



# Orienting Our Sights on the Future

Opportunities and Challenges of the Arab Revolts

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Middle East Studies

at the Marine Corps University

## Middle East Studies Monograph Series

As part of its mission to broaden U.S. Marine Corps access to information and analysis through publishing, Middle East Studies at Marine Corps University (MES) has established different mechanisms to disseminate relevant publications, including a Monograph Series. The aim of the MES Monograph Series is to publish original research papers on a wide variety of subjects pertaining to the greater Middle East, to include the countries of the Arab world, Israel, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. The focus of the Monograph Series is on timely subjects with strategic relevance to current and future concerns of the U.S. Professional Military Education community.

The third issue of the Monograph Series brings together five short pieces representing some of the lectures delivered as part of Academic Year 2011-2012 MES Lecture Series, “Orienting Our Sights on the Future: Opportunities and Challenges of the Arab Revolts.”

The MES Monograph Series will be available both in print and electronically through the MES website at [www.mcu.usmc.mil](http://www.mcu.usmc.mil) under the “Middle East” tab as well as on Facebook at [middleeaststudies.mcu](http://middleeaststudies.mcu). For information on obtaining print copies, please contact Mr. Adam C. Seitz, Senior Associate at MES, at [seitzac@grc.usmcu.edu](mailto:seitzac@grc.usmcu.edu), telephone number (703) 432-5260.

We welcome comments from readers on the content of the series as well as recommendations for future monograph topics.

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# Middle East Studies

at the Marine Corps University

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# Preface

by **Amin Tarzi, Marine Corps University**

The uprisings and ensuing political changes taking place throughout the Middle East and North Africa are reshaping the political and social landscape of the region. As this environment evolves, the United States Marine Corps, as the Nation's force in readiness, must stay current on the emerging realities in the Middle East to ensure they stand ready to respond to the Nation's needs. The wave of uprisings which began in December of 2010 in Tunisia, now generally referred to as the Arab Spring or Arab Revolts, has had varied results throughout the region and mixed responses from the international community. Not only has the rule of long-standing regimes been challenged, but also the relationships of leaders throughout the region and beyond have been redefined.

Because of continuing U.S. force deployments in the Middle East and U.S. military presence in the Gulf region for the foreseeable future, there is a need to broaden the Marine Corps' understanding of the events taking place throughout the region as well as of the impact these changes will have on U.S. policy and Marine Corps planning for future operations. To support this, Middle East Studies at Marine Corps University (MES) dedicated its 2011-2012 Lecture Series to exploring the opportunities and challenges that the Arab Revolts present to the United States, the region, and the international community.

As part of its mission, MES disseminates its materials in a wide variety of media formats to reach the largest audience possible. This Monograph represents part of this endeavor. Additionally, most of the lectures presented as part of MES programs remain available on-line as well as on audio or video DVDs, which can be requested free of charge.

This collection, number three in the series of monographs published by MES that began in 2011, brings together five short pieces representing some of the lectures presented in the MES 2011-2012 Lecture Series entitled, "Orienting Our Sights on the Future: the Opportunities and Challenges of the Arab Revolts." While time has passed since the lectures were presented and the rapidly changing dynamics in the region are presenting new challenges and opportunities beyond what had been discussed a year ago, the analysis of underlying causes of the unexpected turn of events in the Arab world beginning in December 2010 as well as the predictions and policy recommendations offered by our speakers in their writings remain of value to both students and researchers trying to understand the events in question and the policy community. The questions of democracy, political participation, and the roles of Islam, the military, and international relations as well as a myriad other topics stemming from or related to the Arab Spring continue to be relevant today. The inclusion of Turkey, a country which not only is a non-Arab state, but also is not directly affected by the Arab Spring, was at the request of students at Marine Corps University who wanted to learn more about Turkey and its potential to serve as a role model and key player in the political outcome in most of the Arab countries affected by the upheavals.

The topics of the Monograph are listed in the chronological order of the talks held at the Marine Corps University. Each speaker wrote the summary of his talk slightly differently, and the editors have refrained from standardizing them to allow the reader to capture the intent of each lecture and the individual styles of

each speaker. The editors have standardized the transliteration of foreign terms and names and have kept their own comments on the works to a minimum.

In the piece on Libya, Jon Alterman postulates that the developments of Libyan politics will outlast the initial Western interest in that country, adding that, in 2012, the United States will not be able—in his view, appropriately—to maintain a sustained focus. Using U.S. post-war reconstruction engagements in Germany and Japan to demonstrate the amount of effort and resources needed in a “sustained focus”, he reminds us that both cases required large numbers of occupation forces, the surrender of host countries’ leadership, and a long-lasting top-level focus of U.S. leadership. This is a role he sees as unlikely and possibly even not advisable for the United States. However, according to Alterman, the Libyans have an opportunity to steer their country in the right direction, and the United States has the possibility to play a role, but in the end, it is the Libyans who must decide the outcome, not any foreign player. Alterman points out that, due to the complexities involved in extracting, refining and transporting oil—the main source of income for Libya, a stable government will be more advantageous for the Libyans than the uncertainty and anarchy that enable other economic activities, for example, the diamond industry, to thrive. As this publication is going to press, Libya has successfully conducted its first open national election for parliamentary seats, and Libyans now are waiting to see who will be their prime minister. It appears that the National Forces Alliance, while not receiving a majority, may end up with that task. Barring any major and immediate mishaps, this may indeed lead to the establishment of a government. While optimistic, Alterman cautions it will be an uphill road toward a positive outcome for the future of Libya.

David Ottaway began his piece noting that the turbulence in the Arab world mainly affected those countries that supposedly had progressive republics rather than presumed regressive monarchies. Thus, Ottaway questions whether any of the current political upheavals occurring across the region can be termed revolutions, during which the “whole political, economic and social landscape” of a country changes. Comparing these uprisings with what happened in 1979 in Iran and without a crystal ball to foretell the future, he doubts that what is occurring in the Arab world is tantamount to the Shiite Iranian Revolution. Citing examples of Tunisia and Egypt, Ottaway concludes that those two countries are not experiencing revolutions—at least not yet. Additionally, Ottaway also questions applying the label of “counter-revolution” to the actions of a number of the Arab monarchies, and most specifically, Saudi Arabia. Listing Riyadh’s policies towards Muammar al-Qadhafi of Libya, Ali Saleh of Yemen, the post-Hosni Mubarak Egypt, and especially Syria, he says that Saudi Arabia’s actions have been daring, but not “counter-revolutionary.” Thus, Saudi policy in the wake of Arab Spring has been guided by three interconnected factors based on realpolitik. Namely countering Iran’s influence in the region; gaining or maintaining influence with the Arab states emerging from Arab Spring; and striving to put Saudi Arabia in a “commanding role” in the post-Arab Spring order.

The situation in Syria, the subject covered by Thomas Dine, has rapidly deteriorated into civil war since Dine spoke at MES in December 2011. At the time, civil war was but one possible future course raised at the lecture when discussing the nature of the Syrian crisis. In his piece for this collection, Dine focuses on whether and when Bashar al-Asad will relinquish power. He provides a number of indicators as a way to answer to those questions, the first of which is crowd size. Writing late last year, Dine points that compared to the crowds in Tahrir Square in Cairo or in Tunisia, Libya or Yemen, the crowds in Syrian cities have been relatively smaller in size, adding that apart from the universities, there has been no civil unrest in Syria’s two largest cities, Aleppo and Damascus. Based on this indicator alone, the situation in Syria today would point to a significant negative turn of events for Al-Asad’s regime. However, the crowds continue to remain “fragmented,” as Dine has written. At the end of his piece, Dine postulates that the crisis in Syria has come to a point of no return, predicting an end to the era of Al-Asad’s rule in that country.

In his piece on the only non-Arab country covered during the lecture series, Soner Çağaptay discusses the role the Arab Spring played in bridging the gap between Turkey and the United States. After the election of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in Turkey in 2002, Ankara began a policy of rapprochement with regional states, including Iran and Syria; however, the Arab Spring dispelled that “political mirage” according to Çağaptay. After Bashar al-Asad ignored Ankara’s requests to stop the violence, Turkey began

to oppose the Syrian regime and became one of its strongest opponents. This, in turn, also pitted Turkey against Syria's old ally, Iran. This shift in regional relations opened the possibility for the United States and Turkey to rekindle their relationship. According to Çağaptay, despite the existence of unresolved hurdles in larger Ankara-Washington relations such as Turkish-Israeli tensions, after a "decade of discord," Turkey and the United States have found common strategic interest in the region of the Middle East in the course of 2011. While the author contributes part of the warming of U.S.-Turkey relations to the personal connection between President Barack Obama and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, he foresees that the two countries appear to be linked together by "common interests in the Middle East" even if the two leaders are no longer in office.

Terming the fall of Hosni Mubarak as the "most important development" in the Middle East for the United States, David Schenker's piece on Egypt begins with a statement that the "Arab Spring," while forever changing the face of the Middle East, remains a work in progress. Internal to Egypt, Schenker writes that what is developing in that country is not a democracy but rather a "competitive theocracy." He foresees an inevitable conflict between the military, more specifically the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), and the Muslim Brotherhood who had won the majority of the seats in the People's Assembly—the lower house of the Egyptian parliament at the time this piece was written. The Muslim Brotherhood have since secured the presidency of the country. Schenker writes, both the Muslim Brotherhood and SCAF are looking at Turkey as a model. While the latter is favoring the pre-AKP roles of the military (the guardian of secularism and having the power to change and remove unyielding governments), the former is looking at the post-AKP era where an Islamist party has control of both the legislative and executive branches of the Turkish government and has been able to bring the military under its control.

The MES Academic Year 2011-2012 Lecture Series "Orienting Our Sights on the Future: Opportunities and Challenges of the Arab Revolts" offered up-to-date analysis and assessment on current events in the Middle East to Marine Corps University's students and the broader Marine Corps community. The current Monograph furthers MES's mission by disseminating a portion of the lectures to a wider audience and for further study and debate in what has surely been a defining moment in the Middle East.

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# Seeing Through the Fog: Transitional Governments in Libya and Elsewhere

by Jon B. Alterman, Center for Strategic and International Studies

October 6, 2011

There is something ironic about trying to understand Libya through comparison with other countries. For more than four decades, Libya's leadership tried to make Libya *sui generis*, a country that defied convention to create its own peculiar form of government. Famously, Libya was not a republic, or *jumhuriya*, but rather a "*jamahariya*," a neologism intended to signify a state of the masses. Muammar al-Qadhafi, who led Libya since he seized power in 1969, claimed to hold no official post in Libya, but only to give guidance to the government when asked. And that government had no traditionally elected representatives, but instead was a manifestation of direct democracy, a system of representation that supposedly began on the neighborhood level and fed all the way into a national system.

In point of fact, Libya was always more subject to the rules of reality than anyone in Libya ever wanted to admit. Libya had a genuine economy, distorted though it was, a fierce intelligence apparatus, and its emphasis on direct democracy was intended to divert attention from the fact that there was no democracy at all. Despite utopian aspirations, Libya had social problems as well. In the early days of a reestablished U.S. diplomatic presence in Libya, one intrepid foreign service officer even wrote a cable about prostitution in the country. It was memorably slugged, "To the Whores of Tripoli."

The demise of the Qadhafi clique leaves us in a quandary as to what Libya's future is, and what role the United States might play in steering things in a positive direction. Seen in isolation, Libya has never been a strategic asset or a strategic adversary of the United States. Libya has been troublesome and mercurial, but the United States government has found ways to work with or around it, as the situation dictated. Now, in a period of broader transition in the Middle East, a successful outcome in Libya can have a broader impact as a model for interactions between transitional governments and the outside world on the one hand, and between the United States and like-minded allies confronting complex contingencies on the other. To do so is to wade into the dangerous territory of making Libya into some sort of model, which it desperately but unsuccessfully tried to do for itself for more than four decades.

Even if Libya does not emerge as a new model, drawing on other experiences can and should help guide the way we think about Libya going forward. We have important and enduring interests in Libya, from helping to restore access to Libyan energy to counterterrorism to getting a handle on the large volumes of Qadhafi's weapons that are draining out of storehouses and already appearing in conflict zones throughout the region.

There is no magic solution to make complex contingencies work, and there is no course of action that will guarantee success, or even make it likely. Still, there are some things to keep in mind that will help us avoid making obvious mistakes, and others that will help us right-size our expectations. I'd like to highlight six of them here. Three have to do with governmental transitions in general, and three have to do with the particulars of the Libyan case itself. None of them are determinative, but collectively they seem to me to advise modesty in the types of outcomes we should expect in Libya and in our ability to shape the new



environment. Nevertheless, this analysis should help us prioritize where we invest our efforts and how we pace ourselves in the current period of regional turmoil.

The first issue involves the pace of transitions. It will likely take years for the character of Libya's transition to become clear and recognizable. The classic example of this is Iran, where there was considerable public hostility to the Shah in the United States for his poor human rights record and great optimism that a broad opposition coalition that included Ayatollah Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini, liberal nationalists and moneyed interests from the merchant class could lead Iran into a better future. Support for the Iranian revolution did not merely come from the radical fringe. Serious academics such as Princeton's Richard Falk and Columbia's Edward Said argued that the Islamic revolution in Iran should not be alarming, as it was based on aspirations for social justice. The first prime minister of revolutionary Iran, Mehdi Bazargan, served for nine months before he was purged for being insufficiently revolutionary. An article in the establishment-oriented *Foreign Affairs* in the autumn of 1980 advised it was not yet time to grow alarmed with Khomeini's consolidation of power behind a revolutionary religious establishment, because the country remained so beset with problems.

Other examples of slow-rolling revolutions are Cuba under Fidel Castro and Egypt under Gamal Abdel Nasser. In both cases, Americans initially saw the leaders as anti-imperialists and nationalists. As the United States has its own long history of being anti-imperialist and nationalist—at least in the eyes of most Americans—few in the United States saw the new governments these men led as threats. In the case of Fidel Castro, as shrewd an anti-Communist as Vice President Richard Nixon saw Fidel as a sympathetic figure, and viewed the real danger to be his brother Raul (who, ironically, is now dismantling much of the Communist apparatus his brother built). In Egypt, the U.S. government actively courted Nasser after the Egyptian coup of 1952, but British resistance to U.S. arms sales in the midst of negotiations over British troop withdrawals from Egypt helped push Egypt toward the Eastern Bloc for weaponry. The non-aligned movement that Egypt helped create in 1955 was in clear contravention of U.S. plans for the developing world, and opened a period of Egyptian-American tensions that scarcely diminished for two decades.

Despite the slowness of these governments to reveal their true essence, they had an advantage that made the process clearer than the one we are likely to see in Libya. In each of these cases, the movements that took power had clear and charismatic leaders who led the government and the public toward a new status quo. In Libya, no charismatic figure appears to be in the leadership, and none appear to be on the horizon. It appears that the "charisma vacuum" is part of the legacy of Qadhafi, that the government shaped people's professional development in such a way as to make true leadership impossible, except for The Leader himself, Qadhafi. Learning patterns of leadership, and adapting patterns of followership that are healthier than those that existed under Qadhafi is likely to extend this period of uncertainty even longer.

All of this is to say that while there will be keen scrutiny of the development of Libyan politics for the next year and beyond, the period of uncertainty and change is likely to endure long after most Americans and Europeans have moved on to other challenges. This isn't to predict the success or failure of Libya's transition, but rather to suggest it is likely to last far longer than anyone anticipates now.

The second point, related to the first, is that the United States government is often bureaucratically divided in its analysis of such moments of transition. This was especially clear in the case of Iran, where the State Department was relatively optimistic about the course a post-Shah Iran would take, and National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski was more skeptical. For her own part, first lady Rosalyn Carter reportedly carried on a private correspondence with the Shah's wife before his abdication, surely confusing the Iranians as well as others in the U.S. government as to exactly what the policy of the U.S. government was.

It is worth unpacking this a little, because the problem is deeper than merely differences of analysis. Unsurprisingly, different government agencies maintain different contacts in foreign countries that help shape their view of the host government. This is true as much in normal times as in transitional situations. Times in which the leadership is uncertain and things are in flux should be precisely the time of maximum information sharing and comparing notes across agencies, so as to gain a more complete picture of an uncertain situation. In practice, however, the bureaucratic process tends to drive agencies to hoard information

rather than share it, and use information to wage battles for influence that in some ways mirror the battles going on in foreign capitals.

One might argue that such differences of opinion are both natural and healthy, and that under such circumstances it is incumbent on the National Security Council (NSC) to act as an arbiter of interagency disputes. In times of governmental transition, however, the NSC has more often taken on the role it did in the Iran case: It was a player in negotiations rather than the referee, it put forward its own analysis, and backed its own interpretation of the facts.

While the goal of the interagency process is to synthesize diverse sources and emerge with a fully vetted whole, in practice the interagency process has sometimes led to governmental paralysis. In that way, rather than having a wide variety of information about transitional governments helping the United States government to act effectively, it has more often prevented the government from acting much at all. Some would argue that such paralysis is healthy, curbing an overzealous interventionist instinct and preventing the United States from getting out of position. It does that, but perhaps more than would be ideal.

The third thing we know from other transitions is that neighbors have a profound effect on the outcome of such transitions. It stands to reason that proximity gives outsized influence, especially because it allows opposition groups and other political aspirants to have a safe haven outside a country's borders. In addition, neighboring countries often have relatively fine-grained understandings of the domestic politics of surrounding states. Linguistic, ethnic and family ties, reciprocal travel and sustained focus on neighbors are not determinative in every case, but in most cases give neighbors a better understanding of politics than countries half a world away. In addition, the stakes of a transition are almost always higher for neighbors than they are for global powers, focusing the mind on accomplishing positive outcomes.

Neighbors are important both for how they align with U.S. interests and complicate them. Iraq and Afghanistan are recent examples where neighbors have often been unhelpful, confounding the U.S.-backed transitions by supporting insurgents and meddling in the broader political process. Even earlier, during Yemen's civil war in the 1960s, it was the clash between Egypt and Saudi Arabia that did much to define how Yemen would fit into the regional balance of power, far beyond U.S. decisions to support either side. The same has been true of Saudi involvement in Bahrain, albeit in a different way.

All of these things tell us something about transitions in general: That they take time to evolve, that the U.S. government often constrains its own role through internal divisions, and that neighboring states often play an outsized role influencing outcomes. Yet none of these principles tell us anything specific about Libya. And while we've talked about Libya's uniqueness, even that uniqueness offers comparisons to events in other countries. I want to offer three here.

First, compared to other successful oppositions, Libya's opposition is of relatively recent origin and was forged out of a relatively short battle. Compare this to the Solidarity movement in Poland, which built itself over 15 years before taking power, Khomeini's supporters in Iran, who built their movement over more than a decade, and Fidel Castro's movement in Cuba, which built on six years of guerrilla activity. Think even of the African National Congress in South Africa, which built itself up in one form or another for over 80 years during apartheid. These gestational periods allow groups to forge and develop ideologies, to create internal leadership structures, and to form constituencies. Of course, running a secret movement creates its own pathologies. But it also creates leaders with genuine legitimacy, at least to their followers, and helps train them to speak effectively with broader publics. Equally important, these movements represent opportunities to develop an organizational culture, and for individuals to build relationships and trust across responsibilities that help governments function better when they come to power.

The fact that so few of such opposition movements succeed is not to be lamented. Rather, movements' success suggests that they have survived a Darwinian competition for allegiances and therefore have some capacity to lead. One might think of a long struggle for independence as a way to develop immunity from the ills that afflict new governments.

Libya's opposition did not undergo this same process of building immunities, but it is put into an environment swarming with pathogens. The Transitional National Council's (TNC) ability to unite *against* a leader rather than *behind* a leader was one of its initial strengths in uniting diverse constituencies, but it presents a challenge in the post-Qadhafi milieu. Not only is the transitional government a broad coalition of groups, many of which are armed, but many also have different external sponsors. While the Contact Group process resulted in an international imprimatur for the TNC, it was not able to resolve differences within the body. In addition, many in the TNC's leadership came from senior positions in the Qadhafi regime, most notably Mustafa Abdel Jalil, who was formerly Libya's Minister of Justice and now the chairman of the TNC. Others were close to Qadhafi's modernizing son, Seif al-Islam, whom some Libyans saw representing the best chance for evolutionary change in the country. Having Libyans with internal political experience is not a bad thing. To the contrary, it holds out the promise of a more inclusive Libyan government at the end of the day. While a longer period of political struggle would offer more opportunities for former regime figures to gain bona fides as forces for change, short-circuiting this process will mean it will be a more contentious battle. This is not a recipe for failure, but it is a recipe for conflict, and there are few battle-tested political leaders to guide the resolution of those conflicts.

A second observation is that many insurgent political movements in other countries have had a deep nationalist core, and nationalism is an uncertain quality in Libya. The quintessential kind of nationalist movement is an anti-colonial struggle, and we've certainly seen that in the Middle East and beyond. Much of the same sentiment guided Eastern European political movements in the 1980s and 1990s, driven by a desire to reclaim national culture from the homogenizing effect of Soviet-inspired conformity. In Iran, in Cuba, and elsewhere, there was a deep sense that the leadership was obsessed with foreign approval and had somehow sought to undermine what was natural and good about the nation-state.

Yet, the Libyan nation-state, as we all know, is a colonial creation, the sticking together of three provinces under Italian rule in the 1930s. Libya did not win its independence through rebellion, but rather through the Italian loss of World War II. The United Nations handed independence to King Idriss in 1951. He ruled with a relatively light hand for eighteen years, before being pushed aside by Muammar al-Qadhafi who moved the capital from Benghazi to Tripoli and sought to destroy all remnants of the old order.

So what we have, rather than a deep historical memory, is a rather shallow nationalism that lionizes the anti-Italian rebel Omar al-Mukhtar, who died 80 years ago, and agrees on little else. Qadhafi so twisted the national identity in part by setting up Libya as a utopian and universalist model, and in part by playing Tripolitania off against Cyrenaica, that it is hard to understand what at all is left of the notion of Libyan-ness. Indeed, what seems to constitute most of Libyan national identity is having survived Qadhafi's leadership; how that essentially negative definition is replaced by something positive remains to be seen. Because there is so little past to rely on, a forward-looking nationalism may emerge to be more inclusive and optimistic than many other post-conflict situations, yet defining that nationalism will almost certainly be contentious as well.

Almost all of the foregoing suggests a difficult path ahead for the transitional government, and forces that argue for conflict if not dissolution of the state. A final factor worth keeping in mind about Libya is a unifying one. There is an awful lot of money in Libya, and a future stream of money that is likely to give huge advantages to whomever can control it. To give a sense of scale, the Qadhafi government had about \$70 billion in its sovereign wealth fund alone, some of which became the property of the TNC when it was recognized as the legitimate government of Libya. In addition, Libyan oil and gas production generates approximately \$37 billion in annual revenues to the state. The combination represents a huge resource base for the Libyan government, especially considering the fact that it need only be spread among some 6 million Libyan citizens.

This is not to say that oil will make it easier for Libya to be "successful," whatever that means and however one wishes to measure success in Libya. There is an extensive academic literature on the "resource curse," the short version of which is that countries that discover natural resources early in their political development not only rarely emerge as democracies, but they often remain quite poor. Time after time, a tiny

number of people monopolize the resource proceeds, with most left to eke out a living. The problem is more acute the larger the proportion of the overall economy the resource revenues represent. In places such as Indonesia, non-resource-driven economic activities, and the diversity of resource-driven economic activities, have both allowed for broader economic and political development. In the Congo, the results have been much poorer.

In the oil-rich Arab states, we have seen a relatively high degree of diffusion of resources, but a relatively low degree of political pluralism. The Kuwaiti parliament, whatever its many failings, has actively pushed for greater distribution of oil wealth to Kuwaiti nationals. In Saudi Arabia, the ruling family is supremely wealthy, but a formerly impoverished Bedouin population is now urbanized, educated, and relatively well nourished. Libya followed much of this pattern, although the outrageous inefficiencies of Qadhafi's state reduced the benefits individual Libyans realized from the country's petroleum wealth.

In each of these circumstances, oil wealth has given rulers the ability to co-opt and coerce potential rivals, making the benefits of allegiance and the costs of opposition extremely high. Not surprisingly, the overwhelming choice of the public has been allegiance—even in situations where conflict would otherwise seem likely.

An interesting case study in this regard is Iraq, another state the colonial powers wove together from three Ottoman provinces. Iraq had a forceful integrating leadership in the post-war era, despite the ethnic and tribal diversity of the country. Yet, more than a decade of virtual independence for the Kurdish north, combined with the fact that Kurds remain ethnically and linguistically distinct from Iraqi Arabs, did not lead to the Kurdish separatism that many anticipated after the fall of Saddam Hussein. Oil money plays some part of this, as do oil disputes in mixed areas such as Kirkuk. The bottom line, it seems, is that the cost of dissolving Iraq would be high for all sides, and it is preferable to work out even financial arrangements based on the country's abundant oil resources than rend the fabric of Iraqi life.

Oil, it seems to me, is a special kind of resource in a world of resource curses and the politics that flow from them. Oil is bulky and hard to move, and it requires significant infrastructure. Loading terminals often cost billions of dollars to construct, and pipelines, refineries and a host of other associated costs make this the sort of project that only a government can undertake. There may be some small-scale smuggling to be sure, especially when products are available domestically for less than global prices, but insurgent groups cannot develop an oil infrastructure, and multinational oil companies are loath to invest in such an infrastructure where risk is unacceptably high.

Compare this, though, to diamonds, a valuable commodity that is easily transported. There can be conflict diamonds in West Africa for precisely that reason, testing territorial integrity and stoking civil war for years on end. For the same reason, it is hard to imagine that there can be "conflict oil." With oil, the advantages lie wholly with the governments, not those who seek to undermine that government.

What is absent from all of this is a clear sense of what will happen in Libya, or any way that the United States can help force a predetermined outcome. Rather than being a problem, though, that strikes me as a reflection of reality. For more than a half-century, our archetypal post-war reconstructions were in Germany and Japan. Through American efforts, deeply fractured societies were made whole, armies were demobilized, and warlike spirits that had worried neighbors for decades was transformed into peaceful economic engine that continue to help drive the world economy. Yes, it required large numbers of occupation troops, yes, it required the abject surrender of the countries' leaderships, and yes, it required a top-level U.S. focus that lasted for years. But we forget all that.

It's become popular to blame the prolonged and messy post-war environments in Iraq and Afghanistan on the Bush Administration's missteps, and there certainly were many. Yet, the true blame rests on those who failed to anticipate the likelihood of such environments after U.S. military action. By creating high expectations for the rapidity and cleanness of the post-war environment, the administration set itself up for failure.

To my mind, the Obama Administration has avoided many of these traps in Libya, playing a constructive role in reconstruction but avoiding ownership of it. The administration has also been blessed by good luck, not least in the relatively peaceful fall of Tripoli.

With looming budget battles, an unfolding political campaign, and challenges throughout the Middle East, it will be difficult for the administration to put a sustained focus on Libya in 2012. That, it seems to me, is appropriate, as we have few vital interests at stake and only a limited amount of influence on the ground. But we have some influence, with which we should engage with Libyans, their neighbors and our allies to help build a post-Qadhafi environment that is both orderly and peaceful. Libyans have a chance to get this transition right, and the United States has an opportunity to help, but we won't be able to judge that effort for another decade. It is an uphill road but not an impossible one, and one for which Libyans, and not Americans, will decide the outcome.

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# The Illusion of Revolution and Counter-Revolution in the Arab World

by David B. Ottaway, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

November 9, 2011\*

These are truly tumultuous times in the Middle East. Over the course of 2011, four long-ruling Arab leaders were driven from power by popular uprisings in the name of democracy—Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali of Tunisia, Muammar al-Qadhafi of Libya and Ali Abdullah Saleh of Yemen. A fifth, Bashar al-Asad of Syria, is fighting for his political life in early 2012. Such an extensive turnover in Arab leadership in just one year has never happened before, and analysts at first took to comparing these “revolutions” in their historic significance to the fall of the Berlin Wall ending the Cold War and the revolts that shook European monarchies back in 1848. Most significant about the turbulence in the Arab world, perhaps, was its concentration in the supposedly progressive Arab “republics” rather than the presumably regressive Arab “monarchies.”

How times have changed. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, it was the monarchs which fell one after the other starting with the assassination of King Abdullah of Jordan in 1951, whose shaky monarchy just managed to survive. King Farouk of Egypt was less lucky. He was overthrown the following year together with the Egyptian monarchy, which was quickly replaced by a socialist republic. In 1958, it was the turn of King Faisal and the Hashemite monarchy in Iraq to join the dustbin of history. Then, in 1962, Imam Badr in Yemen was swept from power in a civil war that gave birth to another Arab republic. The same year, Algeria after eight years of war against the French colonial power became independent and gave birth to yet another republic, as well as a socialist revolution. Finally, the fall of the Shah in Iran in 1979 led to predictions that the end was in sight for the six Arab monarchies on the western side of the Persian Gulf, led by the oil colossus Saudi Arabia.

More than 30 years later, however, all eight of the Arab world’s monarchies, including Jordan and Morocco, are still stand, while its eleven republics are scrambling to reinvent themselves.

It has become fashionable among pro-democracy activists in the Arab world to define what has happened in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Yemen as “revolutions” and to brand the kings and emirs opposed to democracy, or even constitutional monarchy, as “counter-revolutionary.” The problem with these highly emotive terms is that they obscure analysis of what is taking place by conflating a single event—the fall of an unpopular dictator—with what is almost always a long-drawn-out process such as occurred in the French, British and Russian revolutions. Moreover, the term has become so widely used in the Arab world, even to include military coups, that it has become almost meaningless.

More worrisome is the Arab assumption that a “revolution” has already occurred in these republics, raising great expectations for enormous changes that have not taken place—and may never happen. Already the term has created frustration and disillusionment among those who sparked the uprisings; it has also led to widespread strikes and marches for demands like jobs, higher wages, bonuses and fringe benefits that cannot possibly be met. Already, too, Egyptian secular activists are complaining their revolution has been

\* *This is an updated version of Dr. Ottaway’s November 2011 presentation, submitted May 2012.*

“stolen” or “betrayed” either by the military, which refuses to yield office, or Islamists, who rode their protests in Tahrir Square to power in post-Mubarak elections. The same disillusionment has set in among Tunisian secular parties and pro-democracy activists over the same phenomenon of better-organized Islamists trouncing them at the polls.

The widespread use of the term “revolution” can be traced partly to the so-called “color revolutions” that took place in Eastern European countries in the wake of the Soviet Union’s demise after 1991. Many leaders of the Egyptian uprising had studied the tactics used there to bring about the removal of unpopular leaders, thanks in many cases to training courses offered by U.S. democracy promotion groups like Freedom House, the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute. Democracy activists I interviewed in Cairo in January 2010—a year before the uprising there—were very familiar with the youth-led Otpor Movement in Serbia that had produced the “Bulldozer Revolution” that brought down Slobodan Milosevic in 1997. They were also well aware of Georgia’s “Rose Revolution” in 2003 and Ukraine’s “Orange Revolution” in 2004.

I discovered during a visit to the Sudan in October 2011 that Ukraine was serving as an inspiration to the pro-democracy youth movement there called “*Girifna*,” meaning “Fed Up.” Its leaders had chosen to print their pamphlets calling for protests against the military regime in orange in imitation of Ukraine’s Orange Revolution.

What Arab pro-democracy activists have forgotten, or chosen to overlook, is that these Eastern European revolutions took place in a totally different context and at the end of a unique set of circumstances, not at the start. They had occurred after the Soviet Union’s collapse that in itself had produced huge changes in the existing communist ruling elite, system of governance, Marxism-Leninist ideology and socialist economic system. Moreover, the first color revolution, that in Serbia, took place eight years after the Soviet Union’s collapse and was the culmination of political, economic and social changes flowing from that, as well as from the breakup of Yugoslavia.

I would propose looking elsewhere for precedents and comparisons to the current-day political upheavals, namely contemporary Arab history. Arab pro-democracy activists prefer not to recall the history of earlier uprisings that were also labeled “revolutions,” only one of which arguably deserved the name, Egypt. This lapse of memory stems from the fact that those who most often led them, namely the military, and also because of the outcome—dictatorship by officers or highly authoritarian single parties.

The first civilian uprising against military dictatorship in the Arab world took place 48 years ago in the Sudan. Protracted street protests by students, lawyers and workers forced General Ibrahim Abboud from power in October 1964. Hence the event has gone down in Sudanese history as the “October Revolution.” Interestingly, it was carried off long before cell phones, the internet, Facebook and Twitter came into existence, and while word of mouth was still the primary means of communication.

The outcome is worth reflecting upon since it could happen again in countries currently facing popular uprisings. After General Abboud was ousted, Sudan went through a very unstable period under civilian government, ending after five years, in May 1969, in a military coup led by General Jaafar Nimeri. This was the Sudan’s “May Revolution.”

Nimeri ruled until April 1985 when, once again, a wave of street protests, strikes and general chaos engulfing the capital, Khartoum, motivated another general, Suwar Dahan, to depose Nimeri while he was on a visit to Washington. This time, civilian rule lasted just four years until Colonel Omar al-Bashir seized power in 1989. Al-Bashir remains in power today.

What we see in Sudan’s troubled history since its independence from British rule in 1956 is one possible outcome of the upheaval underway in the Arab republics—popular uprisings that topple military rulers who then return to power after a period of unstable civilian governance. Most extraordinary in the Sudanese case is that some of principal civilian leaders who failed and brought back the military over the past four decades—men like Sadiq al-Mahdi and Hassan Turabi—are still active and are once again plotting a return to power.

It seems highly questionable these failed civilian uprisings and military coups are deserving of the term “revolution,” particularly in a country whose history is soaked in the blood of prolonged civil war that ended in the secession of South Sudan in July 2011.

A second kind of “revolution” took place in the Arab world back in the 1960s. This was led by the Arab Socialist Baath Party and presented itself as another form of Arab nationalism and socialism to that trumpeted by the charismatic Egyptian leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser. One of its theoreticians and leaders was a Syrian Greek Orthodox Christian, Michael Aflaq. The Baathists infiltrated the military and took power through coups in Syria in 1963 and in Iraq first in 1963 and then later in 1968.

Baath Party rule did usher in substantial changes in the existing political, social and economic order in those two countries, but ended in single party-cum-military autocratic regimes. Probably the most “revolutionary” step taken in either country was the Syrian Baath decision to form a single union with Egypt in 1958 in a bid to fulfill its chief goal of uniting all Arab countries in one nation. The union proved a disaster, and the United Arab Republic was summarily dissolved in 1961.

Egypt stands out as the exception. It was the first and only Arab country to birth a revolution worthy of the name in its depth and breath—Nasser’s “July Revolution” of 1952. Nasser upended the old order dramatically. He exiled King Farouk to France and scraped the monarchy. A new military elite replaced Egypt’s old landed aristocracy. Egypt’s multi-party system was replaced by a single party that brought workers and peasants into parliament to replace landlords and business tycoons. Nasser also transformed Egypt’s economy, nationalizing big land holdings and private enterprises, and created a massive state-run economy in the name of Arab socialism. He changed the whole political, economic and social landscape of Egypt. Whether one applauds or abhors what he did, Nasser forced through changes that amounted to a real revolution.

Egyptian pro-democracy activists cringe at the notion of awarding Nasser’s undertaking the title of a “revolution.” This is because it was led by military men who turned out to be profoundly anti-democratic and crushed freedom of speech, thought and assembly, theoretically in the name of the collective Egyptian masses. Today, these activists look upon the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) that took over after President Mubarak resigned in February 2011, as their nemesis, out to maintain the old order. In their minds, the SCAF is “counter-revolutionary.”

With these examples of Arab “revolutions” in mind, we are probably wiser to suspend judgment as to what precisely is taking place in Egypt today. Secularist activists relished calling their uprising the “January 25 Revolution”—named after the date of the first massive protest calling for Mubarak’s departure. With each passing day, however, these same activists have increasingly questioned the appropriateness of the term, as first the SCAF maneuvered to prolong its stay in power and then the Muslim Brotherhood exploited the situation to become the leading political force in the land.

As of the time of this writing, it was not possible to determine whether even the minimum attribute of a true revolution—a change in the ruling elite—was taking place. Certainly the parliament itself had undergone a major transformation: Mubarak’s long-dominant National Democratic Party had been swept aside and the Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party, after winning 47 percent of the vote, had taken control. The Brotherhood was also seeking to consolidate its claim to constituting Egypt’s new ruling elite by winning the presidential sweepstakes in May.

Still, it was far from clear the Brotherhood would succeed. The contending political forces, old and new, were still wrangling over a new constitution spelling out the respective powers of parliament and the presidency. The residual powers of the SCAF, which pledged to resign from politics at the end of June, remained to be tested. Civilian secularists from the old order were also waging a fierce battle to remain a political force. The courts, dominated by judges appointed by Mubarak, were curbing the unfettered rise to power of the Islamists. The Brotherhood was still far from fulfilling its pretension of being Egypt’s new ruling elite.

There were no signs, either, of any substantial change in either Egypt’s economic or social policies. The Brotherhood’s economists seemed as committed to free enterprise as the previous Mubarak regime. A



serious economic crisis made radical changes unlikely. At the same time, Brotherhood leaders were holding the line against more radical Salafi demands that the sharia, Islamic law, be applied to the letter. In any case, the old constitution had already declared the sharia as *the* main source of legislation, a formulation that seemed likely to remain in place. Over all, Egypt seemed likely to remain more or less as “Islamic” as it had been under Mubarak.

The extent of change resulting from Tunisia’s “December 17 Revolution” was just as blurry. (December 17, 2010 was the day Mohammed Bouazizi, a hapless street vendor in the town of Sidi Bouzid, set himself afire, thereby igniting as well a national uprising.) The Islamic Ennahda Party, long excluded from politics, had won a 37 percent plurality of votes in the October 2011 elections, not enough to dominate either the government or, with only 89 out of 217 seats, the Constituent Assembly elected to write a new constitution.

The new prime minister, Hamadi Jebali, was indeed a top Ennahda official. But the Islamists had been obliged to share power in government with two militantly secularist parties, whose respective leaders were serving as president of the country as well as of the constituent assembly. Only after parliamentary elections for a five-year term in the spring of 2013 might it be possible to assess whether a new Islamic elite was ruling Tunisia. In any case, Ennahda, like Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood, had declared itself dedicated to free enterprise and to no change in the old description of Tunisia as simply an Arab and Muslim nation.

The term “counter-revolution” was just as misleading as an analytic framework for understanding change underway in the Arab monarchies, except perhaps for Saudi Arabia. Most of the monarchies were implementing reforms, though at vastly different speeds and depths. King Mohammed VI of Morocco moved the fastest and farthest, promulgating a new constitution, which was approved overwhelmingly in a July 2011 referendum. Among other reforms, the document commits the king to choose the country’s prime minister from the winning party at each parliamentary elections. Thus it is that Abdelillah Benkirane—secretary-general of the Justice and Development Party—became Morocco’s first Islamic prime minister as a result of elections in November 2011.

The slowest reformer among the monarchies is doubtlessly Saudi Arabia, often described as the heart of the counter-revolution to any democratic transformation in the Arab world. It took in the fleeing Tunisian leader, Ben Ali, and stood up for Mubarak long after the Obama administration had told him to leave. The Saudi government reacted to the Arab Spring by earmarking \$130 billion for wage hikes, bonuses, unemployment benefits and new housing to dampen reform demands, even while putting down all signs of political protest. King Abdullah did decree one notable political reform, however, namely to allow women to vote and run in municipal elections scheduled for 2015. He also said women would now be appointed to the National Consultative Council.

The Saudis have also run to the rescue of other besieged Arab monarchies. In March 2011, it sent National Guard troops to Bahrain to help the minority Sunni Al-Khalifa monarch suppress protests by the Shiite majority. It promised \$1 billion a year for ten years in financial aid to both Bahrain and the Oman sultanate, and proposed that both Jordan and Morocco be taken into the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), currently composed of the six Arab Gulf monarchies.

When it comes to its policy toward the Arab republics, however, Saudi Arabia has been anything but counter-revolutionary. It promoted and supported the NATO campaign to overthrow Qadhafi in Libya and led efforts undertaken by the GCC to remove Ali Saleh from power in neighboring Yemen. More surprisingly, it has been at the forefront of Arab efforts to see an end to Al-Asad’s minority Alawite regime in Syria, calling openly for the arming of the opposition Free Syrian Army. Though suspicious of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, the Saudis offered the post-Mubarak government \$4 billion in financial aid and investment, handing over \$500 million immediately, to help stabilize the economy.

Arguably the most remarkable switch in Saudi foreign policy has been toward Syria. From seeking accommodation with Al-Asad, the Saudis have turned to focusing on his downfall. Their motive has nothing to do with promoting democracy, however, but to bringing to power a Sunni majority government that it hopes will end Syria’s alliance with their arch enemy, the Shiite Islamic Republic of Iran.

In its reactions to the the Arab Spring, Saudi Arabia has more often than not been guided by hard-nosed realpolitik. Its chief objectives have been countering Iran, maintaining its influence with the new Arab democracies and pushing for a commanding role in the emerging new Arab order.

If “revolution” and “counter-revolution” are dangerously misleading terms, then how should we think about events taking place in the Arab world today? Secretary of State Hillary Clinton coined the term “democratic awakening.” Another oft-heard description by Arab academics is “the Arab Awakening.” One Saudi analyst has come up with the term “people’s coup” as opposed to a “military coup” to describe the overthrow of these dictators. Certainly we can agree there have been unprecedented “popular uprisings” or “popular revolts”—what the Arabs in the Palestinian-Israeli context call *intifadas*.

Will these uprisings ever morph into genuine revolutions? Perhaps, but it is too early to predict their outcomes—even to label them more modestly as “political revolutions.” No doubt Islamists becoming part of the political system after decades of persecution and exile constitutes a major change both in their status and influence in the politics of Tunisia, Egypt and Morocco. They are at least joining, if not displacing, the existing ruling elite.

But Islamists are far from fashioning a new system of Islamic governance and will remain constrained from doing so by various opposing forces—the King in Morocco, secularists in Tunisia and the military, courts, Christian Copts and liberals in Egypt. They are not about to establish an “Islamic state” or restore the caliphate, as the Salafis dream of doing.

Finally, the argument over terminology raises another issue: will Arab secularists—women in the first place—accept that uprisings that lead to Islamists coming to power and restoring, or emphasizing, conservative Muslim values qualify as “revolutions.” There is one precedent—the Shiite Iranian Revolution of 1979. Whether we are witnessing Sunni revolutions in the making will have to await the judgment of history.

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# Blood in the Streets of Syria and the Region: A Future in Conflict

by Thomas A. Dine, Search for Common Ground

December 13, 2011

The Arab uprising that began in Tunisia over a year ago arrived in Syria on March 18, 2011, when Syrian security forces lit the flame of discontent, using live bullets on its own citizens in the modest Sunni tribal area of Deraa, located on the Jordanian border. A group of school children had scrawled on a wall, “The people want the fall of the regime,” a slogan seen widely in Cairo’s Tahrir Square, an anti-regime protest. They were jailed and tortured. Since that time, the regime’s theme has become internal violence and cruelty, and analyzing that violence and cruelty and where the conflict is headed is theme of the discussion herein.

Syrian society is deeply, indeed dangerously, divided for and against the ruling family, among religious and tribal sects within Syria and among its bordering neighbors. Lethal force and chaos increase on a steady basis, sometimes daily. In December of 2011, the United Nations High Commission on Human Rights claimed more than 5,000 Syrian civilians killed since protests got underway in March. This is going to lead to a UN General Assembly resolution against the killings.<sup>[1]</sup>

I have been involved in conflict resolution situations for much of my career—mediating between Muslims and Christians in Mindanao, Philippines, part of U.S. diplomacy with India and Pakistan over Kashmir, engaged in Bangladesh’s break from Pakistan and independence in 1971, the use of foreign aid to help stop genocide and begin the healing process in Bosnia, the flow of accurate, timely reporting during the two Russian wars against its vassal state Chechnya, the Israel-Palestine conflict. The latest is non-governmental interchanges and efforts at improving U.S.-Syrian relations, building bridges between prominent Americans and Syrians for the past three and a half years. In this process, I have been to Syria nine times, the last time three days after the Friday killings began in Deraa the third week of March 2011, and have arranged for Syrian interlocutors coming to Washington, Houston, and Los Angeles twice.

My scars show that Track II reconciliation is not an easy exercise. At best, it only works for a short period until governments decide to relinquish resentments, recognize each other’s vulnerabilities, swallow national pride, and agree to pursue a common agenda. In Track II diplomacy, one must listen and listen and listen some more, recognize each other’s common humanity, and build personal trust so that pragmatism takes over the process. In listening and encouraging and engaging in open, frank, and equal dialog among all the individuals at the table and walks in Damascus’s narrow back alleys, as I did with Dr. Samir Altaqi and others, one learns a great deal. For me, it was about Syrian fears and perspectives, as well as the narrow-mindedness and limitations of a repressive regime. That is why I am horrified at the cold bloodedness of Bashar al-Asad’s rule, but I am not surprised.

In this regard, I like many, was hopeful that the son would be different than the father, that Bashar was a reformer determined to bring economic and technological modernity to his country and would encourage a new cooperation between the government and the governed, indeed political pluralism. But alas, the apple does not far from the tree, and the same brutal, violent tactics as the father are the reality of the day.

<sup>[1]</sup> Eds. Note: On 19 December 2011, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 66/176 condemning “the continued grave and systematic human rights violations by Syrian authorities.” Additionally, in April 2012 the UN Security Council adopted resolutions 2042 and 2043 “condemning the widespread violations of human rights by the Syrian authorities, as well as any human rights abuses by armed groups.”

The five most commonly asked questions I am asked about the current crisis inside Syria are:

1. When will Bashar and his family depart from power?
2. Isn't Syria already in a civil war?
3. Because of sectarian tensions, will bloodshed continue in the streets of Syria even if the regime falls? Concomitantly, can reconciliation be achieved after the widespread use of torture, the volume of blood of children and innocent civilians has spilled, and the flagrant violations of human rights?
4. Can democratic values and governance, with a multi-party system, the rule of law, and the protection of individuals, replace many years of repressive rule?
5. What will Syria and the region look like in 2013?

Obviously regarding question number one—when will the Asads give up?—has been asked since February 2011, when Mubarak fell from grace and in the third week of March when the shootings of civilians commenced in southern Syria.

Since my visit to Damascus in March 2011, I have tracked six indicators that take these five questions into account, offering some insight into a murky, indeed blood-filled, environment:

**1. Crowd size.** Owing to the size of the crowds in Tahrir Square in Cairo, also in Tunisia, Libya, and Yemen and their effect on regime changes, estimating the size of mass demonstrations in Syria's cities to be extraordinarily large would be a primary criteria to judge Bashar al-Asad's unpopularity and his final exit, dead or alive. The size of the crowd is not, however, as important as is the relatively pacific confrontation between civilians and regime. In this situation, with direct physical threat and brutal torture and the death toll, it is the number of places and specific area of civil disobedience that are more significant as an indicator.

-In Damascus and Aleppo, protests have been almost nil, apart from those at universities. The merchants of these top municipalities have accumulated wealth from the regime's policies, which has made individuals less likely to go to the streets. Additionally there are large numbers of security forces present in those crowded cities to prevent any mass gatherings from the moment any sign of the protest begin.

-Homs, with its mixed Christian, Alawite, Sunni, and Shiite populations, is the heartland of both peaceful protests as well as spiraling sectarian violence

-Hama has a large Sunni majority and much of its population remembers the experience of the heavy hand of Hafez al-Asad's brutality 29 years ago. Even before the violence and chaos, the son was not looked upon favorably.

-In the port city of Latakia and other medium size towns, there have been consistent stirrings and protests. These are often organized in response to events in other parts of the country, as these peaceful protesters are eager to show solidarity with their fellow Syrians across the country against regime violence.

-The crowds, practicing non-violence for the most part, have daily shown the bravery and determination of great numbers of urban youth. There is a large and growing opposition to Bashar's rule and the regime has consistently denied many parts of Syrian society equal political footing. On the ground, however, a united opposition has been elusive. It is fragmented. Yes, there are local citizen committees, traditional secular oppositional figures, the Muslim Brotherhood, and groups and individuals in the diaspora, but these groups lack coordination and are without a plan on which to proceed, thus reactive, are moving forward at a snail's pace after a half century in which they were suppressed, largely inactive and lacking legitimacy.

-While a serious threat to the regime exists, the crowds have not been of overwhelming or sufficient size

as in Cairo that made it clear to the Egyptian military to tell Mubarak that it was time to fold, hand in his cards, and leave the stage. As I said, the real issue is not crowd size, but rather widespread civil disobedience and sustained protests. The Asad family will not be finished until very large and sustainable uprisings occur in the centers of Damascus and Aleppo—and a national opposition is united sufficiently and can lead in seizing the day and the country's future.

**2. The military.** The second indicator, also based on the Egyptian model, is the role, particularly the loyalty, of Syria's military. But let's keep in mind that each situation, across the Maghreb and on the Arab peninsula and up and down the Gulf's littoral, is different. In Egypt, the military had enough political clout to call the shots and force Mubarak out of office. In Syria, the Army, while of good size and importance in society, does not have comparable power. Further, the Army is held in check, indeed has been undermined, in Bashar's time, by the fact that of the 1,200-man officer corps, 1,000 are Alawites, by the special security services that "The Family" and their closest Alawite loyalists also control. The threat of military mutiny has been, and will seemingly stay, minimal. The real power rests in the hands of those with weapons held by the Republican Guard wing of the Army, manned mainly by Alawites and commanded by Maher al-Asad, Bashar's youngest brother, the Special Security Forces headed by cousin Hafez Makhlof—the brother of billionaire Rami Makhouf—and the death squads (*shabbihas* or ghosts).

Those in Army uniform that have fled, forming the Free Syrian Army in late July 2011, are for the most part stationed in Syria's mountains like Al-Zaouin Mountain and the others are inside Turkey. They are manned by lower ranked officers and non-officers. Defectors are a relatively small number, although reports are trickling in of armed groups on the rise in Syria and coming out of protected areas in Turkey. With the surprising tough anti-Bashar line being taken by the Arab League for the President to stop killing civilians, it is assumed that this is a signal to the armed forces to defect and turn the crisis into an armed struggle. In this regard, the regime's two biggest nightmares are that a Benghazi scenario will come to pass—either a breakaway army able to establish a foothold along the Turkish-Iraqi border region, and/or mass killings start in Aleppo, Syria's most populous city, and it becoming Syria's Benghazi. The point here is that, overall, the real power of the regime lies with the several security forces, not the Army which has been kept in their barracks unless ordered to put down a protest with tanks and guns and then quickly return.

**3. Ruling coalition.** Indicator three is the strength of Bashar's political coalition, comprised of Alawite officers, Sunni elites that run the Damascus and Aleppo business communities, what is left of Baathist Party heads, leaders of minorities, diverse as they are—Alawites, Christians, Druse, Ismaelis, and Kurds. They feed from the regime's trough of oppression and economic favoritism, and they fear sectarian strife under conservative Sunni rule. So far the coalition's glue is holding.

**4. State of the economy.** Fourth is the degree and depth of the economy's deterioration, crippled by months of political unrest. As a variety of media reports, ongoing World Bank analyses, and anecdotal sources report, Syria's economy is no longer standing still, but slipping downhill. More and more are living hand-to-mouth. The devaluation of the Syrian pound by 15-20 percent per month proves that there are limitations to the capability of the regime to prevent the crisis by subsidies. A five-year drought was already playing havoc in the important agricultural sector, now there are riots and political chaos in the rural regions. Short- and long-term U.S. and EU sanctions are squeezing banks, exports, and foreign investments; foreign money transfers are stopped; oil and gas production by foreign companies has come to a halt due to the embargo; the purchases on the open market of arms is an international "no-no;" there is now a ban on travel abroad of designated individuals, including Bashar himself; commercial air travel in and out of the country is constricted; and the biggest hard currency earner, tourism, has dropped to almost nil. Hyper-inflation looms large. One of Syria's former allies and trading partners, Turkey, has halted economic cooperation such as trucking and imposed bruising sanctions.

Funds and technical services, however, are coming in from the Iranians, the Syrian pound is now backed by Russian rubles, and the Iraqis have assured an economic cross-border fluidity that, so far, keeps the Syrian ship from sinking.

It is a fact that the longer the protests go on, the weaker the economy becomes, a matter that concerns

leading businessmen. In sum, the private sector, which accounts for 65 percent of GDP, is near standstill.

**5. Information control.** My fifth criterion is the media. Bashar and his message advisor, Buthaina Shaaban, at the beginning of the uprising won the media game, not by trying to make the people believe the regime's story, but by seeding suspicions in the opposition's stories. They used standard state-run print and electronic information centers. This old-think has lost credibility.

Demonstrators are now gradually mastering the techniques of communication. Internal social media (emails, texting, still shots, videos recorded on cell phones and small cameras that are then uploaded to YouTube, Skype), Pan-Arab satellite television stations (Alhurra, Al-Arabya, and Al-Jazeera) and other alternatives (TV and radio broadcasts from Lebanon and Turkey) are overcoming regime restrictions on independent reporting and channeling accurate and useful information to the population. The regime has faced the street protesters with both violence and an information black out that includes threatening, even bribing, the clergy and other religious leaders so that the religious message coming from all sects is the regime's message about armed gangs and international interference. The official media is weak, it lacks credibility, and it lacks any star figure to convince and calm the public, but it has not been superseded.

**6. Syria's First Lady.** My sixth and final indicator of regime instability is the activities of the one who Vogue magazine heralded "The Rose of the Desert," Mrs. Asma al-Asad, the President's wife. Is she sticking with an "at-all-cost" policy? What are the chances of her abandoning her husband? What is she planning?

-From inside information, I am aware that she feels isolated, is distraught, and worried about her children, exhausted from swimming among sharks in the Palace.

-Her father, Fawaz Akhras, remains in London and has desperately tried to distance his family from the Asad regime.

-No one has, so far, discovered any evidence of a secret purchase of a faraway villa, for instance, along Mexico's Pacific coastline, in French wine country, or in and around Yalta.

-There is no evidence of visits to Swiss banks to withdraw the family fortune—so far.

-I project that Asma al-Asad faces a big dilemma—what to do as the current crisis gets worse, where to flee with the children, where to go with the International Criminal Court system's global reach, with the Syrian opposition hounding you, particularly furious families of the street-dead and those tortured, free to hunt down Bashar and family members anywhere in the world?

So what is the condition of the Syrian uprising at this point? Can the regime hold on to the political status quo by administering huge doses of violence and torture on a daily basis, stopping a spring from happening? Can oppositional forces stick to non-violence in the streets or will violence beget violence? How will Syrian society continue to erode?

Of my almost five decades of involvement in public policy, I have never seen a government behave so badly and take all the wrong steps in trying to prevent and then handle a crisis as has Al-Asad and his small group of loyal advisers. Even before the bloodshed of March 18, 2011, Bashar al-Asad's 11-year tenure had been marked by promises of reform that were never pursued or kept. Now the regime is engulfed in state-sponsored bloodshed and tragic undertakings, including massive human rights violations, policy mistakes, ineffective talking points that the disorder and bloodshed stem from foreign plots, armed thugs, religious terrorists such as domestic militant Muslim Brothers, Saudi-funded Salafis, and those sympathetic to al-Qaeda, masking over official responsibility for the violence by the Army and Special Forces and torture militias.

The ultimate in political theater occurred in Barbara Walters' December 7, 2011 interview of Al-Asad when he defiantly denied ordering or being responsible for the national crackdown, saying "We don't kill our people. No government in the world kills its people, unless it's led by a crazy person." Al-Asad, knowing he

and his group cannot last without killing, has become the agent of instability and destruction in Syria and causing great anxiety in the region.

Bashar, a trained ophthalmologist, with an 18-month internship in London, was, reportedly, a mild-mannered chap that did not seek power during his early manhood. What happened? Did he live in a protective cocoon or did his mother particularly encourage his use of violence. Is this part of the reason for him acting like “a crazy person?” Experts I know believe he has a bipolar personality.

In Bashar's first five years in office, he allowed or encouraged corruption by the oligarchic few, Rami Makhlouf and others, to become dominate. He learned that the government is “The Family Business” and, like Michael Corelleone, he got sucked into the wrong role. For sure now, he is pursuing a policy that will keep him, and his kin in power He is the one attending to details of those that threaten him and is ordering violence be done to such individuals. He is the one calling the shots.

The Al-Asad Era is over. As the situation worsens, some Alawites are seeing him not as a man of solutions, and it is my belief that if he tries to leave, let's say at the last minute, there is a high probability that top Alawites will kill him. Humpty-Dumpty may still be in his heavily guarded administrative fortress high above crowded Damascus thinking delusional thoughts, but his reputation and credibility cannot be put back together again. The political future for Syria is violence and chaos, with Bashar al-Asad responsible.

In Syria, a weak but hopeful spring is now facing the glum of winter. The crisis is at a point of no return, facing three scenarios:

1. The regime continues using the security solution, including more and more open, ad hoc shootings and death squads (*shabbiha*), and physically and psychologically beats back unarmed and armed oppositional forces. The regime prevails. But the regime will find itself staying on a constant state of alert for the rest of its existence a la North Korea. Iran and Hezbollah would be winners. The only foreign intervention I can foresee is Turkey spreading its territory into that of Syria so the Free Syrian Army has a safe haven from which to make incursions and fight.
2. Scenario two is that public discontent on all sides of the conflict creates sufficient cracks in the regime and in the Alawite community that then leads to a peaceful transfer of power. This means Turkey and the Arab League guarantee that the regime accepts and agrees to a multi-party democratic transformation over a specified timeline.
3. The country goes into a full-fledged civil war that could last through 2012. This is the bloodiest scenario. As I indicated earlier, the longer the current course goes on and on, the more likely this scenario becomes. A coordinated combination of Turkey, the Arab League, the EU, and the U.S. would then be faced with the unenviable task of finding ways to achieve a truce, sponsor and conduct mediation talks, change the regime, and pursue reconciliation processes.

As has been true in all the Arab revolts this year, the Syrian uprising is the peoples' doing, a response to decades of injustice and indignities forced upon the people by their corrupt and cruel leaders. These unknowns in streets and squares have arisen to offset traditional fears, weaknesses and inactions. In early December of 2011 a Syrian journalist used the words of a legendary Syrian poet to describe this desire to change from passivity to activism. I paraphrase what my friend wrote: We stand tall like telephone poles staring blankly into the skies like idiots. Technological and public policy changes pass above the heads of the telephone poles, tectonic plates move beneath us and yet we feel nothing. We know nothing. We remember nothing. We keep asking God to stay with us. And I add my words: change and freedom, however, must come if Syria is to have a positive future.

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# Ankara Moves Closer to Washington: How the Arab Spring Warmed U.S.-Turkish Relations

by Soner Çağaptay, Washington Institute for Near East Policy

January 12, 2012\*

U.S.-Turkish relations entered into a tumultuous period with the Iraq War in 2003. This difficult phase in bilateral ties appears to have ended with the beginning of the Arab Spring.

Until recently, disagreements on a number of issues—such as how to deal with Iran's nuclearization—undermined Washington's historical bond with Ankara.

Today, however, the United States and Turkey are closely cooperating, with President Barack Obama and Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan having formed what is probably the strongest relationship between a U.S. president and a Turkish prime minister in decades. The shifting political winds across the Middle East are also bringing Turkey and the United States closer than they have been since their falling-out in 2003 over the Iraq war.

## Washington Opens a Direct Line with Ankara

President Obama and Prime Minister Erdogan have developed a close relationship and this personal rapport is the foundation of the new U.S.-Turkish relationship. Until last year, Turkey's relationship with Washington was wavering: Ankara's Iran policy was oscillating, which often challenged Washington's efforts to impose internationally backed sanctions on Tehran.

In June 2010, for example, Turkey voted at the UN Security Council against a proposal for U.S.-imposed sanctions. For about two months, it looked as though this vote would sever U.S.-Turkish ties. But the straightforward conversation President Obama had with Prime Minister Erdogan on the sidelines of the Group of 20 summit in Toronto in July 2010 prevented that scenario.

The U.S. President chose to simply tell the Turkish prime minister how upsetting Turkey's UN vote had been to Washington. Such candor helped clear the air between the two. And Turkey's policy soon changed: Ankara stopped defending Tehran and began working more closely with Washington.

Since then, the relationship has been on the upswing. The two leaders speak often—at least a dozen times in 2011 alone—and frequently agree on policy. Turkey's statements in support of the Arab Spring led President Obama to appreciate Turkey, a Muslim NATO member that uniquely satisfies Washington's quest to find powerful allies that have a majority-Muslim population and are happy to work with the United States.

\* *Dr. Çağaptay's paper first appeared in MES Insights Volume 3 Issue 1, January 2012.*



## **Ankara Reconsiders its Middle East Policy after the Arab Spring**

Whereas the personal relationship between President Obama and Prime Minister Erdogan helped prepare the hypothetical groundwork for rebuilding U.S.-Turkish ties, the Arab Spring has unexpectedly made this a reality by aligning U.S. and Turkish interests in the Middle East.

In 2002, when Turkey's newly elected Justice and Development Party (AKP), led by Mr. Erdogan, began a policy of rapprochement with the country's Middle Eastern neighbors, including Syria, the hope was that this would start integration between Turkey and its neighbors, creating something similar to the 1950s "Benelux" bloc of Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. Ankara also hoped to benefit from this process by building soft power across the Muslim Middle East, in hope of rising up as a regional leader.

Until the Arab Spring, this policy seemed to be largely inconclusive because of the hard reality on the ground: Turkey's counterparts in rapprochement were not its neighboring peoples, but rather their undemocratic regimes.

Syria is a case in point: whereas Ankara hoped to reach out to the Syrian people, the Bashar al-Asad regime took advantage of its close ties with Turkey, a member of NATO, to gain legitimacy while oppressing its people.

The Arab Spring has ended the political mirage. Even though Ankara repeatedly asked President Al-Asad to stop killing civilians, he chose to ignore these calls—demonstrating that there was never true rapprochement between Turkey and Syria, and that Ankara had been unsuccessful in establishing effective soft power over Damascus.

Subsequently, Ankara has slammed Al-Asad, emerging instead as the chief regional opponent of his policies. This is Ankara's new policy toward the Arab Middle East: leading the world in dropping dictators in favor of the pro-democracy movements, from Egypt to Libya to Syria.

After Ankara concluded that dictators such as Libya's Muammar al-Qadhafi and Syria's Al-Asad would fall—sooner or later—once they are challenged by the masses, Washington and Ankara began coordinating their policies on the Arab Spring.

Cooperation has been especially deep toward Syria. Turkey has emerged as the region's key opponent of the Al-Asad regime's crackdown on demonstrators, which also is approved by Washington, which hopes for a "soft landing" in Syria—an end to Al-Asad's rule without the country descending into chaos. Washington appreciates that Ankara is willing to bear the burden of policy toward Syria, from imposing sanctions against Al-Asad to supporting the opposition, following a strategy led by Turkish Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoglu.

## **While Iran Drives Turkey Closer to Washington**

The upswing in U.S.-Turkish ties is likely to last also because of increasing tensions between Ankara and Tehran.

In 2002, when Mr. Erdogan took office, Ankara decided to warm up its ties with Tehran. Then, with the start of the Iraq War in 2003, Turkey and Iran became, in a sense, friends. Alarmed by the U.S. military presence to its east in Afghanistan and to its west in Iraq, Tehran concluded that it needed to win its neighbor Turkey to break the grip of the U.S.-led ring of isolation forming around it. Iranian support for the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) ended the day U.S. troops started landing in Iraq.

Eight years later, Tehran is re-evaluating its strategic environment. With U.S. troops leaving Iraq and Iran gaining more influence there, Tehran feels that it can act differently towards Turkey.

What is more, Turkey's return as a major player in the Middle East has stirred competition with the region's other country seeking hegemony, Iran. A soft rivalry started between the two countries when they supported opposing factions in Iraq's 2010 elections. This struggle has given way to outright competition over Syria, with Tehran supporting and funding the Al-Asad regime and Ankara supporting and hosting members of the opposition.

Turkey has emerged as the key opponent of the Syrian regime's crackdown. It has threatened action against Al-Asad if the killing does not stop. In response, Damascus has decided to make things difficult for Turkey. U.S. and Turkish officials suggest that the Syrian regime might, once again, be allowing PKK activity in its territory.

Since Damascus is aware that it would likely face a Turkish invasion if it were to allow PKK attacks from its territory into Turkey, it has turned to its ally Tehran for assistance.

Tehran, already annoyed that Turkey is trying to diminish Iranian influence in Iraq, has been glad to help. Iran desperately needs to end Turkey's policy of confronting Al-Asad. If not countered, this policy will usher in the end of the Al-Asad regime in Syria, costing Iran its precious Levantine client state. Hence, Iran's age-old strategy against Turkey has been resuscitated: using the PKK to attack Ankara from another country in order to pressure Turkey.

Accordingly, since the beginning of summer 2010, the PKK has attacked Turkey from Iraq, killing almost 150 Turks as well as kidnapping dozens of people.

Thus forms the Middle Eastern "PKK circle": the more people Al-Asad kills, the more hard-line Turkey's policies will become against Syria. This will, in turn, drive Iranian-Syrian action against Turkey through PKK attacks from Iraq.

Turkey, Iran and the Al-Asad regime are locked in a power game over Syria's future. Either Ankara will win and Al-Asad will fall, or Tehran will win and Ankara, hurt by PKK attacks, will quit and let Syria be.

In the long term, the Turkish-Iranian rivalry will bring Ankara closer to Washington, and perhaps even to Israel, or at least halt further deterioration of Turkish-Israeli ties.

Events in Iraq already provide the basis for further cooperation between Washington and Ankara. With the United States having withdrawn its troops from Iraq, Turkey and Iran will be competing economically and politically to gain influence in Iraq, and this issue is already bringing Ankara closer to Washington.

Accordingly, not a day goes by that yet another Iranian official threatens Turkey. Take for instance, Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Sayyed Ali Hoseyni Khamenei's military adviser Major-General Yahya Rahim-Safavi's October 2010 warning: "Turkey must radically rethink its policies on Syria, the NATO missile shield and promoting Muslim secularism in the Arab world or face trouble from its own people and neighbors."

Such threats have driven, at least in part, Ankara's 2011 decision to take part in NATO's missile defense project. In fact, this decision can be seen as the sharpest Turkish rebuke to Iran over the past decade.

Today's Middle East-oriented Turkey, anchored in NATO, is a greater threat to Iranian interests than the merely pro-Western Turkey of the past. Accordingly, there is a chance that Iran might become even more aggressive towards Ankara. Some analysts suggest that the Iran's Qods Force, the special-operations unit of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps, might be connecting with the PKK in northern Iraq to target Turkey and also the Iraqi Kurds.

## **Looking Forward**

There are still some tensions between Washington and Ankara, including the future of Turkish-Israeli

relations. However when a flotilla sailed from Turkey to Gaza in early November 2011, the White House asked Ankara to allow no Turks on board the ships, in order to avoid a repeat of the May 2010 incident in which nine Turks on Gaza-bound ships were killed by the Israelis. Ankara obliged, and a crisis was averted.<sup>[1]</sup>

Nonetheless, there is hope for the future of the Turkish-Israeli relationship. Just as Israel appears keen to find a way to build bridges with Ankara, Turkey, too, would be well served to repair its relationship with Israel. Ankara is currently enjoying increased power in the Middle East. To maximize its influence in the region, though, Turkey will need good ties with all the states in the region, including Israel. This means moving past the 2010 flotilla incident to rebuild these relations.

What is more, both Turkey and Israel face a new and challenging regional landscape. Consequently, both countries would be well served to focus on pressing security issues, rather than devoting precious resources to confronting each other.

Israel's current security situation is a prime example of why it should not wish to add another state—especially one as powerful as Turkey—to its "watch list." Iran poses the most serious challenge to Israel by marching toward a nuclear weapons program. In addition, Iran can mobilize Hezbollah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and other radical terror groups to target Israel and the peace process with the Palestinians. Israel also faces new security challenges, such as the Arab Spring's historic transformation of its neighbors. Not only has Egypt become a bigger concern for Israel than in the past, but Israel must also devote resources to watching Syria if and when President Bashar al-Asad falls.

Turkey also stands to benefit from improved relations with Israel. Until recently, Ankara's policy of "zero problems with neighbors" yielded positive results in the Middle East: Turkey's relations with Iran improved and Ankara and Syria became close allies. Turkey also pacified the terror attacks of the PKK, and even mediated peace between Israel and Syria.

Now, Turkey's problems with its neighbors have resurfaced. Ankara's opposition to the Al-Asad regime's crackdown on demonstrators has earned Damascus' hostility once again, and has placed it on a collision course with Tehran, which defends Al-Asad's crackdown. Turkish-Iranian competition, which began with Tehran and Ankara's support of opposing factions in Iraqi elections, will be further exacerbated if Syria descends into even greater chaos. Signs are emerging that Iran may even resort to its past policy of using the PKK against Turkey.

Given the new environment in the Middle East, Israel appears to be thinking of restoring ties with Turkey, and analysts suggest that Ankara seems interested in doing the same. This time, though, the Turkish-Israeli relationship might have a different foundation: whereas Turkey and Israel allied in the past because they needed the other's friendship, they must now ally because they do not need the other's enmity. Fortunately, a solid foundation for renewed relations already exists: despite their political differences, trade between the two countries is booming, having risen by over 30 percent in 2011, and there are reports of back-room diplomacy already happening.

After a decade of discord with the United States, Turkey's ties with Washington have improved significantly over the course 2011. While the Obama-Erdogan relationship has established a new foundation for U.S.-Turkish ties, it appears that the two countries will be bound by common interests in the Middle East even after these leaders leave office.

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[1] Eds. Note: The Gaza flotilla incident, also known as the Mavi Marmara incident, refers to the 31 May 2010 boarding and take-over of a flotilla of six vessels (including the Mavi Marmara) by the Israel Defense Force off the coast of Gaza, which was under a naval blockade.

# Winter or Spring: Islamists, the Military, and Post-Revolution Politics in Egypt

by David Schenker, Washington Institute for Near East Policy

March 29, 2012\*

The so-called “Arab Spring” has forever changed the face of the Middle East, and it’s not finished. While the revolts that toppled longtime autocrats in Tunisia and Libya were remarkable accomplishments, these states are of little strategic interest to the United States. Unlike Libya and Tunisia, what transpires in Syria—an ally of Iran that possesses a substantial chemical weapons stockpile—could have significant implications for Washington. But Syria remains a work in progress. To date, the most important development in the region for the U.S. has been the fall of Egypt’s longtime president Hosni Mubarak. Since 1977, Egypt has been a strategic partner of the United States—providing essential political support to U.S. policies in the Middle East—and an important peace partner of Israel in a hostile region.

The fall of Mubarak heralds a change in the regional strategic architecture that had been in place since 1979. For decades, the regional balance of power pitted U.S.-oriented Egypt, Turkey, and Israel against anti-Western, terrorist-supporting regimes in Iraq and Iran. While the structure had changed slightly before February 2011—Iraq dropping off the “adversaries” list in 2003 about the same time that Turkey under Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the Justice and Development Party (AKP) moved out of the pro-West camp—Egypt remained a key friend to the United States. With the tectonic political and social shifts in post-Mubarak Egypt, however, it is unclear how long this friendship will continue, and what U.S.-Egyptian bilateral relations will look like going forward.

Much of Egypt’s strategic importance stems from its status as a regional trendsetter. With 83 million people, what happens in Egypt has an impact across the region. In the coming months and years, there are several key trends to watch for in Egypt, and, by extension, throughout the Middle East. What follows is a list of some these trends and issues that will shape Egypt in the months and years ahead:

**The rise of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB).** In Egypt’s recent parliamentary elections held from—November 2011-January 2012—the MB’s political arm, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), took 46 percent of 508 seats in the People’s Assembly—the lower house of the Egyptian parliament. The group’s impressive electoral performance came as little surprise. Although the MB was illegal under Mubarak, it operated for decades, and was not as suppressed as some of Egypt’s more liberal organizations. Indeed, after the revolt, the MB’s Freedom and Justice Party emerged as the state’s leading political organization, with its hierarchy, infrastructure, and message already in place. The MB already had a significant advantage. Egyptian society has for decades been becoming increasingly religiously conservative. The increased prevalence of hijab-wearing women in Egypt may be some anecdotal evidence of this trend: when I lived in Egypt in the early 1990s, only about 10-15 percent of women wore hijab, while now the percentage is closer to 80. When I asked the former MB Deputy General Guide Muhammad Habib about this phenomenon during an interview in Cairo back in 2009, he explained: “We won—the people are with us 100 percent.” That the Islamist Ennahda party, Tunisia’s iteration of the MB took 40 percent of the seats

\* *Mr. Schenker’s paper first appeared in MES Insights Volume 3 Issue 3, May 2012.*

in parliament—in one of the most secular states in the region—is testament to the group’s popularity.

Some observers were actually relieved that the “moderate” MB took control of the parliament, and not the more militant Salafi Islamists. But the MB is far from moderate. To wit, Muhammad Badie—the group’s General Guide who spent time in jail with Sayyid Qutb, one of MB founders—predicted in a December 29, 2011 speech that the Islamist government in Cairo would “lead to a rightly-guided caliphate that will instruct the world.”

**The surprise of the Salafis.** While the MB parliamentary plurality was more or less expected, the true surprise of the Egyptian elections was the performance of these more conservative Islamists, who won an astounding 27 percent of the seats in the People’s Assembly. Combined with the seats won by the FJP, Islamists hold nearly 75 percent of the People’s Assembly.<sup>[1]</sup>

If indeed the MB ever was moderate, it won’t be for long; as the Salafis will be attacking the Brotherhood from the right, pressuring the group to adopt even more conservative social legislation. In December 2011, I was an election monitor in Menoufiya in the Nile Delta, and had the opportunity to chat with several Salafis. We discussed the many changes to come in Egypt, including the imposition of the *jizya* tax levied on non-Muslims, the encasing of Pharaoh statue’s faces in wax (to prevent prohibited idolatry), the banning of alcohol, making hijab wearing mandatory, and the institution of the *hudud*—the cutting of the hands of thieves.<sup>[2]</sup> The Salafis agree with the MB about the institution of a caliphate. Essentially, the key difference between the groups lies not in the proscriptions of Islam, but in how quickly or severely sharia is implemented. What we are seeing develop in Egypt right now is not necessarily democracy but competitive theocracy.

**Post-Mubarak populist politics and Egypt’s future orientation.** Both the FJP chairman, Muhammad Morsi, and vice chairman, Essam al-Erian, claim that the United States and the international community owe Egypt financial assistance, irrespective of what policies they pursue regarding women, human rights, or protections of minorities. It is viewed as compensation for supporting an authoritarian government in Egypt during the Mubarak era. Notwithstanding the request for financial assistance, the Islamists and the military-appointed government in Egypt are taking provocative positions vis-à-vis Washington—and Israel—which will complicate the bilateral relationship.

Consider the NGO crisis earlier in 2012, where a decision was taken to prosecute several U.S. citizens working on democracy promotion in Egypt and prevent them from traveling abroad. Going forward, it is conceivable that Egypt may continue to deliberately generate crises, to prove the state’s relevance to Washington and ensure continued U.S. financial assistance. To avoid, or de-escalate, these situations, the U.S. and the international community will be obligated to pay what essentially amounts to a rent.

Objectively, this kind of populism makes sense. The Egyptian economy is in free fall, and populist politics are a useful distraction. They also provide useful scapegoats. Egyptians already have a low opinion of the U.S.—according to public opinion polls, 70 percent of Egyptians do not want U.S. financial assistance. Leaders in Tehran also poll more favorably than those in Washington. This trend may have repercussions for long-term bilateral relations, including priority U.S. access to the Suez Canal, over flights with little warning, and the maintenance of the peace treaty with Israel.

**The peace treaty with Israel.** It is little secret that the MB does not like Israel much. Indeed, the MB has hinted that it might put the Camp David treaty to a popular referendum. Already, Essam al-Erian has announced that should the U.S. cut its financial assistance package to Egypt, it would cause Cairo to review and perhaps modify the treaty. In Spring 2012, the parliament passed a hand-vote resolution declaring Israel to be Egypt’s “number one enemy,” calling for the Israeli ambassador to be expelled from Cairo, and

<sup>[1]</sup> Eds. Note: The composition of the People’s Assembly following Egypt’s 2012 elections has the Freedom and Justice Party holding 216 seats (43.4%) and the Islamist Alliance (which includes Al-Nour, the Building and Development Party, and Al-Asala) holding 125 seats (25%). However, in a June 2012 ruling the, the Supreme Constitutional Court declared the parliamentary elections unconstitutional.

<sup>[2]</sup> Eds. Note: In Sharia, *hudud* refers to a class of punishments that are fixed for certain crimes including theft, fornication, consumption of alcohol, and apostasy. Cutting off the hands of thieves is one such punishment in *hudud*.

demanding an end to Egyptian sales of natural gas to Israel. While the resolution is non-binding, as the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) remains in control, the military has indicated its intention to return to its barracks following the June presidential elections.<sup>[3]</sup> What happens then remains to be seen. I think, however, that the treaty is safe in the short-term, due to the state of the economy. The MB knows that stability is key to rebuilding. Still, in late April 2012, Egypt suspended gas sales to its peace partner.

**The SCAF's imminent return to the barracks.** Some observers suspect there have been behind-the-scenes dealings between the SCAF and the MB, even a tacit agreement on a division of labor going forward, with the military continuing to determine foreign policy and national security issues while the MB focuses on domestic politics and social issues, such as the further Islamization of society. Whether or not such a deal ever existed is unclear. If there ever was, though, it probably is no longer in force. In spring 2012, tensions between the SCAF and the MB were on the rise after the MB announced (in contradiction to previous statements) its intention to run a presidential candidate and the subsequent permanent disqualification of the MB's front-runner candidate by Egypt's presidential electoral commission. The Islamists' calls for the dismissal of the SCAF-appointed government of Prime Minister Kamal al-Ganzouri—and the dispute over the MB's participation in the upcoming presidential elections—have only further strained the ties, to the point that the SCAF has threatened a crackdown on the MB.

Conflict between the SCAF and the MB is inevitable, as both groups want to implement a Turkish model in Egypt. For the SCAF, the model is that of the pre-AKP before the Erdogan premiership, when the military served as guardian of secular society in Turkey, periodically removing Islamist governments from power. The MB, however, looks to the Erdogan model, where Islamists control the parliament and the executive, and over time, bring the military to heel. Given these divergent views, it is just a matter of time until a SCAF-MB showdown.

**SCAF Competency?** Since day one, Washington has had an abiding confidence in the SCAF's competence. At the time of the revolution, the United States applauded the military for not opening fire on the crowds. The White House even took credit for its restraint: \$66 billion in financial assistance since 1979, so the argument went, bought the United States influence and prevented more bloodshed. In reality, the U.S. has little influence on the SCAF today.

The confidence in the SCAF is misplaced, as the council has in fact proven itself grossly incompetent. In the months leading to the formation of the Constituent Assembly, for example, the SCAF changed its rules multiple times, first announcing that the newly elected parliament would select the members of the constitutional drafting committee. However, as a result of the elections, the Islamists took control of parliament. Therefore, the SCAF changed its mind and allowed the Islamists to select only 20 percent of the seats and appointed the other 80 percent itself. When the Islamists protested, the military backed down completely. The committee now is comprised almost entirely of Islamists. The SCAF also grossly mismanaged the NGO crisis, allowing a situation in which Sam Lahood—the son of U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray Lahood—was essentially prohibited from leaving Egypt. Yet another failing of the SCAF has been its inability to reestablish security in Egypt since Mubarak's ouster.

**Insecurity.** Ever since the revolution, Egypt has faced difficulties in reestablishing security. Initially, the combination of economic stresses, a diminished security apparatus, and the flight of criminals from state jails contributed to a rise in the crime rate. The near absence of tourism and foreign direct investment and a serious case of inflation over the past year have only raised the poverty rate and collective sense of desperation. Today, heretofore violent crimes in Egypt—car jackings, armed robberies, and kidnapping, for example—are becoming routine.

Chances are also better than ever that if you perpetrate a crime, you will not be caught. Demoralized, underpaid, and no longer encouraged to subsidize paltry incomes through corruption, police officers have not been showing up for work. Meanwhile, State Security—the former regime's repressive apparatus and domestic counterterrorism organization—has lost much of its capacity. Indeed, State Security shredded a

[3] Eds. Note: Following its dissolution of the People's Assembly, the SCAF issued an interim constitutional declaration giving it greater legislative powers until a new parliament is elected.

significant portion of its files during the uprising to insulate itself from accountability. Currently, the organization is reportedly undergoing a process of “restructuring.” The prospects for an improved security situation anytime soon—something critical to jumpstarting the tourist economy—are slim.

**Terrorism.** The Sinai has long proved fertile ground for terrorists, and the situation in the peninsula has only deteriorated since the revolution. Terrorists escaping jail during the revolution flowed back into the Sinai, and an al-Qaeda affiliate named Ansar al-Jihad set up shop there. The result is an increasingly lawless, if not ungoverned, territory, in which the terrorist threat is severe. It is unclear at present exactly how much success Ansar al-Jihad is having recruiting local Bedouin, but there are some signs that these jihadists are making headway. In August 2011, after the al-Arish police station attack, a statement was issued by “al-Qaeda in the Sinai Peninsula,” demanding the implementation of sharia and the establishment of an Islamic emirate in the Sinai. That same month, via the internet, al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri congratulated the terrorists who bombed the pipeline in July—and exhorted his followers to target more Israelis. Earlier this year in January, Ansar al-Jihad announced its support for Zawahiri, as well as its plans to attack the SCAF and U.S. interests abroad. Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist organizations are also becoming a problem, crossing into the Sinai and attacking Israel from Egyptian territory. In addition to being dangerous, terrorism in the Sinai is undermining the tourist economy there.

**Egypt’s economy still in crisis.** Egypt is on the brink of an economic crisis, with reportedly as little as \$11 billion remaining in foreign reserves, and depleting at a rate of nearly \$1 billion a month. The absence of security and a concern about the future direction of the state have spooked tourists and investors alike. Without foreign direct investment and tourism, Egypt’s economy has worsened, and hardship has increased. Polling suggests that economic factors contributed greatly to the revolt. Likewise, when polled, a majority of Egyptians said they expected their personal economic situations to improve as a result of the uprising. It is safe to say that to date, at least economically, the post-Mubarak government has not met popular expectations. With poverty on the upswing, in May 2011, General Mahmoud Nasr, a member of the governing Supreme Military Council, held a Cairo news conference last month and announced that if the situation did not improve, there would be another revolution in Egypt—“a revolution of the hungry.” Improving the economy will be a key priority of the Brotherhood’s ruling Freedom and Justice Party in the coming months and years. In the interest of pragmatism, this overriding priority could serve to constrain some of these Islamists excesses, in particular, the full implementation of sharia, in the near term. Notwithstanding, it is unclear that even a less corrupt and economically competent Muslim Brotherhood will be able to ameliorate the longstanding economic difficulties of Egypt.

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# Contributors

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**David B. Ottaway** received a B.A. from Harvard, magna cum laude, in 1962 and a PhD from Columbia University in 1972. He worked 35 years for the *Washington Post* as a foreign correspondent in the Middle East, Africa and Southern Europe and later as a national security and investigative reporter in Washington before retiring in 2006. He has won numerous awards for his reporting at home and abroad and was twice nominated a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. Dr. Ottaway was a Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson Center in 1979-80 and again in 2005-06 and is currently a Senior Scholar there. His most recent book, published in November 2008, was *The King's Messenger: Prince Bandar bin Sultan and America's Tangled Relationship with Saudi Arabia*. He is currently working on a book regarding the changes underway in the Arab world.

**Thomas A. Dine**, involved in U.S. foreign policy for more than 49 years, is currently the senior director of a Track II project between Americans and Syrians. For nearly three and a half years, this diplomatic effort has taken place in Syria and the U.S. among 16 prominent individuals from each society under the auspices of Search for Common Ground, a Washington-based NGO that deals with conflict resolution situations around the world. Prior to this pursuit, Mr. Dine served as CEO of the San Francisco-based Jewish Community Federation (2005-2007); President of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty in Prague, Czech Republic (1997-2005); USAID Assistant Administrator for Europe and Eurasia (1993-1997); Executive Director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (1980-1993); professional staff in the U.S. Senate (1970-1980); Personal Assistant to the American Ambassador, New Delhi, India (1967-1969); and U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer in the Philippines (1962-1964).



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# About the Editors

**Amin Tarzi** is the director of Middle East Studies at the Marine Corps University in Quantico, Virginia. In his position, Dr. Tarzi supports the MCU by providing a resident scholar with expertise in Middle East and South/Central Asia, representing the Marine Corps at various academic and professional forums, providing expert advice for all Professional Military Education programs, and mentoring the AFPAK Hands Marines assigned to MCU. Prior to joining the MCU, he was with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Regional Analysis team focusing on Afghanistan and Pakistan. While working at RFE/RL, he also taught courses in political Islam, cultural intelligence, terrorist organizations and similar topics at the Washington-based Center for Advanced Defense Studies. Before joining RFE/RL, Dr. Tarzi worked as Senior Research Associate for the Middle East at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies where he primarily researched Iran and its missile and nuclear developments and policies. At the Monterey Institute, he also taught a graduate seminar on Middle East security policies and threat perceptions with focus on Egypt, Iran, Iraq and Israel. Dr. Tarzi's prior experience includes holding the post of Political Advisor to the Saudi Arabian Mission to the United Nations dealing with the conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans and Somalia; the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty extension; Iranian behavior in the United Nations; and Security Council expansion. After his tenure with the Saudi government, Dr. Tarzi held the position of Researcher/Analyst on Iranian affairs at the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research in Abu Dhabi.

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