From: Office of Terje Rod-Larsen <[redacted]>
Subject: May 22 update
Sent: Thursday, May 22, 2014 11:30:15 AM

22 May, 2014

Article 1.	The Council on Foreign Relations **The Coming Struggle over Iran Nuclear Pact** An interview with George Perkovich
Article 2.	The New-Yorker **Javad Zarif on Iran's Nuclear Negotiations** Robin Wright
Article 3.	The National Interest **The Sino-Russian Hydrocarbon Axis Grows Up** Flynt Leverett Hillary Mann Leverett
Article 4.	The Washington Institute **Iraq's Election Results: Avoiding a Kurdish Split** Michael Knights
Article 5.	Foreign Affairs **The Failed Autocrat - Despite Erdogan's Ruthlessness, Turkey's Democracy Is Still on Track** Daron Acemoglu
Article 6.	NYT **Turkey's Dickensian Disaster** Mustafa Akyol

Article 1.

The Council on Foreign Relations

The Coming Struggle over Iran Nuclear Pact

An interview with George Perkovich

May 21, 2014 -- *Iran and the so-called P5+1 [the United States, UK, France, Russia, China, and Germany] are unlikely to reach an agreement on the former's controversial nuclear program by the stated goal of July 20, says George Perkovich, director of Carnegie's Nuclear Policy program, but he feels a partial accord is possible by the end of the year. The biggest challenge, he explains, is on the issue of uranium enrichment—Iran wants to more than double its nineteen thousand centrifuges while the P5+1 wants to limit this number to about four thousand. Perkovich says that opponents to nuclear diplomacy in both countries will likely try to leverage the missed deadline to derail the process.*

The latest round of nuclear negotiations between the P5+1 and Iran ended last Friday with no visible progress, and both sides were gloomy in their brief comments to the press. The talks are expected to resume next month. You've been watching them and getting briefings. Are you upbeat? Do you think they will meet their July 20 deadline for the talks' conclusion?

From the beginning, I haven't felt that the July 20 deadline was going to be met. So the seeming lack of progress last Friday was not surprising for several reasons. One is that the requirements the Iranians feel they have to satisfy for a final agreement are simply unsupportable in the United States and in other partner countries. Similarly, the requirements that we feel the Iranians have to satisfy are not supportable in Iran's

domestic politics.

Could you spell these out?

There are a number of gaps. The biggest is over the question of ongoing uranium enrichment. The P5+1 have long demanded and would prefer Iran have zero enrichment activity going forward, but privately they understand that Iran needs some ongoing enrichment. So the question is the scale and scope of that ongoing enrichment. The P5+1 feels that [allowing Iran some enrichment] is a huge concession, and generally insists that Iran, which has nineteen thousand first generation centrifuges, has to scale back to four thousand. That's a number that's been floating around out there and is predicated on the criteria of breakout—how long it would take Iran to make a nuclear weapon if it chose to. The idea is to provide for six months' warning. Iranians say they won't dismantle any centrifuges, begging the question of whether they would take them offline. But whereas we say they should go from nineteen thousand to four thousand, they want to go to fifty thousand. So reconciling the positions of both sides isn't going to happen before July 20. That's the hardest issue, while the others are more readily manageable. There is also another reason why the July 20 deadline is not realistic: [Iranian] domestic politics and its negotiating tradition. The Iranians can't agree to something before a deadline. By definition, if you agree to something before a deadline, you did not negotiate hard enough. You have to go beyond a deadline, to a point where there is a crisis, and then pull back and tell your critics at home that you got the most you could.

So what does that mean?

It means we're headed for a rough patch in July because the Iranians aren't going to make the concessions that we want.

And then some people in the U.S. Congress and in the media—who have been skeptical on this all along and have been trying to pin another failure on the president—are going to take the non-agreement and say, "You see, we were right all along, and we should pin new sanctions on Iran." As soon as they propose that, the elements in Iran who were especially wary of disengagement are going to say, "You see, all along these people were for regime change. They didn't want to make a deal." So they are going to press for a ratcheting up of nuclear activity in Iran. The risk is that we will go back to a tit-for-tat escalation. Now, I am optimistic that can be avoided. I didn't think we would get an agreement by July 20, but my guess is that even though we will be close to a crisis by then, both sides will agree to not go back to what we had for the period between 2005 and 2013, when there was no real diplomatic traction and Iran kept expanding its capability. No one wants to go back there. I predict that when we get to the crisis over the inability to make a final deal, the two sides will agree to keep the process going forward. Even after last Friday's culmination of talks, there was no recrimination. The P5+1 was not saying bad things about the Iranian team, and the Iranians were not saying bad things about the P5+1. That is really remarkable.

Is there something the Iranians can do short of a deal?

They have indicated they can modify the research at Arak to greatly reduce the plutonium.

Arak is a heavy water reactor?

Yes. It's something the Israelis are particularly worried about. There are some technical modifications Iran can make to greatly reduce the facility's plutonium production and at the same time allow the reactor to produce medical isotopes.

These are verifiable measures they could take that would address one of the major concerns, but not all of them. The Iranians would say, "We need something from you too—something more in the way of sanctions relief." We won't give them the most leveraged financial sanctions, but we could give them some sanctions relief. So you could move [the process] forward without necessarily reconciling everything, without being clear when you might reach a final agreement, because the politics are so difficult. That is the most likely outcome.

So the talks would just continue past July 20.

There is a limit to how far this can go. There will be pushback in Iran. President Hassan Rouhani and Foreign Minister Javad Zarif are already under attack from those in Iran who want the country to basically remain isolated. This is a fundamental issue of autarky, of folks in the Revolutionary Guard who make money from a closed economy and will use any opportunity to trash Rouhani and Zarif. This is similar to the situation here in the United States, where there are people who fundamentally want regime change in Iran and do not want a deal because they want to squeeze things to a crisis.

Are we going to have an agreement this year?

We will not have an agreement before July 20. But if you ask me if there is going to be one before December 31, 2014, I think that is possible.

What about other issues?

There's another issue the IAEA has about the experiments Iran conducted in the past to design a nuclear weapon. One experiment was at Parchin, a military facility where it is believed Iran had a fairly significant military explosion to test a nuclear device. There has been a lot of cleanup there to cover up this activity. There is a longer list of activity and

experiments that the IAEA and foreign governments believe can only be explained by Iran's ambition to work on nuclear weapons design. Iran committed last November to never make nuclear weapons. So if there is some evidence that they had been working to that end in the past, the IAEA needs to understand whether that was the case in large part then to better monitor and verify in the future that Iran is not seeking nuclear weapons. It's a very important, but very difficult issue, and it has been bedeviling Iran and the international community for multiple reasons. Let's say some Iranians did conduct experiments related to nuclear weapons. If they admitted that, Iran would be punished further. But also, the supreme leader has issued a fatwa against nuclear weapons. If they were to acknowledge such activities, it would make the leader look like a liar. There are artful ways of handling this without having to confess having had a nuclear weapons program, but the world needs information on the research program.

Interviewee: George Perkovich, Vice President for Studies, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Article 2.

The New-Yorker

Javad Zarif on Iran's Nuclear Negotiations

Robin Wright

May 22, 2014 -- I first met Mohammad Javad Zarif, the Iranian foreign minister, in the nineteen-eighties, when he was a junior member of the Iranian delegation at the United

Nations. This week's issue of The New Yorker includes a Profile based on twenty-five years of conversations with him, including four in Tehran and New York since last September. Zarif is now the pivotal broker in nuclear talks between his government and six world powers—Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia, and the United States. After eight months of diplomacy, the serious drafting of terms for a long-term deal to insure that Iran does not acquire a nuclear weapon began last week, in Vienna. The deadline for reaching an agreement is July 20th.

A nuclear deal would almost certainly affect Iran's political future. "If we can ascertain and show to our people that the West is ready to deal with Iran on the basis of mutual respect and mutual interests and equal footing, then it will have an impact on almost every aspect of Iran's foreign policy behavior—and some aspects of Iran's domestic policy," Zarif said.

Iran and the six powers must address points of contention on virtually every aspect of a nuclear deal, from the future of suspect facilities to accounting for past programs, but Zarif has been noticeably upbeat about prospects for a breakthrough. I asked him how difficult it would be to reach an agreement. The red lines—particularly between Washington and Tehran—often seem insurmountable.

"It's going to be both hard and easy," he said. "Easy, because ostensibly we have a convergence of views on the objectives. We don't want nuclear weapons, and they say the objective is to insure Iran does not have nuclear weapons. So, if that is the objective, in my view it's already achieved. We just have to find mechanisms for agreeing on the process."

But the details "may be cumbersome," Zarif added. "More so

because those who do not want to see an agreement, those who seek their interests in greater mistrust and conflict, are hard at work. And they do their best to prevent." He presumably meant opponents in the United States and Israel, as well as in Iran. But he predicted that they were regrouping to prepare for what comes next if a deal is struck.

"Now they have had time to collect themselves and to come up with probably new tactics," he said. "I still believe that they'll lose. But they are going to make life a bit tougher for those who want to do something positive."

* * *

For Iran, the singular theme in negotiations with the six major powers is respect. "Respect for Iran's rights," as Zarif put it, is a euphemism for the right to enrich uranium, a process that can be used both for peaceful nuclear energy and for weapons. Tehran believes that enrichment is necessary for building alternative energy sources. Within a generation, because of soaring domestic oil consumption, Iran could run out of oil for export—the country's main source of revenue. Iran also wants to restore Persia's historic standing in the annals of science, and it sees nuclear energy as crucial to modern development. It feels the West wants to block any such advancement.

"Nuclear talks are not about nuclear capability." Zarif told me. "They are about Iranian integrity and dignity." He went on, "If the other side understands the importance of dignity and integrity to the Iranian people, and grasps the fact that various Iranians—who may never have seen [facilities at] Natanz or Arak or Fordo—believe that dignity is not up for sale, that their technology and development is not up for sale … then they will be able to reach an understanding with us."

* * *

Iran's nuclear debate is technically the domain of the Supreme National Security Council, which advises Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei. He will have the last word. But there is a smaller committee—including Iran's new President, Hassan Rouhani—that has worked out specific terms for the nuclear talks.

"It's a debate," Zarif said of discussions within the Iranian government. "And debate is healthy, heated or otherwise. It's a very, very serious subject and it has important implications, and that is why it is a difficult decision. And a lot of mistrust is there, of the West. So every step is taken, I hope, with a lot of prudence, and consideration."

When I was in Tehran in March, I asked Zarif how much a nuclear deal depended on him. "I don't know," he said. An aide, sitting nearby, chimed in quickly, "Ninety per cent! The outcome depends ninety per cent on him."

"I hope that's not true," Zarif said.

* * *

President Rouhani is a striking change from his predecessor, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, even in Iran's controlled political environment—particularly when it comes to foreign policy. "We have a different perspective of the world," Zarif said of the stance that he and Rouhani have taken. "We don't necessarily see the world in terms of black and white. We believe there is the possibility for engagement and interaction. We believe we do not necessarily need to agree with somebody to be able to talk to them or to engage with them or to reach an understanding."

But, he went on, "at the end of the day, we are actually much more self-confident. So we believe we can negotiate and achieve our goals, because we have the ability to make our

point logically and to convince our negotiating partners that they can have a deal with us."

Even so, there is nothing to prevent the Islamic Republic from returning to hard-line positions. "The electorate can send us back home," he said. "I retired at the early age of forty-seven"—when Ahmadinejad squeezed him out of the Foreign Service—"so I can retire again. And I think people have every right to make that choice."

Zarif ascribed Ahmadinejad's election as President, in 2005, to the West's failure to respond to diplomatic outreach during the reform period under his predecessor, Mohammad Khatami. "Iran adopted an open, engaging policy," Zarif said. But the West's reaction was "based on illusions—and, unfortunately, a bunch of people sitting in the White House who had extremely limited knowledge and grasp of world realities. The reaction to this openness was arrogant, wishful, and delusional. And the Iranian people believed that their dignity had been compromised, that the openness of our administration had been confronted with hostility and excessive demands. So they elected someone diametrically opposed to that approach."

A sense of victimization permeates Iranian thinking. "Every statement that comes out of Washington that is not respectful and is trying to intimidate the Iranian people—is trying to put pressure on the Iranian people—strikes that very, very sensitive chord in the Iranian psyche, and they immediately react," Zarif said.

I mentioned that the anti-American rhetoric—notably, things I'd heard while attending a Friday-prayers service—was more provocative than anything said by Americans. From the women's section, I heard shouts of "Death to America" three times. I asked Zarif why Iranians are not sensitive to the things

that they want Americans to be sensitive about.

"We're talking about something done by the public versus something by the President of the United States," Zarif said, a reference to statements, made by both Obama and George W. Bush, that military strikes against Iran remain an option. "The people of Iran respond to intimidation and pressure negatively; almost they are allergic to it… . It produces resentment among the Iranian people, and the chanting that you see in the Friday prayers."

He went on, "I assure you, these people are the same people who went out of their way after 9/11 presenting their condolences to the Americans, even walking in the streets with candles, commemorating and expressing their sympathy and unity of purpose, actually, with the Americans. And, in two consecutive weeks, there was no slogan [at Friday Prayers]. But what changed it? Statements by Don Rumsfeld and Condi Rice humiliating the Iranian people."

America should have learned better over the past thirty-five years, Zarif said. Iranians "respond very positively to respect. Try it. It won't kill you."

Zarif told me, "There are two futures. One future will be greater conflict, greater tension, greater mistrust—basically, more of the same as we had in the past. But more of the same may not be easily manageable. And it may even get worse, and more dangerous. So that's one option, which I hope will not be before us."

I asked him if that outcome included another Middle East war. The United States and Israel have both warned that if diplomacy fails the military option remains on the table.

"I'm not that worried about war," Zarif said. "Insecurity is the word I would use—insecurity and tension and conflict. I

thought civilized people had abandoned wars." But then he added, "Sometimes people don't make rational decisions." The second, more hopeful future, he said, is one in which, despite differences, the world powers "can work together on serious issues of mutual concern and try to address them. And these issues include problems of instability, extremism, and terrorism in the Middle East and Afghanistan, and a whole range of other possibilities, including Iran being a reliable source of energy for Europe."

* * *

For decades, Iran was one of two pillars of American foreign policy in the Middle East. Israel was the other. I asked Zarif if the United States and Iran had any common interests thirty-five years after their diplomatic split.

"Did I say there were common interests?" Zarif, who is known for his wry humor, replied. "Iran has a national-security interest in nonproliferation, so, if the United States is interested in nonproliferation, that is one issue. Iran has a national-security interest in freedom of navigation in the Persian Gulf. We have a national-security interest in stability in this region. We have a national-security interest in fighting terrorism in Afghanistan, instability in Afghanistan." He continued, "We have a national-security interest in stability and in maintaining stable governments in the region. We have a national-security interest in in putting an end to the bloodshed in Syria." In sum, he said, "If I take what the United States says at face value, there should be convergence."

Article 3.

The National Interest

The Sino-Russian Hydrocarbon Axis Grows Up

Flynt Leverett Hillary Mann Leverett

May 21, 2014 -- Eight years ago, in the pages of The National Interest, Flynt Leverett and Pierre Noël identified a "new axis of oil"—a "shifting coalition of both energy exporting and energy importing states centered in ongoing Sino-Russian collaboration"—that was emerging as an increasingly important counterweight to the United States on a widening range of international issues. While, at the time, Russian oil and gas exports to China were negligible, Leverett and Noël projected that Russian hydrocarbons would become "a major factor buttressing closer Sino-Russian strategic collaboration" in the future.

Western analysts have long been skeptical of the prospects for sustained Sino-Russian cooperation—but over the last eight years, the new axis of oil has become undeniable market and geopolitical reality. Russia is now one of China's top three oil suppliers (with Saudi Arabia and Angola) and is set to grow its oil exports to China significantly in coming years. While some analysts cite Chinese firms' acquisition of upstream positions in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan and the opening of a Turkmen-Chinese gas pipeline as signs of Sino-Russian competition in Central Asia, these moves supported Moscow's interest in keeping Central Asian hydrocarbons from flowing west and undermining Russia's market dominance in Europe.

And this week—just hours after Foreign Policy headlined "the deal that wasn't"—Russia and China concluded a $400 billion gas agreement, marking a major step in the maturation of the

(let's now call it) Sino-Russian "hydrocarbon axis." Geopolitically, too, this axis has assumed ever greater importance. Moscow has been profoundly disappointed with what many Russian political elites see as the Obama administration's fundamentally disingenuous "reset" of U.S. relations with Russia. Beijing, for its part, has been alienated by a series of U.S. military and political initiatives that, in the eyes of Chinese elites, are meant to contain China's rise as a legitimately influential player in Asian affairs. In this context, the deepening of Sino-Russian energy ties has indeed buttressed closer cooperation against what both Moscow and Beijing view as a declining, yet dangerously flailing and over-reactive American hegemon.

One observes this clearly in the Middle East. After the Arab Awakening began in late 2010, the Obama administration's ambition to co-opt it as a tool for remaking the regional balance in ways that would revive America's regional dominance prompted more determined (and coordinated) Russian and Chinese resistance to U.S. policies than the world has witnessed since the Cold War's end. In March 2011, Russia and China abstained on a UN Security Council resolution authorizing the use of force to protect civilians in Libya. Washington and its partners quickly distorted this resolution to turn civilian protection into a campaign of coercive regime change in Libya—with predictably and, by now, glaringly evident destructive consequences. Within weeks, Russian and Chinese officials were openly acknowledging their acquiescence to the Libya resolution as a "mistake"—one they would not repeat in Syria. Since then, Moscow and Beijing have vetoed three U.S.-backed resolutions seeking Security Council legitimation for

intervention in Syria—and will veto more, if need be, until Washington accepts reality and supports a negotiated settlement between parts of the Syrian opposition and a Syrian government still headed by President Bashar al-Assad. Likewise, over the last four years, Russia and China have refused to support Security Council authorization of further multilateral sanctions against Iran, and have become ever more resentful of what they consider Washington's illegal and unilaterally imposed secondary sanctions regime. Their opposition to new multilateral sanctions intersected with increasing incentives for them to defy existing U.S. sanctions to push Washington's sanctions policy to the limit. This reality—combined with President Obama's inability to act on his declared intention to attack Syria after chemical weapons were used there in August 2013, which made clear that Washington can no longer credibly threaten the effective use of force in the region—has compelled the Obama administration to take a more serious approach to nuclear diplomacy with Tehran. If, in the end, the United States proves unwilling to conclude a final nuclear deal with Iran, Russia and China are likely to become far less accommodating of U.S. demands for compliance with Washington's illegitimate secondary sanctions. Moscow, for example, could conclude a $20 billion deal it is currently negotiating with Iran, whereby Iran would swap oil volumes for Russian industrial goods and equipment.

More recently, the deterioration of Russia's relations with the United States and Europe over Ukraine helped Moscow and Beijing close their new gas deal. Over the last several years, Russia's national oil company, Rosneft, has given Chinese energy companies equity stakes in joint oil projects in Russia,

an approach that has facilitated the expansion of Russian oil exports to China. Gazprom, in contrast, has resisted taking Chinese companies as partners in its upstream gas projects. However, under pressure from U.S. and European reaction to Russian policy toward Ukraine, Gazprom is reconsidering its opposition to giving Chinese companies equity stakes in Russia's upstream gas sector. Last year, Novatek—Russia's largest independent gas producer—gave China's biggest state-owned energy firm a stake in the Yamal LNG project. In the context of the new Sino-Russian gas deal, it seems likely that Chinese capital will help finance development of gas supplies from new eastern Siberian fields which Gazprom will use to meet its new export commitments to China, as well as any future commitments to other Asian markets.

More broadly, the Sino-Russian hydrocarbon axis has become a foundational pillar for efforts to turn a post-Cold War world defined by overwhelming U.S. hegemony into a more genuinely multipolar order. At the Asian security summit in Shanghai where the gas agreement was signed, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping issued a joint statement calling on all nations to "give up the language of unilateral sanctions" and stop aiding forces seeking "a change in the constitutional system of another country." While the Putin-Xi message was not addressed to any specific capital, its primary intended audience undoubtedly resides in Washington.

Flynt Leverett is professor of international affairs and law at Penn State; Hillary Mann Leverett is senior professorial lecturer at American University's School of International Service. Their book, Going to Tehran: Why America Must

Accept the Islamic Republic of Iran, is now in paperback.

Article 4.

The Washington Institute

Iraq's Election Results: Avoiding a Kurdish Split

Michael Knights

May 21, 2014 -- On May 19, the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) released the results of Iraq's April 30 national elections, and Shiite prime minister Nouri al-Maliki scored strongly on two fronts. First, his State of Law Alliance held its ground, winning 92 seats in the new 328-seat parliament compared to 89 in the previous 325-seat assembly. Second, he surpassed his personal vote count of 622,000 in 2010 by collecting 727,000 votes this time. Although rival Shiite parties and Kurdish and Sunni Arab oppositionists collectively won around 160 seats -- just shy of the 165 required to ratify a prime minister -- opponents of a third Maliki term would have to set aside their differences and demonstrate near-perfect cohesion to unseat him. Maliki is therefore the front runner for now, though his victory is not a foregone conclusion by any means.

If events favor Maliki, accepting his potential reappointment would be especially difficult for the Iraqi Kurds, who command 62 seats in the new parliament. On May 14, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) president Masoud Barzani underlined his opposition in personal terms, stating, "The Maliki that we knew before he was in power was different from the Maliki who has been in power," adding that

the longtime prime minister bore chief responsibility for "totalitarianism" in Iraq. According to Rebwar Sayid Gul -- a senior official with the Kurdistan Islamic Union who attended a May 18 gathering with other Kurdish leaders in Erbil -- the Kurdish blocs "have decided that if Maliki is nominated for a third term, [they] will hold a referendum on independence and separation from Iraq." Such a referendum is akin to a doomsday machine that once initiated may not be stoppable; the Kurds are making the threat because they are increasingly desperate, fearing that Maliki's reappointment will be fatal to their ambitions. Yet such a threat may inadvertently reduce their ability to cut deals with Arab blocs in Iraq.

Erbil's opposition has intensified sharply ever since Maliki interrupted Kurdish revenue-sharing transfers from the federal government this year. That move was a response to the Kurds' refusal to market their oil to international buyers using the federal State Oil Marketing Organization and Iraq's New York and Baghdad bank accounts. Whereas the KRG previously received over a billion dollars in monthly transfers, Baghdad has only sent partial payments for two of the five months of 2014. In mid-March, Maliki approved the back-payment of January and February KRG salaries, and the Kurds responded by offering to provide 100,000 barrels per day of oil to Baghdad from April 2014 onward. Yet with both sides playing games to stymie the oil flows, Maliki suspended the payments for March, April, and May, meaning that the KRG has received only $1.3 billion of the $4.25 billion needed to pay its salaries this year. Desperate KRG fundraising activities have gathered a reported $429 million of additional funds, but pay protests are escalating across the Kurdish region.

Indeed, the budget cut has incensed the Kurds more than

anything Maliki has previously done. President Barzani has frequently referred to such a cut as "an act of war," and on May 14 he warned that "those who cut the budget of Kurdistan are going to pay the price of that decision."

Regardless of the rights and wrongs of the federal and KRG positions, these are among the worst possible circumstances under which to form a multiethnic, cross-sectarian government. Before the elections, U.S. diplomats foresaw the outcome of the budget clash and energetically sought to prevent it, helping Baghdad and Erbil craft a revenue-sharing and joint oil marketing system that would satisfy their near-term needs. If this agreement is fully set in motion, it could represent one of Iraq's most positive forward steps in half a decade. Currently, the deal is functionally complete, including export infrastructure, marketing arrangements, and near-automatic revenue management that would allow the KRG to pay entitlements to its oil contractors. All the machine needs is a modicum of goodwill on both sides to bring it to life. Iraq's other problems may be equally pressing -- notably the government's increasing use of Shiite militiamen to fight its counterinsurgency -- but the Baghdad-Kurdish issue is an area where the U.S. government can help provide a solution right now.

Resuscitating this deal is more important than ever, and U.S. diplomats should make it an early priority as they seek to build on the elections and foster a stable government that could improve the prospects for stabilizing Iraq. The oil export and revenue-sharing agreement clears the way for Kurdish involvement in the next Iraqi government and is needed whether the next premier is Maliki or somebody else. Political compromises combined with the right oil deal could keep Erbil

from toying with independence and allow Iraq's factions to focus on rebuilding the relative unity and tranquility seen before the 2010 elections and the terrorist surge in the west.

Michael Knights is a Boston-based Lafer fellow with The Washington Institute.

Article 5.

Foreign Affairs

The Failed Autocrat

Despite Erdogan's Ruthlessness, Turkey's Democracy Is Still on Track

Daron Acemoglu

May 22, 2014 -- Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan was once the darling of the international community, but no more. He is still sometimes praised for stewarding Turkey through impressive economic growth, defanging a Turkish military establishment with a long history of meddling in national politics, and initiating a promising peace process with the country's restive Kurdish population. But Erdogan's achievements are now shadowed by his undeniable lurch toward autocracy. Over the last year, he has initiated a harsh crackdown against peaceful protesters, political opponents, and independent media outlets. (According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, at one point, the number [1] of journalists jailed in Turkey even exceeded the number in Iran and China.)

The worst developments of all began last December. That was

when, in order to quell a perceived threat from an erstwhile ally, the U.S.-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gülen, Erdogan fired thousands of prosecutors, judges, and policemen, imposed bans on Twitter and YouTube, intensified the government's already stifling control over the judiciary, and gave the intelligence services more latitude to monitor Turkish citizens. That the Turkish electorate didn't seem to care much about the heavy-handed repression and the wholesale gutting of judicial institutions added a degree of farce to the tragedy. The Justice and Development Party (AKP), Erdogan's party, won 43 percent of the vote in the March 28 municipal election, exceeding the 39 percent it received in the previous municipal election, though falling short of the almost 50 percent it won in the last national elections. It all seemed to confirm that, contrary to what many international observers once believed, Turkey was headed away from, not toward, democracy and the rule of law.

But that that would be the wrong way to read this latest chapter of Turkish history. Turkey is in the middle of a difficult process of institutional rebalancing, in which key political and social institutions have been shifting their allegiances away from the military and the large urban-based economic interests that have long dominated Turkish politics. In the absence of independent judicial organizations and an organized civil society, the risk has always been great that any politicians who took power during this turbulent time would abuse it. In other words, Erdogan's drift from democracy is a lamentable, but almost predictable, stage of Turkey's democratic transition. If Turkey is to eventually become a democracy, there is no way to avoid the occasionally painful process of making the country's institutions more inclusive -- a

process that the country has shown no signs of abandoning.

FROM THE OTTOMANS TO ATATURK

To understand the need for institutional rebalancing, one needs to first understand how the roots of Turkey's present institutions began in the Ottoman Empire. The reach of the Ottoman state was limited in many ways, but the effective political power that did exist -- organized mainly around military conquest and expansion -- was concentrated in the hands of a narrow bureaucratic and military elite.

Apart from the elite stood the reaya, meaning "the flock." As economic actors, these Ottoman subjects had few rights and even fewer options for political participation. Limited private-property rights prevented the emergence of economically independent landholders and merchants. And social institutions were structured so as to minimize constraints on the sultan's and the central state's power. Islamic law is supposed to allow for a religious-legal establishment, the ulema, that would constrain rulers. But the Ottoman Empire integrated the ulema into the state bureaucracy. The sultan, then, was also the most powerful representative of religious power.

Despite many attempts at reform during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Turkish rulers' hold on the bureaucracy and the judiciary never truly relaxed. The reason was simple: the reforms weren't intended to have that effect. The Ottoman reformers, hailing mostly from the military, were interested not in sharing power with non-elites but in strengthening the state's existing institutions, domestically and internationally, in the face of financial, economic, and military crises. It is telling that the would-be reformers, from the later infamous Committee for Union and Progress, who organized a

watershed uprising against the sultan in 1908, didn't make a serious attempt to co-opt an existing grassroots movement opposed to the government, but instead relied on backers in the military. Once in power, these "revolutionaries" immediately turned against anyone who they thought opposed them.

The Turkish Republic was officially founded in 1923, by another group of young military officers, with Mustafa Kemal (later called Atatürk, "the great Turk") at the helm. The Turkish Republic marked a more radical departure from the Ottoman Empire. The new rulers abolished the monarchy, modernized state bureaucracy, regulated religion, which they saw as an obstacle to their plans, and intended to industrialize Turkey. But one aspect of the Ottoman order was never challenged: state institutions and the bureaucracy remained under the command of the ruling elite, now the upper cadre of Atatürk's Republican People's Party (CHP). Once again, the elite felt that there was little need for broad-based support. In fact, Atatürk's reforms were intended to be imposed forcefully on a population that was presumed, rightly, to be opposed to many of them.

The military and political dominance of the CHP, and the party's willingness to use robust force if necessary, allowed the Kemalist project to succeed under one-party rule until the end of World War II. But cracks were appearing. In 1946, the Democratic Party (DP) was founded by former members of the CHP, who hoped to benefit from public discontent over the CHP's heavy-handed rule. In 1950, when the DP swept to power with a landslide election victory, many of its deputies, and certainly its supporters, hailed from provincial cities and rural areas and had backgrounds in small-scale commerce

outside the purview of the state. (This contrasted with the bureaucratic or military background of the majority of the CHP deputies.)

THE AKP REVOLUTION

On May 27, 1960, Turkey woke up to the first of many military coups, putting an end to its nascent experiment with democracy. The military swiftly moved to hang Adnan Menderes, the leader of the DP.

The next 40 years brought many new political actors to the Turkish scene, including a panoply of leftist groups bent on the overthrow of the state. But the divide between the more statist CHP and the more religious parties (which picked up the DP's mantle) remained a constant, even as the latter agreed to work with the military and generally refrained from challenging the core precepts of the Kemalist state (and, in some instances, forged even better ties with existing business elites).

It was the AKP that most faithfully, and effectively, copied the DP's formula of religious populism mixed with free-market economics. When the AKP emerged victorious in the 2002 parliamentary elections, the battle lines with the Kemalist elite were already drawn. In April 2007, after the party gained control of the presidency, the military -- which had moved against three other elected governments between 1960 and 2002 -- posted a memorandum on its website threatening a coup against the AKP government. Ominously, the Constitutional Court started proceedings to shut down the AKP, because its religious outlook was allegedly in violation of Atatürk's constitution.

But 2007 was not 1960. It wasn't just that the AKP had deeper social networks, especially in municipalities run by its

predecessor, the Welfare Party. It had also taken control of large parts of the bureaucracy and the police. Meanwhile, the military's status within Turkish society was at an all-time low. This time, the Kemalists lost, in part because the Turkish public refused to abide the generals' meddling. Power had successfully shifted away from Kemalist elite to a party with support from the majority of Turks, including much of the population of provincial cities and the rural heartland.

But in terms of building a true democracy, it was never going to be enough to simply loosen the Kemalist elite's grip on existing state institutions. The institutions themselves needed to become more inclusive. Unfortunately, the AKP -- in the absence of any concerted pressure from Turkey's still feeble civil society -- concentrated instead on building a political monopoly of its own. Rather than strengthening independent institutions, AKP elites set out to seize control of the state bureaucracy, the police, and the judiciary, and then tried to use those institutions for the party's own ends. This mimicked the pattern of political development in many postcolonial societies, where new political leaders swiftly seized decisive control of the state after the colonial powers departed in a hurry. And, like those predecessors, Erdogan has not shied from flaunting his power.

Far from trying to overcome the polarization of the Kemalist era, Erdogan has cleverly decided to tap into it. He has declared that Turkey is still in the midst of an existential struggle between Black Turks (the disempowered, less educated, more conservative masses) and White Turks (the Kemalist, educated, Westernized elites). "Your brother Tayyip," he has declared, "belongs to the Black Turks."

The problem with this rhetoric is that, because it is half true, it

resonates with the public and polarizes it further. This became quite clear last summer, when Erdogan successfully masked his repression of peaceful protests as a necessary step in the struggle of Black Turks against White Turks, and then again during this year's municipal elections. In each instance, the strategy paid off for the AKP, not only because it cemented Erdogan's popularity among his core supporters but also because the rhetoric became self-fulfilling. The outcome is that Turkey's state and civil institutions, caught in this seemingly existential standoff, have failed to become any more inclusive.

NO TURNING BACK

Despite creeping authoritarianism and polarization in Turkish politics, one shouldn't despair. From a democratic perspective, things were worse under the Kemalist elite (especially after the 1980 military coup), when Turkish society was largely depoliticized. Facing military rule allied with big business, most potential opposition forces offered no resistance. The AKP is in the midst of a very different situation today. Indeed, the party planted the seeds of its own undoing when it mobilized Turkish civil society in its initial rise to power. Even Erdogan, in his early years in government, encouraged open dialogue in society, if only to obliterate some of the red lines (on Kurds, minorities, the role of the military in society, and religious freedom, at least for his Sunni supporters) previously imposed by the Kemalist elite.

The AKP can try to mimic its Kemalist predecessors, but Turkish society is unlikely to be as pliant as it was in earlier years. Not only is the country's urban youth more liberal, more independent, and more informed than ever before -- Turkey is among the top users of both Facebook and Twitter -- but also, the protests last summer made clear, it is thirstier for political

participation and democracy. The judiciary, taking its cues from Turkey's newly awakening civil society, is also no longer content to be a pushover. The Constitutional Court has struck down some of the AKP's more repressive laws and decrees. It is important to note that, in making these interventions, the Constitutional Court has not been speaking on behalf of the military-bureaucratic elite (as was its role under the CHP), but for a broader segment of the population, and thus for the rule of law and inclusive political institutions.

Although Erdogan's support among the urban and rural poor and large segments of the middle class seems solid today, it is predicated on continued economic growth and the delivery of public services to the underprivileged. Erdogan's joy ride is over if the economy heads south (and it could -- Turkey's growth over the past six years has depended on unsustainable levels of domestic consumption and trade deficits). In that case, the opposition is likely to broaden and, having learned from experience with the AKP, will eventually begin to demand institutions that fairly represent the country as a whole.

This is not to suggest that the recent slide in Turkish governance should be viewed through rose-colored glasses. The AKP continues to repress any opposition and will surely try to gag the Constitutional Court. But the party's efforts to monopolize power should not surprise in historical context. More than 50 years on, the process of building inclusive political institutions in many postcolonial societies is still ongoing. And it took France more than 80 years to build the Third Republic after the collapse of the monarchy in 1789. Institutional rebalancing was never going to be a painless, easy process. For the AKP to eventually fail in its attempts to

monopolize power, ordinary people and civil society will have to protest loudly. Politics has long been an elite sport in Turkey, and the elite -- whether military, bureaucratic, big business, or the AKP -- have looked after their own interests, not the people's. This will change only when politics encompasses a broader segment of society. The silver lining to the current trouble is that Turkey has already taken some important steps toward doing just that.

Kamer Daron Acemoğlu is a Turkish-American economist.

Article 6.

NYT

Turkey's Dickensian Disaster

Mustafa Akyol

May 21, 2014 -- Istanbul -- The fire that tore through the Soma mine last week underlined the dark side of Turkey's economic leap forward: poor working conditions and low safety standards in industrial jobs — especially the coal mines that provide most of the country's energy.

According to figures from Tepav, a Turkish research center, the annual number of miner deaths per million tons of coal produced is 300 times higher in Turkey than in the United States. "Turkey is a world leader in the human cost of coal production," notes Guven Sak, the director of Tepav. One infuriating example of this lack of safety in Soma is the absence of specially equipped refuge chambers that are routinely used in mines in Canada, Australia, the United States and South America. It was thanks to such chambers that 33

Chilean miners were rescued in 2010 — seemingly miraculously — after spending 69 days underground. But there is no such foresight among Turkey's industrialists. Alp Gurkan, the boss of Soma Holding, which owns the mine that claimed 301 lives last week, falsely boasted on TV a year ago that he had built such chambers in Soma. After the fire, however, it turned out that the only refuge chamber was in an inactive part of the mine and thus helped save no one. Some workers who survived the disaster also told the press that they had warned their bosses about the unusual levels of heat within the coal being mined in the days before the fire, but they were ordered to keep working. Due to such examples of deadly negligence, millions of Turks are angry with Soma Holding, some of whose managers were arrested over the weekend. But they are also furious with the government, particularly Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Mr. Erdogan's missteps after the disaster explain much of the anger toward him. He visited Soma after the day of the incident and gave a press conference in which he repeated his longstanding line that such accidents are "in the nature of this profession." He then cited similarly deadly mine accidents in other countries, such as in England in 1862 and 1866, in France in 1906 and in the United States in 1907. Many wondered, of course, why the prime minister was focused on the primitive conditions of previous centuries rather than modern-day standards and cutting-edge technology. Then Mr. Erdogan took a walk in the town, where he seemed shocked to find angry faces and crowds who booed him. This led to a squabble between the prime minister, surrounded by his bodyguards, and protesters. In an amateur video posted online, Mr. Erdogan is heard shouting, "If you boo the prime minister

of this country, you'll get slapped." A man in the crowd later claimed that the prime minister had indeed slapped him. Two days later, the man changed his story and claimed he was "thankful" to Mr. Erdogan for "saving" him from being beaten. Now, the man has claimed that he was both slapped by Mr. Erdogan and beaten by bodyguards and that he only changed his initial statement due to intimidation by pro-government officials in his town.

Another scandal has been recorded quite clearly: One of Mr. Erdogan's advisers, Yusuf Yerkel, kicking a prostrate protester, who was held down by two gendarmes. Mr. Yerkel, whose footwork made worldwide headlines, later announced that the man had kicked a car in the prime minister's convoy, and apologized "for not being able to control his anger." He has neither resigned nor been dismissed, but took a week's "sick leave for injury to leg" — presumably the one he used to kick the protester. The fact that he has kept his job is yet another example of Mr. Erdogan's famously patriarchal management model: The prime minister will never dismiss any of his men as long as they are unquestionably loyal to him.

Meanwhile, both in Soma and other Turkish cities peaceful demonstrators who took to the streets were, as usual, tear-gassed and water-cannoned by the police. The authorities also banned all demonstrations in Soma and established checkpoints at city entrances. Had the government come out not with such hubris and anger but humility and empathy, it might have received more positive responses. No wonder the one government figure who did so, Energy Minister Taner Yildiz, who tirelessly coordinated the whole rescue effort on the ground, gained widespread sympathy and approval. It is not that Turkey's masses hate everything about the

government. But lots of Turks do hate its holier-than-thou attitude and its habit of turning a deaf ear to criticism and denouncing any detractor as the mouthpiece of some heinous conspiracy. The lesson from Soma is that Turkish leaders' poisonous mix of arrogance and paranoia must come to an end. Mr. Erdogan has brought some great advances to Turkey in the past decade, from health care to transportation. But to move on, and to further improve the lives of millions, he should allow a healthy democracy in which the government can be criticized and the governing elites can listen without demonizing their opponents and indulging in self-veneration. If Turkey can learn that lesson from this tragedy, then the 301 honorable victims of Soma will not have died in vain.

Mustafa Akyol is the author of "Islam Without Extremes: A Muslim Case for Liberty."