

The Shimon Post



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Article 1.

Wall Street Journal

The Arab Spring and The Palestine Distraction

Josef Joffe

APRIL 26, 2011 -- In politics, shoddy theories never die. In the Middle East, one of the oldest is that Palestine is the "core" regional issue. This zombie should have been interred at the beginning of the Arab Spring, which has highlighted the real core conflict: the oppressed vs. their oppressors. But the dead keep walking.

"The plight of the Palestinians has been a root cause of unrest and conflict in the region," insisted Turkish President Abdullah Gul in the New York Times last week. "Whether these [recent] uprisings lead to democracy and peace or to tyranny and conflict will depend on forging a lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace." Naturally, "the U.S. has a long overdue responsibility" to forge that peace.

Writing in the Financial Times, former U.S. National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft intoned: "The nature of the new Middle East cannot be known until the festering sore of the occupied territories is removed." Read: The fate of democracy hinges on Palestine.

So do "Iran's hegemonic ambitions," he insinuated. This is why Tehran reaches for the bomb? Syria, too, will remain a threat "as long as there is no regional peace agreement." The Assad regime is slaughtering its own people for the sake of Palestine? And unless Riyadh "saw the U.S. as moving in a serious manner" on Palestine, Mr. Scowcroft warned, the Saudis might really sour on their great protector from across the sea. So when they sent troops into Bahrain, were they heading for Jerusalem by way of Manama?

Shoddy political theories—ideologies, really—never die because they are immune to the facts. The most glaring is this: These revolutions have unfolded without the usual anti-American and anti-Israeli screaming. It's not that the demonstrators had run out of Stars and Stripes to trample, or were too concerned about the environment to burn Benjamin Netanyahu in effigy. It's that their targets were Hosni Mubarak, Zine el Abidine Ben-Ali, Moammar Gadhafi and the others—no stooges of Zionism they. In Benghazi, the slogan was: "America is our friend!"

The men and women of the Arab Spring are not risking their lives for a "core" issue, but for the freedom of Egypt, Tunisia, Libya and Syria. And of Iran, as the Green revolutionaries did in Tehran in 2009.

Every "Palestine-first" doctrine in the end comes down to that fiendish "Arab Street": The restless monster must be fed with Israeli concessions lest he rise and sweep away our good friends—all those dictators and despots who pretended to stand between us and Armageddon. Free Palestine, the dogma goes, and even Iran and Syria will turn from rabid to responsible. The truth is that the American and Israeli flags were handed out for burning by those regimes themselves.

This is how our good friends have stayed in power: Divert attention and energy from oppression and misery at home by rousing the masses against the enemy abroad. How can we have free elections, runs a classic line, as long as they despoil our sacred Islamic lands? This is why anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism are as rampant among our Saudi and Egyptian allies as among the hostile leaders of Iran and Syria.

The Palestinians do deserve their own state. But the Palestine-first strategy reverses cause and effect. It is not the core conflict that feeds the despotism; it is the despots who fan the conflict, even as they

fondle their U.S.-made F-16s and quietly work with Israel. Their peoples are the victims of this power ploy, not its drivers. This is what the demonstrators of Tahrir Square and the rebels of Benghazi have told us with their silence on the Palestine issue.

So Palestine has nothing to do with it? It does, though not in the ways insisted by Messrs. Gul and Scowcroft. The sounds of silence carry a different message: "It's democracy, stupid!" Freedom does not need the enemy at the gate. Despots do, which is why they happily let the Palestinian sore fester for generations.

Israel, which has reacted in utter confusion to the fall of Mubarak, might listen up as well. If democracies don't have to "busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels," as Shakespeare has it in Henry IV, then Israel's reformed neighbors might at last be ready for real, not just cold peace. Mr. Mubarak was not. Nor is Mr. Assad of Syria, who has refused every Israeli offer to hand back the Golan Heights. If you rule at the head of a tiny Alawite minority, why take the Heights and give away a conflict that keeps you in power? Peace at home—justice, jobs and consent—makes for peace abroad.

Still, don't hold your breath. Yes, democracy is where history is going, but it is a long, perilous journey even from Tunis to Tripoli, let alone all the way to Tehran.

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Article 2.

The Daily Beast

The Israel-Palestine Vote Igniting the Mideast

Leslie H. Gelb

April 24, 2011 -- Almost certainly, the United Nations General Assembly will vote in September to grant statehood to Palestine, thus legally removing it from Israeli authority. Almost every U.N. member will vote “aye.” Israel will reject the vote because such a Palestinian state would include half a million Israeli settlers living there unprotected. The United States cannot void the statehood resolution because its veto applies only to U.N. Security Council decisions. This story of a vote foretold should not be dismissed as the usual diplomatic gamesmanship with little or no consequences. The stage is being set for calamity: The high risk of Palestinian riots to fully claim their state, followed by very tough Israeli crackdowns—adding fire to the unexpected and unpredictable popular upheavals across the Middle East. According to American, Israeli, and Palestinian officials, the tales within counter tales begin with an invitation from House Speaker John Boehner to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to address a joint session of the U.S. Congress on May 24. Boehner acts as if the idea of inviting “Bibi,” as the prime minister is universally known, was his own. But the facts indicate that this most-sought-after event was initiated at Bibi’s behest. Now, the White House couldn’t say no and risk an open rupture with Israel’s supporters, so officials there unhappily went along. The Obama administration saw the “invitation” as a power play by Bibi to head off new and tough U.S. demands on Israel, and particularly to try to corner the White House into backing Israel in the September U.N.

vote. That seems to be precisely what Bibi had in mind as well, but—and here's one of the many new twists in this saga—he had no clear idea of what he would say to Congress. Indeed, the U.S. side can't seem to figure out what to say either, or what strategy to adopt overall at this time. The only ones who appear to know their hand are the Palestinian leaders. They intend to stand pat, hoping that the pending U.N. vote will force critical Israeli concessions without the Palestinians having to lift a compromising finger. Mind you, the Israeli and American governments are talking to each other behind the scenes constantly, trying to discover the other's thinking without divulging their own. At this moment, however, there doesn't seem to be much to discover.

Back in Jerusalem, Bibi is planning how to generate such a strong embrace by Congress in his address that President Obama will fear abandoning him. At the same time, he doesn't wish to publicly confront and thus alienate Obama. Israelis feel they've offered major compromises over the years, with nothing in return from the Palestinian Authority headed by President Abbas. Bibi seems inclined, contrary to his right-wing coalition partners, to speak of a return to the 1967 borders with land swaps to protect Israeli settlements. He won't give a Palestinian capital in Jerusalem, and he wants the PA to accept Israel as a Jewish state with a very limited right of Palestinian return to Israel. Further, Israel believes it must have security agreements to limit sharply the armaments and military activities of a Palestinian state. But Bibi is unlikely to showcase all this to Congress. Present thinking is to do some peace talk, plus words of caution about Iran, plus a welcome and a wariness about the new popular awakenings among Arabs. The aim is to capture as much U.S. support as possible at the U.N. and maybe add two or three states like Germany to the tiny list of nations voting against

Palestinian statehood. Bibi realizes he faces substantial isolation at the U.N., but he doesn't want total isolation.

As for the Obama team at the moment, it has many choices and no answers. It can't decide whether Obama should give a speech before or after Bibi's congressional oration. Going first, however, is hard without a message. Some officials want that message to be as broad as possible, in effect a speech about the whole Mideast situation, putting Palestinian-Israeli issues into that broader context. Others aren't ready to say anything definitive about either the region or Israel. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton favors a broad-gauged address as soon as possible. Defense Secretary Bob Gates rails against Israel at every National Security Council meeting, arguing that Washington has given Israel everything it wanted and gotten nothing in return. Special Mideast envoy George Mitchell wisely counsels against doing anything that will fail, once again. The former senator is keenly aware that the consequences of failure are loss of power to get things done in the future. Dennis Ross, the key NSC staffer on the Mideast and Iran, opposes Clinton's idea for a big speech now. Ross, with his usual complex and enigmatic mind, may be waiting for a sign from the Oval Office. Meanwhile, the clock will not stop. Israelis expect a major Palestinian demonstration in Jerusalem on May 15 and worry about large-scale violence.

Unremarked upon by the media, another foreign flotilla is heading toward the Gaza Strip, intent on breaching Israel's legal blockade and delivering supplies. Surely, the flotilla masterminds in Turkey and elsewhere remember well the last ship to run the gauntlet and the deaths of the crew and Israeli commandos. To boot, Israeli officials can't just keep crossing their fingers, hoping that the upheavals elsewhere in the region will not explode on their own doorstep. Bibi is said to be tempted to escape Israel's ever-shrinking box with a

bold, dramatic, and generous proposal to the Palestinians. But he is pulled back by the prospect of fracturing his right-wing coalition and of having to team with unwanted, more left-leaning allies. Elliott Abrams, Mideast chief on George W. Bush's NSC staff, has an imaginative tactic for Bibi to think about. Israel should head off the U.N. vote at the pass, he says, by having Bibi proclaim to Congress that Israel accepts Palestinian statehood. But that would leave half a million Israelis in Palestinian hands without Palestine being able to protect them. This would require Israel to maintain all the present security measures until Israel and Palestine have fully agreed on peace. Sure, this is a ploy, but not a bad one for Israel because it might avoid an international blessing for a Palestinian state. None of this lets Obama off the hook. Many Mideast experts, including in his own administration as well as many former senior officials, are pressing him to lay out a comprehensive U.S. peace plan. This would include all the elements of compromise for both the Palestinians and Israelis, but mostly for the Israelis. They want him to do this even if it means taking this leap without any prior indication by the two parties that they'd accept U.S. terms. It would be totally putting U.S. prestige on the line, naked in public, and letting the chips fall where they may. It would be jumping off the cliff for peace. It doesn't sound like Barack Obama to me. And from what all parties know now, it would be a leap too far. That is, if this grand leap fails, U.S. credibility would virtually disappear, and the warring parties could be left without a viable intermediary. Then what?

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Article 3.

The National Interest

Palestinians Dupe West

Benny Morris

April 25, 2011 -- Several dozen Israeli intellectuals and politicians have signed a declaration endorsing the immediate establishment of an independent Palestinian state covering the territories Israel occupied in the 1967 Six Day War. They have proclaimed this as both a diktat of justice—peoples have a right to self-determination—and Israeli self-interest, given the desire of its majority Jewish population to remain a majority and to remain a member in good standing of the international community. Given Palestinian Arab birth rates, the incorporation of the West Bank's and Gaza's Arab population into Israel would mean an Arab majority between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean—and continued rule over an occupied, antagonistic Palestinian population would result in Israel becoming a pariah state.

These Israelis' declaration dovetails with the Palestinians' current diplomatic campaign to establish a state and achieve international recognition of such statehood by September when, it is expected, the matter will be brought to a vote at the UN General Assembly.

Many observers in the West seem to regard this campaign, masterminded by Mahmoud Abbas and Salam Fayyad, respectively the Palestinian Authority's president and prime minister, as an innovative breakthrough, a reversal of the strategy of their unwholesome predecessor, PLO chairman (1969-2004) Yasser Arafat.

This is incorrect. Indeed, Arafat's strategy from the late 1980s, after he realized that he wasn't going to orchestrate the destruction of Israel (Black September 1970 in Jordan and Israel's Lebanon War of 1982

were instrumental in this connection), was precisely to establish a Palestinian Arab state encompassing the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, but without recognizing Israel or making peace with it. Which is why Arafat never accepted a signed and sealed two-state settlement involving a Palestinian state side by side with Israel reduced to its 1949 borders. This, after all, was what former Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak (currently Israel's defense minister) and former US president Bill Clinton had offered Arafat in December 2000 (the Clinton "Parameters") and this is what former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert offered Abbas in 2008—and this is what both Palestinian leaders rejected.

Palestinian strategy is rather simple (and not particularly clever, though it does manage to take in a surprising number of Westerners): Because of the demographic threat (an Arab majority in a Jewish state) and because of international pressure for self-determination for the Palestinians and an end to Israel's military occupation, Israelis will eventually accept, however reluctantly, a Palestinian state encompassing the Palestinian-majority territories of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. Israel will eventually unilaterally withdraw (as it has already done from the Gaza Strip). So why offer or give the Israelis recognition and peace in exchange?

Rather, once this mini-state is achieved, unfettered by any international obligations like a peace treaty—and having promised nothing in exchange for their statehood—the Palestinians will be free to continue their struggle against Israel, its complete demise being their ultimate target. Inevitably, the armed struggle—call it guerrilla warfare, call it terrorism—will then be resumed. And, alongside it, so will the political warfare—the delegitimization of the Jewish state and, most centrally, the demand for the refugees of 1948/1967 to be allowed to return to their homes and lands (what the Palestinians define as the "Right of Return"). The refugee issue plays well with

public opinion in the West, which somehow fails to notice that such a return will mean that Israel proper will become an Arab-majority territory, i.e., no more Jewish state. In democracies, what publics accept or support eventually becomes what leaders advocate. And, on the military and political levels, no one will be able to fault the Palestinians. They will have broken no treaty and violated no solemn agreement. They won't have signed a "no further claims" clause or a "no more war" commitment, as Barak, Clinton and Olmert had demanded as essential components of a two-state peace settlement. They will have received their mini-state, a launching pad for further assault on Israel, without giving anything in return. And Israel, let me sadly add, will have done a great deal to have helped us reach this unhappy pass—an Israel, under Netanyahu, that has offered the Palestinians nothing that any Arab or the international community, including the US, could accept as a reasonable minimum the Palestinians should agree to.

Article 4.

The Financial Times

Egypt's liberals are losing the battle

Gideon Rachman

April 25 2011 -- All sorts of contending forces rub shoulders in Egypt these days. Last week, I found myself in the lobby of a Cairo hotel, chatting to a square-bearded, pot-bellied, fundamentalist preacher who is eager to see all women in Egypt wear the niqab – the all-encompassing veil that leaves only a slit for the eyes. Just behind him, French tourists ambled around in bathing suits. Then the hotel crooner began belting out “My Way”. I suggested we move to a quieter spot and the preacher agreed, pointing out that, as a Salafi, he objected to all forms of music – and not just Frank Sinatra.

Eventually, after further discussion of the merits of hand-chopping and the possibility of a return to Islam as practised in the seventh century, the sheikh got into his car and drove back to his job as a computer technician.

Egypt's young liberal middle-classes are discovering that they were not the only forces set free by the downfall of President Hosni Mubarak. One leading liberal politician told me last week that he had been barely aware of Salafism until after the revolution. Suddenly, Salafi spokesmen are all over the media and are organising politically. By some reckonings they could get 5 per cent to 10 per cent of the vote in parliamentary elections planned for September. The Muslim Brotherhood, the more established and less fundamentalist Islamist organisation, is generally reckoned to be good for at least a third of the vote. Add in a couple of fringe Islamist parties and you could be looking at an Islamist majority in Egypt's first parliament. “Entirely plausible,” says a western diplomat in Cairo, as he sips his coffee.

The stakes in the coming elections are very high, since the new parliament will have the power to rewrite Egypt's constitution and so shape the country for decades. But Egypt's liberals face formidable odds. They are operating in a country where 40 per cent of the total population live on less than \$2 a day. Some 30m Egyptians are illiterate. The Muslim Brotherhood is by far the most organised non-state organisation in the country, while the liberal forces are fragmented and disorganised.

Realising this, most liberals opposed the constitutional changes that laid the groundwork for parliamentary and presidential elections this year, arguing that more time was needed to establish a proper constitutional order and to allow new political forces to organise. The Muslim Brotherhood, who know that they are well placed to profit from swift elections, campaigned for a Yes vote – and were delighted to see a 77 per cent vote in favour.

The crushing defeat of the liberal camp in the referendum came as a bad shock to them, since it was the first political trial of strength between Islamists and liberals since the revolution. It should serve as a wake-up call, galvanising liberals to unify and organise.

Unfortunately, much of the energy of liberal Egypt seems to be focused on pursuing the old regime rather than preparing for the future. Earlier this month crowds reoccupied Tahrir Square in central Cairo to demand that Mr Mubarak be put on trial. Now that the demand has been granted, corruption allegations are being pursued against businesses that did well under the old regime.

Some liberals argue that the pursuit of justice and the exposure of the crimes of the old regime are crucial to the establishment of a new Egypt. They also fear that the “deep state” of the Mubarak era will re-emerge and thwart change, unless it is exposed and pursued through the courts. These are legitimate arguments. But an overconcentration on the past risks losing the future. The political dangers are

heightened by a serious deterioration in the economy. Tourism is a crucial industry, but many tourists seem too frightened to go to Egypt at the moment. Visiting the Pyramids in Giza last week I virtually had the place to myself.

A lot of foreign and domestic investment is also on hold. Inflation is running at 18 per cent and food price inflation is over 50 per cent. In an effort to maintain stability, the government is pouring money into subsidies for food and energy. But the budget deficit is now about 12 per cent of GDP and foreign reserves are falling, as the central bank struggles to support the currency. Some fear that Egypt is heading for a balance-of-payments crisis. An International Monetary Fund-style austerity regime in an already poor country will not be a great advert for the post-Mubarak order.

Despite all this, there is still plenty of post-revolutionary euphoria in Cairo. People who demonstrated in Tahrir Square are still exhilarated by what has been achieved – and by a new sense of dignity and hope for the future. But the risks of political and economic chaos are rising. Egypt's liberals need to organise fast in response and to prepare for elections.

As for the west, it cannot afford to let the dramas in Libya, Syria and Yemen lead to the neglect of Egypt. For the fate of the Arab Spring still hangs most of all on what happens in the most populous and culturally powerful country in the Arab world.

Mohamed ElBaradei, one of the frontrunners to be Egypt's next president and a leading liberal voice, told me last week: "If we succeed here, then the march towards democracy in the Arab world is unstoppable." On the other hand, if Egypt fails, then the blue skies and optimism of the Arab Spring may swiftly give way to something a lot stormier and darker.

Article 5.

Project Syndicate

Turkish Journalism Behind Bars

Alison Bethel McKenzie and Steven M. Ellis

2011-04-25 -- In a study released in early April, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe's Representative on Freedom of the Media, Dunja Mijatović, reported that 57 journalists are currently in prison in Turkey, mostly on the basis of the country's anti-terrorism laws. With 11 more Turkish journalists also facing charges, the total number could soon double the records of Iran and China, each of which reportedly held 34 journalists in prison in December 2010. Indeed, Mijatović estimated that another 700-1,000 proceedings against journalists remain ongoing. Such a situation is intolerable anywhere, but particularly in a democracy that seeks European Union membership, and that recognizes freedom of expression as a fundamental right. Turkey's behavior thus calls into question not only its desire but also its ability to commit to the values underlying the EU. Journalists linked to Kurdish or Marxist organizations have regularly been targeted under Turkey's anti-terrorism laws, and the OSCE study found that they have faced some of the harshest punishments. One Kurdish journalist was sentenced to 166 years in prison. Others currently face – wait for it – 3,000-year sentences if convicted. The relative lack of scrutiny of Turkey's treatment of journalists by many in the West has changed, however, owing to the recent waves of arrests in the so-called "Ergenekon" case. Numerous military officers and academics have been implicated in that case, which involves an alleged plot by secular ultra-nationalists to overthrow the Turkish government. The probe has now turned increasingly towards journalists. One of those accused of participating in the plot is the daily newspaper Milliyet's

investigative reporter Nedim Şener, whose work includes a book about links between security forces and the 2007 murder of Turkish-Armenian journalist Hrant Dink. The International Press Institute (IPI) named Şener a World Press Freedom Hero in 2010. Incarcerated following his arrest last month, he reportedly stands accused of belonging to an armed terrorist organization seeking to overthrow the government. Another journalist under fire is Ahmet Şık, who already faced prosecution for co-writing a book criticizing the government's crackdown on the Ergenekon plot. Şık was said to be working on a book about the alleged influence of an Islamic group within Turkey's police force, which authorities last month ordered confiscated before it could be printed. A common thread in all of the cases targeting journalists is that the alleged facts are shrouded in secrecy, and the authorities have declined to release any evidence of crimes or criminal organizations. Worse still, they have declined even to inform those brought before courts – sometimes in secret – or their attorneys of the charges they face. Indeed, journalists caught in this Kafkaesque affair can expect to spend years behind bars before being allowed to respond to the accusations against them. A climate of fear escalates with each raid and arrest. Meanwhile, Turkish authorities affirm the country's commitment to press freedom, even as they impugn the motives of those who exercise it. Given that so many journalists have been jailed, and that all of them have been critical of the government, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that journalists are being targeted because of their work. Such concern has been voiced not only by press-freedom groups such as IPI, and journalists, like the Freedom for Journalists Platform (an umbrella group representing local and national media organizations in Turkey), but also by respected international institutions. The United States' Mission to the OSCE and the European Commission have joined Mijatović in calling on Turkey's authorities to stop their intimidation

of the media immediately, and to uphold basic OSCE media freedom commitments. The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has called on Turkey to guarantee freedom of opinion and expression. Even Turkey's president, Abdullah Güл, recently called for "prosecutors and courts to be more diligent in pursuing their responsibilities, and to act in a way that does not harm the honor and rights of the people."

Turkey plays a pivotal, bridge-building role between East and West, and the country has been praised for demonstrating that democracy can coexist with Islam. But the arrests of so many journalists are eroding this image.

The right of journalists to cover sensitive topics, including national security, is fundamental. Those who do not engage in criminal activity should not face arrest, imprisonment, or any other form of harassment or intimidation for doing their job. Those accused of criminal activity must be given due process and a fair trial. Evidence must be provided, and the accused must be presented with the charges they face and the opportunity to defend themselves.

Far from being defamatory subversives, journalists who investigate and criticize their government's actions demonstrate true patriotism, because no democracy can survive without the open and independent assessment of public policies that journalists provide. If Turkey, a major regional power with an ancient cultural heritage, truly wishes to be welcomed into Europe, to take its rightful place on the world stage, and, indeed, to remain a democracy, its leaders must not hold freedom of the press in contempt.

Alison Bethel McKenzie is Director of the International Press Institute (IPI). Steven M. Ellis is IPI Press Freedom Adviser.

Article 6.

Hurriyet Daily News

Why is the AKP lenient on Libya and Syria?

Semih İdiz

April 25, 2011 -- For weeks now forces loyal to Moammar Gadhafi have been raining all types of ordinance, including cluster bombs, on the city of Misrata with no regard whatsoever for the safety and well being of women, children or the elderly. In Syria, Bashar al-Assad's snipers and soldiers have killed unarmed demonstrators, as well as those attending the funerals of those murdered, in various cities around the country.

In addition to this they have now decided to use the army more visibly against demonstrators.

Some of the images reaching the world from these countries are not too different from the images that came out of Bosnia at the time of the Serbian Chetniks attacks during the breakup of Yugoslavia.

The people in the cities under siege or under attack in Libya and Syria are, in the final analysis, as defenseless as the people of Gaza, who suffered the disproportionate military operations of the Israeli army conducted under the guise of "retaliation."

But for some reason the Justice and Development Party, or AKP, government, which is eager to bash Israel on every occasion over Gaza, has very little to say in the face of the images of brutality coming out of Syria and Libya. In the meantime no one in the party is openly accusing Gadhafi or Assad of murdering their citizens.

As for the tone of the occasional criticism coming out of Ankara, as was the case the other day, of the Gadhafi and Assad regimes, these are controlled and mute, being issued more for the sake of diplomatic

propriety, rather than out of any deep conviction. In the meantime those pro-AKP organizations are quick to gather outside the Israeli embassy in protest are not to be seen outside the Libyan or Syrian embassies.

The only conclusion one can arrive at in the face of this general picture is that the value of Palestinian civilians killed by Israeli bombs and bullets is not the same for the AKP as the value of civilians killed in Libya, Syria and indeed Yemen by the authorities there.

Given this situation it is not hard for anyone to conclude that the AKP is openly displaying an ideological bias here. In the meantime no one has forgotten Prime Minister Erdogan's remark in connection with Sudan that "Muslims do not commit genocide."

Put another way, there seems to be little difference in the way the U.S. supports Israel blindly and without question, keeping the tone of its criticism very soft and innocuous when it feels it has to do so, and the approach the AKP government has toward regimes that are committing crimes against humanity in the Middle East today.

There is an irony however in the fact that Erdogan and the AKP always bases their strong criticism of Israel on the concept of respect for human rights. But they appear to be overlooking a key aspect of the principle of "respect for human rights." And this principle is indivisible and not subject to political or ideological preferences.

Put another way it should make no difference to those who claim to be acting in the name of human rights, whether these are being violated in Palestine, Israel, Libya, Syria, Yemen, or indeed Turkey itself. It makes little difference in the end if a child is killed by the Israeli Army, by a Hamas bomb or by the Libyan or Syrian security forces. The bottom line is a child is being killed and that should be protested without exception.

There is also another contradiction in all this as far as the AKP is

concerned. No doubt the government is acting toward the Libyan and Syrian regimes from the perspective of Islamic solidarity. As it is we know from Prime Minister Erdoğan's past remarks, that as far as the AKP is concerned there is Libya and Syria on the one side, and a wily calculating West on the other, which is only after the wealth of Islamic nations.

There are also those within the AKP who are convinced the people who took to the streets in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya and now Syria did so as the result of some kind of massive Western-Israeli conspiracy against the Islamic world. It is clear such people are not aware of the oppression that people have had to live under for decades in those countries. Or it could be they are aware, but their ideological orientation does not allow them speak up.

The simple fact is, however, those who have taken to the streets in these countries and are now under attack are Muslims, and they make this apparent in their slogans and their funerals. We also saw how the opponents of Gadhafi, who we believe will be successful in the end, turned against Turkey. The same thing could easily happen in Syria if the AKP government continues to go softy softly on Assad.

This then is where the real contradiction lies. In other words, those who might turn on Turkey in the future by saying, "You did not support us at a critical moment in our history," are in fact much more Islamic than the regimes that are oppressing them. But they are not getting the support they want from the AKP government at their moment of greatest need. No doubt they will remember this in one way or another in the future.

Article 7.

SPIEGEL

An Alliance without a Strategy

Jörg Himmelreich

04/25/2011 -- The current mission in Libya is an illustration of greater problems within the NATO alliance -- the member states are no longer able to agree on a common strategy. The alliance has failed in its ability to redefine its mission in a post-Soviet world. NATO lacks ideas and unity, and Germany shares responsibility for this failure.

The NATO foreign ministers gathered in Berlin for a summit earlier this month may have worn diplomatic smiles on their faces, but the expressions seemed quite artificial -- and their ostentatious display of unity came off more like a masquerade than reality.

The truth is that the alliance is currently experiencing a lack of solidarity on a scale that has been rare in its history. Every country in the alliance appears to be pursuing its own national agenda, with few showing much willingness to compromise with their other partners.

To name but a few examples:

- The German government seemed almost dead-set in its determination to steer down the wrong path to international self-isolation with its abstention in the vote on March 17 on United Nations Resolution 1973, which granted military protection to Libya's civilian population. With its move, Germany frittered away any of the credibility it might have needed to be taken seriously in any further discussion on the military intervention. With state elections taking place just days after the vote, the government appeared to be more concerned with the ballot box at home than issues abroad.

- In a U-turn on its previous policy on Libya, France -- which has recently re-engaged itself as a NATO partner under President Nicolas Sarkozy -- conducted military air strikes on its own while NATO foreign ministers meeting in Paris were still discussing whether NATO should take over command for the military intervention in Libya from the United States. Previously, France had sought to keep NATO out of Libya for as long as possible, to provide a unique opportunity for Sarkozy to bolster his domestic standing in the run-up to French presidential elections next year.
- Recently, NATO partner Turkey has begun to see it as self-evident that it should act in a role as mediator between the Arab world and the West. In order to ensure that its role would not be damaged, Ankara prevented the alliance from acting for a decisive number of days.
- As the NATO alliance leader, the US also decided at rather short notice to demonstrate ambition in the fight against the dictators of the world. With Obama's re-election campaign starting there, Washington's moves also appeared to be motivated by domestic political considerations.

Obama is erroneously hoping that the NATO intervention can succeed without US leadership. The US president could lead -- both politically and militarily -- but he doesn't want to. Among the Europeans, it is Sarkozy who would most like to lead the mission, but he is incapable of doing so -- French munitions are already in short supply. And German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle is still insistent that no German soldier should set foot on Libyan soil, but in the next breath he says that Germany will provide military protection to humanitarian transports to Libya.

Otherwise, leaders in Berlin are crossing their fingers that the murderous Libyan despot, out of remorse, will voluntarily exit the stage into self-imposed exile.

NATO Lacks a Strategy

With such deep differences of opinion, it is currently impossible for NATO to develop a common strategy on how to proceed in the face of the present impasse in Libya. With air strikes alone, NATO will be unable to topple Gadhafi, but the current UN mandate doesn't even cover the necessary use of ground troops. Without obtaining arms from abroad, the rebels will also be incapable of gaining the upper hand. And even if they do manage to obtain weapons, it remains an open question whether or not they can prevail.

One thing the NATO foreign ministers were able to agree on at their Berlin summit was that Gadhafi's war against his own people -- and, thus, the NATO intervention -- will last longer than originally anticipated.

There are deeper reasons behind NATO's inability to agree on a common policy for the Libya intervention. The current problems are tied to profound strategy deficits within the alliance.

During the Cold War, the undisputed raison d'etre of the alliance was the US-led joint defense against a Soviet attack on the territory of a NATO member state -- anchored in the famous Article 5 of the NATO charter, which stipulates that an attack on Europe or North America would be considered an attack against all and obligates the other members to come to its aid. Germany, especially, benefitted from the protection offered by Article 5. With the implosion of the Soviet Union in 1991, though, NATO lost its enemy and the original reason for its inception.

Since then, numerous task forces and innumerable NATO summits have experimented with new strategy proposals. At the same time, though, the international security situation has been in a constant

state of flux and has changed in revolutionary ways. NATO had a strong historical -- and praiseworthy -- role to play in the transformation process of the former Warsaw Pact member states, culminating in 2005 with the accession of the Eastern European countries to NATO. But by the time of the Russian-Georgia conflict in 2008, at the very latest, NATO's enlargement euphoria had dissipated.

Profound Differences over Future Role

Today, the 28 NATO member states have profoundly different opinions about what the alliance's future course should be, a fact that even the new NATO strategy plan adopted at a summit in Riga in November was unable to conceal. It contains little by way of answers to some of the most pressing questions:

- What role should Russia be given in the efforts to develop a common missile defense to protect Europe from missiles that could be fired from the Middle East?
- Should NATO act as the global police in every conflict hot spot around the world?
- Should NATO troops be deployed to secure strategic marine trade lanes and commodity transports in the new era of African pirates?
- Can cyber attacks trigger an Article 5 collective response from NATO?

Opinions among the member states diverge greatly on each of these questions. And the member states are currently unable to agree to a common NATO strategy on any of these issues that is politically palatable for each country. Indeed, NATO today lacks the kind of supreme strategic objective that united all NATO partners up until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

And as long as there is no solidarity or political will among all the member states to establish a substantial new strategy that goes

beyond painless closing statements at summits that pay diplomatic lip service but add little in terms of content, NATO's ability to act militarily will remain compromised. And the more it loses its ability to act collectively, the more we will see individual NATO member states seeking out "coalitions of the willing," if those alignments better serve their own strategic interests. The result is the loss of one of NATO's key assets, the integration of the security policies of its 28 member states.

German Provincialism

In the face of this lack of will on the part of the Europeans, the United States' readiness to rapidly and constantly support the pursuit of European interests out of solidarity to the alliance will also diminish, as is currently illustrated in the case of Libya. The consequence of this is that NATO may transform into a forum for nonbinding trans-Atlantic political discourse. With solidarity fading away within the military alliance, the Europeans would be relegated to ensuring their security on their own in the future.

That is a scenario that surely cannot be in Germany's interests if it wants to pursue a serious, credible and responsible security policy. However, Germany's present self-isolation leaves the international community with the fatal impression that Germany, the former main beneficiary of NATO, is no longer available to shape a NATO strategy for the future. And why isn't it? Because of ignorant, nationalist-pacifist provincialism.

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