

# The Shimmon Post



Presidential Press Bulletin

17 May, 2011

Article 1.	NYT <b><u>The Long Overdue Palestinian State</u></b> Mahmoud Abbas
Article 2.	The Washington Post <b><u>What would Netanyahu do for peace?</u></b> David Makovsky
Article 3.	Wall Street Journal <b><u>Israel Will Never Have Peace</u></b> Bret Stephens
Article 4.	The Daily Beast <b><u>Israel's Palestinian Arab Spring</u></b> Peter Beinart
Article 5.	The Weekly Standard <b><u>How Did this Nakba Day Differ from All Other Nakba Days?</u></b> Elliott Abrams
Article 6.	Wall Street Journal <b><u>Gadhafi And The Vanished Imam</u></b> Fouad Ajami
Article 7.	The National Interest <b><u>Another Revolution Betrayed</u></b> Walter Laqueur

Article 1.

NYT

## **The Long Overdue Palestinian State**

Mahmoud Abbas

May 16, 2011 -- Ramallah, West Bank -- SIXTY-THREE years ago, a 13-year-old Palestinian boy was forced to leave his home in the Galilean city of Safed and flee with his family to Syria. He took up shelter in a canvas tent provided to all the arriving refugees. Though he and his family wished for decades to return to their home and homeland, they were denied that most basic of human rights. That child's story, like that of so many other Palestinians, is mine.

This month, however, as we commemorate another year of our expulsion — which we call the nakba, or catastrophe — the Palestinian people have cause for hope: this September, at the United Nations General Assembly, we will request international recognition of the State of Palestine on the 1967 border and that our state be admitted as a full member of the United Nations.

Many are questioning what value there is to such recognition while the Israeli occupation continues. Others have accused us of imperiling the peace process. We believe, however, that there is tremendous value for all Palestinians — those living in the homeland, in exile and under occupation. It is important to note that the last time the question of Palestinian statehood took center stage at the General Assembly, the question posed to the international community was whether our homeland should be partitioned into two states. In November 1947, the General Assembly made its recommendation and answered in the affirmative. Shortly thereafter, Zionist forces expelled Palestinian Arabs to ensure a decisive Jewish majority in the future state of Israel, and Arab armies intervened. War and further expulsions ensued. Indeed, it was the descendants of these expelled

Palestinians who were shot and wounded by Israeli forces on Sunday as they tried to symbolically exercise their right to return to their families' homes. Minutes after the State of Israel was established on May 14, 1948, the United States granted it recognition. Our Palestinian state, however, remains a promise unfulfilled. Palestine's admission to the United Nations would pave the way for the internationalization of the conflict as a legal matter, not only a political one. It would also pave the way for us to pursue claims against Israel at the United Nations, human rights treaty bodies and the International Court of Justice. Our quest for recognition as a state should not be seen as a stunt; too many of our men and women have been lost for us to engage in such political theater. We go to the United Nations now to secure the right to live free in the remaining 22 percent of our historic homeland because we have been negotiating with the State of Israel for 20 years without coming any closer to realizing a state of our own. We cannot wait indefinitely while Israel continues to send more settlers to the occupied West Bank and denies Palestinians access to most of our land and holy places, particularly in Jerusalem. Neither political pressure nor promises of rewards by the United States have stopped Israel's settlement program. Negotiations remain our first option, but due to their failure we are now compelled to turn to the international community to assist us in preserving the opportunity for a peaceful and just end to the conflict. Palestinian national unity is a key step in this regard. Contrary to what Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel asserts, and can be expected to repeat this week during his visit to Washington, the choice is not between Palestinian unity or peace with Israel; it is between a two-state solution or settlement-colonies. Despite Israel's attempt to deny us our long-awaited membership in the community of nations, we have met all prerequisites to statehood listed in the Montevideo Convention, the 1933 treaty that sets out the

rights and duties of states. The permanent population of our land is the Palestinian people, whose right to self-determination has been repeatedly recognized by the United Nations, and by the International Court of Justice in 2004. Our territory is recognized as the lands framed by the 1967 border, though it is occupied by Israel.

We have the capacity to enter into relations with other states and have embassies and missions in more than 100 countries. The World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the European Union have indicated that our institutions are developed to the level where we are now prepared for statehood. Only the occupation of our land hinders us from reaching our full national potential; it does not impede United Nations recognition. The State of Palestine intends to be a peace-loving nation, committed to human rights, democracy, the rule of law and the principles of the United Nations Charter. Once admitted to the United Nations, our state stands ready to negotiate all core issues of the conflict with Israel. A key focus of negotiations will be reaching a just solution for Palestinian refugees based on Resolution 194, which the General Assembly passed in 1948. Palestine would be negotiating from the position of one United Nations member whose territory is militarily occupied by another, however, and not as a vanquished people ready to accept whatever terms are put in front of us. We call on all friendly, peace-loving nations to join us in realizing our national aspirations by recognizing the State of Palestine on the 1967 border and by supporting its admission to the United Nations. Only if the international community keeps the promise it made to us six decades ago, and ensures that a just resolution for Palestinian refugees is put into effect, can there be a future of hope and dignity for our people.

Article 2.

The Washington Post

## **What would Netanyahu do for peace?**

David Makovsky

May 17 -- Just a few weeks ago, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's upcoming visit to Washington had the makings of a confrontation amid U.S. dissatisfaction over peace policy. Then Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas signed a power-sharing arrangement with Hamas. Although Washington cannot easily demand that Netanyahu make major concessions on peace as Abbas joins forces with a group sworn to Israel's destruction, the Israeli prime minister should still arrive this week with a plan for renewed peace talks.

Concerns about the Palestinian unity government are understandable. The Abbas-Hamas deal jeopardizes important gains in the West Bank of the past four years: the exemplary economic stewardship of Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, who oversaw 9 percent annual growth at a time of global economic recession; and the security cooperation between Israel and the PA, which has led to an unprecedented calm after several years of bloody violence.

Israel's reaction to the Hamas-Fatah pact has been to hunker down, hoping that the unity government will collapse under the weight of the parties' differences. Yet paralysis carries its own risks. The U.S. partners in "the Quartet" — the European Union, Russia and the United Nations, which joined Washington in 2006 to lay out steps by which Hamas must reform should it want to become a legitimate interlocutor in the peace process — have cautiously welcomed the new government with hopes, as opposed to demands, that Hamas will evolve, though some have championed the fact that cabinet ministers in the new body are affiliated with neither Hamas nor Fatah. A

majority of countries is likely to recognize a Palestinian state at the U.N. General Assembly this September.

This should be of serious concern to Netanyahu, who needs to overcome suspicions about his desire for a breakthrough. Rather than slide to September, Netanyahu should take the opportunity of his May 24 address to a joint session of Congress to lay out a compelling political vision toward renewed peace talks. He could state that if — and only if — Abbas cuts ties with Hamas, Israeli and Palestinian leaders could cross historic thresholds meaningful to both sides. Polls show that the majority of Israelis and Palestinians want a two-state solution but remain uncertain of whether the other side is willing to make the necessary concessions. Both Netanyahu and Abbas need to address the other side's gut fears. And the only chance of one side crossing a threshold is if the other side takes a comparable step.

In theory, the United States should have engineered and synchronized this crossing of thresholds. It has, however, been preoccupied with the Arab Spring and has not focused on this issue, perhaps precipitating former senator George Mitchell's departure as envoy. The new Palestinian configuration further hamstrings our position. A speech by President Obama this Thursday, focusing on the Mideast writ large, with a possible mention of U.S. principles to end the conflict, is far less preferable than substantive leadership by Netanyahu and Abbas; it would be perceived in the region as exhortation without follow-through.

So it is up to both parties to act. Netanyahu should spell out to Congress the major threshold he will cross, but only if Abbas is willing to respond publicly in kind. Since Palestinians' major fear is that Israel will hold on to the West Bank, Netanyahu needs to clearly state that this will not be the case. Although Palestinians realize that Israel will not return to the pre-1967 borders and that enforced

security arrangements are vital for any agreement, they want assurance that the 1967 line will be the baseline for calculations in configuring the final border. Thus, whatever land Israel keeps from within the West Bank — which is likely to be adjacent to the old pre-1967 boundary, where a significant majority of the settlers live — will yield an equivalent amount from within Israel proper. Such a deal is in line with Israeli offers to every other Arab state on its borders; a statement to this effect will go far in assuring Palestinians that Netanyahu is serious about peace.

The historic threshold that Israelis want Abbas to cross is acceptance of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people, with equal rights for all its citizens. Netanyahu noted in a June 2009 speech that this would address Israel's key fear that Palestinians will never accept the legitimacy of a Jewish state in the Middle East, regardless of the extent of Israeli territorial concessions.

Of course, mutual recognition must be accompanied by a vigorous public peace education campaign, with both sides making clear that each has a historic attachment to the land and that the land must be shared.

These declarations alone are unlikely to solve all the problems, but making them would be an important step toward jump-starting a process that has completely stalled and could easily deteriorate. If they choose to maintain the status quo, Abbas and Netanyahu can win politically for now, but in the long run both peoples will lose. There is no substitute for a clearly articulated political vision from both leaders.

*David Makovsky is a distinguished fellow at and director of the Washington Institute's Project for the Middle East Peace Process. He co-authored "Myths, Illusions and Peace" with Dennis Ross.*

Article 3.

Wall Street Journal

## **Israel Will Never Have Peace**

Bret Stephens

MAY 17, 2011 -- No doubt it is true, as the Israeli newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth reported on Sunday, that among the Palestinian protesters seeking to force their way into Israel there were some with humbler aims than reclaiming "historic Palestine."

"We've crossed the border in order to stay with our families, away from all the killing in Syria," the paper reported one of the infiltrators as saying. "We ask the powers that be in Israel to help us stay and not send us back."

No doubt it is also true, as White House spokesman Jay Carney noted yesterday, that the attempted breach was an effort by Damascus "to distract attention from the legitimate expression of protest by the Syrian people." The border between Israel and Syria has been quiet for 37 years; it's no accident, comrades, that the embattled regime of Bashar Assad, perhaps advised by Iran, would choose this particular moment to shift violent energies toward a more opportune target. But here's something about which there should also be no doubt: People don't scamper over barbed wire, walk through mine fields and march toward the barrels of enemy soldiers if they aren't fearless. And if they aren't profoundly convinced of the rightness of what they are doing.

For many years it has been the conventional wisdom of Arab-Israeli peace processors that the conflict was, at heart, territorial, and that it could be resolved if only Israel and its neighbors could agree on a proper border. For many years, too, it has been conventional wisdom that if only the conflict could be resolved, other distempers of the Muslim world—from dictatorship to terrorism—would find their own

resolution. If the Arab Spring has done nothing else, it has at least disposed of the latter proposition. From Tehran to Tunis to Tahrir Square, Muslims are rising against their rulers for reasons quite apart from anything happening in Gaza, the West Bank or the Golan Heights. This isn't to say they've abandoned their emotional commitments to Palestinians, or their ideological ones against Israel. It's simply to say that they have their own problems.

But just as the West has consistently misunderstood the Muslim problem, so too has it failed to grasp the Palestinian one. And what it has failed to grasp above all is the centrality of Palestinian refugees to the conflict.

The fiction that is typically offered about the refugees by devotees of the peace process is that Palestinian leaders see them as a bargaining chip in their negotiations with Israel, perhaps in exchange for the re-division of Jerusalem. But listen in on the internal dialogue of Palestinians and you will hear that the "right of return" is an inviolable, inalienable and individual right of every refugee. In other words, a right that can never (and never safely) be bargained away by Palestinian leaders for the sake of a settlement with Israel.

In this belief the Palestinians are sustained by many things.

One is the mythology of 1948, which is long on tales of what Jews did to Arabs but short on what Arabs did to Jews—or to themselves. Another is the text of U.N. resolution 194, written in 1948, which plainly states that "refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbors should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date." A third is UNRWA, the U.N. agency that has perpetuated the Palestinian refugee problem for generations when most other refugees have been successfully repatriated. A fourth is their ill treatment at the hands of their Arab hosts, which has caused them to yearn for the fantasy of a homeland—orchards and all—that modern-day Israel succeeds in looking very much like. A fifth is the

incessant drone of Palestinian propaganda whose idea of Palestinian statehood traces the map of Israel itself.

Other things could be mentioned. But the roots of the problem are beside the point. The real point is that a grievance that has been nursed for 63 years and that can move people to acts like those witnessed on Sunday is never going to allow a political accommodation with Israel and would never be satisfied by one anyway.

No wonder Ismail Haniyeh, Hamas's prime minister, can say he would be prepared to accept the 1967 borders—but that establishing those borders will never mean an end to the conflict. The same goes for Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who praised Sunday's slain protesters as martyrs who "died for the Palestinian people's rights and freedom." This from the "moderate" who is supposed to acquaint his people with the reality and purpose of a two-state solution.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is due in the U.S. soon to deliver what is being billed as a major policy address. What should he say? I would counsel the same wisdom that sailors of yore used to tattoo to their knuckles as a reminder of what not to forget on the yardarms of tall ships in stormy seas. Eight easy letters:  
H-O-L-D F-A-S-T.

Article 4.

The Daily Beast

## **Israel's Palestinian Arab Spring**

Peter Beinart

May 16, 2011 -- Why did thousands of Palestinians yesterday converge upon Israel's borders? Partly because Syria's war-criminal leader, Bashar al-Assad, and his ally, Hezbollah, wanted them to. But there's more to it than that. Palestinians also marched from Jordan and Egypt, whose governments did their best to stop the protests. In fact, they marched from every corner of the Palestinian world, in a tech-savvy, coordinated campaign. What hit Israel yesterday was the Palestinian version of the Arab spring. Something fundamental has changed. I grew up believing that we—Americans and Jews—were the shapers of history in the Middle East. We created reality; others watched, baffled, paralyzed, afraid. In 1989, Americans gloated as the Soviet Union, our former rival for Middle Eastern supremacy, retreated ignominiously from the region. When Saddam Hussein tried to challenge us from within, we thrashed him in the Gulf War.

Throughout the 1990s, we sent our economists, law professors and investment bankers to try to teach the Arabs globalization, which back then meant copying us. In a thousand ways, sometimes gently, sometimes brutally, we sent the message: We make the rules; you play by them. For Jews, this sense of being history's masters was even more intoxicating. For millennia, we had been acted upon. Mere decades earlier, American Jews had watched, trembling and inarticulate, as European Jews were destroyed. But it was that very impotence that made possible the triumph of Zionism, a movement aimed at snatching history's reins from gentiles, and perhaps even God. Beginning in the early 20th century, Zionists created facts on the ground. Sometimes the great powers applauded; sometimes they

condemned, but acre by acre, Jews seized control of their fate. As David Ben-Gurion liked to say, “Our future does not depend on what gentiles say but on what Jews do.” The Arabs reacted with fury, occasional violence, and in Palestine, a national movement of their own. But they could rarely compete, either politically or militarily. We went from strength to strength; they never missed an opportunity to miss an opportunity. That world is gone. America and Israel are no longer driving history in the Middle East; for the first time in a long time, Arabs are. In Tahrir Square, Egypt’s young made a revolution. President Obama bowed to reality and helped show Hosni Mubarak the door; Benjamin Netanyahu stood athwart history, impotently yelling stop. Now Egypt’s leaders are doing its people’s will, bringing Hamas and Fatah together in preparation for elections. Hamas and Fatah are complying because they fear their own Tahrir Square. They sense that in Palestine too, a populist uprising stirs; that’s part of what yesterday’s marches were about. For American and Israeli leaders accustomed to Palestinian autocrats and Palestinian terrorists, this is something new. Netanyahu and his American backers are demanding that Obama rewind the clock, but he can’t. The Palestinians no longer listen to functionaries like George Mitchell. They have lost faith in American promises, and they no longer fear American threats. Instead, they are putting aside their internal divisions and creating facts on the ground. When Israelis look at Salam Fayyad, who Mahmoud Abbas reportedly wants to be prime minister of the united Palestinian government, they see a man with all the qualities old-fashioned Zionists revere. He does not bluster; he builds his state. And he does so based on a ruthlessly unsentimental view of the world. While Netanyahu and the gerontocrats of the American Jewish establishment yearn for a return to the days of George W. Bush, Fayyad has developed a strategy for the post-American age. He knows that if Netanyahu continues to

entrench the occupation and Palestinian leaders keep nonviolently demanding a state near the Green Line, it won't ultimately matter what Obama does. The more America sticks by Netanyahu, the less relevant America will become. Other powers will begin taking matters into their own hands, and their strategies for achieving a two-state solution will have none of the tenderness of Dennis Ross. Just last week, German and French companies pulled out of railway projects in the West Bank. The Palestinians could still blow it. They could return to widespread terrorism; yesterday's protests, if they continue, could force Abbas to take a harder line on refugee return, thus making it easier for Netanyahu to say no. But Netanyahu would be foolish to bet on that. From Egypt to Turkey to Palestine, Israel now faces something it hasn't faced before: adversaries at home in a democratic age. This is not a movement that tear gas can stop. The Palestinians are taking control of their destiny because Israel has not. Zionism, which at its best is the purposeful, ethical effort to make Jews safe in the land of Israel, has become—in this government—a mindless land grab, that threatens Jewish safety and Jewish ethics alike. Once upon a time, when the Arabs were hapless and America was omnipotent, Israel could get away with that. Not anymore. If Barack Obama cannot get Benjamin Netanyahu to endorse—and work toward—a Palestinian state near 1967 lines, events will pass them both by. Others will take the initiative; in the Middle East, the U.S. and Israel will increasingly find their destinies in other nation's hands. For those of us raised to believe that Americanism and Zionism were can-do faiths, it is harder to imagine any crueller irony than that.

*Peter Beinart is associate professor of journalism and political science at City University of New York.*

Article 5.

The Weekly Standard

## **How Did this Nakba Day Differ from All Other Nakba Days?**

Elliott Abrams

May 16, 2011 -- This Nakba Day was different because it fell amidst the many recent developments in what we call the Arab Spring. It is probably correct that Palestinians have been feeling left out, as the attention of the world and of their Arab brothers turns to reform, politics, revolts, elections, constitutions, criminal trials—everything but the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. So, this Nakba Day had to be used to recover the stage and demand attention. With President Obama speaking later this week on the Arab Spring and receiving Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu next week, the timing must have seemed right for putting themselves back on the world's front pages. We are still here, Palestinians were saying. It is striking that the sum total of demonstrators who got across from Jordan into Israel was zero, while there was violence at the Lebanese and Syrian borders. This fact alone makes it clear that what happened was mostly manufactured by Hezbollah and the Assad regime. The king of Jordan was opposed to trouble, so there were demonstrations but no border breaches or violence along the Jordan River and its crossings. The Syrian regime and Hezbollah were seeking to use this Nakba Day to divert attention from the revolt in Syria, so they organized trouble. Several days ago Assad's cousin and partner in financial crime Rami Makhlouf issued a threat, saying, "If there is no stability here, there's no way there will be stability in Israel." So this Nakba Day was different because it saw the Syrian regime, fighting for survival, hijacking the occasion to cause bloodshed. The only

comic aspect—black comedy, admittedly—of this picture was provided by Bashar al-Assad, who took time from murdering protesters all over Syria to issue a statement condemning Israel for violence against demonstrators. This Nakba Day is also different from those of past years because it arrived just as Palestinians were celebrating a Hamas-Fatah unity agreement. The goal is to bring Hamas into the Palestinian government and the PLO, the body charged with negotiating peace with Israel. So when Hamas officials spoke on Nakba Day this year, they did so not as enemies of the PLO, not as leaders being hunted by Palestinian security forces, and not as people being excluded from an increasingly moderate Palestinian political leadership. Instead they spoke as future officials of the Palestinian Authority and future PLO members and leaders. This was bad enough. Yet the worst aspect of Nakba Day 2011 was not the differences from past years; it was the continuity. The catastrophe being commemorated was not the Arab defeat in the 1967 war, and a Camp David-type agreement about the West Bank would not reverse it. The catastrophe was not settlement expansion—and Palestinian demands could not be met by freezing construction. Nor were they focused on the coming September vote on admitting a Palestinian state to membership in the U.N., and their demands could not be satisfied by announcing the United States would agree not to use its veto. The demand of Nakba Day is that the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 be reversed. When Hamas's prime minister Ismail Haniyah spoke on Sunday in a Gaza speech, he told the crowd they were demonstrating "with great hope of bringing to an end the Zionist project in Palestine." And last week Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas said, "We will never give up the right of return." This is what Palestinians' leaders continue to feed their people and teach in their schools. For Israelis and all those who seek peace in the Middle East, this is the real catastrophe.

Article 6.

Wall Street Journal

## **Gadhafi And The Vanished Imam**

Fouad Ajami

MAY 17, 2011 -- The law has tarried, but a measure of justice has been served. The chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for Libyan dictator Moammar Gadhafi, for his favorite son Saif al-Islam, and for the head of the regime's security apparatus. They stand accused of "crimes against humanity" for targeting their own countrymen in a murderous effort to cling to power.

Crimes against humanity are nothing new for Gadhafi. They've been the staple of his regime. The prosecutors will not lack for evidence of brutalities, but they might want to begin with a Gadhafi crime that took place a little more than three decades ago—the kidnapping and murder of a luminary of the Shiite religious class, Imam Musa al-Sadr, and two of his companions.

In the summer of 1978, Sadr, the leader of Lebanon's Shiites, and two companions went to Libya to take part in a celebration of Gadhafi's military revolution. The charismatic cleric, who had all but remade the world of Shiite Lebanon, was never heard from again.

The Libyans insisted that the three men had left Tripoli for Rome on an Alitalia flight. But their claim was clearly bogus (no flight records could be found), and the matter of the "vanished imam" never went away. In 2009, Lebanon's Judicial Council indicted Gadhafi and 16 of his aides in the matter of kidnapping Imam Musa al-Sadr.

It was inevitable that the tumult in Libya would call up yet again the mystery of Sadr's disappearance. The vanished imam, one rumor has it, is alive and well, detained in a Libyan prison, now 83 years of age. But operatives of the Libyan regime have recently admitted that the

imam was indeed killed while on his brief visit. The murder was done, they claim, at the behest of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, and Gadhafi was more than willing to do Arafat's bidding. The Shiites and the Palestinians had opened up a small war of their own over southern Lebanon. Sadr had wearied of the Palestinians and their anarchy and bravado, of the state within a state they had built in Lebanon. Literate and stylish, he hadn't been cut out for the role of a militia leader, but he had taken the plunge. Arms were the adornment of men, he told his followers, as he put together a militia of his own, the Amal Movement, and traveled to foreign lands for support. For Sadr, that passage to Libya was one of ill-omen. He was last seen in public in a Tripoli hotel on Aug. 31, 1978. He told a group of Lebanese visitors that he was on his way to a meeting with Gadhafi. On Sept. 1, the celebration Sadr had come to attend had taken place, but the cleric was nowhere to be seen. When questioned, the Libyans routinely answered that he and his companions had left for Rome. Gadhafi had men in Lebanon—newspapers he financed, gangsters who saw in him the second coming of a pan-Arab redeemer—and they put the word out that Sadr might have made his way back to Iran for the unfolding struggle between the shah and Ayatollah Khomeini. Sectarianism, rancid and vicious, hung over the affair: A self-styled Bedouin Sunni ruler doing in a turbaned Shiite cleric, and a Persian at that. This was to play out a month after Sadr's disappearance. Gadhafi had come to Damascus, and a vast Shiite outpouring descended on that city, eager to know of their leader's fate. Four clerics confronted Gadhafi. The imam, they said, was a mortal man, his people could understand and accept his death. But they could not accept that he could just disappear, be "dissolved like some grain of salt." Gadhafi had no satisfaction to offer. "I am told that Musa al-Sadr is an Iranian; is he not?" he inquired. Lines were being drawn—between Arabs and Persians, between Sunnis and Shiites.

A decent man tried to broker this feud, King Hussein of Jordan, himself a Sunni claiming descent from the prophet. He wrote to Gadhafi: These are "sensitive times," he said, for Palestinians and Lebanese alike, "help us with this matter so we can help you, with God's permission."

It was all to no avail. There would remain the persistent rumors—a sighting of the imam in this or that prison, a deal yet to be brokered on his behalf by the new clerical regime in Qom. And there would of course play upon Shiites of Lebanon a visceral hatred for the Libyan ruler.

In retrospect, this was Gadhafi's debut—the criminal audacity of the man, his indifference to the canons of his culture. This was still a time when large numbers of Arabs took the man seriously. (Not so, it should be noted, Egypt's Anwar Sadat, who dubbed him "the crazy boy" and dismissed his hallucinatory Green Book of political tenets as a "toaster manual" purporting to speak to the problems of international governance.)

True, Gadhafi now kills and wars against his own people, and Arabs squirm when they ponder him—"the king of the kings of Africa," he called himself, after giving up on the Arabs. But it was the Arab world that made Gadhafi and other strongmen in the region. They chanted their names, excused their crimes, believed their bogus promises. Until now. Until the Arab Spring.

That shameful silence, in the summer of 1978, in the face of a good man's murder, foreshadowed the future. Gadhafi would go on to commit bigger crimes—he would bring down French and American airliners and bomb discotheques, he would war against his neighbors. In time, he would launch a war against his own population. But truly in that summer we had seen what was to come.

Some NATO planners are worried that we might yet make a martyr of the tyrant if the military campaign against him were to succeed.

This is but a variant of the soft bigotry of low expectations. If and when the end comes for Gadhafi, he shall fall alone. In Beirut and Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, and in the streets of Iran and Shiite Iraq—where Musa al-Sadr still enjoys a saintly aura—there shall be joy. The undoing of Gadhafi would be seen as the grant of belated justice.

*Mr. Ajami is a professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution. He is co-chair of the Hoover Working Group on Islamism and the International Order.*

Article 7.

The National Interest

## **Another Revolution Betrayed**

Walter Laqueur

May 16, 2011 -- IT IS DIFFICULT to predict revolutions. George Rude, the leading left-wing historian of the French Revolution once wrote that an intelligent observer of the French scene, native or foreign, would hardly have predicted in 1787 the coming of the revolution despite a variety of straws in the wind. There was probably no closer student of France at the time than Arthur Young, the leading British expert on agriculture, who visited France three times for extended periods on the eve of the revolution. While he saw a number of things that were wrong with the country, he certainly did not realize that a great revolution was coming.

Not as unusual as one might think. In Russia, there was no more ardent a protagonist of the revolution than Vladimir Ilich Lenin, who had devoted his whole life to the cause. And yet Lenin, in a lecture in Bern in January 1917, was quite pessimistic about the prospects of the masses rising up, telling his audience that the great event might not even happen in his lifetime. But it did happen just one month later. And by the end of the year, his party, the Bolsheviks, had taken power.

In our age it seems to have become even more difficult to make these sorts of predictions, perhaps because there has not been a revolution for a long time. The term is bandied about rather freely and carelessly. When I was asked many years ago to prepare the entry "revolution" for the Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences there was broad agreement that a revolution was something sui generis; today it seems to have become a synonym for rebellion, coup d'etat, mutiny, uprising and half a dozen other forms of upheaval. All too often we

forget a once generally-accepted principle: namely that a true revolution involves a number of preconditions.

First, there is the spark needed to trigger the uprising. In 1917 it was a strike in Petrograd; the revolution in Munich in 1848 broke out because an umbrella had fallen (or was thrown down) from the top seats of a theater and the public mistook the noise for a gunshot; in Brussels in 1830 the performance of a romantic opera (*La Muette de Portici*) in which the aria of Masaniello, a Neapolitan fisherman, denounced the injustices which had been committed by the Spanish Habsburg rulers, led to the division between Belgium and Holland. In the case of the Arab awakening of 2011, 46-year-old policewoman Fedia Hamdi struck Mohamed Bouazizi, a Tunisian stallholder in a market, and in protest he burned himself alive (in the subsequent investigation it appeared that in fact Hamdi had not struck him—and she was acquitted). But there was enough tension and discontent within the country—and in particular with Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali—that had it not been for the unfortunate Bouazizi, some other incident might well have caused the overthrow of the regime.

Next, for a revolution to succeed, it needs a revolutionary movement capable of making use of it. And unless the party in power, the establishment, has been greatly weakened—lost its self-confidence and the popular support on which it rests—the revolutionary movement may still be defeated. Extreme and efficient dictatorships—such as that of Hitler or Stalin—leave no room for maneuver. Even in the case of Tsarist Russia it took a lost war (1904/5) and three years of heavy losses (close to two million killed) in another to bring about a revolution. Tocqueville observed that a dictatorial regime faces the greatest danger when it is trying to reform itself.

WHY, THEN, WERE Mubarak and Ali ousted so easily while other dictators are putting up a more determined resistance? Largely

because they had stayed in power for too long and had become soft and lazy. That Mubarak's regime was corrupt and a dictatorship is beyond doubt. But it was in all probability not the most corrupt, just a little bit worse than the Middle Eastern norm. Those who claim that Mubarak stole seventy billion dollars seem not to know the difference between a million and a billion; it would have made him the richest or the second richest man in the world. So far all that has been found is one apartment in London's Knightsbridge; no doubt more accounts and properties will be discovered. True, those in power might have stolen a little more than customary, but probably less than Qaddafi. Egypt's overall economic balance sheet these last few years had been quite positive (in contrast to that of Syria). True, not enough had trickled down and, above all, the rulers had not conveyed the impression that their states were moving forward. But the general climate of corruption in Egypt generated envy and hatred primarily because it lasted too long.

Mubarak's dictatorship was not the most cruel and repressive, for if it had been it is unlikely that a book like *The Yakoubian Building* (and the movie based on it) could have been published, depicting quite realistically all the social ills besetting contemporary Egypt. It is also unlikely that a leading public intellectual like Tariq al-Bishri would have been able to publish his bitter attacks against the state.

These were old-fashioned authoritarian states without a populist ideology and without a well-oiled propaganda machine. Some have defined the Egyptian regime (and some others in the Middle East) as "Sultanist." A term popularized by Max Weber, it connotes a despotic and unpredictable regime in which everything depends on one person, the ruler. But Mubarak's sway was by no means unlimited nor was it unpredictable.

Under Gamal Abdul Nasser life in Egypt was far more repressive and many more people were jailed and killed. He ruined Egypt's

economy and suffered a crushing defeat in the war against Israel. Yet in this case, the prerequisites for a revolutionary situation were not in place. Many Egyptians admired him. Had he not brought dignity and pride to their country and enhanced its standing in the world? If he had not died from a disease, he might have ruled Egypt for many more years.

WHEN THESE LEADERS fell, the Western media joyously proclaimed the end of an era. When the demonstrations began in late January in Tahrir Square in Cairo, exhilaration grew by the hour not only among the participants but also among the journalists who had hastened to Egypt from all parts of the globe. Tahrir Square, they reported, was the most exhilarating place in the world, the atmosphere was intoxicating, uplifting, elating, entrancing, electrifying.

In the words of the poet (at the time of the French revolution) bliss was it to be alive. It was a sweet, peaceful and leaderless revolution, a million Egyptians or more were all brothers and sisters now. It was a show of incredible strength, it was an infectious source of inspiration. The alarmists had been proved dismally wrong, everything would be different in the future, a return to the bad old days was impossible. No one wanted the Muslim Brotherhood to take over and the few voices shouting Brotherhood slogans such as “Allahu Akbar” were quickly drowned out.

Who could stand aside when the young people of this old country, suddenly feeling a sense of pride, demanded freedom and dignity? It was truly amazing how this new generation had used the Internet, Facebook and Twitter to mobilize huge masses. Was it not the beginning of a new age, did the events of the Arab Spring (or Awakening or Revolution) not have worldwide historical implications? Were they not bound to affect many other countries

suffering from repression? Was it not the beginning of a global revolution?

The heady spirit of the first days and weeks of Tahrir will no doubt find its chroniclers. It was the storm of the Bastille in the Arab world, the Gdansk moment, the dismantling of the Berlin Wall.

It was wonderful while it lasted.

EGYPT'S REVOLUTIONARY YOUTH became less happy as time went by. They wanted real change, not just the removal of the pharaoh, his sons and his clan. They were unhappy with the military, which quite obviously did not share their revolutionary enthusiasm, instead wanting above all to restore order and normalcy. They demanded that power not remain in the hands of the army—but to whose hands it should pass was not quite clear. The military was happy to oblige in the meantime; there would be elections in six months, not a day later. A committee was going to deal with minor changes in the constitution. And yet there were warning signs that not all was going to work out quite so well: There was not a single woman among the members of the committee and it was headed by Tariq al-Bishri, who had so vehemently and eloquently elucidated the problems with the Mubarak regime—formerly a Communist fellow traveler, now a Muslim Brotherhood sympathizer. This meant that the famous second paragraph of the constitution concerning shari'a as the law of the land would certainly not be abolished (as liberals had demanded). Whether harshly or leniently enforced, this means no greater freedom for women and minorities—that is to say for 60 percent of the population.

Though the young revolutionaries had demanded free elections, the more farsighted among them very quickly realized that they had little public support, so free elections would not give them what they wanted. The Muslim Brotherhood would get about 40-45 percent of all parliamentary seats, and together with some smaller Islamist

groups and Islamist “independents,” the liberals would certainly find themselves in the minority. And even if the Islamists failed to win, the Wafd, Egypt’s traditional nationalist secular party, announced that it would be happy to cooperate with the Brotherhood. The army, which could then maintain power in the background, would be perfectly content with such an outcome.

Slowly, the true state of affairs and the not-so-sanguine prospects began to dawn on foreign observers and commentators. Some had their misgivings from the beginning, remembering Foucault’s misguided enthusiasm about Khomeini and the Iranian revolution. But, they argued, Cairo was not Tehran—which is indeed undeniable. Articles began to appear arguing that revolutions are never easy, straightforward affairs, that there might be setbacks on the way to freedom and democracy, that Egypt faced serious social and economic problems. As life in Cairo returned to normal and demonstrators vacated Tahrir Square, press coverage turned summarily pessimistic: Had the revolution perhaps been defeated? The results of the interim elections seemed to point that way, for the great majority did not support the liberals and democrats. The revolutionaries and their well-wishers who had always been so enthusiastic about theirs being a leaderless movement seemed to ignore that never in history had such a leaderless movement succeeded. Great believers in the political power of modern technology, they disregarded the fact that while texts and tweets can promote democracy they can also teach how to make bombs. The prospects in these countries remain bleak. Economically, states like Egypt, Syria and Yemen are riddled with poverty and plagued by rapidly increasing populations. Any sense that they will move in the direction of Turkey is greatly exaggerated. With so many educated young people unable to find jobs commensurate with their education, radicalization seems far more likely than democratization.

It was easy to be infected by the high spirits of the masses demonstrating in Tahrir Square in the early days. The Middle East, particularly the Arab world, has been for so long the problem child in world affairs, the source of endless worries, the focus of tensions and dangers to peace. Here at long last was the chance—nay, the certainty—that this part of the world had found its way out of backwardness and repression to greener pastures. Visions of a better world were irresistible: the bad guys defeated, the good guys triumphant. And all this without a single shot fired, simply by the enthusiasm of an idealistic young generation. It was a revolutionary fairy tale.

But there will be no fairy-tale ending in our time.

*Walter Laqueur is an American historian and political commentator. His main works deal with European history in the 19th and 20th century, especially Russian history, German history and Middle East history.*