
Narratives of Legitimacy

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Narratives of legitimacy include the highest-level justifications for states and regimes, narratives of divine right, narratives of electoral or democratic affirmation, narratives of conquest, narratives of historical entitlement. These narratives can seem solid and eternal yet history shows they are fragile and ephemeral, that they can vanish in a day. They are the product of myth, of past achievement and often of international accord and consensus. Shifts can come from changing global values, from economic pressure, from ideological challenge from outside or out, from dissent, or from improbable moments of mass conversion. Narratives of legitimacy—and their alternatives—are nourished by competing groups—for example, supporters of a regime (be they stakeholders or merely conservatives) and its long-term opponents (both domestic and foreign). Transformations come from changes in the state's own telling of its story, both at home and globally, and from the increasing role of other major players in accepting, fashioning or rejecting justificatory narratives. Failing states—those without any convincing narrative of

Els discursos de legitimitat contenen altíssims nivells de justificació dels estats i dels règims; discursos de dret diví, discursos de reafirmació electoral o democràtica, discursos de conquesta, discursos de drets històrics. Aquests discursos poden semblar sòlids i perpetus, tot i que la història evidencia que són fràgils i efímers i es poden esvaïr d'un dia per l'altre. Són fruit del mite, d'esdeveniments passats i, molt sovint, d'acords internacionals o del consens. Els seus canvis es deuen a la transformació dels valors globals, la pressió econòmica, els reptes ideològics interns i externs, la dissidència o bé a improbables situacions de conversions en massa. Els discursos de legitimitat—i les seves variants—són alimentats per grups contraris, com ara els defensors d'un règim, ja sigui la classe dominant o conservadora, i els seus rivals seculars, tant interns com forans. Les transformacions apareixen per canvis de posició des del propi estat, ja sigui en clau interna o global, i també pel paper creixent d'altres actors principals amb força suficient per acceptar, conformar o rebutjar aquests discursos de justificació. Els estats no reeixits—els que no disposen d'un discurs convincent de legitimitat—

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Key words: *legitimacy, democracy, imagery, regulation, free speech.*

poden imposar restriccions en el dret d'expressió per tal de protegir-se de la crítica, les ofenses o d'altres vies d'atac.

Paraules clau: *legimitat, democràcia, imatges, regulació, llibertat d'expressió.*

A state is, in part, a collection of stories connected to power. Remembered traditions, obligations and laws—all stories in themselves—shape internal and external perceptions of a state and the range of its efficacy. But the collection of stories that define the state changes and transforms. Within the bandwidth of circumstances we might call reality, it is important to understand who manufactures such stories and what levers of control are deployed in their diffusion. Viable states fight to manage and limit the process of narrative transformation. A sense of loss of state power intensifies when significant aspects of self-characterization fall out of national control: when, for example, a state or its leadership change in the global imagination from moral hero to delegitimated villain, from keeper of ideals to perpetrator of evil, from agent of desirable stability to vessel for potential protest and disorder, or from representative of financial reliability to economic profligate. Because narratives are part of the mythic architecture of the state, how they are produced, and with what consequences, becomes an important part of understanding state power, regime stability, and the interactions between local and global processes and structures. The shaping of these narratives is a product of the discursive environments in which the state is understood, influenced by everyday speech and strategic communications. Ideational entrepreneurs will compete with states to enrich epistemic communities that sustain and legitimize policy ideas.¹ Outside states and other major groups (NGOs, rival political entities, etc.) have a stake, often quite a desperate one, in how these narratives are framed. And the effort to control such narratives both draws on and challenges the ideas of “free expression,” or the rights to receive and impart information. The daily dramas, the bold adventures and frequent tragedies of free expression take place against the background of intense, large-scale maneuvering over which narrative dominates. The result—domestic or international efforts to affect this process—leverages speech out with the context of formal legal constraints, challenging understandings of “the right” itself.

In this chapter, I focus on the interaction among strategic communicators to create a particular kind of “strategic narrative,” namely what I call “narratives

of legitimacy". Narratives of legitimacy include the highest-level justifications for states and regimes, narratives of divine right, narratives of electoral or democratic affirmation, narratives of conquest, narratives of historical entitlement. These narratives can seem solid and eternal yet history shows they are fragile and ephemeral, that they can vanish in a day. They are the product of myth (e.g. of birthright, or of manifest destiny), of past achievement (e.g. of imperial glory) and often of international accord and consensus (such as the partition of Korea, which is alien to those in the North). Shifts can come from changing global values, from economic pressure, from ideological challenge from outside or out, from dissent, or from improbable moments of mass conversion. Narratives of legitimacy—and their alternatives—are nourished by competing groups—for example, supporters of a regime (be they stakeholders or merely conservatives) and its long-term opponents (both domestic and foreign)—. Transformations come from changes in the state's own telling of its story, both at home and globally, and from the increasing role of other major players in accepting, fashioning or rejecting justificatory narratives. Failing states—those without any convincing narrative of legitimacy—may use coercive speech restrictions to protect themselves from criticism or insult or other methods of undermining them.

Regimes strive to maintain or deepen their narratives of legitimacy against global efforts to redefine them in many ways. Traditions of legitimacy are attacked and new narratives are set against them. Typically, states engage in strategic communication to attack or reinforce these narratives of legitimacy. Often the theater of performance is global, not national and, as a result, the ordinary tools, including the language of censorship, are less effective. The narrative of legitimacy is hardly ever the exclusive domain of the state to which it pertains, though the romance of it would say otherwise. Strategic narratives and the struggle to affect them are usually a remnant of classic diplomatic efforts. They are normally attempts at the highest government levels to arrange an understanding of scenarios, moving forward. But, simultaneously, other players—the "street", the "society", the crowd, often using social media—fight to intervene in the process of narrative management, creating additional challenges for governments. A new dynamic arises as use of social media critically interacts with efforts by world leaders to fashion and influence strategic narratives.

A narrative of legitimacy that gains regional and international approval has not only symbolic value but can reduce costs, for example, of defense or avoidance of sanctions. Each period, in modern times, sees its own struggles to validate narratives of legitimacy based in prevailing political consensus or recent historical events. In the 1990s, the redefinition of the post-Soviet states required assertion and protection of new formulations based on free market capitalism and parliamentary democracy. The dissolution of Yugoslavia led to extraordinary conflicts and international intervention to help define and defend certain narratives of legitimacy concerning ethnicity, self-government, and the limits of regional integration. What narratives drove Kosovar independence, for example, or the federation of Serbia, what would Bosnia and Herzegovina look like had different narratives prevailed? In Africa, the processes of legitimation and delegitimation continue in the post-colonial period. Secessionist entities like Somaliland

exist and function though without international recognition, yet have a strong internal narrative of functionality. In Sudan, civil war gave way to plebiscite and the nervous creation of South Sudan as separatism gained legitimacy as a political solution. A successful narrative produces “loyalty,” a quality explored by Albert O. Hirschman in his work as one which raises the price of “exit” or non-participation by citizens and subjects in the functions of the state.²

States scramble to find techniques, international negotiation, economic and diplomatic clout to maintain conditions of legitimacy. But narrative plays a significant role. They suppress dissent, produce propaganda, nourish histories (false and true), use the levers of policy, of sanction and reward, all in the service of such narratives. Narratives are interlaced with power. A successful narrative (internally or externally) may lubricate power, underwrite power, mask power. A narrative may momentarily mesmerize, but not be sufficient to hold sway. Thus, fateful episodes of post-Soviet transitions, of the 2011 Arab Spring, of the European economic crises and reinventions of African states, frequently solid in their apparent hold, dissolve into mockeries of themselves with challenges in these areas.

Transformations are significant in an international context. An enduring and successful narrative can hold a coalition together, maintain investment confidence, foster a resolution to a divisive conflict, and encourage collective dedication to a politically viable outcome. Narratives, of course, can be destructive as well as rehabilitating; they can be used to move a society towards a more democratic practice, but also to destructive ends, for example, through one of the most terrifyingly successful narratives of our time, to fascism.

NARRATIVES AND STRATEGY

This process of creating and sustaining basic justificatory mythologies can be understood through the expanding literature on strategic narratives. “Strategic narratives” is a term that has been resuscitated and burnished in the last several years as a more specific and narrower element of strategic communication. Narratives are “frameworks constructed to allow people to make sense of the world, policies, events, and interactions,”³ Ben O’Loughlin defines strategic narratives as those forged by a state with several purposes, including “with the express purpose of influencing the foreign policy behavior of other actors”⁴—a form of narrative much more coercive than simply national storytelling. Niels Röling and Marleen Maarleveld take a longer view of the function of narratives. They rely on Giddens (1987) and his notion of “double hermeneutics” to clarify how stories, images, theories, slogans, and axioms are woven together, become widely shared, and dominate behavior.

Single hermeneutics refers to the act of making sense of objects and events. For example, Copernicus, the 16th Century Polish astronomer, established that the earth is not the center of the universe. Instead, the earth is a rather insignificant planet turning around the sun. Double hermeneutics refers to the fact that sense making by some can affect the sense

making and behavior of others. In other words, whether people believe the earth turns around the sun or vice versa does not affect the behavior of these celestial bodies. But the way people make sense of the world can certainly affect the sense making of others.⁵

As Røling and Maarleveld put it, “Widely shared narratives are constructed that influence individual sense making by highlighting and legitimating some options and making invisible others... [S]trategic narratives shape social relations by determining our expectations about other people’s behavior. Social relations produce structure and structure produces social relations”.⁶ As a result, “Social science can be as powerful as natural science because it can equally affect people’s sense making. It is not the power of its predictions that give social—or any—science its influence, but the extent to which its perspectives or narratives take hold of people’s imagination and enthusiasm, and especially the extent to which that sense making begins to justify policies and shape enduring practices, institutional design, and the use of natural resources and ecological services”. In this sense, “narrative” must be separated from merely observing the world and recording what is observed. Narrative is interpretive, not merely, or necessarily objective. This potential gap between narrative as myth and narrative as representation of the world is the basis for its strategic significance.

When it comes to those elements that make narrative strategic, Laura Roselle captures a helpful logic. She cites Freedman, a forerunner of strategic narrative theory, who has argued that narratives are “compelling story lines which can explain events convincingly and from which inferences can be drawn”.⁷ Like O’Loughlin, Roselle distinguishes “narratives” from “stories” and discourages using the terms interchangeably. “The structure of stories implies a temporality—a movement through time—suggesting a link to the past (history), a purpose or meaning, and a conclusion, lesson, or proscription for the future. Stories have been and are important to people as conceptual organizing tools that allow individuals to understand one another within a particular context”.⁸ For Roselle, “[w]hat makes such efforts ‘narratives’ instead of plain ‘stories,’ domestic ‘spin,’ or ‘propaganda’ is the fact that they are less retrospective explanations than they are forward-looking conceptual frameworks for explaining and interpreting events yet to come”.⁹ Narratives are different, as well, from “framing” exercises, as they are based on future behavior rather than simply on aiding understanding. Narratives “attempt to follow a certain self-referential logic which must string together a host of events, pose a causal relationship between them, and then use this to hypothesize about the best way forward to success”.¹⁰

For Freedman, narratives “are strategic because they do not arise spontaneously but are deliberately constructed or reinforced out of the ideas and thoughts that are already current”.¹¹ This is similar to the idea that “[n]arratives are composed for particular audiences at moments in history, and they draw on taken-for-granted discourses and values circulating in a particular culture”.¹² In an important essay, Antoniadis, Miskimmon and O’Loughlin address “narrative work great powers undertake to establish and maintain influence in the international system and shape the system itself”.¹³ The function of these narratives is to extend influence, manage expectations and change the discursive environment. Strategic narrati-

ves take the actors' understandings of international politics, gather them into intelligible patterns, traditions and ideologies, and connect apparently unconnected phenomena around some causal transformation. While storylines are "sense-making" and organizational, "narrative" can be distinguished, these writers say, in that they take an initial situation or order, identify a problem that disrupts that order, and produce a resolution that reestablishes or has the anticipation of restoring order. For Hajer, the "key function of storylines is that they suggest unity in the bewildering variety of separate discursive component parts of a policy problem,"¹⁴ but still the additional measure of consensus or agreement or power is necessary so that the storyline becomes strategically functional. The objective—what makes a story a strategic narrative in international relations—is the implicit inclusion of a "tacit set of rules" as Antoniades, *et al* put it, "for how foreign policy actors are to perform in certain speech situations and articulate responses to policy challenges and problems".¹⁵

Archetti enlarges the lens from state actors to non-state actors: "Narratives are central to the practice of international relations. Governments use narratives strategically to achieve desired objectives: defining their countries' identities, explaining their role in the world, identifying allies and enemies, establishing the nature of the relationships among them; contextualizing historical events, as well as policy decisions." But, as she points out, "the context in which contemporary international relations take place... is not characterized by the interaction among states only. Access to global communications has empowered... states, NGOs, corporate actors, transnational actors, even private citizens [all of whom] have acquired a voice (Valencic, 2001)".¹⁶ The possibility of communicating instantaneously with global audiences across distances at almost no cost gives non-state actors both visibility and the power, to different extents, to influence the conduct of international politics. Indeed, "these actors might not have substantial financial, material or military resources, yet through the persuasive power of strategic narratives can mobilize audiences across national borders (Douglas 2007; Betz 2008)".¹⁷ Thus we see the stage is set for the increasing proliferation of strategic narratives, as social media users and NGOs empowered by strategic communication seek to utilize their power.

Archetti reminds the reader of the complexity with which the various narrative inputs are received, particularly in light of new technologies. Using a metaphor of differentially placed mirrors in the field through which a narrative is refracted, Archetti asserts that "the position within the social field will affect the orientation of each individual's mirror [and...][t]he position also affects where (to which people) the image is going to be further reflected to. Network analysts would say this depends on the ties the individual has with the broader network (Brown 2009)".¹⁸ Thus, control lapses over the formation, projection and reception of the strategic narrative. The new media ecology means, as Antoniades *et al.* put it, more potential to re-evaluate, disrupt and re-inscribe historical events—that is, to change the narrative. Archetti resists "reification of the narrative, the belief that it has an objective existence outside the mind of audiences—a notion that clashes with the understanding of narrative as a social product only existing through its continuous re-telling".¹⁹

STRATEGIC NARRATIVES IN ACTION

In this essay, I focus on a subset of narratives of legitimacy, mildly modifying the definitions within this family of possibilities. Consistent with this book's emphasis on strategies of communication, I focus on narratives that have a certain kind of strategic pedigree. They are usually the consequence of an external international agreement (formal or tacit). The agreement contemplates actions that enact a transformative drama of governance. The international parties seek to assure that the story predicted by the narrative will take place, and threaten consequences if they do not. I have selected these criteria because they reflect, in some manner, principal recent transnational struggles to invent or construct approaches that will resolve conflict or crisis, where the ongoing reinvention of the polity is an important and vital part of an emerging reality. My approach to this understanding of strategic narratives is informed by the events of the Arab Spring and other critical transnational episodes that touch on governmental legitimacy. There, in episode after episode, elements of the international community (NATO, the Arab League, the UN, and individual states in shifting combinations), sought to fashion scenarios, cease-fires, truces, and negotiated agreements that would alter existing political arrangements and create a new platform for governance.

These narratives sought to introduce scripts with discipline for different actors playing different roles, scripts with consequences for non-adherence. These were not always successful, and they required, of course, cooperation from internal warring parties as well as the government itself. In their implied coercion, strategic narratives are akin to law—or at least aspire in that direction—. Narratives are strategic as they perform the functions that scripts play in conventional theater, namely to bind actors to roles or set an approximate trajectory; to hold the actors (with wild differences based on authorial or directorial perquisites) to more or less expected ways of behaving. Strategic narratives, in this sense, are exceptional. They purport to pull key participants within their sweep, not only those who were the architects or writers of the script but also those, involuntarily bound, who can affect whether the script will be successful in its overall performance. Narratives that are strategic are anthems to the future of the state. They must be related to history, but also illuminate future paths. Strategic narratives may (and often do) incorporate a brokered solution among parties. They incorporate the resolution within a larger mythology designed to suppress, at least momentarily, internal divisions, and create a momentum for moving forward. The practicalities of compromise are significant. The strategic narratives I discuss impose additional conditions and assure dramatic sequences that satisfy the international community that one more crisis is at least temporarily thwarted.

Of course, the Arab Spring was a concatenation of strategic narratives, seeking to be effective. The Dayton Accords contained within them a strategic narrative for the Balkans, one in which a series of states would glided toward European Union membership or association and an international protectorate, temporarily in control, dissolved into a sequence of more or less democratic entities. So too did the Oslo Accords for Israel and Palestine: the narrative of a two state solution built on UN resolutions. Each episode had the potential for success, each for

failure. Each was dependent on parties to agree to terms. But each had an overriding dramatic element—a transcendent vision designed to overcome otherwise incontrovertible obstacles—. Not all strategic narratives are embedded in consensual documents to which parties, internal and external, have agreed—the drive towards the Iraq war, for example, was incredibly contested, yet produced a script which, if obligations were not met and roles not adhered to, meant war—.

A TAXONOMY OF LEGITIMACY NARRATIVES

Looking at the recent embodiments of narratives of legitimacy, the following model may clarify the argument. Narratives of legitimacy are “strategic” in the sense I have suggested if:

- The new narrative has gained consensus among key international actors (consensus-based narrative) or,
- In lieu of consensus among such actors, was deemed binding because of the power held by the maker or collaborative makers of the narrative (power-based narrative), or
- In lieu of such external power, had such narrative strength in an aesthetic of interpretation that it became an (or the) accepted version of what should occur (self-generating narrative).

I explore, below, a consideration that applies to all three: whether, in an age of social media, the narrative must be in harmony with changing narrative of power “in the street”.

Each configuration has its examples—and most instances partake imperfectly of all three—. Take the first—an agreed-upon approach among key international actors that accompanies or precedes an action—. This does not mean, necessarily, a reenactment of a Yalta-like event with powers (in this case through Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill) formally meeting and coming to a complex understanding. It may be an agreement that is formed by a series of diffuse policy statements, slowly emerging over time, explicitly or by nods and winks. Such a narrative is designed to build consensus among domestic or international publics. The narrative might be an accurate portrayal of why a decision to act was taken, or of what is planned or proposed as a course of action coherent with the past; but a strategic narrative need not and often is not fully accurate in its depiction or understanding of reality. Because the function of the narrative is to achieve and build consensus, transparency and credibility are often critical, but it is primarily for that (excellent) reason of furthering support that accuracy and truth-telling is a factor. It is a matter of prudence and efficacy rather than principle. What is significant—and hard to achieve—is for key actors to agree the narrative and bind those that they have influence over.

In the second case, power, not consensus, legitimates. Power creates the illusion of consensus, but it is often illusion that undergirds the strategic narrative in the first instance. Understanding power is central to understanding why the narrative takes on its particular guise. Strategic narratives based on power were characteristic

of the Cold War period, where, for example, Warsaw Pact countries followed a Soviet lead. Or in contemporary times where a superpower is a reality, where narratives invented in Washington—one might think of Iraq or the ‘War on Terror’ more generally—are subscribed to elsewhere. One might quibble, arguing that where it is power that does the work, the nature of the strategic narrative is less important. But we have seen that regardless of the extent of power, a strategic narrative helps in consensus building and maintaining the legitimacy of power.

The third case may be closest to what might be called a “pure” strategic narrative: where it is the compelling nature of the narrative itself that serves to marshal support and agreement among key players and key publics. This could be strategic narrative by epiphany, or strategic narrative by the most artful understanding of the needs of contending participants. It might be strategic narratives that are based on religious fervor, where the emotional consensus-building elements for the significant participants are already present. “Democratization” sometimes takes the form of such a “pure” narrative, where the idea of a common desire for more democratic practices is thought to work its own mobilizing magic—although we should note that this was how the Iraq War narrative was presented, underlining the power of this third type, a naturalized narrative aspired to by those who otherwise work through power or consensus—. After Tunisia, a default narrative arose—a narrative of liberation—which seemed to affect the complex environment of ordinary compromise and political arrangement. The restoration of an Islamic caliphate is another charismatic form of conferring legitimacy. Pure narratives can be the most compelling. Such narratives permeate networks and gain adherents. These narratives persist, often, in the face of shifting attitudes of political actors and may have greater endurance in the face of the use of force. This compelling narrative which is “aesthetic” and self-generating, and can be entirely detached from power and consensus, indeed could counter both.

In all three cases a narrative can fail at its strategic purpose. The narrative can carry emotion, build consensus and still fail, as I have indicated earlier in this chapter. Failure, with accompanying *Schadenfreude*, is frequent enough that it too must be analyzed. Key actors may, for one reason or another, depart from an explicit or implicit agreement and their consensus cannot be enforced. States fall out with other states. Disclosures or new information, or changing facts on the ground, may make the narrative no longer tenable. A strategic narrative may be dependent on representations of the real world that no longer have credibility (we can think, for example, of the loss of legitimacy suffered by the United States upon the revelation of no WMDs in Iraq). The publics that narratives were designed to influence may turn out to be resistant and rejecting. And an account that seemed an epiphany, or a narrative that transcended current divisions and, in itself, deepened loyalties and allegiance, can be washed away in a moment of mass transformation. In Egypt and in rebel Libya the potential for such disintegration of the strategic narrative was always present. In Egypt, the international narrative of peaceful transition was and continues to be threatened by the sustaining role of the military, violence against civilians, and the lingering ambitions and sense of entitlement of the old guard. In Libya, to the extent the international community’s narrative was built on the premise that there were rebels capable of

gaining control, the regaining of ground by loyalists, persistence of a stalemate, errors by NATO forces, disarray in rebel ranks—all of these posed momentary and recurring problems for the strategic narrative—. The romance of the narrative might persist, but no longer with its disciplining force.

The process of delegitimation, like that of affirmatively building a new narrative, should be analyzed in similar terms. Delegitimation of the old (Mubarak, Assad, Gadhafi, Saleh) has elements of consensus and rewriting or reconceptualizing history, and is a critical part of informing a new narrative, but it should be differentiated from the process of advancing alternative or competing narratives. Delegitimizing may be a prerequisite; yet it will often be much easier than creating an alternative. The delegitimizing function may be effective, while the strategy for a replacing narrative falls short. In the Arab Spring cases—and others—delegitimation efforts may be largely directed inwards. Efforts to support protestors in Tahrir Square or Syrian demonstrators in Homs (delegitimizing the government) were accompanied by an international effort to bolster those pushing for a new or altered set of resolution-oriented conditions. The legitimizing and delegitimizing function of a narrative may be highly correlated, or the two approaches may different constellations internationally dealing with different constituencies or targets with somewhat different strategies.

The Arab Spring illustrated how various forums might exist for the playing out of these contests over narratives. They are a complex mix between interventions from international actors (seeking, competitively) to create and extend a strategic narrative, and liberation ideologies or other manifestations of historical momentum from below. The forums for strategic narratives have included the Arab League (Syria and Libya), the UN Security Council (Libya), NATO (in the case of Libya) and the EU. But one can think more broadly. Efforts to enhance or solidify particular narratives of legitimacy for Palestine (in one form or another) are accompanied by efforts to delegitimize Israel (or to reinforce the Palestinian Authority as compared to Hamas). Each process or element may have its own distinct set of target audiences, its own set of strategic allies, its own methods for furthering the likelihood of the desired outcome being achieved. Delegitimation may take place on the assumption that a new, particular narrative of legitimacy will emerge, but instead the replacing form may take a form unanticipated by the delegitimizers.

STRATEGIC NARRATIVES IN THE ARAB SPRING

Two instances, early in the Arab Spring, underscore the interplay between strategic narratives and legitimacy and set the tone for what came afterwards. By February and March 2011, an informal consensus had emerged in Western capitals: Hosni Mubarak would have to resign, as would Colonel Gaddafi. In those months both Mubarak and Saif Gaddafi, the Colonel's favored son, rather than accept the narrative, sought to resist. Each held the illusion that he could propound an alternate vision, each through the vehicle of a speech to a national and global audience, leading in both cases to a hostile reaction—swift and relatively

bloodless in the instance of Egypt, and long and costly in the instance of Libya—. These examples show the strong impact a strategic narrative can have, forcing actors into roles and laying out consequences for non-compliance.

When Mubarak, then still Egypt's long-reigning authoritarian President, spoke, on what turned out to be his last public speech in his official capacity (on February 10, 2011),²⁰ he varied from the international narrative for change, one likely brokered between Washington and the Egyptian military. It had been widely anticipated that Mubarak would make generous obeisance to the protestors at Tahrir Square, recognize the importance of the rising civil society, speak respectfully of processes of fundamental change, and gracefully announce a purposive set of practices for shuffling off the political stage.²¹ Instead, he gave a somewhat angry, defensive speech in which he emphasized the ways he would continue to control the levers of power rather than merely summarily disappear. The reaction among the Egyptian military, the protestors in the street, and the international policy world in Europe and the United States was virtually unanimous. Mubarak had blundered badly; he had violated expectations in some fundamental way. Within 24 hours, he resigned.

In Egypt, a strategic narrative seemed to have been virtually negotiated, with the Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton appointing a Special Representative to convey the U.S. determination, then personally asserting an anticipated result, and the U.S. military leadership (in concert, undoubtedly, with European counterparts) pronouncing a prospective outcome to the Egyptian command. In Libya, the initial efforts were equally dramatic. By April 2011, the fate of Libya's current "narrative of legitimacy" was sealed. U.S. President Barack Obama, UK Prime Minister David Cameron of the UK and French President Nicolas Sarkozy wrote a joint letter for global public consumption (the letter was addressed to the *The Times of London*, *The International Herald Tribune* and *Le Figaro*). The letter was a significant example of forming and promulgating a strategic narrative—and doing so not through a formal organization or classic agreement—. For "a transition to succeed, Colonel Gaddafi must go, and go for good. At that point, the United Nations and its members should help the Libyan people as they rebuild where Gaddafi has destroyed—to repair homes and hospitals, to restore basic utilities, and to assist Libyans as they develop the institutions to underpin a prosperous and open society—. This vision for the future of Libya has the support of a broad coalition of countries, including many from the Arab world".²² The three leaders had announced that a narrative of legitimacy that included Colonel Gaddafi in a position of leadership was unsustainable.

The international narratives in Egypt and Libya had expectations built into them, expectations of what the leaders would do and before that, what they would say. For those proclaiming such narratives, some kind of sense (at least temporary sense), had been made of the world; and mechanisms were put in place to enforce them. It was expected that even actors not fully party to the narrative's construction would see the light and, if at all possible, conform. These strategic narratives were not quite "law," though they were designed to regulate behavior. They were not quite contracts and, as the Egypt and Libya case show, they may not have had the necessary acquiescence by those who were key players.

These examples begin to demonstrate the consequences of shifts in narratives of legitimacy. A delegitimated regime has altered status in the international community. The consequence might be sanctions, more difficult access to zones of discourse, weakening influence in international bodies, or all-out regime change. Delegitimation has important consequences internally. For domestic citizens, the promise of protest, the values of adherence to Rule of Law, the level of general obedience and loyalty, the willingness to fight—all this is affected by rejection of elements of a consensual narrative of legitimacy and a shift to a new one—.

When Mubarak faced the microphones and gave ‘the wrong speech,’ he was defying—perhaps consciously—the narrative of positive social change and gradual but significant transfer of power. That latter approach was a narrative that had an arc—from protests in Tahrir Square to a promise of a new election process, a new generation of involved citizens, and a more democratic outcome—. In the face of his actions, there were elements of all three ingredients I listed: consensus among key international actors, grounded in power, with a high-concept drama that had transcendent qualities. And the international narrative was synchronous, or seemed to be, with internal developments. Not only was the narrative about the future of Egypt, it was an outcome of intense discussions among Western governments and with the Arab League, as well as a reflection of the power of the street. As a result it had sufficient impetus behind it (though there were those, such as the Saudis, who disagreed intensely with elements of the narrative) to function in strategic form. Finally, the narrative had a romantic appeal—it was the playing out of a dream, echoing the events of 1989 in terms of its aesthetic power—.

The example of Libya was more complicated and more telling. When protests spread to Libya, the processes for intervention, the parties to intervention and the justification for intervention were each highly disputed. It was necessary to find a strategic narrative that created the umbrella for joint action and defined or maintained the limits of collaboration. The strategic narrative had to negotiate a carefully-defined goal (protecting civilians from their own government, reducing the numbers of civilian deaths and, more controversially, removal of Gaddafi from power); a technique (no-fly zone versus degrees of other forms of combat intervention); and provide a motivating drama that would build consensus (increasingly a mix of stories of torture, rape, delusion, irresponsible wealth, over-maintenance of power and lack of democratic institutions). Consistent with my earlier definitions, the strategic narrative needed to be credible but it did not need fully to represent the complexities of the real. And it did not need to dictate day-to-day conduct, just the general roles of the actors. It will long be debated how exactly the strategic narrative concerning Libya shifted, so subtle were the nuances of what was expressed and what was not, which elements were contained within the UN resolution and which were not. The expressed broad-based strategic narrative (and the UN resolution) stopped short of explicitly requiring the ouster of Gaddafi, but the principal powerful actors included that with their own articulations of preferred outcomes.

As with Egypt, much of the Libyan experience must be seen in terms of a long-standing public relations initiative—serving the *status quo*—that heightened the sense of abandonment and betrayal. For example, consider Saif, in February 2011. In the days before the speech, in the moments before it was delivered, the default na-

rrative he considered likely was transition —and transition into Saif’s hands—. The son had been trained for this moment —trained for reform at the London School of Economics where he received a PhD and was assumed to have been handpicked to guide Libya to a more democratic, civil society-based future—. He may have meant at one point, to enact that narrative, but, as part of a ceremony of recalcitrance, he fully and devastatingly failed, a failure manifested in the media accounts of informal and formal Western government reaction. “We will keep fighting until the last man standing, even to the last woman standing,” Saif said, “We will not leave Libya to the Italians or to the Turks ... Our spirits are high.” Speaking of the rebels, “They now want to transform Libya into a group of [Islamic] emirates —small states—and even [cause] separatism. They have a plot. Unfortunately, our brother Arabs [allowed] their media, their stations and the inflammatory coverage”.²³

One caveat: in presenting this definition of strategic narratives, I do not mean to underplay what could be called the revolutionary dynamics, the protests, the internal mobilizations, the effective interrelationships between crowds and global audiences. It would be a mistake to overemphasize the role of the elite over the masses, the role of the “international community” over the dynamics within each state. Almost always, a catalyst for the West to emphasize the importance of deposing leaders stepping down came from protest and rebel power respectively), and a realization the countries were at a “tipping point,” and often (in Egypt especially), a desire to be on ‘the right side’ of history. In this sense, the “strategic narrative” of the events in Egypt influenced the United States as much as they did Mubarak. This narrative though, is more disembodied, comes from a mix of popular unrest, international pressure, worldwide support through social media, and, after Tunisia, a sort of blueprint of the way things would go.

NARRATIVES OF LEGITIMACY AND SOCIAL MEDIA

I indicated earlier that each attempt at narrative by actors in the international community would be affected by what transpired in the “social media.” What pressure does use of social media place on the capacity of elite international players to establish either a controlling framework or a consensus-based narrative of legitimacy? O’Loughlin *et al* ask whether the rise of digital innovations will mean significant changes in the structuring and functioning of strategic narratives.²⁴ Consideration of strategic narratives and their impact began in an era of more conventional media, when leaders had greater capacity (or at least considered that they did) to control messages and their diffusion, or to shape opinion about a narrative. The Arab Spring reinforced the idea that top-level development of strategic narratives is supplemented and altered as the use of new technologies become effective; a broader public, and an unstructured, crowd-related set of interests may become more decisive in calculating what narrative of legitimacy should survive. It was cable news and the CNN effect that was the first systematic shock to an earlier system of managing the production and distribution of strategic narratives. Steven Livingston, among others, documented ways in which traditional diplomatic interchanges were modified by the capacity of new networks to disrupt old practices.²⁵

The internet, social media, cellphones, satellites—all of these now insistently affect how narratives, especially international strategic narratives, evolve and what constitutes their life cycle—. Narratives, both domestic and international, are more vulnerable because of the potential volatility of extraordinarily passionate entrants who use new technologies to alter the rhythm of accepted approaches.²⁶ The received wisdom is subject to challenge. Deviations from accuracy—real or imagined—are challenged by crowd-sourced material and citizen journalists. The existence of secret or discreet agreements to a strategic narrative is more likely to be uncovered and publicized. And competing narratives—ones that represent a more compelling myth, a more impressive group of key players and a different concatenation of power—can be produced and rendered viral instantly. As a result, the stability or half-life of a reigning narrative may become shorter and shorter. An international narrative that is out of sync with facts on the ground is always susceptible. But the increased penetration and use of social media makes this lack of synchronicity particularly salient.

One could posit several subcategories: where the local socially-mediated reality is congruent with the strategic narrative being propounded internationally (Tahrir Square), strongly inconsistent with its international counterpart (occasional reflections on the reality of Libyan rebel forces), or divided. One can demarcate areas where social media are relatively passive or deeply active. Such examination is an element in understanding the process of interaction between social media and strategic narratives. For much of the world, the lesson from the Arab Spring is the hopeful one of democratization. For those in power, and not only those in repressive regimes, the message is more complex. Social media shifts power, speeds mobilization, decentralizes leadership, unifies across class—or at least has this potential—. From the perspective of security, this combination of strategic communication from abroad and social media within can be particularly toxic. Tyrants as well as protestors will examine these questions closely. New variables that gain significance include the extent of social media activity—if penetration and use are acting in a way that alters local networks and that connects local agents for change with others (diasporic allies, non-governmental organizations, and governmental supporters abroad)—.

Another related variable is whether the social media platforms are highly contested—whether complexity in establishing a strategic narrative globally reflects deep divisions that reach into the representation of events in social media (leaving aside whether those divisions are overrepresented or underrepresented in the social media as opposed to the physical world). A grid could be constructed that shows, by country, the intensity of use of social and the extent to which there are meaningfully competing narratives being represented. Such an analysis could also evaluate the success of the government or the state in shaping access to social media as a means of affecting the narrative of legitimacy.

I suggested above three models for legitimating strategic narratives: consensus, power and charisma. One can begin to ask—though a systematic scheme cannot be yet undertaken—for each of the states involved in the Arab Spring,²⁷ questions like these: *a*) Was there a settled narrative that came to meet one of the three categories of potentially viable accounts (consensus supported, superpower supported or charismatic)?; *b*) Can one describe what stage in the strategic nar-

rative process was involved: formation, application, regression?; c) How did the new communications technologies and social media affect the formation and application of the strategic narrative?; and, finally, d) has the strategic narrative in some articulable way “succeeded” or “failed” in its application?

One must also understand how social media affects the relationship between the different types of strategic narrative. Tunisia, as the first, seemingly spontaneous event, which came to fruition quickly, established a dominant new narrative that became the default approach in the rapidly-arising successor protests in Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria and elsewhere. But what appeared to be the defining narrative did not rise, in each instance, to strategic status or do so immediately. After Tunisia, and certainly after Egypt, it became increasingly difficult for key actors to reach agreement on an aspirational narrative. The capacity of the narrative itself to cause a binding script on key actors could therefore not be easily realized. Power and lack of consensus among significant partners meant the voices on the street could not be harmonized and put into the service of a unified vision.

An understanding must also draw on social media’s relationship with other forms of mass communication, which still have undoubted influence. The relationship between social media and the traditional broadcast media is complex, and the loop or progression analysis of the perceptive observer (and important participant in the Tunisian revolution), Sami Ben Gharbia, is compelling.²⁸ Ben Gharbia proposes a three-part model (drawing on the case of Tunisia) that “treats social media as part of a... complex ecosystem,” involving Facebook as a publishing platform, multiple curation platforms (Nawaat, Global Voices, Twitter, Posterous), and eventually broadcast platforms (Al Jazeera and France24 among others). Sites like Nawaat identified content posted on Facebook, tagged and categorized it and made it accessible to other media organizations, particularly Al Jazeera. Then the loop or interaction began. “Once content made it onto Al Jazeera, it began filtering back into Tunisia, letting Tunisians who weren’t looking for content online understand what was unfolding.” Al Jazeera “became an extension of the internet, publishing user-generated content and using it to educate Tunisian citizens about what was going on in their own country, and eventually the whole region.” According to Ben Gharbia, this three-part model created an information cascade that was instrumental in hastening the revolution. Thus we see that informed analysis led to a much more complex understanding of the dynamics of the situation—with social media interacting with old forms of media and politics to synthesize new ones, rather than simply usurping what went before.

In the Tunisia case—given its suddenness—the strategic narrative trailed the social media, indeed, may be said to have followed and mirrored it. In Syria and Bahrain there was more interaction, where players with a stake in the strategic narrative sought to affect the social media space because of its generative capacity. In a way the Ben Gharbia model—reflecting the Tunisia case—would be expanded. The loop would include international actors seeking to influence the blogosphere, with reverberations into the curation sites and ultimately returning to Al Jazeera or other effective international media

(such as CNN or BBC World Service's *World Have Your Say*). This then would feed both into the international sphere and the local blogosphere —the two audiences interacting—.

In Bahrain, where social media use is high, the blogosphere reflected the intense division of perspectives on how to characterize events —a division that was partly spontaneous, and partly an orchestrated effort by all sides to produce an internal narrative with implications on how Bahrain and its protests would be perceived in capitals of the world—. ²⁹ In the early days of the Syria protests, where efforts existed to seal what was occurring from foreign reporting, it was social media risk takers who provided rare insight into occurrences —a system that then matured—. Accounts in *The New York Times* and *The Guardian* emphasized the ingenuity of Syrian supporters of protests to enrich the social media space:

Among unprecedented and growing protests against the 41-year dictatorship of the Assad family over Syria, social media mavens such as Nakhle are emerging as the thread that binds disparate protests together. Foreign media have been all but barred from reporting from Syria and dozens of local and Arab journalists have been arrested or expelled. In their place, Syria's cyber activists are using social media and technology to ensure reporting gets out, linking the protesters on the street with the eyes and ears of the world.³⁰

Analysis of the social media demonstrate that there were two (at least two) audiences for those seeking to embed a narrative. The world was fixated on the celebration of the emerging narrative in Tahrir Square, or in the protests in Syria or Bahrain or Yemen. That is the most notorious audience. But for strategic narratives of international importance, there is also the home audience of the major powers where populations are called upon to support, finance and enforce the playing out of a narrative. A narrative for Libya and Egypt, one determined in international capitals, had to resonate with the political desires of populations in the UK or the United States or France. Political leaders had to persuade their constituents and shape an account that brought them gently into the frame. But the key actors for whom these narratives constitute a script obviously include the authorities in the target society, as we have seen with Mubarak and young Gaddafi. Indeed, they are the actors who are to be brought to heel, if possible, who are subject to the hoped-for binding nature of the narrative, who are to be persuaded to follow an international script. And it is here that the implications of social media become central. Enforcing the global narrative against the local central actors presents significant barriers if, in an intensely socially mediated world, the local socially mediated reality is strongly inconsistent with its international counterpart, relatively passive, or strongly divided. An internationally-forged strategic narrative may, and possibly should, lose credibility if it is inconsistent with on the ground opinion (as manifested through social media and other channels), and a divided and conflicting narrative loses the benefit of reinforcement and expansive network effects. It is the power of social media actually to challenge the power of the West's unilateral ability to impose strategic narratives and to allow domestic audiences to take the lead or a greater role in some situations.

THE COMPLEXITY OF RELIANCE ON STRATEGIC NARRATIVES

In terms of “anxieties,” one can see the relationship between narratives of legitimacy on the one hand and reaction of authority on the other. Throughout the Arab Spring, the exercise of narrative power by the West —announcements, letters, emissaries— were met by rejection and contempt by the then-in-power leaders to whom they were addressed. The issue of arriving at a narrative that has staying power has to do, as well, with the problems I have already highlighted —ones of forming and implementing the narrative and protecting against backsliding. Even when there were attempts to fall in line, resentment was not far beneath the surface. And throughout, in reaction to the narratives of democracy propounded, a spate of counter-efforts were attempted. In Libya, for example, circumstances on the ground and in the air were constantly rubbing against the accepted narrative. It was increasingly unclear whether the cost of fidelity to the narrative was too high for otherwise strained U.S. or European participants.

Syria presented another example of complexity concerning the strategic narrative where the international consensus has taken a long time to coalesce, if coalescence ever occurs, and bitter hostility and refusal to bend seemed to characterize the actions of Assad. The threat of such an imposed understanding is there, however. In Egypt, the international consensus almost immediately (with notable exceptions and some slight delays) was for Mubarak to depart, with the Egyptian military rapidly concurring. In Syria, it took months for the international community to agree (and it had not yet at the time of this version) on how or whether Assad was required to step down. The crises in drafting a resolution at the UN Security Council showed the waning momentum to shape a unifying strategic narrative.

There are several traps in the invocation of “strategic narratives” in the account of international policy decisions, even in the narrower framework of the episodes I have discussed. First there is the problem of overbreadth. It is hard to distinguish between narrative and strategic narrative. I have suggested that a distinction, for me, lies in the disciplining or potentially binding nature by which the narrative operates. But here too, as I have pointed out, there is a fragility. Where they exist, strategic narratives are tenuous, as is their capacity, even their potential, for guiding and controlling conduct. It is difficult to evaluate what disciplining power can be attributed to the narrative itself, as compared to the power structures that underlie it. And it would be useful to see how strategic narratives affect public opinion, both in the target society and at home. The important role of the militaries in deciding the outcome of Arab Spring protests is indicative of the confusion here —the interaction between the word and the bullet is not always easy to examine—. As to each of the states involved, we can ask these questions: is there a settled narrative that meets one of the three categories (consensus supported, superpower supported or charismatic); what stage in the strategic narrative process is involved: formation, application, regression; how do communications technologies affect the formation and application of the strategic narrative; has a strategic narrative “failed” in its application. Since circumstances change, it is difficult to comment on these variables. We have seen that what appears to be a suitable characteriza-

tion at one point, alters at another. Tunisia, as the first, seemingly spontaneous event, which came to fruition quickly, established a dominant new narrative that became the default approach in the rapidly arising successor protests in Egypt, Yemen, Bahrain, Syria and elsewhere). But what appeared to be the defining narrative did not rise, in each instance, to strategic status or do so immediately. After Egypt, it was more difficult, even, at first, in the case of Libya, to reach agreement of key actors for the aspirational narrative. The capacity of the narrative itself to cause a binding script on key actors —could not easily be realized. Power and lack of consensus among significant partners meant—.

Illustrations beyond the “Arab Spring” are legion and significant. Take the strategic narrative that accompanied the decision to go to war in Iraq in 2003 concerning the presence in Iraq of weapons of mass destruction.³¹ The narrative was strategic because it bound sufficient international players for key moments in time. It was effective because the key players actually performed for the time necessary for elements of the narrative to be achieved. Again, it had elements of the three categories I have described above: agreement, exercise of power, and what seemed to be a sufficiently compelling story to adequately enlist and carry public opinion. In some ways, the fact that the narrative was not based on actual facts merely illustrates the significance of the narrative independent of reality. One could argue that the years of seeking a “solution” to the Middle East peace process were exercises in successive efforts at developing a strategic narrative, as well as at demonstrating the powers and the limits of such efforts. The Oslo Accords, the Camp David Agreements, and any number of “roadmaps” all are preceded by or reflect narratives that provide the environment for formally and explicitly binding documents. Strategic narratives included “land for peace,” or movement towards a two-state solution. They were about a grand picture in which the actors would enact certain set roles on a determined trajectory. To follow the categories outlined above, the strategic narrative misfired, as key parties withdrew, as the power basis for the agreement collapses, or if the narrative was not sufficiently compelling to keep all parties at the table.³²

Strategic narratives are not just the product of vast changes in the global information environment. They are not, necessarily, the products of the kinds of transnational efforts by one state to alter the media space of another. They are not dependent, though they may be affected, by the rise of social media in a particular context. A strategic narrative can be destabilizing as well as stabilizing, reshaping as well as unifying. The construction of the narrative can and does become a matter of great state interest. Control of information by the elites has had overwhelming significance in shaping these narratives. Yet, the crowds in Tahrir Square in Egypt, or those in Yemen and Syria, demanded a say in the strategic narrative that would arise from multilateral negotiations. They became a Fifth Estate —asserting their own authority, and seeking to become at least an equal in terms of bargaining over the way the future would be defined—. If narratives have this power, then the continuing process of producing them bears scrutiny.

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Notes

¹ Schmidt, V.A. (2008). Discursive Institutionalism: the Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse. *Annu. Rev. Polit. Sci.*, 11:303–26.

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³ Roselle, L. "Strategic Narratives of War: Fear of Entrapment and Abandonment During Protracted Conflict". SGIR: Stockholm, September 2010, page 6. <<http://stockholm.sgir.eu/uploads/Strategic%20Narratives%20of%20War.pdf>>.

⁴ From O'Loughlin website <<http://newpol.com.rhul.ac.uk/display/ShowJournal?moduleId=1414019®isteredAuthorId=158548¤tPage=2>>.

⁵ Röling, N.; Maarleveld, M. (1999). Facing strategic narratives: An argument for interactive effectiveness. *Agriculture and Human Values*, 16, 295–308, p. 296.

⁶ *Idem.*, p. 297.

⁷ Freedman (2006), p. 22. Cited in Roselle 2010, p. 6.

⁸ Roselle (2010), p. 6.

⁹ Douglas, F.S. (Scott) (2008). The Year After Zarqawi: Strategic Narratives, Peripheral Operations, & Central Visions in the "Long War." Prepared for ISA 2008 Annual Convention in San Francisco, p. 4 (actually cited in Roselle).

¹⁰ *Idem.*, p. 4.

¹¹ Freedman, L. (2006). *The Transformation of Strategic Affairs*. Adelphi Paper 379, IISS/Routledge, p. 22. Again cited in Roselle.

¹² Riessman, C. (2008). *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, p. 3. Cited in Roselle.

¹³ Antoniadis, A.; Miskimmon, A.; O'Loughlin, B. (2010). "Great Power Politics and Strategic Narratives". In CGPE Working Paper Brighton: Centre for Global Political Economy, University of Sussex, p. 1. From Roselle <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/cgpe/documents/cgpe_wp07_antoniadis_miskimmon_oloughlin.pdf>.

¹⁴ Hajer, M.A. (1995). *The Politics of Environmental Discourse*. Oxford, UK: Clarendon, p. 56.

¹⁵ *Idem.*, p. 4.

¹⁶ Archetti, C. "Terrorism, Communication and the War of Ideas: Al-Qaida's Strategic Narrative as a Brand". <http://salford.academia.edu/CristinaArchetti/Papers/153510/_Terrorism_Communication_and_the_War_of_Ideas_Al-Qaidas_Strategic_Narrative_as_a_Brand_, p. 2>. [Valencic, Jana. 2001. "The Individual and International Relations." In *The Image, the State and International Relations*, Alan Chong and Jana Valencic. London: London School of Economics and Political Science.]

¹⁷ *Idem.*, p. 2.

¹⁸ *Idem.*, p. 5.

¹⁹ *Idem.*, p. 7.

²⁰ CBC News (2011). 'Transcript: Hosni Mubarak TV Address to Egypt,' last accessed 01/31/12 at <<http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/story/2011/02/10/f-egypt-mubarak-transcript.html>>.

²¹ See, for example, *The New York Times* (2011), 'Mubarak Refuses to Step Down, Stoking Revolt's Fury and Resolve', last ac-

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²² Obama, B.; Cameron, D.; Sarkozy, N. (2011), 'Libya's Pathway to Peace,' last accessed 01/31/12 at <<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/15/opinion/15iht-edlibya15.html>>.

²³ *The Guardian* (2011), 'Gaddafi Son: 'We will eradicate them all,'" last accessed 01/31/12 at <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/feb/21/gaddafi-son-muammar-libya>>.

²⁴ Hoskins and O'Loughlin (2006).

²⁵ Steven Livingston *Clarifying the CNN Effect*. Also, "Deflecting the CNN Effect: Public Opinion Polling and Livingstonian Outcomes" (with Lauren Kogen), *Media, War & Conflict* 4, p. 109-123, August 2011.

²⁶ It also allowed the spreading of "memes" of protest. For example, see this excellent piece on "Tahrir as Meme" by a British protest/radical theory group <<http://deterriotorialsupportgroup.wordpress.com/2011/05/21/egypt-bahrain-london-spain--tahrir-square-as-a-meme>>.

²⁷ Indeed, even in the choice of umbrella term—awakening or spring—there is an implied turn to the narrative. The Arab Spring terminology is evocative of 1968, the Prague Spring and by extension of the dissolution of the Soviet bloc post 1989. Ben Zimmer <http://www.visualthesaurus.com/cm/wordrountes/2855> wrote evocatively that "The 'Arab Awakening' suggests a slightly different narrative from the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring idea has a built-in irony because of the tragic end of the Prague forebearer. The term bears within it the prospect of failure. Awakening also suggests a narrative that has more of a

mass impact, the slumbering multitudes coming to an awareness of their future. Spring is an externally determined event, cyclical, almost divine. Awakening could be self-generated. There has been dispute among those seeking to characterize the events as to which label is more suitable. From a "strategic narrative perspective, this could be an element of branding: what name makes it more likely to hold a coalition together, what inference will bring support to a set of ideas and a plan? As might be expected, such a term has limited applicability as the specific events unfurl and the reality becomes muddier. There is the shift from Spring ultimately to Winter and there is the complex understanding, after an Awakening, that the realities are not so ideal as was first envisioned.

²⁸ <<http://www.ethanzuckerman.com/blog/2011/05/06/civic-disobedience-and-the-arab-spring>>.

²⁹ See, for example, <<http://globalvoicesonline.org/2011/08/05/bahrain-liliane-khalil-another-blog-hoax-or-propaganda>>.

³⁰ *The Guardian* (2011), 'Syria's young cyber activists keep protests in view,' last accessed 01/31/12 at <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/apr/15/syria-activists-protests-in-view>>.

³¹ Arsenault, A.; Castells, M. (2006). <<http://annenbergl.usc.edu/Faculty/Communication/~media/Faculty/Facpdfs/Castells%20Iraq%20misinformation%20pdf.ashx>>.

³² Afghanistan presented an unusual case: continued agreement to act without a strategic narrative. But Afghanistan also presented a case where the very absence of such a strategic narrative meant that the agreement was weakened and subject to piecemeal defection.