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From: Office of Terje Rod-Larsen
Sent: Wed 7/18/2012 2:19:46 PM
Subject: July 14 update

14 July, 2012

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Article 1.

The Washington Institute

Can It Get Worse in Syria? It Just Did

Jeffrey White

July 13, 2012 -- Syria's descent into ever-greater violence steepened yesterday. Driven by the regime's desperate attempt to stay in power, an already ugly conflict took an ominous turn with the reported movement of chemical munitions and what appears to be the worst massacre of civilians yet.

CHEMICAL WEAPONS MOVEMENT

Although details are lacking on yesterday's news that the regime

is moving some of its chemical weapons (CW), the development signals that something important may have changed in Syria. The regime's CW infrastructure has been well established for years, and sudden movement within it suggests a major decision may be in the making. After all, the very act of moving them puts them at risk. The opposition Free Syrian Army has been widely attacking the road system, including military convoys -- if CW transports come under attack, the weapons could be damaged, chemical agents could be released, or munitions could fall into the hands of FSA elements.

The regime's decision could be based on one of several factors. If the munitions are being concentrated at a smaller number of secure facilities, that would suggest the regime is worried about losing control of its CW as a result of combat or defections. It would also be another indication that the regime's position is deteriorating.

Alternatively, the regime may be preparing to use the weapons. If CW munitions are being deployed to operational units, that would suggest preparation for use. Use of CW would be the worst possible development of the war, one that should almost certainly trigger outside intervention.

Perhaps the regime is concerned that outside actors such as the United States are preparing to target its CW stocks. Once these weapons begin moving around, locating and targeting them becomes a much more difficult intelligence problem. Although the U.S. intelligence community will presumably be checking on all known CW facilities and operational units (air, ground, and missile) with a CW mission in the wake of yesterday's reports, the regime can send the weapons virtually anywhere in the

country and could simply hide them altogether. If the regime is willing to take the risks associated with moving CW in this manner, it could indicate that Damascus is seriously worried about the prospect of outside intervention.

THE MASSACRE

As many as 200 people were reportedly massacred in the village of Tremseh yesterday, and responsibility for the killings clearly lies at the regime's feet. The town of some 7,000 people was apparently subjected to concerted attack by Syrian military forces (including helicopters, artillery, and tanks) and then sacked, in the medieval sense, by shabbiha irregulars. The action is consistent with tactics the regime routinely employs in its offensive operations. That this kind of incident would happen at some point was predictable following the Houla massacre in May, and similar or even worse attacks could occur in the future as the regime becomes increasingly desperate to crush the opposition.

IMPLICATIONS

The Tremseh massacre and the movement of chemical weapons show that the Syrian regime is on an increasingly deadly path and will not be diverted by negotiations. The situation is becoming rapidly worse, and diplomatic efforts to end the fighting will continue to fail. UN envoy Kofi Annan's efforts are increasingly out of touch with realities on the ground, giving the regime a fig leaf of legitimacy and time in which to break the opposition. In short, this is a dangerous regime -- dangerous to its people and, as the CW movement suggests, dangerous to the region. The time for talking with Bashar al-Assad has passed. It

is time for ultimatums -- and, if those fail, armed action to topple the regime.

Jeffrey White is a defense fellow at The Washington Institute.

Article 2.

Newsweek

The Plagues of Egypt

Sarah A. Topol

July 16, 2012 -- The streets of downtown Cairo are sweltering as usual this summer afternoon, but Tamer Hassan resists the urge to turn on the taxi's air conditioning. Instead, the 39-year-old father of two keeps the windows rolled wide open and hopes for passengers who will tolerate the baking heat. What else can he do? For all his determined penny-pinching, he has plenty of days when his eight-hour stint behind the wheel brings in barely enough to cover the cost of renting the vehicle from the cab company--never mind the extra gas it would take to run the AC.

And he needs whatever he can get from moonlighting as a cabdriver just to keep his 8-year-old in private school. Hassan is convinced--not without reason--that Egypt's woeful public-education system is good for nothing but turning children into

undereducated hooligans. Hassan's day job as a state-employed security guard at a public theater pays barely \$33 a month, an amount that hasn't gone up in the nine years he has worked there, he says. His son's tuition is \$475 a month. Hassan has no idea what he'll do when his younger son, now 3, is ready for school.

It's people like Hassan--millions of them--who pose some of the biggest challenges confronting Mohamed Morsi. Somehow Egypt's new president still needs to persuade these skeptics to believe in his campaign promises that things will get better. And that won't be easy. When Morsi faced off against former prime minister Ahmed Shafiq in last month's presidential runoff contest, half the country's voters didn't participate, and those who bothered to show up divided nearly down the middle. That left Morsi (who hadn't even been his own party's first choice for the presidency) the winner by the barest of majorities over his opponent, Shafiq, who was widely viewed as the military's favored candidate and a relic of Hosni Mubarak's ousted dictatorship.

The worst of it is this: no matter how unexpectedly skillful a politician Morsi might turn out to be, the task he's facing is practically impossible. Even before he can tackle the country's stalled economy, the failing education system, the bloated bureaucracy, and the crumbling infrastructure--not to mention winning the confidence of the millions of Egyptians who didn't vote or actively supported his opponent--he has to figure out how much power the interim military government has actually ceded to him. Just weeks before he took the oath of office, the Supreme Court, stacked with holdovers from the Mubarak regime, effectively dissolved the country's first freely elected

Parliament. Then the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) amended its own previously issued Constitutional Declaration, giving veto power to the military in the drafting of a new constitution exempting the security forces and the military budget from presidential control.

Crucial legal questions remain lodged in the court system. Among the unresolved issues: ongoing challenges to the disbanding of Parliament, how to select the assembly that will write the new constitution, and even whether the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party can legally exist. (There's old legislation still on the books that forbids the creation of religious-based political parties.) Meanwhile, the generals have hinted that Morsi's term of office could be cut short to make way for another presidential election when the new constitution is ratified.

Such disputes have only worsened the country's most pressing problem: the stalled economy. All year the grappling over power between military and civilian leaders has delayed a deal with the IMF for a \$3.2 billion loan that could stabilize borrowing costs, assist with further international aid, and reassure foreign investors. Economic growth is projected to be no more than 1.5 percent this year, compared with 5.1 percent in the last year of Mubarak's rule. Currency reserves have sunk to little more than a third of their level on the eve of his fall, from \$43 billion to \$15.1 billion. Tourism and direct foreign investment have dropped, and unemployment has climbed. According to IMF forecasts, the budget deficit could grow to 10 percent of GDP this year.

As one of his presidency's first acts, Morsi ordered a 15 percent

increase in the pensions and salaries of government employees, along with an increase in social-security payments, effective this month. He never said where he thought the money would come from; that didn't matter, as the generals soon made clear. On July 1 they approved the national budget for fiscal year 2012-13 without allowing Morsi even to review it. Now the new president has no choice but to continue the Mubarak regime's spending habits and little hope of making good on his own campaign promises.

But Egyptians like Hassan don't much care about the details. They just want solutions to the country's problems--and fast. Since Mubarak's fall, they've endured more than 16 months of frustrated expectations, and most of them have precious little to show for it. In fact, roughly half the country's 83 million people are estimated to be living on roughly \$2 a day or less. "The problem in Egypt is there is no middle class," Hassan says as we sit stuck in afternoon traffic. "If the government doesn't help people who want to work, crime is going to rise even more. People won't be able to feed their families."

But Morsi has inherited a system that was designed to keep the old guard in power, not to build a modern, vibrant middle class. Take education: roughly 32 percent of the population is under 15, but the country's public schools are in dire straits. Classrooms are shared by 40 to 50 pupils, and curriculum is focused on rote learning, rather than on critical thinking. "The mismatch between the outputs of the education system and the needs of the job market is one of the key reasons behind the persistently high level of unemployment in Egypt, which is officially estimated at 12 percent but generally assumed to be significantly higher," the London-based think tank Chatham

House warned in a paper on Egypt's education system earlier this year.

Morsi clearly needs to clean up the Education Ministry and inject more money into the nation's classrooms. But he has no control over the budget. And the past six decades of military rule have created a feudal system of deeply entrenched corruption throughout the government. "It's going to take time for Morsi to reform the ministries, and time is the one thing he doesn't have," says Joshua Stacher, a 2012-13 Wilson Fellow and author of *Adaptable Autocrats: Regime Power in Egypt and Syria*. "Any kind of maneuver he makes within a ministry to reform it, change its personnel, redesign it, is going to be met with bureaucratic obstructionism by people who are used to doing things a certain way and are basically turf guarding their positions in that ministry. They're going to dilute initiatives, sabotage them."

That in itself would be a serious obstacle to getting Egypt up and running, but Mubarak allowed the rest of the country to fall apart as well. The country's roads, ports, and bridges are mismanaged and crumbling. Infrastructure investment has plummeted over the past 15 years, especially in power generation and transportation, according to a January 2010 World Bank working paper. "Associated with this decline, capital expenditures in Egypt have been reduced in the last decade, raising concerns that the country may have reached an unsustainably low level of infrastructure investment," the report said.

Egypt already occupied a less-than-distinguished spot in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business rankings, but in the past

year it slipped still lower, from No. 108 to No. 110. Out of 183 economies, Egypt ranks 154th for ease of attaining a construction permit, 101 for getting electricity, and 145 in tax payments. All of these factors contribute to Egypt's economic dysfunction. "These are all complementary moving parts," says Stacher.

The only way for Morsi and the Brotherhood to begin fixing these problems is by taking the reins away from the military and its vested civilian partners. So far, however, that doesn't seem to be happening. Human-rights groups have been particularly dismayed by the Brotherhood's acquiescence to the generals' demand that the civilians keep their hands off the Ministry of Interior. "The mission of security reform is very important, and it should be a priority," says Bahey El Din Hassan, director of the Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies. "But there is no political will."

Instead, he says, when the topic of reforming the Interior Ministry was raised in the now dissolved Parliament, the Brotherhood seemed to focus solely on substituting pro-Islamists for officers who persecuted them under the old regime. Other than that, Mubarak's police state remains essentially intact, institutionalized torture and all. In the past 16 months, more than 100 protesters have been killed in clashes with the security services, and 12,000 civilians have been hauled before military courts. "Nothing has happened," says El Din Hassan. "They are claiming there is ongoing reform, [but they are] just using some beautiful words."

The country's Coptic Christians are particularly worried. Since March 2011, thousands of Copts have left Egypt for fear of the

Islamists' rising political strength, according to Naguib Gabriel, president of the Egyptian Union of Human Rights. In fact, two of his three sons have moved abroad. In the past year, he says, his law office has been threatened, vandalized, and set ablaze because of his high-profile work on Coptic issues. Morsi has promised to name a Copt as vice president, but many say they want solid guarantees of religious liberty--including the right to build churches and prosecution of those who commit sectarian violence--not just token gestures.

In his first televised address to the nation, Morsi promised to be a president for all Egyptians, whether Muslim, Christian, or secular. Many of his listeners remain unconvinced. "The Muslim Brotherhood never keeps their word," said Zyad Elelaimy, a Social Democratic Party M.P. from the now dissolved Parliament and a veteran of the Revolutionary Youth Coalition, which planned the Jan. 25, 2011, uprising. Members of the Brotherhood interviewed by Newsweek admit that they have a lot of work to do, but say their critics should be more patient. "We've been going about this as ethically and as legally as we can," says Brotherhood spokesman Jihad El Haddad. "Perhaps not as revolutionary as many had hoped, but then again, the Muslim Brotherhood was never a revolutionary group. It's a gradual-reform and social-change group."

Some accuse the Brotherhood of making secret backroom deals with the military to carve out realms of influence in the new Egypt. Others say that for the moment the two sides ought to be seeking common ground. "What is needed is an agreement between the SCAF and the Muslim Brotherhood that for the foreseeable future they have to share power," says Marina Ottaway, a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for

International Peace. "They have to rule together because there is no other way to do it. They cannot start addressing issues which are totally crucial unless they solve some of the political problems."

If they can't find a way to resolve their conflicts and move forward against the desperate problems that are afflicting ordinary Egyptians, the country is in big trouble. And civilian politicians like Morsi will be the ones who are held accountable. "If they fail, what does that do to perceptions about democratic change?" asks Michael Hanna, a fellow at the Century Foundation in New York. "Does it discredit the move to create more accountable governments and pave the way for authoritarian relapse?" Already a palpable hankering for a return to the old order has set in among many Egyptians. The desire was reflected by Shafiq's strong showing in the elections--not only in the runoffs, when he was the only remaining alternative to the Islamists, but also in the first round, when he finished second.

Tamer Hassan says he doubts that Morsi and his party will fix Egypt's problems. As soon as they have a solid grip on power, they'll begin abusing it, he predicts: "Once they grab the bone, they'll just keep biting it." As he speaks, he's driving through Tahrir Square, the birthplace of the uprising that overthrew Mubarak and ushered in Morsi. "But it all depends on what they do," he says, shaking his head. "If they change something, I swear, I'll be the first one in line voting for them."

Sarah A. Topol is a Cairo-based journalist.

The Washington Post

In Egypt's Sinai desert, Islamic militants gaining new foothold

Ernesto Londoño

July 13 -- RAFAH, Egypt — Vast areas of Egypt's Sinai desert have descended into lawlessness in recent months, providing fertile ground for small cells of extremist militants that have emerged from the shadows and quietly established training camps near the Israeli border, according to Bedouin elders and security experts.

The militants include men who have fought in Afghanistan and Pakistan in recent years, as well as Islamists who were released from prison after the 2011 popular revolt that toppled President Hosni Mubarak and drove much of his potent security apparatus underground.

Drawing little notice during a period of dramatic developments in Cairo, the militants have become increasingly bold and visible amid a broader breakdown of security in the strategically important desert, a buffer zone between Israel and Egypt. The eclipse of authority has also given rise to Sharia courts run by Islamic scholars who settle disputes according to Islamic law.

The Egyptian government's failure to restore order in the Sinai has unnerved Israel, in part because of a recent attack on an

Israeli border post. Some local residents worry that Israel might ultimately respond unilaterally, a prospect that alarms those who survived successive wars in the Sinai between the neighbors in the 1960s and 1970s.

“In one year, this could all become extremely dangerous,” said Nassar Abu Akra, a merchant and elder in the area who fears that the rise of a violent militant movement could spark a crushing response from Israel. “If Israel responds to protect its land, it would be a disaster — a massacre. Even normal people, not just jihadis, would fight and die if Israelis came back.”

U.S. officials have grown increasingly concerned about deteriorating security in the Sinai. The subject is all but certain to come up during Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton’s visit to Cairo this weekend, particularly because two U.S. citizens were reportedly kidnapped in the area Friday.

The Sinai peninsula was contested territory for much of the past century, largely because it is a gateway to the Suez Canal, which connects the Mediterranean Sea and Red Seas. Israeli forces occupied the Sinai in 1956 and 1967 and fought a war against Egyptian troops in the following decade. Egypt regained full control of the Sinai after the 1979 peace treaty brokered by the United States.

A U.S. Army battalion consisting of several hundred soldiers is stationed in the Sinai as part of an international peacekeeping force.

In the recent turmoil, militants have been carrying out attacks on lightly armed police officers in recent months and have repeatedly bombed the pipeline that carries natural gas to Israel.

Bedouin tribesmen with grievances against the state, meanwhile, have kidnapped foreign tourists and international peacekeepers. Drug runners and human smugglers have also seized the moment, making both lucrative trades increasingly violent.

Soon after Egyptians rose up in Cairo in late January 2011 against Mubarak's authoritarian regime, residents in northern Sinai went on a looting rampage, burning police stations and other symbols of a state that became despised for the heavy hand of its security forces and the few services it offered to the residents of the impoverished, barren area.

As Mubarak was ousted, the black-clad police officers who for decades treated bearded men in the Sinai as terror suspects melted away. Police stations and checkpoints were reduced to piles of ashes and debris. Soldiers took up positions along the road that connects Cairo and the Gaza Strip, barricading themselves inside tanks and other fighting vehicles surrounded by walls of sandbags.

As pillars of the police state eroded, hundreds of Islamists left prison — some through release orders, others by breaking out. Maree Arar, a 41-year-old with a scraggly beard, was among those freed Islamists. Arar said he does not endorse acts of violence committed in the Sinai by militants, some of whom he said he knows, but they ought to be seen in proper context.

“They feel that there is still lingering injustice,” he said while fiddling with an iPhone. “We still have prisoners we want to get out; there are violations against our brothers in Palestine; there is a war on Islam all over the world. They are affected by it. They can't control themselves.”

‘The law is not respected’

Retired Egyptian Gen. Sameh Saif el-Yazl, who heads a center for political and strategic studies in Cairo, said the status quo in the Sinai is untenable. Hard-line fighters in the Sinai include men who fought in Afghanistan and Pakistan in recent years, he said. They have joined forces with Islamists released recently from prison.

“They want to impose Islamic law over the state,” said Yazl, whose views on security matters are widely seen as reflective of those of the country’s military chiefs. “The government must impose its control and rule over Sinai. Right now the law is not respected.”

A police official based in the Sinai city of Arish said in an interview that respect was the least of his worries. Men like him are being hunted.

“We leave our families to do our duties,” said the officer, who spoke at a beachfront cafe just above a whisper and insisted on anonymity for fear of reprisals. “Why are we coming home as dead bodies? We want to know why. If we are being targeted, let us leave this place for the people and the army.”

Ibrahim el-Meneey, a powerful Bedouin tribal elder who lives a few miles from the Israeli border, said that arrangement would be ideal, as long as the military sticks to guarding the road. The tribes, which have stockpiled everything from small arms to anti-aircraft missiles, are doing a fine job of dealing with violent human smugglers, drug runners and other miscreants who have taken advantage of the security vacuum over the past year, he said.

“Here, it’s all tribes,” Meneey said, sitting on a moonlit sandy patch outside his house, which is close enough to Israel that cell phones roam onto the country’s mobile networks. “Security is very stable.”

The increasing boldness of militant cells in the area does not yet concern him, Meneey said, noting that he does not share their goal of creating an Islamic caliphate. The fighters who set up a small training facility about three miles from his home earlier this year are respectful of locals, and number no more than 150.

But he worries that such groups could evolve into a powerful movement with links to militant groups in Palestinian territories and other Muslim countries. For the time being, there is little support for the budding jihadist cells among the members of his tribe, the Sawarka, the elder said. That could change, he cautioned, if the government once again carries out indiscriminate arrests.

“The bedouin is a peaceful being,” Meneey said, sipping sweet tea. “But if he feels humiliated, he will never forget. The government has to work quickly to deliver justice.”

If the Egyptian government fails to find the right approach to restore security and services, he said: “This could become like a second Afghanistan. It could become an international war.”

Residents assume state functions

Whether or not armed conflict is imminent, Sinai leaders say they have increasingly taken on tasks the state is not performing. Roughly six months ago, Hamdeen Abu Faisal, an Islamic scholar, became among the first in the region to set up informal

tribunals that settle cases that would normally be the jurisdiction of local courts.

“The people started to need someone to sort out their problems,” Faisal said. “There are no functioning courts, police stations or district attorneys.”

The courts are not imposing corporal punishments, Faisal said, and are only arbitrating disputes among people who agree in writing to adhere to the decision of the scholars.

“Don’t worry,” joked Faisal, who was among the Islamists detained following the 2004 bombings in Taba, a resort town then popular among Israelis. “We don’t use whips.”

Article 4.

Asia Times

The murder of Yasser Arafat

Sami Moubayed

Jul 14, 2012 -- When iconic Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat died at the age of 75 on November 11, 2004, the causes of his sudden collapse and death at a Paris hospital were registered as "unknown". This was strange - to say the least - for a man of his age.

Israeli papers occasionally came out with reports that Arafat died of AIDS, while Palestinians of different strips and colors insisted that their former president had been murdered. For years, the world scoffed at them, claiming that Arabs in general

and Palestinians in particular love to spin wild "conspiracy theories". Today, eight years later, Arafat's case re-emerges strongly as fresh evidence indicates that he may indeed have been poisoned.

After a recent groundbreaking nine-month investigation by the Doha-based al-Jazeera TV, it was proven that high levels of the deadly radioactive polonium 210 were found in Yasser Arafat's effects. The poison avoids detection unless specifically searched for at a laboratory, explaining why nobody noticed it back in 2004. Two years after Arafat's death, Russian dissident and former KGB officer Alexander Litvinenko was murdered in London by Russian agents using this same poison. It took him three weeks to die from polonium. As in Arafat's case, his doctors at first wrote off the death as an "accident".

After the al-Jazeera report, Arafat's widow submitted her late husband's toothbrush, underwear, and other belongings to a respected Swiss laboratory for further investigation. She authorized the exhumation of his remains for further testing, which was promptly approved by Arafat's long time friend and successor, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. After examining his body and bone marrow, tests will be able to demonstrate whether the radioactive poison was in his system. If that is the case, all fingers are pointing at two potential culprits; then Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon and Mohammad Dahlan, the former chief of Preventive Security in the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

Let us round up the usual suspects in Arafat's death. One obviously is Sharon, who often lamented publicly that he did not eliminate Arafat when he had the chance to do so in Beirut in 1982. In early 2004, he talked about Arafat having "no insurance policy". The Israelis have done it before, notably in 1997 when

they almost killed Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal in Amman, on the orders of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. There is nothing that would have prevented them from doing it yet again to Arafat, whom they regarded as a prime terrorist and the single source of all their misery since 1967.

Had Sharon done it, however, he probably would not have hid the task, which he would have regarded as a great service to Israel. Sharon had already grounded Arafat in his office compound in Ramallah since December 2011, denying him access to foreigners, sleep, and travel authorization. Israeli drills were conducted at night right next to his bedroom to deny him sleep during the night, and guns were trained at the compound to shoot him, if he dared venture outside his "jail".

Yet if Israel had nothing to hide, why then did its prime minister sign off a law extending classification of state archives? That meant that all documents related to the war of 1948, for example, and its monumental aftermath would remain under lock and key until 2018, exactly 70-years after the loss of Palestine.

Records of Arafat's death, therefore, will not be opened until 2074. Netanyahu's move came only after the Shin Bet applied pressure to prevent the opening of state archives. According to State Archivist Yehoshua Freundlich, the material will remain classified because "it has implications over [Israel's] adherence to international law". He added: "I've been convinced that in the current situation these materials are not fit for public viewing."

The Dahlan connection

When Hamas occupied the Gaza Strip in 2007, its leaders claim that they found a letter dating back to July 13, 2003, addressed by Dahlan to then-Israeli defense minister Shaul Mofaz.

According to Hamas, he said: "The fear now is that Yasser

Arafat will merge the Legislative Council to withdraw confidence [from the Abbas cabinet]. To prevent him from doing that, I wish to see cooperation from all parties and pressure [on him." He adds, "Be certain that Mr Yasser Arafat has been counting his final days. Let us slaughter him our way - not yours."

Was the Dahlan-Mofaz document authentic? The recent revelations certainly add credit to it, indicating that somebody, probably from his own entourage, killed Arafat. Abbas was quick in authorizing an autopsy of the former president's body last week, specifically to ward off accusations that he too might have been accomplice to Arafat's murder.

In June 2011, Dahlan was expelled from Fatah because of repeated claims by President Abbas that he had murdered Arafat. In September, his house was raided by the Palestinian police and his private armed guards were arrested. In August 2011, his former party accused him of murdering Arafat by poison, long before the al-Jazeera investigation was launched. According to an old friend of Abbas, who spoke to Asia Times Online on the condition of animosity; "Dahlan is more dangerous than Israel!"

In July 2009, senior Fatah member Farouk al-Kaddoumi accused Dahlan publicly of having murdered Arafat. Speaking to Al Jazeera from Jordan, Kaddoumi revealed the contents of a secret document - presumably shown to him personally by Arafat - regarding a meeting between Sharon, Abbas, Dahlan, US undersecretary of state William Burns and a number of Central Intelligence Agency officials. The meeting was aimed at eliminating Arafat and Hamas leaders Abdul Aziz Rantisi (who was eventually assassinated by Israel in April 2004).

Kaddoumi said he advised Arafat to flee Ramallah, seeing that

the death threat was serious, but the aging Arafat curtly refused. Arafat after all was a firm believer in fate, especially after he miraculously survived an air plane crash in Libya, when all others onboard were killed. Responding to the accusations, which spread quickly throughout the Palestinian areas, Abbas said, "Kaddoumi claims to be in possession of five-year-old documents that prove [his allegations], so why did he not reveal them immediately?"

Abbas, who shared a close relationship with both Kaddoumi and Arafat since the 1960s, claimed that the accusations were "lies" intended to show him in poor light. Kaddoumi also called for an international tribunal to investigate Arafat's death, similar to the one created to probe the 2005 assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri.

Poisoning Arafat was probably not a difficult task. Those who knew him are full of stories about how lax his security was; how he used to eat off the hands of strangers, and kiss or embrace anybody who spoke favorably of the Palestinian cause. During the siege of Beirut in 1982, he would famously sleep near Israeli checkpoints, believing that Sharon would never search for him so close to where his enemies were camping.

Readers might ask why Arafat's case is so important today, when thousands of Arabs are dying each day in the Syrian Revolt - for example - and while others were killed at the hands of the Libyan regime in February 2011?

Yasser Arafat is the only Arab leader who probably would have calmly survived the Arab Spring. In the age of Arab despots and military dictators, he was the only democratically elected president in the Arab world (with the exception of course of Lebanon), which explains why all his contemporaries hated him

and wished to see an end to the PLO chairman.

While they fed off the riches of their countries, and milked the Palestinian cause dry, Arafat was a selfless figure; devoting his life in hell to a cause he firmly believed in. He never thought of bequeathing power to any chosen successor, and never did he clamp down on his critics, or shoot a single Palestinian citizen when serving as president after the Oslo Accords of 1993.

No statues of Arafat decorated the landscape in Gaza or the West Bank during his tenure in the 1990s. Unlike Arab leaders who had huge armies to rely on in times of war, a secret police in times of peace, and a massive state-run media machine, Arafat had nothing. He had no real army, no dungeons in which to incarcerate his opponents, and in the age of mass media and satellite TV, he was a walking, talking disaster.

While his Arab contemporaries wore Western suits and were always ironed, neat, and clean-shaved, looking like leaders of European countries, Arafat had the looks of a resistance leader. Scruffy, always in khaki military uniform, and always with a revolver buckled on his side, he was the perfect mirror of his people's image, representing revolution and resistance.

In Jordan, he used to lunch with his troops in their barracks, sleep in their camps, and spend quality time with them. In Beirut, he joined them in their weddings, funerals, and daily life. Even as head of state in Ramallah and Gaza, he did not change colors with the Palestinians. He would show up at hospitals to visit the wounded, and in one televised encounter, bent over to kiss the foot of an injured Palestinian boy. His critics argued that these were theatrical stunts, no different from him donating blood to the victims of the 9/11 attacks in New York.

True, they may be stunts, but they had a magical spell on his people. Was he corrupted? Arafat was a corruptor par excellence -

he knew what it took to lure people into his political orbit, and what it cost to secure their eternal silence. The same of course cannot be said of his wife, who lived a lavish lifestyle in Tunisia and France, while her countrymen suffered because of occupation, war, and poverty.

Precisely because of the Arab Spring, Yasser Arafat ought to be remembered and given justice. In the neighborhood of dictators, he was the only real democrat, and that is why everybody wanted him dead.

Sami Moubayed is a Syrian political analyst. He is the author of Steel & Silk: Men and Women Who Shaped Syria 1900-2000 (Cune Press 2005).

Article 5.

The Wall Street Journal

George Shultz: Memo to Romney — Expand the Pie

Robert L. Pollock

July 13, 2012 -- George Shultz has one of the most preposterously impressive résumés in recent American history. World War II Marine (1942-45); distinguished academic

economist; business executive; secretary of labor (1969-70); director of the Office of Management and Budget (1970-72); secretary of the Treasury (1972-74); chairman of Ronald Reagan's economic transition team; and the secretary of state (1982-89) who wound down the Cold War.

He's also been an active adviser to GOP leaders including George W. Bush in the years since. And, as I just learned, he's not a bad singer either.

When I called out of the blue on Wednesday morning, the 91-year-old éminence grise was in his office at Stanford University's Hoover Institution and willing to meet for an interview that afternoon.

The executive summary? On the economy: "We have some big problems in this country." He's very concerned about debt, and about monetary, tax and regulatory policy. On foreign policy: "We're weaker, much weaker" abroad than we were two decades ago.

But despite it all, Mr. Shultz is confident that if we get the policies right again, America can regain its footing: "When Ronald Reagan took office, inflation was in the teens, the prime rate was in the 20s, and the economy was going nowhere. We still had the remnants of wage and price controls, particularly in oil and gas. And Jimmy Carter said we were in 'malaise.' It was a bad time. I'm convinced the economy can be turned around because I watched Ronald Reagan do it."

"It took long-term thinking," Mr. Shultz emphasizes. "I'll give you an example. [Reagan] knew and we all advised him you can't have a decent economy with the kind of inflation we've got.

. . . The political people would come in and say 'You've got to be careful, Mr. President. There's gonna be a recession [if the Federal Reserve tightens the money supply]. You're gonna lose seats in the midterm election.'

"And he basically said, 'If not us who? If not now when?' And he held a political umbrella over [Fed Chairman] Paul Volcker, and Paul did what needed to be done. And by late '82 early '83, inflation was under control, the tax changes that he made were kicking in, and the economy took off. But it took a politician with an ability to take a short-term hit in order to get the long-run results that we needed."

Is inflation a primary threat today? Not an immediate one, says Mr. Shultz, "but it's a building problem because of all this liquidity that's being stored up. . . . They [the Fed] think their contribution to doing something about [our economic troubles] is very easy money. Well, by this time money is very easy. It doesn't have to get any easier. . . . It takes other things to get the economy going—not more money."

Mr. Shultz dwells at length on the national debt, and on the Fed's role in enabling it: "It's startling that in the last year, three-quarters of the debt that's been issued has been bought by the Fed and the balance has been bought by other countries, so U.S. citizens and institutions are not on net buying U.S. debt. . . . The Fed doesn't have an unlimited capacity because when it buys the debt what it's doing is monetizing the debt. Sooner or later that has got to get out into the economy. Can't be held forever. And when it does in that kind of volume—as Milton Friedman taught us, inflation is a monetary phenomenon—it's gonna be hard to control."

As Mr. Shultz sees it, there is plenty of empirical evidence about which policies promote growth and which don't.

"I think the things that need to be done are sort of in the air, and you almost feel as if everybody knows what they are," he says. "It's quite apparent that we need to have another round of the 1986 tax act. That is, clean out the preferences and lower the rates. . . . It's also not a mystery that our corporate tax rate is way too high and there are preferences there that could be cleaned out."

For Mr. Shultz, the tax issue is not just about rates—though he believes lower rates often produce more revenue than higher ones, and "it's the revenues you're looking for"—but about predictability.

He asks me what sports I like. "Let's talk about football. . . . You want to know the rules and have an impartial referee, but you also want to make sure somebody isn't going to come along and change the rules in the middle of the game. . . . Now it's as though we have all these people who have money on the sidelines and we say 'Come on and play the game,' and they say 'Well what are the rules?' and we say 'We'll tell you later.' And what about the referee? Well, we're still struggling for who that's gonna be. . . . That's not an environment designed to get people to play."

Mr. Shultz cites the handling of the auto bankruptcies as an important deviation from rules-based economic policy. The question was "are we gonna have a political bankruptcy or a rule-of-law bankruptcy? Political bankruptcy was chosen. So the result is that the unions got paid off and the regular creditors didn't."

He also cites Washington's "habit of passing bills that are thousands of pages long and you know most legislators haven't even read what they're voting for."

That would be ObamaCare, of course. "I fear that the approach to controlling costs in the health-care business is moving more and more to a wage-and-price-control approach. And one thing you know from experience is when you control the price of something, you end up getting less of it. So if you control the price of health-care providers, you will have fewer of them and that's gonna wind up as a crisis. The most vivid expression of that . . . was Jimmy Carter's gas lines."

Experience. Examples. Evidence. Shultz themes.

As we turn to foreign policy, the national debt again looms large: "Now remember something. Alexander Hamilton, our first secretary of the Treasury, and a very good one, redeemed all of the Revolutionary War debt at par value, and he said the 'full faith and credit' of the United States must be inviolate, among other reasons because it will be necessary in a crisis to be able to borrow. And we saw ourselves through the Civil War because we were able to borrow. We saw ourselves able to defeat the Nazis and the Japanese because we were able to borrow. We've got ourselves now to the point where if we suddenly had to finance another very big event of some kind, it would be hard to do it. We are exhausting our borrowing capacity."

Mr. Shultz is not an alarmist about the rising power of China. He believes Chinese leaders understand their interest in having good relations with the United States. He is withering in his critique of those who would blame cheap Chinese labor or a cheap Chinese currency for U.S. economic problems:

"We are consuming more than we produce and we've done that a while and we're complaining about the fact that we have an imbalance of trade with China. But if you consume more than you produce, you have to import. It's just arithmetic. And if you spend more than you earn, you have to borrow. It's just arithmetic."

Mr. Shultz is more concerned about the Middle East, an area where he concedes even the Reagan administration struggled, "just like everybody." So what would he do about the threat of an Iranian bomb? Is he concerned we haven't seized the current opportunity to weaken Iran's ally in Damascus?

"[Syrian President Bashar al-Assad] and the Iranians have been a strategic adversary. Gadhafi was sort of a tactical adversary. . . . I think I would have said to the Turks, 'I see you are providing safe havens on your border and probably you could use some help. We're there with you.'"

He also thinks we can have a deterrent effect without major military strikes. He recalls an episode from the 1980s when the U.S. Navy became aware of Iranian efforts to mine the Persian Gulf: "We boarded the ship. Took off some mines for evidence. Took off the sailors, sank the ship. Took the sailors to Dubai, I believe, and said to the Iranians 'Come and get your sailors and cut it out.'"

What about Mitt Romney? Is he running on the right themes? Will he have a mandate if he wins?

"He made one speech that I thought was outstanding, addressing a long-term problem. And that was the speech about K-12 education, and he pointed out the degree to which the United

States is falling back. . . . We know that economic growth in the long run is correlated to education achievement."

Could he recommend one book for Mr. Romney to read this summer? "This book that John Taylor"—the Stanford economist and Mr. Shultz's colleague at Hoover—"has just published, 'First Principles: Five Keys to Restoring America's Prosperity.' You don't have to spend weeks reading it."

Mr. Shultz also mentions the memo his economic transition team wrote for President-elect Ronald Reagan in 1980, recently excerpted in The Wall Street Journal ("Advice for a New President," May 26): "If you just took that and put that into effect again, then we'd be in business."

I try hard to pull Mr. Shultz back toward despair. Aren't we an older, more poorly educated society than the one that climbed out of similar debt after World War II?

"Well, we gotta get after these things! Somehow people are locking into the idea of chronological age. There's another way of calculating age. That is what is the probability of your dying within the year. If you use that way of calculating, people who are 75 today on that basis are 65 as of some earlier time. . . . We need to gear our retirement system in such a way that people keep working longer."

He suggests ending Social Security taxes for people who have paid in for 40 years. The way to meet our demographic challenge is to keep people in the labor force longer, Mr. Shultz says, and not fall for European notions that there is some fixed amount of work to be divided up. "The trick is to keep expanding the pie."

We end on some wistful and optimistic notes. "There's no lack of creativity in the United States." Silicon Valley, he says, "is a giant Stanford spinoff." He waxes lyrical for a moment about Steve Jobs. "My wife tells a story," he says about a party with Jobs's wife. "[My wife] says well 'Where's Steve?'" "Steve is thinking. He's decided to take six months off and think" is the response. "He was a creative genius," adds Mr. Shultz with admiration.

Shultz conservatism is not dour, budget-balancing conservatism. Nor was Reagan's. It is a belief in the human spirit.

And, of course, in economic policies based on evidence. As the interview closes, I am treated to a song—not a note out of place—that was sung by the secretary on Milton Friedman's 90th birthday:

"A fact without a theory is like a ship without a sail. Is like a boat without a rudder. Is like a kite without a tail. A fact without a theory is as sad as sad can be. But if there's one thing worse in this universe, it's a theory . . . without a fact."

Mr. Pollock is the Journal's editorial features editor.

Article 6.

Psychology Today

The 8 Key Elements of Highly Effective Speech

Mark Waldman and Andrew Newberg, M.D.

Jul 10 2012 -- I'd like you to take a moment to experience the following sentence, taken from a recent article exploring the nature of human consciousness: "Neuroplastic mechanisms relevant to the growing number of empirical studies of the capacity of directed attention and mental effort systematically alter brain function."

Exciting? Hardly! In fact, most of the words you read barely register in your brain, and most of the words you speak barely register in the listener's brain. In fact, research shows that words are the least important part of communication when you have face-to-face conversations with others. So before you utter another word to another person, memorize this list of the 8 key elements of highly effective speech:

1. Gentle eye contact
2. Kind facial expression
3. Warm tone of voice
4. Expressive hand and body gestures
5. Relaxed disposition
6. Slow speech rate

7. Brevity

8. The words themselves

Effective communication is based on trust, and if we don't trust the speaker, we're not going to listen to their words. Trust begins with eye contact because we need to see the person's face to evaluate if they are being deceitful or not. In fact, when we are being watched, cooperation increases.[1] When we are not being watched, people tend to act more selfishly, with greater dishonesty.[2]

Gentle eye contact increases trustworthiness and encourages future cooperation,[3] and a happy gaze will increase emotional trust.[4] However, if we see the slightest bit of anger or fear on the speaker's face, our trust will rapidly decrease.[5] But you can't fake trustworthiness because the muscles around your mouth and eyes that reflect contentment and sincerity are involuntary. Solution: if you think about someone you love, or an event that brought you deep joy and satisfaction, a "Mona Lisa" smile will appear on your face and the muscles around your eyes will soften.

The tone of your voice is equally important when it comes to understanding what a person is really trying to say. If the facial expression expresses one emotion, but if the tone conveys a different one, neural dissonance takes place in the brain, causing the person confusion.[6] The result: trust erodes, suspicion increases, and cooperation decreases.

Researchers at the University of Amsterdam found that expressions of anger, contempt, disgust, fear, sadness, and surprise were better communicated through vocal tone than

facial expression, whereas the face was more accurate for communicating expressions of joy, pride, and embarrassment.^[7] And in business, a warm supportive voice is the sign of transformational leadership, generating more satisfaction, commitment, and cooperation between other members of the team.^[8]

You can easily train your voice to convey more trust to others, and all you have to do is slow down and drop your pitch. This was tested at the University of Houston: when doctors reduced their speaking rate and pitch, especially when delivering bad news, the listener perceived them “as more caring and sympathetic.”^[9] Harvard's Ted Kaptchuk also discovered that using a warm voice would double the healing power of a therapeutic treatment.^[10]

If you want to express joy, your voice needs to become increasingly melodic, whereas sadness is spoken with a flat and monotonic voice. When we are angry, excited, or frightened, we raise the pitch and intensity of our voice, and there's a lot of variability in both the speed and the tone. However, if the emotion is incongruent with the words you are using, it will create confusion for the listener.^[11]

Gestures, and especially hand movements, are also important because they help orchestrate the language comprehension centers of your brain.^[12] In fact, your brain needs to integrate both the sounds and body movements of the person who is speaking in order to accurately perceive what is meant.^[13] From an evolutionary perspective, speech emerged from hand gestures and they both originate the same language area of the brain.^[14] If our words and gestures are incongruent, it will

create confusion in the listener's brain.[15] Our suggestion: practice speaking in front of a mirror, consciously using your hands to "describe" the words you are speaking.

Your degree of relaxation is also reflected in your body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice, and any form of stress will convey a message of distrust. Why? Your stress tells the observer's brain that there may be something wrong, and that stimulates defensive posturing in the listener. Research shows that even a one-minute relaxation exercise will increase activity in those parts of the brain that control language, communication, social awareness, mood-regulation, and decision-making. [16] Thus, a relaxed conversation allows for increased intimacy and empathy. Stress, however, causes us to talk too much because it hinders our ability to speak with clarity.

When you speak, slow down! Slow speech rates will increase the ability for the listener to comprehend what you are saying, and this is true for both young and older adults.[17] Slower speaking will also deepen that person's respect for you,[18] Speaking slowly is not as natural as it may seem, and as children we automatically speak fast. But you can teach yourself, and your children to slow down by consciously cutting your speech rate in half. A slow voice has a calming effect on a person who is feeling anxious, whereas a loud fast voice will stimulate excitement, anger, or fear.[19]

Try this experiment: pair up with a partner and speak so slowly that ... you ... leave ... 5 ... seconds ... of ... silence ... between ... each ... word. You'll become aware of your negative inner speech that tells you that you should babble on endlessly and as fast as possible. It's a trap, because the

listener's brain can only recall about 10 seconds of content! That's why, when we train people in Compassionate Communication, we ask participants to speak only one sentence at a time, slowly, and then listen deeply as the other person speaks for ten seconds or less. This exercise will increase your overall consciousness about the importance of the first 7 elements of highly effective communication. Then, and only then, will you truly grasp the deeper meaning that is imparted by each word spoken by others.

But what about written communication, where you only have access to the words? When it comes to mutual comprehension, the written word pales in comparison to speech. To compensate, your brain imposes arbitrary meanings onto the words. You, the reader, give the words emotional impact that often differs from what the writer intended, which is why so many email correspondences get misinterpreted. And unless the writer fills in the blanks with specific emotional words and descriptive speech – storytelling – the reader will experience your writing as being flat, boring, dry, and probably more negative than you intended.

The solution: help the reader “paint a picture” in their mind with your words. Use concrete nouns and action verbs because they are easier for the reader's brain to visualize. Words like “sunset” or “eat” are easy to see in the mind's eye, but words like “freedom” or “identify” force the brain to sort through too many conceptual frameworks. Instead, our lazy brain will skip over as many words as possible, especially the abstract ones. When this happens the deeper levels of meaning and feeling will be lost.

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