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Article 1.

NYT

Building Boom in Gaza's Ruins Belies Misery That Remains

Ethan Bronner

June 25, 2011 -- GAZA — Two luxury hotels are opening in Gaza this month. Thousands of new cars are plying the roads. A second shopping mall — with escalators imported from Israel — will open next month. Hundreds of homes and two dozen schools are about to go up. A Hamas-run farm where Jewish settlements once stood is producing enough fruit that Israeli imports are tapering off.

As pro-Palestinian activists prepare to set sail aboard a flotilla aimed at maintaining an international spotlight on Gaza and pressure on Israel, this isolated Palestinian coastal enclave is experiencing its first real period of economic growth since the siege they are protesting began in 2007.

“Things are better than a year ago,” said Jamal El-Khoudary, chairman of the board of the Islamic University, who has led Gaza’s Popular Committee Against the Siege. “The siege on goods is now 60 to 70 percent over.”

Ala al-Rafati, the economy minister for Hamas, the militant group that governs Gaza, said in an interview that nearly 1,000 factories are operating here, and he estimated unemployment at no more than 25 percent after a sharp drop in jobless levels in the first quarter of this year. “Yesterday alone, the Gaza municipality launched 12 projects for paving roads, digging wells and making gardens,” he said.

So is that the news from Gaza in mid-2011? Yes, but so is this: Thousands of homes that were destroyed in the Israeli antirocket invasion two and a half years ago have not been rebuilt. Hospitals

have canceled elective surgery for lack of supplies. Electricity remains maddeningly irregular. The much-publicized opening of the Egyptian border has fizzled, so people remain trapped here. The number of residents living on less than \$1.60 a day has tripled in four years. Three-quarters of the population rely on food aid.

Areas with as contested a history as this one can choose among anniversaries to commemorate. It has been four years since Hamas took over, prompting Israel and Egypt to impose a blockade on people and most goods. It is a year since a Turkish flotilla challenged the siege and Israeli commandos killed nine activists aboard the ships, leading to international outrage and an easing of conditions. And it is five years since an Israeli soldier, Staff Sgt. Gilad Shalit, was abducted and held in captivity without even visits from the Red Cross.

In assessing the condition of the 1.6 million people who live in Gaza, there are issues of where to draw the baseline and — often — what motivates the discussion. It has never been among the world's poorest places. There is near universal literacy and relatively low infant mortality, and health conditions remain better than across much of the developing world.

“We have 100 percent vaccination; no polio, measles, diphtheria or AIDS,” said Mahmoud Daher, a World Health Organization official here. “We’ve never had a cholera outbreak.”

The Israeli government and its defenders use such data to portray Gaza as doing just fine and Israeli policy as humane and appropriate: no flotillas need set sail.

Israel's critics say the fact that the conditions in Gaza do not rival the problems in sub-Saharan Africa only makes the political and human rights crisis here all the more tragic — and solvable. Israel, they note, still controls access to sea, air and most land routes, and its security policies have consciously strangled development opportunities for an

educated and potentially high-achieving population that is trapped with no horizon. Pressure needs to be maintained to end the siege entirely, they say, and talk of improvement is counterproductive. The recent changes stem from a combination of Israeli policy shifts and the chaos in Egypt. The new Egyptian border policy has made little difference, but Egypt's revolution and its reduced policing in the Sinai have had a profound effect.

For the past year, Israel has allowed most everything into Gaza but cement, steel and other construction material — other than for internationally supervised projects — because they are worried that such supplies can be used by Hamas for bunkers and bombs. A number of international projects are proceeding, but there is an urgent need for housing, street paving, schools, factories and public works projects, all under Hamas or the private sector, and Israel's policy bans access to the goods to move those forward.

So in recent months, tunnels under the southern border that were used to bring in consumer goods have become almost fully devoted to smuggling in building materials.

Sacks of cement and piles of gravel, Turkish in origin and bought legally in Egypt, are smuggled through the hundreds of tunnels in double shifts, day and night, totaling some 3,000 tons a day. Since the overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian security authorities no longer stop the smugglers. Streets are being paved and buildings constructed.

"Mubarak was crushing us before," said Mahmoud Mohammad, a subcontractor whose 10-man crew in Gaza City was unloading steel bars that were carried through the tunnels and were destined for a new restaurant. "Last year we were sitting at home. The contractor I work for has three major projects going."

Nearby, Amer Selmi was supervising the building of a three-story, \$2 million wedding hall. Most of his materials come from the tunnels.

Karim Gharbawi is an architect and building designer with 10 projects under way, all of them eight- and nine-story residential properties. He said there were some 130 engineering and design firms in Gaza. Two years ago, none were working. Today, he said, all of them are.

Another result of the regional changes is the many new cars here. Israel allows in 20 a week, but that does not meet the need. Hundreds of BMWs, pickup trucks and other vehicles have arrived in recent months from Libya, driven through Egypt and sold via the unmonitored tunnels. Dozens of white Kia Sportage models, ubiquitous on the street, are widely thought to have come from the same dealership in Benghazi, Libya, that was looted after the uprising there began.

Hamas's control of Gaza appears firmer than ever, and the looser tunnel patrols in Egypt mean greater access to weapons as well. But opinion surveys show that its more secular rival, Fatah, is more popular. That may explain why an attempt at political unity with Fatah is moving slowly: the Hamas leaders here are likely to lose their jobs. The hospital supply crisis is a direct result of tensions with Fatah in the West Bank, which has kept the supplies from being shipped here.

Efforts by fringe Islamist groups to challenge Hamas have had little effect. And it has been a year since the government unsuccessfully sought to impose tighter religious restrictions by banning women from smoking water pipes in public. On a recent afternoon in the new Carino's restaurant — with billiards, enormous flat-screen televisions, buttery-soft chairs — women without head coverings were smoking freely.

But such places and people represent a wafer-thin slice of Gazan society, and focusing on them distorts the broader and grimmer picture.

Samah Saleh is a 21-year-old medical student who lives in the Jabaliya refugee camp. Her father, an electrician, is adding a second story to their house now that material is available from the tunnels. Ms. Saleh will get her own room for the first time in her life, but she views her good fortune in context.

“For the vast majority in Gaza, things are not improving,” she said. “Most people in Gaza remain forgotten.”

Article 2.

Herald Tribune

Buying Into Palestinian Statehood

Yossi Alpher, Colette Avital, Shlomo Gazit, and Mark Heller

June 24, 2011— Instead of wasting time and energy trying to revive a moribund Israeli-Palestinian peace process, the United States and European Union should take another look at the Palestinian initiative to seek U.N. recognition in September. What is described in some quarters as a recipe for new strife and confrontation can actually be leveraged into a win-win situation for Israelis, Palestinians and the world.

The Palestinians under Mahmoud Abbas want the United Nations to grant them a sovereign state based on the 1967 boundaries with East Jerusalem as its capital. That's all. It is not asking the U.N. to solve the refugee /right-of-return issue or to determine who owns the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. It is opting to convert an intractable conflict between a state and a liberation movement into a state-to-state conflict with manageable parameters.

Why not offer the Palestinians what they want, but add elements that could render the resolution acceptable to a majority of Israelis?

Israel wants acceptance as a Jewish state with its recognized capital in Jerusalem. It needs assurances regarding the nature and priorities of future negotiations, with the truly intractable issues postponed to a later phase. It needs solid security arrangements, understandings regarding Hamas rule in Gaza, and a viable incentive from an Arab world that has long offered to reward it for moving forward with the Palestinians.

Here are the components of a possible “win-win” U.N. resolution regarding Palestinian statehood:

- Reaffirm support for the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of two states for two peoples and the right of the Jewish and Palestinian peoples to self-determination, without prejudice to the rights of all citizens and minority groups. Recall, in this context, U.N. General Assembly resolution 181 of 1947 that called for the establishment of a Jewish state and an Arab state.
- Acknowledge institutional and security reform, economic development and state-building efforts — especially in the West Bank, under the leadership of President Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, which have helped lay the foundations for Palestinian statehood — and endorse the position articulated by the World Bank and the United Nations that the Palestinian Authority is “well positioned for the establishment of a state at any point in the near future.”
- Accordingly, support the establishment of an independent and sovereign Palestinian state on the basis of the 1967 lines with its capital in East Jerusalem in parallel with Israel’s recognized capital in West Jerusalem, and with mutually agreed territorial swaps and modifications, subject to negotiation — a state that will live side by side with Israel in peace and security.
- Recognize that extending the authority of a Palestinian state to the Gaza Strip will depend on effective control there by a legitimate Palestinian government that exercises authority in the West Bank, is committed to the Quartet principles and the Arab Peace Initiative and respects the commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization.
- Call for both states to engage in good faith negotiations on the basis of this and previous relevant resolutions and agreements in order to resolve all outstanding issues between them, beginning with the issues of borders, settlements, water and security arrangements. Specifically, security arrangements — including multi-layered international, regional and bilateral guarantees — should confront

and neutralize threats and enable the phased withdrawal of Israeli forces from a demilitarized Palestinian state with an effective internal security force and without compromising Israeli security.

- Note the importance of the Arab Peace Initiative, endorsed by the Arab League in 2002, and call for regional states to assist in creating an atmosphere conducive to negotiation and agreement, including by intensifying efforts to advance coexistence and normalization of relations between Arab League members and Israel.

A creative and courageous approach to leveraging the Palestinian initiative will not end the conflict. But it could make it far more manageable.

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Article 3.

The Daily Star

What the Arab revolts leave unanswered

Rami G. Khouri

June 25, 2011 -- My pleasure at speaking this week in Ottawa at a gathering at the International Development Research Center of Canada was compounded by the very thoughtful questions and comments that members of the audience offered.

The audience raised new questions in my mind about what is likely or possibly may occur in the Arab region, as the current citizen revolt moves into its seventh month. The issues they raised revolved around the reality that there is no certain outcome to the developments in assorted Arab countries. While I and many other Arab citizens feel that the wave of democratic transformations will continue to wash across most of the region, sweeping away old and young autocrats and opening the door to new democracies, this is by no means certain.

Economic pressures, for one, could easily create such immense stresses on families that many Arabs who celebrated the Tunisian and Egyptian regime changes may welcome the return of strongmen who restrict citizens' powers but provide more jobs. I doubt this will happen, but we can never rule it out. The demands of children's stomachs crying out for food that many families cannot afford to buy are immensely powerful drivers of political behavior.

Another threat that some audience members raised was related to the potential break-up of some countries into smaller units that could be more easily controlled by regional or foreign powers. The first Arab revolt against the Ottomans around a century ago occurred simultaneously with the Sykes-Picot accord, by which France and Great Britain carved up the Arab east into smaller units that were put

under the rule of locally chosen leaders whom the Europeans knew they could trust. It is possible that the current transformations might result in security vacuums that local parties or foreign powers could exploit to fragment some Arab states into smaller units that would then be more reliant on foreign support or protection.

Sudan has already split into northern and southern states, while Yemen, Iraq and possibly a few others are similarly susceptible to subdivision into smaller statelets. This raises difficult issues about the inviolability of the current Arab borders that the retreating Europeans created last century. I thought the secession of South Sudan was a perfectly acceptable development, if it reflected the will of the people of the south, and was not imposed on them. The operative principle in such possible developments is whether change reflects the consent of the governed and represents the will of the majority, while protecting the rights of minorities. If Yemenis decide to split again into two or even three states, and this reflects the free will of the Yemeni people, they should be allowed to do so without external interference.

There is nothing sacred or permanent about the borders of any country, especially Arab countries that were mostly created by the handiwork of European colonial officers. Countries evolve and sometimes change shape as a routine historical process. If some Arabs decide they are uncomfortable with their existing state boundaries and they wish to break away and form a separate country, that should always be an option. After all, the world mostly rejoiced when the former Soviet Union and its empire collapsed and some of its constituent republics fragmented into smaller units, notably Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia.

We should be prepared to deal with the specter of existing Arab countries that reconfigure their frontiers and populations while they are reconfiguring their political governance systems.

Another point that was raised in several different forms related to how the current Arab revolt would affect relations with major Western countries, especially since many Western powers actively supported the Arab autocrats who are now being challenged and, in some cases, removed from office. Would newly liberated Arab citizenries seek revenge against Western powers?

My impression is that this will depend on the new policies that these Western powers adopt, rather than on what they did in the past. Most Arabs are critical of Western powers because they unquestioningly back Israel or support Arab autocrats. Should those policies be moderated and replaced by more even-handed postures toward the Middle East, newly liberated Arab citizens would probably be too busy building their new countries to allow themselves to be distracted by lingering resentments from the past.

What is the single most important development that could trigger regime change in some countries now facing domestic challenges and unrest, one person asked? Three reasons come to mind: economic collapse could do so; or key figures in the military and security agencies could stop protecting the regime; or strategically placed commercial, tribal, sectarian and business leaders in society could decide that the current course was disastrous and, in consequence, could bring about the fall of the regime.

Article 4.

Guardian

Why Israel is wrong about Iran

Meir Javedanfar

25 June 2011 -- Israel's former intelligence chief, Meir Dagan, has been subjected to a firestorm of criticism – from the Israeli government as well as sections of the media – since he stated that attacking Iran's nuclear installations would be "a stupid idea". So strong has been the reaction that the prime minister's office even asked him to return his diplomatic passport. What seems to be bothering some Israelis, including Ari Shavit, the respected Haaretz journalist, is that Dagan has now "made the Iranians think they can continue galloping to the bomb because they are not in any real danger". This claim, though, is a clear example of where some in Israel are getting it wrong with regard to Iran and what the Iranian leadership perceives as serious threats. Israel has to realise that the Tehran regime is more petrified by what is happening to its economy and among its own population than by the possibility of a military attack from Israel. When it comes to using violence, this regime has had 32 years of experience. It can cope. However, the regime is so frightened of its own population that it breaks up silent demonstrations. It panicked when the shooting of Neda Agha Soltan was filmed and broadcast to the world. It even went as far as to temporarily ban books by Paulo Coelho – simply because his editor in Iran, Arash Hejazi, was seen trying to save Neda's life. Dagan could be wrong in his assessment but, even if he is right, it does not mean that cessation of a military threat from Israel would induce the Iranian government to "gallop ahead" towards the bomb without any concern. The biggest reason why Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, has agreed to talks during the last few years is not the

fear of a military attack by Israel. The biggest reason is that he is worried about his country's economy, which is far more crucial to the regime's survival than the nuclear programme. The Islamic regime in Iran has not and will not live on its nuclear programme. It lives on its economy. Khamenei is worried that if he doesn't negotiate, the west will find it easier to justify isolating his country. This, in turn, will make it easier to gain international approval for tough economic sanctions. With so much legitimacy lost domestically after Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's controversial election in 2009, Khamenei has even more reason to worry about the impact that sanctions could have on the survival of his regime. This is the main reason why he is negotiating and will continue to do so. This is also why he will be careful, as he was before Dagan's statement, in the way he approaches his nuclear programme. One also has to ask: which is the bigger reason why the international community is becoming more united against Iran's nuclear programme? Its distaste and concern for Khamenei's desire to have access to a bomb (which is becoming more apparent from clause 35 of the most recent IAEA report), or threats by Israel to attack Iran's nuclear installations? After recent revelations, such as the secret enrichment site near Qom, the former is more true. To deal with such a regime and to confront its controversial nuclear programme, instead of constantly relying on military threats, Israel's leaders would be better advised to study Coelho's masterpiece, *The Alchemist*, and page 121 in particular: "When you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it."

Israel is no longer alone in its belief that Iran wants to build a bomb. Judging by the support for sanctions, the UN and especially its security council members are more on the side of Israel than Iran. This includes countries such as South Korea that have adopted unilateral sanctions against Iran. In its bid to stop Iran's nuclear

programme Israel should help itself and the international community. The most potent way would be by improving relations with the Islamic world, especially the PLO and Turkey. Israel had good relations with them before. It can do so again.

Fortunately for Israel, and unfortunately for Khamenei, Israel even has the option to hurt the regime on its very own streets.

That option is the cessation of verbal military threats against Iran. Cessation of military threats from Israel will make it much harder for the regime to divert the public's attention away from its falling popularity and serious domestic problems. Silence from Israel will make Iran's leaders more worried, as it will rob Khamenei from an important tool which has helped him, and at a crucial time when the regime is hemorrhaging legitimacy and popularity at an unprecedented rate. The damage such an endeavour will cause is worth the inconvenience of Israeli politicians having to bite their tongues. Cessation of verbal threats will also prevent significant future damage being caused to Israel's deterrence posture if, at the end of the day, it decides to not to attack Iran's nuclear installations. Coelho once said:

"Be careful. You can hurt with your words, but you can also hurt with your silence."

The words of a wise man.

Meir Javedanfar is an Iranian-Israeli Middle East analyst and co-author of The Nuclear Sphinx of Tehran: Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the State of Iran.

Article 5.

The Financial Time

Global oil supplies are healthier than they seem

Ian Bremmer

June 24, 2011 -- Many of the world's oil consuming nations, led by the US, shocked oil markets this week as the International Energy Agency agreed to release 60m barrels of oil from strategic reserves over the coming month. The move was intended to offset price pressures brought about by Libya's supply cut and comes in response to Opec's recent inability to formally endorse new supply increases. The IEA action is also an example of growing concern over higher oil prices in Washington, where the White House is managing political fallout from high gasoline prices as next year's presidential elections loom just over the horizon. Yet, a year from now, we're likely to look back on this moment and find that fears for supply have diminished. There are three reasons. First, the most substantial fallout from the Arab world's recent upheaval is behind us. Syria's Bashar al-Assad continues to fight for survival and Yemen continues to flirt with failed-state status, but the Gulf's major oil-producing states are quite stable. So are other major producers. Even in Iran, with its leaders infighting, the green revolution has moved off the streets for now. While there are plenty of long-term structural challenges for many major economies – just ask China – for the moment there are no more Libyas left to explode. IEA action and the ongoing Saudi supply increases will neutralise what remains of the oil price's political risk premium. Second, big additional supply is coming, and it's not all priced in. Offshore Brazil and Canadian oil sands are no longer new stories, but their collective impact has not

yet been fully felt and is often undervalued. Iraq still draws undue scepticism but production there is showing serious promise. The country could add up to 300,000 barrels this year, with more contracts, more exploration and more drilling already in the works. Barring an unlikely and total implosion of the government, it is hard to see production slowing down this decade. The same is true for “tight oil” coming from unconventional sources. We are seeing this begin to play out in North American fields such as the Bakken in North Dakota. As technology and investment are dispersed over the coming year, oil supply should positively surprise. Third, Saudi supply increases are not dependant on Opec. The country’s oil minister Ali Naimi left the cartel’s Vienna meeting earlier this month with complaints that the organisation had just endured one of its most contentious and least productive gatherings in many years. But that is only because the major oil players were not prepared to pretend that there was agreement on output quotas. With Iran chairing the meeting, an annoyed Venezuela in attendance and an embattled Libya looking on, it was much harder to get the group to put aside their differences and smile for the cameras. The Saudis have the most influence on price-moving output decisions and they increased production just as they had planned before the meeting proved so difficult. Economically stressed oil producers such as Iran and Venezuela always want higher oil prices. But the Saudis and other Gulf Co-operation Council producers maintain a longer-term moderating outlook and they are the ones with the spare capacity to make the difference. Add that to your favourite economist’s projection on the softness of the global economy, and we may soon be asking whether or not this latest IEA move was worth it.

The writer is the president of Eurasia Group, a political risk consultancy, and author of ‘The End of the Free Market’.

Article 6.

Newsweek

Robert Gates: America is losing its grip

John Barry and Tara McKelvey

27 June -- Aboard the Pentagon jet on his last foreign trip as secretary of defense, Robert Gates takes a moment to peer across the American horizon--and the view is dire: the U.S. is in danger of losing its supremacy on the global stage, he says.

"I've spent my entire adult life with the United States as a superpower, and one that had no compunction about spending what it took to sustain that position," he tells NEWSWEEK, seated in the strategic communications center of the Boeing E-4B. "It didn't have to look over its shoulder because our economy was so strong. This is a different time." A pause. "To tell you the truth, that's one of the many reasons it's time for me to retire, because frankly I can't imagine being part of a nation, part of a government ... that's being forced to dramatically scale back our engagement with the rest of the world." Such a statement--rather astonishing for the leader of the world's preeminent fighting force--may open the administration to charges of not believing in American exceptionalism, an opening the GOP is already trying to exploit. But these days Gates is less worried about political crossfire and more focused on the legacy of his own tenure, which bridged the presidencies of George W. Bush and Barack Obama. He is determined to define his own legacy as Pentagon boss, and eager to push back against one of the more vocal criticisms of his tenure: the belief among many liberals and some conservative budget hawks that in a time of deep indebtedness, he hasn't been willing to chop enough of a defense budget bloated by a decade of war. Don't expect him to apologize. In Gates's mind, it's other political leaders with less experience who are confused.

"Congress is all over the place," Gates says at one point. "And the Republicans are a perfect example. I mean, you've got the budget hawks and then you've got the defense hawks within the same party. And so I think there is no consensus on a role in the world."

In some ways, the first part of his tenure was easier. During the Bush years, money was never an issue. By contrast, Obama faced a harsh economic reality, and Gates tried to get in front of the issue by shrinking the Pentagon budget. But his cuts satisfied neither hawks nor doves nor the White House. This spring, when Obama announced a \$400 billion reduction in defense spending, Gates got just 24 hours' notice. Gates, who'll be succeeded by CIA chief Leon Panetta, wins bipartisan accolades for restoring morale at the Pentagon and, more important, repairing relations with Congress, which had grown distrustful of the Defense Department under Rumsfeld.

Bridging two administrations, Gates gets credit for stabilizing Iraq, though the key decisions that led to success--a surge of troops and the appointment of Gen. David Petraeus to oversee the strategy--predated his arrival. Petraeus says Gates knew that his real contribution was to buy time in Washington for the strategy to succeed. " 'Your battle space is Iraq. My battle space is Washington,' " Petraeus recalls Gates telling him. Gates concedes he was sometimes on the wrong side of an issue. For instance, he was gun-shy about using ground troops to kill Osama bin Laden, arguing that Obama should opt for an airstrike instead. Gates hesitated because he feared a repeat of the bungled 1980 attempt to free American hostages in Iran that killed eight U.S. servicemen. "I was very explicit with the president in one of the discussions," Gates acknowledges. "I said: 'Mr. President, I want truth in lending. Because of experience, I may be too cautious, you know.'?" Obama overruled Gates, siding with those who wanted to deploy the elite Navy SEALs, securing the biggest victory in the 10-year war on terror. Rather than a transformational figure, a more

accurate description for Gates may be "steady hand on the wheel," says the Foreign Policy Research Institute's Michael Noonan.

"I don't think [Gates's] accomplishments merit the sky-high reputation that he enjoys as he leaves office," former senior CIA analyst Paul Pillar says. "Gates has long had a knack for nurturing his own reputation."

Pillar recalls that Gates during his CIA days was "always saying, 'I'm going to whip this organization into shape.' Anything good that happens, it's because 'I'm head of the organization.' Anything bad can be attributed to 'institutional resistance.'"

When Gates took over the Pentagon in December 2006, he quickly demonstrated the diplomatic and political acumen he had acquired as he worked his way up through the intelligence community as the first career officer to become CIA director.

Take, for instance, his decision to court Hillary Clinton when she took over as secretary of state in 2009. One of the few senior Bush holdovers in the new Obama administration, Gates was keenly aware of the tensions between the State and Defense departments built up during the war in Iraq. He invited Clinton to his Pentagon office, and the two ate lunch at a table that belonged to Confederate President Jefferson Davis back when he was U.S. secretary of war.

"I just told her, based on my experience, that how well the administration worked would depend a lot on how well she and I got along together," Gates recalls. "If we got along, the message would go to the entire bureaucracy--not just our own bureaucracies but the rest of government as well. She totally understood."

Gates made a calculated--and more public--courtship of her entire agency. "I read in the press, and therefore it must be true, that no secretary of defense had ever been quoted as arguing for a bigger budget for State," Gates boasts now. The strategy worked. Clinton and Gates try to get together privately once a week to work out

differences between their departments, and working with a younger generation, the two have bonded.

"Hillary and I call ourselves the Old Folks Caucus," Gates quips.

"And I must say, it's the first time in my life I've worked for a president who was 20 years younger than I was."

Gates's tenure had difficult moments, too. Three years ago, he rejected requests from Gen. David McKiernan, his then top commander in Afghanistan, for more troops, believing there weren't enough resources. Gates stayed the course until 2009, when he argued for the troop surge that now appears to have stalled the insurgency.

Gates acknowledges a historical similarity to the Vietnam War.

"There is one parallel that I think is appropriate, and that is we came to the right strategy and the right resources very late in the game,"

Gates says. "President Obama, I think, got the right strategy and the right resources for Afghanistan--but eight years in."

In Afghanistan, Gates leaves behind a difficult, unfinished piece of business: to convince Congress and war-weary Americans that any major U.S. withdrawal should be delayed by a year--a deferment sought by military commanders on the ground. Likewise, Gates won't be around for what may be the most delicate aspect of the exit strategy--trying to broker reconciliation between the Taliban and the Afghan ruling parties aligned with the U.S.

"I'm not saying it'll all be settled," says Gates. "I'm just saying you could begin a serious dialogue by the end of the year." But, he concedes, "asking for another year is hard."

Article 7.

The National Interest

The Good Autocrat

Robert D. Kaplan

June 21, 2011 -- IN HIS extended essay, *On Liberty*, published in 1859, the English philosopher John Stuart Mill famously declares, “That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others.” Mill’s irreducible refutation of tyranny leads him to—I have always felt—one of the most moving passages in literature, in which he extols the moral virtues of Marcus Aurelius, only to register the Roman’s supreme flaw. Mill writes:

If ever any one, possessed of power, had grounds for thinking himself the best and most enlightened among his contemporaries, it was the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Absolute monarch of the whole civilized world, he preserved through life not only the most unblemished justice, but what was less to be expected from his Stoical breeding, the tenderest heart. The few failings which are attributed to him, were all on the side of indulgence: while his writings, the highest ethical product of the ancient mind, differ scarcely perceptibly, if they differ at all, from the most characteristic teachings of Christ. And yet, as Mill laments, this “unfettered intellect,” this exemplar of humanism by second-century-AD standards, persecuted Christians. As deplorable a state as society was in at the time (wars, internal revolts, cruelty in all its manifestations), Marcus Aurelius assumed that what held it together and kept it from getting worse was the acceptance of the existing divinities, which the adherents of Christianity threatened to dissolve. He simply could not foresee a world knit together by new and better ties. “No Christian,” Mill writes, “more firmly believes

that Atheism is false, and tends to the dissolution of society, than Marcus Aurelius believed the same things of Christianity.”

If even such a ruler as Marcus Aurelius could be so monumentally wrong, then no dictator, it would seem, no matter how benevolent, could ever ultimately be trusted in his judgment. It follows, therefore, that the persecution of an idea or ideals for the sake of the existing order can rarely be justified, since the existing order is itself suspect. And, pace Mill, if we can never know for certain if authority is in the right, even as anarchy must be averted, the only recourse for society is to be able to choose and regularly replace its forever-imperfect leaders. But there is a catch. As Mill admits earlier in his essay, *Liberty*, as a principle, has no application to any state of things anterior to the time when mankind have become capable of being improved by free and equal discussion. Until then, there is nothing . . . but implicit obedience to an Akbar or a Charlemagne, if they are so fortunate as to find one. Indeed, Mill knows that authority has first to be created before we can go about limiting it. For without authority, however dictatorial, there is a fearful void, as we all know too well from Iraq in 2006 and 2007. In fact, no greater proponent of individual liberty than Isaiah Berlin himself observes in his introduction to *Four Essays on Liberty* that, “Men who live in conditions where there is not sufficient food, warmth, shelter, and the minimum degree of security can scarcely be expected to concern themselves with freedom of contract or of the press.” In “Two Concepts of Liberty,” Berlin allows that “First things come first: there are situations . . . in which boots are superior to the works of Shakespeare, individual freedom is not everyone’s primary need.” Further complicating matters, Berlin notes that “there is no necessary connection between individual liberty and democratic rule.” There might be a despot “who leaves his subjects a wide area of liberty” but cares “little for order, or virtue, or knowledge.” Clearly, just as there

are good and bad popularly elected leaders, there are good and bad autocrats. THE SIGNAL fact of the Arab world at the beginning of this year of democratic revolution was that, for the most part, it encompassed few of these subtleties and apparent contradictions. Middle Eastern societies had long since moved beyond basic needs of food and security to the point where individual freedom could easily be contemplated. After all, over the past half century, Arabs from the Maghreb to the Persian Gulf experienced epochal social, economic, technological and demographic transformation: it was only the politics that lagged behind. And while good autocrats there were, the reigning model was sterile and decadent national-security regimes, deeply corrupt and with sultanic tendencies. These leaders sought to perpetuate their rule through offspring: sons who had not risen through the military or other bureaucracies, and thus had no legitimacy. Marcus Aurelius was one thing; Tunisia's Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, Egypt's Hosni Mubarak and Syria's Bashar al-Assad, quite another. Certainly, the Arab Spring has proved much: that there is no otherness to Arab civilization, that Arabs yearn for universal values just as members of other societies do. But as to difficult questions regarding the evolution of political order and democracy, it has in actuality proved very little. To wit, no good autocrats were overthrown. The regimes that have fallen so far had few saving graces in any larger moral or philosophical sense, and the wonder is how they lasted as long as they did, even as their tumultuous demise was sudden and unexpected. Yet, the issues about which Mill and Berlin cared so passionately must still be addressed. For in some places in the Arab world, and particularly in Asia, there have been autocrats who can, in fact, be spoken of in the same breath as Marcus Aurelius. So at what point is it right or practical to oust these rulers? It is quite possible to force through political change, which leads, contrary to aims, into a more deeply

oppressive, militarized or, perhaps worse, anarchic environment. Indeed, as Berlin intimates, what follows dictatorial rule will not inevitably further the cause of individual liberty and well-being. Absent relentless, large-scale human-rights violations, soft landings for nondemocratic regimes are always preferable to hard ones, even if the process takes some time. A moral argument can be made that monsters like Muammar el-Qaddafi in Libya and Kim Jong-il in North Korea should be overthrown any way they can, as fast as we can, regardless of the risk of short-term chaos. But that reasoning quickly loses its appeal when one is dealing with dictators who are less noxious. And even when they are not less noxious, as in the case of Iraq's Saddam Hussein, the moral argument for their removal is still fraught with difficulty since the worse the autocrat, the worse the chaos left in his wake. That is because a bad dictator eviscerates intermediary institutions between the regime at the top and the extended family or tribe at the bottom—professional associations, community organizations, political groups and so on—the very stuff of civil society. The good dictator, by fostering economic growth, among other things, makes society more complex, leading to more civic groupings and to political divisions based on economic interest that are by definition more benign than tribal, ethnic or sectarian divides. A good dictator can be defined as one who makes his own removal less rife with risk. While the logical conclusion of Mill's essay is to deny the moral right of dictatorship, his admission of the need for obedience to an Akbar or a Charlemagne at primitive levels of social development leaves one facing the larger question: Is transition from autocracy to democracy always virtuous? For there is a vast difference between the rule of even a wise and enlightened individual like the late-sixteenth-century Mogul Akbar the Great and a society so free that coercion of the individual by the state only ever occurs to prevent the harm of others. It is such a great disparity that

Mill's proposition that persecution to preserve the existing order can never be justified remains theoretical and may never be achieved; even democratic governments must coerce their citizens for a variety of reasons. Nevertheless, the ruler who moves society to a more advanced stage of development is not only good but also perhaps the most necessary of historical actors—to the extent that history is determined by freewilled individuals as well as by larger geographical and economic forces. And the good autocrat, I submit, is not a contradiction in terms; rather, he stands at the center of the political questions that continuously morphing political societies face.

GOOD AUTOCRATS there are. For example, in the Middle East, monarchy has found a way over the decades and centuries to engender a political legitimacy of its own, allowing leaders like King Mohammed VI in Morocco, King Abdullah in Jordan and Sultan Qaboos bin Said in Oman to grant their subjects a wide berth of individual liberties without fear of being overthrown. Not only is relative freedom allowed, but extremist politics and ideologies are unnecessary in these countries. It is only in modernizing dictatorships like Syria and Libya—which in historical and geographical terms are artificial constructions and whose rulers are inherently illegitimate—where brute force and radicalism are required to hold the state together. To be sure, Egypt's Mubarak and Tunisia's Ben Ali neither ran police states on the terrifying scale of Libya's Qaddafi and Syria's Assad nor stifled economic progress with such alacrity. But while Mubarak and Ben Ali left their countries in conditions suitable for the emergence of stable democracy, there is little virtue that can be attached to their rule. The economic liberalizations of recent years were haphazard rather than well planned. Their countries' functioning institutions exist for reasons that go back centuries: Egypt and Tunisia have been states in

one form or another since antiquity. Moreover, the now-fallen dictators promoted a venal system of corruption built on personal access to their own ruling circles. And Mubarak, rather than move society forward by dispensing with a pseudomonarchical state, sought to move it backward by installing his son in power. Mubarak and Ben Ali were dull men, enabled by goons in the security services. The real story in the Middle East these past few months, beyond the toppling of these decrepit regimes, is the possible emergence of authentic constitutional monarchies in places like Morocco and Oman. Both of these countries, which lie at the two geographical extremities of the Arab world, have not been immune to demonstrations. But the protesters in both cases have explicitly called for reform and democracy within the royal system and have supported the leaders themselves. King Mohammed and Sultan Qaboos have moved vigorously to get out in front of popular demands by reforming their systems instead of merely firing their cabinets. Indeed, over the years, they have championed women's rights, the environment, the large-scale building of schools and other progressive causes. Qaboos, in particular, is sort of a Renaissance man who plays the lute and loves Western classical music, and who—at least until the celebrations in 2010 marking forty years of his rule—eschewed a personality cult. The characteristics, then, of the benign dictator are evident, at times hewing to propositions set forth by the likes of Berlin: freedom may come as much from stability as from democracy; leaders must adhere to the will of the people, they need not in all cases be chosen by them. Yet in the Middle East these dictators remain the exception to the rule, and this is why quasi monarchies of the iron-fisted Assad or the crazed and tyrannical Qaddafi are now under assault. THE PLACE where benevolent autocracy has struck deep and has systematic roots is Asia. Any discussion of whether and how democracy can be successfully implemented might, because of the

current headlines, begin with the Arab world, but the answers such as there are will, nevertheless, ultimately come in from the East. It is in those Asian lands that conventional Western philosophical precepts are challenged. The ideology by which Asian autocrats stand in opposition to the likes of Mill and Berlin falls—to some extent—under the rubric of Confucianism. Confucianism is more a sensibility than a political doctrine. It stresses traditional authority, particularly that of the family, as the *sine qua non* of political tranquility. The well-being of the community takes precedence over that of the individual. Morality is inseparable from one's social obligation to the kin group and the powers that be. The Western—and particularly the American—tendency is to be suspicious of power and central authority; whereas the Asian tendency is to worry about disorder. Thus, it is in Asia, much more so than in the Middle East, where autocracy can give the Western notion of freedom a good run for its money. The fact that even a chaotic democracy is better than the rule of a Mubarak or a Ben Ali proves nothing. But is a chaotic democracy better than the rule of autocrats who have overseen GDP growth rates of 10 percent annually over the past three decades? It is in places like China, Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam where good dictators have produced economic miracles. These in turn have led to the creation of wide-ranging personal freedoms, even as these leaders have compelled people against their will on a grand scale. Here the debate gets interesting.

Indeed, probably one of the most morally vexing realizations in the field of international politics is that Deng Xiaoping, by dramatically raising the living standard of hundreds of millions of Chinese in such a comparatively short space of time—which, likewise, led to an unforeseen explosion in personal freedoms across China—was, despite the atrocity of Tiananmen Square that he helped perpetrate, one of the great men of the twentieth century. Deng's successors,

though repressive of political rights, have adhered to his grand strategy of seeking natural resources anywhere in the world, wherever they can find them, caring not with which despots they do business, in order to continue to raise the economic status of their own people. These Chinese autocrats govern in a collegial fashion, number many an engineer and technocrat among them, and observe strict retirement ages: this is all a far cry from the king of Saudi Arabia and the deposed leader of Egypt, sleepy octogenarians both, whose skills for creating modern middle-class societies are for the most part nonexistent.

Park Chung Hee, in the 1960s and 1970s, literally built, institutionalized and industrialized the South Korean state. It was Park Chung Hee's benign authoritarianism, as much as the democracy that eventually followed him, that accounts for the political-economic powerhouse that is today's South Korea. Then, of course, there is the founder of current-day Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew. In 1959, Lee became prime minister of what was then a British colony. He retired from that post over thirty years later (though he continued to exert significant power until very recently). As the British prepared to withdraw in the 1960s, Lee attached Singapore to Malaya, helping to form Malaysia as a bulwark against Indonesian expansionism. When racial tensions between ethnic Malays in the Malay Peninsula and ethnic Chinese in Singapore made the new federation unworkable, Lee seceded and the independent city-state of Singapore was born. When Lee assumed power, Singapore was literally a third-world malarial hellhole beset by ethnic tensions and communist tendencies; it was barely a country in any psychological sense and it certainly could not defend itself against powerful neighbors. Lee turned it into a first-world technological dynamo and transportation hub, with one of the highest living standards worldwide, and with a military that is among the best

anywhere pound for pound. Along the way, a strong national consciousness was forged in the vein of a twenty-first-century trading state. Lee's method of government was not altogether democratic, and his intrusion into people's lives bordered on the petty and anal-retentive: banning spitting, the use of tobacco and chewing gum. The press, of course, was tightly controlled. Whenever criticized, Lee scoffed at how an uninhibited media in India, the Philippines and Thailand had not spared those countries from rampant corruption; multinationals love Singapore in large measure because of its meritocracy and honest government. Yes, Singapore is green with many parks, and so immaculate it borders on the antiseptic. But it is also a controlled society that challenges ideals of the Western philosophers.

For Lee has provided for the well-being of his citizens without really relying on democracy. His example holds out the possibility, heretical to an enlightened Western mind, that democracy may not be the last word in human political development. What he has engineered in Singapore is a hybrid regime: capitalistic it is, but it all occurred—particularly in the early decades—in a quasi-authoritarian setting. Elections are held, but the results are never in doubt. There may be consultations with various political groupings, yet, in fifty years, there is still little sign that the population is fundamentally unhappy with the ruling People's Action Party (though its majority has fallen somewhat). Unsurprisingly, Lee makes liberals supremely uncomfortable. Fundamentally Mill, Berlin and many other Western philosophical theorists and political scientists—from Thomas Paine and John Locke to Francis Fukuyama of late—hold that people will eventually wish to wrest themselves from the shackles of repressive rule. That the innate human desire for free will inevitably engenders discontent with the ruling class from below—something we have seen in abundance in the lands of the Arab Spring. Yet, Confucian-

based societies see not oppression in reasonably exercised authority but respect; they see lack of political power not as subjugation but as order. Of course, this is provided we are talking about a Deng or a Lee and not a Pol Pot.

To be sure, Asian autocracies are not summarily successful. Elsewhere, political Confucianism is messier. In Malaysia, Mahathir bin Mohamad lifted his people out of abject poverty and easygoing cronyism to mold another high-tech, first-world miracle; but he lacks virtue because of the tactics he employed as methods of control: vicious campaigns against human-rights activists and intimidation of political opponents, which included character assassination. The Vietnamese Communist leadership has lately overseen dynamic economic growth, with, again, the acceleration of personal freedoms, even as corruption and inequalities remain rampant. Think for a moment of Vietnam, a society that has gone from rationing books to enjoying one of the largest rice surpluses in the world in a quarter of a century. It recently graduated in statistical terms to a middle-income country with a per capita GDP of \$1,100. Instead of a single personality with his picture on billboards to hate, as has been the case in Egypt, Syria and other Arab countries, there is a faceless triumvirate of leaders—the party chairman, the state president and the prime minister—that has delivered an average of 9 percent growth in GDP annually over the past decade. Nevertheless, Vietnam's rulers remain fearful of public displays of dissatisfaction spread across the Internet. And there is China: continental in size, it produces vastly different local conditions with which a central authority must grapple. Such grappling puts pressure on a regime to grant more rights to its far-flung subjects; or, that being resisted, to become by degrees more authoritarian. So terrified is its regime of its own version of an Arab Spring that it has gone to absurd lengths to block social media and politically provocative areas of the Web.

HERE IS the dilemma. Yes, a social contract of sorts exists between these citizens and their regimes: in return for impressive economic-growth rates the people agree to forego their desire to replace their leaders. (Truly, East Asian autocracies have not robbed people of their dignity the way Middle Eastern ones have.) But even as such growth rates continue unabated—to say nothing of if they collapse or even slow down—at higher income levels, this social contract may peter out. For as people become middle class, they gain access to global culture and trends, which prompts a desire for political freedoms to go along with their personal ones. This is why authoritarian capitalism may be just a phase, rather than a viable alternative to Western democracy.

To be sure, once the basic issues of food and security have been addressed, *pace* Mill and Berlin, democracy retains a better possibility of getting it right than autocracy. This is because virtuous autocracies are hard to come by and usually rely on the genius of personality; whereas democracy, regardless of the personalities involved, is systemically better positioned to lead citizenries along the path of development. Of course, we will have to wait until China's economic growth slows down, or, failing that, continues until enough Chinese have more access to global culture. Only then can we really begin to draw conclusions about whether democracy represents the final triumph of reason in politics.

The genius of both Rome and America lies ultimately in their institutions, which allowed in the first place for their freedoms. True, the history of Rome—and particularly the death of the Roman Republic—is not in the least uplifting relative to the cause of political expression. But it was Rome's ability to provide a modicum of stability to parts of central Europe and the entire Mediterranean basin—and thus further the cause of personal freedoms (mind you, by the dismal standards of the era)—that is key to its achievement; and

something which, in turn, is owed to its imperial superstructure. And as that superstructure became too unwieldy, an emperor like the gruff soldier Diocletian could allow for the division of the empire itself into several administrative parts, thus furthering its life span.

America, for its part, is unique in its division of federal, state and local power over a vast continental landscape, allowing for the full expression of its boisterous democracy. Say what you will about the deficiencies of the United States and particularly those of Rome, but they both indicate a very difficult truth central to the outcome of the Arab Spring: it is not about the expressions of freedom in Tahrir Square so much as it is about the building of legitimate institutions to replace illegitimate ones. And because institutions are hierarchical—and social media like Twitter and Facebook dismantle existing hierarchies—revolutions enabled by new technology do not necessarily lead to the building of governing organizations. Criticism is not enough, someone must wield power; hopefully in a way less coercive than before.

Meanwhile, the Arab Spring has raised the pressure on autocrats the world over to truly be good—or at least better. Though, even if they are, they can never ultimately get it right, as demonstrated by Mill's example of Marcus Aurelius.

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