



16 March, 2011

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Article 1.

The Atlantic

10 Critical Questions About Japan's Nuclear Crisis

Cristine Russell

Mar 15 2011 -- As Japan's nuclear crisis worsens at the Fukushima Daiichi plant 160 miles northeast of Toyko more questions than answers have arisen about just how damaged the plant is and how much danger residents are in. This seesaw story has swung rapidly between peril and promise and back again, or as a colleague of mine once said, between no hope (catastrophe) and new hope (it's under control).

The challenge for the press and for government, seldom achieved in this crisis thus far, is to sound an appropriate alarm for those who are at greatest risk -- workers and local residents -- while calming those at little or no risk. (The challenge is intensified when instant global communication turns everyone into an observer, reporter, and worrier all at once.)

So how worried should we be about the unfolding disaster at Fukushima? Here are some key questions to ask in the hours and days to come.

1. What is the current state of damaged reactors at Fukushima Daiichi?

This has been a moving, and confusing, target and it's been hard to plot a trend line. Toyko Electric Power Co. reported that fire had

broken out again early Wednesday morning in Japan (Tuesday evening in the U.S.) in the building housing reactor 4. A hydrogen explosion had also occurred earlier at reactor 2. That brings the number of crippled units to four of the plant's six reactors. As with the pot that boils over on one burner of a stove when you're stirring another, the initial concerns focused on units 1 and 3, in which hydrogen explosions occurred over the weekend, which now seem somewhat more stable. Units 4, 5, and 6 were not operating at the time of the earthquake, but experts are now worried about storage pools of spent nuclear fuel rods heating up.

2. Is this more like Three Mile Island or Chernobyl?

While the question is unavoidable (and I've been asking it myself, having covered TMI), we still can't answer it yet. The cascade of reactor crises, and uncertainty about bringing them under control, has increased the degree of concern that Fukushima could become a more serious catastrophe than it originally appeared. As Matthew Bunn of Harvard's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs pointed out: "This is the worst nuclear accident since Chernobyl, and in some respects worse than Three Mile Island (TMI)."

At TMI, operators managed to avoid a hydrogen explosion and there was only a modest release of radiation as a result. In the case of Japan, there have been hydrogen explosions that damaged buildings at the plant and signs of significant radioactive releases (reports conflict about the amounts)., According to an international rating scale, Chernobyl (which involved a completely different type of reactor without a containment vessel and resulted in a significant radioactive release) was ranked 7 out of 7, while TMI was ranked 5. Initially, Japan's nuclear crisis was given a preliminary rating of 4,

but this is sure to change over time once the outcome becomes more clear.

3. What do we know about possible "meltdowns" involving Fukushima's reactors?

The short answer is: very little. At least "partial" meltdowns (which occurred at TMI) may have occurred in several reactors. The key issue is the degree to which crucial containment vessels housing the nuclear fuel cores remain intact. There were fears that an explosion at reactor unit 2 may have damaged the containment vessel, which increases the risk of release of hazardous radioactive materials. While reactor 4 was shut down at the time the earthquake occurred, there is concern there and at the other reactors about the pools containing used or spent uranium fuel rods. Again, it is all about cooling and containment and it ain't over yet. Scientific American has a good online package, while this New York Times graphic shows what would happen in a meltdown.

4. What's happening with the water?

Ironically water--or lack of it--has been the real story at Fukushima for the past four days. The nuclear cores need water to cool them down, and the tsunami swamped Fukushima and initially cut off electricity powering the cooling systems. Then various backups failed, which forced plant operators to pump sea water into the reactors to try to cool them down. The Times initially reported that helicopters might be used to drop water on the pools of spent fuel that are too hot. (Later the idea was discounted.) In short: follow the water.

5. What do we know about current radiation levels inside the plant?

That's where the alarm bells went off on Monday evening (U.S. EDT) following a Japanese press conference in which a top official warned the situation was growing "very grave" and that there were new concerns about the release of radioactive materials that could pose human health risks. The bulk of the plant's workers were evacuated because of the increased radiation and health risk, with a bare-bones crew of 50 left to continue heroic efforts to contain the ongoing crisis. It is of course the workers who are at greatest risk of short-term radiation sickness and long-term health effects.

Beware of single reports of radiation level reports, since radiation levels can frequently fluctuate and it is not clear who is being exposed and for how long. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirmed today that elevated radiation ("dose rates up to 400 millisieverts per hour") had been reported at the plant. Falling radiation levels were also reported.

6. What about radiation levels outside the plant?

The degree of human health risk depends on several factors including: the type of radioactive material involved; the level of radiation in the environment; whether and how long individuals are exposed to the radiation; the cumulative amount or dose of radiation. Some individuals are more vulnerable than others, particularly pregnant women, young children and seriously ill patients. Reliable measures of levels outside the plant have not been available and won't be for the foreseeable future (some journalists and others are wearing radiation dosimeters which will keep track of their individual exposure).

7. Is enough being done to protect Japanese near Fukushima, and what about those who live farther away?

In order to reduce the amount of exposure by residents, the government increased evacuation area around Fukushima to 20 kilometers and asked those living up to 30 kilometers away to stay indoors to further protect them from radiation. (During the the Three Mile Island episode there wasn't a mass evacuation, but pregnant women and preschool children were urged to leave the area.) The TMI crisis was relatively short-lived (the immediate danger subsided after three days) and involved just one reactor. The Japan crisis is far larger and will clearly last far longer.

8. Which way is the wind blowing?

This is highly pertinent. The wind direction, should there be a plume containing radioactive material, determines whether fallout will land on populated areas or in the sea. One bright spot here -- dare I say "new hope," at least temporarily? -- is that the prevailing surface winds, which were blowing toward Tokyo, are now expected to head toward the Pacific. Because low-levels of airborne radiation dissipate over time and distance, officials have said they don't expect this to pose a significant health risk in Hawaii or the mainland U.S.

9. Should we believe the official sources of information?

Frustration continues to grow in about the confusing, often contradictory, information emanating from the Japanese government and the company running Fukushima (not to mention dueling experts in some of international media). Concerns have inevitably surfaced

that some of the key players may be downplaying the situation (as was charged during TMI). But the situation is so serious that it seems unlikely it's being downplayed by those in power. The primary source of information are Japanese government officials, the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

10. How is the global media handling all of this?

Coverage by American news outlets has steadily improved, with more in-depth, informative updates replacing the limited, confusing weekend reports. You can get breaking news directly from Japan, including live USTREAM coverage on NHK WORLD TV, an English language 24-hour international news and information channel; NHK also has breaking online news in English; as does Kyodo News agency.

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Article 2.

Guardian

We in the Middle East have replaced humiliation with dignity

Ahmet Davutoglu

15 March 2011 - The wave of revolutions in the Arab world was spontaneous. But it also had to happen. They were necessary in order to restore the natural flow of history. In our region – west Asia and the south Mediterranean – there were two abnormalities in the last century: first, colonialism in the 1930s, 40s and 50s that divided the region into colonial entities, and severed the natural links between peoples and communities. For example, Syria was a French colony and Iraq a British one, so the historical and economic links between Damascus and Baghdad were cut.

The second abnormality was the cold war, which added a further division: countries that had lived together for centuries became enemies, like Turkey and Syria. We were in Nato; Syria was pro-Soviet. Our border became not a border between two nation states, but the border between two blocs. Yemen was likewise divided.

Now it is time to naturalise the flow of history. I see all these revolutions as a delayed process that should have happened in the late 80s and 90s as in eastern Europe. It did not because some argued that Arab societies didn't deserve democracy, and needed authoritarian regimes to preserve the status quo and prevent Islamist radicalism. Some countries and leaders who were proud of their own democracy, insisted that democracy in the Middle East would threaten security in our region.

Now we are saying all together: no. An ordinary Turk, an ordinary Arab, an ordinary Tunisian can change history. We believe that

democracy is good, and that our people deserve it. This is a natural flow of history. Everybody must respect this will of the people.

If we fail to understand that there is a need to reconnect societies, communities, tribes and ethnicities in our region, we will lose the momentum of history. Our future is our sense of common destiny. All of us in the region have a common destiny.

Now, if this transformation is a natural flow of the history, then how should we respond? First, we need an emergency plan to save people's lives, to prevent disaster. Second, we need to normalise life. And finally, we need to reconstruct and restore the political systems in our region, just as we would rebuild our houses after a tsunami.

But in order to undertake that restoration, we need a plan, a vision. And we need the self-confidence to do it – the self-confidence to say: this region is ours, and we will be the rebuilders of it. But for all this to happen, we must be clear about the basic principles that we have to follow.

First, we need to trust the masses in our region, who want respect and dignity. This is the critical concept today: dignity. For decades we have been insulted. For decades we have been humiliated. Now we want dignity. That is what the young people in Tahrir Square demanded. After listening to them, I became much more optimistic for the future. That generation is the future of Egypt. They know what they want. This is a new momentum in our region, and it should be respected.

The second principle is that change and transformation are a necessity, not a choice. If history flows and you try to resist it, you will lose. No leader, however charismatic, can stop the flow of history. Now it is time for change. Nobody should cling to the old cold war logic. Nobody should argue that only a particular regime or person can guarantee a country's stability. The only guarantee of stability is the people.

Third, this change must be peaceful – security and freedom are not alternatives; we need both. In this region we are fed up with civil wars, and tension. All of us have to act wisely without creating violence or civil strife between brothers and sisters. We have to make this change possible with the same spirit of common destiny.

Fourth, we need transparency, accountability, human rights and the rule of law, and to protect our social and state institutions. Revolution does not mean destruction. The Egyptian case is a good example: the army acted very wisely not to confront the people. But if there is no clear separation between the military and civilian roles of the political institutions, you may face problems. I am impressed by Field Marshal Tantawi's decision to deliver power to the civilian authority as soon as possible.

Finally, the territorial integrity of our countries and the region must be protected. The legal status and territorial integrity of states including Libya and Yemen should be protected. During colonialism and cold war we had enough divisions, enough separations.

This process must be led by the people of each country, but there should be regional ownership. This is our region. Intellectuals, opinion-makers, politicians of this region should come together more frequently in order to decide what should happen in our region in the future. We are linked to each other for centuries to come.

Whatever happens in Egypt, in Libya, in Yemen, in Iraq or in Lebanon affects us all. Therefore we should show solidarity with the people of these countries. There should be more regional forums, for politicians and leaders, for intellectuals, for the media.

Usually the "Middle East" – an orientalist term – is regarded as synonymous with tensions, conflicts and underdevelopment. But our region has been the centre of civilisation for millennia, leading to strong traditions of political order in which multicultural environments flourish. In addition to this civilisational and political

heritage, we have sufficient economic resources today to make our region a global centre of gravity.

Now it is time to make historic reassessments in order to transform our region into one of stability, freedom, prosperity, cultural revival and co-existence. In this new regional order there should be less violence and fewer barriers between countries, societies and sects. But there should be more economic interdependency, more political dialogue and more cultural interaction.

Today the search for a new global order is under way. After the international financial crisis, we need to develop an economic order based on justice, and a social order based on respect and dignity. And this region – our region – can contribute to the formation of this emerging new order: a global, political, economic and cultural new order.

Our responsibility is to open the way for this new generation, and to build a new region over the coming decade that will be specified by the will of its people.

This is an edited extract of a speech Ahmet Davutoglu delivered this week at the sixth Al-Jazeera forum in Doha

Article 3.

Washington Post

High stakes over Bahrain

David Ignatius

March 15 -- The Obama administration and its support for democratic change in the Middle East has been on a collision course with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and other traditional monarchies of the Persian Gulf. The crunch finally came this week with a sharp break over how to deal with protest in Bahrain.

The stakes in this latest crisis are high, even by Middle East standards, for it contains all the region's volatile ingredients: tension between Saudis and Iranians, between Sunni Muslims and Shiites, and between democratic reformers and status-quo powers.

Underlying this combustible mixture is the world's most important strategic commodity, Persian Gulf oil. How's that for a witch's brew? U.S. officials have been arguing that Bahrain's Sunni monarchy must make political compromises to give more power to the Shiite majority there. The most emphatic statement came last weekend from Defense Secretary Bob Gates, who said during a visit to Bahrain that its "baby steps" toward reform weren't enough and that the kingdom should step up its negotiations with the opposition.

This American enthusiasm for change has been anathema to the conservative regimes of the Gulf, and on Monday they backed Bahrain's ruling Khalifa family with military force, marching about 2,000 troops up the causeway that links Bahrain to Saudi Arabia. A senior Saudi official told me the intervention was needed to protect Bahrain's financial district and other key facilities from violent demonstrations. He warned that radical, Iranian-backed leaders were becoming more active in the protests.

“We don’t want Iran 14 miles off our coast, and that’s not going to happen,” said the Saudi official. U.S. officials counter that Iran, so far, has been only a minor player in the Bahrain protests and that Saudi military intervention could backfire by strengthening Iran’s hand.

“There is a serious breach” between the Gulf countries and Washington over the issue, warned a second Saudi official. “We’re not going in [to Bahrain] to shoot people, we’re going in to keep a system in place,” he said.

The Bahrain issue is the most important U.S.-Saudi disagreement in decades, and it could signal a fundamental change in policy. The Obama administration, in effect, is altering America’s long-standing commitment to the status quo in the Gulf, believing that change in Bahrain — as in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya — is inevitable and desirable.

The split reflects fundamental differences in strategic outlook. The Gulf regimes have come to mistrust Obama, seeing him as a weak president who will sacrifice traditional allies in his eagerness to be “on the right side of history.” They liken Obama’s rejection of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt to Jimmy Carter’s 1979 abandonment of the shah of Iran.

The crackup was predicted by a top UAE sheik in a February meeting with two visiting former U.S. officials. According to notes made during the conversation, the UAE official said: “We and the Saudis will not accept a Shiite government in Bahrain. And if your president says to the Khalifas what he said to Mubarak [to leave office], it will cause a break in our relationship with the U.S.” The UAE official warned that Gulf nations were “looking East” — to China, India and Turkey — for alternative security assistance.

The Obama White House hasn’t yielded to such pleas and threats from the Gulf. U.S. officials believe the Saudis and others have no

good option to the United States as a guarantor of security. They note that military and intelligence contacts are continuing, despite the sharp disagreement over Bahrain.

In the end, this is a classic liberal-conservative argument about how best to achieve stability. The White House believes that security crackdowns won't work any better in Bahrain than they did in Egypt or Tunisia — and that it's time to embrace a process of democratic transition across the region. The Gulf monarchies and sheikdoms counter that concessions will only empower more radicalism — and that the big beneficiaries, in the end, will be Islamic radicals in Iran and al-Qaeda.

The trick is finding a formula for transition that doesn't destabilize the Gulf and the global economy. White House officials talk as if this is an evolutionary process, but they should know better: As they saw in Egypt, change comes as a sudden shock — a nonlinear event that, in the case of the Gulf, will affect global energy and financial markets. Obama's goal should be “progressive pragmatism,” with an emphasis on both those words.

Article 4.

The Daily Star

Holy smokes! The Saudis are in Bahrain

Rami G. Khouri

March 16, 2011 -- The deployment of Saudi Arabian and United Arab Emirates security forces to Bahrain on Monday is a cause for concern at several levels.

It suggests that conservative Arab leaders in key energy-producing states are worried about the potential for the unrest in Yemen to their west and Bahrain to their east to spill over into their own countries. It accelerates the long-simmering ideological war between some Arab leaders and the Iranian government, with an unspoken but strong undertone of Shiite-Sunni tensions. And it is likely to spark fresh internal tensions in some Gulf states, where Shiite minorities will raise the level of their demands and protests.

However, the move, potentially, is good news on two other fronts: Saudi Arabia is asserting itself and showing that it can act decisively, and the United States is a marginal spectator in this process.

The Emirati foreign minister, Abdullah bin Zayed al-Nahyan, said Monday that the Saudi-UAE move aimed to defuse tensions in Bahrain and “support the Bahraini government and to get calm and order in Bahrain and to help both the Bahraini government and people to reach to a solution which is for the best for the Bahraini people.”

This is a legitimate and reasonable goal, but sending troops from other Arab countries is about the worst possible way to achieve it, given the internal, regional and global contexts in which the measure is occurring. Internally, a serious homegrown challenge to the ruling elite in Bahrain reflects the wider revolt of Arab citizens who are fed up with being denied their full citizenship rights. Regionally, this is

likely to be seen as the latest proxy political battle between Saudi Arabia and Iran, which in some places (Iran, Palestine, Lebanon) has also occasionally spilled over into armed clashes.

And globally, with the added symbolism of the U.S. Sixth Fleet home base in Bahrain, this is the latest phase of the ideological battle that has defined the Middle East for the past two decades, especially since the demise of the Iraqi state in 2003 due to the Anglo-American attack. This battle has been defined by Iranian-Syrian-led regional defiance against and resistance to American-Israeli-Arab conservatism.

In most of these spheres and in proxy battles, pro-American conservative Arabs have generally lost ground to Iranian-Syrian-led groups in both the political and the military realms, with only occasional exceptions. If Bahrain is now the latest active battlefield of ideological and ethnic conflict, the military gesture by the Saudis and the Emiratis on behalf of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is likely to have exactly the opposite effect than its intended goal of calming the situation down. It will stoke resentment and active opposition by many in Bahrain and around the region, who will see the move as an “occupation,” as some Bahrainis described it on Monday.

The lesson that many will draw is that two different standards apply to Arab citizen rights. In countries like Libya, Egypt and Tunisia, the world will accept or actively support constitutional changes that citizens of those countries demand; while in other Arab countries like Bahrain, the rights of citizens are secondary to wider energy and security needs, which is one reason that both mild and major protests by citizens of some GCC states are increasing.

Sending in Saudi-UAE troops is probably a counter-productive over-reaction, because tensions in Bahrain are purely political and local. They can be resolved through national negotiations that reconfigure

the constitutional governance system in a manner that affirms the equal rights of all citizens and subjects the incumbent power elite and national decisions to credible mechanisms of accountability and participation, which is what Arabs are demanding across the region. Issues of a political character that were resolvable in Bahrain will now be less resolvable because they have been shifted into an arena defined by foreign troops and a proxy battle for regional and global powers.

An inner beast has awoken in Saudi Arabia. Sending Saudi troops to other lands is a sign of real concern and growing panic, but also of self-confidence and assertion in foreign policy. The implications of this Saudi move for the region are enormous and unpredictable. It is also fascinating that the United States says it was not informed or aware of the decision on cross-border military movements by its closest Arab ally, in the heart of the most strategic real estate in the world.

As my learned political scientist friends would say, “Holy smokes!” There is no better sign of the reality that Washington has become a marginal player in much of the Middle East, largely as a consequence of its own incompetence, inconsistency, bias and weakness in allowing its Middle East policy to be shaped by neoconservative fanatics, pro-Israel zealots, anti-Islamic demagogues, Christian fundamentalist extremists, and assorted other strange folks who trample American principles and generate foreign policies that harm and marginalize the U.S. abroad.

Article 5.

The Washington Post

A regional strategy for democracy in the Middle East

Zalmay Khalilzad

March 15 -- President Obama has reportedly settled on a country-specific strategy for the Middle East uprisings. Instead of crafting a regional plan, the United States will deal with protests for democracy and freedom in each state on its own terms. This approach is inadequate to both the challenges and the opportunities arising from the political turbulence.

The administration's approach so far has yielded mixed results at best. On the positive side, the dictators in Tunisia and Egypt departed peacefully. Steady transitions to democracy appear to be underway, though the situations in both countries are still in flux. In Bahrain, U.S. pressure initially persuaded the ruling monarchy to cease attacks and engage the opposition politically (though the extent to which the regime will liberalize remains unknown).

Events elsewhere are more troubling. Protests are escalating against American partners in Yemen, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Jordan and some of the Gulf states. It is unclear whether these regimes will be able to reach understandings with their opposition movements without greater American involvement. The arrival of Saudi forces in Bahrain suggests that the Obama administration is losing influence to those in the Gulf who advocate a crackdown. Moreover, the Obama administration has failed to offer opposition movements in countries with anti-American regimes — notably Libya — sufficient support to prevail. The administration has also

shown little inclination toward a comprehensive support strategy for the opposition in Iran and Syria.

A country-specific strategy maintains U.S. flexibility and counters the image of American “meddling” in the Middle East, preserving, as reportedly characterized by President Obama, the “completely organic” nature of the uprisings. Yet this thinking has two major flaws.

First, it discounts the link between U.S. policy in one situation and outcomes elsewhere. Just as protests beginning in Tunisia inspired revolts across the Middle East, so too will the American approach to each uprising have ramifications in other countries.

Second, the strategy is inherently reactive. It allows us to manage breaking developments but undermines our ability to shape events proactively even as regimes and reformers are watching our actions and drawing lessons. If we are to avoid instability while putting hostile regimes on the defensive, we need a strategy that allows us to take the initiative.

The United States should adopt a proactive regional strategy that differentiates among transitional states, friendly authoritarians and anti-American dictatorships. In Iraq, Tunisia and Egypt, the United States should steer the transitions underway toward full democratic consolidation. In Iraq, we need to assist in the implementation of the recent power-sharing agreement and prod the government to deal with corruption and improve services. In Egypt and Tunisia, we can increase the odds of stable democracies emerging by leveling the playing field between moderate, secular democrats and their Islamist and sectarian opponents. We can do so by making sure good election laws are put in place and by providing liberal parties and civil society groups with assistance to counter the aid that Iranian and others provide to Islamist parties.

In friendly but repressive states, the United States should push ruling regimes to open space for responsible actors and oversee political reforms. We should encourage the regimes in Morocco and the Persian Gulf to evolve into constitutional monarchies while pressuring leaders in Algeria and Yemen to strengthen their parliaments, engage the opposition, and implement and abide by constitutional limits. Without such transitions, these countries risk increased instability.

The Middle East uprisings that hold the greatest promise are in anti-American dictatorships. The immediate challenge is to ensure the ouster of Libyan leader Moammar Gaddafi. Steps to help that happen include the establishment of a no-fly zone; support and assistance for the authorities in liberated areas, humanitarian and military aid for friendly rebels; and outreach to elements inside the Gaddafi coalition, including tribes. The Arab League's call for a no-fly zone should bolster [REDACTED]. Security Council support for tougher action. By moving quickly on all these fronts, the United States and its allies can begin to reach an understanding with Libyans opposed to Gaddafi.

Without greater outside support, Gaddafi's regime is likely to crush its opposition, and Libya is likely to emerge as a rogue pariah run by a vindictive Gaddafi. Other dictatorships would then be emboldened to squelch their democratic opponents and resist liberalization. Our failure to act now will force a costlier intervention down the line.

By contrast, Gaddafi's overthrow and the consolidation of a liberal, pro-American regime would bolster prospects for reform in Iran and Syria by countering Iranian propaganda that the current revolts are Islamist in character and directed only at partners of the United States.

We can follow up with a variety of steps to foment democratic revolutions against Tehran and Damascus, beginning with clarion calls for change. These include: training and support for opposition

forces in and outside the countries; pressure directed against regime officials who attack their own people, including targeted sanctions and referrals in international tribunals; surrogate broadcasting and other pro-democracy messaging; funds for striking workers; and covert efforts to induce defections by regime and security officials. We are at a key juncture. As in Europe in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the dysfunction of the Middle East today generates the most threatening challenges to the international community. The largely peaceful, youth-oriented, democratic revolutions across the region present an opportunity to catalyze a fundamental transformation. Partnering with other responsible actors, we should take reasonable steps to facilitate and consolidate this shift in the Middle East.

The writer, a counselor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, was U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, Iraq and the United Nations during the George W. Bush administration.

Article 6.

SPIEGEL

An Interview with Amr Moussa

03/16/2011 -- *Amr Moussa is the secretary-general of the Arab League and is a favorite in Egypt's upcoming presidential election. In a SPIEGEL interview, he discusses the prospects for democracy in the Middle East, the risks of a civil war in Libya and his expectations of the West. Editor's note: This SPIEGEL interview was conducted before the Arab League officially requested on Saturday that the UN Security Council impose a no-fly zone on Libya.*

SPIEGEL: Mr. Secretary-General, the dictator Moammar Gadhafi is dropping bombs on his own people in Libya, and you, as head of the 22-member Arab League, are merely looking on?

Amr Moussa: That is precisely what we are not doing. For the first time in the history of our organization, we have suspended a country's membership because its leadership is abusing the country's people. In two resolutions, we have condemned Gadhafi's actions and declared our solidarity with the Libyans, whose struggle for freedom of expression and democracy we fully support. We are consulting with the United Nations and the African Union -- two alliances of which Libya is also a member -- partly to discuss imposing a no-fly zone on Gadhafi's air force.

SPIEGEL: Are you trying to influence him? When was the last time you spoke with the Libyan leader?

Moussa: The way he is now behaving means a personal telephone call makes no sense. Gadhafi lacks the insight that Tunisia's (former) President Ben Ali and (former) Egyptian President (Hosni) Mubarak

showed by stepping down. Gadhafi truly believes that the unrest is controlled from abroad and that the Libyan people still adores him.

SPIEGEL: Do you think he is irrational or cold-blooded and calculating?

Moussa: I'm not prepared to discuss his psychological state. The situation is too serious for that.

SPIEGEL: Gadhafi sent an envoy to the Arab League. What did the man want?

Moussa: I didn't meet him. We have already adopted resolutions on Libya and will make the appropriate decisions at the next League meeting. Besides, Libya and Gadhafi are a matter for the United Nations Security Council...

SPIEGEL: ...which would have to approve the no-fly zone to give it international legitimacy. This is a highly controversial step. US Defense Secretary Robert Gates has called it an act of war. The Libyan anti-aircraft positions would have to be bombed first, so that surveillance aircraft couldn't be shot down.

Moussa: I'm no military expert. How this zone is implemented, and by whom, remains to be seen. The Arab League can also play a role here, which I will advocate.

SPIEGEL: You support an international military intervention in a fellow Arab state?

Moussa: You are calling it an intervention. I'm talking about a humanitarian campaign. The goal of implementing a no-fly zone is to

support the Libya people in their struggle for freedom against an increasingly inhuman regime.

SPIEGEL: Who should lead the campaign?

Moussa: That depends on the Security Council resolution. The UN, the Arab League, the African Union, the Europeans -- everyone should be involved. I just spoke with the Italian foreign minister, and his British counterpart called me the day before. We are trying to coordinate our efforts.

SPIEGEL: While you consult, Gadhafi keeps on bombing. The regime in Libya is waging a war against its citizens.

Moussa: It's a revolution, but it isn't a civil war yet. We are motivated by the desire to protect the civilian population, not by strategic interests, and not by oil. For us, it's the people that count.

SPIEGEL: Not all Libyans are calling for international support against Gadhafi. Some believe that they can topple the despot on their own. An intervention would deprive them of the pride in their revolution.

Moussa: We Egyptians, of all people, know how important it is to bring down an autocrat using only your own power. I hope the Libyans can have the same wonderful feeling. The revolutions in the Arab nations are not all proceeding according to the same pattern, but change is inevitable. And irreversible.

SPIEGEL: What has triggered the unexpected uprisings? Where are the common roots?

Moussa: People are taking to the streets because they are frustrated and because they have no prospects. Because they were being governed poorly. And because they are tired of seeing their freedom of opinion curtailed. Throughout the entire Arab world, it is an uprising propelled primarily by young people.

SPIEGEL: Do you see other autocrats being overthrown?

Moussa: Yes. This is only the beginning. I bow to the Tunisian people, whose brave revolt started it all. I am proud of my fellow Egyptians, who have already achieved so much with their courage and spirit. What happens in our country has always had a critical impact on the Arab world. The revolution in Cairo opened the door wide up for change. In other words, the Libyan regime will not be the last to fall. I see a domino effect.

SPIEGEL: Who will be next? Will it be President Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen, Abdelaziz Bouteflika in Algeria or King Khalifa in Bahrain?

Moussa: The situation in Yemen is extremely tense. But you don't seriously expect me to go through all of the countries with you and predict the next overthrow.

'We Are Experiencing a Dramatic Upheaval in the Entire Middle East'

SPIEGEL: Dissatisfaction is even driving people to protest in wealthy, conservative Saudi Arabia.

Moussa: We are experiencing a dramatic upheaval in the entire Middle East. This region is in the process of undergoing radical change in a short space of time. And even if the change is still

associated with risks and setbacks, it's a unique opportunity, the beginning of an epochal development. What we are now experiencing is the discovery of true democracy by the Arab world.

SPIEGEL: What do you mean?

Moussa: For many in the West, democracy means dropping completed ballots into ballot boxes. That's enough for them. This is also the superficial view imparted to us by Western countries, and it hampered our chances for development. But now we have recognized that there is more to democracy: respect for human rights, the observance of basic rights and laws, the development of independent institutions. In taking this path, we are picking up where our own history left off: the parliament of 1866, a development that was interrupted by coups. We are not imitating the West, and we will not be given instructions. We are going our own way.

SPIEGEL: Middle Eastern autocrats consistently claim that they are the bulwark against religious extremism, based on the motto: It's either me or chaos.

Moussa: That sentence comes from Mubarak. Extremism exists in every society, everywhere, not just in the Middle East and not just in Islam. It isn't just the result of religious fervor. It is the responsibility of all of us to fight these bloody superiority fantasies with all our might.

SPIEGEL: That's also the way Mubarak justified his repressive regime.

Moussa: Certain circles in the West were only too willing to accept this. But it was very convenient having a strong man as a partner.

SPIEGEL: And now cooperation will become more inconvenient and unpredictable for our politicians?

Moussa: Don't belittle the West in general. There are many leaders who are genuinely pleased about the awakening of our democracy. I expressly count Chancellor Merkel among them. She has her own experience with lack of freedom and with the triumph of overcoming it. I would be pleased to be able to welcome her here in the new Egypt soon.

SPIEGEL: You served the old Egypt for 20 years. You were its ambassador to the United Nations and Mubarak's foreign minister. Do you regret having been loyal for so long?

Moussa: I can't deny that I was part of the government. But my loyalty was always to Egypt, not Mubarak. I was never in his party. As foreign minister, I represented the interests of my country, and with a good conscience. I adhere to what I did in that position. But I always had my own ideas. That's why I had to go after 10 years.

SPIEGEL: Mubarak sent you off to the Arab League. Was it because you had become too popular for his taste and he feared you as a rival, as many believe?

Moussa: I had a constructive working relationship with Mubarak for a long time, until the president insisted on constitutional amendments in 2005 that were meant to solidify his further control. This was an attack on the dignity of our country, and it shattered our relationship. At the economic summit of Arab nations in January 2011, I spoke clearly to Mubarak about the wrongs in our country: the dissatisfaction of young people, their lack of opportunities, their calls

for freedom and a share of power, and their feelings of outrage over corruption.

SPIEGEL: Mubarak didn't want to listen?

Moussa: I was appalled at how little he understood about what was really happening in Egypt. He didn't have his finger on the pulse of the time.

SPIEGEL: And yet you were in favor of Mubarak remaining in the presidential palace for the remainder of his term, until September 2011. The revolution was already in full swing at that point. Why?

Moussa: I wanted to provide him with an honorable exit, under the condition that he would not run for office again or send his son into the race. He agreed to that condition.

SPIEGEL: But it wasn't enough for the hundreds of thousands on Tahrir Square in Cairo. They chanted: "Now it's enough!"

Moussa: Yes. Mubarak's realization came too late. There was no longer any chance of a possible compromise once the regime brutally attacked the people. When that happened, I went to Liberation Square (Tahrir Square) twice. I was moved by how warmly the protesters received me.

SPIEGEL: Did it encourage you to run for the office of president?

Moussa: I am available. But we don't know yet when exactly the elections are to take place. It also isn't clear yet whether there will be parliamentary elections or presidential elections first. I would argue for the latter. New parties have to first be set up in Egypt so that a parliament can be representative of the people.

SPIEGEL: With all due respect to your vitality, you will be 75 this year, which doesn't exactly make you the standard-bearer of the young Egyptians who were largely behind the revolution.

Moussa: I don't believe that my age is a handicap. The new Egypt needs fresh people, but also politicians with experience.

SPIEGEL: An initial poll suggests you are a frontrunner for the presidency. When will you resign from your post as head of the Arab League?

Moussa: Irrespective of a candidacy, I decided some time ago that after 10 years at the head of the Arab League, I would no longer be available for a new term. As far as my role as a favorite goes, I've been in politics long enough not to place too much faith in opinion polls. There are also other candidates.

SPIEGEL: Who is your main rival? Nobel Peace Prize winner Mohamed ElBaradei?

Moussa: I hold him in high regard. I'm looking forward to a political contest with him.

SPIEGEL: What does your political platform look like?

Moussa: I'm a supporter of the free market economy, but this doesn't mean that we should forget social issues and justice in society.

SPIEGEL: The Islamic political organization Muslim Brotherhood also hopes to win votes by running on a justice platform.

Moussa: The Muslim Brothers are a part of society, and they indisputably have their followers. But they did not play a key role in the Egyptian revolution. Now they have the right to form an

independent party and to take part in free and fair elections. They have to prove themselves with a political platform. This is better than marginalizing and persecuting them, as Mubarak did.

SPIEGEL: What do you think the Muslim Brotherhood's prospects are in elections?

Moussa: They are a strong force. But I don't believe that they will come into power.

SPIEGEL: Your neighbor, Israel, fears that the Muslim Brotherhood's influence is growing to a dangerous degree, and that religious extremists will revoke the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. Is that fear justified?

Moussa: Our policies will be moderate and geared toward balance. As president, I would naturally uphold all international agreements, including those with Israel.

SPIEGEL: You would, but the Muslim Brothers probably wouldn't.

Moussa: Should they become the most powerful force, against all expectations, Israel will have to live with it. Democracy is democracy. I'm sorry, but you can't choose who wins the election.

SPIEGEL: You too are considered highly critical of Israeli policy.

Moussa: Egypt fully supports the joint Arab position toward Israel. The Palestinians need their own, viable state, and Israel has to withdraw from the occupied territories. And as a very first step, the blockade of the Gaza Strip...

SPIEGEL: ...which is controlled by the radical Islamic group Hamas...

Moussa: ...has to be lifted, immediately and in full.

SPIEGEL: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is a long way from doing that. Could you still sit down with him and find political compromises?

Moussa: First of all, Netanyahu would have to show that he is interested in a just peace. That would reduce the tensions in the region.

SPIEGEL: You already visited Israel during your time as foreign minister. Back then, you refused to visit the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial.

Moussa: That was many years ago. I didn't want the agenda of my visit to be dictated to me at the time. But that has nothing to do with my revulsion for the Nazis' mass murder of the Jews.

SPIEGEL: The Egyptian military has to give up its power as a precondition for real democracy.

Moussa: I'm convinced of that. They have shown great responsibility. You know that they are only managing the transition. As with all other democratic forces, I am in close contact with the military council. But Egypt's new era will only begin when our constitution is reformed and the first freely elected president is inaugurated.

SPIEGEL: Should the crimes of the past be punished or forgiven?

Moussa: The crucial thing is the rule of law. Criminals need to be punished. But it's not about revenge. For us, the most important thing is to look to the future.

SPIEGEL: Should Mubarak be pardoned? Are you in contact with him?

Moussa: No, I have no contact with him. He is living in his villa in Sharm el-Sheikh on the Red Sea, and he's well guarded. He should withdraw from public life completely. The former president is now an ordinary citizen like anyone else. Hosni Mubarak will also have to answer to the law. Everyone is equal in the new Egypt.

SPIEGEL: Mr. Secretary-General, we thank you for this interview.

Article 7.

The New York Times

'Physics of the Future'

Dwight Garner

March 15, 2011 - Reading a dull, charmless nonfiction book is almost always better than reading a dull, charmless novel. With a nonfiction book, you might at least learn something. "Dull" and "charmless" are awfully harsh words to apply to Michio Kaku's "Physics of the Future," a book that examines, with exhaustive pluck, what life might be like at the end of the current century. But they're the first words that popped into my mouth when a stranger asked me, in a coffee shop, "How's the book?"

Mr. Kaku is a quantum physicist, a founder of string field theory and the host of an appealing show on the Science Channel called "Sci Fi Science." He's a smart human who in the course of compiling this book became an even smarter one: he interviewed more than 300 scientists who are performing forward-looking work in areas like computers, medicine, nanotechnology, space exploration and energy production.

A lot of the information Mr. Kaku rounds up and dispenses in "Physics of the Future" won't be new to people who've kept up with the work of Ray Kurzweil and other futurists. Yet it's eye-popping. We'll have X-ray vision and space elevators and live at least twice as long and be able to move things, perhaps even martinis, with our minds. We'll go online, thanks to wired contact lenses, by blinking. "We will view chemotherapy," he writes, "like we view leeches of the past century." We'll watch televised football games, if we wish, as if from the 50-yard line.

“Micromachines smaller than the period at the end of this sentence,” he declares, will perform surgery. Next stop, as Rod Serling used to declare suavely, the Twilight Zone.

This is not boring stuff, and it all somewhat makes me wish that I (born in 1965) were going to be around to witness it all. In terms of data delivery, “Physics of the Future” gets the job done. But airplane food gets the job done, too, and airplane food — bland and damp — is what Mr. Kaku’s prose too often resembles.

“Physics of the Future” has few sentences so bad that you can tweezer them, like splinters from your toe, and put them on display. But there’s barely an original turn of phrase in the book’s nearly 400 pages.

Clichés pile up. Sometimes two or three fight it out in the same sentence. One example: “Like a kid in a candy store, he delights in delving into uncharted territory, making breakthroughs in a wide range of hot-button topics.” This kind of thing, if you are accustomed to real writing, hurts your insides.

Mr. Kaku thinks in numbers better than he thinks in words, which is a problem only in that he’s written a book and not a series of equations. His voice has an androidlike, take-me-to-your-leader tone.

Describing the pleasure we get in watching Snooki or Regis or Morley or Oprah, he writes: “We love to watch others and even sit for hours in front of a TV, endlessly watching the antics of our fellow humans.”

Such textureless prose inadvertently illustrates one of his key observations about computers: that they will, in the near future, be able to perform repetitive tasks for us, like doing the dishes or walking the dog. But they will not be able to tell meaningful stories or create art.

Word geek roughs up math geek: that's this review so far, approaching overkill. "Physics of the Future," let me add, has the ability to surprise and enthrall and frighten as well.

Mr. Kaku probes the future of medicine. Our toilets will check our excretions for telltale signs of disease, he suggests. [REDACTED] machines will be the size of cellphones; you might keep one at home. Sensors in our clothes will leap into action if we are hurt.

"In the future," he writes, hauntingly, "it will be difficult to die alone."

Nearly everything we touch will be connected to the Internet; we may not need laptops any longer. We may even have "scrap computers" the way we have scrap paper now.

Our zoos will most likely fill with animals that are now extinct. We might be able to bring back the Neanderthal. Mr. Kaku is alert to ethical implications. He quotes Richard Klein, an anthropologist at Stanford, about Neanderthals: "Are you going to put them in Harvard or in a zoo?"

Mr. Kaku suggests that we will have replicators, or molecular assemblers, capable of creating almost anything we want, the same way that nature can "take hamburgers and vegetables and turn them into a baby."

This book's dark aspects pool around its margins. The author fears that Silicon Valley may become a rust belt, upending the economy, because computer chips will no longer be able to grow smaller. The postsilicon era is unknowable.

He notes that many of our technological leaps — from the global positioning system (GPS) to the Internet itself — have come from the military. He looks forward to genial robots. He is less sanguine about the robots that are "specifically designed to hunt, track and kill humans" and about what might happen should they fall into the wrong hands or go berserk.

Global warming will be quite real, he suggests, and predicts that by the end of the century, several major American cities will be underwater and that others (including New York) will be surrounded by looming seawalls. The futurist in him even fears more Islamic terrorists, “who would prefer to go back a millennium, to the 11th century, rather than live in the 21st century.”

We will probably discover signs of intelligent life in the cosmos during this century, Mr. Kaku surmises. But “Physics of the Future” makes Earth seem like a very lonely planet, hurtling toward a destiny both exhilarating and dire.

Dwight Garner is a book critic for the New York Times . A former senior editor of the New York Times Book Review , he was the founding books editor of [REDACTED]