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Article 1.

Foreign Policy

Palestinians between reconciliation and impasse

Peter Lagerquist

July 5, 2011 -- The reconciliation accord formally signed by Hamas and Fatah on May 2 is beginning to show its first cracks. The two movements agreed to jointly contest new elections in late 2012 and were scheduled to announce a transitional government in June. But Fatah leader and Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas's insistence that it should be headed by his current prime minister, Salam Fayyad, infuriated Hamas. The Islamists loathe Fayyad, who has overseen a four-year crackdown on their membership in the West Bank in cooperation with Israeli forces, as much as he is feted by Western chanceries. The latter have agreed to keep funding the PA on the condition that he controls its purse strings. Abbas fears that a new unity government might face a financial crisis similar to that endured in 2006, when Hamas won PA elections. On June 21, he accordingly insisted on his prerogative to choose the new prime minister, formally contravening the text of the reconciliation accord. In response, Hamas complained that he had become little more than a collaborator with Israel.

Declaring that the new government must "preserve room for resistance," Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh underscored why the odds on this political détente holding up had always seemed steep. If these odds are to improve, both factions will have to make new and steep rhetorical climb-downs. Yet signs indicate that Abbas in particular is reconsidering reconciliation, or at least looking for ways to mitigate the risks to which it has exposed him.

Since the split of the PA in 2007, Hamas and Fatah's enmity has become a fact on the ground to most Palestinians no less intractable and debilitating than the settlements Israel has continued to build in the West Bank. Television footage of Abbas and Hamas politburo head Khaled Meshal clasping each other's shoulders in Cairo in May was accordingly greeted with hope, but also much wariness, in Ramallah. "They are like two prisoners fighting over scraps of bread, instead of working on getting out of jail," said one coffee shop patron over his water pipe. "So this agreement is good, but will they really change?" Scant more enthusiasm was on show in the following days, with perfunctory manifestations to mark the reconciliation easily outdone by drive-by rallies of local Real Madrid and Barcelona football club supporters, then battling it out for the Spanish league title.

Such lack of engagement reflected not only doubts about the viability of the Fatah-Hamas accord, but also a broader disenchantment with the political choices offered up by them. To most Palestinians, neither faction has produced political results, and their autocratic rules remain unpalatable. "People are afraid to say anything critical of the PA. If the wrong person hears you, the next day your cousin loses his job with such and such ministry," whispers one coffee shop waiter. In Gaza, even many Palestinians who are deeply critical of Fatah have been disappointed by Hamas's lurch into police state paranoia following 2007. "They have informants everywhere," complains one social worker in Gaza City. "[They are] even paying kids a few shekels to report on people in their neighborhood."

Inspired by popular uprisings in the region, parallel street demonstrations in the West Bank and Gaza on March 15 served as a first warning to their powers that be. Yet these first buds of Palestine's own political spring were modest affairs. Ramallah's small, central Manara roundabout would on any day be a poor

imitation of Cairo's Tahrir Square; the 1,000-some locals who would ultimately make their way there on the date Facebooked as Palestine's answer to Egypt's January 25, were less likely to have felt the stirrings of a new future than the dead weight of history. Overhead banners featuring Yasir Arafat presided over smaller insets of assassinated Hamas figurehead Sheikh Ahmed Yassin and other martyred notables from both movements. Flanked by customary heavies, current PA Minister of Economy Hasan Abu Libdeh rubbed shoulders in the crowd with former Preventive Security chief Jibril Rajoub, the West Bank's onetime answer to Omar Suleiman. "I'm not responsible for the division!" one beaming functionary said, only furthering the impression that politicians had themselves become spectators.

Cast in stark relief by such scenes were the limits of the day's slogan: "The people want the end of the division!" While Egyptians and Tunisians had by then jettisoned Hosni Mubarak's National Democratic Party and Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali's Rally for Constitutional Democracy, the March 15 movement was in effect asking Palestinian equivalencies not to disband, but team up. The irony was not lost on many more radical demonstrators. "We don't want these two leaderships to reunite; we want them to be rid of them," explained one prominent activist. "This is about more than Fatah and Hamas."

Official co-optation of the March demonstrations, also in Gaza, signaled an awareness by both Fatah and Hamas that they may have to ride rather than buck the gathering tide of public discontent. Several reconciliation attempts had already been made in recent years, twice following Israel's bloody May 31, 2010, interception of the Gaza freedom flotilla and the subsequent easing of Israel's and Egypt's boycott on the Gaza Strip, which cut into already fraying hopes that Hamas could otherwise be pressured into submission. In

both instances, however, U.S. opposition presented Abbas with an impossible choice, recapitulated starkly by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu after May 2: "It's either Hamas, or peace with Israel." With Mubarak's Egypt shoring up a still-biting Gaza blockade, meanwhile, and taking Fatah's side as the final arbitrator of reconciliation with Hamas, Abbas could keep the Islamists bottled up.

Since then, however, Abbas's position has deteriorated. Barack Obama's inability last fall to back the Palestinian leader's pursuit of an Israeli settlement freeze in the West Bank demonstrated one time too many how little Abbas's dearly purchased goodwill in the West was worth. With Mubarak's fall, meanwhile, and the impending ascendancy of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Hamas looked poised to break its economic and political confinement. And for the first time, Abbas now needed if not a principled political agreement with the Islamists, then at least domestic accord. For a while his refusal to climb down from the proverbial settlement-freeze tree prevented Abbas's domestic credibility from plummeting further, but it also left him without a political strategy.

In lieu of negotiations with Israel, the PA president has mortgaged the remainder of his shaky political house on seeking U.N. recognition for a Palestinian state in September. The gambit is unlikely to pass U.S. approval in the Security Council; even if successful, it proffers doubtful leverage in his tug of war with Tel Aviv. Although Syria is an independent state, in 44 years it hasn't managed to pry the Golan Heights away from Israel; a Palestinian state is unlikely to do better with the 60 percent of the West Bank that remains under full Israeli control. Legally dubious without Gaza under a unified PA administration, a U.N. appeal lacking Hamas's support would also have left Abbas with no political cover if recognition proves inconsequential. Abbas and Fayyad may

themselves harbor doubts, having in 2010 suppressed a skeptical assessment by PLO legal advisors of their U.N. strategy. Former lead negotiator Saeb Erakat has since given plenty of hints that they would be happy to abandon their stunt if the United States would only get negotiations started again.

Although the outlook appeared more promising for Hamas, regional change came at once too slow and too fast for the Islamists' liking. In Egypt, it left a cautious military junta in place that is domestically embarrassed by the Mubarak-era blockade of Gaza, but wary of cozying up too rapidly to an international pariah government. Meanwhile, Hamas's Syrian patron regime has started to totter. This has left Hamas at a fraught impasse. Its participation in the 2006 elections signaled a desire for greater recognition as a full-fledged player in Palestinian politics and that it is keen to broaden its popular appeal; its aims are frustrated by a continuing diplomatic boycott of the movement and the persistence of an 80 percent poverty rate in the strip. However approximate, opinion polls giving Hamas less than 10 percent national support are a far cry from the plurality that it briefly enjoyed after its 2006 election victory. When Egypt's rulers accordingly offered to ease the Gaza blockade and thaw relations in exchange for reconciliation, the Hama leadership saw an overdue opening.

Reconciliation seemed at the outset to require a modest political down payment from the Islamists, while allowing them to capitalize on the de facto compromises they have already made in recent years. Abbas's precondition for the reconciliation -- that they allow him to pursue his quest for a Palestinian state delimited to the West Bank and Gaza -- are now digestible to Hamas. And as its radical detractors in Gaza frequently complain, it has largely enforced a cease-fire with Israel since the end of the 2009 Gaza war, policing militancy no less than the PA in the West Bank. Otherwise, its core political

positions often diverge less from Fatah than is internationally acknowledged. Both movements refuse to recognize Israel as a Jewish state; both continue to insist on a right of return for Palestinian refugees; the prerogative of armed resistance also remains enshrined in Fatah's own charter. And critically, until the 2012 elections, an increase in coordination as much as an integration was likely to be the name of their game, with each faction preserving control of some autonomous forces. Change could work for both, it was accordingly hoped, because for the moment, little may change. Even before the reconciliation process started to crack, there was scant evidence that official repressiveness was on the wane either in Gaza or in the West Bank. New Palestinian elections in 2012, were they to be held, might have reanimated national politics. Yet Fatah in particular is deeply fractured and in need of renewal. At its sixth party congress in 2009, the most influential movers included party strongman and former PA Gaza Preventive Security Chief Mohammed Dahlan, long considered Abbas's likeliest successor. Since fall 2010, however, Abbas has cut his erstwhile lieutenant down to size, and on May 13 he formally excommunicated him on a range of sordid charges, most notably for preparing a coup against the PA president. Never a man of subtlety, Dahlan hit back in a videotaped speech that belittled Abbas's political record, branding his attempts at talks with Israel "a farce," and pooh-poohing his latest attempt to seek recourse at the United Nations. Most of Fatah's members would have noted that this was also a bleak verdict on their party's own record.

Abbas has brooked no intraparty debate since Dahlan's dismissal, a sign not only of his iron grip on the movement, but also its weakness as a movement, long ago reduced to an appendage of its leader and increasingly also his prime minister. Ironically, some Fatahwis would be as happy as Hamas to see the back of Fayyad: Not a party man, he

has outgrown his remit, many of them feel; some openly fear that security cooperation with Israel is branding them as collaborators on the Palestinian street. Meanwhile, though better organized, Hamas briefly suggested it might take a leaf out of the Muslim Brotherhood's updated democracy playbook and not seek power even if it wins the 2012 election, content to be a parliamentary overseer. Most fundamentally, then, the possibility of reconciliation re-posed questions about the PA as a vehicle for Palestinian politics. Is its function merely to administer, and if so, what use are political movements? If Hamas and Fatah fail to answer this question, a plurality of Palestinians may be inclined to see Fayyad continue his tenure. Whether or not PA salaries would continue to be paid was a central concern of local newspapers after the reconciliation agreement, and the prime minister has demonstrated his ability to keep the donor tap running.

Even the economic recovery that such aid has recently sustained in the West Bank, however, is playing to diminished expectations. Following years of retrenchment, per capita incomes are still barely higher than 11 years ago. Latest unemployment figures clock in at a U.S. Great Depression-level of 23 percent, and donors are warning that growth cannot be sustained in the coming years. Meanwhile, Israeli settlement construction and house demolitions in the Palestinians' hoped-for capital fuel bitter talk in relatively better-off Ramallah. "In a year, there will be nothing left of Silwan," mutters one restaurant owner, referring to one of East Jerusalem's increasingly besettled neighborhoods. And though Abbas may have initially gambled that he would continue to enjoy U.S. support in a more domesticated rivalry with Hamas, many Palestinians have long ago stopped hoping that such support can be made to count. Palestinian political energies are likely to be tuned inward in the coming year, and to the example set by their Arab neighbors. Among

those groups who have to date pushed for domestic reform, however, there are doubts about whether the capacity to mobilize exists. "In Egypt, the youth groups and organizers had gone through a long process of preparations and discussions with each other ahead of the demonstrations," says one poet-activist on the March 15 in Ramallah. "Here, it is as if they expected a revolution to descend from the sky through Facebook." Yet there are also foci at close hand. On May 15, the date Palestinians commemorate their exile in 1948, activists from Aida refugee camp near Bethlehem who targeted the Israeli wall enclosing their community ultimately found themselves stoning PA police officers sent to protect the structure. Two teenagers were arrested.

If popular mobilization against Israel resumes, the PA will have to choose whether to continue interposing itself between its constituents and the source of their frustrations, or to stand aside, with all the risks that may entail. If it does not, it may not matter much whether it is a unified PA or not. One Ramallah resident, formerly employed by the PA President's Office, says that he has a 12-year-old son who keeps asking him, "What has Abbas done for us? We should kick him out!" His father responds, "In two years he will be throwing stones not at the Israelis, but at the PA police." Though Barcelona and Real Madrid flags still flutter in Ramallah, the grace period could be shorter than that.

Peter Lagerquist is a writer who works on Israel and Palestine. He has previously contributed to Le Monde Diplomatique, the London Review of Books, and the Guardian, among other publications.

Article 2.

The Daily Beast

Jews Won't Fail Obama

Zev Chafets

July 2, 2011 -- On Thursday, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced that the United States is opening a dialogue with the Muslim Brotherhood. This news coincided with a spate of media speculation about a possible decline in Jewish support for President Obama in 2012.

Such speculation precedes every national election, but this time the Republican case against Obama seems, at first glance, unusually promising. The president is on chilly terms with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Obama is committed to a negotiating stance that moves America from the barely qualified support for Israel of the Clinton and Bush administrations to something closer to diplomatic neutrality. And Obama's web of friendships and connections to figures like Jeremiah Wright, Rashid Khaladi, Bill Ayers, and other harsh critics of Israel are well known. Despite this, in 2008, Obama got 77 percent of the Jewish vote—more than any ethnic bloc except African-Americans. But his Israel problem will cost him votes and donors, right?

Wrong. No Republican presidential candidate since 1924, no matter how pro-Israel, has won more than 40 percent of the Jewish vote. Usually it is closer to 20 percent. Barack Obama is not going to break that record.

Jews are less than 2 percent of the American population, but they are major players in the Democratic Party. Debbie Wasserman Schultz is the chairwoman of the national committee. Steve Israel heads the House reelection committee. The party's intelligentsia and pundit class have a higher bar mitzvah quotient than the average B'nai Brith

bowling team. Three of the four Supreme Court justices appointed by Democratic presidents are Jews. So are a quarter of the members of the Democratic Senate Caucus and 45 congressmen (all but one, Eric Cantor, are Democrats).

The Washington Post has estimated that Jews provide 60 percent of the party's major individual contributions. The actual stat, according to a Democratic insider privy to unreleased research, puts the figure closer to 80 percent. In 2004, when so-called 527 organizations provided the biggest contributions, four Democratic donors—George Soros, Peter Lewis, Steven Bing, and the Sandler family—coughed up $73 million, more than the next 20 contributors, Republican and Democratic, combined. Jews are not simply supporters of the Democratic Party. They are stakeholders. Like all stakeholders, Jews—and their interests—are taken seriously. Some are professional: academia, the entertainment industry (which depends on a good U.S. image abroad for much of its income), the high-tech sector, the legal establishment, financial institutions, teachers' unions, and liberal NGOs are all disproportionately run and staffed by Jews.

So is the party's activist base. Perhaps the most salient Jewish voting issue is the protection of abortion rights, which is supported by close to 90 percent of all Jewish women. In other words, American Jewish support for the Democratic Party is not a decision made by a Sanhedrin in some imaginary bunker in Boca Raton. The Democratic Party is the emotional home of most Jews. The Reform Movement, America's largest Jewish denomination, has been called "the Democratic Party with holidays." Many of the secular Jewish national organizations are simply cogs in the party machine. Most Jewish Democrats are fans of Israel. When the team is doing well, they are glad to join the parade. Democratic lawmakers were happy to stand and cheer a pro-American speech by Prime Minister Netanyahu in Congress. After all, Israel is popular in the U.S. But some Americans

like it more than others. A recent Gallup poll tells the story: asked where their sympathies lie in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, 48 percent of Democrats chose Israel; 85 percent of Republicans did. This year Republicans intend to turn their unconditional support for Israel into a campaign issue. Any conceivable GOP candidate, with the exception of Ron Paul, will be far friendlier to Israel than the current administration. Michele Bachmann says she spent the most meaningful summer of her life as a post-high-school volunteer on a kibbutz (Barack Obama was famously influenced by a youthful trip of his own, to Pakistan). Sarah Palin came back from a recent trip to Israel sporting a Star of David. American Jews place a very high premium on sophistication, and many are uncomfortable with the love of people they regard as bumpkins.

In any event, Republican Zionism is not aimed at the Upper West Side. Its intention is to solidify and animate the Christian right, attract Reagan Democrats, and appeal to the broad swath of Middle America that instinctively sees Israel as a friend and ally. The Gallup poll found that 60 percent of independents prefer Israel to the Palestinians. Democratic Jews may, too, but they aren't going anywhere. If and when the Obama administration seriously clashes with Israel—over the “peace process,” recognition of Hamas, Iranian nukes, or outreach to Islamist enemies of Israel like the Muslim Brotherhood—the president will have nothing to fear from his Jewish base. Hell, a lot of them would rather join the Muslim Brotherhood than vote for a Republican.

Article 3.

The National Interest

Israel's Rightward Turn

Benny Morris

July 5, 2011 -- Perhaps Shimon Peres's worst mistake was back in November 1995, when he failed to throw the book at – or even mildly harrass – the coterie of right-wing leaders and rabbis who had allegedly incited the assassination of his predecessor, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. For months, right-wing politicians, including Ariel Sharon, had painted Rabin as a traitor for having embarked on the Oslo peace process with the Palestinians and handed over territory, in Gaza and the West Bank, and weapons to Yasser Arafat's PLO. Several rabbis connected to the settler movement had reportedly given spiritual cover to the plotters, who included the gunman Yigal Amir, by ruling that Rabin was subject to the halachic laws governing one who handed over Jews or sovereign land to the enemy, din moser (the judgement of one who hands over a Jew, or, by extension, Jewish land, to gentiles) or din rodef (the judgement of one who chases a Jew). For both, a death sentence was seen as apt. Amir later hinted that he had consulted one or more rabbis before embarking on the assassination. But Peres, taking over from Rabin at that chaotic time, failed to move against those who had paved the way for the assassination, and the chance to subordinate the hard right's spiritual guides to Israeli law was missed (the statute books include laws against incitement to murder). Within months, Peres lost the premiership to the tyro politician Netanyahu in general elections that all had assumed would be a walkover for Labor. Last weekend, the police briefly arrested and interrogated two alleged spiritual miscreants, Dov Lior, who was already a prominent settler movement rabbi in the Rabin days, and Yaakov Yosef, the son of Ovadia Yosef,

the spiritual leader of the Shas Party and, by extension, of Israel's Sephardi ultra-orthdox community.
Lior is currently the municipal rabbi of Kiryat Arba, the Jewish suburb of Hebron and bastion of Gush Emunim (the Bloc of the Faithful), which orchestrated the expansionist settlement movement in the West Bank (Judea and Samaria) since the early 1970s. Lior and Yosef had refused to respect a police summons for questioning after they had given a rabbinic stamp of approval to Torat Hamelekh (the thinking of the king), a book that appeared two years ago that discusses halachic rulings concerning the killing of goyim (i.e., in context, Arabs). The book is emblematic of the drift rightward of the Israeli public, and of its racist fringe. Many Israelis, and the country's judicial authorities, see the book as an incitement to violence.
The book was written by Itzik Shapira, the rabbi of Yitzhar, one of the more extreme national-religious settlements in the West Bank. A declaration of "approval" by three more senior rabbis, including Lior and Yosef, was disseminated with the book. The third senior rabbi, Yosef Ginsburg, was questioned a year ago; Lior and Yosef, declined the police summons, arguing that the judicial system and police had no authority over halachic issues. This time, both the 76-year-old Lior and Yosef were briefly questioned, cautioned and released without charges, triggering small anti-government demonstrations in Jerusalem. Netanyahu said in Sunday"s cabinet meeting that Israel is a country "run by law, and no one is above the law."
Lior has been one of the most prominent supporters of insubordination by IDF troops and police ordered to remove settlers from West Bank outposts. He has also declared that the Torah – the book of Jewish religious law – trumps the state's (secular) law.
Lior was born in Eastern Europe and by luck evaded the Nazis. In 1947 he was an 11-year-old passenger on the "1947 – Exodus from Europe" (more commonly known as the "Exodus"), the Haganah

illegal immigrants ship that tried to run the Royal Navy's blockade of Palestine. After it was caught by a British destroyer, Lior was among those the British shipped back to Europe, though he managed to make his way to Palestine a few weeks before Israel was declared.
The 64-year-old Yosef, who is the rabbi of the Givat Moshe neighborhood of Jeruusalem and head of the Chazon Yaakov (vision of Jacob) yeshiva, is a former Shas Knesset member. But in recent years he has broken with his father and adopted a far harder line on halachic and political issues. (Ovadia Yosef has occasionally stated that giving up territory for peace is halachically permissible. His son Yaakov is opposed to handing over areas of the Land of Israel to Arabs.) Several right-wing MKs called for the resignation of the police minister (a member of Avigdor Liberman's Yisrael Beiteinu Party and Israel's two chief rabbis protested against the arrest.
Over the years, Lior's name has been linked to Yigal Amir's. Lior has supported Amir's release from prison. In 2010 the rabbi married Yigal's brother, Amitai, to Avital Trimbobler, the daughter of Larissa Trimbobler, who was secretly married to the jailed Yigal Amir in 2004. Yigal and Larissa had a child together in 2007.
Lior's arrest and interrogation, however brief, is a step in the right direction and ironic, on a number of levels. It takes a right-wing government to curb extreme right-wingers (Begin successfully uprooted the Sinai settlers as part of the implementation of the peace treaty with Egypt; Ariel Sharon pulled out the IDF and evacuated the settlers from the Gaza Strip). But on a deeper level, it is precisely such a government, which has given anti-Arab racists their head and in a broad way allowed the genie out of the bottle, that is trying to shove it back in, at least on this minor but symbolic legal issue.

Article 4.

Le Monde diplomatique

The Egyptians go to the polls: What are we afraid of?

Alain Gresh

July 2011 -- The Egyptians go to the polls to elect a new parliament at the end of September, and a new president at the end of December. How will they vote? The question bothers politicians, analysts and thinkers alike – they cannot even begin to answer it. In 2005, when the parliamentary elections were perhaps less rigged than usual, 4-5 million turned out; in March 2011 some 18 million voted on amendments to the constitution; this autumn and winter, 25-30 million are expected to exercise their democratic right. Some in Egypt share a fear of the masses that has held sway among the well-to-do ever since the introduction of universal suffrage. Ahmed Seif al-Islam, president of the Hisham Mubarak juridical centre and a tireless defender of human rights, was surprised by attitudes of some of his friends: "Tahai al-Gebali, vice-president of the Supreme Constitutional Court, has suggested that the well-educated should have a greater say than others. Other people feel some principles of the future constitution, which is to be written by a commission appointed by parliament, should be set 'above the law'. But who would act as their guarantor? The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which some hope will extend the transition period and put back the dates of the elections. … What are we afraid of? All political parties have accepted article 2 of the constitution: 'Islam is the religion of the state. Arabic is its official language, and the principal source of legislation is Islamic jurisprudence (sharia).' The rest will be decided through political debate." Egyptians often evoke the

"Turkish model", which reserves a special place for the military, forgetting that the Turks themselves are trying to get rid of it. Fear of an Islamic tsunami – and "uncontrolled" social movements – makes them see the armed forces as the ultimate guarantors of order and stability. It is this kind of short-sighted vision that has led people in the past to support authoritarian regimes as the best defence against the Islamists, and the most likely to open up the markets.

The political arena is undergoing a major transformation. The Muslim Brotherhood, the only movement with any real organisation, is emerging from the shadows and has for the first time established a political party, Liberty and Justice. It has repeatedly declared itself in favour of democracy and has undertaken not to field candidates in more than half of all electoral wards. But its new visibility is not entirely to the Brotherhood's advantage: one of its leaders, Mohammed al-Baltagui, has denounced the media's habit of highlighting every mistake the Brotherhood makes, and it has made many (1). During the great demonstration in Tahrir Square on 27 May, the first in which the Brotherhood had not participated, its website carried a photo showing the square empty. The next day, the Brotherhood apologised for misleading the public – tens of thousands had gathered in the square – and the manager of the website resigned. The Brotherhood was also criticised for the decision of one of its past leaders, Abdelmonem Abul Futouh, to stand for election as president, in spite of the Brotherhood's decision not to field a candidate. Futouh declared that, if elected, he would guarantee the right of Muslims to convert to Christianity; a number of younger members of the Brotherhood have declared their support for his reformist stance.

The Brotherhood is far from having a monopoly on the Muslim vote. It competes both with the Salafists, who have entered the political arena for the first time, and with parties such as al-Wasat, many of whose leaders (including al-Wasat's president Abu Ela Madi) are

former Brotherhood members. (Al-Wasat has less conservative social views than the Brothers and include Copts among its leaders.) Apart from the remains of the dissolved National Democratic Party and the parties authorised under Mubarak – notably the Wafd, Tagammu (the leftwing Progressive Unionist Party) and the Nasserist Party, all three divided and discredited for having collaborated with the Mubarak regime – dozens of organisations have been legalised or are in the process of being so. As in Tunisia, it is hard to know how much influence each of these parties has. There are many organisations with liberal, secular leanings, such as the social democrats, Free Egyptians Party (backed by Naguib Sawiris, owner of telecoms firm Orascom) and Amr Hamzawi's Egypt liberation party. On the left there is a "socialist front" made up of five parties, including the Communist Party and Ahmad Shaaban's Socialist Party, which has a bolder social programme and support among workers and intellectuals. Over time, many alliances have been formed and dissolved, not always for any discernible reason. Recently, 13 parties including Liberty and Justice, al-Wasat, al-Ghad (the party of former presidential candidate Ayman Nur) and Tagammu (one of the Muslim Brotherhood's fiercest critics), agreed to parcel out electoral wards among themselves. On 17 June, a young man named Mohammed Abul-Gheit wrote on his blog that the revolution should not forget the disinherited, and should enforce a change in government policy (which favours the rich). By putting social concerns at the heart of the debate, he reminded all the political forces, starting with the left, that this is where the future will be played out. After all, the sans-culottes who took to the Paris streets in 1793 were demanding both bread and liberty.

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Article 5.

Foreign Policy Research Institute

The Arab Uprisings Of 2011: Ibn Khaldûn Encounters Civil Society

Theodore Friend

July 5 -- The journalistic notion of an "Arab Spring" is faulty on two counts. Climatologically, from Morocco to Yemen, it is absurd; there is no such season. It is also misleading, because analogy with the "Prague Spring" of 1968 runs into the unhappy fact that protests by Czech citizens against their imperial masters were crushed by Soviet tanks. The Cold War did not thaw out until two decades later.

In speaking instead of the "Arab uprisings," I find much cause for hope in the current regional dynamics, especially in Tunisia and Egypt. Even if strangled by armed force (Syria) or suffocated by money (in Saudi Arabia, the $130 billion unloaded into the social economy was described to me by a Turk as a "royal bribe"), present time in the Arab world is unforgettable. In many places it remains open- ended. But what is being risen against?

ARAB DYNASTIC CYCLES

Ibn Khaldûn is of help here. This 15th century North African traveler, scholar, diplomat, and judge reflected on the troubles of his own times. Going far beyond customary chronicles, he attempted to show the dynamics of social organization and urbanization that underlay them. So doing, he generated an Arab philosophy of history three and a half centuries before Vico and four centuries before Gibbon produced works in Europe of equal ambition. Key to the thinking of Ibn Khaldûn is the concept of asabiyyah: group solidarity or social cohesion. It was vital to overcome the savage pride of the Bedouins in order to generate cooperation, establish dynasties, and cultivate

urban civilization, as distinct from the raw survival of desert life. Once the principle of group solidarity was established, Ibn Khaldûn saw dynasties going through predictable cycles of five phases: (1) successful overthrow of a royal predecessor; (2) gaining of complete control; (3) leisure and optimal expression of rule; (4) contentment succumbs to lassitude and luxury; (5) squandering breeds hatred in the people and disloyalty among the soldiers, and dynastic senility becomes an incurable disease.[1]

Ibn Khaldûn's cycle helps to describe the authoritarian continuities found in recent Arab history: three rulers across sixty years in Egypt; two across fifty years in Tunisia; one for more than forty in Libya; one for more than thirty in Yemen; father and son for more than forty years in Syria. The most continuous line of authority in the region of course is in Saudi Arabia, where the clan of Al-Saud has been preeminent for over a hundred years, testing the elasticity of Ibn Khaldûn's theory and buying the patience of the people with social subsidies.[2] In contention with royal modes of ruling are democratic recognitions that all leaders are flawed; and that term limits both minimize the chances of peculiar flaws becoming endemic, while they also maximize the chances of systemic flaws becoming identified and treated.

Egyptians grew alarmed when they recognized that Hosni Mubarak was attempting to create an actual bloodline dynasty. Now he must answer for ordering the shootings of protesters that marked his last days in power; and his sons in jail cells must also answer for the greedy amassing of wealth that characterized the last years of that regime.

The Egyptian revolt will be the most important model for the rest of the Arab world, even though the Tunisian one, which preceded and inspired it, may reach a further point of development and stabilize at a more secure level of democracy. But here we broach an idea that

was unknown to Ibn Khaldûn. The sovereignty of the people would have struck him as a wondrous and dangerous extravagance. But precisely because that idea now exists, the Arab political dynamics in our own time do far more than replicate royal cycles.

Beyond democracy they summon other modern concepts-human rights, rule of law, pluralism, transparency, and accountability. These define health and disease in the body politic, attention to which may allow continuous renewal rather than recurring declines into the senilities that Ibn Khaldûn predicted.

TUNISIA AND EGYPT

Such multiple values came suddenly into play in Tunisia, which had been the first Arab nation to outlaw slavery (1846, a year before Sweden did so), and among the first to enact women's suffrage (1959). There, on December 17, 2010, a 27-year-old fruit vendor in the town of Sidi Bouzid had his wares confiscated. He was allegedly slapped in the face by a female inspector and beaten by her aides. After being denied interview by the town governor, Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in the town square. He died in a coma, January 4, 2011. His dramatic suicide was picked up by Al Jazeera and became a national symbol-a furious expression of frustration with a regime going rapidly from Ibn Khaldûn's fourth stage (hateful luxury) into its fifth and final condition (incurable senility). Demonstrations mounted rapidly. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, twenty-four years in power, fled his own country with his family on January 14, 2011 and took refuge in Saudi Arabia. Tunisia, backed by Interpol, issued a warrant for his arrest, and the arrest of his wife, on multiple and grand counts of illegal seizure of properties; and dozens of other charges. Swift conviction in absentia led to 35-year sentences for each and $66 million in fines.

The Tunisian example of revolt, despite its 300 deaths, gave courage to the young-and-fed-up as well as the under-fed and angry in several

countries, most notably Egypt. Controlled as that great nation was, its media had some grasp of critical reality and were allowed occasional gasps of truth.

A presidential election in 2005, although marred by low turnout and many irregularities, was won by Mubarak with 89 percent of the vote. Ayman Nour, runner-up, obtained only 7 percent and was then jailed for a five-year term, apparently for the effrontery of opposing the autocrat. His example of daring nevertheless sank into popular consciousness.

For January 25, 2011, not long after Ben Ali fled Tunisia, a protest in Cairo was scheduled on National Police Day-intentionally targeting police abuse. The killing of Khaled Said had stirred thousands of young people for many months, and now they could focus their feelings. Said was a 28-year-old who had filmed police in the act of profiting from the sale of drugs. In retribution, two policemen repeatedly slammed him against stone steps and an iron door just one block from his home, and dumped his body in front of an Internet café,. The bloody visage of his corpse in the morgue with its fractured skull and broken bones, snapped by his brother on a mobile phone, went viral on Facebook.

Young leaders of many kinds brewed up revolt, such as Asmaa Mahfouz, a 26-year-old female activist who, in eloquent videos, urged a turnout in Tahrir Square. As one Egyptian who responded emotionally observed, the protests gathered momentum, calling for dignity (the freedom to be), freedom (the opportunity to do), and social justice (things that must be done). Egyptians began to break through their fear and to end it with growing demands like "drumbeats_you start soft, then go louder."[3]

For eighteen consecutive days, they protested massively and nonviolently in Tahrir Square. In retrospect, a young activist summarized new lines of communication: "We use Facebook to

schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world." A Google executive, Wael Ghonim, was critical to administration of the social links that expressed desires for a better life, while summoning righteous anger as a motivation. "We are all Khaled Said" became a powerful slogan.

The masses protesting in Tahrir Square and elsewhere-later estimates put their accumulated total at six to eight million - hit at unemployment, food prices, corruption, and outrages taken as insults to personal dignity. They were unappeasable, and further aroused by Mubarak himself in two condescending and rambling speeches on TV. On February 11 he resigned. During many of the days of protest Wael Ghonim himself was in jail. Abroad, however, he stood for the revolt to a degree captured in a remark by President Obama.

In answering a question from a staff member, Obama said, "What I want is for the kids on the street to win and for the Google guy to become president_."[4] In fact, the young crowds in Egypt found Obama's own posture indistinct and insufficiently supportive; and American public opinion influenced them little. When Obama sent his personal representative, retired Ambassador Frank Wisner, to talk Mubarak out of office, he came back instead urging continued support of the dictator. Thus Wisner clouded his own previous reputation by failure to understand what was going on in Egypt, and what had to happen there.

The eventual tally of the Egyptian dead went well over 800, mostly civilians. Those who died did not intend to pay a price for a Gandhian principle of nonviolence. It was common sense to see that a weaponed regime led by an ex-general could not be overthrown by ordinary demonstrations. The uncommon sense that made history was to maintain civil discipline in resistance to that regime, returning to the squares not in an idolatry of peace, but in determination to win major goals by unarmed struggle in solidarity. Resort to even minor

acts of violence would have played into the hands of the regime, which seemed to entice such an error.
Discipline prevailed.[5]
The real question for Egypt became what further goals could be achieved after Mubarak was gone, and his ominous subaltern, Lt. Gen. Omar Suleiman, was refused as a successor. The crowds achieved a civilian prime minister at last. But that still left the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, thirty-six generals, at the apex of power in Egypt.
Accommodating in tone but paternal in determination, they accepted as national strategy that the constitution must be rewritten and elections held. But entrusting such matters to a council of generals is not the same as handing it over to Jeffersonian yeomen. The referendum submitted to the populace in March 2011 contained a necessary minimum of constitutional change, while scheduling parliamentary elections for the following September. That is not time enough, many protesters declared; not adequate to organize and educate the electorate. The military did not budge; they likely did not want and do not want an electorate overeducated.[6]
For upper-middle class Cairenes, longer deliberation appeared the better course, so that Egypt would lay down surer guidelines for the future. By one account, listening to his employer's family dinner table conversations convinced their chief manservant, who had to return to his rural village to vote. He persuaded a great majority of the village to his views. Then the Salafis, hyper- traditionalists of the neighborhood, began to sound off.
They said, "A 'no' vote is atheism." They threatened fines of thousands of Egyptian pounds to those who so voted. What regulation they pretended to did not matter. Nor did invasion of the secret ballot matter. "We will know if you vote 'no.'" The servant came back to Cairo and told his employers of pressures that could not

be surmounted. He and his followers in the village had chosen to abstain.[7] Nationwide the result was 77 percent "yes."

Such powerful manifestation of Salafi opinion will affect the probabilities for September's national election. [This is written in June 2011.] The neutered NPD, the tame majority party for Mubarak, will get new life and credibility from context alone, rather like ex-Communists in post-1989 Eastern Europe.[8] The oft-penalized Muslim Brotherhood has declared that it will not seek the presidency, and will not offer candidates in more than half of the races for parliamentary seats. But this apparent forbearance is a careful calculation. In many constituencies they can make a deal not to run, and thereby affect the outcome. Their organization, developed since 1928, gives them power far beyond the impact of their social service organizations. Under three authoritarian regimes they have aimed to Islamize society from the ground up. Now they are ready to reap their rewards.[9] They appear likely to win, or otherwise to "own," at least 40 percent of the seats. In coalition politics they can be imagined to ally with blocs of Salafis (perhaps 10 percent of the electorate) and with progressive Muslims (perhaps 5 percent), for clear working control of the national legislature, which will generate a new constitution, followed by a presidential election. Thus Hassan Al-Banna's dream will in some manner be realized seven dozen years after he founded the Muslim Brotherhood. The chance for an Obama option, some variant of a "Google guy" being elected president, is of course none at all.

THE MILITARY

We cannot yet see the outcome of the numerous and momentous movements in the Arab region, which are greater even than the Nasserite upheavals half a century ago. But enough is evident to note some patterns. One-party governments, despotic at their worst, feel threatened by localized protests. From tear gas to rhetorical kisses

there is a great range of options, in which the military and police are critical, and not always coordinate. The army may be deployed systematically and brutally with tanks and helicopter gunships (Syria); or it may take sides with the people (Tunisia); or it may shatter along tribal and geographic lines (in civil war, Libya; or in anti- establishment anarchy, Yemen).

There is no true or sustained neutrality possible for an army in such times. Egypt's military was not charmed into democratic solidarity with demonstrators by the popular chant, "The people and the army are one." No: a conscript army simply did not wish to fire into large crowds, because their own relatives could be there; and officers were unwilling to give such an order. The top senior generals finally judged Mubarak, one of their own, to have become unsupportable. They removed him to his villa at Sharm al- Sheikh and later put him under custody in a hospital nearby.

Then they consented to a trial beginning in August 2011.

Though it would mask their own complicity in previous oppression, it would promise to give the public symbolic satisfaction for long-felt injustices.

Comparison with Indonesia is interesting. There, too, in the crisis of 1998, the army finally tilted against its own three-decade autocrat, but afterward protected Suharto at home in Jakarta until he died ten years later. Even now, they guard his reputation, as part of a massive national syndrome of undigested history. Indonesia, nevertheless, would be an excellent standard were any Arab nation to care about Muslim Asia. After toppling their dictator, Indonesians proceeded to constitutional revisions, administrative reorganization, and to two free, open, and direct presidential elections (2004, 2009). They also achieved some curbs on corruption, and between 2000 and 2010 increased per capita income from $500 to $3000.

CIVIL SOCIETY

One of the most broadly informed American experts on Islam observes summarily that "Civil society in Egypt has never been-and I would argue, can never be-free from significant government interference, constraints, and outright oppression."[10] Although Islamist activists and secular intellectuals both have been allowed their latitudes in the last sixty years, there was always an implicit leash by which the authoritarian regime (whichever one; the characteristic in Egypt is by now innate) could yank them back or even, metaphorically, strangle them.

Nowhere in the region is civil society in the North Atlantic sense guaranteed. Tunisia may be the closest, but Ben Ali trimmed it back.[11] In fully flowered development, civil society is guaranteed by a constitution, unhindered by police, and defended by a military. With a constitution supplying the skeleton of national organization, and laws in continual play and counterplay more important to its protection than the muscle of weaponed forces, then civil society may complete the anatomy of an evolving nervous system. It must be free to inquire into whatever it chooses, and manifest whatever it legally can, so that the creativity of a people will count more than its capacity to be policed. At an opposite extreme, the nervous system barely matters at all, and the armed muscle of the organism can break its own bones.

With regard to civil society, social networking may be seen in proper perspective. Its prevalence in Egypt and elsewhere is important, and the late, failed effort of the Mubarak government to suppress it proves its consequentiality. The grim successes of the Assad government of Syria in keeping out foreign reporters and shutting down the Internet demonstrate by absence the importance of such communication.

Social networking may further become key to the nervous systems of civil societies; but talk of "Facebook revolutions" is exaggerated and

misplaced. The motivations for what occurred in Tunisia and continues to happen in Egypt come from the gut; from humiliation and the desire to connect in fighting against it. Social networking then provides speed in connection, and in this year of tumult it has massively surprised some despots. But swiftness of communication does not transform the persons that for a while it brings together in common motivation and constructive action. The nodes of the network are still human beings. The long-term impact for peace of new techniques in communication may be judged by asking: Did invention of the telephone prevent World War I? Did invention of the radio prevent World War II?

The norm of North Atlantic societies is peculiar to itself and revealing in its origins. In the era of the Holy Roman Empire, perhaps, state and church and society could be said to have been inseparable. But Western Europe developed in a manner that made state and church distinct and contending entities. The Protestant Reformation then added another dimension of society in which individual conscience became preeminent.

Islam and the Muslim world, however, proceed from different premises. There is no "church." Regardless of the state to which one may pay taxes, the broadest entity to which one owes allegiance is the umma, or the global community of believers. Invoking "civil society" therefore does not have the muscle tone historically developed in France or the United States, nor does it have the same powerful claim on personal values. Nonetheless, educated persons in the Arab worlds, professionals and intellectuals often proclaim "civil society" to justify and advance their vision.

As they do so, they may or may not be aware that the present currency of the term derives from its use before and after 1989, in the Eastern European countries throwing off Soviet imperial rule and internal exploitation by Communist autocrats and elites. Its use was

meant to signify votes that counted, consciences that mattered, and organizations-both for business and not-for-profit-that were allowed independent roles in creating a new national vitality. Not all the nations that redesigned themselves are stories of success; the best may not yet be exuberantly productive, and the worst still contain some police repression. But none would seek to return to the Communist era, with its citizen-automatons, glorified bureaucrats, state-controlled media, and schools with dogmatic curricula. Something new has emerged: not error-free by any means, but in principle tolerant of error, and willing to proceed by the public contest of opinions.[12] Those are essential characteristics of society becoming civil. Whatever the historical background or the present circumstances of the Arabs desiring something new, they are not wrong to express their yearning as "civil society."

By being youthful and peaceful, the majority of those participating in present uprisings radiate more hope than Nasserite pan-Arab nationalism ever contained. Their peacefulness conveys promise to non-Arab nations, and their youthfulness supplies promise to their own cultures. What matters still more are the concepts of society they bring forward to their citizenry. The best of those are anti-dynastic, non-patriarchal, and democratic. They reflect Alexis de Tocqueville far more than Ibn Khaldûn. They may be based on neither, but instead arise from a 20th century vocabulary of hope. They ignore the elite lockjaw that shuts down argument, and plunge instead into a pluralistic discourse that will engage whole populations.

SHI'ITE ABSOLUTISM, SUNNI ROYALTY

Some societies of West Asia ("Middle East"), nevertheless, are markedly averse to concepts of civil society, most notably Iran and Saudi Arabia. Iran, of course, projects Persian values, and is therefore unlikely to adopt Arabian trendlines. More basically still:

the ideology of its revolution against the Shah in 1979 has replaced a hereditary secular autocrat with his ecclesial equivalent, a Grand Ayatollah. Jurist-theologians are ascribed a Shi'ite infallibility, supreme in faith, practice, and policy. Their Supreme Leaders have consigned thousands to death in the 1980s (Khomeini) and treat articulate liberal democrats today to prison and torture (Khamenei). Faith and the state are also interlocked, but differently, in the richest kingdom of the region. Saudi royalty and Wahhabi theocracy linked up a quarter of a millennium ago.

No parliament threatens to contest the king; consultative councils are royally appointed; petitions come less from subjects than from those who might be called "abjects"; and women, half the population, have no legal standing at all.

King Abdullah and his government have pumped the equivalent of $5000 per person into the social economy. While upheavals proceed elsewhere, the Saudi people appear lulled or even stupefied. When adventurous women proclaimed June 17, 2011 a day for themselves to drive in defiance of custom and police, only thirty or forty were estimated to have done so across the country. Twenty years previous, more women-47 exactly-had gone briefly to jail in Riyadh for taking the wheels of their cars.[13]

These two neighboring absolutisms, Iran and Saudi Arabia, loathe and fear each other. Upon the Persian/Arab divide is built Shi'ite/Sunni antipathy; and upon both is loaded national competition for regional influence. Their tensions recently came to a head in Bahrain, when the majority Shi'ite population arose to protest felt discrimination by King Isa Al-Khalifa and his Sunni elite advisors. Fearing that the meager freedoms already allowed would become the basis for further agitation, the government shut down the media, closed off the social networks, and physically obliterated the Pearl

Square monument, so that no symbol or place might remain for the dissidents who camped there.

Twenty-eight Shi'ite mosques were completely leveled, of which ten had been counted as historic structures.[14] Saudi troops and forces from the Gulf Cooperation Council were invited in as reinforcements where an estimated 100,000 people-one-seventh of the native population-had demonstrated. Even though organizers like Muniro Fakhro, with decades of feminist experience, stressed national unity, many of Bahrain's Sunnis and neighboring Saudis want no event like Tahrir Square in the Gulf, fearing it would play to the advantage of Iran.

In the vortex of the Arab uprisings, royalty itself began to project its concerns. The Gulf Cooperation Council, a nest of rich familial kingdoms, extended invitations to membership far beyond its region, to Morocco and to Jordan.

This hope of turning the affinities of monarchy into a wider political solidarity may be reckoned as one of the effects of the uprisings of 2011. But it appeared to have less potential as a decisive trend than piquancy as a defining moment in the endangered history of Arab royalties. The most effective monarchical coping comes from King Mohammed VI of Morocco, who from the beginning of his reign in 1999 has tried to anticipate the people's needs, liberalizing the family code and rights for women, and incrementally devolving his powers under the constitution.

LIBYA, YEMEN, SYRIA

Libya, Yemen, and Syria complete the list of major national actors in the Arab convulsions. Their civil war, anarchy, and extreme repression respectively do not foster the creative discourse from which modern societies are built.

Libya, even though its population of six million is less than a third of the other two countries, has long attracted attention because of the

antics of its dictator, Muhammar Qaddafi. His ruthless killing of protesters triggered an intervention by NATO forces, which remained conflicted in motive and mission. To what degree was the intervention humanitarian (as Obama pictured it) and to what degree anti- immigrant (by fearful European countries)? To what degree protective of Libyan civilians, and in what measure protective of oil flow to the West? After a half-year of Arab uprisings, there was no sure answer to such questions, nor a clear outcome of the struggle. All the elements of civil war were present, including geographic split between status-quo government in Tripoli and rebel government in Benghazi.

Yemen's troubles were embodied in its autocrat of three decades, Ali Abdullah Saleh. When he seemed an obstacle, agreements were brokered by the Gulf Council and encouraged by the United States that he withdraw from power in return for immunity from prosecution. Three different times on the verge of accepting them, he publicly reneged. He finally departed for Saudi Arabia for treatment of wounds received in an attack on his palace mosque. His country was in the grips of urban battle in Sana, Taiz, and elsewhere, colored by tribal divisions between his followers and the allies of the clan Ahmar. Blood feuds persist in Yemen, and are not conducive to solving its problems. At the bottom of the Arab League in GDP per capita, its 22 million people were "awash in weapons" while its oil reserves were emptying out and its water supplies were drying up. "Water stress" has been growing intense as annual demand exceeds renewable supply, with ground water seriously declining. Some urban housewives cannot wash dishes or flush toilets. Here human dignity was challenged in a fundamental way: compromised personal cleanliness. Could a new national culture emerge from the protests? After five months of campout, marches, lectures, and demonstrations focused in University Square, a detectible fusion was emerging of

hip, academic, feminist, and liberal oppositionist values. But a similar long-term cultivation of solidarity was going on among nearby pro-government forces, implying continued conflict.

Syria's government has its own unique and uncompromising style in suppressing protest. Saudi Arabia has done so by taming its people with a flow of social funding, while Iran does so again by clubbing and jailing those who demonstrate.

Iran, however, has recent historical leverage from its revolution of 1979, by which it can brand any dissident as a counter-revolutionary. This charge benefits from the theological undertone conveyed by being the world's leading Shi'ite power, and the political overtone of having deposed the corrupt Westernizing Shah. The Syrian government has no such psychic resources. It is held together in its presidential family and its top military echelons by Alawites-a religious minority that may be characterized as Shi'ite or syncretist, depending on who is articulating its beliefs. And those Alawite leaders have, instead of a revolutionary heritage to draw on, the ugly memory of the father and uncle of the current leaders stomping down revolt of Muslim Brotherhood members in 1982 with thousands of deaths.

The family clique of Al-Assad, involved in many businesses and entwined in the apex of government, wield power for the interests of the military, intelligence, arms trade, and repression of protest.[15] As a family corporate conglomerate, their form of security-obsessed power replaces the old idea of dynasty. The regime of the Al-Assads does not believe in freedom of information. An American journalist friend of mine, in Damascus during the regime of the father, Hafez, witnessed a failed attempt to assassinate that president, and he accordingly filed a report to his wire service. He was then arrested, interrogated, and told he was disseminating lies. "But I saw it," he said. "No, you didn't," was the reply. With rubber hoses they beat

the naked soles of his feet until he recanted; then let him crawl into a prison cell with dozens of other men and two buckets, one for drinking water and one for excrement.

Foreign correspondents in Syria have been disallowed since first demonstrations in March 2011. Social networking is severely truncated. Under those conditions, nonetheless, crowds gathered in Dera'a to protest the imprisonment of boys eight to fifteen years old who had scrawled anti-regime graffiti on the walls of their schoolhouse. When a thirteen-year-old youth, Hamza Al-Khateeb, was allegedly tortured to death and his penis cut off, photos of his corpse further stoked the fires of civil rage.

The regime replied through a careful account by the president of the Medical Examiners of Syria, who nervously testified on video that three bullets ("life-wounds, not torture") caused Hamza's death, that there were no signs of torture, and that his penis was undamaged, although the body had decomposed in the weeks that it had remained unidentified.[16] This death has nonetheless been made into a symbol of Syrian protest in the pattern set by the case of Khaled Said in Egypt: "We are all Hamza Al-Khateeb."

To this the regime's reply is more tanks, helicopter gunships, and loyal troops with machine guns. Elite brigades have gone to rebellious cities west and east along the northern border with Turkey, and "pacified" them with violence or preemptive presence. These heavily Sunni tribal areas mutter darkly against the Alawite leaders of the country, and their own Alawite neighbors.

No city wants the honor of being Hama, where in 1982 government forces under President Hafez Al-Assad's brother, Rifat, killed 10,000 (some say 20,000). As a showdown intensifies a generation later, it is another pair of brothers, Bashar and Maher, poised to do the same, against demonstrators lightly armed or weaponless but willing to look

death in the eye. Blood feuds run deep; still deeper when fueled by religion.[17]

GENDER JUSTICE AND JUSTICE IN GENERAL

For over a century, feminisms in the Arab regions and across the Muslim world have been produced by women, for whom stakes are higher than men in rethinking gender, religion, and culture.[18] In the uprisings of 2011, women are even more intensely than before registering those dynamics and seeking new definitions. It is far too early for conclusive summary, but not premature to look at specifics. Tunisia, which abolished slavery more than a century before Saudi Arabia, remains a social leader among Arab nations.

Even as their independent electoral commission postpones a national election for three months to ensure adequate registration, all participating parties are required to list as many women as men candidates, and to alternate them on the ballots. The liberal Progressive Democratic Party, with co-leaders, male and female, says it had already planned to field gender in equal numbers. Al Nadha, which is a liberal Islamist party by regional standards, even if conservative in the Tunisian value spectrum, supports the requirement, declaring that it had already developed a strong cadre of women to pursue its work when Ben Ali put many of its party's men in jail.[19]

Egypt, with over eighty million people, is by size and length of tradition closely watched, even if the phenomena permitted by the supreme military council are neither supple nor subtle. Young women such as the Coptic physician, Dr. Sally Tooma Moore, were leaders of the youth groups who took over Tahrir Square and made all the world hold its breath.

Even a near-octogenarian slept out there, the aged and tested feminist, Nawal al-Saadawi, whose novels and books had been banned. As a physician herself, psychiatrist, and long-time leader

(first a victim at age six) in the campaign against female genital mutilation, her eminence had won her international notice. Then by the Sadat regime she was dismissed from her fourteen-year job in the Ministry of Health. When she wrote a memoir about her time in jail, she began it using a prostitute's eyebrow pencil and toilet paper. In Tahrir she knew she belonged. Her American friend, Islamicist Bruce Lawrence, managed to reach her there by cell phone. "Bruce, Bruce," she exclaimed in delight at the young people all around her, "they are reading my books!"

There were notable reversals as well. The male mob groping of American reporter Lara Long was a frightening spontaneous incident. Systematically ugly, however, was the post-Mubarak incident of "virginity tests," as demonstrations continued for diverse causes. Young women were taken in by the military and, as alleged defense against false charges of rape, were stripped, photographed, and required to submit to medical proof (or disproof) of their virginity, restrained by female soldiers while a man in a white coat examined them. Widespread outrage in Egypt moved the military to disown this illogical and humiliating practice.[20] Rotten masculine intimidation arose again when a "Million Women March" was planned for March 8, International Women's Day, especially to protest non-inclusion of any women on the constitution reform panel then at work. Fewer than a thousand women appeared, and they were taunted and quickly disrupted by aggressive men.

Libya, in its civil war, has women far more prominent as victims than as leaders. Iman al-Obeidi, who complained of gang rape by Qaddafi soldiers, was then forcibly abducted by agents of the government from a hotel lobby where she was meeting with journalists.[21] After release from imprisonment, she left the country. A human rights group says that Hillary Clinton has helped arrange a flight to the United States for her and her father. Will the National Transition

Council in Benghazi focus on countering such barbarities against women? The Council has only one female member.

A timeline of opposition in Syria bulges with religious contention and brutal repression, but not with female heroes. The government uses Bouthaina Shaaban, a British- educated scholar of Arab women and literature, to reach out to old oppositionists while young ones are disinclined to talk. Who will preserve the "canopy" of religious and cultural variety that has survived, even flourished, in Syria under minority sectarian power?[22] Gunships are not good for canopies. Fourteen hundred have already died, activists say, and over 10,000 have been arrested. Perhaps a lost provincial event will have to stand for female courage in Syria. When hundreds of men were rounded up in the villages of Bayda and Beir Jnad, to crush dissent, two thousand women and children the following day blocked the coastal highway, demanding their release. "We will not be humiliated," they cried. And the authorities freed about a hundred men, some bruised and with apparently broken bones, to cheers and cries of triumph from the protesters.[23]

Yemen has been absolute last in the world in the Global Gender Gap Report ever since it was first published in 2006.

It is likely to remain there, significantly below Chad and Pakistan. Sixty-seven percent of its women are illiterate.

Of its 301 parliamentarians, just one is female. Above this data, a mother of three stands out. Tawakkul Karman is chair of Women Journalists Without Chains, which addresses national issues not just of women, but of unemployment and corruption.[24] She has also orated to crowds for four years, in weekly protests against the rule of Ali Abdullah Saleh; and she astonishes men that they are not only spoken to by a woman, but roused by her remarks. One woman does not make a political revolution, nor can one alone spark a gender transformation. Where there is one such as Karman, however, there

are many others hoping for change and willing to do something about it. But does Yemen have sufficient cohesion in its makeup to prevail over its combustibility?

The prospect of Saleh coming back as president touches in Tawakkul Karman a self-destructive anger. "If [he] returns and is president, people will blow themselves up. We will not care about our lives."[25]

Margot Badran has been surveying feminisms in Egypt and throughout Islam across four decades. The eighteen days of protest in Tahrir Square, getting millions beyond fear, have given her "jet fuel" of renewed optimism. Exclusion of women from the drafting committee of the interim constitution was a blow, but female lawyers and judges are freshly energized. She sees senior women as having the networks, standing, and skills for new achievement; middle-generation women as experienced and sensitized in development and human rights; and young women as "hell-bent" on getting things done, working together with young men.

The sequence ahead on the Nile appears to be: elections in September (if Tunisia's delay does not influence a similar one in Egypt); constitutional matters percolating forward into 2012; with revisions of the Personal Status Law and family law reform only possible after changes in the constitution. Everything is up for grabs. But not everything will be transformed. Politically, Badran realizes, idealists will lose to hard religious forces and stiff patriarchalism if they insist too fiercely on gender justice. But this is the time to determine what is critical and to press for it. In a paper entitled "The Sovereignty of Equality," she lays out her conviction that the egalitarian readings of Islamic text are the compelling ones. Persons of either gender and of all religions have equal rights.[26]

Such views, I believe, do not require a miracle to be realized. They require work, today, tomorrow, and the next day. Time has shown

that Ibn Khaldûn's philosophy of history is far from adequate to the present Arab era. Asabiyyah may explain how cities and civilization arose from Bedouin savagery. But cities are now a given, and civilization emerges variously in new dimensions. To evolve in the Arab regions, a new and greater cohesion is necessary beyond desert tribalism and between genders; and there must also be a new civil sensibility, accessible to minorities.

Accompanying both, to ensure against Ibn Khaldûn's tedious cycles, probity is required in management of resources and in delivery of benefits to whole populations, not just to narrow elites and self-indulgent princelings.

Theodore Friend (born August 27, 1931 Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania) is an American historian, novelist, and teacher, a former President of Swarthmore College. In 2003, Harvard University Press published his latest book, Indonesian Destinies. Dr. Friend's first book, Between Two Empires: The Ordeal of the Philippines, 1929–1946 (Yale University Press, 1965) won the Bancroft Prize in American History, Foreign Policy, and Diplomacy (1966).

Notes

[1] Ibn Khaldûn, The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History, Frank Rosenthal, trans.; N.J. Dawood, ed. (Princeton University Press, 1967); asabiyyah, xi; 152; stages, pp. 140-42 and passim.

[2] Excellent articles: Peter Turchin, "Scientific Prediction in Historical Sociology: Ibn Khaldûn meets Al Saud," in Peter Turchin, Leonid Grinin, Andrae Korataev, and Victor C. de Munk, History and Mathematics: Historical Development of Complex Societies (Moscow, Kom Kniga, 2006); pp. 9-38; William R. Polk, "Encounters with Ibn Khaldûn," www.williampolk.com/pdf/2001/Encounters....

[3] Heba Ramzy, e-mail correspondence with the author, 28-29 June 2011.

[4] New York Times, 12 May 2011, p. A10.

[5] And prevailed despite enormous national frustration, already symbolized in 2010 by the performance artist Ahmed Basiony. He had publicly run in place an hour a day for thirty days, while sensors on his suit used his sweat to project a flush of colors on video screens around him. On January 30, 2011, in Tahrir Square he was shot dead. His artistic career subsequently became the centerpiece of the Egyptian exhibit at the Venice Biennale, breaking the tradition of previously academic submissions by Egypt. www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/art/egypt-displays-an-artful-legacy-at-the-venice-biennale"

[6] Lally Weymouth interviewed generals for washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/Egyptian-generals-speak_. 18 May 2011. The evaluative language is mine.

[7] Interview, Heba Ramzy, 19 May 2011.

[8] I am grateful to Ambassador (ret.) Adrian Basora, Director of the Project on Democratic Transitions at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, Philadelphia, for his essay, with Jean F. Boone, "A New U.S. Policy Towards Democracy in Post-Communist Europe/Eurasia," January 2010; and for his personal notes, "Arab Revolutions of 2011 vs. Post-Communist Transitions of 1989-91."
[9] Here I owe perspective to three scholars who presented a seminar on "Egypt, Regime Change, and the Muslim Brotherhood" at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, Philadelphia, 24 May 2011: Samuel Helfont, Aaron Rock, and Eric Trager.
[10] Bruce B. Lawrence, "Islam and Civil Society - Perspectives from Egypt before and after Mubarak," talk prepared for Philadelphia, 2 May 2011 (but not formally given, displaced by news of the death of Osama bin Laden), p. 2.
[11] Christopher Alexander, "Authoritarianism and Civil Society in Tunisia," Middle East Report, October-December, 1997.
[12] My outlook here was informed by numerous trips, as President of Eisenhower Fellowships, to Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria, 1985-1992.
[13] The figure "47" comes from my own interviews in Riyadh with two female drivers of 1991. Other information: //www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jun/17/Saudi-arabia-women-drivers-protest_.' //English.aljazeera.net/indepth/opinion/2011/06/201161694746333674.html.
[14] On mosques: www.mcclatchydc.com/2011/05/30/114980/bahrain's-official-tally-shows.
[15] bbc.co.uk/news/world/middle-east-13216195-"Bashar Al- Assad's Inner Circle," May 18, 2011.
[16] This video appears on YouTube as "Hamza Al Khatib-Truth of his Death." I cite it despite its unpersuasive tone and its unpopularity. Several other videos on Hamza are dramatically sympathetic to him, highly political, and much more often visited.
[17] For historical ideology and emotion on this subject, see <talismangate.blogspot.com/2007/05/new-syrian-group-delivers-anti-alawite-calling-card>.
[18] Margot Badran, Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences (Oxford, Oneworld, 2009), p. 310 and passim.
[19] New York Times, 9 June 2011, p. A10.
[20] Isobel Coleman,
<cnn.com/2011/OPINION/06/01/coleman.egypt.women/index>.
[21] The abduction appears on <yahoo.com/video/play?p+iman%20%20obeidi&tnr_>. More offensive detail is conveyed, compellingly, on YouTube, "Eman Al-Obeidi to Anderson Cooper (complete)."
[22] Quotation from Malise Ruthven, "Storm over Syria," New York Review of Books, 9 June 2011, pp. 16-20. "Women and the Rise of Religious Consciousness," by Anonymous, is a brave attempt, necessarily controversial, to open up the subject for Syria and the region: Joshua Landis, Syria Comment, 28 September 2010
[23] <huffingtonpost.com/2011/04/13/Syria-protest-women-block-highway+n_848475>.
[24] Alice Hackman, <mideastposts.com/2011/03/03/tawakkul- karman-the-woman-leading-yemens-protests/. Further on Karman, on Asmaa Mahfouz, and Munira Fakhro, is found in Natana DeLong-Bas, "Women of the Arab Spring_." Common Ground News Service, 20 June 2011.
[25] New York Times, 11 June 2011, p. A6.
[26] Margot Badran to the author, 7, 8 June 2011.