



# Middle East Studies In Review

2010-2011

April 2012



Middle East Studies

at the Marine Corps University

## About Marine Corps University

Marine Corps University (MCU) provides educational opportunities, under the auspices of Education Command, Training and Education Command, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Quantico, Virginia, to enlisted members and officers from all branches of the United States armed forces, civilian interagency personnel, and international officers. A continuous pursuit of knowledge throughout the career of a Marine is central to the Marine Corps' educational philosophy. As such, MCU works closely with the College of Distance Education and Training to provide students with the most rigorous, challenging, and diverse curricula possible to properly prepare them for increased levels of responsibility so that they can meet the challenges of the national security environment. Additionally, through the History Division and the National Museum of the Marine Corps, MCU preserves, promotes, and displays the history and heritage of the Marine Corps.

## Middle East Studies In Review 2010-2011

The *Review* is available both in print and electronically through the MES website at [www.mcu.usmc.mil](http://www.mcu.usmc.mil) under the "Middle East" tab as well as on Facebook at [middleeaststudies.mcu](http://middleeaststudies.mcu). For information on obtaining print copies, please contact Mr. Adam C. Seitz, Senior Research Associate at MES, [seitzac@grc.usmcu.edu](mailto:seitzac@grc.usmcu.edu), telephone number (703) 432-5260.

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# MES Mission Statement

The mission of Middle East Studies at Marine Corps University is to serve as the Marine Corps' center of expertise on the Middle East and, more broadly, Pakistan and Afghanistan in order to deepen the Marine Corps' understanding of this critical region and to link the Marine Corps to the broader academic, intergovernmental, and international Middle East studies community.

Middle East Studies (MES) accomplishes this mission by:

- 1) Analyzing and assessing current events, regional trends, U.S. policy decisions and strategies, and the cultural and historical complexity of the region;
- 2) Conducting and publishing academic research related to Middle East and South/Central Asia;
- 3) Leading classes, supporting student papers, and offering lectures and discussions on the Middle East and South/Central Asia to Marine Corps University (MCU) schools and other U.S. Armed Forces professional military education institutions;
- 4) Providing lectures and discussions on the Middle East and South/Central Asia to other services and U.S. Government agencies, foreign governments and militaries, and academia/non-governmental agencies;
- 5) Representing the Marine Corps and MCU at conferences and seminars related to MES's areas of responsibility.

# Forward

We at the Marine Corps University's Middle East Studies continually seek ways to present internal and partnered research and analysis in order to enrich the Marine Corps' understanding of the complex security environment of the Middle East. As part of the effort to provide accessible, relevant information for Marines and the broader defense community, we began three forms of publications. The Middle East Studies Occasional Paper Series, the first issue published in June 2011, aims to disseminate original, peer-reviewed research papers on a wide variety of subjects pertaining to the Middle East, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The MES Monograph Series, the first issue published in August 2011, focuses on timely subjects of strategic relevance to the current and future U.S. professional military education community and is meant to be published quickly to address fast-developing situations. The third and final publication forum is the Middle East Studies *Insights*, published bi-monthly since January 2010 as the newsletter of MES. This publication features short analytical pieces as well as information on events organized by MES and provides a forum for debate with our readers.

It gives me great honor to present this collection of *Middle East Studies In Review 2010-2011*. This collection contains most of the articles appearing in the first two volumes of MES *Insights*. Some of the pieces are current and indeed forward-looking while others deal with past events that continue to have links to issues of strategic and tactical concern today. These short articles are listed thematically. Furthermore, the *Review* informs readers of MES activities and of selected engagements by MES staff during the period of 2010-2011.

The articles in the *Review*, while representing the breadth and depth of the scope of MES's research, also demonstrate MES's gradual shift of emphasis from the Afghanistan-Pakistan theater of operations to the broader Middle East, the region for which MES was initially formed. With this reorientation on the Middle East, the mission of MES remains the same. We will continue to offer our analysis and assessment of current events and regional trends as well as the cultural and historical complexity of this strategically important region, all the while being mindful of our primary task to serve as a tool in the advancement of the MCU students and community and sister Professional Military Education institutions.

I am looking forward to your continued engagement with our work and to your support by providing us with guidance, criticism, and encouragement.

Amin Tarzi  
Director, Middle East Studies  
Marine Corps University



# MES Insights: Iran

MES Insights • Volume 1, Issue 1 • January 2010

## Iran at a Crossroad

by Amin Tarzi and Adam C Seitz

The Islamic Republic of Iran is at a crossroad. 2009 closed with the Islamic Republic regime witnessing the most fundamental challenges to its rule over Iran. As a result both the regime in power and the country of Iran begin the year 2010 with more uncertainty than at any other time in the thirty years since the triumph of the Islamic revolution. The uncertainty in Iran not only translates into insecurity for the regime, but also for the region and beyond, as the regime flexes its muscles to demonstrate relevance and authority. This presents a challenging security environment. Chief among the growing security challenges are Tehran's continued defiance in negotiations over its nuclear program, and the weakening of the chains of commands which hitherto had kept Tehran from stepping beyond certain redlines in projecting its influence beyond its borders. Which way is Iran heading?

### **Nuclear Negotiations and International Security Issues**

The issues surrounding Iran's nuclear program continued to go unresolved. Revelations, such as the discovery of the undeclared Fordow underground nuclear enrichment facility near Qom, have only created more questions and concerns over Iran's true intentions. Tehran continues to walk a tight rope with regards to its nuclear program. The Iranian leadership appears to make concessions and keep dialogue open with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) by suggesting alternatives to the P5+1 backed IAEA offer to ship the bulk of Iran's low-enriched uranium to Russia and France for conversion into nuclear fuel for a medical research reactor in Tehran. Thus far, the alternatives Tehran has offered, ranging from gradual shipments of its uranium "abroad" to shipping the uranium to the Iranian island of Kish, do little, if anything, to ease security concerns. They can only be viewed as attempts to stall talks and avoid sanctions or other more robust action by the international community, all the while Tehran moves forward with its nuclear program.

If obtaining nuclear fuel for "peaceful" use had been the sincere objective for Tehran, accepting the proposal agreed to in principle by Iran during the October 2009 negotiations held in Geneva ought to have been sufficient. Therefore, little doubt should remain that Tehran's ultimate objective in its nuclear policies is something other than securing nuclear fuel for its planned power plants and other legitimate uses.

Exacerbating the nuclear dilemma in the past year was Tehran's repeated missile tests, increased Iranian political and military support of militant groups not limited to the Middle East region, and provocations against specific targets in Iran's neighborhood and beyond. As nuclear negotiations drag on, Tehran is taking this opportunity to rearm and position its proxies in the region. Throughout 2009 the international community witnessed an increase in the frequency and size of



Iran-origin weapons shipments seized en-route to militants throughout the Middle East, raising concerns that Tehran is preparing for confrontation with the West through proxies in the event of a bolder action against the Islamic Republic or as a leverage in gaining a better deal in the nuclear negotiation roundabouts.

### **Domestic Insecurity and Leadership Issues**

Prior to the highly disputed June 2009 presidential election and the internal fallout which has followed it, there was some sense that the Islamic Republic had a defined, albeit complicated and convoluted, leadership structure. The supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was the final arbiter, and he and his office acted as a source of ultimate legitimacy within the regime. Khamenei, while not omnipotent within the system, was clearly the person who stood, at least in the public perception, outside of the wrangling of Iran's multifaceted power structure and was the one who checked and balanced various forces competing for primacy within the regime. However, Khamenei's blatant support of Mahmud Ahmadinejad prior to the election and after his disputed victory has stripped the Supreme Leader of any aura of impartiality that he had retained. The massive protests which have rocked Tehran and other Iranian cities since June and the government's brutal suppression of these protests have left a greater rift in many Iranian decision-making apparatus, illustrating the limits of Khamenei's power and control over the system in charge in Iran. All the while as the Iranian leadership continues to scramble to regain order and legitimacy, the door has been opened for the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) to step in amid the power struggle with clinched fists to fill the power vacuum.

It is too early to predict that Iran is turning into a shadowy military dictatorship unofficially headed by elements within the IRGC. But it is becoming clearer that there are major rifts among civilian political circles and also among the clergy, leaving the hardliners in the IRGC ranks as the power-brokers and eventual deciders of the course of action for the Islamic Republic.

The internal threats to the security of the Iranian regime and the apparent lack of resolute leadership among the traditional civilian forces in charge in Tehran have created concerns about a host of issues; prime among them for the international community are the Iranian regime's threat perceptions and the IRGC's reaction to further domestic unrest. Beyond questions about gross violations of human rights currently taking place against protestors and political opponents of the regime, the two aforementioned interrelated dilemmas are likely to be key questions facing the international community regarding Iran this year.

To address the first dilemma, the international community needs to anticipate and prepare for the Iranian regime's reaction should the domestic upheaval gain momentum. It is likely that the regime will continue to accelerate the pursuit of nuclear technology beyond peaceful uses to gain more legitimacy for the system and bolster nationalistic fervor among Iranians, both in concrete actions and also in opaque actions aimed at raising more concerns about Iran's nuclear program. Tehran seems to be calculating that by inviting more international condemnation for its nuclear activities, it can divert attention from its internal problems and also to blame the international community for fomenting those problems. Incorporating this understanding effectively into negotiation strategies and engagement planning is critical to advancing the international community's position in the region.

The second challenge is about Iran's leadership. Is there an individual or an identifiable institution, other than the IRGC, with which the international community could continue to negotiate the fate of Iran's nuclear program as 2010 begins? In desperation, Tehran might gamble to invite harsher international actions as a diversionary tactic. With lack of decisive leadership and with access to advanced nuclear technology, this could be a dangerous gamble for all involved. It is imperative to identify in the near-term an empowered, acceptable interlocutor that can be a reliable partner at the table.

As 2010 begins, Iran – both regime and country – is at a crossroad. Which path will it take? This will depend heavily on internal pressures, of course. However, the international community has a hand to play as well. It is in the playing that the course will be determined.

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MES Insights • Volume 1, Issue 5 • November 2010

## MES Launches Iran Lecture Series

by Adam C Seitz

As part of an effort to broaden the Marine Corps knowledge of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Middle East Studies (MES) at Marine Corps University launched a lecture series entitled “Framing the Iranian Challenge.”

The first two lectures in the series were presented by Dr. Kenneth Katzman, of the Congressional Research Service, and Mr. Simon Shercliff, from the British Embassy in Washington. Both lectures highlighted the complexities of framing the Iranian challenge and moving forward with engagement Tehran and meaningful negotiations with regards to its nuclear program.

MES kicked off its Iran Lecture Series with a presentation by Dr. Katzman entitled “Iran’s Revolutionary Guard: Facing Challenges Foreign and Domestic.” Dr. Katzman provided an overview of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC) as it faces both internal and external challenges, which are not purely military, brought on by growing international pressure on the Islamic Republic to end its nuclear program.

Dr. Katzman’s presentation provided insight into the evolution of the IRGC, from defender of the Iranian regime to a “business conglomerate, active in all spheres of the Iranian economy.” He laid out how this evolution has made the IRGC susceptible to international pressure on Iran to end its nuclear program, in the form of sanctions. This susceptibility has highlighted growing schisms in the Guard Corps as their business interests are threatened by the implementation and expansions of sanctions imposed on the IRGC by the United Nations Security Council.

In the second lecture in the series entitled “A British Perspective in Negotiating with Iran,” Mr. Shercliff shared Dr. Katzman’s view that the overwhelming international support for the latest round of Security Council sanctions, as well as supplemental actions taken by individual nations, is working to curb Iran’s nuclear program by making it more difficult for anyone to do business with Tehran.

Through the lens of his diplomatic post in Tehran as a political officer in the British Embassy from May 2000 to July 2003, as well as his experience from his subsequent postings in Baghdad and Kabul, Mr. Shercliff presented his “10 Iranian Negotiation Tactics”, expressing some optimism as to the effectiveness of the “carrot and stick” approach that has been employed by the international community to curb Iran’s nuclear ambitions. He highlighted the slow progress of Iran’s nuclear program over the last three decades. However, Mr. Shercliff cautioned that the perception of an Iranian nuclear program, no matter the actual pace of progress in such a program, is a destabilizing factor in the region.

Dr. Katzman and Mr. Shercliff's presentations laid the groundwork for framing the Iranian challenge with an assessment of the evolution and current state of the IRGC, the effectiveness of current policies aimed at deterring Iran's nuclear ambitions, the complexities of negotiating with Tehran, and what is at stake should Iran continue along its current path.

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MES Insights • Volume 2, Issue 5 • November 2011

## Iran's Internal Dynamics

by Amin Tarzi

Since its establishment in 1979, the Islamic Republic of Iran has never been free of political intrigue. However, since the disputed June 2009 presidential election, the level of intrigue has increased. And the recent public rift between the two highest office holders – the unelected supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and the elected president, Mahmud Ahmadinejad – may very well be pushing Iran and the Islamic Republic regime close to the brink. While the denouement of this latest political wrangling has yet to be written, the “writing on the wall” suggests that the results will be anything but anti-climatic.

Prior to the 2009 presidential election and the internal fallout that ensued, the Islamic Republic's leadership structure, while perplexing and labyrinthine, was intelligible. The office of the supreme leader was, both on paper and in fact, the final arbiter, an impartial entity external to and above the governing administrative structures. The person of Khamenei and his position served as the source of ultimate legitimacy within the Islamic Republic regime and as the regime's guardian. That all changed with the Supreme Leader's blatant and unquestioned support of Ahmadinejad prior to the election and after his controversial victory. This action removed any lingering sense that the office of the supreme leader and the person of Khamenei were impartial and above political machinations and manipulations. [1]

While most of the world's attention was focused on the activities of the popular opposition and its Green Revolution after the controversial electoral outcome, a rift emerged between the Supreme Leader and his chosen candidate, the reelected President. The alliance formed for political expediency prior to the 2005 presidential election to keep the pragmatist and reformist camps from political position and strengthened in the run up to the 2009 election now seemed to be unraveling. The confident, newly reelected President began asserting his independence and, in the minds of the conservatives aligned with Khamenei, deviating from the correct path of the Islamic Revolution. In boxing terms, the gloves came off. In July 2009, the president appointed Esfandiar Rahim Mashaei as the first vice president, but Khamenei pressured Ahmadinejad to reverse the appointment. While caving to this demand of the Supreme Leader, Ahmadinejad challenged Khamenei by appointing Mashaei as his chief of staff. Furthermore, in December, Ahmadinejad, reportedly per insistence of Mashaei, fired his foreign minister, Manouchehr Motaki while the latter was on an official visit to Africa. Motaki's dismissal was regarded as a rebuke to Khamenei for preventing Mashaei's appointment to the post of first vice presidency. The tensions between the office of the president and that of the supreme leader continued to escalate, and mostly in public, until the two offices came to blows over Ahmadinejad's dismissal and his forced reinstatement of intelligence minister, Haydar Moslehi, in April 2011. The growing animosity between the two men

and their respective offices is evidence of the widening crack in the Islamic Republic's governing regime, something not seen since the very early days of the revolution.

### **IRGC Flexes Its Muscle**

Lieutenant General Mohammad Ali Jafari, Commander of Islamic Revolution Guard Corps (IRGC), declared in a July 2011 interview that the IRGC, acting as commissars of Iran's judicial branch, arrested a number of deviant individuals on charges of economic and moral violations. [2] These individuals also happened to have close ties to supporters of Ahmadinejad and Mashaei, or the true figures of the "digressive current," as Jafari insinuated. What this announcement suggests is that the IRGC is seeking to expand its authority within the Islamic Republic regime. Yes, the IRGC has in the past warned former president Mohammad Khatami not to stray too far off the path of the Islamic Revolution; however, it was done via private correspondence, not via the press and not without the usual deference to the office of the supreme leader to which the IRGC is subservient. The IRGC's main mission is to safeguard the Islamic Revolution, including the office of the supreme leader. Throughout the existence of the Islamic Republic, the powers of the judiciary have been kept, at least ostensibly, outside the authority of the IRGC. Jafari's public declaration that his forces are in fact acting as enforcers of the law is a potential game changer and is an affirmation of what was anticipated in the first issue of the Middle East Studies Insights, in January 2010, that "as the Iranian leadership continues to scramble to regain order and legitimacy, the door has been opened for the... IRGC to step in amid the power struggle with clinched fists to fill the power vacuum... leaving the hardliners in the IRGC ranks as the powerbrokers and eventual deciders of the course of action for the Islamic Republic." [3] The power balance has shifted. With Khamenei's unprecedented overt support of Ahmadinejad and the subsequent public sparring between former allies, Khamenei and his office lost much credibility, becoming more dependent on the IRGC for safeguarding the Islamic Republic regime and thus, changing the relationship between the supreme leader and the IRGC from one of leader and follower to that of interdependency for mutual survival.

### **Elimination of the Presidential System?**

Khamenei in a recent speech reinforced the elevated position of his office, stressing that the role of the office of the supreme leader was to manage not administer and that he, as leader, was charged with overseeing the administrative branches of the government and guarding the general direction of the Islamic Republic regime. He also hinted during that speech that if necessary the Islamic Republic might change the current presidential system into a parliamentary system of government [4]. This was no veiled threat. Through this speech, Khamenei issued a warning to Ahmadinejad and his supporters that they as individuals as well as the top elected administrative branch of government could be sacrificed if required to safeguard the Islamic Republic regime and that he, Khamenei, has the authority to carry this out. But does he?

### **End of the Islamic Republic?**

The question remains whether Khamenei and the office of the supreme leader enjoy the level of support that they had prior to 2005, especially in light of the 2009 election and ensuing political maneuvering. If not, then that leaves room for the IRGC to "insert self" as the true guardian of the administrative systems of the Islamic Republic and to sideline the office of the supreme leader or to alter its authorities if the Islamic Republic regime or the IRGC itself requires it. This would end the Islamic Republic of Iran as we know it since 1979. In a twist of irony, Ahmadinejad, the man who has come to personify all that is negative about the regime in Tehran, may in fact be the

albatross that is now hanging on the neck of the Islamic Republic.

**Iran's Internal Dynamics Notes:**

[1] Amin Tarzi and Adam Seitz, "Iran at a Crossroad" *MES Insights*, Volume 1, Issue 1, January 2010.

[2] "Sepah zabet-e dastgah-e qazayi dar barkhord ba jaryan-e enherafi ast" Mehr News Agency, 5 July 2011, [www.mehrnews.com/fa/NewsPrint.aspx?NewsID=1351670](http://www.mehrnews.com/fa/NewsPrint.aspx?NewsID=1351670), accessed 3 November 2011.

[3] Tarzi and Seitz, "Iran at a Crossroad".

[4] "Bayanat-e rahbar-e muazam-e enqelab dar didar ba daneshgahyan-e ostane Kermanshah" The Office of the Supreme Leader Sayyid Ali Khamenei, 16 October 2011, [www.leader.ir/langs/fa/print.php?sec=bayanat&id=8729](http://www.leader.ir/langs/fa/print.php?sec=bayanat&id=8729), accessed 31 October 2011.

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# MES Insights: Afghanistan and Pakistan

MES Insights • Volume 1, Issue 2 • March 2010

## ANA Visitors Suggest Constructive Steps During Meeting with MES

by Amin Tarzi

A high-level delegation from the Afghan National Army's (ANA) 205th Corps participated in a roundtable discussion organized by the Middle East Studies (MES) at Marine Corps University during their early 2010 visit to the Marine Corps Base Quantico. During the productive exchange, the ANA delegation made several suggestions which, if implemented, they argued, would not only improve the morale and quality of the Afghan forces, but also would lead to better communication between the ANA and their U.S. and other international partners and trainers.

According to the ANA delegation, one of the principal reasons people join the opposition is the lack of access to viable jobs and education for average Afghans – two interrelated factors, they maintained. They argued for more strategic planning on job creation and emphasis to be placed on developing the indigenous Afghan labor market, integrating them into the countless development projects underway in Afghanistan. This would have the dual benefit of strengthening the bonds between people and their government and preventing them from joining in the destructive work of the insurgents.

To improve the viability of the ANA, the Afghan delegation proposed providing English language training for ANA volunteers. They argued this has both short-term and long-term advantages for the military and for Afghanistan writ large. First, while foreign forces rotate in and out, the ANA remains, providing a stable, consistent force. Investing in English language training would maximize the return on language training investment and facilitate relations between ANA and the U.S. and other international partners.

Furthermore, they added, there are direct economic benefits for both ISAF and Afghanistan's overall economic and security calculations. The ANA representatives pointed out that the imported interpreters from the United States and elsewhere at a great expense had severe inadequacies in the Pashto language and limited understanding of military language and culture and challenge the sensitivities of ANA personnel who, while asked to sacrifice much, cannot even imagine the benefits these individuals – whom they perceive as equals or less qualified – receive. The incentive for individuals' participating in the language training would be the hope of finding a more lucrative job after their military service ends, one of which could be as an ISAF interpreter. These interpreters would be less costly, as they are local, and would bring their military and cultural experiences, eliminating the inadequacies present in the current pool of available interpreters. Moreover, they continued that there could be a positive effect on accessions once the word got out



that joining the ANA opens up doors to better opportunities, fixing ANA as a viable organization in the minds of the local population. Finally, they argued that the salaries provided to these interpreters vice their non-local counterparts would be reinvested into the Afghan economy and help in the overall rebuilding of that country and the Afghanization process of that process.

The suggestions by the ANA delegation may not respond to the short-term requirements of the U.S. forces on the ground in Afghanistan; however, they may merit consideration because of their potential long-term benefits.

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MES Insights • Volume 1, Issue 2 • March 2010

## MES AfPak Lecture Series Presents a History of Nationalism in Afghanistan

by Adam C Seitz

As part of an effort to expand the understanding of Pashtun people within the Marine Corps PME community and beyond, the Middle East Studies (MES) at Marine Corps University (MCU) launched a lecture series entitled “A Multidisciplinary Approach to the AfPak Region and Its People.”

The lecture series incorporated the ISAF Commander’s Summer 2009 counterinsurgency and stability operations guidance for Afghanistan into the Marine Corps PME to “embrace the people”, “partner with the ANSF”, “build governance and accountability”, and “get better everyday” by giving Marines a better understanding of the Pashtun population.

The first two lectures in the series were presented by Dr. James Caron, of the University of Pennsylvania, and Professor Robert McChesney, from New York University. Both lectures deepened the Marine Corps knowledge of the Pashtun people and challenged some perceptions about the history of Afghan governance and the Pashtun tribes.

MES at MCU kicked off its MES AfPak Lecture Series, with a presentation by Dr. Caron entitled “Social and Political Dissent in Pashtu Poetry: The Case of Malang Jan.” Dr. Caron provided a different perspective of the Pashtun people and shed new light on the history and role of tribes in the AfPak region. He discussed the history of the Pashtun tribal structure, how Pashtu poetry has been used as a form of political and social dissent, and where this dissent was targeted. Dr. Caron argued that “in the case of Malang Jan, his poetry was often directed at domestic critique of the Afghan power structure, especially tribal hierarchies. Oral poets of eastern Afghanistan, including Malang Jan, tend to emphasize tribal elders, not as natural representative leaders of a collective tribe, but as autocratic rulers who are most interested in personal gain and self-preservation.” Pashtun poetry was not limited to localized tribalism, but rather it was larger and more nationalistic, reaching out to a greater audience helping to shape public opinion. The nationalist sentiments in Malang Jan’s poetry challenge some of current trends of thought which argue that Afghans are tribal and therefore do not have desire to be a part of a greater Afghan national identity.

Dr. Caron’s presentation provided insight into Afghanistan’s history of nationalism, as revealed

through Pashtun poetry. He discussed how this nationalism was spread throughout Pashtun society, even beyond the border of modern-day Afghanistan, and was seen as a real and popular challenge to the tribal system. The argument Dr. Caron presented challenged the idea the tribes are the answer to governance and security in Afghanistan.

In the second lecture in the series entitled “Afghans’ View of Afghanistan’s History”, Professor McChesney presented an argument that furthered the notion of a history of an Afghan nation and an Afghan national identity through an examination of historical texts. Through these texts, Professor McChesney presented an Afghan view of their master narrative. This narrative provides insight into the creation of an Afghan national identity, not an identity based on a tribal norms, but rather on something greater, transcending subnational identities. The narrative shows the formation of a nation state, bringing together myriad tribes, ethnicities, and cultures under a created Afghan national identity, and set forth a national chain of command with Kabul taking control of an Afghan nation with sovereignty within established borders, dating at least as far back as the late nineteenth century.

Professor McChesney and Dr. Caron brought a fresh look at Afghanistan’s history of nationalism, tribal structures and modes of communication as well as governance to the Marine Corps University. Their insight based on their examination and analysis of written and oral word of the Afghan people provided a window into the history and culture of the AfPak region and its people.

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MES Insights • Volume 1, Issue 3 • July 2010

## The Kabul Conference

by Amin Tarzi

On July 20, 2010 the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) will host the Kabul Conference which is envisioned by GIROA to be a contract with the Afghan people. The main agenda of the conference is to end the ongoing insurgency in Afghanistan mainly through an Afghan-led reconciliation and reintegration program which Afghan President Hamid Karzai formally announced at the London Conference in January 2010. The GIROA plan has endorsed reconciliation talks with almost all segments of the insurgents in Afghanistan who are of Afghan origin.

The criteria by which the insurgents can be reintegrated and reconciled are that they must renounce violence and join “in a constructive process of reintegration in order to benefit from a chance at peace, improved governance, and economic development.” As announced by Karzai in London, the GIROA organized the National Consultative Peace Jirga (NCPJ) which met in Kabul in June. Regardless of the true sentiments of the majority of the Afghan people, at the conclusion of the NCPJ, the GIROA secured a national mandate, at least on paper, to achieve a peaceful end to the country’s three decades of almost perpetual conflict through national reconciliation. As expected, tactical details of the reconciliation process were not enumerated by the NCPJ, but rather called for the formation of a High Peace Council to handle the modalities of the peace process. The period between the end of the NCPJ and the Kabul Conference should provide the GIROA and its foreign backers the time to concentrate on the minutiae of the reconciliation program and hammer out the details to discern between desired and achievable end states. Time, unfortunately, is not on the side



of GIRoA, as the neo-Taliban's strategy increasingly is to wait out the presence of NATO-led ISAF combat forces. The current narrative of the Afghan conflict in Afghanistan and the region is that the West, led by the United States, is tired of its engagement in Afghanistan and is looking for an honorable exit and to leave behind a system bolstered by financial and political support that could maintain power for a reasonable period of time in Kabul and major population centers.

While the GIRoA concept on peace and reintegration notes that the Afghan people "desire not only short-term security, but a consolidated, sustainable peace," actions by the GIRoA to carry out peace and reintegration efforts, most recently the NCPJ, increasingly appear to be short-term tactical moves lacking clear long-term objectives for achieving a long-term consolidated, sustainable peace. The mere fact that the Hazarah and Uzbek political leadership, who supported Karzai's reelection efforts, chose to stay out of the NCPJ, is an indicator that if the peace and reconciliation program remains ill-defined, Afghanistan may be heading towards the divisive environment that followed the fall of the last communist regime in Kabul in 1992.

Most of the Afghan, ISAF and European Union officials consulted by this author during a trip to Kabul in May agreed that there is a growing sense of uncertainty among the Afghan population. For the Kabul Conference to be successful the following recommendations regarding clarity of objective to guide GIRoA were offered by those consulted:

- The goal of reconciliation should be defined and contextualized.
- Clear, precise information campaigns explaining the reconciliation program's goal of sustainable peace and countering the perceptions that the program is providing ISAF a graceful exit will help to alleviate Afghans' concerns over the aims of the program.
- Shaping public debate about ISAF troop withdrawal is a shared responsibility of all troop-contributing states.
- The GIRoA needs to define and clarify the incentives that it can offer to the neo-Taliban leadership.
- The GIRoA needs to clearly articulate the targets of the reconciliation efforts – defining who's in and who's out. Some expressed fear that some among the neo-Taliban leadership may still seek revenge for their defeat in 2001 and see reconciliation as a means to avenge their losses once the threat from international forces is diminished.

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MES Insights • Volume 1, Issue 3 July • 2010

## The Role of History in Afghanistan's Future

by Adam C Seitz

In 2010 the Middle East Studies (MES) program at Marine Corps University hosted a lecture series pertaining to the Afghanistan-Pakistan region entitled, "A Multidisciplinary approach to the AfPak Region and its People." The series was created with the intent to fill a critical gap in the U.S. Marine Corps' understanding of this volatile region and its people. This project also incorporated

the ISAF Commander's Summer 2009 counterinsurgency and stability operations guidance for Afghanistan into the Marine Corps PME by giving Marines the tools needed to "embrace the people", "partner" with the Afghan National Security Forces, "build governance and accountability", and "get better every day" through a better understanding of the Pashtun population in both Afghanistan and in Pakistan.

Between January and July 2010, MES hosted eight presentations by regional experts from both the operational and academic worlds. Each of the speaker's unique expertise and experience were critical to enhancing the Marine Corps' understanding of the complexity of the issues that define or plague the region and its people.

The speakers who participated in the MES AfPak Lecture Series discussed a wide range of topics from tribal structures to Afghan national identity, and from the different historical narratives of the Afghan people to lessons for ways forward. The participants also discussed the regional dimensions that have played an important role in Afghanistan's past and present and will continue to play a pivotal role in its future.

Dr. James Caron, Professor Robert McChesney, Professor Shah Mahmoud Hanifi and Mr. Qamaruddin Jabarkheil provided very different historical and cultural narratives of how Afghans, with a focus on the Pashtuns, view themselves and their history. The narratives provided in-depth insights into Afghan historiography, Afghan society, governance, and nationalism. At the same time the lectures, when viewed collectively, illustrated the complexity of the subjects. Nevertheless, their insights based on examination and analysis of the written and oral history of the Afghan people provided a fresh look at the history of the Afghan people and provided a foundation to build upon in understanding Afghanistan in the here and now, and devising a strategy for a successful way ahead.

Ambassador Ronald Neumann, drawing on the lessons of Afghanistan's history and his personal recent diplomatic experience in Kabul as the U.S. ambassador, provided strategic options for the future. Neumann discussed how statements and catch phrases, such as "government in a box," were undercutting U.S. credibility, pointed out the similarities between actions and statements of U.S. officials now and those of Soviet officials leading up to their withdrawal from Afghanistan in February 1989, and explained the effects this would have on perceptions in Afghanistan and the region. He referred specifically to a 1988 statement by former Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev, who called the occupation of Afghanistan a "bleeding wound" for Soviet Union a year before the start of the withdrawal of Soviet forces. Neumann compared Gorbachev's statement to one made by General Stanley McChrystal referring to Marjah as a "bleeding ulcer" in June of 2010. Statement such as this reverberate through Afghan and regional communities as they wait and prepare for history to repeat itself, Neumann warned.

Former deputy of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, Ambassador Peter Galbraith concentrated on the controversial 2009 presidential elections in Afghanistan and offered a look at the hurdles that Afghanistan has yet to overcome in terms of governance and rule of law.

Mr. Abubakar Siddique and Mr. Haider Mullick provided two Pakistani perspectives of the region and the war in Afghanistan. Siddique's presentation was directed at the history of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan and the unique governance and judicial systems that have taken shape in this transition zone due to that history while Mullick focused on the Pakistani military's evolving counterinsurgency strategy over the past 10 years. Coming from different perspectives, Siddique and Mullick agreed on the fact that the Pakistani government has been very selective about which insurgents they would target as well as its purging of army and Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) officials that are associated with these groups.

A major theme that came out of this series was how history and culture, and more importantly how Afghans and Pakistanis have viewed their history and culture, have impacted where Afghanistan

and Pakistan are now and will heavily influence the actions of Afghans and Pakistanis, as well as the regional players, as the AfPak region forges ahead. At present, many in the region see eerie similarities between their past and the current situation, and this perception is weighing heavily on the actions of regional decision makers as well as the common Afghan and Pakistani citizens.

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MES Insights • Volume 1, Issue 2 • September 2010

## Just Another Election?

by Lieutenant Colonel Wolfram Jaeger (DEU), MES International Fellow

Elections are an integral part of democracies and regularly shape democratic societies either for the better or for the worse. Furthermore, depending on a particular country's relative importance in the international sphere, the impact of elections can travel beyond national borders.

On the world stage, Afghanistan is a minor player in terms of exerting direct economic or political power. The upcoming election in late summer to Wolesi Jirga (People's Council) is to award 249 seats in lower house of the Afghan National Assembly (parliament) for five years. Viewed in isolation, the upcoming election is of no great consequence for the rest of the world. However, the potential impact of this September 18th election may reach far beyond the borders of the Hindu Kush and could, in fact, force the political landscape in many countries to shift over the long term.

The reportedly widespread election fraud of 2009, mostly committed on behalf of the incumbent Hamid Karzai, received a tepid response at best from the international community and forced Afghans to accept the corruption and the election results as a *fait accompli*. There were no measures developed neither to combat the irregularities nor mitigate the potential for future infractions. Karzai returned to another term as president, there were no new elections, and resentment grew within the Afghan population in the same proportion to the voters in North America. Europeans and others lost confidence in the promises of their own politicians about Afghanistan.

Despite last year's disappointments, those both inside and outside of Afghanistan have great expectations for the upcoming elections. Many candidates decided to accept the high risks involved and have been campaigning where feasible. There are certain areas of the country that are not accessible due to the deteriorated security environment, limiting candidates' electioneering to Kabul and other major cities. Further limiting the candidate pool is the apparently arbitrary disqualification of certain candidates by the Afghan Electoral Commission. International organizations had previously attacked the Commission's lack of momentum; however, the cryptic process it has elected to follow leaves many dissatisfied with their lack of transparency. Further complicating matters is the difficulty in ascertaining the status of the relationship between the candidates and the warlords and other clandestine groups.

Karzai believes he does not have much to fear in these elections. He is banking on the election results being accepted by the international community since their level of tolerance for fraud appears to be quite high. Karzai may have to weather a few official and unofficial protests, but nothing more.. In certain areas Karzai's protégées are expected to win their districts on their own merit and thus broaden his power base. However, if they do not receive the most votes and they

happen to be from important, influential districts, when the final votes are tallied, they are expected to come out on top. Karzai is seeking to bolster “his candidates’” chances by distancing himself from Western governments and policies. As the election draws near, his criticisms have increased to demonstrate to Afghan voters he is not a Western puppet.

For the majority of the over 18,000 candidates, the goal of this election is to gain influence over and access to financial resources. No matter their walks in life, for most candidates, the well-being of Afghanistan is secondary, and for the minority who truly are concerned with the welfare and future of Afghanistan, it is expected that they will receive only a very small share of seats in the Wolesi Jirga.

At election time, the average Afghan is confronted with the following fundamental questions: Is it safe for me to go to the polls, or do I have to fear reprisals? If I take the risk and vote, will my vote be counted at all – or will there be rampant fraud as was the case during the presidential election? It is not about the actual proportion of the electoral fraud, but rather the perception thereof. Why should the average Afghan risk to serve the "Taliban" as a target when his vote may not be counted, thus diminishing the prospect for change and his own benefit from the election? This attitude is especially prevalent in those areas of the country where the central government is still not present, or at least not permanently. The disillusionment grows in proportion to the perception of anticipated electoral fraud.

The "Taliban" – and there are many groups of differing motivations and objectives included in this definition – are not represented officially at the election and therefore have no interest in its success. Threats against those citizens willing to vote have increased. There have been attacks on polling stations, and these will likely continue. As long as these groups are not involved in the political process, they will not have a vested interest in its success. Why support a system that brings no personal benefit? Better to antagonize it and prepare the way for a new apparatus – a regime like the old “Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan” that promises benefits to those who are not included in the existing Karzai governmental system. (Thus the term "extra-parliamentary opposition" would be certainly appropriate for most of those we call “the Taliban”.)

Representatives of the numerous NGOs in Afghanistan are in a predicament. For them, this election needs to be a success; otherwise the donations from their Western donor countries, which fund their activities and their pay checks, will appreciably diminish. However, a closer association with the elections, and thus the Afghan government increases their risk of being targeted. Each additional dead or injured member of the international community leads to a reduction in the NGOs’ profile in the rural areas, and as the elections near, this is expected to increase due to continued Taliban attacks on “supporters of the system.”

But the real significance of the Afghan election is for United States and Europe. President Barack Obama has declared Afghanistan a ‘top priority’ and thus connected his political destiny with the success of the mission in Afghanistan. Defeat can no longer be blamed on the former President George W. Bush. With the official announcement of the end of the combat phase of the Iraq war, the president shifted, perhaps unintentionally, the focus of the American public opinion to the development in Afghanistan. A failure there will impact the outcome of the U.S. congressional elections. as well as the 2012 presidential election.

What does success look like? At a minimum, there needs to be a successful withdrawal of foreign forces from a stabilized Afghanistan that has an accepted Afghan government, reasonably fair elections, and popular political participation. If the Afghan people do not feel this is likely, support for the "Taliban" will rise and complicate the situation, most likely resulting in higher casualties, both local and from the international community.

This in turn will further weaken support in the U.S. and on the European continent. In addition to the U.S. government, it is mainly the ruling political elites of Europe that have to fear the Afghan

elections. If there is another election deemed unsuccessful by the voters as a result of honest-to-goodness fraud, the number of fatigued supporters of the Afghan campaign will increase. The war-weary Europeans look primarily at the cost of 'Mission Afghanistan.' Nevertheless, with increasing economic problems in Europe, the willingness to support an Afghan system perceived as corrupt and fraudulent is expected to decline. Furthermore, European politicians who want to be elected (or re-elected) may refrain from articulating their support for the Afghan government too openly; otherwise they might receive the same treatment as the Dutch government. Christian Democratic Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende had to offer his government's resignation after considering a NATO request for Dutch forces to stay beyond August 2010 in the southern Afghan province of Uruzgan.

Finally, the main question remains unanswered even in the wake of the election for the Wolesi Jirga: "Quo vadis, Afghanistan?"

As long as the International Community has not outlined and agreed upon a clear and concise desired end state of affairs in Afghanistan, all elections in the Hindu Kush can – by proponents and opponents of the current system – be perceived as wasted paper. So it is just another election.

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## Village Stability Operations and the Security Transition in Afghanistan

by Captain Arthur Karell, USMC, ACPAK Hands

The community-based policing and development model exemplified by the Village Stability Platform (VSP) has far-reaching implications for Afghanistan, yet there has been little public discussion over how the VSP model will be integrated into the transition from international to Afghan security responsibilities. Marines should become familiar with the model and its sustainability past 2014, given the increasing importance of VSP within the Afghan counterinsurgency campaign plan. Village stability operations could become a key factor in the successful transition to Afghan security responsibility.

Efforts to establish village-level defense forces to fight the Taliban insurgency have been ongoing since the beginning of the military campaign in Afghanistan in 2001, but it was only in July 2010 that the Afghan central government gave the official authorization to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to raise local defense forces.[1] The VSP model is built around local defense forces, yet it is not a cash-for-security program such as the Sons of Iraq (SoI) model employed in Anbar Province, Baghdad, and elsewhere during Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). In the face of persistent central government corruption, VSP is designed to improve village governance and infrastructure by supporting community-driven development projects as a reward for the establishment of local defense forces. This bottom-up tactic is meant to address a long-term shortage in Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) available to protect the population, as well as a lack of central government capacity to deliver basic services.

The establishment of local defense forces has long been a contentious issue with the Afghan



central government because of its concern that such forces, predominantly based in rural areas, would be unaccountable to central government control and could quickly revert to unlawful or even insurgent activity. Afghans have expressed wariness as well, recalling local militias raised by the Communist government of President Muhammad Najibullah in the late 1980s to 1992, and the bloody civil war that erupted between lawless militias after the withdrawal of Soviet forces, which was only quelled by the near-complete takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban in 1996.

The main difference between militias and local defense forces, however, is that militias are led and maintained by individual leaders (also called warlords), who set militia objectives according to their own personal agendas.[2] Local defense forces are maintained by the community as a whole, and are guided by the conclaves of community leaders, called *jirgas* or *shuras*. There is also a key difference in terms of size and scope: militias can number in the tens of thousands of personnel and operate offensively or defensively in whatever area is decided upon by the leadership, while local defense forces are typically no larger than a couple of hundred men and operate solely within the territorial boundaries of the community, almost always in a defensive manner.[3] Local defense forces have a long history of employment by Afghan communities, and are variously called *arbakai*, *chagha*, and *chalweshtai*, among other terms.[4] In Iraq, efforts were made to bring local SoI groups under the authority of the national government as quickly as possible.[5] It is far from clear that a similar approach would work in Afghanistan in light of its traditionally autonomous local defense forces, or even be preferable under its current climate of corruption.

Nevertheless, the first major Afghan-ISAF effort to organize local defense forces was a top-down, centrally-controlled program called the Afghan National Auxiliary Police (ANAP), established in 2006. Unlike the programs implemented by individual Special Operations Forces (SOF) teams since 2001, the nationwide ANAP program was directed by the Afghan Ministry of Interior (MoI), in partnership with the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A). Like other local defense forces it was meant to draw its personnel from local communities who would operate only in those communities.[6] As a central government program, however, ANAP planning was conceptual and largely divorced from conditions on the ground. The program was immediately crippled by the lack of capacity to vet recruits, distribute funds, and provide logistical support. The MoI leadership and contractor-run training of ANAP proved wholly inadequate in preventing tribal bias, corruption, and even criminal activity against local Afghans.[7] The program was widely seen as a complete failure and was shut down in 2008.[8]

Since the ANAP experience, ISAF has gone back to locally-maintained and led defense forces, through such efforts as the Afghan Public Protection Program (AP3), Afghan Public Protection Force (APPF), and Local Defense Initiative (LDI). These defense forces, which make up the security “plank” of VSP, have had varying levels of central government involvement and have met with mixed success, at least for those that have been publicly reported.[9] Early trends indicate that programs controlled by the central government – such as the AP3 in Wardak Province – tend to struggle, as do those programs that are initiated by large conventional units, such as the local defense force established by the 82nd Airborne Division in Nangarhar Province that involved the Shinwari tribe.[10]

Despite these difficulties, ISAF has pressed ahead. Over the last year, local defense forces are increasingly the vector through which international agencies and the central Afghan government have undertaken development and governance projects. Examples of such projects are village infrastructure construction, agricultural seed distribution, and educational initiatives, all taken in partnership with village *jirgas* or *shuras*, and are contingent upon the raising and maintenance of a local defense force. Under the VSP model (and unlike SoI), Afghan and ISAF authorities undertake development projects with a participating village, instead of paying local defense forces directly.

As VSP becomes more central to ISAF’s transition plan through 2014 and beyond, this raises the question whether VSP gains and expansion are sustainable without a significant drop-off in

quality training and mentoring. Even today, ISAF is still lacking 40-60 percent of the trainers required to reach ANSF manning goals under current timelines. That gap widens exponentially when taking into account the number of trainers that would be needed for village-level local defense forces that would present a credible long-term, bottom-up deterrent to insurgent activity. The need for trainers will be a deciding factor in the 2011-2014 transition plan to Afghan-led security.

One partial solution would be to include village-level local defense force training and mentoring in the mission-essential tasks of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)-bound Marine Corps units. This would allow those units to prepare by prioritizing the requisite education and training over other pre-deployment tasks. Marines have been part of ETTs and MiTTs since 2002, and Marine units have been tasked with training and mentoring national-level Afghan security forces. Marines also recently played a key role in the establishment and administration of SoI groups in Iraq. But today's non-SOF Marine units have had little to no training or experience with village-level local defense forces in Afghanistan.

There is also talk of dedicating the bulk of ISAF combat troops who will remain to a quick-reaction force (QRF) role as a gradual withdrawal begins, possibly as early as 2011, in order to back up the nascent village defense forces.[11] There is nothing new about this approach, as it is similar to the role U.S. post-surge combat troops played for national Iraqi security forces from 2008 onwards. The difference, of course, is in the capabilities of the security forces being supported. Even with ramped-up recruiting and training, it is unlikely that ANSF will be able to perform at the same level as their Iraqi counterparts in the timeframe that ISAF has set for transition. It goes without saying that village-level forces will be even less ready. Indeed, by 2008, the training and fielding of Iraqi national security forces had seen at least four years serious effort by Coalition partners. By the end of 2011, ANSF will have had at most three years; and defense forces participating in VSP since it became an official program will have had one.

Whether an ISAF or ANSF QRF for village-level defense forces would be sufficiently effective is an open question. The types of confrontations that village defense forces would have with Taliban and other anti-coalition fighters are unlikely to be the kind of engagements in which a QRF would make a difference: sustained kinetic engagements on the village outskirts, with key ISAF or ANSF personnel already on the ground to vector in supporting forces. Instead, insurgents are much more likely to step up night letters and assassinations as part of murder and intimidation campaigns against villages with pro-government defense forces. Insurgents would probably avoid open fighting with such forces in any case, so as not to alienate public opinion. In the end, it will be difficult for a village defense force to prevent any and all infiltration by insurgent forces, especially at night, if those insurgents have nearby hide-outs and ANSF/ISAF troops are confined to far-away bases.

The question of whether village defense forces are sustainable after the eventual transition from internationally-led to Afghan-led security will have much more to do with how closely it is incorporated into a network of adjacent defense forces. That is, if one village has a local defense force, but a nearby village does not, the chances of insurgent infiltration increase significantly. This is due not only to proximity, as Afghan village are often separated by only a few kilometers or less, but also of coordination. If adjacent villages do not sufficiently share priorities to coordinate security actions, then local defense forces – and the governance and development projects that come with them under the VSP model – may be rendered ineffective or even counterproductive. The obvious counterweight to such instability is national-level security presence, but in the timeframes mentioned above, the ability of ANSF to meaningfully reach the tens of thousands of rural villages in the Afghan countryside will be limited at best.

To facilitate coordination, leaders of villages must be willing to reach out to neighbors to institute the traditional security structures such as the *arbakai* and *chalweshtai* mentioned above, without any direct international or central government participation. This will only happen after the 2014 security transition if insurgent influence is seen as a serious enough threat not just to the central

government, but to the villages themselves. Only then will village leaders be willing to address it, or at least to inform ANSF and their district government of its presence.

Efforts to bring about this tipping point have been identified and are underway, such as a reduction in government corruption, economic development, elimination of insurgent leadership and a weakening of their capabilities, and reintegration programs for former fighters. One factor can significantly enhance all of these efforts: a continued emphasis on cultural understanding, at every level and in both directions.

In other words, ISAF and ANSF personnel (particularly those from differing provinces) need to be able to identify the causes of instability in a given set of villages that will make or break an effective network of local defense forces. Also, village leaders themselves need to understand the priorities of adjacent villages and the benefits of coordinating local defense force actions. This is the result of a continuous dialogue with villages and *between* villages – it is not simply “targeted information operations.” The SOF units that have been doing this in Afghanistan since 2001 know how much cultural understanding is required by all participants in order to make village stability operations work; that type of thinking must be adopted by the entire international presence in order to succeed after transitioning to Afghan-led security.

#### **Village Stability & Transition in Afghanistan Notes:**

[1] “Karzai Approves New Local Defense Force,” BBC News, July 15, 2010. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south+asia-10649876>.

[2] Antonio Giustozzi, *Empires of Mud: Wars and Warlords in Afghanistan*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.

[3] Seth G. Jones, Arturo Munoz, “Afghanistan’s Local War: Building Local Defense Forces,” RAND National Defense Research Institute (2010), p. 29. Available at: [www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND\\_MG1002.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND_MG1002.pdf).

[4] *Ibid*, p. 27.

[5] Colonel Dale C. Kuehl, “Unfinished Business: The Sons of Iraq and Political Reconciliation,” Masters’ Thesis, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania (2010). Available at: <http://www.dtic.mil/cgibin/GetTRDoc?Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf&AD=ADA521771>.

[6] Mathieu Lefevre, “Local Defense in Afghanistan: A Review of Government-Backed Initiatives,” Afghanistan Analysts Network, (2010). Available at: <http://aan-afghanistan.com/uploads/20100525MLEfevre-LDIpaper.pdf>. 7

[7] *Ibid*.

[8] *Ibid*.

[9] Local defense forces have been established under the AP3, APPF, and LDI programs in Wardak Province, Arghandab district (Kandahar Province), Nili district (Daikundi Province), Achin district (Nangarhar Province), Gereshk (Helmand Province), and Paktia Province. See Lefeyre, p. 15.

[10] Lefeyre, pp. 17-18.

[11] LTG David Barno (Ret.) and Andrew Exum, “Responsible Transition: Securing U.S. Interests in Afghanistan Beyond 2011,” Center for a New American Security, December 2010, p. 27. Available at: [http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/CNAS\\_ResponsibleTransition\\_BarnoExum\\_2.pdf](http://www.cnas.org/files/documents/publications/CNAS_ResponsibleTransition_BarnoExum_2.pdf).

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# Can Democracy in Afghanistan Survive the Growing Pains?

by Amin Tarzi

On January 26, 2011, the newly elected Afghan National Assembly held its opening session, albeit not without controversy. The September parliamentary election results, announced by the Independent Election Commission (IEC) on November 24, were marred with allegations of fraud and foreign manipulation; however, there were also signs of progress, as more women and minorities claimed seats. The combination of setback and progress is not an uncommon occurrence in post-Taliban Afghanistan elections. As the country advances on the road to democracy, there will be some growing pains, some challenges. These are to be expected. However, the most recent performance by Afghan President Hamid Karzai at the January 26th opening session causes concern.

After threatening to delay the opening of the Afghan National Assembly, Mr. Karzai finally reluctantly agreed to open the session. Because his presence is a requirement to legitimize the opening session, his threats to delay were thwarting the nascent democratic process's advancement and calling into question his commitment to democracy. His rationale? He did not like the election results and was seeking time for a special tribunal established by the Afghan Supreme Court through presidential intervention to rule on allegations of fraud by losing candidates, many of whom were his supporters. And while Mr. Karzai permitted the session to open, he took to the floor and decried the involvement of "unnamed" forces – read Western – in the failure of the electoral process to yield legitimate results.

Not legitimate or not favorable to Mr. Karzai? Yes, there were varying degrees of fraud; however, after a thorough review of the results, the IEC called the election and announced the results. The results did not work in favor of Mr. Karzai.

He not only lost a fair number of his supporters in the already hostile lower house (Wolesi Jirga or People's Council), but also partially due to security concerns in the Pashtun dominated areas of Afghanistan, the current configuration of the 249-member chamber ended up with only 96 Pashtun members compared to 115 in the previous Wolesi Jirga elected in 2005. He claimed fraud and brought in the judicial branch to force a more favorable outcome. In his speech opening the National Assembly, Mr. Karzai alleged that unnamed hands had interfered in the September 2010 polls, saying that "the main question is which forces want to cause the crisis of legitimacy" for Afghanistan's nascent governing system.

That is a good question. Which forces are they? Mr. Karzai's no-so-subtle inference pointed squarely at foreign manipulation by his Western backers. However, Mr. Karzai himself took care of this problem after the fallout from the 2009 presidential election. According to the Afghan election law, the IEC and the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) are responsible for organizing elections and investigating any allegations of fraud or error. The 2009 presidential election was also marred with fraud and errors, and the IEC and ECC were questioning the legitimacy of the results. However, this time the electoral results were favorable to the President. Mr. Karzai took special aim at the ECC for having foreigners at its helm, calling into question the legitimacy of their positions and motivations. After being declared the winner amid controversy, President Karzai called for the Afghanization of the ECC. The current makeup of both the IEC and ECC are the result of post-2009 election adjustments. And it is this IEC that announced the

election results in November 2010. And it was those unnamed forces that pressured Mr. Karzai to allow those results to stand and the National Assembly to open, despite the on-going judicial case. In Afghanistan's bumpy road to representative democracy, the opening of the second National Assembly is a bittersweet compromise and a reminder both that the institutions of democracy are fragile and easily manipulated by personality until mature and that until institutions overcome individual influence they may need tending through foreign assistance and, at times, foreign pressure.

Since 2001, the Afghan electoral process has been progressing. Yes, there have been challenges with violence and irregularities. However, the very act of holding elections to transfer power is a laudable achievement for both Afghans and their foreign supporters. As recently as the 1990s power was sought and fought over through violent means and at times by some of the same people who are now parliamentarians. Indeed, Mr. Karzai acknowledged in his speech that "Afghans have proved that they want to embrace democracy." Additionally, the fact that 69 women were elected in September 2010 to the Wolesi Jirga is a victory not only for Afghan women, but also for the budding civil society in Afghanistan. The Afghan Constitution allocates a quarter of the seats in the Wolesi Jirga to women. The number of women now slightly exceeds the 25 percent mark, meaning women have won seats not through affirmative action but in open competition. This is a substantial step forward for the democratic process. Similarly, the fact that all major ethnic groups in Afghanistan are represented in the Wolesi Jirga in significant numbers is a milestone along Afghanistan's road to becoming a truly multiethnic democracy. Ironically, the latter point may not rest well with Mr. Karzai, as he may view this as an unfair redistribution of seats in the newly elected Wolesi Jirga away from the Pashtuns, who he believes are the majority. Of course, Afghanistan's last census, albeit an incomplete exercise, was conducted more than three decades ago and leaves the current numbers of people and ethnic groups to the imagination of each community. Should such a dispute arise, the budding system could be jeopardized – without referees from the outside.

However, during his speech on January 26, 2011, Mr. Karzai bluntly stated, "We should put an end to foreign intervention and ambiguity in our democracy, elections and affairs" and called for the Afghanization of not only the electioneering but also the state-building process. The Afghan President referred to the Provincial Reconstruction Teams and other "unnecessary offices" as "serious obstacles ahead of state building process" in this country.

The course of action regarding Afghanistan's future poses a dilemma both for Afghans and for countries, such as the United States, which have supported the Afghan state-building process with their blood, treasure and political capital over the last decade. On the face of it, the agreement by the Afghan President to assume responsibility for his country's security and the handling of its state structures without foreign involvement and, therefore, presence, is a welcome message. Most troop-contributing states within NATO's International Security Assistance Force are facing increasingly difficult political climates at home and are ready for a phased withdrawal from Afghanistan that leaves a viable system behind that does not collapse under the pressure from the ongoing insurgency, does not allow terrorists with international reach such as al-Qaeda to incubate inside Afghan territory, and adheres to at least a measure of the democratic principles currently being respected in Afghanistan. While minimalistic, after a decade of fighting, most of the states involved in Afghanistan would accept such an outcome as a success.

However, is it feasible right now? Honestly, there is no telling what would occur if Afghanistan's security and state-building management were to be fully turned over to the Afghans right now. The last time a foreign-backed Afghan government was facing a stiff and determined resistance and that foreign support withdrew, the government, the unpopular regime of Najibullah, lasted only two years.

That said there should not be a comparison drawn between the Afghan system of today, a budding democracy with an elected parliament, to the authoritarian regime of Najibullah. The key to success is ensuring the institutionalization of the democratic process. This takes time and requires a cooperative synergy among Afghanistan's three branches of government. If this occurs, there is every indication that Afghanistan stands a fair chance to stand on its own with the support of its foreign

allies through agreements based on Afghan realities and needs. However, if personality and individual influence remain key drivers in the political process, especially if the executive branch continues to work with the legislative bodies only when it serves personal interests, Afghanistan faces a grim future without foreign supervision and direct support.

Growing pains. Afghanistan's democratic process is in the throes of adolescence, yearning for independence but not quite mature enough to stand alone. Afghanistan's leadership has the choice to embrace democracy, as the people have, and encourage the institutionalization of Afghanistan's remarkable democratic achievements and move forward to meet the challenges of statehood on its own and with support of its friends and allies.

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## Measuring Perceptions about the Pashtun People

by Amin Tarzi and Robert D. Lamb

Afghanistan and Pakistan are sites of intense conflict – and intense international interest. Because the epicenter of the Afghan war is along Afghanistan's southern and eastern border with Pakistan, and because important combatants use Pakistan's tribal areas for sanctuary, there is correspondingly intense interest in better understanding the people who live in this border region. The dominant ethnic group there is the Pashtuns, who have experienced a long series of wars and other major disruptions since the 1970s. What little academic research has been undertaken about Pashtuns during this period is sorely outdated. Knowledge about Pashtuns affects policies and strategies in the region – including counterinsurgency – so it is important not only to study Pashtuns but also to study what is believed about them.

This report documents the results of a study about beliefs about the Pashtun people. The purpose was to identify the range of perceptions or misperceptions about Pashtun communities by cataloging “stereotypes” about Pashtuns held by English-speaking policymakers, experts, and other opinion leaders. The authors interviewed 52 officials and experts in the United States, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, and analyzed 138 articles drawn from recent academic and popular sources. Pashtuns were most commonly characterized as proud, victimized, sectarian, tribal, and hospitable; they were not stereotyped as warlike, misogynous, illiterate, conservative, or medieval. Pashtun diversity was generally acknowledged, as were the changes Pashtuns have experienced in recent decades. Some saw Pashtuns as natural allies of the Taliban, while others considered them more opportunistic, which suggests there are competing schools of thought about counterinsurgency in the region (i.e., population-centric versus enemy-centric strategies). The report concludes by noting the absence of broad, deep, and, most importantly, current knowledge about the Pashtuns. Having such knowledge would be a good in itself, but would also help policymakers and strategists avoid having to make untested assumptions about how important populations might respond to different activities – whether military or political.

*Full Report available at: <http://csis.org/publication/measuring-perceptions-about-pashtun-people> or via the MES website under the Publications tab.*

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# Afghanistan's Presidential Election of 2014

by Amin Tarzi

Afghan President Hamid Karzai told a number of Afghan parliamentarians in Kabul on 11 August 2011 that he will not be seeking a third term as president when his current five-year term ends in 2014, thus respecting the two-term limitation placed on the presidential office under the Afghan Constitution. According to Afghanistan's official National Television, Mr. Karzai added: "I do not intend nor will I try to serve as president for a third time, because I believe such a move harms Afghanistan".

President Karzai is absolutely correct in stating that any attempt by him to seek a third unconstitutional term would harm Afghanistan, and that harm could very well be irreversible.

Since the October 2004 presidential election, Afghanistan's democratic experiment has declined in transparency and fairness, and the enthusiasm of the Afghans for a better future through the electoral process has diminished. Recurring causes of concern from past Afghan elections include: the lack of adequate preparations before elections; the failure to address irregularities in a timely and transparent manner; and the selection of expedient, short-term solutions over more difficult foundational decisions.

One of the prerequisites for Afghans to assume primary responsibility for the future of their country is to have a government in which the majority of the Afghans believe and trust. The neo-Taliban and other anti-governmental forces will only lose momentum if the population does not allow them room to maneuver, and this will only occur if the majority of Afghans believes in the legitimacy and sincerity, if not efficiency, of their national leadership in Kabul.

Under the Bonn Agreement of 2001, the head of the executive branch was designed to be the mechanism under which Afghanistan would reorganize itself as a state and emerge as a democracy. In the decade since, the mechanism envisaged in Bonn has withstood numerous tests while its shortsightedness has been exposed in the reality of Afghan politics. However, Afghans, by and large, have respected the electoral institutions. This last statement could, in itself, be regarded as a major achievement when compared to how political aims were being achieved in Afghanistan in the decade following the end of the struggle against the communist regime in 1992, and both Afghans and their international partners have paid a very heavy price to get to this point. It would dishonor the sacrifices made to settle for a post transition period in Afghanistan that could revert to the pre-2002 period.

The timing of the next presidential election – in 2014 – coincides with the planned completion of the drawdown of international forces and the transition of security authority to the Afghan National Security Forces. Afghanistan cannot go through this transition while suffering a constitutional crisis over the fate of the most important office in the country, which would occur if Mr. Karzai intended to seek a third term. Any attempts to alter the constitution of Afghanistan during a transition period that has called for reintegration of reconcilable members of the armed opposition would also severely weaken the most important clause of reconciliation and reintegration programs: respect for the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

To ensure success of the transition, there is an urgent need to strengthen Afghanistan's electoral institutions, address those recurring problems, and provide the electoral process protection from executive branch – and by proxy, judicial branch – encroachments.

It seems incumbent on the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA), with the

active support of its international partners, to ensure that the country's crucial presidential election of 2014 is carried out in a transparent, organized fashion and produces a new Afghan leader. This would result in a victory for institutionalizing democratic values in the country. A successful presidential election, based on the current constitutional requirement, will undoubtedly raise the credibility and legitimacy of the GIRoA among the majority of the Afghan people and could very well become the catalyst for a new Afghanistan that, with international partnership and responsible Afghan stewardship, can realize the dreams and aspirations of millions of Afghans and justify the sacrifices of all involved in Afghanistan in the last decade.

Anything tampering with the electoral process will most likely lead to a reopening of the dark chapters of Afghan history, even if the meddling in the electoral process is accepted as an expedient step to a smooth transition. Afghanistan needs a long-term foundational solution, not another façade building. Most observers have responded to Mr. Karzai's early announcement with skepticism. They see it as a politically expedient statement that the Afghan leader can disregard closer to the next presidential elections. May it not be so.

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MES Insights • Volume 2, Issue 4 • August 2011

## Karzai Election Decree Complicates Afghan Political Crisis

by Abubakar Siddique, RFE/RL

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has made his move, ordering the Afghan Independent Election Commission (IEC) to “immediately finalize” the controversial results of last year's parliamentary polls.

Instead of breaking a political deadlock over more than 60 seats in the lower house of parliament, the Wolesi Jirga, however, the president appears to have muddied the waters.

The Afghan election body, lawmakers, political factions, media, and legal experts are divided over the interpretation of the August 10 decree.

The 62 candidates who were granted parliamentary seats after a special election tribunal overturned the initial results of the September 2010 election have welcomed the order, taking it as a sign that they will finally be sworn in as members of the lower house (see *MES Insights*, Vol. 2, Issue 1). They have gone so far as to characterize the decree as a victory for the rule of law in Afghanistan.

A sizeable number of sitting lawmakers – a group that has served as a wedge between parliament and the presidential administration by stalling cabinet confirmations and legislation as the crisis has played out – have a vastly different interpretation. They too are touting Karzai's order as a victory, predicting that the election commission will now validate its initial results.



## **IEC Welcomes Decree**

Meanwhile, IEC head Fazal Ahmad Manawi is also taking the situation as a win. He has welcomed the Karzai decree, saying it backs his stance that the IEC has the last say in all matters related to the elections.

“The high court called on the president to take steps to resolve the problem,” Manawi said. “And the president called on the election commission to take steps in the light of the constitution and the election laws.”

Manawi openly opposed the president’s creation of the special election tribunal amid claims of fraud that emerged after the results were released.

International media reports have suggested that the IEC now intends to consider just 17 cases of alleged election fraud.

Such an outcome would hint at the possibility for a compromise that would placate Karzai by allowing some of the candidates he backs to retain their seats, but is far from the radical overhaul of the parliament recommended by the special election tribunal.

## **‘This Is The Law’**

What is clear is that the president’s new course is fraught with risk. Supporters of the 62 candidates declared winners by the tribunal are unlikely to stay silent if they are unable to join the parliament.

Daud Sultanzoi, a leading member of the group of 62, told RFE/RL’s Radio Free Afghanistan he welcomed Karzai’s decree, and called on the IEC to implement the special tribunal’s decision.

Sultanzoi said that the fact that it’s called the “Independent Election Commission” doesn’t mean that it’s above Afghan laws and institutions.

“The court decision is a binding and enforced by Islamic [Shari’a] law. Nobody can defy the injunctions sanctified by the law,” Sultanzoi said. “If they stand in the way of implementing this decision they will be considered ‘mutamarid’ [defying Islamic principles]. We all know that what Shari’a prescribes for dealing with such people.”

## **Sitting Members Unhappy**

Speaking at a stormy parliament session on August 10, sitting members threatened to boycott parliament if the IEC moves to implement the tribunal’s decision. They warned of an unsolvable crisis if some members are forced out of the Wolesi Jirga.

Lawmaker Yunos Qanuni decried it as “part of a deliberate plan to foment a crisis in Afghanistan that will pave the way for a power grab after the 2013 elections.”

While the two sides invoke the constitution and the rule of law, observers in Kabul see it as unending wrangling between strongmen and the political factions they control. They suggest that the eventual IEC results would not placate all sides, but might ensure that powerful interests of the pro- and anti-Karzai camps are accommodated.

*This piece was originally published on 11 August 2011 by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Reprinted with*

*permission of RFE/RL. Abubakar Siddique is a senior correspondent for Radio Free Europe /Radio Liberty covering Afghanistan and Pakistan.*

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MES Insights • Volume 2, Issue 6 • December 2011

## Pakistani Extremist Group In Focus After Unprecedented Attack On Afghan Shia

by Abubakar Siddique, RFE/RL

As Afghanistan recovers from a deadly and unprecedented attack on a Shiite shrine in Kabul, the finger of blame is pointing directly at a Sunni extremist group with a long history of carrying out such attacks in neighboring Pakistan.

At least 55 people were killed and more than 160 wounded in the December 6 suicide attack, which occurred as Shiite worshippers were assembled outside the shrine to commemorate Ashura, a Shiite religious holiday. A separate attack near an Ashura procession in the northern city of Mazar-e Sharif killed at least four people.

Shortly after the midday attack in Kabul, a man claiming to be a spokesman for Lashkar-e Jhangvi al-Alami contacted Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's (RFE/RL) Radio Mashaal to claim responsibility on behalf of the Pakistan-based militant group.

It was impossible to independently verify the claim made by the man, who identified himself as Qari Abubakar Mansoor.

The man first contacted a Radio Mashaal correspondent in Pakistan who covers the western Kurram tribal district, where the group is believed to be headquartered. A man going by the name of Qari Abubakar had previously contacted Radio Mashaal to provide information regarding the Lashkar-e Jhangvi al-Alami. Following RFE/RL's report tying the group to the attack in Afghanistan, various media reported receiving similar claims from the same spokesman.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai, who cut short a European trip and returned to the Afghan capital to deal with the crisis, appeared to accept that the attack was carried out by Lashkar-e Jhangvi al-Alami. While visiting survivors of the attack in the hospital, he was quoted as telling reporters that "we are investigating this issue and we are going to talk to the Pakistani government about it."

### **Ties to Al-Qaeda, Taliban**

Farzana Sheikh, a Pakistan specialist at the Chatham House think tank in London, says the group evolved from the Anjuman-e Sipah-e Shaba Pakistan, an extremist political party intent on transforming Pakistan into a Sunni state. One of its splinter groups, Lashkar-e Jhangvi (LeJ) was

considered the most deadly sectarian militia in the South Asian state in the 1990s.

Lashkar-e Jhangvi al-Alami is now considered a splinter group of the LeJ, which was banned in Pakistan in 2002 because of its role in the killing of thousands of Shia.

“Its roots really lie in southern Punjab [Province], in the district of Jhang, from where they have clearly spread to other parts of Pakistan,” Sheikh says, “but particularly the [southwestern province of] Balochistan, where they have been responsible, and indeed claimed responsibility, for a series of murderous attacks against Shia Hazaras.”

Sheikh says that the group once enjoyed close links to Pakistani intelligence agencies. This, she notes, enabled LeJ to maintain bases in Taliban-controlled Afghan regions because of Islamabad’s relationship with the Taliban regime. However, the LeJ’s Shia-killing campaign made it a prime security threat for Pakistan, according to observers.

The demise of the Taliban regime forced LeJ back to Pakistan. But observers say its uneasy relations with the government led it to become a surrogate for Al-Qaeda in Pakistan’s tribal areas. The group is also believed to have influenced the Pakistani Taliban, which has former LeJ members among its key leaders. The LeJ and its off-shoot Lashkar-e Jhangvi al-Alami have been involved in fierce attacks in Pakistan.

It was held responsible for the 2008 bombing of the Marriot Hotel in Islamabad, which killed more than 50 and injured hundreds. Its March 2009 attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team – in which six police escorts and one civilian were killed – shocked the cricketing world and has prevented Pakistan from hosting international cricketing events to this day. The group has taken responsibility for killing some 600 ethnic Hazaras in Balochistan since 1999.

Sheikh says the LeJ might now be attempting to precipitate a much wider conflict in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Relations between the two neighbors have been tense since the September assassination of former Afghan President Buhannuddin Rabbani. Islamabad recently boycotted an important international conference on Afghanistan’s future in Germany and suspended supplies to NATO forces though its territory after accusing the alliance of killing 24 of its troops in a border attack.

“If it is shown that this group has been responsible for this attack, it will not only further inflame relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan but, of course, it also for many spells the possibility of widening the conflict in Afghanistan, which until now has been political and ethnic,” Sheikh says.

### **One Objective: Sectarian War**

Pakistani journalist Azmat Abbas has been tracking LeJ’s evolution for the past two decades. He says LeJ today is a transnational organization with mostly Pakistani membership. Abbas claims the group provided Al-Qaeda with some of its first suicide bombers to foment a sectarian war in Iraq after the U.S.-led invasion of the country in 2003. LeJ was also instrumental in propping up Jundallah – a Sunni extremist group responsible for several large-scale attacks inside Iran.

Abbas says that despite its history of cooperation with the Taliban, the two groups have distinct objectives. “Lashkar-e Jhangvi’s declared agenda is to target the Shia. They have never said that they want to establish an Islamic state [in Afghanistan] or want to drive U.S. forces from it. Their only agenda is to target the Shia. And their choice targets are the places where the Shia live.”

The Afghan Taliban has rejected government claims that it orchestrated the December 6 attacks. A statement attributed to their spokesman called the attacks “savage acts” whose aim was to divide the Afghan people.



Chatham House's Sheikh says that bombings showcase the “Pakistan-ization” of the Afghan conflict, as sectarian conflicts have been rare in Afghanistan. “If the current trends are to go by, it is an extremely disturbing development,” she adds.

*This piece was originally published on 7 December 2011 by Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. Abubakar Siddique is a senior correspondent for RFE/RL covering Afghanistan and Pakistan. RFE/RL Radio Mashaal correspondent Abdul Hai Kakar contributed to this report. Reprinted with permission of RFE/RL.*

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# MES Insights: Arab World

MES Insights • Volume 2, Issue 2 March • 2011

## To the Shores of Tripoli?

by Amin Tarzi

On 17 March 2011, UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1973 authorized a no-fly zone over Libya. Shortly thereafter, the airstrikes against targets in that North African country began. And the United States, as the initial lead in this effort, finds itself back near the shores of Tripoli. For Marines, this may conjure up images from the Corps' exploits during the 19th Century conflicts against Barbary pirates and have them humming the Marine Corps hymn. The second line of the Marine Corps hymn – “To the Shores of Tripoli” – refers to a march led by Marine Lieutenant Presley O'Bannon from Alexandria in Egypt to the Fort of Derna, currently a small town in northwestern Libya. The Marines were successful at capturing Derna in 1805, forcing the Bey of Tripoli to capitulate.

While both instances have U.S. forces operating near the shores of Tripoli, the purpose behind the missions are vastly different. Two centuries ago Marines were sent in to protect U.S. ships and international shipping lanes from attacks by pirates. Today, U.S. forces, in support of UNSC mandated operations, are to “protect civilians and civilian populated areas under attack” in Libya.

Additionally, the United States, while currently taking the lead in the air campaign and calling for the Libyan leader Colonel Muammar al-Qadhafi to relinquish power, has insisted that there are no plans to use ground forces in Libya. Thus any comparisons between the 19th Century Barbary Wars and Operation Odyssey Dawn – as the military action underway in Libya is dubbed – should indeed be relegated to history only.

### **Libya in Context**

Since 1969, Qadhafi has ruled Libya. When the current wave of protests broke out throughout North Africa and the Arab Middle East, Libya and its government were not immune. However, what is happening in Libya differs from what has happened elsewhere in the region. In Tunisia and Egypt, leaders Zayn al-Abidin bin Ali and Hosni Mubarak either chose or were not able to use excessive force against their own populations and left the political scene without much resistance. In case of Mubarak, the Egyptian Armed Forces played a crucial stabilizing role and became the protector of people, thus ending the three decade dictatorship with skill and honor. While parallels can be drawn between Libya and Yemen in the role of tribal affiliations in the opposing forces, the similarities end when the response from President Ali Abdallah Saleh of Yemen is compared with that of Qadhafi. Bahraini opposition is almost exclusively based on sectarian differences between the ruling elite and majority Shiite population. The Bahraini response is a combination of strengthening the ability of that kingdom to secure the country while offering a list of compromises designed to respond to some of the grievances of the opposition. Unlike other situations in the current popular upheavals

in a number Arab countries, the Bahraini situation also has a strong foreign dimension; while Manama has sought military assistance from a number of Gulf Cooperation Council member states and is currently being assisted by forces from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, the opposition historically and currently is receiving support and encouragement from Iran. Sultan Qabus of Oman by all accounts remains a very popular leader, and the core of the current disenchantment most likely is caused by economic concerns first and perhaps political freedoms second.

In contrast, the Libyan leader has both the capacity through his armed forces and the will to use excessive force against his own population, and he is not stepping down. He has not only refused to compromise with the opposition forces, but has called them “rats” and “cockroaches” who should be eliminated. Qadhafi has compensated for the loss of the loyalty of part of his civilian and military cadres by arming local and foreign militias. Additionally, the four decade, almost personal rule by Qadhafi has stripped Libya of most of its civic institutions and the potential for leaders independent from the current regime to develop. Consequently, the Libyan opposition has no unified leader who commands international recognition, nor is it clear that the opposition forces can agree on much beyond the ouster of Qadhafi.

### **Beyond the No-Fly Zone**

Despite its lack of previous civic responsibilities, the Libyan opposition has managed the affairs of cities under its control, especially Benghazi, in a remarkable fashion. Under the threat of Qadhafi’s forces, the disparate opposition might very well have learned the skills of leadership in the battlefield as well as have become an agent for change with international credentials to lead Libya into a new era and out of its forty two years of schizophrenic existence. With current operations enforcing the UN-mandated no-fly zone over Libya, the opposition might very well have the chance to survive and entrench itself in western Libya and perhaps elsewhere in that country. But, to what end? If Qadhafi falls, Libya’s future will be determined by these various opposing forces’ ability to unify under a long term strategic vision for Libya because currently their focus and agreement seems to be limited to the short term goal of removing Qadhafi from power. There is a danger of sparking an intense, internal struggle to fill the power void.

If Qadhafi decides to end attacking the opposition either to abide by the UNSC demand or because he simply runs out of options due to the success of Operation Odyssey Dawn, then what are the options of the international coalition? I see two potentialities: One is to intervene on behalf of the Libyan opposition beyond the mandate of UNSC Resolution. This might require more extensive attacks on the Libyan government and their supporting factions beyond attacks related to its airpower. Such expansion has a good chance for forcing one or more of the states involved to use limited ground assets. And second, the international coalition – while ensuring the safety of civilians – could stop engaging targets in Libya. Both scenarios could lead to a civil war or a de facto disintegration of Libya, and both may require renewed and protracted military responses. Thus, the stakes are high and require a fully-informed, clear strategic policy before moving forward.

### **Clarity of Strategic Aim**

The push to punish Qadhafi for attacking his own people came from a number of European states, led by France and the United Kingdom. Resolution 1973 was cosponsored by the two aforementioned states and Lebanon, the sole Arab state in the UNSC, bringing with it the rare support of the League of Arab States for an attack on one of its member states. Support by a majority of Arab League member states for the U.S.-led coalition to liberate Kuwait being the only other notable exception. For the two major European powers, the Libyan decision has domestic as well as international dimensions and with it responsibilities both at home and abroad. Not only is

Libya a source of energy for a number of European countries, but also instability in that country would directly impact southern Europe, from the potential influx of refugees to Libya's becoming a potential haven for international terrorists near Europe's southern shores. The Arab League, while supportive of the operations initially, may renege its support if the strikes on Libya result in increasing casualties among Libyan civilians. For the Arab side, the longer foreign forces pound another country in their midst, the less enthusiastic their support of UNSC Resolution 1973 will be.

Here clarity of mission by the Western-led coalition would go far to contain Arab conspiracy theorists and maintain good will. If the goal is to set Libya on a track where the majority of its people can determine the fate of their nation, then it would seem that a combined European-Arab leadership with support from the United States and UN would be the answer. In such a group, major European players such as France, United Kingdom and perhaps Italy can illustrate that they are able to lead a humanitarian intervention in support of the Arab people working directly with Arab states. For Arab states such as Egypt, Qatar and Lebanon, working to restore normalcy in Libya in cooperation with European states would usher a model of problem solving in which responsibility is shared and military intervention is supported only for an internationally-binding, specific aim. More ambitious and vague plans may plunge Libya into chaos; alienate Arab states, some of which are dealing with their own domestic challenges; and at the end may help forces whose identity and aim go counter to the interests of greater international peace and security.

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MES Insights • Volume 2, Issue 2 March • 2011

## Yemen's Coming Crisis

by Adam C Seitz

Following the successful ousting of Presidents Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt, anti-government protests continue to challenge the rule of long-standing regimes throughout the Middle East and North Africa. The 32-year rule of Yemen's President Ali Abdallah Saleh is no exception. Widespread corruption, growing economic and resource inequality, and internal fragmentation have pushed anti-government protestors into the streets demanding the immediate ouster of President Saleh, challenging the stability of a country already on the brink of becoming a failed state.

Even before Yemen was swept up by the wave of protests rolling through the region, the Saleh regime had been faced with a number of daunting challenges: a slew of economic and social issues, the Islamist al-Houthi rebellion in the north, a resilient secessionist movement in the south, and a resurgent al-Qaeda offshoot seeking to take advantage of Yemen's domestic conflicts and demographics.

In the past, Saleh has been relatively effective in managing the issues his regime has faced through power-sharing arrangements brokered with various tribal leaders, Islamist groups and political factions. Recently, however, shifting alliances have put this system to the test.

Since 9/11, Saleh has become an important ally in the U.S.-led global war on terror, with his government receiving significant amounts of aid to combat al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. The regime's relationship with Washington has made it all the more difficult to maintain its strategic

domestic alliances with Islamist supporters and northern tribal leaders, who increasingly perceive the Saleh regime as a U.S. and Saudi puppet. Such perceptions have only contributed to the government's domestic weakness and put added stress on an already fragile system.

Although the Saleh regime has announced a series of unprecedented concessions, notably regarding presidential term limits, hereditary succession and constitutional reforms, due to the trust deficit that Saleh has built up over his three decades as president, such statements have had little effect in satisfying protestors' demands. As security forces have turned to violent and hard-handed tactics to restore order, support by tribal leaders and even top military commanders has increasingly shifted in favor of the opposition. Yemen's top military commands, security services and intelligence agencies are held by Saleh's relatives and close allies in the Sanhan tribe; thus, the high-level defections currently taking place do not bode well for the regime.

It appears ever more likely that a negotiated exit by the President Saleh is the only way out of the current crisis. But because there is no clear or popular alternative leader to navigate the complex social, economic, and security issues that Yemen would continue to face even after Saleh's departure, a peaceful transition of power seems unlikely. Unlike Egypt, Yemen's military lacks the capability and legitimacy to act as a viable transitional power. The Yemeni political and social landscape is teeming with tribal leaders and Islamist groups that have the arms and the power to turn the situation into an all-out civil war. Such a situation would benefit al-Qaeda greatly – as did the war between the Saleh regime in the north and southern separatists in 1994 – and would pose a serious threat for Yemen's neighbor to the north, Saudi Arabia.

As attention has turned from the transitions taking place in Egypt and Tunisia to the Western-led military operations in Libya and the Saudi intervention in Bahrain, the rapidly deteriorating situation in Yemen has been lost in the headlines. Over the past 32 years, the Saleh regime has been faced with one crisis after another and has been able to survive, but the coming crisis of a post-Saleh Yemen will have far reaching implications and should not be underestimated, especially not by policymakers in Washington and Riyadh.

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MES Insights • Volume 2, Issue 3 • May 2011

## The Middle East: Bracing for a New Wave of Nuclear Proliferation?

by Norman Cigar, MCU Minerva Research Initiative Chair

Against the background of the recent turmoil and changing environment in the Middle East, the issue of nuclear weapons has received renewed attention which may signal the possibility of a new phase of proliferation. Although this may be a long-term process, decisions and initial steps in that direction could occur soon, and even the current public discussions may lead to increased tensions in the region.

## The Gulf Countries

A growing consensus that neither the United States nor Israel is likely to derail Iran's quest for nuclear weapons, and increasing questions about the United States' ability to support regional friends in difficulty have engendered anxiety in the Gulf. In March 2011, at a conference held by a high-profile research center in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Prince Turki al-Faysal, former Director General of Saudi Arabia's Intelligence Agency, openly asked: "What would be wrong with acquiring a nuclear force to confront the Iranian force ... and the Israeli nuclear force?"[1] The UAE's Foreign Minister Prince Abd Allah also agreed that "the Gulf countries must acquire a nuclear force." [2] Prince Turki's suggestion, presented in the context of closer Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) military coordination, suggested a collective nuclear effort to allay local concerns and as a show of regional solidarity, although realistically Saudi Arabia, as the largest GCC country, would probably take the lead on nuclear weapons.

It is unlikely that Prince Turki's proposal was a slip of the tongue, as it occurred in the presence of numerous high-ranking regional officials, and was reported widely in the tightly-controlled Saudi media where it was accompanied by positive readers' comments. Not surprisingly, Bahrain, as the GCC country which feels the most threatened by Iran, also seems receptive, with one apparently high-level press editorial calling on fellow-GCC countries to "Work toward nuclear arms and acquire a Gulf atom bomb, since that bomb will create a deterrent against anyone thinking of aggression against the GCC countries." [3]

The utility of nuclear weapons has long been a subject of analysis in the Saudi media, albeit often in abstract terms or in relation to other countries. Late last year, Prince Turki bin Muhammad, Saudi Arabia's Deputy Foreign Minister for Multilateral Relations, was more circumspect when he repeated his country's calls for a nuclear-free zone in the Middle East, but nevertheless hinted at the same time that Iran's quest for nuclear weapons "will lead to a slide toward a nuclear arms race in the region." [4] The open allusions to nuclear weapons not only signal Saudi Arabia's concern to Iran and to Riyadh's allies, but also prepare a case for regional and international acceptance when and if Saudi Arabia proceeds as it suggests it may. Focusing on the Iranian threat, rather than on Israel, may be seen as making nuclear proliferation more palatable to international opinion, although the Israeli nuclear arsenal remains a concern in the Gulf, if for now overshadowed by that of Iran.

Any Saudi acquisition of nuclear weapons would very likely consist of a turn-key project (as would be true of any Arab country in the near term), with Pakistan as the most likely potential source, perhaps with some help from North Korea or China, which provided Saudi Arabia with the now aging intermediate range CSS-2 surface-to-surface missiles in 1989.

## Egypt

In Egypt – rather than the Iranian threat – the impetus for considering nuclear weapons stems from a perceived threat from neighboring Israel and from frustration on progress over the Arab-Israeli issue.

Egyptian analysts and opposition figures have expressed support before for a national nuclear program, citing concerns with the regional imbalance of power. Such voices, long subdued, have become more pronounced and frequent after the fall of President Hosni Mubarak in February 2011. Egyptian commentators now openly express fears of the influence of Israel's nuclear monopoly in dire terms for the region, with one seeing in Israel's nuclear arsenal "the decisive tool to subjugate the Arab region." [5] Moreover, elements expressing such views, whether secularist nationalists or supporters of religious blocs, may now have a greater impact on Egypt's new political landscape.

For example, the once repressed but now resurgent and increasingly influential ultraconservative



salafi Islamic bloc has come out in favor of nuclear weapons. At a high-profile meeting of leading salafi figures, the consensus expressed was that "There is no objection to developing nuclear weapons, to going into space, and to producing missiles." [6] Sheikh Yusuf al-Badri, a hardline cleric on Egypt's Supreme

Council for Islamic Affairs, also asserted that the response to a nuclear-armed Israel "must be the development by the Arabs of an Islamic atom bomb," noting that realistically it would have to be acquired from another country. [7]

An editorial in the Egyptian press likewise called for peace by nuclear deterrence, and did not exclude the utility of nuclear weapons even as a warfighting tool. [8] Egypt's past reluctance to focus on nuclear weapons is now often cast as a remnant of the old system to be discarded. According to one nationalist academic, Mubarak's reluctance to support Egypt's nuclear effort while in power is just one more criticism to lay at the ousted leader's doorstep. [9] Even Egypt's long-serving senior diplomat during the Mubarak period, Amr Musa, has now sought to distance himself from his past boss on this issue, insisting that he had clashed with the latter over promoting a nuclear program. [10]

A new Egyptian government may be tempted to anchor its nationalist, religious, and modernist credentials on the nuclear issue, appealing to the military and the domestic and regional publics based on national pride, security, and technology, although this could well lead to chillier relations with Israel. However, any concrete steps may be tempered by the potential reaction of the international community and the negative impact on the significant U.S. aid program.

### **Libya's Cautionary Example**

Yet another dynamic favoring the acquisition of nuclear weapons that has surfaced recently has been that of regime security. That is, nuclear weapons are now often portrayed as useful not only as a deterrent against the nuclear threat from other countries but also as a deterrent to intervention by foreign powers against a regional government. The model – especially for beleaguered regimes – for this perspective is Libya, with the lesson learned that had Qadhafi retained his nuclear program the United States and other NATO countries would have been reluctant to become involved on behalf of the opposition seeking to topple his regime. Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, pointing to Western intervention in Libya, noted that Qaddafi had made a mistake in relinquishing his nuclear program and concluded that Iran was right in rejecting any curb on its own nuclear development. [11] Likewise press commentary in Bahrain noted that "Had Saddam and likewise Qaddafi not relinquished their nuclear weapons [i.e., programs] ... the West would not have dared to attack them." [12]

### **Prospects and Implications**

Whether any country actually does go beyond discussions to the acquisition of nuclear weapons in the short-term is unclear, especially given the technical and political hurdles. Nevertheless, one can draw several implications. First, if proliferation does begin in earnest, in addition to the GCC and Egypt, one should also watch Algeria, Morocco, Turkey, Syria, and Iraq as potential candidates aspiring to the nuclear club. Second, nuclear deterrence cannot be applied mechanistically, and the spread of nuclear weapons may not lead to stabilizing mutual deterrence. Differences from the situation during the Cold War – such as the small size of arsenals and their inherent vulnerability, limited intelligence capabilities, inefficient command and control, etc. – are likely to hinder the establishment of a stable multilateral deterrence regime. Third, an assumption that nuclear weapons would never be used in a warfighting mode may be flawed, given the potential for miscalculation

and unfamiliarity with the characteristics of nuclear weapons. Fourth, even a small nuclear arsenal in the wrong hands can be sufficient to cause significant negative consequences for U.S. interests and for regional stability.

Finally, modifying the regional threat environment – such as a just resolution of the Arab-Israeli issue – may alleviate the pressures for proliferation by removing or diminishing the sources of perceived insecurity which can magnify threat perceptions and serve as a potent stimulus to fuel proliferation. Likewise, less public emphasis on international calls for regime change might lower the sense of embattlement which some regimes feel and reduce perceptions of outside threats to such regimes' survival.

#### **Middle East Nuclear Proliferation Notes:**

[1] Ali Al-Qahis, "Al-Amir Turki Al-Faysal yutalib bi-tahwil majlis al-taawun ila ittihad ashbah bi'l-urubbi wa-insha' jaysh khaliji muwahhad" [Prince Turki Al-Faysal Calls for a Transformation of the (Gulf) Cooperation Council into a Union Resembling the European Union and for the Establishment of a Combined Gulf Army], Al-Riyadh, 22 March 2011, [www.alriyadh.com/2011/03/22/article615880.html](http://www.alriyadh.com/2011/03/22/article615880.html).

[2] *ibid.*

[3] Muwatin [A Citizen] "Al-Qunbula al-nawawiya al-khalijiya" [The Gulf Atomic Bomb], Al-Ayyam (Manama, Bahrain), 8 May 2011, [www.alayam.com/Save.aspx?aid=74151](http://www.alayam.com/Save.aspx?aid=74151).

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[6] "Al-Salfiyun yutalibun bi-tatbiq al-sharia wa-yaqulun man yutliq al-suham sataud alayh" [The Salafis Demand the Application of Islamic Law and Note That If Anyone Shoots an Arrow It Will Fall Back on Him], Al-Yawm al-Sabi (Cairo), 1 April 2011, [www.youwm7.com/NewsPrint.asp?NewsID=381923](http://www.youwm7.com/NewsPrint.asp?NewsID=381923).

[7] Interview by Girgis Bushra with Yusuf Al-Badri, "La budd min wujud qunbula nawawiya islamiya fi muwajahat 'Isra'il" [It Is Necessary to Have an Islamic Atom Bomb to Confront "Israel"], Al-Hiwar Al-Mutamaddin (Cairo), 12 April 2011, [www.al-7ewar.com/m/showthread.php?t=32887](http://www.al-7ewar.com/m/showthread.php?t=32887).

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[9] Muhammad Al-Sayyid Salim, "Hasibu Mubarak ala ilgha' al-barnamaj al-nawawi al-misri" [Hold Mubarak Accountable for Cancelling the Egyptian Nuclear Program], Al-Arabi (Cairo), 14 March 2001, [www.al-3araby.com](http://www.al-3araby.com).

[10] Interview by Magdi Al-Gallad and Raniya Badawi with Amr Musa, "Lastu mahsuban ala nizham Mubarak wa-ikhtalaft mah bi-sha'n alalaqa ma Isra'il" [I Am Not a Protege of the Mubarak Regime and I Differed with Him on the Issue of the Relationship with Israel], Al-Misri Al-Yawm (Cairo), 2 March 2011, [www.almasry-alyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=289289](http://www.almasry-alyoum.com/article2.aspx?ArticleID=289289).

[11] "Don't Bomb Libya, Arm Rebels, Says Iran's Khamenei," Reuters, 21 March 2011, [www.reuters.com/assets/print?aid=USTRE72K50L20110321](http://www.reuters.com/assets/print?aid=USTRE72K50L20110321).

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## Into the Arab Summer

by Amin Tarzi

It has been raining dictators in the Middle East of late. The Arab Spring, as the current wave of unrest in the Middle East is known, began in December 2010 and, to date, is responsible for the downfall of two longstanding dictators in Tunisia and Egypt. With very few exceptions, most states with Arab majorities have experienced the vagaries of “Spring,” challenging the status quo and seeking to change the order in these states. In a couple of cases, the resulting “storms” are supported by outside forces, such as in the cases of Libya where NATO is providing military support to the opponents of the Libyan leader, Colonel Muammar al-Qadhafi, and of Bahrain where Iran is seen as the opposition’s spiritual guide; but in most, the main engine behind the upheaval has been the disenchanting Arab youth, seeking more than slogans and promises of the past and demanding a better life and brighter future. The Arab Spring has now entered its summer season, and there are more questions than answers.

Unlike storm seasons of old, in this Spring, we see a climatic shift. While the economic environment preceding the Arab Spring was conducive to popular revolts, it is noteworthy that the traditional revolutionaries of decades past who champion an Arab version of socialism were not at the helm. Also, there has been no transfer of responsibility to foreign actors, especially those with colonial or neocolonial ties. And most interestingly, those risking their safety to protest in streets of Cairo, Damascus or Sana do not seem to have bought into the promise of the social order being propagated by the Islamist organizations. Absent in the Arab Spring have been the slogans or placards supporting the likes of Osama bin Laden or his ideology. This last fact alone, while not in itself an answer to the Arab protesters’ calls for economic opportunities and democratic ideals, is nevertheless a major victory for the forces that reject the use of terror and intimidation for political gain. And lastly, with the glaring exception of Iraq, the Arab uprisings have been free of the anti-American sentiment so often associated with political rallies in the Middle East.

While it is too early to discuss the fruits of the Arab Spring, it is encouraging, as we enter the Arab Summer, that the youth in most Arab states, and indeed their societies as a whole, have sown different seeds this Spring, desiring to change their lot for the better. Using trusted implements of the establishment, such as the military and judiciary, these movements are relying on these advocates for the harvest. In the short-term, a bountiful harvest depends upon how these advocates respect the trust the people have bestowed upon them and their ability to resist reverting to old ways. In Tunisia and Egypt – two cases where the Arab Spring can be deemed successful in its initial phase – fairness and transparency in the upcoming elections and of constitutional changes would cement the relationship between those spearheading the revolts and those elements of state power which survived the regime changes. In the long-term, the success of the Arab “storms” will be determined by their fruits: will there be positive change for the average Arab citizen or will the fruits spoil in the fields, hijacked by extremists or dictators? Ahh, the patience of farmers.

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## A Consular Protest

Responding to Amin Tarzi's piece on Libya in MES Insights Volume 2 Issue 2, Ambassador Ronald E. Neumann (ret), President, American Academy of Diplomacy, wrote the following "consular protest": Just read your excellent and thoughtful essay "To the Shores of Tripoli" in the Middle East Studies series. In defense of the diplomatic corps, however, I feel bound to raise one tiny, historical quibble. The Marines under Presley O'Bannon who took Derna were, in my recollection, part of a rather rag-tag force that was directed over all by William Eaton, the former consul to Tunis who still held a diplomatic title. So, O'Bannon at least needs to share credit with a diplomat. When I was young, I always thought I'd like to be a diplomat of Eaton's type, leading a military adventure. However, it was pretty much a wasted effort since the diplomacy was duplicitous and came to little in the end.

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## Transition in the Arab World and Saudi Arabia's Role

by Adam C. Seitz

As the Arab Spring turns to winter, a number of regimes engulfed by the wave of popular uprising rolling through the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region are moving towards new phases of transition. It was with this in mind that Middle East Studies at Marine Corps University (MES at MCU) dedicated its 2011-2012 Lecture Series to exploring the evolving situation and emerging realities in the Arab world.

The second lecture in the Series presented on 16 November 2011 by Dr. David Ottaway, Senior Scholar at Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, was entitled "Revolution and Counter Revolution in the Arab World." Drawing on his extensive knowledge of and experience in the MENA region as a scholar and reporter, Dr. Ottaway focused on three points in examining the current uprisings: (1) the appropriateness of using the term "revolution" when characterizing the current uprisings; (2) the use of historical examples of revolutions and uprisings in the MENA region, as opposed to the color revolutions of Eastern Europe and some successor states of the Soviet Union, when considering the transformations taking place; and (3) the central counter-revolutionary role Saudi Arabia currently plays.

## **Are Arab Uprisings Revolutions?**

Dr. Ottaway started off by questioning the use of the term “revolution” to describe the events currently taking place in the Arab world, arguing that labeling the current uprisings as “revolutions” has “obscured analysis of what is taking place.” He went on to describe a revolution as not being a single event – i.e. the overthrow of an unpopular leader – but rather a process that involves “major shifts in the economic, political and social sectors.” Thus, using the term “revolution” to describe the current uprisings in the Arab world is rather premature and “conflates this single event.”

Moreover, this misnomer, he added, has “raised enormous expectations way beyond what is possible in terms of outcome,” which is already leading to “frustration, disappointment and disillusionment” among the Arab populations with activists who already are asking “what happened to our revolution?”

## **Historical Examples**

Dr. Ottaway explained that Arab pro-democracy activists continue to look to the color revolutions of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union for inspiration and comparison. These activists often ignore their own history of recent revolutions because revolutions within the MENA region have more often be “led by the military and ended with dictatorships led by the military or a single party.” However, Dr. Ottaway cautioned that comparing the Arab uprisings today to those in Eastern Europe during the fall of the Soviet Union “misses the fact that conditions were much different” and proposed the need to look for “comparison and precedence in contemporary Arab history” in discussing possible outcomes for the current transitions taking place within the region. He provided Egypt in 1952, Iraq in 1962 and Syria in 1968, as more relevant examples to refer to when analyzing the current transformations underway in the MENA region.

In looking to the transition taking place in Egypt, he asked, “Will there be a new civilian elite empowered by the uprisings? Or is Egypt’s Supreme Council of the Armed Forces taking on the role of leading what is seen as a counter-revolution?” When considering possible scenarios in Egypt and other transitioning governments in the region, Dr. Ottaway pointed to what he called the “Sudan governance model” of a series of civilian-led uprisings leading to short periods of civilian-controlled governments followed by military rule.

## **Saudi Arabia as Counter-Revolutionary**

In the latter portion of his presentation, Dr. Ottaway discussed his views on Saudi Arabia’s counterrevolutionary role in the current uprisings, stating that Saudi Arabia is at the “center of the counter-revolution, preventing democracy from advancing in the Middle East.” Domestically, the Saudi government has responded to the current uprisings using a variety of methods – such as the religious establishment, state-run media, economic incentives, as well as promises of social reforms – to dissuade would-be demonstrators.

Within the region, Dr. Ottaway cited Saudi Arabia’s involvement in Bahrain as a prime example of Saudi Arabia’s extending its counter-revolutionary policy beyond its own borders. The shift in the regional sectarian balance as a result of the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq was too much for the Saudis, who have made it clear that they will not allow a Shiite-dominated government in Bahrain, he added. Thus, Bahrain has essentially become Saudi Arabia’s “red line,” and Riyadh will do what it must to protect the current monarchy and maintain the status quo in the island nation, Dr. Ottaway stated. To this end the Saudi government has also worked to bolster the rest Arab monarchies of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

Not only has Saudi policy bolstered the Arab monarchies to maintain the status quo of the Gulf regimes, it also has allowed Saudi Arabia to take the opportunities presented by the Arab Spring to bring about changes in regional republics that will favor the Saudi kingdom in the long run, even if the changes bring about democratic systems. In his presentation, Dr. Ottaway went case by case in examining Saudi policy vis-à-vis the Arab republics. In Yemen, he explained, that the Saudi government worked to remove President Saleh from power by providing money to various tribes. Its motives were not to inspire democratic change in the country, but rather to advance its own security interests by maneuvering to bring about a post-Saleh government in Yemen that was friendly to Riyadh and the rest of GCC. Similarly, in Egypt, Dr. Ottaway pointed out that, despite being unhappy with the U.S. response to the uprising in Egypt, Riyadh has pledged over four billion dollars to Egypt's transitional government in an attempt to protect its interests in Cairo. Finally looking to Syria, Dr. Ottaway argued that Riyadh has shifted its policy to one of seeking regime change as the prospect of a Sunni-led government, and by extension the potential to reduce Iranian influence, has presented itself.

Dr. Ottaway's presentation provided a theoretical framework for examining the Arab uprisings and discussed the counter-revolutionary role of Saudi Arabia. As this environment continues to evolve, such PME opportunities provide the Marine Corps with the ability to discuss and prepare for the emerging realities in the MENA region. The remaining lectures in this series run through April 2012 with focus on Syria, Turkey, Bahrain, Egypt, and Yemen.

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# MES Insights: Terrorism

MES Insights • Volume 1, Issue 5 • November 2010

## How Strong is Al-Qaeda Today?

by Stephanie Kramer, MCU Minerva Research Assistant

Al-Qaeda is a different organization today than the one that coordinated and executed the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. Some analysts and policy makers argue that al-Qaeda no longer has the ability to carry out such a large-scale, sophisticated attack.[1] Counterterrorism efforts have disrupted the leadership structures originally based in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and many key leaders (especially 3rd-level officials) have been either captured or killed. Additionally, al-Qaeda's popular support in the Muslim world is reportedly in steep decline- an ideological backlash provoked by al-Qaeda attacks that have harmed or killed Muslim civilians.[2] These developments do not bode well for forming a pan-Islamic caliphate.

At the same time, however, al-Qaeda could be seen as stronger and more resilient than ever. While the "core leadership" may be compromised, al-Qaeda has still mounted a sophisticated counter-intelligence operation, and is adept at recruiting Western operatives. The organization has also spread. In 2004, Jordanian jihadist leader Abu Musab al Zarqawi committed his Iraq-based group to Bin Laden, which is now known as "the Islamic State of Iraq." Two years later, in 2006, the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat formally allied with al-Qaeda, and now fights under the name of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. In 2009, Yemen and Saudi extremists unified under the banner of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. The group became famous last December for the foiled Christmas underwear bombing plot.

In addition to these somewhat-more-formal al-Qaeda branches, numerous other Islamic militant groups have a strong affiliation with al-Qaeda. Government sources estimate that al-Qaeda cells or associates can be found in over 70 countries around the globe.[3] Well known examples are al-Shabaab in Somalia, and Jemaah Islamiya in Indonesia.[4] Though these offshoots are by-and-large more focused on local issues than the core al-Qaeda, some are projecting power beyond their original domains. The attacks, while perhaps less spectacular, are more diverse, unpredictable, and arguably more difficult to counter.

This situation invites tough questions: does this proliferation of affiliated organizations signify a fragmentation and loss of control for al-Qaeda, or is it an indication that al-Qaeda is purposefully shifting its strategy? How much influence and control do Osama bin Laden and the core leadership still exercise over these nodes? Which of the groups are the most successful (or dangerous), and why? Finally, are the United States and its allies equipped to deal with the new al-Qaeda?

A research team at the Marine Corps University, headed by Dr. Norman Cigar, is investigating these and other questions. The research project is being funded through the Minerva Initiative, a DoD grant program that encourages universities to investigate social science issues of strategic interest to the United States. Dr. Cigar will focus on al-Qaeda's adapting relations with the tribes in Iraq;

and al-Qaeda headquarters' management of operations in Iraq. In addition, he hopes to shed light on what al-Qaeda's geo-political vision for the future world might look like, and to provide insight into which theaters al-Qaeda chooses and why. Dr. Chris Harmon, the current Horner Chair of Military Theory at Marine Corps University, will focus his research on al-Qaeda's interactions with international institutions.

As a substantial piece of the project, Marine Corps University plans on hosting a conference next spring entitled "Al-Qaeda After Ten Years of War: A Global Perspective of Successes, Failures and Prospects." The conference will bring together regional experts from academia, the government (both civilian and military), think tanks, and media. Each discussion panel is set to focus on a specific region of the world where al-Qaeda operates, and will provide a net assessment of al-Qaeda's successes and failures in the respective area. By doing this, the team hopes to paint a comprehensive picture of al-Qaeda today in order to inform the strategic decisions of tomorrow. After all, no matter what one believes about the relative strength of al-Qaeda, the United States will be dealing with its actions for the foreseeable future.

**Al-Qaida Notes:**

[1] Vice-President Joe Biden, for instance, said in an interview on CNN's Larry King Live Show: "The idea of there being a massive attack in the United States like 9/11 is unlikely, in my view". Instead, he said, the attacks are likely to be of the "small", "frightening" type attempted by the Christmas bomber in 2009. See: [http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544\\_162-6197550-503544.html](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-6197550-503544.html).

[2] Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, "The Almanac of Al Qaeda," Foreign Policy, May/June 2010.

[3] John Rollins, "Al Qaeda and Affiliates: Historical Perspective, Global Presence, and Implications for U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report for Congress R41070, February 5, 2010.

[4] Facts on al-Qaeda affiliates come from the National Counterterrorism Center's Counterterrorism Calendar 2010, available at: <http://www.nctc.gov/site/index.html>. Further background information is found in Chapter 6. Terrorist Organizations from Country Reports on Terrorism 2009, US Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, August 5, 2010: <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2009/140900.htm>.

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# MES Hosted Events

## 2010

- 20 Jan: MES hosted Dr. James Caron, University of Pennsylvania, as part of the 2010 AfPak Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “Social and Political Dissent in Pashtu Poetry: The Case of Malang Jan.”
- 18 Feb: MES hosted Prof. Robert McChesney, New York University, as part of the 2010 AfPak Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “Afghans’ View of Afghanistan’s History.”
- 25 Mar: MES hosted Amb. Peter Galbraith as part of the 2010 AfPak Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “Afghanistan: War of Necessity or Quagmire?”
- 5 Apr: MES hosted Prof. Shah Mahmoud Hanifi, James Madison University, as part of the 2010 AfPak Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “Pashtun Counter-Narrative.”
- 21 Apr: MES co-hosted with the Marine Corps University Foundation the MCU Emerald Express Strategic Symposium Series, “Afghanistan: The Way Ahead.”
- 3 May: MES hosted Mr. Qamaruddin Jabarkheil, USMC Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning, as part of the 2010 AfPak Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “Today’s Pashtuns.”
- 8 Jun: MES hosted Amb. Ronald Neumann, American Academy of Diplomacy, as part of the 2010 AfPak Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “A Reality-Based Policy in Afghanistan: Lessons from the Past and Notes for the Future.”
- 30 Jun: MES hosted Mr. Abubakar Siddique, Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty, as part of the 2010 AfPak Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “Terrorism and the Pashtun Tribal Lands.”
- 9 Jul: MES hosted Mr. Haider Mullick, United States Joint Special Operations University, as part of the 2010 AfPak Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “The Pakistani Surge: Progress and Challenges.”
- 16 Aug: MES hosted Prof. Robert Crews, Stanford University, as part of the 2010 AfPak Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “The Politics of National Reconciliation in Afghanistan.”
- 25 Oct: MES hosted Dr. Kenneth Katzman, Congressional Research Service, as part of the 2010-11 Iran Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “Iran’s Revolutionary Guard: Facing Challenges Foreign and Domestic.”

- 15 Nov: MES hosted Mr. Simon Shercliff, British Embassy, as part of the 2010-11 Iran Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “A British Perspective in Negotiating with Iran.”
- 15 Dec: MES hosted Dr. Anthony Cordesman, Center for Strategic and International Studies, as part of the 2010-11 Iran Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “The Iranian Challenge: From U.S. and Israel Perspectives.”

## **2011**

- 11 Jan: MES hosted Mr. Michael Eisenstadt, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, as part of the 2010-11 Iran Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “The Operational and Policy Implications of Iranian Strategic Culture and Doctrine.”
- 28 Feb: MES hosted Amb. John Limbert, United States Naval Academy, as part of the 2010-11 Iran Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “America and Iran: Endless Enemies?”
- 17 Mar: MES hosted Mr. Afshin Molavi, New America Foundation, as part of the 2010-11 Iran Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “Iran and the Persian Gulf States: Between Commerce and Confrontation.”
- 21 Apr: MES hosted Dr. Trita Parsi, National Iranian American Council, as part of the 2010-11 Iran Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “Iran and the U.S. under Obama.”
- 30-31 Aug: MES co-hosted with the Marine Corps University Foundation and the Defense Intelligence Agency the MCU Emerald Express Strategic Symposium Series, “Shaping for Successful Transition in Afghanistan.”
- 6 Oct: MES hosted Dr. John Alterman, Center for Strategic and International Studies, as part of the 2011-12 Arab Revolts Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “Seeing Through the Fog: Transitional Governments in Libya and Elsewhere.”
- 9 Nov: MES hosted Dr. David Ottaway, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, as part of the 2011-12 Arab Revolts Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “Revolution and Counterrevolution in the Arab World.”
- 12 Dec: MES co-hosted with the Minerva Initiative at MCU and the Public International Law & Policy Group the Afghanistan Negotiations Simulation, “The Reconciliation Process in Afghanistan.”
- 13 Dec: MES hosted Mr. Thomas Dine, Search for Common Ground, as part of the 2011-12 Arab Revolts Lecture Series, for a presentation entitled, “Blood in the Streets of Syria and the Surrounding Region: A Future of Crisis.”

# MES PME Support

## 2010

- 13 Jan: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Regional Approaches to Afghanistan,” to the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) Fellows, MCU.
- 14 Jan: Amin Tarzi led a discussion on U.S.-Afghan relations and scope of MES activities at MCU with a visiting Afghan National Army delegation, MCU.
- 16 Feb: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Political Culture in the Afghanistan Theater,” to the Senior Enlisted Professional Military Education (PME) Course, MCU.
- 17 Feb: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled “An Overview of the Afghanistan Theater,” to Marine Corps System Command (MARCORSYSCOM), Stafford, VA.
- 19 Feb: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled “The Historical Relationship between State Formation and Judicial System Reform in Afghanistan,” to the Army Judge Advocate General (JAG) School, Charlottesville, VA.
- 22 Feb: Amin Tarzi taught the Marine Corps War College’s (MCWAR) Regional Studies Course on the Middle East, MCU.
- 23 Feb: Amin Tarzi taught MCWAR’s Regional Studies Course on Israel, MCU.
- 25 Feb: Amin Tarzi taught MCWAR’s Regional Studies Course on the Iran, MCU.
- 27 Feb: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Afghanistan and Its Region: An Assessment,” to 1st Battalion, 25th Marines, Fort Devens, MA.
- 1 Mar: Amin Tarzi taught MCWAR’s Regional Studies Course on Afghanistan, MCU.
- 7 Mar: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “The Land of the Afghans,” to the 300th Military Intelligence (MI) Brigade’s Annual Language Conference, Draper, UT.
- 4 Mar: Amin Tarzi taught MCWAR’s Regional Studies Course on Pakistan, MCU.
- 10 Mar: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “The Merits and Pitfalls of the ‘Regional Approach’ to the Afghanistan Question,” to the Commanders’ Course, MCU.

- 31 Mar: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “The Merits and Pitfalls of the ‘Regional Approach, to the Afghanistan Question,” [REPEAT] to the Officers’ Candidate School (OCS), MCB Quantico.
- 2 Apr: Amin Tarzi served as a substitute instructor for the Comand and Staff College (CSC) class on Arab Nationalism, MCU.
- 16 Apr: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Afghanistan and the State of Insurgency Therein” to Marine Fighter Attack Squadron 232 (VMFA-232) and other air wings at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Miramar, CA.
- 16 Apr: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Prospects for Reintegration Programs in Afghanistan,” to select officers and staff non-nommissioned officers (SNCO) of VMFA-232, MCAS Miramar, CA.
- 10 May: Amin Tarzi led a discussion on Afghanistan at a meeting of the Quatrefoil Club, Quantico, VA.
- 18 Jun: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Political Culture in the Afghanistan Theater: Ways Forward,” to the Senior Enlisted PME Course, MCU.
- 21 Jun: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Insurgency, Reconciliation and COIN: A Regional Round-Up,” to visiting students from the Danish Defense College, Washington, DC.
- 28 Jun: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Measures of Success in the Afghanistan Theater In Light of AfPak Realities and Perceptions,” to Marine Manpower Enlisted Assignments, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Quantico, VA.
- 1 Jul: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “A Strategic Overview of the Afghanistan Theater,” to 3rd Battalion, 25th Marines, Camp Pendleton, CA.
- 3 Aug: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Political Culture in the Afghanistan Theatre: Ways Forward,” [REPEAT] to the Senior Enlisted PME Course, MCU.
- 13 Aug: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “The Land of the Aryans: Myths and Realities of Iran,” to visiting U.S. Naval Academy students, MCU.
- 17 Aug: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “The Historical Relationship between State Formation and Judicial System Reform in Afghanistan,”[REPEAT] to the Army JAG School, Charlottesville, VA.
- 27 Aug: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “A Glimpse into the History of Afghanistan and Its Current Relations with Pakistan and Iran,” to the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters (II MEF HQ), Camp Lejeune, NC.

- 27 Aug: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “The AfPak Predicament,” to School of Infantry (SOI) – East, Camp Geiger, NC.
- 29 Sep: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Recalibrating the Afghan Reconciliation Program,” [REPEAT] to the Senior Planners Course, MCU.
- 20 Oct: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Political Culture in the Afghanistan Theatre: Ways Forward,” [REPEAT] to the Senior Enlisted PME Course, MCU.
- 16 Nov: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Iran’s Policies and Options in the ‘AfPak’ Region,” to the AfPak Hands Great Books elective at Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF), National Defense University (NDU), Ft. McNair, Washington, DC.
- 13 Dec: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “History and Culture of Iran,” to the Expeditionary Warfare School, MCU.

## **2011**

- 12 Jan: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Political Culture in the Afghanistan Theater: Ways Forward,” [REPEAT] to the Senior Enlisted PME Course, MCU.
- 18 Jan: Amin Tarzi led a discussion on Afghanistan and Pakistan at a meeting of the Quatrefoil Club, Stafford, VA.
- 1 Feb: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “6+2 Revisited: Afghanistan and Its Region,” to the Commanders Course, MCB Quantico.
- 11 Feb: Amin Tarzi taught MCWAR’s Regional Studies Course on the Middle East, MCU.
- 15 Feb: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Save Me from My Friends: Afghanistan and Its Neighbors,” to the Joint Advanced Warfighting School, Norfolk, VA.
- 16 Feb: Amin Tarzi taught MCWAR’s Regional Studies Course on Iran, MCU.
- 28 Feb: Amin Tarzi taught MCWAR’s Regional Studies Course on Afghanistan, MCU.
- 3 Mar: Amin Tarzi taught MCWAR’s Regional Studies Course on Pakistan, MCU.
- 7 Mar: Amin Tarzi played the role of the Saudi Arabian King and Prime Minister of India with the AfPak Fellows Program participants at ICAF, NDU, Ft. McNair, Washington, DC.
- 23 Mar: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Political Culture in the Afghanistan Theater: Ways Forward,” [REPEAT] to the Senior Enlisted PME Course, MCU.

- 13 Apr: Amin Tarzi taught the Senior Planners Course, Iran section, MCU.
- 19 Apr: Amin Tarzi taught the Senior Planners Course, AfPak section, MCU.
- 3 May: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “6+2 Revisited: Afghanistan and Its Region,” [REPEAT] to the Commanders’ Course, MCU.
- 3 May: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Arab Spring in Perspective,” to the Commanders’ Course, MCU.
- 5 May: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Afghanistan: Challenges to the Regional Approach,” at MCAS Miramar, CA.
- 6 May: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Afghanistan: Challenges to the Regional Approach,” [REPEAT] at MCAS Yuma, AZ.
- 12 May: Amin Tarzi taught the School of Advanced Warfighting’s Afghanistan course, presenting a lecture entitled, “The Land of the Afghans: A Glimpse into the History of Afghanistan,” MCU.
- 14 Jun: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Afghanistan: Where From Now?” at The Basic School, MCB Quantico.
- 16 Jun: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Political Culture in the Afghanistan Theater: Ways Forward,” [REPEAT] to the Senior Enlisted PME Course, MCU.
- 12 Jul: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Afghan Legal History and the Evolution of Afghanistan as a State,” [REPEAT] to the 4th Rule of Law Course at the Army JAG School, Charlottesville, VA.
- 12 Jul: Amin Tarzi participated in a panel entitled, “Rule of Law in Iraq and Afghanistan,” as part of the 4th Rule of Law Course at the Army JAG School, Charlottesville, VA.
- 18 Jul: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Iran’s Political Landscape,” to the Reserve Senior Staff Course, MCU.
- 26 Jul: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Afghanistan, Its Neighbors and Its Neo-Taliban,” to the Reserve Senior Staff Course, MCU.
- 4 Aug: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Transition in Afghanistan: Regional Approach and Reconciliation,” to the CMC Fellows, Navy Annex, Arlington, VA.
- 10 Aug: Amin Tarzi, presented a lecture entitled. “Political Culture in the Afghanistan Theater: Ways Forward,” [REPEAT] to the Senior Enlisted PME Course, MCU.



- 19 Aug: Adam Seitz presented a lecture entitled, “Iran’s Regional Role,” to the Senior Enlisted PME Course, MCU.
- 7 Sep: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Iran’s Political Landscape,” to the Senior Planner’s Course, MCU.
- 15 Sep: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Save Me From My Friends: Afghanistan and Its Neighbors,” [REPEAT] to the Senior Planner’s Course, MCU, Quantico, VA.
- 18 Oct: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “The Historical Relationship Between State Formation and Judicial System Reform in Afghanistan,” [REPEAT] to the Air Force JAG’s Keystone Leadership Summit, New Orleans, LA.
- 20 Oct: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Afghanistan, Pakistan and Beyond: Dilemmas for the United States,” to the Commanders’ Course, MCU.
- 20 Oct: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Political Culture in the Afghanistan Theater: Ways Forward,” [REPEAT] to the Senior Enlisted PME Course, MCU.
- 24 Oct: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “The Historical Relationship Between State Formation and Judicial System Reform in Afghanistan,” [REPEAT] to the Army JAG School, Charlottesville, VA.
- 26 Oct: Adam Seitz presented a lecture entitled, “Iran’s Regional Role,” [REPEAT] to the Senior Enlisted PME Course, MCU.

# MES Outreach

## 2010

- 6 Jan: Amin Tarzi participated in a workshop on regional approaches to the Afghan problem, hosted by Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC.
- 12 Jan: Amin Tarzi participated in a colloquium entitled, “The Perfect Handshake with Iran: Prudent Military Strategy and Pragmatic Engagement Policy,” hosted by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Washington, DC.
- 13 Jan: Amin Tarzi participated in a colloquium entitled, “The Pakistan Nuclear Program,” hosted by the Preventive Defense Project, Stanford University, held in Washington, DC.
- 9 Mar: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Afghanistan: Governance, Justice, Politics,” to the Defense Intelligence Agency’s Joint Military Intelligence Training Center, Springfield, VA.
- 24 Mar: Amin Tarzi presented a talk entitled, “Where We Are and the Operational Implications and Considerations of a Tribal Engagement Approach,” at a symposium on tribal engagement hosted by the Small Wars Foundation, Fredericksburg, VA.
- 27 Apr: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Prospects for the Reintegration in Afghanistan,” to NATO-ISAF’s Key Leader Training, held at Joint Forces Command Headquarters (JFC HQ) Brunssum, the Netherlands.
- 25 Jun: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Iran’s Political Landscape: A Year After the Green Challenge,” at the Room XIX of the Chicago Club, Chicago, IL.
- 9 Aug: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Recalibrating the Afghan Reconciliation Program,” to the CMC Fellows at the Navy Annex, Arlington, VA.
- 21 Sep: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Recalibrating the Afghan Reconciliation Program,” [REPEAT] to NATO-ISAF’s Key Leader Training, held at JFC HQ Brunssum, the Netherlands.
- 14 Oct: Amin Tarzi participated in the Middle East Policy Council’s 62nd Capitol Hill Conference entitled, “Middle Eastern Perspectives on the United States: Are We a Reliable Security Partner or ‘A Problem to Be Managed’?”, Washington, DC.
- 3 Nov: Amin Tarzi presented the paper, “Beyond Façades: Democratization in Afghanistan,” at a conference entitled, “Electoral Politics and Democratization in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and Iran,” organized by University of South Florida, Tampa, FL.

- 4 Nov: Amin Tarzi chaired a panel entitled, “Electoral Politics & Democratization in Pakistan & Afghanistan,” at a conference entitled, “Electoral Politics and Democratization in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and Iran,” organized by University of South Florida, Tampa, FL.

## **2011**

- 13 Jan: Amin Tarzi presented a roundtable discussion entitled, “Karzaiology – How to Decipher the Afghan President,” to the Army Directed Study Office, Alexandria, VA.
- 11 Mar: Amin Tarzi participated at a panel entitled, “Intervention and the Dilemmas of Security in Afghanistan,” at the Weiser Center for Emerging Democracies, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.
- 23 Mar: Amin Tarzi presented a lecture entitled, “Afghanistan and Its Neighbors: Save Me from My Friends,” sponsored by the Middle Eastern Studies Program at Mary Washington University, Fredericksburg, VA.
- 24 Mar: Amin Tarzi delivered the wrap-up and led the discussion at a forum entitled, “Iran: The Threat to Israel and its Neighbors,” sponsored by the Defense Education Forum of the Reserve Officers Association, Washington, DC.
- 2 Apr: Amin Tarzi participated at a panel entitled, “Bureaucracy at a Glance in Afghanistan: A Historical Perspective,” and delivered a paper entitled, “Process of Centralization of Afghan Bureaucracy,” at the Joint Conference of the Association of Asian Studies and International Convention of Asia Scholars, Honolulu, HI.
- 23 Jun: Amin Tarzi presented a talk entitled, “Arab Spring: Challenges and Opportunities for the United States,” to Middleburg Conservative Men’s Club, Middleburg, VA.
- 26 Jun: Amin Tarzi presented a joint discussion with Tom Wide on the Afghan National Archives as part of a conference entitled, “Invisible Archives,” at St. John’s College, Oxford University, UK.
- 29 Jun: Amin Tarzi presented a paper entitled, “Pashtun Tribalism and the Future of Afghan and Pakistani States and Societies,” at the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies Annual Conference 2011 in Exeter, UK.
- 26 Sep: Amin Tarzi presented a talk entitled, “The current political landscape in Iran: challenges and opportunities, a vision from the United States,” at Casa Asia, Barcelona, Spain.

- 27 Sep: Amin Tarzi led a roundtable discussion entitled, “What Does the U.S. Want? Examining the U.S. Relationship with Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan,” at the U.S. Consulate, Barcelona, Spain.
- 27 Sep: Amin Tarzi presented a talk entitled, “Iran’s Policies and Options in the ‘Af-Pak’ Region,” at Casa Asia, Madrid, Spain.
- 28 Sep: Amin Tarzi led a roundtable discussion entitled, “Af-Pak Conflict and Its Regional Implications,” at the Center for Advanced National Defense Studies, School of Advanced Defense Studies, Madrid, Spain.
- 29 Sep: Amin Tarzi presented a talk entitled, “Global Security: A Perspective from the United States,” at 19th International Defense Seminar, “Global Security and Emerging Powers in a Multi-Polar World,” Jaca, Spain.
- 17 Nov: Amin Tarzi presented a paper entitled, “The Lasting Legacy of the Great Game: ‘Pashtunistan’ through an Afghan Lens,” at a conference entitled, “Great Games? Afghan History through Afghan Eyes,” hosted by UCLA Program on Central Asia, Los Angeles, CA.

# Outside Publications by MES Staff

## 2010

- Apr: Amin Tarzi, “Right Now, We Cannot Just Let Go,” in the *Marine Corps University Journal*, Vol.1 No. 1.
- Sep: Amin Tarzi, “Recalibrating the Afghan Reconciliation Program,” in *PRISM* Vol. 1, No. 4.
- Nov: Amin Tarzi, “Abd al-Rahman Khan,” in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Third Edition (Leiden and Boston: Brill).
- Nov: Amin Tarzi, James Zogby, Leon Hadar, Jon Alterman, “The United States in Middle Eastern Eyes: A Reliable Security Partner or a ‘Problem to be Managed’,” *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XVII, Winter 2012, No. 4.

## 2011

- Mar: Amin Tarzi and Robert Lamb, *Measuring Perceptions about the Pashtun People* (Center for Strategic and International Studies).
- 1 May: Adam Seitz and Anthony Cordesman, “Iran’s Continuing Challenge in a Time of Arab Turmoil,” May 2011 issue of *The Montreal Review*.
- 16 Oct: Adam Seitz, “Yemen” in *The World Almanac of Islamism 2011* (Rowman & Littlefield, American Foreign Policy Council).
- Dec: Amin Tarzi, “Iran’s Internal Dynamics,” in Foreign Policy Research Institute’s *Footnotes*, Vol. 16, No. 10.

# In The News

## 2010

- 18 Jan: Amin Tarzi was interviewed by *NPR* for the program entitled, “Ahmad Zahir: The Voice of the Golden Years.”
- 26 Oct: Amin Tarzi published “Iran Has a Chip on Every Number,” in “What Does Iran’s Cash Buy in Afghanistan?” in *The New York Times* online “Room for Debate.”
- 22 Nov: Amin Tarzi appeared as a guest on The Kojo Nnamdi Show program entitled, “Afghanistan: The Way Forward,” on *NPR*, WAMU 88.5 FM.

## 2011

- 1 Feb: Amin Tarzi was interviewed in Persian by *Voice of America* on the situation in Egypt.
- 22 Mar: Amin Tarzi was interviewed in Persian by *Voice of America* on the handover of security to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in several provinces and districts of Afghanistan.
- 28 Apr: Amin Tarzi was interviewed for the *AOL News* article, “Q&A: How Are the Taliban Linked to the Ancient Tribe the World Never Quite Conquers?”
- 3 May: Amin Tarzi was quoted in the *USA TODAY* article, “Al-Qaeda’s effect weakens in Mideast.”
- 3 May: Adam Seitz was quoted in the *Longmont Daily Times-Call* story, “Local veterans: U.S. gets ‘final say’.”
- 8 Sep: Adam Seitz was interviewed for the *Quantico Sentry* article, “Key players discuss Afghan self-reliance during Emerald Express.”
- 1 Oct: Amin Tarzi’s interview on Iran was published in *Ara*, a Catalan language daily published in Barcelona, Spain.
- 29 Oct: Amin Tarzi was quoted in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, “Editorial: Karzai still meeting low expectations.”



# MES Staff

**Amin Tarzi** is the Director of Middle East Studies at the Marine Corps University in Quantico, Virginia. In his position, Dr. Tarzi supports the MCU by providing a resident scholar with expertise in Middle East and South/Central Asia, representing the Marine Corps at various academic and professional forums, providing expert advice for all Professional Military Education programs, and mentoring the AFPAK Hands Marines assigned to MCU. Prior to joining the MCU, he was with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Regional Analysis team focusing on Afghanistan and Pakistan. While working at RFE/RL, he also taught courses in political Islam, cultural intelligence, terrorist organizations and similar topics at the Washington-based Center for Advanced Defense Studies. Before joining RFE/RL, Dr. Tarzi worked as Senior Research Associate for the Middle East at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey Institute of International Studies where he primarily researched Iran and its missile and nuclear developments and policies. At the Monterey Institute, he also taught a graduate seminar on Middle East security policies and threat perceptions with focus on Egypt, Iran, Iraq and Israel. Dr. Tarzi's prior experience includes holding the post of Political Advisor to the Saudi Arabian Mission to the United Nations dealing with the conflicts in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans and Somalia; the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) extension; Iranian behavior in the United Nations; and Security Council expansion. After his tenure with the Saudi government, Dr. Tarzi held the position of Researcher/Analyst on Iranian affairs at the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research in Abu Dhabi.

Dr. Tarzi earned his Ph.D. and M.A. degrees from the Department of Middle East Studies at New York University. His latest works are *Taliban and the Crisis in Afghanistan*, a co-edited volume with Professor Robert D. Crews of Stanford University (Harvard University Press, 2008) and *The Iranian Puzzle Piece: Understanding Iran in the Global Context* (MCU Press, 2009).

**Adam C. Seitz** is the Senior Research Associate for Middle East Studies at Marine Corps University in Quantico, Virginia. In his position, Mr. Seitz supports MCU with his research on the Middle East and South/Central Asia, with a concentration on Iran and the Persian Gulf Region. Prior to joining MCU, Mr. Seitz was a research associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy where his research focus was in Middle East and South Asia security studies, weapons of mass destruction, weapons proliferation, terrorism and asymmetric warfare. Mr. Seitz has published a number of papers and reports on these subjects, including a book he co-authored with Dr. Anthony Cordesman entitled *Iranian Weapons of Mass Destruction: The Birth of a Regional Nuclear Arms Race?* (Praeger Security International, 2009). Mr. Seitz served in the U.S. Army as an Intelligence Analyst and is an Operation Iraqi Freedom Veteran, serving in Anbar province in 2003 and 2004.

Mr. Seitz earned his B.A. in International Affairs from the University of Colorado at Boulder and is currently working towards his M.A. in International Relations and Conflict Resolution at American Military University.

MES Occasional Papers No. 1, "Saddam's Nuclear Vision: An Atomic Shield and Sword for Conquest," Norman Cigar, MCU Press, June 2011.

MES Monographs No. 1, "The Strategic Culture of the Islamic Republic of Iran: Operational and Policy Implications," Michael Eisenstadt, MES at MCU, August 2011.

MES Occasional Papers No. 2, "Al-Qaida, the Tribes, and the Government: Lessons and Prospects for Iraq's Unstable Triangle," Norman Cigar, MCU Press, September 2011.

MES *Insights*, Volume 1, Issues 1-6, 2010.

MES *Insights*, Volume 2, Issues 1-6, 2011.



Middle East Studies

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