

that any Islamic country can achieve such growth rates, he criticized the shift in Islamic history, away from a commitment to science, to a more limited religious approach. That commitment to science, and to all branches of knowledge more generally, had been the landmark of the Islamic renaissance, from the early period in Baghdad, across North Africa and into Islamic Spain, or Andalusia, through the 15th Century. Just at the point when European culture was launching its golden renaissance, Dr. Mahathir said, Islamic civilization was turning in a different direction. The notion that Islam “is sufficient,” that is, that religious teaching alone suffices for social progress, was an error, he said. This led to a degeneration of the civilization, at a time when Europe, in large part reaping the achievements of Islamic culture, was generating immense progress. Thus, there is an urgent need to return to this heritage of science and technology.

EIR Message to Egypt: U.S. Revolution Is On

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Fear is gripping the Arab world.

As this author experienced firsthand, during a recent visit to Cairo, developments in the region after the U.S. elections have provoked fears that the chaos sparked by the Afghanistan and Iraq wars will be exacerbated, and spread across Southwest Asia. Most pointedly, the Lebanese-Syrian crisis, which erupted with the Feb. 14 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, has made clear the Bush Administration’s determination to pursue the 1996-drafted doctrine for a “Clean Break”—the doctrine of regime change, beginning with Iraq, and proceeding to Syria, Lebanon, and Iran—and the elimination of the Shi’ite Hezbollah.

The implications of the “Clean Break” doctrine have become known in the region, after the widespread coverage in the Arabic media of *EIR*’s exposé, immediately after Hariri’s murder (see *EIR*, Feb. 25, 2005). Press from the Persian Gulf, as well as media from Lebanon and Syria, and numerous websites, carried the story of the neo-conservatives’ regional war policy and the identification of the lobby inside America, the U.S. Committee for a Free Lebanon, which is in a mad rush for war.

The immediate fear, therefore, is that the Lebanon-Syria crisis will explode into a new war. As U.S.-backed elements in the opposition refuse calls for national unity by the Lebanese majority, and insist on acceptance of their non-negotiable demands (for total Syrian withdrawal, expulsion of Lebanese intelligence officials, and an international investigation into the Hariri case) as a condition for political participation, the

specter of social conflict, and possible civil war, looms on the horizon. Other scenarios being debated, include a possible military coup in Syria, and an Israeli military attack leading to war against Syria. All agree that next on the list, after Syria, would be Iran.

Egypt Targetted

The maniacal crusading fervor which President Bush has been exhibiting since the outbreak of the Lebanese crisis, has sent the message that the White House neo-cons are “on a roll,” propelled by the momentum of what they call the wave of democratization, and committed to igniting the region with “democracy.” The most alarming example for Egyptians, is what is happening in their own nation. President Hosni Mubarak is, it appears, also on the target list for regime change. “Why in the world should the U.S. destabilize Egypt?” one political figure asked. “Egypt is the U.S.’s best ally in the Arab world. Mubarak has been doing everything to promote a revival of Palestinian-Israeli peace talks. Why target him?”

Why, indeed? Anyone seeking a rational answer must be disappointed. Yet, there is no doubt that Egypt is being pressured. On March 8, Bush laid out his guidelines for elections: “Like all free elections, these require freedom of assembly, multiple candidates, free access by those candidates to the media, and the right to form political parties.” In response, Egyptian Foreign Minister Abu Gheit made clear that in the “so-called democratic endeavor, the pace will be set by Egypt and the Egyptian people, and only the Egyptian people. The Egyptian people will not accept what we call trusteeship.”

He went on to make the point: “I think Egypt is a light-house for the Middle East. The need for Egypt to be a friend of the United States is something I’m sure people in Washington value very much. We are not subject to any kind of pressure.”

Abu Gheit also called Bush’s bluff regarding the wave of democratization that Bush, in his address to the National Defense University, said was sweeping the Middle East. “What model are we talking about in Iraq?” Abu Gheit asked. “Bombs are exploding everywhere, and Iraqis are killed every day in the streets. Palestinian elections?” he commented to the *Washington Post*. “There were elections seven years prior.” As for Lebanon, Abu Gheit warned the United States not to believe that it could manipulate the process so easily. Pointing to the huge Hezbollah rally days earlier, he said: “There are other trends in society. Maybe things will get better, but we see what we see.”

U.S. demands for “free and fair elections” for the Egyptian Presidency, have led Mubarak to propose a change in the Constitution, so as to allow multiple party candidacies. One opposition group, led by two-term parliamentarian Ayman Nour, has set up a new party called Al-Ghad (“Tomorrow”), which is widely rumored to be an American-funded and piloted operation. This, some sources said, is Bush’s tool to bring down Mubarak. Nour was accused of having submitted petitions for his party that contained falsified signatures. The

Interior Ministry's Anti-Forgery Department said: "An investigation into the political practices of MP Ayman Nour showed that, in an attempt to gain a legal license for his party, Nour had fabricated and forged the signatures of as many as 1,187 citizens. Nour forged these signatures," the report said, "to provide the Political Parties Committee with what it needed to legalize his party."

In a rather hasty, and clumsily organized operation, the authorities moved overnight to lift Nour's parliamentary immunity, and to arrest him on Jan. 29. After six weeks in jail, he was released on bail.

Nour's profile and program fit the description of a U.S.-funded and backed "democracy" operation. He has called for curtailing the President's powers, and limiting the President to two terms in office. According to the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram*, his party promotes a "free market economy, respect for the rule of law, good governance, women's empowerment, freedom of expression, secularism, an open relationship with the West and the United States, and a vibrant multi-party system."

Nour also has an American connection—or more than one. Just 48 hours before he was arrested, Nour met former U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, who was leading a Congressional task force on democracy. Nour and members of the Ibn Khaldoun Development Center, headed by pro-democracy advocate Saadeddin Ibrahim, were invited to the meetings. Nour also met with U.S. Ambassador to Egypt David Welch.

The United States did not hesitate to respond to Nour's arrest. Richard Boucher, spokesman for the U.S. State Department, said the arrest of "one of Egypt's most prominent opposition leaders" raised questions about Egyptian democracy. The person who has raised the banner of Nour's cause most vociferously, is Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who repeatedly demanded his release. Saying that she hoped "the issue is resolved soon," she cancelled her trip to Egypt in protest against his incarceration.

Egyptian press have raised the question of foreign interference, after the news that \$1 million was being given to six non-governmental organizations in the country. In February, President Mubarak accused unnamed foreign agencies of allocating \$70 million in funding for local pro-democracy advocates.

No one could reject the suggestion that greater participation in the political process in Egypt were desirable. However, any such process of reform must come, as Abu Gheit said, from within; outside interference will only lead to destabilization. And, given the role that Egypt continues to play strategically in the region, it would be inviting disaster to force regime change in Cairo.

The Good News from America

In this climate of fear and near despair, an insight into what is really happening in the United States—into the fight

being waged by a patriotic coalition of forces against Bush—is crucial. This author had the opportunity to present such a picture, during a seminar on March 12, organized by the Center for Political Research and Studies of the Faculty of Economic and Political Science of Cairo University. The three-day seminar was dedicated to the Middle East situation, with special emphasis on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Prof. Mohammad Seyyed Selim, of the Center for Asian Studies, presented a detailed historical analysis of the causes of the failure of the peace process.

This author had been asked to address the issue of how to change Washington's policy in the region. The speech laid out, first, the nature of current U.S. foreign policy for the region, as outlined in the "Clean Break" doctrine. The series of events triggered by the assassination of Hariri, was then analyzed from the standpoint of an intended implementation of that doctrine.

Counterposed to this, was a presentation of what a true peace policy would look like, as developed in Lyndon LaRouche's peace doctrine for Southwest Asia: U.S. commitment to a security arrangement among the leading nations of the region (Egypt, Turkey, Syria, and Iran), within which context, a withdrawal of U.S. and other troops from Iraq could be organized; and U.S. commitment to a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine, based on a cooperative economic development program, in the spirit of the Peace of Westphalia.

How such a happy perspective could become reality, was the question on the minds of the audience of students, professors, diplomats, and press. Nothing short of a revolution in American politics could bring this about. This was the main message communicated: that, especially since Nov. 2, a revolution is being organized, under the leadership of LaRouche in the Democratic Party, but, increasingly, drawing in bipartisan support from Republicans. The historic developments around the fight against voter suppression, culminating in the Dec. 13 Electoral College meeting, and the Jan. 6 joint session of Congress, where the legitimacy of the vote was challenged, had not hitherto been made known to the Egyptian public. Once a perspective had been laid out, showing how this revolutionary process can lead to a political defeat of the Bush Administration—especially around the Social Security privatization battle—and to rendering Bush a lame duck, the mood of the assembly changed visibly. As the seminar moderator noted, this was "the good news from America," which brought a whiff of welcome optimism into the debate.

In private discussions with representatives of government, military, and press circles, this author experienced the same phenomenon: Once the reality of the political process inside the United States is grasped, the deep pessimism, which hangs like a dark cloud over the mind, can be lifted. Then, the possibility of effecting a fundamental change in U.S. foreign policy as well, becomes comprehensible. In this light, peace, not eternal war, again seems within reach—and worth fighting for.