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|---|---|
| Article 1. | The Economist<br>**Political Islam - Everywhere on the rise** |
| Article 2. | The Washington Post<br>**A bleak look at America's future**<br>David Ignatius |
| Article 3. | Guardian<br>**As the dust settles, a cold new Europe with Germany in charge will emerge**<br>Ian Traynor |
| Article 4. | The National Interest<br>**Understanding Egypt's Islamist Turn**<br>Benny Morris |
| Article 5. | The Washington Post<br>**Why Iran remains defiant on the nuclear bomb**<br>Ray Takeyh |
| Article 6. | NOW Lebanon<br>**Hezbollah - Jumping into the fire**<br>Tony Badran |
| Article 7. | Al-Hayat<br>**The Role of Women in Arab Post- Revolutionary Regimes**<br>Raghida Dergham |

Article 1.

The Economist

# Political Islam - Everywhere on the rise

Dec 10th 2011 -- Revolution sweeps away a hated tyrant, unleashing a joyous jumble of hopes. Amid the cacophony a faint but steady drumbeat grows louder. Soon the whole country marches to this rhythm. Those who fall out of step find themselves shunted aside or trampled underfoot, sacrificed to the triumph of an idea that many exalt as noble but no one can define.

It happened in Iran when Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini steered a broad uprising against the shah into a grimly Islamist cul-de-sac. Might the same fate await Egypt, where elections seem set to produce a solid majority of Islamists in parliament? And might the example of Egypt, the most populous and culturally radiant of Arab countries, spread across a region primed for revolutionary change?

The bold early advance of Egypt's Islamists, in an electoral process that still has several rounds to run, has come as a shock to many, including the country's own largely secular elite. It had been widely assumed that the Muslim Brotherhood would capture a plurality rather than an outright majority of votes, much as its cousins, Nahda in Tunisia and the Justice and Development Party in Morocco, have recently done. Founded in 1928 and hounded by all governments despite—especially recently—professing a fairly moderate version of Islam, the Brotherhood is known for its political savvy as well as its resilience and discipline. The dozens of other parties competing in Egypt's elections are inexperienced, narrowly based or tainted by association with the fallen regime.

In the first round of voting for the lower house of parliament, covering a third of Egypt's 27 governorates, the Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party won a startling 46% of seats with 37% of

the party-list vote. More striking still was the performance of Nour, the Party of Light, a rival representing the puritanical Salafist strain of Islam. Partly inspired by Saudi Arabia's strict Wahhabism, Egypt's Salafists seek to purge the faith of modern accretions and impose literal interpretations of dogma.

Though only a few months old, and despite doubts that it could unite an array of often squabbling Salafist factions, Nour won 24% of the party-list vote and 21% of the seats. The biggest secular party trailed with 10% of the seats. In some districts the neophyte Salafists beat the Brotherhood's slick political machine by wide margins. Add in smaller parties that are offshoots of the Brotherhood, and the Islamists appear to have secured two-thirds of the first-round seats. Much of the voting to come is in rural districts that are Islamist strongholds, so this tally is unlikely to diminish before the next two rounds of elections conclude in mid-January.

Why did the scale of the Islamists' triumph so surprise Egypt's mainly secular pundits? Mostly this reflects the success of Egyptian governments, beginning long before Hosni Mubarak came to power, in denying that the bulk of Egyptian society has always been deeply conservative and fervidly religious. Whatever inroads secularism made in the 20th century, a generation-long, worldwide Islamist revival has washed much of it away.

The reality is that most Egyptians remain grindingly poor, ill educated and alienated from a ruling class seen as more attuned to Western fashions than local custom. In a survey of attitudes in seven Muslim-majority countries in December 2010 by Pew, an American research organisation, Egyptians proved the most likely to prefer "fundamentalists" over "modernisers" as champions of Islam. More than half of Egyptians favoured separating the sexes at work, compared with just 13% among Turks. Only Pakistan matched Egypt's enthusiasm for such traditionally Islamic penalties as stoning

for adultery, amputation for theft and death for apostasy, despite the fact that Egyptian courts have shunned such punishments for a century.

Youssef Ziedan, an Alexandrian novelist, explained in a recent column that he came to understand the Salafists' attraction after taking a wrong turn and getting lost in a maze-like ghetto whose existence he had been completely unaware of. This was just one of hundreds of such places across the country, with untold thousands jammed into dark streets under no guidance or rule: "People there have no recourse except to Islamists; there is no one else to impose any sort of order. The Mubarak regime created such realities by neglecting Egyptians whose only sin was that God created them in the age of Mubarak."

Villagers in the rural province of Fayoum, south-west of Cairo, who were for decades corralled to vote for Mr Mubarak's party in fraudulent polls, got little in return except for brutal police, venal officials and rutted roads. But for many years Muslim Brothers have paid small stipends to widows and supplied water buffaloes on easy repayment plans to landless peasants. Salafists, whose fiery sermons thrill mosque-goers and have propelled a fashion for full-face veils, now also do their bit, distributing cut-price food for religious feasts and offering classes in Koran recitation. Perhaps more importantly, they have gained a bully pulpit on numerous Saudi-funded satellite television channels that beam round-the-clock religious fare.

The recent elections brought out colourful banners and blaring tannoys in Fayoum's remotest hamlets but almost none advertised secular parties. Rallies graced by telegenic Salafist preachers attracted tens of thousands, while a curious few listened politely to youthful leftists talking up revolution. Small wonder that the province gave 14 of its 16 seats to Islamists. Four went to the Salafists, whose numbers were, ironically, boosted by voters once beholden to Mr

Mubarak's now-disbanded party, who are still instinctively mistrustful of the Brotherhood.

What do they want to do?

Surrounded by well-wishers at his home on a narrow dirt street in the village of Nazla, Wagih al-Shimi insists his Nour party would have done even better if the Brothers had not cheated. Blind from birth and lushly bearded, Fayoum's new MP is a doctor of Islamic jurisprudence, preaches in local mosques, and has a reputation for resolving disputes according to Islamic law.

"We owe our success to the people's trust, to their love for us because we work for the common good, not personal gain," says Mr Shimi. As for a party programme, he says his lot will improve schools, provide jobs and reform local government, introducing elections at every level to replace Mubarak-era centrally appointed officials. As for the wider world Mr Shimi is vague, except to say that Egypt should keep peace with any neighbour that refrains from attacking it.

The Brotherhood echoes this parochialism: its party's 80-page manifesto mentions neither Israel nor Palestine. The two groups have more in common. The Brothers profess to share the Salafists' end goal; namely, to regain the pre-eminent role for Islam in every aspect of life that they believe it once held. Some leading Brothers even describe themselves as Salafist in ideology. Many secular Egyptians, too, especially Coptic Christians, who make up an increasingly beleaguered 10% minority, see little difference between rival Islamists.

Yet within the broad spectrum of political Islam, the distinctions between two are telling. Muslim Brothers tend to be upwardly mobile professionals, whereas the Salafists derive their strength from the poor. The Brothers speak of pragmatic plans and wear suits and ties. The Salafists prefer traditional robes and clothe their language in

scripture. The Brothers see themselves as part of a wide, diverse Islamist trend. The Salafists fiercely shun Shia Muslims. Asked what he thinks of Turkey's mild Islamist rule, a Nour spokesman snaps that his party had nothing to take from Turkey bar its economic model.

Nour says it rejects Iranian-style theocracy, but equally rejects "naked" Western-style democracy. Instead, in what some Salafists see as a daring departure from previous condemnation of anything that might dilute God-given laws, it wants a "restricted" democracy confined by Islamic bounds. Yasir Burhami, a top Salafist preacher, says that his mission is to "uphold the call to Islam, not to impose it on people." Still, he believes the party can convince Egyptians to accept such things as banning alcohol, adopting the veil and segregating the sexes in public because "we want them to go to heaven".

Brotherhood leaders say instead that they must respect the people's choice. Their party includes a few Christians. It worked hard to build a coalition with secularists, too, though most of its partners soon withdrew. Whereas Nour party leaders openly call for an alliance with the Brothers to pursue a determined Islamist agenda, the older group, with its long experience of persecution, is wary. It says fixing Egypt's ailing economy should take priority over promoting Islamic mores. The Brotherhood would probably prefer a centrist alliance that would not frighten foreign powers or alienate Egypt's army, which remains an arbiter of last resort.

In any case, a Brotherhood-led government is not in the immediate offing. Egypt's generals, discomfited as anyone by the Islamists' advance, seem determined to find ways to delay it. They insist on retaining the right to appoint a cabinet and are seeking to dilute the new parliament's role in writing a constitution. Egypt's fractious liberals are deeply sceptical of the military, but may revert to

accepting a further dose of military dictatorship to stave off the Islamist tide, at least for a while. Just possibly, they may also embrace the Brothers as the best guarantee of getting the soldiers back to the barracks.

Whatever the outcome, Egypt looks set to join a broader regional trend that has seen a more pragmatic, tolerant form of Islamism rise to dominate the political scene, by way of the ballot box rather than the gun barrel. As Islamist parties come to the fore, from Iraq to Morocco, it is worth bearing in mind the words of Safwat Abdel-Ghani, the leader of an Egyptian Salafist group that once preached terrorism in the name of jihad, on the death of Osama bin Laden: “Al-Qaeda has not been destroyed by the ‘war on terror’ but by popular revolutions that made it unnecessary.”

Article 2.

The Washington Post

# A bleak look at America's future

David Ignatius

December 10 -- Is American power in decline, relative to the rest of the world? That question is at the center of a provocative study by the U.S. intelligence community exploring what the world might look like in 2030.

The answer, judging by comments from a panel convened to discuss the topic, is that America faces serious trouble: The U.S. economy is slowing, relative to its Asian competitors, which will make it harder for the country to assert its traditional leadership role in decades ahead. That, in turn, could make for a less stable world.

This pessimism among intelligence analysts contrasts sharply with the relentlessly upbeat prognostications made by politicians, especially the field of Republican presidential candidates, who describe an America of perpetual sunshine and unchallenged leadership. That's certainly not the view of this nonpartisan group.

The unclassified study, titled "Global Trends 2030," is being prepared by the National Intelligence Council, which is part of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. This is the fifth such study (the first, published in 1996, looked toward 2010) and the only one to radically question U.S. staying power.

In preparing the document, the analysts decided to focus on America's role in shaping the global future. "You have to be intellectually honest that there are changes in the U.S. role, and the role of rising powers," that will affect events, explains Mathew Burrows, a counselor at the National Intelligence Council and the principal author of the report.

Burrows and other contributors met in Washington this month to hear outside comments — and it was an eye-opening discussion. A somewhat pessimistic paper on the U.S. economic outlook, prepared by Uri Dadush of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, was criticized at this meeting for not being pessimistic enough.

The base-line scenario offered by Dadush was that America would avoid economic icebergs and stabilize its deficit and debt problems. The U.S. economy would grow an average of 2.7 percent annually between 2010 and 2030, and the country's share of Group of 20 gross domestic product would decline from about a third to about a quarter.

Dadush offered a second, bleaker picture, where breakup of the euro zone triggers a huge financial crisis that spreads to the United States. After several years of deep recession, the United States begins to expand but anemically. Under this forecast, U.S. growth would average just 1.5 percent through 2030. "Seen as a country on the down slide, the United States is both incapable of leading and disinclined to lead," wrote Dadush about the more negative version.

A disturbing consensus emerged among the analysts that something closer to the pessimistic scenario should be the base line. Fred Kempe, president of the Atlantic Council, the think tank that hosted the meeting, sums up the views of these analysts and of a similar exercise last month by the World Economic Forum when he warns that the biggest national-security threat is "the danger of receding American influence on the world stage."

My own view (I was asked to critique the presentations as an independent journalist) is that the key issue is how the United States adapts to adversity. That offers a slightly more encouraging picture: Relative to competitors, America still has a more adaptive financial system, stronger global corporations, a culture that can tap the talents of a diverse population and an unmatched military. The nation's chronic weakness is its political system, which is approaching

dysfunction. If the United States can elect better political leadership, it should be able to manage problems better than most competitors.
What other trends does the National Intelligence Council foresee in 2030? Burrows explained that the study will look at 15 or so "disruptive technologies" and their potential impact; it will examine governance and the growing gap between the pace of economic and political change and the ability of local, national and global governance to respond; and it will forecast likely conflicts — and assess ways that cyber, bio and other new weapons could empower individuals and small groups.
Here's the most interesting footnote to this gloomy exercise. Burrows said that as he discusses his 2030 project with analysts around the world, he finds them much less downbeat about America's prospects. "The Chinese are the first ones to say that we are too pessimistic about our future," he reports, and Brazilian and Turkish analysts have said much the same thing.
Burrows noted that the nonpartisan report will be released after the 2012 presidential election. But the issue of America's future will surely be at the heart of the coming campaign.

Article 3.

Guardian

# As the dust settles, a cold new Europe with Germany in charge will emerge

Ian Traynor

9 December 2011 - As a clear damp dawn rose over Brussels on Friday morning, the tired and tetchy leaders of Europe emerged, bleary-eyed from nine hours of night-time sparring over how to rescue the single currency and indeed the entire European project. Brave faces were put on, bluffs called, counter-bluffs revealed, vetoes wielded. Histrionics from France's Nicolas Sarkozy, poker-faced calm from Germany's Angela Merkel, David Cameron gambling the UK's place in Europe by opting to battle for Britain rather than helping to save the euro. When the dust settles, Friday 9 December may be seen as a watershed, the beginning of the end for Britain in Europe. But more than that – the emergence for the first time of a cold new Europe in which Germany is the undisputed, pre-eminent power imposing a decade of austerity on the eurozone as the price for its propping up the currency.

The prospect is of a joyless union of penalties, punishments, disciplines and seething resentments, with the centrist elites who run the EU increasingly under siege from anti-EU populists on the right and left everywhere in Europe.

"For the first time in the history of the EU, the Germans are now in charge. But they are also more isolated than before," said Charles Grant, director of the Centre for European Reform thinktank. "The British are certainly more marginal than before. Their influence has never been lower in my lifetime."

Whether or not the summit has saved the euro remains, of course, to be seen. At a single stroke, however, it has transformed Britain's place in Europe. With the fate of the currency at stake in the EU's worst crisis, Cameron opted for a fight and lost, placing the interests of the City of London before the European priority. Battling for Britain and wielding my veto in the Great British national interest, Cameron averred. There are senior UK officials who believe the prime minister betrayed the British national interest by picking the wrong fight at the wrong time, losing, and forfeiting a seat at the table that will determine the future shape of the EU.

"Cameron has miscalculated and performed rather badly. He didn't do well," said a senior EU official. If the main summit narrative was UK v EU, the frictions, anxieties and animosities generated by Germany's new ascendancy, however, extend much more broadly, enveloping France, Spain, Italy, Greece and others. Cameron went to Brussels saddled with backbench taunts of being the new Neville Chamberlain. The nasty references to the 1938 appeasement of Hitler, however, are not only heard on the Tory backbenches and in the Europhobic tabloids in Britain.

Nicolas Sarkozy, too, is contending with attacks from the right and the left that he has capitulated to Berlin and is being compared with the Frenchman who was with Chamberlain in Munich in 1938 – Édouard Daladier. In Greece, Italy and Spain the talkshows and newspapers are bristling with anti-German grudges, regularly bringing up the second world war, the Nazis, the alleged "Fourth Reich".

And in Germany itself, where its leaders are ambivalent about their new power and feel willfully misunderstood, columnists are calculating how much it is costing the country to bail out the eurozone's feckless states and comparing the figures to the colossal reparations it was forced to pay after the first world war, triggering

the backlash which paved the way for Hitler. "We are going to have to put up with a bit of Germanophobia," wrote Jakob Augstein in Der Spiegel this week. "Europe has returned to the stereotypes of the postwar years. The ugly German is back … it would be better for Germany to get things wrong together with its partners than to insist on being right alone."

As German exports crash through the €1trn barrier for the first time this year and arguments about surpluses and deficits are seen in Berlin as the rest of Europe wanting to penalise its industries for success, there is little sign of Merkel listening to her critics. The Germans, famously, do not read John Maynard Keynes. Presenting the case this week for a penalties-based euro regime as the response to the crisis, a senior German official said: "We have got to get away from the illusion that state spending creates growth."

"Despite your understandable aversion to inflation, you appreciate that the danger of collapse is now a much bigger threat," Radek Sikorski, the Polish foreign minister, countered last week in a speech in Berlin. It is not clear that the plea was appreciated. Because of the German preoccupation with saving and not spending and what is seen as monetarist fetishism, says Grant, "we face 10 years of austerity with grim German schoolmasters rapping everyone else over the knuckles".

"When all this austerity hits the real economy, it will be bleak with unemployment going up," adds a senior official in Brussels.

"The recession we have now entered is the first 'made in Europe' recession since 1993," says Jean Pisani-Ferry, head of the Bruegel thinktank in Brussels. "The euro crisis has already taken a significant toll on the European economy. If things continue to worsen the toll could be huge."

The shift in the way power is wielded in the EU has been building incrementally for 20 years, since German unification, the destruction

of the deutsche mark, the birth of the single currency, and the liberation then integration of eastern Europe redrew the map and the politics of Europe.

But the sovereign debt emergency, the financial crisis, and the response of Europe's leaders have brought the transformation into clearer focus than ever before this year. Germany calling the shots, France playing second fiddle, Britain sidelined, the eurozone split between haves and have nots, the smaller EU states fed up of being dictated to by a Franco-German "directorium", the European commission at its lowest point in years despised and ignored by Paris and Berlin, and the traditional pro-EU governing elite on the continent (not Britain) being challenged as seldom before by a new breed of anti-EU populists. This dismal situation is compounded by a crisis of confidence in leadership and a crisis of credibility in the markets. "A fractured Europe, inward-looking and navel-gazing," says Grant. "Unable to be a world player, staggering from crisis summit to crisis summit."

Others are less gloomy.

"Eventually Germany too will need to spend and invest," says the senior EU official. "You will probably have a different French leader. Merkel could lose the next election. There can be a return to Keynesian economics. This may be a moment of the domination of German orthodoxy, but things can change." The pleas to Merkel are becoming louder and more public. "This is the scariest moment of my ministerial life," told the German foreign policy elite in Berlin . "The biggest threat to the security of Poland today? the collapse of the eurozone. I demand of Germany that, for your own sake and for ours, you help it survive and prosper. You know full well that nobody else can do it." Merkel is in an uncomfortable position, feared if she wields her power overbearingly and criticised if she fails to lead. he seems uneasy with Berlin's new pre-eminence. "It's absurd to say that

Germany wants to dominate Europe in any way," she told the Bundestag last week. If she decides to heed the pleas, change course, and help the rest of Europe, Cameron is unlikely to be among the beneficiaries.

Although the main clash in the wee hours in Brussels on Friday was between Cameron and Sarkozy, it was Merkel's, not Sarkozy's, blueprint that the prime minister wrecked. Merkel was alone in demanding that the route out of the euro crisis was to re-open the Lisbon treaty and for all 27 member states to facilitate her stiff new euro regime. Indeed, her demand was opposed by the European commission, by Herman Van Rompuy chairing the summit, by France, and by many others who feared that re-opening Lisbon was jerking open a can of worms. Cameron's veto saves their blushes. But it does not save the euro and for that there is likely to be payback for the British.

At least 23 EU countries will now endeavour to hammer out a new separate stability pact with teeth over the next three months. But because of legal wrangles over who is empowered to police and compel fiscal rigour and punish delinquents, the resulting pact may be weaker than Merkel planned.

In the cold new Europe taking shape, the Germans are more powerful than everyone else, but not all-powerful.

*Ian Traynor is the Guardian's European editor. He is based in Brussels*

Article 4.

The National Interest

# Understanding Egypt's Islamist Turn

Benny Morris

December 9, 2011 -- Egypt’s temporary ruling government, or Supreme Military Council, decided against publishing the results of the first round of elections to the People's Assembly, or parliamentary lower house. This reflected shock and worry over the unexpected success of the Salafist Al Nour movement—which, according to Al Jazeera and other knowledgable observers, won 24.4 percent of the popular vote in first-round districts, including Cairo, Alexandria and Suez.

While the 36.6 percent reportedly won by the Muslim Brotherhood's "Freedom and Justice" list was no surprise, it was considered remarkable that the two Islamist parties together apparently netted almost two-thirds of the popular vote (which may, in the end, give them an even larger proportion of the seats in the lower house). Egypt's other districts, by and large more rural and less educated, are expected to produce results at least as favorable, if not more so for the fundamentalists.

The Muslim Brotherhood, which in recent years has avowed its belief in democracy and human rights and has rejected violence as a means of achieving power, is expected to head the coalition government that emerges after the various rounds of elections—for the lower house, the upper house (the Senate), and the presidency—next summer. Whether that coalition will include the Salafists or only the secular and liberal parties, which were trounced in the November vote, remains unclear. The most powerful of them—the "Egyptian Faction"—won only 13.4 percent of the votes. It is not clear what the the reaction will be from the military. The officer class is Egypt's

traditional bastion of secularism (as Turkey's military was, before its recent purge by the country's Islamist government) and has important economic interests that the fundamentalists will likely want to dismantle.

Since its 1928 founding, the Muslim Brotherhood's credo has been: "Allah is our objective; the Koran is our constitution; the Prophet is our leader; Jihad is our way; and death for the sake of Allah is the highest of our aspirations." The movement's main societal goals are to enshrine sharia, or Koranic religious law, as "the basis controlling the affairs of state and society" and “liberate Islamic countries . . . from foreign imperialism." This includes Palestine, an "Islamic country" by the Brotherhood's lights, which must be liberated from Zionism, which it sees as a form of "foreign imperialism." Geopolitically, the movement's goal has always been the resurrection of an Islamic empire stretching from Indonesia to Spain (once an Islamic domain which, according to Islamic doctrine, must revert to Muslim rule).

Many in the West, taken in by the recent professions of "moderation" by Brotherhood spokesmen, have ignored the documents that define the movement's "eternal" verities.

The Salafists have the same general vision for the internal reordering of Egypt and for the Muslims' geopolitical future, but they seek its immediate translation into policy and reality, whereas the Brotherhood has adopted, or so they claim, a gradualist approach resting on persuasion rather than coercion. Sheikh Abdul Moneim al-Shahat, one of the Al Nour leaders, recently explained in a television debate that the Salafists wish to rule a state in which "citizenship will be restricted by the sharia, freedom will be restricted by the sharia and equality will be restricted by the sharia.” This implies that Egypt’s millions of Coptic Christians will lose their citizenship and women will be denied equality.

Salafism, a movement originating with Muslim reformists in Cairo in the mid-nineteenth century (though Salafist spokesmen insist that it really "started" with Muhammad in the seventh century), believes that Muslims must return to the pristine piety and puritan values of Islam's first generations in the Arabian desert. Jihad against the infidels is a major component of the Salafi worldview.

Commentators explain the electoral success of both the Brotherhood and Al Nour as resulting from of the innate religious conservatism of the Egyptian people but also as stemming from extensive civic good works—free medical services, distribution of "pita bread, rice and beans [ful]" to the masses, averting starvation. These have been the trademarks of the fundamentalist for decades and in the political realm often make up for the deficiencies of the corrupt and unegalitarian practices of the military regime that has ruled Egypt since 1952. In addition, both the Brotherhood and various Salafi parties that together form the Al Nour list have recruited and organized popular support for decades, arriving at the current election process well organized and focused.

The same can’t be said for their liberal-secularist rivals, who led the revolutionary protests last January-February that toppled the Mubarak government and more recently deterred effective intervention by the military in the ongoing political process. These people focused on getting Mubarak and the military out, not on organizing and recruiting popular support. They now appear poised to pay the price.

American policy also played a role in the ongoing takeover of Egypt by Islamists. Early in 2011, President Obama starkly discouraged Mubarak from unleashing his military and police to crush the demonstrators and then nudged Mubarak to step down. All the while, he hailed the birth of freedom in Tahrir Square (a freedom, incidentally, that has deteriorated, over the past few months, to

include a series of sexual attacks). In recent months, the Obama administration similarly has sought to induce the interim military government to shepherd the electoral process to a "democratic" conclusion.

This was reminiscent of Obama's predecessor, George W. Bush, who in 2006 arm-twisted Israel into allowing and facilitating general elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The results were similar. The upshot of that earlier prodemocracy advocacy was the victory of the fundamentalist (and terroristic) Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood's offshoot in Palestine, and the defeat of the Fatah in the Palestinian territories, to both Israel's and the West's chagrin.

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Article 5.

The Washington Post

# Why Iran remains defiant on the nuclear bomb

Ray Takeyh

December 10 -- Attention has returned to the potential nuclear threat building in Iran. It has long been assumed that the regime seeks the bomb for its deterrent power or as a means of projecting influence in a politically volatile region. As important as these considerations may be, Iranian nuclear calculations are predicated on a distinctly domestic calculus: The Islamic Republic perceives it can reclaim its international standing better with the bomb than without one. Instead of conceding to intrusive [redacted]. resolutions or amending their behavior on issues of terrorism and regional subversion, Iran's rulers sense that once they obtain the bomb, they can return to the international fold on their own terms.

Iranian officials claim that Washington's hostility goes far beyond the nuclear issue. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has denigrated prospects of diplomatic settlement and claims that Washington exploits the nuclear issue in hopes of extending its sanctions policy to other countries. "The change of behavior they want — and which they don't always necessarily emphasize — is in fact the negation of our identity," Khamenei insisted in an August 2010 speech. This indictment encompasses Western nations as well as the [redacted]. Security Council and the International Atomic Energy Agency. After a critical IAEA report was released last month, a senior adviser to Khamenei, Ali Akbar Velayati, dismissed Iran's culpability and stressed that the "IAEA will never agree on Iran's peaceful nuclear activities."

A clerical oligarchy trapped in a mind-set conditioned by conspiracies and violent xenophobia paradoxically views both American entreaties and sanctions as an affirmation of its perspective. Offers of diplomatic dialogue made in respectful terms are seen as indications of Western weakness and embolden the regime to sustain its intransigence. Conversely, coercive measures are viewed as American plots to not just disarm the Islamic Republic but also to undermine its rule. Armed with the ultimate weapon, the Islamists think, they may yet compel the West to concede to Iran's regional aggrandizement. Ali Larijani, the speaker of parliament who is often wrongly depicted in Western circles as a pragmatist, has mused that "If Iran becomes atomic Iran, no longer will anyone dare to challenge it because they would have to pay too high of a price." Iranian elites may not be misreading the lessons of proliferation. Historically, when a nuclear power has emerged, after a period of sanctions and censure the international community has not only acquiesced to the country's new capabilities but also invests in the perpetuation of that regime — partly out of fear of the unknown. If Tehran achieves the bomb, some — and not just in Moscow and Beijing — will argue that the regime's collapse is too dangerous to contemplate. If no reasonable successor to the theocratic regime is clear, economic sanctions, diplomatic isolation and aid to dissident forces are likely to be deprecated. After all, if Iran were to undergo a period of prolonged disorder, characterized by the breakdown of central authority, political convulsions and/or ethnic separatism, what would happen to its nuclear arsenal and resources, its scientists and technicians? Before international pressure erodes state power, many are certain to marshal arguments similar to those aired on behalf of a problematic Pakistani government that is a custodian of a dangerous nuclear arms industry.

The case of China is similarly suggestive — and disconcerting. Once a rash, revolutionary Chinese regime detonated its bomb in 1964, many around the world argued China was too dangerous to be left alone to nurture its grievances. The task at hand was not to insist on disarmament but to embed China's bomb in the international security architecture. Iran similarly hopes that once it discharges a nuclear device, the international focus will no longer be on its domestic repression or aid to terrorist groups but on its reintegration into the global economy as a means of mitigating the adverse consequences of its bomb.

To be sure, this is a perilous path. Tehran could face further sanctions and possibly military retribution. Yet for a supreme leader who has spoken of creating a "real resistance economy" and who tends to discount the prospect of military strikes, the dividends of defiance outweigh the advantages of accommodation. A clerical leadership whose sense of confidence is shadowed by its imagined fears sees the bomb as a means of ameliorating its vulnerabilities while escaping its predicament on the cheap.

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Article 6.

NOW Lebanon

# Hezbollah - Jumping into the fire

Tony Badran

December 9, 2011 -- Anyone monitoring Hezbollah's rhetoric over the last several days could not but notice a spike in its apocalyptic pitch. Perhaps it was the religious occasion of Ashura, but more likely, it was the result of the tense regional situation, namely the increased paranoia in Tehran. Convinced that an attack against them is imminent, the Iranians are now preparing for war and publicly declaring that Hezbollah, and thus Lebanon, will be their first line of defense. That is why in his most recent speeches, Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah has been preparing the Shia community in advance for the ruin that awaits them as a consequence.

All talk of Hezbollah's "Lebanonization" and its supposed definition as a "national resistance" aside, the reality is that the group's first and foremost task is to be Iran's long arm. The Iranians are now making this fact known explicitly. Two weeks ago, Yahya Rahim Safavi, former commander of the Revolutionary Guards and military adviser to Iran's Supreme Guide, Ali Khamenei, declared that in case of an Israeli attack on Iran, the Iranian retaliation will come from Lebanon, "because all the Zionist cities are within the range of our ally Hezbollah's Katyushas." In other words, the order has been given and Hezbollah is up to bat.

The problem is that, for Hezbollah, this order comes at a rather bad time, as the Party of God is facing serious constraints and uncertainties, especially as its Syrian ally struggles for its life, putting in question the group's strategic depth in Syria. Moreover, Nasrallah now must mobilize a reluctant Shia community, still reeling from the utter devastation of the 2006 war, to follow the party into the abyss

for the sake of its Iranian patron.

It is against this backdrop that Nasrallah's Ashura speeches this past week, including his rare public appearance with the celebrating crowd in Beirut on Tuesday, are best understood.

Of all those speeches, perhaps most telling was the one Nasrallah gave on the third night of Ashura, last Monday. The overriding motif of the address was the perseverance of the faithful regardless of the hardships they must face and the sacrifices they must make.

Nasrallah made it amply clear that what was expected of the believers was nothing short of self-sacrifice. To drive the point home, he referenced a story from Shia tradition about how the faithful—men, women and children—willingly jumped into a pit of fire rather than renounce their Imam.

Nasrallah then tied the ancient lore to the present, revealing the core of what he expected from his followers. "We, the men, women and children who held steadfast in the July [2006] war, are not frightened by their war or their weapons … In these hard times, facing all the challenges, dangers and slander, and facing the excessive strength and cunning of the enemy and the scarcity of supporters and defenders, we say to Hussein, we will not abandon you, or your religion, or your banner, or your Karbala, or your goals, even if we were to be cut, sawed, and our women and children banished," Nasrallah shouted, rallying his supporters, welding their religious and communal identity with Hezbollah.

Similarly, there was little subtlety when Nasrallah made a surprise appearance in Dahiyeh on Tuesday. The purpose behind that was to bind himself, Hezbollah and the Shia community in one fate—which is decided for them in Tehran. "I have chosen to be among you today for a few minutes … so the whole world can hear and we can renew our pledge," he told the crowd. At the heart of this pledge of allegiance (bay'ah) are Hezbollah's weapons. "We will hold on to our

resistance and to the weapons of the resistance," he said.

Why is Nasrallah so keen on reaffirming his community's allegiance to his party at this juncture? The episode of the Katyusha rockets that were recently fired on Israel is instructive. Hezbollah denied responsibility, and blame was thrown at an obscure Sunni Islamist outfit with alleged ties to al Qaeda. Many saw the episode as more of a Syrian attempt to remind the world that Bashar al-Assad could still light up the front with Israel, as well as to warn them that what might come after him would be al Qaeda jihadists. The Syrian regime's publicists didn't even bother with nuance in making this point.

But the Syrian angle was likely secondary. Furthermore, the accused Sunni group has denied responsibility for the attack. Most probably, Hezbollah launched the attack, much in line with Safavi's threat that immediately preceded it, in retaliation for the mysterious explosions that have rocked Iranian facilities in the last month. But the subdued manner in which this was done is the most interesting aspect of the episode.

Hezbollah's caution does away with an enduring and destructive myth from the 1990s, which holds that Hezbollah managed to achieve a "balance of terror" with Israel. In reality, Nasrallah knows full well what will befall the Shia community, indeed all of Lebanon, once Hezbollah attacks Israel on behalf of Iran, which is one reason why the party remained mum about the Katyusha attacks.

With the prospect of the decimation of his Shia followers, it becomes easier to understand why Nasrallah is practically beseeching them, preemptively, to persevere in the face of inevitable devastation and, literally, jump with him into a pit of fire. For that is what he and his superiors in Iran will bring raining down on their heads.

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Article 7.

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# The Role of Women in Arab Post-Revolutionary Regimes

Raghida Dergham

09 December 2011 -- The subjection of Arab women will be inevitable if Islamist political parties seize power in the countries of change, where coups or uprisings took place this year. The condition of women in Iran in the wake of Khomeini's revolution in 1979 bears living testimony to the fate of Arab women, if they make similar mistakes and fail to rebel early on and in a comprehensive fashion. For one thing, Arab women today would represent an extraordinary instrument of change, if they were to organize themselves with the aim of causing political, economic and social change, so as to form a clear response to the attempts of Islamists to hijack the idea of the secular state. Resisting subjection may force women to resort to violence, and this would require courage, boldness and initiative. Yet civil disobedience would also require these qualities. And so would "thinking outside the box", through new means and approaches, some of which entailing confrontation, while others requiring an innovative and creative strategy. While traditional women's associations have played and continue to play a necessary role, most of them have dissociated themselves from politics, considering the latter to be "men's work".

Women have played significant roles within political organizations, liberationist or Islamist, yet they have most of the time been excluded as soon as the revolutionaries or the Islamists came to power. The condition of women in countries that claim to be enlightened, such as Lebanon, is also shameful given the absence of women from political

decision-making institutions, as the men of power had not “found” any women qualified enough to fill even a single ministerial position under the current Prime Minister, while there were only two female ministers under the previous one. In fact, the country of freedom and democracy, as it boasts, has failed to adopt a decision to outlaw violence against women in compliance with the desires of religious institutions. The women of Egypt, or most of them, are digging their own graves as long as their burkas are blinding them to the fate of their fundamental rights – women’s rights from the perspective of human rights at the very least. Here, the women of Lebanon, a country not reached by the Arab Spring - which has become an autumn and a possible prelude to a winter storm-, have one thing in common with the women of Egypt, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia, where the fast train of change has arrived, as well as with the women of the Syrian opposition, who have played striking political roles and whose fate remains unknown under the alternative forces that would come to power. What they have in common is the necessity for them all to form feminist political parties – political parties, not unions or associations. They are in need of political parties with clear programs and goals, and a clear focus on the roles played by women in decision-making. They need parties that are bold and courageous in calling themselves feminist, then run in elections and demand a 30 percent quota of posts for women, as adopted by the United Nations 35 years ago. These parties would organize protests, demonstrations and local and international workshops to benefit from the experiences of women around the world. In fact, the first of such workshops should be held in collaboration with the women of Iran. And more still, such workshops should examine ways to make use of the Arab women’s money and their abilities (independently as holders of capital), yet within a strategy of influence capable of transforming the standards of an investment in which women would be pioneers and

decision-makers, and which would have a massive impact on the country's economy. This way it will be possible to redefine the role of women in the Arab region and also to reshape their relations with the new generation of both young men and women. And if the young generation, which took part in the revolutions of change and in the overthrow of the regimes, has truly reached political maturity, it should take the initiative now – before the Islamists finish hijacking their revolution – to raise Arab women as a slogan, an instrument and a feature for the democratic road to reform and freedom.

It may be said that a crisis and a confrontation could arise between the women of modernity and the women of tradition – especially religious tradition – in view of their different aspirations. Well then, so be it. Just as there is acceptance of the struggle between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafists for power, or between Leftists and Islamists, let the difference between the women of modernity and the women of tradition be accepted and be democratic.

The Libyan women activists are characterized by a great deal of courage, as they enter into a fateful battle against the Islamist revolutionaries, and even against the leaders in power who have rushed to degrade Libyan women by reinstating Libyan men's "right" to marry four women. Libya's women may well fall victim to the alliance between the North Atlantic Alliance (NATO) and the revolutionaries to overthrow the regime, if the sponsors of this alliance do not go ahead and exercise their influence – which they do when they want to – instead of merely speaking empty words about women's rights. Libyan women have taken part in getting rid of Muammar Gaddafi's regime – and some of them have been active for 40 years – but they are now alone in a fateful battle against the men of the revolution, who are determined to monopolize power, exclude women and impose their own narrow-minded version of Sharia rule.

The United Nations has a role it must now boldly play through its Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who spoke boldly against Gaddafi, and must now speak with the same boldness for the rights of Libyan women, from the perspective of human rights as well as that of political participation. In Afghanistan for example, where the United Nations played a role in shaping the new political regime after the fall of the Taliban, then-UN Envoy Ambassador Al-Akhdar Al-Ibrahimi made sure to include the participation of women in decision-making and a clear quota for them according to the constitution, giving women 25 percent of seats in parliament. The United Nations failed to do the same in Iraq – although it would have been able to if it had tried. Before it today is the opportunity of a Security Council term for the Secretariat, as well as that of the presence of an entire UN entity dedicated to women, called UN Women and headed by the former President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet. This entity must prove itself courageous and bold by supporting and providing all assistance to Arab women. This is a fateful phase for them, and that is the mission of the new entity.

A workshop for Arab women must adopt a new political discourse, based on women leading, not following, or demanding to be granted a right here or to have a restriction removed there. The women of Iran have hesitated, they have been patient, they have waited and they have dreamed. And when they awoke to their bitter reality, it was too late. Even the execution of some of them went by without any international notice. Their situation today is tragic, and they are warning Arab women, as if to say: beware of committing the same mistakes. If you do not rise up now, it will be too late.

The Arab youths, who are waging the battle for change in their respective countries, have not yet risen to recognizing the right of young women to freedom, liberalism and the right to express themselves. Most of them fell between chivalry and tradition, as they

watched the Islamists in Tahrir Square in Egypt expelling young women by "pushing" them and pulling their hair, to punish them for violating tradition. Some of them have overlooked harassment, and even rape. As long as they keep this mentality, they will not rise to the level of being able to cause the required radical change in Arab societies, not just because this is a fundamental part of freedom and liberalism, but also because it will not be possible to develop Arab societies without women.

If young Arabs stay in the Tahrir-style Squares of Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Morocco and Syria in such a state of want, their battle for power against the Islamists will be a losing one. They will surely fail without the participation of young Arab women, who have truly begun work that is organized, bold and qualitatively new. They are active in Tunisia, Syria, Morocco, Libya and Egypt as well.

The burden of the fate of Yemeni women, meanwhile, falls on the shoulders of Tawakel Karman, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, amid the West's zeal to accept the Muslim Brotherhood, to which Tawakel is affiliated – considering them to represent moderate Islam, as per their own definition. It is not clear whether Tawakel Karman intends to make use of the standing given to her by such a prize in defending the rights and the role of Arab women in a secular state that separates religion and state. Tawakel Karman has the right to take on the role of an activist for the overthrow of Ali Abdullah Saleh's regime, but she does not have the right to take on that of a supporter of Arab women, as long as she does not clarify her position within the context of the Muslim Brotherhood being in power.

It is time to clarify one's identity, particularly by the women of the Muslim Brotherhood. We know that Salafist women have neither a say nor a role, but only exclusion and submission, as admitted and clearly declared by the Salafists themselves. We know that the worst thing that could happen to Arab women would be for the Salafists to

come to power. They have made this unequivocally clear. What is unclear is the women's program within Muslim Brotherhood organizations, which pay lip service to modernity as a tactic, so as to reach power then monopolize it.

Turkey, perhaps in partnership with Qatar, has promoted so-called moderate Islam to circumvent extremism. Yet it is today required to take clear stances towards the roles and rights of Arab women. We know that the wives of all high-ranking officials in Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's government, including the President and the Foreign Minister, wear the hijab as a political statement, and not just as a religious choice. Turkey has the ability to stop the descent, because secularism in it is strong, and because its geography prevents it from such a descent. Things are not so in the Arab region. Turkey is required to speak publicly of the situation of Arab women, especially as it is a partner in the drive to bring the Islamists to power.

Most importantly, Arab women must begin to work for local change while coordinating or at least communicating with the feminist work being done in other Arab countries. The challenges are many, benefiting from the lessons of others is necessary, and adopting a new methodology based on political discourse and on establishing political parties has become urgent. The time for serious work is now, because the Arab Awakening will end in the Slumber of the Dark Ages if Arab women fail to take the initiative and to lead the way forward.

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