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Article 1.

TIME

The Syria Crisis: Is Al-Qaeda Intervening in the Conflict?

Rania Abouzeid

May. 14, 2012 -- There are several elements to the ongoing violence in Syria. There is the use of security forces by President Bashar al-Assad's regime; there are the reprisals and counter-violence by hodgepodge mix of defectors and armed civilians comprising the Free Syrian Army; and then there are coordinated attacks like last week's twin car bombings near a military intelligence branch in a Damascene neighborhood which reportedly killed at least 55 and wounded hundreds.

Both sides blamed each other for the explosions, which the Interior Ministry said involved two cars laden "with more than 1,000 kilos of explosives and driven by suicide bombers," not unlike the bombings that became near-daily occurrences in neighboring Iraq. An obscure, relatively new Islamist group, Jabhat Al-Nusra li Ahl Ash-Sham, or the Support Front for the People of Syria, claimed responsibility for the blasts in a boilerplate al-Qaeda-like video message, just as it has for most of the handful of other major explosions that have rocked Syria in the past few months.

Until early this year the group was unknown. So far, all that is known is that Jabhat al-Nusra is led by someone using the nom de guerre Abu Mohammad al-Golani. "Golani" is a reference to Syria's Golan Heights, which is occupied by Israel. It's unclear if it is comprised of Syrians or foreigners or both, if it has a sizable membership or ties to other more well-known militant groups in the region like Jund Ash-Sham, Fatah al-Islam and Al-Qaeda in Iraq. Some observers question if it even exists as an independent entity, claiming that it is a front for elements within the Syrian regime working to fuel the government's narrative that it is facing an armed terrorist insurgency. Others say that it is indeed a front — for Al-Qaeda in Iraq.

It's hardly a revelation that Syria's slow slide into failed statehood may attract criminal and extremist elements looking to profit from the disintegration of order. Instability, after all, is a petri dish for radicals. But if the Damascus attacks are the work of Al-Qaeda and its Levantine franchises, does this mean that elements within the country's majority Sunni Muslim population, large swathes of which are fiercely anti-regime, have become receptive to the extremists' ideology and willing to accept their support?

One important line of inquiry is: how did two cars laden with 1,000 kilos of explosives travel undetected around Damascus, a city chockfull of

checkpoints? Andrew Tabler, a fellow at the Washington Institute and author of *In the Lion's Den: An Eyewitness Account of Washington's Battle with Syria*, says that although he can't say with certainty who carried out the attacks, the secular Syrian state has a history of cooperating with Jihadist networks despite the groups' seemingly incompatible ideologies — as long as their short-term goals mesh. "We know this from the ratlines of fighters that used to go into Iraq," he says. But he and others also caution against viewing the Syrian regime as a monolith. Elements within its 18 or so security and intelligence bodies, for example, have long been said to operate without the knowledge of others.

A video uploaded to YouTube anti-government activists on Sunday suggested how some Assad loyalists may be trying to foment the idea of Jihadists in the midst of Syria. In a short clip, Ahmad Mustafa, a boyish clean-shaven defector dressed in black military fatigues, says that he and others in his Republican Guard unit were given the black uniforms, which reportedly bear Al-Qaeda insignia although it is difficult to tell from the video. He didn't think much of it, he says, until he saw photos in the Syrian press showing him walking alongside a blue-bereted United Nations monitor. "Nobody is surprised to see a photo of an international observer chatting with a member of Al-Qaeda on the outskirts of Homs," *Al-Watan* newspaper said in an article accompanying the photo. Mustafa's claims are difficult to verify and may simply be more opposition counter-programming.

In any case, the regime may not need go to such lengths. Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri has given his explicit support for the Syrian uprising. But more than approval from the less-and-less influential Zawahiri, there are indications that Syria is becoming an attractive potential theater of operations for independent would-be Jihadists who want to come to the aid of Sunni brethren besieged by a secular regime of Alawites, who they consider members of an apostate group. There have been reports of a small number of Libyan and Tunisian fighters dying in Syria, despite declarations from many Syrian rebels that they don't need foreign manpower, just weapons and ammunition.

But for an extremist movement to take root, especially one with foreign members, it must plant itself within a receptive local community, among people who will support and shelter it. Bilal Y. Saab, a fellow at the

Monterey Institute of International Studies who specializes in Middle East security and terrorism, says that historically the Levant has been hostile to global Jihadists seeking a foothold in the region for several reasons: the presence of established mainstream Islamist groups whose ideology is at odds with the extremists; the region's formidable intelligence services; and, finally, Shi'ite Iran's "dominant influence" in the area. "Al-Qaeda will struggle to find a home in Syria," he says, adding that while it "could send fighters to wreak havoc and exploit the vacuum, it will take a lot for them to create an insurgent movement in the country."

Saab, a Syria and Lebanon expert who has advised the U.S government on both, says that may change "should Sunnis in Syria, feeling outpowered, enter into a devil's pact with al-Qaeda to defeat the Alawis. This is what happened in Iraq, where some Sunnis chose to cooperate with al-Qaeda to fight the Shi'ites." Still Saab and others say that it is precisely because of the example of Iraq that Syria's Sunnis may shun radical elements, both foreign and local. "I don't think they romanticize these groups," says Emile Hokayem, a Mideast-based fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies. For all its violence, the Syrian conflict is still fundamentally political, Hokayem says, and requires a political solution. "It's really about getting a shift in loyalty from the minorities, other key social groups around the country, and these groups aren't going to shift because of that kind of [extremist] violence."

Jabhat Al-Nusra also seems cognizant of the need to reassure certain minorities. In a videotaped claim of responsibility for a blast dated March 20, the group addresses Christians. "We tell Christians that they were not the targets of the attack on the Air Force site in their neighborhood," the message says. Hokayem says that the only real political impact extremist groups like Jabhat Al-Nusra are likely to have on the Syrian conflict is that they "are going to contribute to defining the struggle in more sectarian terms."

There are already signs of the conflict's religious entanglements, from anecdotal tales of drunkards becoming pious Muslims to the nomenclature of units of the rebel Free Syrian Army, many of which are named after historical Sunni figures who fought against Shi'ites. Many rebels have also taken to wearing distinctive Salafi-style beards (with shaved mustaches). The facial hair, however, may not necessarily mean that its wearers adhere

to conservative Salafi ideology. It may simply be a means of emphasizing an element of a man's identity, a way to clearly be defined as a Sunni, albeit of a particular sort. "The Assad regime would like this to be blurred," Tabler says. "They would like the formula to be opposition equals Sunnis equals terrorists." If only things in Syria were that simple.

Article 2.

Bloomberg

Creating Syria Safe Zones Is a Dangerous Step Toward War

Aaron David Miller

May 13, 2012 -- Having proposed more than my fair share of bad ideas during more than 20 years in government service, I know one when I see it. And the proposal by various media commentators and politicians to create safe zones inside Syria for refugees and rebels is one bad idea.

If President [Barack Obama](#) determines that toppling the regime of Bashar al-Assad by force is a vital U.S. national interest (though it isn't), he should create a coalition to act quickly, decisively and effectively to do it. Otherwise, he should avoid half-baked measures, such as the safe-zones scheme, that can lead to an open-ended military commitment without accomplishing the intended results.

The desire to do something about Syria is understandable. An [April 12 cease-fire](#) brokered by former United Nations Secretary-General [Kofi Annan](#) between the government and leading opposition groups has failed -- deaths, including those of at least 34 children, continue to mount on both sides. To many, the Russians and Chinese appear callous for supporting Assad, and the U.S. looks feckless for not doing more -- much more -- to take down the regime.

But the president is absolutely right to be wary of ill-considered interventions, including the idea du jour for stopping the killing. ([John Kerry](#), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has begun

[talking up the concept](#).) Like the [Annan plan](#), safe zones are far more compelling on paper than they would be in practice.

A Tightening Noose

The arguments in their favor go something like this: Safe zones would absorb fleeing refugees, relieving pressure on [Turkey](#), which has received [at least 25,000](#) of them; a political opposition might set up a headquarters in the sanctuaries; and powers such as the U.S., [France](#), the U.K. and key Arab states could help organize, train and supply fighters from the rebel Free Syrian Army and other groups there. This would send a powerful signal to Assad that the noose was tightening. A foreign presence on Syrian soil might shake the regime and accelerate its fragmentation.

To have even a chance of working, the right conditions would have to be present. Those would include full Turkish buy-in and an international mandate legitimizing intervention, preferably a resolution of the UN Security Council. Most important would be a sustained military commitment to protect the zones and the corridors leading to them. This would require air patrols and thus the suppression of Syrian air defenses. It would also mean carrying out offensive air strikes against the regime's forces, if the Syrians respond militarily, and ultimately securing [Syria's](#) stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons to prevent their use against coalition troops.

Even if all that could be achieved (and it probably couldn't), safe zones are real headaches. Protecting these areas from the air might not be possible and would thus require boots on the ground. The farther coalition forces got from Turkey's border, the harder and messier this would be. Once in, there would be no choice but to prevail. Declaring safe zones without having the means and will to protect them could lead to a repeat of the 1995 tragedy in Bosnia where UN peacekeepers couldn't protect civilians in UN designated safe zones from Bosnian Serb massacres.

It took eight months to bring down Muammar Qaddafi's regime in [Libya](#). And the advantages that effort enjoyed -- French enthusiasm, Russian acquiescence, a Security Council mandate, and a tin-pot dictator with no serious military, air defenses or weapons of mass destruction -- don't apply to Syria. Plus the NATO after-action report on Libya -- with its accounts of faulty information sharing; a paucity of military analysts and planners; heavy reliance on American know-how; and a lack of aircraft required to

intercept electronic communications -- doesn't inspire confidence in another coalition mission. The report suggests that, unlike Libya, Syria would have to be a U.S.-dominated operation.

Arguments Against Inaction

I've heard all the arguments against inaction: It's morally wrong to let the murderous Assad regime continue killing; toppling Assad will weaken [Iran](#) grievously; Syria is more important than Libya; the longer the killing continues, the greater the chances of regional instability, even war.

They are all forceful. Watching the killing over the past year has been heartbreaking -- sensing it will continue, even worse.

But let's be very clear with ourselves. If the case for intervention is so compelling, then the U.S. should lead and develop a strategy geared to the real task: removing Assad quickly so that a political transition to something better can result. Otherwise, we should stop pretending we're serious about quickly and dramatically changing the balance of power in favor of the rebels. In this case, we should stick to a more modest approach, building up political and economic pressures against the regime.

And if we do make Syria our priority, we have to accept the costs: To maintain the pressure against [Iran's nuclear program](#), we'll need the Russians and the Chinese on board, but we won't get them to support both our policies on Iran and Syria.

Above all, we shouldn't delude ourselves. The creation of safe zones will lead to our full military involvement in the Syrian crisis. If we're prepared to go in this direction, fine. But we can't let our moral outrage push us into embracing a plan, thinking we can get rid of Assad on the cheap. We can't.

[Aaron David Miller](#), a distinguished scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, served both Republican and Democratic secretaries of State as a Middle East negotiator and analyst.

Article 3.

NYT

Saudi Arabia Seeks Union of Monarchies in Region

[Kareem Fahim](#) and [David D. Kirkpatrick](#)

May 14, 2012 -- MANAMA, Bahrain — [Saudi Arabia](#) pushed ahead Monday with efforts to forge a single federation with its five Persian Gulf neighbors as the conservative monarchy seeks to build a new bulwark against the waves of change sweeping the Middle East.

The Saudi foreign minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal, said after a meeting in Riyadh of the loosely allied, six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council that the group had distributed a draft plan for the union to its members' foreign ministers to review so they could resolve any issues. "I am hoping that the six countries will unite in the next meeting," he said.

Several smaller gulf states have publicly balked at the idea, fearing Saudi domination of the group. The fact that no agreement was announced Monday, as some had expected, seemed to signal deep misgivings among several of Saudi Arabia's neighbors. But Prince Saud's public push forward despite their opposition underscored the kingdom's continuing scramble — with diplomacy, money and even arms — to preserve or rebuild what it can of the old regional order in the wake of the Arab uprisings.

Saudi Arabia's rulers fear that the contagion of popular revolt could reach their country's borders and stir its own disenfranchised citizens and residents, including dissidents, members of minority groups and foreign workers, analysts said. "They don't want the spirit of our uprising to reach their shores," said Sayed Hadi al-Mosawi, a Bahraini opposition politician. The move also highlights the Saudi monarchy's preoccupation with its regional rival, Iran, which has been reflected in a series of Saudi interventions that have taken on distinctly sectarian overtones, including its support for Sunni opposition groups in Syria and its military intervention last spring on behalf of the Sunni monarchy in Bahrain.

Thousands of Saudi troops rolled into Bahrain last year to help Bahrain's monarch put down a popular uprising led by members of the country's Shiite majority. Bahrain, which is linked by a bridge to Saudi Arabia, is virtually the only country publicly endorsing the Saudi push for a tighter regional federation. In a statement released on Monday, the king of Bahrain, Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa, said, "We are looking forward to the establishment of the Gulf Union."

Several Bahraini opposition activists rejected the idea and suggested it was not only government opponents who feared a closer union with its far more

conservative neighbor. “We don’t want to be subsumed by Saudi Arabia,” said Ala’a Shehabi, a writer and opposition activist.

And several other states — including [Kuwait](#), [Qatar](#) and [Oman](#), have so far shown little enthusiasm for the kind of tighter union Saudi Arabia is pushing, perhaps modeled on the European Union.

“Each of them has its own reason not to be very warm to the idea of a more empowered Saudi Arabia,” said Emile Hokayem, a Middle East analyst with the International Institute for Strategic Studies who is based in Manama. “Those tensions have been around forever, but what’s different at this point is a number of countries don’t feel they need a Saudi security umbrella. They’re quite ambitious independently. They know how to leverage their wealth. It doesn’t make sense to throw their lot right now in with Saudi Arabia.”

Saudi Arabia has already made moves to try to stretch the Gulf Cooperation Council far beyond its original regional mission to try to turn it into an alliance of monarchies that might band together against the democratic trend. Its diplomats have made overtures to include the kingdoms of Morocco and Jordan. Saudi and Kuwaiti officials last year even leaked the idea that [Egypt](#) might become some kind of member of the group, though Egyptian diplomats quickly dismissed the idea. At the time, one senior Egyptian official suggested that Egypt’s revolution would fundamentally change the nature of the relationship with Saudi Arabia, a longtime ally of the deposed president, Hosni Mubarak. In recent weeks, Egyptians have taken to the streets to complain about the alliance, prompting the worst crisis in years between the countries. Saudi Arabia withdrew its ambassador after Egyptians, angered at the arrest of an Egyptian human rights lawyer while visiting Saudi Arabia, held protests outside the Saudi Embassy in Cairo. The lawyer, Ahmed el-Gizawy, had drawn attention to the detention of Egyptian workers in Saudi Arabia, who are employed under a restrictive sponsorship system.

But Egypt’s military rulers, fearful of losing billions of dollars in pledged Saudi aid in the midst of a fiscal crisis, quickly tried to heal the rift. Senior Egyptian officials, including senior leaders of the Islamist-led Parliament, flew to Riyadh to make amends with the Saudi king. Saudi Arabia appears to be trying to make up with Egypt as well. After more than a year of waiting, it has released to Egypt the first \$1 billion of a promised aid

package, just in time to help Egypt land a larger loan from the International Monetary Fund.

And on Monday, Saudi officials said they were beginning reforms of visa rules that compel guest workers to maintain the “sponsorship” of their Saudi employer — a requirement many Egyptians say reduces guest workers to servitude. Although the planned reforms may be mainly cosmetic — Saudi government “sponsorships” will still be required — the Saudi announcement was played as major news Monday in Egypt’s state media.

Article 4.

The National Interest

Unfinished Mideast Revolts

Jonathan Broder

[May-June 2012](#) -- NOWHERE IN the world have the latest shocks to the Old Order been more powerful than in the Middle East and North Africa, where massive civic turmoil has swept away long-entrenched leaders in Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen, toppled a despot in Libya and now challenges the status quo in Syria. Over the past sixty years, the only other development of comparable game-changing magnitude was the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union.

It isn’t clear where the region is headed, but it is clear that its Old Order is dying. That order emerged after World War II, when the Middle East’s colonial powers and their proxies were upended by ambitious new leaders stirred by the force and promise of Arab nationalism. Over time, though, their idealism gave way to corruption and dictatorial repression, and much of the region slipped into economic stagnation, unemployment, social frustration and seething anger.

For decades, that status quo held, largely through the iron-fisted resolve of a succession of state leaders throughout the region who monopolized their nations’ politics and suppressed dissent with brutal efficiency. During the long winter of U.S.-Soviet confrontation, some of them also positioned themselves domestically by playing the Cold War superpowers against each other.

The United States was only too happy to play the game, even accepting and supporting authoritarian regimes to ensure free-flowing oil, a Soviet Union held at bay and the suppression of radical Islamist forces viewed as a potential threat to regional stability. Although successive U.S. presidents spoke in lofty terms about the need for democratic change in the region, they opted for the short-term stability that such pro-American dictators provided. And they helped keep the strongmen in power with generous amounts of aid and weaponry.

Perhaps the beginning of the end of the Old Order can be traced to the 1990 invasion of the little oil sheikdom of Kuwait by Iraq's Saddam Hussein—emboldened, some experts believe, by diplomatic mixed signals from the United States. It wasn't surprising that President George H. W. Bush ultimately sent an expeditionary force to expel Saddam from the conquered land, but one residue of that brief war was an increased American military presence in the region, particularly in Saudi Arabia, home to some of Islam's most hallowed religious shrines. That proved incendiary to many anti-Western Islamists, notably Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda terrorist forces. One result was the September 11, 2001, attacks against Americans on U.S. soil.

The ensuing decade of U.S. military action in Iraq and Afghanistan produced ripples of anti-American resentment in the region. The fall of Saddam Hussein after the 2003 U.S. invasion represented a historic development that many Iraqis never thought possible. But the subsequent occupation of Iraq and increasing American military involvement in Afghanistan deeply tarnished the U.S. image among Muslims, contributing to a growing passion for change in the region. Inevitably, that change entailed a wave of Islamist civic expression that had been suppressed for decades in places such as Egypt and Tunisia.

Meanwhile, the invasion of Iraq also served to upend the old balance of power in the region. It destroyed the longtime Iraqi counterweight to an ambitious Iran. This fostered a significant shift of power to the Islamic Republic and an expansion of its influence in Syria, Lebanon, the Gaza Strip and the newly Iran-friendly Iraqi government in Baghdad. Iran's apparent desire to obtain a nuclear-weapons capacity—or at least to establish an option for doing so—tatters the status quo further. With Israel threatening to attack Iran's nuclear facilities, many see prospects for a

regional conflagration, and few doubt that such a conflict inevitably would draw the United States into its fourth Middle Eastern war since 1991. In short, recent developments have left the Middle East forever changed, and yet there is no reason to believe the region has emerged from the state of flux that it entered last year, with the street demonstrations in Tunisia and Egypt. More change is coming, and while nobody can predict precisely what form it will take, there is little doubt about its significance. Given the region's oil reserves and strategic importance, change there inevitably will affect the rest of the world, certainly at the gas pump and possibly on a much larger scale if another war erupts.

A CAREFUL look at the history of the Middle East reveals that, although the West has sought to hold sway over the region since the fall of the Ottoman Empire following World War I, its hold on that part of the world has been tenuous at best. This has been particularly true since the beginning of the current era of Middle Eastern history, marked by the overthrow of colonial powers and their puppets.

Like so many major developments in the region, this one began in Egypt. On July 22, 1952, Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser led a coup that toppled the British-installed King Farouk, a corrupt Western lackey. The son of a postal clerk, Nasser was a man of powerful emotions. He had grown up with feelings of shame at the presence of foreign overlords in his country, and he sought to fashion a wave of Arab nationalism that would buoy him up as a regional exemplar and leader. By 1956, he had consolidated power in Egypt and emerged as the strongest Arab ruler of his day—"the embodied symbol and acknowledged leader of the new surge of Arab nationalism," as the influential columnist Joseph Alsop wrote at the time.

From President Eisenhower's secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, Nasser secured a promise of arms sales, but Dulles failed to deliver. So Nasser turned to Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, who was happy to comply. The young Egyptian leader's anti-Western fervor impressed Khrushchev, and he saw an opportunity: ship arms to Nasser and gain a foothold in the Middle East. The West's relations with Nasser deteriorated further when Dulles withdrew financial support for the Egyptian leader's Aswan Dam project. Nasser, in retaliation, seized the Suez Canal, the hundred-mile desert waterway that nearly sliced in half the trade route from the oil-rich Persian Gulf to Great Britain.

Britain joined with France and Israel in a military move to recapture the canal, but Eisenhower sternly forced them to halt their offensive and withdraw the troops. Thus did Nasser manage to secure the canal for his country for all time. Alsop and his brother Stewart, both Cold War hawks, complained that Britain's options narrowed down to "the grumbling acceptance of another major setback for the weakening West."

By engineering the anti-Farouk coup, then consolidating his power in Egypt and striking a powerful blow against the West at Suez, Nasser set in motion the events that forged the modern, postcolonial era in Middle Eastern history. In 1958, Iraqi officers toppled the pro-British King Faisal II, and cheering mobs dragged his body through the streets of Baghdad. The long and bloody Algerian revolution against French colonial rule finally forced France to give that country its independence in 1962. Morocco gained its autonomy from France two years later. In 1969, Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi overthrew the oil-rich King Idris and installed himself as the "Brother Leader and Guide of the Revolution" in Libya.

In those days of Cold War confrontation, Moscow moved quickly to exploit the opportunity posed by this revolutionary wave and the anti-Western sentiment that undergirded it. Soviet diplomats in the region didn't preach against Arab attacks on Israel in the long-running hostilities of the region. Regarding Middle Eastern oil, they said, in essence, "Take it; it was stolen from you." The Soviets rubbed their hands in delight at the prospect of cutting off the West's oil lifeline. They stood by their Middle Eastern clients in good times and bad by helping them rearm and providing political support after the Arab countries suffered humiliating defeats in the 1967 and 1973 wars with Israel.

But even before the 1973 hostilities, Nasser's successor, Anwar Sadat, made a decision that helped tip the scales of influence back toward the United States. He expelled thousands of Soviet military advisers that Nasser had invited into the country and curtailed his ties with Moscow. Then, in a dramatic move in 1977, he flew to Israel to announce his desire for peace before the Israeli Knesset. After two years of U.S.-mediated negotiations, the two countries signed a peace treaty that took Egypt out of the Arab conflict with Israel and altered the strategic landscape in the

Middle East. It also bolstered the U.S. position in the region as America's good offices became a significant element of influence.

Throughout the remainder of the Cold War and well into the post-Cold War period, events in the Middle East unleashed persistent threats to the stability of the postcolonial order set in motion by Nasser in the 1950s.

That status quo survived in general form, but it was constantly beset by major upheavals and ominous rumblings just beneath the surface. This was reflected in the long, bloody Lebanese civil war of 1975–1990. It could be seen in the Iranian Revolution of 1979, which installed an Islamist regime in a nation that had been a steadfast U.S. ally and unleashed a bitter wave of anti-Americanism (culminating in the Tehran hostage crisis that lasted from late 1979 to early 1981). It was also reflected in the bloody Iran-Iraq War, which extended over most of the 1980s and consumed nearly 1.2 million lives on both sides. Another upheaval was the ten-year Algerian civil war of the 1990s, which claimed more than 160,000 lives.

These threats to stability also included, of course, the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian tensions, which defied persistent efforts at negotiation and erupted intermittently into violence of varying degrees of magnitude and intensity.

And yet, for all that, the fundamental contours of the region remained relatively intact as those strongman leaders, many allied with the United States to one extent or another, held firm to their autocratic regimes, their agencies of control and their citadels of corruption. Once again, Egypt set an example for the region. If Nasser's brand of politics was fueled by an idealistic Arab nationalism and Sadat's contribution was a search for accommodation with Israel (for which he won a Nobel Peace Prize), the next Egyptian leader, Hosni Mubarak, seemed fixated on the status quo and the politics of self-aggrandizement. He was the embodied symbol and acknowledged leader of Middle Eastern corruption, and his brand of politics was embraced by other leaders in the region.

For nearly sixty years, these leaders generally managed to enforce the Old Order. But now, with the Arab Spring and its aftermath, that Old Order is fading fast, and much of the region is being remade from the bottom up. What's emerging is a strong sense that the Middle East needs to join the rest of the world and that popular sentiment should direct the destinies of the region's nations and peoples.

AS THE countries of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe joined the West in developing modern global economies, the Arab world lagged far behind. And ordinary Middle Easterners were reminded of that fact every day as new Arab satellite-television networks such as Al Jazeera brought the modernizing world into their homes, over the heads of the state-controlled media.

Anyone who visited the non-oil-producing countries of the Middle East over the past thirty years could see how far behind the rest of the world they were in economic development. In Tangier, legions of unemployed young Moroccan men sat around with nothing to do but stare across the Strait of Gibraltar, hoping for a job on the European side. It was a tableau of despair that was repeated throughout the region.

One of the Arab world's most glaring problems was its outdated educational system. According to the UN's "Arab Human Development Report 2002," few Arab schools could keep pace with the changes caused by globalization and technological advances. Clinging to old teaching methods that emphasized rote learning, Arab schools failed to teach critical thinking. Across the region, these schools produced legions of young Arab graduates who were unprepared for a modern, information-age global economy. In some countries, women were denied education altogether. "With so little human capital available, relatively few entrepreneurs have invested in the Middle East, other than to harvest the region's plentiful oil and gas resources," wrote Kenneth Pollack, a Middle East specialist at the Brookings Institution, in a 2011 study of the Arab Spring. Those investments, he added, "have benefited the regimes and their cronies, but not the vast majority of the people."

The result was massive unemployment, especially among the young. Many emigrated to Europe in search of work. But many others remained, living with their parents and unable to afford marriage.

Other problems included the lack of democratic rule and the endemic corruption that these regimes tolerated and sometimes encouraged. In most countries, so-called elections consisted of referendums in which voters could choose whether they approved or disapproved of the sitting leaders. Not surprisingly, the leaders often claimed 98 percent approval.

The leaders not only enriched themselves and their cronies but also developed pervasive internal-security forces and questionable legal

systems to quash any dissent. In Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan and the Persian Gulf states, torture was a regular practice in government jails, according to the State Department's annual human-rights reports. With the pressure cooker of unemployment, official corruption and government repression building up for more than three decades, it was simply a matter of time and human nature before something snapped. It came on December 17, 2010, when a Tunisian vegetable peddler named Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire to protest the humiliating treatment he persistently received at the hands of a government inspector. His self-immolation would ignite the entire Arab world and eventually help bring down the Old Order.

BUT WHAT will the new order in the Middle East look like? It is still emerging. The discontent in Algeria, Lebanon, Iraq, Sudan and the Palestinian territories, which also share the demographic profile of high unemployment among young people with few economic prospects at home, has not yet reached a critical mass. Perhaps that is because the memories of civil conflict are still fresh in all of those countries. But unless the governments there take steps to address their economic problems, they easily could become targets of a new round of popular protests.

So far, the only rulers who have managed to hold back the popular pressures of the new Middle East are those who lead oil-rich monarchies. Saudi Arabia succeeded in buying off the malcontents in the kingdom by distributing more than \$36 billion in additional benefits to a tiny population that already enjoys cradle-to-grave care. For a few months last year, protests by Bahrain's Shia majority appeared to threaten the tiny island nation's ruling al-Khalifa family, which is Sunni. The United States, which maintains a major naval base in Bahrain, pleaded with Bahrain's rulers to make political reforms. But Saudi Arabia, already aghast at the failure of the United States to support Egypt's Mubarak, a faithful U.S. ally for nearly thirty years, intervened on behalf of the regime. Without informing the Americans, Riyadh sent armored units across the causeway that links Bahrain to the Saudi mainland to help crush the Shia rebellion. For now, at least, Saudi Arabia and the other wealthy Gulf states have bought compliance with the status quo.

But Jordan and Morocco, the Arab monarchies that don't have oil, are talking seriously about political changes in an effort to stay ahead of the

revolution. In Morocco, King Mohammed VI is considering a new form of government that would transform his country into a constitutional monarchy.

As for the countries where the old autocrats fell, the Arab revolutions are still a work in progress. Public opinion will direct events to a much larger extent, in foreign policy as much as in domestic affairs. This can be seen in Egypt, which seems to be reclaiming its former role as the region's center of gravity. If the recent contretemps over the detention of Americans working for several prodemocracy NGOs is any indication, Washington can expect more anti-American episodes in the future. Israel can also expect greater hostility. It is wildly unpopular in Egypt because of its treatment of the Palestinians. Few, however, expect the Israel-Egypt peace treaty to unravel. The Egyptian military still maintains enough power to keep both the peace treaty and U.S. ties intact.

But the West will have to get used to political Islam as a major force in the Middle East. In Tunisia, Islamists are behaving in accordance with the country's moderate, pro-Western traditions. The Islamist Al Nahda party, long banned under Tunisia's former rulers, won parliamentary elections last year but assembled a coalition with two liberal parties in an effort to form a government of national consensus. In Egypt, the Muslim Brotherhood, also banned under Mubarak's rule, captured one-third of the seats in parliamentary elections, while the more conservative Salafist party won another 20 percent. Democracy in Egypt is pushing the country toward some form of Islamist structure, though its precise nature remains unclear. The test in Egypt is what kind of constitution the Islamists will write. Will it move the country from autocracy to the rule of law? Will the constitution guarantee individual rights for both men and women as well as protect minorities such as Egypt's beleaguered Coptic Christian population? Will sharia law play a role? And how will the country's ruling party behave the next time there is an election? Will it hand over power peacefully if it loses?

Only the future can answer these questions. After decades of political stagnation, the political ferment in the Middle East is only beginning, and any new order there could take years or even decades to develop. Adding to the region's uncertain trajectory are the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian

conflict and the growing threat of a war between Israel and Iran over Tehran's nuclear-enrichment program.

Indeed, the only certainty in the new Middle East is the countless opportunities for statesmanship—and miscalculation—that will lie along the way.

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Article 5.

Yale-Global

Asia as Global Leader – Not So Fast

Ho Kwon Ping

14 May 2012 -- SINGAPORE: As the European economy teeters on the verge of a second recession and the US recovery wobbles, Asia is brimming with optimism. For Asian triumphalists attending a recent conference in Thailand – “Reading the Signposts of a Changing Landscape” – the signs are big, clear and point to a happy future. I’m less sure. The wording on many signposts is confused, with many pointing towards dead-ends or quicksand. In the rush of exuberant expectations that Asia’s time has come, the continent could fall victim to what’s behind many failures in the history of the world – simple hubris. The rise of Asia is not predetermined, just as the dominance of Western civilization for the past few hundred years was not preordained. The rise of European imperialism and then American hegemony was not simply due to economic power backed by military might. It was underpinned by innovative, even revolutionary thinking, about the primacy of the rule of law; the separation of church and state; the commitment to an empirical, scientific worldview; and all the institutions that brought about the modern state built on liberal democracy and market capitalism. Much of the intellectual vigor propelling the West to supremacy is now spent. In its

place is frustration that the old order is not working, with no vision as to what the new order should be.

So could Asia rise to the occasion and, in the intellectual vacuum, offer new solutions to bankrupt thinking? Is the continent capable of creative destruction of taboos and restrictive mindsets hobbling it during past centuries? Is Asia's economic growth matched by equally vigorous intellectual innovation?

The regional landscape offers clues.

India, for example, has managed, despite numerous challenges, to remain the world's largest practicing democracy. But the continuing clash and contradictions between tradition and modernity renders Indian political and social relations almost dysfunctional. And while Indian pride in its scientific, artistic and business achievements is justified, the continuing inability to lift millions of people out of abject poverty remains a sobering and hopefully not insurmountable challenge.

China, the other great and ancient civilization of Asia, is today to become the second most powerful economy in the world. Its government has, unlike India, lifted teeming masses from abject poverty. Private capitalism thrives alongside the more dominant state capitalism. But the absence of a dynamic civil society – unlike in India – and its opaque political structure, as so glaringly revealed by the Bo Xilai scandal, is possibly unsustainable.

India suffers from a lack of political consensus; China has too much of it. India has a surfeit of democracy and a deficit of economic equality; China has eradicated poverty, but suppressed democracy.

Indian thought leaders realize that democracy has not reduced inequality or improved the lives for most Indians. Chinese intellectuals recognize that the current systemic problems of political governance, glossed over by rapid economic growth, are unsustainable and brittle. But neither knows how to move forward beyond recognition of the need for drastic reform. Intellectual innovation and political power are not integrated.

Japan's social cohesion stands in stark contrast against China and India, but that same homogeneity and social conservatism has left it stranded in genteel decline, with no new thinking to break the country out of its stifling insularity.

South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore are probably the best examples of societies which grew rapidly due what political scientists call “developmental authoritarianism” and have successfully transited to liberal democracy. But their models of development are not easily transplanted to larger, more diverse societies.

South East Asia has largely recovered from the debilitating financial crisis in the late 1990s, which nearly crippled its private sector and brought down its banks. But internal contradictions remain unresolved in Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia and are, arguably, growing steadily.

While one can't deny the real achievements of an ascendant Asian civilization, it's difficult to accept the facile self-congratulations of the triumphalists who suggest that Asia's success in this century is inevitable. Even those who believe fervently that Asia's time has come cannot afford complacency. Asia requires diverse, innovative thought leadership if its economic rise will result in a sustainable, new paradigm for civilizational progress.

In particular, Asia needs to inculcate a virtuous cycle whereby business, political and social leaders interact to create new norms of economic, social and political behavior and values. One example is the dire need of a replacement for the highly individualistic, American form of capitalism which at its best, enormously rewards risk-taking, but at its worst, creates monstrous inequalities based on speculative gambling of other people's money. Capitalism is not universally identical; it's shaped by history and culture, resulting in the Scandinavian variant or the German model. The American model may not be broken, but after recent financial debacles, Asia should not blindly adopt it.

Asia needs to delve into its own history and culture for inspiration in creating an Asian variant of capitalism. One such source can be the webs of mutual obligations which serve as a common, recurring socio-ethical tradition of Asia. This communitarian characteristic of Asian culture can, if thoughtfully enhanced, nurtured and developed, replace the highly individualistic, Darwinian ethos of American capitalism. Communitarian capitalism can be an Asian form of ethical wealth creation, where the interests of the community of stakeholders in an enterprise – owners, employees, customers and suppliers and the larger community – would be a higher consideration than return on capital.

In other words, communitarian capitalism would be stakeholder-driven, not simply shareholder-driven.

One of the contradictions of globalization is the starkly worsening income inequalities across the world, particularly in Asia. There is no middle way, no waffling position where Asia's elite claim credit for generating growth but deny responsibility for its negative consequences. Such waffling unfortunately, is what most Asian business leaders are doing today; hiding their heads under the sand, thinking that if they simply stick to what they're good at doing – creating and consuming wealth – they are part of the invisible hand of productive capitalism. But that's just not good enough because, as we've seen, unfettered capitalism is not an absolute good, and often businessmen deepen its imperfections.

History has shown how many institutions of a modern and progressive society, such as liberal democracy or universal suffrage, arose out of the demands of a rising business class – the bourgeoisie. Asia's rising middle class needs to play the same historic role as their counterparts in Europe several hundred years ago.

Thought leadership need not be in grandiose or visionary ideas, but can small, practical solutions to real problems. For example, as a tiny country, Singapore has no pretensions of being a global thought leader. It has simply and quietly created solutions to its own set of changing circumstances, setting a model for others.

Singapore's approach to social security and public housing, launched many decades ago, has been universally hailed as revolutionary. In the field of sustainable resource management for cities, Singapore is probably one of the leading world examples.

Across Asia, there are many more examples of innovative, inspiring thought leadership covering a spectrum of fields. But this is not enough. Asia needs fundamental paradigm shifts, particularly on political and business governance, if it's to reach the vision of its future. Future generations will either blame or thank the present elite for what they do, or more disappointingly, choose not to do.

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The Daily Beast

Colin Powell on the Bush Administration's Iraq War Mistakes

Colin Powell

May 13, 2012

Chaos in Baghdad

On the evening of Aug. 5, 2002, President Bush and I met in his residence at the White House to discuss the pros and cons of the Iraq crisis.

Momentum within the administration was building toward military action, and the president was increasingly inclined in that direction.

I had no doubt that our military would easily crush a smaller Iraqi army, much weakened by Desert Storm and the sanctions and other actions that came afterward. But I was concerned about the unpredictable consequences of war. According to plans being confidently put forward, Iraq was expected to somehow transform itself into a stable country with democratic leaders 90 days after we took Baghdad. I believed such hopes were unrealistic. I was sure we would be in for a longer struggle.

I had come up with a simple expression that summarized this idea for the president: “If you break it, you own it.” It was shorthand for the profound reality that if we take out another country’s government by force, we instantly become the new government, responsible for governing the country and for the security of its people until we can turn all that over to a new, stable, and functioning government. We are now in charge. We have to be prepared to take charge.

“Taking Charge” is one of the first things a young Army recruit learns. The new soldier is taught how to pull guard duty—a mundane but essential task. Every recruit memorizes a set of rules describing how a guard performs his duty to standards. These rules are collectively known as the “General Orders.”

One of those guard-duty General Orders has stuck deeply in my head all these years and become a basic principle of my leadership style: a guard's responsibility is "to take charge of this post and all government property in view."

In the days, weeks, and months after the fall of Baghdad, we refused to react to what was happening before our eyes. We focused on expanding oil production, increasing electricity output, setting up a stock market, forming a new Iraqi government. These were all worth doing, but they had little meaning and were not achievable until we and the Iraqis took charge of this post and secured all property in view.

The Iraqis were glad to see Saddam Hussein gone. But they also had lives to live and families to take care of. The end of a monstrous regime didn't feed their kids; it didn't make it safe to cross town to get to a job. More than anything, Iraqis needed a sense of security and the knowledge that someone was in charge—someone in charge of keeping ministries from being burned down, museums from being looted, infrastructure from being destroyed, crime from exploding, and well-known sectarian differences from turning violent.

When we went in, we had a plan, which the president approved. We would not break up and disband the Iraqi Army. We would use the reconstituted Army with purged leadership to help us secure and maintain order throughout the country. We would dissolve the Baath Party, the ruling political party, but we would not throw every party member out on the street. In Hussein's day, if you wanted to be a government official, a teacher, cop, or postal worker, you had to belong to the party. We were planning to eliminate top party leaders from positions of authority. But lower-level officials and workers had the education, skills, and training needed to run the country.

The plan the president had approved was not implemented. Instead, Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Ambassador L. Paul Bremer, our man in charge in Iraq, disbanded the Army and fired Baath Party members down to teachers. We eliminated the very officials and institutions we should have been building on, and left thousands of the most highly skilled people in the country jobless and angry—prime recruits for insurgency. These actions surprised the president, National Security Adviser Condi Rice, and

me, but once they had been set in motion, the president felt he had to support Secretary Rumsfeld and Ambassador Bremer.

We broke it, we owned it, but we didn't take charge—at least until 2006, when President Bush ordered his now famous surge, and our troops, working with new Iraqi military and police forces, reversed the slide toward chaos.

Unreliable Sources

You can't make good decisions unless you have good information and can separate facts from opinion and speculation. Facts are verified information, which is then presented as objective reality. The rub here is the verified. How do you verify verified? Facts are slippery, and so is verification. Today's verification may not be tomorrow's. It turns out that facts may not really be facts; they can change as the verification changes; they may only tell part of the story, not the whole story; or they may be so qualified by verifiers that they're empty of information.

My warning radar always goes on alert when qualifiers are attached to facts. Qualifiers like: My best judgment ... I think ... As best I can tell ... Usually reliable sources say ... For the most part ... We've been told ... and the like. I don't dismiss facts so qualified, but I'm cautious about taking them to the bank.

Over time I developed for my intelligence staffs a set of four rules to ensure that we saw the process from the same perspective and to take off their shoulders some of the burden of accountability:

Tell me what you know.

Tell me what you don't know.

Then tell me what you think.

Always distinguish which is which.

What you know means you are reasonably sure that your facts are corroborated. At best, you know where they came from, and you can confirm them with multiple sources. At times you will not have this level of assurance, but you're still pretty sure that your analysis is correct. It's OK to go with that if it's all you have, but in every case, tell me why you are sure and your level of assurance.

During the 1991 Gulf War, our intelligence community was absolutely certain that the Iraqi Army had chemical weapons. Not only had the Iraqi Army used them in the past against their own citizens and against Iran, but

there was good evidence of their continued existence. Based on this assessment, we equipped our troops with detection equipment and protective gear, and we trained them to fight in such an environment. What you don't know is just as important. There is nothing worse than a leader believing he has accurate information when folks who know he doesn't don't tell him that he doesn't. I found myself in trouble on more than one occasion because people kept silent when they should have spoken up. My infamous speech at the U.N. in 2003 about Iraqi WMD programs was not based on facts, though I thought it was. The Iraqis were reported to have biological-agent production facilities mounted in mobile vans. I highlighted the vans in my speech, having been assured that the information about their existence was multiple-sourced and solid. After the speech, the mobile-van story fell apart—they didn't exist. A pair of facts then emerged that I should have known before I gave the speech. One, our intelligence people had never actually talked to the single source—nicknamed Curveball—for the information about the vans, a source our intelligence people considered flaky and unreliable. (They should have had several sources for their information.) Two, based on this and other information no one passed along to me, a number of senior analysts were unsure whether or not the vans existed, and they believed Curveball was unreliable. They had big don't knows that they never passed on. Some of these same analysts later wrote books claiming they were shocked that I had relied on such deeply flawed evidence. Yes, the evidence was deeply flawed. So why did no one stand up and speak out during the intense hours we worked on the speech? "We really don't know that! We can't trust that! You can't say that!" It takes courage to do that, especially if you are standing up to a view strongly held by a superior or to the generally prevailing view, or if you really don't want to acknowledge ignorance when your boss is demanding answers. The leader can't be let off without blame in these situations. He too bears a burden. He has to relentlessly cross-examine the analysts until he is satisfied he's got what they know and has sanded them down until they've told him what they don't know. At the same time, the leader must realize that it takes courage for someone to stand up and say to him, "That's wrong." "You're wrong." Or: "We really don't know that." The leader should never shoot the messenger. Everybody is working together to find

the right answer. If they're not, then you've got even more serious problems.

Tell me what you think. Though verified facts are the golden nuggets of decision making, unverified information, hunches, and even wild beliefs may sometimes prove to be just as important. Many intelligence analysts and experts believed the Iraqis would use chemical weapons. That was their opinion. The facts could be taken either way. My own judgment was that they wouldn't use them. There was too much to lose. We had communicated to them that we would respond in an asymmetric way if they did, and we left them to imagine what that might be. They were aware of our capabilities.

I further believed that we could fight through any Iraqi chemical attacks. The possible effects back home worried me—public outrage and near-hysterical reactions. But I felt we could manage these. In making these judgments, I was relying on my experience and instincts. If I was wrong, the responsibility and accountability would be upon me and not the intelligence community.

It turned out that the Iraqis did not use chemical weapons.

Always distinguish which is which. I want as many inputs as time, staff, and circumstances allow. I weigh them all—corroborated facts, analysis, opinions, hunches, informed instinct—and come up with a course of action. There's no way I can do that unless you have carefully placed each of them—facts, opinions, analysis, hunches, instinct—in their proper boxes.

Years ago, one of my best friends, then-major general Butch Saint, got thrown out of the Army chief of staff's office for delivering bad news about one of the chief's favorite programs. Butch knew before he walked in that he was entering the lion's den, and he wasn't surprised when he got thrown out. Word quickly spread around the Pentagon, as it always does when things like that happen. Not long after I heard about it I ran into Butch in a hallway. As we walked along, I offered him comforting words. "Hey," he said quietly, "he don't pay me to give him happy talk." I have never forgotten that. Butch retired as a four-star general.

The Burning Fuse of Abu Ghraib

THERE'S an old Army story about a brand-new second lieutenant just out of airborne jumpmaster school who is supervising his first drop-zone exercise. He is standing there by the drop zone—a big, open field—watching the approaching planes. Standing next to him is a grizzled old sergeant who has been through this hundreds of times. The lead planes will be dropping artillery, trucks, and ammunition.

Everything is looking good and the lieutenant gives the OK to drop. The first chute comes out and deploys fully. The second one is a streamer and doesn't deploy. It hits the first one, which collapses. Subsequent chutes get caught up in the mess and they all start hitting the ground at full speed. Pieces of wreckage are flying everywhere, gasoline fires break out, touching off the ammunition and starting a brush fire that rapidly spreads into the surrounding woods.

The young lieutenant stands there contemplating the disaster. He finally says to the sergeant, "Umm, Sarge, do you think we should call someone?" His patient reply, "Well, Lieutenant, I don't rightly know how you are going to keep it a secret."

Staffs try like the devil to delay as long as possible passing bad news to the boss. That suits some bosses, but it never suited me. I had a standing rule for my staffs: "Let me know about a problem as soon as you know about it." Everyone knows the old adage: bad news, unlike wine, doesn't get better with time.

In 2003 American soldiers and interrogators in charge of Iraq prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad subjected prisoners to horrendous abuse, torture, and humiliation. Their actions were shocking and clearly illegal. Late that year, one of the soldiers stationed at the prison reported the abuses to his superiors and said that photos had been taken by the abusers. The commanders in Iraq immediately took action and took steps to launch an investigation. Soon after, the news reached Secretary Rumsfeld and Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who told the president in early January 2004 that incidents at Abu Ghraib were being looked into. It seems that nobody told these senior leaders that these incidents were truly horrendous. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, the overall military commander in Iraq, announced the investigation on Jan. 12. Soldiers were suspended from duty during pending disciplinary action.

The machinery was working, but not all of it. The pipes leading up to the senior leader were never turned on. The Abu Ghraib photos were available to senior Pentagon leaders, but it does not appear that Secretary Rumsfeld saw them, nor were they shown at the White House. A fuse was burning, but no one made the senior leadership aware that a bomb was about to go off.

In late April, CBS's 60 Minutes broke the story wide open. They had obtained the photos and showed them on the air. The bomb went off and all hell broke loose.

I was shocked when I saw the photos. How could American soldiers do this? How could the implications of their eventually becoming public not set off alarm bells at the Pentagon and White House? Why was there no action at the top? Don Rumsfeld had been around a long time. If they had known what was going on, he and his staff would have immediately realized the dimensions of the crisis. So would the president's staff. And yet nearly four months went by and no one had elevated the material up the chain to the secretary or the president.

If that had happened, the problem would not have been magically solved, but the people at the top would have had time to decide how to deal with the disaster and get to the bottom of it. The president was not told early. Leaders should train their staffs that whenever the question reaches the surface of their mind—"Umm, you think we should call someone?"—the answer is almost always, "Yes, and five minutes ago." And that's a pretty good rule for life, if you haven't yet set your woods on fire.

With early notification, we can all gang up on the problem from our different perspectives and not lose time.

As I have told my staff many times over the years, if you want to work for me, don't surprise me. And when you tell me, tell me everything.

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