

## LETTERS

**Promoting Egypt's New Democracy**

MADAM, Since Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak was forced to step down in February, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces has been in control. This arrangement was intended to be temporary, and many protests continue in Cairo and around the country by people determined to send a message to the military that it must remain so. After the heady days of the Arab spring in Tahrir Square, Egyptians fear their longed-for democracy is being hijacked.

The Egyptian Armed Forces Council has now pushed back the date for parliamentary elections to September. Publically they have said that this is to allow more time for the creation of viable political parties. Critics have suggested that this is a reaction to Islamist forces flexing their muscles. With the delay until after the summer, the Muslim Brotherhood will have more time to organise and mobilise. I think that the delay to September offers opportunities as well as challenges, both for Egyptians who wish to see a functioning democracy and for those of us in the West who wish to support such an outcome.

Some people argue that democracy cannot work in the Arab world. Such pessimists look at Iraq, where full-scale military intervention and billions of dollars of spending have only produced the most fragile of democracies thus far. After such a vast expenditure of blood and treasure, the results seem decidedly poor. Such scepticism extends to Egypt where, critics say, there is little hope of establishing a functioning democracy in a land with no strong tradition of the rule of law.

I do not agree with this assessment. The people who brought about the Arab Spring need to be given the tools

to put their infectious enthusiasm for democracy into practice. We in the West can give positive encouragement but we must also offer practical support. Wordsworth wrote of the French Revolution: 'Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive, But to be young was very heaven!' The revolution in France was followed by the Terror. To prevent such terrible history from repeating itself in Egypt, the West must act now.

While the US poured billions of dollars into its own military interventions as well as military assistance to foreign countries, it spent a tiny fraction of those sums on government-financed organisations to promote democracy. Under the umbrella of the National Endowment for Democracy, which was created by the US Congress in 1983 to provide grant funding for promoting democracy in developing nations, the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) have been sowing democratic seeds. The IRI and the NDI are loosely affiliated with the Republican and Democratic parties respectively. Their total annual expenditures as provided by Congress amount to a mere \$100 million a year, and yet they have a supersized impact upon promoting the democratic process around the world.

Since 1992, the United Kingdom has had the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), a non-departmental public body originally set up to promote democratic institutions in central and Eastern Europe and in sub-Saharan Africa. Belatedly, the mother of all parliaments had an organisation associated with its name to promote democracy abroad. The WFD aided some remarkable democratic successes in post-Communist Eastern Europe, such as in Estonia and Poland, as well as in post-Apartheid South Africa. However, the

experience in countries like Belarus and Zimbabwe demonstrates the dangers of failing to adequately develop democratic institutions. It is time for the WFD to expand its remit into the Arab world. The crucial few months leading up to the Egyptian elections present an ideal and urgent opportunity for it to deploy its expertise.

There is also a pan-European role waiting to be created here. The European Union has suffered some bad publicity lately with the single currency in trouble. Creating a European agency specifically designed to promote democratic institutions would be an ideal publicity coup as well as the fulfilment of an urgent international responsibility. This would be a step beyond the European Commission's current role of providing development funding around the world and might also present better value for money. It would be an ideal way for Baroness Cathy Ashton to assert her own credentials as the de facto European foreign secretary: the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of the European Union. For what – after all – is the EU if it is not a club of democracies? ■

**David Martin Abrahams**, Vice-President, RUSI Council

**The Killer Lesson from Japan's Catastrophe**

MADAM, Japan's catastrophe has months to run. Its recovery to whatever the 'new normal' will be will take years. It is too early to consider the strategic implications of this twenty-first century synchronous triple – earthquake, tsunami, nuclear – 'black swan' mega disaster. But it is clear that in Japan, as elsewhere, some core and worst-case

disaster planning assumptions and safety standards have been woefully inadequate. We are reminded how fragile developed societies are, with high expectations being delivered by just-in-time resources and consumables that depend wholly on our e-infrastructure and reliable power supplies.

Here in the UK we have a good strategic resilience review process and a civil contingencies secretariat that is internationally respected. However, we have weak spots, institutional blindness and inertia too, and are running just to stand still as complexity and risk increase. We should link this to a seriously deteriorating international security situation, growing challenges and risks at home – including our hosting of the Olympic Games in 2012.

Now is the time to appoint an independent heavyweight figure to lead the most comprehensive stress test – an ‘operational audit’ of national and top-level plans and standards. The benchmark for the audit should be a Tohoku earthquake-level catastrophe that would test the nation’s response to a complex and high-impact catastrophe as considered in our new National Security Strategy and Risk Assessment.

Resilience is about investing in prevention and warning systems, national planning and local disaster preparedness and response. A study of where Japan did and did not do well will help to identify where the UK falls short.

Two scenarios could be used. First, of the once-in-500-hundred years freak tidal wave hitting the Thames Barrier just at a time when a mechanical failure means it cannot be engaged. Ensuing havoc would result in the Cabinet having to relocate and Parliament being unable to sit; and fuel, water and food outages along the Thames corridor. Countless people would be engulfed by the flood, and there would need to be wholesale evacuations and other disaster scenes similar to what we have just witnessed in sophisticated, first-world Japan where over half a million people suddenly became homeless, hungry, and without water or electricity.

Second, a summer 2012 scenario might evolve around a sophisticated terrorist attack that instigated

simultaneous catastrophes such as: a cyber attack against power and banking systems, of a greater sophistication and impact than that in Estonia in May 2007, which could disrupt electricity supplies, money transactions and supply of food, water, fuel and medical consumables; a physical terrorist attack, possibly against an Olympic target echoing the Mumbai attack with secondary attacks against iconic targets and transportation hubs in London; and a severe summer storm, such as those of 2002 and 2007, that brings widespread disruption, flooding, blocked roads and downed power lines.

Such scenarios would test national decision-making, stress responses across many lines of operation and evaluate the readiness of the UK general public. The key lesson of Japan is the importance of stress-testing scenarios where multiple failures or incidents occur.

Lesser crises have tested previous governments. What confidence should we have that paralysis of decision-making, breakdown of communication, overwhelmed emergency services and non-compliant public response could not happen in UK? The events in Japan show that we must take training and preparation more seriously, from top to bottom.

The following areas are high priorities for improving our preparedness: the role of the military in domestic humanitarian operations and public order; *extremis* civilian staff capacity; local authority and utilities planning and preparedness; expanding and empowering the chief scientific adviser’s remit; re-examining emergency legal powers; and improving EU emergency co-ordination response.

What can we do about these issues now? Well, taking *extremis* civilian capacity, it is clear that we have insufficient numbers of emergency responders and, in particular, police, for the worst-case, high-impact catastrophe. We do not have the numbers available to do what the Japanese authorities did around Fukushima and in other disaster-hit areas.

There is a partial and very cheap quick fix worth examining: *extremis* reserve liability for the police and other emergency workers akin to the

military reserve liability in event of a major disaster that is enacted under ‘Queen’s Order’. Legislation could be introduced that places such liability on personnel recently retired and those with experience but now in other employment.

More extensive mutual aid agreements should also be developed with key European allies. They must include exclusion zone and cordon assistance in the event that national resources become overwhelmed. *Extremis* reserve agreements should also be established with certified security companies.

Before unprecedented disaster struck Japan, this would all have been tossed aside as the rant of a manic disaster-planner, and in Whitehall the conversation-ending retort ‘there is no money’ would have been the usual refrain. Now though, disaster preparedness does not look ridiculous. Indeed, a thorough stress test of the whole system would be a very efficient use of a small amount of money. We must go the extra mile to mitigate the inevitable sooner-or-later peril through sophisticated planning, modelling and testing. In these uncomfortable and uncertain times, we need people to think the unthinkable and identify ways in which we maintain the security of our population and overseas visitors. ■

**Brigadier (Rtd) Nigel Hall**, Former CO 1, Duke of Wellington’s and **Catarina Tully** (formerly of the PM’s and Foreign Secretary’s strategy units) are Directors of NHJ Strategic Consulting

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### The SDSR and Reserve Forces

MADAM, In the debate last year about the SDSR, little attention seemed to be paid to our reserve forces, and to the possibilities of enhancing the roles of both those with reserve commitments and, in the case of the army, the Territorial Army (TA). One would have expected us to learn that the experiences and structures of reserves in other countries, particularly Israel, would have repaid detailed study. The contraction of all three services should have led to

increases in the numbers of reservists and the manpower of the TA to enable even the reduced defence commitments to be met with balanced forces and the necessary skills and capabilities of our people. This did not happen.

Far from shedding commitments, the unexpected has already occurred and cast grave doubt on the assumptions which underlay the SDSR. The operations in Libya are an extra strategic task making large demands on dwindling resources. The degree of overstretch for the army is shown by the fact that nearly every battle group for Afghanistan needs individual reinforcements from the TA and often a complete sub-unit from another unit to provide the necessary boots on the ground. The RAF has curtailed the flying training of nearly 200 student pilots, only to discover they are short of qualified Tornado pilots. It is suggested that many of the air strikes in Libya are flown from the UK at much higher costs because we can no longer field aircraft aboard an aircraft carrier from which they could be launched closer to their targets.

Some remedies to this sad catalogue of woe could be explored within or nearly within the public expenditure constraints imposed on the forces.

The Royal Navy used to have a Reserve Fleet manned by reservists; a few years ago, the minimum number of frigates for all operational tasks was twenty-three. A Reserve Squadron could preserve maritime resources and capabilities, as well as their skilled crews, at reduced costs.

When not in an operational theatre, units of the army could shed one sub-unit which, less a small permanent cadre, could be mobilised for operations with reservists, and, where particular skills are lacking, by individual TA reinforcements. This would avoid the 'loan' of sub-units from other units. The TA should be asked to undertake more active roles such as manning main battle tanks.

The RAF's Reserve Auxiliary Air Force should provide the additional skilled air and ground crews needed to maintain operational strength and capabilities, as they did so successfully in the years leading up to the Second World War.

Measures of this sort would go a long way to reassuring the forces,

the public and other nations that the long-term defence policy of the UK is soundly based on a coherent strategy, as well as sharing fairly the reductions in expenditure required by the financial policy of less from the public purse. I recommend that the Israeli experience is revisited to see what would help us in this difficult time. I do not know why we exhibit such reluctance to glean some lessons from other countries or from our own history. It is only fools who think they have a monopoly of wisdom.

Failure to take such measures risks a raft of evils such as a loss of morale and essential skills or capabilities which events are now telling us we should seek to avoid. ■

**Major General (Rtd) Henry Woods**

### **Cruise Missiles Will Not Do!**

MADAM, I have some sympathy with Paul Lever ('Criteria for Deterrence', February/March 2011) in arguing for greater transparency as to whom our nuclear deterrent might be directed. However, exposure of such detail will be extremely difficult. The current submarine successor programme (there is no 'Trident replacement programme' as such – the US missile system has been underwritten until 2042) is focused on the period 2030–60. Predicting potential nuclear threats at that distance is a precarious business. However, despite honourable calls from the global zero movement, current evidence suggests that nuclear proliferation will continue to underpin an expansion of nuclear capable states and global warming will almost certainly give rise to further nation-to-nation conflict over natural resources. This and concerns over the unpredictable nature of our future relationships with other major nuclear powers (both Russia and China are updating and expanding their nuclear arsenals) are reasons enough to invest in insuring against the risk of nuclear aggression in the future. Furthermore, discussion of the detail behind the government's deterrence criteria requires access to highly sensitive material and models, such that it would almost certainly be denied.

More worrying is Sir Paul's later assertion that a cruise missile solution will somehow provide an affordable alternative to Trident. Development of a suitable nuclear variant (known in the jargon as TLAM(N)) for the UK would actually be far more expensive than maintaining the well-proven Trident system where we realise extraordinary savings due to very favourable cost sharing with the US.

In supporting his argument, Sir Paul is wrong to question how long the TLAM(N) will be retained in the US's inventory, as this is quite clear: the US announced the retirement of its ageing TLAM(N) capability in the last Nuclear Posture Review (June 2010). The system is out of date, has not been deployed since the early 1990s and would not meet a minimum twenty-first century performance, safety and reliability requirement. The US has no plans to procure a successor. Indeed no other nuclear weapon state deploys or has plans to deploy such a weapon and no cruise missile of sufficient range, speed, penetrability and reliability exists. Thus the UK would have to design one on its own from scratch. The R&D investment alone would be huge, never mind the deployment, testing and support costs. The missile would also require a brand new warhead and it too would be more expensive than any replacement for Trident, as the latter would be essentially evolutionary and little different to the current one deployed. A new UK TLAM(N) warhead would involve a completely new design concept involving science and technology not tried before. With no testing allowed as a result of the UK's ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, this would be a formidable challenge and a very expensive one. Notwithstanding the cost, cruise missiles are less effective than ballistic missiles (like Trident); they are vulnerable to missile defences and indeed, more worryingly, sometimes go astray. A large number of missiles and warheads would therefore be required to meet any benchmark deterrence criteria. This could breach the UK's NPT commitments and go against the government's disarmament agenda.

In addition to the missile and warhead procurement cost, the redesign of the *Astute* submarine to load, store and fire nuclear weapons would not be 'relatively straightforward' as Sir Paul suggests, but the subject of a costly major redesign to accommodate a complex safety case to allow the *Astute* submarines to carry and fire nuclear weapons for which the current submarines are not certified. More submarines would also be required to ensure the necessary firepower.

Cost arguments apart, it is questionable whether a cruise missile is a true strategic weapon able to deliver a sufficient level of retaliatory power to do what it is meant to do, which is to deter a potential aggressor. My view is that such a solution would leave Britain in the parlous position of a state possessing nuclear weapons but one without a nuclear deterrent capability – the very worst of all options. The government has looked at alternatives like cruise missiles time and time again. Meeting the twin

principles of delivering an effective minimum deterrent capability at an affordable price is a challenging objective. The continuous-at-sea presence of Trident remains the only effective and affordable answer for the UK. A cruise missile solution just will not do. ■

**Commodore Tim Hare, Royal Navy,**  
Former Director Nuclear Policy, MoD,  
1999–2002

## Notification Annual General Meeting

16:00, Thursday 21 July 2011

Royal United Services Institute, Whitehall, London



The 180<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies will be held on Thursday 21 July 2011 at 16.00. Copies of the agenda will be available from the Director-General's office two weeks before the meeting.

'The General Meetings of Members and the Full Council shall have the entire direction and management of the concerns of the Institute, in the manner and subject to the terms laid down in the Charter of Incorporation'. (Bye-Laws, Chapter 2, Paragraph 1).

Any Member wishing to raise a matter of business at the AGM is invited to give notice in writing to the Director-General on or before 30 June 2011. Any proposal to vary or revoke any existing Bye-Law or Resolution must be signed by the proposer and seconder. (Bye-Laws, Chapter 2, Paragraph 5).