

OPINION and ANALYSIS

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**A selection of some of the more challenging and thought-provoking
local and international writings on the Middle East**

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Well-organised Islamic parties are in a position to seize power in a number of countries including Libya, Jordan, Syria and Yemen

Swing low sweet Sharia

Nidra Poller, New English Review, April 2012

<http://www.meforum.org/3213/swing-low-sweet-sharia>

The play within the play

In October 2011 an extraordinary opportunity to apprehend the ill-defined "Middle East" conflict was offered in the form of a play within the play. Discourse was disabled by flesh and blood images acting out the drama with exquisite unity and perfect casting. Playing the role of Israel, Gilad Shalit, courageous survivor of five years of unspeakable deprivation, emerged frail, pale but gloriously resistant. The little that we know of the conditions of his imprisonment is already too much. Kidnapped at the age of 19 near the Kerem Shalom crossing in Israel (two IDF soldiers were killed in the cross-border attack), held in some sort of dungeon, starved of human company, starved of daylight, undernourished, not even given eyeglasses with which to see the ugly contours of his

constricted world, Gilad stood before us, a miraculous survivor. The celestial light of dignity suffused his flesh and bones with metaphysical force.

What decent human being would not have misgivings about the release, in exchange for Shalit, of 1027 murderers, thieves, and thugs determined to use their liberation as a license to renew the persecution of Israeli Jews? And who could not feel, seeing the first images of Gilad roughly handled by Hamas and Egyptian intermediaries, that no price was too dear for the release of one single human being from the tomb in which he was jailed and left to slowly extinguish like a flame without oxygen.

On one side of the border husky men were welcomed triumphantly with bear hugs and slaps on the back, while Gilad Shalit, still wearing the ugly shirt imposed by his jailers, had to endure one last act of torture: an Egyptian TV interview conducted in violation of the swap deal. Freelance journalist Shahira Amin, bare headed and ostensibly modern, prodded the dazed young Israeli with insolent questions.

Every detail counts in the play within the play, every detail speaks volumes. Compounding her lack of journalistic integrity and disregard for the elementary rules of decency, Shahira Amin later complained to a BBC newscaster that she often had to repeat questions because Gilad Shalit seemed to have difficulty understanding her. Elsewhere, defending herself against critics, she is quoted as saying: "I know that he was very eager to go home and see his family, but it only took a few minutes and it was important to let the world know that he was all right."^[i] Exquisitely feminine refinement of cruelty! Amin's sham humanity is revealed to be corrosive acid in the light of a photo posted on the Israel Matzav site, showing the interview from the journalist's viewpoint: masked Hamas operatives are standing behind Gilad, breathing down his neck.^[ii]

Gilad Shalit, finally dressed in uniform and wearing his glasses, stood straight and tall, saluted Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, was reunited with his parents, returned to his village in Galilee where he was welcomed with flowers, Israeli flags, blue and white balloons, and humane discretion. Shalom. The quiet voice of peace and peacefulness. The released hostage enters the family abode in a gesture so light it is almost weightless, so strong that it effaces any image of the Israeli as victim.

20 October, two days after the release of Gilad Shalit, Mouamar Gaddafi is dragged out of a rat hole culvert, sodomized with a knife,^[iii] delivered up to the murderous mob, beaten bloody, shot or bludgeoned to death or both. His putrefying body covered with a flashy blanket is exposed for days in the (no-longer) cold storage room of a supermarket in Misrata. Families stand in line to view the body with contempt and take pictures with their cell phones. Fathers holding toddlers in their arms wait patiently in the hot sunshine for the joy of showing the dead dictator to their kids. The stench is almost visible on our TV screens while in the foreground honey-voiced newsreaders describe the scene to the music of Arab springtime. Declarations by NTC leaders who swear that the Libyan dictator was shot in a crossfire as rebel fighters were bringing him to the hospital alternate with footage of the gory death of Gaddafi at the hands of a savage mob.

Weaving a path through confused statements from the NTC, NATO, and European and American officials, one could reasonably assume that Gaddafi was delivered into the hands of Libyan fighters by a NATO bombardment of his convoy as he tried to escape from the bastion in Sirte where he had made his last stand.

Scenes of rejoicing in Libya, smug satisfaction in Europe, and retroactive scolding of George W. Bush, were orchestrated with unashamed media complicity. The story went like this: unlike the heavy handed unilateral [sic] invasion of Iraq by big bad gun-slinging Bush, this multilateral NATO intervention--that included Qatar, was approved by the Arab League, and piloted by a UN resolution--was accomplished with consummate skill. We the enlightened, instead of forcing democracy on a reluctant population, deftly assisted courageous fighters who have now liberated their country *comme il faut*. Mustafa Abduljalil, the cross-eyed rabbit-faced soon to be ex-president of the NTC, was already announcing that Libya will be governed hereafter by sharia law; it didn't spoil the celebration.

The media hated the Iraq "war." They loved the Libyan "liberation." *Allahu akhbar* (mistranslated as "God is great") became an advertising jingle. Creepy scraggly fighters shooting into the air and making the V for victory were loveable mascots. Nothing was gruesome enough to seep through and spoil the icing on the cake. Destruction of lives and property were barely a blip on the screen. NATO's mission was not regime change it was protection of the civilian population. So what if there were 25 to 30,000 dead?[iv] There was no equivalent of the Iraqbodycount to tally and deplore.

The self-satisfied declarations of British Foreign Minister William Hague and his French counterpart Alain Juppé were televisually juxtaposed with the gruesome spectacle of the dead dictator exposed as a war trophy. Hip hip hurrah for NATO and hats off to the UN. This is state of the art... state of the art what exactly? Rubble in Sirte and Misrata, lawless gunmen everywhere, checkpoints, summary executions, roundups of blacks, all visible to the naked eye.

Curtain!

It was a real life Shakespearian drama. Issues that have been front and center since the dawn of the 21st century suddenly crystallized in flesh and blood, with dramatic unity, suspense, intense emotions, poetic exaggerations, orations, the fickle crowd... nothing was missing. International opinion was convened to watch the play within the play, a masterpiece of popular theater; the villains looked like villains, their deeds bloodied the stage, the good guys spoke softly and cherished life. Was the crime exposed? Did the criminal betray himself? Was international opinion enlightened?

Hope and change

Terms like "disproportionate force," systematically applied to Israel and occasionally to the United States, vanished without a trace. The professional NGO wailers who cry over the victims of Israeli or American soldiers had no tears to shed. The UN was not accusing NATO and its local handymen of war crimes[v] and wanton destruction of property and infrastructure. What does the chaos in Libya have to do with the chaos in Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein? Why was public exposure of the open mouth of a Saddam Hussein pulled out of his rat hole more shocking than the knife-sodomy of Mouamar Gaddafi pulled out of his? Why was Israel the bad guy for allegedly encouraging the "invasion" of Iraq and now the bad guy for not adoring the Arab Spring in Libya and wherever else it blossomed?

In the last scene of a Shakespearian tragedy the stage is littered with dead bodies. In this neo-Shakespearian reality play the stage is littered with the coming victims of sharia law. Crudella, who interviewed Gilad Shalit with rapier questions and a stone heart, may eventually be veiled and muzzled, unless she flees to the UK in time. Alex Crawford (SkyNews), Lyse Ducet (BBC), and other cheerleaders of Arab Spring jihadis were lucky to escape the fate of their colleagues Lara Logan and, more recently, Caroline Sinz of state-owned France 3 TV, beaten, stripped, and finger-raped in a 45-minute ordeal in Tahrir Square on the eve of Egypt's first free elections.[vi]

Free elections in Tunisia yield, o surprise, a 40% victory for Nahda, with the same score from dual citizens who voted in France. The king of Morocco, having cleverly sidestepped an Arab Spring uprising, held democratic elections and, fair play, appointed Abdelilah Benkirane of the sharia-ambitious Justice and Development Party as Prime Minister. The crowd that shouted "Islamists, what Islamists?" one year ago—flaying the likes of Tunisia's Izzedine ben Ali, accused of oppressing freedom-loving citizens under the pretext of holding the Islamists at bay—is now singing the praises of "moderate Islamists." The artificial distinction between Islam and Islamists isn't good enough for these new developments. Democratically elected moderate Islamists will now govern by the law of moderate sharia, engage in moderate jihad, perform moderate beheadings, commit moderate mass murder and moderately relegate women to moderate niqab cages.

Working hand in hand, media, government officials, commentators, and experts adopted a Hope and Change attitude to popular uprisings in Muslim countries. Their observations, analyses, and predictions were not only faulty, they were hollow, shallow, and thrown together without any attempt at rational thinking. As evidence piled up, it was rejected with a hope-for-the-best shrug. No matter how ominous the signs for the immediate future, they were disregarded on the pretext that anything would be better than those terrible dictators who just a short while ago were fine enough for most purposes and especially appreciated when they focused their ire on Israel.

Utterly inappropriate schemas were plastered onto a Muslim world that was playing out a recognizable cycle in a distinctly Islamic historical process.[vii] Here in France, our cherished Revolution was offered like a pair of quaint pince-nez glasses: popular revolt, people's government, the Terror, Restoration, etc. all the way to true democracy, and *laïcité* (1905). Elsewhere, the fall of the Soviet Union looked appetizing. And of course the American Revolution could be appropriated. *Allahu akhbar* (Allah is the greatest) would be the equivalent of "Give me liberty or give me death!"

While the balance of power in the Middle East and, consequently, worldwide was undergoing radical change that could seriously endanger our life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness, public discourse prattled at an incomparable level of inanity. The belief that the foreign policy of Western governments should protect the interests of their citizens has already been scuttled; now, the idea that we should actually think about what is happening has dissolved in treacly sentiments. This is a fatal error. Idle commentary has dominated the collective mind with regard to the current transformation of the Muslim world, which, lest we forget, includes Muslim communities in Europe, the United States, and other lands.

It has often seemed in the past year that political leaders are taking their cues from the media. France's Foreign Secretary Michèle Alliot-Marie was forced to resign after spending a family vacation in Tunisia last Christmas with an old friend who was a bit cozy with Ben Ali. Worse, she was accused of offering crowd control material to the Tunisian government in the first days of the uprising that morphed into the Jasmine Revolution. Months later the deputies that virtually skinned Alliot-Marie alive for her willingness to collude in tactics that might touch a hair on the head of Tunisian demonstrators would bask in the gory glory of the Libyan operation without batting an eyelash over collateral damage. Another scuttled expression.

Occupy Wall Street

Three savvy New York Blacks interviewed by CNN in Zuccotti Park proclaim: the Occupy Wall Streeters are "demanding democracy like our comrades in Tahrir Square." This is not only ridiculous, it is scathing evidence of a dhimmitude current that is wending its way through our free societies. Here the benighted Muslim world becomes the role model for a disgruntled fringe in the United States. When the media focuses its doe eyes on the Occupiers, the tiny minority (not even a millionth of one percent) is magnified into the Voice of the People. Another link between OWS and the Arab Spring was forged by *Indignez-vous*, the little grey book by the world class impostor Stéphane Hessel. The doddering Ambassador Hessel is not really Jewish, was not interned in a concentration camp, is not co-author of the Declaration of Human Rights, but his mega bestseller can be credited with sparking *indignés* from the Plaza del Sol in Madrid to Zuccotti Park and onward. It is no surprise to find a virulent strain of anti-Zionism/Semitism in the movement inspired by his sharp thin book seasoned with a strong dose of indignation against Israel. But Hessel is just riding a wave. He is not the driving force of the upheaval.

Whatever one might have imagined about the OWS movement, the video of Occupy Atlanta robots "discussing" whether Congressman James Lewis should be allowed to speak to the group, was stunning.[viii] Mindless voices echoing simplistic phrases--"No individual is more important than any other / No individual is more important than any other"—took fifteen minutes to dismiss the civil rights hero who walked away, visibly perplexed. When, where, and how had these people been lobotomized? Were they trained in Pakistan?

Branded as a popular outcry for economic and social justice, the OWS movement bears telltale signs of the Islamization of the western world--a Muslim Brotherhood rally in the heart of Occupy Wall Street, [ix] a surprising encounter with a CAIR-associated lawyer running the Occupy Orlando movement.[x] More dramatically, this fringe movement claiming to speak for the 99% operated as if it were revolting against an absolute tyrant while inchoate Islamic masses in Muslim countries were glorified with democratic values that were nowhere to be seen. Though the Occupy movement was short-lived in the United States-- Americans are sticklers for hygiene and expect the police to protect property-- it may turn up in other shapes in the near future.

Kill or be killed

How do protest movements operate in tyrannical Muslim countries? Television coverage gives us an opportunity to compare discourse to reality. Dramatic images with a strong

emotional charge-- an aerial view of a public square filled to the gills-- give an impression of "everyone" when in fact we are seeing a tiny minority of the population. What and who does this minority represent? The excited voice of the newscaster, most often female, makes it seem that the collective mind of the assembled mass can be scrutinized and communicated. The reporter dips into the crowd and scoops up some goodies: calls for freedom, democracy, and justice mouthed indifferently by women in niqab or naked faces, bearded true believers and youthful tweeters, wild Libyan fighters shooting anti-aircraft guns into "enemy" residences and earnest lawyers turned soldiers. The dictator is ousted with the magical word *Dégage!* (scram). Images of "incredible courage" smuggled out of Syria show men-- and sometimes women and children— marching through the streets, clapping their hands, chanting *allahu akhbar*. A few dozen are killed, several dozen are wounded, the rest will be out again the next day.

Without demeaning the last acts of the desperate, one must still ask what do they want, where are they going, how are they doing it. The articulation of aims, purposes, values and strategy is lost in the flash of dramatic footage. Or is it deliberately hidden? Because no sooner does the tyrant scam, dead or alive, than the victor arrives, and his name is sharia.

Apologetics automatically kick in. It's because the Islamists are the only ones who were well-organized, took care of the needy, were persecuted by the tyrant. Not to worry, the true democrats will act as a counter-force and the Islamists will by necessity become pragmatists when faced with everyday administrative chores.

Jihad, sharia, dhimmitude

The unalterable goal of Islam is to impose sharia, the law of Allah, on all human beings everywhere in the world. How? By jihad. Jihad is not holy war and it is not self-improvement; it is jihad as defined in the original texts, upheld by generations of Islamic scholars, and practiced throughout the history of Islam. Constricting or distorting the meaning of jihad cripples our defenses. Jihad is not some "thing" it is the heart and soul of Islam, its guiding light, its fuel and its wings. Tens of millions of Muslims, acting on what they think to be their own free will, march in the armies of jihad. Muslims who do yearn to be free are swallowed in the quicksand of jihad.

And suddenly it's spring! Arab spring. What is blooming in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Morocco? What is budding in Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain...? Why should it be difficult to demonstrate that the goal of the Arab spring was the imposition of sharia and that is why, in one country after another, the sharia-imposing party won the biggest share of the votes and will lead the government? After all, jihadis have been promising for years to topple the corrupt leaders that collaborate with the West. While the majority of western media were in ecstasy over an imagined surge of democracy and all that goes with it, astute observers accurately described the movement and predicted the outcome. A sprinkling of true freedom lovers in the crowd had been used as an alibi to cover the real thrust of the movement, in the same way that sharia-imposing leaders season their declarations with a sprinkling of cost-free promises of democracy, justice, tolerance, freedom, progress.

This sheds light on another aspect of Occupy Wall Street: Jihad = convert the infidels, make them act as if they are already living in an Islamic society where there is no

political structure through which to express demands. Politics is reduced to gathering in a public square, setting up tents, living in anarchy, mouthing slogans and, ultimately, kill or be killed. Where does the 99% really live? In Egypt, not in the United States. The dhimmified pawns of the Occupy movement literally shit on their own land, pour contempt on the financial system that brings prosperity to the masses, invite Muslim Brotherhood thugs into their midst, glorify the illiterate masses of Tahrir Square and espouse their values.

In one more cruel twist, Israel is scolded for its apparent lack of enthusiasm for this darling Spring, and accused of wanting to keep Muslims under the heel of dictators whose saving grace was to maintain peaceful, or at least unwarlike relations with Israel. In other words, Israel is expected to acquiesce in its own destruction. Many a journalist gleefully warned that power to the Muslim people would mean a tough & true policy. Israel would have to answer for its mistreatment of Palestinians now that their liberated brothers and sisters were running the show. Today this is translated into "Kill the Jews." As could have been expected.[xi]

The merits of replacing "Arab Spring" with "jihad" to name what is happening in front of our eyes is that it accurately accounts for events as they occur and correctly predicts successive developments. The widespread inability to recognize jihad in action is, furthermore, induced by contemporary jihad strategy. Terror-stricken peoples were conquered by the sword in the medieval past. Today, the overwhelming military superiority of western nations dictates methods that behead rational thought. From the al Dura hoax to the Arab Spring hoax, the same technique has been used: a blinding emotional flash, a magical mystical narrative channeled through Western media that present it as their own; stubborn belief in the commentary that contradicts the image, leading to further erosion of rational thought and an inability to integrate new evidence and relinquish the first impression...

The Arab Spring lethal narrative plays on our culture's good wishes for one and all. It seems so much more decent to hope that a long-oppressed people will finally breathe free than to recognize that they are simply exasperated by a ruling caliph that they will soon replace with a new caliph. Instead of combating the mentality that imprisons them in this repressed condition, the narrative renews and reinforces it. It would be truly more humane to acknowledge the extent of their enslavement. Islam is submission. Power is transmitted from Allah to the Prophet to a single individual who rules as long as he can hold power. Power cannot be transmitted to groups that function democratically, but it can be seized by groups that reproduce the one-man rule on a smaller scale.[xii] This pattern has been repeated since the earliest times. The Sunna-Shia split is the first of an endless series of divisions, clashes, assassinations. Doesn't this explain why the so-called Islamist—but truly Islamic—party is always the most well organized? Because it is the only way an Islamic society can be organized.

French connection

Eight years after the Chirac government had basked in opposition to the "war in Iraq," President Sarkozy benefited from enthusiastic bipartisan support for his leading role in the NATO operation in Libya. He is credited with convincing a reluctant President Obama and hesitant Europeans to enforce a no-fly zone over Libya with the unique objective of saving civilian lives in the expectation that courageous freedom fighters

would liberate their country in a few short weeks. As the mission crept, the term "mission creep" fell into oblivion. When regime change became the inescapable endpoint of the operation, "regime change" surreptitiously entered public discourse as if it had been there from the start. French media, which are notoriously hostile to the "upstart" president, had only kind words for the Libyan operation. It was the right thing to do, the right way, at the right time. Glowing TV reports from the decks of our aircraft carrier actually glorified fighter pilots. Grisly Libyan gunmen shooting into the air and making the V for victory were media darlings.

Hours after the fall of Baghdad in April 2003 French media were still reporting that American troops were bogged down and likely to remain outside the city for another three months. This time around, exploits of the Libyan rebels were hastily celebrated though no evidence of their victorious battles was ever produced and glowing reports from their own ranks were usually contradicted within 48 hours by facts on the ground.

The value system that had prevailed since September 11, 2001 no longer applied. The solution, we were told then, must be political, not military. Two days into the 2006 Hizbullah war, France called for an immediate ceasefire and the opening of humanitarian corridors. Israel was ordered to back off and trust in a UN resolution and a beefed-up UNIFIL to restore peace on the border. Candidate Barack Obama was idolized by the French as the president who would end the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and close the torture chambers of Guantanamo. The 2009 Cast Lead operation in Gaza found no favor whatsoever in France's pacifist eyes. Nicolas Sarkozy, who succeeded Jacques Chirac in 2007, was slammed for his friendship with the warmonger G.W. Bush. What explains the sudden enthusiasm for war in the days of this Arab Springtime? Is it too far-fetched to conclude that defensive war against jihad is bad but waging war on the side of jihad is good?

As Mouamar Gaddafi rotted on a concrete floor in Misrata, the French president held a triumphant press conference in the company of the NTC Prime Minister and president, British Prime Minister David Cameron, and the emir of Qatar. It could be compared to the "Mission Accomplished" speech of George W. Bush after the fall of Saddam Hussein. But it wasn't. It was swallowed whole. Again, the Libyan operation was given as the counter-example to the Iraq war. This is how you should liberate a Muslim country. This is why we won't have the ugly aftermath that beset the invasion of Iraq.

Four-star globe-trotting philosopher Bernard Henri-Levy is credited with convincing president Sarkozy to act forcefully in Libya. It was BHL's dream come true. The philosopher-activist is sincerely convinced that he achieved the perfect union of the philosophical quest for the good the true and the beautiful with the ideal of the virtuous man of action. What's more, he performed this feat as a Jew! And dared to say so in front of a mass of revolting Libyans. Invited, in tandem with Chief Rabbi Gilles Bernheim, to give the closing address at the CRIF Convention on November 20th, BHL gave an embarrassing account of his adventure, the excitement of running from meetings with the rebels to rendez-vous with French government officials, helping plan strategy, weapons procurement, public relations and the political future. The philosopher seemed to think that because the Libyans knew he was Jewish, Zionist, and unstintingly devoted to their cause they will now look kindly on the Jewish people. He described an all-night conversation with a rebel leader, said to be connected to al Qaeda, in a remote farmhouse whose location was kept secret from him. The farmhouse was surrounded by

pickups mounted with heavy weapons, the warrior was surrounded by body guards, and the slim graying philosopher arrived, armed only with his brilliant mind and honest heart. "We talked all night, no holds barred, each said what he had on his mind, and I know he was changed, tomorrow he will not blame Israel for all his people's ills." [xiii]

The theme of that session of the CRIF Convention was "Tomorrow, the Jews of France." A better brighter future because our man stepped up to the plate, took action, intervened in contemporary history, gave muscle to *tikkun olam*, and stamped his action "Jewish"? Or is it the height of self-aggrandizing delusion?

What should a woman wear in the Arab Spring?

The media modestly lowers its gaze when the supposedly liberated nations start choking on the aftermath of these highly questionable revolutions. They did go running back to Tahrir Square as it filled once more with protestors reportedly demanding that the army hand over power immediately. To whom exactly? Isn't that what elections are for?

Caroline Sinz, covering the events for state-owned France 3 TV, was brutally assaulted.[xiv] The circumstances of what she describes as "finger rape" are worthy of note. Working with cameraman Salah Agrabi on Mohamed Mahmoud Street, she did an item on teenage demonstrators. The boys seemed to be operating under the wing of a man identified as a 33 year-old tour guide who had quit his job to join the Tahrir Square nation. He boasted about the courage of these callow youths. "If they get hit in the head with a projectile, they get it bandaged, and go right back into the fray." As usual in Arab Spring reports the journalist stood with and for the interested parties, more of a spokesperson than an observer. As the report drew to a close, I noticed the men and boys clustering behind the blond journalist, pressing against her back. Back to the studio. Before going on to the next item, the newscaster laconically mentioned that Sinz and her cameraman were assaulted after filming the youths. But a detailed account of the attack was already available on the site of the Figaro daily:[xv] the journalist and cameraman were grabbed and dragged into Tahrir Square where they were separated. He was roughed up. She was beaten, stripped, and raped. Her ordeal lasted 45 minutes. "I thought I was going to die," she declared with unusual candor for a French journalist...unless the designated culprits are Israeli.

Feeble attempts to attribute the assault to army or police thugs—vaguely described as plainclothes men—were dropped as it became obvious that it could be any man in the Square. The journalist is pressing charges against X. An initial, rather sensible statement from Reporters without Borders, advising media to be more careful about sending female journalists into this kind of dangerous situation, provoked an outburst of indignation from the interested parties and was immediately withdrawn.

Is this an affirmation of female courage and right to "equality," or a continued denial of reality? Israel HaYom editor and former ambassador Boaz Bismuth, interviewed on Radio J, was asked if he entered Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt with his Israeli passport. He replied that a European journalist can get a visa at the Egyptian border with no delay and a big welcome. With an Israeli passport it might take hours. But that's the least of the problem. At the entry to Tahrir Square he was stopped at a checkpoint set up by the protestors. Asked why they checked passports, he was told "So that no Israeli journalists can come and report on what is happening here."

Why do Israeli journalists accept and adapt to reality when female journalists insist on flying in its face? Will they use bodyguards? It would take a dozen armed men to protect a woman in that mob. Would they disguise themselves as men? Will they, with typical media hypocrisy, slip out of the slot without ever admitting that in fact it's no place for a woman?

What strikes me is that, in the case of Caroline Sinz, a clear warning of imminent assault was visible on camera. The subjects of the report, seen with tender sympathy, were moving into place to become actors of the assault. Did the cameraman recognize it? Did he warn his colleague? Did it happen too fast or did it happen because neither of them had any street smarts. Their personal ordeal fits right into the play within the play. The curtain of the lethal narrative of Arab Spring is ripped away to reveal with raw brutality the place of women under the sharia rule. The flesh and blood truth.

The West is epitomized in the female journalist gushing over an illusory democratic revolution and, minutes later, reduced to a piece of meat in Tahrir Square. In everyday life a woman who can't tell a killer from a cad from a decent guy pays a heavy price. These female journalists who have been selling the Arab Spring like it was a snazzy automobile are enticing the citizens of the free world to dance for their own demise.

Now who's winning the war of images?

Every word of criticism thrown at Israel since the beginning of the jihad-intifada in September 2000 is invalidated today. Modern antisemites refusing to wear the label claimed to be criticizing the Israeli government. "We have nothing against Israel and nothing against Jews. We disagree with the policies of Ariel Sharon. In fact, many Israelis share our gripes." Then it was the government of Ehud Olmert, and now of Benjamin Netanyahu. The criticism was supposedly based on immutable rules of behavior for civilized nations.

Well, that's washed away in the Libyan mudslide. The only rules that are truly respected are: we do what we can get away with and deny what is too shameful to admit. Nothing is too brutal to be given the spin. There is no lack of willing accomplices... as if valor and virtue were decided from day to day by a show of hands.

When the Arab street was chanting "Death to the Jews" in Paris, London, and Berlin, when Jews were insulted, bashed, and sometimes slaughtered in European cities, it was said to be regrettable payback for crimes against humanity committed by Israeli soldiers in "Palestine." The sight of bloodied Palestinian civilians was too horrible to bear. Israel, it was said, was losing the war of images.

Indeed! International opinion was so distraught, for example, by the approval of housing construction in Gilo in October that it could hardly be distracted by shaky cell phone images of Syrian protestors mowed down by tanks or snipers and sharp professional footage of Egyptian Copts burned alive in churches, crushed under the wheels of military vehicles.

Now we know how to win the war of images. Not by improving hasbara, retelling the history of the "holy land" from Abraham to last week, replacing pictures of soldiers in tanks with shots of pinups in bikinis, publishing weekly lists of Israel's high-tech exploits

along with the medical records of Arabs and Muslims treated at Hadassah hospital. The way to win the war of images is—don't be Jewish.

How about a Jewish Springtime?

Genocidal persecution is bad for Jews and it is about time we put an end to it. But it is not only bad for the Jews. It is bad for humanity. Why can't we get that message across?

This is the puzzle that has been constantly jiggling in my head since the end of September 2000 when the al Dura blood libel inaugurated an international wave of neo-pogroms that persists, expands, and worsens, reaching terrifying proportions and, simultaneously, becoming so commonplace that an accurate appraisal sounds like a hysterical false alarm.

I have sought to use the advantages of an intuitive literary approach here to seize events in their just proportions and build a hopefully compelling narrative that can counter the lethal narrative of jihad. Breaking through the stylistic limitations of intellectual discourse opens the way to a multitude of singular approaches that can reveal deep truths in a great variety of ways, some of which might be surprisingly effective. The prudent skepticism about the Arab Spring which is accepted as serious analysis unfortunately reinforces the illusion that the "springtime" narrative bears some resemblance to reality.

We need a rich arsenal of anti-jihad strategies that would bring about a real spring, an authentic liberation for Jews and free people everywhere, based on noble values. How do we do it? What is holding us back? We don't need to topple any caliphs or overturn any tyrannical order. We don't need to gather by the millions in any public square. One by one and each one alone we could find the idea that springs this latch.

The simple facts are in. Yes, we are the bad guys... in terms of what we expect of ourselves. But in this Great Big Nasty Reality Show, we are the good guys! Why can't we make this operational?

What could spur Iran to make concessions?

Dr Ephraim Kam,.Israel Hayom, 15 April 2012

http://www.israelhayom.com/site/newsletter_opinion.php?id=1729

What could spur Iran to make concessions?

The renewed talks between Iran and Western governments about the Islamic Republic's nuclear program are a direct result of new conditions that have been created in recent months. The most important change is the increasing pressure on Iran due to harsher sanctions imposed on it, as well as the general assumption that Israel could attack if diplomatic efforts fail. This pressure motivated Iran's leadership to suggest renewing negotiations while moderating its declarations regarding its nuclear program. It also provides the West better bargaining chips for negotiating with Iran.

Meanwhile, the U.S. administration is prepared to grant Iran certain concessions, mainly in agreeing, in principle, to letting Iran develop its own nuclear program on the condition it proves it is intended for civilian purposes and not for producing nuclear weapons.

To this end, the U.S. has drafted a number of demands. As we know, Iran has a large stockpile of uranium, currently enriched to low levels of 3 percent. If this uranium is enriched to the required levels to produce a nuclear weapon, Iran would have enough for three to four atomic bombs. It also has a smaller amount of uranium enriched to levels of 20%, which can't be used to make a weapon but would make the process of enriching to military levels significantly quicker if the decision were made to do so.

The American demands are not fully known, but they do include at least two central requirements: shutting down the Fordo uranium enrichment facility, which was dug into the side of a mountain near the city of Qom and is especially difficult to attack; and removing the uranium enriched to levels of 20% out of Iran. These demands are intended to block Iran's progress toward weapons-grade enrichment levels and delay Iran's entry into what Defense Minister Ehud Barak has called the "zone of immunity" – the point when Iran's nuclear facilities become heavily fortified enough to withstand attack.

These are significant, important demands. However, they also come with two problems. The first is that they allow Iran considerable advantages. It is unclear whether the U.S. will demand that the large stockpile of 3% enriched uranium also be removed from Iran – as it demanded in 2009. If this is not insisted upon, it will not stop Iran from striving toward a nuclear weapon. It will be even worse than the deal the U.S. offered Iran in 2009, which ultimately failed. Moreover, such a deal would provide legitimacy to Iran's nuclear enrichment program. Even if it is recognized as civilian in nature and is placed under more stringent supervision, it will not be possible to sufficiently oversee Iran's nuclear-related activity.

The second problem is Iran's position. Iran has said it would consider the demand to stop enriching uranium to 20% and maybe even reduce it to 3%. However, it has rejected the demand to remove its stockpile of uranium enriched to 3% out of Iran – just like it rejected the same demand in 2009. Iran also refused to shut down the Fordo facility. Even if Iran exhibits more flexibility about its stockpile of enriched uranium, it is hard to imagine that it would agree to shut down the Fordo facility, which is integral to Iran's nuclear weapons program. Closing it would be perceived as surrender.

Add to this the lack of trust between the sides, which is fed, among other things, by the Iranian leadership's belief that steps taken by the United States are aimed at toppling the regime. And because the strategic goal of the Iranian regime will continue to be possessing a nuclear weapon, or at least having the capability to build one, it is safe to assume it won't agree to concessions that would jeopardize this goal. The main consideration that could motivate the regime to accept concessions is the belief that international pressure could lead to domestic pressure that would oust the regime. For the time being, it does not appear to believe this is the case.

Therefore, the chance of reaching a comprehensive, satisfactory agreement is minimal. Failure at the negotiating table will bring the sides closer to the moment of truth. Iran will

have to decide whether to keep coping with the sanctions imposed on it, which will worsen in July when the European Union oil embargo is set to begin.

The U.S. and Israel, meanwhile, will need to decide whether to continue waiting for sanctions to have an effect on Iran, or to move closer to the military option, for which time is running out.

Preventing a nuclear Iran

A briefing by Michael Rubin, Middle East Forum, 19 March 2012

<http://www.meforum.org/3212/preventing-nuclear-iran>

Michael Rubin, a former editor of the *Middle East Quarterly*, is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and a senior lecturer at the Naval Postgraduate School. He formerly served as a political adviser to the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq and has written extensively about Iranian history and politics. He is the author of *Into the Shadows: Radical Vigilantes in Khatami's Iran* (2001) and the co-author of *Eternal Iran* (2005). On March 19, Rubin addressed the Middle East Forum in Philadelphia about the efficacy of sanctions on Iran as well as the prospect and logistics of an Israeli strike.

Can sanctions against the Iranian regime be effective? Michael Rubin addressed this question by citing Tehran's former nuclear negotiator, who revealed that previous suspensions of Iranian nuclear enrichment had merely been temporary ploys aimed at ameliorating international pressure and preventing a UN consensus on sanctions. Rubin argued that Iran's bleak current economic outlook is due not to sanctions but to the regime's mismanagement of the economy.

Whether sanctions can cause the regime to change tack is a different story. Twice before, Tehran has staked out very firm positions only to ultimately reverse course: in 1981, when fifty-two American hostages were released after 444 days in captivity—the reason for which, Rubin explained, is a topic of much debate—and in 1988, when Ayatollah Khomeini accepted a ceasefire to end the Iran-Iraq War. Khomeini admitted that the ceasefire was like "drinking a poisoned chalice" but that eight years of bitter stalemate and the desolation of the Iranian economy left him no choice.

What measures can be imposed today that would force Iran to again drink the proverbial poisoned chalice? Rubin suggested that broader, rather than targeted, sanctions would be a good start. It may be necessary to cause some "pain for ordinary people," he noted, "if our goal is to start a grassroots movement."

Rubin voiced reservations about taking the diplomatic route. With only ten percent of the Revolutionary Guards (IRG)'s revenues coming from the government, the force has effectively "gone rogue." Even if a deal was struck with the Iranian regime, the IRG—with its control over the country's main cargo airport, many of the customs gates at the Imam Khomeini International Airport, and, most likely, a nuclear weapons program—would still pose a grave physical and ideological obstacle. For this reason, a policy of deterrence doesn't sit well with Israel or America. Moreover, were the regime to be defeated, the potential for the IRG to launch missiles simply out of spite, as did Gaddafi's

forces at Misrata when defeat became imminent, suggests that containment isn't a viable option either.

The question is, therefore, whether Israel could pull off an air strike on Iran. Even if the Jewish state succeeded in striking under a veil of secrecy, this would quickly disappear once the pilots delivered their payloads, and they would still have to travel about 700 miles before exiting Iranian airspace. Thus, Iranian control centers and air defenses would also need to be eliminated, requiring an operation of such magnitude that an Israeli attack would be both improbable and ineffective.

Against this backdrop, Rubin emphasized the importance of distinguishing the Iranian people from the regime, citing a poll that suggests that only 25 percent of Iranians favor the clerical system, while 75 percent have given up on it. With little faith in the efficacy of the aforementioned options, Rubin proposed that we leverage and embolden this majority, push for regime change, and ask ourselves: how can we empower the Iranian people?

**The Gunter Grass debacle: Blowback from anti-Israel poem enveloped both sides
*Karl Vick, Time World, 11 April 2012***

<http://globalspin.blogs.time.com/2012/04/11/the-gunter-grass-debacle-blowback-from-anti-israel-poem-envelopes-both-sides/?xid=newsletter-europe-weekly>

Günter Grass, the German author who waited until he'd won a Nobel Prize before revealing that he'd served in Hitler's SS, might seem an unlikely vessel for criticism of Israel (in 2006 he confessed that in 1944, at the age of 17, he'd belonged to the Waffen; his novel, *The Tin Drum*, covers the rise of Nazism). Germany's elected governments hew closely to the Jewish State, deeply and persistently mindful of their shameful history.

So German Foreign Minister Guido Westerwelle was prominent in the crowd calling Grass out last week after he published a poem titled "It Must Be Said." "Why do I say only now...that the nuclear power Israel endangers an already fragile world peace?" the poet inquired of himself. "Because that must be said which may already be too late to say tomorrow." The intended reference was to Israel's threats to attack Tehran's nuclear facilities.

(MORE: Günter Grass's Silence)

"Putting Israel and Iran on the same moral level is not ingenious but absurd," Westerwelle said.

And yet, one week later, the topic of the day is not Grass' dubious meter but Israel's reaction. The author was PNG'ed — officially barred from entering the country, declared *persona non grata*. "Grass' poems fan the flames of hatred against Israel and the Israeli people, thus promoting the idea he was a part of when he donned an SS uniform," said interior minister Eli Yishai, who imposed the ban. "His distorted poems are not welcome in Israel and might receive a following in Iran." (Indeed, Press TV, the state-owned

Iranian English-language satellite channel, has reportedly praised the poem: “Metaphorically speaking, the poet has launched a deadly lyrical strike against Israel.”)

The fulmination that ensued was predictable enough that Yishai might have held back if he’d paused to anticipate how the ruckus would be diverted his way. His government, led by Benjamin Netanyahu, could have had it both ways — kept Grass out of Israel, while avoiding the fallout from the PNG declaration — by simply finding some excuse to turn him away, if he had the nerve to pitch up at Ben Gurion International. (Lesser lights have been turned away with less fuss, including Noam Chomsky and Ivan Prado, described as Spain’s most famous clown.) The fact is, inside Israel, banning Grass was a popular move. In Europe, not so much.

Israel first. “The Nobel Prize laureate translated into poetry all the propaganda that is manufactured every day by the left wing mouthpieces,” David Merhav wrote in the conservative daily *Makor Rishon*. “He, as opposed to them, took that to the very end: if Israel is Sparta, then it must pose a threat to world peace. The commentary, the newspaper columns and the op-eds that are written every day against Netanyahu need to be translated, ultimately, into one overriding conclusion: Israel is illegitimate.”

In *Ma’ariv*, columnist Ben-Dror Yemini noted polls showing a large majority of Germans believe Israel is carrying out a policy of “extermination” against Palestinians, while some 40% think Israel’s treatment of them recalls the Nazis. “The myth perpetrated by the left wing is that criticism by Israelis of Israel saves Israel’s honor and proves that Israel is a democratic state,” Yemini writes. “I have yet to meet the German or the European who has been exposed to their own industry of lies, and whose conclusion was: wow, what a wonderful democracy. The facts prove that when a lie is repeated a thousand times — that Israel is a monster — the conclusion is that it is a monster.”

Meanwhile, Salman Rushdie called the ban “infantile pique” and, in Germany, *Suddeutsche Zeitung* termed Yishai’s ban “absurd.” “It would have been more clever to invite Grass to a debate,” the center-left daily wrote. “He wouldn’t have won, either.” But while *Berliner Zeitung* also faulted Yishai for drawing attention away from Grass’ words and personal history, it shared Yemini’s concern with German public opinion. “Questions persist,” the leftist paper said. “For example, that of the extent to which the special relations between the German government and Israel — which under Chancellor Angela Merkel have been elevated to the status of a *raison d’état* — actually reflects German reality. Grass incensed the Israelis with his skewed view of the Iran conflict. But the government in Jerusalem is also alarmed by the fact that opinion polls show that most Germans secretly believe that Grass is right. That merely reinforces the uneasy feeling the Israelis have that they can trust themselves alone and that they can rely on neither the United States nor Germany.”

Predicting Middle Eastern Politics: 10 Questions with Daniel Pipes

Greg Callaghan, *The Australian*, 14 April 2012

<http://www.danielpipes.org/11004/predicting-middle-eastern-politics>

***The Australian:* In Egypt, Islamist parties now hold about 80 per cent of the seats in parliament. Given the majority of demonstrators in Tahrir Square were liberal secularists, has Egypt's Arab Spring been hijacked?**

Daniel Pipes: No, because the liberals of Tahrir Square did not force Mubarak from power. The military took advantage of their mass demonstrations to dispatch a president it had had enough of, in large part because of his intent on handing power to his son, Gamal.

Is the victory of the Muslim Brotherhood bad news for Egypt's Coptic Christians and secularists?

Yes, but the Copts have fared badly under the military as well, which engaged in a pogrom against them a half year ago. I doubt the Muslim Brotherhood has had a victory but rather see the parliamentary elections as basically fraudulent.

Is there a risk that the major beneficiaries of the mass demonstrations in the Middle East will be well-organised Islamic parties?

Yes, well-organised Islamic parties are in a position to seize power in a number of countries including Libya, Jordan, Syria and Yemen. But I see this less the result of fleeting economic tribulations than the consequence of a deep frustration about the weakness of the umma, the Muslim community, over the past two centuries. I call this the trauma of modern Islam.

Had the US not gone to war in Iraq, would Saddam Hussein have been toppled by his own people anyway?

No, because Saddam Hussein's regime was unique in its brutality and in his determination to hold on to power. The Syrian regime is probably the closest parallel to it. I doubt whether the Iraqis would have revolted against Saddam; if they did, I doubt whether they would have succeeded. Remember, Saddam used chemical weapons against his own people in 1988.

Is Iran's regime weakening?

It's certainly feeling the heat. The European oil boycott is having an effect and the current struggle between President Ahmadinejad and Supreme Leader Khamenei reflects serious internal divisions between the clerical elite and military veterans like Ahmadinejad. I see Iran as comparable to the Soviet Union in the 1970s: a powerful and bellicose state but a hollow one because most of its subjects are alienated.

What is the likelihood of a US and/or Israeli air strike against Iran's nuclear facilities?

I can't answer that but I do sense that the Iranians will be prevented from acquiring nuclear arms. Tehran is as dead set on building nuclear weapons as the North Korean leadership.

Wouldn't a military strike against Iran galvanise the population behind the theocratic regime?

Perhaps, but it might cause them to turn in anger against the government. This is hard to predict.

You're more pessimistic about Turkey than Iran, aren't you?

Yes. When the Islamist party, the AKP, came to power in 2002, it trod carefully around the military and did little to overturn the secular principles established by Ataturk in the 1920s. When it was re-elected in 2007 the AKP's Islamisation project became much more evident, especially weakening the military's political power. Since its re-election last year the AKP's gloves have come off and the bullying has increased.

Can Syria's President Bashar al-Assad survive?

No. Increasing resistance from the soldiers, growing economic problems and burgeoning international opposition doom the regime.

Is fundamentalist Islam increasing or decreasing in influence?

It is peaking about now. The collapse of the Islamic regime in Iran would be a key event in its decline.

NOTE: The views expressed in certain articles are not necessarily those of the SAZF

South African Zionist Federation

Tel : (011) 645-2505

Fax: (011) 640-6758

E-mail: froma@beyachad.co.za

Website: <http://sazionfed.co.za>

PBO NUMBER: 930014277