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Article 1.

The New York Times

Power With Purpose

Thomas L. Friedman

May 22 - Political power is always a double-edged sword. The more of it you amass, the more people expect you to use it to do big things, and, when you don't, the more ineffectual you look. That's the dilemma in which Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu of Israel finds himself. He avoided early elections by adding a new centrist coalition partner to his right-wing cabinet, giving him control of 96 of the 120 seats in Parliament. There are Arab dictators who didn't have majorities that big after rigged elections. What is unclear is whether Bibi assembled these multitudes to be better able to do nothing or be better able to do something important to secure Israel's future.

The stakes could not be higher — for him and Israel. Ami Ayalon, the former commander of Israel’s Navy and later its domestic intelligence service, put it to me this way: “I imagine a book called ‘Jewish Leaders in Recent History’ that one day Bibi’s grandson will be reading. What will it say? In one version, I imagine the section about the State of Israel will say that Herzl envisaged it, Ben-Gurion built it and Netanyahu secured it as a Jewish democracy.” But there is another version that could also be written, added Ayalon. “This version will describe Herzl and Ben-Gurion in the same way, but it will say of Netanyahu that he was the only Israeli leader who had the political power and he missed his moment in history” — and, thereby, created a situation in which Israel is not a Jewish democracy anymore. “Now is his moment to decide.”

I’m keeping an open mind, but the temptation for Bibi to do nothing will be enormous. The Palestinians are divided between Hamas in Gaza and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, and both populations are tired. Moreover, economic conditions have improved in the West Bank in recent years, and the Palestinian Authority’s security forces are keeping a tight rein on anti-Israeli violence. Aid from the U.S., Europe and the Arabs pays a lot of the authority’s budget. Israel’s security wall keeps Palestinian suicide bombers out. The U.S. election silences any criticism coming from Washington about Israeli settlements. The Israeli peace camp is dead, and the Arab awakening has most Arab states enfeebled or preoccupied. So Israel gets to build settlements, while the Arabs, Americans, Europeans and Palestinians fund and sustain a lot of the occupation.

No wonder then that for most Israelis, the West Bank could be

East Timor. “We see the writing on the wall, but we don’t care,” says the columnist Nahum Barnea of the Israeli newspaper Yediot Aharonot, referring to the fact that Arabs could soon outnumber Jews in areas under Israeli control.

The exception to all of this is Iran’s nuclear program, but Bibi — either through brilliant bluffing that he will bomb Iran or a sincere willingness to do so — has managed to make stopping Iran’s nuclear program a top U.S. and global priority.

Whenever a nation or leader amasses this much power, with no checks coming from anywhere, the probability of misreading events grows exponentially. Bibi could be assuming that the Palestinians in the West Bank can be pacified simply with better economic conditions. Don’t count on it. Humiliation remains the single most powerful human emotion. It trumps economic well-being every time. Bibi could be assuming that the Palestinian security services will indefinitely act as Israel’s forward police force in the West Bank — absent any hopes of Palestinian statehood. Not likely — eventually they will be viewed as “traitors.” Bibi could be assuming that Israel could strike Iran — and upend the world economy — and still continue to build settlements in the West Bank. I would not bet on that; the global backlash could be severe. Bibi could be assuming that the West Bank Palestinian leadership will always be moderate, secular and pro-Western. If only ...

At the same time, Bibi is prime minister for a reason. He was elected because many Israelis lost faith in the peace process and see chaos all around them. So what to do? Here I think Ayalon has the best new idea: “constructive unilateralism.”

In an essay in this newspaper on April 24, Ayalon and two colleagues argued that Israel should first declare its willingness to return to negotiations anytime and that it has no claims of sovereignty on any West Bank lands east of its security barrier. It should then end all settlement construction east of that barrier and in Arab neighborhoods of Jerusalem and establish an attractive housing and relocation plan to help the 100,000 Jewish settlers who live east of the barrier to relocate within Israel's recognized borders. The Israeli Army would remain in the West Bank until the conflict was resolved with a final-status agreement. And Israel would not physically force any citizens to leave until an agreement was reached, even though relocations could begin well before then. Such an initiative would radically change Israel's image in the world, dramatically increase Palestinian incentives to negotiate and create a pathway for securing Israel as a Jewish democracy. And Bibi could initiate it tomorrow.

“Heroic peacemaking is over,” says Ayalon. It is time for “coordinated” and “constructive” unilateralism. The way is there. Does Bibi have the will?

Spiegel

The Two Faces of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood

Alexander Smoltczyk in Ismailia, Egypt

The Muslim Brotherhood is the strongest political force in Egypt, which is holding presidential elections this week, yet opinions are divided over the nature of the movement and what it really wants. A visit to Ismailia, the small city on the Suez Canal where the movement began, provides an insight into the Islamists' goals.

A dredger moves slowly through the glistening, soupy waters of Egypt's Lake Timsah, also known as Crocodile Lake. A Mubarak doll, dressed in faded jeans and with a noose around its neck, hangs at the jetty for the ferry across the Suez Canal.

If it weren't for Hassan al-Banna, there wouldn't be much else to report from Ismailia, a provincial city redolent of eucalyptus, located two hours northeast of Cairo next to Lake Timsah. Banna was a 20-year-old elementary school teacher who came to the city in 1927.

Banna's arrival in Ismailia marked the beginning of a story that has had as much of an impact on Egypt and the world as the famous canal. It is the story of the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood to become the strongest organized force in political Islam, as well as a powerful player in Egypt, where a new president will be elected on May 23 and 24. One of the key

issues in the election is the question of what role Islam will play in the future life of the republic.

Candidate Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh represents, for the first time, a reasonable chance that a former top member of the Brotherhood could assume one of the most powerful offices in the Arab world. For some it would be the culmination of the revolution, but for more secular skeptics it would mark its end.

'Resistance against the Missionaries'

It all began in Ismailia on the Suez Canal when Banna decided to take Egypt from the modern age back to its roots. He was the founder of the movement.

The West was to blame, say supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood today. "Why Ismailia?" asks Midhat Saki, a minor official with the Muslim Brotherhood in Ismailia who has a dark, crusty prayer bump on his forehead. He goes on to answer his own question. "Because the colonialists walked around here as if the country belonged to them. They allowed thousands to perish during the construction of the canal."

"They drank wine, built churches and brought missionaries into the country," Saki continues. "Sheikh Banna began the resistance against the missionaries."

The Brotherhood has its headquarters next to an auto parts shop. The chairs are still covered with plastic wrap, and the symbol of the Brotherhood, two crossed swords above the Koran, and the words "Prepare Yourselves," hangs in the stairway.

Saki tells the story of Hassan al-Banna, and of how he and six canal workers founded the first cell against evil -- in the form of

Western decadence, exploitation and proselytizing -- and for good -- namely Islamic values, charity and justice. With Banna at its helm, the Brotherhood grew, and had more than half a million members by the time that Banna was shot and killed by an assassin in 1949. Saki relates how the Brotherhood built mosques, hospitals and factories, and how it tried to spread "true Islam" from the bottom up, using itself as a model, instead of from the top down, as the revolutionaries would later do in Iran.

Growing Strength

"No violence," says Saki, as he toys with a car key. For decades, the Muslim Brotherhood was brutally repressed at the hands of Egyptian regimes under Gamal Abdel Nasser, Anwar Sadat and Hosni Mubarak. He too was beaten, says Saki, when he was in prison.

The Muslim Brotherhood has since become the driving force in the Middle East. It influences politics from Rabat to Damascus, and its growing strength is as feared in Dubai as it is in the Saudi Arabian capital Riyadh and in the suburbs of London and Paris.

The Brotherhood has about 600,000 members in Egypt today. Its political arm, the Freedom and Justice Party (FJP), became the strongest party in the Egyptian parliament last winter. The Brotherhood has a strict hierarchical structure that is unchanged since Banna's days. Its supreme leader is the chairman of its executive board. The members are organized into cells called "families." Each family consists of five Brothers.

The magazine Foreign Affairs recently compared the movement to Scientology, describing it as secretive, with a sect-like power

structure and exercising tight control over its members. The Foreign Ministry in Berlin, however, calls it a "major party capable of securing a majority in the long term." German officials in the ministry see the movement as an Islamic version of Bavaria's conservative Christian Social Union (CSU), devout and sometimes radical in its rhetoric, and yet shaped by the middle class and ultimately pragmatic. Both predispositions exist within the Brotherhood -- that of the sect and that of the big tent party.

'Loose Behavior'

In June 1947, Banna sent a list of 50 proposals to the leaders of the Islamic world, and the Egyptian king, in particular. The manifesto, "Towards the Light," is one of his few political texts. To this day, his critics cite it as an indication of how little the supposedly moderate character of the Brotherhood has in common with reality. It reads like something the Taliban could have written.

In the text, Banna calls for the reintroduction of corporal punishment, the moral supervision of government officials, and the prohibition of prostitution, gambling, alcohol and "ostentation in dress and loose behavior."

He demands that dance halls be closed and theater and singing performances be subjected to rigorous control and purified of immoral thoughts. Banna's political program also includes gender separation in schools, the encouragement of memorization of the Koran and the reunification of Islamic countries to form a caliphate.

Today, Banna's manifesto is disseminated on Ikhwanweb, the

Brotherhood's international website, which states: "Many of the view points and directives it contains still represent the dearest hope of every Arab and every Muslim."

A Better Human Being

"Of course we want the caliphate," says Saki. "All Islamic countries must become one nation, but without violence." He gives the interpreter a serious look. Everything else, he says, including Sharia law and clean living, can only be introduced in the long term, and certainly not by decree. "We must serve as role models, so that others will follow."

Then Saki says something that points directly at the core of the movement: "We want to change people. Without violence! First the individual, then the family and then the world."

He is referring to an educational program that culminates in a better human being, which the Brotherhood calls "Renaissance." It explains why the party wants to occupy key positions in education and culture. For the Brotherhood, this is more important in the long term than gaining control over the police or the judiciary.

And it's precisely what worries some people. At the beginning of the month Adel Imam, a popular Egyptian comedian and actor, was convicted of offending Islam. But the films in question, in which he portrays confused, bearded men with prayer bumps on their foreheads, are more than 10 years old.

'Triviality and Pornography Are Being Broadcast'

"Triviality and pornography are being broadcast in the movie theaters," says Ahmed al-Bahi, the representative of the FJP in

Ismailia. "We won't close the theaters here. But we will educate the people so that they can make their own decisions about boycotting things."

That, he believes, is a great concession to tolerance.

Bahi, a pleasant man, is a bridge engineer and speaks fluent English. "The old forces are still in their positions," the engineer says later, as he forces his dilapidated Hyundai through narrow streets. Voters are restless, he says. "We have the political majority in Ismailia, as we do everywhere in the Nile Delta. But we have no governmental power." Not everyone would complain about that fact.

The original mosque of the Brotherhood, which Banna helped to build with his own hands, is a green-and-white building on New Train Station Street. A plaque outside reads: "Dankes Mosque, formerly the Mosque of the Muslim Brothers, built in 1931." The ground floor is rented to a furniture dealer. Lamb halves dangle from hooks in the butcher's shop next door.

The janitor at the mosque is Salim Yahir, who used to work as a pizza chef in the western German city of Aachen. The entire neighborhood voted for the FJP in the parliamentary elections, he says, although he adds that it is hard to predict whom they will vote for in the presidential election. "The Brothers," he says, remembering bits of his German, "are from yesterday. You understand? Now they come and say: We no more smoke and drink." Then he offers the SPIEGEL reporter a cigarette.

Banna may have embarked on his plan to create a new kind of human in Ismailia 84 years ago, but he didn't get very far.

'They Let Us Down'

The Brotherhood had promised political humility before the parliamentary elections in the winter. After their election victory, they tried to take control of the constitutional commission and they eventually put forward a candidate for the presidential election after all, even though that was precisely what they had said they would not do. The movement, says Muslim Brotherhood expert and political scientist Diaa Rashwan, has switched from "patience" to "dominance" mode, out of concern that its voters could feel disappointed and turn their backs on the Brotherhood, because their daily lives have not changed.

An iron desk stands on the sidewalk next to the mosque. Behind it, nibbling on sunflower seeds, is a rotund, melancholy man, the owner of the butcher shop, keeping his eye on the street. Next to him are a toothless man with a packet of sugar on his wrist, sitting on an aluminum chair, and a man with a gloomy, scarred face who looks as if he might have accidentally stuck his head into an exploding oven.

"Hummel, Hummel," the toothless man says, using a colloquial greeting typical of the German city of Hamburg. Tears of emotion well up in the corner of his eyes. He was a sailor and apparently went to sea once with a man from Hamburg. The man with the scarred face embarks on a monologue that the interpreter summarizes as follows: "The Muslim Brothers had their chance. They let us down. We are all Muslims. Germany should help us."

The small group is sitting under a tarp made of an old campaign

banner. The melancholy man introduces himself as Ibrahim al-Gaafari, master butcher. Years ago, he was an unsuccessful candidate on an independent list. The banner hanging above him was his own.

Immune to Reeducation

"The Brothers are Muslims like us. They're harmless. What can anyone have against them?" asks Gaafari. But the niqab, the full veil, shouldn't become obligatory, he adds, saying: "I wouldn't even recognize my own daughter." There are also deviants among the Brothers, says Gaafari, and they are responsible for all the chaos, the recent attack on a refinery and the secret campaigns. "We voted for the Brothers because we were hungry for freedom. It's as if you suddenly had a plate of rice and meat in front of you. The first thing you do is eat. But they're liars."

The three old men say they will vote for Khaled Ali, the candidate favored by young people, or perhaps Amr Moussa, the charismatic former foreign minister, who Mubarak sidelined to the position of secretary-general of the Arab League. But they certainly will not support a candidate who has anything to do with the Muslim Brotherhood.

And there they sit, in the shade of a campaign banner that depicts the butcher's head and the words: "One of the devoted sons of Ismailia. Support him with love and esteem."

They sit there, and they'll be sitting there again the next day, chewing sunflower seeds. They are living proof of the tenacity of people, who are the way they have always been -- in other words, largely immune to all attempts to reeducate them.

Article 3.

The Washington Post

An underwhelming approach to Iran's nuclear ambitions

Reuel Marc Gerecht and and Mark Dubowitz

May 23 - Wednesday's meeting on Iran's nuclear program will be a competition of fears. Who is sufficiently terrified of an atom bomb in Iranian hands to credibly threaten military action? Who fears the immediate economic consequences of Persian petroleum coming off the market more than the longer-term menace of a nuclear-armed state that supports terrorism? Who dreads above all else an Israeli preemptive strike?

The West's sanctions — the reason the Iranians are showing up in Iraq — have been an alternative to war. Those who want these talks to go on will be enormously tempted to make concessions to Tehran. Stand too firm and Iran's supreme

leader, Ali Khamenei, might walk. Like his former patron Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the true father of Iran's nuclear program, Khamenei has supported the atomic quest since the mid-1980s, when it was still covert. He has spent billions to develop what appears to be every component of a nuclear-armed missile. Yet Western negotiators want to hope that sanctions have caused enough pain — and threaten more — that the supreme leader will have no choice but to view nuclear weapons as harmful to his rule. President Obama and his Western European counterparts have adopted a strategy of quasi-regime change: They don't really intend to overturn Khamenei's dominion, but they want Tehran's power players to think they will.

But given how advanced Iran's nuclear program is, the West's approach seems wildly underwhelming. As the tactician Anthony Cordesman recently noted, “the threat Iran's nuclear efforts pose [is] not simply a matter of its present ability to

enrich uranium to 20 percent. . . . [The regime] can pursue

nuclear weapons development through a range of compartmented and easily concealable programs without a formal weapons program, and even if it suspends enrichment activity.” If the West cannot stop Iran's technological advances in centrifuge production — and it remains unclear whether Western intelligence services know where the Iranian regime is manufacturing these machines — then even shutting down the known enrichment facilities at Natanz and Fordow offers, at

best, a pause. Increasingly proficient centrifuges will allow for much smaller, hard-to-detect facilities that can rapidly process low-enriched uranium into bomb-grade material.

The Americans and the Europeans have chosen not to underscore, Cordesman also points out, the fact that Tehran's entire military strategy for a quarter-century has been to develop atomic weapons to compensate for an irreversible lack of conventional power. Take away the nuclear program, and Khamenei's stewardship of his country and creed looks enfeebled. Nuclear weapons are the supreme leader's legacy.

Given the enormity of the task, one would think that war-averse Western leaders would go in one of two directions. They would try to bribe Iran's ruling elite with really big, sanctions-ending "carrots." This approach, while likely to fail, would at least match the scope of the challenge with the reward. Or they would crater the Islamic Republic's economy and then offer to negotiate, presuming that financial desperation would perhaps match the determination and duplicity of Iran's pro-nuke elite. But the West appears poised to, once again, take the easy way out. Despite U.N. Security Council resolutions saying the opposite, Western powers seem ready to concede to Khamenei the "right" to enrich uranium to 5 percent, which would, according to Olli Heinonen, former deputy director of the International Atomic Energy Agency, put Iran two-thirds of the way toward making bomb-grade uranium. By drawing the red line on enrichment at the higher level of 20 percent, the West will leave Tehran with about 13,000 pounds of low-enriched uranium today, enough to make five nuclear weapons. Iran would be free to continue its 5 percent stockpile and its centrifuge development, the real key to an undetectable

breakout.

Americans and Europeans certainly don't want to appear to cave — pride, politics and fear of the Israelis all matter. So they are likely to attempt to give Tehran economic relief by not strictly enforcing sanctions — on financial transfers between banks, technical assistance to the energy industry, shipping, insurance and imports of Iranian crude — already on the books. The Europeans could significantly diminish their embargo, slated to take full effect July 1, by ignoring “reflagged” Iranian crude shipped to Europe via Chinese-owned and -insured tankers. These steps could save Iran billions of dollars; they would clearly signal that the West wants the negotiations to continue. Which brings us back to the Israelis, who are the primary reason everyone is so anxious. As long as the talks continue, the Israeli government would find it politically difficult to attack. It's unclear whether Jerusalem has the capacity to preemptively strike. But if the Israelis, or the Americans, know the location of Iran's centrifuge production facilities, air raids that could seriously retard the weapons program become more likely. A new red line at 20 percent enrichment would leave Jerusalem two options: strike or give up. The euphoria in Western and certain Israeli circles that Judgment Day has been avoided will vanish rapidly as it becomes obvious how much Khamenei can cheat with this new standard. For those who fear another conflagration in the Middle East, that ought to be a compelling reason to hang tough in Baghdad. Odds are, however, we won't.

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Defense of Democracies. Mark Dubowitz is executive director of the foundation and head of its Iran Energy Project.

Article 4.

The Christian Science Monitor

Iran talks in Baghdad: Western naiveté

By Reza Kahlili

May 22 - It's hard to overestimate the degree of naiveté on the part of the West as it heads toward another round of nuclear talks with Iran in Baghdad on Wednesday.

Clearly, Iran is stalling for time to develop a nuclear weapon. One example: In talks last month in Istanbul, Tehran seems to have convinced international negotiators of the sincerity and weight of a fatwa, or religious edict, by the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei that a nuclear bomb is haram – forbidden – in Islam.

Last week, for instance, former French Prime Minister Michel Rocard said the fatwa will help promote confidence about Iran's nuclear activities.

The ayatollah is not beholden to keep his word, but that doesn't seem to be of much concern. At the Istanbul talks, the West agreed for the first time to Iran's demand that it may enrich uranium, with restrictions – despite UN resolutions to the contrary.

The Islamic regime has continuously believed that the more its nuclear program is expanded and progress is achieved, the less likely the West will demand a halt to the program – and if Iranian leaders remain steadfast in the face of all threats, the more likely the West will eventually accept a nuclear Iran.

Recent chronology bears this out.

When President Obama took office in 2009, Iran was under several UN sanctions conditioned on its suspension of all uranium enrichment-related and reprocessing activities. At the time, Iran had 1,200 kilos of low-enriched uranium at its Natanz facility.

Mr. Obama chose to engage the Islamic regime, believing that an extended hand would yield better results than threats. He reasoned that a new US approach would be welcomed by Tehran because it was a complete change from the Bush administration.

However, the radicals ruling Iran saw this extended hand as weakness. They engaged the Obama administration while enriching uranium beyond the benign 3.5 percent level, as it had been limited to for many years, to the 20 percent level. While that is not a high enough enrichment level for a nuclear weapon, it is high enough to get to bomb-grade very quickly – in a matter of weeks if Tehran decides to do so.

Early in 2010, Obama, realizing his defeat in the negotiation phase, moved to a sanctions phase. But instead of the crippling sanctions he had promised, he started step-by-step sanctions that Iran's clerics saw as further proof of America's inability to stop Iran, which emboldened them to speed up their program.

Today Iran, under further sanctions by the United Nations, United States, and European Union, has over 5.5 tons of enriched uranium – enough to eventually make six nuclear bombs. It continues to enrich uranium with more than 9,000 centrifuges at Natanz, both at the 3.5 and 20 percent levels, and at the previously secret site, the Fordow facility, deep in a mountain near the city of Qom, to the 20 percent level.

All the while Iran is expanding the number of centrifuges at both sites, with a possibility that there are more sites unknown to the West or the International Atomic Energy Agency.

This takes us to the current set of negotiations. In Istanbul, the West handed the Islamic regime a historic win. For the first time in the negotiations over Iran's nuclear program, the West offered Iran full acceptance of its nuclear enrichment process if Iran stopped the 20-percent enrichment.

In other words, the West has caved to Iranian demands of accepting its domestic nuclear enrichment.

Most interesting is an Iranian analysis of Khamenei's fatwa: "If the Obama administration realizes the importance of the place of the supreme leader in Iran and understands the fatwa, then most of their problem [with Iran's nuclear issue] will be solved."

The analysis ominously stated: "There will be no other

guarantee beyond the fatwa to the West” – meaning that the West will only get the word of a leader whose regime has been based on lies and deceit, a leader who has ordered the slaughter of thousands of Iranians – and also Americans – in Iraq and Afghanistan, and a leader who constantly threatens the existence of Israel and the “defeat” of America.

Khamenei is not a grand ayatollah, or a marja, and therefore cannot issue a fatwa. Many in Iran’s Islamic leadership know this. He was elevated to ayatollah status overnight to replace Ruhollah Khomeini when he died in 1989. Even if a marja issues a fatwa, he can overturn it if it benefits Islam. So Khamenei’s fatwa can be tossed out at the right time.

Interestingly, the regime’s interpretation of the Quran is to deceive its enemy, i.e. the West, until such time as the regime is strong enough to confront it.

Is Obama so naive as to hang on to a fake fatwa in return for accepting a nuclear Iran?

His secretary of state, Hillary Rodham Clinton, says she has discussed the fatwa with Turkey’s prime minister, experts, and religious scholars. “If it is indeed a statement of principle, of values, then it is a starting point for being operationalized, which means that it serves as the entryway into a negotiation as to how you demonstrate that it is indeed a sincere, authentic statement of conviction,” she said last month.

According to media reports, the US is expected to push Iran to close its Fordow facility and send its stockpile of medium-enriched uranium out of the country.

Iran has ruled out the closure of Fordow, even announcing that it will increase the number of centrifuges at that facility. And so far, its strategy of expanding its nuclear program while wearing down the West has already proved successful.

It is clear that after a decade of negotiations and sanctions, the leaders of the Islamic regime will not accept a full halt to their nuclear program. But given that Iran now has the know-how to make a bomb, that is the only outcome that should be acceptable to the West.

Reza Kahlili is a pseudonym for a former CIA operative in Iran's Revolutionary Guard and the author of the award winning book "A Time to Betray: The Astonishing Double Life of a CIA Agent Inside the Revolutionary Guards of Iran." He teaches at the US Department of Defense's Joint Counterintelligence Training Academy (JCITA) and is a member of the Task Force on National and Homeland Security.

Article 5.

Project Syndicate

The Nixon Option for Iran?

William H. Luers and Thomas R. Pickering

May. 22 — Rearranging the deck chairs would not have saved the Titanic. Nor did the endless debates on the shape of the table in the Vietnam negotiations advance the effort to end that malign conflict. Nevertheless, many American presidents have successfully redesigned talks with adversaries in bold new ways to strengthen national security without war. Such boldness is now needed in the negotiations over Iran's nuclear program. In 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt negotiated personally with Soviet Foreign Minister Maxim Litvinov to open diplomatic relations between the two countries. Dwight D. Eisenhower invited Nikita Khrushchev to the United States in 1959 to open the eyes of the first Soviet leader ever to visit America. The bilateral US-China talks in Warsaw in the 1960's were fruitless until Richard M. Nixon and National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger opened a different, more direct discussion through the auspices of Pakistan.

International negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program also need a new concept and broader agenda. The Istanbul meeting last month concluded on a positive note. Both sides decided to find a way to avoid the pattern of mutual recrimination and sterile exchanges. The door is now open to an initial agreement with modest goals.

But don't count on a new era without some form of direct US-Iran discussions. The talks with the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council plus Germany (P5+1) are formulaic, stagnant, and not likely to achieve any breakthrough

on their own. The Iranians feel out-numbered by diverse participants with varying agendas. The US needs to reshape the environment to make it easier for Iran to compromise.

The US should press for bilateral talks. One lesson provided by former American presidents is the value of direct, high-level contacts with key adversaries. Of course, a face-to-face meeting between President Barack Obama and Ayatollah Ali Khamenei seems absurd to imagine – now. But could any meeting have seemed more absurd in 1969 than the 1971 meeting between Nixon and Mao Zedong? The US and Iran need to set a path toward broad bilateral discussions on worldviews, regional security, and plans to improve mutual understanding in order to minimize differences.

Even without direct US-Iran talks now, the current negotiations need reshaping. The P5+1 should continue to negotiate with Iran on its uranium-enrichment program, while the International Atomic Energy Agency should negotiate with Iran on strengthening the transparency of its nuclear program. The Iranians want to resolve their problems directly with the IAEA, and to avoid negotiating under the cloud of UN Security Council resolutions, which impose sanctions on Iran to force suspension of enrichment.

Comments

This situation suggests a phased approach. First, during the talks in Baghdad, the P5+1 might seek an early confidence-building agreement by which Iran voluntarily ceases enriching to 20% content in the U-235 fissile isotope and blends down or ships out their stockpile of such uranium, which is closer to weapons

grade. They might also seek a standstill on the deep underground enrichment facility at Fordow in exchange for provision of fuel rods for Iran's research reactor and a freeze on some sanctions.

Second, the P5+1 could then agree to agree to some Iranian enrichment as an incentive for Iran to conclude a parallel agreement with the IAEA on greater transparency. These parallel steps would reshape the process to achieve a key US objective: ensuring that Iran abides by Khamenei's own fatwa (religious decree) against nuclear weapons.

Third, both sides will need to outline the long-term objectives of the negotiations. As the IAEA presses Iran for agreements on greater transparency, Iran wants to know where such agreements might lead, particularly regarding sanctions.

Iranians claim that each time they move toward cooperation with the US, a new problem emerges to block improved relations. Iran wants to know which sanctions might be delayed, frozen, or lifted in exchange for current and future concessions, fearing that the US will continue to impose sanctions on human-rights, security, or other grounds.

The US, for its part, views Iran as a duplicitous and unreliable negotiator that is committed to nuclear weapons and unserious about talks. The time has come to test Iran's intentions by reaching something like the two-phased agreements outlined here – a longer-term, step-by-step process with reciprocal actions, in which each side must give something to get what it needs.

Finally, even with step-by-step progress on Iran's nuclear

program, broader discussions are needed to address the many non-nuclear issues that threaten regional stability. There is currently no forum to discuss Afghanistan, Iraq, drug trafficking, Persian Gulf security, emergency communications to avoid accidental conflict, and the sources of deep distrust and misunderstanding.

Some of these discussions might involve representatives of states that are not part of the P5+1, including governments that have closer relations with Iran. To organize discussion of these broader issues, the US and others should explore the possibility of appointing a special envoy – perhaps a former Chief of State under UN auspices – to engage Iran in new ways.

If Obama were to take the lead in reshaping the setting and the process by which the US and others talk with Iran, progress could become easier. The Istanbul talks opened the door to an initial – if incremental – breakthrough agreement. The US now has an opportunity to establish new ways to explore common ground and reach a more durable political solution.

William H. Luers served as US Ambassador to Czechoslovakia and Venezuela, and President of the United Nations Association from 1999 to 2009.

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Article 6.

The New York Times

The Crisis of European Democracy

Amartya Sen

May 22 - IF proof were needed of the maxim that the road to hell is paved with good intentions, the economic crisis in Europe provides it. The worthy but narrow intentions of the European Union's policy makers have been inadequate for a sound European economy and have produced instead a world of misery, chaos and confusion.

There are two reasons for this.

First, intentions can be respectable without being clearheaded, and the foundations of the current austerity policy, combined with the rigidities of Europe's monetary union (in the absence of

fiscal union), have hardly been a model of cogency and sagacity. Second, an intention that is fine on its own can conflict with a more urgent priority — in this case, the preservation of a democratic Europe that is concerned about societal well-being. These are values for which Europe has fought, over many decades.

Certainly, some European countries have long needed better economic accountability and more responsible economic management. However, timing is crucial; reform on a well-thought-out timetable must be distinguished from reform done in extreme haste. Greece, for all of its accountability problems, was not in an economic crisis before the global recession in 2008. (In fact, its economy grew by 4.6 percent in 2006 and 3 percent in 2007 before beginning its continuing shrinkage.)

The cause of reform, no matter how urgent, is not well served by the unilateral imposition of sudden and savage cuts in public services. Such indiscriminate cutting slashes demand — a counterproductive strategy, given huge unemployment and idle productive enterprises that have been decimated by the lack of market demand. In Greece, one of the countries left behind by productivity increases elsewhere, economic stimulation through monetary policy (currency devaluation) has been precluded by the existence of the European monetary union, while the fiscal package demanded by the Continent's leaders is severely anti-growth. Economic output in the euro zone continued to decline in the fourth quarter of last year, and the outlook has been so grim that a recent report finding zero growth in the first quarter of this year was widely greeted as good news.

There is, in fact, plenty of historical evidence that the most

effective way to cut deficits is to combine deficit reduction with rapid economic growth, which generates more revenue. The huge deficits after World War II largely disappeared with fast economic growth, and something similar happened during Bill Clinton's presidency. The much praised reduction of the Swedish budget deficit from 1994 to 1998 occurred alongside fairly rapid growth. In contrast, European countries today are being asked to cut their deficits while remaining trapped in zero or negative economic growth.

There are surely lessons here from John Maynard Keynes, who understood that the state and the market are interdependent. But Keynes had little to say about social justice, including the political commitments with which Europe emerged after World War II. These led to the birth of the modern welfare state and national health services — not to support a market economy but to protect human well-being.

Though these social issues did not engage Keynes deeply, there is an old tradition in economics of combining efficient markets with the provision of public services that the market may not be able to deliver. As Adam Smith (often seen simplistically as the first guru of free-market economics) wrote in "The Wealth of Nations," there are "two distinct objects" of an economy: "first, to provide a plentiful revenue or subsistence for the people, or, more properly, to enable them to provide such a revenue or subsistence for themselves; and secondly, to supply the state or commonwealth with a revenue sufficient for the public services."

Perhaps the most troubling aspect of Europe's current malaise is the replacement of democratic commitments by financial

dictates — from leaders of the European Union and the European Central Bank, and indirectly from credit-rating agencies, whose judgments have been notoriously unsound.

Participatory public discussion — the “government by discussion” expounded by democratic theorists like John Stuart Mill and Walter Bagehot — could have identified appropriate reforms over a reasonable span of time, without threatening the foundations of Europe’s system of social justice. In contrast, drastic cuts in public services with very little general discussion of their necessity, efficacy or balance have been revolting to a large section of the European population and have played into the hands of extremists on both ends of the political spectrum.

Europe cannot revive itself without addressing two areas of political legitimacy. First, Europe cannot hand itself over to the unilateral views — or good intentions — of experts without public reasoning and informed consent of its citizens. Given the transparent disdain for the public, it is no surprise that in election after election the public has shown its dissatisfaction by voting out incumbents.

Second, both democracy and the chance of creating good policy are undermined when ineffective and blatantly unjust policies are dictated by leaders. The obvious failure of the austerity mandates imposed so far has undermined not only public participation — a value in itself — but also the possibility of arriving at a sensible, and sensibly timed, solution.

This is a surely a far cry from the “united democratic Europe” that the pioneers of European unity sought.

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