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Subject: 233. Red Team: "Stability has Left the Building."
Catching up with the President's secret 8/2010
directive; Neuroscience and Dr. Sharp's theory of
non-violent revolutions

Dear Dr. Fischhoff, Dr. Atkinson, and Colleagues:

A Red Team should be moving very quickly to learn lessons and evolve: a.) the Administration's paradigm of professional community organizing; and b.) the behavioral theories of non-violent regime change.

The following two news reports from today's New York Times disclose the White House secret (Ross) strategy group that began in August, 2010 and the behavioral science framework for effective non-violent revolutions developed by Dr. Gene Sharp (D. Phil., Oxford and a retired faculty member at the U. of MA with a research position at Harvard's Center for International Affairs for almost thirty years). President Obama's secret

Directive recognized several of the new trends and opportunities that also were under discussion in the Fischhoff process.

- My perceptions about the practical relevance of the new hierarchical psychodrama paradigm are similar to Dr. Sharp's - e.g., that the locus of an autocratic regime's power is in the behavior and psychology of the oppressed. [See # 231 at www.policyscience.net II. D. and references cited there.] A thoughtful analysis of the brain mechanisms involved begins to unconceal vulnerabilities and new pathways for people with constructive purposes. These lines of investigation should proceed quickly.

- President Obama's community organizing paradigm probably can (and has) added many vital elements (for example, preparatory discussions with the Egyptian military and the Israeli government) that are not in Dr. Sharp's approach alone.

- It is likely that other autocratic regimes will be involved in their own strategic learning, and autocrats may be experiencing what neuropsychologists call "amygdala hijacks" - i.e., primitive fear reactions that can increase the likelihood of violent responses. The basketball court ("from the minuet to the basketball court") analogy is relevant: the Administration must move quickly to identify and use openings, especially if the goal is nonviolent change.

It would not be unusual for most of the \$80 billion/year DNI system to be unaware of the new White House paradigm or the range of reporting and capabilities that would be suggested by community organizing paradigm + Sharp's model. Thus, there is added urgency to recommend a Red Team/National Academy project to review older assumptions and new requirements.

Specifically: In Egypt, in Friedman's allusion, "Stability has left the building." If the Obama Administration can, with the help of the DNI and/or behavioral scientists improve the effectiveness of key variables by 3% - 5% or more each, the cumulative impacts could be an exciting contribution to (genuinely) non-violent and rapid change. In

Egypt and in other countries.

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NYT. February 16, 2011

Secret Report Ordered by Obama Identified Potential Uprisings

by MARK LANDLER

WASHINGTON n [President Obama](#) ordered his advisers last August to produce a secret report on unrest in the Arab world, which concluded that without sweeping political changes, countries from [Bahrain](#) to [Yemen](#) were ripe for popular revolt, administration officials said Wednesday.

Mr. Obama's order, known as a Presidential Study Directive, identified likely flashpoints, most notably [Egypt](#), and solicited proposals for how the administration could push for political change in countries with autocratic rulers who are also valuable allies of the United States, these officials said.

The 18-page classified report, they said, grapples with a problem that has bedeviled the White House's approach toward Egypt and other countries in recent days: how to balance American strategic interests and the desire to avert broader instability against the democratic demands of the protesters.

Administration officials did not say how the report related to intelligence analysis of the

Middle East, which the director of the [Central Intelligence Agency, Leon E. Panetta](#), acknowledged in testimony before Congress, needed to better identify “triggers” for uprisings in countries like Egypt.

Officials said Mr. Obama’s support for the crowds in Tahrir Square in Cairo, even if it followed some mixed signals by his administration, reflected his belief that there was a greater risk in not pushing for changes because Arab leaders would have to resort to ever more brutal methods to keep the lid on dissent.

“There’s no question Egypt was very much on the mind of the president,” said a senior official who helped draft the report and who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss its findings. “You had all the unknowns created by Egypt’s succession picture and Egypt is the anchor of the region.”

At the time, officials said, President [Hosni Mubarak](#) appeared to be either digging in or grooming his son, Gamal, to succeed him. Parliamentary elections scheduled for November were widely expected to be a sham. Egyptian police were jailing bloggers, and [Mohamed ElBaradei](#), the former chief of the [International Atomic Energy Agency](#), had returned home to lead a nascent opposition movement.

In Yemen, too, officials said Mr. Obama worried that the administration’s intense focus on counterterrorism operations against [Al Qaeda](#) was ignoring a budding political crisis, as angry young people rebelled against President [Ali Abdullah Saleh](#), an autocratic leader of the same vintage as Mr. Mubarak.

“Whether it was Yemen or other countries in the region, you saw a set of trends” and a big

youth population, threadbare education systems, stagnant economies and new social network technologies like [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) that was a “real prescription for trouble,” another official said.

The White House held weekly meetings with experts from the State Department, the C.I.A. and other agencies. The process was led by [Dennis B. Ross](#), the president’s senior adviser on the Middle East; [Samantha Power](#), a senior director at the [National Security Council](#) who handles human rights issues; and Gayle Smith, a senior director responsible for global development.

The administration kept the project secret, officials said, because it worried that if word leaked out, Arab allies would pressure the White House, something that happened in the days after protests convulsed Cairo.

Indeed, except for Egypt, the officials refused to discuss countries in detail. The report singles out four for close scrutiny, which an official said ran the gamut: one that is trying to move toward change, another that has resisted any change and two with deep strategic ties to the United States as well as religious tensions. Those characteristics would suggest Jordan, Egypt, Bahrain and Yemen.

By issuing a directive, Mr. Obama was also pulling the topic of political change out of regular meetings on diplomatic, commercial or military relations with Arab states. In those meetings, one official said, the strategic interests loom so large that it is almost impossible to discuss reform efforts.

The study has helped shape other messages, like a speech Secretary of State [Hillary](#)

[Rodham Clinton](#) gave in Qatar in January, in which she criticized Arab leaders for resisting change.

“We really pushed the question of who was taking the lead in reform,” said an official. “Would pushing reform harm relations with the Egyptian military? Doesn’t the military have an interest in reform?”

Mr. Obama also pressed his advisers to study popular uprisings in Latin America, Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia to determine which ones worked and which did not. He is drawn to Indonesia, where he spent several years as a child, which ousted its longtime leader, [Suharto](#), in 1998.

While the report is guiding the administration’s response to events in the Arab world, it has not yet been formally submitted and given the pace of events in the region, an official said, it is still a work in progress.

Shy U.S. Intellectual Created Playbook Used in a Revolution

By [SHERYL GAY STOLBERG](#)

BOSTON n Halfway around the world from Tahrir Square in Cairo, an aging American intellectual shuffles about his cluttered brick row house in a working-class neighborhood here. His name is [Gene Sharp](#). Stoop-shouldered and white-haired at 83, he grows orchids, has yet to master the Internet and hardly seems like a dangerous man.

But for the world's despots, his ideas can be fatal.

Few Americans have heard of Mr. Sharp. But for decades, his practical writings on nonviolent revolution n most notably "[From Dictatorship to Democracy](#)," a 93-page guide to toppling autocrats, available for download in 24 languages n have inspired dissidents around the world, including in Burma, Bosnia, Estonia and Zimbabwe, and now [Tunisia](#) and [Egypt](#).

When Egypt's April 6 Youth Movement was struggling to recover from a failed effort in 2005, its leaders tossed around "crazy ideas" about bringing down the government, said Ahmed Maher, a leading strategist. They stumbled on Mr. Sharp while examining the [Serbian movement Otpor](#), which he had influenced.

When the nonpartisan [International Center on Nonviolent Conflict](#), which trains democracy activists, slipped into Cairo several years ago to conduct a workshop, among the papers it distributed was Mr. Sharp's "[198 Methods of Nonviolent Action](#)," a list of

tactics that range from [hunger strikes](#) to “protest disrobing” to “disclosing identities of secret agents.”

Dalia Ziada, an Egyptian blogger and activist who attended the workshop and later organized similar sessions on her own, [said trainees were active in both the Tunisia and Egypt revolts](#). She said that some activists translated excerpts of Mr. Sharp’s work into Arabic, and that his message of “attacking weaknesses of dictators” stuck with them.

Peter Ackerman, a onetime student of Mr. Sharp who founded the nonviolence center and ran the Cairo workshop, cites his former mentor as proof that “ideas have power.”

Mr. Sharp, hard-nosed yet exceedingly shy, is careful not to take credit. He is more thinker than revolutionary, though as a young man he participated in lunch-counter sit-ins and spent nine months in a federal prison in Danbury, Conn., as a conscientious objector during the Korean War. He has had no contact with the Egyptian protesters, he said, although he recently learned that the [Muslim Brotherhood](#) had “From Dictatorship to Democracy” posted on its Web site.

While seeing the revolution that ousted [Hosni Mubarak](#) as a sign of “encouragement,” Mr. Sharp said, “The people of Egypt did that n not me.”

He has been watching events in Cairo unfold on CNN from his modest house in East Boston, which he bought in 1968 for \$150 plus back taxes.

It doubles as the headquarters of the [Albert Einstein Institution](#), an organization Mr.

Sharp founded in 1983 while running seminars at Harvard and teaching political science at what is now the [University of Massachusetts](#) at Dartmouth. It consists of him; his assistant, Jamila Raquib, whose family fled Soviet oppression in Afghanistan when she was 5; a part-time office manager and a Golden Retriever mix named Sally. Their office wall sports a bumper sticker that reads “Gotov Je!” n Serbian for “He is finished!”

In this era of [Twitter](#) revolutionaries, the Internet holds little allure for Mr. Sharp. He is not on [Facebook](#) and does not venture onto the Einstein Web site. (“I should,” he said apologetically.) If he must send e-mail, he consults a handwritten note Ms. Raquib has taped to the doorjamb near his state-of-the-art Macintosh computer in a study overflowing with books and papers. “To open a blank e-mail,” it reads, “click once on icon that says ‘new’ at top of window.”

Some people suspect Mr. Sharp of being a closet peacenik and a lefty n in the 1950s, he wrote for a publication called “Peace News” and he once worked as personal secretary to A. J. Muste, a noted labor union activist and pacifist n but he insists that he outgrew his own early pacifism and describes himself as “trans-partisan.”

Based on studies of revolutionaries like Gandhi, nonviolent uprisings, civil rights struggles, economic boycotts and the like, he has concluded that advancing freedom takes careful strategy and meticulous planning, advice that Ms. Ziada said resonated among youth leaders in Egypt. Peaceful protest is best, he says n not for any moral reason, but because violence provokes autocrats to crack down. “If you fight with violence,” Mr. Sharp said, “you are fighting with your enemy’s best weapon, and you may be a brave but dead hero.”

Autocrats abhor Mr. Sharp. In 2007, President [Hugo Chávez](#) of Venezuela denounced

him, and officials in Myanmar, according to diplomatic cables obtained by the anti-secrecy group [WikiLeaks](#), accused him of being part of a conspiracy to set off demonstrations intended “to bring down the government.” (A year earlier, a cable from the United States Embassy in Damascus noted that Syrian dissidents had trained in nonviolence by reading Mr. Sharp’s writings.)

In 2008, Iran featured Mr. Sharp, along with Senator [John McCain](#) of Arizona and the Democratic financier [George Soros](#), in an animated propaganda video that accused Mr. Sharp of being the [C.I.A.](#) agent “in charge of America’s infiltration into other countries,” an assertion his fellow scholars find ludicrous.

“He is generally considered the father of the whole field of the study of strategic nonviolent action,” said Stephen Zunes, an expert in that field at the University of San Francisco. “Some of these exaggerated stories of him going around the world and starting revolutions and leading mobs, what a joke. He’s much more into doing the research and the theoretical work than he is in disseminating it.”

That is not to say Mr. Sharp has not seen any action. In 1989, he flew to China to witness the uprising in Tiananmen Square. In the early 1990s, he sneaked into a rebel camp in Myanmar at the invitation of Robert L. Helvey, a retired Army colonel who advised the opposition there. They met when Colonel Helvey was on a fellowship at Harvard; the military man thought the professor had ideas that could avoid war. “Here we were in this jungle, reading Gene Sharp’s work by candlelight,” Colonel Helvey recalled. “This guy has tremendous insight into society and the dynamics of social power.”

Not everyone is so impressed. As’ad AbuKhalil, a Lebanese political scientist and founder of the [Angry Arab News Service blog](#), was outraged by a passing mention of Mr. Sharp

in The New York Times on Monday. He complained that Western journalists were looking for a “Lawrence of Arabia” to explain Egyptians’ success, in a colonialist attempt to deny credit to Egyptians.

Still, just as Mr. Sharp’s profile seems to be expanding, his institute is contracting.

Mr. Ackerman, who became wealthy as an investment banker after studying under Mr. Sharp, contributed millions of dollars and kept it afloat for years. But about a decade ago, Mr. Ackerman wanted to disseminate Mr. Sharp’s ideas more aggressively, as well as his own. He put his money into his own center, which also produces movies and even a video game to train dissidents. An annuity he purchased still helps pay Mr. Sharp’s salary.

In the twilight of his career, Mr. Sharp, who never married, is slowing down. His voice trembles and his blue eyes grow watery when he is tired; he gave up driving after a recent accident. He does his own grocery shopping; his assistant, Ms. Raquib, tries to follow him when it is icy. He does not like it.

He says his work is far from done. He has just submitted a manuscript for a new book, “Sharp’s Dictionary of Power and Struggle: Terminology of Civil Resistance in Conflicts,” to be published this fall by Oxford University Press. He would like readers to know he did not pick the title. “It’s a little immodest,” he said. He has another manuscript in the works about Einstein, whose own concerns about totalitarianism prompted Mr. Sharp to adopt the scientist’s name for his institution. (Einstein wrote the foreword to Mr. Sharp’s first book, about Gandhi.)

In the meantime, he is keeping a close eye on the Middle East. He was struck by the

Egyptian protesters' discipline in remaining peaceful, and especially by their lack of fear. "That is straight out of Gandhi," Mr. Sharp said. "If people are not afraid of the dictatorship, that dictatorship is in big trouble."

Andrew W. Lehren contributed reporting from New York, and David D. Kirkpatrick from Cairo.

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