



The US and Us: The Mitvim-DC Monthly

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The US and Us: The Mitvim-DC Monthly is a monthly report on US-Middle East issues. Each report includes an analysis, a roundup of commentaries, and a profile of a major US policymaker. The series is of particular importance for Israel's regional foreign policies as the second Obama administration takes shape – a time in which personnel changes and policy re-evaluations regarding Israel and the Middle East are taking place.

This report is prepared by Brian Reeves, a Visiting Fellow at Mitvim, briannreeves@gmail.com. Previous issues can be [read here](#).

A. Analysis

June begins as the peace process remains on hold with the Obama administration sending clear signals that it has shelved the issue for the near future. Confirming speculation that the new US policy is to leave both sides to acquire a sense of urgency to resume the negotiations and to come up with their own proposals, [The New York Times reported](#) that an Obama official—likely Martin Indyk—said that the president preferred “to let the failure of the talks sink in for both parties, and see if that causes them to reconsider.”

Likewise, [Obama has instructed Secretary Kerry](#) to invest his energy in the Iran negotiations and the developments in Ukraine. He reinforced this agenda in a [highly symbolic commencement speech](#) at the United States Military Academy at West Point while also defending his vision that the US should not intervene militarily in international conflicts unless core American interests are jeopardized.

Opponents charged that this position would limit US policy options (e.g. in [Iran and Syria](#)) and perpetuate the [perception of America as an unreliable ally](#) when military intervention is needed. Others praised it as a sober [alternative to the hawkish policies](#) of the last decade while [reaffirming America's commitment](#) as the global leader. What this vision means for US-Egyptian relations in the wake of [General al-Sisi's landslide presidential elections victory](#) remains a question for the coming month. A glaring omission in the speech was any mention of the peace process.

Judging by Netanyahu's [boasting of having outmaneuvered the Americans on settlements](#) and his reported plans to consider [alternative options to direct negotiations](#), together with the new [Fatah-Hamas unity government](#) and the [likelihood that Abbas will forge ahead](#) with plans to pressure Israel at the UN, it is unlikely that there will be attempts to advance the peace process in the coming months. When the talks eventually are resumed, as they inevitably will be, Israel may find itself under greater American pressure to make compromises.

B. Article Roundup

The US and the Peace Process

Former US Middle East advisor Aaron David Miller writes a scathing analysis [blaming Secretary of State John Kerry of three diplomatic “delusions”](#) that fatally undermined the peace process.

Dennis Ross, at The Washington Institute, suggests that the [US should restart the peace process by cajoling the parties into issuing basic declarations](#) allaying the other side’s central concerns. Alternatively, the US should shift to a conflict management approach.

An exchange of letters between Michael Oren and Foreign Policy CEO David Rothkopf highlights [US and Israeli views](#) on how Israel should define its Jewish character.

Palestinian Reconciliation

Matthew Levitt and Neri Zilber of The Washington Institute warn that when it comes to interpreting Hamas-Fatah reconciliation [the devil is in the details](#), and Hamas’ actions should not be overlooked.

Dr. James Zogby of the Arab American Institute makes the case for why the [US should accept a Palestinian unity government](#).

Elections in Egypt

Experts at the Council on Foreign Relations warned that al-Sisi as president will [neither advance democracy nor repair the economy](#), and that the US should withhold aid.

Brian Katulis, Hardin Lang, and Mokhtar Awad, at the Center for American Progress, outline [challenges of security, political polarization and a fragile economy](#) that now President-elect al-Sisi will be confronted with once in office.

Michelle Dunne, at Carnegie, argues that US foreign policy towards Egypt should in the future [be based on what—“bread, freedom and justice”—rather than whom, it supports](#).

C. Policy Profile

Stephen Beecroft, newly-appointed US Ambassador to Egypt

Amid diplomatic tensions with Egypt, Stephen Beecroft brings dependable experience as a career diplomat to the US embassy there. He has replaced now Assistant Secretary of State Anne Paterson, who [vacated the post back in August](#) after facing heavy criticism from Egyptians for choosing sides in the country's ongoing power struggle.

Ambassador Beecroft has served in posts in Riyadh, Damascus, and [most recently Baghdad](#) where he was the Ambassador since 2012. This last position leaves little room for the imagination for why he was tapped to serve in Cairo at this critical juncture in US-Egyptian relations. In April, the US [partially resumed military aid](#) to Egypt, yet ties between the two countries could swiftly deteriorate if the US finds cause to reverse this decision.