

## Arab Spring a misnomer

To the editor:

The articles in the March 2013 issue of *F&D* on the future of the Middle East are thoughtful and exhaustive. But whatever is meant by the “Arab Spring,” a season for flowering and growth or a time for leaping up or forward, reality belies the title—a monumental misnomer confusing popular upheaval, spontaneous and unorganized, with the need for drastic root-and-branch societal change. The articles’ ideas for economic, political, and other reforms are destined to lead nowhere not for lack of trying but for landing on barren, toxic, and unreceptive ground. Living for centuries under a perverted time warp, the countries and people of the region need *first and foremost* a rebirth not unlike the European Renaissance of centuries ago, which, in the words of a recent commentary in *The Economist*, “broke through the carapace of medieval

thought to rediscover ancient learning . . . . The movement placed man, rather than God, at the centre of the universe.” To change the human condition in the region, politicians and opinion leaders should sort out the relationship of their people *not only to nature but to heaven as well.*

**Mehdi AlBazzaz**  
formerly of the World Bank

## Battling on Bretton Woods

To the editor:

Since Eric Rauchway’s review of my book *The Battle of Bretton Woods* in your March issue I have been obliged to console

myself with accolades from the *New York Times* (“should become the gold standard on its topic”), the *Financial Times* (“a triumph of economic and diplomatic history”), and the *Wall Street Journal* (“a superb history”). I confine myself here to the two substantive charges in his article.

First, he writes of my account of Harry Dexter White’s role in the crafting of the U.S. ultimatum to Japan in 1941 that “The 2002 history [the Schecters’ book] Steil uses to support the case relies, itself, on documentation that historians John Earl Haynes and Harvey Klehr have determined to be fake.” Only Rauchway’s charge is fake. Haynes and Klehr themselves published the following response in the *Times Literary Supplement* (TLS) on April 26: “our account does not, as Rauchway suggests, undermine Steil’s story of White’s treachery or imply that he was bamboozled by fake documents. In fact, Steil cites the Schecters only once in his whole book.”

Second, Rauchway, who is not an economist, thinks that I don’t understand the gold standard or the Bretton Woods system. Interested readers can find my full response, with graphical representations of historical economic relationships that Rauchway denies, on the Web: <http://on.cfr.org/steilresponse>. I note here only that Rauchway’s rhetorical device of founding arguments on nonexistent quotes leaves something to be desired. He quotes me, for example, not once but *twice*, as saying that the Bretton Woods system guaranteed an “economic apocalypse.” Compare this to what I actually wrote on p. 334: “Harry White’s creation, in Triffin’s rendering, was an economic apocalypse in the making.” To paraphrase Oscar Wilde, once looks like carelessness, twice looks like an agenda.

**Benn Steil**  
Council on Foreign Relations



## Like what you're reading?



Then like us on Facebook!

[www.facebook.com/financeanddevelopment](http://www.facebook.com/financeanddevelopment)