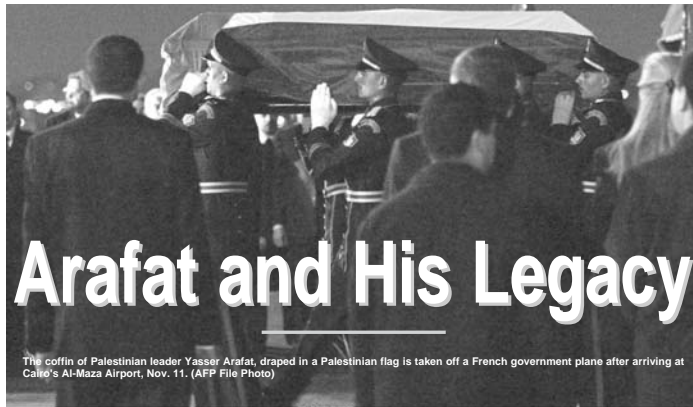


Yasser Arafat dominated the politics of the Middle East for four decades, and his death comes at a moment when the way ahead for this most intractable of conflicts has rarely looked so uncertain. The Palestinian leader had been isolated for the past three years, a virtual prisoner of Israel's army among the deliberately preserved ruins of his compound in the West Bank town of Ramallah. George Bush and Ariel Sharon had been boycotting him on the grounds that he was not a dependable partner. He had lost little of his iconic status for many of his own people and will be mourned even by rivals. But for Israelis he remained an implacable, wily and untrustworthy enemy, despite his transformation - false or incomplete for most of them - from guerrilla leader to peacemaker and Nobel prize winner, with Israel's Yitzhak Rabin.

Arafat's legacy is a mixed one. Like the biblical Moses, he did not succeed in leading his people into their promised land. Israel's strength, American indulgence, Arab divisions and Palestinian weakness conspired to prevent that. But he will rightly be remembered for one huge achievement: when he founded the Fatah movement in the mid-1960s, Palestinians were known only as stateless refugees, half-forgotten victims of the creation of the Jewish state in the 1948 war, barely tolerated by the Arab regimes that sheltered them. By the mid-1970s, when he addressed the UN general assembly and offered a choice between the gun and the olive branch, the national rights of the Palestinians were widely recognised. Today it is clear to the world - including to many Israelis - that peace and justice



Arafat and His Legacy

The coffin of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, draped in a Palestinian flag is taken off a French government plane after arriving at Cairo's Al-Maza Airport, Nov. 11. (AFP File Photo)

require that the Palestinians have a state of their own in part of the land they lost. The size and character of that state, of course, remain in bitter contention. Arafat cultivated his image - keffiyeh headdress, three-day stubble and battledress - through the occupation of the rump of Palestine in the 1967 war, black

September and the Jordanian civil war, and the creation of a PLO mini-state in Lebanon. Against the odds, he survived Israel's invasion in 1982 to fight another day from a new exile in Tunisia.

His other achievement was to hold together the factions that made up the PLO, manoeuvring deftly to

ensure it remained the "sole legitimate representative" of the Palestinians, when Israel and some Arabs sought advantages in their disunity. He orchestrated its military activities - including attacks on Israeli and Jewish civilians - but edged towards a political solution, recognising Israel's existence and renouncing terrorism in 1988. Others rejected his reluctant but pragmatic acceptance of 22% of the area of mandatory Palestine as treachery.

Ironically, the stone-throwing intifada in the occupied territories did more for the Palestinians than decades of armed struggle and led, eventually, to the Oslo deal and that extraordinary moment in 1993 when Arafat and Rabin shook hands on the White House lawn. It was a fateful move for the PLO leader, who gambled that mutual recognition and Israeli withdrawals would bring agreement on borders, Jerusalem and refugees. In the end, though, neither side could go far enough. Suicide bombings by fundamentalist Islamist groups, Rabin's murder, continuing Israeli settlement activity and the discrediting of a corrupt, ineffectual Palestinian Authority led to the current deadly impasse.

Now that the unifying deathbed wrangling is over, attention will focus on whether Arafat's heir as PLO chairman, Mahmoud Abbas, can revive the moribund though still internationally backed peace process, driven by a re-elected George Bush. It is hard to predict what happens next, but it is fitting that there was controversy to the very end for a man, who for all his many flaws, will long be remembered as "Mr Palestine".

GUARDIAN.CO.UK

Family, State And Globalization

At a glance, placing the words "family" and "globalization" in the same sentence seems a bit of an oxymoron. The family conjures the past, whereas globalization is taking place in the present and seems to be the inevitable reality for the future. The family seems out of place in today's zeitgeist.

However, globalization, which diminishes the role of the state, enhances the role of the family institution. Indeed, at a time when the state has been weakened, the family is the most immediate institution that can provide spiritual, moral and welfare support to citizens. Globalization has both weakened the state's ability to provide what it claims to be a moral bulwark against negative influences, and also its ability to intervene in the economy. The emerging consensus is that the state should rather focus its resources into the health and education sectors. There is an impending realization that alas, the state cannot do everything.

This is not to say that the family is unscathed by the tide of globalization. MTV and McDonald's have changed the dynamics of the family institution in this day and age. There is also greater inequality as a by-product of the global economy. The culture of consumerism, and increasing education and training of women (desirable as it is) means that increasingly both parents work to provide an optimal standard of living for the family. In many countries throughout Asia, foreign maids, consumer goods and shopping malls have become surrogates to the traditional family--along with drugs and crime. It's not the state alone that has lost control over the individual; the family too cannot control the individual in the same way as it could in the past.

Yet compared with the impersonal state, the family can be more

effective in providing a positive ethical framework, strengthening economic independence from the state and creating a sense of identity and belonging.

Many who claim to be progressive think it is out of place to argue that the family can inculcate moral and positive values. Those on the left have focused on poverty and economic inequality as the major causes of crime, removing morality and ethics from the equation altogether. The right has frequently laid the blame on the media and negative popular culture. We must realize that crime does not arise from a single factor only; a strong and positive family institution in a more equal economic environment can be a powerful bulwark against crime.

In this new scenario, the state cannot do everything, but it can do something--it should encourage a vibrant and independent family institution. While in certain countries there is a need to encourage family planning to keep population growth manageable, many developed countries have realized that they now need to encourage families to have children to sustain the economy.

There is still room for the state to play its role: first, it can provide more opportunities for poorer families by providing allowances based on their income and number of children; second, it can nurture a flexible environment for working parents to bring up children; and third, it can encourage more facilities that are family-oriented. An efficient education and health sector can play an important supporting role to the family institution. This is where I differ from the assertions of the traditional right. Even with globalization, the government can continue to play the role in creating opportunities, even if not in the conventional one-size-fits-all statist approach.

Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad
ATIMES.COM

Wall Is Gone, History Remains

The Wall has been gone for 15 years now, but the ghosts are not. Photographs of Hitler stare down from ubiquitous flyers advertising the hit film of the fall, "The Downfall," an account of the last 12 days of Hitler's life. Near the site of the bunker in which he killed himself, by the Brandenburg Gate, a field of 2,700 concrete blocks is nearing completion as a monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe. The Reichstag building stands further on, its gleaming new interior still displaying the graffiti of victorious Russian soldiers (though, at Russia's request, minus the obscenities).

Behind it, a barely noticeable line paving stone traces the old path of the Berlin Wall, sometimes disappearing



Crosses form shadows on a replica of the Berlin Wall in Berlin, Nov. 7. 1,065 crosses commemorate those who died while trying to escape from East Germany. (AP File Photo)

into clusters of glittering office blocks. There's no escaping the past in Berlin.

An exhibition currently at the German Historical Museum on the Unter den Linden, the "Myths of the Nations," has attracted considerable attention with its displays of how different nations--Russians, Americans, Europeans--have formed and reformed the narratives of their experience of World War II and the Holocaust over the past 60 years.

The purpose is to impress on the visitor that national memory is really the past continuously reinterpreted through the present. "Nowhere have the memories of the war faded," declares the text. "On the contrary, they are constantly being renewed in ever-changing variations."

Like much of what the Germans do with their past, the exhibition is open to the criticism of seeking to "relativize" Nazi history. The display about the United States, for example, is dominated by a clip of Jimi Hendrix playing his celebrated screeching version of the "Star Spangled Banner" at Woodstock. The text with the display says it was the first assault on America's postwar image of itself as the champion of liberty and democracy. Is there a longing here to deflate the victor, or perhaps to nip at the invader of Iraq?

The irony, intended or not, is that the exhibition stands at the heart of what is perhaps the greatest collection of overlapping national myths, Berlin itself. So thick are the layers--the Berlin of Prussian Kaisers, of "Cabaret," of the Third Reich, of East and West, and of today--that the real problem often is to decide where to begin peeling them back, and when to stop.

Near the German Historical Museum (formerly a museum of Prussian might, then of Nazi might, then of Communist might, now a museum to all these myths) stands the massive hulk of the Palace of the Republic. The East Germans raised the garish modern monolith, sheathed in bronze-tinted windows, over the bombed-out ruins of the old Prussian Royal Palace

to proclaim the triumph of peace-loving Marxism over Prussian militarism. After unification, it had to be gutted because of asbestos, and the new masters announced plans to rebuild the Prussian palace. That's being disputed of course. In the meantime, the bronze box has found its own niche in the present--as a popular setting for art and music shows.

In the end, experiencing the layered myths of Berlin is incomplete if it doesn't include a long look in the mirror. The Germans, at least, have seriously accepted the responsibility for untangling their past. But there's a lot of terrible history elsewhere--the Gulag, the "disappeared," Cambodia, Rwanda--that still badly needs to be stripped of congealed myth and denial.

Serge Schmemmann
IHT.COM

Stuck in France's Orbit

Amid continuing turmoil in Ivory Coast, France firmly denied Monday that its forces were seeking to depose President Laurent Gbagbo. But such suspicions are understandable, given the country's history, and especially after France's ruthless weekend destruction of the country's air force.

Ivory Coast has always faced an unequal struggle for viable independence, as even its official name, Cote d'Ivoire, suggests. French traders first meddled there in the 15th century, in search of slaves and ivory. France obtained a foothold in 1842, and in 1893, 60 distinct tribes were conjoined in a territory of France design.

Even after independence in 1960, Ivory Coast remained firmly in the

Francophonie, France's more muscular equivalent to the Commonwealth. Its official language is French. Its currency (unlike that of France) is still the franc. About 14,000 French expatriates maintain France's sizeable economic stake. France is the country's biggest single trading partner; defence supplier and bilateral aid donor. It has military bases there, and since the 2002 civil war, has again acted as its political arbiter.

Colonialism aside, Ivory Coast's struggle for identity has faced numerous other obstacles. The country's first post-independence president, Felix Houphouet-Boigny, resisted the development of democratic institutions in the 33 years he held power.

The west's tolerance of this precedent was not lost

on his successors after 1993. President Henri Konan Bedie also rebuffed democratic reform, promoting instead the concept of 'ivoirite--national pride--as a binding force. But political polarisation accelerated in the 1990s. Ivoirite became a conduit for xenophobia, aimed in particular at economic immigrants in the north who comprise up to 40% of the total population. Divisions between southern Christians, non-Ivoirian Muslims in the north, and indigenous faiths, hardened.

All the while, the country's economic underpinning was being stripped away. Ivory Coast is one of the largest exporters of cocoa and coffee, but as commodity prices were forced down by world markets, so too was the country's principal source of

income. Ivory Coast's struggle for identity and autonomy finally turned into violence in 1999. A military coup deposed Mr Bedie. The country was ostracised, foreign aid plummeted, and then came civil war and virtual partition. Thus did Ivory Coast come full circle, the object once again of an intervention by France--this time armed with a UN mandate.

If the weekend rioters had a unifying motive, it was anger at what they see as a renewed attempt by France, and the west in general, to manipulate Ivory Coast as in the past. The old cry, that France covets natural resources (including significant offshore oil and gas) was once again heard on the streets of Abidjan.

France says it only wants to see talks resume between

Our Not-So-Free Press

Praging China! Help! Urge the U.S. government to respect freedom of the press!

It does sound topsy-turvy, doesn't it? Generally, it's China and Zimbabwe that are throwing journalists in prison, while the U.S. denounces the repression over there.

But now similar abuses are about to unfold within the United States, part of an alarming new pattern of assault on American freedom of the press. In the last few months, three different U.S. federal judges, each appointed by President Ronald Reagan, have found a total of eight journalists in contempt of court for refusing to reveal confidential sources, and the first of them may go to prison before the year is out. Some of the rest may be in prison by spring.

The first reporter likely to go to jail is Jim Taricani, a television reporter for the NBC station in Providence, R.I. Mr. Taricani obtained and broadcast, completely legally, a videotape of a city official as he accepted an envelope full of cash.

U.S. District Judge Ernest Torres found Mr. Taricani in contempt for refusing to identify the person he got the videotape from, and the judge fined him \$1,000 a day. That hasn't broken Mr. Taricani, so Judge Torres has set a hearing for Nov. 18 to decide whether to squeeze him further by throwing him in jail.

Then there's Patrick Fitzgerald, the overzealous special prosecutor who is the Inspector Javert of our age. Mr. Fitzgerald hasn't made any progress in punishing the White House officials believed to have leaked the identity of the C.I.A. officer Valerie Plame to Robert Novak. But Mr. Fitzgerald seems determined to imprison two reporters who committed no crime, Judith Miller of The New York Times and Matthew Cooper of Time, because they won't blab about confidential sources.

Federal District Judge Thomas Hogan is threatening to send them to prison; a hearing is set for Dec. 8. As for Mr. Novak, he is in no apparent jeopardy, for reasons that remain unclear.

Then there's a third case, a civil suit between the nuclear scientist Wen Ho Lee and the government. Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson held five reporters who are not even parties to the suit in contempt for refusing to reveal confidential sources.

In yet another case, the Justice Department is backing a prosecutor's effort to get a record of telephone calls made by two New York Times reporters--uncovering all their confidential sources in the fall of 2001. Put all this together, and we're seeing a broad assault on freedom of the press that would appall us if it were happening in Kazakhstan.

Responsibility lies primarily with the judges rather than with the Bush administration, except for the demand for phone records and for the appointment of Inspector Javert as special prosecutor. But it's probably not a coincidence that we're seeing an offensive against press freedoms during an administration that has a Brezhnevian fondness for secrecy.

Journalists are in this mess partly because we're widely seen as arrogant and biased, and we need to wrestle seriously with those issues. But when reporters face jail for doing their jobs, the ultimate victim is the free flow of information, the circulatory system of any democracy.

Nicholas D. Kristof
NYTIMES.COM

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