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From: Lloyd Etheredge <lloyd.etheredge@policyscience.net>

**Subject: 244. Red Team: The Middle East - from impasse to the basketball court. US data systems and Scheuer's new hypotheses**

Dear Dr, Fischhoff, Dr. Skocpol, Dr. Atkinson and Colleagues:

I enclose a copy of a recent forecasting piece by Michael Scheuer.

These are among the hypotheses that the National Academy of Sciences should be recommending to a Red Team. They challenge conventional (public) wisdom and the monitoring/measuring systems should be in place quickly so that the Obama Administration can respond nimbly to adverse trends.

A conventional, Hollywood theory of democracy (also believed by many students) is that, in democracies, the people rule. However Scheuer's model that it is the intense and organized minorities who will win is a scientifically credible forecast.

The professional journalist coverage of the Middle East in the US has become so weak that President Obama may need to rely, almost exclusively, on the DNI system.

Scheuer had some interesting additional discussion of his views online at the Washington Post on Monday.

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## **Why the Mideast revolts will help al-Qaeda**

By Michael Scheuer

Washington Post. Friday, March 4, 2011; 1:00 PM

The rush in the West to proclaim the advance of democracy in the Arab world has led to the propagation of an ill-conceived and dangerous corollary: that the revolts in the Middle East and North Africa also mark the irrelevance of al-Qaeda and other Islamist militant groups.

["Al Qaeda Sees History Fly By,"](#) declared the New York Times. ["Uprisings Put al Qaeda on Sidelines,"](#) asserted the Wall Street Journal. And Western politicians, academics and even intelligence specialists appear to agree that, with peaceful and pro-democratic change afoot in the Middle East, the world has moved beyond al-Qaeda, leaving Osama bin Laden writhing in the dust.

If only that were true. Since bin Laden declared war against the United States in 1996, al-Qaeda's main goals have included the destruction of the Arab world's tyrannies and of Israel. [The events of recent weeks](#) only move al-Qaeda closer to those objectives.

Today, the dictatorships of Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali in Tunisia and Hosni Mubarak in Egypt are gone. Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh is little more than the mayor of his capital city of Sanaa. And Col. Moammar Gaddafi may be on his way out in Libya, unless some knee-jerk U.S.-led intervention saves him by refocusing Libyan and other North African Islamists on what they consider an infidel threat greater than Gaddafi.

As for Israel, the fall of Mubarak - and the unsealing of Egypt's border with Gaza - pose a security disaster equal to the destruction of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. Israel's two anti-Islamist shields to the east and to the west are now history.

All of this amounts to an enormous strategic step forward for al-Qaeda. That these victories have come with virtually no investment of manpower or money by the terrorist network, and with self-defeating applause from the Facebook-obsessed, Twitter-addled West, only makes them all the sweeter for bin Laden.

Peering into the future, the autocrats' probable successors likewise offer abundant good news for al-Qaeda and kindred groups. In Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen and any other nation with a U.S.-supported tyranny that sinks in the weeks and months ahead, the role of Islamist groups will become larger - and over time perhaps dominant - if only because the populations in play are almost entirely Muslim and because Islamist groups have the most effective nationwide infrastructures to replace the old guard. And most do and will receive funding, openly or covertly, from always generous donors in Saudi Arabia and other oil-rich Sunni gulf states.

Each new regime is likely to host a more open, religion-friendly environment for speech, assembly and press freedoms than did Mubarak and his ilk. So it will be easier for media-savvy Islamist groups - whether peaceful or militant - to proselytize, publish and foment without immediate threat of arrest and incarceration. Indeed, Washington and its Western allies will dogmatically urge the new governments to maintain such freedoms, even as the Islamists capitalize on them.

The Islamists will follow the formulas for gaining power and then governing that are detailed in the Koran and the Sunnah, the prophet Muhammad's sayings and traditions. Western experts have long failed to recognize these documents as Islam's equivalent to the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Federalist Papers. In Egypt, for example, governance based on them would be far more familiar, comfortable and

culturally appropriate than anything [opposition leader Mohamed ElBaradei](#) and his followers could offer.

The blessing of the Arab revolts for al-Qaeda and its allies also can be seen in the opening of prisons across Egypt, Tunisia and Libya. In Egypt alone, the news media are reporting that at least 17,000 prisoners have been freed. Many of those released are not thieves and murderers, but Islamist firebrands that the regimes had jailed to protect their internal security - at times even at the request and with the funding of Washington and its allies. Indeed, many were incarcerated as a result of quiet cooperation between Western and Arab intelligence services; their release is a major setback for these efforts.

So al-Qaeda and like-minded groups are now being replenished by a steady flow of pious, veteran mujaheddin, each of whom will never forget that U.S. and other Western funds helped keep them jailed by Arab tyrants.

The revolts also mean that the United States and its Western allies must take on a far greater share of the counterterrorism operations that they previously conducted with the help of Arab regimes. The days of Mubarak, Saleh, Gaddafi and Ben Ali doing the dirty work for American, European and Israeli counterterrorism efforts are over. Soon it will be U.S. and Western special forces and intelligence services that will be ordered to capture or kill militants in Muslim lands - individuals that our tyrannical friends used to dispose of for us.

How tragic that in the war being waged against the United States by al-Qaeda and its allies precisely because of Washington's relentless intervention in the Islamic world, the U.S. government will now be forced to intervene even more - or sit on the sidelines and watch al-Qaeda build or expand bases from which to threaten U.S. security.

Of course, open and vociferous participation by Islamists in the demonstrations in Cairo, Tunis, Tripoli and elsewhere would have earned a lethal and Western-supported response from Mubarak, Ben Ali and Gaddafi. So al-Qaeda, the Muslim Brotherhood

and other groups simply used a talent that long ago atrophied in the West - the ability to keep their mouths shut. As usual, the West wrongly concluded that silence connotes not strategy, but impotence and irrelevance.

Bin Laden and his peers are counting on the fact that the uprisings' secular, pro-democracy

Facebookers and tweeters - so beloved of reality-averse Western journalists and politicians - are a thin veneer across a deeply pious Arab world. They are confident that these revolts are not about democratic change but about who, in societies where peaceful transfers of power are rare, will fill the vacuum left by the dictators and consolidate power. These men also know that the answer to that question will ultimately come out of the barrel of a Kalashnikov, of which they have many, along with the old tyrants' weapons stockpiles, on which they are now feasting.

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