates rising domestic standards of living and a feverish economy. [...] The overall picture features other worrisome elements, too. Inflation is up by 3.6% for the past year alone. [...] Any householder stocking up on basic provisions can attest to the inflationary spiral, to say nothing of hikes at the gasoline pump, higher water and electricity bills and skyrocketing municipal rates. [...] Most importantly, this is no time for reckless self-satisfaction of the sort that would tempt us to throw caution to the wind and disregard common-sense budgetary restrictions. Above all, this is the time to stay vigilant, not overspend and not foolishly clamor for higher salaries, which are sure to fan inflationary flames out of control."

JPO 20.02.11 Editorial

HAA = Haaretz

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