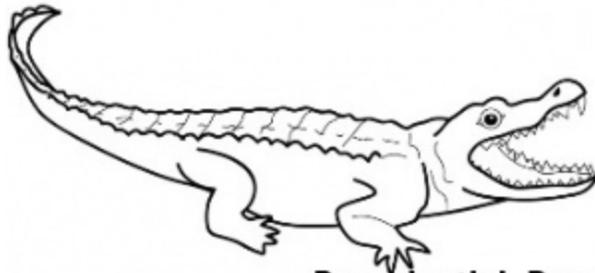


The Shimon Post



Presidential Press Bulletin

26 September, 2011

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Article 1.

The Washington Post

The real threat in Egypt: Delayed democracy

Jackson Diehl

September 26 --- Is Egypt imploding?

A lot of people in Washington seem to think so, though they are talking about it quietly so far. Their fears are specific: that the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamic fundamentalist parties will take power when Egypt's first democratic elections are held later this year; and that peace with Israel — the foundation of a 30-year, American-backed order in the Middle East — is “hanging by a thread,” as Robert Satloff of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy put it.

There is reason, of course, to worry about those scenarios. But here's what emerged in conversations I had last week with a number of Egyptian journalists, activists and officials: The most immediate and urgent threat in Egypt is not a dramatic Islamic coup or a diplomatic rupture with the Jewish state, but prolongation of the chaotic and directionless regime the country now lives under.

Egypt exists in a strange, unpredictable netherworld between military dictatorship and liberal democracy. Since Hosni Mubark's regime was overthrown in February, free media, political parties and civil society groups have flourished; there are daily strikes and street demonstrations; Mubarak himself is on trial. But thousands have been summarily sentenced to prison by military courts. Bloggers who criticize the army have been harassed, and a regime of “emergency law” — which officially bans most public gatherings — has been revived.

The ruling military council says that parliamentary elections will be held beginning in late November. But it has yet to specify exact dates, the form representation will take, the electoral districts that will be used or what duties the new parliament will have — other than choosing an assembly to write a new constitution. Nor do Egyptians know when a presidential election will take place, whether it will be before or after the new constitution is completed or whether the military will seek to give itself special oversight powers in the new political order. Announcements are made, then abruptly revised or reversed, depending on whom the generals last consulted with. Meanwhile, the economy is tanking as tourists and foreign investors keep their distance. The military recently demonstrated its economic acumen by abruptly imposing new visa requirements on foreign visitors, before just as hastily lifting them.

The generals once promised to turn over power by this month. But, at best, the parliamentary elections will be completed at the end of February. The presidential election, which would finally end military rule, could come in nine months, some analysts predict; others say it could be put off 18 months while delegates dicker over the new constitution.

The great problem here is that elections are the most likely means of arresting the downward spiral. Five of the leading six candidates for president are responsible secular centrists; the runaway favorite, so far, is former foreign minister and Arab League general secretary Amr Moussa. Moussa may be a recent convert to liberal democracy, and he is known for striking populist poses against Israel. But he would almost certainly run a better government than the military and give the economy a chance to recover.

True, Islamist parties may win a plurality in the parliamentary elections. Estimates of their potential vote range from 10 to 40 percent. But that still means they would hold a minority of seats; and

the Islamists themselves are divided into several factions. The strongest of them recognize that they will not be able to force a fundamentalist agenda on Egypt's secular middle class or its large Christian minority, at least in the short and medium terms.

What about Israel? Moussa was recently quoted as saying that the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty is "untouchable" and that the sacking of the Israeli embassy in Cairo this month was "unacceptable." Every major political party in Cairo has denounced the embassy attack, and while some have called for renegotiating the treaty's security provisions, none wants to cancel it. The mob that attacked the embassy was largely composed not of political revolutionaries but of soccer hooligans who had gathered in the center of Cairo because they were angry at being harassed by police. When they marched on the embassy, police at first did nothing to stop them.

Those who worry about an Egyptian implosion sometimes hint that the elections should be further postponed or even canceled. In fact, the opposite is needed. The United States and other Western governments ought to adopt the demand put forward in a letter last week by Wael Ghonim, the Google executive who was one of the leaders of the revolution: that the military "quickly announce specific dates for the process of transferring complete power . . . to an elected civilian authority that would control everything in the nation."

Egypt's problem is neither its revolution nor its prospective democracy: It's what is happening — and may yet happen — between the two.

Article 2.

Al Shabaka

Statehood Stalled: Next Steps for the Palestinian People

Nadia Hijab

26/9/2011 -- Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) chairman and president of the Palestinian Authority (PA) Mahmoud Abbas could have gone to the United Nations General Assembly for observer state membership, which only needs a simple majority vote that the PLO has already guaranteed. However, he chose to go to the Security Council with an application for full UN membership for Palestine, even though that application may languish in committee for weeks or months.

Some reports speak of a backroom deal to do just that. Whether or not this was the case, Abbas has bought time for the PA without losing face or U.S. aid, and was able to give a much-applauded speech at the UN. The United States has also bought some time and does not immediately have to use its veto.

The decision to go to the Security Council has also bought time for a third party – the Palestinian people – that could have unintended consequences for both the U.S. and the PLO/PA as well as for Israel.

Unintended Consequences

What are those unintended consequences? The PLO/PA statehood bid galvanized several segments of the Palestinian people into making public their disagreement with and disapproval of PLO/PA mismanagement, over more than two decades, of the Palestinian quest for self-determination and human rights.

Public positions were set out by the Palestinian Boycott Divestment and Sanctions National Committee (BNC), which has extensive and

growing international support, the Stop the Wall Campaign, Palestinian writers and intellectuals in the occupied Palestinian territories and beyond, the Palestinian Youth Movement (PYM), and the US Palestinian Community Network (USPCN).

These statements forcefully reaffirmed the basic tenets of the Palestinian struggle, including the status of the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and the Palestinians' inalienable rights. In effect, they challenged the present leadership's claim to represent the Palestinian people. Moreover, the BNC, PYM, and USPCN statements were crafted through democratic processes that put into practice the very principles the Palestinians want to see established in the PLO.

The legal opinion issued by Oxford University Senior Research Fellow Guy Goodwin-Gill regarding the dangers of the statehood bid for the Palestinian refugees' right of return was in fact commissioned by a former PLO official – his colleague at Oxford University, Dr. Karma Nabulsi. It opened up the debate and brought the question of representation to the fore, galvanizing Palestinian grassroots networks that were until then unaware of the technical legal issues. Indeed, the PLO/PA statehood bid has also added strength and urgency to the Palestinian voices demanding accountability and democratic representation since the Arab uprisings. There are moves underway in Palestinian communities in Europe, America, and the Arab region to demand elections to and reconvening of the Palestinian National Council (the Palestinian parliament in exile, which elects the PLO's Executive Committee.)

A third consequence is the shift away from the cozy trilateral negotiations that marked the peace process since the first Oslo agreement was signed in 1993. Washington's management of the process enabled Israel to continue its colonization unchecked, while

the Palestinians were bullied, through diplomatic and financial pressure, to stay at the table.

The internationalization of the conflict could prove the statehood bid's most significant result. As Mouin Rabbani, a Senior Fellow at the Institute for Palestine Studies and an Al-Shabaka policy advisor told Al Jazeera, "It is an essential first step towards irrevocably removing the question of Palestine from the Oslo framework and putting it back with the international community."

He underscored that this should be part of a "strategic transformation" grounded in a Palestinian national consensus rather than a tactical maneuver. In fact, a multilateral approach to the conflict would be no better than a U.S. stranglehold unless the sources of power of the Palestinian national movement are reinforced, including civil resistance, BDS, and reframing the discourse around Palestinian rights.

Taking Advantage of the Moment

What then can Palestinians do to take advantage of this moment and ensure a "strategic transformation" so that the resolution of the conflict results in self-determination, freedom from occupation, justice for the refugees, and equality for the Palestinian citizens of Israel?

The first and most important step is to save the land of Palestine. This applies of course to the land that has been under Israeli military occupation and colonization since 1967, particularly East Jerusalem, the land of villages affected by Israel's Separation Wall, and the Jordan Valley. But it also applies to Palestinian land within the state of Israel, including in the Negev, where Bedouin are currently threatened with dispossession, in the Galilee, which is under constant threat on account of Israel's repeated efforts to "Judaize" the region, and in the so-called mixed towns within the Green Line.

The popular struggle committees in the West Bank have had some success in stopping Israel's encroachments on their villages.

Unfortunately, the UN bid has diverted attention from these civil resistance campaigns. Palestinians in the Diaspora need to sustain efforts to support, give voice to, and uphold that civil resistance wherever it occurs. There are some Israeli, American, and European Jewish allies who work within a human rights framework who are and can help in this sphere.

A second major move should be to press for accountability.

Palestinian alienation from their national institutions, including the PLO/PA, is not as comprehensive as it is elsewhere in the Arab world. Many of the people who staff these two bodies are relatives, friends, and long-time comrades of those now opposing the system, making it harder to call for a clean break. In addition, these institutions have a larger reservoir of historical legitimacy, and even current popular constituencies, than has been the case compared to many Arab regimes.

Moreover, the PA payroll sustains more than a third of the population of the West Bank and much of Gaza. It would be irresponsible to demand that people be prepared to live in penury, as recently happened at a Palestinian demonstration in the U.S. whose organizing statement blithely urged the firing of all PA employees. On the contrary, Palestinians in the Diaspora and the Palestine solidarity movement should seek ways to sustain local economies, education, and fulfillment of Palestinian potential, even under occupation.

Nonetheless, the Palestinians should press for accountability, for representation, and for respect of their basic human rights by both the government dominated by Hamas in Gaza and that of Fatah in the West Bank. This is also the time to expose and push for an end to PA security collaboration with the occupying Israeli forces.

And the PA, should it continue to exist (Abbas warned in his September 23 speech that it might be pushed to the point of collapse), should be restored to the originally envisaged function of an interim administrative apparatus reporting to the PLO rather than subsuming it.

Concurrently, Palestinians must redouble their efforts for democratic representation in order to ensure the realization of self-determination and inalienable rights. The challenge is to limit the PLO/PA's freedom of maneuver within clear, nationalist parameters in the meantime. The Palestinian people are rich in expertise and experience, in eloquent advocates and strategic thinkers, and they must be represented in and lead Palestinian national institutions. Discussions and strategies on how to do so should quickly reach a conclusion on practical mechanisms so as to reclaim the leadership of the entire Palestinian people.

Finally, it is long past time to forcefully use the legal tools provided by the International Court of Justice Advisory Opinion on the legal consequences of the construction of the Wall. Of particular importance is the ICJ's reminder to all States that they are under an obligation not to recognize or "render aid or assistance in maintaining the situation created" by the construction of the Wall, and to end any impediments created by the wall's construction to the Palestinian people's exercise of its right to self-determination. This and other elements of the Opinion provide an excellent basis for the PLO to push states to divest from bodies that profit from Israel's occupation and apartheid, as well as to impose sanctions against Israel. They should take their cue from the highly successful BDS movement initiated by Palestinian civil society in 2005, on the 1st anniversary of the ICJ opinion, and now led by a representative coalition of popular and political forces in the BNC.

These strategies and sources of non-violent Palestinian power – civil resistance, BDS, legal tools and mechanisms, reframing the debate, growing international solidarity among peoples and states – are essential to the struggle for self-determination and realization of inalienable rights.

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Article 3.

Reuters

Leaderless Iranian opposition seen lacking strategy

Parisa Hafezi

September 25, 2011 -- TEHRAN - Iran's reformist opposition has watched with admiration as revolutions have toppled three Arab leaders, but despite divisions in the ruling elite it looks incapable for now of taking its protest movement back out onto the streets.

Mass protests against the 2009 re-election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad marked the worst unrest since the Islamic Revolution three decades earlier, but were quelled with lethal force by the state's security apparatus, headed by the elite Revolutionary Guards.

While Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei swiftly endorsed the election result, splits emerged in the ruling establishment as some, including lawmakers, criticized the government for mishandling the protests and using force to silence the 'Green' opposition.

Attempts to revive street protests have fizzled. The opposition, which says its fight for a freer Iran will continue, is following the Arab uprisings with a mixture of envy and regret for its own failure, analysts and moderate former officials say.

"The opposition is leaderless and lacks any strategy. The opposition leaders are under house arrest. Dozens of prominent reformists are jailed. Their supporters have no choice but to wait and see," said a close ally of opposition leader Mirhossein Mousavi, who asked not to be named.

Mousavi, a former prime minister, and Mehdi Karoubi, a cleric and a former parliament speaker who also stood against Ahmadinejad, have

been placed under house arrest since February and denied any contact with the outside world.

The authorities, who deny the election was rigged, have jailed many senior pro-reform politicians, closed a dozen reformist publications and banned at least two moderate parties since the vote.

The government is permitting less and less political dissent by banning media coverage of the opposition, according to journalists working for local newspapers. The opposition continues to communicate over the Internet despite a web-filtering system designed by the authorities to curb its online activity.

The main question is whether the lack of anti-government protests shows the pro-democracy movement is a spent force, or whether it can remain alive despite the fierce state crackdown.

"The core supporters of the regime are ready to sacrifice their lives for the regime. They consider killing or dying for the regime as their religious duty," said a pro-reform politician, who was sentenced to two years jail after the 2009 vote on charges of "acting against national security."

"Confronting the establishment has been made very costly to intimidate the opposition supporters."

"CATCH 22"

Unlike the Arab countries, Iran's opposition leaders are limited in their ambitions: they remain committed to the Islamic Revolution and the principles of its leader, the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, but they want to reform the establishment within that framework.

"The Green opposition is not questioning the foundation of the system as happened in the Arab world," said Dubai-based political analyst Hamid Sedghi. "It makes it difficult for the authorities to uproot the opposition, but also it prevents any regime change."

The chances of witnessing the kind of uprising that swept veteran Tunisian, Egyptian and Libyan rulers from power seem remote in

Iran in the near term, since the leadership and opposition are united in defending the establishment, analysts say.

"It's a Catch-22," said political analyst Hamid Farahvashi. "The opposition leaders are also among the founders of this system, who want an evolution, not toppling the establishment."

Iran's hardline rulers have put a positive spin on the Arab Spring, saying it will spell the end of U.S.-backed governments in the region. Khamenei has called it the "Islamic Awakening" and said it was inspired by Iran's 1979 revolution, which replaced the U.S.-backed Shah with a Muslim theocracy.

But the cleric-led elite is concerned about any spillover effect of popular uprisings against dictatorial leaders in the Arab world.

"KHAMENEI-STYLE REFORMS"

Analysts say two factors may help sustain the opposition despite its current weakness: the weakness of the economy, and a widening political rift among the hardline elite.

Ahmadinejad's honeymoon with clerics and the Revolutionary Guards has ended because of his bucking of Khamenei's authority, analysts say. Khamenei clipped the president's wings by reinstating his sacked intelligence minister in April.

Chants of "death to opponents of the Supreme Leader" have been heard at parliament and Friday prayers.

"The leader is a clever politician ... Considering the Arab Spring and Iran's international isolation, he plans to form a new group of politicians," said a relative of Khamenei, who asked not to be named.

"This group will emerge before the 2012 parliamentary elections ... They will carry out Khamenei-style reforms in the country to preserve the establishment."

With mounting international pressure over Iran's disputed nuclear program, rising prices, long queues of jobless and investors keeping a

tight hold on their purses, analysts say the establishment ultimately needs to give limited freedoms.

"The high oil price is helping the establishment," said economist Reza Hazegh. "But the government, dependent on petrodollars to run the country, may face domestic tension in the long term if the price of oil drops."

The rulers have allowed ordinary people to enjoy themselves. Luxury shops are loaded with Western designer brands. Coffee shops and restaurants are crowded with young people.

"Whatever keeps young people off the streets is tolerated by the system ... It is a reward for staying clear of politics that could endanger the system," said political analyst Mansour Marvi.

But some young people who lack hope for the future have chosen to leave the country and Iranian media say the country has the highest "brain drain" in the Middle East.

"Unlike young Arabs, many young Iranians are leaving the country instead of confronting the establishment," said a senior western diplomat in Tehran. "They believe resistance is too costly."

Article 4.

Today's Zaman

Stepping on the gas towards a Cyprus partition

Huge Pope

25 September 2011-- Despite eastern Mediterranean states' new readiness to talk and act tough, navies of the region are unlikely to clash any time soon over oil platforms, aid flotillas, maritime boundaries or exclusive economic zones. But newly assertive Turkey, Israel and Cyprus are making the region's interlocking disputes more intractable, most notably setting back hopes of a reunification of the divided island of Cyprus.

The Israeli front, while tense, is less dangerous than it appears. Angered by the killing of eight Turks and a Turkish-American by Israeli commandos on the high seas last year, on a Turkish ship which originally aimed to break the Gaza blockade, Turkey has vowed to ensure "freedom of navigation." It says its navy will protect any future aid flotillas to Gaza. But Ankara's actions speak louder than words. Learning from the disastrous 2010 experience, it stopped its pro-Islamic charities from attempting to sail to Gaza again this year. Given Ankara's focus on good relations with the United States, it is hard to imagine that it will seek an armed clash with the Israelis, and Turkish officials have told Crisis Group they have no argument with Israel's Exclusive Economic Zone or its exploitation of gas resources there.

Turkey has also revived a potential dispute with Greece about exactly where the Aegean ends and the Mediterranean begins, or, more specifically, where the maritime boundaries of these two countries might meet if and when there are talks on the subject. Turkey rejects

apparent Greek arguments that the easternmost island of the Dodecanese -- Meis or Kastelorizo -- give it a claim to a large share of the eastern Mediterranean. Indeed, Turkey, a rare non-signatory of the 1982 Convention on the Law of the Sea, believes the whole concept of Exclusive Economic Zones of up to 200 nautical miles is inappropriate to the east Mediterranean's crowded neighborhood. To make its disagreement clear, Ankara has chartered a Norwegian seismic survey ship to look into the area southwest of Antalya. This particular Turkish-Greek dispute is unlikely to lead to the near-wars seen in the Aegean Sea, most recently in 1987 and 1996. It will, however, undermine the past decade's Turkey-Greece normalization and what are still positive-looking talks on resolving the Aegean dispute (see Crisis Group's "Time to Settle the Aegean Dispute"). It will also stoke fears among Turkey's neighbors that in recent months it has switched to an assertive and nationalist policy in the region, rather than its previous, much heralded "zero problem" approach. The real long-term threat, however, arises from unilateral decisions by the Greek Cypriots, and by the Turkish Cypriots and the Turks, to define maritime boundaries and drill for oil and gas around Cyprus. Turkey is talking threateningly, fanning rumors of conflict in Greek Cypriot media. But Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has publicly ruled out the use of force (even while condemning Greek Cypriot and Israeli "oil exploration madness"). Turkish officials also told Crisis Group that they have no claim to the Greek Cypriots' "Block 12" south of the island (although they do contest a strip of Greek Cypriot-claimed continental shelf to the west of Cyprus). Even if there is no open conflict, the decisions to start exploiting or prospecting for natural resources whose ownership is still under dispute is a slap in the face of the UN-facilitated reunification talks that restarted with great hopes in 2008. Mainly due to the great mistrust and lack of communication between the Greek Cypriots and

Turkey (which does not participate directly in the talks, but has some 30,000 troops on the island), the glass is now said by one person close to the talks to be “three-quarters empty.” Indeed, the readiness to start drilling unilaterally is yet more evidence that while two of the key players may be talking about reunification, they are in fact planning for separate futures.

The US and the EU are so far supporting the Republic of Cyprus's go-ahead to a US company to drill into the apparently large gas field. Greek Cypriot authorities have also now usefully stated that they will ensure that Turkish Cypriots get a share of any income. However, as it now stands, the initiative is hardly sensible. It forces Turkish Cypriots further into Ankara's embrace. Secondly, one of the rare points of agreement between both Cypriot communities is that the territorial waters should one day be a federal, joint competence. Thirdly, without normalization with Turkey and access to its large market, export of any gas found will need far more expensive pipelines or liquefaction plants.

On Cyprus, major studies have shown that the real economic prize for both sides is reunification, security for all and normalization with Turkey. Crisis Group has long argued that if either side wants to take unilateral steps, they should be to build confidence and to open communications. We set out several ideas for this in our June 2011 briefing (“Six Steps to a Settlement”), but since our January 2008 report (“Reversing the Drift to Partition”) we have also underlined how continued division carries a huge price in lost commercial opportunities, insecurity and social isolation.

Turkey, too, will suffer. As long as Cyprus remains divided, Turkey can never truly revive its stalled EU membership negotiations. As Turkey enjoys a wave of popularity in the Middle East, its leaders have turned their backs on Brussels. But only time will tell if the Middle East and its uncertainties are truly a good substitute for the

EU -- once the locomotive of Turkey's reform (now lagging), the source of two-thirds of its foreign direct investment, and its primary partner in commerce, cultural exchanges and tourism.

While all sides can survive the current choppy waters in the eastern Mediterranean, and most attention is focused on the Turkey-Israel spat, the divergent trends in Cyprus are the most likely to have a real long-term negative effect. If left unchecked, they will drive a wedge deeper between the two communities on Cyprus, between the EU and Turkey, and thus, in the long term, between Turkey and its hopes of being an open crossroads between Europe and the Middle East.

Hugh Pope conducts research in Turkey and Cyprus, writing policy-focused reports on Turkish policy, Turkey's immediate region and the factors that mitigate or increase the risk of armed conflict.

Article 5.

The National Interest

The Worst Is Yet to Come in Libya

Rajan Menon

September 23, 2011 -- AS THE dust begins to settle in Libya two things are clear. Though NATO is celebrating its triumph, its campaign actually raises serious question about its future; and while Libyans rejoice at their freedom, they, unlike Egyptians and Tunisians, face the daunting challenge that Afghans and Iraqis did: rebuilding a state from the debris of despotism. Of course, the fate of Muammar Qaddafi's forty-year-old dictatorship was sealed once the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1970, referring his regime to the International Criminal Court and imposing sanctions, and particularly after the council followed up with Resolution 1973, which authorized the no-fly zone that would render his air and armor effectively unusable. The Libyan insurgents began to receive weapons and training from the outside, special forces from France, Britain, Jordan, and Qatar were deployed to help them, the Qaddafi regime's financial assets were frozen, a naval quarantine was imposed, and stream of states began to recognize the National Transitional Council (NTC)—the insurgents' Benghazi-based proto-government. The question soon became when, not whether, Qaddafi would fall. Though NATO is celebrating its triumph, the world's most powerful military alliance revealed itself to be divided over the Libyan campaign: apart from the United States, only seven of its twenty-eight members participated in air strikes. Britain and France carried most of that burden once the United States stepped back, and two important allies, Germany and Poland, opposed the military intervention. The states in the alliance that launched air and missile attacks were dependent on the United States for everything from the

replenishment of bomb and missile stocks and target acquisition to refueling and electronic warfare. NATO has expanded, but it has gained in neither strength nor cohesion. Indeed, the Libyan venture casts doubt on whether NATO can achieve its goal of making out-of-area operations central to its post-Cold War *raison d'être*, not least because Europe's economic crisis rules out substantial increases in military spending by European states. The alliance took over six months to defeat a third-rate military that was plagued by defections and run by a reviled regime facing an increasingly effective armed opposition. It prevailed by resorting to a tortured interpretation of Resolution 1973, which was designed to stop atrocities against civilians, not to determine who would win a civil war, and China and Russia are unlikely to lend the Security Council's imprimatur to such enterprises again. Seen thus, the Libyan campaign may be a swan song for NATO's extra-European ambitions, not a harbinger. For Libyans, and the states and international organizations that have pledged to support them in the post-conflict phase, the wartime obstacles will prove to be the easy part. The situation in Libya is much more challenging than in Egypt and Tunisia, where the military broke with the strongman and showed him the door, averting full-scale war, and enabling the preservation of the state machinery. The post-revolutionary governments in Tunis and Cairo were therefore better positioned to provide the essential goods and services that Libya is now responsible for supplying. In this sense, Libya's circumstances more resemble those of postwar Afghanistan and Iraq: the state has collapsed, and while relatively ethnically homogenous, overwhelmingly Sunni Libya will not face the ethno-religious strife that Iraq has, it will encounter other difficult problems that have emerged in post-conflict settings where the basic institutions of governance had to be built. THE FIRST order of business for any new government is establishing control over its domain. In Libya,

pockets of resistance remain in Sirte (Qaddafi's hometown) and Bani Walid, and even with NATO's air support and the insurgents' superiority in weaponry and numbers, wresting control of these places has proved arduous because of the loyalists' tenacity. Once these last bastions of the ancien regime are overrun, the NTC will have to reckon with the disparate, decentralized anti-Qaddafi opposition over which it nominally presides. The insurgents and their supporters were united by the common commitment to topple Qaddafi; what remains unknown is how much common ground they will share when it comes to designing a post-Qaddafi polity and society, and whether the differences will be reconciled through bargaining and compromise, particularly given the absence of firmly established institutions. The insurgency was never directed by a centralized leadership or political party and consists of a multitude of militias that sprouted haphazardly amidst the chaos of insurrection. These militias have strong local identities and are led by commanders to whom the rank-and-file fighters owe fealty. Disarming these groups, who have now fortified their arsenals by looting Qaddafi's arms depots, and drawing them into a national army that becomes cohesive and professional and is answerable to civilian authority, will not be easy. Not only do these units relish their autonomy, they are bound to worry that without their arms they will lose their leverage to shape the new Libya. But unless disarmament and integration (or disbandment) is accomplished, the urgent tasks of reviving the economy and creating democratic political order will be even more complicated than they inherently are; both tasks require a minimum degree of stability. The formation of a Supreme Security Committee (SSC) appears to be the first step in what will be a complex process. The ease with which the militias are dissolved or drawn into a national army and police force will in turn depend partly on whether

the NTC succeeds in bridging several divides that are already evident in Libya between:

1) Émigré leaders (exemplified by Ali Tarhouni, deputy chairman of the NTC and head of both the Oil Ministry and the SSC, who fled Libya in 1973 and had been teaching economics in the United States when the uprising against Qaddafi erupted) and others who have endured the hardships of life inside Qaddafi's Libya, including torture and imprisonment, and are therefore apt to believe that their sacrifices give them a superior claim to power.

2) Islamists of various persuasions (such as Alamin Belhaj, Abdel-Hakim Belhaj and Ali Salibi who are already emerging as important personalities in Libyan politics) and Libyans who are committed to creating a secular post-Qaddafi polity and are therefore wary of the Islamists' long-term program. The discord that has already arisen in Tripoli's Municipal Governing Council over the proper role of Islam in public policy illustrates this division. The secularists will doubtless pay particular attention to Abdel-Kareem Belhaj. He joined the anti-Soviet resistance in Afghanistan, later led the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) in the first half of the 1990s, and moved to Taliban-ruled Afghanistan in 1998 after Qaddafi destroyed the group. He was arrested and subjected to rendition—and, by his account, torture—by the CIA in 2004, after the LIFG was deemed by the US government to have al-Qaeda links. During the war against Qaddafi he commanded a major militia and now sits on the SSC. He also heads the Tripoli Military Council, which post gives him authority over several thousand troops.

3) Key NTC figures whose political base is in Benghazi, Al Bayda and Tobruk in eastern Libya—the cradle of the uprising—and who are well represented in the NTC and who aspire to high political office but hail from western Libya and fear subordination, even

exclusion. Libya's east-west divide should not be overplayed, but it should not be denied.

4) Those who seek a centralized Libyan Arab state and others who may prefer one that devolves more power to localities. For example, the Imazighen (the indigenous inhabitants of North Africa, commonly known as Berbers, who were conquered by the Arabs, starting in the seventh century CE) are now eager to realize their long-suppressed linguistic and cultural aspirations, not simply with fine words but through empowering arrangements built into the emerging polity.

5) The leaders of the anti-Qaddafi revolution and their supporters and the many thousands who worked in Qaddafi's government and are thus viewed with suspicion, even animosity, by those who were victims of its repression. This applies even to those who were not part of Qaddafi's feared intelligence and security apparatus. A case in point is interim prime minister Mahmoud Jibril, who served as head of Qaddafi's National Economic Development Board before defecting once the rebellion began. Tensions between him and the Islamists are already apparent, with some of the latter predicting that his power will prove transitory.

None of these divisions is impossible to overcome, and others, such as Libya's much-vaunted tribal rivalries, may prove less pernicious than assumed. But bridging them will require a wholly different set of skills and a temperament (marked by farsightedness, forgiveness, restraint, and pragmatism) compared to those that enabled the insurgency to prevail on the battlefield. THEN THERE is the task of economic reconstruction, which is pressing because it touches on everything from the resumption of regular running water in the major cities and the restoration of clinics and hospitals to the provision of adequate and affordable supplies of food, gasoline, and medicine. Once the fighting ceases the euphoria generated by Qaddafi's fall will

transmute into high expectations for a better economic life, and the hopes of Libyans will necessarily run ahead of the resources and experience of the NTC. It will not be long before Qaddafi's successors are held responsible for solving the myriad economic problems created by a wrenching conflict. True, Libya has oil, but production has plummeted from about 1.6 million barrels a day last year to less than 65,000 in August; and, if Iraq is any guide, bringing output back to pre-war levels will take longer than anticipated. Moreover, oil is both a blessing, because it provides revenue for economic reconstruction and development, and a curse, because the record shows that countries with substantial oil wealth experience several pathologies: sustained or episodic authoritarianism, corruption, the swelling of the state apparatus and the shrinking of civil society, wasteful spending (particularly on arms), cronyism, resistance to reform and the failure to build a diversified economy that shields them from the vagaries of oil prices. Alas, Norway is not the norm; something resembling Nigeria is. To enumerate these problems is not to say that Libya will inevitably succumb to them; at the same time, experience teaches that it would be foolish, for Libyans and those who will be involved in helping build their new society and polity, to be oblivious to them. Recognizing these risks is a prerequisite to creating mechanisms to reduce their severity. Yet among the difficulties involved for outsiders who seek to help is that Libyans will, quite appropriately, want to run their own affairs. They will, and should, be leery of benefactors and advisers from abroad who arrive with their own notions on what Libyans ought to choose now that they have the right to choose.

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Article 6.

The Daily Star

Let's not overestimate Al-Qaeda's might

Bruce Riedel

September 26, 2011 -- The 9/11 attacks, what Al-Qaeda calls the Manhattan raid, changed the course of global history in a morning. The decade that followed would see America engage in two costly wars, change its national security structures profoundly, and pursue Al-Qaeda around the world. The decade ahead also promises to be dangerous. Although wounded by the killing of founder Osama bin Laden, Al-Qaeda is still an active global terror group with an ideology that has attracted a small but committed band of murderers. It aspires to change global history again by provoking more conflict to set the stage for its new caliphate. The strategy is insane, but Al-Qaeda is determined to pursue it.

The 9/11 attacks cost about a half-million dollars to organize and execute, according to the U.S. 9/11 Commission report. The property damage in New York and Washington alone cost about \$100 billion. The cumulative economic cost to the global economy has been estimated as high as \$2 trillion. The attack led directly to the war in Afghanistan and indirectly in Iraq. Brown University recently estimated their costs at \$4 trillion. So 9/11 was not only traumatic, it was a cheap investment that cost America dearly in lives and treasure.

It also transformed the national security infrastructure of the United States more profoundly than any event since the start of the Cold War. Whole new bureaucracies have been created, including the Department of Homeland Security and the National Counter Terrorism Center. The intelligence community was reorganized and a new position, director of national intelligence, created because 9/11

revealed a serious lack of coordination among the agencies. It also encouraged America to use torture and secret prisons to fight back. For more than a decade Al-Qaeda has sought to provoke wars. Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahri assumed from the start of their self-proclaimed jihad that the more chaos and violence they could provoke between the Islamic world and the West on the one hand and with India on the other, the more likely they would achieve their goal of creating a caliphate that would restore the apposition Islam once held as a world power.

Al-Qaeda attacked the United States on Sept. 11, 2001, to provoke America into what it calls a “bleeding war” in Afghanistan. Bin Laden’s goal was to recreate the quagmire that bled dry the Soviet Union in the 1980s with America as the victim. George W. Bush gave him a bonus – a war in Iraq that bin Laden’s protege Abu Musab Zarqawi turned into a civil war.

Al-Qaeda’s December 2009, attack on a Detroit-bound airliner, which failed because the suicide bomber misfired his bomb, was also intended to provoke America into another war, this time in Yemen. Al-Qaeda proudly said its goal was to snare America into “the final trap.” It tried again with the parcel-bomb attempt last October in a plane bound for Chicago. After the bombs were discovered, thanks to Saudi intelligence help, Al-Qaeda announced that the plot cost only \$4,200 to pull off and promised more to come.

The global jihad has had more success in Pakistan where it has fomented unprecedented terror and violence from Karachi to Indian-held Kashmir, murdered Benazir Bhutto and created the Pakistani Taliban as a new arm of Al-Qaeda. America now carries out routine bombing strikes in northwest Pakistan and will probably do so for the foreseeable future. Zawahri places a high priority on Pakistan. Al-Qaeda has more links to terror groups in Pakistan than anywhere else; it swims with a syndicate of likeminded jihadists. It was this

syndicate that helped hide bin Laden for a decade and is hiding Zawahri today.

At least twice jihadists have tried to provoke war between India and Pakistan. The first time was in December 2001 with the attack on the Indian Parliament; then on Nov. 26, 2008, with the attack on Mumbai. Two Indian prime ministers were too smart to take the bait. Under Zawahri we can expect Al-Qaeda and its allies like Lashkar-e-Taiba to try to provoke more conflict in the decade ahead. War between nuclear India and Pakistan is at the top of their agenda. Research by Pakistani journalist Syed Saleem Shahzad, including exclusive interviews with key Al-Qaeda officials, shows this is a high priority. Shahzad was murdered for his efforts, probably by Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence which maintains its own shadowy links to many of the jihadists in the syndicate, as described by Shahzad in his book "Inside Al-Qaeda and the Taliban Beyond Bin Laden and 9/11."

A South Asia war would ease the pressure on Al-Qaeda's core team in Pakistan and vastly complicate, if not imperil, NATO's logistics in Afghanistan, benefiting the Taliban. It could also set in motion a jihadist coup in Pakistan depending on how the war comes out. A jihadist takeover has long been on Zawahri's wish list. He has even written a book about it. He knows it would be a global game-changer like nothing else. Zawahri worked closely with the late Muhammad Elias Kashmiri, killed in a drone attack this year, to start a war in the subcontinent to hasten what Al-Qaeda calls "the end of times." Al-Qaeda will try to set traps elsewhere. Its franchise in Iraq is making a comeback and has often said it would welcome a war between America and Iran, pitting the Crusaders against the Shiites. It does not want America to leave the "trap" in Mesopotamia. Now Al-Qaeda also sees an opportunity in Zawahri's own Egypt. The Arab revolution has opened Cairo's prisons and released many of his

old comrades who have regrouped in the Sinai where they have already begun attacking Israeli targets. Zawahri began his life in terror helping to kill President Anwar Sadat for the crime of making peace with Israel. He now hopes he can finally kill the peace.

However, we must keep Al-Qaeda in perspective. It is a relatively small band of fanatics who have alienated the vast majority of Muslims with their mindless violence. The demonstrators in Cairo, Sanaa, Benghazi, Hama and Tunis are not calling for Al-Qaeda's caliphate. Al-Qaeda is not Nazi Germany, Stalin's Russia or Mao's China. Today it is under unprecedented stress from the strategy Obama has developed.

We should be vigilant but not panic. We don't need torture to defeat Al-Qaeda; we need respect for Islam and a determined effort to resolve the conflicts like Palestine that give it so many recruits.

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