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Article 1.
NYT

Russia: Sort of, but Not Really
[Thomas L. Friedman](#)

February 4, 2012 – Moscow -- AS a journalist, the best part of covering the recent wave of protests and uprisings against autocrats is seeing stuff you never imagined ██████ see — like, in Moscow last week, when some opponents of [Vladimir Putin](#)'s decision to become president again, for possibly 12 more years, hung a huge yellow banner on a rooftop facing the Kremlin with Putin's face covered by a big X, next to the words "Putin Go Away" in Russian.

The sheer brazenness of such protests and the anger at Prime Minister Putin among the urban middle classes here for treating them like idiots by just announcing that he and President Dmitri Medvedev were going to switch jobs were unthinkable a year ago. The fact that the youths who put up the banner were apparently not jailed also bespeaks how much Putin understands that he is on very thin ice and can't afford to create any "martyrs" that would enrage the antigovernment protesters, who gathered again in Moscow on Saturday.

But what will Putin do next? Will he really fulfill his promise to let new parties emerge or just wait out his opposition, which is divided and still lacks a real national leader? Putin's [Russia](#) is at a crossroads. It has become a "sort-of-but-not-really-country." Russia today is sort of a democracy, but not really. It's sort of a free market, but not really. It's sort of got the rule of law to protect businesses, but not really. It's sort of a European country, but not really. It has sort of a free press, but not really. Its cold war with America is sort of over, but not really. It's sort of trying to become something more than a petro-state, but not really.

Putin himself is largely responsible for both the yin and the yang. When he became president in 2000, Russia was not sort of in trouble. It was really in trouble — and spiraling downward. Using an iron fist, Putin restored order and solidified the state, but it was cemented not by real political and economic reforms but rather by a massive increase in oil prices and revenues. Nevertheless, many Russians were, and still are, grateful. Along the way, Putin spawned a new wealthy corrupt clique around him, but he also ensured that enough of Russia's oil and mineral bounty trickled down to the major cities, creating a small urban middle class that is now demanding a greater say in its future. But Putin is now stalled. He's brought Russia back from the brink, but he's been unable to make the

political, economic and educational changes needed to make Russia a modern European state.

Russia has that potential. It is poised to go somewhere. But will Putin lead? The Times's Moscow bureau chief, Ellen Barry, and I had a talk Thursday at the Russian White House with Putin's spokesman, Dmitri Peskov. I left uncertain.

All these urban protests, said Peskov, are a sign that economic growth has moved ahead of political reform, and that can be fixed: "Ten years ago, we didn't have any middle class. They were thinking about how to buy a car, how to buy a flat, how to open bank accounts, how to pay for their children to go to a private school, and so on and so forth. Now they have got it, and the interesting part of the story is that they want to be involved much more in political life."

O.K., sounds reasonable. But what about Putin's suggestion that the protests were part of a U.S. plot to weaken him and Russia. Does Peskov really believe that?

"I don't believe that. I know it," said Peskov. Money to destabilize Russia has been coming in "from Washington officially and non-officially ... to support different organizations ... to provoke the situation. We are not saying it just to say it. We are saying it because we know. ... We knew two or three years in advance that the next day after parliamentary elections [last December] ... we will have people saying these elections are not legitimate."

This is either delusional or really cynical. And then there's foreign policy. Putin was very helpful at the [United Nations](#) in not blocking the no-fly zone over Libya, but he feels burned by it — that we went from protecting civilians to toppling his ally and arms customer, Muammar el-Qaddafi. It's true. But what an ally! What a thing to regret! And, now, the more Putin throws his support behind the murderous dictatorship of Bashar al-Assad in [Syria](#), the more he looks like a person buying a round-trip ticket on the Titanic — after it has already hit the iceberg. Assad is a dead man walking. Even if all you care about are arms sales, wouldn't Russia want to align itself with the emerging forces in Syria?

"There is a strong domestic dimension to Russian policy toward Syria," said Vladimir Frolov, a Russian foreign policy expert. "If we allow the [redacted] and the U.S. to put pressure on a regime — that is somewhat like ours

— to cede power to the opposition, what kind of precedent could that create?”

This approach to the world does not bode well for reform at home, added Frolov. “Putin was built for one-way conversations,” he said. He has overseen a “a very personalized, paternalistic system based on arbitrariness.”

Real reform will require a huge re-set on Putin’s part. Could it happen? Does he get it? On the evidence available now, ■ say: sort of, but not really.

Article 2.

Inside-IRAN

Iran will strike back

Geneive Abdo and Reza H. Akbari

February 3rd, 2012 -- Will Iran retaliate if attacked? Israeli intelligence officials and neo-conservative pundits in the United States argue that Iran is bluffing – that it wouldn’t dare.

But on Tuesday, U.S. Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper Jr. powerfully rebutted this view. Clapper argued not only that Iran would retaliate, but that some Iranian officials are now even willing to carry out attacks on U.S. soil.

In his unclassified statement submitted to the U.S. Senate’s Select Committee on Intelligence, Clapper said: “Iran’s willingness to sponsor future attacks in the United States or against our interests abroad probably will be shaped by Tehran’s evaluation of the costs it bears for the plot...as well as Iranian leader’s perception of U.S. threats against the regime.”

The issue of survival is not taken lightly by the Iranian military and political establishments. According to an article published by the Guardian, an Iranian idiom is quite popular among military officials, “If we drown, we’ll drown everyone with us.” The Iranian regime is prepared to fight until the end.

Many foreign leaders, such as France’s Nicholas Sarkozy are also very worried about the implications of a potential military conflict with Iran. As

reported by the German publication Spiegel, during his New Year's address to diplomats in Paris, Sarkozy stated, "A military intervention [in Iran] would not solve the problem [of Iran's nuclear program], but would trigger war and chaos in the Middle East and maybe the world.

Such conclusions are far more realistic than that of a retired Israeli official who told the New York Times: "I am not saying Iran will not react. But it will be nothing like London during World War II."

In the eyes of the Iranian regime, this is a fight for survival far more threatening than the domestic challenge presented by the protest movement of millions of Iranian demonstrators in 2009.

The recent pronouncements from Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and other Iranian officials should be taken seriously. In November, Khamenei said: "Iran is not a nation to sit still and just observe threats from fragile materialist powers which are being eaten by worms from inside.

"Anyone who harbors any thought of invading the Islamic Republic of Iran – or even if the thought crosses their mind – should be prepared to receive strong blows and the steel fists of the military, the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, and the Basij, backed by the entire Iranian nation," he said. Is he bluffing? There is no way to know for sure, but are Israel and the United States willing to accept the potential risks?

There are a number of political, economic, and military retaliatory moves Iran is perfectly capable of and willing to carry out in the short and long-term.

- According to Clapper's Worldwide Threat Assessment, "Iran already has the largest inventory of ballistic missiles in the Middle East, and it is expanding the scale, reach, and sophistication of its ballistic missile forces." Iran can use its missile abilities to strike Israel.

- Some might make the argument that Iran's military capabilities are not on par with Israel or the United States. It does not matter. Even if Israel succeeds in short-term air strikes, Iran is willing and able to cause and promote instability in the region. This is in direct contradiction with the United States' broad interest in the Middle East, which is stability.

- Iran may not be able to keep the Strait of Hormuz closed indefinitely, but even threats and potential attempts will cause volatility in the Persian Gulf. Some point to recent history and argue that Iran has never launched a large-scale retaliatory attack. But times have changed, and Iran's position

has shifted. Iran is now preparing for an attack on its soil, and part of this strategy includes an effective second strike.

Article 3.

Today's Zaman

Zero problems with neighbors revisited

Richard Falk

5 February 2012 -- Pundits in Europe and North America in recent months have delighted in citing with a literary smirk “zero problems with neighbors,” the centerpiece of Ahmet Davutoğlu’s foreign policy agenda since he became foreign minister on May 1, 2009, having previously served as chief advisor to both the prime minister and foreign minister. These critics point to the heightened tensions with Syria and Iraq, the persisting inability to overcome the hostile fallout from the Mavi Marmara incident with Israel, and even the renewed salience of the long unresolved dispute with the Armenian diaspora sparked by a new French bill that makes the denial of genocide associated with the 1915 massacres of Armenians in Turkey a crime.

Troubles to be sure, but should these be interpreted as “failures,” and more precisely as “Turkish failures”? Perhaps, Davutoğlu was insufficiently cautious, or alternatively too optimistic, when he articulated the zero problems diplomacy, but was it not an accurate way of signaling a new dawn for Turkey’s approach to neighbors, especially its Arab neighbors, and actually, to the world as a whole. And Davutoğlu followed through with a dizzying series of initiatives, conceiving of the neighborhood in a broad sense and managing to banish many of the bad memories associated with Ottoman rule over much of the Arab world.

It should be recalled that Turkish foreign policy began charting a new course years before Davutoğlu became foreign minister. In an important sense, the turning point came in 2003 when the Turkish government refused to allow the United States to use its territory to stage an invasion of Iraq. At the time the anti-Justice and Development Party (AKP) opposition called the decision the biggest mistake in Turkish republican history. In retrospect, it was a transformational moment that showed Turkey, its neighbors and the world that it could think and act for itself when it comes

to foreign policy, that the Cold War was over and that Washington could no longer take Ankara for granted. And yet this move did not mean, as some critics immediately claimed, a turn toward Islam and away from the West. As recently shown, Turkey still values its NATO ties even to the extent of allowing radar stations on its territory that is linked to missile defense for Europe, Israel and the Gulf in relation to Iran.

Forgetting Turkey's past

By now it is almost forgotten that it was Turkey that encouraged peace talks between Syria and Israel that seemed to be headed for dramatic success until their abrupt breakdown, a development attributed at the time to the Israeli attacks on Gaza at the end of 2008, but in retrospect better understood as the unwillingness of Israel to give up any of its 1967 conquests. Turkey also sought to be a peacemaker further afield in the Balkans and the Caucasus, doing the seemingly impossible, bringing Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia together in a manner that moved their two antagonistic governments on a path leading to peace. Even more ambitiously, in collaboration with Brazil, Turkey used its new stature as an independent player in May 2010 to persuade Tehran to accept an arrangement for the storage of much of Iran's enriched uranium in Turkey, thereby demonstrating the plausibility of a peaceful alternative to the United States/Israel posture of sanctions and warmongering.

To be sure, the earlier sensible effort to have friendly relations with Syria backfired, but not until the regime in Damascus started the massive shooting of its citizens and refused to meet the demands of its people for far reaching reforms. Arguably, the same reversal of outlook in Ankara occurred in relation to Libya after Muammar Gaddafi threatened to massacre his opposition, leading even to extending some Turkish support to the UN-backed NATO intervention in Libya in 2011 that shaped the outcome of an internal struggle for control of the state. Also, there is no doubt that the refusal of the European Union to shift its one-sided stance on Cyprus has soured relations with Greece, producing a temporary deterioration that has taken place despite the Turkish show of reasonableness and exhibiting a spirit of compromise.

Even with Israel, despite the strong sympathies of the Turkish public with the struggle of the Palestinians, the AKP leadership has done its best to restore normalcy to the relationship between the two countries. After all,

the May 31, 2010 attack by Israel's navy in international waters on the Mavi Marmara carrying humanitarian activists and assistance to Gaza and challenging the Israeli blockade was not only a flagrant breach of international law but resulted in the death of nine Turkish passengers. Turkey has demanded an apology and compensation for the families of the victims, a reasonable set of expectations that was on the verge of acceptance by Tel Aviv, but collapsed when challenged by the internal opposition to Benjamin Netanyahu led by the super-hawk foreign minister, Avigdor Liebermann, now under indictment for fraud.

What this brief overview argues is that Turkey has consistently tried to avert recourse to intervention and war in the Middle East and to promote diplomatic approaches that rely exclusively on soft power. It has, to be sure, resisted geopolitical rebuffs, as in relation to its efforts to end the confrontation with Iran, impressively refusing to stay in line behind the bellicose leadership of the United States and Israel. Davutoğlu has correctly affirmed Turkey's resolve to act on the basis of its values and convictions in the post-Cold War politics of the region and not blindly follow directives from Washington. Iran is a striking case where the Turkish approach, although incapable of stemming the drift toward war being mounted by the West, is both wiser and more likely to achieve the goal of reassuring the world that Tehran means what it says when it insists that it does not intend to acquire nuclear weapons. As in every other foreign policy setting, Davutoğlu is exhibiting his belief that in the 21st century persuasion works better than coercion, not to mention the avoidance of death, devastation and displacement.

In sum, the zero problems with neighbors as a touchstone to Turkish foreign policy in the Middle East and the world needs to be understood as an aspiration and strong preference rather than as an invariable guide to practice. There are too many contradictions embedded in political realities to be slavishly tied to a rigid doctrine incapable of taking account of context. For instance, in Syria and Libya the Turkish government was forced to choose between siding with a regime slaughtering its own people and backing the population in its efforts to democratize and humanize the governing process. Zero problems needs to be understood as a framework for addressing the relations between countries, not just governments, and in situations of strife choices must be made. Arguably Turkey went too far

when it backed NATO in Libya or not far enough when it failed to show support for the Green Revolution in Iran after the stolen elections of June 2009. These are difficult interpretative choices that do not invalidate the principled positions that Davutoğlu has repeatedly affirmed as being as important as realist calculations in shaping foreign policy in complex situations. Possibly, if the Green Revolution had shown more persistence or the regime had engaged in more widespread killing of its people Turkey would have made a “Syrian choice.”

‘Great historical transformations’

Davutoğlu on more than one occasion has expressed enthusiastic support for the upheavals grouped together under the banner of the Arab Spring. He calls these upheavals great historical transformations that are irreversible and expressions of a thirst by young people for lives of dignity and democratic freedoms. There is nothing that Turkey has done to thwart these high ideals.

In this respect, I think it is possible to reach an assessment of Turkish foreign policy as of early 2012. It has charted a course of action based on -- to the extent of which it is feasible -- soft power diplomacy, taking initiatives to resolve its conflicts with neighbors but also to offer its good offices to mediate conflict to which it is not a party. Its credibility has become so great that İstanbul has replaced European capitals as the preferred venue for conflict resolution whether in relation to Afghanistan or even Iran. It is notable that despite Washington’s annoyance with Ankara regarding Iran or due to the simmering dispute with Israel, the US government seems to favor İstanbul as the most propitious site for negotiations with Iran concerning its nuclear program.

At the same time, as Syria and Libya show, it is not always possible to avoid taking sides in response to internal struggles, although Turkey has delayed doing so to give governments in power the opportunity to establish internal peace. In a globalizing world boundaries are not absolute, and sovereignty must give way if severe violations of human rights are being committed by the regime, but that still should make armed intervention a last resort, and one only undertaken in extreme instances on behalf of known opposition forces and in a manner that has a reasonable prospect of success at acceptable costs for the targeted society. Such conditions almost never exist and so intervention is rarely if ever, in my judgment, justified,

although conditions may quite often create strong interventionary temptations.

We can only hope that Turkey stays the course, pursuing every opening that enables positive mutual relations among countries and using its diplomatic stature to facilitate conflict resolution among others. Rather than viewing “zero problems” as a failure, it should be a time to reaffirm the creativity of Turkish foreign policy in the course of the last decade that has shown the world the benefits of soft power diplomacy. This diplomacy, as supplemented by Turkey’s economic success and political stability, helps us understand the great popularity of and respect for the Turkish prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, throughout the region and the world.

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Article 4.

Asharq Al-Awsat

Egypt: Three scenarios

Abdel Monem Said

04 February 2012 -- Many people have asked me about the path that Egypt is following today, and my answer draws from the ancient Egyptian aphorism that reads: when one comes to a crossroads, he can take one of three roads; the road of safety, the road of regret, or the road of no-return. This issue was put forward to many different people during the time of the revolution, resulting either in a new wondrous and prosperous state of affairs, compared to the past, or a state of “disorientation” and bewilderment where a state does not know which direction it should head in and so comes to a virtual standstill, being content with cursing the old regime, but not knowing what should replace it. Alternatively, there is the final path, where following the the revolution, the state suffers from violence and civil war, division is inevitable, and this country is then viewed as a “failed state”, according to the modern method of classifying states.

The "road of safety" in Egypt is clearly embodied in what has been called the deadline for the transfer of power from the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces [SCAF] to an elected civil authority. Power, at the end of the day, is nothing more than a set of institutions that run the affairs of the state and which legislators universally agree as including the executive, the legislative, and the judiciary. At the same time, these are also a set of institutions in which people work, and which work to meet the people's requirements and needs, whilst also granting them the opportunity to be innovative. Fortunately, despite the 25 January revolution and the Egyptian state being idle as a result of the dissolving of the Egyptian parliament and Shura Council, as well as the destruction of the security apparatus; the presence of the army, judiciary, and state bureaucracy have helped in the management of state affairs. This allowed the country to reach the road of safety by alleviating the security troubles and electing the major legislative institution [the parliament], which is now operative less than one year after the revolution. According to the agreed time frame, the state's institutions that have been idle will be operational once more following the election of the Shura Council. This schedule or timeframe will then see the drafting of a new constitution, the election of the president, and the military returning to the barracks. When all this has been achieved, Egypt will be ruled by a purely civilian authority for the first time in six decades. "The road of regret" on the other hand simply means that the state of affairs remains as it is; the process of rebuilding the country is carried out whilst the revolution continues; a duality which will have a huge cost on the country. The cause of this duality can be seen in the revolutionaries returning to the "square" once again on the revolution's first anniversary, as they believe that none of the revolution's goals and objectives have been fulfilled, with the exception of the departure of the president and some of his close associates. However despite this, the revolutionaries believe that the roots of the regime remain the same. This view is somewhat true, for a deeply-rooted and firmly established state like Egypt cannot be changed in terms of its regime or people by virtue of a revolution, even as strong a revolution as the recent Egyptian revolution. The state of affairs in the country requires time to change; legislations, laws and the drafting of a new constitution must be extensively discussed and negotiated by the major factions and parties, and this is something that requires time. The revolutionary youth, having

entered the domain of politics without a clear leadership – eventually making up 216 separate revolutionary parties and trends – are unaware of the complexities of politics. They believe that laws can and should be agreed upon and enacted immediately; as if this were as easy as ordering a takeaway! Yet, the revolutionaries have another problem; they do not want to shoulder the responsibility of anything that happened during the transitional period. They are acting as if they were not responsible for defeating the 19 March referendum, when they failed to convince the people to follow a different path. They are acting as if they did not demand that this transitional period be prolonged to allow the youth “parties” to prepare for a general election. It was therefore surprising that they later blamed SCAF for prolonging the transitional period and drawing up an election law that resulted in the failure of all revolutionary parties. Of course, this law was drafted in front of the eyes of the revolutionary powers! Despite this, it was the Muslim Brotherhood who won the most seats, and this would have been the case whether the election system would have been proportional or representative; indeed nobody knows what election system the revolutionaries would have preferred! The dilemma is that the election results were a source of anger; for the youth staged the revolution yet it was the Muslim Brotherhood and the Salafist parties that reaped the rewards. Both of these groups are moving towards moderation; however the revolutionaries who have begun to regret the catastrophic mistake they made [in failing to benefit from the revolution], seem to want to resume this revolution, only this time utilizing hard-line slogans, sometimes against SCAF, sometimes against the sovereignty of law, and other times against “fake” democracy. The road of regret is for the revolution to always feel as if it has been betrayed, whilst the state is frustrated, and everybody is awaiting the moment where clashes break out between members of the two on satellite television screens. Therefore, it is probable that this situation will move to the street in a moment of anger when one side drives the other to despair. This is the moment when Egypt would reach the "road of no-return", a moment that seems improbable for the Egyptian people who are known for their moderate nature and their keenness to be distanced from anything that can lead them to danger. This is a country where many former opposition figures have now been let into the decision-making process. Perhaps, the Egyptian people are now in a

state of revolutionary and election fatigue at a time. Yet, this situation is totally different to what is going on in the minds of the revolutionaries; the youths who represent the vast majority of the revolutionary powers are now badly injured, or rather insulated, because although many people applauded them during the revolution, they acted differently when it came to the elections. The revolutionary youth were unable to solve this puzzle, and confused by the election outcome, and when confusion has no end, it shifts into frustration, and when frustration exceeds the limits, it becomes violence, and at best, will result in continuation of the revolution.

In this way, one year after the Egyptian revolution, and the so-called Arab Spring, the state of affairs have changed in an unprecedented manner which is not likely to reoccur in the future. What we came to know is that the early romance [of the revolution] has produced a reality that is not so romantic today. What happened was necessary and inevitable because the situation had reached a deadlock. The scenes we are watching now in Syria, and the al-Assad regime clinging to power even at the expense of the deaths of thousands of martyrs, is evidence that whatever change is desired will always have a price. When this change is achieved, however, stressful times lay ahead, during which the people search for ways to move the country forward, not backwards. All the scenarios take us to a future that will have its own dynamics and conditions, and we must wait and see what this is; 2012 will no doubt be just as exciting as 2011!

Article 5.

World Politics Review

Preparing for the 'Day After' in Syria

[Nikolas Gvosdev](#)

03 Feb 2012 -- Now that the United States, France and other Western powers have endorsed the Arab League's call for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to step down -- even if that formulation is ultimately edited out of the final draft of the resolution pending before the ██████ Security Council -- it is time to start making plans for the various contingencies that may erupt on "the day after."

Most Western policymakers, at least in their public rhetoric, continue to

cling to an optimistic scenario in which a broad-based, inclusive opposition takes power in Damascus after an initial transition from Assad's rule. Reassured of their role in the new Syria, the country's Alawite and Christian populations, two of the communities that the current regime depends on for bedrock support, would have an incentive to participate peacefully in the post-Assad order. Of course, such a scenario appeals to U.S. and Western publics, weary from a decade of stabilization efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is simply not politically feasible for Western leaders to vigorously champion efforts to force Assad to step down if there is an expectation that Western forces be needed to guarantee the transition. But the window of opportunity for this optimistic scenario is closing rapidly, [if it ever existed at all](#). CNN's Nic Robertson, returning from a recent visit to the embattled country, worries that those in the largely Sunni-based opposition who are inclined to reach out to Syria's other communities [may no longer have that option](#), as "the hard-liners are already jockeying for post-al-Assad power."

And even if opposition leaders were to make clear and unambiguous statements about their desire for a secular, nonsectarian Syria in which all communities would be represented, the reality of what has happened to other multiethnic societies when authoritarian regimes have collapsed does not provide a comforting track record. Bosnia today [has made little progress in overcoming its divisions](#), despite billions of dollars in aid and massive Western state-building efforts following the 1995 Dayton Accords. Similarly, the Iraqi exiles who told President George W. Bush that divisions among country's Sunni, Shiite and Kurdish communities could be easily overcome in a post-Saddam Hussein Iraq either underestimated or deliberately downplayed the salience of these ethno-sectarian identities. Moreover, reassuring statements made to Western leaders may not always translate into actual policy once opposition forces come into power. Still, even if the Assad regime does manage to linger on in the coming months in the absence of any determined push by outside powers to unseat it, it appears to have been fatally damaged. So the day is probably coming when Assad will no longer be able to retain power over the entire country. Unfortunately, that leaves us with the pessimistic assessment of the Council on Foreign Relations' Ed Husain, [who argued that](#) "regime change in Syria would be bloody and protracted."

The worry here is that, as the country's majority Sunni population takes power, the minority groups that did well under the Assad dynasty will be targeted. The troubling slogan, "Christians to Beirut, Alawis to the coffin" [that has been heard from time to time](#) at opposition rallies is not particularly reassuring. Nor can either group take comfort in the fate of Iraq's formerly dominant Sunni minority and previously tolerated Christian community when imagining what things might look like for them in a post-Assad order.

The stage could thus be set for a cycle of violence that would be difficult to break. The Sunni insurgency in Iraq is one example of the form such violence could take. Another possibility is that Syria would fracture. If the core of Syria is "lost" to a Sunni-based Arab movement after the fall of Assad, then the logic of large-scale ethnic cleansing to create compact regions, seen in the Balkan wars in the 1990s, could surface here. As in Iraq, there are different geographic regions where Syria's minority groups form the local majority. For the Alawites, the coastal areas around the city of Latakia -- where, incidentally, the last remaining Russian military base outside the former Soviet Union, the port of Tartus, happens to be located -- are their strongholds. Indeed, during the French Mandate period, there was a separate Alawite state based on these territories. Similarly, the Druze, who have largely remained neutral in the current struggle, have traditionally been concentrated in regions in the south. There would also be a strong temptation on the part of the country's Kurds to carve out a Syrian Kurdistan in the northeast.

And unlike in Libya, where any negative consequences from the overthrow of Moammar Gadhafi could be minimized in terms of the impact on the larger region, there is no such cushion for Syria. A Sunni government, particularly one strongly influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood, would change the whole balance of power in the neighborhood, to begin with by breaking the Assad government's ties with Iran, which permit Tehran to expand its influence throughout the region.

Neither Iran nor Hezbollah in Lebanon would welcome those developments. Already there are reports that Iranian Revolutionary Guards and Hezbollah fighters [have supported the pro-Assad forces](#), and both would have strong incentives to back an Alawite insurgency against a Sunni-dominated regime. Sectarian strife in Syria would risk destabilizing

both Iraq and Lebanon, which is why Lebanese Druze leader Walid Jumblatt [has been urging his fellow Lebanese politicians](#) to work to “isolate Lebanon from the Syria problem.” And the Hashemite monarchy in Jordan, already coping with the strains of coping with Iraqi refugees as well as the perennial issue of the kingdom’s Palestinians, could be overwhelmed by new refugee flows from the north.

In such a worst-case scenario, would the West be willing to intervene to stop sectarian battles by deploying peace-enforcement troops on the ground? Given that senior military leaders in NATO [are already quietly expressing strong opposition](#) to a no-fly zone, the alliance would be very unlikely to endorse such an approach. In the absence of any Western will to intervene, is it time to start setting up for Syria the equivalent of the Bonn Conference process that brought together all parties and regional stakeholders to plan for a post-Taliban Afghanistan? And does this mean revisiting Russia’s offer to broker talks between Assad loyalists and the opposition? [Marc Lynch has argued that](#) “more could be done to plan for a post-Assad future and to communicate to terrified Syrians sitting on the fence that they have a place in that new Syria.” So far, that doesn’t appear to be happening.

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Article 6.

The Diplomat

[**Beijing’s South China Sea Gamble**](#)

Will Rogers

February 4, 2012 -- Beijing seems to be doubling down in the [South China Sea](#). Why? In large part it’s to secure access to potential deep sea hydrocarbons like oil and natural gas – many describe the South China Sea as the next Persian Gulf, given the possible richness of resources that supposedly lay beneath the seabed. And while there are significant

differences between the two regions that complicate such a comparison – including the ease of access to fossil fuel resources and the cost of developing them – it’s a useful analogue for understanding why China views the region as critical to its core interests.

But Beijing may in fact be overestimating the strategic significance of the region’s oil and natural gas – and taking unnecessary risks that could undermine its peaceful rise.

China’s voracious appetite for energy to feed its continued economic development will become increasingly important as the state continues its transition into an industrial powerhouse. In 2009, China just barely overtook the United States as the largest consumer of energy in the world; by 2025, its energy consumption is projected to eclipse the United States by nearly 50 percent. In order to secure access to the energy resources it needs to fuel its economy, [Beijing is developing a broad range of energy sources](#), including investments in solar technology and hydroelectric development. Yet conventional fossil fuels, China is betting, are likely to remain dominant.

As a result, Beijing is developing a robust portfolio of fossil fuel resources from a variety of locations, including the Middle East, Central Asia and the South China Sea, in an effort to reduce its vulnerability from any one source. [Middle East oil must transit through the Strait of Malacca](#), which, as Beijing is acutely aware, poses a strategic vulnerability should any state choose to compromise the sea lines of communications by blocking the strait. Beijing’s investment in a vast infrastructure of overland energy pipelines from Central Asia means oil must cross volatile transit states like Burma and Pakistan and is delivered to western China where Beijing’s influence waxes and wanes. Consequently, Beijing is eyeing the South China Sea as a safer way to ensure access to the energy it needs to thrive. Yet Beijing’s plan may be flawed. Estimates vary widely as to the size of the hydrocarbon reserves beneath the sea floor. The U.S. Geological Survey calculates that there may be roughly 28 billion barrels of oil – enough to feed global oil consumption for about 11 months according to 2009 statistics. The Chinese government, meanwhile, estimates that the South China Sea region contains nearly 200 billion barrels of oil, or enough to meet global oil consumption for more than 6.5 years. Analysts tend to agree that China’s estimates are wildly optimistic. These disparate

estimates need to be resolved, yet recent efforts to survey fossil fuels reserves by states like Vietnam have been stalled by the China Maritime Safety Administration, which has taken to cutting survey cables of vessels chartered to provide better information.

Moreover, Beijing's bet that fossil fuels will remain the dominant energy source seems to ignore developments in energy technology and the broader energy market. Indeed, the once-single energy source transportation sector, which accounts for about 60 percent of oil consumption in OECD countries, is now being diversified by electric vehicles as well as serious research and development of second-generation liquid biofuels derived from feedstock like algae that can displace the demand for oil.

However, serious research and development of second-generation liquid biofuels derived from feedstock like algae that can displace the demand for oil. Indeed, the scaling up of alternative fuels will alter the strategic value of whatever resources lie beneath the South China Sea floor as they reach price parity with conventional fossil fuels. Experts contend that if production continues apace, these alternative fuels may be commercially available and at price parity with petroleum in a decade.

What is more, not all oil is created equal, at least as far as cost is concerned. Some analysts project that the price of a barrel of oil from deep water wells could be as much as four times that of a barrel produced from conventional reserves like those in the Middle East. Thus the cost of extracting South China Sea oil could be much more expensive than fuels derived from algae, other biomass or even dirtier sources like coal and natural gas, making deep-seabed oil less strategically important than those other sources.

Whether those hydrocarbon resources in the [South China Sea](#) are strategically important or not, the perception in Beijing seems to be that they are vital. It's no surprise, then, that China has taken an increasingly zero-sum approach to securing access to those resources, becoming more aggressive with neighbors that it suspects are trying to exploit oil and natural gas on their own. In that light, even Beijing's push for joint development could be taken as an effort to slow roll other countries' efforts while its own Chinese National Offshore Oil Company gets the edge in developing those resources first.

But Beijing's efforts could all be for naught if energy trends continue to develop as projected, and especially if the South China Sea turns up dry (so to speak). As a result, China's continued assertiveness in the South China Sea could compromise its claim to a peaceful rise and reinforce the call from countries like Vietnam and the Philippines for the United States to step up its military presence in the region.

Perhaps the most important step the United States can take in the near term to diffuse tensions in the region is to promote the message that those energy resources aren't as valuable as Beijing believes. At the same time, the United States should encourage Southeast Asian countries to lead a multilateral effort through partnerships like the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation to survey fossil fuel resources, putting to bed once and for all the uncertainty around how much oil and natural gas really lies beneath the ocean floor. Maybe then Beijing will realize that its bet in the South China Sea is one it can't afford to make.

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Article 7.

NYT Books

One Man's History

Francis Fukuyama

THINKING THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

By Tony Judt with Timothy Snyder

414 pp. The Penguin Press. \$36.

February 3, 2012 -- Tony Judt was known to many people as the public intellectual who aroused a firestorm of criticism for an article he wrote in *The New York Review of Books* in 2003, calling for Israel to become a binational state and to lose its specifically Jewish character. That essay, as well as biting critiques of the Iraq war and the Israel lobby, earned him

considerable enmity in some quarters, mitigated perhaps by the subsequent news that he had developed Lou Gehrig's disease, to which he succumbed in August 2010.

This public persona is unfortunate because it obscures a much more interesting figure. As a historian of 20th-century Europe, Judt both chronicled and himself represented the huge ideological transformations that occurred between the beginning and end of that century. This life has now been documented in the quasi-autobiographical "Thinking the Twentieth Century." Conceived after Judt's illness had already been diagnosed, the book consists of transcriptions of his conversations with Timothy Snyder, a Yale historian who is the distinguished author of a number of well-regarded books on Eastern and Central Europe. Snyder, highly erudite and opinionated himself, is not your typical journalistic interviewer; the book is more a dialogue than an autobiography.

Judt's story is in many ways very familiar: His forebears were Eastern European Jews who ended up in Britain, where they assimilated into English life. He was not brought up in a religious home — his father was a Marxist — but consciousness of the Holocaust was central to his identity; he was named after a cousin who died at Auschwitz. He attended Cambridge and began a career as a Marxist historian in the mold of his idols Eric Hobsbawm and E. P. Thompson, writing initially on obscure topics like French socialism in Provence. Intellectually, he was as French as he was English, participating in the événements of 1968 and spending a year at the École Normale Supérieure, where he befriended Marxist luminaries like the historians Annie Kriegel and Boris Souvarine.

Whatever Judt's initial ideological commitments, he later concerned himself with a stark and important question: "how so many smart people could have told themselves such stories with all the terrible consequences that ensued." The story was that of Communism, which perpetrated "the intellectual sin of the century: passing judgment on the fate of others in the name of their future as you see it, . . . concerning which you claim exclusive and perfect information." Looking back at the history of left-wing figures from the 1930s like the French socialist Léon Blum, he saw their central failing as the lack of "any appreciation of the possibility of evil as a constraining, much less a dominating, element in public affairs." This was to become the theme of his 1992 book "Past Imperfect," which

chronicled French intellectuals like Jean-Paul Sartre who publicly supported Stalinism while remaining willfully blind to its horrors. Judt's journey from Marxism to "East European liberal" came in several stages. He read the revisionist Marxist writings of the Polish intellectual Leszek Kolakowski, became friends with the Polish sociologist Jan Gross, and met in the 1980s with dissidents on the other side of the Iron Curtain, whose fates he realized he had previously ignored. He threw himself into this newfound interest with abandon, learning Czech and making himself an expert on contemporary Eastern European thought. His knowledge of the two halves of Europe was reflected in the sweeping narrative of his 2005 book "Postwar."

Judt's unhappiness with the contemporary left extended to the practitioners of cultural studies in the 1970s. This group, he argues, simply replaced Marx's proletariat with "women; or students, or peasants, or blacks, or — eventually — gays, or indeed whichever group had sound reason to be dissatisfied with the present disposition of power and authority." Identity politics made it impossible to create a master narrative of social development and sidetracked progressives into particularistic dead-ends. The prolonged discussion of public intellectuals toward the end of the book shows off Judt's least pleasant side. He argues that it is an intellectual's duty to "speak truth to power" no matter what, and there is no doubt of his willingness to endure withering castigation for his own views. In return, he skewers many people — Thomas Friedman, David Brooks, Michael Mandelbaum, Judith Miller, Leon Wieseltier, Michael Ignatieff, myself included — for being ignorant at best and willing dupes of power at worst, never conceding that his opponents could be honestly wrong or that his own views might deserve more introspection.

All of these characteristics come out in the above-mentioned critique of Israel. He argues that Israelis and their American supporters have used the Holocaust as a "Get Out of Jail Free card for a rogue state," but seems to think that his own Jewishness and the fact that he lived in Israel at one point give him the authority to be as morally obtuse in return. Judt seems intent on transferring the lessons learned in Eastern Europe, where genuine liberalism mostly replaced ethnic nationalism, to a part of the world where such liberalism just won't work. His proposal for a binational state was put forward with the self-certainty of an intellectual who has never had to deal

with the realities of practicality and power. But he remained little inclined to give ground to critics he believed could be motivated only by bad intentions.

Perhaps as compensation for his embrace of Eastern European anti-Communism, Judt makes it clear that he wants his legacy to be on the left. It was “unjust as well as unfortunate” that social democracy collapsed along with Communism in the age of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. He spends a great deal of time attacking Friedrich Hayek and defending John Maynard Keynes. “Thinking the Twentieth Century” concludes with a recapitulation of the defense of the welfare state made in his 2010 book “Ill Fares the Land,” as well as a prolonged castigation of the Bush administration for the Iraq war and rising inequality.

In the end, what is striking about this book is the great difference between the 20th-century world it describes and the present. Totalitarianism has disappeared, except in a few small countries like Cuba and North Korea; a risen Asia represents as much a cultural as an ideological challenge; religion has made a political comeback everywhere. The undergraduate students I teach were all born after the fall of the Berlin Wall; for them, the huge ideological battles among Communism, fascism and liberalism are neither meaningful nor interesting. They are fortunate not to live in a world where ideas could be translated into monstrous projects for the transformation of society, and where being an intellectual could often mean complicity in enormous crimes. Documenting this 20th century, then, is an important achievement of a scholar and intellectual whose premature passing we should all regret.

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