

# The Shimon Post



Presidential Press Bulletin

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Article 1.

The Financial Times

## **Obama must broker a new Mideast peace**

Brent Scowcroft

April 13 2011 -- The 'Arab Spring' that is flowering in fits and starts in most countries of the Middle East has significantly altered the geopolitical situation in the region, and is likely to have a profound effect on American interests. No one knows how or when the region will settle down, and there is little that the US can do to help shape events directly. Even in Libya, the US and other countries have been reacting, admittedly in a direct manner, rather than shaping the outcome of the struggle between Muammer Gaddafi and his opponents. This is all for good reason.

As a new Middle East has begun to be shaped by citizens in individual countries, one issue appears conspicuously unaffected, at least on the surface: the Arab-Israeli dispute over Palestine. Israelis and Palestinian leaders remain incapable or unwilling to talk seriously. It is wishful thinking that this situation can continue for long. The US has more direct interests at stake in ensuring a lasting peace between Israel and Palestine than it does in the outcome in most other countries in the region. Remaining silent on deadlocked negotiations over a two state solution, while encouraging greater democratisation in other countries, suggests a double standard that damages America's image in the Middle East and the broader Muslim world. This is particularly true because the Palestinian issue stands out as the one issue in the Middle East where nothing can be accomplished without active American leadership, including that of President Barack Obama. No other country can convince Israeli and Palestinian leaders to reach a binding compromise that results in two states living side by side in peace and security, ending the Israeli-

Palestinian conflict and all claims related to it. Such an outcome would significantly increase Israel's security, while resolving an issue that adversely affects America's national security interests in the region. Some argue that the uncertain situation in the broader Middle East is not a propitious time to re-engage on Palestine; that we should wait to see what new leaders arise and what their policies towards Israel might be.

Others argue that, facing reelection next year, Mr Obama should avoid personal involvement unless he is guaranteed of success, so as not to appear weakened or to offend domestic constituencies. These views do serious injustice to the interests of all the main parties, including those of the US. Adding to these interests is that fact there is increasing international support to have the UN General Assembly declare in September a Palestinian state based on the borders of 1967. The US cannot block such a declaration; indeed it is likely to be isolated in its opposition (along with Israel). However, such a declaration, satisfying as it may be to those rightly frustrated with decades of failed negotiations, is likely to result in a deepened stalemate rather than the lasting peace devoutly desired by majorities in Israel and the occupied territories.

Resuming the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is not a matter of forcing concessions from Israel or dragooning the Palestinians into surrender. Most of the elements of a settlement are already agreed as a result of the 'Clinton parameters' of 2000, the Oslo Accords, and the 'road map' of 2003. What is required is to summon the will of Israeli and Palestinian leaders, led by a determined American president, to forge the various elements into a conclusion that all parties have already publicly accepted in principle. Indeed, a broad-based Israeli group has just announced its 'Israeli Peace Initiative' that endorses these elements, and there is strong support from the leaders of Europe, especially Germany, France and the UK.

Thus the time has come for Mr Obama to lay out his view of the parameters of a fair and viable peace agreement. Four issues should be highlighted. First, territory and borders should be addressed. Two states, based on the lines of June 4, 1967 with minor, reciprocal, and agreed-upon modifications as expressed in a 1:1 land swap is needed, to take into account areas heavily populated by Israelis in the West Bank. Next, there has to be a solution to the refugee problem that is consistent with the two-state solution that does not entail a general right of return to Israel and addresses the Palestinian refugees' sense of injustice, while also providing them with meaningful financial compensation as well as resettlement assistance.

Third, Jerusalem has to be made the undivided capital of both Israel and Palestine, with Jewish neighbourhoods under Israeli sovereignty and Arab neighbourhoods under Palestinian sovereignty. There should be a special regime for the Old City, providing each side control of its respective holy places and unimpeded access by each community to them.

Last, on the issue of security, Mr Obama must push for a non-militarised Palestinian state, together with security mechanisms that address Israeli concerns while respecting Palestinian sovereignty, and a US-led multinational force to ensure a peaceful transitional security period. These parameters would serve as a basis for substantive and productive discussion by the parties to move the peace negotiations to a positive resolution. They would achieve priority US national security and foreign policy objectives with respect to the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Also, they would fulfill the repeated urgings of the international community, including the Arab League and the Quartet (the UN, the US, the European Union, and Russia), that the US exercise determined and effective leadership as the chief facilitator of the Middle East peace process. The parameters should

be part of a comprehensive and ambitious strategy designed to move the parties forward to a lasting agreement.

Of course, success is not guaranteed. By its very nature, no issue that requires a president's direct involvement is. But many issues of importance to US national security interests depend on achieving lasting peace between Israel and Palestine.

The nature of the new Middle East cannot be known until the festering sore of the occupied territories is removed. Iran's hegemonic ambitions, including its support for Hezbollah and Hamas, cannot be blunted as long as it is seen in the region as the champion of the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinians.

Syria and Lebanon will remain arenas of direct concern to Israel as long as there is no regional peace agreement. Relations with Saudi Arabia, already tested by the overthrow of Hosni Mubarak, likely would be strengthened if King Abdullah saw the US as moving in a serious manner to resolve the Palestinian issue.

There is no issue in the Middle East more deserving of the president's engagement, both for US interests globally and for the stability of a vital region undergoing historic change. In June 2010, Mr Obama spoke eloquently in Cairo about justice and progress, tolerance and the dignity of all human beings. It is now time to use his office and prestige to bring peace to the Holy Land, uniting Israelis, Palestinians and Arabs in a lasting peace.

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Article 2.

The National Interest

## **King Abdullah: Time is Running Out for Arab-Israeli Peace**

Bruce Riedel

April 13, 2011 -- King Abdullah II of Jordan, like the rest of us, was apparently surprised by this winter's eruption of political dissent in the Arab world. His just published autobiography, *Our Last Best Chance: the Pursuit of Peace in a Time of Peril*, warns that upheaval and war is coming to the Middle East if the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not resolved by a just and fair peace, but does not prepare the reader for the revolutions that swept Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and the rest of the Arab world this winter and spring. That is not a criticism—no one else saw it coming either. Rather it is a reflection on just how volatile and unpredictable the region is today and a reason why the king's message is so important and timely. Without peace, the revolutions and violence sweeping Arabia today are all too likely to be exploited by the most extreme elements in the Islamic world—like al-Qaeda—and could turn 2011's hope into despair.

The book is both an autobiography and a call to action. As autobiography it is a fascinating glimpse into the lives of not just King Abdullah and Queen Rania but of his father, Hussein, as well. Hussein sought to shield his oldest son from the glare and attention that royalty brings while also preparing him for his royal duties. So Abdullah spent much of his childhood being educated in the UK and USA. He expected to spend his life in the army since his uncle, Hassan, was Crown Prince for three decades and was expected to succeed his brother. Instead Hussein almost on his death bed made

Abdullah king. King Abdullah has sought to build in Jordan a school that would give today's young Jordanians the same quality of education that he got in America in his youth.

For more than a decade after acceding to the throne Abdullah has guided his small country through the tempest of terror and wars. He recounts his many interactions with three American presidents along the way. Bill Clinton gets credit for trying at Camp David and other summits to make peace. George Bush fares less well. Always polite and reserved, Abdullah nonetheless paints a picture of the 43rd President as a man who just did not get what the King tried tirelessly to tell him—a peace agreement between Arabs and Israelis is not just good for them but a national security imperative for America and the world. Without peace, al Qaeda and other extremists feed on the anger and frustration a billion and a half Muslims feel about Israel and how it treats the Palestinian people. Instead Bush was obsessed with Iraq and Saddam Hussein, an obsession that in the end only fueled the extremist forces in the region, strengthened al-Qaeda and gave Iran more opportunities to meddle dangerously in the Arab states.

Abdullah also reveals that he has been the target of more than one al-Qaeda plot to assassinate him and destabilize the Hashemite Kingdom. In one such plot the king and his family were targeted by the terrorists to be blown up while on a yacht cruising near Rhodes in Greece in June 2000. Another plot was set to kill him as he visited Iraq after Saddam's fall. Al Qaeda has targeted Amman for terror and has killed dozens in the Jordanian capital. Abdullah provides unique insights into how the Hashemite Kingdom's very capable intelligence service, the General Intelligence Directorate, has fought al-Qaeda and helped to track down its Jordanian mastermind Abu Musaib Zarqawi in Iraq in 2006.

The main purpose of this book, however, is the call to action. Abdullah, like his father, has been an advocate and champion of peace as king, trying to persuade his fellow Arab rulers to make the concessions necessary for peace. Hussein took his son to some of his own secret meetings over the years with Israeli leaders before the Israel-Jordan peace treaty was signed in 1994. Since then Abdullah has seen the peace process up close. He was a major player in the Arab peace initiative that tried to convince Bush to press Israel to make a deal by promising if Israel made peace with Palestine, it would get the “57 state solution” because every Muslim state would back it and recognize Israel. It is still on the table but Abdullah warns it may not last much longer.

The King makes abundantly clear his view that Israel’s Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu is not a man of peace. He recounts his meetings with Bibi and shares his frustration at Netanyahu’s repeated failures to live up to his commitments on peace and his obsession with focusing on Iran as the top problem in the region, not the absence of a fair peace with the Palestinians. Like Bush, Abdullah tells us, Bibi just doesn’t get it.

Today the region is absorbed in the drama of the spring of Arab awakening. In Jordan, like every other country, the immediate focus is on demonstrations and calls for reform. Most Jordanians it seems want their king to stay but they also want a more open and transparent political system. Next door in Syria the prospects for violence and civil war are much higher and the fallout from Syria’s internal convulsions may be the next big challenge Abdullah has to face.

But the King is surely right that the Arab-Israeli conflict is bound to return to page one, more likely with another war in Gaza or Lebanon than with a breakthrough peace agreement. Hezbollah and Hamas are both arming for another round and the Israelis are preparing too. The

Palestinians and the Arab states are determined to press for the United Nations General Assembly to admit Palestine as a UN member state this fall. That will isolate Israel in the world as never before.

Abdullah makes no secret of his hope that President Barack Obama will take action to lead the region to peace and will put forward an American peace plan sooner rather than later. He recounts his meetings with Obama and is clearly relying on this “new voice from America.” It is clear that the negotiations process that began in Madrid and Oslo has run its course now. However close we came at Camp David in 2000, the time has come for America to take decisive leadership. Our Last Best Chance is a warning that time is short.

Article 3.

City Journal

## **Revolution in the Square -- Where will Egypt's urban uprising lead?**

Judith Miller

Spring 2011 -- Revolutions are often born in public squares, and the uprisings that have rewritten Middle Eastern history this year are no exception. “A different Middle East is emerging,” observed Ehud Yaari of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, “one that may be temporarily called square-ocracy, or the transfer of power from governments to masses of demonstrators in the streets.” The main square in Tunis, where protesters gathered to oust dictator Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, is now named for Mohammad Bouazizi, the desperate, government-harassed young street vendor whose self-immolation helped topple the regime. Pro-government thugs loyal to Libyan strongman Muammar el-Qaddafi opened fire in February on protesters assembled in Tripoli’s Green Square, threatening carnage to come. The government of Bahrain shot protesters who were gathering peacefully in its main urban landmark, Pearl Square, to demand greater political rights and representation. In no Arab capital, though, has an uprising been as closely identified with a place as in Cairo, whose Tahrir Square hosted the revolt that ended the 30-year rule of President Hosni Mubarak. Tahrir, or “Liberation,” Square was originally called Ismailiya Square, after Khedive Ismail, one of Egypt’s self-styled pharaohs, who built it 140 years ago. The square was part of an effort by Ismail, an admirer of Baron Haussmann’s grand boulevards, parks, and squares in Paris, to make Cairo the Paris of the Middle East. Another of Egypt’s autocrats, colonel-turned-president Gamal Abdel Nasser, renamed the square “Tahrir” in 1952

to commemorate Egypt's "liberation" from the British—a tad belatedly, since Britain had left in the 1920s—and from the monarchy of King Farouk, from whom Nasser and a handful of officers had seized power in a military coup.

The square isn't really a square at all. As Nezar AlSayyad, an Egyptian-born architect at the University of California at Berkeley, observes in his meticulous new book, *Cairo: Histories of a City*, Tahrir is actually a vast, ill-defined space bordered on one side by the Nile and on another by a few buildings that have come to symbolize modern Egypt, for better or for worse. Their focal point is the Mugamma ("central complex")—a sprawling, 12-story Stalinist structure housing the many government offices that Egyptians must visit to seek permits or licenses when doing any business with the state. Such dealings are so complex, and the Egyptian bureaucracy so unresponsive, that even the most routine procedure often requires weeks to finish, absent baksheesh (a bribe). Egyptians like to joke that an ambulance is permanently parked at the base of the building to collect the bodies of citizens who have hurled themselves out of the fortress in despair. Facing the Mugamma, on another side of the square, is the rose-colored Egyptian Museum, which houses some of the world's oldest artifacts. During the protests, young Egyptians locked arms around the museum to protect it from vandals, a testament to their sense of national pride. Nearby is the headquarters of Mubarak's National Democratic Party, which, by contrast, protesters nearly succeeded in burning to the ground. Tahrir was a natural destination for the protesters, partly because it's almost impossible to seal. "There wasn't a single large boulevard that the police could block off," said AlSayyad. Some 23 streets, in fact, lead to different parts of the square—a boon to the protesters, who Tweeted about the entrances that the police hadn't secured yet.

“I knew we had won when we held the square,” said Ibrahim el-Hodaiby, a 27-year-old self-described Muslim democrat who hurled stones at the police to defend the tent city that protesters had erected there. Hodaiby, the grandson and great-grandson of two of the Muslim Brotherhood’s supreme guides, celebrated until dawn on the night Mubarak was ousted. “Tahrir is the heart of this city, which is the heart of Egypt, which is the heart of the Arab world,” he said proudly. After decades of being barred from holding large protests in the square, he said, Egyptian citizens had finally “liberated” Tahrir. The protesters’ victory was as improbable as the mass rallies that produced it. A well-connected Egyptian told me that shortly before citizens began protesting the killing of a young Egyptian blogger by the security police for failing to show his identification, the country’s widely despised interior minister, Habib el-Adly, had assured Mubarak that the police could easily handle the 15,000 to 20,000 people expected in Tahrir Square. Instead, seemingly half the city’s population visited Tahrir in the 19 days of largely nonviolent protests that forced Mubarak’s ouster. Not even the Muslim Brotherhood, believed to be Egypt’s largest opposition group, foresaw such an outpouring. “I was totally surprised,” said Abd al-Monem Abo al-Fotouh, a Brotherhood leader. “We thought that this younger generation was good only for sipping coffee in cafés and playing computer games. That’s why we waited so long to join the protests.” But Alaa al-Asmawy had predicted that such a day might come. His 2006 novel *The Yacoubian Building*, which was translated into several languages and made into an equally popular film, described Egypt’s moral decay and the growing desperation of its citizens. The story depicted the lives of eight residents of a once-elegant, now-dilapidated building not far from Tahrir Square—a structure ravaged by age, mismanagement, corruption, and neglect, and thus a metaphor for Egypt itself. *The Yacoubian Building* captured an

Egyptian paradox: the belief held by many Egyptians that their country was at the end of an era, despite impressive economic growth rates of roughly 6 percent a year for the past decade, glistening new shopping malls, chic bars and nightclubs, new “satellite cities” on Cairo’s outskirts, improved infrastructure, and an economic liberalization that spawned a booming, if crony-capitalist, private sector—much of it owned and managed by Mubarak’s son Gamal and his inner circle. “We need change,” al-Asmawy told me in Cairo back in 2008. A Chicago-educated dentist who writes fiction in between filling cavities and writing columns for an opposition newspaper, he called Egypt a “sick” nation whose politicians treated its symptoms, rather than the underlying illness. “Dictatorship is our disease and democracy is the remedy,” he told more than 1 million cheering Egyptians in the square. Soon after Mubarak left the capital for the Sinai resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, I visited Amr Moussa, the veteran Egyptian politician and outgoing head of the Arab League, which occupies another Nasser-era building overlooking Tahrir Square. Moussa seemed younger than his 74 years; he is exploring a bid for the Egyptian presidency. Moussa wasn’t naive. Democracy in countries like Egypt, he said, couldn’t emerge full-blown overnight, but Egypt was moving in the right direction. The rebellion, for instance, had no “religious coloring.” Protesters had hoisted placards demanding freedom and jobs, not Korans. The Brotherhood, which so many Coptic Christians and secular Egyptians fear may win control of a new Egyptian government, was “not in the driver’s seat,” he asserted. While they had helped the protesters organize and fight the police who attacked them, they hadn’t “claimed ownership of the revolution.” Another good sign: “When have revolutionaries ever cleaned up their own mess?” Moussa asked, pointing to the young Egyptians who were clearing trash and repainting signs in the square. Assembling the building blocks of democracy would take time, but

the revolution had fostered a “new spirit,” he said. “Egyptians now want strong systems, not strongmen.”

Some businessmen, too, were bullish about Egypt’s prospects. Ahmed el-Alfi, who returned to Egypt from California in 2006, had launched a venture-capital fund just three weeks before the protests erupted. He predicted that investment capital would start flowing into Egypt. “████ betting my own money on it,” he told me. There was something deep in the Egyptian soul that wanted stability, he added. Perhaps, I thought, it sprang from the need for a strong central government to organize an agrarian society around the annual flooding of the Nile. But creating stable, modern, democratic systems in Egypt—functioning political parties, the rule of law, protection of the Coptic Christians and other minorities, respect for the individual and for the right to dissent—is a daunting proposition, to say the least. It will certainly take longer than the six months that the army has allocated for a transition to civilian rule. Some Egyptians said they feared that the military would transfer power to civilians before they were ready to govern. Others worried about just the opposite—that the army, which controls an estimated 10 percent to 20 percent of the economy directly and through front companies, might ultimately resist yielding power. Another concern, of course, is the role that the Muslim Brotherhood will play. As we sat together at the Semiramis, a deserted luxury hotel adjacent to Tahrir Square, Tarek Heggy, a longtime pro-democracy activist, pointed out that roughly 20 percent of Egyptians support the Brotherhood. An Egyptian civil society couldn’t afford to ignore so many people, he said; the challenge would be to ensure that the Brotherhood played by democracy’s rules. But the Brotherhood isn’t monolithic. It is deeply divided—between younger and older members, along ideological lines, and over strategy and tactics. If Mubarak’s repression forced the group to paper over its differences, freedom is likely to intensify

them. “We will have not one Brotherhood but many,” predicted Hodaiby. He ought to know. Despite his credentials as a descendant of Brotherhood leaders, Hodaiby quietly quit the group long before the protests began. “I was fed up with their internal quarrels and intolerance,” he told me. “They’re almost as archaic as Mubarak’s regime.” The depth and breadth of Egypt’s problems became all too clear in the weeks after Mubarak’s departure. In early March, a Muslim mob attacked Christians protesting the razing of a Coptic church just south of Cairo. Thirteen people were killed and 140 wounded. Mubarak’s police, still in hiding, weren’t around to restore order. The military has resisted calls to cancel the three-decade-old emergency law that gives the government virtually unlimited power to arrest and detain citizens without judicial review. Foreign policy, too, is dangerously adrift. Even supposedly liberal politicians have suggested that Egypt’s 30-year-old peace treaty with Israel be amended or subjected to a popular referendum. That may be a popular move; the men who infamously beat and sexually molested Lara Logan, a non-Jewish CBS correspondent, in Tahrir on the night of Mubarak’s ouster also shouted “Jew, Jew,” and called her “Mubarak’s blond Israeli reporter.”

Egypt also faces economic and demographic challenges. Under Mubarak, the economy was controlled largely by the government and military, and the small private sector was stifled by heavy regulation and corruption. Despite its robust recent growth rates, the country registered in the lower 40 percent of all developing nations in the United Nations’ 2007 Human Poverty Index, with 40 percent of Egyptians living at or below the international poverty line and an illiteracy rate of 32 percent. The challenges confronting Egypt were much on the mind of Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the 88-year-old Egyptian diplomat who was the UN’s sixth secretary-general. As we drank tea in his study overlooking the Nile, he observed: “Egypt

remains a country with too many people living on too narrow a strip of land along a Nile with too little water.” Indeed, 70 percent of Egyptians are under 35, and the nation has the world’s highest rate of youth unemployment. Egypt’s underfunded universities graduate nearly half a million students each year, many of them unemployable, thanks to the poor quality of Egypt’s educational system.

As I prepared to leave the country in February, Tahrir Square had been cleared, and its revolutionary euphoria was fading. Egypt’s revolt hadn’t become a full-fledged revolution; Mubarak was gone, but power remained in the security establishment’s hands. An ancient land with over 5,000 years of strong, centralized rule, Egypt seemed to have its own inexorable rhythms. What it had experienced was not “Revolution 2.0,” as the young Google executive who helped launch the revolt called it, but “Revolution 5,000.0,” said el-Alfi, the entrepreneur. In March, Egypt held its first free vote—a referendum on constitutional amendments that a group handpicked by the military had proposed. The Muslim Brotherhood and Mubarak’s party endorsed the package; Egypt’s young liberal reformers opposed it. Some 77 percent of the 41 percent of Egyptians eligible to vote endorsed the changes—a blow to the liberals.

The rebellion may have enabled young Egyptians to conquer their fear and demand their rights as citizens, but it hasn’t changed Egyptian history or culture. Will the protesters of Tahrir Square be able to devise solutions to the nation’s challenges? Or will Egypt slip back into its old despotism, making the square’s name the butt of yet another Egyptian joke?

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Article 4.

The Washington Post

## **Egypt's unlikely 'founding fathers'**

David Ignatius

April 13 -- CAIRO -- They make an unlikely trio of “founding fathers” for the new Egypt: One is a wily, old-school politician, the second is a reticent scientist who won the Nobel Peace Prize and the third is a hard-nosed business tycoon. But they are emerging as the country’s senior political voices and, interestingly, they share similar views about Egypt’s transition to democracy.

The three leaders are Amr Moussa, a former foreign minister and head of the Arab League; Mohamed ElBaradei, the former director of the International Atomic Energy Agency; and Naguib Sawiris, the chief executive of Orascom, a giant telecommunications company that is Egypt’s biggest private employer. Egyptian analysts describe the first two as potential future presidents and the third as a possible kingmaker. (Sawiris, a Coptic Christian, wouldn’t have a chance in a presidential bid, but he has just formed a powerful new political party.)

These senior figures didn’t make the revolution; that was the work of the young activists who gathered in Tahrir Square and refused to leave until President Hosni Mubarak resigned. But the three played important supporting roles. Each took a personal risk by coming to the square and supporting the demonstrators long before the outcome was clear.

Like America’s founders, they face a turbulent transition to democracy — and each one stresses that the political damage done by decades of repression can’t be undone in six months.

The three spoke frankly in interviews last week and, despite their different backgrounds, they expressed common concerns: All worry

that the ruling military council is moving too fast toward parliamentary elections and a new constitution; they warn about rising Muslim-Christian religious tensions; they see a deterioration in security on the streets and want to rebuild the police; and they fear that a sharp economic downturn is ahead.

Their views converge on policy issues, too, which suggests that a moderate post-revolutionary consensus is emerging. They all favor a market economy, but one that protects and subsidizes Egypt's poorest citizens; they support continued ties with America, including cooperation between the U.S. and Egyptian militaries; and they want a secular government that protects individual rights. Simply put, they all want Egypt to join the 21st century as a modern, prosperous democratic state.

Moussa, who plans to run as an independent candidate, is the early favorite in the coming presidential election. He carries the baggage of being a former member of Mubarak's inner circle and having a reputation as a political wheeler-dealer, but those factors may also make him a force for stability and continuity. He's likely to have quiet support from many in the military and from some in Mubarak's old political party.

Moussa says he will run for only one four-year term, "just to put the country on the right track, protecting all the basics and creating conditions of stability and consensus."

ElBaradei is a saintly figure for many Egyptians, widely admired for his stand as IAEA director against what proved to be false American allegations that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. He was briefly placed under house arrest after he returned to Egypt in January to support the protests. He plans to run for president as the candidate of the new Social Democratic Party, which is supported by many intellectuals and Tahrir Square activists. His apolitical style is part of

his appeal, but some worry that he may be too reserved to govern this turbulent country.

Sawiris is a canny businessman who built Orascom into what he says is the eighth-largest telecommunications company in the world. In a country where many business tycoons are corrupt, he's seen as independent and competent.

Sawiris is blunt in expressing the concern shared by all three that the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups could hijack Egypt's democracy: "My fear is that we will get an Iranian-type regime here, and it's a real fear," he says.

Moussa and ElBaradei say Egypt needs time to learn how to make democracy work. This is why both urged "no" in the referendum on the military's plan for quick elections and a patchwork temporary constitution. But the military's plan, backed by the Muslim Brotherhood, was approved by 77 percent of the voters.

ElBaradei warns that in the short run, "we have a country that's falling apart." But like Moussa and Sawiris, he thinks a democratic Egypt will succeed if given time. "Every time you feel low, you think: What has happened here is so good, to see this part of the world waking up to the 21st century. It's worth a try."

Article 5.

Al Majalla

## **Influence Curtailed**

Mehdi Khalaji

Apr 12, 2011 -- If the recent political movements in the Arab world lead to more free and liberal societies, this will promise the decline of Iranian influence in the region. For the current Iranian regime, democracy is no longer threatening only at home, but also abroad. Iranian leaders have tried to portray the Arab uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt within their revolutionary 1979 framework, casting them as successes of their revolution export policy. However, Islamists like Rachid Al-Ghannouchi in Tunisia have claimed the opposite; Al-Ghannouchi does not want to be Tunisia's Khomeini, nor his model of government. The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt also made clear that the revolution in Egypt was not an Islamic event and that all of Egypt's citizens have participated. This was made abundantly clear by the slogans and signs heard and seen throughout Tahrir Square. What is clear from this is that the Islamic Republic fears the failure of Islamist ideology over true democratic discourse.

The Arab uprisings have forced Iran to take awkward and contradictory positions, belying their purported underdog, anti-status quo messaging. While some Saudi muftis argue that the demonstrations are religiously illegal, Iranian pro-government ayatollahs, such as Hossein Noori Hamadani, argue that Sunni muftis have misinterpreted Islamic text, which does not forbid demonstrations against unjust rulers. Yet, merely 20 months prior, the same ayatollahs justified the Islamic Republic's crackdown on peaceful demonstrators protesting against the rigged presidential election.

This time around, however, demonstrators are not predominantly Shi'ite Iranian citizens protesting against the Islamic Republic's tyranny, but rather Shi'ites in other Arab states.

Throughout the course of the current Arab uprisings, Iran has sought to portray itself as the voice of oppressed Muslims and a loyal patron of Shi'ites in the Arab world. Bahrain's uprising has provided Iran with ample opportunity to do so, and Iranian propaganda has accordingly waged a vicious campaign against Bahrain's brutal crackdown on protesters. Ironically, however, similar scenes were seen in Tehran in 2009 and 2010, when the Iranian Revolutionary Guard and Basij militia attacked peaceful protesters, killing young men and women who had been demonstrating with shouts of "Where is my vote?" The majority of these victims were Shi'ites, as were the Bahraini victims.

Yet, in his recent speech in March, leader of the Islamic Republic, Aytollah Ali Khamenei, stated that "on regional issues, our position is clear: We defend peoples and their rights... and we oppose bullying powers, dictators, malevolent dominance-seekers and plunderers all over the world." But although he condemns the Libyan government's brutality against its people, he opposes "US and western intervention." Addressing the western power, Khamenei said, "You are not there to defend people; you want Libya's oil; you want to use Libya as a place to monitor the activities of the future revolutionary governments in Egypt and Tunisia." His accusations were echoed by several state-owned news agencies, such as Fars News (belonging to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Council, or IRGC), which asserted that western forces are targeting revolutionaries, rather than Qadhafi's forces.

Returning to the subject of recent demonstrations in Bahrain, Khamenei likened the nature of the protests to those of other regional countries embroiled in turmoil, such as Egypt, Tunisia or Libya.

“The [Bahraini] government ignores people’s rights,” Khamenei remarked. “The main demands of the people were for elections and for one vote for every person. Is this too much?” he asked.

As a leader who only recently manipulated an election in his own country, suppressed those who protested his actions and placed the opposition leader under house arrest, such a statement serves merely to cast him as a hypocrite in the eyes of his people. On Facebook and in other social media, Iranians now ask each other, “Why is a free and fair election good for Bahrain, but not for us?” Their perplexity only increased when Ayatollah Ali Sistani in Najaf added his voice to that of Khamenei in a public condemnation of the Bahraini government for its role in the death of Shi’ites. “Why do the Shi’ites of Bahrain deserve the attention of the ayatollah,” they asked, “when Iranian Shi’ites, who were similarly persecuted for political reasons by the Islamic Republic, don’t?”

Unsurprisingly, Khamenei denied that his defense of the Bahraini people stems from the fact that most of the opposition is Shi’ite. He claimed that Iran defends all Shi’ites everywhere and labeled any attempts to ignite enmity between Shi’ites and Sunnis a “colonial powers’ conspiracy.” But history continues to unveil new ironies: Syrians are now demonstrating in the streets, yet on this topic, Iran has not uttered a word. Both Iranian and Syrian opposition sources are accusing the Syrian government of using Iranian IRGC, Basij and Lebanese Hezbollah forces to crack down on people. Shouts of “No Iran, No Hezbollah, but Syria!” ring through the streets. Meanwhile, Fars News reports that Israel is behind the text messages that have appeared on more than a million Syrians’ mobile phones in a call for revolution against Assad. Iran condemns western intervention in Libya and Saudi’s decision to deploy soldiers to Bahrain, but Iranian pro-government news sources like Raja News reported that Iranian

Istishhadions are ready to go to Bahrain, fight with the Bahraini government and Saudi soldiers along with their “Shi’ite brothers.” As for Libya, a picture of Khamenei and Qaddafi smiling happily is now being widely circulated on the Persian Facebook network and other political website. The picture dates from Khamenei’s trip to Libya in the 1980s as the then Islamic Republic’s president. Iran and Libya have enjoyed a close relationship since the new regime came to power in Iran 1979. Many Islamist revolutionaries trained in Libya prior to the 1979 revolution. Iran began purchasing chemical weaponry from Libya during the Iran-Iraq war several years later, followed by nuclear technology after the war’s end. Given Iran’s severed diplomatic ties to Egypt and its poor relations with Tunisia and Morocco, Libya, along with Sudan, served as Iran’s main gate of access to North Africa. As a result, Iran has long touted Libya and Sudan as its African allies.

In July of 2008, Luis Moreno Ocampo, chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), alleged that Al-Bashir bore individual criminal responsibility for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Darfur since 2003. Ali Larijani, speaker of the Majlis, traveled to Sudan in a show of Iranian support for Al-Bashir.

Iran also refrained from pressing Qadhafi’s government on the disappearance of Musa Al-Sadr. Al-Sadr was an Iranian cleric and Lebanese Shi’ite community leader who disappeared during his 1978 trip to Libya to meet with a Libyan official. Most reports claim that he was immediately killed by Qadhafi’s forces after a bitter dispute with Qadhafi. Al-Sadr had been a close member of Khomeini’s family and Khomeini himself was under great emotional pressure to investigate his disappearance. For fear of risking the political benefits of their relations with Qadhafi however, neither Khomeini nor Khamenei pursued Al-Sadr’s case.

Like all populist autocratic regimes, Iranian leaders seek to portray themselves as the advocates of the downtrodden everywhere. However, the recent Arab uprisings highlight Iran's hypocrisy and inconsistency more than ever before. It seems that in the Islamic Republic only the authority of the ruling jurist is absolute; everything else is relative. For Iran, not only Islam but also Shi'ism is used as a tool to advance its ambitious agenda in the region, not more. Because Iran's influence in the region stems mainly from its soft power and propaganda, the possibility that its propaganda might be weakened by the emergence of new democratic regimes in the Middle East has placed it in a very difficult situation. If democratic forces prevail in Arab nations, Islamism will lose its main forum for advocating state rule by Islamic ideology. Anti-American and anti-Israel discourse would be replaced by more practical demands and expectations, as we have already witnessed in the course of demonstrations in Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere. Iran would find little fertile ground for its old-fashioned propaganda that portrays itself as the leader of the anti-American world and the main patron of anti-Israel forces. Democratic systems would allow people to focus more on their personal lives, participate more fully in the shaping of their political future, and hold their ruling class more accountable for its actions, meaning that Iranian propaganda would no longer be needed in the struggle against rulers or their western allies. If the recent political movements in the Arab world lead to more free and liberal societies, this will promise the decline of Iranian influence in the region. For the current Iranian regime, democracy is no longer threatening only at home, but also abroad.

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Article 6.

NYT

## **Cairo's Roundabout Revolution**

Nezar Alsayyad

April 13, 2011 -- IT has become fashionable to refer to the 18-day Egyptian uprising as the “Facebook revolution,” much to the dismay of the protesters who riveted the world with their bravery in Cairo’s Tahrir Square. But revolutions do not happen in cyberspace, even if they start there. What happened in Tahrir Square during the revolution and the protests happening there now show that even in the 21st century, public space remains the most important arena for dissent and social change.

Tahrir Square’s rise to prominence is a testament to how place and history can come together unexpectedly. Although its Arabic name means “liberation,” and although it is one of the oldest squares in modern Cairo, Tahrir never carried much meaning for Cairenes until recently.

In fact, the idea of the public square as we know it today did not exist in Egypt or in the cities of the Middle East until colonial times; open spaces were historically situated in front of the main mosque, to accommodate overflow crowds and religious festivals.

The demonstrations that began in Tahrir Square in January with demands for the overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak continue today with protests of the Egyptian military’s management of the revolution’s aftermath. Indeed, the interim Egyptian cabinet recently issued a decree criminalizing demonstrations, on the ground that they disrupt the economy, and two protesters in the square were killed last weekend by security forces.

In many ways, it seems an accident of history that Tahrir Square has become a locus of protest and repression. But a closer look reveals

that the square's geography and structures, including the burned buildings and pockmarked pavements now engraved in the minds of people all over the globe, embody the shifting political currents of modern Egypt as it encountered colonialism, modernism, Pan-Arabism, socialism and neoliberalism.

To the south of the square stands the Mugamma, a bulky, Soviet-style structure that has long been a symbol of Egypt's monumental bureaucracy. (No Egyptian was able to avoid a trip to that building, in which government offices issued everything from birth certificates to passports.) Overlooking Tahrir Square on the west are the headquarters of the Arab League, with its Islamic architectural motifs, and the former Hilton, the city's first modern hotel (and soon to be a Ritz-Carlton). Just north of the hotel lies the salmon-colored Egyptian Museum and, behind it, the headquarters for Mr. Mubarak's National Democratic Party, with its monotonous Modernist facade left charred by a fire set during this year's protests.

The city's various rulers and regimes, from the pharaohs to Mubarak, have woven themselves in Cairo's urban fabric. When the Fatimid regime established el-Qahira (Cairo is the Anglicized version of that name) in the 10th century, the Nile ran a different course than it does today. The area that later became Tahrir Square was marshland. By the time Napoleon occupied Cairo at the end of the 18th century, the land had dried up enough to allow the French forces to camp there. But it was not for several decades more, until the time of Muhammad Ali, the founder of modern Egypt, that engineers were able to stabilize the Nile's banks enough to allow the square to be born as a green field.

The 500-acre open space was home to cultivated fields, gardens and several royal palaces during Khedive Ismail's reign, from 1863 to 1879. Ismail, the grandson of Muhammad Ali, came to be known as the founder of modern Cairo.

Having lived in Paris as it rebuilt itself into a city of broad boulevards and roundabouts, Ismail embarked on a similar project of modernizing Cairo during the 1860s. Both a district and the square that eventually became Tahrir were initially named Ismailia in his honor.

Ismail's modernization projects plunged the country into great debt, and he was ousted by foreign forces in 1879. The British occupation of Egypt soon ensued, lasting into the mid-20th century. The British stationed their troops west of the square in Ismailia, in what Egyptians often called the English Barracks.

In the early 20th century, the Ismailia district became downtown Cairo and expanded toward the square, which was redesigned with a roundabout at the southern end to improve the flow of cars. A few decades later, during the reign of King Farouk, the square acquired a large empty pedestal that Cairenes who lived through those years still remember with great nostalgia. Farouk had commissioned a statue of his grandfather, Khedive Ismail, but by the time it arrived years later, reverence for the monarchy had given way to the Egyptian Republic and nascent Pan-Arabism — and the statue never took its place on that pedestal. The Arab League headquarters, a symbol of this new era and ideology, was constructed at the western side of the square and became a monument to the dream of Arab unity.

The square witnessed its first demonstrations on Feb. 11, 1946, when opposition to the British presence in Egypt led to protests and skirmishes with the police, resulting in the death of two dozen Egyptians. Dissatisfaction with King Farouk's government brought protests that ignited the Great Fire of Cairo on Jan. 25, 1952. A few buildings in the square were casualties of the blaze. (On the same day, 59 years later, Egyptians descended upon Tahrir Square in unprecedented numbers to protest their government.)

The 1952 fire was a precursor to an army coup, led by Gamal Abdel Nasser, which transformed Egypt from a sleepy kingdom into a revolutionary anti-imperialist republic. In the following decade, Nasser's government issued a decree changing the name of the square from Ismailia to Tahrir to commemorate the departure of the British from Egypt.

In 1959, the Nile Hilton opened on the site of the former English Barracks, inaugurating the era of mass tourism in Egypt. Next to it was a building that became the headquarters of Nasser's Arab Socialist Union, the party that governed Egypt as a police state for much of his rule. This was the same building that Mr. Mubarak's National Democratic Party later inherited as its headquarters.

After Nasser's death in 1970, President Anwar el-Sadat renamed Tahrir for his predecessor and rumor had it that a statue of Nasser would sit atop the pedestal once intended for Khedive Ismail — but the name never stuck and the statue never came.

The unoccupied pedestal remained in the square until the mid-1970s, when construction of a station for the Cairo metro system necessitated its removal. Its pieces now lie forgotten in a storage yard on the outskirts of Cairo.

Today, as the dust settles over the few remaining tents and the scarred sidewalks of Tahrir Square, a quiet revolution is taking place in all sectors of Egyptian urban life — one that has largely gone unnoticed. Students in schools and universities are demanding a say in their curriculum, government employees are refusing to work unless given raises, many of the Islamist activists and fundamentalists who have been jailed for decades have been released and now make regular television appearances, and the despised police have been replaced by soldiers serving as traffic cops. The neighborhood watch groups and committees that sprung up during the revolution to

coordinate security and deliver services have also disappeared now that most people have gone back to work.

For a city of more than 11 million people, this new order could be a recipe for instability or it could usher in a new era of democratic participation. When I visited Tahrir Square a few weeks ago, the situation was volatile and the euphoria of the revolution had subsided. The mood of the city remains tense, and many Cairenes are realizing that the military, which is heavily invested in the Egyptian economy and unwilling to tolerate dissent or criticism of its behavior, is not on their side. The slogan chanted during the revolution — “The people and the army are one hand!” — now rings hollow.

The Egyptian people have long accepted July 23, 1952, as their day of revolution, but they never recognized Tahrir Square as the symbol of their liberation. That changed on Jan. 25. But the new government’s crackdown on protests may yet deny Tahrir Square the name that it has finally earned. We can only hope that the Egyptians who massed in the square to demand their rights will be able to reclaim that name before Tahrir simply becomes yet another Martyrs’ Square.

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Article 7.

Foreign policy

## **The day of Saudi collapse is not near**

Nawaf Obaid

April 13, 2011 -- Reports in recent weeks have suggested that the mass protests occurring in Arab nations will soon spread to Saudi Arabia. There has been coverage of Facebook pages established by activists calling for a "day of rage," and a "day of revolution." Large, front page articles, illustrated with pictures and charts, have asserted that it is only a matter of time before massive upheavals will bring down the Saudi monarchy. The BBC has reported that the Saudi downfall is inevitable, and weighing heavily on global energy markets, where a fear premium had added 15 percent to the price of oil.

These assertions have been grossly exaggerated: 17,000 Facebook fans or "protesters" do not necessarily translate into 17,000 Saudi rioters, because at the very least it is impossible to verify how many of them actually lived in the Kingdom. One cannot forecast events based on a count of virtual fans at a social network.

In this case, the outcome is a dangerous, long-term yet illusory perception: the vulnerability of Saudi Arabia's energy infrastructure. The logic of this narrative is there: Saudi Arabia holds 25 percent of the world's proven oil reserves, is the largest exporter of oil, is the only nation with significant spare capacity (almost 4 million barrels of oil a day), and is the leading power and sole swing producer in OPEC. A disruption in Saudi oil exports would create what can best be described as a global economic catastrophe. Unlike in the case of the disruption of Libyan exports, in which Plan B is for Saudi Arabia to increase its exports to steady the markets, there is no Plan B if Saudi Arabia goes off line. Because the kingdom possesses about 75

percent of the world's spare capacity -- all of which would now vanish -- oil would probably soar to \$200-\$300 per barrel in such a scenario. The effects this would have on economies around the world would be devastating. Stock markets would crash as mega non-energy multinational companies would see their energy costs soar, and their market cap valuations drop. The entire transportation sector would go bankrupt. Wall Street would be the most affected -- it would require federal government bailouts that would dwarf those made just a few years ago. The nascent U.S. recovery would grind to a halt, as every extra cent paid at the pump would pull about \$1 billion from motorists' pockets per year. The sudden, exorbitant rise in the cost of practically every commodity would cripple global trade. But this nightmare scenario is extremely unlikely. No system as vast as the Saudi oil complex -- with its scores of rigs, refineries, export terminals and pipelines -- is perfectly protected. But the risks are much less serious than widely disseminated.

The first layer of security in the Saudi energy infrastructure is simply its design and construction. Two failed attacks over the years show this well.

In 2004, terrorists attacked the Yanbu petrochemical plant, but Saudi security agents were able to quickly cordon off its industrial portions, and isolate and neutralize the attackers. Several people were killed, but the complex itself was never in danger. In February 2006, al Qaeda terrorists attacked the Abqaiq oil processing facility, the world's largest and the "nerve center" of the Saudi distribution system. They breached the outer perimeter and overran the guards. But they never made it to the plant's operational areas. They were trapped in a "no-man's land," a large area designed as a moat, and forced to detonate their car bomb there. Although people tragically lost their lives at the first gate and the exterior portions of

the center suffered some damage, at no time was the facility or its ability to process oil under serious threat.

Thousands of sensors, cameras, sophisticated computers and world-class surveillance protect the sprawling energy facilities. It is worth pointing out that the elements most difficult to protect, such as the thousands of miles of pipeline, are also the easiest to repair and quickly get back on line. Saudi authorities estimate that in a worst-case scenario -- in which an entire section of pipeline is destroyed -- repair teams could bring the line back to normal operation within days. The key processing points and bottlenecks in the system are, by their centralized nature, much easier to defend.

Since the 2006 attack, the Saudi government has invested an additional \$10 billion to further improve Abqaiq's energy security. A key element has been the creation of a 35,000-strong "Facilities Security Force." These troops come from across the kingdom and receive extensive training through a U.S. technical assistance program. They have exclusive responsibility for guarding energy installations against both internal and external threats. Also, the Saudi government has stockpiled considerable volumes of oil through its Foreign Reserve Initiative. A sizable portion is in floating containment facilities near the kingdom's main export markets and can be released in emergencies -- volumes were in fact released to compensate for lost Libya volumes.

Another mistaken impression is that the kingdom's oil resources lay in a region inhabited by a restive Shiite majority. Setting aside that in the many decades of Saudi oil production, there have been no serious Shiite attempts to sabotage the kingdom's oil facilities, they in fact are not the majority in the oil-rich Eastern Province, but roughly 30 percent of the population (around 1.1 million out of about 3.9 million people), and about half are concentrated in villages in the coastal Governorship of Qatif. At one time, the Eastern Province was

predominantly Shiite, but in the past several decades, more than 1.3 million foreign workers and almost 1.5 million Saudis from other parts of the kingdom have migrated there in search of economic opportunities.

None of this is to say that Shiites have no legitimate grievances: The community lacks full religious freedom, encounters obstacles within the Sunni-dominated legal code, and has suffered economic discrimination. But since assuming the throne in 2005, King Abdullah has worked to provide Shiites equal economic and social benefits with the majority Sunnis, to increase employment opportunities in the public sector, and offer equal access to fully paid foreign scholarships. So it is a serious exaggeration to characterize the native Shiites as a "Fifth Column" representing a threat to the kingdom's oil infrastructure.

Fears about Saudi stability verge on the irrational. The oil markets are skittish about Saudi Arabia, but for spurious reasons. The kingdom has long been, and will probably long remain, the most stable and secure provider of energy in the world.

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