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20 March, 2014

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Article 1.

AP

Jailed militant key to Mideast talks

Mohammed Daraghmeh

March 19, 2014 -- Ramallah, West Bank (AP) — A prominent Palestinian uprising leader imprisoned by Israel could soon emerge as the key to keeping fragile U.S.-led peace efforts alive.

According to several top officials, the Palestinians are seeking the freedom of Marwan Barghouti, who is serving multiple life sentences for his alleged role in killings of Israelis, as part of any plan to extend negotiations with Israel beyond an April deadline.

A release of Barghouti, a popular figure among Palestinians, could inject new life into the troubled peace process, boost embattled Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, and even provide the Palestinians with a plausible successor to their 78-year-old leader.

But Israel seems unlikely to approve the request, setting the stage for a possible breakdown in the talks.

Under heavy U.S. pressure, Israel and the Palestinians restarted negotiations last July, setting a nine-month target for wrapping up a comprehensive peace deal establishing a Palestinian state and ending a century of conflict. After realizing this was unrealistic, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry scaled back his ambitions and said he would aim for a "framework" peace deal by the April deadline.

With even that more modest goal in question, the sides are now searching for a formula that will allow the talks to continue.

The Palestinians have been skeptical about the chances of success, distrusting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. A prolonging of the talks means continuing shelving of their previous plans to press for recognition, even without a peace deal, with various international bodies.

The Palestinians have two demands for an extension: a freeze in Israeli settlement construction in the West Bank and east Jerusalem and the release of the most senior prisoners held by Israel, first and foremost Barghouti, two Palestinian officials told The Associated Press — senior official Nabil Shaath and Prisoner Affairs Minister Issa Qaraqi.

Israel was already forced to release dozens of prisoners convicted of deadly violence to make the current round of talks possible, but Barghouti remains jailed.

With Israel not expected to halt settlement construction, the Palestinians say they will drive a tough bargain on the prisoner issue. Palestinian officials and Barghouti's family said Abbas raised the issue of Barghouti's release in his White House meeting this week with President Barack Obama.

"President Abbas demanded the release of the political leaders in jail like Marwan Barghouti, Ahmad Saadat and Fuad Shobaki," said Qaraqi, the prisoner affairs minister.

Barghouti's wife, Fadwa, said Abbas is "exerting his efforts to release Marwan and he is very serious about it."

Israeli officials said the matter has not yet come in the talks. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the peace efforts with the Palestinians.

Saadat heads a faction that killed an Israeli Cabinet minister in 2001 and is serving a 30-year sentence for allegedly participating in attacks. Shobaki, a former top Palestinian official, is the alleged mastermind of an attempt to smuggle a large shipment of weapons to the Palestinians on a ship that was intercepted by Israeli naval commandos in 2002.

But no prisoner is more prized by the Palestinians than Barghouti, who was a rising star in the dominant Fatah party before he was captured by Israeli troops in 2002. Israel says Barghouti, 54, was a leader of the violent uprising in the West Bank early last decade. He is serving five life terms for alleged involvement in the deaths of four Israelis and a Greek monk.

The Palestinians say Barghouti is a politician who had no direct involvement in any of the killings.

Barghouti's release could be critical for Abbas. The Palestinian leader has seen his popularity plummet due to the lack of progress in peace talks. Winning Barghouti's freedom would be a huge moral victory for him.

And at almost 79, Abbas has recently acknowledged he cannot serve forever. Yet he has never designated a successor and is facing a rising challenge by an exiled former aide, Mohammed Dahlan. Barghouti is perhaps the only member of Fatah's next generation of leaders with the gravitas to confront that challenge.

Palestinian analyst Hani al-Masri said Abbas desperately needs Barghouti's release, both to justify continued talks with Israel and to finally have a clear successor.

Fadwa Barghouti said her husband remains intimately involved in Palestinian affairs from his cell in an isolated bloc of the Hadarim prison in central Israel.

She said he shares a cell with two other men and is allowed to go outdoors into a courtyard twice a day — one hour each time — for exercise and a

walk. She said he starts his day with exercise and then reads four Israeli newspapers. In addition to his native Arabic, Barghouti speaks Hebrew and English.

As a member of Fatah's leadership, Barghouti is briefed on the negotiations through his wife, who is in close contact with the Palestinian leadership and visits him twice a month.

"He was hoping that the U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry would succeed in striking a deal based on the Israeli commitment to end the occupation on the 1967 borders," she said.

Barghouti, like other Palestinian leaders, wants to establish an independent state in all of the territories captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war: the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Gaza Strip, she said. Several past Israeli offers, by more moderate governments than Netanyahu's, seemed to come close, but ultimately fell short.

The fate of the roughly 5,000 prisoners held by Israel is deeply emotional in Palestinian society. Virtually every Palestinian has a friend or relative who has served time in Israel, and the prisoners are revered as freedom fighters.

But the issue is equally emotional for Israelis, who see prisoners like Barghouti as terrorists.

At the outset of talks last July, Israel agreed to release 104 long-serving prisoners in four stages. But the fourth and final stage, scheduled later this month, is suddenly in jeopardy.

The previous releases, including dozens of men who were convicted in deadly attacks, have been accompanied by jubilant celebrations by Palestinians and attended by Abbas himself, angering many in Israel. On Tuesday, Israel's chief peace negotiator said the final release was not guaranteed unless there was progress in the talks.

For that reason, the release of Barghouti could become a contentious issue in the coming weeks. Israeli officials have rejected repeated attempts to include him in past prisoner releases.

Still, Israel could be tempted. During the peace talks of the 1990s, Barghouti was generally liked by the Israelis, had many friends among them, and was considered a moderate interlocutor. With many Israelis concerned that Abbas will be followed by more radical nationalists or Islamists, a Barghouti ascension, despite his supposed actions during the uprising, might not seem like the worst option.

Without a significant gesture, the Palestinians could soon walk away from the negotiating table.

Shaath gave a glimpse of what could lie ahead, saying the Palestinians would soon resume a campaign for U.N. recognition if Israel does not carry out the final scheduled prisoner release. Israel bitterly opposes the U.N. campaign, since the Palestinians have said they will use their enhanced international status to press for anti-Israel action. The Palestinians halted the campaign in exchange for Israel's pledge to free prisoners.

"We committed to not applying to the U.N. agencies and Israel committed to release 104 ... prisoners in four batches," he said. "That was the deal. If Israel breaches it, we will too."

Article 2.

Wall Street Journal

The Failure of the Mideast 'Peace Process'

Melanie Phillips

March 19, 2014 -- The Middle East peace process seems all but doomed. Although U.S. President Barack Obama said he remained "convinced" it could still succeed when he met Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas this week, Secretary of State John Kerry has said trust between the Israelis and the Palestinians has reached a "nadir."

David Cameron visited Jerusalem and Bethlehem last week, his first visit to the region after four years as British Prime Minister. His government has kept the Middle East at arm's length. It is Secretary Kerry who has made all the running in this latest peace process, endlessly shuttling between the two sides.

Ostensibly, both the U.S. and the U.K. are urging both sides equally to take "tough political risks," as Mr. Obama put it, for peace. Alas, such exhortations seem to elicit merely disdain from both Jews and Arabs.

A poll by the Israel Democracy Institute and Tel Aviv University revealed last week that 64% of Israelis do not trust Mr. Kerry to treat Israel's security as a "crucial factor" in the framework peace proposal, while some 53% of Israeli Arabs don't trust him either.

Both the U.S. and Britain present themselves as Israel's candid friends. Israel doesn't quite see it like that.

For all his well-received remarks in the Knesset, where he declared his "unbreakable" belief in Israel and "rock solid" commitment to its security, Mr. Cameron's government is widely viewed there with suspicion. Last year, the U.K. played a key role in the EU's provocative decision to label goods made in the disputed territories, and even issued an explicit warning to British companies over the risks of doing business there—initiatives the Israelis regarded as gratuitous acts of aggression.

More important, there is also deep shock within Israel at what it sees as bullying by the U.S. When President Obama met Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu earlier this month, he issued a veiled threat that if Israel did not accept the Kerry framework, the U.S. would no longer defend Israel against its enemies at the U.N. and elsewhere. This followed Mr. Kerry's remark last year that if Israel stymied the peace process, it might soon be facing an international delegitimization campaign "on steroids."

In Israel, there is bewilderment that it alone is being held responsible for the absence of peace. After all, while Mr. Netanyahu has accepted the prospect of a Palestinian state alongside Israel, Mr. Abbas has said

repeatedly that the Palestinians will never accept that Israel is a Jewish state.

He also continues to insist on the right of every Palestinian "refugee" to immigrate not just to Palestine but also to Israel, which would destroy it as the Jewish national home.

In addition, despite President Obama's statement this week that Mr. Abbas has "consistently renounced violence," the Palestinian Authority continues to incite hatred against Israel through its educational materials and regime-controlled media, and permits and glorifies acts of terrorism by the al Aqsa brigades and others.

Yet the U.S. and U.K. hold only Israel's feet to the fire. Why? An important part of the answer lies in the inherent nature of the "peace process" itself.

This rests on two premises. The first is the Western fallacy that everyone in the world is governed by reason and material self-interest, whereas in fact some have non-negotiable agendas. The second is the current liberal belief that trans-national instruments such as international law can transcend the grievances of nation states.

War thus becomes a primitive throwback. It must be replaced by conflict resolution, negotiation and the "peace process."

This then becomes a deeply problematic end in itself. Based on an amoral equivalence in such negotiations between aggressor and victim, the peace process has to be kept going at all costs if war is to be avoided.

That means ignoring the fact that the aggressor in the dispute may still be violent or threatening. For if that is acknowledged, the "peace process" becomes something unconscionable: an enforced surrender to violence.

If the victims protest at this free pass to murderous aggression and refuse to submit, it is they who get the blame for derailing the peace process. That process is therefore innately inimical to justice, and biased in favor of the aggressor in a conflict.

This is what happened in the Northern Ireland peace process. Widely viewed as a triumph in creating a power-sharing administration between

the hitherto warring Catholic Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the Protestant Unionists, this is the template for the Middle East negotiations and Mr. Kerry's last stand.

The U.K. government first under John Major and then Tony Blair is credited with having turned IRA terrorists into statesmen by bringing them into this peace process. In fact, the IRA came in only because they were in effect beaten by the British army and British intelligence. They realized they could never win by military means. So they put their weapons "beyond use" and were given a share in the government of the province.

But to keep the peace process on track, the Unionists were denied knowledge of certain facts, such as deals being made to not prosecute IRA terrorists. When these secret deals recently became public, Mr. Cameron had to move swiftly to stop the Unionists from destroying Northern Ireland's power-sharing administration, which brought the risk of a return of IRA terrorism.

Not so much a true peaceful democracy, therefore, as an institutionalized protection racket. For Northern Ireland, the peace process was a Faustian pact in one U.K. province. For Israel, the stakes are rather higher.

Ms. Phillips is a columnist and author. Her e-book, "Guardian Angel," can be downloaded from www.embooks.com or Amazon.

Article 3.

The Washington Post

Obama doesn't grasp Putin's Eurasian ambitions

Editorial Board

March 20 -- IT'S EASY to conclude that Vladimir Putin's passionate defense of Russia's takeover of Crimea "just didn't jibe with reality," as Secretary of State John F. Kerry put it. In a speech on Tuesday, the Russian ruler repeated mendacious charges that the Ukrainian government had been hijacked by "nationalists, neo-Nazis, Russophobes and anti-Semites"; voiced his paranoid conspiracy theory about supposed Western sponsorship of popular revolutions, including the Arab Spring; and brazenly compared Russia's abrupt annexation of Ukraine with the reunification of Germany.

It's necessary, however, to take some of what Mr. Putin said seriously, because of the implicit threat it poses to European and global security. Mr. Putin advanced a radical and dangerous argument: that the collapse of the Soviet Union left "the Russian nation" as "one of the biggest, if not the biggest ethnic group in the world to be divided by borders." That, he suggested, gave Moscow the right to intervene in Crimea, and, by extension, anywhere it considers ethnic Russians or their culture to be threatened.

Mr. Putin's doctrine would justify Russian meddling not just in other parts of Ukraine — he claimed that "large sections of the historical south of Russia" now "form the southeast of Ukraine" — but also in other former Soviet republics with substantial populations of ethnic Russians.

Western officials seem to be betting that Mr. Putin won't dare to extend his aggression beyond Crimea. But then, just last week they were saying they did not expect Moscow to move quickly on Crimean annexation. The Obama administration and its European allies have been too slow to grasp that Mr. Putin is bent on upending the post-Cold War order in Europe and reversing Russia's loss of dominion over Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

Worse, some in and outside of Western governments may be feeding Mr. Putin's imperialism by rushing to concede "Russian interests" in Eurasia. President Obama and Mr. Kerry are among those who have said they recognize such "interests" in Ukraine. But the fact that there are ethnic Russians in a country should not give Mr. Putin's regime a privileged say in its affairs. The idea that areas populated by Russians must be ruled or

protected by Moscow is less the ideology of the 19th century, as Mr. Kerry would have it, than of the 1930s.

Mr. Putin's claim that Russia should have a say in the political orientation of its neighbors, and whether they join alliances such as the European Union or NATO, is equally unacceptable. (Mr. Kerry recently renounced, gratuitously, any such U.S. claim on Latin American states, several of which have close military ties with Russia.) Perversely, some in the West are echoing Mr. Putin's argument that his aggression is an understandable response to Western encouragement of the former Soviet Bloc states that embraced democracy and free markets and sought NATO and European Union membership.

The two countries that Mr. Putin has invaded since 2008, Ukraine and Georgia, were rejected for NATO membership action plans that year. Can it be argued seriously that Estonia and Latvia, with their large Russian minorities, now would be less vulnerable to Russian aggression had they had not joined NATO? The crisis in Europe has come about not because Western institutions expanded, but because they did not fulfill their post-Cold War promise of "a Europe whole and free."

Read more on this topic: Condoleezza Rice: Will America heed the wake-up call of Ukraine? David Ignatius: Putin's error in Ukraine is the kind that leads to catastrophe The Post's View: Mr. Putin might actually believe his own Ukraine propaganda The Post's View: U.S., E.U. must stay the course on Russian sanctions over Ukraine Charles Krauthammer: Putin's Ukraine gambit

Article 4.

The Christian Science Monitor

Condoleezza Rice: Crimea shows US can't step back and let others lead

Nathan Gardels

March 19, 2014 -- *Condoleezza Rice is was National Security Advisor and then secretary of State under the George W. Bush administration. She spoke with WorldPost and Global Viewpoint editor Nathan Gardels on March 18.*

NATHAN GARDELS: Since leaving office as secretary of state, you've focused on domestic issues such as education, governance reform, civic issues, and citizenship. Why this switch in focus?

CONDOLEEZZA RICE: It's not so much a switch in focus, but instead making sure we lead from a position of strength and by example. As an academic and former provost of Stanford [University], I have always cared deeply about the education system here in the United States. My parents were teachers, too, and I watched them from a very early age shape the young minds of our country and help mentor kids to achieve their goals and dreams.

But I also believe that America can only lead abroad if we are strong here at home. This means we must always look inward and make sure that our democracy is providing the same opportunities that we are promoting abroad. Whether it's good governance in Africa, human rights in the Middle East, or education and immigration issues here at home, we must lead in these issues both here at home and abroad.

GARDELS: The Economist recently ran a cover story on "Democracy, what went wrong?" – pointing out the recent overthrow of elected governments in Cairo and Kiev, but also pointing to the continuing gridlock in Washington. Why is democracy having such troubles?

RICE: I firmly believe that history has a long arc and democracy takes time. If you look back at the history of the United States, we've been through many times of trial and turmoil. We fought a Civil War, we've had challenges with civil rights and equality, we've gone through the Great Depression. Democracy is not easy and it's certainly chaotic at points, but

it's the only form of government where people have the right to consent to be governed and elect their leaders.

GARDELS: What are the consequences of the US "leading from behind," as you have put it – not only in the Middle East, but now in Ukraine and East Asia, where China and Japan are at each other's throats?

RICE: The United States cannot step back, lower its voice, and let others lead. Though we'd like to think that our democratic allies would replace us in such instances, we have instead seen the opportunity grabbed by extremists and dictators in the Middle East and nationalists like the Chinese and Russians.

The recent events should be a wake-up call to all Americans. I know we are tired and worried about our problems at home, but we cannot eschew the responsibilities of leadership and embolden those who don't share our values. The world is a pretty scary place when led by those who believe in different ideals, and I'm afraid the United States will pay a price in the long run.

Article 5.

The Brookings Institution

Obama Mending Fences in Riyadh

Bruce Riedel

March 19, 2014 -- The Saudi-American bilateral relationship has been seriously strained in the past three years by tensions underlying the Arab Awakening, and President Barack Obama has serious fence-mending ahead of him when he meets with King Abdullah in Riyadh in March. The relationship is not broken and both sides still need each other.

Barack Obama's first trip as President to an Arab capital was in 2009 when he visited Riyadh before going to Cairo to deliver his now famous speech on American relations with the Islamic world. It was an indicator of how critical and important Obama deems the Saudi role in the region from Morocco to Indonesia. The US President has appreciated the Kingdom not just as a key energy source (one in four barrels of oil on the market comes from Saudi Arabia), but it is also home to Islam's two holiest cities and thus has enormous soft power in the Muslim world.

Arab Spring and the Winter in Bilateral Relations

But the Arab spring severely damaged America's ties to the royal family, which was shocked to its core when Obama urged President Hosni Mubarak to leave office. For the House of Saud this was a betrayal of a key ally. Thus, the Saudis were very quick to welcome the military coup in Egypt this past summer which they saw as restoring order in Cairo and strengthening their own position at home by removing a dangerous example of revolutionary change in the Arab world. The return to autocratic rule in Cairo reduced the danger of upheaval in other Arab states. Abdullah recognised the coup leaders, especially General Sisi, hours after they took power and Riyadh rapidly put together a multibillion aid programme for Egypt and enlisted Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates to help fund it. The aid comes with no rider that Egypt restore democratic rule; to the contrary, it is intended to undermine American efforts to use US aid to help foster reform and democracy.

When the Arab spring spread to Bahrain, and America urged reform there as well, the Saudis sent troops across the King Fahd Causeway to back the minority Sunni ruling family. Almost three years later, Saudi troops continue to back up the Sunni minority regime in Manama and King Abdullah has spoken openly about a closer union between the Kingdom and Bahrain. The Saudis have become increasingly irritated by American criticism of the Bahraini government's poor human rights record.

More Anger with Washington

Riyadh is especially disappointed in American policy toward Syria where they want Washington to take robust steps to oust the Assad regime and

replace it with a pro-Saudi Sunni government. The Saudis are arming the opposition much more aggressively than Washington and want Obama to be more vigorous in fighting Assad.

At the same time, Riyadh is anxious that Washington is prepared to appease Assad's backer Iran and conclude a deal with Tehran on its nuclear programme. Senior Saudi officials like intelligence chief Prince Bandar bin Sultan have been increasingly outspoken in criticising American policy, and the Saudis refused to take up a seat on the United Nations Security Council this January because they argued the US was not doing enough on Syria or the Palestinian issue. Saudi officials made it clear that this unusual decision was intended to signal anger with Washington.

Despite these public tensions, in private robust cooperation continues on counter terrorism and other issues. The Americans and Saudis cooperate closely against al-Qaeda, especially in Yemen. CIA Director John Brennan enjoys very close and productive relations with the Saudi counter terrorist chief and Interior Minister, Prince Muhammad bin Nayif. Saudi intelligence was critical in foiling the last two plots by al-Qaeda to smuggle explosives onto aircraft flying in the United States. This year, the Kingdom has also tried to take steps to prevent Saudi citizens from travelling to Syria to join al-Qaeda jihadists there.

The burden of bucking up weak autocratic regimes and other allies is becoming more costly for Riyadh. Saudi officials say the Kingdom spent more than $25 billion subsidising its allies in Jordan, Bahrain, Yemen, Pakistan and elsewhere in 2012, and expect that burden to rise to over $30 billion in 2014 with the addition of the Egyptian account. Almost all of this aid is budgetary support so there is virtually no economic development return. The cost of supporting the counter revolution in the Arab and Islamic worlds adds greatly to the challenges facing the House of Saud in the years ahead.

A Disharmonious Alliance, But No Divorce

The Arab Awakening has demonstrated clearly that Washington and Riyadh do not share common values, but they do still share some common interests. Neither has a viable alternative partner to secure those interests

like fighting al-Qaeda and containing Iran. It is likely to be an increasingly disharmonious alliance, but not a divorce.

Obama will try to persuade Abdullah to support two of his key initiatives – the nuclear talks with Iran and the peace negotiations with Israel, and the Palestinians. The Saudis are very worried that the P5+1 talks with Tehran will produce a weak deal that allows Iran to be on the verge of nuclear weapons status while lifting most of the sanctions. Riyadh has made it clear that it will seek its own nuclear deterrent if Iran gets the bomb, almost certainly from Pakistan.

Obama's Challenges

The President must assure the Saudis that he will not make a bad deal and the deal he wants to reach will ensure Iran is not just a short step away from the bomb. Obama must also assure the King that the United States has no intention of ignoring Iranian behaviour in supporting Assad in Syria, Hezbollah in Lebanon and dangerous Iranian subversion in Bahrain and Yemen. Since the US is committed to thwarting Iranian aggression, the two should be able to agree on a shared strategic consensus on this issue.

On the peace process with Israel and the Palestinians, Obama's goal is to convince Abdullah that he and Secretary of State John Kerry are really serious about achieving a breakthrough this year. The Saudis in general and the King in particular want Washington to press Israel to accept a two state solution based on the 1967 lines with a Palestinian capital in Jerusalem. Their concern on this issue is not that Obama and Kerry are not trying enough now but whether they will be willing to put pressure on Israel to accept a deal when the talks get to decision time. The Saudis were deeply disappointed in the first Obama term when he spoke tough about an Israeli settlements freeze as a condition for negotiations, but backed away when Israel balked.

Abdullah is the principal author of the Arab League's peace initiative that promised Arab recognition of Israel within secure borders in return for a just and fair peace with the Palestinians. The King is passionate about the Palestinian cause and deeply disappointed that America has done too little to press Israel to end the occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Stability in South Asia

A third issue will probably get attention mostly behind the scenes. The two leaders will need to address how to help ensure stability in South Asia when American and other NATO forces leave Afghanistan at the end of this year. Riyadh has enormous influence in Pakistan and hosted Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif during his years in exile. Washington has little influence in Islamabad and needs Saudi help.

The American-Saudi relationship dates back to 1945 when the modern kingdom's founder Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud met with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt on an American warship, the USS Quincy, in the Suez Canal at the end of World War II. The two agreed on a basic formula for the partnership, American security help to Saudi Arabia in return for Saudi management of a reliable and affordable energy supply to the world.

The partnership has had its highs and lows. Probably the peak was the joint covert programme to back the mujahedin in Afghanistan with Pakistan to defeat the Soviet Union in the 1980s. That partnership won the final and decisive battle of the Cold War. Probably the nadir was King Feisal's decision to shut off oil exports to the US in 1973 over American support for Israel. Some American pundits suggested seizing the oil fields of the Kingdom in retaliation. Cooler heads prevailed.

Today's difficulties are not as serious as the 1973 low point, but they do need attention and care. Obama will need to convince his hosts that he is serious about keeping the relationship healthy, curbing Iran's nuclear ambitions and, above all else, securing a breakthrough in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Editor's note: This article was originally published by the Diplomatist.

Bruce Riedel -Director, The Intelligence Project Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy, Saban Center for Middle East Policy, Center for 21st Century Security and Intelligence

Article 6.

Al-Monitor

Look for more assertive Russia in Middle East

Dr. Vitaly Naumkin

March 19, 2014 -- Russia's recognition of the results of the Crimean referendum and the independence of the Republic of Crimea, and the subsequent acceptance of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol as new constituent entities of the Russian Federation, have elicited an extremely negative reaction in the West and led Washington and Brussels to announce sanctions against Moscow.

We can only hope that this tension will not have a negative effect on the extremely important cooperation between Russia and the West on the entire set of urgent problems of Afghanistan and the Middle East region. (It is sufficient to mention the problem of removing chemical weapons from Syria, Iran's nuclear program, resolving the Syrian crisis, the Middle East conflict, the situation in Yemen, etc.) However, there are already signs that this tension in relations between the leading global players is having an impact on their regional policies and on the behavior of the regional powers themselves.

In Moscow, it is not considered a coincidence that it is now, when Russia has decided to bring Crimea and the city of Sevastopol into the Russian Federation, that President Barack Obama has announced the closing of Syria's diplomatic missions in the United States. This is interpreted as a signal that the American administration is pursuing a tougher policy with respect to Damascus, and that Washington is very likely to move away from cooperation with Moscow in resolving the Syrian crisis. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad declared his full support for Moscow's actions in

Crimea, clearly attempting to use this to his advantage now, when he hopes to achieve a military victory over the scattered rebel units or, failing that, at least reduce them to an insurrection movement of an "acceptable level" not representing an existential threat to the regime, and trending toward fragmentation and decline.

Analysts in Moscow also think it is no coincidence that now, at a time when relations between Washington and Moscow are increasingly strained, Obama has launched a new attempt, by himself, to get the Palestinian-Israeli negotiation process moving again. Does this mean that Obama has given up for good on this important aspect of partnership with Russia as well? In other words, does it mean that the short-sighted policy of comprehensively isolating Russia will also apply to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process? Or is the US president, foreseeing that the conflicting sides will probably be unable to agree on anything by the end of April, merely trying to save face through this unilateral initiative?

To what extent could the efforts to resolve the Syrian and Middle Eastern crises fall victim to the "new" policy of the West, and primarily of the United States toward Russia, whose leaders have reiterated their willingness to continue working with the West in all areas?

Whatever happens, in the Middle East and on all other matters of world politics, the West will have to deal with a more consolidated and self-confident Russia and a new Russian President Vladimir V. Putin, who is now seen by the vast majority of the public in his country as a triumphant victor. It must be noted that the West's severe pressure and threats toward Moscow over Russia's policy regarding Crimea have led to a rapid increase in patriotic feelings and a sharp rise in Putin's popularity within the country.

Will this new reality affect — and if so, how — the course of events in the Middle East, where Russia nevertheless remains an influential player, and how will it affect Moscow's policy in the Middle East and Russia's cooperation with the West on regional problems? Certainly, whether or not Russia and the United States continue to cooperate on Afghanistan and in the war on international terrorism, at a time when the West is using

sanctions to increase pressure on Russia, will have a powerful effect on the entire Middle East region.

Presumably, the extremely sharp criticism of the Kremlin coming from Washington and Brussels has opened the door for Russian officials to speak out more forthrightly about US policy, for example on the issue of counteracting the illegal drug trade, on which Russia has a long history of cooperating with the United States. For instance, Viktor Ivanov, the director of the Federal Drug Control Service, stated decisively on March 5 that the world and Russia are dealing with "drug production on a worldwide scale, fostered by the United States and NATO" in Afghanistan. Today, that country produces twice as many opiates as the entire world produced 10 years ago. He noted that, during the period of "Operation Enduring Freedom," the area planted with opium poppy increased by 26 times.

Now, Russia's relations with Turkey will be particularly important to Moscow. The declaration by the Russian president that Crimea will have three official languages — Russian, Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar — contrasts favorably with Kiev's suicidal policy in the area of culture and language. The efforts to provide housing assistance to Tatar repatriates in Crimea, after years of being forced to live in shacks, will surely win the approval of the influential Crimean Tatar community in Turkey. Given Turkey's geographic position and its interests in the Black Sea basin, attractive proposals could be made for it to participate in economic development projects in Crimea, whose economy has been in free fall over the past two decades. Russia will clearly strive to transform Crimea into an economic success story, and to achieve a serious and demonstrative effect, it will need investors, for whom highly favorable conditions just might be created.

By mercilessly criticizing the extreme Ukrainian nationalists on the rise in Kiev, who preach anti-Semitism and do not hide their kinship with the Banderists, who helped the Nazis kill Jews during World War II, Moscow will actively court public opinion in Israel. People there remember well that a quarter of the six million Jews who fell victim to the Nazi genocide were killed on Ukrainian territory.

It is likely that, in the face of the unprecedentedly harsh criticism of its actions in Crimea, which the vast majority of the Russian public considers legitimate, Russia will be much more sensitive to any actions by the West that are seen here as evidence of double standards, and will criticize them more strongly, while more decisively standing up for its national interests. People are saying here that the United States and its allies have many more troops in Afghanistan than there are Russian military personnel at the Russian base in Sevastopol, a base that is vital to protecting the security interests of the country. People here are recalling the passages in the US president's speech in Cairo in 2009, when he said that the United States does not want to keep troops in Afghanistan, and does not seek military bases there, whereas now America is attempting to maintain nine military bases in that country.

Apparently, one of the ways in which the turbulent events in Crimea are affecting the situation in the world and in the Middle East, is by providing impetus to self-determination movements (not necessarily in the form of full national independence in all cases). It is no coincidence that Scottish, Catalan, Basque and certain other observers were eager to watch the election in Crimea. It is too soon to assess how certain Kurdish activists will react to these events.

The sooner the tension surrounding Ukraine eases, and the global players return to their prior forms of cooperation, the better it will be for the Middle East, which has been torn apart by conflicts and antagonism, and often turned into a platform for competition among outside powers.

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Article 7.

The Diplomat

Chinese Foreign Policy: A New Era Dawns

Anne-Marie Brady

March 17, 2014 -- A new era is dawning in Chinese foreign policy as the country's economic growth enables it to move from past timorousness in declaring itself a global leader and a relative inability to defend its interests, to one in which Beijing can seek adjustments in the security environment it has faced for the last sixty years. In the Chinese-language media, politicians are increasingly talking of China as a great power. Yet Russia's invasion of Ukraine has put Beijing's new foreign policy to the test and raised questions about the extent of China's global role.

China is close to meeting all the measures of what defines a global great power: political, economic, and military might with a global reach. But it does not appear to act like a great power in terms of its contribution to international leadership during conflict situations such as in Ukraine. Instead we repeatedly only see Beijing being assertive when it comes to defending its own narrow interests.

While Deng Xiaoping's foreign policy dictum was for China to "hide its strength and bide its time" (taoguang yanghui), in January 2014 Chinese Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping announced that China should be "proactive" (fenfa you wei). This is the equivalent of China moving from first gear into second; and like second gear, the pace of this new foreign policy can sometimes be jagged.

As the Russian intervention in citizen unrest in Ukraine has played out, Beijing has held back from criticizing Moscow, citing China's long-standing policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states. While China decries the interference of "hostile foreign forces" in popular protests in Xinjiang and Tibet, it appears that it won't take a public stance on Russia's breach of Ukrainian sovereignty. In phone calls to U.S.

President Barack Obama and German Chancellor Angela Merkel on March 10, Xi urged the two leaders to use political and diplomatic means to resolve the standoff.

On March 15, China's UN representative put forward a three-point proposal on a political solution to the crisis; urging the formation of an international group to help mediate; recommending all parties refrain from further provocation; and suggesting international financial actors should help stabilize Ukraine's economic situation. Yet, China abstained from the UN draft resolution on the same day, which condemned today's referendum aimed at legitimizing the transfer of the Crimea from Ukraine to Russia. As a leading power and permanent member of the UN Security Council, China has exercised its "right to speak" (huayu quan) on the situation in Ukraine, but is avoiding involvement in the international response. The 13 other members of the Security Council all voted in favor of the resolution, while Russia opposed it.

In Chinese foreign policy terms Xi and his representative at the UN have been quite outspoken. But outside China, many would agree that China's response is too little, too late. It is behavior such as this in times of international crisis that has led commentators to question whether or not China is a "reluctant stakeholder" in the global order and whether or not China is still just a regional power.

Since becoming general secretary of the CCP in 2012, Xi Jinping has overseen an expansion of China's economic reforms and opening up to the outside world, at the same time as leading a new clampdown on freedom of speech and association, and tightening security against Uighur and Tibetan populations.

Under Xi's leadership China has gone head to head with Japan on contested territory in the East China Sea, declared a new ADIZ over the contested Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, and been increasingly assertive in the South China Sea.

China's economic model requires new markets and privileged access to resources and this will be a moderating factor in their foreign policy approach. Beijing can't afford to offend its neighbor Russia for a complex

range of reasons, ranging from internal and external security and access to new sources of energy supply.

The competitive and contentious external environment China faces in its immediate neighborhood requires Beijing to take a relatively cautious and tactful national security approach in the short to medium term. At the same time it is strengthening its external environment, especially on the periphery, whenever it can.

So we can expect to see Chinese foreign policy verge from being at times assertive and proactive; to in other situations being ambiguous and non-confrontational. Where China cannot affect change, it makes the best out of the current global order and quietly pursues own interests; but where the possibility of creating new norms exists, Beijing acts assertively.

In the 1990s, Chinese policymakers conducted in-depth studies on the lessons to be learned from the fall of the Soviet Union. In the 2000s they studied the rise and fall of other great powers such as Portugal, Spain, France, Germany, Great Britain—and the United States—and the lessons each held for China.

This is why as a rising great power, despite this year's 12.2 percent budget increase to the PLA, China is not likely to follow the U.S. or the Soviet Union in making burdensome investments in military spending. The PLA budget is only 2 percent of China's GDP; versus the current U.S. figure of 4.4 percent and the Soviet Union's figure of 13-14 percent just before the Gorbachev era began in the mid-1980s.

China is instead investing in asymmetric warfare, focusing on electro-magnetic pulse weapons, cyber and space warfare, and a small but adequate nuclear deterrent; meanwhile creating a complex network of China-centered bilateral and multilateral agreements such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, free trade agreements with states such as Iceland, and less formalized, issue-specific partnerships with states strategically important to China such as Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka and Russia.

China is a relatively insecure new great power, both in its internal politics and in terms of the external environment it faces. So it has to be both

increasingly proactive about defending its interests and ambiguous about what its actual interests are in order to delay open conflict with other potential competitors for as long as possible.

China is by no means a reluctant stakeholder; rather a reluctant leader. We should not expect China to behave as previous and present great powers have done; it is forging its own path in international relations and will need to resolve its own sense of insecurity before it responds as a true global leader might to a geopolitical crisis such as the one unfolding in Ukraine.

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Article 8.

The New York Review of Books

Most of Us Are Part Neanderthal

Steven Mithen

Neanderthal Man: In Search of Lost Genomes

by Svante Pääbo

Basic Books, 275 pp., $27.99

The Gap: The Science of What Separates Us from Other Animals

by Thomas Suddendorf

Basic Books, 358 pp., $29.99

April 3, 2014 -- My wife has always worried about me going bald, because I have a bump on the back of my skull that if exposed would make me look like a Neanderthal. Common knowledge still maintains that Neanderthals were rather stupid when compared to Homo sapiens, the species we all belong to today. There is, or was, a "gap" between them and us, rather like the gap that Thomas Suddendorf writes about when comparing the mental abilities of modern humans and the great apes. When I used to lecture on human evolution, my hand would involuntarily stroke my head to feel my "occipital bun" just as I mentioned those words to describe a key anatomical difference between Homo sapiens and Homo neanderthalensis. Should I just offer myself as a live demonstration?

My wife need worry no more and my students have had a lucky escape. By finding the lost genome, the Swedish biologist Svante Pääbo has discovered that we are all part Neanderthal—except those with an entirely African heritage. So I now feel like shaving my head to celebrate the interspecies engagement of 50,000 years ago, whether or not it is the ultimate cause for the oddity of my skull and my occasional acts of stupidity.

Archaeologists and physical anthropologists have long debated the evolutionary relationship between modern humans and Neanderthals, relying on the similarities and differences between their designs of stone artifacts and the shapes of their bones, with little real understanding of how these might have arisen. Interminable academic arguments have been swept away by the revolution in studies of ancient DNA, led by Pääbo (now at the Max Planck Institute in Leipzig) and brilliantly recounted in his new book, Neanderthal Man: In Search of Lost Genomes.

Pääbo has provided us with a fabulous account of three decades of research into ancient DNA, culminating in 2010 with the publication of the Neanderthal genome. It's a story seen through his eyes. He describes how he began with secretive attempts to explore whether DNA would survive in an artificially mummified calf's liver, and how he led a multimillion-dollar global research project to ascertain the genomes of ancient organisms.

Pääbo's book has to be compared to The Double Helix (1968), James Watson's brilliant but controversial account of how the structure of DNA was discovered. When taken together they provide an insight into how biomolecular science has both changed and remained much the same during the last half-century. Both are strong personal accounts of scientific discovery, exposing how science is driven as much by passion, ambition, and competition as by rational thought and the sharing of knowledge. In both books the reader is gripped by life stories of far greater interest than those in many novels before being plunged into passages of near-unintelligible science (despite much simplification) that are nevertheless strangely enthralling.

Pääbo comes across as a generous scientist compared to the distinctly unlikable Watson of The Double Helix. Unlike Watson's frequent disparaging of others, Pääbo criticizes chiefly those who make "outlandish" and "ludicrous" claims regarding the extraction of DNA from fossils that are millions of years old, obstructionist museum curators, and occasionally himself.

The pressure to publish was present in both worlds. For Pääbo it was especially intense, and partly self-inflicted. One of the reasons he became disillusioned with his early interest, during the 1980s, in Egyptology and archaeology was the "glacial speed" with which the journals "concerned with ancient things" were moving. By the time his article on the extraction of ancient DNA from an Egyptian mummy appeared in the Journal of Archaeological Science in 1985, it had already been overtaken by events, primarily dramatic advances in scientific techniques.

So Pääbo chose to work in a fast-moving field in which journals and prospective authors have to move at an equivalent speed. His decisions about which journals to publish in, when to submit, and what to include in any single paper, along with his reactions to referees' comments and his responses to the publications of others—sometimes being inspired, at other times distraught—pervade the text as they do the life of any scientist in a fast-moving field today. (Archaeology remains relatively sluggish.) The magnum opus publication of the Neanderthal genome in Science in 2010 had fifty authors. It took up a mere twelve pages in the journal, supported

by 174 pages of technical detail in the online supplementary material. An utterly fascinating chapter is devoted to the preparation and reception of the manuscript.

If the pressures, pace, and technical demands of publication have intensified since Watson's time, the peculiar blend of cooperation and competition between scientists appears much the same. For Watson the competition-cooperation was just down the road at King's College London and in the Pasadena laboratory of Linus Pauling; for Pääbo and his team, based in the Max Planck Institute, it was Eddy Rubin at Berkeley. He had been a collaborator, but adopted a different method for the sequencing of nuclear DNA than Pääbo, preferring to use the method of cloning bacteria rather than adopting the new polymerase chain reaction (PCR) method. Rubin suffered the consequence of making the wrong choice, becoming little more than a footnote in the story of how ancient DNA was reconstituted (at least as recounted by Pääbo—Rubin might see it differently, as did many of those who read Watson's book).

The impact of new technology was critical to the successes of both Watson and Pääbo—although far more evident in the latter. Pääbo describes his twenty-five years in molecular biology as a continuous technological revolution. He learned that "unless a person was very, very smart, breakthroughs were best sought when coupled to big improvements in technologies." Watson and his collaborator Francis Crick are often idealized (notably by Watson himself) as playing with bits of cardboard when building their double helix model for DNA. They could only do so, however, because of the advances in X-ray diffraction that had enabled Rosalind Franklin to create images of DNA that revealed its helical structure. A sneaky look at a single image of Franklin's by Watson was sufficient.

Pääbo's dependency on technology was quite different. When hearing about the PCR method at a conference in 1986 he immediately recognized a technical breakthrough for studying ancient DNA. Two decades later, when ready to sequence the three billion nucleotides of the Neanderthal genome, Pääbo required the support of a biotechnology company called 454 Life Sciences, along with several million pounds to pay them.

Coincidentally, another project of 454 Life Sciences was "Project Jim," sequencing the whole genome of James Watson.

While The Double Helix covers just three years (1951–1953) and a single discovery (albeit one on which so much else is based), Pääbo's search for lost genomes spans three decades and takes the reader through a linked series of discoveries: from the first extraction of Neanderthal DNA to the mapping of the whole Neanderthal genome, the discovery of interbreeding between Neanderthals and Homo sapiens, and the identification of a brand-new human species from ancient DNA that had been extracted from a finger bone found in Denisova Cave in Siberia. Along the way we learn about the extraction of ancient DNA from Egyptian mummies, Oetzi the Bronze Age Ice Man, mammoths, and cave bears. The technical breakthroughs are critical to the story, none more so than those that enabled the shift from studying mitochondrial DNA—i.e., the DNA that is stored in hundreds of copies in a cell's tiny structures outside its nucleus—to nuclear DNA, two copies of which are stored in the cell's nucleus. The mitochondrial DNA is inherited from the female line alone and hence provides what Pääbo calls a "blurry, one-eyed view of human history."

A constant theme of Pääbo's book is the battle to detect and avoid contamination of ancient DNA by that of modern humans. Such contamination might derive from the archaeologists who innocently handled the bones during excavation or the scientists whose DNA is unavoidably carried on the dust floating through their laboratories. Others should have known better: Pääbo describes his horror at watching a curator at the Natural History Museum in London lick an ancient bone to detect whether it had once been chemically treated, thus coating it with his own DNA. This is one of several moments of human folly interspersed through Pääbo's account of high-tech science. Quite different is Pääbo's savoring of the smell of burnt bone when a Neanderthal arm bone was being cut to provide a sample for analysis—the smell suggested that collagen within the bone had survived and hence DNA would be found.

Finding such bones was another challenge for Pääbo, and led to battles with obstructionist museum curators and then negotiations with the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts to access the Neanderthal remains

from Vindija Cave in the north of the country. Luckily he succeeded, enabling him to find what he describes as a "magic bone," one that had almost 3 percent of its Neanderthal nuclear DNA preserved, in contrast to the usual frequency of between 0.06 and 0.2 percent. This crushed fragment of bone, five centimeters long, enabled the sequencing of the Neanderthal genome and has changed our understanding of human history. It had sat unremarked upon in a museum basement for several decades.

Throughout this story of ancient DNA we also follow the human story of Pääbo as he drives the science forward, which was by no means a smooth ride. He is an emotional man: on one page we find him overexcited, on another insecure; he is periodically frustrated, irritated, and feels like screaming; he can be very happy and then deeply disappointed. He admits to making a fool of himself, suffering from an exaggerated desire to be liked, bouts of sarcasm (swiftly regretted), and being very sentimental. His emotions are critical to his scientific success and when we read about his brief infatuations with heterosexual men and his pleasure at strolling along a beach naked with his new wife, these passages do not seem inappropriate. His success was not only based on his individual efforts but on building a team of scientists at the Max Planck Institute. He had to manage this team so that each member could pursue his or her own goals while contributing to the big project—budding scientists are, he writes, largely driven by self-interest. When Pääbo writes about how he felt a love for each and every person around the table, one believes him and appreciates that this was crucial to his, and their, success.

What did that success amount to? Pääbo and his team were able to determine that the modern human and Neanderthal lineages had split between 270,000 and 440,000 years ago, a conclusion that confirmed existing views. Far more surprisingly, however, they concluded that people outside of Africa, whether Europeans or Asians, have up to 5 percent of their DNA derived from Neanderthals. The most likely scenario is that a group of modern humans left Africa sometime around 50,000 years ago, interbred with Neanderthals in the Middle East, and then went on to populate the world, taking the Neanderthal DNA with them. That DNA would have been diluted with every generation of humans but its persistence into the present day suggests that some of the Neanderthal gene

variants have provided modern humans in Europe and Asia with enhanced adaptive capabilities over their African Homo sapiens forebears.

By drawing on the work of the English biologist Peter Parham, Pääbo was able to offer one possible example. Parham, we learn, is one of the world's leading experts on the "major histo-compatability complex" (MHC), a particularly complicated genetic system in the human genome associated with fighting infection. He found that one particular MHC gene variant is common in today's Europeans and Asians but unknown in Africans. Pääbo found this gene variant in the Neanderthal genome. As such, it must have been inherited from the Neanderthals by those humans who first ventured into the Middle East and then undergone positive selection to reach its frequency in modern-day non-Africans. Parham suggests that this particular gene variant provided an advantage in fighting off diseases that were local to Europe and Asia.

The nature and extent of the differences between Neanderthals and Homo sapiens—the gap—remain as vigorously debated as ever. Pääbo and his team identified the molecular gap between them. There are seventy-eight amino-acid-altering nucleotide positions—"meaningful mutations"—in which all humans today are similar to one another and different from Neanderthals and the apes. Pääbo suspects that this number will reach two hundred as the sets of data are refined but even that will be only a tiny proportion of the complete human genome.

These amino acid differences arose from mutations after the lineage divide that led to the emergence of both Neanderthals and Homo sapiens from a common ancestor. They influence the proteins that build tissues and the mind. Considering that there are more than 20,000 proteins encoded by the genome, a mere seventy-eight (or even two hundred) mutations seem a tiny genetic gap—but the behavioral consequences might be vast. Regrettably, we have little idea of any such consequences. Pääbo confesses all: "The dirty little secret of genomics is that we know next to nothing about how a genome translates into the particularities of a living and breathing individual." As such, despite all we know about ancient DNA, arguments about the relative cognitive capabilities of modern humans and

Neanderthals remain reliant on interpretations of the archaeological data. My own view is that these capabilities were quite different.

Thomas Suddendorf would probably consider me a "killjoy," his term for those who are reluctant to ascribe complex humanlike abilities to other animals. He contrasts the killjoys with the "romantics," those who are more prepared to see greater continuities (even the most deadly of killjoys must accept some continuities). Although Suddendorf often adopts the middle ground, his use of these terms is telling: Is it not rather romantic to think, as he often does, that humans are quite different from all other humans and rather a killjoy attitude to think that we are just part of the mix?

The Gap: The Science of What Separates Us from Other Animals is about a challenge quite different from Pääbo's quest to find out what separates us from the Neanderthals. Suddendorf's evidence comes from behavioral observations, primarily of the great apes and most significantly of chimpanzees, the living species to whom we are most closely related. From these observations he seeks to infer the similarities and differences in their mental capabilities from those of modern humans. Of course, differences are undeniable—otherwise a chimpanzee might be writing this review—but their nature and extent have been long debated with no satisfactory resolution. It appears that psychologists can display equal degrees of rigor in their experimental designs and data analysis and yet reach quite different interpretations about the size of the gap; psychologists can be either killjoys or romantics.

In this regard, Suddendorf's science of comparative psychology is quite different from the molecular biology described by Pääbo and Watson. Molecular biology has answers that are more evidently right or wrong and hence have a far greater degree of measurable progress. Observations made by psychologists in the 1950s and earlier appear just as relevant to Suddendorf's evaluations as those from recent times, while many of the questions being asked remain those raised by Darwin. I don't suppose Pääbo looks to publications more than twelve months old in his fast-moving field. In other respects there are similarities. Suddendorf's science is certainly driven by competition, such as that described between Daniel Povinelli's team at the University of Louisiana (killjoys) and Michael

Tomasello's team at the Max Planck Institute in Leipzig (romantics, coincidently based at the same institute as Pääbo).

While there is an element of personal journey in his account, Suddendorf's book is a work of synthesis. It draws on the research of many psychologists, including his own important contributions, making what he describes as a "prudent and cautious" analysis. It covers an extensive number of observations made in the wild and in laboratory experiments, describing the various interpretations for the underlying mentality of apes and humans.

The book is structured around six fields of inquiry: language, mental time travel (through memory and anticipation), mind reading (through empathy and imagination), intelligence and problem-solving, cultural transmission, and morality. Each has a chapter in which Suddendorf initially summarizes the principal characteristics of human mentality, then provides comparative evidence from the great apes (and occasionally other animals), and finally makes a comparison. The boundaries between the six subjects are extremely blurred—one can hardly write about language without referring to mind reading or about cultural transmission without language.

It is not surprising, therefore, that Suddendorf concludes that all six fields share two features that set humans apart from our closest relatives: "our open-ended ability to imagine and reflect on different situations" and "our deep-seated drive to link our scenario-building minds together." Unfortunately, I remained unclear whether he was suggesting that these features provide the underlying foundations for language, intelligence, and so forth, presumably requiring some biological basis in the brain, or whether they represent emergent properties from the interactions between his six fields. Moreover, there is a hint that a fundamental constraint on ape mentality might simply be a shortage of working memory, an idea I would like to have seen further explored.

For Suddendorf, the two features he points to constitute "the gap" between human and ape mentality. To me it appears more like a chasm (remember I am a killjoy). While this chasm must have been opening up throughout the 65 million years of primate evolution, the full extent was only reached approximately six million years ago, the time of the divide between the

lineages that led to the modern-day chimpanzee and human. Ultimately the gap must derive from differences in the genomes, and here we return to Pääbo's "dirty little secret" that we cannot currently connect our knowledge of the genome with the particular characteristics of individual humans.

We do, however, learn something about the differences between the human and ape genomes from Pääbo's book. He recounts a conference presentation by Corey McLean in 2010 that described how modern humans were missing 583 large chunks of DNA that are present in apes. Those chunks had included some genes that are consequently now absent in humans. One such gene had been related to a protein that limits the extent to which neurons divide and hence its absence has "something to do" with how brains got larger in human evolution. According to these books, that seems to be as far as we can currently go in relating molecular biology to mentality in human evolution.

Fortunately, another chunk of missing DNA provides something more concrete. In the DNA that humans no longer have there was a gene that, in apes, encodes for a protein expressed in penile spines, the curiously named structures on the penises of apes that cause males to ejaculate very quickly. Lacking such spines, modern humans are able to enjoy prolonged intercourse. This gene was also found—luckily for them—to be absent from Neanderthals.

Reading Pääbo's and Suddendorf's books together, the obvious question arises of whether the modern gap in mentality between humans and apes is the same in kind as that between modern humans and Neanderthals. When compared to modern humans, were the Neanderthals also limited in their capacity for building mental scenarios and connecting their minds together? Or had these critical abilities for modern human thought already arisen in human evolution, at some time between the six-million-year-old human–ape common ancestor and the 0.4-million-year-old modern human–Neanderthal common ancestor? Suddendorf attempts to address this question in his penultimate chapter but is hindered by the sheer complexity of the archaeological data.

He gets into a tangle. On one page he suggests that dental evidence indicates Homo erectus had enhanced behavioral flexibility in comparison with its ancestors (a rather dubious inference) and may have made "serious headway in both key aspects of the gap." But then he is confronted by the stasis in technology for more than a million years and asks why Homo erectus did not regularly improve the design of their tools: presumably because they could neither imagine nor talk about new types of artifacts. Homo erectus then somehow becomes clever again by dispersing throughout much of the Old World, i.e., Europe and Asia. These apparent contradictions in Homo erectus's mental capacity suggest to me that the frame proposed by Suddendorf is missing something fundamental for understanding cognitive evolution, something that only becomes apparent from the archaeological record and thus is largely invisible to psychologists who rely upon observing living, breathing humans and apes.

The "prudent and cautious" analysis that Suddendorf brings to the psychological evidence is lost when it comes to the Neanderthals. I don't blame him, since the evidence appears even more contradictory than that for Homo erectus. What is unfortunate, however, is that Suddendorf doesn't cite any of the numerous recent books on Neanderthal mentality; that by Thomas Wynn and Frederick Coolidge would have supported his own hint about the overall significance of working memory capacity.*

The archaeological interpretations are incidental to Suddendorf's book, which provides the most comprehensive comparison of the mentalities of humans and apes that one can imagine. It is difficult to conceive of any new experiments or field observation that might either challenge or further develop his conclusions. In contrast, although Pääbo's book ends in 2010, one requires a mere glancing acquaintance with more findings to know that his scientific revolution continues. Just a few months ago, on December 4, 2013, DNA was reported as having been extracted from a 400,000-year-old human fossil. This is ten times older than the Neanderthals and opens up yet another new frontier in human evolution studies.

The fascination with who we are and what makes us different from our close relatives, whether extant or extinct, will continue. It is an alluring subject for everyone from the scientist requiring millions of dollars of

research funding to those who sit daydreaming in armchairs. Within a few months of the Neanderthal genome being published, forty-seven people had written to Pääbo claiming that they were Neanderthals; tellingly, forty-six of these were men. Twelve women had also written, suggesting that their husbands were Neanderthals. One may well have been my wife.

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1. See Thomas Wynn and Frederick L. Coolidge, How to Think Like a Neanderthal (Oxford University Press, 2011).