

felt it more convenient to work with the military directly and tended to adopt its advice over the suggestions of other agencies (p. 54). It is conversely true, however, that in cases where decision-makers had no security background (e.g., Golda Meir, Levi Eshkol, Menahem Begin, Amir Peretz) they had to lean on the military for advice. It seems, therefore, that neither the military nor the politicians have so far really felt that they needed intervening bodies between them. Although the political echelon could be expected to be more interested in such bodies than the military, this has never happened.

While stressing realistic explanations, such as the state's strategic conditions or the bureaucratic-organizational bargaining process among decision-makers and national security agencies, the book is somewhat less strong in the non-realistic, cultural explanations that it offers. Since the pre-state years, Israeli strategic culture has given priority to military solutions to national security challenges.² It has cherished rich experience and experience-based intuition, a practice-oriented approach,³ and performance;⁴ it has tended to extol resourcefulness and improvisation;⁵ and until 1973 it has been plagued by hubris, as a result of the "aura of prestige" gained in the 1967 War.⁶

2. Baruch Kimmeling, "Militarizem ba-Hevra ha-Yisra'elit" ["Militarism in Israeli Society"], *Te'oriya u-Vikkoret*, No. 4 (Fall 1993), pp. 129–30.

3. Oz Almog, *Sabra: The Creation of a New Jew* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

4. Dan Horowitz and Moshe Lissak, *Metsukot be-Utopiya: Yisra'el, Hevra be-'Omes Yeter* [Troubles in Utopia: Israel, an Overburdened Society] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved 1990), pp. 145, 181; Yaacov Hisdai, "Idi'olog u-Vitsu'ist: ha-Kohen ve-ha-Navi' shel TSAHaL" [Ideologue and Performer: The Priest and the Prophet of the IDF], *Ma'arakhot* 279–280 (May–June 1981), pp. 41–6.

5. Moshe Dayan, *Avne Derekh: Autobiographia* [Milestones: An Autobiography] (Jerusalem: Edanim 1976), p. 244; The Winograd Commission's final report, http://www.vaadatawino.org.il/pdf/_%20_.pdf, p. 425.

6. Eliot Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes* (New York: The Free Press 1990), p. 124.

Given the deep-rooted pathologies analyzed in the book, the negative record of past efforts to reform the national security decision-making system — which the author describes in the book — and the aforementioned impact of Israeli strategic culture, one cannot be too optimistic regarding the chances of the author's recommendations for further improvement to be implemented in the foreseeable future.

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LIBYA

Exit Gaddafi: The Hidden History of the Libyan Revolution, by Ethan Chorin. London: Saqi Books, 2012. £15. [Also published as **Exit the Colonel: The Hidden History of the Libyan Revolution**. New York, Public Affairs Books, 2012. \$30.]

Reviewed by Jason Pack

More than two years after the United States joined France, Britain, Qatar, and others in enforcing the no-fly zone over Libya, the morality, political wisdom, and international legality of helping rebel forces topple Mu'ammār al-Qadhafī is still hotly debated.

Was it a success as it aided the Libyan people's fight for freedom and led to successful elections, bringing the Arab Spring's only non-Islamist successor government to power? Or a failure as the post-Qadhafī central government is so weak and security so patchy that the British Ambassador's motorcade was bombed and the US Ambassador was assassinated by Islamist militants even though the authorities and the vast majority of the Libyan people hold favorable attitudes toward Britain and America?

Even the highest political officials in the land cannot seem to decide if the United States adopted the right policy in engaging in Libya. In fact, since the killing of Ambassador Christopher Stevens in Benghazi on September 11, 2012, the subject of America's role in Libya has become irrevocably tainted by partisanship.

In her last public act as secretary of state, Hillary Clinton appeared before Congress on January 23, 2013. She presented vague admissions concerning the State Department's and the intelligence community's failings that led to the death of Ambassador Stevens. Freshman senator from Kentucky Rand Paul claimed that Clinton should have been fired for the security lapses, while Senator John McCain bravely redirected the discussion away from security and toward the larger issues of the US-Libya relationship. He bucked the consensus in Congress which holds that the US should invest more in security and less in "nation-building" in societies in transition. McCain hit the nail on the head as he pointed out that Ambassador Stevens was inherently in danger in traveling to Benghazi, not because Americans are hated in Libya, but rather because the US did not provide enough capacity building assistance to the Libyan authorities to help them construct central security mechanisms. He rightly acknowledged that American failings in Libya have been from engaging too little, not too much.

Predictably, McCain's fellow Republicans did not follow him into a high-minded policy debate, rather they descended into a partisan blame game attempting to besmirch Obama's entire approach to Libya — ignoring that it was merely a continuation of the Bush-era policy of engagement, deterrence, and détente.

Sparked by the urgency and politicization of the debate surrounding the "West's Libya policy," certain popular books have attempted to weigh in. A common theme has been to blame Western nations and multinational corporations for their role in the international "rehabilitation" of Qadhafi from 2003–2010. Lampooning Tony Blair for his "deal in the desert" has become common place in almost all British broadsheets. The standard argument holds the West as partially culpable for Qadhafi's sins because it sold him sophisticated weapons and served him his Islamist enemies on a silver platter rather than sticking to Ronald Reagan's unnuanced aim of ousting "the mad dog of the Middle East." This case is made most coherently in Ethan Chorin's, *Exit Gaddafi: The Hidden History of the Libyan Revolution*.

Chorin presents a detailed, readable, and informed blow-by-blow account of the

events of 2011. He elegantly frames the narrative with morsels of Libyan fiction which confer an epic, fable-like quality to the events of the revolution. Furthermore, Chorin expertly peppers the text with an insider's anecdotes about Libya's key personalities. Both literary devices give the reader a taste of Libyan culture and an appreciation for developments on the ground. He utilizes interviews with high ranking officials to dissect both how the Qadhafi regime attempted to combat the uprisings and how the rebel movement evolved over time. All of the above makes *Exit Gaddafi* a pleasure to read and a valuable contribution to the emerging scholarship.

Yet Chorin's real legacy is his unique account of the events which led to the uprisings, especially his focus on the causative role of the US-Libya relationship. In so doing, he presents the most succinct and engaging account yet in print of the secret diplomacy that led to Qadhafi paying off the Lockerbie families and renouncing his WMD program. Chorin puts forth the fascinating — yet likely erroneous — thesis that Qadhafi's brilliant negotiating turned the Lockerbie families from the greatest opponents of Libya's normalization with the West into its greatest proponents. "Gaddafi had performed brilliantly, turning negatives into positives and liabilities into assets, all at the expense of the West" (p. 145). According to Chorin, greed lured Western diplomats and businessmen into Qadhafi's masterful gambit. Furthermore, Chorin asserts that the Bush Administration's policies toward Libya were *primarily* shaped by its desire "to prove" that its strategy in Iraq was having a successful deterrent effect elsewhere. He simply dismisses the concrete counterterrorism advantages garnered from intelligence sharing: "the CIA's dealings with Libya benefitted no one but Gaddafi himself" (p. 143).

Although a fascinating revisionist take on recent history, it bears little resemblance to the reality I experienced working full time promoting the US-Libya relationship in Tripoli and Washington, where few were under any illusions about Qadhafi (as demonstrated by WikiLeaks cables), many felt Libyan HUMINT (human intelligence)

seriously strengthened the American fight against al-Qa'ida, and no one I ever met at the State Department was *primarily* motivated to approach Libya to demonstrate that America's Iraq policy had encouraged other rogue states to come clean. Rather, Western diplomats and companies engaged Libya, because it was both in their financial, counterterrorism, and counterproliferation interests to do so and because engagement could be used as a means to open Libya to the internet, educational exchanges, infrastructural investment, foreign scrutiny, and outside cultural influences. A by-product of this new openness was to raise the ambitions, aspirations, and know-how of ordinary Libyans. If North Korea could have been pried open in a similar manner only through dealing with Kim Jong-il, would not policymakers have been wise to do so? And would it not have made the glorious reign of Kim Jong-un less likely?

Yes, Chorin rightly points out that prior to engagement, the international sanctions regime (1992–1999) neutralized Qadhafi as a player on the global stage, while lifting them did add oxygen to his delusions of regional and global leadership. But, like all sanctions regimes, it severely harmed the Libyan people, limited external contact and influence, and left appalling gaps in Libya's physical and human infrastructure. Ending the sanctions and engaging Qadhafi was a moral and strategic necessity.

In trying to elaborate on how changes in high politics affected the Libyan domestic scene, Chorin peculiarly places the US as a central actor in Libya's internal changes downplaying both the home grown struggles between Saif al-Islam al-Qadhafi's "reformers" and the hardliners of the Revolutionary Committees as well as the fact that the Europeans were always more closely plugged-in to the country's domestic politics. This distorted American-centric optic, allows for Chorin to weave a ridiculous 21st-century morality play where "big oil" and K Street lobbyists nefariously sold the Libyan people down the river to improve their bottom lines.

Although Chorin acknowledges that an "unintended consequence" of Western policy was giving the Libyan people the tools

to overthrow their tyrant, he maligns Western actors as naively manipulated by Qadhafi to boost his prestige and leverage. He never so much as entertains the possibility that the West manipulated Qadhafi in return — which, given how things shook out for the Colonel, seems quite likely to me. More crucially, Chorin's argument neglects that many Western nations (especially the US and UK) remained deeply ambivalent about the Qadhafi regime and understood that its song and dance of economic reforms were not accompanied by a genuine opening of public or commercial space. This deep ambivalence allowed for Western diplomats and businesses to strengthen the nascent Libyan private sector, covert and overt civil organizations, and those few individuals within the Qadhafian bureaucracy who advocated for real change. Crucially, the *détente* between the West and Libya allowed British and American diplomats, researchers, and corporations an insider's perspective from which to become truly acquainted with the main actors in Libya. The acquisition of detailed personal knowledge and contacts was essential for the West's supportive role in the 2011 uprisings.

In short, a balanced and detached appraisal of the role of the West in the years 2003–2010 in helping or hindering the Libyan people's realization of their aspirations has yet to be written. Yet when future diplomatic historians grapple with the problem, they will likely conclude that the West's decision to engage with Qadhafi was morally and strategically justified. Chorin's *mea culpa* on behalf of the West simply confuses today's readers about how the West is received in post-Qadhafi Libya. Rather than being spurned for supporting Qadhafi, British and American diplomats and companies are greeted with appreciation and gratitude for supporting the Libyan people in overthrowing him. It is crucial that we not lose sight of this essential fact in the wake of the tragic killing of Ambassador Stevens.

In fact, if we can learn anything from the events of the last five years throughout the Middle East, Libya should be held up as a poster child for a Western diplomacy that seriously engages with Muslim populations rather than just propping up their dictators.

Conversely, events in Iran over the same period have shown the manifest failure of the alternative policy of consistent non-engagement diplomatically followed by non-support for the Green Revolution.

Finally, Chorin might seem an unlikely prophet for such a revisionist approach to Western diplomacy toward Libya, as he acquired his firsthand knowledge of the country as a US Foreign Service Officer. He even wrote the Department of Commerce's commercial guide, which helps American companies operate in Libya. His chapter in Dirk Vandewalle's definitive compendium *Libya Since 1969: Qadhafi's Revolution Revisited* brilliantly puts forth the case for the inevitable edifying impact that American business penetration could have on promoting political freedom in Libya. In those heady days of 2008 as I packed my bags to head off to Tripoli, Chorin was my inspiration; now that the argument is won and that the Arab Spring has vindicated us — the proponents of engagement — his abrupt change of heart comes as a shock and a let-down.

There is no doubt that the potential positive impact of Western products, services, diplomats, and businessmen on Qadhafi's Libya was constrained — and the negative impacts multiplied — by the corruption, surveillance, and thuggery of the Qadhafi regime. But few doubt that since engagement, Libyans experienced a net improvement in their lives and a vast widening of their horizons. In fact, Western engagement with Libya from 2003–2010 engendered a Qadhafian glasnost and perestroika which ineluctably led to the crumbling of the *ancien régime*. There was and could be no “Arab Spring” in the North Korea of Kim Jong-Il, the USSR of Stalin, or Qadhafi's Libya of the 1980s. Western engagement with Libya *directly and by design* (not *indirectly and accidentally* as Chorin claims) led to Qadhafi's ouster. Its agents should be patting themselves on the back rather than publically self-flagellating.

Jason Pack is editor of The 2011 Libyan Uprisings and the Struggle for the Post-Qadhafi Future (Palgrave Macmillan Forthcoming June 2013).

SYRIA

Engineers of Modern Development: East German Experts in Ba'athist Syria: 1965–1972, by Massimiliano Trentin. Padua: Coop. Libreria Editrice Università di Padova, 2010. 184 pages.

Reviewed by Fred H. Lawson

Syria's Ba'ath Party remains, in Eric Rouleau's apt phrase, “an enigma,” and no more so than during its heyday in the mid-1960s. The so-called “radical” wing of the party adopted programs that empowered disadvantaged members of Syrian society, most notably women and farm laborers, yet imposed an unprecedented degree of state supervision on industrial workers. Efforts were made to strengthen state agencies at the local level, while at the same time augmenting the institutional capacity of the central administration. Such initiatives heightened fundamental contradictions in Ba'athi economic policy, and set the stage for the demise of the radicals and the consolidation of a “corrective movement” that melded a strong state with an overriding concern for efficiency and even profitability in industry and agriculture.

New insight into the workings of the Ba'athi political economy at its zenith can be found in Massimiliano Trentin's innovative analysis of relations between the technical missions of the German Democratic Republic (DDR) and the Syrian authorities from 1965 to 1972. Rather than promoting scientific socialism per se, the East Germans quickly took steps to create a rational, modern political apparatus, in which departments in Damascus could make policy and issue directives to the provinces in an orderly fashion. When Prime Minister Yusuf al-Zu'ayyin hinted that he planned to issue a public condemnation of the “coffee drinkers” who staffed government ministries, the East German adviser to the finance ministry “advised him not to stir up their resistance with such a provocation, because he needed their support to implement reforms.” Schneider then wrote to his superiors in Berlin: “I would define the current situation [in Syria] as the ‘telephone phase’ and