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Pesticide study raises cautionary note

Two popular pesticides that are much used in the Pacific Northwest have been implicated as potential cancer risks. While taking the matter seriously, ordinary citizens who look into the issue mostly won't see a need for drastic, immediate changes.

Setting off what National Public Radio describes as "a wave of feverish reaction," the credible International Agency for Research on Cancer said the weed killer glyphosate — trade named Roundup — along with the widely used insecticide malathion could cause cancer in humans under some circumstances. The IARC's assessment does not rise to the level of stating that these chemicals actually do result in cancer. This distinction is a subtle one.

Monsanto, the company that invented glyphosate and which holds patents on "Roundup Ready" crops that can be sprayed for weeds without themselves suffering damage from the herbicide, aggressively disputes the IARC's findings. A long-term study of farm workers who routinely work in direct proximity with Roundup-treated farmland and crops hasn't found higher rates of cancer among them. Federal and state regulators have determined that the chemical composition of glyphosate rapidly breaks down into harmless substances in the environment. Crops on which glyphosate are used — like canola, soybeans and corn — are treated in early growing stages and then heavily processed before reaching consumers, apparently leaving no trace of the chemical.

Many substances and circumstances conceivably may give rise to cancer. In the case of glyphosate, NPR describes the source of the IARC's concerns: "First, there were laboratory studies showing that the chemical can damage DNA and chromosomes in human cells. This type of damage can lead to the emergence of cancer. Second ... some studies showed increased rates of cancerous tumors in mice and rats

that were exposed to glyphosate. These were rare forms of cancer that are unlikely to occur by themselves, adding to the evidence that glyphosate caused them."

The aquatic version of glyphosate was a rich source of controversy in Pacific County, Wash., during much of the 1990s as agencies and private landowners sought some way to battle spartina, a tideland grass that was turning Willapa Bay into a vast meadow unsuitable to industrial shellfish farming. Ultimately, glyphosate wasn't effective but the battle was won with a different herbicide. Nevertheless, spraying opponents are likely to feel a degree of vindication after the IARC's report.

As for malathion, widely used for things like mosquito control, many will recall living in towns where crop dusters were employed at least annually to suppress insects. This would cause a tremendous uproar today, and appropriately so.

For most people, narrowly targeted uses of pesticides will likely remain an acceptable risk in return for lower food prices and fewer bugs that bite us or endanger crops and forests. In some cases, such as controlling mosquitoes in places where tropical diseases are endemic, insecticides directly save lives.

But the IARC's findings are a useful reminder that we must take an active interest in the chemicals being applied around us and during the production of products we use. The federal Environmental Protection Agency is in the process of reviewing many of these "legacy" pesticides. A thorough examination to make sure past conclusions and assumptions are still valid is very much welcome.

Fish: Mostly still a very healthy choice

This is a place where seafood is a major dietary motif and a delicious part of life — there can be few regions in the nation with greater appreciation for and access to premium-quality fish and shellfish. But even here it behooves us to be knowledgeable about the sources of the seafood we eat and potential risks attached to some kinds of fish.

As a general matter, the purity of local seafood is a key point of pride and safety assurance. Spending most of their lives in the vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean, salmon and steelhead tend to be low in environmental contamination and high in omega-3 fatty acids that are increasingly viewed as key to brain, heart and circulatory health, in addition to helping reduce some forms of inflammation, such as arthritis. Oysters and clams also pack a nutritional wallop while containing little we need worry about.

While it is geared toward fish caught and consumed around Puget Sound, a March 10 story by Investigate West, "Balancing risks and rewards of a seafood diet," (tinyurl.com/of43xj) makes a variety of useful points. All fish isn't created equal when it comes to health and safety.

Bigger, longer-living predatory fish such as sharks, swordfish and tuna have more chances to accumu-

late heavy metals and other toxins from the prey they consume. This is true even of popular choices like canned albacore tuna.

Looking specifically at the Columbia River, the Environmental Protection Agency has cautioned against frequent consumption of sturgeon — not much of an issue since retention has effectively ended in recent years. Some ethnic groups continue to eat problematic species including large-scale suckers. (See tinyurl.com/oad2cdc for more details.)

The fundamental message of public health officials is that fish is good for us. "Eat at least two fish meals per week as part of a heart-healthy diet ...," the Washington State Department of Health advises. "Most foods, regardless of source, contain some contaminants. Switching from fish to other types of food may not eliminate contaminant exposure. One can safely continue to eat the American Heart Association's recommended two fish meals per week by avoiding fish that are high in contaminants."

Salmon, oysters, clams, smelt, crab — all are things we can confidently eat whenever we wish. Halibut, rockfish, albacore — all safe once a week or so. Things like swordfish and big tuna steaks from outside our area — just say no.

How to fight anti-Semitism?

By DAVID BROOKS
New York Times News Service

Anti-Semitism is rising around the world. So the question becomes: What can we do to fight it?

Do education campaigns work, or marches or conferences?

There are three major strains of anti-Semitism circulating, different in kind and virulence, and requiring different responses.

In the Middle East, anti-Semitism has the feel of a deranged theoretical system for making sense of a world gone astray. Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, doesn't just oppose Israel. He has called it the "sinister, unclean rabid dog of the region." He has said its leaders "look like beasts and cannot be called human."

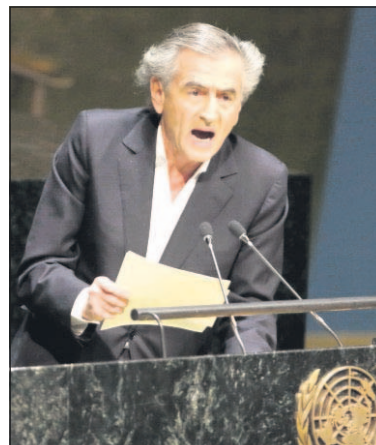
President Hassan Rouhani of Iran reinstated a conference of Holocaust deniers and anti-Semitic conspiracy theorists. Two of Iran's prominent former nuclear negotiators apparently attended. In Egypt, the top military staff attended a lecture on the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. The region is still rife with the usual conspiracy theories — that the Jews were behind 9/11, drink the blood of non-Jews, spray pesticides across Egyptian lands.

This sort of anti-Semitism thrives where there aren't that many Jews. The Jew is not a person but an idea, a unique carrier of transcendent evil: a pollution, a stain, a dark force responsible for the failures of others, the unconscious shame and primeval urges they feel in themselves, and everything that needs explaining. This is a form of derangement, a flight from reality even in otherwise sophisticated people.

This form of anti-Semitism cannot be reasoned away because it



David Brooks



AP Photo/Richard Drew
French philosopher and writer Bernard-Henri Levy addresses the United Nations General Assembly, Jan. 22. The U.N. General Assembly held its first meeting devoted to anti-Semitism in response to a global increase in violence against Jews.

doesn't exist on the level of reason. It can only be confronted with deterrence and force, at the level of fear. The challenge for Israel is to respond to extremism without being extreme. The enemy's rabidity can be used to justify cruelty, even in cases where restraint would be wiser. Israeli leaders try to walk this line, trying to use hard power, without becoming a mirror of the foe, sometimes well, sometimes not.

In Europe, anti-Semitism looks like a response to alienation. It's particularly high where unemployment is rampant. Roughly half of all Spaniards and Greeks express unfavorable opinions about Jews. The plague of violence is fueled by young Islamic men with no respect and no place to go.

In the current issue of *The Atlantic*, Jeffrey Goldberg has an essay, "Is It Time for the Jews to Leave Europe?" He reports on a blizzard of incidents: a Jewish school principal who watched a Frenchman of Algerian descent pin his 8-year-old daughter down in the schoolyard and execute her; a Swedish rabbi who has been the target of roughly 150 anti-Semitic attacks; French kids who were terrified in school because of the "Dirty Jew!" and "I want to kill all of you!" chants in the hallway; the Danish imam who urged

Anti-Semitism is an assertion of impurity and speaks the language of extermination.

Look before leaping into Iran deal

By THOMAS L. FRIEDMAN
New York Times News Service

I can think of many good reasons to go ahead with the nuclear deal with Iran, and I can think of just as many reasons not to.

So, if you're confused, let me see if I can confuse you even more.

The proposed deal to lift sanctions on Iran — in return for curbs on its bomb-making capabilities so that it would take at least a year for Tehran to make a weapon — has to be judged in its own right. I will be looking closely at the quality of the verification regime and the specificity of what happens if Iran cheats. But the deal also has to be judged in terms of how it fits with wider American strategic goals in the region, because

a U.S.-Iran deal would be an earthquake that touches every corner of the Middle East. Not enough attention is being paid to the regional implications — particularly what happens if we strengthen Iran at a time when large parts of the Sunni Arab world are in meltdown.

The Obama team's best argument for doing this deal with Iran is that, in time, it could be "transformational." That is, the ending of sanctions could open Iran to the world and bring in enough fresh air — Iran has been deliberately isolated since 1979 by its ayatollahs and Revolutionary Guard Corps — to gradually move Iran from being a revolutionary state to a normal one, and one less inclined to threaten Israel. If one assumes that Iran already has the know-how and tools to build a nuclear weapon, changing the character of its regime is the only way it becomes less threatening.

The challenge to this argument, explains Karim Sadjadpour, a Middle East specialist at the Carnegie Endowment, is that while the

Obama team wants to believe this deal could be "transformational," Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, "sees it as transactional" — Iran plugs its nose, does the deal, regains its strength and doubles-down on its long-standing revolutionary principles. But, then again, you never know. What starts out as transactional can end up being transformational in ways that no one can prevent or predict.

A second argument is that Iran is a real country and civilization, with competitive (if restricted) elections, educated women and a powerful military. Patching up the U.S.-Iran relationship could enable America to better manage and balance the Sunni Arab Taliban in Afghanistan,

and counterbalance the Sunni jihadis, like those in the Islamic State, or ISIS, now controlling chunks of Iraq and Syria. The United States has relied heavily on Saudi Arabia, ever since Iran's 1979 revolution, and while the Saudi ruling family and elites are aligned with America, there is a Saudi Wahhabi hard core that has funded the spread of the most puritanical, anti-pluralistic, anti-women form of Islam that has changed the character

of Arab Islam and helped to foster mutations like Islamic State. There were no Iranians involved in 9/11.

Then again, it was Iranian agents who made the most lethal improvised explosives in Iraq that killed many U.S. troops there. And it was Iran that encouraged its Iraqi Shiite allies to reject any extended U.S. military presence in Iraq and to also overplay their hand in stripping power from Iraqi Sunnis, which is what helped to produce the Islamic State counterreaction.

"In the fight against ISIS, Iran is both the arsonist and the fire bri-

worshippers in a Berlin mosque to kill the Jews. "Count them and kill them to the very last one."

Thousands of Jews a year are just fleeing Europe. But the best response is quarantine and confrontation. European governments can demonstrate solidarity with their Jewish citizens by providing security, cracking down — broken-windows style — on even the smallest assaults. Meanwhile, brave and decent people can take a page from Gandhi and stage campaigns of confrontational nonviolence: marches, sit-ins and protests in the very neighborhoods where anti-Semitism breeds. Expose the evil of the perpetrators. Disturb the consciences of the good people in these communities who tolerate them. Confrontational nonviolence is the historically proven method to isolate and delegitimize social evil.

The United States is also seeing a rise in the number of anti-Semitic incidents. But this country remains an astonishingly non-anti-Semitic place. America's problem is the number of people who can't fathom what anti-Semitism is or who think Jews are being paranoid or excessively playing the victim.

On college campuses, many young people have been raised in a climate of moral relativism and have no experience with those with virulent evil beliefs. They sometimes assume that if Israel is hated, then it must be because of its cruel and colonial policies in the West Bank.

In the Obama administration, there are people who know that the Iranians are anti-Semitic, but they don't know what to do with that fact and put this mental derangement on a distant shelf. They negotiate with the Iranian leaders, as if anti-Semitism was some odd quirk, instead of what it is, a core element of their mental architecture.

There are others who see anti-Semitism as another form of bigotry. But these are different evils. Most bigotry is an assertion of inferiority and speaks the language of oppression. Anti-Semitism is an assertion of impurity and speaks the language of extermination. Anti-Semitism's logical endpoint is violence.

Groups fighting anti-Semitism sponsor educational campaigns and do a lot of consciousness-raising. I doubt these things do anything to reduce active anti-Semitism. But they can help non-anti-Semites understand the different forms of the cancer in our midst. That's a start.



Thomas L. Friedman

gade," added Sadjadpour. To Saudi Arabia, he added, the rise of the Islamic State is attributable to the repression of Sunnis in Syria and Iraq by Iran and its Shiite clients. To Tehran, the rise of the Islamic State is attributable to the financial and ideological support of Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies.

And they are both right, which is why America's interests lie not with either the Saudis or the Iranian ideologues winning, but rather with balancing the two against each other until they get exhausted enough to stop prosecuting their ancient Shiite-Sunni, Persian-Arab feud.

Then again, if this nuclear deal with Iran is finalized, and sanctions lifted, much more Iranian oil will hit the global market, suppressing prices and benefiting global consumers. Then again, Iran would have billions of dollars more to spend on cyberwarfare, long-range ballistic missiles and projecting power across the Arab world, where its proxies already dominate four Arab capitals: Beirut, Baghdad, Damascus and Sanaa.

But, given the disarray in Yemen, Iraq and Syria, do we really care if Iran tries to play policeman there and is embroiled in endless struggles with Sunni militias? For 10 years, it was America that was overstretched across Iraq and Afghanistan. Now it will be Iran's turn. I feel terrible for the people who have to live in these places, and we certainly should use U.S. air power to help prevent the chaos from spreading to islands of decency like Jordan, Lebanon and Kurdistan in Iraq. But managing the decline of the Arab state system is not a problem we should own. We've amply proved that we don't know how.

So before you make up your mind on the Iran deal, ask how it affects Israel, the country most threatened by Iran. But also ask how it fits into a wider U.S. strategy aimed at quelling tensions in the Middle East with the least U.S. involvement necessary and the lowest oil prices possible.