

Protesters celebrate Unification Day across Yemen

By: Shatha Al-Harazi

SANA'A, May, 22 — Unlike this time of the year, the National Day of Unification was celebrated by the state, accompanied by military parades and fireworks displays. However, this year, anti-government protesters across the country are staging celebrations of their own.

Protesters in the capital Sana'a say that they want to prove to the world that Saleh's threats about a divided Yemen don't hold water. Protest leaders told the Yemen Times that nationwide unity celebrations are meant to show Saleh and the world that the people care about keeping the country unified and that the fall of the Saleh regime will only serve to further solidify North and South Yemen's unity of purpose.

Over 3500 soldiers from the defected First Armored Brigade participated in a parade and a show of force in Sana'a, sending a message to loyalist military forces that they should stand with the people as well. According to the secretary general of the soldier's coalition, all soldiers should defect from the regime if they are to uphold their duties as defenders of the Yemeni people and

protectors of the state.

"Around 3500 soldiers participated in this symbolic event," said Major Hamdan Fars, Secretary-General of the soldier's coalition in "Change Square" in Sana'a. "the objective of this show is to deliver a message to our brothers in Yemen's military that have not joined the protest yet, we want to motivate them to defect and join the people," he added.

Although some groups of the southern movement held an event yesterday in Aden calling for secession, many others participated in today's celebrations of unification across the former territory of the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, according to Mohammed Joma'n, an anti-government protester living in Aden.

Joma'n confirmed that even though the southern Movement is against unification, they do not oppose protesters celebrating the occasion.

Protesters in the capital believe that the dissolution of the union is a threat that president Saleh is using to garner more support. "Separation is a lie that the regime promotes," said Major Fars. "There will not be any separation."

Civilians also participated in the cel-

brations with shows of their own.

Waleed Al-Amari, one of the celebration's coordinators, said that the program will be informative and supportive. "We have different shows that reflect many different cultures like a Tuhami show, Maribi show and so" said Al-Amari.

"The aim is to show the world that the Yemeni people are unified, the people want to bring down the regime and we have no fear that our union will be negatively affected by our revolution. In fact, national unity will be strengthened by it," he added.

Al-Amari also confirmed that the entrances of celebrations and protest camps are protected in case of attacks by government loyalists or security forces.

The White House released a statement on Sunday in support of Yemen's unity.

"The United States will continue to support the Yemeni people as you work toward a unified, stable, democratic, and prosperous Yemen. We continue to call for a peaceful transition of power so that the citizens of Yemen may one day realize your aspirations," said Hilary Clinton in a press release on 21 May.



Soldiers of the defected army patrol a street in Sanaa, capital of Yemen, May 22, 2011. Over a thousand soldiers of former government forces who have then defected took the street here on Friday to celebrate Yemen's Unification Day.

Divide between youth, opposition parties vast and deep

By: Nadia Al-Sakkaf

Murad Al-Ghariti is a human rights and development since 1992. He started his career with Amnesty International in Yemen. Today he is the executive director of the Tamkeen Development Foundation that looks at the issues of human rights training, research and advocacy. In this interview, Nadia Al-Sakkaf speaks with Murad about the role of civil society and its capacity in contributing towards Yemen's development during this period of transition and the future.

Your organization, Tamkeen Development Foundation (TDF) defines itself as a neutral independent civil society organization yet its' media rhetoric indicates otherwise. How do you explain this?

We are an independent non-governmental organization that works neutrally in development from a human rights perspective. We are also a member of a number of local and international alliances and networks and continue to play a role as an independent organization on the issues Yemen faces, from a legal rights-based developmental approach.

This means that although we are neutral, we have to issue statements on what is going on in Yemen from a human rights approach; i.e. we must criticize violations of human rights regardless of who does them.

I do admit that some of my personal statements may seem less objective, but I do so as an individual, in my personal capacity and not necessarily as a TDF spokesperson. However, given what is going on in Yemen, as a civil society actor and human rights activist my opinions are derived from my perceptions. These I adopt from my own environment.

You need to understand that one of the motives to establish the foundation was to provide an independent neutral civil society rights based narrative of what's going on in Yemen especially since many organizations are not entirely neutral and thus the credibility of reports coming from many Yemeni civil society organization was questionable.

Having said that, there is no reason why members of an independent organization should not have their own political affiliations or opinions – but these should not affect the direction of the organization and its work.

But in today's Yemen, sometimes there is a need to go beyond being neutral and objective. We need to take a stand against the violations taking place and monitor them as well as document them in a credible and accurate manner. We also need to use these facts for advocacy and awareness on human rights. There are so many internationally known and respected human rights organizations that take a stand against violations, what we are doing here is the same. This is the essence of civil society



Murad Al-Ghariti, left

organizations in the first place.

Yes, but why should Yemenis or the world, trust the local civil society organizations? Or believe that they are true representatives of Yemenis and what they want?

Civil society organizations play an important role in any society because, they are nongovernmental organizations were created as part of the community and as representatives of it. It plays an intermediary role between the people and the government or points of authority, while educating and empowering the people.

A strong civil society is a tool for balance and empowerment of the people. Civil society is a member of the third sphere (these include the private sector and political parties). These three together create the interface between the people and their governments and the stronger they are the more balanced the relation between the governed and the governors, therefore having strong and independent civil society in any country is a sign of the strength of its democracy.

This is why it is important to trust and support Yemen's civil society especially in such critical times. We also need to supervise and direct the work of the civil society organizations -- to remind them of their role and to ensure their independence and credibility so that they are capable of providing accurate information on behalf of the people as well as creating pressure on the government for reform

In other words Yemenis and the world has no other option, other than to trust and have faith in Yemen's civil society because it is their alternative voice. Perhaps this is also an opportunity to call on all Yemen's civil society organizations to realize the responsibility they have -- and that they should work in an institutional and independent manner -- to support the country's development.

Talking about representing what the people need, there seems an increasing gap between the revolution's youth and opposition political parties, what is going on?

That is correct and the gap has become too wide. At this stage it cannot be bridged. But we need all the strategizing and collective intelligence to deal with the current situation on political and popular levels. Yet it seems there is a huge divide between the two. There is a lack of clear coordination between the youth and opposition political parties despite the fact that they agree in principle on the same goal, that is to topple the regime.

In my opinion the main reason for this divide is that the political parties, which are based on individual strengths rather than collective power, operate in a traditional way compared to the more liberated popular movement.

Moreover, the youth are too eager and too hasty; they can't wait for political deliberations and games. The youth also feel excluded and sometimes oppressed by the very political parties that rode on their backs to reach the prominent positions they are in today. This exclusion is visible in the lack of empowerment of the youth politically and the non-inclusion of them as groups or individuals in political discussions and decision-making.

We need to remember that although these opposition parties are rivals to the current regime, they were influenced during their conception by the very system they are fighting today. Thus their structure, mechanisms and even policies are somewhat similar to that of the existing regime in which the youth is considered obsolete.

The regime has also created and endorsed other structures such as tribal leaderships and supportive political parties that play a role in the political power struggle.

The divide between the youth and the

political parties is visible in the disparity in the approaches. In fact it is seen even in the dates marked for their movements. For example the political parties defined 3rd February as the beginning of the revolution without consultation with the youth who recognize 11th February as the first day of the revolution.

The crucial blow and divide was when the opposition parties decided to accept the initiative and reach an agreement with the president without consulting or reaching an agreement with the youth. Moreover, the political parties actually did not publically announce their position in support of the popular youth until end of March. And now it again confines the revolution to political agreements through discussions on the Gulf Initiative.

Finally some of the actions of the opposition political parties especially the Islamic one, against the youth has further alienated them and this has made them more apprehensive of being categorized with the parties – they feel that their revolution will be hijacked.

It's safe to say that until the political parties have not yet realized the importance of coordinating with the youth or taking their emerging structures, coalitions and committees seriously (and I think this is mainly because the way the youth are doing it is very different from the traditional old school of doing politics)

Interestingly enough, there seems to be a merger between some of the young members of the political parties who joined the protests in the revolution squares, initially as representatives of their parties, but who eventually became more engaged in the new structures that further the gap.

But Yemen's youth has proven to the world that they are capable, this new school of thought can create successful revolutions, that are really representative of the Yemenis and are a sort of a melting pot of all the diverse orienta-

tions and affiliations and unites that brand them the umbrella of the revolution's youth.

So where is the country heading then?

The future of this country is sketched by its youth. We need to be supportive of the revolution's youth and abandon all the traditional old fashion political mind-sets that were tampered with by the regime.

I am not for the exclusion of any side or party that exists politically or socially, but we must give youth their chance to be and provide them with the support to be able to make the right decisions for this country.

These youth want to create a modern institutional country that is based on the rule of law and equal citizenship. This may not coincide with the visions of the Islamic political line, which according to Al-Zindani is looking for an Islamic state that will take us back centuries.

The controversy is that the Islamic group knows that being rigid on this issue is not acceptable inside or outside the country. Therefore they have been playing it right and advocating for a more liberal approach emphasizing on the role of youth.

In fact in the countries that proceeded Yemen in their revolutions regionally -- Tunisia and Egypt -- the Islamic parties have displayed willingness to share power with the youth and to enter into coalitions with parties very different from them ideologically. In addition they now portray themselves in a modern structure based on civilian and democratic principles.

We need to remember here that the Islah party, Yemen's Islamic party, is the strongest and most organized one and yet has entered into coalitions with ideologically different and weaker parties such as the Socialists and the Nasserites.

When reviewing the history of this very party we will see that in 1994 the Islah joined ranks with the current ruling party against the socialists who are today's friends. And this shows that the party does understand the rules of political games and is willing to play by them.

Now with its desire to merge with the youth, it has made attempts to influence them if not control them but it has not been as successful as anticipated. This is because the youth have one advantage: their diversity and passion for change that has made aligning them into political module nearly impossible.

I do, however, recognize a number of the more modernized and understanding leaderships in the Islah party who realize that the future of Yemen is in the hands of the youth. In fact I anticipate that the Islah party will play a significant role in the creation of the new Yemen but according to a modern institutional framework and not an Islamic state has been said.

What can the friendly countries in the region and the west do to support the youth define their future as you say?

This stage and the ones to come require the international organizations and governments especially the human rights organizations to first acknowledge and deal with the violations against the Yemeni people. There are cases of illegally detained protesters and those forcefully disappearing. The other demand is that they should recognize Yemeni people's right to defining their own future and link this to any political or economic considerations or deals.

The western world and the international community as a whole needs to immediately exert pressure on Saleh to leave without conditions. They need to stop protecting him, especially the Gulf countries and the United States of America.

As for how the world can help the youth directly, they can do this through providing them with advice and technical support so that they are able to create sound visions and strategies for the new Yemen. They also need to support the civil society organizations and empower them so that they are able to play their roles appropriately.

Perhaps what they can do is encourage discussions and public debates in the country. Support the creation of forums and round table discussions in order to create as much conversation about the current and coming stages of the country.

Finally Yemen needs a quick financial/ economic rescue mission especially since Saleh's regime has exhausted the country's resources, leading to economic deterioration that Yemen alone cannot get out of without help. And this will definitely lead to violence and security and social problems in Yemen. This is a given regardless of who rules next.

Finally, one last question; do you think the Yemeni woman is being used as a mobilization tool and will not really be integrated as an equal in the new Yemen?

The Yemeni woman has proved that she is as capable as the man in active and strong participation in politics and public activities. This is what we have witnessed since the beginning of the revolution whether in the protest areas or various revolution platforms.

This is surprising because it is a known fact that the Yemeni women were not visible or actively included in various political movements -- except as you said a lobbying tool whether by the ruling party or the Islah party.

But today this revolution has given the Yemeni women a more significant and visible role that cannot be locked up or limited to, as supporters of men. We have seen signs of women's ability to lead and their strength to endure and I am sure that the Yemeni woman will be visible and active in the next level on all fronts.

Cheick Sidi Diarra speak to Yemen Times “Good government leads to business success”

By: Sadeq Al-Wesabi

A 10-year action plan to support sustained economic growth for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) was revealed on May 13th at the close of the Fourth UN Conference on LDCs, held in Istanbul earlier this month.

The Yemen Times interviewed Cheick Sidi Diarra, Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, in Istanbul.

Diarra is very optimistic about the economic future of LDCs and expects that the economy in LDCs will begin to recover and grow during next few years.

On 6 July 2007, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon announced the appointment of Cheick Sidi Diarra of Mali as High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. Diarra has over 25 years of professional experience in international relations, international law and development.

“The importance of the LDCs conference is to mobilize the international community to continue to support this group of countries,” Diarra told the Yemen Times.

According to Diarra, since the creation of the group in 1972, it had three programs of action since 1972 to 2001. “Each program of action has come up with a new set of measures to support the LDCs. Now we want to move the fourth program of action for ten years to come,” he said.

“What we intend to do is to put a number of international measures of support by donor countries in place. It could be in the form of money, trade or debt relief,” he said. “These measures would come to support priorities that LDCs would have defined themselves in the national strategies of development.”

“Our role is to bring international community to agree on what they will



Cheick Sidi Diarra

do for the LDCs and to mobilize those efforts in support of the LDCs,” he said.

Diarra indicated that the donor countries are maintain a commitment made ten years ago and intend continue their support of LDCs on the basis of the commitment which is to provide 0.2 Percent of the Gross National Income

GNI in terms of official development assistance to LDCs.

“Currently, they provide less than 0.1 percent of GNI so it has not been fulfilled completely and that’s why we believe that this conference will help donor countries determine new strategies to fulfill their commitments completely.”

Diarra mentioned that MPS from various countries participated in the conference, indicating that the role of MPs is to identify national resources that can be allocated to executive branch to implement the priorities of the Istanbul conference.

“Parliamentarians would put pressure on the executive branch to implement what they have committed to do,” he said.

“The NGOs also will ask the government about what did they do regarding implementation of conference’s objectives. They will follow up the donor countries to remind them about their promises to support their countries.” He added.

“We need the private sectors to implement this. They can create wealth in the country by producing goods. They can make trade and create job and they can also provide taxes to state to function,” he said.

Diarra said that the conference invited companies from all LDCs to come and meet with private companies around the world to do business with Turkey, France, America and other Western economic powers.

“They can bring more business for the LDCs. The private sector in LDCs is very weak and doesn’t have enough capital for significant investment. These companies need money from developed countries but the developed countries refuse to invest in these countries due to lack of security. They are not sure that their investment will be protected by the government in these countries. They are also unsure that they will generate good financial returns and find skillful people who can manage their work well,” he said.

Lack of production capacity

“The most important economic threat for the LDCs is the lack of production capacity,” said Diarra.

“Lack of production capacity such as roads, electricity and railways restrict LDCs from producing high-quality goods,” he said. “Many countries are ready to import goods from LDCs but the LDCs cannot take advantage of

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these offers because they cannot produce high-quality goods.”

“Now what we need to do is to help LDCs to produce quality goods and services,” said Diarra.

“We are trying to bring the donor countries to LDCs to focus essentially on strengthening the productive capacity and infrastructure,” he said.

When asked about corruption in LDCs and how it affects the economic development, Diarra said: “The donor countries should ask LDCs every year about what did they do and what did they build for people. Countries that perform well should be encouraged and given more money but countries that don’t perform well should be deprived from taking money. This is the best way to fight corruption in these countries.”

“There is also some mechanism to control using money well. They can make a joint committee between the donor countries and the recipient countries to verify the use of money,” he said.

“I expect the global economy to recover during less than three years.

Global economic recovery is good for LDCs because people will buy natural resources to make production and that will generate money for LDCs. They will really benefit from this recovery,” he said optimistically.

“LDCs should develop their agriculture. They have to develop other things like banking system and tourism to multiply their chances to succeed,” he added.

“LDCs should be optimistic about their economic future,” said Diarra.

Diarra stressed the importance of a leadership in developing economy. “A good governor determines a success.”

“Yemen will benefit from this conference in many ways. Its priorities will be identified through the conference held in Istanbul. You will succeed if you have a clear vision about your plan,” he said.

“Yemen should explain the resources they have as well as the gap that they have. They should say to donors I need this amount of money to complement what I had and say to them - please help and they will help,” he said.

New space for discrimination at work

Compiled by: Ali Saeed

A new report on equality in the workplace conducted by the International Labor Organization (ILO) found that the global economic crisis has opened up a new space for discrimination at work against certain groups, such as migrants and others.

In spite of good achievements in anti-discrimination legislation, the risk of discrimination is still higher due to the impact of the economic crisis on employment, according to the report.

Thousands of members of the Yemeni labor-force are scattered migrant workers, especially in neighboring gulf countries. A large percentage of them illegally enter these countries on a daily basis through the Yemeni northern border and into Saudi territory, seeking better work opportunities.

Most Yemeni illegal migrants are young people under the age of 20 and some of them are school drop outs who left school to help their families in obtaining cash-income with increasing rampant poverty in Yemen.

The worldwide key problem for migrant workers is access to jobs. “The proportion of workers who are vulnerable to poverty is on the increase again, reversing the positive trends noted over the last few years,” reads the report.

And “in times of crisis, inequality, insecurity and the danger of exclusion are fed by direct or indirect discrimination.”

“Rapid advances have been made



Many women in Yemen still can't go to work due to social norms dictating that women must remain in the home

with legislation to prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability and age. Race and sex continue to be the two grounds of discrimination which are specifically included in almost all legislation for equality and against discrimination at work,” the report highlighted.

But the report indicated that “having laws and institutions to prevent dis-

crimination at work and offer remedies is not enough, keeping them functioning effectively is a challenge especially in troubled times.”

It explained that “Many of the institutions are faced with a shortage of human and financial resources, inadequate policy coherence at the national and local levels, and insufficient synergy and cooperation with other relevant

institutions.”

It went on saying “Labor inspectors, judges, public officials and other competent authorities encounter a lack of knowledge and inadequate institutional capacity when they attempt to identify and address discrimination cases. This prevents victims of discrimination from submitting their claims successfully.”

Maternity and paternity protection

The report found that discrimination related to pregnancy and maternity is still common. “The access of women to certain jobs can be restricted on the basis of their reproductive role.”

“Several equality monitoring bodies worldwide have even witnessed increased discrimination against women

on grounds of maternity. Specific cases concern dismissals for pregnancy and nursing, failure to grant time for nursing, withholding of pre- and postnatal benefits, denial of promotion, and refusal to allow workers to return to posts occupied before maternity leave,” reads the report.

At the same time, “new legal provisions are being introduced to protect women against dismissal and discrimination due to pregnancy, marital status, family responsibilities or maternity leave.”

Many countries including Yemen provide women with paid leave if they have a miscarriage or stillbirth or suffer from some other abnormal condition, according to the report.

Sexual harassment

The report also highlighted sexual harassment saying “it occurs on every continent and in different types and categories of occupations. Surveys show that it is a significant problem in workplaces.”

It said that “Women who are most vulnerable to sexual harassment are young, financially dependent, single or divorced, and migrants. Men who experience harassment tend to be young, gay and members of ethnic or racial minorities.”

“Experiences in many countries have shown that effective action against sexual harassment in the workplace requires a combination of legal frameworks, stronger enforcement, adequately funded institutions and greater awareness,” it concluded.



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Ali Abdullah Saleh

President of the Republic of Yemen
and all the Yemeni people
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22
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On the occasion of the National Day MAY 22ND, 1990,
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متمنين لليمن مزيدا من التطور و الرخاء في ظل دولة الوحدة
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YT vision statement



Prof. Abdulaziz Al-Saqqaf,
(1951 - 1999)
Founder of Yemen Times

**"To make Yemen
a good world
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OUR
OPINIONWhat Yemenis
want from the world

Dear Politiken

Obama's speech on Thursday to the Arab World almost brought nothing new. Two years after his inspiring talk in Cairo, the Arab world is disappointed that nothing much has happened and his stirring words about peace in the Middle East were overshadowed by the regions reality.

For us personally regarding Yemen, Obama brought nothing new that wasn't already said by the US ambassador in Yemen or the American State Department spokesperson. Saleh has to fulfill his promises and allow for a peaceful transfer of power.

Although the world was waiting and anticipating Obama's speech, the public opinion and media in Yemen did not even give it the minimum attention. Our headlines were concerned with our fate and to what extent Yemen will be heading towards war in the coming few days.

The one question that Yemenis were asking is who outside Yemen will be able to make our president accountable? Is it Obama and the US administration? They have already been issuing warning statements and froze bilateral agreements and aid to Yemen since February this year.

Is it the Gulf Council and Saudi Arabia in the first position? They have already seen how easily President Saleh breaks his promise toying with people's expectations. Their last trick in the bag is to give him an ultimatum of two days before which he should sign the gulf initiative otherwise they will stop supporting him or give him immunity or even accept to receive him in Jeddah in case he decides to leave the country like the Tunisia president did.

In Yemen, every Friday after the prayer, millions of Yemenis head to the streets. There are obviously the two camps, pro- and anti-government.

The pro camp is only in the capital city of Sana'a while the other camp which is the revolution and callers for change are out in almost every city in the country, even in Socotra Island on the Indian Ocean. As tradition after the prayers the president speaks to his people at Al-Sabeen Square and the opposition leaders of the political parties and youth speak to the other crowds.

This Friday the president called for early presidential elections to prevent any potential bloodshed and he again criticized the opposition parties and called them thugs and opportunists. He is again playing with words and betting that the protestors will tire of staying in the streets and all this up-rise will come to an end.

The other side was very moving... the speaker was standing behind the microphone and shouting: Hold your left hand with your right, lift them in the air and shout, "Samidoon samidoon," (Unwavering/steadfast).

Imagine millions of people holding their hands like this in the air and promising each other and the world that they will never give up, will not surrender or tire until they reach their goal... imagine the echo of millions of people together across the air...

Then the speaker asked us to join hands, each holding the hand of the person next to him or her and then raise it into the air and shout, "Muatahidoon mutahidoon," (United) millions of Yemenis holding each others' hands, not necessarily knowing who is the person next to them yet feeling united in mission and in destiny.

We were shouting at the peak of our voices and the rush of excitement going through us like electricity. When I saw what the pro-president demonstrators were doing I felt sorry for them. They are missing so much, they are not connected to the journey of change and in fact they are challenging it and trying to stop it.

This passion is what the gulf countries and the US administration is missing in regards to Yemen. They think it is about politics and this is why the whole west not just the US were surprised with the Arab Spring. It is beyond politics, it is about the people and what they want.

All we need from the world now is to stop dealing with Yemen only through its president, there is more to Yemen than Ali Abdullah Saleh. There are 25 million people more, who are now speaking up for themselves and wanting to be recognized.

Nadia Al-Sakkaf

Rethinking "Moderate Islam"

By Güneş Murat Tezcür

In the United States, the notion of "moderate Islam" has been central to public and scholarly debates about democratic change in the Middle East. For many scholars, the expectation is that sustainable democratization in the region primarily depends upon the existence of robust and popular "moderate Islamic" movements.

This expectation is based on three assumptions. First, authoritarian Arab rulers would be more willing to heed calls for democratization if they have less to fear from the opposition. In contrast to radical Islamists who seek to establish the "Islamic state," moderate Islamic movements are not expected to "hijack democracy" to establish their own version of dictatorship. Consequently, as the argument goes, these movements would reduce the threat perceptions of Arab rulers, making them more willing to cede power.

Second, moderates are believed to be amenable to working with the "guardians of the old order" during the transitional period and inclined towards avoiding confrontational policies that would unravel the nascent democratic system.

Finally, moderate Islamic movements would not pursue aggressive strategies toward Israel and would not challenge U.S. strategic interests in the region.

The current uprisings in the Arab world as well as the evolution of Islamic moderates in contemporary Iran and Turkey have, however, demonstrated the shaky ground on which these assumptions have been based, exposing the internal contradictions embedded within them.

Political Change & Popular Mobilization

The assumption that authoritarian rulers are more willing to undertake democratizing reforms when not confronted with a radical opposition is hard to sustain given the track record of these governments in repressing all forms of dissent. In fact, one can argue that democratization is achieved only when the ruling elite recognizes that anything but reform will bring widespread unrest and revolution from below. Indeed, successful democratization often requires popular mobilization that challenges the monopoly of political power and successfully obtains concessions from the elite.

This reality has been borne out by events leading to the fall of Tunisia's Ben Ali and Egypt's Mubarak earlier this year. Without contentious action and popular mobilization, it would have been highly unlikely that the security establishment in both countries would have sacrificed these corrupt ruling families. In both countries, the military establishment abandoned the ruling families, which had become a lightning rod for popular anger, in order to preserve their institutional privileges and end mass demonstrations. That the regimes in Bahrain, Libya, Syria, and Yemen responded to non-violent mass demonstrations with lethal violence also demonstrates that it is in fact the nature of these regimes, rather than the type of political opposition, which underlies their inability and unwillingness to reform.

Ironically, one of the most unanticipated aspects of the current uprisings in the Arab Middle East has been the relatively minimal role played by Islamic political actors, both moderate and otherwise. As with its Arab rulers, the mostly spontaneous street rebellions took the region's Islamic politi-

cal actors by surprise, demonstrating the extent to which these groups had fallen behind in organizing and channeling popular grievances. The reason these groups failed to take the initiative in leading the current uprisings may have had much to do with their long history of victimization at the hands of Arab rulers, as well as the compromises they have been forced to make with these governments in order to survive. After many decades of adapting to these authoritarian regimes, the region's Islamic political leaders have become ill-suited to leading mass demonstrations characterized by non-violent but contentious action. At the same time, currently they are probably most well-positioned group to capitalize on electoral opportunities in Egypt and Tunisia.

Democratization & Moderation

Similarly problematic is the assumption that democratization is facilitated by moderate Islamic movements because these groups are less confrontational and more willing to compromise with the guardians of the old order (i.e., the military). Such beliefs are based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of regional authoritarian rule. In reality, without radical changes to the institutional distribution of power, it is improbable that authoritarian regimes would permit popular participation and greater political pluralism. In this regard, the experiences of moderate Islamic movements in Iran and Turkey are highly instructive.

In the second half of the 1990s, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the secular Turkish Republic witnessed the rise of the most popular and successful moderate Islamic movements in the Middle East. In Iran, a group of Islamic revolutionaries, who had been politically marginalized in the early 1990s, gradually transformed into advocates of political pluralism, civil society and democratic rule. This group also developed a critical reading of the notion of the Islamic state and direct clerical rule. Under this framework, the Islamic Republic of Iran was viewed as prioritizing ephemeral aspects of religion, such as ostentatious acts of piety, over sacred and genuine religiosity characterized by ethics and pure faith.

Throughout the 1990s, Iran's moderates mobilized significant popular support, leading to victories in the country's 1997 presidential election and 2000 parliamentary vote. That the opposition candidates were permitted to win, at the time, set Iran apart from authoritarian Arab countries.

The moderate Islamic political leader and winner of the 1997 presidential election, Mohammed Khatami, eschewed confrontational rhetoric in favor of seeking better relations with the United States and regional countries. Inside Iran, President Khatami cultivated an environment in which a vibrant press emerged, which openly discussed previously taboo issues and actively questioned abuses of power. Yet these reforms soon generated a backlash from hardliners, who held unelected positions at the helm of Iran's most powerful political institutions. To thwart the agenda of Khatami and other reformists, these hardliners utilized legal methods, such as the vetoing of parliamentary legislation and presidential bills, the judicial persecution of outspoken moderates, and the closure of newspapers, as well as violent tactics, such as assassinations and the brutal suppression of demonstrations.

In the end, the moderates failed to counter hardliner strategies, sustaining significant losses in the 2004

parliamentary election as well as losing their 2005 presidential bid. Until Iran's 2009 presidential election, the moderates remained unable to capitalize on their initial successes in mobilizing popular support and pursuing a strategy of contentious mass action. During this period, moderates, instead, preached reconciliation, attempting to find common ground with adversaries who were determined to completely marginalize them. In pursuing this strategy, the moderates failed both to obtain any concessions from the hardliners and to democratize the country's power structure.

Given Turkey's relatively open and competitive political system, the experiences of its Islamic moderates have been more favorable. In contrast to their Iranian counterparts, Turkey's moderate Islamic movement, which reached its apex in the establishment of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) that won the 2002 and 2007 parliamentary elections and is poised to win the June 12, 2011 general elections, has had shallow intellectual roots. There were no Turkish counterparts to Yousefi Eskhevari, Mohsen Kadivar, Mojtaba Shabestari or Abdolkarim Sorush, the Iranian Islamic thinkers who created a robust intellectual framework around the work of that country's moderate politician. Rather, in Turkey, the transformation from Islamic radical to moderate has been a process guided by pragmatism and facilitated by sociological changes and electoral opportunities.

By the early 1990s, the participation of pious Muslims in an expanding public sphere and market economy had facilitated the adoption of modern values of profit making, comfort, entertainment, and pluralism. Consequently, many Islamic activists became more content to pursue an "Islamic life-styles" rather than an "Islamic state." Additionally, it became increasingly clear to a younger generation of Islamic politicians that developing centrist platforms targeting a wide swath of the electorate was the only way to win elections in Turkey's highly fragmented and volatile party system. As a case in point, in the aftermath of the November 2000 and February 2001 crises that devastated the Turkish economy, the AKP focused its platform on economic reconstruction and anti-corruption measures, issues on which it found voters were highly receptive.

While the AKP is often portrayed as the embodiment of moderate Islam and democracy, its policies since 2002 demonstrate that moderation is not always conducive to democratic rights. Since the early 1980s, the two most important obstacles to Turkish democratization have been the military's lack of popular accountability and the restrictions on the rights of the country's religious and ethnic minorities such as the Alevis and Kurds. In terms of the military, the AKP has only been willing to challenge its involvement in politics when the AKP's own political power has been threatened by that institution. For example, the AKP actively sought to reduce the military's political autonomy only after the presidential election crisis in the Spring of 2007 and the constitutional referendum in the Fall of 2010; in both cases, the AKP initiated constitutional amendments that increased the power of directly elected institutions vis-à-vis the military (as well as the high judiciary). With regard to minority rights, there have been only very limited improvement in the rights of Alevis and Kurds during the AKP years. Restrictions on the Kurdish language and violations of human rights in Kurdish regions are still

pervasive, while the Alevi faith continues to be subject to wide-ranging discriminatory measures.

As demonstrated by the examples of Turkey and Iran, the paradox of moderation is that strategies that entail compromises, reconciliation and risk-aversion may actually end up entrenching authoritarian rule and stalling democratic transformation.

Moderates & Foreign Policy

Finally, the assumption that moderate Islamic movements are more likely to pursue "moderate" foreign policies that are conducive to regional peace and stability is problematic, as "moderate foreign policy" is defined in terms of activities that do not run counter to U.S. and Israeli interests. Yet, the example of the AKP challenges this understanding. Since at least 2007, Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East has been characterized by increasing activism and diversification. In 2008, Turkey attempted to facilitate Israeli-Syrian negotiations, took the initiative to resolve the crisis surrounding Iran's nuclear crisis in 2009 and has generally expanded Turkey's commercial, political and cultural ties with the Arab Middle East. Meanwhile, Turkey's relations with Israel have progressively deteriorated, reaching a nadir with the thalassia crisis of May 2010.

However, rather than indicating a definitive shift away from the West, these developments point to the growing complexity of Turkey's political and economic interests. Turkey has continued to maintain a pro-European stance in world affairs, conducts most of its trade with the EU, and remains an important member of NATO. At the same time, there is an increasing divergence between Turkish interests in the Middle East, on the one hand, and U.S. and Israeli interests in the region. The U.S. invasion of Iraq dramatically changed the strategic interests of Turkey and decreased its need to form an alliance with Israel vis-à-vis Syria and Iran. In fact, the revitalization of Kurdish nationalism in the aftermath of the invasion has brought Turkey closer to these latter two states. Moreover, Turkey's increasing economic linkages with the Arab Middle East and widespread opposition amongst the Turkish public to Israeli practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territories substantially influence the AKP government's foreign policy priorities. For Turkey's elites, the political tensions between Iran and the United States are of great concern, as they threaten Turkey's commercial linkages with its eastern neighbor and have serious negative implications for the Turkish economy. In short, as a rising regional power, Turkey is no longer content with remaining beholden to U.S. hegemony in the Middle East. One can reasonably expect that moderate Islamic movements in the Arab world will come to adopt similar positions when they come to power.

Conclusion

It is vital that we rethink the conventional association of Islamic moderation with progressive political change in the Middle East. The way in which moderation has been defined often entails positive normative judgments that are not borne out by the region's historical struggles for human, social and political rights. The experiences of Iranian and Turkish moderates and the current uprisings in the Arab world suggest that contentious yet non-violent action may, in fact, be a more effective facilitator of democratization than the region's moderate Islamic movements.

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Kuwaiti parliament scuffle reveals sectarian cleavages

Sunni and Shiite Parliamentarians exchange blows over Guantanamo inmates

By: David E. Miller

A fistfight between legislators in Kuwait's parliament during a debate over Guantanamo prisoners drew no blood, but it exposed what had been latent sectarian tensions between Sunni and Shiite Muslims in the oil-rich Gulf emirate.

Shiite parliament member Hussein Al-Qallaf sparked the scuffle when he called the two Kuwaiti detainees in the US prison in Cuba "terrorists who belonged to Al-Qa'ida." A Sunni parliament member, Jamaan Al-Harbash of the Muslim Brotherhood, quickly blasted him, saying the session had been called to discuss Guantanamo prisoners and not Al-Qa'ida. Tempers flared and at least two Shiite and four Sunni lawmakers came to blows before parliament speaker Jaseem Al-Khorafi suspended the legislative body till the end of May.

"The scent of sectarian alignment reached the noses of those who attended the meeting," reported the Kuwaiti daily Al-Watan. Kuwait, where Shiites comprise 30% of the country's

population, boasts a robust parliament, the first elected legislature in the Arab Gulf. Nine of 50 Kuwait's parliament members are Shiite.

The pro-Shiite daily Al-Dar reported that Al-Qallaf had decided to press charges against the parliament members who attacked him. According to the daily, an aide to one of the assailants cursed Al-Qallaf, offending his "origin and affiliation."

"What happened in Kuwait reflects dangerous sectarianism, which should worry us," Salman Sheikh, director of the Brookings Doha Center, a Qatar-based think tank, told The Media Line. He said that social unrest in nearby Bahrain, where Shiites comprise a majority of the population, has had a marked effect on Kuwait. Kuwait sent a naval force to Bahrain following Shiite-led protests.

"Kuwaitis are more sensitive to the situation in Bahrain than other Gulf countries, because of their own [demographic] makeup," he said.

Saleh Al-Saeidi, a political commentator for the Kuwaiti daily Al-Qabas, said that sectarian tension between Sunni and Shiite Muslims existed all

across the Gulf. But in Kuwait, with its free press and active parliament, the debate was out in the open rather than hidden.

"Kuwait is accustomed to this tension, but it has channels through which people can vent their grievances; particularly the media," Al-Saeidi told The Media Line. "Secrecy is what causes things to deteriorate. Here everything is out in the open."

Kuwait is ranked first in press freedom among Gulf states, according to a 2010 report by Reporters Without Borders.

Al-Saeidi said the scuffle in the parliament, the first in Kuwait's history, was a result of pent-up political tension rather than an expression of sectarian animosity.

"Al-Qallaf is an ally of the prime minister, and his attackers are oppositionists who always question the prime minister," he said.

According to a diplomatic cable published by the Wikileaks website, the Kuwaiti government refused to rehabilitate ex-Guantanamo detainees in its territory. The cable revealed that in February 2009 Kuwaiti Interior Minister Shaykh Jaber Al-Sabah told American diplomats that the detainees were "rotten" and the best thing would be "to get rid of them."

Relations between Sunnis and Shi-

ites were traditionally good, argued Lindsey Stephenson in an article published in Foreign Policy April 29. Unlike Bahrain, Shiites are well integrated in Kuwait's business sector and the political arena.

"Fortunately, in Kuwait sectarianism has always been a non-starter," she wrote. "Simply put, the Shia are fully Kuwaiti, and have long been regarded as such by the government and Kuwaiti Sunnis."

But things haven't always gone so smoothly. Last September, Kuwait's Interior Minister banned all public protests after the government's decision to strip the citizenship from a contro-

versial Shiite cleric threatened to spark widespread demonstrations.

"Things have gone out of hand in Shiite-Sunni relations," Shafeeq Ghabra, a political scientist at Kuwait University told The Media Line at the time. "People are getting too emotional and there is a cycle of agitation and counter-agitation."

Stephenson admitted that Shiites are increasingly asserting their identity through various insignia, such as the wearing of a particular kind of ring. She said that the increasing rhetorical marginalization of Shiites, particularly in media, ran the risk of making Shiite society more insular and reclusive.

Mounting tension between Kuwait and its Shiite Islamic neighbor Iran did not add to peaceful internal accord, either. In March, Kuwait sentenced three men to death on allegations of belonging to an Iranian spy ring, and the Iranian ambassador was banished from the country. Iran, for its part, has criticized the involvement of Gulf forces, including Kuwait's, in quashing the largely Shiite protests in Bahrain.

But in a sign of rapprochement, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Salehi came to Kuwait on Wednesday and promised the reinstatement of Kuwaiti and Iranian ambassadors in their respective countries.

Obama Libya policy - president breaking the law, claims bipartisan group of lawmakers

By: Marcus Baram
For the Huffington Post

For critics of the Obama administration's decision to bypass Congress before taking military action in Libya, Friday is judgment day.

May 20 is the 60-day deadline for President Barack Obama to get congressional authorization under the War Powers Act, prompting outrage among a bipartisan group of lawmakers who believe that the president is breaking the law. Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) and five of his GOP colleagues sent a letter to Obama, demanding an answer.

"There is a law. It's on the books, and in plain reading of the War Powers Act, he appears to be in violation of the War Powers Act," Paul told CNN.

"To me it's the most important debate we'll ever have up here," Paul added. "If we're going to send someone, your son or my son to war, it's important that it be done properly. And it's important that, if there are constitutional restraints, we obey them."

Rep. Brad Sherman (D-Calif.) was just as emphatic, telling The Huffing-

ton Post, "[t]he War Powers Act is the law of the land, and it is clear. You must withdraw forces from hostilities after 60 days absent authorization from Congress. President Obama should seek authorization for the Libya operations and Congress should debate and vote. Our efforts to bring democracy to Libya should not undermine democracy and the rule of law in the United States."

And Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-Ohio) says he plans to introduce legislation next week to halt the mission. In a statement, Kucinich decried that the administration is "setting the stage for endless war which will bring ruin and poverty."

Though previous presidents have ignored provisions of the act requiring congressional approval before military action, it is unprecedented for the commander-in-chief to blow the 60-day deadline, say presidential scholars.

"Make no mistake: Obama is breaking new ground, moving decisively beyond his predecessors," Yale law professors Bruce Ackerman and Oona Hathaway wrote in the Washington Post on Tuesday. "If nothing happens, history will say that the War Powers Act was condemned to a quiet death by a

president who had solemnly pledged, on the campaign trail, to put an end to indiscriminate warmaking."

Other members of Congress don't seem as concerned.

Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.), who has strongly backed military support for Libyan rebels, says he doesn't think the president needs to get a resolution. "I've never recognized the constitutionality of the War Powers Act, nor has any president, either Republican or Democrat," he said.

The White House did not return calls for comment. But Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee last week that the administration intends to seek congressional authorization, describing it as a "narrow set of authorities."

The mission has already surpassed the \$750 million projected cost at the outset of the NATO operation, with State Department officials estimating that enforcement of the no-fly zone will cost at least \$40 million a month. And UN officials are seeking \$233 million to handle a burgeoning humanitarian nightmare — almost 800,000 refugees have fled Libya in recent months.

Mississippi river flooding: In the crosshairs, a bayou community waits

By: Kris Kirkham
For the Huffington Post

The evening chorus of bullfrogs, crickets and screech owls along the waterfront has seemed louder these last few nights.

The homes are empty. The music and chatter from neighbors has disappeared. The electricity is almost entirely switched off, plunging the remaining holdouts of this hideaway community into pitch-black nights illuminated only by the moon and stars.

In the heart of the nation's largest swamp, Butte La Rose lies in the direct path of floodwaters unleashed last Saturday from the Morganza Floodway, an effort to divert the Mississippi River's force away from Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

But before the water rises here, it must spread out over hundreds of square miles of cypress swamps and bottomlands.

The people of Louisiana have become attuned to disasters over the years, yet the slow creep of rising water through this untamed region has even the hardiest natives on edge.

"Growing up down here, you become acclimated to hurricanes. It's fast-mov-

ing," said full-time resident Michelle McInnis, a native of Hackberry, La., a town walloped by Hurricane Rita more than five years ago. "It's mentally anguishing, this slow rise of the water ... and knowing you can't come back for six weeks."

A surprising number of full-time residents live in this Atchafalaya Basin town, a collection of both dowdy trailer homes and million-dollar fishing retreats with names like "Bar-B-Que and Drink a Few" and "Dad's Pad When Mom's Mad."

There are two ways in to Butte La Rose: a ramp down from Interstate 10 and a floating bridge. By Saturday, the bridge will be off limits, leaving only one entrance. The handful of stores and bars close one by one.

Local sheriff deputies in Army National Guard Humvees constantly patrol the area, making daily rounds to warn anyone left that a mandatory evacuation remains in effect.

The daily checkups have become a sort of joke for Randy Moncrief. He's vowed to watch over "Timbuktu," the two-story red waterfront home owned by his father, until he either runs out of food or can no longer tolerate bathing in the canal behind the house.

"Cleanliness is gonna drive me out,

if anything," Moncrief said. "I've got plenty of shotguns. I'll kill me a rabbit, a gator, a deer, whatever."

Before it comes to that, Moncrief has stocked up freezers and coolers with nearly ten pounds of red beans and rice with sausage, a full frozen brisket, 20 pounds of shrimp and loads of deer sausage.

He's not sure exactly what he'll do for the next three or four weeks. "It'll be some long days," he admitted. His truck is gone, left on higher ground. He has a four-wheeler to traverse high water, if needed.

Moncrief is a product of the Atchafalaya Basin, a wild region of swamplands and marshes west of the Mississippi River. His grandparents trapped nutria and muskrat for years at a "camp" in the middle of the swamp, accessible only by shallow-draft boats.

He said he's used to being surrounded by water. But in recent days, nature has started to rear its head.

Snakes appear in greater abundance, along with alligators. Moncrief was tending to a plant in the backyard three days ago when a snake bit his hand. Shining a flashlight on the canal behind his house at night reveals numerous pairs of red alligator eyes lurking in the waters.

Omani Sultan steers his country away from violence — for now

By: David E. Miller
For the Media Line

Fast action, handouts, companionate leadership nipped unrest in the bud

As political turmoil engulfs the Arab world, Oman has remained nearly unscathed by popular uprisings that have already brought down two Arab leaders and threaten to depose others.

Unrest did briefly surface in the Gulf kingdom in late February when two demonstrators were killed in riots in Sohar, a port and industrial hub located 200 kilometres (124 miles) west of the capital Muscat. A police station and government building were set on fire.

But a swift government response, which included both political moves and economic benefits, succeeded in nipping the protest movement in the bud.

Sultan Qaboos, the country's ruler of over 40 years, sacked 12 ministers including the ministers of trade and industry, economy and interior as part of a broader government reshuffle. He also promised to create 50,000 new jobs, and granted a monthly stipend of 150 riyals (\$390) for job-seekers and raised the minimum wage in the public sector from \$364 to \$520.

On the political level, Qaboos established a committee to examine the prospect of granting legislative powers to the 84-member Shura Council, the country's elected lower house. The parliament currently fills an advisory function only.

"The sultan addressed the protesters' demands even more than they had asked for," Aish Awwas, head of security and military issues at the Sheba Center for Strategic Studies (SCSS), a Yemeni think tank. "He quickly spent large sums of money on the areas of unrest and effectively pulled the rug from underneath the protesters."

Far from threatening or demonizing the protest movement in his country as

did other leaders in the Arab world, Qaboos said the demonstrators were "children of Oman who should be treated wisely."

The oldest independent state in the Arab world, Oman has been ruled by Sultan Qaboos since he seized power from his father, Sultan Said bin Taimur, in a bloodless coup in 1970. Oman doesn't have as much oil or money as many of its Gulf neighbors, but its low-key approach to development has emphasized social progress. That has paid off, with the United Nations saying in 2010 that the country made more progress over the last 40 years than any in the world in education and health.

Gus Freeman, managing director of the Arabian Research Bureau, a Muscat-based consulting and research firm, says the sultan's quick response contributed greatly to quelling the protests.

"The unrest was a surprise," Freeman told The Media Line. "But the sultan acted very quickly."

"When Qaboos took power Omanis termed the event a renaissance," Freeman said. "The recent moves are considered 'a second renaissance.'" Demonstrators never called for the replacement of Qaboos as the country's leader, he added.

Oman has fared dramatically better than its Gulf neighbors experiencing mass protests and unrest. Yemen has been wracked by protests since the start of February that have left nearly 200 dead and forced its president into talks about his stepping down. In Bahrain, the ruler called in Saudi troops to put down a rebellion and declared martial law to quash a rebellion by the kingdom's Shiite majority.

Awwas of SCSS says Oman's superior financial situation, based on abundant natural resources and a small population, was the decisive factor preventing unrest in Oman. Oman produces some 800,000 barrels of oil per day (BPD) and has a population of only three million, whereas Yemen produced only

288,000 BPD with a population of 24 million. At \$2,500, Yemen's per capita gross domestic product is a tenth of Oman's.

But Freeman says unemployment does pose a formidable challenge to Sultan Qaboos, as it does many of the rulers in the Middle East. The jobs offered so far by the Sultan are more an alternative form of social welfare than a real stimulus to the country's economy.

"Today there is a new imperative to create jobs," Freeman said. "Companies have so far relied on cheap imported labour, but from now on they may start employing locals who are more expensive but also more productive."

Oman hasn't completely quieted down since February, though. Hundreds of protesters took to the streets of the port city of Salalah on May 6, demanding an end to corruption and democratic reform. In early April, police arrested 57 people in a crackdown on protests in the northern industrial city of Sohar.

Indeed, a small group of protesters had been encamped outside the Shura Council building in Muscat since February, bemoaning unemployment. One protester, Basma Al-Kiyumi, told BBC in late April that even after the Sultan's moves, the country was still "a bomb waiting to explode."

Last Thursday, soldiers moved in on another protest camp as night fell over Salalah, the country's second-largest city, dispersing demonstrators demanding higher salaries and more jobs. Clashes between security forces and protesters and arrests reportedly continued the next day and into the weekend.

Freeman added that the Oman labour market was undergoing a process of "Omanization," where entire sectors have been given quotas the percentage of Omani employees be put on payrolls. Some sectors, such as the transportation, have achieved the target of 100% Omani employees. "This move makes reliance on cheap expat labour more difficult," Freeman said.

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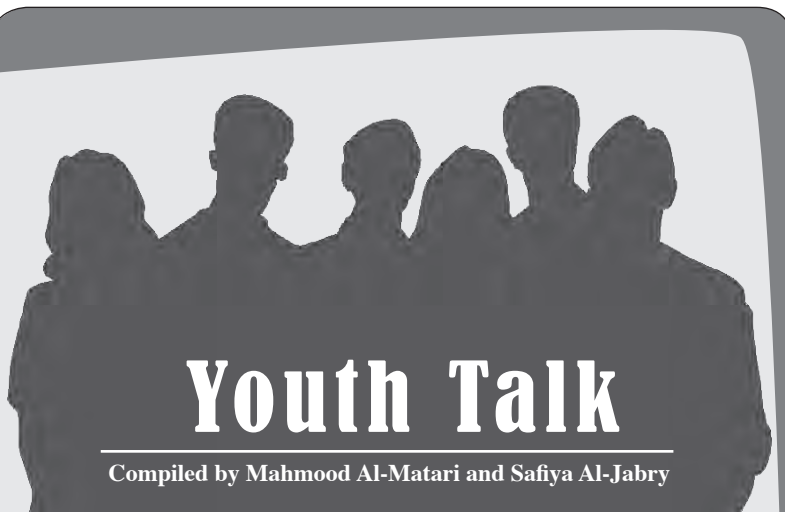
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'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.'

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, article 1



Youth Talk

Compiled by Mahmood Al-Matari and Safiya Al-Jabry

In this section we talk to young people about their concerns, hopes and dreams. Every week we hit the streets and share what young people have to say right here.

This week's question:

Are protest marches beneficial or do they only serve to force a violent response from security forces?

Abduakarim Obyan

I agree with peaceful marches and closure of governmental institutions because these buildings are owned by the people, it is one of the only ways to send a clear message to an obstinate ruler. However, the regime uses such actions as a pretext to carry out violent actions against peaceful, unarmed protesters.

Nabil Al-Ahmadi

I can say and trust what I say - the Yemeni youth revolution is peaceful and will succeed because they are Yemeni youth. We aren't subject to foreign influence and we don't use violence or vandalize private property. What have we done to illicit such a violent response from security forces? Do we deserve the violence because we want a decent life? Because we demand the end of corruption in our nation?

It is the job of security forces to protect citizens, not to terrorize them and kill them as they have done to peaceful protesters across Yemen.

Khalid Al-Karimi

Sporadic marches are not enough to strike fear in the heart of a leader like Saleh. Each protest costs many lives whereas the man at helm falsely denounces the revolutionaries as the firebrand of violence and sabotage. Without a doubt, to have a siege on the Presidential Palace can never be attained for granted. We have grown bored of routine marches. Okay, what will efficaciously work? Protesters across the nation necessitate an orderly decisive march with no intention to retreat. Yes, people will die, but this revolution cannot be won without sacrifice. The protesters' motto is "Triumph or Martyrdom." If they speak seriously then they will take charge and march fearlessly. If they don't, marches are futile.

Sami Shamlan

I think a march on the palace would be suicide. If we see how many people have killed before they marched to the office of prime minister it is a huge number, 14 martyrs in the end. President Ali Saleh called for civil war in his last speech at Al Sabeen Square and called on his supporter to protect public services. Finally, if protesters march on the palace, it will be a crazy decision. All of them will be killed.

Amr Al-Najar

The marches which organized in all cities towards governmental institutes are peaceful movements, but it's combating with violence and live bullets from security forces, we aren't turbulent, and that's rage us. In my opinion to prosperity out revolution, the revolutionists must detect marched Day on the government palace with their weapons, not naked breasts. The regime apathetic they are bare or not, Wed, marched proven that. On otherwise, even collective sacrificed committed, we are in people revolution, it's cheap on blood to get freedom.

Aamer Mohammed Ahmed

In my opinion, any march towards the presidential palace, is a blunder act, and fault, because any miscalculation by the president Saleh or by the protesters whether the opposition parties or the youth could lead to massacres and chaos that would not be easily stopped in the short term. Ali Saleh must go out from the power but protesters must keep their peaceful revolution from the violent and bloodshed. So I think that, the Gulf initiative is the best opportunity for Yemeni political groups to end their conflict and save face, without incurring heavy losses. It preserves Yemen's security, stability, and unity, while the same time preventing bloodshed. Eventually I appealed all the interested parties to stop their inciting the people to fight one other and attacking on the public and private properties.

Next Week's Question:

If the Gulf initiative was signed will items implemented? If it is not signed what would happened after that?

Follow this section for a new question every week and feel free to reply with your answers or feedback by sending an e-mail to yttyouth@gmail.com

So this is your chance to share your humorous stories, poems or opinions with other young readers!



One of 13 protesters that were killed on 11 May as security forces and snipers opened fire on a group of demonstrators

Photo by Jeb Boone

Thinking for yourself

By: Hanan Mohammed
h.dorso22@yahoo.com

Taking a decision is so hard because the consequences of this decision will return to you either positively or negatively. So most people, though not all, when they have a choice to make will either run away or depend on someone else's decision in order not to use their own mind for a while.

Going deeper into this topic is to open another door. It is opinion. In fact, expressing opinions involves countless concepts, but I will shed light on my own simple understanding. The opinion is a shadow that reflects who you are,

not who others are.

When we were children, we didn't use to express our opinions. If we opened our mouth to say one single word, older people would say, "You are still children. You don't understand. Go and play."

When we get older, we try to contradict our parents' opinions, or others who are older than us. They tell us "be polite with those who are older than you. You have to follow their opinion." In fact, this is the way that most young men are raised. Copying other's opinions whether they are true or false.

Actually, what pushed me to write about this topic is a something that attracted my attention in the street. I saw two boys talking about a political issue.

They started with expressing opinions, each one belonging to a different party, and they ended with a bloody fight. So parents reap what they plant on their children.

Honestly, it is only just a smaller view reflecting the larger one playing out these days in Yemen. Every one sticks to his opinion, whatever it is, and he is not ready to think with his own mind. Not only because of his opinion, but the opinions of others he carries.

No one accepts other's views, not only because they have different opinions, but because they consider people who contradict them as their enemy.

Using your own mind is the only tool to judge what you are saying, and doing,

Not what you were raised on, and what others say.

Wearing your glasses to see what is happening around you is much better than wearing someone else's glasses of different colors.

Accepting others' opinions and whatever contradicts your own opinion is the best evidence of reaching a higher progression in thinking. Looking at the problem from different corners is wiser than seeing it from only a single narrow perspective.

I am proud to say, if people in the whole world have advanced knowledge and reach higher positions in thinking, Yemeni people have wisdom which is greater than anything else.

Time for unity in Pakistan

By: Khalid Aziz
From the Dawn Newspaper
20th May 2011

After the 9/11 attack, the US began to put together its response to global terrorism based on its wealth and power.

The US is a strategic gorilla in a world of middling and poor states. It accounts for a huge 23 percent of the world's GDP and is also the biggest spender on the means of war - a whopping 43 percent of the global military expenditure.

The other nations don't come anywhere near these statistics. In another context, such abilities give the US an opportunity to define developments, at the same time providing the country the luxury of making mistakes and recovering from these fairly easily.

Clearly its excellence in leadership and knowledge of global issues are formidable as we discovered in the unearthing of Osama bin Laden in our midst.

Pakistan, the other player in Osama's story, is a nation of 180 million people and sits astride one of the most sensitive locations in Asia. Its geographic location is both a bane and an asset. It is an asset if used for trade and commerce, but a

liability when the security demands of the neighborhood are considered.

Pakistan's security managers have long dominated the country's politics and commanded its resources due to the

prioritization of security over trade.

Thus Pakistan's people and infrastructure both remain marginalized. Paucity of the resources required to run the state has made Pakistan dependent on external funds that in turn has permitted undue foreign influence to dominate Pakistan's policies.

Despite being a nuclear power, the management of state institutions remains below par. Poverty abounds as investment in the people is low. At the same time, we have relied on religion to bind the country together - a narrative reinforced after the decade-long Mujahideen war in the 1980s. Today, the same religious extremists frequently used as proxy warriors, are tearing Pakistan apart.

After the May 1-2 raid in Abbottabad and the discovery of Osama, Pakistan's civil-military leadership has come out poorly. It is shocking to be found with stolen goods in our front yard; it is a failure of the state managers and not the people. Pakistan is being set up to pay a high price in some form unless the arrest of Osama itself was a set-up.

Unfortunately, when our parliament speaks of the violation of our sovereignty in the context of this matter it doesn't hold.

States like human beings are not equal - some are more powerful than others and there is one country that has the capacity to cause immense pain and hardship to us, and that is the US.

One might be thinking: "Hey, this person is taking me to the market to be sold." I have nothing of the kind in

mind. However, I do recommend the exercise of rational thinking for the long-term survival of a normal and a peaceful Pakistan.

In order to succeed, we need to revisit many of our fondest strategic paradigms since that is where the problem lies. Our limited military capacity does not warrant the role that we have assumed.

Secondly, we have known for a long time that the more proxy wars we fight, the weaker we become. In order to get out of this, we need to transform our narrative from being exclusive to one that celebrates diversity; resisting this transition will be suicidal.

In a recently held Shura meeting of the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan, three important issues were reportedly discussed.

Hakimullah Mehsud swore that but for the drones he would have taken over Islamabad. In another exchange over suicide bombings, the Shura was told by a participant that innocents have died in every revolution; if the Shura had qualms it could compensate those who were considered innocent after they had achieved power!

Will the US exit from Afghanistan? It is unlikely - 40-50,000 troops will remain in that country in the foreseeable future. Societies in Afghanistan and Pakistan have been radicalized and it will take more than a generation to make them neutral. Thus the war will not end with the exit of the US from the region. If that is the case, what should Pakistan do?

It is clear that our strategic policies are beyond our financial capacities. The money needed for implementing them combined with the cost of internal security is crippling us. Unfortunately, the dearth of leadership in Pakistan is delaying the change necessary. We have no statesman; only carpetbaggers masquerading as democrats.

Our major political parties are managed by dynastic leaders who place their own interests before Pakistan's. Although democratic political forums have the right to lead the nation and solve the people's problems, we still see them wasting time on rhetoric rather than taking effective action to solve problems.

Clearly, the need of the hour is to stand united. Now is not the time to blame each other. The political and military leadership are sons of the soil and must know that they will have to work together as institutions, not personal fiefdoms. Whatever the differences between them, the civil and military leadership must work jointly to take the nation out of its current crisis.

Secondly this is a good opportunity to rationalize our security doctrine and the national narrative that must reflect principles of universal peace and brotherhood. Pakistanis were surprised to learn of Osama bin Laden's presence in Abbottabad. Let us use this embarrassment to good effect and become stronger and wiser by reforming ourselves. Pakistan's future lies in building relations of peace with all its neighbors.

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Photos by Minal S.

While most of Aden's shops, businesses and hotels remain closed as part of a civil disobedience campaign, the beauty of the coastal city endures as a reminder of a once thriving tourist industry in Yemen's largest southern city.

The center of some of the heaviest police crackdowns in Yemen, Aden has been under a curfew for a great deal of time since anti-government protests began sweeping across the country in January.

Should Yemen's period of civil strife and uprising come to a close, tourist from around the world, other parts of the Arab Gulf and from governorates around Yemen will be able to enjoy the splendor of Aden yet again.

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