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HELPING IRANIANS TO FIGHT BACK

A crucial U.S. decision to allow companies to export cellphones and laptops could frustrate official censorship.

The Obama administration has made a useful modification to its Iran policy by lifting sanctions on companies that want to sell cellphones, laptops, encryption software and other similar technology to ordinary Iranians. This should improve the ability of Iranians to circumvent their government's unrelenting crackdown on dissenting opinion and communicate with each other and the outside world without reprisal.

The decision, announced by the State and Treasury Departments on Thursday, is a departure from the administration's general approach, which over four years has been to increase sanctions in an effort to persuade Iran to abandon its nuclear program.

The Obama administration has definitely not repudiated that approach. Along with the technology decision, it also announced sanctions on an Iranian company, a government agency and nearly 60 individuals accused of human rights abuses related to political repression. On Friday, for the first time, eight Iranian petrochemical companies were sanctioned; penalties were also levied against a company based in Cyprus and Ukraine that is accused of trying to evade Iran-related sanctions.

More sanctions are likely. But the decision to permit the export of personal communications technology suggests a welcome willingness on Washington's part to reduce the burden of the sanctions on ordinary Iranians. The directive specifically bans government or commercial sales.

So far, the sanctions have failed to force Iran to make a deal on its nuclear program, which is advancing steadily toward a bomb-making capability. But the sanctions have badly damaged the country's economy, and ordinary Iranians, not just the government, are paying a price.

The technology decision, which comes two weeks before Iran's presidential election, inserts the United States into Iranian politics on the side of political freedom in a way the Obama administration did not during the last election in 2009.

That election was denounced as fraudulent by the Iranian opposition, which, using various social networking services and Web sites, staged months of protests that, in turn, triggered a vicious government crackdown.

Just what impact the technology decision might have on the presidential election on June 14 is unclear. Most opposition leaders remain under house arrest, imprisoned or otherwise silenced; only eight candidates, handpicked by the state's Guardian Council, have been allowed to run for president.

There could be delays in exporting hardware, but software updates and access to instant messaging and other online programs could be made available quickly.

This should have been done sooner. Tensions between Iran and the United States — over Syria and terrorism, as well as the nuclear program — will almost certainly get worse, barring some unexpected new policies in Tehran. But America will be in a stronger position if it is seen as standing with the Iranian people.

Xi Jinping's Chinese Dream

OBAMA MEETS XI JINPING
American

policy makers must understand that the new Chinese leader needs to be a nationalist to be a reformer.

Robert Lawrence Kuhn

BEIJING What to make of Xi Jinping, China's new senior leader, who holds his first summit meeting this week with President Barack Obama?

The hope is that Xi is a reformer who will guide China through domestic transformation and to responsible statecraft. The fear is that Xi is a nationalist, who has set China on an aggressive course of bullying its neighbors and confronting the United States.

The fear seems not unfounded. China has intensified its territorial claims, from island disputes with Japan to vast areas of the South China Sea.

Xi frequently inspects People's Liberation Army forces, especially naval fleets, exhorting China's military to "get ready to fight and to win wars" and "to win regional warfare under I.T.-oriented conditions."

Xi holds China's top three positions: head of the ruling Communist Party of China, head of state, and, as chairman of the Central Military Commission, head of the military. He will likely lead China for a decade.

Just after becoming party chief in late 2012, Xi announced what would become the hallmark of his administration. "The Chinese Dream," he said, is "the great

rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."

Xi's Chinese Dream is described as achieving the "Two 100s": the material goal of China becoming a "moderately well-off society" by about 2020, the 100th anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party, and the modernization goal of China becoming a fully developed nation by about 2049, the 100th anniversary of the People's Republic.

The Chinese Dream has four parts: Strong China (economically, politically, diplomatically, scientifically, militarily); Civilized China (equity and fairness, rich culture, high morals); Harmonious China (amity among social classes); Beautiful China (healthy environment, low pollution).

"A moderately well-off society" is where all citizens, rural and urban, enjoy high standards of living. This includes doubling the 2010 G.D.P. per capita (approaching \$10,000 per person) by about 2020 and completing urbanization (roughly one billion people, 70 percent of China's population) by about 2030.

"Modernization" means China regaining its position as a world leader in science and technology as well as in economics and business; the resurgence of Chinese civilization, culture and military might; and China participating actively in all areas of human endeavor.

If Xi's nationalism seems at odds with these grand goals, it is not. Here are six reasons why:



FENG LIU/GETTY IMAGES

• *Need to consolidate power.* Xi was not selected by Deng Xiaoping, the architect of reform, as were his predecessors (Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao), and he was not elected by the people. Conventional wisdom had it that Xi would be a weak leader. In order to realize his Chinese Dream, Xi needs to assert strength and assure control. So far, he has exceeded expectations.

• *Need to enable reform.* Xi and Premier Li Keqiang are determined to enact far-reaching economic reforms, the most extensive in 15 years, but there is stiff resistance from those whose dominance would be diminished and benefits cut (such as state-owned enterprises with ties to party power).

This resistance can no longer be couched credibly in terms of ideology, so it appeals to nationalistic aspirations by accusing reformers of "worshipping Western ways," "glorifying Western models" or "caving in to Western pressures." Xi's proactive nationalism is a strategy of "offense is the best defense" — an inoculation, as it were, against the political virus of being labeled "soft" or "pro-Western."

Reformers in China are generally associated with pro-American attitudes and thus subject to fierce public criticism. By establishing himself as a nationalist operating independently of the United States (his first foreign trip was to Russia), Xi is able to secure economic reforms by distinguishing them from serving Western/American interests.

• *Need to legitimize one-party rule.* To perpetuate its rule (which China's top leaders truly believe is essential for the well-being of the country), the Chinese Communist Party has constructed a grand narrative that is founded on three critical claims: Only the Communist Party can continue to improve citizen's standard of living (and ameliorate severe social and economic disparities); only the party can maintain a stable, unified country and construct a happy, harmonious society; and only the party can effect the "rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," which stresses a firm command of "core interests" (i.e., sovereignty and territoriality) and increasing global respect.

• *Maintain stability through unity.* China faces numerous internal tensions, especially a class-divided popu-

lace (rich-poor, urban-rural, coastal-inland) that have erupted within one generation. Moreover, an increasingly complex society can fracture along multiple fault lines. Pollution, corruption, healthcare, housing, migrant workers, workers' wages, social cynicism, changing values, among other raging issues, threaten to fragment society — and all are exacerbated by an energetic social media. Only nationalism, which resonates intrinsically and passionately across Chinese society, can provide sufficiently strong social glue.

• *Differentiate from predecessors.* Top Chinese leaders must combine historical continuity with their own distinguishing theories and practices. How shall Xi fare?

Economic growth rates must decline, and a host of domestic tensions (or crises) are coming his way, such as public anger at corruption and resistance to pollution. Hence another rationale for nationalism.

In the past, nationalistic surges were triggered largely by external events (such as NATO's accidental bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in 1999). Xi is putting nationalism at the core of his leadership — his nationalism is proactive, riding the high road of patriotism and pride.

• *Personal beliefs.* Xi has deep-seated patriotic convictions, the product of family, life and career. His father, Xi Zhongxun, was a founder of the new China and a leading reformer under Deng Xiaoping. In 2006, when Xi Jinping was party secretary of Zhejiang Province, he told me about Chinese pride and patriotism as motivating China's historic resurgence — words remarkably similar to his recent pronouncements.

So is Xi a reformer? A nationalist? The answer is that he is both, because only by being a nationalist can he be a reformer. American policy makers must understand Xi's nationalism so that when the reigning superpower meets the rising superpower, both can benefit.

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GLOBAL VIEWPOINT/TRIBUNE MEDIA SERVICES

In Kenya, a victory for girls and rights

160 young victims of rape in Kenya strike a major legal blow to a culture of impunity.

Sally Armstrong

There was something deliciously serendipitous about the power going off in northern Kenya on May 27 just as Judge J. A. Makau read his much-anticipated decision in a case could alter the status of women and girls in Kenya and maybe all of Africa.

But the lights did come on. And the judge in the high court in Meru declared: "By failing to enforce existing defilement laws, the police have contributed to the development of a culture of tolerance for pervasive sexual violence against girl children and impunity."

GUILTY. An extraordinary story of tenacity and courage, wit and survival led to this victory.

Three years earlier, 160 girls between the ages of 3 and 17 sued the Kenyan government for failing to protect them from being raped. Now they'd made legal history: Through a constitutional challenge — holding the state accountable for the police treatment of defilement claims — the girls secured access to justice for themselves, and legal protection from rape for all 10 million girls in Kenya.

A child is raped every 30 minutes in Kenya. One of the reasons is the demented thinking of thousands of men in sub-Saharan Africa who believe that having sex with a little girl will cure you of H.I.V. and AIDS. In fact, the belief is that the younger the girl is, the stronger the cure will be.

Although there are adequate laws in the Kenyan criminal code to protect girls from what Kenyans call defilement, there is almost total impunity for the perpetrators. The laws are not enforced and the practice of defilement has been on the rise.

Ninety percent of the victims have been raped by people they know — fathers, uncles, brothers, neighbors, teachers, priests — the very people assigned the task of keeping children safe.

If the girl doesn't die of her injuries, she faces being abandoned. No one wants to have anything to do with a defiled girl. She loses her chance to go to school. She's likely sick with a sexually transmitted disease or H.I.V. She may be pregnant. Her childhood is over. She becomes poor, unhealthy and destitute.

It took the courage and tenacity of 160 girls to take on a system that failed them. On Oct. 11, when the case went to court in Meru, their lawyers marched through the streets from the shelter where the girls had been staying to the courthouse.

The girls wanted to march as well but were told that their identity needed to be protected and that they must stay at the shelter. Nothing doing, they said. They marched beside their advocates chanting, "Haki yangu" — the Kiswahili words for "I demand my rights."

The guards at the courthouse slammed the gates shut as the girls approached. But they climbed the fence still chanting "Haki yangu" and then started to laugh at the reversal in roles being played out in front of them.

"Look," they called to each other. "These men who hurt us and made us ashamed are scared of us now!" Soon the gates were opened and the girls and their lawyers entered the court.

The case actually began when lawyers from Kenya, Malawi, Ghana and Canada got together at Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto and their discussion turned to the alarming rise in rape in Kenya.

Canadian women had sued their government for failing to protect them and had won. The African women asked them how they achieved their victory, and when the Canadians ex-

plained the force of a constitutional challenge, they decided to go forward together.

The action was the brainchild of Fiona Sampson, a Canadian who runs an organization called the Equality Effect that uses international human rights law to improve the lives of girls and women. She teamed up with Mercy Chidi, director of a shelter in Meru called Ripples International. Together they knew it was time to tackle the problem: the impunity of rapists and the failure of the justice system to convict them.

The journey these children have taken is about girls daring to break taboos and speak out about sexual assault. It's about women lawyers from two sides of the world supporting youngsters in their quest for justice. It's about kids who were told they had no rights but insisted that they do. And it's the pushback reaction that women and girls everywhere have been waiting for.

Within 48 hours of the court decision, Fiona Sampson had heard from people in half a dozen countries who want to undertake the same action. It's as though the centuries-old jig is up.

SALLY ARMSTRONG, a Canadian journalist, is the author, most recently, of "Ascent of Women: Our Turn, Our Way — A Remarkable Story of World-Wide Change."

Turkey takes an authoritarian turn

Seyla Benhabib

The huge demonstrations that engulfed Istanbul over the weekend were initially prompted by a small grievance: the government's decision to build a shopping mall and a replica of Ottoman military barracks in an old, much beloved park where I played as a child. The impending destruction of Gezi Park and Taksim Square, an important civic space with beautiful water fountains and flower stands, has touched a nerve because it seems an effort to erase the face of the old, majestic Istanbul, which has largely disappeared in recent years in favor of shallow, gaudy, stupefied consumerism.

But the protests are not just about protecting urban greenery; they reflect a resistance to the political path being taken by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his increasingly Islamist Justice and Development Party, known

as the A.K.P. Mr. Erdogan was re-elected for a third term in 2011 and he has used the mandate to pursue an authoritarian agenda that many see as an assault on the secular republic that emerged after the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

In the weeks preceding the Taksim demonstrations, tempers were already flaring around new curbs on serving alcohol in public places passed hastily by the A.K.P.-dominated Parliament but not yet signed into law. The real problem, in a country where alcoholism is minimal, is Mr. Erdogan's "culture war" against the country's secular classes and the illiberal form of democracy that he is advancing. I've heard many Turks, both devout and nonobservant, say: "If consuming alcohol is a sin, let me reckon with my own maker. The government cannot force us not to sin."

Mr. Erdogan's attempt to forge a Muslim moral majority is evident also in his government's stance on abortion, which, until recently, had prompted no theological or political controversies.

Islam, like Judaism, gives priority to the mother's life and health over that of the fetus, but Mr. Erdogan, borrowing a page from America's Christian right, has introduced legislation to curb the availability of abortion through Turkey's national health insurance system.

If Erdogan ignores his critics, Turkey's experiment in Islamic democracy could fail. And he has compounded such measures, which would hurt poor women more than the wealthy, with nationalistic calls to increase the population of the great Turkish nation by recommending that all women have

at least three children.

This moral micromanagement of people's private lives comes amid a strident government assault on political and civil liberties. Turkey's record on journalistic and artistic freedoms is abysmal; rights of assembly and protest are also increasingly restricted.

The highest political stakes involve a proposed transition from a parliamentary to a presidential system. Mr. Erdogan's model would give a newly empowered president the prerogative to dissolve the legislative assembly. Coupled with other reforms of Turkey's Constitutional Court, Mr. Erdogan's proposal portends the most extensive refashioning of the political system since the establishment of the secular republic in 1923. If a constitutional referendum is approved and Mr. Erdogan is elected the new president next year, Turkey could find itself with an authoritarian, charismatic presidential system resembling Russia's or Venezuela's, much more than that of the United States or France, where a strict separation of powers defines and limits the president's authority.

Mr. Erdogan is playing shrewdly with the prospects of peace with the country's Kurdish separatists by seeking to conclude a three-decade-old war by co-opting them into his presidential

vision. The legislative wing of the militant Kurdish movement has become a junior member of the parliamentary committee on constitutional reform, giving Mr. Erdogan the numbers he needs to eviscerate Turkey's parliamentary system. It is widely believed that he has promised the imprisoned Kurdish militant leader Abdullah Ocalan some regional and cultural autonomy in return for this support.

For Turkish progressives who have supported some form of Kurdish autonomy for decades, it is bitterly ironic to see their old allies becoming pawns on Mr. Erdogan's chessboard as he seeks to fulfill his presidential ambitions.

Not all of the proposed reforms are objectionable. The 1982 Constitution, which remains in force, still bears marks from a military coup, and Mr. Erdogan's proposals would rightly establish a more representative Constitutional Court, not dominated by the old secular elite. What is irritating and bewildering to most Turks is the speed with which both good

and bad reforms are being undertaken. This power grab has struck chords of alarm and anger deep enough to suggest that Mr. Erdogan may have miscalculated his strength. Some factions of his own party oppose him. Even President Abdullah Gul has urged moderation in response to the demonstrators.

The people who have now taken to the streets represent a new majority of observant and nonobservant Muslim Turks, as well as some Kurds who had supported Mr. Erdogan's government because it seemed tolerant, pluralistic and cosmopolitan. But a new opposition, not only secularist and nationalist, is stirring. So far Mr. Erdogan has arrogantly dismissed his critics. If he continues to ignore their voices, the danger is that Turkey will descend further into violence and see its much-trumpeted experiment in Islamic democracy fail.

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