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Article 1.

NYT

Setting Sail on Gaza's Sea of Spin

Ethan Bronner

July 2, 2011 -- SOME see a parallel with the Exodus, the ship filled with Jewish refugees that tried to break the British blockade of Palestine in 1947 and helped sway world opinion toward Zionism. Others are struck by the insistence on transporting basic aid — food and cement — when it is no longer needed. Still others note the way the Israeli authorities portray the organizers as violent Islamists when most are middle-aged European pacifists.

Almost everything about the flotilla stuck in Greece and waiting to challenge Israel's blockade of Gaza seems to be a parable for something else, part of an unstated effort to recast the Israeli-Palestinian narrative in extreme terms. Instead of helping to clarify what Gaza needs and how it might build a future, the saga has merely brought out the public relations demons on all sides.

Ostensibly the 10 or so boats, with several hundred advocates from more than a dozen countries, are trying to take goods to Gaza because of a siege imposed by Israel and Egypt to pressure Hamas, the Islamist ruler there. A year ago a similar flotilla was stopped by the Israeli Navy, and after commandos boarded and scuffles ensued, nine activists were killed.

The international outrage that followed helped force an easing of the siege. One result, largely unacknowledged by the flotilla leaders: far more goods have gone into Gaza over the past year, and while the 1.6 million people there still need many things, basic supplies are not among them.

Israel is therefore quick to say that Gaza is well provided for and does not need any flotilla. If it still wants to bring in aid, it should take it

to either Israel or Egypt and it will be delivered by truck. Sea access must remain blocked to prevent weapons smuggling.

The Israeli position defies a brutal truth: last year's flotilla made a big difference for the people of Gaza — at a terrible cost in lives — by refocusing international attention on their plight and forcing a change in Israeli policy. Today, twice as many goods enter from Israel as before. Nonetheless, Gaza remains a deeply sad and deprived place. “The focus on humanitarian aid by both flotilla organizers and the Israeli government is infuriating and misleading,” Gisha, an Israeli human rights group focused on Gaza, said in a statement. “There is no shortage of food in Gaza, but economic recovery is blocked by sweeping restrictions.”

The Exodus analogy supports a certain political and public relations strategy. In July 1947, when Britain ruled Palestine and the number of Jews allowed in was severely limited, the ship, with 4,500 Jewish refugees from Europe, tried to get through. British forces boarded it, killed three people, wounded dozens and essentially destroyed the ship as it listed in Haifa harbor.

The British ultimately sent the passengers to Hamburg. The sight of thousands of Jewish refugees shipped to Germany soon after the Holocaust sparked international outrage and sympathy for the Zionist cause, a key goal of the trip. “The Exodus showed that if the British are callous enough to send Jews back to Germany, the only ones who should be in charge of the fate of the Jews are the Jews themselves,” observed M. M. Silver, an Israeli historian and the author of “Our Exodus.” “Palestinian forces are trying to make the same point through the flotilla, that Israel has no right to control the fate of Palestinians.”

Several months after the Exodus, the United Nations General Assembly voted for the establishment of two states in Palestine, Jewish and Arab, the key diplomatic moment in Israel's history. The

Palestinian leadership rejected that resolution, but this September plans to ask the United Nations for recognition of its statehood with the 1967 lines, a move strongly opposed by Israel.

Israel, for its part, has been campaigning against the flotilla and perhaps doing more — some of the boats have suffered sabotage. Israel says the Exodus is the wrong analogy; the flotilla is aimed at delegitimizing Israel and killing its soldiers.

“The flotilla is entirely designed to attack Israel’s image around the world,” said Yuli Edelstein, minister for public diplomacy. “We know that there are representatives of different terror groups on their way to join the flotilla.”

Israeli military officials have told newspapers that some flotilla participants plan to pour sacks of sulfur on Israeli commandos and set them afire. The flotilla organizers have denied it.

A government news release noted that Mr. Edelstein had participated in a simulation exercise for the flotilla in which Israeli forces were attacked. The description of the simulation indicates how the government expects the harsh information war to play out: “As the events were taking place, the media — with emphasis on the Internet, Facebook and Twitter — were flooded with mendacious reports (by private users, Hamas and others among Israel’s enemies).”

Mendacity has already reared its head. An Israeli actor put up a YouTube clip saying that he was a gay activist rejected by the flotilla because of his sexual orientation. The video was exposed as a fake. Israeli officials, who had promoted the clip on Twitter and Facebook, said they had been duped. But suspicions remained since the clip’s production quality was high and officials had long used the talking point that Hamas and other Islamist groups were intolerant of homosexuality.

The Turkish group I.H.H., which helps sponsor the flotillas, has ties to Hamas, and Israeli and Western concern that violence could occur

if the flotilla sets sail does not seem far-fetched, despite the organizers' vows to the contrary.

So the flotilla has virtually no support in Israel. Still, some are uncomfortable with the way the project has been criticized as an attack on Israel itself.

Shlomo Avineri, a historian and onetime director general of Israel's foreign ministry, wrote in the Haaretz newspaper last week that when the flotilla is described as aimed at delegitimizing Israel, he recalls the Soviet Union's reaction to any criticism as an assault on its right to exist. Opposition to Israeli policy is not the same as an attack on its existence, he said, and the government's approach damages Israel. His argument about the flotilla points to the larger dynamic: the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is increasingly disintegrating from a debate over borders and security into a battle between those claiming that Israel is a genocidal machine and those who dismiss every attack on its policy as an assault on its essence.

Ethan Bronner is the Jerusalem bureau chief of The New York Times.

Article 2.

The Daily Beast

5 Lessons of the DSK Affair

Bernard-Henri Lévy

July 2, 2011 -- The Strauss-Kahn affair is not over.

For it to be over, the American system of justice must pursue its investigation and work to the very end.

If it's truly to be over, Dominique Strauss-Kahn must be granted not only his freedom, but—even more importantly—restoration of his honor.

In other words, “the Strauss-Kahn affair” will continue to be regarded as such as long as it hasn't been clearly established that there never was any affair at all—and that the plaintiff, not content to have lied about this or that aspect of her past, also lied in accusing the former head of the IMF of having raped her.

And yet, given recent revelations, we can already draw a few lessons from what will ultimately—no doubt very soon—be known as the Strauss-Kahn non-affair.

1. The cannibalisation of Justice by the Sideshow.

This cannibalisation is not exclusively an American phenomenon, of course, and we have witnessed myriad examples of it in Europe and France. But it must be said that, with this affair, it has reached the heights of obscenity. The improvised press conference by the woman's lawyer on the steps of a courthouse normally dedicated to the sober discernment of the truth was obscene. The “shame on you's” that greeted Dominique Strauss-Kahn as he arrived for the hearing on June 6th, shouted by battalions of hotel chambermaids who knew nothing of the actual case and whose protest had been orchestrated and scripted, were obscene. And so, too, though in another manner, was the famous “perp walk” which, I'm aware, is the

lot of all those charged with a crime, but which, given the identity of the accused in question, could only degenerate into globally observed torture—high punishment for a crime, which no one, at that point, knew whether or not he had committed.

This vision of Dominique Strauss-Kahn humiliated in chains, dragged lower than the gutter—this degradation of a man whose silent dignity couldn't be touched, was not just cruel, it was pornographic. And it was at least as pornographic (because, I repeat, it's the same thing) as attorney Kenneth Thompson's visible glee in expounding on the state of his client's "vagina" [sic] before the entire world.

2. The Robespierism of this judicial sideshow.

What is Robespierism? It's a word taken from the French Revolution, of course, one that describes the way those behind the terror at the time took hold of a man of flesh and blood and dehumanized him by transforming him into an abstract symbol, and, as the literal incarnation of that symbol, tailored his person to fit the skin of all they had decided to purge from society of the Ancien Régime.

Well, we are compelled to observe that, regarding the Strauss-Kahn affair, America the pragmatic, that rebels against ideologies, this country of habeas corpus that de Tocqueville claimed possessed the most democratic system of justice in the world, has pushed this French Robespierism, unfortunately, to the extremes of its craziness. In this case, Dominique Strauss-Kahn was no longer Dominique Strauss-Kahn. He was no longer a singular man gifted with a singular word, one whose version of the facts should have been carefully heard in order to compare it with that of his accuser. No. He was the symbol of arrogant France. He was the emblem of the world of the privileged, odiously sure of their own impunity. He was the mirror of this world of white global bankers that constitutes Wall

Street—one that the other America, the Main Street of every city in the country, sees as the quintessential enemy. And, similarly, this woman was the allegory of all women who are not only battered and humiliated but also poor and immigrant—their words, silenced too long, finally expressed through hers.

The sad thing is, that's not what justice is. Justice doesn't oppose symbols, but human beings. Unless we succumb once more to what Condorcet—one among many of Robespierre's victims—called the “sympathetic zeal of the supposed friends of mankind,” and what I would call the “lynching, in sympathy with minorities, by their supposed friends.”

3. For in France, again, Robespierrism has always gotten on well with another -ism, apparently its opposite but in reality its twin, which is called Barrèsism. What is Barrèsism? It is a worldview that takes its name from the French nationalist writer, contemporary of the Dreyfus Affair, Maurice Barrès. And it is particularly and precisely in reference to Captain Alfred Dreyfus that he uttered the famous phrase, “That Dreyfus is guilty, I deduce not from the facts themselves, but from his race.” The Strauss-Kahn affair is obviously unrelated to the Dreyfus affair. I must state, to be clear, that I don't think it has much to do with this worldwide religion and delirium that is anti-Semitism. But what I do believe is that this is the appearance of a new variation on Maurice Barrès's phrase that has become, “That X—in this case Dominique Strauss-Kahn—is guilty, I deduce not from his race, but from his class.”

And what I believe is that this utterance, along with the transformation (compliments of the Terror) of the “individual” Strauss-Kahn into “the suspect” delivered to the media guillotine, has been enough to fuel the fatal mechanism and make it run full throttle. In a letter by Bill Keller, the executive editor of The New York Times, that I received May 20 and that I have no scruples about

making public since publication was its purpose (it appeared in his commentary in *The New York Times Magazine*), he said he was “struck” and “puzzled” by the fact that “57 percent of the French public” and, in particular, “70 percent of the Socialists” seemed to embrace the cause of Dominique Strauss-Kahn, whereas “one might expect” them “to be ideologically empathetic to an African hotel maid.”

I’m not saying that Keller was among those who found the powerful and white banker antipathetic. And I would say so even less since the *Times* ultimately provided the first elements of truth leading to the spectacular turnaround we are witnessing.

But I maintain that formulating the problem in these terms—bringing up political categories in a debate in which they are not relevant, in a word, introducing ideological considerations in an area with which they have nothing to do—is, in itself, very disturbing.

And I maintain—as I have said and repeated here and elsewhere—that the very fact of admitting that empathies of this sort can enter into the realm of justice amounts to inventing a class justice in reverse, no less problematic nor, ultimately, less criminal than the former.

It’s no longer, as it once was, “bastard poor, the rich are always right,” but rather, “rich bastards, it’s the poor and the injured who are always, and inevitably, right.”

4. Another temptation typical of our era is the sacralisation of the victim’s word.

Let me make it clear. If there is a lifelong combat I have led of which I am proud, it is that which consists of giving voice to the humble and to those who have no voice. It is a combat I have fought in Bosnia, in the confines of Asia, in the forgotten wars of Africa but also, and as much or nearly so, in our officially democratic world where it took

decades of struggle so that “equality of rights” wouldn’t be empty words, and so that rape, for example, would be recognized as a crime. But giving voice to the lowly is one thing. Considering this voice as Gospel is quite another—which can be the source of new and dreadful injustices. Yet this is exactly what has happened with his accuser’s charges.

And I am still asking myself how so many editorialists, so many great consciences and, by the way, so many feminists could take it as a given that the word of this woman—of whom we knew only what filtered through the incomplete language of justice—was necessarily infallible.

The truth is that we have passed from one extreme to the other. The era when the word of the System’s victims was, on principle, discredited has given way to one in which it is—also on principle—attributed all prestige.

Yet I repeat: To be a victim of society is one thing, and no one doubts that the alleged victim of the supposed rape is at least the victim of a social order that pays its hotel maids peanuts and treats them like livestock.

But to be the victim of aggression is another thing entirely and of an entirely different nature. It must be established methodically, scrupulously, and with discretion, by comparing evidence, viewpoints and witness accounts and by avoiding the interference of emotion, even when justified, that may motivate one and another. This is a question of principle.

5. Finally, as I immediately emphasized, there is already a victim in this case and that is the very principle, in the United States, of the presumption of innocence. Soon there will be another, I mean another victim, should it be verified that the accuser also lied about what actually happened in this now-legendary suite at the Sofitel, and that will be Dominique Strauss-Kahn himself. But from now on, there

is an established disaster, that being the destruction, in a country of which it was one of the pillars, of the sacrosanct principle that, even in an accusatory system, a man has the right to the respect of his honor and his integrity as long as his guilt has not been established. In the case of Dominique Strauss-Kahn, this principle was flouted by the tabloids (The New York Post, The Daily News, etc.) whose competitions in humiliation transformed him, from the first moment, into a monster. He was trampled on by that part of the "serious" press, which, like Time magazine, with its astounding cover illustrating the "lies" and "arrogances" of the "powerful" with a photo of a pig, committed what the worst of the tabloids did not dare to.

And he was crushed, then, by that fraction of the American judicial apparatus that, by putting Dominique Strauss-Kahn in stocks, by humiliating him before the entire world, by ruthlessly pursuing him, has probably ruined his life. That is what I wished to say when I wrote that, after George W. Bush's invention of the concept of "pre-emptive war," America, under Cyrus Vance, Jr., has perhaps begun to invent the idea, scarcely less horrifying, of "pre-emptive penalty." And please allow a friend of this country to repeat, here, what he has said in his own country, when media-judicial tornadoes of the same kind have swept the land: that all this calls, at the least, for serious, honest, and substantial soul-searching.

Bernard-Henri Lévy is one of France's most famed philosophers, a journalist, and a bestselling writer. He is considered a founder of the New Philosophy movement and is leading thinker on religious issues, genocide, and international affairs. His most recent book, Left in Dark Times: A Stand Against the New Barbarism, discusses political and cultural affairs as an ongoing battle against the inhumane.

Article 3.

Al-Ahram Weekly

New paradigm in Palestine

Mahmoud Musa and Awni Sarraf

30 June - 6 July 2011 -- All roads to a meaningful settlement of the Arab Israeli conflict are at a dead end. Nevertheless, should two states be established in historic Palestine, bloody conflict will persist. Putting aside disputes over natural resources, Israel will remain a Zionist supremacist state with a clear arsenal that can turn the entire Middle East into an inferno, and the enclaved improvised Palestinian Arab entity cannot exist without aid from the outside world. There will be democracy for the Jewish people of Israel, with second and perhaps third class citizenships for all others.

The Palestinians, as the last twenty years have shown, will be ruled under an autocratic corrupt police state. The plight of the Palestinian refugees living outside the new Palestine will continue and their right to return totally forgotten. The Jordanian regime may collapse to become the alternate home leading to civil wars between the indigenous Jordanians and the Palestinians. It is also reasonable to assume that, in order to preserve the Jewish identity of Israel, another Nakba will befall the Israeli Arabs who may be relocated to areas in the West Bank.

There can only be one solution -- one state where Palestinians and Israelis alike are equal citizens in a nation that belongs indeed to the Middle East. Three conditions must be met for the new state to take hold: dissolving the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah and the Hamas Government in Gaza, the rejection of Zionism by the Israelis, and the return of the Palestinian refugees. These can only be accomplished under the auspices of the United Nations (UN).

Whereas the defunct two state solution was proposed in 1947, when the UN General Assembly passed Resolution 181 calling for dividing historic Palestine into two entities and for granting Jerusalem an international status, the reversal of this resolution by the Assembly is imperative. Although not legally binding, this resolution did grant legitimacy to the creation of the State of Israel. Ironically, since that resolution, there was no serious discussion concerning the establishment of two states in Palestine until the 1991 Madrid Conference and the signing of the Oslo Accords (Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements) in Washington in 1993. Except for a few euphoric, but short-lived moments, not the slightest progress has been made towards granting the Palestinians statehood, and all attempts to establish two states have failed.

We propose that neutral member states should ask the UN General Assembly to rescind Resolution 181 and to request a new resolution for the establishment of one state in historic Palestine. Although this responsibility falls under the Security Council, the constant exercise by the US of its veto power to protect Israel against condemnations and sanctions has proven the council's ineffectiveness in dealing objectively with the Arab-Israeli conflict.

At the General Assembly, each state has an equal voting right, thus lending legitimacy to passed resolutions. In its deliberations, the Assembly should also address international law and human rights violations committed by Israel, the PA, and neighbouring states against the Palestinian people, and set a course for a new beginning in the Middle East through major shifts in the paradigms that have crippled the region for decades.

A resolution for establishing one democratic state in historic Palestine will include as citizens all those who live there and all Palestinians in the Diaspora, reaffirming Palestinian refugees right to return, and acknowledging the special place that Palestine is for

world Jewry. Such a resolution is supported by four facts: All attempts to establish two states have ended in failure; the Jewish and Palestinian populations are too intertwined to separate except forcibly which would constitute apartheid; the physical geography and natural resources such as water and natural gas in coastal waters make division a source of perpetual tension; it is imperative to eliminate the current legitimacy given to Israel's racist colonial system and to establish a just political culture for all.

The resolution's implementation would be the responsibility of the UN and Israel/Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt. To succeed, representatives of world powers may have to serve as even-handed observers.

The international focus on the Goldstone Report elaborating Israel's alleged crimes in Gaza, and on its assault on the humanitarian aid flotilla uncover only the tip of the iceberg of Israel's violations of international law. The UN is within its rights to sanction Israel for its defiance of international laws and norms. However, although Israel is the primary offender, Lebanon (denying Palestinians minimum civilian rights), Jordan (withdrawing citizenship without due process of the law), and the PA (an autocratic police- state), should all be held accountable for gross human rights violations against the Palestinians.

While a new course should be set based on reconciliation and forgiveness, Israeli and Arab individuals charged with such war crimes and human rights violations must be prosecuted. The General Assembly should, therefore, establish an International Criminal Tribunal as a "subsidiary organ" under Article 22 of the UN Charter for this very purpose.

The proposed shift in the paradigms regarding the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, once implemented will contribute to three UN goals: peace and security of the West Asian/North African region as the new state

relinquishes occupied Lebanese and Syrian territories and dismantles its nuclear arsenal; cultural, political, and economic development of the region; and equal rights of all people living on that land.

The new state will be diverse -- an amalgam of different nationalities and faiths, all with equal rights and opportunities. To the Abrahamic faiths, historic Palestine is the Holy Land. The majority of the Palestinians see themselves as Arabs; as such, the new state should have a special status in a more meaningful Arab League. The nationalistic feelings of the Jewish population that link them to fellow Jews worldwide must be recognised and upheld. The Jewish population will, however, have to reject Zionism, a racist and apartheid ideology based on 19th century European colonialist thinking which preyed on the Jewish national feelings long before the Palestinians became its victims.

The new state will bring fundamental changes in governance to the region. Democracy based on equal opportunities will begin to take hold with economic and military unions of the independent states of the region. An EU-like union of the new state, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon will enhance peace and reconciliation and will be a nucleus for a larger regional union.

There are numerous challenges ahead. They range from developing trust to rebuilding the infrastructure, the judicial, educational and social institutions; from disposing of the nuclear arsenal to dealing with the issues of confiscated lands, demolished homes and erased towns and villages. The first step, however, is to go to the UN General Assembly.

Professor Musa teaches global politics at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes Internationales in Paris, and Dr Sarrif is a researcher in Middle East studies.

Article 4.

Cato Institute

The Rest Won't Overcome the West

Leon Hadar

July 1, 2011 -- Much has been said and written in recent years about the growing challenge to US geo-strategic and geo-economic status by China, BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) and the other rising global powers, including South Africa, South Korea, and Turkey. Indeed, in the aftermath of the US military debacles in Iraq and Afghanistan, and especially since the financial meltdown and the ensuing Great Recession, small-time pundits as well as renowned futurologists have been predicting that the West is basically kaput and that the rest of the Twenty-First Century belongs to the 'Rest'. In this scenario, China replaces the US and the global hegemonic power sooner or later. As we study these America-is-finished-and-China-rules-the-world forecasts, it is important to recall that not so long ago many of the same pundits and futurologists were anticipating that globalisation and the Internet would lead to the collapse of the nation-state and the end of the business cycle, or that the US would dominate a unipolar international system and bring about the triumph of democracy and free markets worldwide.

That many of the same experts who were celebrating US triumphalism in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall and the First Gulf War have now been transformed into the prophets of American gloom and doom, should encourage us to embrace a certain sense of scepticism about the notion that China and the rest of the Rest are about to take charge and that Washington will turn out to be nothing more than a tourist attraction for Chinese and Indian tourists in the coming years.

Even if we set aside indicators such as gross national income per capita (US\$46,300 in the US; US\$3,650 in China) or military spending (US\$687.105 billion in the US; US\$114.300 billion in China) that make it clear that the combined economic (G-8 and other industrial nations) and military power of the West overwhelms that of the Rest, the reality is that the Rest - occasionally being referred to as the South - remains an amorphous amalgam of nation-states and economies that have very little in common aside from some hostility - which is receding - towards past European colonialism and American hegemonism.

That Russia is both a member of the exclusive western club of the G-8 and of the BRIC grouping is just one example of the complex global reality in which governments like Russia, or for that matter China, Turkey or Brazil, find US power to be appealing while at the same time also trying to keep it at bay. Hence, the states and economies which belong to the elusive Rest are seeking to penetrate the markets of the US and the West and attract their investors, while also hoping to reform global rules and institutions in a way that would reflect their growing power.

But as Mexico failed in its attempt to win support from the South for its candidate for leading the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the long-term interests of China or India may lead them to support the current status quo in the institution. In fact, the G-20 that has been touted as the new global grouping for projecting the rising power of the Rest, has yet to demonstrate its effectiveness in charting a new direction for the global economy.

Moreover, notwithstanding their occasional resort to anti-American rhetoric, China and Russia which are leading members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation are each probably more worried over the threat that the other poses to its security interests than the US challenge.

Turkey may be attempting to reassert its influence in the Middle East by defying US pressure. But it remains a loyal member of Nato and continues to press for membership in the EU. In fact, notwithstanding Turkey's regional ambitions, it has proved to be ineffective in trying to bring to an end the political upheaval and violence in neighbouring Syria. At the same time, despite its lessening influence in the Middle East, the US and its Nato and EU partners continue to play an active role in trying to provide support to its allies and bring some stability to the Middle East.

And while Asean members are strengthening their economic ties with the rising Chinese giant - as are Japan, South Korea, Australia and India - they also support continuing strong US military and economic presence in East Asia as part of an effort to counter-balance Chinese efforts to establish its dominant position in the region.

In a way, even as emerging markets are gaining more economic clout and the international system is becoming multipolar, it is not clear that that is creating the conditions for the West versus the Rest confrontation or that the US or the EU is being marginalised. In the new global economy and international system with its many centres of power, interlocking trade and investment ties, and shifting balances of power, a wise and effective leadership coming out of Washington could help actually turn the US once again into a central and indispensable power.

Leon T. Hadar is a research fellow in foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute, specializing in foreign policy, international trade, the Middle East, and South and East Asia.

Article 5.

The Japan Times

South China Sea: making sense of**nonsense**

Mark Valencia

June 29 — After a series of aggressive incidents involving Chinese patrol boats and subsequent soothing official statements, many analysts are trying to figure out what is really going on.

More specifically, why have different sections of China's government given mixed signals and chosen in nearly one fell swoop to embarrass their own leaders, undermine China's carefully nurtured and reasonably successful "charm offensive" toward the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and play right into the U.S. strategy of convincing ASEAN nations that they need its protection from a bullying China?

In China, has the political train left the station and are ASEAN nations thus just changing seats or cars on the train?

We are talking here not just about blatant violations of the solemnly agreed Declaration on Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) — all parties are guilty of that — but also of contradicting, by poorly timed actions, the words of leaders. When Chinese Defense Minister General Liang Guanglie was telling the Shangri-la Dialogue on June 3 in Singapore that "China is committed to maintaining peace and stability in the South China Sea" and that "China stood by" the DOC, news media were reporting that on May 26 a Vietnamese survey ship operating on its claimed continental shelf had its seismic cables cut by a Chinese patrol boat.

Shortly after that event China sent two vice chairmen of the Central Military Commission to Southeast Asia to try to reassure other

ASEAN claimants. But a second such incident occurred on June 9 — only two weeks later. Earlier, on March 4, the Philippines protested an incident on the Reed Bank in which two Chinese patrol boats allegedly threatened to ram a Philippine survey ship.

Then on the eve of Gen. Liang's visit to Manila, Chinese fighter jets allegedly harassed members of the Armed Forces of the Philippines near disputed islands in the South China Sea.

China responded to frenetic protests from Vietnam and the Philippines that any exploration in the Spratly area without its consent is a violation of its jurisdiction and sovereignty. This real time link between its stark and sweeping position and its enforcement has sent a chill down the spines of other ASEAN claimant and drawn U.S. attention. These disputes and even such incidents are certainly not new but why are they occurring now, and why is China sending very mixed signals?

This was supposed to be a period of negotiations to transform the DOC into an official enforceable code. Needless to say, this effort may now be moribund.

Despite China's rhetoric, ASEAN nations are genuinely alarmed and are looking to the United States for succor and support. The U.S. — having confronted China and injected itself into the issue via U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's speech at the ARF Foreign Minister's meeting in Hanoi in July 2010 — is only too happy to help — at least verbally and with signals that militaries understand.

The great irony is that none of this was necessary for China. Its problem with the U.S., or vice versa, concerns the intelligence-gathering activities of U.S. military vessels and aircraft — the EP-3, the Impeccable, the Victorious, the Bowditch in what it claims is its waters — not conflicting claims to islands or ocean space. These can only be linked in one worst scenario: that China has decided that it disagrees with portions of the U.N. Law of the Sea Treaty that it

ratified and with international law that Western powers developed and have imposed on China while it was weak and that it now is set on revamping the international system.

In other words China is indeed serious about its nine-dashed line claim to all features, waters and resources of the South China Sea and it alone will decide the passage regime to be imposed therein.

This is radical and could lead to war. Otherwise, China could claim most of what it wants by using existing international law and the Law of the Sea Treaty. It could claim the features and, for legal islands, a continental shelf and 200 nautical mile exclusive economic zone for each. Of course it would have to negotiate boundaries with the other claimants.

But that is the present situation anyway and China's legal position is very weak. The area claimed would be almost the same as that within the nine-dashed line and the argument would be legitimate — supported by the convention.

Regarding the navigational issues with the U.S., the U.S. has not ratified the convention and has little legitimacy in arguing it or its interpretation thereof. The U.S. would be widely seen as a "bully" if it tried to force its interpretation on the world.

The puzzle is that China has excellent experts on Law of the Sea who are aware of this opportunity and yet China seems to be eschewing this option.

Perhaps U.S. strategy and tactics have pushed a portion of China's military leadership "over the edge." Maybe they have concluded from what they perceive as the U.S. "containment" policy and the constant and active probing by high-tech spy vessels and planes that war is inevitable. In this scenario China feels it must defend its exposed underbelly and push its defense "zone" as far south and seaward as possible.

Of course, this is anathema to the U.S., particularly its navy. In this case, the DOC or even a convention will be of little utility. Let us hope that the real explanation is more benign. One possibility is confusion and lack of coordination between high policy officials in foreign affairs and the military, particularly the PLA Navy. But this could also mean that China's foreign policy is in flux or disarray on this issue and that the PLA Navy has emerged as a trendsetter and spokesperson thereon.

Remember that just as U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates arrived in January on his historic visit to China, its military tested a stealth fighter and the civilian leadership appeared to have been caught unawares.

If the military is on occasion acting independently of the civilian leadership, this could explain the seeming dichotomy between Chinese officials' words and PLA Navy actions. But this would indeed be worrying.

In any event the situation looks likely to get worse before it gets better. More surveys and exploratory drilling are planned in areas claimed by China. And Vietnam has conducted an offshore live-fire drill and has called for international — including U.S. — help to resolve the issues. Rare anti-China protests have broken out in Hanoi and Manila. At this point all one can say is hold on to your hat.

Mark Valencia, a former senior fellow with the East-West Center, is a maritime policy analyst.

Article 6.

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How the Brain Understands Food and Appetite [Excerpt]

David Linden

*Editor's Note: The following is an excerpt from a chapter in the book *Compass of Pleasure: How Our Brains Make Fatty Foods, Orgasm, Exercise, Marijuana, Generosity, Vodka, Learning, and Gambling Feel So Good* by David Linden. Copyright (c) 2001 by David Linden.*

July 2, 2011 -- In studies where the food intake and energy expenditure of subjects are carefully monitored over a period of weeks to months (which tends to average out day-to-day fluctuations) a remarkable balance between calories consumed and calories burned was observed. When various mammals, from mice to monkeys, are either overfed or starved for a few weeks, their weight soon returns to normal levels when free access to food is resumed. Crucially, our mammalian bodies seem to be able to regulate feeding based on the amount of energy available in the food we consume, not just on the volume of that food. One example of many: When groups of rats were fed nutrient solutions of varying concentrations, they adjusted the volume consumed to achieve a constant inflow of calories. It's a lot like the thermostat in your house: When its thermometer registers a drop in temperature, it sends a signal to the heater to warm the house until the desired set point is reached.

These observations suggest that the brain must receive signals from the body that indicate its weight and that the brain makes use of the signals to modulate appetite and energy expenditure in order to

maintain an individual's weight within a fairly narrow range. The signals are received in a structure at the base of the brain called the hypothalamus. The hypothalamus is involved in the control of many basic, subconscious drives and reflexes including sex, feeding, aggression, drinking, and regulation of body temperature. When rats received lesions in a particular subregion of the hypothalamus called the ventromedial area, they became obese. They behaved as if they were starving and compensated with an increase in food intake and a decrease in energy expenditure. Conversely, when a different part of the hypothalamus, called the lateral area, was destroyed, the rats behaved as if they had been overfed. They reduced food intake and increased energy use and thereby became dangerously lean. This is not just a rat trick: These experiments have been replicated in a wide variety of mammals, and humans who sustain damage to the ventromedial hypothalamus (usually from a tumor of the adjacent pituitary gland) will also increase their food intake and become obese.

This model raises one obvious question: How does your hypothalamus know how much you weigh? Let's step back and play God for a moment. If you wanted to build this system, how would you do it? By measuring blood glucose? Fat deposits? Core body temperature? Pressure on the soles of the feet?

This all remained a mystery until 1994, when Jeffrey Friedman and his colleagues at Rockefeller University reported their observations of two strains of mutant mouse, one called obese and the other called db. (These mutations were not created by scientists using genetic tricks but arose spontaneously in a breeding colony.) Both strains of mice were extremely fat, a trait that was passed on to their offspring in a simple, dominant pattern of inheritance, like eye color. This suggested that obesity in both obese and db mouse strains resulted from a mutation in a single gene in each case. Friedman's group was

able to track down the mutation in the obese mice and found that it blocked production of a particular protein hormone, which they named leptin. The leptin protein is only secreted by fat cells. When similar analysis was performed on the db mice, it was found that the disrupted db gene was responsible for encoding a protein that functions as a leptin receptor: When it binds circulating leptin at the cell surface, it sets in motion a biochemical cascade inside the cell. Most provocatively, the leptin receptor is expressed strongly on neurons in those areas of the hypothalamus that cause obesity or leanness when destroyed.

So with Friedman's key findings we now have a reasonable hypothesis for how the hypothalamus can sense body weight and use that information to maintain it within a narrow range. When weight is gained, the amount of body fat increases, and since fat cells secrete leptin in proportion to their mass, leptin levels will consequently rise. Leptin circulates in the blood and crosses into the brain, where it is sensed by leptin receptors expressed on neurons in the hypothalamus. Activation of those neurons by leptin suppresses appetite and increases energy expenditure. When weight is lost, the system works in the opposite direction: Less fat means reduced levels of circulating leptin, increased appetite, and reduced energy expenditure.

So far, the evidence that supports this hypothesis is quite promising. Leptin levels in the blood do indeed increase with weight gain and decrease with weight loss. Injections of leptin in obese mutant mice cause them to reduce food intake and lose weight (and these injections work even if tiny doses are delivered directly to the hypothalamus). Injections of leptin in db mutant mice have no effect, because there are no leptin receptors in the hypothalamus for the exogenous leptin to activate.

Of those people who are morbidly obese, less than 1 percent harbor DNA mutations that disrupt the function of the leptin gene—a low

rate of incidence that is not surprising, as leptin-deficient humans and mice are both infertile, so these mutations do not pass readily to subsequent generations.

David J. Linden is an American professor of neuroscience at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, and the author of The Accidental Mind: How Brain Evolution Has Given Us Love, Memory, Dreams, and God.