

# The Philosophy of the Middle East Revolution, Take One: Nonviolence

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Assailed as we are with dramatic information multiplied manifold by the digital transformation of telephone and laptop carriers into direct media agents, we are all looking for our bearings to understand where we are in the Middle East, where we are going, and how to get there.

Philosophy, unlike other intellectual tools and disciplines, offers insight at the most abstract level: what a revolution is about in essence. Contrary to the cynicism of those who disdain ivory tower thinkers, the philosophical investigation into the meaning of the Middle East Revolution, its Hegelian *Dasein*, is key to the reforms it is promising. This article is an early take, *in media res*, on the philosophical understanding of where we stand in the Middle East in 2011. The central question is this: what is the philosophical nature of the Revolution as it unfolds? If we get the right answer, then we can embrace the Revolution, direct it, and oppose it when needed.

To the central question for the present enquiry—the philosophical essence of the 2011 Middle East Revolution—I would like to propose the following answer: nonviolence.

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Several moments in human history beckon for comparison. Nonviolence conjures up epic struggles from Christ, to Gandhi, to the American civil rights movement, and the Argentinian mothers of the disappeared, through to the 1989 upheavals in Europe and Tien an Men. People naturally compare what they do not know to what they know, and historians do it more professionally and more rigorously than the common reader. One telling comparison likens the Syrian government's mindless repression of its own citizens' open revolt since mid-March 2011

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to the suppression of slave uprisings.<sup>2</sup> Such historical and comparative lenses are useful. Yet I won't develop the comparison of what is happening in the Middle East with other such momentous events as slave rebellions in antiquity or the classical Islamic period, or the continent-wide upheavals in 1848 or 1989 in Europe. My interest is in the *peculiarity* of the Middle East (ME) revolutions of 2011, conducted here as a philosophical exercise.

Names are important: I have called the mass social phenomenon we have been witnessing across the region the “Middle East Nonviolent Revolution”, and I defend this label against the so-called Arab Spring, which is as inchoate as it is poetical. “The Arab Spring” is incorrect because it ignores the precedent of the Green Revolution since the summer of 2009 in Iran, as well as variations on nonviolent struggle in Palestine-Israel for a good part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century—including the first Intifada in 1987, as well as the sacrifice of leading Israeli dissidents, of whom the most remarkable may be Mordechai Vanunu's, universally passed under silence despite his long incarceration for denouncing the nuclearisation of Israel, and Yitzhak Rabin, doggedly ignored by Palestinians, and Arabs in general, who should have heeded the portentous significance of his assassination on the night he chanted for peace on November 4, 1995. The “Arab Spring” ignores Israeli Jews, as well as Palestinians in Israel, in the West Bank, in Gaza and the refugee camps. It also ignores the Kurds of Iraq and Syria, who are key to understanding the revolutionary developments in two central Middle Eastern countries. It ignores the peoples of Iran. This is factually wrong and morally incorrect.

The protection of the Middle Eastern character of the Revolution against an Arab straitjacket also safeguards its future. It may be that Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia become part of the Middle East Revolution, but the definition of the region hesitates to include them, let alone acknowledge a structural resemblance between their many turbulences and what

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<sup>2</sup> The signal violence in Syria has made recurrent the qualification of Syrian citizens as slaves (*'abid*), and the massive repression of Syrian uprisings as a ‘slave putdown’. See, for instance, Lebanese author Elias Khoury's use of *in 'itaq* (a legal concept in classical law deriving from *'itq*, manumission) in “*al-thawra ka-fi' l in 'itaq*,” (Revolution as Liberation from Slavery), *Al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 5 July 2011, <http://ta7rir.tv/?p=6423> (accessed 30 June 2011); and Palestinian lawyer Nimer Sultany, “*hawla suria wal-wajeb al-akhlaqi*,” (On Syria and Moral Obligation), *Al-Quds al-'Arabi*, 1 July 2011, <http://www.arabs48.com/?mod=articles&ID=82945> (accessed 30 June 2011). On April 15, a month after the beginning of the Syrian revolution, a statement from a group of Syrian members of the opposition likened the treatment of the citizens to that of slaves (*'mu'amalat al-'abid wal-raqiq'*). See “*bayan al-lajna al-suriyya lil-inqadh wa i'tilaf al-taktattul al-suri al-muwahhad*,” (Statement of the Syrian Salvation Committee and the United Syrian Coalition), 15 April 2011, <http://www.transparentsham.com/sham> (accessed 30 June 2011).

is happening to the regions lying to their west.<sup>3</sup> There is, however, no hesitation of geographical, cultural or strategic import in the case of Iran and Israel. The ME Revolution, if it wants to be factually accurate and morally sound, as well as safeguard its future, is Middle Eastern rather than Arab. Iran and Israel are very much part of it.

Regardless of the geographic passage from Arab to Middle Eastern, which human rights advocates wish to see expanded to China,<sup>4</sup> much of the world's future depends on the outcomes of the ME upheaval—from the price of oil to the massive movement of populations and the tragic fate of refugees, both amongst the nationals who escape government violence and the guest workers who are unable to continue living in the turmoil of societies wrecked by the rulers' violence against their people. The class dimension is etiologically daunting: the causes of the Revolution are evidently rooted in the ever-narrowing economic horizons of the massive majority of the citizenry, and in the rampant corruption. The socio-economic consequences of the turmoil are important, but the central philosophical nature of the Middle East Revolution unfolding in 2011 is *political*.

In the upheaval straddling over twenty countries and a half billion people, the central question goes to its political philosophy—namely, whether change adumbrated by the ongoing revolutions can be premised on the nonviolent character collectively advocated by millions in the streets of Sanaa, Damascus and Bahrain, as it was the case in Tunis and Cairo until the rulers were deposed. Since nonviolence is the conscious, overarching method of the street protests that turned massive in the Cedar Revolution in Beirut in 2005-6, since 2009 in Tehran, and in 2011 across the region, the defining character of its political philosophy needs to be understood more closely.

In a borrowing from Hegel's dialectics, revolutionary nonviolence stands in counterpoise to governmental violence. The ME revolutionaries are by and large nonviolent, while the regimes are by definition violent. This has been a universal hallmark of rulers clinging on to power, in monarchies as well as in republics, Islamic and otherwise. The frantic repression of unarmed demonstrators by ME governments is actually why the revolution against them is nonviolent, and must remain so to preserve its philosophical character. Nonviolence is the

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<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of the Middle East as concept in legal context, see Chibli Mallat, *Introduction to Middle Eastern law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 129-32.

<sup>4</sup> See Press statements and interventions in the section on China-ME at [www.righttononviolence.org](http://www.righttononviolence.org), <http://tinyurl.com/6k76bhe> (accessed 30 June 2011).

philosophy of the Revolution, its Hegelian spirit, and state repression its condition, revelator and reinforcer. There were various intensities, from Oman to Morocco, in state repression, but the governments across the Middle East can be defined by their natural propensity to deal violently with nonviolent dissent.

Other consequences of the philosophy of nonviolence bespeak the narrative of recent ME history. As in all matters of historic importance, narrative is key, and is always disputed. The ME nonviolent Revolution on the march is no different. The dominant view is that the uprisings were unexpected, that they came as a “surprise”. I disagree with this reading. Evidence of the “surprise narrative” is seen in the early days of the Jasmine and Nile Revolutions, in the statements of world leaders who had to eat their words only a few days after putting them on the record. Remember the foreign minister of France, Michèle Alliot-Marie, who was proposing to send French police to bolster Zayn al-‘Abidin ibn ‘Ali (Ben Ali)’s repression,<sup>5</sup> and US Vice President Joseph Biden talking about Husni Mubarak as “the non-dictator of Egypt.”<sup>6</sup>

The surprise reading is part of a narrative that is premised on a choice: to defend the leaders of authoritarian regimes based on an enduring personal relationship (Ben Ali and Alliot-Marie), or as a regional ally (Biden and Mubarak), and often as a mix of both. Without that connection, one cannot understand Western leaders advocating support for the repression of a nonviolent revolt in the context of a 23-year old police regime in Tunisia, or denying that the Egyptian president and the Saudi king are dictators. Beyond the convergence between the narrative and the interests and choices on which it is based, counter-narratives are also premised on their own mix of personal beliefs and interests—in my own narrative, as the choice for human rights, and with an interest in seeing the field of politics open to all citizens.

There is more to the erring of a narrative. The unfortunate vision rooted in the “surprise” of the ill-informed discards the dozens of prisoners of opinion of Arab and Middle Eastern

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<sup>5</sup> “Tunisie: les propos ‘effrayants’ d’Alliot-Marie suscitent la polémique,” *Le Monde*, 13 January 2011, [http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2011/01/13/tunisie-les-propos-effrayants-d-alliot-marie-suscitent-la-polemique\\_1465278\\_3212.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2011/01/13/tunisie-les-propos-effrayants-d-alliot-marie-suscitent-la-polemique_1465278_3212.html) (accessed 30 June 2011). For devastating details on the financial connections between the families of Alliot-Marie and Ben Ali, see Nicolas Beau and Arnaud Muller, *Tunis et Paris: Les liaisons dangereuses* (Paris: Jean-Claude Gawsewitch, 2011), 29-32. She is, however, the ‘victime expiatoire’ of a pattern of high-level corruption between the governing elites in France and Tunisia.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, “Joe Biden Says Egypt’s Mubarak No Dictator, He Shouldn’t Step Down,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 27 January 2011, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Backchannels/2011/0127/Joe-Biden-says-Egypt-s-Mubarak-no-dictator-he-shouldn-t-step-down> (accessed 30 June 2011). However, it is worth noting that, unlike Alliot-Marie, Biden did mention the need for the Egyptian ruler “to respond to some of the legitimate concerns that are being raised.” The full transcript of Biden’s interview with Jim Lehrer is available online, at [http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/politics/jan-june11/biden\\_01-27.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/politics/jan-june11/biden_01-27.html) (accessed 30 June 2011).

democrats who rotted in prison and torture chambers, and the thousands who lie in the many cemeteries of the long—and by and large nonviolent—resistance to tyranny. Such blindness to the systematic suffering of Middle Easterners also passes under silence the two major upheavals that have been carrying the nonviolent torch in recent memory: the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon since 2005-2006, and the Green Revolution in Iran since the summer of 2009.

The number of journalists, lawyers, professors, human rights activists, and political leaders who have been imprisoned, assaulted or killed is probably larger in the modern Middle East than in any other place in the world in the last decades. An illustration of the willful ignorance of the suffering comes from Syria: people in the West long for a Middle Eastern Mandela, a Walesa, a Havel. Nelson Mandela's profile emerged as one of the most powerful examples of leadership against the tyranny of apartheid because of his near three decades in jail. Who thinks at the same level of Syria's most remarkable dissident, Riad Turk, imprisoned for twenty years, released, then imprisoned again, and hounded every day by a secret police terrified by the thought of this frail, old man walking the streets of Damascus? The Syrian government was right to be scared of him: on 12 March 2011, the trigger to the Syrian upheaval was an article by Riad Turk under the ominous title, "The time for silence is gone."<sup>7</sup> Sure enough, three days later the first demonstration of the "mothers of the place of Marja" broke out in the heart of Damascus. It was soon followed by the Der'a uprising.

Another example is the case of Lebanese leader Musa Sadr, disappeared in Libya's jails since 1978, together with his two companions, cleric Muhammad Ya'qub and journalist Abbas Badreddin. Mu'ammār al-Qaddafi bought the silence of the families of the UTA and Lockerbie victims,<sup>8</sup> and of their respective governments, at a time when the relatives of the Imam and his two companions systematically refused the millions of dollars that the Libyan ruler was offering them for their silence. They only wanted "Truth and Accountability", the constant message of a long judicial campaign that coincides, so many years later, with the referral of Qaddafi, his eldest son to the International Criminal Court under UN Security Council Resolution 1973 (UNSCR

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<sup>7</sup> Riad Turk, "*laqad walla zaman al-sukut: lan tabqa suria mamlakat al-samt*," (The Time of Silence is Gone: Syria Will No Longer Remain the Mute Kingdom), published on the Syrian al-Ra'i website, 12 March 2011, <http://www.arraee.com/portal/> (accessed 30 June 2011).

<sup>8</sup> UTA: Union des Transports Aériens Flight 772, the French airline brought down on 19 September 1989 by an explosion engineered by Libyan intelligence according to the French investigation and trial, with all 171 people on board killed. At Lockerbie in Scotland on 21 December 1988, 270 people lost their lives when Pan Am Flight 103 was brought down by a criminal explosion in which Libyan intelligence officers were found guilty in a UN-organised Scottish trial.

1973), and their subsequent indictment along with the head of intelligence.<sup>9</sup> How many people in the West have acknowledged the pleas of Imam Sadr's family? Or indeed the Libyan citizens' pleas, like Mansur Kekhia's, whose wife the courts in Egypt fined for daring to challenge the disappearance of her husband in Cairo in 1993.<sup>10</sup> How does one describe the long-drawn battles launched by the Sadr and Kekhia families, other than as nonviolent resistance to tyranny?

Other cases of nonviolent resistance are better known, and Western officials at various levels have stood for them. In 2000, Professor Saadeddin Ibrahim was imprisoned for three years because he dared to question Mubarak and his family's cronyism. His colleagues at the Ibn Khaldun Center were harassed, jailed and ruined. In March 2005, the Cedar Revolution's show of people's power against the emerging dictatorship of Emile Lahoud in Lebanon, which led to growing demonstrations in Cairo, forced Mubarak to amend art. 76 of the Egyptian Constitution. The Egyptian dictator read the street correctly, which openly questioned his presidential extension and the wish to establish dynastic rule. '*La tamdid, la tawrith*' (no prorogation of the presidential mandate, no passing it on to the children) was already the central demand of the Egyptian street in that early phase, and Mubarak's amendment was officially designed to allow other contenders to run. Ayman Nur did. As the Cedar Revolution declined, Mubarak regained confidence. Ayman Nur was jailed for over three years for that act of *lèse majesté*, and his Ghad party destroyed.

Various officials in the West stood for Ibrahim and Nur, as did leading human rights organizations. Although the human rights movement was sincere and generally consistent, qualifications are in order about the commitment of the officials' *démarches* against Mubarak. Governments deal with dictators. The structure of international law makes it hard to do otherwise. There is little doubt that Western governments colluded strategically with most ME dictators for oil, stability, resistance against communism in the old days, and the Islamist movement scarecrow. A less happy story, however, is that of Western civil society—and not

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<sup>9</sup> Regarding the Sadr case, see [www.imamsadr.net](http://www.imamsadr.net) (*mawqa' samahat al-imam al-sayyed musa al-sadar a'adah Allah*, site of imam sayyed Musa al-Sadr, may God return him [safely to us]), which features on its frontpage key documents in the case brought by the family against Qaddafi in Lebanon; including the decisions of the Lebanese courts as well as a *New York Times* placard, "Arrest Libyan Leader Mu' ammar al-Qaddafi Today in New York," 23 September 2009 (accessed 30 June 2011); see also the statement of Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East and North Africa director at Human Rights Watch, "Use Arab League Summit to Resolve Longstanding Cases," 26 March 2010, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2010/03/26/libya-reveal-fate-disappeared> (accessed 30 June 2011).

<sup>10</sup> Chibli Mallat, "Forty Years of Qaddafi Impunity and the Megrahi Paradox," *The Daily Star*, 1 September 2009, <http://www.mallat.com/imag/pdf/DS1Sep09.pdf> (accessed 30 June 2011).

only oil companies—in the reluctant engagement with Arab and ME dissidents. Despite the constant efforts of Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch, the question remains: why were Ibrahim, Nur, Turk and so many others not household names in the West in the same way as Mandela and Walesa?

One can offer reasonable explanations of this phenomenon: apartheid in South Africa became intolerable with the rise of Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement within the United States' tragic racial scene; and the enthusiasm for oppositional labour in Poland was intrinsically linked to the Cold War battles. The Middle East, in contrast, *seems* far more complex. The flow of Saudi oil, the sanctity of the Jewish national home in Palestine, and the excesses of the Islamic revolution in Iran are all part of a *seemingly* bewildering complexity. I stress “seems” and “seemingly” to advance a more controversial point, which should not be misconstrued as knee-jerk frustration. This point owes to Edward Said, and with him to Michel Foucault, that narrative and the order of discourse can hardly be severed from power. This is evident in the Alliot-Marie/Biden examples. Less evident is the fact that the peoples of the Middle East have been massively perceived as different. And by different I mean the wrong type of difference; the one that brings in a worldview where the basic human rights of these people are by and large considered to be of lesser value than their Western counterparts’.

Ultimately, the difference must be read as racist differentiation: Riad Turk is no Nelson Mandela or Lech Walesa because he is Syrian, and Syrians, like other Arabs, Muslims, and Middle Easterners, will hardly be treated as human rights heroes. One can now better appreciate the “surprise” expressed worldwide at the 2011 upheavals. Suddenly, the Western world discovered, surprise surprise, that Arabs, Muslims, and Middle Easterners are Shylocks who bleed when they are pricked, and die when they are poisoned.

This may happily be over, for Middle Easterners and Chinese alike, and for all humans in-between. Universalism will take time to fulfil its embrace of the revolution from Nouakchott to Beijing, but a mental paradigm shift is afoot, to be either impeded or accelerated by the success of the reform of ME politics in adhering to the central character of the Revolution—its nonviolence. Like all paradigmatic shifts, it may take several decades to blossom, though it can be accelerated, with acceleration as well as disenchantment depending on the wherewithal of its nonviolent *aggiornamento*. This brings up two other points in the unfolding revolutionary process.

The first point is that although nonviolence comes with immense dilemmas, its torch must be firmly kept alive against all the temptations of retaliatory violence. On these tragic dilemmas, an early testimony comes from the Lebanese precedent. Early in the Cedar Revolution, the assassination of colleagues started, first with Samir Kassir in June 2005, stripping away the joy from an extraordinarily positive moment in the country's history. This was followed by a string of assassinations that claimed over one hundred victims, dead or severely wounded, and by the brutal occupation of West Beirut in May 2008 by the supporters of violence, whose philosophy declared absolute commitment to armed resistance to Israel and the United States, and to their alleged allies amongst the locals who were questioning Syrian rule and its Lebanese supporters. The Cedar Revolution never retaliated in kind: against assassinations, it called for justice in the shape of what became the Special Tribunal for Lebanon; against the violent occupation of Beirut by Hizbullah and its allies, it called for nonviolent resistance, which continues to date.<sup>11</sup> In several meetings of the leadership, violent revenge was often advocated against the Syrian rulers. A simple question was raised time and again: How much effort and money would it cost to put a bomb in a market in Damascus, or in one of the seats of power in Syria? We stood unanimously against it, because if we did plant a bomb in Damascus, if we did send killers to shoot at Syrian officials, we would become like them, we would lose the nonviolent dimension of our Revolution, its hallmark and superior moral character. The colleagues in Tehran since the summer of 2009 have followed religiously in these footsteps. Our respective revolutions have not succeeded yet, but that should not deter us from pursuing the philosophy of nonviolent change without being deterred by the inevitable setbacks.

The dilemma is real in other pressing ways, as is evident in the Libyan revolution, where the Right to Protect civilians has been enshrined in the clause of "all necessary means" of UNSCR 1973 (including military ones), to prevent the revolution's collapse in early March 2011. Maybe there was no choice, as Benghazi was about to be re-occupied by a vengeful Qaddafi, but the philosophical portent of Libya's revolution is more important in the negative. For the ME nonviolent Revolution, Libya has been the exception, an unfortunate one that

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<sup>11</sup> See, generally, Chibli Mallat, *March 2221, Lebanon's Cedar Revolution: An Essay on Non-violence and Justice* (Beirut: [Lir], 2007) on the significance of nonviolence in the Lebanese revolt, through to my statements during my presidential campaign in 2005-2006 on the vain use of force domestically and regionally. See also Mallat, *Ahadith ri'asiyya- Presidential talk* (Beirut: Dar al-Jadid, 2008), 49-56, 97-99, (on the need for a nonviolent strategy in Israel-Palestine)198-200 (on the importance for the state not to use violence against demonstrators), 302-06 (on Hariri as a thoroughly nonviolent Lebanese political leader).

underlines in contrast the stubborn efficacy of nonviolence in the palpable successes achieved in Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen, and the incomplete revolution afoot in Bahrain, Syria, Saudi Arabia. The rebels were wrong to take up arms against Qaddafi, for the day they did was also the day they lost the nonviolent Revolution to the logic of a civil war, the formation of battlefronts, and the immediate collapse of the Libyan capital into the firm clench of the dictator.

Against the sceptics, who see nonviolence as a serendipitous occurrence of the Middle East Revolution, the reality is that of a powerful, conscious determination of the revolutionaries in at least three countries where repression was immense, and where people refused to take up arms after the nonviolent precedents in Tunisia and in Egypt. In Bahrain, Yemen and Syria, the refusal to resort to violence is a conscious choice of hundreds of thousands of people. That clear appreciation of the power of nonviolence, in contrast to the revolutionaries in Libya, can be read in the leitmotiv carried by the central Facebook coordinator of the “Syrian revolution against Bashar al-Asad”: “Why does the regime insist that the revolution is armed . . . Why does it go to such great lengths to say there are armed groups . . . Does this not tell you something? Does it not tell you that the choice of nonviolence and peace is the right choice, and that it is the choice that the regime is scared of? . . . If the choice for peaceful means were wrong, wouldn’t the regime behave differently?”<sup>12</sup> The rebels in Libya made a mistake in taking up arms against Qaddafi, and lost Tripoli on the very day when the military front was constituted. Yet the rule remains, across the ME Revolution from the beginning of the paradigmatic shift in January 2011, in the attachment to nonviolence as the privileged means to revolutionary success.

The second point is that nonviolent revolutions must succeed. This is not as trite as it first sounds. In a Middle East where violence has been the dominant midwife of history, success is an existential matter for nonviolence. For decades, organised violence through wars and armed revolts has spanned the full gamut of assassinations, suicide killings, missile strikes, air and tank battles, even the use of chemical weapons, by Saddam Hussein against his own people and against the Iranians. Any suggestion that violence was pointless to advance one’s interests made little headway, and nowhere was the persuasive efficacy of violence more troubling than in Israel—the bulldozer state that continues to ethnically cleanse non-Jews by force, sixty years after its emergence over the ruins of Palestine. No wonder that the guiding motto in the region,

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<sup>12</sup> Entry “*limadha yusirr al-nazam ‘ala anna al-thawra musallaha,*” (Why does the regime insist that the revolution is armed?), 11 June 2011, [www.facebook.com/Syrian.Revolution](http://www.facebook.com/Syrian.Revolution), <http://tinyurl.com/6gyoyru> (accessed 30 June 2011).

from Naser to the Islamic revolutionaries, was that “what is taken by force, can only be restored by force.” This motto is no longer true in Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen.

A firm belief in raw power is not limited to the Middle East, but it is in the Middle East that it is most dominant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. That nonviolence can succeed in the region is a novelty. The historical emergence of the idea has yet to be written, but the phenomenon can hardly be gainsaid—whatever the scepticism that remains for the importance and sustainability of the philosophy of nonviolence over time. Success is therefore key to undermining the choice for violent upheaval, providing the necessary tools for the revolution to stand the test of time.

It is hard to define success. What is plain is that Qaddafi’s removal is a *sine qua non* of any new start in Libya, as were the forced departures of Saleh, Mubarak and Ben Ali. The Cedar Revolution failed when the “coercively-extended” president, Emile Lahoud, remained in power despite the massive street movement that brought half the working population of Lebanon on the street after the assassination of his arch-rival, Rafiq al-Hariri. It was our early Lebanese mistake that we did not say “leave” on day one of the Revolution as the Tunisians and Egyptians did, in the pattern that has become key in the “monarblics”, and must be key in the absolute monarchies that prevail in the rest of the region.<sup>13</sup> It is also true that they learnt from the failures of the Cedar Revolution, and from the Iranians who hesitated to call for the departure of Khamene’i in the summer of 2009.

The political demise of the effective heads of absolutist regimes is therefore essential to the success of the Middle East revolutions, from Khamene’i in Iran to the Abdallahs of Saudi Arabia and Jordan. Monarchies and republics in the Middle East share absolutism. There is an apparent difference between the two because, at least in theory, republics cannot be democratic without transference of presidential power. Monarchy leaders may wish to remain figureheads,

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<sup>13</sup> Some of this history is recounted in Mallat, *March 2221*, supra n. 11, at 41-44, specifically the early “banner” for the Revolution, in which ‘*istiqala*, resignation’ was called for (but interpreted as that of the Prime Minister and not the President). The concept of “monarblic” (monarchy + republic; arabic *jamlaka*, from *jumhuriyya* + *mamlaka*) is a political science coinage from the Middle East, where republics are effectively monarchies. I originally thought that Elias Khouri had coined the term, but my friend Saadeddin Ibrahim mentioned in conversation in Salzburg on 26 June 2011 that his use of the word ‘*jumlukiyya*’ in an article led him straight to prison on the night of its publication on 30 June 2000. See Saadeddin Ibrahim, “*iqtirah bi-insha’ malakiyyat dusturiyya fil-jumhuriyyat al-‘arabiyya, ‘alal-umma an tudif mustalah ‘jumlukiyya’ ila qamusih al-siyasi*” (Suggestion to establish constitutional monarchies in the Arab republics: the [Arab] world should add the concept of ‘*jumlukiyya*’ to its political lexicon), *al-Majalla* (Saudi weekly then published in London), 2-8 July 2000, available at <http://www.eicds.org/arabic/publicationsAR/saadarticles/03/nov-dec/gomlokeya.htm> (accessed 30 June 2011).

although their capacity for revolutionary reform raises doubts that are as strong as the doubts about their republican counterparts' readiness to quit. Should monarchs remain as figureheads, also known as constitutional monarchs, we need to be clear about their role. To be simple—and revolutionary messages must be kept simple—the monarch puts up and shuts up. He or she doesn't retain the purse, or decide who the prime minister is, or veto a law. These are all key decisions that the elected body of politics, not the court, is entitled to decide.

This renders the departure of the head of the regime a necessary condition for the success of the Middle East revolutions, as was the case in Tunisia, Egypt, and Yemen by mid-2011. It is not a sufficient condition for a revolution to succeed, but it is a necessary one. For the success of nonviolence over time, institutionalisation is the measure of its durable success. And as the dictator's one-man rule ends, the Middle East Revolution begins—its constitutional moment.