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Article 1.

Weekly Standard

Blaming the Jews—Again

Elliott Abrams

December 20, 2011 -- If you were an anti-Semite dedicated to spreading your hatred of Jews, what charges exactly would you make in 21st century America?

You would avoid the blood libel—too medieval to write of sacrificing Christian children to make Passover matzo. That kind of stuff circulates in Arab lands or Pakistan, but won't sell in suburban America. And the "Christ-killer" material is also dated, what with Vatican II, Evangelical support for Israel, and the like.

There are two charges you would make. First, the rich Jews control our government. Second, those Jews are trying to push America into war so your sons will have to fight for Israel.

In the last week that is exactly what we have seen. First came the Thomas Friedman column in the New York Times: "I sure hope that Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, understands that the standing ovation he got in Congress this year was not for his politics. That ovation was bought and paid for by the Israel lobby." Perhaps it was jealousy from seeing Walt and Mearsheimer sell all those books with this line, but Friedman here tips right into the swamps.

And now we have Joe Klein, in Time magazine, in a section accurately entitled "Swampland": "Iowa Republicans are not neoconservatives. Ron Paul has gained ground after a debate in which his refusal to join the Iran warhawks was front and center. Indeed, in my travels around the country, I don't meet many neoconservatives outside of Washington and New York. It's one thing to just adore Israel, as the evangelical Christians do; it's another

thing entirely to send American kids off to war, yet again, to fight for Israel's national security."

Now, Klein has chosen his medium well: Time has a history of anti-Semitism, illustrated by its famous 1977 story about Israel's prime minister that began "Menachem Begin (rhymes with Fagin)." But Klein's thoughts are about as ugly as ever appear outside of Pat Buchanan's publications. "There are only two groups that are beating the drums for war in the Middle East-the Israeli Defense Ministry and its amen corner in the United States," Buchanan said in 1990.

How different is that from what Klein just wrote? After all, Klein is saying (1) neoconservatives are Jews, and Jews are neoconservatives; (2) Evangelicals like Israel but they are real Americans who put their own country first, unlike Jews; (3) and what those Jews/neoconservatives really want is to send American boys off to fight Israel's wars, sparing Israeli kids and of course their own kids, who are apparently not "American kids" and anyway do not fight for their country. Of course Klein simply ignores the possibility that concern about the Iranian nuclear program does not make one a warmongering neoconservative, and actually extends even to Christians. Yesterday Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta said, "The United States does not want Iran to develop a nuclear weapon. That's a red line for us and that's a red line, obviously, for the Israelis. If we have to do it we will deal with it....If they proceed and we get intelligence that they are proceeding with developing a nuclear weapon then we will take whatever steps necessary to stop it."

Bought and paid for? Sending American kids off to fight for Israel's security?

These two recent statements are as vicious as it gets in the mainstream media, and here we have two Jews—Friedman and Klein—spreading the two major themes of contemporary American anti-Semitism. Why? Why now?

Why does it matter? Perhaps it is their hatred of Israel's right of center government, or of modern Israel, or of the rise of Orthodoxy in Israel and in the American Jewish community. Let us not descend into such analyses when what matters is not abnormal psychology but the bounds of public discourse. Once upon a time, William F. Buckley banned Pat Buchanan from the pages of National Review and in essence drummed him out of the conservative movement for such accusations. Today, where are the Anti-Defamation League, and the American Jewish Committee, and all the Jewish "defense" organizations? Where are all the Jewish groups which have given Klein and Friedman awards, demanding them back? Where are Jewish Democrats in Congress, who have no doubt wined and dined both Klein and Friedman in a thousand dinner parties, and Congressional leaders from Nancy Pelosi to Harry Reid? And what about our other supposed moral leaders, religious, intellectual, or political?

It isn't a small matter, because as we have learned the hard way with Walt and Mearsheimer, once the infection of anti-Semitism enters the mass media and the academy, it grows and grows. What begins as a "controversial statement" ends up on every reading list. Klein and Friedman, whatever their personal motivations for these statements, are helping popularize and make acceptable anti-Semitism in America. Their own publications will no doubt reward them for their advanced thinking. Will the rest of our society?

Article 2.

The National Interest

A New Hamas in the Making?

Bilal Y. Saab

December 20, 2011 -- Jane's, an internationally respected British security and defense risk-analysis firm, has recently reported that Hamas, the Palestinian militant group, is on "the brink of renouncing armed resistance and moving to a policy of nonviolent resistance to Israel." Jane's, with which I have been a monthly writer to three of its publications since 2007, has several hard-to-ignore quotes in its report of Hamas leaders saying that the move was not "tactical" but "strategic." Also interviewed are Palestinian Authority intelligence officers who said that Hamas's strategy was "gradual and nuanced," with one senior officer telling Jane's that Hamas "intends to keep its military and security units to control the situation in Gaza, not necessarily to fight the Israelis." The interviewees' names were not mentioned for obvious security reasons.

I urge every subscriber to Jane's to read that groundbreaking piece of reporting because, even if it is not publicly confirmed yet by Hamas's leadership, it has all the makings of a fascinating story which I am positive will generate an intense debate not only in the Arab world and Israel but also in Washington and other Western capitals. The story is starting to get serious attention in the international press with the Financial Times, Sydney Herald Tribune and other media outlets covering it.

The report, written by my friend and colleague David Hartwell, Jane's Middle East and Islamic affairs editor, argues that the springboard for this new strategic approach by Hamas is the Arab uprising. More directly, Egypt, Qatar and Turkey reportedly played a key role in convincing Hamas to reconcile with its historical rival

Fatah and end armed resistance against Israel. Hartwell writes that Hamas leader Khaled Meshal, in a meeting on November 24 in Cairo with Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas, accepted "in writing with a signature" the need to embrace peaceful activism. And if this is not controversial enough, echoing Syrian opposition leader Burhan Ghalioun, Hamas's leadership also told Jane's that it will be "downgrading its ties with Syria and Iran and forge new relationships with Egypt, Qatar, and Turkey."

In some ways, perhaps, this development could have been foreseen. Even the most ideological and stubborn actors in the Middle East have been forced to adjust to the new political realities created by the Arab uprising. Hezbollah in Lebanon, for example, has been feeling increasingly vulnerable and isolated lately because of the escalating civil conflict in Syria and the threat that poses to its ally, the Syrian regime. Hezbollah recently made significant concessions at home, including its approval of funding for the Special Tribunal for Lebanon—an entity that Hezbollah's leadership for years had viewed as a tool used by Israel and the United States to defeat it. Other signs of Hezbollah's contemplation of life after Syrian president Bashar Assad include its decision to move most of its military hardware that has been stored in Syria back to areas under its control inside Lebanon, including the South and the Bekaa.

Yet despite its evident tactical adjustments, Hezbollah hasn't suggested any intent to disarm, forge new strategic alliances or end its military struggle against Israel. In fact, in a rare public appearance this month, Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah declared that his party will remain defiant, side with Assad's Syria and never relinquish its arms. If Hamas, an ally of Hezbollah, Syria and Iran (the so-called Resistance Axis), truly intends to reinvent itself, that would be a historic development with massive political and security implications

not just for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but also for the whole of Middle East politics.

There are numerous questions surrounding Hamas's reported decision, the most obvious being why it could have possibly adopted such a stance. It is one thing to say that Hamas felt motivated and/or pressured by Turkey, Egypt and Qatar to renounce violence. But it takes much more for an organization to abandon everything it has stood for and create for itself a new identity. After all, Saudi Arabia and Egypt have tried countless times in the past to shape Hamas and lure it, with financial and political rewards, to leave the pro-Iran-Syria-Hezbollah camp and give up armed struggle. The strategy did not work simply because Hamas felt it had much more to lose than gain. The Resistance Axis was always on the rise, especially after the 2003 Iraq war as Iran and Syria gained influence in the region at the expense of their rivals.

No more. Today, with Iran feeling more cornered by the international community (minus Russia and China) than ever because of its controversial nuclear program and with Syria's regime fighting an existential battle against its own people, the balance of power is shifting in the Middle East, and this has not gone unnoticed by Hamas. It is foolish to deny that Hamas's decisions and behavior have been partly driven by ideological convictions and motivations, but it is also wrong to argue the organization has not acted rationally, based on material interest. The decision it reportedly has currently taken may be further proof of that.

While it is important to remember that Hamas's leadership has not gone public with its decision, it is worth noting that the majority of its external political staff has already evacuated Damascus, where it has a key office managed by Meshal. Their next destination is likely to be Cairo and Doha, where leaders there have committed to sponsoring the movement politically and financially. Unlike

Hezbollah, Hamas has refused to say publicly that it is siding with the Syrian regime, a move that has angered not only the Syrian leadership but also the mullahs in Tehran—causing them, according to Jane's and other sources, to stop providing financial assistance. With money drying up and winds of change rocking the region, it is no wonder Hamas was fed up with Syria and Iran. One also cannot exclude the sectarian underpinnings of Hamas's decision. While Hamas never allowed its religious identity—Sunni—to prevent it from forming necessary and strategic alliances with Shiite Iran and Hezbollah, the party is pragmatic enough to realize that positioning itself against the Sunni Islamist tide that is currently sweeping the region (in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, possibly Syria and elsewhere) is against its long-term interests. Having operated in the Iranian strategic orbit in the past, Hamas might now wish to embrace its old identity as a branch of the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood.

Hamas's decision, if real, will take time to implement. Since its founding in 1987, the organization's bread-and-butter stance has been armed resistance coupled with terrorist activity. Should Hamas's leadership publicly state its new strategy, the first thing it will have to do is come up with a new charter as evidence to the world that its move is not propaganda. The organization will also need substantial help from Arab countries and others interested in such a development. The world, including the United States, will not accept Hamas's transformation if it is half-hearted. In other words, Hamas will have to integrate its military into the security forces of the Palestinian Authority in order to get the attention and support it desires.

The implications of such a Hamas decision could be huge. Theoretically, it will create a united Palestinian front. In other words, there would be few divisions within Palestinian society to inhibit progress in negotiations with the Israelis, a major boost for the

Palestinian cause. Two things remain unclear, however: how Hamas's constituency and Israel would deal with this massive shift. It is not unreasonable to assume that Hamas would not make such a dramatic move without testing the waters and feeling the mood in the Palestinian street. Hamas knows its constituency well enough to realize that the costs it might suffer as a result of such a decision are likely to be tolerable. Furthermore, Hamas's support base is not necessarily ideological. Many credible polls suggest that those who have voted for Hamas over the past few years have done so out of pragmatic reasons and anger toward Fatah for its governmental failures. As far as Israel is concerned, the suspicion is that moderates and those truly committed to peace and a two-state solution will be supportive of Hamas's transformation. The hard-liners will remain critical and will always find an excuse to object. Marking its twenty-fourth anniversary this week, Hamas leaders did not even hint that they may switch strategy. They insisted instead that they will never recognize Israel. For Israeli hard-liners, this is reason enough to remain skeptical of any move by Hamas.

If Hamas actually seeks to pursue such a decision, the United States will be confronted with a crucial choice. It can lend its verbal and material support for the move and cite its concerns and reservations. Or it can stand against it and endorse whatever the Israeli government says and does on the matter. Hence, a large onus likely will rest on Washington as well as on Hamas.

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Article 3.

NYT

The End, for Now

Thomas L. Friedman

December 20, 2011 -- With the withdrawal of the last U.S. troops from Iraq, we're finally going to get the answer to the core question about that country: Was Iraq the way Iraq was because Saddam was the way Saddam was, or was Saddam the way Saddam was because Iraq is the way Iraq is — a collection of sects and tribes unable to live together except under an iron fist. Now we're going to get the answer because both the internal iron fist that held Iraq together (Saddam Hussein) and the external iron fist (the U.S. armed forces) have been removed. Now we will see whether Iraqis can govern themselves in a decent manner that will enable their society to progress — or end up with a new iron fist. You have to hope for the best because so much is riding on it, but the early signs are worrying.

Iraq was always a war of choice. As I never bought the argument that Saddam had nukes that had to be taken out, the decision to go to war stemmed, for me, from a different choice: Could we collaborate with the people of Iraq to change the political trajectory of this pivotal state in the heart of the Arab world and help tilt it and the region onto a democratizing track? After 9/11, the idea of helping to change the context of Arab politics and address the root causes of Arab state dysfunction and Islamist terrorism — which were identified in the 2002 Arab Human Development Report as a deficit of freedom, a deficit of knowledge and a deficit of women's empowerment — seemed to me to be a legitimate strategic choice. But was it a wise choice?

My answer is twofold: "No" and "Maybe, sort of, we'll see."

I say “no” because whatever happens in Iraq, even if it becomes Switzerland, we overpaid for it. And, for that, I have nothing but regrets. We overpaid in lives, in the wounded, in tarnished values, in dollars and in the lost focus on America’s development. Iraqis, of course, paid dearly as well.

One reason the costs were so high is because the project was so difficult. Another was the incompetence of George W. Bush’s team in prosecuting the war. The other reason, though, was the nature of the enemy. Iran, the Arab dictators and, most of all, Al Qaeda did not want a democracy in the heart of the Arab world, and they tried everything they could — in Al Qaeda’s case, hundreds of suicide bombers financed by Arab oil money — to sow enough fear and sectarian discord to make this democracy project fail.

So no matter the original reasons for the war, in the end, it came down to this: Were America and its Iraqi allies going to defeat Al Qaeda and its allies in the heart of the Arab world or were Al Qaeda and its allies going to defeat them? Thanks to the Sunni Awakening movement in Iraq, and the surge, America and its allies defeated them and laid the groundwork for the most important product of the Iraq war: the first ever voluntary social contract between Sunnis, Kurds and Shiites for how to share power and resources in an Arab country and to govern themselves in a democratic fashion. America helped to midwife that contract in Iraq, and now every other Arab democracy movement is trying to replicate it — without an American midwife. You see how hard it is.

Which leads to the “maybe, sort of, we’ll see.” It is possible to overpay for something that is still transformational. Iraq had its strategic benefits: the removal of a genocidal dictator; the defeat of Al Qaeda there, which diminished its capacity to attack us; the intimidation of Libya, which prompted its dictator to surrender his nuclear program (and helped expose the Abdul Qadeer Khan nuclear

network); the birth in Kurdistan of an island of civility and free markets and the birth in Iraq of a diverse free press. But Iraq will only be transformational if it truly becomes a model where Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds, the secular and religious, Muslims and non-Muslims, can live together and share power.

As you can see in Syria, Yemen, Egypt, Libya and Bahrain, this is the issue that will determine the fate of all the Arab awakenings. Can the Arab world develop pluralistic, consensual politics, with regular rotations in power, where people can live as citizens and not feel that their tribe, sect or party has to rule or die? This will not happen overnight in Iraq, but if it happens over time it would be transformational, because it is the necessary condition for democracy to take root in that region. Without it, the Arab world will be a dangerous boiling pot for a long, long time.

The best-case scenario for Iraq is that it will be another Russia — an imperfect, corrupt, oil democracy that still holds together long enough so that the real agent of change — a new generation, which takes nine months and 21 years to develop — comes of age in a much more open, pluralistic society. The current Iraqi leaders are holdovers from the old era, just like Vladimir Putin in Russia. They will always be weighed down by the past. But as Putin is discovering — some 21 years after Russia's democratic awakening began — that new generation thinks differently. I don't know if Iraq will make it. The odds are really long, but creating this opportunity was an important endeavor, and I have nothing but respect for the Americans, Brits and Iraqis who paid the price to make it possible.

Article 4.

The Washington Post

In Iraq, a return to old enmities

Editorial

December 21 -- PRESIDENT OBAMA struck a “mission accomplished” tone when he greeted Nouri al-Maliki at the White House last week, heaping praise on the Iraqi prime minister and declaring that he “leads Iraq’s most inclusive government yet.” It didn’t take long for those words to boomerang. No sooner had Mr. Maliki returned to Baghdad than he launched what looks like an attempted coup against the country’s top Sunni leaders. Though the outcome is still in doubt, Iraq’s fragile political order appears in danger of crumbling just days after the departure of U.S. troops.

Mr. Maliki’s strike took the form of criminal charges against Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi, a Sunni known for his attempts to find accord with Shiite leaders. Three security guards arrested last week were paraded on state television Monday, where they confessed to acts of terrorism and alleged that Mr. Hashimi had directed them. Mr. Maliki, meanwhile, asked parliament for a no-confidence vote against Deputy Prime Minister Saleh Mutlaq, another Sunni. Sunni members of parliament and cabinet ministers responded by suspending their work — threatening a governmental collapse.

We haven’t seen enough to judge the charges against Mr. Hashemi, and few Sunni or Shiite leaders are free of any link to the violence that has wracked Iraq since 2003. But both the timing and the televised form of Mr. Maliki’s charges against the vice president were blatantly political. They followed what has been a mounting campaign by the prime minister, a Shiite with close ties to Iran, against perceived Sunni enemies. Hundreds of former members of Saddam Hussein’s Baath party have been arrested in recent weeks.

Security forces controlled by Mr. Maliki have surrounded the compounds of Sunni leaders in Baghdad.

The Obama administration appears blindsided by the crisis. It shouldn't be so surprised. It risked just such a breakdown when it disregarded the recommendation of its military commanders that some U.S. forces remain in Iraq to help guarantee against a return to sectarian conflict. Sunni and Kurdish leaders also urged U.S. officials to broker a deal for a stay-on force with Mr. Maliki; now they say their worst fears may be coming to pass. "The Americans pulled out without completing the job they should have finished," Iyad Allawi, the leader of the secular political bloc supported by most Sunnis, told the Reuters news agency Tuesday.

The U.S. withdrawal was forced in part by a deal struck by the Bush administration, as well as domestic pressure on Mr. Maliki from Iran's proxies. But White House aides who argued that no stay-on force was necessary will now see their argument tested. U.S. diplomats in Baghdad are trying to help Iraq's Kurdish president and foreign minister defuse the incipient conflict; Vice President Biden was on the phone Tuesday to Mr. Maliki and the Sunni speaker of parliament. Washington's leverage includes the promised sale to Mr. Maliki's government of F-16 warplanes and training for Iraqi pilots. Mr. Maliki has said he wishes to maintain a strategic partnership with the United States. If that's true, Mr. Obama might still rescue the situation by delivering the message he failed to communicate in public last week: Such an alliance cannot be maintained with an Iraqi government that pursues a sectarian agenda or seeks authoritarian power.

Article 5.

New York Review of Books

Egypt on the Edge

Yasmine El Rashidi

January 12, 2012 -- It has been almost one year since Hosni Mubarak gave up power, and in the months since then, the future of a newly democratic Egypt has been uncertain. The political transition all but stalled this past summer, as tensions between Muslims and Copts erupted, street violence flared, and the various post-Mubarak political factions repeatedly disagreed on the form the new Egypt should have. This fall, the military council now ruling the country—the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF)—was itself drawn into violent conflict with protesters, leading to more than forty deaths in a single week. Many wondered, amid all this, if a democratically elected civilian government would ever take office.

In late November, as Egyptians finally went to the polling stations, the direction the country would most likely take was at last becoming clear. If the preliminary results of the parliamentary elections are any indication, most Egyptians want a country governed by the Islamists, whom Mubarak and his allies had aggressively tried to suppress. In the first of a three-stage election process, which began on November 28 and ends on January 10, the Islamist factions emerged with 69.6 percent of the votes. Only nine of Egypt's twenty-seven governorates voted in the first stage on November 28, and there are several weeks to go until the rest cast their ballots—there are some 52 million registered voters in all—but since many of the remaining electoral districts are ones in which the Islamists are known to have a strong popular following, it seems likely that their lead will be maintained, if not strengthened.

That the country's first free and fair elections will likely result in a parliament in which the Islamists have a dominant majority is casting doubt on the promise of the democratic state that many who took part in the revolution hoped to achieve. When youth protesters first took to Cairo's Tahrir Square on January 25, they chanted their desire, among other things, for a state that promised social justice, unity, and equal rights for all. For eighteen days last winter, that model for a new and democratic Egypt seemed plausible; it was being lived in Tahrir. Copts and Muslims, women and men, youth and the elderly, secular and religious protested and prayed together and shared tents and meals. The Copts shielded the Muslims against possible attacks by thugs while they knelt down and prayed, and hundreds of the youth members of the Muslim Brotherhood surrounded the square as guardians for all, searching bags, checking IDs, and trying to ensure that informants or people hoping to disrupt the demonstrations would be swiftly escorted out.

In the aftermath of the first election results, many are wondering if the unity that came to typify the Tahrir protests is now a dream of the past. What is the fate of an Islamist-dominated Egypt? And what does it mean for the country's liberal minorities—the Coptic Christian community, the moderate Muslim upper class, the remaining handful of Jews, and middle-class Muslims who in spite of their adherence to the rituals of Islam are committed to preserving the cosmopolitan Egypt they grew up in? The concerns of some of these groups are largely about the ways they will live. Will women be prevented from working? Will the veil become compulsory? Will public spaces be segregated to separate men from women? (Such measures are supported by the Salafist Al-Nour Party, which has so far received 18.5 percent of the vote.) For the Copts, who make up some 10 percent of the country's 82 million people and who have faced increasing persecution since Mubarak stepped down on February 11,

whether they will be left to freely practice their faith is an acute and daily concern.

Many people are also worried that tourism and the economy might suffer a ruinous blow if laws are passed to ban bathing suits and alcohol and to cover pharaonic monuments—as several Islamists have proposed in recent months. Although the Muslim Brotherhood in particular has so far expressed its commitment to building a democratic and moderate society, many fear that once the Islamists settle into power, their tune might change.

The likelihood of Egypt transforming from a moderate and open society to one resembling Saudi Arabia or Iran seems highly improbable, at least in the short or medium term. After 498 members of the 508-seat "lower parliament" are finally installed on January 14 (the remaining ten members will be appointed by the SCAF), there will be elections for the parliament's "upper house." This will be a consultative council of 270 seats—180 of which will be filled by elections, and 90 by members appointed by the SCAF, a clear sign of the continuing powers of the military. Once that entire structure is in place, the parliament's immediate task will be to select a committee to draft the long-awaited new constitution.

Since the revolution last winter, the subject of the constitution has proved to be divisive, pitting political factions against one another for eight months. The Islamists, confident of winning the elections, were demanding that the newly elected parliament be granted absolute authority to draft the constitution to its liking. The liberals for their part wanted a supraconstitutional declaration promising respect for religious minorities, as well as the broader vision of a democratic state. To each draft of such a document (proposals were made by both leaders of the Muslim Al-Azhar University and the interim deputy prime minister) the various factions have had objections. On December 7, the SCAF further complicated matters by announcing

that it would appoint a council to oversee the drafting of the constitution in order to limit the influence of religious extremism. The de facto military rulers now seem intent on using the rising threat of Islamist rule as their excuse for remaining involved in the country's affairs, and the future power of the army, which has large economic influence and holdings, remains a central question for Egyptian politics.

Under current rules, for example, the parliament will have limited powers. The military council that is now running the country will continue to have overriding authority, which it has used to curb media freedoms and arbitrarily subject civilians to military trials. It is expected that the parliamentary majority will try to put pressure on the military by passing legislation giving itself the absolute right to appoint a new government and to draft the constitution that will shape the country's future (already this week the Brotherhood accused the military of trying to undermine the parliament's authority and said they would boycott the advisory council being formed by them to oversee the drafting of the constitution). With the political balance of the new parliament favoring the Islamists, the liberals worry about the ideological direction Egypt might take. As such concerns have increased, many liberals have slowly shifted away from their previously staunch opposition both to the SCAF and to the remnants of the former regime—the felool.

The largest liberal coalition, El-Kotla or the Egyptian Bloc, includes many former MPs who had strong influence under the Mubarak regime. Liberals now view them as preferable to the Islamists. Members of the Egyptian Bloc are also now advocating the continued involvement of the SCAF in the country's affairs so that it can guarantee that the basic tenets of the constitution remain untouched—namely, that Egypt remain a democratic, modern state, a commitment the SCAF has repeatedly made.

What will happen, then, when the new parliament begins its first session in March? Most likely we can expect continuing arguments over the extent of the parliament's authority, the timetable for transition and the handing over of powers from the military, and what the new cabinet should look like. In the debate over the constitution many of the Islamists, in particular those of the Muslim Brotherhood, will probably try to exert influence not through outright demands that it be based on Islamic sharia law—already, Article 2 in the current constitution states that Islam is the religion of the state and the principle source of legislation is Islamic jurisprudence—but rather through a subtle play on words and syllables in the Arabic language that can convey double meanings. They will favor a constitution with provisions that provide leeway for later reinterpretation. There will no doubt be fanatical members of the ultra-orthodox Salafis who push for a constitution that asserts boldly and clearly that Egypt is an Islamic state—indeed, some Salafis are already supporting this—but it is doubtful that they will form an overriding majority.

The transitional parliament could be in power for what might be as little as a one-year term, while a regular term in the previous Egyptian parliament was five years. The two largest political factions in the so-called "lower house"—the Muslim Brotherhood (represented by its political arm, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP)) and the Salafi Al-Nour Party—are well aware that within that term, their constituents will expect them to deliver on some of their promises. Among the failures of both the SCAF and the various interim cabinets in recent months have been their responses to the demands of the revolutionaries, which have resulted in large-scale protests calling for them to step down. Egyptians will expect that the parliament deliver some tangible and immediate results—a pressure that will be felt by the liberal MPs as well.

The Muslim Brotherhood has decades of organizational and administrative experience. Aside from its expansive nationwide networks, its services to the needy have included selling meat at wholesale prices, offering subsidized school supplies, helping with medical treatment, and providing handouts of fresh produce, sugar, cooking oil, and other items. These activities have won it popular followings. The Brotherhood has also long had leading and instrumental parts in the country's various professional syndicates and labor unions. The doctors', lawyers', and engineers' syndicates, for example, have historically been dominated and led by Brotherhood members. At the journalists' syndicate, reporters say that some of the board members affiliated with the Brotherhood have provided the best and most efficient services to the syndicate's members to date—health care plans, for example.

It is the Brotherhood's strengths in such different spheres of life—both in municipal welfare and as prominent business owners themselves—that give rise to hopes that it will be a positive force in Egypt. Essam el-Erian, deputy head of the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party and the group's long-time spokesperson, told me this week: "We are ready for democracy and this parliament will work to rebuild this country for all Egyptians." The party's secretary-general, Mohamed el-Beltagy, said something similar, insisting that the parliament, and his party in particular, would serve as "the representative of the people": "we have to respect one another and defend the rights of all Egyptians—of the entire nation and its people."

The FJP seems to know that it has little choice but to act in a moderate and strategic manner. Issues of education, the economy, and rising inflation are of critical concern and need to be tackled immediately. In both their pre-election campaign rallies and recent press conferences, the Brotherhood leaders have promoted moderate

positions. They have included among their supporters a variety of liberal and secular professionals. At the FJP's first public rally before the elections in the working-class district of Bulac, a leading member of the liberal Egyptian Bloc coalition was among the invited speakers. It also has women and Copts among its members. Many of the hundreds of Muslim Brotherhood women I have encountered at its events work, and some hold full-time jobs. During the years immediately ahead, there is little reason for the party leaders to radically change their tone.

For Islamist factions, the coming parliamentary term offers an opportunity to widen their support and allay fears of Islamic domination. The FJP will doubtless take advantage of its plurality to show that it does not menace the rights of others. But among the MPs of the Salafi Al-Nour, it seems likely that there will be a divide; many Salafist members of parliament envision an Egypt on the model of Saudi Arabia.

During the next year the laws regarding codes of dress or matters of faith and worship will probably remain unchanged. Transformations are more likely to take place in subtle ways. As the social and cultural landscape of the country is altered, the visibly orthodox Muslims will become freer in their movements. Under the Mubarak regime, the Salafis with their bushy beards and ankle-length galabiyas were very closely watched; many of them were virtually under house arrest. In the months since Mubarak was ousted, and certainly in the center of Cairo, there has been a visible rise in the number of bearded men and of women who are fully veiled. The men, in particular, say that they were persecuted for their beards under Mubarak's regime, often keeping them trim if they grew them at all. Or as many told me, they simply stayed in their Islamist governorates or city suburbs, where the state's informants kept them under watch. Now it is probable that

the more liberal Muslims, and the country's Copts, will feel increasingly out of place.

When I went out to vote on the morning of November 28, a topic of discussion as we stood in line for six hours waiting to cast our ballots was what our futures might hold if the Islamists took power. Many women, my mother and her cousins and friends included, shared stories of the past—how they used to take public transportation wearing short skirts or open V-neck tops. "The good old days," they called them. But many women like my mother, and the others who stood in line in the well-to-do neighborhood of Zamalek, also understand that they are a minority in a country where 40 percent of the population is living on two dollars a day. For many, but certainly not all, such poor people, a sense of security and basic guarantees of survival are paramount. At polling stations in poorer districts of Cairo, like Imbaba, Shubra, and Ain Shams, people told me that they wanted "stability and a strong economy," and that "ultimately it is in God's hands." During the campaign, liberals spoke of a secular state; Islamists, trying to speak for the masses, concentrated on the cost of food. It is on such promises of better conditions that the Islamists will be expected to deliver.

Some of the election results were not unexpected. The Muslim Brotherhood has long been known to be the country's largest and most organized movement, with widespread networks and growing popular support. As it offered increasing numbers of Egyptians social services where the government had failed, it came to be considered the greatest threat to the Mubarak regime. The deposed leader had often warned that if he left power, the Muslim Brotherhood would rise.

Indeed, in the 2005 parliamentary elections, Muslim Brotherhood members—forced as an outlawed political group to run as independent candidates—won the largest bloc of seats, eighty-eight,

in opposition to the ruling National Democratic Party (NDP), which won 311 seats. The ballots, moreover, were significantly rigged in the NDP's favor. What is surprising, then, is not that—with a voter turnout of 52 percent—the Brotherhood won 47.6 percent of the votes in November, and seems likely to win more in the remaining elections. What was unexpected was that the ultra-orthodox Islamist Salafis, newcomers to electoral politics, won 18.5 percent of the votes. (The moderate Islamist Al-Wasat Party took 2.4 percent, and the liberal parties and coalitions collectively just 20.5 percent, 7.1 percent of the vote going to the nationalist liberal Al-Wafd and 10.7 percent to the Egyptian Bloc.)

The success of the Salafis—mainly represented by the Al-Nour Party, which was formed after the revolution—seems partly owing to recent miscalculations of the Brotherhood, which has repeatedly been absent from Friday protests and demonstrations that had the support of most other political groups, even the Salafis. The Brotherhood boycotted the May 27 "Day of Rage," or "Second Revolution," angering many of the million people who took part. Over the months, the Brotherhood leaders also changed and changed again their positions on a variety of issues—including the status of Copts and the end goal of an Islamic state—earning them the reputation, as I often heard said, of "never speaking the entire truth." In conversations with voters in poor neighborhoods during the November 28–29 vote, I frequently heard: "The Brotherhood can't fully be trusted; they don't stick to their words. The Salafis are pure."

Perhaps their biggest mistake came on November 18, when tens of thousands of Egyptians—responding to a call by the Brotherhood—returned to Tahrir Square to protest a government draft document that seemed, among other things, to give the ruling SCAF control over the writing of the new constitution. The demonstration went off

peacefully, and when darkness eventually fell, the Brotherhood packed up and left, satisfied with the show of force.

In the early hours of the following morning, riot police stormed the square, forcefully clearing it of the remaining protesters, mainly activists and revolutionary coalitions. In the days that followed, clashes between the police and protesters escalated, with the state's various security forces unleashing a kind of violence that had rarely been seen since the revolution. Tear gas was fired in toxic amounts, poisoning many and killing some; specially trained forces seemed to be targeting protesters' eyes. In the course of a single day, five young men lost sight in one eye, and one man—Ahmed Harara—was blinded (he had lost his first eye on January 28).

Egyptians were outraged at the level of violence—forty-two people were killed—and at the SCAF's refusal to take responsibility, withdraw the state's security forces, and issue an apology. Many liberal parties suspended their campaigns, and some called for the elections to be postponed. The interim cabinet resigned in response to the violent attacks, and the presidential candidate Mohamed Elbaradei offered to forgo his presidential ambitions and instead serve as temporary prime minister to deal with the crisis. The country's highest Islamic authority, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar University, succeeded in brokering a truce on the streets so that elections could go forward.

Throughout it all, the Muslim Brotherhood was conspicuously absent, cau- tious about taking sides. On TV programs and talk shows, the liberal candidates went to great lengths to explain why it was not moral to continue their election campaigns while people were dying in Tahrir. The Brotherhood leaders, for their part, insisted that elections take place soon; they knew they were far ahead of the other parties and coalitions. They had been waiting for this moment for eighty years; they weren't prepared to let it slip away.

On the night of November 24, members of the Brotherhood reappeared in the square with the intention of clearing it—along with the embattled Mohamed Mahmoud Street—of the remaining protesters. “They did everything they could to get people to go home,” a friend told me. “They would assess the type of person you are, and speak to you in a way that they thought would persuade you. They were willing to go to any lengths to make sure that people left that night.”

It is widely believed that the Brotherhood leaders had made a deal with the SCAF. They would clear the main demonstration site and calm the protesters, and the SCAF in return would hold the elections on time. Many blamed the Brotherhood for how long the clashes lasted and how many lives were lost. In Tahrir on November 25 the Islamist researcher and political analyst Ibrahim El Houdaiby told a group of us: “It would have taken a completely different direction had the Brotherhood come out last weekend and put their weight behind the people.” Even Islamists and some preachers and veiled women spoke of their disappointment with the Brotherhood; they hoped that it wouldn’t win the polls of the following week.

Still, the liberal parties were not able to find much support from the underclass, whether in poor urban districts or rural Egypt. They could not penetrate the decades-old informal networks that have long been dominated by family and tribal alliances, religious affiliations, or agents of the former regime. Even if they had succeeded, the most prominent of the liberal coalitions, the Egyptian Bloc, was headed by the Free Egyptians Party, founded by the telecom tycoon Naguib Sawiris, whose popularity plummeted in June when he tweeted a cartoon of Mickey and Minnie Mouse wearing Muslim gowns and headdresses—Mickey with a bushy beard, and Minnie in a face veil. “Mickey and Minnie after…,” he wrote.

In the weeks following, a full-scale campaign was launched against him by Islamists, urging people to boycott his businesses. In a matter of weeks, 304,000 subscribers left his telecom provider, Mobinil, for local competitors; his company suffered losses of 96 percent for the third quarter of 2011. Even among some liberal Egyptians, Sawiris's tweet was seen as going too far: "We are a largely Muslim country, Sawiris has to remember and respect that." In response to the cartoon, a Coptic friend posted on Facebook a message that "the revolution was about unity, not such attacks."

Amid all this, the Salafi Al-Nour Party has preached in favor of its puritan form of Islam, and a state governed by its principles—one with the same religious restrictions as Saudi Arabia—as the answer to the country's social and economic woes. The Salafists swiftly followed the lead of the Muslim Brotherhood, providing free and subsidized goods and services to the poor, and focusing their campaign messages on the price of food and cost of living. We don't know how much the party's appeal was hurt or enhanced by the fact that its campaign posters didn't feature pictures of its female candidates, and instead had an image of a rose above their printed names. At a political rally in a public square in Alexandria, it covered a statue of a mermaid with a cloth. But it appealed to Egyptians who spoke the language of the street and believed, among other things, that ultimately, the future of Egypt is in "the hands of Allah."

In the days since the initial election results were released, the liberals have been discussing how to regroup and prepare for the weeks and voting rounds ahead. Many liberal Muslims and Copts are talking about what the future might hold, including immigration. The Islamist parties, for their part, are anxious not to be grouped together. The FJP has firmly stated that it will not enter an alliance with the Salafis, who themselves have said they will not walk in the shadow of the Brotherhood. (Before the elections, the two groups had agreed on

a code of proper behavior during them, but they have not entered into a political alliance.)

In months to come, Egypt's first freely elected parliament will probably be as fragmented as the political landscape that preceded it. During what will be a period of immense pressure, the Muslim Brotherhood will most likely emerge as a mediator and perhaps the ally of the parliament's liberal coalition. The military, for its part, will undoubtedly continue to have a hand in the country's affairs, whether overtly through a provision of the constitution, or through tactical pacts with factions in parliament. Having waited since 1928 for this moment, the Brotherhood can be expected to wait another few years before attempting to make any drastic or fundamental changes in the social and cultural life of the Egyptian state.

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Article 6.

INEGMA

Syrian Uprising: Its Impact on Iran and Possibility of Civil War

Riad Kahwaji

December 20, 2011 -- Over ten months have passed and the Syrian uprising has maintained its strong momentum without a near end in sight. The Syrian regime of President Bashar Assad has signed an Arab-League plan aimed at quelling the violence in the country that has claimed the lives of over 5,000 people and injured thousands others. However, most observers and analysts in the Middle East have cast doubt on the sincerity and seriousness of the Syrian Baath Party regime to implement the Arab League plan. The suppression of the Syrian public uprising has all but increased since the signing of the Arab plan on December 19. Expectations by most regional experts and officials are that sooner or later the Syrian file will be referred to the United Nations Security Council, and a Turkish-led international military intervention would be inevitable. However, the resilience of the Syrian regime has surprised many, but so did the determination of the Syrian people who seems to have reached th point of no-return in its uprising to topple the Assad regime and end the half century old Baath Party rule.

Iran appears to be the most anxious party over the course of events in Syria. Syria has been the other strong side of the Iranian axis in the region that has been engaged in a Cold War against a U.S.-led alliance that includes several Western and Arab states. Iran has worked on building this axis since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, and in addition to Syria includes two strong non-state actors: Hamas and Hizbullah. Syria has been the bridge for Iran in the Arab

world and losing the Assad regime would break this bridge and disconnect Iran from its strongest regional player: Hizbullah in Lebanon. So the collapse of the Syrian regime will destroy Iran's current strategic position in the region that is the fruit of two decades of hard work and billions of dollars. Burhan Galyoun, the head of the Syrian National Council that groups all main opposition forces has already stated that the first order of business for the nex government of a Syria after Assad will be to end the strategic relations that Damascus has with both Iran and Hizbullah.

Tehran seems to continue to bet on the Syrian regime for one main reason and that is it does not have any other options. "Iran will back Assad regime to the very end," asserted an Iranian expert who also advices the presidency in Tehran. He pointed out that Iran believes Assad could still survive the current crisis, providing that the United Nations or the West do not intervene militarily. "The Assad regime has learned a valuable lesson from (the late deposed Libya leader) Moammar Ghaddafi, and that is so long as it has a monopoly on the absolute use of violence it will not fall no matter how many people protest and march," the Iranian expert said. "Ghaddafi could have won and remained in power if it wasn't for the NATO intervention," he added. So the Syrian regime's strategy to quell the uprising is to use full military force against the opposition, and to use all its cards and connections to prevent an international intervention. Even though Assad is playing for time the time factor is playing against the regime as a result of the strong determination shown by the people despite the ferocity of the Syrian military and security forces in dealing with protestors and opposition figures.

The Syrian opposition in turn is becoming more organized internally and externally. Faced with hesitation by some international powers to back an intervention in Syria, the Syrian opposition leaders have decided to become more self-sufficient. Efforts to raise money to self-

sustain their activities outside and inside Syria have proven successful so far. Donations by a large base of wealthy Syrian businessmen and supporters have brought in millions of dollars that will enable the opposition to better organize itself and gain international recognition and support. However, the danger of delaying international intervention would compel the Syrian opposition to become more self-dependent in their internal efforts to fight back the Syrian military onslaught. Thousands of Syrian troops appear to have defected and are now organizing in small groups around the country, engaging the regime's forces in guerrilla warfare. But the fighting is taking more on the form of sectaria clashes between the predominantly Alawite forces of the regime and the largely Sunni opposition forces. If unchecked by a swift international intervention to end the conflict, Syria will most likely slide into a sectarian war between the Alawite minority and Sunni majority. Expectations now are that the Syrian regime will probably fail to implement the Arab plan, and subsequently will miss its last chance to prevent the internationalization of the conflict. As of January 2012, the Arab seat in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) will go to Morocco after it was held by Lebanon for 2 years. Due to the strong Syrian-Iranian influence in the current Lebanese government, the Lebanese envoy to the UN opposed any resolutions against Syria. But with Morocco, the situation will be much different and the Arab League would be able to present a strong resolution against the Syrian regime. Many diplomats and analysts believe a resolution proposed by the Arabs at the UNSC will not face much resistance from China and Russia and will most likely be passed. Whenever the UNSC refers the UN Human Rights report on Syria to the War Crimes Court and issues a resolution calling for the creation of safe-corridors or implementation of a no-fly zone ove northern Syria, then Turkey would have the needed international political cover to lead a

military alliance that will establish a safe-zone for the defected Syrian forces to organize and will also prompt many Syrian military and government figures to turn against the Assad regime.
Fear of international players, including Israel, that an international intervention could create another Libya scenario inside Syria is not fully true. Hesitant Syrian officials who still support the regime will likely reconsider their position whenever they see the regime's strategy that is based on preventing intervention, fails. This could bring a quick end to the crisis. Since most armed opposition groups are defected Syrian soldiers working under a military leadership, there will not be any chaos as was the case in the period that followed the collapse of the Libyan regime. There will likely be an orderly transition of both political and military powers in Syria. However, delaying the intervention could lead to the rise of armed Sunni militias to work separately from the organized Free Syrian Army, and this would lead to the spread of chaos before and after the collapse of the Assad regime. Reports out of Syria indicate that the current sanctions by many countrie and the civil-disobedience action by the opposition have started to take its toll on the regime. All what is needed is a little push from the international community to bring an end to a regime that was rightly described recently by a U.S. official as a "dead man walking."

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Article 7.

Foreign Policy

Bashar al-Assad Is Every Bit His Father's Son

Jerrold M. Post, Ruthie Pertsis

December 20, 2011 -- Incredibly, the Syrian uprising has now entered its 10th month. More than 5,000 people have been killed, according to the United Nations, with thousands more imprisoned and tortured or driven from the country. Many Syrian activists fear the toll may be far higher. A newly released Human Rights Watch report details that army units have been given "shoot to kill" orders in dealing with unarmed protesters. In the last two days alone, at least 150 people have been killed, a worrying sign that the violence is accelerating. Yet, in a remarkable interview this month with ABC's Barbara Walters, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad 1) denied the extent of violence in his beleaguered country; 2) disputed the evidence in a U.N. report charging him and his government with crimes against humanity, asking, "Who said that the United Nations is a credible institution?"; 3) claimed that the forces charged with cracking down too hard on protesters did not belong to him, but instead to the government; and 4) indicated that the Syrian people supported him -- otherwise he would not be in his position.

Does this suggest that Bashar is out of touch with political reality? Or -- as he has watched with dismay the fate of his fellow Arab dictators in Egypt, Tunisia, and Yemen, who yielded too quickly to protests; and the violent end of Muammar al-Qaddafi in Libya, who fought until the bitter end -- has he resolved to follow neither path? To understand Assad's political behavior from a psychological perspective and try to anticipate how he will behave, we must understand him in the context

of the Assad family's dominance of the Syrian political scene. Bashar's father, Hafez al-Assad, ruled Syria with an iron fist for three decades, including enforcing draconian emergency laws in 1963 that helped him eliminate political opponents and pave the way for the family to secure long-term political control, despite being part of the minority Alawite sect. Emblematic of his brutal rule was the crushing of the uprising in the city of Hama in 1982, in which tens of thousands of Syrians were killed.

Hafez had originally designated his eldest and favorite son, Bassel, as his successor, and Bassel, the chief of presidential security, was perfect for the job. He was forceful, macho, an aficionado of fast cars who was popular with women. He stood in stark contrast to Bashar, Hafez's second son, who grew up in Bassel's shadow, weak and in his own world, calm with a soft voice. Bashar went on to become a doctor, specializing in ophthalmology. In fact, it was Hafez's childhood dream to become a doctor, but his family did not have the financial resources to support him, so he entered the military and then politics instead. Thus, it can be argued that Bashar, in becoming a doctor, was fulfilling his father's thwarted dreams.

So it was not surprising that when duty called, six years after Bassel was killed in a car accident in 1994, the dutiful son would abandon his medical career to be at his father's side. He was summoned back from London, where he was in postdoctoral training in ophthalmology. It was not taken for granted that Bashar, who seemed to lack the forceful character necessary to succeed his father, would replace him. Indeed, some family members looked to Bashar's younger brother, Maher, who more closely resembled his father and eldest brother in his aggressive personality. In the end, though, Hafez chose Bashar as his successor, giving him the role of the dignified leader, and named Maher as the head of the Republican Guard, the enforcer. (This would not have been a new arrangement for the Assad

family, for Hafez himself had an aggressive younger brother, Rifaat, who was the head of the security forces and personally oversaw the Hama massacre.)

Initially, Syrians and Syria-watchers hoped that Bashar would be an open-minded, liberal, and reforming leader. But these hopes rested on a fragile foundation. The thrust of the argument was based on Bashar's supposed "Westernization" during his time living and studying ophthalmology in London. Contributing to the Westernized image was his elegant British-born wife, Asma, whose parents had emigrated from Syria to Britain, and who worked as an investment banker with J.P. Morgan.

The Westernized facade proved to be all too thin, however. Bashar was 27 when he lived in London, a fully formed adult, and had spent his life absorbing his father's political ideas and observing his leadership style, in particular how to deal with conflict. What's more, Bashar only spent about 18 months in London and was almost certainly significantly insulated by personal security forces during that time, so his actual exposure to "Western" ways of life was likely quite limited. And, of course, mere exposure to Western culture, even if it is direct, is by no means a guarantee that an individual will adopt and internalize its values and ideals.

In any event, the stormy waves of political reality were to overcome whatever hopes he might initially have had to bring Syria into the modern world. As the pressure for political reform grew, Bashar found his minority Alawite leadership increasingly threatened, and his inner circle pressed him to put a lid on the restive Sunni-majority population, as his father would have done. As the second-choice son, and not the obvious choice at that, Bashar had to prove himself a worthy occupant of his father's throne. Unlike his father, the lion of Damascus, whose powerful authority was unquestioned, Bashar was

acutely aware of the concerns of the inner circle about whether he could successfully lead Syria.

In a revealing moment during the Barbara Walters interview, when asked whether he thought that his forces cracked down too hard on protesters, Bashar replied: "They are not my forces; they are military forces belong[ing] to the government.… I don't own them. I am president. I don't own the country." In fact, he may have been speaking the truth, reflecting that he does not have the full authority his father had and was not the author of the extent of the violent crackdown. Rather, it seems to be the handiwork of his aggressive younger brother, Maher, who was initially the lightning rod for criticism of the regime's brutality and who, according to a former Syrian diplomat, because of his control of Syria's security forces, is "first in command, not second."

Bashar's comment that he doesn't own the country is reminiscent of Qaddafi's denial that he had any position of authority in Libya at the beginning of the unrest there. Likewise reminiscent of Qaddafi, who repeatedly claimed, "My people, they all love me," when asked whether he thought that he had the support of the Syrian people, Bashar responded that he wouldn't be in the position of president if he didn't. But, in an apparent reference to the late Libyan leader, Bashar disavowed killing his own people: "We don't kill our people; nobody kill[s]. No government in the world kill[s] its people, unless it's led by crazy [a] person." Never mind that the claim is demonstrably false -- his calm demeanor during the interview underscored this distinction between him and the emotionally unstable Qaddafi.

Perhaps a better comparison for Bashar is to Qaddafi's own designated successor, his son Saif al-Islam, who was also seen as a potential force of modernization for his country. Saif was famously exposed to the Western world during his graduate training in political

philosophy at the London School of Economics, and it is believed that he took the lead in ending Libya's economic isolation. But fatefully for Saif, raised by his father's side, as the protests mounted, he fully supported his father and helped carry out the violent suppression of the protest movement to the degree that the International Criminal Court indicted him along with the elder Qaddafi. As his father had vowed to "fight to the last drop of my blood," Saif, giving up any pretense of reformer, vowed that he would "fight to the last bullet."

Like Saif, and for all his veneer of Westernization, Bashar never learned from a powerful father how to respond to protest without resorting to violence, and totalistic violence at that. After all, the Hama massacre kept Hafez al-Assad in power for nearly two more decades. It seems likely that Bashar, like Saif, will persist with the present destructive course charted by his father until the end, for in the end "blood will out."

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