

Date: Tue, 01 Feb 2011 15:00:37 -0500

To: "Dr. Baruch Fischhoff - Chair, National Academy Committee on Improving Intelligence" <baruch@cmu.edu>, "Dr. Anne-Marie Slaughter - Director, Policy Planning Staff via Ms. Marisa S. McAuliffe" <mcauliffems@state.gov>,

From: Lloyd Etheredge <lloyd.etheredge@policyscience.net>

**Subject: 215. Red Team (timely): Testing Brooks-Lasswell: "The United States Usually Gets Everything Wrong"**

Dear Dr. Fischhoff and Colleagues:

David Brooks' column in today's New York Times (below) should activate a National Academy recommendation for a Red Team project. (David Brooks discusses an arc of events and a pattern of mistakes, in cases from around the world and across fifty years, a number of which he has covered professionally.)

"The United States usually gets everything wrong" is an exciting and interesting charge for a Red Team/National Academy project to engage. There is an opportunity for learning by the intelligence community: a generic, recurring foreign policy problem with a large N for scientific analysis. The project is timely and relevant: New cases will be heading toward the intelligence community and US decision makers.<1>

**The Deeper, Brooks-Lasswell Hypothesis**

Brooks also raises, in his deeper theory about the resonance of human dignity, a behavioral science hypothesis about the forces of history and the basis for civil and world order. Lasswell, many years ago, proposed that "a world commonwealth of human dignity" would be an attractive and sustainable basis for public order.

When the Lasswell hypothesis was proposed (with a sophisticated analysis of human rights and outcomes across eight areas, and a behavioral science strategy) it was widely seen in the

context of the Cold War. I.e., it might be something nice for academics to talk about, but that should be (like human rights generally, or foreign aid) on the periphery (part of a package to keep Wilsonian liberals and humanitarians enrolled in the domestic constituency for foreign policy). True world order was to be created and sustained by a more valid, Realist, approach to public order via mutual assured destruction, using rotary slide-rules calibrated in megadeaths, CIA interventions, and supporting dictators who would be our allies.

## **A New Grand Strategy? Is Human Dignity a Deep and Valid Political Behavior**

### **Insight?**

Does Brooks now, with hindsight about 50 years of (what a Red Team may agree to have been) mistaken judgments, help us to perceive a deeper scientific truth that should cause us - and the intelligence community - now to rethink new cases and Grand Strategy? Was Lasswell right that, while many US speeches and policies “ring bells,” it is the political agenda for dignity and human rights that “rings cathedral chimes?”

### **“Carpe Diem!”**

We may be at a unique historical juncture and a “teachable moment.”

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<1> There will be generic forecasting/analysis tasks and recycling arguments: e.g., "They still control the Army - they are not really weak." Or “Don’t make this about us!” Or “What if we support the demonstrators and they lose?” Or “hedge our bets” policy arguments - i.e., early, official/cautious tilts toward all governments while secretly giving messages of respect to the opposition.

This is an interesting large N case for Tetlock's analysis of forecasting -, i.e., if, instead of randomness, the "US usually gets everything wrong . . . "

It would be worthwhile consulting with the Dunne/Kagan think tank project that Brooks

references. How does the world occur for them, differently, so that they got the right answer this time? Is their new algorithm, cross-walking the past fifty years with a counterfactual analysis, plausibly greater in scientific stature than just the current Egyptian case?

- Could any new algorithm be improved by including Alex George/Holsti/Lebow/Hermann-Janis et al. and recognizing the autocrat's decision as a crisis decision under stress?

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January 31, 2011. NYT.

## **The Quest for Dignity**

By DAVID BROOKS

I wonder if sometime around 50 years ago a great mental tide began to sweep across the world. Before the tide, people saw themselves in certain fixed places in the social order. They accepted opinions from trusted authorities.

As the tide swept through, they began to see themselves differently. They felt they should express their own views, and these views deserved respect. They mentally bumped themselves up to first class and had a different set of expectations of how they should be treated. Treatment that had once seemed normal now felt like an insult. They began to march for responsive government and democracy.

I've covered some of these marches over the years in places like Russia, Ukraine and South Africa. While there are vast differences between nations, the marchers tend to echo certain themes n themes we are hearing once again in the interviews that reporters are doing in Cairo.

Protesters invariably say that their government has insulted their dignity by ignoring their views. They have a certain template of what a "normal" country looks like n with democracy and

openness and they feel humiliated that their nation doesn't measure up.

Moreover, the protesters tend to feel enormous pride that they are finally speaking up, even in the face of danger. They feel a surge of patriotism as the people of their country make themselves heard.

This quest for dignity has produced a remarkable democratic wave. More than 100 nations have seen democratic uprisings over the past few decades. More than 85 authoritarian governments have fallen. Somewhere around 62 countries have become democracies, loosely defined.

The experiences of these years teach us a few lessons. First, the foreign policy realists who say they tolerate authoritarian government for the sake of stability are ill informed. Autocracies are more fragile than any other form of government, by far.

Second, those who say that speeches by outsiders have no influence on places like Egypt have it backward. The climate of opinion is the very basis of the revolt.

Third, for all the pessimism and nervousness that accompanies change, most countries that have experienced uprisings end up better off. We can all think of exceptions, like Iran, but we should greet these events with eagerness and hope.

Fourth, while the public hunger for dignity is unabated, the road from authoritarianism to democracy is rocky and perilous. Over the past few years, the world has experienced a "freedom recession" with more governments retreating from democracy than advancing toward it. For outside powers, the real work comes after the revolution in helping democrats build governments that work.

The other thing we've learned is that the United States usually gets everything wrong. There have been dozens of democratic uprisings over the years, but the government always reacts like it's the first one. There seem to be no protocols for these situations, no preset questions to be

asked.

Policy makers always underestimate the power of the bottom-up quest for dignity, so they are slow to understand what is happening. Last week, for example, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared that the Egyptian regime was stable, just as it was falling apart.

Then their instinct is to comfort the fellow members of the club of those in power. The Obama administration was very solicitous of President Hosni Mubarak during the first days of the protests and of other dictators who fear their regime may be next.

Then, desperately recalibrating in an effort to keep up with events, they inevitably make a series of subtle distinctions no one else heeds. The Obama administration ended up absurdly calling on Mubarak to initiate a reform agenda. Surely there's not a single person in the government who thinks he is actually capable of doing this. Meanwhile, the marchers heard this fudge as Obama supporting Mubarak and were outraged.

The Obama administration's reaction was tardy, but no worse than, say, the first Bush administration's reaction to the uprisings in the Baltics and Ukraine. The point is, there's no need to be continually wrong-footed. If you start with a healthy respect for the quest for dignity, if you see autocracies as fragile and democratic revolts as opportunities, then you'll find it much easier to anticipate events.

The Working Group on Egypt, co-led by Michele Dunne and Robert Kagan, has outperformed the U.S. government by miles. For months, they've been warning of Mubarak's fragility. As the protests started, they issued a smart and concrete set of policy recommendations.

Over the past decades, there has been a tide in the affairs of men and women. People in many places have risked their lives for recognition and respect. Governments may lag, and complications will arise, but still they will march. And, in the long run, we should be glad they do.

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