



**Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia**

**NEWSCLIPPINGS AND ARTICLES  
ON  
POLITICAL CONFLICT**

**July 16 - 31, 2009**

**INFORMATION SERVICES DIVISION  
ISIS MALAYSIA**

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

THURSDAY, JULY 16, 2009

## Hillary's Passage to India

By T.P. Sreenivasan

India adored Edmund Hillary, a New Zealander who conquered Mount Everest in 1953 long before Hillary Clinton came on the scene. That name recognition may have contributed to Hillary Clinton being referred to as "(D-Punjab)" in a memo from Barack Obama's campaign during their fight for the nomination. As she sets out on her journey to India today in her new capacity as secretary of state, she has as much a hazardous climb ahead of her as Sir Hillary had in the previous century.

The recent elections in India and the United States will have a profound impact on the ties between the two countries. The Bush Administration was ready for a tight embrace of India, but India shied away because of the hesitation of the leftists, who were part of the ruling coalition. But today, when India is ready to move forward with a popular mandate, it appears that it is the turn of the U.S. to backtrack. Priorities seem to have changed on the Potomac. Short-term concerns may well have overtaken the logic for building a long term relationship.

Mr. Obama and Mrs. Clinton have set the right tone with India, but it is on policy that trouble may arise. The contours of the nuclear agreement with India, in particular, do not fit neatly into the policy framework of the Democrats. In the eyes of some Obama advisers, the nuclear deal was a sellout to India and, given a choice, they would retrieve much of what was negotiated by Bush. But the Obama Administration is committed to the implementation of the deal in a way that it does not hurt the nonproliferation objectives of the U.S. India, on the other hand, wishes to consoli-

date the gains of the Bush era and build on them.

The next steps that each country has in mind do not coincide. The U.S. side wants India to adhere to the Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damages to provide liability protection to U.S. companies and announce two nuclear reactor park sites for U.S. firms. The Indians would rather

tackle the modalities of reprocessing and tie up perpetuity of supplies. The latest G-8 decision to ban the transfer of enrichment and reprocessing items to non-NPT countries strikes at

the very root of full civil nuclear cooperation. This move might jeopardize the talks scheduled for modalities of reprocessing. What would happen to the spent fuel from Tarapur if reprocessing is not facilitated? This partnership may end up looking like a three-legged race in which two athletes are tethered together but incapable of displaying their collective strength.

The path to a world without nuclear weapons that Mr. Obama delineates is also

different from the Indian vision. He sees the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty as the major milestones in this journey. India can hardly afford to embrace these as it has to preserve and protect its minimum deterrent against real and immediate threats.

Other tensions are brewing as well: Indian industry has anxieties over Mr. Obama's emphasis on moving jobs from Bangalore to Buffalo, when the market forces dictate movement in the opposite direction. Skills developed in India and facilities set

up exclusively for the U.S. market should not become monuments of failed theories of globalization.

War on terror is a common responsibility for the U.S. and India and a primary area of cooperation. But the biggest perpetrator of terror on India is also the chief fighter of terrorism for the U.S. The U.S. will not talk to terrorists, but it wants India to keep talking to Pakistan even after the horror in Mumbai. Moreover, the U.S.

persists with old solutions for new problems such as propping up regimes with dollar infusions. Mrs. Clinton will face questions in India as to what guarantees the U.S. has extracted about the end use of the lethal weapons that are gifted to Pakistan.

At the G-8 summit earlier this month, India once again called for the reform of the Security Council as an imperative for equity in the new international matrix. As though in anticipation, Mrs. Clinton made the tantalizing offer "to cooperate with New Delhi as it shoulders the responsibilities that accompany its new position of global leadership." She should know that nothing short of a commitment to expand the permanent membership of the Security Council on objective criteria such as population and constructive contributions will meet the aspirations of New Delhi. If she can make that commitment, she needs to do nothing else to make the visit historic. Signing some agreements or setting up commissions will not have the same impact.

Sir Hillary did not climb Everest by himself. He shared his moment of glory with an Indian, Tenzing Norgay, whose contribution may well have been as significant. Mrs. Clinton will have the same support if she is willing to share the view from the summit with her Indian counterpart, S.M. Krishna, by no means a novice in statesmanship.

*Mr. Sreenivasan is a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington. He was India's deputy ambassador to the U.S. from 1997 to 2000 and permanent representative to the United Nations from 2000 to 2004.*



Indian Minister of Foreign Affairs S.M. Krishna and U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton



# Indonesia, Democratic Trailblazer

By Paul Wolfowitz

It's rare when any political leader wins a 60% mandate in a free and fair election, so it's not surprising that commentary on last week's Indonesian election has focused on the personal success of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

However, Indonesia's success in building democratic institutions in just a short 10 years is even more remarkable and more important in the long run. It is yet another demonstration of the appeal of free institutions, in this case to people with East Asian value systems and to the largest Muslim population in the world. Equally significant, Indonesia's first decade of democracy demonstrates the practical political benefits of democratic institutions which provide for the orderly succession and overall legitimacy of government.

Ten years ago it wasn't hard to find skeptics about whether this democratic experiment could succeed. Some thought the Asian value systems which underlay the indigenous cultures of Indonesia would require rule by a strongman like Suharto. Others questioned whether democracy could succeed in a country where the population was poor and overwhelming Muslim.

Even those who had long hoped for a democratic transition in Indonesia and who cared deeply about the country had difficulty being optimistic. The economy alone was sufficient grounds for pessimism. The financial collapse that brought about Suharto's resignation in 1998 caused GDP to fall by 14% in a single year and pushed more than a quarter of the country's population below the official poverty line.

Beyond that, East Timor's violent separation from Indonesia severely damaged the country's international reputation and even threatened the breakup of the entire country. In a country that stretches across a distance as great as London to Moscow and contains literally dozens of different large ethnic and language groups, it was easy to imagine the whole country unraveling. As if those problems weren't enough, radical Islamist movements were gaining strength and causing bloody clashes between Christians and Muslims in Eastern Indonesia. Then came 9/11 and a serious Al Qaeda threat in Indonesia, including the terrible bombing in Bali in October 2002 which killed more than 200 people, most of them tourists from Australia.

Against that background, it seems hard to believe how well Indonesia is doing today. Per capita incomes have now more than doubled since the time I arrived there as U.S. Ambassador 25 years ago. Most impressively, since 2000 Indonesia's economy has grown at an average of better than 4% a year and even achieved a growth rate of 6% last year, despite the global economic turnaround.

The country has turned in a similar record on other fronts. The war in Aceh has ended. Secessionist sentiment elsewhere in

the country has largely disappeared, thanks in considerable measure to the decentralization brought about by the democratic transition. And the Indonesian police have recorded some substantial successes against the terrorist groups responsible for the bombings in Bali and elsewhere.

Above all, Indonesia's political process has displayed a remarkable degree of maturity. Holding three consecutive free and fair presidential elections, and scores of parliamentary and regional contests, is one mark of that. So are a number of important legal and Constitutional reforms, including reform of the election process for the presidency and the parliament, restrictions on the role of the military and decentralizing authority to the provinces. Beyond that, Indonesian voters have displayed an im-

pressive degree of common sense, focusing their votes on parties with credible prospects and candidates expected to perform well. For example, the attempt in the recent election to make an issue of the fact that the wife of President Yudhoyono normally appeared without a head covering, or *jilbab*, apparently failed to gain any traction for his opponents.

Complacency is not in order, however. Ten years is much too short a time for democratic institutions to put down firm roots. And the problems facing the country are still enormous, poverty first among them. That is why President Yudhoyono has placed so much emphasis on increasing economic growth. To do that, more progress will have to be made to reduce corruption, which remains a major deterrent to the foreign investment Indonesia badly needs. The notorious corruption of Suharto's family is a thing of the past. Indeed, when his son's father-in-law was jailed on corruption charges, President Yudhoyono did not intervene, something that would have been unheard of earlier. But the transition has brought a kind of decentralization of corruption, which may be a greater drag on the economy. One thing Indonesia should consider is a special court for handling commercial disputes, like the one Tanzania has created.

Moreover, Islamic fundamentalism could still threaten the country's traditional tolerance in matters of religion. The authorities have shown a disturbing passivity in the face of attacks on churches and on mosques of certain minority sects. And the government has given in to Islamist pressure to place restrictions on one such sect, the Ahmadiyah. Many Indonesians are fearful that a controversial anti-pornography bill passed by parliament last year will be used by extremists to restrict legitimate freedom of expression. On the positive side, the trend in recent elections has seen a decline in the influence of overtly Islamist parties. However, that trend could reverse if Indonesia again runs into economic difficulties.

Explanations for Indonesia's overall success during the last decade are diverse and complex, just like the country. Clearly, Presi-

dent Yudhoyono's leadership deserves a great deal of credit. Another factor is the country's tradition of tolerance and respect for the role of women. Indonesia's first two democratically elected presidents were Abdurrahman Wahid, a prominent Muslim leader and advocate of religious tolerance, and Megawati Sukarnoputri, a woman and a passionate advocate of democracy. Neither of their presidencies were very successful, but the values they embodied were important and influential.

Along with that went a variety of civil society groups which managed to thrive despite restrictions from the Suharto regime, particularly the two large national Muslim organizations, Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. The fact that Indonesia's press were financially independent and competitive meant that the country had a strong basis for a free media as soon as censorship restrictions were lifted. Another important influence came from the fact that so many of the country's leaders were educated in part in democratic countries. Significantly, President Yudhoyono himself is a graduate of the U.S. Army's Command and Staff College.

The U.S. has an enormous stake in Indonesia's continued progress. It provides essential stability for the whole of Southeast Asia, a region of more than half a billion people. As an example for other aspiring democracies, especially in Asia, Indonesia's success is important. And if it can continue to progress on a basis of religious tolerance and equal rights for minorities, it can help point the way for other majority Muslim countries.

Indonesians have achieved this success largely on their own. But having chosen a path of freedom, democracy and religious tolerance, they would like to see that recognized more strongly. Although the U.S. came through dramatically for Indonesia when the tsunami struck in December of 2004, Indonesians feel that too often they are ignored, or blamed for the sins of an old regime which they are attempting to put behind them.

The Obama administration has made a good start by including a well-received visit to Indonesia as part of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's first foreign trip. Her commitment there to developing a "comprehensive partnership," an idea first proposed by President Yudhoyono, marks an important step forward in U.S.-Indonesian relations. Although the details remain to be fleshed out, it is important to follow through on that proposal. When President Obama visits Indonesia in November—where he will receive a hero's welcome—he will be able to take that cooperation to a new level. He should also use that opportunity to speak forcefully on behalf of the great majority of Indonesians, of all religions, who believe in tolerance and equality for all the country's citizens.

*Mr. Wolfowitz, a visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, has served as deputy U.S. secretary of defense and U.S. ambassador to Indonesia.*

## Asia's Military Balance at a Tipping Point

By Paul S. Giarra  
And Michael J. Green

Officials from Japan and the United States meet tomorrow in Tokyo to discuss the future of the alliance under the Security Consultative Committee. The talks come at a crucial time, when the military balance of power in Asia is in flux. China's growing military capabilities and North Korea's missile and nuclear provocations should top the list of discussion topics at the SCC.

China is challenging access to the global commons through a broad, consciously directed array of military developments. China's military has moved beyond its focus on Taiwan and now possesses antisatellite weapons, advanced land attack ballistic missiles, new classes of submarines and surface ships and the emerging ballistic missile capability to hit ships at sea at least 1,000 miles from China's coasts.

These developments are designed to reorder the balance of power in China's favor by diminishing American strategic mobility and free access to Pacific waters, Pacific airspace, and the "high terrain" of space and cyberspace. A good example of this is China's development of land-mobile antiship ballistic missiles. This antiaccess capability is unprecedented anywhere in the world and has numerous implications for the U.S. Navy, probably best summarized as losing air and sea dominance—and perhaps control—in the Asian-Pacific region. This puts at risk American influence, regional security and alliance interdependence.

Given these developments, U.S. officials will have to lay out constructive thinking

in Tokyo about how to add more capability in the U.S.-Japan alliance. The U.S. should have serious talks with its allies about gaps in strategic defenses caused by the Chinese military's build-up. One place to start might be a dialogue about whether making the strategic F-22 stealth fighter available to allies makes sense for both allied and American security. For example, the U.S.

has been saying "no" to Japan's request for the F-22 stealth fighter without first sitting down with its key ally in the Pacific and jointly figuring out whether the fighter makes sense for U.S. and allied security in light of the PLA Air Force's rapid expansion of advanced fighters.

In light of the North Korean threat, the U.S. must also think seriously about allied perspectives on the ongoing U.S. nuclear posture review (due in December), the strategy and technologies of missile defense, and the president's Prague Speech on disarmament. North Korea has declared its intention to be a full nuclear weapons state by 2012 and is determined to put nuclear weapons on missiles, the first of which will range South Korea and Japan. Cutting U.S. missile defense spending now is out of synch with the realities of Asia, which are driven by the North Korean threat and the Chinese emphasis on offensive ballistic missiles.

The time has come for serious discussions with Japan and South Korea about how extended deterrence and nuclear deterrence work under these new circumstances. Japanese interlocutors have been requesting such a bilateral dialogue for years.

The capabilities of U.S. alliances and defense relationships across Asia are interconnected, both in terms of U.S. credibility and

the ability to deter and dissuade. Given the North Korean sprint for deliverable nuclear weapons, the administration should review the implications of its current plan to abandon the Combined Forces Command with South Korea by 2012, particularly since 10 million South Korean citizens have signed petitions saying "hold on." A U.S. decision on Taiwan's request for F-16 C/D fighters to counter China's rapidly expanding fighter fleet is also long overdue.

Next year, the United States and Japan will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the 1960 mutual security treaty. The agenda put in place this weekend in Tokyo will set the stage for the Alliance Declaration that President Barack Obama and a future Japanese prime minister will promulgate. Managing the high profile realignment at the U.S. Marine base in Okinawa will be important, as will new areas of cooperation to respond to transnational challenges such as pandemics and climate change.

But at its core alliance solidarity is about mutual protection. The threat environment the U.S. faces with its allies in Northeast Asia is becoming increasingly dangerous. Bilateral consultations of character, substance and achievement are major components of deterrence. The high level defense discussions in Tokyo are the "best first" opportunity for the Obama administration to demonstrate its readiness to continue an American tradition of working with allies to reinforce stability in the Asia Pacific region.

*Mr. Giarra is the president of Global Strategies & Transformation, a Virginia based defense consultancy. Mr. Green is senior adviser and Japan chair at the Center for Strategic and International Relations and a professor at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.*

**America's  
deterrent is  
shrinking  
in the region.**

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.  
MONDAY, JULY 20, 2009

## Terror in Jakarta

**T**he bombs that ripped through two Jakarta hotels Friday have also destroyed any illusion that Indonesia's war on terror is behind it. As President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono looks ahead to his second term in office, the fight against terror is a clear priority.

Indonesia has been here before, of course, and Mr. Yudhoyono, popularly known as SBY, knows how to deal with it. Indonesians elected him after the 2002 Bali bombing as a bet for security. Although terrorist attacks continued, under SBY's watch Indonesia's counterterrorism unit, Detachment 88, has arrested key leaders of the

Islamist terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah (JI). Friday's bombing was the first suspected JI attack since 2005.

### Indonesia's battle with Islamic radicals is far from won.

But the war is far from won. Friday's attack was chillingly sophisticated: The terrorists checked into a room at the Marriott on Wednesday, smuggled bomb parts through security, and then assembled the explosives in the privacy of their room. They attacked with precision: One suicide bomber targeted a weekly breakfast for CEOs, leaving at least four foreign businessmen dead, many in the resources industry.

The attacks were also a reminder of the international nature of Islamic ter-

rорism. Indonesian police suspect the man behind the attacks is Noordin Mohammed Top, a Malaysian citizen who has close ties to JI groups in the Southern Philippines, and al Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb, an al Qaeda affiliate in North Africa. A haven in any one of those places can feed violence elsewhere.

SBY addressed the nation Friday, vowing to "execute proper and decisive punishments to the bombers." Detachment 88 was already hot on Noordin's trail, raiding a suspected hideout just days before the attack that contained bomb components similar to those used Friday.

But Indonesia can do more than catch the criminals: It's also important to attack the Islamist ideology behind groups like JI and leaders like Noordin. For all of

Indonesia's success in catching terrorists, the ideas that fuel their actions are still openly accepted. The ideological leader of JI, Abu Bakar Bashir, a cleric jailed for conspiracy after the Bali bombing, was released from jail in 2006 and is now free to preach hatred to all who will listen. Now that SBY is re-elected and won't run for another term in office, he has nothing to lose by speaking out against those who spread these ideas.

The U.S. can help, too, by continuing its practical and technical support for Detachment 88, and by taking seriously terrorist threats in hotspots like the Southern Philippines. President Barack Obama famously lived in Indonesia as a child, and will visit again in November. We hope this is a battle he understands.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

TUESDAY, JULY 21, 2009

## Radical Islam Checks In

By Sadanand Dhume

Friday's bombings of the J.W. Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels in Jakarta underscore the emergence of a new terrorist target of choice: the international luxury hotel. In the 19 months leading up to the Jakarta attacks, Islamic terrorists have brought their holy war to upscale properties in Kabul, Islamabad, Mumbai and Peshawar. The casualties thus far number about 116 people killed and hundreds more injured.

More often than not, the terrorist predilection for five-star mayhem is explained in purely practical terms. Compared to fortified and heavily guarded embassies, hotels, welcoming to strangers by design, make relatively soft targets. Their international clientele, as well as the visual impact of a familiar building's façade dramatically mangled, guarantee terrorists the oxygen of publicity for their cause. When the hotel brand in question is American, such as the Marriott or the Ritz-Carlton, the terrorist faithful gain the added benefit of hurting their foremost foe.

From a radical Islamic perspective, however, an international hotel is much more than merely a convenient target of opportunity. It also represents, in microcosm, the antithesis of the world that rad-

ical Islamists, both violent and nonviolent, seek to create.

In a modern hotel, for example, men and women are treated equally. More effort is expended on segregating smokers from nonsmokers than on segregating the sexes. The bar, the gym and the swimming pool are gender-neutral spaces. Nobody seeks to enforce special dress codes on women.

Nor would any international hotel dream of privileging one faith over another. By contrast, the radical Islamic worldview entitles Muslims to special privileges by virtue of their being the recipients of an allegedly superior revelation, the broad underlying principle behind everything from Pakistan's harsh anti-blasphemy laws to Malaysia's lopsided affirmative action program for the Malay-Muslim majority. True, a hotel in, say, Jakarta, may place a Koran by the bedside table, and mark the direction of prayer to Mecca on the ceiling. But these are innocent gestures, designed to convenience Muslim guests rather than to inconvenience, much less to actively discriminate against, those of different backgrounds.

For Islamic radicals, who seek to order all aspects of 21st century life—from

banking to burqas—by the medieval precepts enshrined in Shariah law, the secular nature of a hotel is galling enough. But perhaps this would not matter as much if it weren't so appealing to local elites. In a place like Peshawar or Kabul,

---

### Western hotel chains challenge terrorist family values.

---

and to a large degree even in Jakarta or Mumbai, a five-star hotel represents an island of order and prosperity in a sea of squalor. It hints at the prosperity promised by free markets and a culture of individual liberty. It is living proof that the worldly can successfully be split from the divine. It also acts as a bridge to the West. For example, the stars of Manchester United, the iconic British soccer club, were scheduled to stay at the Ritz-Carlton before the attacks forced them to cancel their visit to Indonesia.

What, then, does this chasm between Marriott values and Shariah values portend? For the foreseeable future, leading hotels in Asia will continue to evolve in the direction of marble-floored bunkers. Metal detectors, sniffer dogs, undercarriage mirrors and armed guards in lobbies—all unimaginable barely a decade ago—will increasingly become part of the standard luxury hotel experience. If, as appears likely,

the Jakarta attacks were carried out by hotel guests, then more intrusive background checks may also become necessary.

In the long term, however, the only way to return hotels to their natural function—as enablers rather than inhibitors of human connections—will require a recognition by elites in Muslim-majority countries that a law and order approach to fighting radical Islam is necessary but insufficient. Going after individual perpetrators of terrorist violence, or even dismantling networks such as Jemaah Islamiyah in Indonesia and the Taliban in Pakistan and Afghanistan, earns only a temporary reprieve. As long as a vocal and influential minority of Muslims remains fundamentally opposed to what a hotel like the Marriott or the Ritz-Carlton stands for, the odds of terrorists seeking to stoke their sympathy and shore up public support (however foolish and misguided) will not disappear entirely.

*Mr. Dhume is a Washington-based writer and the author of "My Friend the Fanatic: Travels with a Radical Islamist" (Skyhorse Publishing, 2009).*

# U.S. refocuses attention on Southeast Asia

*North Korea issue likely will dominate Asean security talks*

BY JAMES HOOKWAY

BANGKOK—U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is due to attend a Southeast Asia-based security summit on the Thai island of Phuket on Wednesday in what diplomats from both sides of the Pacific are describing as a revival of U.S. interest in a region comprising several major exporters, the world's most populous Muslim nation and 570 million people.

But discussions on strengthening Washington's trade and security ties with the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or Asean, will likely be overshadowed by two long-running problems in the region: How to deal with a nuclearized North Korea, and how to persuade Myanmar's military junta to allow a degree of democratic change in the reclusive nation.

The U.S. has longstanding ties to several Southeast Asian nations. U.S. troops are on the ground in the Philippines helping to train local soldiers as they attempt to root out al Qaeda-affiliated terrorist groups. Similarly, the U.S. has helped to train and equip Indonesia's counterterrorism forces, which are now hunting for the masterminds behind the bombings that killed nine people—including two suicide bombers—at two hotels in Jakarta on Friday.

Total trade between the U.S. and Asean exceeded \$178 billion in 2008, and, in an opinion piece Mrs. Clinton wrote and was published in Bangkok newspapers Tuesday, she said "there is no doubt that our economies' fortunes and our nations' futures are more intertwined than ever before."

Some regional diplomats see the Asean group as the kernel of a broader free-trade bloc spanning the Pacific and also encompassing China, Japan, South Korea. Mrs. Clinton is scheduled to sign a nonaggression pact with Asean in Phuket, as China did in 2003, which analysts say could enable the U.S. to later en-

mesh itself within the so-called East Asia Summit group, which includes the 10 Asean members plus trade partners China, India, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and Australia.

"America is shaping itself to be a real player in the region again," says Thitinan Pongsudhirak, director of the Institute of Security and International Studies at Bangkok's Chulalongkorn University. The U.S. is once more engaging with East Asia as a region rather than as a series of bilateral agreements, he said.

To reinforce the point, senior U.S. administration officials in Bangkok said Tuesday the U.S. plans to open a new diplomatic mission to the Asean secretariat at its headquarters in Jakarta, Indonesia.

Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice skipped the annual Asean Regional Forum, as it's known, two times in three years during the second term of President George W. Bush, partly because of other pressing matters. But now, one senior administration official said, the U.S. is "trying to step up its game" in Southeast Asia, a resource-rich part of the world where China is also trying to assert its diplomatic and commercial power.

The region's many political and security problems frequently crowd out trade and economic discussions, however—particularly the question of how to deal with North Korea.

Besides the U.S. and Asean, representatives from China, the European Union, Japan, Russia and South Korea will attend, along with a host of ministers from other countries. Usually, North Korea's foreign minister attends, but this year Pyongyang sent a roving ambassador in his place amid growing international criticism for its weapons tests and an increasingly hard-line, militaristic stance after North Korean leader Kim Jong Il fell ill almost a year ago.

In Bangkok on Tuesday, Mrs. Clinton said the Obama administration was concerned that North Korea may have military ties to Myanmar, although she didn't say if the concern was related to North Korea's nuclear capabilities. "It would be destabilizing for the region," she told reporters.

A senior administration official



U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who is scheduled to sign a nonaggression pact with Asean, meets with Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva in Bangkok.

said the U.S. was concerned about the possibility that North Korea could be assisting Myanmar on a possible nuclear-weapons program. But he added that the U.S.'s intelligence on any suspected transfer of nuclear technology or military equipment from North Korea to Myanmar was incomplete.

A North Korean ship tracked by the U.S. Navy in June and July on suspicion of carrying a banned arms cargo was rumored to be heading for Myanmar, but in the end never docked there. U.S. and Asian diplomats say Myanmar has become a transshipment point in recent years for North Korean arms and contraband.

Mrs. Clinton suggested, how-

ever, that North Korea could still be tempted back to talks on rolling back its nuclearization policy. "But they have to be willing to change their behavior and agree to de-nuclearize North Korea ... and we stand ready to respond if we get any signal that there would be a serious commitment to doing that," she said.

Myanmar, meanwhile, is a source of constant embarrassment to Asean. Regional analysts have said Asean's unwillingness to expel or take other harsh measures against the military-run, resource-rich country could affect the grouping's ability to secure wider trade pacts with some of its biggest trading partners.

Several Southeast Asian nations, notably democracies Indonesia and

the Philippines, have been pushing the group to take a stronger stance against the military leaders in Myanmar, which is also known as Burma. Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirayuda told the Associated Press on Tuesday that elections that the Myanmar junta is planning for 2010 must include opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. Ms. Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace laureate, is currently on trial and faces up to five years in prison on charges of violating the terms of her house arrest by allowing an uninvited American guest to stay at her home.

"We should see whether from now until 2010 [Myanmar] develops a credible process leading to truly democratic elections acceptable to the international community," Mr. Wirayuda said.

Separately, Australia's Foreign Minister Stephen Smith said he is hoping to use the Phuket forum to talk with his Chinese counterpart, Yang Jiechi, about the detention of Rio Tinto employee and Australian citizen Stern Hu. Mr. Hu and three other Rio employees have been detained since July 5. China has alleged they used bribery to obtain state secrets.

Australian officials, including Mr. Smith and Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, have argued that China's handling of the issue will be watched and judged by governments and corporations around the world.

—Rachel Pannett contributed to this article.

Agence France Presse

# U.S. pushes on Myanmar

*At Asean summit, Clinton reiterates worry about North Korea's nuclear plans*

BY JAMES HOOKWAY

PHUKET, Thailand—U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton urged the nations of Southeast Asia to apply additional diplomatic pressure on the reclusive military regime that runs Myanmar, and she reiterated U.S. concerns that North Korea was passing on its military capabilities—and perhaps even its nuclear technology—to Myanmar.

Mrs. Clinton offered a carrot to Myanmar's leaders, saying that freeing jailed pro-democracy leader Aung San

Suu Kyi could open the way for the U.S. to allow investments in the country, which Washington currently targets with stiff economic sanctions. Any loosening of U.S. sanctions would represent a major change in U.S. policy, though analysts have long said they doubt Myanmar's military regime will free Ms. Suu Kyi anytime soon.

Mrs. Clinton stressed that members of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or Asean, might want to find ways in which to get tougher on My-

anmar, also known as Burma. The country has a track record of human-rights abuses that has long plagued Asean's efforts to obtain a higher global profile.

In Phuket, a resort island in southern Thailand that is hosting the annual Asean Regional Forum, Mrs. Clinton said Asean should "stay focused on trying to convince the Burmese leadership that they have a better future by moving away from isolation and ... giving their people a true election next year that will help chart a new course

for the people of Burma." Myanmar says it is planning free elections in 2010, but there is international skepticism that authorities there will allow a free vote.

Mrs. Clinton canvassed the foreign ministers of China, South Korea, Japan and Russia for their support in persuading North Korea to give up its nuclear-weapons program. She said "irreversible denuclearization" is the only viable option for North Korea.

North Korea has taken an  
*Please turn to page 19*

## U.S. urges Asean nations to get tougher on Myanmar

*Continued from first page*  
increasingly hard-line stance since leader Kim Jong Il fell ill in August 2008, testing a series of nuclear devices and missile systems. A North Korean ship was tracked by the U.S. Navy in June and July on suspicion of carrying arms to Myanmar, but in the end it never docked, possibly because the U.S. applied diplomatic pressure on its military leaders, a senior administration official said.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Clinton signed a friendship and cooperation treaty with Asean—just as China did in 2003, and many other countries have since. "It's a highly symbolic step" of renewed engagement with the region, says Rodolfo Severino, a former Asean secretary-general who now heads up the Asean Studies Center at the Singapore-based Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

Mrs. Clinton herself took the

buildup to the signing as an opportunity to say that President Barack Obama's administration sees the region—rich with natural gas and other resources, and a global exporting power—as an important economic and political partner.

Signing the treaty is also a first step that could potentially enable the U.S. to join a rising economic cooperation bloc in a region that comprises the 10 Asean nations plus countries such as China, South Korea, Japan, India and Australia.

International trade analysts say a number of countries have been driven by the continuing failure of the World Trade Organization to conclude the Doha Round of trade-liberalization talks to look at other trade deals as an al-

ternative to the stalled WTO process.

"Countries are looking for the best trade deals they can get at the moment, and the U.S. is preparing the ground politically if they choose to get more involved at a later date," said Steven Wong, assistant director general of the Institute of Strategic and International Studies in Kuala Lumpur.

The European Union also hopes to sign the so-called Treaty of Amity and Cooperation with Asean for the same reasons as the U.S. "It's a little more difficult for us, because we are a group of countries," said the EU's foreign policy chief, Javier Solana. In addition, he still said there was reason to be hopeful that the long-stalled Doha Round of negotiations at the WTO can still be

passed after the next Group of 20 economies meeting in Pittsburgh in late September.

Still, Mr. Solana said, "there's no doubt that the center of gravity of many things in the world is moving east, and we want to have a deeper relationship [with the region] both economically and politically."

Meanwhile, Mrs. Clinton surprised some observers by saying during a Thai television interview that the U.S. would provide a "defense umbrella" over its allies in the Persian Gulf to protect them if Iran acquires nuclear weapons. She later told a news conference in Phuket that "Iran needs to understand that its pursuit of nuclear weapons will not enhance its security or achieve its goal of enhancing its power both regionally and globally," and that pursuing a nuclear-weapons program could trigger an arms race in the area.



Hillary Clinton



# How Islamic Should Iran Be?

By Francis Fukuyama

When Columbia University President Lee Bollinger introduced Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at his school in September 2007, he denounced him as a "petty tyrant."

Ahmadinejad is many bad things, including a Holocaust denier and a strong proponent of a nuclear Iran. But as recent events have underlined, Iran is not quite a tyranny, petty or grand, and the office Ahmadinejad occupies does not give him final say in Iranian affairs. That role is more truly occupied by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, head of the Council of Guardians and Iran's supreme leader.

A real tyranny would never permit elections in the first place—North Korea never does—nor would it allow demonstrations contesting the election results to spiral out of control. Yet Iran is no liberal democracy. So what kind of beast is it? And in what ways should we want its regime to evolve?

Political scientists categorize the Islamic Republic of Iran as an "electoral authoritarian" regime of a new sort. They put it in the same basket as Hugo Chávez's Venezuela or Vladimir Putin's Russia. By this view, Iran is fundamentally an authoritarian regime run by a small circle of clerics and military officials who use elections to legitimate themselves.

Others think of Iran as a medieval theocracy. Its 1979 constitution vests sovereignty not in the people, but in God, and establishes Islam and the Quran as the supreme sources of law.

The Iranian Constitution is a curious hybrid of authoritarian, theocratic and democratic elements. Articles One and Two do vest sovereignty in God, but Article Six mandates popular elections for the presidency and the Majlis, or parliament. Articles 19-42 are a bill of rights, guaranteeing, among other things, freedom of expression, public gatherings and marches, women's equality, protection of ethnic minorities, due process and private property, as well as some "second generation" social rights like social security and health care.

The truly problematic part of the constitution is Section Eight (Articles 107-112) on the Guardian Council and the "Leader." All the democratic procedures and rights in the earlier sections of the constitution are qualified by certain powers reserved to a council of senior clerics.

These powers include control over the armed forces, the ability to declare war, and appointment powers over the judiciary, heads of media, army and the Is-

lamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. Another article lays out conditions under which the Supreme Leader can be removed by the Guardian Council. But that procedure is hardly democratic or transparent.

One does not have to go back to the Middle Ages to find historical precedents for this type of constitution. The clearest parallel would be the German Constitution adopted after the country was unified in the 1870s. Pre-World War I Germany had an elected parliament, or Reichstag, but reserved important powers for an unelected Kaiser, particularly in foreign policy and defense. This constitution got Germany into big trouble. The unelected part of the leadership controlled the armed forces. Eventually, though, it came to be controlled by the armed forces. This seems to be what's unfolding in Iran today.

Compared to Section Eight, the references in the Iranian Constitution to God and religion as the sources of law are much less problematic. They could, under the right circumstances, be the basis for Iran's eventual evolution into a moderate, law-governed country.

The rule of law was originally rooted in religion in all societies where it came to prevail, including the West. Friedrich Hayek noted that law should be prior to legislation. That is, the law should reflect a broad social consensus on the rules of justice. In Europe, the church originally defined the law and acted as its custodian. European monarchs respected the rule of law because it was written by an authority higher and more legitimate than themselves.

Something similar happened in the pre-modern Middle East. There was a functional separation of church and state. The *ulama* were legal scholars and custodians of Shariah law while the sultans exercised political authority. The sultans conceded they had to live within rules established by Muslim case law. There was no democracy, but there was something resembling a rule of law.

This traditional, religiously based rule of law was destroyed in the Middle East's transition to modernity. Replacing it, particularly in the Arab world, was untrammelled executive authority: Presidents and other dictators accepted no constraints, either legislative or judicial, on their power.

The legal scholar Noah Feldman has argued that the widespread demand for a return to Shariah in many Muslim countries does not necessarily reflect a desire to im-

pose harsh, Taliban-style punishments and oppress women. Rather, it reflects a nostalgia for a dimly remembered historical time when Muslim rulers were not all-powerful autocrats but re-

spected Islamic rules of justice—Islamic rule of law.

So what kind of future should we wish for Iran? My own preference would be for Iran to some day adopt a new, Western-style constitution guaranteeing religious freedom, a secular state, and sovereignty vested firmly in the people, rather than God.

But a considerable amount of anecdotal evidence (we don't have anything better) suggests this is not necessarily the agenda of the protesters. Many of them, including opposition candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi, say they want Iran to remain an Islamic Republic. They look at the radical regime change that occurred in Iraq and don't want that for themselves. What they seem to wish for is that the democratic features of the constitution be better respected, and that the executive authorities, including the Guardian Council and the military and paramilitary organizations, stop manipulating elections and respect the law.

Iran could evolve toward a genuine rule-of-law democracy within the broad parameters of the 1979 constitution. It would be necessary to abolish Article 110, which gives the Guardian Council control over the armed forces and the media, and to shift its function to something more like a supreme court that could pass judgment on the consistency of legislation with Shariah. In time, the Council might be subject to some form of democratic control, like the U.S. Supreme Court, even if its members needed religious credentials.

Eliminating religion altogether from the Iranian Constitution is more problematic. The rule of law prevails not because of its formal and procedural qualities but because it reflects broadly held norms. If future Iranian rulers are to respect the rule of law as traditional Muslim rulers did, it will have to be a law that comes from the hearts of the Iranian people. Perhaps that will one day be a completely secular law. That is unlikely to be the case today.

Unfortunately, Iranians may never get to make the choice for themselves. The clerical-military clique currently exercising power is likely to drag Iran into conflict with other countries in the region. This could easily consolidate its legitimacy and power. Let us hope that the country's internal forces push for an evolution of the political system towards genuine rule of law and democracy first.

*Mr. Fukuyama, professor of international political economy at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, is author of "America at the Crossroads: Democracy, Power, and the Neoconservative Legacy" (Yale, 2006).*

# Iran still divides U.S., Israel

*Gates wants talks with Tehran, which doesn't please host*

BY YOCHI J. DREAZEN

JERUSALEM—A simmering dispute between the U.S. and Israel over Iran's nuclear program burst into the open as U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates, during a visit to Israel, called for continued diplomatic engagement with Tehran, while Israeli officials repeatedly warned of a possible military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities.

Iran's apparent pursuit of a nuclear weapon is emerging as a major source of tension between the U.S. and Israel, which are already feuding over President Barack Obama's call for a complete freeze on Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Several senior U.S. officials are visiting Israel this week to push Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government to halt Israeli settlement activity, a step the Israeli leader has so far refused to take. The Obama administration's Mideast envoy, George Mitchell, is in the region, while National Security Adviser James Jones and White House Mideast adviser Dennis Ross are due to arrive shortly.

Israeli officials plan to use the meetings to underscore the country's growing unease about the Obama administration's diplomatic



U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates, left, met Monday with Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak; the photo is an Israeli handout.

outreach to Iran. Israeli officials believe Iran may be less than a year away from enriching enough uranium to build a nuclear weapon, a move Mr. Netanyahu's government sees as an existential threat to the future of the Jewish state.

In a joint news conference Monday with Mr. Gates, Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak emphasized that Israel believed "no option should be removed from the table" when it came to Iran, a clear allusion to a possible military strike against Iran's nuclear facilities.

After a later meeting with Mr. Gates, Mr. Netanyahu said he told the American defense chief of "the

seriousness to which Israel views Iran's nuclear ambitions and the need to utilize all available means to prevent Iran from achieving a nuclear-weapons capability."

Mr. Gates said Washington shared the country's deep concern about the Iranian nuclear program. He said that the Obama administration's diplomatic outreach to Iran was "not an open-ended offer" and that the U.S. wanted a clear response from Tehran by the time the United Nations General Assembly convenes in late September.

"We're very mindful of the possibility that the Iranians would simply try to run out the clock," he said.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

THURSDAY, JULY 30, 2009

# India's Singh defends Pakistan strategy

*Prime minister tells parliament he is convinced Islamabad is trying to fight terrorism; skeptics maintain he is soft*

BY KETAKI GOKHALE

NEW DELHI—Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh defended statements he made weeks ago to try to improve relations with Pakistan, saying Wednesday that a new dossier from Islamabad convinced him the nation is making a sincere effort to crack down on cross-border terrorism and that peace in South Asia had to be pursued.

At the same time—in a move to smooth ruffled feathers within his own Congress party and to counter opposition taunts that he has taken a soft line—Mr. Singh repeatedly said talks between the two countries on broader issues like trade and travel cannot continue unless Pakistan pursues strong action against terror.

A joint statement signed two weeks ago by Mr. Singh and his Pakistani counterpart, Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani, said India and Pakistan agreed to decouple discussions about terrorism from broader talks between the two countries on

issues such as trade and travel.

Mr. Singh has thrust India's relations with Pakistan to the top of the political agenda in a way few expected when he began another five-year term of office a few weeks ago. How he fares in this political skirmish could help set the tone for how India deals with Pakistan through his administration.

His supporters say he is determined to leave good relations with Pakistan as part of his political legacy. But Mr. Singh has been facing flak from opponents who say his statement was too concessionary and a departure from popular consensus.

Yashwant Sinha, a parliamentarian from the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party, said Wednesday that the Indian public, still riled by the Mumbai attacks last year, wants Pakistan to bring the terrorists responsible to justice. The agreement "obliterates the distinction between being a perpetra-

tor and victim," said Mr. Sinha during a vitriolic confrontation in parliament. At another point, Mr. Sinha accused Mr. Singh of "walking all the way to the Pakistani camp."

Mr. Singh countered that "unbracketing" the discussion of terror from general talks between the neighbors wasn't a signal that India's aggressive stance on terrorism had changed, or that the formal peace talks between the two countries would resume regardless of Pakistan's action against terror. What the agreement meant to convey was that Pakistan was making satisfactory progress in investigating the November attacks in Mumbai, he said.

A 34-page dossier detailing a high-level Pakistani investigation into the planning and execution of the Mumbai attacks was handed to Mr. Singh just days before his meeting with Mr. Gilani in Sharjah, U.

Sheikh, Egypt, at a summit of non-aligned countries. It provided details of the communication networks the militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba used to plan the attacks, photographs of the alleged plotters in custody in Pakistan, and an account of the progress of the investigation. A charge sheet has been filed against 18 suspects, and a trial in Pakistan is in the offing, Mr. Singh said.

"This is the first time that Pakistan has ever formally briefed us on the results of an investigation into a terrorist attack in India," he said Wednesday. "It is also the first time that they have admitted that their nationals and a terrorist organization based in Pakistan carried out a ghastly terrorist act in India."

Some observers speculated that Mr. Singh would cave to pressure from his party and retract his conciliatory statements with Mr. Gilani before parliament. But according to Sanjay Kumar, a fellow at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, a New Delhi think tank, Mr. Singh

has stuck with his original line of opening up dialogue with Pakistan.

"He didn't backtrack from anything in the joint statement," Mr. Kumar said. "In fact, the prime minister kept on repeating the verbal assurances of his Pakistani counterpart. He took the line that to emerge as a superpower in the region, India has to engage in negotiation—even if it would seem he had conceded some ground to Pakistan."

The joint statement also made reference to new information from Pakistan on the insurgency in the western province of Baluchistan, a sore point between the two neighbors. Pakistani officials have repeatedly accused India of helping Baluch separatists through its consulates in southern Afghanistan, a charge India denies. The raising of Baluchistan as an issue between the two countries could create further political static. Mr. Singh on Wednesday defended the inclusion of Baluchistan in the agreement, saying India has "nothing to hide."

—Vibhuti Agarwal  
contributed to this article.



Manmohan Singh

# Indonesia Terrorism took form in schools

BY TOM WRIGHT

PALEMBANG, Indonesia—As police investigate the suicide bombings at two Jakarta hotels two weeks ago, new evidence indicates terrorists avoided capture for years by relying on the shelter of sympathetic Islamists.

Many intelligence experts agree that terrorist networks in the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation are significantly weaker than a few years ago, before U.S.-trained Indonesian security forces ramped up efforts to wipe them out.

But militants who have eluded capture are still able to rely on numerous havens, often Islamic schools, while they gather the fresh recruits and small amounts of money needed to mount more attacks on Indonesian soil.

Investigators have said they believe Noordin Mohammad Top, a Malaysian believed to have carried out a number of terrorist attacks in Indonesia since 2003, orchestrated the bombings, and authorities have rounded up a number of his family members and associates in their bid to reel him in. The bombings at the JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels July 17 killed six for-

# Terrorists in Indonesia find refuge among sympathizers

*Continued from first page*  
eigners, an Indonesian waiter and the two suicide bombers.

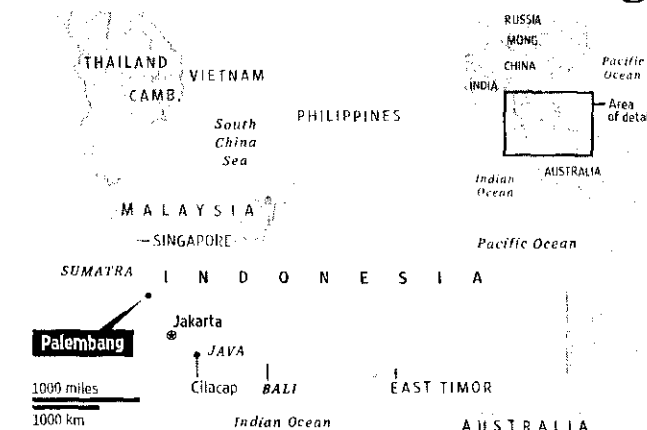
Mr. Noordin was formerly a key figure in Jemaah Islamiyah, the al Qaeda-linked Southeast Asian terrorist network whose members orchestrated bombings in Bali that killed more than 200 people in 2002. After a major Indonesian police crackdown, the group renounced violence, leaving Mr. Noordin to forge links with smaller radical Islamic groups.

His new network's activities in and around Palembang, a sprawling city of 1.5 million people on the Indonesian island of Sumatra, show how they operated. The city, a melting pot of Malay, Indian and Chinese people known for its criminal gangs, is the home of the Masjid Agung, one of the nation's largest mosques.

In 2006, according to police documents, an emissary of Mr. Noordin known as Syaifuddin Zuhri, but who used the alias Sabit, arrived at a small Islamic school called al Furqon, about four hours' drive south of Palembang. His mission: To exhort a nonviolent study group of about 10 people concerned about Christian conversions of local Muslims to consider attacks on Western targets.

Mr. Sabit, who had fought in Afghanistan in the 1980s, knew the founder of the religious school, a Jemaah Islamiyah member and Afghan veteran called Ani Sugandi, and had helped him recruit hard-line teachers, according to police testimony viewed by The Wall Street Journal.

Mr. Sugandi later told police he



had refused requests to join in the violence, but sheltered Mr. Sabit and allowed him to give a sermon to the group.

In the sermon, Mr. Sabit claimed he had direct links to Osama bin Laden and urged the members to launch a jihad against America and its allies, according to the testimony of Abdurrahman Taib, a leading member of the study group. The following year, Mr. Sabit told Mr. Taib that he had been sent by Mr. Noordin, the police files show.

Mr. Sabit introduced Mr. Taib to a master bombmaker, who later trained others in the group, and supplied him with a loaded revolver and 11 spare bullets to be used in attacks on "infidels," Mr. Taib said in trial testimony.

Members of the group in 2007 killed a Christian schoolteacher in Palembang who had persuaded his Muslim female students not to

wear their veils. The members also built bombs and planned to attack tourist cafes in a Sumatran hill resort popular with backpackers, according to testimony. The group called off the attacks at the last minute because they didn't want to also kill Indonesian Muslims.

Jemaah Islamiyah members arrested last year included Mr. Sugandi, the head of the religious school—which is now shuttered—and a 35-year-old Singaporean known as Fajar Taslim, who had helped to radicalize the group and was wanted in Singapore for a foiled attempt to attack Western targets there in 2001.

Six suspects picked up had no previous known connection to Jemaah Islamiyah or any other violent group, suggesting Mr. Noordin's network was able to successfully radicalize people.

Eight members of the group confessed and were convicted of the teacher's murder and of planning attacks, and received prison sentences of between 10 and 18 years. Mr. Sugandi was given a five-

year sentence for harboring terrorists, and his school shut down. Mr. Sabit wasn't captured then but was arrested in June in Cilacap, a town in Central Java where police now say they believe the Jakarta attacks were planned.

In Indonesia, a secular nation of 240 million people with thousands of moderate Islamist academies, there are about 50 radical Islamic schools opened by alleged members of Jemaah Islamiyah.

Sidney Jones, an expert on Southeast Asian terrorist networks at the Brussels-based International Crisis Group, a peace-advocacy body, said the school heads—who want to see the establishment of an Islamic state and are highly distrustful of Indonesia's secular government and police—often allow known terrorists to stay with them as long as they promise not to engage in acts of violence while there.

"You can be at any one of these schools and link in to Noordin" or his associates, said Ms. Jones, who first outlined the story of the Palembang group in a report in May.

The Indonesian government has hesitated to close the schools because of the difficulty of proving direct links to terrorism and the sensitivity about government interference in religious education, said a senior Indonesian anti-terrorism official.

Heri Purwanto, a 25-year-old who was in the Palembang study group and made a living hawking prepaid cards for mobile phones, was guarding the group's bombs in a derelict house in the city when police arrested him. His mother, Purwati, who lives in a run-down wooden house at the end of a narrow maze of alleys in a poor part of the city, contends her son was never a radical Muslim and is at a

loss to explain his involvement.

Ms. Purwati said she complained to guards at her son's Jakarta prison that he was sharing a cell with Mr. Taslim, the Singaporean, and could become further radicalized.

Some members of the study group, who police have been unable to prove were involved in the attacks, have remained free. A lawyer for one of them, Oloan Martua Harahap, who owned an Internet cafe used by the group for meetings but claims not to be have known of the plans for the shooting or planned bombings, says those arrested had become more radical through contact with Mr. Sabit and others. "They were saying jihad must be conducted now and the enemy is capitalism," said Bahrul Ilmi Yakup, the lawyer.

## About 50 radical Islamic schools are believed opened by Jemaah Islamiyah.

Mr. Sabit was arrested in June in Cilacap, a town in Central Java where police now say they believe the Jakarta attacks were planned.

Just a few days before the bombings, police raided an Islamic school in Cilacap run by a man who is the father-in-law of Mr. Noordin and a relative of Mr. Sabit, uncovering bomb-making material. The material was similar to an unexploded bomb found later at the JW Marriott. Authorities have since detained a woman believed to be Mr. Noordin's wife. Her father, who ran the school, and Mr. Noordin remain on the run.

# India and Pakistan vow to fight terror

By Amy Kazmin  
in New Delhi and  
Farhan Bokhari in Islamabad

India and Pakistan signalled a new thaw in relations strained by last year's terror attacks in Mumbai, as they jointly affirmed their commitment to work together to combat terrorism, which they described as "the main threat to both countries".

The statement followed wide-ranging discussions between Manmohan Singh, the Indian prime minister, and Yusuf Raza Gilani, his Pakistani counterpart, in Egypt on the sidelines of a Non-Aligned Movement summit.

The two prime ministers said action on terrorism "should not be linked to the composite dialogue proc-

ess", which includes talks on the disputed territory of Kashmir.

Tensions between the two nuclear-armed neighbours - who have already fought three wars and came to the brink of a fourth - surged after last November's dramatic terror attacks in Mumbai, India's business capital.

New Delhi blamed the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba, an Islamist group, for the attacks and demanded that Islamabad bring to justice the perpetrators who India believes may have support from forces within state agencies.

In the prime minister's joint statement, Mr Gilani affirmed Pakistan would do "everything in its power" to hold the responsible parties to account, and both leaders

agreed "to share realtime credible and actionable information on any future terrorist threats".

Mr Singh then indicated a willingness to resume talks on the wide array of other outstanding issues in the vexed relationship.

However, immediately after the talks, the Indian prime minister told reporters that formal peace talks could not resume "unless and until [the] terrorist heads who shook Mumbai are properly accounted for, [and the] perpetrators of these heinous crimes are brought to book".

The main, long-term bone of contention in the relations between the two countries has been the disputed Himalayan province of Kashmir, currently divided between them and claimed

by both. During his first term as prime minister, Mr Singh made concerted efforts to resolve the long-standing Kashmir dispute with the Pakistani leadership, but the talks faltered as Pakistan was embroiled in its own internal political turbulence.

The Mumbai attacks, however, sent relations spiralling down.

Amitabh Mattoo, a professor of international relations at Jawaharlal Nehru University, told an Indian television channel that the statement had created "a sense of hope, a new beginning...".

"It clearly signals there will be a dialogue on all issues."

Clinton's message, Page 9  
[www.ft.com/india](http://www.ft.com/india)

# Clinton can deliver a tough message to New Delhi

**Strobe Talbott**

**W**hen Hillary Clinton arrives in India today, the US secretary of state will no doubt strike the upbeat tone that befits relations between the world's two largest democracies. But she is expected also to engage her hosts candidly on two issues that have been contentious in the past and may be in future: climate change and nuclear non-proliferation.

In both areas, President Barack Obama's positions are radically different from his predecessor's. Unlike George W. Bush, Mr Obama understands the need for a rules-based international system that will regulate and reduce levels of greenhouse gas emissions and nuclear weaponry. In particular, Mr Bush, like the Republican-controlled US Senate of the late 1990s, opposed the Kyoto protocol on climate change and the ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). He also had little use for the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), even though it was largely an American initiative going back to the dawn of the cold war.

Those Bush policies suited many Indians. In their view, a global regime to restrict carbon emissions could hinder India's growth, while the CTBT and the NPT blocked their right to develop the nuclear-weapons capability their government demonstrated when it conducted a series of tests in 1998. Under Mr Bush, the US and India negotiated a pact on co-operation in civil nuclear power that will, when the details of its implementation are worked out, grant India an exemption from the terms of the NPT.

Mr Obama, however, is committed to ratifying the CTBT, strengthening the NPT, and pursuing other treaties to prevent the spread of dangerous material and technology. He also

intends for the US to be part of the international effort to replace the Kyoto protocol with a treaty-based climate-control regime including India, China and other emerging powers.

As a result, on both proliferation and climate change, many Indians regard Mr Bush with nostalgia and Mr Obama with muted apprehension. Mrs Clinton, however, is seen as a staunch friend of India. Her trip there as first lady in 1995 helped break the ice in US-Indian relations after 50 years of estrangement, paving the way for President Bill Clinton's visit in 2000. She is therefore in an ideal position to deliver a message in New Delhi that is both reassuring and cautionary.

The US administration knows it cannot coax or bully India into formally joining the NPT, nor will it renege on the civil nuclear deal it inherited from Mr Bush. At the same time, Washington policymakers hope that India's Congress party-led government, now that it has been returned to power with an increased mandate, will join the US in tightening the verification authorities of the International Atomic Energy Agency, accelerating negotiations to stop the production of fissile material (the stuff at the core of nuclear warheads) and bringing the CTBT into force.

These steps would make India's region safer, since Pakistan might follow suit in a positive direction, just as it did in a negative one when it conducted a nuclear test shortly after India's in 1998. A similar appeal to self-interest might prevail with respect to climate change. Since much of India's population lives in rural and coastal areas, it is acutely vulnerable to the devastation of agricultural lands and rising sea levels that come with global warming.

Key figures in India are beginning to accept the idea of a global compact on climate change. However, they are focused on the 12-to-1 disparity between the average American's carbon footprint and the average Indian's. Therefore they want progress towards parity in the final agreement. If the US achieves the 80 per cent cut in emissions by 2050 that Mr Obama supports, the gap between the US and Indian footprints per capita would shrink dramatically.

Indians (like many Americans) need to be persuaded to see the urgency of prompt action. There are few voices more persuasive than that of the Indian scientist R. K. Pachauri, the head of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change who shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize with Al Gore. He believes that the world has about six years to impose drastic and effective reductions on greenhouse gases. That will only happen if Mr Pachauri's and Mrs Clinton's governments can make common cause.

*The writer, president of the Brookings Institution, conducted a strategic dialogue with India on behalf of President Clinton from 1998 to 2001*

**On both proliferation and climate change, many Indians regard Bush with nostalgia and Obama with muted apprehension**

# The Middle East chess game Obama cannot afford to lose



**Philip Stephens**

Back in my schooldays a favourite treat was being taken by my father to chess exhibition matches. Striding from board to board behind long wooden trestle tables, the chess masters and grandmasters would play perhaps a dozen games simultaneously. They had time to pause only briefly at each board, but they rarely lost. A (junior) master once offered me a draw. Decades later, I still recall the elation.

Simultaneous chess offers a useful metaphor for Barack Obama's approach to foreign policy. The US president might have chosen to take a cautious, sequential approach to the lengthy list of global challenges: Iraq first; then Afghanistan, Pakistan and al-Qaeda; Iran next; climate change. Russia and nuclear proliferation some way down the track; the Israeli-Palestinian conflict towards the end of his term.

Instead, Mr Obama has sprinted from continent to continent with the speed and confidence of a grandmaster. He has made the opening moves in almost all of the important games. In each instance, he has opted for boldness over caution, pushing out his pawns to deploy his bishops and knights at the centre of the board.

Hillary Clinton, the US secretary of state, put it well this week when she set out the principles underlying US foreign policy. Speaking at the Council of Foreign Relations, she explained that the administration had made a strategic decision to deal with "the urgent, the important and the long-term all at once".

The president is not up against novices. He has advanced further in some games than others. In one or two – Afghanistan springs to mind – the best option may be to play for stalemate. Some contests are destined to outlast even a two-term presidency. Others he may be forced to concede.

One of the most pivotal games is being played in the Middle East – in Mr Obama's effort to re-establish an Arab-Israeli peace process. This is the one the president most wants to win; and he can least afford to lose. It is central to what he promised in Cairo would be a "new beginning" in America's relationship with Muslims. Some of the most critical moves will be made during the next few weeks.

Mr Obama is the first president since Jimmy Carter to put the Middle East conflict centre-stage at the outset of his presidency. George Mitchell, the former senator turned presidential envoy, has been charged with putting together the elements of a comprehensive peace agreement. If Mr Mitchell can get Israelis, Palestinians and Arabs to sign up in principle, Mr Obama wants to set out the framework by September.

In one dimension, the prospects for the resumption of serious peace negotiations look propitious. By shifting the US position from that of cipher to a supportive but even-handed ally of Israel the US president has transformed the diplomatic dynamics in the region.

Javier Solana, the European Union's foreign policy chief, emphasised the importance of the changed mood in delivering the Ditchley Foundation's annual lecture at the weekend. The international consensus on both the shape of, and urgency for, a settlement has rarely been greater, he said. There was a strong measure of agreement also on the confidence-building steps needed to give momentum to negotiations.

By framing the potential threat

from a resurgent Iran as a reason to accelerate rather than defer efforts to achieve a two-state solution, Mr Obama has at once disarmed Israeli hawks and secured more support for a settlement among Arab leaders.

Like the chess player, the US president understands how to marry tactics to strategy. Each move in the putative peace plan is calculated to advance a comprehensive settlement – underwritten by a normalisation of relations between the Arab states and Israel, as well as by the wider international community. As Washington makes overtures to, among others, Syria, the diplomacy of either or has given way to that of both and.

The parameters have been set out many times. The point of departure for the borders of a new Palestinian

**By shifting the US from cipher to even-handed ally of Israel Obama has transformed diplomatic dynamics in the region**

state must be 1967, with land swaps as negotiated between the two sides. Jerusalem must have a status that meets the aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians. Israel must be assured of its security – critically by recognition across the Arab world – and the new Palestinian state of its territorial integrity. Israel will have to give ground on settlements, the Palestinians on the right of return of refugees.

This, though, is the Middle East. If the international context has greatly improved, the facts on the ground are scarcely encouraging. In Benjamin Netanyahu Israel has a prime minister who has had to be dragged kicking and screaming to accept the principle of a Palestinian

state. Mr Netanyahu has thus far refused to accept Mr Obama's demand that he cease the expansion of Israeli settlement. A settlement freeze is the sine qua non of Palestinian and Arab engagement.

For their part, Palestinians are divided between Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza. Arab leaders worry about the reaction on the street to anything that looks like a concession to Israel. After talking to senior Palestinian officials during a recent visit to Ramallah, I was not left with the impression of a leadership ready to take big risks for peace.

The paradox on the Israeli side is that most people accept the logic of a two-state solution – if only because in the long term it is the only way Israel can retain its character as a Jewish and democratic state. But in voting for a government led by Mr Netanyahu, the same people have voiced profound doubts that a peace accord is possible without sacrificing security. Hamas' control of Gaza casts a long shadow.

On the Palestinian side, everyone knows that an agreement is possible only if Hamas can be brought into negotiations. But the hostility between Fatah and Hamas collides with the deep sense of grievance against Israel to favour inertia. Mr Obama is the best mediator the Palestinians could have hoped for. They do not seem to realise it.

Breaking the deadlock looks as impossible a task as it has proved at every attempt since the Oslo accords. Yet this is the game that most matters for the US president. In this respect, the simultaneous chess analogy is inexact. For chess masters each board represents a discrete challenge, disconnected from the next. For Mr Obama what happens in the Middle East could well tip the outcome of many other games.

philip.stephens@ft.com

# Police focus on Islamist factions

## Jakarta bombing

Indonesia's radicals have splintered into a disparate array of militant groups, says **John Aglionby**

Home-grown Islamist terrorists, probably with ties to Jemaah Islamiyah, the al-Qaeda-linked group, were the prime suspects for yesterday's bombing of two luxurious hotels in the Indonesian capital.

The national police chief, General Bambang Danuri, declared that the attacks on the JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels were both carried out by suicide attackers using bombs "identical" to two home-made devices seized earlier this week during a raid on Islamists in central Java.

Jl's stated goal has long been to establish an Islamist caliphate in south-east Asia and purge the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation of its moderate tendencies. It was blamed for the Bali bombings in 2002 and 2005, the 2003 attack on the same JW Marriott hotel and the 2004 bombing outside the Australian embassy in Jakarta.

Since then, experts say, it has splintered. The Australian Strategic Policy Institute, which published a report on Jl on Thursday, says leadership tensions and the recent release from jail of about 100 radicals imprisoned over the past seven years "raise the possibility that splinter factions might now seek to re-energise the movement through violent attacks".

Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who was re-elected as president this month, suggested none too subtly in an emotional speech at the presidential palace that his political opponents might have been involved.

While he did not name anyone, he left little doubt he was referring to Prabowo Subianto, one-time son-in-law of the late dictator Suharto and running mate of Mr Yudhoyono's rival and predecessor, Megawati Sukarnoputri, in this month's election.

Mr Prabowo, a former general who has admitted to dirty tricks including



kidnapping student activists during the dying days of the Suharto regime, has refused to acknowledge Mr Yudhoyono's victory, citing voting irregularities. But he vehemently denied any involvement in yesterday's bombings.

Sidney Jones of the International Crisis Group, an expert on Indonesia and south-east Asian radical Islam, said a politically driven attack would be a "radical departure for Indonesia". There was a wide cast of Islamist suspects to choose from instead, she said.

"There are about 12 dangerous figures involved in radical activities who are fugitives and have nothing to lose by doing something like this attack," she said.

Leading the list of potential plotters is Noordin Top, a Malaysian explosives expert and Jl's military commander, who led a terrorist cell with compatriot Azahari Husein until security forces shot the latter in November 2005. Close behind him are Dulmatin, a bombmaker who is one of the few involved in the 2002 Bali bombing still at large, and Umar Patek, who is thought to be in the southern Philippines.

Abu Bakar Bashir, Jl's joint founder and spiritual leader, who was widely believed to have been involved in the 2002 Bali attacks, formed a new group, Jamaah Anshorut Tauhid, in 2008. He preaches anti-western sermons but is not thought to be orchestrating terrorist attacks.

Indonesia's counter-terrorist campaign has won high marks from govern-

## Indonesia under siege

**October 12 2002**

Bomb attacks on nightclubs on the resort island of Bali kill 202, many of them foreign tourists. Three men belonging to the terrorist group Jemaah Islamiyah are convicted for the attacks and executed in November 2008

**August 5 2003**

Twelve people are killed by a bomb that explodes outside the JW Marriott hotel in Jakarta

**September 9 2004**

A bomb at the Australian embassy in Jakarta kills 10 and injures more than 100

**October 1 2005**

Twenty people are killed in a series of co-ordinated bombings in Bali

**July 17 2009**

Eight people are killed in explosions in the Ritz-Carlton and JW Marriott hotels in central Jakarta

ments round the world in the past five years, partly because of its success in detecting plots and arresting militants before they become active. But it is also thanks to success in persuading radicals to change their ways, mainly through offering incentives such as funding children's schooling. That has opened divisions within the radical movement, as some groups turn away from violence to work with the authorities.

The Australian Strategic Policy Institute report, by Noor Huda Ismail and Carl Ungerer, said those divisions had made it harder to track some of the most hardened terrorists. "The profile of the would-be radical as young, male, religiously devout, alienated, angry, disenfranchised, and living on the edges of society is outdated and not reflective of the broader Jl membership," it said.

The authors believe militants are recruited from divergent backgrounds and radicalised. "Some admit to 'shopping' online for religious edicts that would support violent jihad," the report said.

Ms Jones believes an operation such as the double hotel bombing "would have taken months to plan", which would discount most groups.

Jl attacks have achieved little in the past beyond temporarily scaring off foreign investors and tourists.

"If this is a one-off incident then it should not be too difficult to nail the terrorists," said one western diplomat. "But if it's just the start of something that escalates then it could become very complicated."



# Clues in Jakarta bombing point to regional Islamists

## President accused of unstable reaction

By John Aglionby in Jakarta

Indonesian police expressed increasing confidence yesterday that Jemaah Islamiah, the regional Islamist terrorist group, carried out last week's double suicide bombing in two Jakarta luxury hotels as concern mounted at President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's crisis management after the attacks.

Nanan Soekarna, police inspector-general, said investigators were "almost certain" militants operating under Noordin Top, JI's military chief, perpetrated Friday's bombings of the JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels, killing nine people.

"The clues are still being pieced together but they're pointing in that direction," he said. "Once we've identified the bombers' bodies, we'll be able to reach a clear conclusion."

JI is seen as al-Qaeda's main south-east Asian affiliate. It was thought to have been crippled by the arrest of hundreds of militants.

The seven other fatalities include three Australians and a New Zealander who were at a networking breakfast at the Marriott hotel.

Speculation is mounting that the Marriott suicide bomber was Nur Hasbi, who was in the same school class as Asmar Latin Sani, the suicide bomber in a previous attack on the Jakarta Marriott, in 2003.

Sidney Jones, a JI expert with the International Crisis Group think-tank, said: "If it's Nur Hasbi, then that would clinch that this is the Noordin network."

Mr Noordin is believed to have been a central JI figure for years. The school Mr Nur Hasbi and Mr Asmar attended was the Ngruki Islamic boarding school run by Abu Bakar Bashir, JI's co-founder and formerly its spiritual leader.

Concern meanwhile grew over Mr Yudhoyono's reaction to the bombings. On Friday he made an emotional speech, implicating his opponents in the attacks and warning of a campaign to destabilise the nation.

Politicians and diplomats are saying Mr Yudhoyono's judgment must now be questioned.

Fuad Bawazier, a key aide to vice-president Jusuf Kalla in the latter's failed attempt to win this month's presidential election, said the president should not have made the comments.

"It didn't create calm, rather it was accusatory speculation all over the place," he said after visiting a hospital where some of the 53 injured in the bombings are being treated.

Some diplomats said the speech revealed a worrying side to Mr Yudhoyono. "We always knew he was thin-skinned but this shows he's highly emotional and maybe unreliable in a crisis," one said. "If I were a foreign investor, I'd be more worried about the speech than the bombings."

# Why we need a United Nations army



**Gideon Rachman**

Ronald Reagan once asked Mikhail Gorbachev to imagine that there was "suddenly a threat to this world from some other species, from another planet". The late American president speculated that this would ensure "we would forget all the little local differences that we have between our countries".

We are still waiting for the Martian invasion that will test Reagan's theory. But, in the absence of little green men, it has fallen to Somali pirates to provide the common enemy that unites the nations of the world. An extraordinary international flotilla is patrolling the waters off Somalia, in an effort to stop attacks on the 30,000 ships that pass through the Gulf of Aden every year. Warships from countries as diverse and mutually suspicious as the US, China, Iran and Japan are policing this crucial international waterway. The largest of three international taskforces is run by the European Union and commanded by a British admiral operating from a headquarters in nearby north London. All the various navies, except the Iranians', co-ordinate their operations at regular meetings.

But while there really is something like an "international community" at work in the seas off Somalia, the picture is a lot less impressive on dry land. In the capital, Mogadishu, a 4,600 strong African Union force is struggling to hold off Islamist insurgents who recently got within half a mile of the presidential palace.

Both the land and sea operations in Somalia show the need to do some urgent thinking about international peacekeeping. The naval operation is impressive, but also disjointed. The land operation is simply inadequate.

In both Somali operations, it would make obvious sense to give the United Nations a bigger role as the co-ordinator and mobiliser of peacekeeping efforts.

Over the longer term, the growing demand for international peacekeeping forces means that it is time finally to bite the bullet and give the UN a permanent, standing military capacity.

The idea of a "UN army" remains deeply controversial. Critics can point to some horrendous peacekeeping failures. In the 1990s UN forces failed to prevent the Rwandan genocide and the Srebrenica massacre. More recently, UN-mandated troops were involved in sex crimes in the Congo. Like many international bureaucracies, the UN is often not a pretty sight when viewed from close quarters.

Many nations also have understandable qualms about a permanent, multinational military force, intervening all over the world. The Americans do not put their forces under UN commanders. It often falls to poorer countries, such as Bangladesh, Pakistan and Indonesia, to provide most of the troops for UN operations. But they worry that setting up a permanent force would mean that they would lose the ability to pick and choose which missions they take part in.

Yet the demand for UN peacekeeping forces keeps going up. There are currently 116,000 UN peacekeepers deployed around the world in 17 different operations - an eightfold increase since 1999. Only the US has more troops deployed around the world than the UN.

Alongside the well-publicised UN peacekeeping failures, there have been many quiet successes: Cambodia, Namibia, Sierra Leone and Nepal, to name a few. For the west's over-stretched armies, international peacekeepers often look like a cheap and attractive option. Susan Rice, the US ambassador to the UN, says that for every dollar the US spends on an equivalent military deployment, the UN spends 12 cents. The UN flag also brings a global legitimacy that a Nato or EU

operation cannot muster.

But every time the Security Council votes to deploy peacekeepers, the UN has to appeal for troops and equipment from scratch. So it usually takes between three months and a year to deploy a UN force - far too slow, in an emergency such as Somalia.

All of this points to the need to create a proper UN force on permanent stand-by. Such a force need not be a conventional army, with its own barracks and personnel. It would be better to get countries to give the UN first call on a certain number of their troops, for a specific period of time. National sovereignty could still be respected by allowing countries to opt out of missions, if they inflame national sensitivities.

Creating a permanent UN capability would mean that the UN could intervene much more quickly. It would also make it more likely that forces assigned to the UN follow the same military doctrines. It would also help address chronic shortages of equipment. As things stand, UN forces often lack the kit they need. The peacekeeping operation in Darfur is hamstrung by its lack of helicopters, for example.

A shortage of helicopters is particularly ironic, given the chatter in the more paranoid bits of right-wing America about "black helicopters" from the UN, hovering with intent over the US. Even perfectly sane American conservatives regard the idea of a permanent UN force with horror. They might be surprised and enlightened to learn that the hero of the conservative movement, Ronald Reagan, once spoke approvingly of the idea of "a standing UN force - an army of conscience - that is fully equipped and prepared to carve out human sanctuaries through force". And, of course, to take on the Martians, whenever they finally invade.

[gideon.rachman@ft.com](mailto:gideon.rachman@ft.com)

# Islamic schools seed fresh fears of terror

## Madrassahs

**Farhan Bokhari**  
reports on concerns  
in Karachi that  
education may  
provide a base  
for radicalism

As Pakistan basks in the praise of western officials over its offensive against Islamist militants, concerns are mounting that Islamic *madrassah* schools in the populous provinces of Sindh and Punjab may provide a beachhead for radicalism.

Security officials last year counted more than 560 *madrassahs* in and around Karachi, the country's largest city and financial centre

and the capital of Sindh province, according to a report seen by the Financial Times. Schools in the report were noted for "training for arms and pupils sent to Afghanistan and Kashmir", "famous for extremist teachings and armed students", "arms on site" and "foreign armed students".

Pervez Musharraf, then president, promised in 2002 to address links between Islamic schools and militant groups, but made little headway in establishing authority over the *madrassahs*.

The schools have since been linked to terrorist incidents, such as the 2005 London bombings.

The Karachi *madrassah* schools "are in danger of becoming a watering hole

for militants leaving places like Swat [the valley that was briefly controlled by the Taliban this year before the army launched an offensive to restore control] and seeking refuge if they can reach Karachi", said a western diplomat.

Nadeem Shahid, a tailor in one of Karachi's poorest neighbourhoods, sent his son to a *madrassah*, but is now deeply disillusioned about their ethos.

"I made the fatal mistake of my life when I sent my own son to a *madrassah*," he said. "I had no money to send him to a good school, while the *madrassah* offered free education, free lodging and free food."

The schooling turned Mr Shahid's son, now a teenager, into a radical. "There

have been so many times my son has simply vanished for weeks or even a few months," he said. "Whenever he has returned, he has brought back stories of going for this jihad or that jihad."

The father of eight added that the government's advance in Swat was "not really important till my son returns home for good".

The schools are especially concentrated in poorer neighbourhoods such as Mr Shahid's and have multiplied over the past 30 years. Many received funding and support from the US Central Intelligence Agency and Pakistani intelligence services during the Islamic resistance against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s.

Karachi is deemed particularly vulnerable to the influence of *madrassahs* because of its large Pashtun population. The ethnic group is predominant along both sides of the border with Afghanistan and has formed the backbone of Taliban forces.

Farooq Sattar, a senior leader of the Karachi-based Muttahida Qaumi Movement, a party in the ruling coalition, said: "Unless you begin dealing very aggressively with what fuels this militancy, Karachi will face continuing risks."

"There is a drug mafia in Karachi and then there is a nexus between land-grabbing groups and militants. Ultimately, you have got to take account of all these factors coming together,"

he said. "The destabilisation of Karachi is the destabilisation of Pakistan. We have got to do something about this situation before it gets too late. You have got to enforce the writ of the government in a way that people feel the difference."

Karachi officials say almost one third of the city's population lives in slum-like conditions with limited access to safe drinking water, clean food, efficient sewerage and quality education.

"Why should anyone be surprised over unemployed people turning to radical causes?" asked Usman Ghani, who has been unemployed since finishing his college studies in information technology a year ago.

## Obama's foreign policy agenda

# US pledges to defend Gulf against Iran

Clinton sets out nuclear strategy

Pressure on Tehran and Pyongyang

By Daniel Dombey in Washington and Tim Johnston in Phuket

Hillary Clinton said yesterday that the US was ready to guarantee the safety of its Gulf allies against Iran and would increase pressure on North Korea, as she set out Washington's strategy to tackle nuclear proliferation from Tehran and Pyongyang.

Speaking on a visit to Thailand, the US secretary of state sought to counter recent setbacks to the Obama administration's plans for negotiations with Iran by insisting that the US could "extend a defence umbrella over the [Gulf] region" if Tehran developed a nuclear weapon.

In the face of recent missile and nuclear tests by North Korea and worries about its military and possibly nuclear links with Burma, she also argued that Pyongyang would be subjected to "unrelenting" sanctions unless it irreversibly ended its nuclear weapons programme.

Mrs Clinton held out the prospects of talks with both countries while giving a hard edge to the Obama administration policy of engagement.

"We want Iran to calculate what I think is a fair

assessment: that if the US extends a defence umbrella over the region, if we do even more to support the military capacity of those in the Gulf, it is unlikely Iran will be any stronger or safer," she said.

"They won't be able to intimidate and dominate as they apparently believe they can once they have a nuclear weapon."

Her comments follow suggestions from several US experts that Washington needs a fallback policy of containing Iran, including extending a nuclear umbrella over Israel and the Gulf Arab states, to provide a middle way between engagement and a military strike.

But her remarks were immediately attacked by Israel. Dan Meridor, intelligence service minister, said Mrs Clinton's remarks made it seem as if the US were "already resigned" to a nuclear-armed Iran. "This is a mistake," he said, according to Reuters. "We cannot act now by assuming that Iran will be able to arm itself with a nuclear weapon, but to prevent such a possibility."

Mrs Clinton later insisted that she had not set out a new policy, emphasising that the US still regarded Iranian nuclear weapons as "unacceptable". Barack Obama, president, continues to back plans for negotiations with Tehran, despite the crackdown after last month's disputed Iranian election. Similarly, on North Korea, Gary Samore,

Mr Obama's top arms control adviser, said last week that Pyongyang was "probably looking for a way to get back to the bargaining table", after the recent tests.

But US expectations are low of progress on either front. Mr Samore "could not imagine significant progress" in the talks with Iran by September, when the world's big powers are due to assess the effectiveness of the prospective negotiations. US officials also acknowledge that their challenge on North Korea is not to resume talks, but to convince Pyongyang irreversibly to end its nuclear weapons programme.

Expanding on remarks she made the previous day about "growing concerns about military co-operation between North Korea and Burma", Mrs Clinton said: "We worry about the transfer of nuclear technology. I'm not saying it is happening, but we want to be prepared to stand against it."

North Korean technicians are suspected of helping the Burmese regime build tunnels near Nyapadaw, its remote new capital, and earlier this month the US navy shadowed a North Korean ship it suspected was carrying arms for Burma. The ship turned around before reaching Burma, but the Obama administration has made clear its biggest concern is the risk of proliferation.

# How to help Afghans defeat the insurgency

**David Miliband**

In recent weeks the debate about Afghanistan has centred on the UK military's tactics and resources. The bravery and commitment of our forces has been remarkable, and the toll of death and injury from recent operations heavy. But the result is 80,000 to 100,000 Afghans secure from Taliban threats and violence, and able to vote in the Afghan elections on August 20.

We committed to this mission for one reason: to deny al-Qaeda a base from which to attack the world. People support this and understand that in the 1990s the Taliban authority in Afghanistan provided a convenient incubator for al-Qaeda. But people now want to know whether and how we can succeed. We can. This is how.

The insurgency we face is more complex than a single "Taliban". Different groups operate in different areas across the Afghanistan/Pakistan border. Co-operation is opportunistic and tactical. The southern Afghan insurgency, led by members of the

former Taliban government, has the most fighters and is the best organised. In the east and in Pakistan there are a variety of other factions, including ones allied to al-Qaeda.

Afghans are drawn into the insurgency for different reasons. There are soldiers paid \$10 a day, narco-traffickers who want safe passage for their drugs, and those who fear the Taliban will win and so hedge their bets.

The insurgency has proved resilient, adaptable and deadly. But its weaknesses are also clear. It is a wide but shallow coalition of convenience. It is deeply unpopular: only 8 per cent of Afghans say they want the Taliban back. Its support base is limited to Pashtun areas. And it cannot take and hold territory for long against conventional forces. By the end of 2011 there will be more than 134,000 members of the Afghan army. Alongside them will be 97,000 Afghan police.

General Stanley McChrystal, head of the Nato force in Afghanistan, has explained that success is measured not by the number of Taliban killed, but the number of Afghans protected. Success against the insurgency requires legitimate local

politics, formal and informal.

That explains the importance of credible elections next month. The decisions of the next Afghan government will be key. There are three major political challenges for it to address: it must divide the insurgency through the reconciliation and reintegration of former Taliban; it must reassure and support the Afghan pop-

**Nato must support the government in Kabul by showing the people that they will not be deserted to Taliban retribution**

ulation at large; and it must develop a constructive dialogue with Afghanistan's neighbours.

First, Afghanistan needs a political strategy to dismantle the insurgency's power base. Afghans need effective governors and district leaders and local governance that works with the grain of tribal structures and history. An inclusive political settlement must

bring in conservative Pashtuns and separate them from the hardline Taliban, who must be pursued relentlessly.

The reintegration of former Taliban requires offering bigger incentives to switch sides and stay out of trouble, alongside tougher action against those who refuse. There are precedents: former enemies now work together in the Afghan government; former Taliban sit in the parliament.

At a local level, this means giving village elders the confidence to speak out against the Taliban. Military pressure has an important role to play – Afghans must know that they will be protected from the insurgents if they side with the government.

So the second imperative is that Nato must support the Afghan government in showing the people that they will not be deserted to Taliban retribution. We are not fighting in Afghanistan because girls were not allowed to go to school, but helping them do so will lead to a better future for Afghans. In Helmand, we are working to help build schools, provide clean water and electricity, surface roads and support agriculture. The

UK Department for International Development will spend more than £500,000 in development assistance over the next four years.

Finally, Afghanistan's neighbours must definitively accept its future as a secure country in its own right. It has long been a chessboard upon which the geopolitical struggles of others have played out. The new dialogue between Afghanistan and Pakistan is important. There are now mutually reinforcing efforts on both sides of the border, with extra troops deployed in southern Afghanistan alongside Pakistani military operations in Waziristan. This trend must be maintained and deepened, including with Afghanistan's other neighbours.

People talk about Afghanistan as the "graveyard of empires". But the international community, still less Britain, is not trying to create a colony. We are there to help an Afghan government dismantle the insurgency through the twin tracks of military power and political engagement. That is a necessary mission, and an achievable one.

*The writer is UK foreign secretary*

# How to split the Afghan insurgents

*Miliband's idea for "inclusive settlement" is on right lines*

The increased tempo of the Nato offensive against the Taliban ahead of next month's presidential elections in Afghanistan has inevitably increased casualties, on both sides. This will not be politically acceptable for very long unless it can be anchored inside a viable political strategy.

David Miliband's call yesterday for an overall framework aimed at dividing the Taliban into potentially biddable if Islamically conservative Pashtun nationalists, and unreconcilable pan-Islamist jihadis, offers a plausible way forward. But separating Islamist insurgents into sheep and goats requires not only politico-military coherence but legitimacy.

"We need to help the Afghan government exploit the opportunity, with a more coherent effort to fragment the various elements of the insurgency, and turn those who can be reconciled to live within the Afghan constitution," the UK foreign secretary said in a speech to Nato in Brussels.

Mr Miliband has propounded these ideas before. In May he called for "reconciliation with organisations whose values we may not share but who are prepared to pursue common interests". It is less about beliefs than whether they use politics instead of violence to achieve their goals.

But the government of Hamid Karzai, though it has taken part in Saudi-mediated talks with former Taliban, has shown no inclination for real engagement or, indeed, sharing power. Mr Karzai even ducked out of a televised election debate last week. There is a broader problem here. The sort of legitimacy that would fragment the insurgency and enable Nato and the Afghan army to crush the jihadis is going to be hard to win.

Afghans want and need an end to corruption and warlordism. They want security for their families, jobs, schools and clinics, roads and markets, electricity and water. They want responsive government and justice. As Nato forces clear and hold larger areas, they want to know they will be protected from reprisals if they side with the government and, not, as in Pakistan, left to fend for themselves.

The US, UK and their allies need not only to make clear they are in for the long haul. To win over more pluralist Islamist opinion, they must demonstrate credibly they are prepared to engage with Islamists elsewhere in the region – Hamas, for example – and that this new inclusiveness of those who can be lured into politics is not the cynical tactical manoeuvre the extremists claim. They need, in sum, to prove the jihadis wrong.

# And if Iran doesn't want to talk?

We can't entice Tehran by lowering pressures on it, but we can add pressure.

**Michael Singh**

Six weeks before Iran's descent into electoral chaos, the hardline Iranian cleric Ahmad Khatami rebuked the United States in his Friday sermon, stating, "You do not want talks!"

Ayatollah Khatami (no relation to former president Mohammad Khatami) is clearly not a keen observer of the Washington scene. Given the persistence of American efforts to engage the Iranian regime in dialogue over the last 30 years, and the resilience of the Obama administration's own commitment to engagement, the one constant in American policy toward Iran seems to be that we do indeed want talks.

Hence, as the violence has subsided, attention has turned to whether President Obama still intends to talk to Iran, and if so how.

But this question misses the point. It is a bit like me wondering whether I should invite Angelina Jolie over for dinner: The question isn't really whether I should ask, but how on earth I would get her show up. When it comes to Iran, the question isn't so much whether to engage, but how to get Iran's leaders to want to engage earnestly with us.

While in the past the United States pursued engagement intermittently, in recent years the

effort has gained new urgency as Iran has neared the nuclear threshold. It's worth remembering why the Iranian regime wants the bomb, despite all the trouble involved in getting one: Not primarily for prestige, and not primarily to achieve a balance of power with potential foes. Iran wants a nuclear weapon because the regime is insecure to the point of paranoia.

Understanding this insecurity helps to explain many of the regime's actions. Only a jittery regime would so transparently and clumsily rig an election contested only by candidates it had hand-picked. And any opening to the U.S. is a threat, not a prize, to a regime that thrives on closure and whose ideology rests on anti-Americanism.

Also evident in the recent violence in Iran, however, was the inescapable fact that neither the United States nor any of its allies can provide the regime with meaningful "security guarantees," which are so often proffered as the key to unlocking a grand bargain with Tehran. No U.S. president would, or for that matter could, protect the regime against the greatest threat to its continued prosperity — popular resentment.

If we cannot alleviate the pressure on the regime as a means to induce them to accept our offer to negotiate, the only path that remains is to add to that pressure. The free world should fully and speedily respond to Iranian dissi-

dents' calls for support, but we should not aspire to supplant or direct their activities.

There are other means of pressure that are within our control, such as economic sanctions and diplomatic isolation targeted at regime heavyweights. These efforts have recently slowed both as a result of the sequential, engagement-first approach taken by President Obama as well as the dwindling enthusiasm of partners such as Russia and China.

The present crisis provides an opportunity to revive the latter by channeling international disgust with the regime's abuses into concerted action, and suggests a need to revisit the former. While engagement need not be abandoned, it should be pursued in parallel with pressure. The regime must come to see the president's outreach not merely as an invitation, but as an off-ramp from a road that leads to escalating penalties.

The Iranian regime has demonstrated that it is in no mood for compromise, and not particularly eager to win the world's regard. So serious U.S.-Iran engagement is more likely to be the product of a fundamental reorientation by Iran's leaders than to produce one.

**MICHAEL SINGH**, former senior director for Middle East affairs on the U.S. National Security Council, is a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

# Reason to stay



**Thomas L. Friedman**

**PUSHGHAR, AFGHANISTAN** I confess, I find it hard to come to Afghanistan and not ask: Why are we Americans here? Who cares about the Taliban? Al Qaeda is gone. And if its leaders come back, well, that's why God created cruise missiles.

But every time I start writing that column, something stills my hand. This week it was something very powerful. I watched Greg Mortenson, the famed author of "Three Cups of Tea," open one of his schools for girls in this remote Afghan village in the Hindu Kush mountains. I must say, after witnessing the delight in the faces of those little Afghan girls crowded three to a desk waiting to learn, I found it very hard to write, "Let's just get out of here."

Indeed, Mortenson's efforts remind us what the essence of the "war on terrorism" is about. It's about the war of ideas within Islam — a war between religious zealots who glorify martyrdom and want to keep Islam untouched by modernity and isolated from other faiths, with its women disempowered, and those who want to embrace modernity, open Islam to new ideas and empower Muslim women as much as men. America's invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan were, in part, an effort to create the space for the Muslim progressives to fight and win so that the real engine of change, something that takes nine months and 21 years to pro-

duce — a new generation — can be educated and raised differently.

Which is why it was no accident that Admiral Mike Mullen, the U.S. chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff — spent half a day in order to reach Mortenson's newest school and cut the ribbon. Getting there was fun. Our Chinook helicopter threaded its way between mountain peaks, from Kabul up through the Panjshir Valley, before landing in a cloud of dust at the village of Pushghar. Imagine if someone put a new, one-story school on the moon, and you'll appreciate the rocky desolateness of this landscape.

But there, out front, was Mortenson, dressed in traditional Afghan garb. He was surrounded by bearded village elders and scores of young Afghan boys and girls, who were agog at the helicopter, and not quite believing that America's "warrior chief" — as Admiral Mullen's title was loosely translated into Urdu — was coming to open the new school.

While the admiral passed out notebooks, Mortenson told me why he has devoted his life to building 131 secular schools for girls in Pakistan and another 48 in Afghanistan: "The money is money well spent. These are secular schools that will bring a new generation of kids that will have a broader view of the world. We focus on areas where there is no education. Religious extremism flourishes in areas of isolation and conflict.

"When a girl gets educated here and then becomes a mother, she will be much less likely to let her son become a militant or insurgent," he added. "And she will have fewer children. When a girl learns how to read and write, one of the first things she does is teach her own mother. The girls will bring home meat and veggies, wrapped in newspapers, and the mother will ask the girl to read the newspaper to her and the mothers will learn about politics and about women who are exploited."

It is no accident, Mortenson noted, that since 2007, the Taliban and its allies have bombed, burned or shut down more than 640 schools in Afghanistan and 350 schools in Pakistan, of which about 80 percent are schools for girls. This valley, controlled by Tajik fighters, is secure, but down south in Helmand Province, where the worst fighting is today, the deputy minister of education said that Taliban extremists have shut 75 of the 228 schools in the last year. This is the real war of ideas. The Taliban want public mosques, not public schools. The Muslim militants recruited among the illiterate and impoverished in society, so the more of them the better, said Mortenson.

This new school teaches grades 1 through 6. I asked some girls through an interpreter what they wanted to be when they grow up: "Teacher," shouted one. "Doctor," shouted another. Living here, those are the only two educated role models these girls encounter. Where were they going to school before Mortenson's Central Asia Institute and the U.S. State Department joined with the village elders to get this school built? "The mosque," the girls said.

Mortenson said he was originally critical of the U.S. military in Iraq and Afghanistan, but he's changed his views: "The U.S. military has gone through a huge learning curve. They really get it. It's all about building relationships from the ground up, listening more and serving the people of Afghanistan."

So there you have it. In grand strategic terms, I still don't know if this Afghan war makes sense anymore. I was dubious before I arrived, and I still am. But when you see two little Afghan girls crouched on the front steps of their new school, clutching tightly with both arms the notebooks handed to them by a U.S. admiral — as if they were their first dolls — it's hard to say: "Let's just walk away." Not yet.



# Korea-Myanmar ties worry U.S.

BANGKOK

## Administration taking growing military links 'seriously,' Clinton says

BY MARK LANDLER

Hillary Rodham Clinton, the U.S. secretary of state, arriving here for a meeting of Southeast Asian nations, expressed concern on Tuesday about growing evidence of military cooperation between North Korea and Myanmar, which she said could destabilize the region.

Declaring that she takes the reports "very seriously," Mrs. Clinton said that expanded military ties between the countries would "pose a direct threat to Burma's neighbors." She singled out Thailand, an ally of the United States and the host of the conference, as being vulnerable to a heavily armed Myanmar, a reclusive dictatorship also known as Burma.

Suspicious about North Korea's relationship with Myanmar deepened recently when a North Korea freighter appeared to be steaming toward Myanmar. American officials, believing the ship might be carrying weapons or other illicit cargo, tracked it until it reversed course.

Some intelligence analysts contend that North Korea is helping Myanmar pursue a nuclear weapons program. They cite newly published photos of a network of giant tunnels, which analysts believe were built outside Myanmar's capital, Naypyidaw, with help from North Korean engineers.

Mrs. Clinton did not say whether the Obama administration shares those suspicions. But another senior administration official said the United States had not discounted the possibility. North Korea is suspected of supplying Myanmar with small arms and ammunition.

"North Korea has a history of proliferating," said the official, who spoke on



SUNGRO YONGRIT EPA

The U.S. secretary of state, Hillary Rodham Clinton, was greeted with a garland after arriving in Bangkok on Tuesday.

condition of anonymity because only Mrs. Clinton was authorized to speak publicly in advance of the conference.

Even without these links, Myanmar and North Korea are likely to dominate the meeting of the Association of Southeast Nations, or Asean, which begins Wednesday on the resort island of Phuket. Mrs. Clinton plans to meet with the foreign ministers of several countries to firm up support for the latest United Nations resolution against North Korea, adopted after Pyongyang's nuclear and missile tests.

Although the United States is putting most of its emphasis on implementing the sanctions in that resolution, it has begun discussing possible incentives that the countries could offer North Korea, if its regime agreed to abandon its nuclear ambitions and return to the bargaining table.

Officials declined to say what might be on the table, though they said it would be a mix of familiar and new ele-

ments. In the past, the United States and other countries have offered Pyongyang shipments of fuel.

"There are obviously a list of incentives, offers that could be made if the North Koreans evidence any willingness to take a different path," Mrs. Clinton said in Bangkok, after arriving from New Delhi. "As of this moment in time, we haven't seen that evidence."

The administration's decision to broach the possibility of incentives, officials said, will make it easier to persuade countries like China, which have previously resisted sanctions against North Korea, from agreeing to implement the tougher measures in the United Nations resolution.

North Korea is expected to send a delegate to the Asean conference, but Mrs. Clinton did not plan to meet that person. American officials said there was always the possibility of a chance encounter of a North Korean diplomat and one of Mrs. Clinton's lieutenants on the sidelines.

Mrs. Clinton also has no plans to meet with a representative of Myanmar.

# Iran's tragic joke



**Roger Cohen**

GLOBALIST

**NEW YORK** Allow me to quote the British novelist Martin Amis, writing about Persia in *The Guardian*: "Iran is one of the most venerable civilizations on earth: it makes China look like an adolescent, and America look like a strip-ling."

Iranians, aware of that history, are a proud people. They do not take kindly to being played around with, nor to seeing their country turned into a laughing stock. They do not like the memory of an election campaign that now seems like pure theater, the expression of the sadistic whim of some puppeteer.

So the line I take away from the important Friday sermon of Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the two-time former president who believes that the Islamic Republic's future lies in compromise rather than endless confrontation, is this one: "We shouldn't let our enemies laugh at us because we've imprisoned our own people."

There's been tragedy aplenty since June 12 — dozens of killings, thousands of arrests, countless beatings of the innocent — and I hope I belittle none of it when I say there's also been something laughable.

What president would celebrate a "victory" by two-thirds of the vote with a clampdown resembling a putsch? What self-respecting nation would attribute the appearance in the streets of three million protesters convinced their votes were stolen to Zionists, "evil" media and British agents?

(The former British ambassador to

Iran told me with a smile last January that Tehran was an interesting place to serve "because it's one of the very few places left on earth where people still believe we have some influence!")

What sort of country invites hundreds of journalists to witness an election only to throw them all out? What kind of revolutionary authority invokes "ethics" and "religious democracy" as it allows plain-clothes thugs to beat women?

What is to be thought of a supreme leader who calls an election result divine, then says there are some questions that need resolution by an oversight council, and then tells that council what the result of its recount is before it's over?

Iran is not some banana republic. The events since the night of June 12 have been a shameful interlude. Iranians have not digested this grotesquery.

**Iranians do not take kindly to seeing their country turned into a laughing stock.**

No, Iran is not a banana republic. It's a sophisticated nation of 75 million people. It pretends to a significant role in the affairs of the world. It's a land of poets who knew how to marry the sacred and the sensuous and always laughed at the idea of

a truth so absolute it would not accommodate contradiction.

It's an Islamic Republic and, as Rafsanjani said, "If the Islamic and Republican sides of the revolution are not preserved, it means that we have forgotten the principles of the revolution."

Respecting that duality — the clerical and the republican — means that the price Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has to pay for his lifelong authority is the quadrennial holding of presidential elections that cannot remove him from office but must inform his actions.

Because Khamenei trampled on this principle, ignoring the will of the people, he created the "crisis" of which Rafsanjani spoke.

It will not abate quickly. Iranians believe the puppeteer must pay a price for such clumsy theater. Within the revolu-

tionary establishment and within society, fissures have become chasms. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is now the most divisive figure in the Islamic Republic's 30-year history.

As Rafsanjani said: "We could have taken our best step in the history of the Islamic Revolution had the election not faced problems."

The campaign was of an exemplary openness. Supporters of Ahmadinejad and Mir Hussein Moussavi, the reformist candidate, took to the streets without incident. Moussavi, with his impeccable revolutionary credentials, was the very emblem of unthreatening change.

But a hardline faction around Khamenei, Ahmadinejad and the Revolutionary Guards felt threatened — in their power, wealth and world view.

They do not believe, as Rafsanjani believes, in a China option for Iran: the possibility of normalizing relations with the U.S. and preserving the system.

While Rafsanjani spoke, Ahmadinejad was speaking in Mashad. "As soon as the new government is formed, it will enter the global sphere with a power that is 10 times greater than that of the West and overthrow the West from its hegemonic position," he said.

I heard the president say the same thing, again and again and again, over the course of a three-hour press conference two days after the election. He is suffering from a pathology. Rafsanjani is not alone in believing it is dangerous.

A succession struggle of sorts has begun in Iran. Rafsanjani, 74, is challenging Khamenei, 70. So is Mohammad Khatami, the reformist former president who called Sunday for a referendum on the legitimacy of the election. They are saying Iran is a great and proud nation: open the prisons, free the press, allow debate, do not make a laughing stock of our institutions. That, they insist, is the only form of loyalty to the Revolution.

It's also the only action worthy of a millennial nation. The joke has been too foul to stand.

# Make a case of it

## GAZA AND THE COURT

International justice would be best served by accepting the Palestinian complaint.

John Dugard

A request is pending before the International Criminal Court in the Hague into whether international crimes were committed during the Israeli operations in Gaza in December 2008.

Over 1,400 Palestinians were killed, including at least 900 civilians, and over 5,000 wounded in the offensive. Some 3,000 homes were destroyed, as were many government buildings, schools, universities, mosques, hospitals and factories.

Several investigations — including one by the Arab League Independent Fact Finding Committee (I.F.F.C.), which I chaired — have found considerable evidence that serious crimes were committed in Israel's offensive.

The I.F.F.C. reached its conclusions on the basis of the facts above, the testimony of witnesses of cold-blooded killings by Israeli soldiers, the use of weapons designed to cause the maximum suffering and evidence that

strongly suggested that Israel had made no serious attempt to distinguish between civilians and military targets.

Our investigation found that Palestinian militants also committed war crimes, but attributed responsibility for most of the serious international crimes in the conflict to Israel.

Israel is not a member of the International Criminal Court, and so the I.C.C. does not have jurisdiction on its territory. The U.N. Security Council could refer the situation to the I.C.C. as it did in the case of Darfur. This, however, is unlikely as such a move would certainly be vetoed by the United States.

This leaves only one avenue that offers any prospect of prosecution and that is the Palestinian request now before the prosecutor of the I.C.C., Luis Moreno-Ocampo, for an investigation into whether international crimes have been committed on Palestinian territory.

The Rome Statute, under which the I.C.C. was established, does allow a state not party to the statute to declare that it accepts the jurisdiction of the I.C.C. for international crimes committed within its territory. Significantly, the Palestine declaration would allow the I.C.C. to exercise jurisdiction over crimes committed by both Palestinians and Israelis on Palestinian territory.

There is an obstacle in this approach, however — the question whether Palestine is a "state." The Rome Statute fails to define a state, and there is no international recognition board for aspirant states, leaving it to the I.C.C. itself to make such a determination.

Over 100 states have recognized a "State of Palestine," and it is a member of the Arab League. Moreover, the Palestinian National Authority has diplomatic relations with many states and observer status at the United Nations.

It is not necessary for the I.C.C. prosecutor to decide that Palestine is a state for all purposes, but only for the purpose of the court. In so deciding, Mr. Moreno-Ocampo should not adopt a restrictive approach that emphasizes the absence of a fully effective government,

but rather an expansive approach that gives effect to the main purpose of the I.C.C.

Several factors favor an expansive approach.

First, there is the fact that the Palestinian entity has been widely recognized as a state and meets most of the requirements of statehood — population, territory, government and ability to conduct international relations.

Admittedly its government is weak as a result of the Israeli occupation and the feud between Fatah and Hamas. States have, however, been admitted to the United Nations with less effective governments in order to promote the aims of the U.N. In 1992 Bosnia-Herzegovina was admitted in the middle of a civil war in an effort to secure peace, and several former colonies in Africa with few governmental structures were admitted in order to promote the goal of self-determination.

Second, the Palestinian National Authority has a judicial system more developed than that of many members of the I.C.C., which would allow it to comply with the cooperative obligations contained in the statute.

Third, the purpose of the Rome Statute, as proclaimed in its preamble, is to punish those who commit international crimes and to prevent impunity. If an entity claiming to be a state, and recognized as such by a majority of states, makes a declaration under the I.C.C. statute that seeks to give effect to such goals, the I.C.C. should accept it as a state for the purpose of the I.C.C. statute.

A decision by the I.C.C. to investigate whether crimes were committed in Gaza, in the course of Israel's offensive, would also give the I.C.C. an opportunity to show that it is not infected by a double standard and that it is willing to take action against international crimes committed outside Africa.

**JOHN DUGARD**, a South African professor of law, was chairman of the Independent Fact Finding Committee established by the Arab League to investigate violations of humanitarian law during Israel's military operation in Gaza in 2008.



RONEN ZVULON / REUTERS

# Terrorism in the heartland



**Nicholas D. Kristof**

**KARACHI, PAKISTAN** It was the home of a Muslim religious teacher, but he was stockpiling more than copies of the Koran. His house blew up this month in a thunderous explosion that leveled much of his village and could be heard six miles away. Police reported that he was storing explosives, rockets, grenades and suicide vests.

But perhaps what was most dispiriting was that this arsenal, apparently intended for terror attacks, was not in the tribal areas in the northwest of Pakistan where the Taliban and Al Qaeda have long conducted operations. Rather this was in the southern part of Punjab, the Pakistani heartland.

The explosion was a reminder of what some call the "creeping Talibanization," even of parts of Pakistan far from the formal fighting. Militants seem to be putting the entire country in play, and that's one reason Pakistan should be President Obama's top foreign policy challenge.

Think of it this way: It would be terrible if Afghanistan or Iraq collapsed, but it would be unthinkable catastrophic if Pakistan — with perhaps 80 to 100 nuclear weapons — were to fall into chaos.

Even here in Karachi, the pragmatic commercial hub of the country, extremists have taken over some neighborhoods. A Pakistani police document marked "top secret," given to me by a Pakistani concerned by the spreading tentacles of jihadis, states that Taliban agents sometimes set up armed checkpoints in one such neighborhood here.

These militants "generate funds through criminal activities like kidnapping for ransom, bank robbery, street robbery and other heinous crimes," the report says.

The mayor of Karachi, Syed Mustafa Kamal, confirms that Pashtun tribesmen have barred outsiders from entering some neighborhoods.

"I'm the mayor, and I have three vehicles with police traveling with me. And even I cannot enter these areas or they will blow me up," Mr. Kamal said, adding, "Pakistan is in very critical condition."

Lala Hassan of the Aurat Foundation, which works on social issues, said:

"There's no doubt militancy is increasing day by day, not only in Karachi but all over Pakistan."

On this trip, I also traveled in South Punjab and found it far more troubled than in my previous trips to the area.

Some music shops and girls' schools have been threatened by fundamentalists, local residents said. In the city of Bahawalpur, home to a notorious militant, my interpreter asked me not even to step out of the vehicle. The Daily Times of Pakistan described the situation as "terror's free run in South Punjab."

But the militants may have overreached. Their brutality, including the flogging of a teenage girl before a large crowd, has shocked and alienated many Pakistanis. It is just possible that the tide is turning as a result.

A poll of Pakistanis released this month by WorldPublicOpinion.org found that one-third believed that the Taliban intended to gain control of all of Pakistan, but 75 percent thought that would be a bad result. Two years ago, only 34 percent of Pakistanis believed that Islamic militants consti-

tuted a "critical threat." Now, 81 percent do.

Unfortunately, the United States has acted in ways that have often empowered the militants. We have lavished more than \$11 billion on Pakistan since 9/11, mostly supporting the Pakistani Army. Yet that sum has bought Pakistan no security and us no good will.

In that same poll, 59 percent of Pakistanis said that they share many of Al Qaeda's attitudes toward the United States, and almost half of those said that they support Al Qaeda attacks on Americans.

One reason is that America hasn't stood up for its own values in Pakistan. Instead of supporting democracy, we cold-shouldered the lawyers' movement, which was the best hope for democracy and civil society.

If we Americans want to stabilize Pakistan, we should take two steps. First is to cut tariffs on manufactured imports from Pakistan. That would boost the country's economy, raise employment and create good will. Cutting tariffs is perhaps the most effective step we could take to stabilize this country and fight extremism.

Second, we should redirect our aid from subsidies to the Pakistani military to support for a major education initiative. A bill in the Senate backed by the Democrat John Kerry and the Republican Richard Lugar would support Pakistani schools, among other non-military projects, and would be an excellent step forward.

In rural Pakistan, you regularly see madrassas established by Islamic fundamentalists, typically offering free tuition, free meals and even scholarships to study abroad for the best students. It's clear that the militant fundamentalists believe in the transformative power of education — and they have invested in schools, while we have invested in the Pakistani Army. Why can't we show the same faith in education as hard-line Muslim fundamentalists?

# The losers hang on



**Thomas L. Friedman**

**JALOZAI CAMP, PAKISTAN** After spending a week traveling the frontline of the "war on terrorism" — from the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Ronald Reagan in the seas off Iran, to northern Iraq, to Afghanistan and into northwest Pakistan — I can comfortably report the following: The bad guys are losing.

Yes, the dominos you see falling in the Muslim world today are the extremist Islamist groups and governments. They have failed to persuade people by either their arguments or their performances in power that their puritanical versions of Islam are the answer. Having lost the argument, though, the radicals still hang on thanks to gun barrels and oil barrels — and they can for a while.

Because, while the radicals have failed miserably, our allies — the pro-Americans, the Muslim modernists, the Arab moderates — have not really filled the void with reform and good government of their own. They are winning by default. More on that later.

For now, though, it is obvious that everywhere they have won or seized power, the Islamists — in Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Algeria, Lebanon or Gaza — have overplayed their hands, dragged their societies into useless wars or engaged in nihilistic violence that today is producing a broad backlash from mainstream Muslims.

Think of this: In the late-1970s, two leaders made historic trips — President Anwar Sadat flew from Egypt to Israel and Ayatollah Khomeini flew from Paris

to Tehran. For the last 30 years, politics in the Middle East and the Muslim world has, in many ways, been a struggle between their competing visions.

Sadat argued that the future should bury the past and that Arabs and Muslims should build their future based on peace with Israel, integration with the West and embracing modernity. Khomeini argued that the past should bury the future and that Persians and Muslims should build their future on hostility to Israel, isolation from the West and subordinating modernity to a puritanical Islam.

In 2009, the struggle between those two trends tipped toward the Sadatists. The fact that Iran's ruling theocrats had to steal their election to stay in power and forcibly suppress dissent by millions of Iranians — according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, Iran has surpassed China as the world's leading jailer of journalists, with 41 now behind bars — is the most visible sign of this. The Taliban's burning down of secular schools that compete with its mosques, and its peddling of heroin to raise cash, are also not exactly signs of intellectual triumph.

The same day that President Obama spoke to the Muslim world from Cairo University, Osama bin Laden released a statement on Islamic Web sites and on Al Jazeera. As the Egyptian Middle East expert Mamoun Fandy noted: "Obama beat Osama hands down. Ask anyone about the content of Obama's speech and they will tell you. Ask them what Osama said and most people will say, 'Did he give a speech?'"

In Iraq's elections last January, nationalist and moderate Muslim parties defeated the sectarian, radical religious parties, while in Lebanon, a pro-Western coalition defeated one led by Hezbollah.

Here in Pakistan, the backlash against the Taliban has been building among the rising middle class. It started in March when a mobile-phone video of a teenage girl being held down

and beaten outside her home by a Taliban commander in Pakistan's Swat Valley spread virally across this country. In May, the Pakistani Army began an offensive against Taliban militants who had taken control of key towns in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), and appeared to be moving toward the capital, Islamabad.

I followed Adm. Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

**The Islamic radicals have failed, but the moderates have not really filled the void.**

when he visited a vast, choking-hot and dust-covered refugee tent camp in Jalozai, where some 116,000 refugees have fled the NWFP, as the Pakistani Army moved into their hometowns to smash the Taliban in a popular operation.

"People are totally against them, but the Taliban don't care," a Pakistani teacher, Abdul Jalil, 41, told me while taking a break from teaching the Urdu alphabet to young boys in a sweltering tent. "They are very cruel. They chopped people's heads off."

To the extent that the radical Islamists have any energy today, it comes not from the power of their ideas or examples of good governance, but by stoking sectarian feuds. In Afghanistan, the Taliban play on Pashtun nationalist grievances, and in Iraq, the Sunni jihadists draw energy from killing Shites.

The only way to really dry up their support, though, is for the Arab and Muslim modernists to actually implement better ideas by producing less corrupt and more consensual governance, with better schools, more economic opportunities and a vision of Islam that is perceived as authentically embracing of modernity. That is where "our" allies in Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan have so consistently failed. Until that happens, the Islamist radicals will be bankrupt, but not out of business.

# Links to terror group run deep in Pakistan

RAWALPINDI, PAKISTAN

Former surrogate force against India now sees its members facing trial

BY JANE PERLEZ  
AND SALMAN MASOOD

In a high-security jail here, five members of the Islamic militant group described by the United States and India as the organizers of the terrorist rampage in Mumbai last year were brought before a makeshift court in Pakistan's first steps to bring them to justice.

The brief appearances, described by a defense lawyer, were held in secret for security reasons on Saturday in a case that Pakistan says shows its willingness to prosecute the group, Lashkar-e-Taiba. Pakistan also says that the case will demonstrate that its military, which once backed the group as a surrogate force against India, has severed all ties.

But behind the first glimmerings of the case, sympathies for Lashkar-e-Taiba and its jihadist and anti-Indian culture run deep in this country, raising a serious challenge to any long-lasting moves to dismantle the network.

The membership of Lashkar-e-Taiba extends to about 150,000 people, according to a midlevel officer in the premier spy agency in Pakistan, the Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence. Together with another jihadist group, Jaish-e-Muhammad, the Lashkar loyalists could put Pakistan "up in flames," the officer admitted.

Despite that risk, the jihadis "were good people" and could be controlled, the officer said, speaking on the condition of anonymity in keeping with the agency's custom.

Officials in the administration of President Barack Obama say they continue to press the Pakistanis to guarantee prevention of a sequel to the Mumbai attacks, in which more than 160 people were killed in November in a rampage across two five-star hotels, a Jewish center and a busy train station.

A surprise confession last week of the sole surviving attacker made clear that Lashkar-e-Taiba has the capacity to train young men from villages quickly and inexpensively into intensely driven, proficient killers, a senior Obama administration official said.

Pakistan says it severed ties to Lashkar-e-Taiba in the wake of the attacks on the United States on Sept. 11, 2001, under pressure from the Bush administration to join its campaign against terrorism. The interior minister, Rehman Malik, said in an interview that the group's infrastructure was "no more intact."

But Obama administration officials say they are still trying to understand the state of relations between Pakistan and the group. Among the most likely versions, they say, none would tamp down hostilities between Pakistan and India. These possibilities include that Lashkar-e-Taiba remains a lever of the Pakistani state; that the group and others have realigned themselves quietly behind the interests of Pakistan and could be used covertly; and that the groups have broken away from the official security apparatus and are running independently.

A senior Pakistani official reinforced the last option, saying the connections between Pakistan's spy agency and Lashkar-e-Taiba were so sundered that it was a matter of regret that the military could no longer control them.

A lack of control by the Pakistani Army could have as devastating consequences as outright support, two senior U.S. officials said. "My guess is, the army did not have command knowledge" of the Mumbai attacks, one of the U.S. officials said. "Was there a lack of discipline? It's a very, very serious issue whichever way it is."

The commander of the Pakistani Army, Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, has said in conversations with the Obama administration that he has been trying to control Lashkar-e-Taiba.

The overarching goal of Lashkar-e-Taiba, which operates under the front of a charity, Jamaat-ud-Dawa, is the defeat of India. It also embraces a strong anti-Israeli platform and adheres to Ahl-i-Hadith, a strain of the Wahhabi sect of Islam. On those doctrinal grounds, Lashkar-e-Taiba has much in common with the goals of Al Qaeda, terrorism experts say.

"Lashkar-e-Taiba and Al Qaeda are allies in the global Islamic jihad," said Bruce O. Riedel, who led Mr. Obama's review of Afghanistan and Pakistan policy this year.

Among the evidence of Lashkar's sophistication in the Mumbai attacks is the voice of one of the attackers' handlers, speaking fluently in English, on

**"My guess is, the army did not have command knowledge" of the Mumbai attacks.**

what seem to be tapes of telephone intercepts provided to Channel 4 in Britain for a documentary shown this month. Mr. Malik, the Pakistani interior minister, said he had asked India for the telephone numbers of the calls.

On the tape, the handler speaks in chilling tones as he advises the gunmen on targets to aim at, weapons to use and what to say to hostages and the Indian authorities while staying calm under pressure. "Lashkar-e-Taiba was definitely involved, but they had outside help and assistance," said Sajjan Gohal, a terrorism expert in Britain. "The tape suggests that the handler had military training which went beyond basic terrorist preparation."

Vikas Bajaj contributed reporting from Mumbai.

# A shared Jerusalem



**James  
Carroll**

George Mitchell is in the Middle East, pressing for peace. His planned itinerary brackets Israel and Palestine with a start in Abu Dhabi and Syria and a conclusion in Bahrain and Egypt. The Obama administration's determination to revivify the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is further indicated by the arrivals in the region next week of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, National Security Adviser James Jones, and special Middle East adviser Dennis Ross. President Obama has replaced the Bush policy of hands-off with a gloves-off readiness to push all parties hard.

The destitution of Gaza remains the largest, and most unaddressed, problem between Palestinians and Israelis. Progress toward reconciliation there remains remote, but it presumes prior accommodation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. That prospect, though, has become ever more nettlesome in recent days because of tensions over Jerusalem. This week, the sacred city comes into the center of Jewish awareness as Jews everywhere observe the holy day of Tisha B'Av, the commemoration of the destructions of the Temple. Those calamities, as this Christian understands them, define not

only the place of grief in the Jewish soul, but also the Jewish capacity for reinvention and survival. To the extent that the on-again, off-again peace process has offered prospects of reinvention and survival to both Israelis and Palestinians, a new conflict over Jerusalem now threatens to join the enforced misery of Gaza as a looming deal-breaker.

Unlike his predecessor, President Obama is demanding of Israel that it live up to the requirement of the 2003 Road Map toward a two-state solution, namely a total "freeze" on all settlement activity. (According to one Israeli human rights group, since 2003 the Jewish settler population in the West Bank grew from about 211,000 to almost 290,000. Additionally, the settler population in East Jerusalem has grown to more than 190,000.)

Tensions between Israel and Washington flared this month over planned Israeli expansion of settlements in East Jerusalem, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu defiantly declaring his intentions to go ahead. The steady Jewish population increase in the disputed part of Jerusalem occurs in combination with the Jerusalem municipality's ongoing demolition of Palestinian homes, constructed without permits. Thousands of Palestinian homes are under the demolition order. The two-state solution assumes that East Jerusalem will be the capital of the Palestinian state, but that prospect is daily undermined by the ongoing creation of "facts on the ground" by Jewish settlement and Palestinian displacement.

"A united Jerusalem is the capital of the Jewish people in the State of Israel," Netanyahu declared this month, "and the sovereignty of the city is not subject to appeal."

For a decade or more there has been a majority consensus among Israelis and Palestinians that Jerusalem will be the capital of both states, with some combination of east-west distinction, and overlapping sovereignty (Israel sovereign over the Western Wall and the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, Palestine sovereign over the Muslim Quarter and the Noble Sanctuary). The vision assumes a side-by-side accommodation, no return to the barbed-wire border of the pre-1967 era. In that sense, a shared Jerusalem was to be, in a phrase of President Bill Clinton's formula, "an open and undivided city." That was the ideal to which candidate Barack Obama had referred when he declared before a Jewish group in 2008 that Jerusalem "must remain undivided." That he was misunderstood by Jews and Palestinians alike as echoing a minority Israeli wish to preempt Palestinian authority in Jerusalem showed how far the "shared Jerusalem" concept had eroded. It must be restored.

The Obama administration's initiatives are crucial. As Arab governments are pushed to take timely steps toward normalization with Israel; as negotiations with Syria get back on track; as the Palestinian Authority is pressed to resume peace talks; as the Hamas rocket truce in Gaza is reinforced — focus on Jerusalem must still be maintained. The settlement freeze must be absolute, especially in Jerusalem. The demolition of Palestinian houses must be halted, especially in Jerusalem. "Two states for two peoples" is Obama's watchword. Netanyahu has affirmed it. But that hope requires agreement on the one city both peoples love. Jerusalem is sacred, but so is the obligation now to share it.

BOSTON GLOBE

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29, 2009

# Talk to Israel

Obama's silence toward Israel undermines his case for a settlement freeze.

**Aluf Benn**

**TEL AVIV** In his global tours and TV appearances, President Obama has spoken to Arabs, Muslims, Iranians, Europeans, Russians and Africans. His words have stirred emotions and been well received.

But he hasn't bothered to speak directly to Israelis.

And the effect? Six months into his presidency, Israelis find themselves increasingly suspicious of Mr. Obama. All they see is American pressure on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to freeze settlements, a request that's been interpreted here as political arm-twisting meant to please the Arab street — or simply to express the president's dislike for Mr. Netanyahu.

This would seem counterproductive, given the importance the president has placed on resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. If Israel is part of the problem, it's also part of the solution. Yet so far, neither the president nor any senior administration official has given a speech or an interview aimed at an Israeli audience, beyond brief statements at diplomatic photo ops. The Arabs got the Cairo speech; we got silence.

This policy carries a price. Though Mr. Obama has succeeded in prodding Mr. Netanyahu to accept the idea of a Palestinian state alongside Israel, he has failed to induce Israel to impose a freeze on settlements. In fact, he has failed even to stir debate about the merits of one: No Israeli political figure has stood up to Mr. Netanyahu and begged him to support Mr. Obama; not even the Israeli left, desperate for a new agenda, has adopted Mr. Obama as its icon.

As a result, Mr. Netanyahu enjoys a virtual domestic consensus over his rejection of the settlement freeze. Moreover, he has succeeded in portraying Mr. Obama as a shaky ally. In Mr. Netanyahu's narrative, the president has fallen under the influence of top aides — in this case Rahm Emanuel and David Axelrod — whom the prime minister has called "self-hating Jews." Meanwhile, Mr. Netanyahu is the defender of national glory in face of unfair pressure, someone who sticks to the first commandment of Israeli culture: Thou shalt never be the freier (that is, the dupe).

So far, Israelis have embraced Mr. Netanyahu's message. A Jerusalem Post poll of Israeli Jews last month indicated that only 6 percent of those surveyed considered the Obama administration to be pro-Israel, while 50 percent said that its policies are more pro-Palestinian than pro-Israeli. Less scientifically: Israeli rightists have taken to calling the president by his middle name, Hussein, as proof of his pro-Arab tendencies.

What went wrong? Several explanations come to mind.

First, in the 16 rosy years of Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, Israelis became spoiled by unfettered presidential attention. Memories of State Department "Arabists" leading American policy in the Middle

**The Arabs got the Cairo speech; we got silence. This policy carries a price.**

East were erased. The White House coordinated its policy with Jerusalem, and stayed out of the way when Israel embarked on controversial military offensives in Lebanon and Gaza. This approach infuriated America's Arab and European allies, which blamed Washington

for one-sidedness — something they were willing to forgive of Bill Clinton but not of George W. Bush.

Mr. Obama came to office determined to repair America's broken alliances. One way to do this — to prove that he was the opposite of his predecessor — was to place some distance between Israel and himself.

Second, Mr. Obama's quest for diplomacy has appeared to Israelis as dangerous American naiveté. The president offered a hand to the Iranians, and got nothing, merely giving them more time to advance their nuclear program. In Israeli eyes, he was humiliated by North Korea's nuclear and missile tests. And he failed to move Arab governments to take steps to normalize relations with Israel. Conclusion: Mr. Obama is a softie, eager to please his listeners and avoid confrontation with anyone who is not Mr. Netanyahu.

Third, Mr. Obama seems to have confused

American Jews with Israelis. We are close emotionally and politically, but we are different. We speak Hebrew and not English, we have separate historical narratives. Mr. Obama's stop at Buchenwald and his strong rejection of Holocaust denial, immediately after his Cairo speech, appealed to American Jews but fell flat in Israel. Here we are taught that Zionist determination and struggle — not guilt over the Holocaust — brought Jews a homeland. Mr. Obama's speech, which linked Israel's existence to the Jewish tragedy, infuriated many Israelis who sensed its closeness to the narrative of enemies like Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

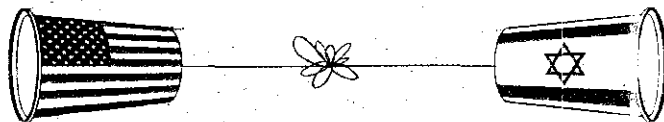
Fourth, as far as most Israelis are concerned, Mr. Obama has made a mistake in focusing on a settlement freeze. For starters, mainstream Israelis rarely have anything to do with the settlements; many have no idea where they are.

More important: In the past decade, repeated peace negotiations and diplomatic statements have indicated that larger, closer-to-home settlements (the "settlement blocs") will remain in Israeli hands under any two-state solution. Why, then, insist on a total freeze everywhere? And why deny with such force — as the administration did — the existence of previous understandings between the United States and Israel over limited settlement construction? There is simply too much evidence proving that such an understanding existed. To Israelis, the claim undermined Mr. Obama's credibility — and strengthened Mr. Netanyahu's position.

Perhaps there are good reasons behind Mr. Obama's Middle East policy. Perhaps the settlement freeze is in Israel's best interest. Perhaps the president is truly committed to Israel's long-term security and well-being. Perhaps his popularity in the Arab street is the missing ingredient of peacemaking.

But until the president talks to us, we won't know. Next time you're in the neighborhood, Mr. President, speak to us directly. We will surely listen.

**ALUF BENN** is the editor at large of the Israeli newspaper Haaretz.



SHIRAZ



# America's balancing act



**Philip  
Bowring**

**HONG KONG** "The United States is back" Hillary Clinton declared at the recent meeting in Phuket, Thailand, of the Asian Regional Forum, which groups the foreign ministers of the Association of South East Asian Nations with their counterparts from China, Japan and South Korea.

Mrs. Clinton's appearance certainly gave a boost to Asean ministers — whose meetings had often failed to lure her predecessor. But the reality is that Washington's Asia policies cannot change much. Although the gradual exit from Iraq and the end of "war-on-terror" rhetoric have helped re-balance Washington's attention, the United States has many interests pulling it in different directions — China, India, Japan, nonproliferation, trade, climate change, etc.

The key is balance, not change.

Sad to say for Asean, Southeast Asia does not pull in any definable direction. At the Phuket meeting, Clinton focused attention on North Korea, a country where Asean members have no discernible influence, and on Myanmar, whose government is impervious to foreign rhetoric.

The United States is conscious of its declining influence in Southeast Asia. Washington's Middle East obsessions were partly to blame, but more important has been the rise of China as an economic power. Competition among China, Japan and South Korea to help Asean countries has stimulated East Asian economic cooperation. China has pushed "friendship" through free trade agreements that look good on paper.

With the United States in recession and its financial institutions disgraced, it may seem like a poor time to imagine that America can revive its influence with official visits and rhetoric. The White House has failed to push a free trade deal with South Korea through Congress, so it can forget about reaching anything like that with Asean.

Yet, paradoxically, this may be the best of times for the region to remember how dependent it remains on the United States. Few Asean members want to see the security umbrella — to

which most contribute — diminished by U.S. budget pressures and engagements elsewhere. Member states that had been embracing China's rapid rise are beginning to wonder whether it is now proving to be too fast for their good. Indeed, Beijing has shown poor timing by resurrecting historic claims to the whole South China Sea. Events in Xinjiang and Tibet have also been reminders of resentment over Han Chinese settlements.

To all this, one must add the benefits of the Obama effect on perceptions of America, particularly in Islamic Southeast Asia.

The economic crisis has been a reminder that Southeast Asia's economic health remains more dependent on a global system that the United States still dominates. China's influence will continue to increase, but that makes it more important for the region not to neglect its other links.

Washington does not need new policies in Southeast Asia. A little attention will go a long way, as will speaking softly while being as helpful as possible on issues like disaster relief, fighting terrorism, building trade and maintaining financial stability.

Superficially, things may look different in Japan, where the Liberal Democratic Party, for decades a faithful ser-

vant of U.S. policies, will probably soon be replaced by the Democratic Party of Japan, which, in theory, remains wary of the U.S. military presence, is opposed to Japanese military involvement overseas, and wants to improve relations with China. But the party is backtracking on these positions as elections approach, so foreign policies are unlikely to change significantly. The rise of China and the enigma of nuclear North Korea will keep the United States and Japan in alliance for a long while yet.

India has had over-expectations about its ties with America. The Bush administration's focus on India as a counterweight to China may make strategic sense, but it was too blatant and the cost to nuclear nonproliferation very high. Whatever the merit of close ties with a democratic India, management of relations with China remains more important, whether the issue is nonproliferation, trade, or climate change. For now, too, Pakistan's problems take precedence over India's opportunities.

Indeed, as long as the United States remains bogged down in Afghanistan, enmeshed in the Middle East, uncertain of its relationship with Russia and facing deficits at home the relative stability of East Asia will limit the attention the region gets. Asean members should not complain about that.

THE JAPAN TIMES THURSDAY, JULY 16, 2009

# More challenges await Hillary Clinton in Asia

Simon Tay  
Singapore

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is again scheduled to travel to Asia this month to meet foreign ministers at the ASEAN Regional Forum, and to visit India. On her first Asian trip in February, she provided a welcome contrast to the past with her openness to others' views, her willingness to cooperate, and her star power. She made Asians look at America anew.

This trip will be trickier. One challenge is that part of the plot for the United States and Clinton is being written by others. North Korea will be on the agenda after its missile tests, as will Myanmar, since its generals persist in prosecuting Aung San Suu Kyi, the world's most famous political detainee, on trivial charges.

After all that has happened in recent weeks, the definition of "success" must be set low. Nothing positive will come from the U.S. condemning these two difficult regimes unilaterally. So a key goal of Clinton's visit must be to pull together with the Asian leaders present at the ASEAN Regional Forum.

As for Myanmar, its neighbors and fellow ASEAN members — Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand — are also concerned about Suu Kyi's continued prosecution. The U.S. should begin to work with these countries not only on this matter, but also on the elections that Myanmar military junta has promised for 2010. Together, they should press for assurances of a free and fair process, with the aim of avoiding the kind of mess that followed the Iranian elections.

Indonesia can be one ally. After decades of autocracy, this vast

archipelago of a country just concluded a presidential election that has solidified its transition to democracy. India, proud of its long-standing democracy and fresh from its own elections, shares a border with Myanmar and can also assist efforts there.

The approach to North Korea is similar. Kim Jong Il is a naughty boy who wants attention and incentives to behave decently. Rather than debate with her counterparts, Clinton needs to ensure that other countries in the six-party framework, especially China and South Korea, are on the same page as the U.S.

On both issues, there is little capacity to exert force or sufficient pressure for solutions any time soon. So diplomatic efforts must instead aim to join Americans and like-minded Asians in common cause, to push for steps forward in the medium to longer term.

Others must be brought on board, especially the Regional Forum hosts, ASEAN and Thailand. A moral community should form in Asia, one that displaces its leaders' usual cynical calculations of power in order to jump on the right bandwagon.

In all this, China is the 500-kg dragon in the room. China is already closer to ASEAN and a key player with respect to Myanmar, North Korea and other sticky issues. A "bamboo" economic zone appears to be emerging, perhaps to replace today's weakening U.S.-centric trans-Pacific ties.

This is the context for Clinton's visit to India, as well. President George W. Bush's administration should be credited for giving overdue recognition to India, but this was done primarily on a bilateral basis. The U.S. should now leverage that relationship to work on regional and even global issues.

Besides her own work, Clinton is likely to also be inundated during this visit with requests concerning President Barack Obama. There is still no confirmation concerning when Obama will visit Asia, though many expect that he will attend the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit, to be held in Singapore in November.

China, Japan and Indonesia must be among Obama's priorities, but many others will clamor for him to visit their capitals. Clinton and the U.S. administration would do well to decide which requests are merely photo ops and confine these to meetings at the sidelines of APEC. The U.S. should insist on a substantive agenda as a condition for any Obama visit. In China, for example, Clinton successfully established an agenda for the two countries to work together on climate change. Plans and resources now must be prepared.

Clinton has reopened the doors for Obama in Asia with charm and confidence. Obama will eventually come to Asia with many high expectations and star billing. While his charisma and openness to dialogue will be sought after, substance will also be measured and much needed. By November, after all, it will be more than a year since the global crisis began in the U.S., and Obama and his team must show tangible prospects for recovery. American leadership — globally and in Asia — can no longer be presumed. It must be earned.

---

*Simon Tay is chairman of the Singapore Institute of International Affairs and a fellow of the Asia Society.*  
© 2009 Project Syndicate  
([www.project-syndicate.org](http://www.project-syndicate.org))

---

# Southeast Asia complacent on terrorism, analysts say

## ANALYSIS

Alvin Darlanika Soedarjo  
Jakarta  
AFP-JJI

Twin bombs that tore through luxury hotels in Indonesia's capital Friday have exposed the complacency of Southeast Asian nations in fighting regional militant networks, analysts say.

Eight people were killed and more than 50 were wounded, including foreigners, by bombs that exploded in the JW Marriott and Ritz Carlton hotels in central Jakarta's upscale Mega Kuningan district.

The attacks are the first of their kind in Indonesia since 2005 and brought back painful memories of a bombing by the radical Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) network that killed 12 people at the JW Marriott in 2003.

Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono said the bombings were an "act of terrorism," but authorities have so far not pointed the finger at any group.

However, University of Indonesia political scientist Bantarto Bandoro said the choice as targets of hotels popular among Westerners suggested the attack could be the work of JI or related militant groups.

"The governments of Southeast Asia have failed and have not been effective in controlling these terrorists because they have been overconfident

in their abilities," Bandoro said.

"These terrorists won't stop even though some of their people get caught. Their networks are very wide," he said, adding that regional governments will have to step up security coordination in the wake of the attacks.

Regional governments have made strides in recent years in curtailing the activities of JI, which has been responsible for attacks in the Philippines and Indonesia including 2002 and 2005 bombings on Bali that killed more than 200 people.

Despite the capture and killing of key regional JI leaders over the years — including the recapture of fugitive alleged Singaporean cell leader Mas Selamat bin Kastari in Malaysia in April — some key leaders remain on the run.

The chief of a violent JI splinter group and the alleged mastermind of the 2002 Bali bombings, Malaysian-born Noordin Mohammad Top, could be one figure behind Friday's attacks, International Crisis Group analyst Sidney Jones said.

"If it was a suicide bombing, then it's certainly a possibility that this was done by Noordin's network," Jones said.

"Noordin is no longer acting in the name of JI. He's a splinter of JI," she said.

"It means that efforts to eradicate (Noordin's network) need to be stepped up. The seriously dangerous fugitives are still at large."

Unconfirmed local reports have said police chasing Noordin stumbled across bomb-making material in an Islamic boarding school in Cilacap district, Central Java, earlier this week.

Singapore-based analyst Rohan Gunaratna said Islamist militants had used flagging attention by regional authorities as an opportunity to regroup for fresh violence.

The attacks show that regional "governments will have to closely work together to dismantle the JI infrastructure," Gunaratna, of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, said.

"Also they need to work on dismantling the propaganda, recruitment and fundraising activities of JI. These activities have not been dismantled," he added.

"The bombings demonstrate that Indonesia should get its act together. If Indonesia took the threat seriously, this would not have happened."

# Iran reaches a tipping point

Robin Wright  
Washington  
THE WASHINGTON POST

How much has changed for Iran in one occasionally breathtaking month. The erratic uprising is becoming as important as the Islamic revolution 30 years ago — and not only for Iran. Both redefined political action throughout the Middle East.

The costs are steadily mounting for the regime. Just one day before the June 12 presidential election, the Islamic republic had never been so powerful. Tehran had not only survived three decades of diplomatic isolation and economic sanctions but had emerged a regional superpower, rivaled only by Israel. Its influence shaped conflicts and politics from Afghanistan to Lebanon.

But the day after the election, the Islamic republic had never appeared so vulnerable. The virtual militarization of the state has failed to contain the uprising, and its tactics have further alienated and polarized society. It has also shifted the focus from the election to Iran's leadership.

Just a day before the election, Iran also had the best opportunity in 30 years to end its pariah status. Since the 1979 takeover of the U.S. Embassy, Tehran has sparred with five U.S. administrations. U.S. President Barack Obama's offer of direct engagement is the most generous to date. He had the world's major powers and a growing number of Americans on board.

The tide has turned. At its summit in Italy last week, the Group of Eight industrialized nations "deplored" the post-election crackdown and urged "democratic dialogue" with the opposition. At his news conference there, Obama noted the G-8's "strong condemnation about the appalling treatment of peaceful protesters post-election in Iran" and "behavior that just violates basic international norms."

Given its advancing nuclear technology and regional influence, Iran believed before the election that it held the trump cards in any negotiations. Now, politically disgraced, it is the needy one. Yet Washington might also pay a price for

engaging with a government that brutalizes its people. Any involvement could effectively bestow legitimacy on a disputed election and reject the transparency and justice that protesters are seeking.

The uprising has transformed Iran's political landscape. Over the past month, dozens of disparate political factions have coalesced into two rival camps: the New Right and the New Left.

The core of the New Right is a second generation of revolutionaries, called principlists, who have wrested control of the security instruments and increasingly pushed their elders aside — at least for now. It includes Mojtaba Khamenei, the supreme leader's son and chief of staff; Mojtaba Samareh Hashemi, a presidential adviser and campaign manager; Intelligence Minister Gholam Hossein Mohseni-Ejehei; Interior Minister Sadegh Mahsouli; Major Gen. Mohammad Ali Jafari of the Revolutionary Guards; Basij commander Hasan Taeb; influential commentators such as Hossein Shariatmadari, editor of the newspaper Kayhan; and industry titans like Mehrbad Bazrpash, the former Cabinet minister for youth affairs who now heads Saipa, the automobile manufacturer.

The New Left is a de facto coalition of disparate interest groups that found common cause in anger after the election. The name comes from opposition candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi, who was considered leftist as prime minister in the 1980s, and the opposition's goal is to open up the rigid theocracy.

Its organization, tools and strategy are weak, but it is the most extensive coalition since the 1979 revolution. The New Left includes former presidents, Cabinet ministers and members of Parliament as well as vast numbers of young people (the dominant demographic), the most politically active women in the Islamic world, white-collar professionals and inflation-sapped laborers.

What was a political divide has become a schism. Many Iranian leaders served time together in the shah's jails; today,

their visions of the Islamic republic differ so sharply that reconciliation would be almost impossible.

What happens next will be determined by three factors: leadership, unity and momentum.

The opposition is most vulnerable on leadership. The big unanswered question is whether Mousavi, a distinctly uncharismatic politician, can lead the new opposition over the long term. He was an accidental leader of the reform movement, more the product of public sentiment than the creator of it. Without dynamic direction, the opposition may look elsewhere.

The regime is most vulnerable on unity. Many government employees, including civil servants and members of the military, have long grumbled about the strict theocracy. In 1997, a government poll found that 84 percent of the Revolutionary Guards, which include many young men merely fulfilling national service, voted for Mohammad Khatami, the first reform president.

Momentum may be the decisive factor. The regime will need to shift public attention to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's second-term agenda. Though Ahmadinejad blames the outside world for the protests, he may focus on regional or international goals to win the legitimacy that his presidency is unable to get at home.

For the opposition, the calendar of Shiite rites, Persian commemorations and revolutionary markers is rich with occasions to spark demonstrations. The opposition also has supporters in Iran's parliament who are likely to challenge Ahmadinejad's Cabinet choices and economic proposals. Further arrests and future trials could also spark new tension. With each flash point, the regime's image is further tainted, its legitimacy undermined.

---

*Robin Wright, a former Post reporter, is the author of "Dreams and Shadows: The Future of the Middle East" and is a public policy scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.*

---

# Does Myanmar want the bomb?

Bangkok  
AP, REUTERS

The recent aborted voyage of a North Korean ship, photographs of massive tunnels and a top secret meeting have raised alarm bells that one of the world's poorest nations may be aspiring to join the nuclear club — with help from its friends in Pyongyang. No one expects military-run Myanmar, also known as Burma, to obtain an atomic bomb anytime soon, but experts have the Southeast Asian nation on their radar screen.

"There's suspicion that something is going on, and increasingly that cooperation with North Korea may have a nuclear undercurrent. We are very much looking into it," says David Albright, president of the Institute for Science and International Security, a Washington, D.C., think tank.

The issue is expected to be discussed, at least on the sidelines, at this week's ASEAN Regional Forum, a major security conference hosted by Thailand. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, along with representatives from North Korea and Myanmar, will attend.

"We know that there are also growing concerns about military cooperation between North Korea and Burma, which we take very seriously," Clinton said Tuesday upon her arrival in Bangkok. "It would

be destabilizing for the region. It would pose a direct threat to Burma's neighbors."

Alert signals sounded recently when a North Korean freighter, the Kang Nam, headed toward Myanmar with undisclosed cargo. Shadowed by the U.S. Navy, it reversed course and returned home earlier this month.

It is still not clear what was aboard. U.S. and South Korean officials suspected artillery and other nonnuclear arms, but one South Korean intelligence expert, citing satellite imagery, says the ship's mission appeared to be related to a Myanmar nuclear program and also carried Scud-type missiles.

The expert, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue, said North Korea is helping Myanmar set up uranium- and nuclear-related facilities, echoing similar reports that have long circulated in Myanmar's exile community and media.

Meanwhile, Japanese police arrested a North Korean and two Japanese nationals last month for allegedly trying to export a magnetic measuring device to Myanmar that could be used to develop missiles.

And a recent report from Washington-based Radio Free Asia and Myanmar exile media said senior Myanmar military officers made a top secret visit late last year to North Ko-

rea, where an agreement was concluded for greatly expanding cooperation to modernize Myanmar's military muscle, including the construction of underground installations. The military pact report has yet to be confirmed.

In June, photographs, video and reports showed as many as 800 tunnels, some of them vast, dug in Myanmar with North Korean assistance under an operation code-named "Tortoise Shells." The photos were reportedly taken between 2003 and 2006.

Thailand-based author Bertil Lintner is convinced of the authenticity of the photos, which he was the first to obtain. However, the purpose of the tunnel networks, many near the remote capital of Naypyitaw, remains a question mark.

"There is no doubt that the Burmese generals would like to have a bomb so that they could challenge the Americans and the rest of the world," says Lintner, who has written books on both Myanmar and North Korea. "But they must be decades away from acquiring anything that would even remotely resemble an atomic bomb."

David Mathieson of the New York-based Human Rights Watch, who monitors developments in Myanmar, says that while there's no firm evidence the generals are pursuing a nuclear weapons capability, "a swirl of circumstantial trends indicates something in the nuclear field is going on that definitely warrants closer scrutiny by the international community."

Albright says some of the suspicion stems from North Korea's nuclear cooperation with Syria, which now possesses a reactor. Syria had first approached the Russians, just as Myanmar did

earlier, but both countries were rejected, so the Syrians turned to Pyongyang — a step Myanmar may also be taking.

Since the early 2000s, dissidents and defectors from Myanmar have talked of a "nuclear battalion," an atomic "Ayelar Project" working out of a disguised flour mill and two Pakistani scientists who fled to Myanmar following the Sept. 11, 2001, World Trade Center attack providing assistance. They gave no detailed evidence.

Now a spokesman for the self-styled Myanmar government-in-exile, the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, says that according to sources working with the dissident movement inside the Myanmar Army, there are two heavily guarded buildings under construction "to hold nuclear reactors" in central Myanmar.

Villagers in the area have been displaced, said spokesman Zinn Lin.

Andrew Selth of Australia's Griffith University, who has monitored Myanmar's possible nuclear moves for a decade, says none of these reports has been substantiated and calls the issue an "information black hole."

# Clinton says 'America is back in Asia'

Phuket Thailand

AP

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton arrived at a key security conference Wednesday carrying a no-nonsense message that the United States is ready to re-engage with Asia after years of neglect.

Clinton moved right into talks with Asian counterparts gathered for two days of international meetings to discuss North Korea, Myanmar and a range of other regional issues.

She said she will sign the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation of the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN), a commitment to peacefully resolve regional disputes that already has been signed by more than a dozen countries outside the 10-nation bloc.

"The United States is back," she declared upon arrival in the Thai capital Tuesday.

In an appearance Wednesday on a Thai TV talk show she said, "President (Barack) Obama and I are giving great importance to this region," suggesting that the administration of former President George W. Bush neglected U.S. interests in Asia.

Evidence of the new U.S. approach, she said, is the fact that her first overseas trip, in February, was to Asia.

"I believe strongly the United States has to be involved in this region," she added. Her main aim in visiting Southeast Asia this time, she said, is to "work hard to try to bring a sense of future possibilities" for partnerships to ensure peace and prosperity.

Asked whether she thought the U.S. image abroad has been improving under Obama, Clinton said, "It certainly feels like it. There is a great sigh of relief in some places."

She also said the U.S. has a plan to prevent Iranian domination in the Middle East if it

gets the nuclear bomb. "We want Iran to calculate what I think is a fair assessment: that if the United States extends a defense umbrella over the region, if we do even more to develop the military capacity of those (allies) in the Gulf, it is unlikely that Iran will be any stronger or safer."

The U.S. signing of the ASEAN treaty will be by the executive authority of Obama and does not require congressional ratification, said a senior administration official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the move publicly.

The Bush administration had declined to sign the document, whereas Obama sees it as a symbolic underscoring of the U.S. commitment to Asia.

Clinton held out the possibility of offering North Korea a new set of incentives to return to negotiating a dismantling of its nuclear program if it shows a "willingness to take a different path." But she admitted there is little immediate chance of that.

A Clinton aide said the United States and its allies are looking for a commitment by North Korea that would irreversibly end its nuclear weapons program. The aide, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said there is no sign that North Korea intends to make such a move, keeping the U.S. focus on enforcing expanded U.N. sanctions.

In her remarks about a possible Myanmar-North Korea connection, Clinton did not refer explicitly to a nuclear link but made clear the ties are disconcerting.

"We know there are also growing concerns about military cooperation between North Korea and Burma which we take very seriously," she said at a news conference in Bangkok.

# Arabs need to talk to the Israelis

Shaikh Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifa  
Washington

THE WASHINGTON POST

We need fresh thinking if the Arab Peace Initiative is to have the impact it deserves on the crisis that needlessly impoverishes Palestinians and endangers Israel's security. This crisis is not a zero-sum game. For one side to win, the other does not have to lose.

The peace dividend for the entire Middle East is potentially immense. So why have we not gotten anywhere?

Our biggest mistake has been to assume that you can simply switch peace on like a light bulb. The reality is that peace is a process, contingent on a good idea but also requiring a great deal of campaigning — patiently and repeatedly targeting all relevant parties. This is where we as Arabs have not done enough to communicate directly with the people of Israel.

An Israeli might be forgiven for thinking that every Muslim voice is raised in hatred, because that is usually the only one he hears. Just as an Arab might be forgiven for thinking every Israeli wants the destruction of every Palestinian.

Essentially, we have not done a good enough job demonstrating to Israelis how our initiative can form part of a peace between equals in a troubled land holy to three great faiths. Others have been less reticent, recognizing that our success would threaten their vested interest in keeping Palestinians and Israelis at each other's throats. They want victims to stay victims so they can be manipulated as proxies in a wider game for power. The rest of us — the overwhelming majority — have the opposite interest.

It is in our interest to speak up now for two reasons. First, we will all be safer once we drain the pool of antipathy in which hatemongers from both sides swim.

Second, peace will bring prosperity. Already, the six oil and gas nations of the Gulf Cooperation Council have grown into a powerful trillion-dollar market. Removing the ongoing threat of death and

destruction would open the road to an era of enterprise, partnership and development on an even greater scale for the region at large.

That is the glittering prize for resolving the dilemma of justice for Palestine without injustice to Israel. Effectively, this is the meta-issue that defines and distorts the self-image of Arabs and diverts too much of our energies away from the political and economic development needed to assuage the fortress mentality of Israelis who automatically cast Palestinians as the enemy — and not as the ordinary, decent human beings they are.

Speaking out matters, but it is not enough. Our governments and all stakeholders also must be ready to carry out practical measures to help ease the day-to-day hardship of Palestinian lives.

The two communities in the Holy Land are not fated to be enemies. What can unite them tomorrow is potentially bigger than what divides them today.

Both sides need help from their friends, in the form of constructive engagement, to reach a just settlement.

What we don't need is the continued reflexive rejection of any initiative that seeks to melt the ice. Consider the response so far to the Arab peace plan, pioneered by King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. This initiative is a genuine effort to normalize relations between the entire Arab region and Israel, in return for Israel's withdrawal from occupied territory and a fair resolution of the plight of the Palestinians, far too many of whom live in refugee camps in deplorable conditions.

We must stop the small-minded waiting game in which each side refuses to budge until the other side makes the first move. We've got to be bigger than that. All sides need to take simultaneous, good-faith action if peace is to have a chance. A real, lasting peace requires comprehensive engagement and reconciliation at the human level. This will happen only if we address and settle the core issues dividing the Arab and the Israeli peoples, the first

being the question of Palestine and occupied Arab lands. The fact that this has not yet happened helps to explain why the Jordanian and Egyptian peace accords with Israel are cold. They have not been comprehensive.

We should move toward real peace now by consulting and educating our people and by reaching out to the Israeli public to highlight the benefits of a genuine peace.

To be effective, we must acknowledge that, like people everywhere, the average Israeli's primary window on the world is his or her local and national media. Our job, therefore, is to tell our story more directly to the Israeli people by getting the message out to their media, a message reflecting the hopes of the Arab mainstream that confirms peace as a strategic option and advocates the Arab Peace Initiative as a means to this end. Some conciliatory voices in reply from Israel would help speed the process.

Some Arabs, simplistically equating communication with normalization, may think we are moving too fast toward normalization. But we all know that dialogue must be enhanced for genuine progress. We all, together, need to take the first crucial step to lay the groundwork to effectively achieve peace. So we must all invest more in communication.

Once we achieve peace, trade will follow. We can then create a "virtuous circle," because trade will create its own momentum. By putting real money into people's hands and giving them real power over their lives, trade will help ensure the durability of peace. The day-to-day experience would move minds and gradually build a relationship of trust and mutual interest, without which long-term peacemaking is impossible.

When stability pays, conflict becomes too costly. We must do more, now, to achieve peace.

---

*Shaikh Salman bin Hamad al-Khalifa is crown prince of Bahrain.*

---

# U.S. counters China clout via ASEAN

## ANALYSIS

Lachlan Carmichael  
Phuket Thailand  
AFP-JJI

U.S. President Barack Obama's administration is bidding to counter China's growing clout in Southeast Asia with steps to revive ties with a region of nearly 600 million people.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton signed a friendship pact in Thailand on Wednesday with the 10-country Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) amid complaints that Obama's predecessor, George W. Bush, had neglected the group.

"I want to send a very clear message that the United States is back, that we are fully engaged and committed to our relationships in Southeast Asia," she said before the signing in the resort of Phuket.

Clinton's predecessor, Condoleezza Rice, skipped two ASEAN regional forums, upsetting members that had been used to a long line of chief U.S. diplomats attending.

The Obama administration, Clinton said, will also announce the appointment soon of a permanent ambassador to ASEAN headquarters in Jakarta. The current U.S. ambassador for ASEAN affairs is based in Washington.

John Harrison, a security analyst at Singapore's Nanyang Technological University, said the signing of the pact "is designed to try to re-establish a more active U.S. presence in Southeast Asia particularly vis-a-vis China."

"The U.S. wants to make sure that Southeast Asia still feels that it is an important area for the U.S. and does not want to create the perception that there is a vacuum that China would come in and fill," he said.

As part of her diplomatic offensive, Clinton promised that the U.S. will stand firm in the face of what she called con-

cerns that North Korea may be shipping conventional weapons and even nuclear knowhow to Myanmar, an ASEAN member.

Cooperation between Pyongyang and Yangon would be "destabilizing" for the region, Clinton said after talks Tuesday with Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva.

The signing in Phuket, on the eve of Asia's annual security forum, marked the U.S. accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia.

**The U.S. faces growing competition from China, which inked the same treaty six years ago and has emerged as a key player in meetings with ASEAN.**

It fulfilled a pledge Clinton made when she visited Indonesia in February on her first tour abroad as secretary of state, when she also visited China and traditional allies Japan and South Korea.

By inking the pact, which contains commitments to peaceful settlement of disputes and noninterference in domestic affairs, Clinton is signaling Washington's desire to deepen ties and offset China's power, diplomats say.

But the U.S. nonetheless faces growing competition from China, which inked the same treaty six years ago and has emerged as a key player in meetings with ASEAN.

Clinton earlier this year warned that a Bush administration policy of isolating anti-U.S. countries in Latin America such as Venezuela threw them into the arms of China and Iran.

But the United States actually has an edge over China in East and Southeast Asia, according to a survey conducted in early 2008 by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs.

Based on public opinion surveys in ASEAN members Vietnam and Indonesia as well as China, Japan and South Korea, the report reveals that perceptions of China's "soft power" generally trail those of the U.S. and Japan.

By "soft power" it meant economic, cultural and political clout, as opposed to military power.

Analyst Harrison said, meanwhile, that Bush had not totally neglected Southeast Asia, pursuing counterterrorism cooperation with the Philippines for example. "Certainly, the Obama administration wants to establish a different tone in the relationship with Southeast Asia and this (signing of the treaty) is a very important step," he said.

ASEAN is made up of Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

## Myanmar stays

Bangkok AFP-JJI

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations will not consider expelling Myanmar over the detention of prodemocracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, rejecting U.S. calls, Thailand's prime minister said Thursday.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told Thai television Wednesday that the regional bloc should consider kicking out the military-ruled member state if it does not free Suu Kyi, who is on trial in prison.

But Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, speaking as current chair of the 10-state grouping, said that while ASEAN and the West "have the same goal, we cannot implement the same policy."

"There are not enough grounds to do that (expel Myanmar). We have already done what we can under the ASEAN mechanism," said Abhisit, referring to the group's public statements expressing concern over Suu Kyi's detention.



# U.S. 'defense umbrella' has murky history

## ANALYSIS

Washington

AP

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton set off tremors in the Middle East last week when she said a nuclear Iran could be contained by a U.S. "defense umbrella" — an offhand remark that appears to have emerged from obscure Washington policy debates and her own presidential campaign rhetoric.

Clinton's comments raised eyebrows because they seemed to go beyond President Barack Obama's administration's current thinking on Iran, which has been strictly focused on preventing the country from acquiring nuclear weapons.

Since making the remark on

**'You don't discuss something like this in the open, particularly when you haven't decided on policy.'**

FORMER MIDEAST PEACE NEGOTIATOR  
AARON DAVID MILLER

a television chat show in Thailand, Clinton has backpedaled, saying she was only restating existing policy and not referring to any sort of formal guarantees of protection under an American "nuclear umbrella."

And when Israeli officials raised alarms that she seemed to suggest that the United States was resigned to a nuclear-armed Iran, Clinton and senior State Department officials hastily insisted such a prospect was still unacceptable and that no policy had changed.

But her comments sounded uncannily like the harder-edged "nuclear umbrella" approach toward Iran that Clinton and several other top Obama advisers had pushed before they joined the Obama administration.

Bringing both Arab allies and Israel under a protective U.S. "nuclear umbrella" is an idea that has been batted around Washington since fears of Iran's ambitions first percolated in the late 1990s.

Clinton herself raised the notion of such a policy during her unsuccessful presidential campaign last year.

"We should be looking to create an umbrella of deterrence that goes much further than just Israel," she said in an April 2008 debate with Obama. "Of course, I would make it clear to the Iranians that an attack on Israel would incur massive retaliation from the United States. But I would do the same with other countries in the region."

During that debate, Obama affirmed support for Israel's security but did not suggest protecting Arab states.

Some policy experts say Clinton's umbrella reference was simple carelessness. Others wonder if it is indicative of an administration that has yet to show discipline in foreign policy thought and action.

There is a sharp line, said Aaron David Miller, a former Mideast peace negotiator, between weighing policy notions in private and putting them out in public before they have been carefully explored.

"You don't discuss something like this in the open, particularly when you haven't decided on policy," Miller said, "because everything you say

is going to be put under a microscope and dissected for clues about how we're going to act."

"We want Iran to calculate what I think is a fair assessment: that if the United States extends a defense umbrella over the region, if we do even more to develop the military capacity of those (allies) in the (Persian) Gulf, it is unlikely that Iran will be any stronger or safer because they won't be able to intimidate and dominate as they apparently believe they can once they have a nuclear weapon," Clinton said Wednesday.

A day later, she insisted to another interviewer that the "defense umbrella" was "nothing specific."

"It is a sort of general term that is used to describe our commitment to making sure that Iran doesn't get a nuclear weapon," she said.

The White House declined to comment on what options may now be under consideration for dealing with Iran. But it refused to rule out any measure.

Despite Clinton's insistence that her phrasing was general, the concept of an American "nuclear umbrella" protecting Mideast nations from Iran has wafted through Washington think tanks for several years.

The concept is based on the Cold War-era notion of deterrence and aims to stop a nuclear-armed country from threatening an unarmed neighbor.

Dennis Ross, who worked for Clinton at the State Department and now heads Mideast policy at the National Security Council, and Robert Einhorn, now a special adviser for non-proliferation and arms control at State — both lent their names to consideration of the concept.

Both advisers were formerly affiliated with the Washington Institute on Near East Policy, which in March of this year published a report that recommended studying the idea closely. The study noted that Ross and Einhorn, who had already resigned to work with Obama, had endorsed drafts of the report.

# Threats against Iran feed off modern myths



CESAR  
CHELALA

New York

Several myths regarding Iran stand in the way of the United States and other nations reaching a peaceful relationship with that country. Much of the concern that Iran may attack Israel, if Iran successfully develops nuclear weapons, rests on the statement by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad that "Israel must be wiped off the map."

However, Juan Cole, a University of Michigan professor of modern Middle East and South Asian history, says no such idiom exists in the Persian language: "Ahmadinejad did not say he was going to 'wipe Israel off the map' . . . Instead, he said he 'hoped the regime, a Jewish-Zionist state occupying Jerusalem, would collapse.'"

This is consistent with statements by Iran's foreign minister, Manouchehr Mottaki. Speaking at a news conference, he denied that Tehran wanted to see Israel "wiped off the map." "Nobody can remove a country from the map. How is it possible to remove a country from the map? (Ahmadinejad) was talking about the regime," Mottaki said.

It has been stated repeatedly that an aggressive Iranian government

represents a danger for the region and for the United States. Facts, however, do not substantiate such an interpretation. More frequently than not, Iran has been on the receiving end of aggressive acts, particularly by the U.S. Iranians cannot forget that it was foreign intervention, particularly by the British and the U.S., that destroyed democracy in Iran, the effects of which linger today.

In 1953, the CIA was instrumental in overthrowing the democratically elected government of Iran's prime minister, Mohammed Mossadegh.

In 1988, the USS Vincennes shot down an Iranian civilian airliner over the Strait of Hormuz toward the end of the Iran-Iraq war. Two hundred ninety passengers were killed, including 66 children, ranking it seventh among the deadliest airliner fatalities. According to the U.S. government, the Vincennes crew misidentified the Iranian Airbus A300 as an attacking F-14 Tomcat fighter.

The U.S. staunchly supported the shah of Iran's regime, despite its brutal repression of the Iranian people. According to Stephen Kinzer, author of "All the Shah's Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror," fears by the Iranians of more U.S. intervention in the internal affairs of their country led to their taking American diplomats as hostages.

Both the U.S. and Israel have repeatedly threatened military action against Tehran, in flagrant violation of the U.N. Charter whose Article 2 states, "All members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or

use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state, or in any other manner inconsistent with the purposes of the United Nations."

Iran's alleged intention to develop nuclear weapons has also been given as a justification for an attack on Iran's nuclear sites. However, Yukiya Amano, the incoming head of the International Atomic Energy Agency declared to Reuters that he hadn't seen any hard evidence that Iran was trying to gain the ability to develop nuclear arms. Developing a civilian nuclear program is Iran's inalienable right and, if some predictions are true, it may also become a need in the near future.

There are indications that Iran's oil resources are fast depleting and Iran may become a net importer of oil a decade from now, according to the Campaign against Sanctions and Military Intervention in Iran.

As U.S. President Barack Obama has repeatedly stated, diplomacy should be pursued in dealing with the Iranian government. Such an approach should include security assurances to the Iranian government that it will not be attacked and that the U.S. will not undermine that country's leadership.

A linguistic equivalent to the Gulf of Tonkin incident should not be the excuse for attacking Iran and unleashing chaos in the region, if not in the whole world.

---

*Cesar Chelala, a foreign correspondent for the Middle East Times International (Australia), writes extensively on human rights issues.*

---

# U.S. wars not going to plan



**WILLIAM  
PFAFF**

Paris

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki was in Washington last week to consult with U.S. President Barack Obama and American military and political officials, three weeks after the Status of Forces Agreement concerning U.S. forces in Iraq came into effect.

On the same day, in Iraq, tension was reported to be increasing between the Americans, whose combat forces were supposed to evacuate Baghdad and other cities at the end of June, and the Iraqi military and security forces, who were supposed to take over the Americans' responsibilities.

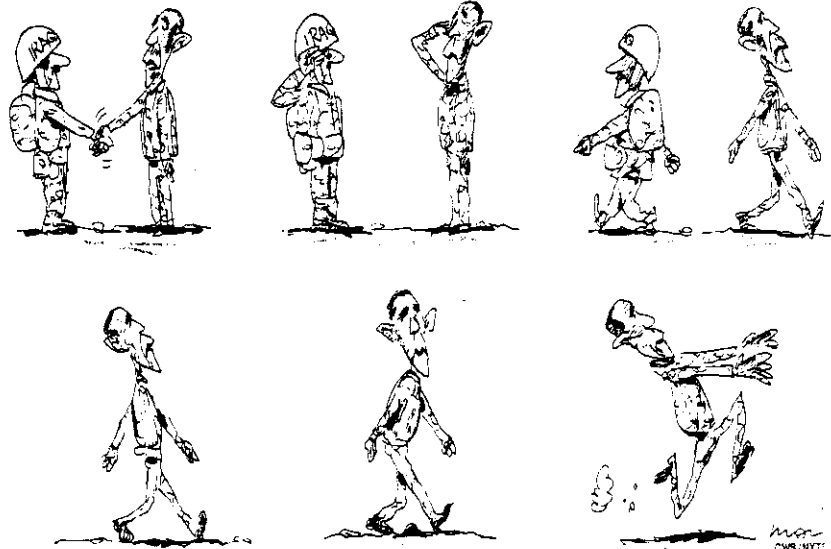
American commanders complain that the Iraq authorities have greatly reduced the number of joint patrols, supposed to continue, and in other ways "clearly are signaling that we are no longer wanted" — according to an American officer quoted in *The Wall Street Journal*. Iraqi commanders have told the Americans no longer to run patrols, and not to conduct raids on suspect locations, without coordinating them with the Iraqis.

A foreign diplomat in Baghdad has said that the Iraqis are determined to show that they are now in charge, in the runup to national elections next year. U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates says the situation is not bad. But attacks have sharply increased recently, and some observers insist that the Shiite- and Kurdish-dominated government must do more to reconcile the former ruling Sunni minority if sectarian conflict is not to break out again.

The Iraqi prime minister is playing the nationalist card, a dangerous one to play when the Sunnis also have sectarian revindications, and a lot of grievances. Washington itself has a hand to play in this game, with 130,000 troops (and at least as many contract forces) still in the country, whom Barack Obama has promised to withdraw, and the American public wants withdrawn — and a demagogic American right, for whom national failure means treason.

This is not the way this war was supposed to end. For younger readers: Six years ago the American intervention was supposed to end in a multiparty democratic government, an ally of Israel against the supposed menace of Iran, the strategic base and headquarters for the U.S. as dominant actor in a "New Middle East," and a permanent and secure source of oil for the United States. None of this has

GOOD BYE, GOOD LUCK...  
AND IF YOU EVER NEED A HAND...



happened. Iran is the principal beneficiary.

Move to another front: Pakistan-Afghanistan. Here there was also supposed to be a straightforward job to do: drive the Taliban out of Afghanistan, into their refuges in the tribal areas of the Pakistan border. There, the Pakistan Army, with American urging and help, would defeat and disarm them, asserting Pakistani control over the region, as well as U.S.-NATO success in Afghanistan.

What actually is happening is unsurprising. Pakistan continues to look after its own national interests, as it has always defined them. This means that the separate radical religious and tribal movements that make up the Taliban continue to be considered an asset to Pakistan in its long-term struggle with India, in defense of its own security, and in order to recover Muslim-populated Kashmir, which India controls.

The Taliban have also been for Pakistan an important instrument (originally supplied and financed by the U.S. — but there's no time to go into that now, although the fact should be kept in mind), in keeping Afghanistan out of hostile hands in Pakistan's equally long-term effort to control that country as providing Pakistan strategic depth and an additional Muslim bulwark against the threat of India.

Pakistan has made it clear now to Washington — to those who can read between the lines — that it wants no American troops inside Pakistan and no more collateral-damage bombing, and considers the American war in Afghanistan a futile and destructive effort, against whose consequences Pakistan must protect itself.

The growing opinion in Europe is that

Afghanistan is the U.S.' "new Vietnam." The truth is that it is worse than Vietnam.

In Vietnam, the U.S. had a clearly identified enemy, supported by a responsible communist state in North Vietnam with its government in Hanoi. The U.S. had a theory about what it was doing: suppressing the insurrection in the South, and bombing North Vietnam until the government stopped the war. All of this was, in principle, possible.

However the U.S. acted on a nonsensical theory about the world "going communist" if the U.S. didn't win, just as today the U.S. has an even more nonsensical theory about radical Islam conquering Muslim Asia and all of Europe, and then attacking the U.S., if Washington fails.

Unlike the Viet Cong, the Taliban are not a disciplined force acting under some government's orders, and have neither the intention nor means to attack anybody outside Central Asia. They are motivated by nationalism, today focused against the U.S., and by a desire to propagate their form of Islam.

In that respect it's a war of ideas, which the U.S. has no theory about how to "win." There is no way to make the Taliban surrender. At most they will temporarily fade away when U.S. and NATO forces begin to fade away, and fight again another day. There is no Taliban government to bomb. And there is no way to "make" Afghanistan a democratic ally of the U.S. The no's have it.

*William Pfaff is a veteran political analyst and columnist for the International Herald Tribune. © 2009 Tribune Media Services International.*

## **US, Japan agree to set up nuclear deterrence talks**

Writer: AFP

Published: 18/07/2009 at 07:59 PM

The United States on Saturday agreed with Japan to set up an official talks on ways to boost the nuclear deterrence it provides to protect Tokyo as tensions continue with North Korea, a senior official said. The US delegation -- led by Kurt Campbell, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, and Wallace Gregson, assistant secretary of defence -- discussed with their Japanese counterparts the situation in North Korea and the Japan-US security alliance, they said in statements.

"Today the US and the Japanese side agreed to set up a special working group that would meet in Washington over the course of several weeks, that would be the first meeting to begin a deep discussion about the elements of nuclear deterrence," Campbell said after the meeting. "Our goal here is to make a very strong commitment to Japan about the fact that the nuclear deterrence of the United States are extended, the nuclear umbrella remains strong and stable, and our commitment to Japan is absolutely unshakable," he said in an interview with Japanese public broadcaster NHK.

Conservative Japanese politicians have argued that Tokyo should arm itself with nuclear weapons to protect itself against Pyongyang's nuclear threat. The idea of Japan going nuclear would "not lead to Japan's national interest or the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region," Campbell said in an interview with the Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper issued in Japanese on Saturday. He said he hoped to discuss the possibility of the collapse of the North Korean regime amid its leader Kim Jong-Il's ailing health, NHK said.

"I would just underscore that the United States, Japan, (and) other nations have to be prepared for a variety of scenarios on the Korean peninsula," he told a television footage. "We are watching developments as they unfold in North Korea vary carefully," he said. The issue of a so-called "nuclear umbrella" -- when a nuclear power pledges to defend an ally that is not armed with atomic weapons -- is sensitive in Japan, the only country to have suffered an atomic attack. Washington and Tokyo have long shied from openly discussing the issue. Japan campaigns for a world free of nuclear weapons but relies on the United States for deterrence as fears mount over North Korea's atomic programme and China's continued stockpiling.

Campbell arrived in Japan on Thursday for talks with Japanese Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone and other high-level officials, in his first visit here after being appointed to the senior position under President Barack Obama.

## **A tale of two insurgents**

### **A rare insight into what motivates men who become involved in the violence**

Writer: Marc Askew

Published: 19/07/2009 at 07:34 AM

Unlike the conflicts in Iraq or other insurgencies, no journalist has been able to get "behind the lines" and report the insurgent's eye-view in the Muslim majority south. This is because there is no "front line" in this war, and the insurgent organisation is a secret one.

What do insurgents think and feel, and what motivates them?

Some reports have recently come out, based on interviews with insurgent intermediaries and others. But they are largely lifeless, making generalisations about the identity of the organisation and the causes of "the violence". All of this is interesting, but it doesn't help us understand them as people. That is my starting point as an anthropologist, trying to fathom the human dynamics of the southern violence, its meaning and its impact.

Unless we try to understand these young men as people in their totality, we will not gain any insight into this insurgency and why it persists. In recent months I had the good fortune to meet a number of young men involved in the insurgency. They had been captured by Thai security forces and held in a detainment hostel. They were prepared to talk to me about their involvement in the insurgency. Here are their stories.

#### **ADUL THE COMMANDER**

WHAT IMPRESSED ME immediately about Adul was his calm intensity and utter directness. His eyes fixed mine with absolute attention and frankness when he answered my questions, or gave me explanations. Whenever there was a break in our talk, his clear eyes rested on some far horizon of contemplation. Adul, now aged 31, commanded 24 juwae (central Malay: Pejuang), or insurgent soldiers, representing half the military strength of fighters in Rangae district of Narathiwat province, an area notorious for insurgent attacks.

Though police issued a warrant for his arrest as early as 2006, he wasn't captured by Thai security forces until February 2009. Between 2004 and early 2009, Adul was involved in numerous insurgent actions, beginning with the now-infamous raid on the camp of the Fourth Development Battalion in Cho Airong district in Narathiwat on Jan 4 2004, and ending with his last planned action, a car bomb attack on Jan 2, 2009, in Rangae district, just prior to his capture.

As he relates it, Adul's entry into the insurgent movement was an almost seamless extension of his religious studies and his search for perfection in faith and practice. His origins are humble enough. His family are rubber farmers, and he is the first in his family to enter higher religious studies, for which his parents are very proud.

A studious boy, he entered the prestigious Samphanwittaya religious school in neighbouring Cho Airong district, and from there gained a scholarship to study at the famous Thammawithaya school in Yala province, where he gained a diploma, reaching the 14th level of Islamic studies.

He wanted to continue his studies in Egypt, but his path was interrupted by events.

Adul recalls that he entered the "movement" in 1994 at the time he was studying at Samphanwittaya school. His recruiter was a religious teacher at the school, but all communication with this teacher was private, taking place outside official class time.

Adul's commitment to the insurgent movement was intimately bound with his religious studies and his understanding of Koranic injunctions. "The Koran has to be believed completely," Adul solemnly pronounced. I asked him just where in the Koran did he find his goal, purpose and motivation as an insurgent justified. "It is about achieving a pure Islamic country," he replied, writing a phrase from the Koran in Arabic on a page in my notebook. The passage translates as "a territory fair and happy [ie, following Islam correctly] and a Lord oft-forgiving".

I found later that it is a passage from Surah 34 of the Koran, referring to the country of Saba' (in the Yemen) during the days of Solomon, which had forsaken Islamic ways and was punished by Allah. It is a passage about the importance of faith and practice, but Adul's emphasis in the passage rests on the ideal of an Islamic country/territory (baladon).

Adul's recruiter had talked about the Patani Sultanate, which he said was great and prosperous 200 years ago, before its subordination by Buddhist Siam. What is critical in Adul's interpretation of this Koranic passage is that the religious space is indivisible from a national space: "You have to have a country for building pure Islam \_ so you must have the country first."

That country is the space of the former Patani state. He was taught that in struggling for the realisation of this Islamic country, killing (kital) is justified. Another key word in his lexicon of the struggle is Yunus, meaning "hired enemy" or "spy", whose killing is necessary. In these terms, all enemies of the religiously sanctioned insurgent cause, whether they are Thai state officials or Malay Muslim government informers, can be killed without the stain of sin.

I asked him: "Did the other teachers know of your recruiters' activity?" He answered: "Maybe some did, but the movement is secret, and all members are bound by the pledge and its Ten Disciplines, so unless these teachers were part of the movement, they would not have any means of knowing."

The pledge of adherence to the Ten Disciplines begins with an invocation, intoned with the right hand laid on the Koran. Of itself, however, this is not the critical element of the pledge (supoh), as some commentators have assumed. The vital substance of the supoh ritual is the declaration of commitment to these Ten Disciplines, which reinforce the operational structure of the cell-based insurgent movement and the moral rationale for members' actions: "If you are ordered to kill you must obey unswervingly," he stressed. "This is the discipline we must observe."

After taking his oath, Adul was left alone to continue his studies, but early in 2001 he was instructed to begin training for guerrilla warfare, and he obeyed. Within a few years he was in command of 12 trained fighters. He was one of the new generation of silent networked insurgents unnoticed by Thai intelligence agencies in the years before 2004.

The secrecy that pervades the insurgent movement is its primary characteristic and advantage. It insures against effective suppression of the organisation by limiting knowledge held by any single member. Adul points out, when asked, that he was never given a name for the movement he joined. He reflects that it may be part of the BRN-Coordinate, named as the major insurgent umbrella organisation by Thailand's military and other commentators, but he doesn't know for sure, and it isn't important to him.

As for his knowledge of other members of the movement, he only knew the names and identities of the 24 fighters directly under his command, who were organised into four groups of six trained young men (one to each tambon, or sub-district). Dubbed by the press and Thai military as RKK (Runda Kampulan Kecil), Adul points out that this is an error; RKK actually refers to a guerrilla training curriculum, not to insurgent military units.

The fighters are known, instead, by very simple names \_ six fighters form a squad, operating at a tambon level; 12 fighters comprise a platoon (Malay for platoon) with an operational area of two Thai tambons, and four platoons (48 men) form a company (company) which operates across a Thai district (or amphoe).

Adul never met his own immediate company commander who was in charge of Rangae district, he only knew him by his nickname. All communication was made by telephone. Adul knew nothing of the identities of higher ranks. As for people in his community and his family, none of them knew he was involved in the movement.

Interestingly, Adul explained the secrecy of the movement on moral, not organisational grounds: "This [secrecy] is the morality of the warriors of Allah \_ we are doing our duty, and we don't seek fame or position."

Adul's account of his experiences in guerrilla operations shows how their effectiveness has been based on a sort of flexibility of operations. This is clear in his account of his involvement in the raid on the Cho Airong army camp on Jan 4, 2004: "I was instructed to start training two days before the attack on the barracks, with specific instructions about what to do with my platoon of 12 men.

"I had the job of providing cover fire. I didn't know any of the other groups in the attack, and we never met them after the operation \_ we did our job and left. After that we laid low back home for three weeks and then took delivery of 21 of the M16s taken from the camp, which we concealed in hidden caches."

Flexibility also marked later actions. As a commander, Adul's role was operational planning for attacks, and specialists, such as bombers, were brought in from outside his area if needed, on the recommendation of his commander, though they also had their own bomb-maker. Though outsiders were used, the leader of these operations had to come from within the district. If his squads had ideas for smaller autonomous operations such as school burnings or small ambushes, they could undertake them, as long as he was told and he approved.

I asked whether the beheading of victims was undertaken on instructions. He answered that beheadings were done entirely at the discretion of the fighters. Why? He answered calmly: "Our fighters behead these victims because they want to spread fear and reach independence [of the Patani state] quickly."

To his police captors, Adul gave information about his past activities and the structure of the groups under his command. But their efforts to introduce him to a liberal version of Islam by sending him to study with a religious teacher of moderate views appear to have been unsuccessful.

Over a period of two months he went for talks with this Ustaz, but he was not convinced about his interpretations on the theme of killing. Towards the end of our talk, Adul showed me a concordance he was compiling on all the cases where the word "kill" appeared in the Koran.

When I returned a month later and asked to meet Adul again, I found he had left the hostel. The police arranged with the public prosecutors for greater leniency in charges against Adul in an effort to further his rehabilitation. As a result he was able to appeal successfully for release on bail, and had left soon after. His police mentor believes he has returned to the insurgent movement.

## HAMAD THE BOMB MAKER

HAMAD, 27, WAS an insurgent bomb maker for four years until his recent capture by the military. He has only three fingers on his right hand, the result of a bomb-assembly gone wrong. He is very much a contrast to Adul in personality and educational background.



He is relaxed with an easygoing manner, the type of friendly Malay Muslim villager you can meet and chat with at a rural tea shop anywhere in the three provinces. Like Adul, he is a native of Rangae district and his parents are humble rubber tappers, but there the similarities end.

Hamad did his schooling entirely at Thai state schools, and completed his secondary education. He never attended a private religious school or traditional pondok. He is a good practising Muslim, but until he was recruited to join the insurgent movement, his Islamic religious education was restricted to what he had learned at the local Tatika school as a young boy.

On leaving state school, Hamad joined the family in working their small rubber holding. But his world was not enclosed entirely in his Malay-speaking Kampung \_ as a child and a young man he had a circle of Thai Buddhist friends. "I still have Thai Buddhist friends, though ever since the situation changed [ie, from 2004] they've kept their distance because they are scared," he said smiling softly, with a note of sadness.

Hamad joined the insurgent network in late 2004, and he is utterly specific about his motivation. It was a direct result of his sheer anger in reaction to Thai security forces' mistreatment of the Muslim demonstrators at Tak Bai in October 2004. He represents the second major wave of insurgent recruitment in the southern borderland, while Adul represents its long pre-2004 first wave. His recruiter was the teacher from his local village Tatika school.

The Ustaz was a graduate of the famous Samphanwittaya school: "I wanted to respond somehow to the Tak Bai event, to do something about it. I was very upset and angry. The village Tatika school is near my home, and the Ustaz got talking to me about the need for Muslims to fight back. I soon figured out that he was checking me out to test my convictions and my character, whether I had a clean life and good habits.

"But I wanted to listen. It was all very private, we spoke alone, meeting in private in the empty school rooms for a period of about two months. He convinced me of the need for us Muslims to fight back to protect ourselves, and that Jihad was justified against the Thai state. In December of 2004 I took the supoh with my hand laid on the Holy Koran and vowed obedience to the Ten Disciplines of the movement, repeating them as the Ustaz read them out to me."

After the supoh ritual, Hamad was required to attend lectures by the Ustaz. He recalls that four or five other young men attended these talks, but he was never introduced to them.

The Ustaz spoke of the history of the Pattani Sultanate and events in the past which demonstrated the suppression of Muslims by the Thai state, such as the story of the disappearance of the cleric Haji Surong at the hands of the police. He was also shown a video of the police suppression of demonstrators at Tak Bai. He was never told the name of the movement he had joined, only that it had been in existence for 40 years.

And what was the aim of this movement?

“We never talked about ‘separation’ as such,” Hamad remarked. “It was always about ‘government’ and the final attainment of full Sharia law, for which we had to struggle as Muslims.” After this indoctrination, Hamad was left alone for about three months, but he knew that his behaviour was being monitored by the Ustaz. He was then called to start undergoing physical training, and following this he was selected to train as a bomb-maker with the senior explosives expert in the district.

The role of bomb-maker was an isolated one, and there was a strict division of labour between the bomb-makers, those who collected the bombs, and others who placed the bombs in locations for attacks and still others who attached the detonation devices. This separation meant that Hamad never knew the identities of many of his fellow insurgents. He really only knew his teacher and the group who came to collect the bombs. “I often wondered just what the structure of the organisation was like,” he admitted. “But I was told that it wasn’t necessary; it was enough just to do my job.”

Bomb making has its own disciplines and routines: “We assembled the bombs close to the target in isolated locations, sometimes near mosques, but always with lookouts posted who would make sure that people wouldn’t see us. We had to finish the assembly two days before the date of the planned attack.”

Aside from this, Hamad’s teacher had impressed upon him that these bombs should only be used against Thai officials and security forces, though this seems to have been his own personal conviction, and other insurgent cadre may have been less concerned. Either way, Hamad agreed with this principle, and recalls that when innocent bystanders were killed and injured by explosions, his teacher became very upset.

Between the years 2005 and 2008, Hamad helped make a total of 50 bombs. In the years 2007 to 2008 things began to change for Hamad. Most dramatically, his teacher was captured, following the discovery by security forces of bomb equipment at the Islamburapha school.

Security sweeps became more intense, more insurgents were being captured, and Hamad was now on his own. It was more difficult to find places to assemble the bombs, and Hamad was forced to make bombs in his room at his parent’s home. Worse, many of his bombs were failing to detonate, and his superiors and colleagues were getting angry with him. “I was starting to get scared of this pressure,” he says.

At the same time he was starting to reconsider his position as an insurgent. “It seemed to me that more innocent people were being killed by bombs, and this wasn’t right to me. I overheard villagers in the local tea shops complaining about the violence, and I wondered whether the struggle was going the right way.”

## **Southeast Asia approves long-awaited rights body**

Writer: AFP

Published: 20/07/2009 at 05:59 PM

Foreign ministers from Southeast Asia endorsed the region's first human rights watchdog Monday, rejecting criticisms that it would be powerless to tackle rogue members such as Burma.



Southeast Asian foreign ministers pose for group outdoor photograph at a resort in Phuket during the opening ceremony of the 42nd Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) Ministerial Meeting. Foreign ministers from Southeast Asia endorsed the region's first human rights watchdog, rejecting criticisms that it would be powerless to tackle rogue members such as Burma.

Officials were also to express "grave concern" over North Korea's nuclear programme and condemn the hotel bombings in Jakarta after meeting in the Thai resort island of Phuket ahead of Asia's main security forum this week. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) will officially launch the long-awaited rights commission at a summit in October after years of claims that it is too soft on military-ruled Burma and communist Vietnam and Laos. But rights groups said the proposed watchdog lacks teeth to punish violators, has no monitoring powers and would merely make the bloc's members provide internal reports on rights conditions inside their countries.

Asean officials confirmed that the foreign ministers had endorsed the terms of reference for the rights body at their meeting on Monday. "It's better to make a start than to leave this hanging with no progress at all," Thai premier and Asean chairman Abhisit Vejjajiva said, adding that the body would focus on the "promotion and protection" of human rights. "What we want to do is establish a body that begins with the issue of promotion, and then the next step obviously once that is put into place, is that there will be more teeth for the body in terms of protection," he said.

Burma has been a thorn in the side of Asean since it joined in 1997 because of its detention of more than 2,000 political prisoners, including pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi. The junta caused fresh headaches for the bloc by putting the Nobel peace laureate on trial following an incident in which an American man swam to her lakeside house in May. She faces up to five years in jail. Asean has been hamstrung throughout its 42-year history by its guiding principle of non-interference in members' internal affairs. The rights commission is being set up under a new Asean charter agreed in December.

Rights groups said the new body's remit fell short of international standards. "The human rights body is born, but it needs a lot of careful care so that it can become a mechanism with teeth and not become toothless," Rafendi Djamin, of the regional group Solidarity for Asian People's Advocacy, told AFP. Splits emerged in Asean's normally placid facade on Sunday as Indonesia objected to the final terms for the rights body and Burma protested against changes wanted by the Indonesians, diplomats said.

Meanwhile the Asean ministers were set to issue a statement urging North Korea to return to six-party talks on its weapons programme and to "express grave concern over the recent nuclear explosions", an Asean official said. Pyongyang's foreign minister has declined to attend Thursday's Asean Regional Forum (ARF) in Phuket, which groups 27 nations including the United States. North Korea quit the talks with the US, South Korea, China, Russia, and Japan after the UN Security Council censured its April 5 long-range rocket launch. It staged its second nuclear test on May 25.

The Asean statement was also set to include a condemnation of the bombings of the Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels in Jakarta on Friday which left up to nine people dead and dozens more wounded, the official told AFP. "In the Indonesian blasts, they will condemn the bombings and Asean will also offer help to bring the perpetrators to justice," he said. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is due in Phuket on Wednesday for the ARF. Thousands of police and troops are on duty to prevent a repeat of anti-government protests that derailed an Asian summit in April.

## **Europe, SEA share a vision for peace and security**

Writer: JAVIER SOLANA

Published: 20/07/2009 at 12:00 AM

Newspaper section: News

Europe's long-standing relationship with Southeast Asia is shifting into a new gear this year. Our mutual engagement is growing still closer and deeper, particularly in the area of building peace, security and cooperation around the globe. We have reached a milestone in our relations this year with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) in Phnom Penh in May on the accession of the European Union and its member states to the Asean Treaty on Amity and Cooperation. Asean is a vital partner for us and I am delighted with this progress. The EU and its Asian partners have a common resolve to tackle today's regional and global threats together and a common interest in developing a system of regional integration and global governance. It is with this shared vision that I am travelling to Phuket this week for meetings with the Asean partners and the Asean Regional Forum (ARF).

We see Asean as the key driving force fostering regional integration in Asia. It has emerged as a serious regional player. We have followed with great interest as it has developed into a permanent regional organisation, inspired - at least in part, we believe - by our own example of successful integration in Europe. We welcomed Asean's historic adoption last December of a new charter creating a legal framework for further integration and we believe that the ambitious road map for an Asean Community will be an important factor in helping to bring about lasting peace, stability, shared prosperity and respect for human rights in the region.

The EU is proud to be in the Asean Regional Forum (ARF), which is the only regional forum in Asia devoted solely to security issues. We are stepping up our involvement with ARF, which has contributed to peace and security in Asia over the past 15 years, because we regard it as an essential venue for dialogue. The need for Europe and Asia to discuss global strategies is all the greater this year, given the multiple crises currently facing the world: "food, fuel, flu and financial - the four Fs", as UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said recently. The EU has vital interests in the region. Its trade with East Asia has overtaken its trade with the US and it is Asean's biggest trading partner.

That is why Thursday's ARF meeting in Phuket is so important to us. The Asean Regional Forum is a central pillar in the evolving regional security architecture and with our ARF partners, now and in future, we will share our vision of working together, as part of a global, rules-based multilateral system, to promote peace and stability through confidence-building action and preventive diplomacy.

The EU's philosophy is that threats must be prevented early on from becoming sources of conflict. Developed and developing countries alike are coping with the dangers and insecurities brought in the wake of globalisation, along with the new-found opportunities it also creates for us all.

The EU is looking forward to discussing both traditional and new security threats at the ARF meeting, ranging from terrorist attacks to the need to reduce nuclear arsenals and prevent more countries from acquiring nuclear weapons; to natural disasters likely to be caused by climate change. We should look at oil and gas supplies, piracy and failed states. None of these threats stop at national borders and all of them are as relevant to our Asian partners as they are to the European Union.

The EU is making its mark in helping to create a more secure world and we can and must work closely with Asia in this. We will continue to support concrete, action-oriented cooperation focused not only on confidence-building measures but also on conflict resolution. Over the past decade, under the European Security and Defence Policy, we have deployed more than 20 operations in response to crises in Europe, Africa and Asia. These range from the successful post-tsunami peace-building mission in Aceh, Indonesia, where we worked closely and very successfully with participating Asean nations, to our first-ever naval task force, Operation EU Navfor Atalanta, fighting piracy off the coast of Somalia. We currently have another mission in Asia, training and mentoring the Afghan police.

Lasting solutions to conflict must bind together all regional players with a common stake in peace. This is what the European project is about and this is what our deepening relationship with Asia is about. We firmly believe that strong ties between different regional groups in the world are crucial for global peace and security. We are committed to stepping up our engagement in Asia's regional integration processes, including the East Asia Summit. We share with you a vision that by 2020 the Asia-Pacific region will be an area of lasting peace, stability, friendship and prosperity based on a foundation of mutual trust, where preventive diplomacy pursues the ultimate goal of conflict resolution. It is vital, especially for the ARF, to make this vision a political reality.

## **EDITORIAL Need for action at Phuket meet**

Published: 21/07/2009 at 12:00 AM

Newspaper section: News

The Asean foreign ministers who met yesterday in Phuket properly updated their already busy agenda to elevate the murderous suicide bombings in Jakarta to the top of the discussion list. Their counterparts from 17 other countries due in the southern resort by tomorrow are to do the same. The influenza outbreak is a threat to life, but can be pushed back and defeated by medical science. Burmese violence and North Korean nuclear weapons are challenges best met with rational diplomacy. But random and bloody terrorist attacks require a wide range of responses by communities, nations and across international borders.

The twin explosions that broke the Sabbath peace at two Jakarta luxury hotels last Friday were carefully plotted. They shattered lives and property, but they also shattered the hope and occasional pretence that terrorism was no longer a threat. Anti-terrorist operations have often been successful. But realists have known, and the cynics must now accept, that the successes of the regional and world fight against terrorism have only begun to make progress.

Police in Indonesia and their foreign allies agree that the attacks last Friday were probably the work of followers of Jemaah Islamiyah. This regional arm of Osama bin Laden's al-Qaeda group has been at the forefront of both local and cross-border attacks for more than a decade. In addition to domestic bombing attacks, mostly against Christians in Indonesia, JI was behind the October 2002, firebombing in Bali which killed more than 200 people. It carried out bombings in Jakarta and upcountry Indonesia, and in Manila and the rural Philippines. JI helped the logistics planning for the 9/11 attacks on the United States.

It plotted major attacks in Singapore and in Bangkok. These and other foiled JI conspiracies showed that the group was far from invincible. The Philippine army and Indonesian police, with massive help from allies around the world, broke up the main JI and Abu Sayyaf gangs with ties to al-Qaeda. One of the key anti-terrorism victories was in Ayutthaya, when a US-Thai joint operation captured JI operations chief and al-Qaeda contact Hambali, who remains imprisoned at the US-run Guantanamo facility in Cuba.

Last week's suicide bombings in Jakarta do not mean terrorism will prevail. At the same time, the outstanding victories against al-Qaeda, JI, Abu Sayyaf and other murderous gangs do not ensure victory. Terrorism is resilient. In Indonesia, the "school for violence" run by the Islamist apologist Abu Bakar Bashir justifies killings like those of six innocent Indonesians and foreigners. Such centres of extremism even attempt to sanctify the

suicides, although they are strictly forbidden by the Koran, as is the taking of innocent life.

Recruiters and talent scouts like Bashir and his small band of followers continue to find weak and lonely young men and women, and brainwash them into warped acts, supposedly for their religion. As a recent, controversial report showed, such men continue to recruit young Thais for similar purposes. It will take more and stronger police work and intelligence activities to root out such evil men, and to remove them from society.

The task is sometimes local, as for example in southern Thailand, where religious communities must be more vigilant against terrorist recruitment. But more than that, terrorism is a matter of international crime. The foreign ministers meeting in Phuket this week have an obligation to upgrade their attempts to stop terrorism through stronger international cooperation.



## Washington to ink SE Asia pact with eye on China

Writer: AFP

Published: 21/07/2009 at 07:59 PM

The signing by the United States this week of a friendship pact with Southeast Asia sends a strong signal of its desire to deepen ties and counter China's increasing influence, observers said. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will sign the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) on Wednesday in the Thai resort of Phuket during a meeting with her counterparts from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean). Washington has been reluctant to sign the non-aggression pact for years, fearing it would leave little room for it to exert its influence on political and security issues in the region of nearly 600 million people.

But a resurgent China signed the treaty in 2003 to broaden its influence, and amid lingering suspicions that the US refusal showed the region was beneath its diplomatic radar, Washington has finally relented. "Apparently the US has decided that the benefits of signing outweigh the costs," former Asean secretary general Rodolfo Severino told AFP. The signing comes on the eve of the annual Asean Regional Forum (ARF), Asia's foremost gathering on security issues involving countries such as China, Japan, Russia, the United States and the European Union. Southeast Asian ministers in a joint statement on Monday "welcomed the impending accession by the United States" to the treaty "as a strong signal of its commitment to peace and security in the region."

The comment reflected satisfaction after years of questions about US intentions in Southeast Asia and a perception that Washington had its mind on other regions. The treaty, first established in 1976, commits signatories to three basic principles: the peaceful settlement of disputes, non-recourse to the use of force and non-interference in domestic affairs. "The implication of not signing is this: if you are a power involved in the region and you don't sign it, people might ask why doesn't the US sign?" said Severino, now head of the Singapore-based Asean Studies Centre. "Does it mean that they (US) are not precluding the use of force in settling disputes, do they want to interfere in countries' internal affairs?"

Signing could also help extend US sway in an area where Asian giants China and India have been forging goodwill by joining a number of regional bodies, diplomats said. China has emerged as a key player at meetings with Asean, which views it as a major trading partner and growing global power that should be kept firmly on side. "Behind this (decision) was a concern that the US was losing ground to China," Bridget Welsh, an associate professor of political science at Singapore Management University, told AFP.

"In order for the US to stay in the game it was accepted that it needed to affirm the norms of Asean the organisation, thus the signing of (the treaty of amity)."Diplomats said Washington could use the treaty as a vehicle for membership in the East Asia Summit, which groups Asean and its six trading partners Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea. Signing the treaty is a requirement for membership in the summit, which is widely seen as a precursor to a pan-Asian economic and strategic community.

"The East Asia Summit has the potential of emerging as a gargantuan trade and strategic bloc," a Southeast Asian diplomat told AFP on condition of anonymity. "If the US is not on board, the United States will have little influence in such a bloc that includes China and India."The United States still holds sway in the APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation) forum, a loose grouping of 21 economies stretching from Chile to China. But APEC has remained unwieldy and risks losing its influence to emerging and more cohesive trade blocs, a second Asian diplomat noted.

## **Asean seeks to 'unchain' the mind of Burmese junta**

Writer: PAVIN CHACHAVALPONGPUN

Published: 21/07/2009 at 12:00 AM

Newspaper section: News

Featuring high in the Asean Regional Forum (ARF) agenda this year is the issue of political deadlock in Burma. After all these years, and since it became a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations in 1997, Burma has shown, time and again, that it has managed its domestic affairs without restraint. The recent trial of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD), is the junta's latest defiance against heightening international pressure.

Back in early May 2008, Burma was hit hard by Cyclone Nargis which slammed into the Ayeyawaddy Delta, causing almost 140,000 deaths and leaving 2 million homeless. Initially, Burmese leaders were reluctant to open up their country for foreign assistance, fearing that the West would use this opportunity to interfere in its domestic politics, or even to deploy their troops on Burma's soil. It was the case of being overly paranoid and extremely xenophobic.

Asean, led by Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan, eagerly embarked on a mission to convince the Burmese junta to accept international aid. He, on behalf of Asean, offered to play a "broker," connecting Burma and the outside world in the reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts. Leaders in Naypyidaw finally agreed with Mr Surin's initiative.

My Burmese friend and I were commissioned by Mr Surin to document Asean's role in the post-Nargis relief efforts. We shuttled between Bangkok, Singapore and Rangoon to conduct countless interviews and to visit the areas devastated by the cyclone. The picture of floating corpses is still fresh in my memory.

Asean has done an excellent job in reaching out to the Burmese junta and explaining to them the important notion of humanitarian assistance and good governance. For once, we believed that we had done something meaningful for Burma, especially in unblocking obstacles that stood in the way of our relief efforts. We were successful in opening up Burma to the world.

But the growing discontent inside Burma and the trial of Mrs Suu Kyi fiercely contested our belief of a new Burma that seemed to open itself up and allow itself to be acclimatised by the global reality. The junta has still refused to set Mrs Suu Kyi free, even despite the plea of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. As of now, the junta wants to go ahead with next year's election without the participation of the NLD.

The conclusion here is that Asean might have been successful, drawing from its Nargis experience, in opening up Burma. But the opening up process was merely physical. Asean has so far been unable to open the junta's mind. The Burmese border might be open. But the leaders' mental doors are still tightly closed.

Why?

First, the Burmese junta has been living in insecurity. Its only tool of survival is repression and intimidation. In strengthening its power position, the junta has painted the image of the outside world as black, including that of the Burmese dissidents. Leaders in Naypyidaw have rejected the idea of democracy, even when they pretended to go along with their own roadmap. Democracy is an evil word. To them, it does not even match Burma's political culture and the Burmese lifestyle.

Of course, all these imaginings are part of the junta's self-construction as the ultimate moral authority within the domestic realm. Asean and the global community have failed to unlock the junta's mentality, mainly because political power is not easily negotiable and particularly if unlocking the mentality only means surrendering of its power.

Bangkok's elite should realise how hard it is to let go of power, as they faced the challenge of Thaksin Shinawatra. They, too, have a blocked mind.

Second, simply summarising that Burma cared about the well-being of the Nargis survivors and truly understood the meaning of humanitarian assistance just because it opened the door to foreign donors, could totally mislead us all. As the Burmese leaders compromised their position in the aftermath of Nargis, Asean hoped that it would be granted more access to the heart of the junta.

Yet, aiding suffering Nargis survivors and releasing potential political contenders from incarceration are two different things. Mrs Suu Kyi has always been perceived as a threat to the regime. She is a democratic icon and a symbol of legitimacy. Since 1997, Burma has sent out the message that free political thought is intolerable. Such a message remained unaltered even in the midst of the Nargis attack.

Third, the closed mind of the Naypyidaw elite is putting the Asean Charter to the greatest test. The Burmese junta fully knows that there is no provision in the Charter that indicates any punishment for a badly behaved member. True, the codification of norms governing relations between state and its citizens is included in the Asean Charter. The Asean human rights body has also been in operation.

The imminent question is how Asean can make use of these new mechanisms to make a breakthrough in the Burmese political crisis, especially in unchaining the mind of the leaders.

The launch of the book on Asean's role in the Nargis relief efforts during the AMM in Phuket, may connote a time to celebrate the grouping's success in such a meaningful

mission. The launch would serve well the ARF agenda on the current situation in Burma, as Asean optimists are convinced that the same method could work in resolving the Burmese political problem: Asean being an honest broker in linking Burma with the world. There is nothing wrong with being optimistic. Having long observed Burma's politics over the past two decades however, I think that being realistic is a more rational approach, as I try to examine the complicated situation in that country.

In realistic terms, the prolonged crisis in Burma seems to suggest that perhaps the junta has intentionally hidden the key that could be used to unlock its own mindset. The political conflict in neighbouring Thailand makes the Burmese leaders even more wary of opening up and welcoming democracy.

Asean's push for change in Burma is highly commendable. Secretary-General Surin has done a remarkable job in opening up a channel of communication, no matter how narrow it is, between Burma and the world. But Cyclone Nargis is an episode of catastrophe. The real disaster for Burma and the Burmese people, which will be more devastating than Nargis, is indeed the persistent existence of the Burmese military regime.

Dr Pavin Chachavalpongpun, a visiting research fellow at Singapore's Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, is co-author, with Moe Thuzar, of "Myanmar: Life After Nargis."

## **FM:Burma key to fate of Asean**

### **No plans to revise engagement policy**

Writer: ACHARA ASHAYAGACHAT and THANIDA TANSUBHAPOL

Published: 21/07/2009 at 12:00 AM

Newspaper section: News

PHUKET :The Association of Southeast Asian Nations cannot move forward until changes occur in Burma, Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya says. The Burmese issue was the focus of talks among Southeast Asian foreign ministers here yesterday. Other Asean ministers reiterated a call for the Burmese government to immediately release political prisoners, including opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, to pave the way for national reconciliation and their participation in "inclusive" general elections next year.

Despite the strong call for change, the 10-member grouping showed no intention to revise its constructive engagement with the military regime. "Recognising the fact that the Myanmar [Burmese] government has been trying to address many complex challenges, we remained constructively engaged with Myanmar as part of the Asean Community building process," they said in a statement released yesterday.

Burma maintained its position that "pressure from the outside and economic sanctions were hampering" its plan to restore democracy and development efforts, the statement said. But Mr Kasit, who is chairing the foreign ministers' meeting, said his Burmese counterpart Nyan Win knew full well Asean could not move forward without changes in Burma. So it was a joint undertaking, he said.

Asean secretary-general Surin Pitsuwan said Asean members should come forward with their own contribution to assistance in the Cyclone Nargis humanitarian efforts. Burma had received at least US\$100 million (3.5 billion baht) in pledges for the latter half of the three-year recovery plan prepared by the Tripartite Core Group comprising representatives from the United Nations, Burma and Asean.

"The Asean contributions will create a momentum for international donors to give more support to the \$300 million needed for the recovery," he said. He called for a similar strategy in dealing with the Rohingya issue in Burma. "There should be a way for the tripartite group to work together to deliver humanitarian assistance to reduce the social and economic pressures that are pushing the people out of the country," Mr Surin said.

In his opening statement to the ministerial meeting, Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva outlined the future of the group which needed quick and united action to tackle threats and challenges and better linkages to serve the region's single market idea.

"Effective action must replace extended deliberation. We must show to the world that Asean is ready to meet any challenge and is well-prepared to act decisively," Mr Abhisit said.

He said the future of the group depended on efforts to invest in education and other human resource development. "Globalisation will be beneficial only if the people in the region are competitive, prepared and able to take advantage of it," he said. Mr Abhisit repeated calls to oppose protectionism and urged Asean to live with others' expectations of it being a driving force.

"The world is closely watching Asean, pinning on us the hope that we will be a dynamic growth pole for the global economy in this time of crisis," he said. The ministers also endorsed the terms of reference on the Asean Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights amid Indonesian discontent over the scope of the agency's functions.

Indonesia wanted the commission to be set up in October to do more than promoting rights issues among the 10 Asean members. Mr Kasit said at the end of the meeting Asean had opted to work towards conciliation and consultation in an amicable manner when there were differences or non-compliance including on human rights matters.

## **EDITORIAL Asean takes a step back**

Published: 22/07/2009 at 12:00 AM

Newspaper section: News

The outcome of the Phuket meeting of Asean foreign ministers was disappointing. It must be hoped that when they are joined by other colleagues for bigger gatherings that they can get off ground zero. Allowing the region's harsher regimes to set the terms of a human rights council for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations is likely to come back to haunt the group, and sooner rather than later. To recover from this setback, Thailand will have to press hard at meetings beginning today, or face stronger criticism for its term as Asean chairman.

By far the biggest letdown, verging on outright failure, was the cave-in by Thailand and other countries on the Asean Inter-governmental Commission on Human Rights. It is not fair to call this new body a toothless tiger - not yet, before it even gets a chance to act. But the terms under which the body will operate appear to make actual human rights progress a dream rather than an achievable goal. Come October, it is widely feared, the commission will begin issuing vague statements and wishful press releases, rather than strong rulings backed by action.

Kudos to Indonesia for being the last nation standing when the roll was called for a stronger commission. It was shocking to see Thailand among the first democratic countries to give up attempts to push for the stronger version of the human rights body. When Thailand turned its back on human rights advocates, so did Malaysia, and then the Philippines. Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda considered holding out and actually scuttling the almost meaningless agreement that emerged. Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya, chairman of the meeting, said the result was a compromise, leaving observers wondering how anyone can compromise on such an important moral issue.

Now it is the turn of the Asean Regional Forum, a 27-nation group which meets under Asean, but discusses matters extending far beyond our region. The group includes the foreign ministers and equivalent from the United States, China, Russia, Japan and other important countries. The ARF has been focusing strongly on the threat to peace by North Korea. Pyongyang, which was brought into ARF through Thai diplomacy in 2000, has once again gone into insult mode, and will send only a relatively junior diplomat to represent the foreign minister.

Thailand is again the chairman, and it must not shy from responding to this careful North Korean show of attitude. ARF was formed specifically to encourage openness in foreign affairs, including trade and military matters, because honesty and information-sharing openly promotes and keeps the peace. North Korea, if it has made any change during the



past nine years, has become even more closed and secretive. Its nuclear weapons tests and unannounced missile firings are designed to be hostile and intimidating. Since this flies in the face of the ARF goals, and defies the real successes of the ARF in achieving regional peace, North Korea must be called to account; no compromising this time.

Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya, the chairman of all Asean meetings this week, has already stated that the group cannot move off dead centre until there are changes in Burma. Now is the time to press ahead with that thought, with 25 other mostly sympathetic nations helping. At the southwest and northeast corners of our region, Burma and North Korea are the main blocks to progress, the worst human rights violators. They are major blocks to peace. Asean can recover some dignity by standing up to these two nations at the important meetings in Phuket.

## US formally firms Asean ties

Writer: ACHARA ASHAYAGACHAT

Published: 22/07/2009 at 12:00 AM

Newspaper section: News

Washington's accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, to be signed by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton today at the Asean foreign ministers meeting and Regional Forum in Phuket, fittingly ends the curious hot and cold nature of the relationship between the US and Southeast Asia.

The accession has been referred to in a joint communique from the Association of South East Asian Nations as "a strong signal of the US commitment to peace and security in the region". But some confusion has arisen over whether the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation's (TAC) emphasis on non-interference in member countries' domestic affairs would constrain US action, especially in relation to its sanctions on Burma.

US officials had proposed clarifications to the treaty but Asean was strongly opposed to them and the US backed down. Mrs Clinton then went ahead and announced the US would pursue accession to the TAC in Southeast Asia. The US will be the 16th non-Asean country to sign the TAC that has bound Asean since 1976. Next in line to become TAC partners are the European Union and Turkey.

With the signing of the TAC, Asean will now appear more vividly on the US radar, not as a blip as in the past. Mrs Clinton will today address the Asean Regional Forum (ARF) and many are curious to hear what she will say about Burma in front of the Burmese representatives.

The TAC, on the surface, will put the US on a par with regional powers such as China. Washington, under the George W Bush administration, had ignored Asean because of its own terrorism concerns and its harsh stance on Burma. The previous secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, skipped the ARF meeting in 2006.

The Barack Obama administration, while sticking to a democracy policy for Burma, will certainly try to be perceived as a more understanding partner in the region and discuss sensitive issues in a more subtle manner. Certainly, there are many issues the US needs to address, especially economic and traditional and non-traditional security concerns. Mrs Clinton has since February reopened doors for Washington in Asia with a mixture of charm and confidence.

## **Asean rejects US call to expel Burma**

Writer: Bangkok Post.com, AFP

Published: 23/07/2009 at 04:20 PM

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) will not consider expelling Burma over the detention of Aung San Suu Kyi because it was unlikely it would solve the problem, Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva said Thursday.

His statement came after US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called on the regional bloc to consider expelling Burma if it does not free the Nobel laureate.

Although Asean and Western countries share the same goals regarding democracy, the suggestion could not be taken up for a number of reasons said Mr Abhisit, the current Asean chairman.

"There are not enough grounds to do that," he said.

"We have already done what we can under the Asean mechanism. If Burma is expelled it will further isolate the regime, and would that solve the problem?"

Mr Abhisit said he hoped Washington and the European Union would both understand Asean's position.

"We are still insisting on our policy of constructive engagement and hope that the US will understand," he said.

He, however, called on the Burmese junta to take some action to improve relations with the United States.

## Ushering in a new era of Asean cooperation

Published: 25/07/2009 at 12:00 AM

Newspaper section: News

The Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR) was formed under the Asean Charter when it came into force last year. Under the charter, each member country has to appoint its permanent representative (PR) to the committee. Piamsak Milintachinda, a former executive director of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Secretariat in Singapore, is Thailand's first PR. He talks to Thanida Tansubhapol about his new job in Jakarta.



Piamsak: Asean will work more collectively now the CPR has been established.

### **What are the responsibilities of your new role as the Thai PR?**

The new charter has made the (annual Asean) summit the forum where all key Asean decisions are to be made. The foreign ministers on the new Asean Coordinating Council are preparing agenda for the next summit. The charter appoints each country's permanent representative to serve and implement the ministers' work for the summit.

Normally, Asean directors-general from 10 member countries will work together to prepare work for the senior official meeting (SOM). But the new Jakarta-based PRs will do this work instead of their country's directors-general, who will shift to coordinate with other related agencies in their countries.

This new working structure will help Asean to work together more collectively.

**Apart from coordinating among the 10-member Asean CPR, what are the other jobs the new body has to do?**

The CPR will also review the Asean Secretariat's budget before forwarding it to the ministers for approval. We also follow the secretariat's work and engage with ambassadors from non-Asean states under the external partner's cooperation programme. These tasks also used to be handled by Asean directors-general.

**When did you start the new job, and what has the CPR done so far?**

The CPR convened its first meeting last May after each Asean country - except Burma, Laos and Cambodia - appointed its CPR member.

I hope the three other Asean countries, which have assigned their ambassadors to Jakarta to serve as their PRs, will appoint their representatives to join us in Jakarta within the next year.

Our first job was to outline the CPR's rules and procedures. Other jobs were to implement the procedures of the Asean political-security council which can then be applied to another two councils - economics and culture.

We were just assigned to develop another procedure for the Asean Coordinating Council, headed by the foreign ministers.

I'm planning to do the guidelines for playing the Asean anthem at major meetings so the host country will be clear about when to play the anthem at these events. This is one of the tasks the CPR is responsible for. I also plan to set the scope of work and work timetable for the CPR, the directors-general and the SOM.

**How long is the transition for handing over work from the Asean directors-general to the CPR?**

We should be able to take over the job from Asean directors-general and be fully operational in one year from now. But the picture will be clearer in the next six months, I hope.

The CPR has just started its work and there are many agendas we have to cover, so we have not yet finalised our meeting schedules yet. It's up to the urgency of the matters.

Actually, I would like to hold a meeting once a month. At the beginning, I only have four staff in my Jakarta office, but I hope that I will eventually have 10 to 12 staff in the future to cope with the increasing workload.

**What are the advantages of being appointed as the Thai permanent representative?**

We use the European Union as an example which has a CPR based in Brussels. It will function better and be more effective, as well as saving on our travel budget. Normally, Asean convenes more than 700 meetings a year. But what remains a challenge for us is coordinating with the Asean Department.

## **Sound advice from Hillary Clinton on overcoming rivalry**

Writer: THONGBAI THONGPAO

Published: 26/07/2009 at 12:00 AM

Newspaper section: News

There is no ignoring that the star of the Asean Ministerial Meeting in Phuket last week was Hillary Clinton, the US secretary of state and a former presidential candidate. Although she lost to Barack Obama, she was hand-picked by him to lead the State Department, a position that entitles her to be the mouthpiece of the world's superpower. In Phuket her every move was closely watched. How important is she? Judging from the tens of thousands of Thai and 200 American security officials surrounding her, she is priceless. Indeed, Mrs Clinton remains as popular as ever. She paid a courtesy call at Government House and had a talk with Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva. She stepped on some toes at the meeting by making bold comments that offended representatives from North Korea.

But what intrigued me the most was her interview with respected journalist Suthichai Yoon, in which she provided an insight into how observant and brilliant she is. To the question of how she viewed Thailand, Mrs Clinton said: "I think that our relationship and close partnership over the years gives us a broad understanding of Thailand. So it's both the land of smiles and a place that is a vibrant democracy. Perhaps sometimes its politics is as spicy as its food." Mrs Clinton must know both Thai food and Thai politics well to make such a canny remark. It remains to be seen whether Thai politicians take it as a compliment or an insult.

Mrs Clinton seems to have compassion for Thais, who have to watch what they wear every time they step out of their houses. She said: "I know there are certain colours that I should not wear." She then added jokingly: "That's all right because some of them don't look very good on me anyway, so I am safe from that." Her remark was both funny and true. Ordinary people who would like to remain politically neutral have had to steer clear of at least two colours in recent years. We have learned to shut our mouths when riding in a taxi because any political comment could easily lead to an unwanted row. Some taxi drivers lock their radio tuners to stations which condemn the opposing group and we can do nothing but put up with it. Sensible people who would like to remain colour blind are careful not to express political opinions at this time.

When asked whether she was going to stop the practice of secret CIA camps where terrorist suspects were tortured, one of which was allegedly in Thailand, she replied: "I'm not going to talk about the past. We have moved beyond that." This is understandable. Mrs Clinton dodged the subject because in the past Americans had caused pain in this country. Such things should not recur under her boss's watch. Immediately upon taking office Mr Obama moved to close the Guantanamo Bay prison where inmates were tortured, a practice a human rights-promoting country like America should not have adopted in the first place.

When asked how it felt to work with her former competitor for the presidency, Mrs Clinton said it was one of the most common questions she was asked in Asia. "We really worked hard against each other to defeat the other, and we said some things about each other that weren't the nicest things to say. "But in our country, when the election is over, we try to work together for the good of the country. And in our system, when the president asks you to serve, you feel that you really should because you want to help the president succeed. And so the president has asked Republicans to serve \_ not just Democrats like me who competed against him \_ and Vice-President Joe Biden also ran against him for a while," she said.

She added: "When I was in Indonesia, it was such a common question because in many countries, the hard-fought political competition continues. They don't look, they don't talk to each other; it's very personal, lines are drawn. "And so the Indonesians kept saying, 'How do you work with somebody you ran against?' I said, well, that's what we have learned through all these years of democracy, that the country must come first; that politicians come and go, people win and lose elections. But once the election is over, you can still have policy disagreements. And we do, as is obvious. But we should try to get along and we should try to pull in the same direction for the good of the country."

Full marks for her on this. Good luck, Mrs Clinton.



## **A chink may yet be appearing in Burma's obstinacy**

Writer: THANIDA TANSUBHAPOL

Published: 27/07/2009 at 12:00 AM

Newspaper section: News

The Burma and North Korea issues have been in the spotlight at Asean meetings for more than a decade. The "issues" vary from meeting to meeting, depending on what is happening with these countries at the time. Mostly, Burma would be brought up at the meetings because of its strong opposition to human rights within the country. There seems to be no sustainable solution to the problems although the regime always tries to appease its Asean neighbours by releasing a number of political prisoners prior to the conferences.

The perennial barb, however, is the continued detention of the opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who is now facing trial for an alleged violation of her house arrest rules after an American man swam across the river to her home. Burma has given some hope to the international community by announcing a national reconciliation process and its peaceful transition to democracy, as envisaged in the seven-step road map to democracy, in particular the adoption of the State Constitution of 2008 by referendum which will lead to a general election next year. It will be the first national election after the regime refused the overwhelming victory of Ms Suu Kyi in 1990.

But without Ms Suu Kyi joining in the 2010 election, it will be worthless. Asean's goal of becoming one community by 2015 is approaching and if the 2010 election in Burma fails, the hopes and dreams for all 10 Asean members to become a homogeneous community might remain just that - a dream. A diplomat who attended the Asean meeting last week said the grouping's members conveyed to Burma that the atmosphere was not good and Burma had to do something to break its silence. Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya said that in this meeting, Burmese Foreign Minister Nyan Win learnt that "his country is a major factor in moving Asean forward".

"It is the duty of Asean and Burma to push the grouping together to become a community," Mr Kasit said. For the first time, Asean asked Nyan Win to convey the sentiment to the Burmese leadership. The action came after Asean foreign ministers felt concerned that their joint call for changes in Burma might not reach the ears of the Burmese leader Snr Gen Than Shwe. Nobody can tell how receptive the Burmese leaders will be to what the outside world has been demanding. Many demands were made in the past but no actions were taken by the regime. The many joint communiques of Asean and the chairman's statement from the Asean Plus Three - Japan, China and South Korea - as well as ARF throughout the years reaffirm that the Burmese government must hold a free, fair and inclusive election in 2010 in order to lay down a good foundation for future social and economic development.

They reiterated their calls for the Burmese government to immediately release all political prisoners, including Ms Suu Kyi to pave the way for genuine reconciliation and meaningful dialogue involving all parties. "Asean ministers were afraid that the Burmese leader might choose to acknowledge only the positive reaction from Asean such as its welcoming of the recent visit of UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon or the thanks for Burma's cooperation in allowing outsiders to help its people after Cyclone Nargis," said a source who attended the meeting. The source admitted the atmosphere in the meeting rooms was better than the past year as there was not any pressure on Burma.

"The atmosphere was full of cogency and pertinent to the real reason [of the need for change in Burma]. There were more frank discussions than in the past," the source said. This was reflected in the offer of Asean and members of ARF to work with Burma to promote democracy, human rights and the well-being of her people. At the same time, it was hoped that Burma would also be responsive to the international community's concerns, according to Mr Kasit. Nyan Win, however, told his Asean counterparts on Monday that pressure from the outside world and economic sanctions were hampering Burma's democratisation and development efforts.

According to the same source, Asean was in the process of persuading Burma to change its situation. "Having Asean to help Burma in its democratisation is better than fighting it," the source said. This message was released during the ARF meeting in which the US also participated. Mr Kasit emphasised that Asean members wanted to help one another and resolve internal problems within the bloc's family without recourse to the international community. Asean's new approach towards Burma at this meeting is its ministers have agreed to take turns to engage the Burmese leadership soon and if the Burmese government would allow outsiders to observe its elections next year, Asean should be the first grouping to do so, the source said.

Asean is expected to receive a positive response from Burma before the annual United Nations General Assembly in New York in September where all Asean foreign ministers will gather, the source added. If Asean is a pull factor for Burma, the US is working as a push one. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton urged Burma to release Ms Suu Kyi in exchange for direct investment from the United States. "If she were released, that would open up opportunities at least for my country to expand our relationship with Burma, including investments in Burma," she said.

Pornpimon Trichote, a Burmese expert, said she was not surprised at the US shift as new US President Barack Obama used to hint that the US policy towards Burma might change. "The US might change some approaches towards Burma but its principles would remain the same. However, I believe Burma might not be in a hurry to reciprocate on what the US has to offer as the relationship of both countries has been estranged for a long time," she said, adding that Burma never cared for the US as it is friends with other powers like China, Russia and North Korea.

If things go according to plan, these push and pull factors could eventually help create more space to deal with Burma after the election next year, she said. "The US might face an impasse as the sanctions have produced nothing for many years. If it has not changed its position, it has nowhere to go," she said, adding it was likely condemnation of Burma will be softer after this.

## ASEAN AND SOUTH KOREA A PERFECT FIT

Writer: RAY FERGUSON

Published: 27/06/2009 at 12:00 AM

Newspaper section: Business

In the first part of this article on June 20, on Asean-South Korea trade, we reviewed the need to develop trade between the two economic blocs. Today we look at how these trade ties have developed over the years. The developing nations of Asean need this capital, advanced technology, skill sets and financial expertise. In return, Asean offers South Korea its expanding marketplace which has the potential to replace consumers in the West, who are tightening their purse strings in the face of the economic crisis.

The synergies make Asean and South Korea a perfect fit as partners. Not surprisingly, businesses on both sides of the spectrum have seized the opportunity and boosted trade and investments over the past decade. South Korean powerhouses Samsung, Hyundai and LG have made deep inroads into Southeast Asia, investing in plants and dealership networks, creating thousands of jobs and developing local technical and commercial skills.

South Korea's shipping giants Hanjin and Hyundai Merchant Marine have set up regional operational headquarters while its electronics multinationals, Samsung and LG, have established regional treasury hubs in Singapore. South Korean construction companies Samsung, Hyundai and Daewoo regularly bid for large infrastructure contracts across the region.

Meanwhile, the South Korean government has used more than \$700 million of economic aid over the past decade to help alleviate poverty, build institutions and impart technical training in Southeast Asia as part of its goal to close the wide development gap between the relatively well-off members and the less-developed members of the grouping.

Conversely, Southeast Asia's leading resource companies have forged partnerships with Korean counterparts and gained share in one of Asia's biggest markets for basic materials. Indonesia's Pertamina, for instance, is one of the biggest providers of natural gas to the Korean market, making it one of the country's leading sources of energy.

The remarkable growth in business ties have been captured in recent data. Trade between the two sides have expanded 11-fold over the past two decades to \$90.2 billion in 2008, with South Korean exports to Asean having a slight edge. President Lee said at the Jeju summit he expects bilateral trade to surge to \$150 billion by 2015. Asean's six largest economies - Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines and Vietnam -

currently account for 90% of this trade. South Korea's trade with these six economies have more than tripled since 1999.

South Korea's biggest trading partners in Asean are Singapore (\$30 billion in 2008) and Malaysia (\$15 billion), but trade with Vietnam and Thailand are catching up. The growth in trade has been so rapid in recent years that Asean is now South Korea's third-largest trading partner, after the EU and China, surpassing the US and Japan. South Korea is Asean's fifth-largest trading partner.

The partnership has evolved from trade links to investments. South Korea's direct investments in the rest of Asia have multiplied five-fold over the past 10 years, amounting to \$10.8 billion in 2008. Asean was the second-largest recipient of these investments, with Vietnam one of the largest beneficiaries due to its low-cost base and skilled labour.

In May, Doosan Heavy Industries inaugurated a \$300-million plant in central Vietnam, aiming to develop it into a global production hub for components for its power-generation and water businesses. Next door, in Thailand, Samsung and LG have set up "strategic" global manufacturing bases for electronics products.

Trade and investment flows will get a fillip as South Korea moves to implement the free-trade agreement (FTA) it signed with Asean for goods in 2006 and for trade in services in 2007. The aim is for tariff to fall to zero for most products by 2010 for South Korea's trade with Singapore, Thailand, Brunei, Malaysia, Indonesia and Philippines. This week, both sides also signed an agreement on investments, completing four years of FTA negotiations.

Indeed, the establishment of the South Korea-Asean FTA is in line with a flurry of activities in bilateral and regional FTAs following the stalemate of WTO's Doha Round of talks. Besides the agreement with South Korea, Asean has also established bilateral FTAs with China, India and Japan.

On top of these FTAs, the expansion of the Chiang Mai initiative - originally a network of bilateral currency swap line agreements, and now a \$120-billion multilateral framework involving Asean, China, Korea and Japan - is another sign of the commitment of major Asian economic powers towards achieving greater financial co-operation and stability in the region. Korea is expected to contribute \$19 billion out of the \$120 billion pool.

The positive message coming out from this is that South Korea and other Asian governments still see considerable value and importance of free trade and capital flows despite the ongoing economic downturn. Indeed, Asia is setting the pace for the rapidly changing world order and South Korea and the Asean region, in many ways, are catalysts of this change. Both are reaching out beyond their borders, trying to capitalise on each other's strengths, to benefit from Asia's redoubtable economic prospects in the coming decades.

Leaders assembled in Jeju this week reiterated their resolve to push this course. It is reassuring to see that it is not just the Korean cultural wave, the "Hallyu" - manifested through Korean hip-hop music, films and movie celebrities and cuisine - travelling across Asia that dominated discussions. Business people and diplomats attending the meet had the rising tide of Korean investments across Asia on the top of their minds.

This is the second of a two-part series from Standard Chartered Bank on Asean-South Korea trade. Ray Ferguson is Regional Chief Executive Officer for Southeast Asia with Standard Chartered Bank.

# The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

## Can ASEAN survive in the post-American world?

Ary Hermawan , The Jakarta Post , Jakarta | Thu, 07/16/2009 1:36 PM | World

The world is not as it was a decade ago: before 9/11, before the Iraq War, and, most fundamentally, before the strategic influence of the United States - once the sole global superpower - faded and "the rest" began to rise.

ASEAN, the 10-member group of Southeast Asian countries, was then struggling amid the Asian financial crisis. Incredibly, it survived, but is it ready to face the challenges posed by today's new world order?

Amitav Acharya, professor of international affairs at American University's School of International Service, said the association is facing new global challenges, but has yet to resolve old regional challenges, which have long undermined its development.

"At the global level, we all know about the rise of China. It's a challenge because it changes the picture, the international distribution of power and influence," he said at the inaugural ASEAN Secretariat Policy Forum at the association's secretariat in Jakarta on Tuesday.

As ASEAN faces new challenges from the north, it also has to cope with India, another emerging Asian power.

"\*ASEAN\* projected a major role in regional diplomacy when China was down and India was out. But now the two countries, which have historically been major influences on Southeast Asian cultures, have come back."

China has overwhelmed the world with its rampant economic development, which has had a huge impact on the East Asian region. The Wall Street Journal wrote in a 2002 editorial that, "Whereas 10 years ago, 80 percent of total investment in East Asia headed to ASEAN countries and 20 percent went to China, now those ratios have reversed. Southeast Asia is in a danger of becoming a backwater."

China's military build-up has long alarmed ASEAN countries, which share both land and sea borders with the dragon to the north. Backed by its strong economy, the country has grown strategically more influential in the region.

The question is, what will ASEAN do if rivalry between India and China escalates? "The best option for ASEAN is not to take sides in the competition, and not to approach either power unilaterally; it has to approach India and China as a group, rather than half of ASEAN siding with

China, half of ASEAN siding with India. That would be devastating for ASEAN," Acharya said.

Competition between China and India is only one threat. Acharya said people have begun to familiarize themselves with terms such as "multi-polarity" and "non-polarity" - which are indicative of the emergence of the post-American world. He said it was not impossible that a new Cold War (between China and the US) would emerge.

Rivalries and protracted border disputes among member states raise questions over the ability of ASEAN countries to act multilaterally, Acharya warned.

Indonesia is a key member in ASEAN, without which the grouping would hardly be able to prevail, but there is no guarantee the region's largest nation will continue to focus its foreign policy on the bloc. "Why doesn't Indonesia play its role in the G20 instead of the ASEAN-10? G20 is far more prestigious than ASEAN-10," Acharya said.

Indonesian Institute of Science researcher Dewi Fortuna Anwar highlighted the important role Indonesia plays in determining the future of ASEAN. "When Indonesia became a democracy, it changed the nature of ASEAN," she said, citing former president B.J. Habibie's role in changing the dynamic between member states by calling Singapore a 'red dot' and triggering discourse on the need to develop a regional security community.

As Thailand flounders politically and Malaysia and Singapore undergo political transitions, Indonesia is expected to play an even greater role in projecting ASEAN's future goals.

Rizal Sukma, executive director of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, has proposed Indonesia develop a post-ASEAN foreign policy, saying the nation had imprisoned itself in the "golden cage" of ASEAN for decades.

"ASEAN should no longer be treated as the sole cornerstone of Indonesia's foreign policy. For Indonesia, ASEAN should constitute only one of the available platforms through which we can attain and fulfill our national interests," Rizal wrote in The Jakarta Post.

But despite the challenges, Acharya said he was upbeat ASEAN, which is set to form a community in 2015, would play a major role in Southeast Asia and the Asia-Pacific.

"But there is a real need to ensure that the initiatives of the past decade are fully implemented and their provisions complied with member states," he said.

"ASEAN's future credibility depends on how it carries out the goals and priorities it has set for itself, goals that are innovative and important, but which face daunting challenges from internal as well external forces."

Copyright © 2008 The Jakarta Post - PT Bina Media Tenggara. All Rights Reserved.

---

**Source URL:** <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/07/16/can-asean-survive-postamerican-world.html-0>



# The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

## Reconstructing ASEAN: Challenges for the 21st Century

Amitav Acharya , Jakarta | Sat, 07/18/2009 1:52 PM | Opinion

Ten years ago, Southeast Asia was still reeling from the Asian financial crisis of 1997, with millions of people impoverished, President Soeharto driven out of office, and ASEAN economies wrecked. The East Asian Miracle had been jolted, Asian values discredited, the ASEAN Way undermined. ASEAN's reputation as a cohesive regional organization was in tatters.

There were bilateral tensions between Singapore and Malaysia and Singapore and Indonesia, as well as between Indonesia and Malaysia. Indonesia was still undergoing a political revolution, its future uncertain, both as a nation state and as a leading member of ASEAN. Questions were being asked about ASEAN's future without Soeharto.

This was also a period where a series of transnational threats begun to challenge Southeast Asia. Aside from the financial crisis, there was the Bali terrorist bombings in 2002 and 2003, the SARS pandemic in 2003, the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004. These were challenges that came at short notice and respected no national boundaries.

Fast forward to ten years later, in 2009. There have been many changes, but some continuities. There is a global (not regional) financial crisis, a crisis that cannot be blamed on ASEAN, but on Western countries, especially the US. Indonesia has not only survived as a nation, but a few days ago proved itself to have become a consolidated democracy. It is no longer a "nation-in-waiting" but an "nation achieving".

ASEAN has been reconstructed, having adopted the goal of becoming a community of three pillars (ASEAN Economic Community, ASEAN Political-Security Community, and ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community). It had adopted a Charter in 2007. Jakarta is still engaged in ASEAN. Many outside powers have now appointed ambassadors to ASEAN.

So why worry about the future of ASEAN? Despite the positive developments since 1999, ASEAN faces new challenges, and some old problems persist. Let me identify several of those, both at global and regional levels.

There is the inexorable rise of China and India, to an extent not foreseen in 1999. ASEAN is a group of weak states who could shape regional order when China was down and India was out. As these two powers, which have historically shaped Southeast Asia's destiny, reassert themselves, what is the fate of ASEAN?

More important is the decline of the US. 1999 was still the "unipolar moment". 9/11 and the

invasion of Iraq had not happened. The subprime crisis in the US leading to the collapse of major banks had not happened. While the US did not create ASEAN, it had US had provided a strategic umbrella which had underpinned ASEAN's growth. What is the future of ASEAN in the post-American world?

Global institutional arrangements are in a deep flux, with the G-8 being challenged by various new formulations, G-20, G-5, G-2, but no G-1. The future world order is variously described as "multipolar", "non-polar", "post-American" "apolar", but there is no agreement on how it will evolve.

At the regional level, the challenges to ASEAN include the unresolved political situation in Myanmar, the bilateral dispute between Thailand and Cambodia over Preah Vihear temple complex, and the Indonesia-Malaysia dispute over Ambalat.

Added to this is the internal instability in several ASEAN member states. While Indonesia is good news, Thailand, an old stalwart of ASEAN, is not. And there are question marks over the political stability and succession in Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore.

Moreover, there have been new transnational issues, such as the global financial crisis, the H1N1 flu, Cyclone Nargis that devastated Myanmar in 2008. Who knows what comes next. In conclusion, it can be argued that while ASEAN survived the crisis of 1997 and moved on, or even moved forward, its progress cannot be taken for granted. There are some dark clouds.

ASEAN must do two things to remain relevant. First, it must keep its promises by implementing the Blueprint for an ASEAN community faithfully. The Blueprint and the ASEAN Charter contain some great ideas, but ideas are useless unless implemented. ASEAN should improved compliance of its members to its new provisions, rules and mechanisms.

Second, ASEAN must make new efforts to deal with new challenges. We live in an era of rapid and unexpected developments. ASEAN should seize the moment or fade away as a new regional and global leadership takes over.

Who knows, Indonesia might get so disillusioned with ASEAN that it might dump the ASEAN-10 in favor of the G-20 to which it also belongs? Above all, ASEAN must maintain intra-mural unity in dealing with the great powers.

*The writer is Professor of International Relations at American University in Washington, DC. This article is adapted from his speech to the inaugural ASEAN Secretariat Policy Forum, held on July 14, 2009 in Jakarta, where ASEAN Secretary General Surin Pitsuwan also launched the 2nd edition of his book: Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order (Routledge, 2001, 2009).*

Copyright © 2008 The Jakarta Post - PT Bina Media Tenggara. All Rights Reserved.

---

**Source URL:** <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/07/18/reconstructing-asean-challenges-21st-century.html>

# The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

## Terrorist attacks rekindle Indonesians' anxieties

Ben Stocking , The Associated Press , Jakarta | Sun, 07/19/2009 1:14 PM | National

The terrorist attacks that struck two luxury hotels in the capital have shaken ordinary Indonesians who had grown more confident after waves of arrests had left the nation's al-Qaida-linked militant network seriously weakened.

Coming four years after the country's last serious terrorist attack, Friday's twin suicide bombings at the J.W. Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels in Jakarta unleashed a new wave of anxiety in the world's largest Muslim-majority country.

"I am shocked by these bombings," said Razif Harahap, 45, a Jakarta graduate student said Sunday. "The same people who carried out these attacks could launch another one, because the mastermind is still at large. We have to be careful."

Police have yet to name a suspect in the bombings, but the method, target and type of bombs used in the attacks immediately raised suspicions of involvement by the Jemaah Islamiyah terrorist group and Noordin M. Top, the fugitive Malaysian national who heads a particularly violent offshoot of the network.

The latest attacks killed seven, plus the two suspected attackers, and wounded 50, many of them foreigners.

Police said they were following leads in the Cilacap region of Central Java, where explosives were reportedly found buried in a garden last week at the house of Noordin's father-in-law, who is also at large.

Investigators have been examining body parts and other forensic evidence from Friday's attacks in an attempt to identify the two suspected bombers, one of whom is believed to be Indonesian.

Their bodies were badly damaged in the explosions - they were decapitated by the force - and confirming their identity could help determine if they knew Noordin.

Officials have identified five of the dead - three from Australia, one from New Zealand and one from Indonesia. The Health Ministry initially reported the death of a Singaporean, but police said they were unable to confirm that.

Among the dead was Craig Senger, the first Australian government official to be killed in a terrorist attack, the Australian Associated Press quoted Prime Minister Kevin Rudd as saying on Sunday.

Senger worked as a Trade Commission office at the embassy in Jakarta.

Officials said 17 foreigners were among the wounded, including eight Americans and citizens of Australia, Britain, Canada, Hong Kong, India, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and South Korea.

Jemaah Islamiyah militants rose to prominence after the 2002 nightclub bombings in the beach resort of Bali that killed 202 people, most of them foreigners.

It staged attacks in Indonesia in each of the next three years: a 2003 car bombing outside the J.W. Marriott, a 2004 truck bombing outside the Australian Embassy, and triple suicide bombings on Bali restaurants by attackers carrying bombs in backpacks in 2005.

After the government launched a major anti-terrorism campaign, no major attacks had been reported since then - until Friday's explosions.

While Friday's attacks rekindled old anxieties, Indonesians interviewed Sunday said they did not believe the bombings signaled a resurgence of strength by the militants, who want to establish an Islamic state in the region.

Indonesia has the world's largest Muslim population, but the Islamist extremists enjoy little support among the nation's largely moderate public.

The terrorists do not have enough money and support to launch another major attack soon, said Agus Triharso, 40, a motorbike taxi driver in Jakarta.

"Noordin Top and his friends have support from just a few hard-line Muslims," Triharso said. "As Muslims, we have to stop them."

---

Copyright © 2008 The Jakarta Post - PT Bina Media Tenggara. All Rights Reserved.

**Source URL:** <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/07/19/terrorist-attacks-rekindle-indonesians039-anxieties.html>

# The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

## Kalla blames unbalanced prosperity in Muslim world for terror attacks

Andra Wisnu , The Jakarta Post , Jakarta | Mon, 07/27/2009 6:45 PM | National

Vice President Jusuf Kalla blames the skewed level of prosperity between rich and poor Islamic countries for terrorist attacks in the world, urging leaders of Islamic countries to work together to spread wealth.

In a seminar held by the World Islamic People's Leadership (WIPL) in Jakarta, Monday, Kalla asked attendants and delegates from Islamic countries, to work towards balancing the prosperity of Muslims.

He used the example of imbalances that occurred when oil prices skyrocketed above US\$140 (Rp 1.3 million) per barrel last year. He said the hike in oil prices created misery for the majority of Muslims living in developed countries, while a small number of other Muslims profited.

"Seventy percent of Muslims living in developed countries were so miserable. And yet 20 percent of Muslims profited from the rise in oil prices," he told delegates at the seminar at Sahid Jaya Hotel, Jakarta.

He said that disparities of wealth had fueled terror attacks as many of the terrorists' pawns came from poor and downtrodden families, looking for a cause to fight for.

Indonesia became a victim of a terrorist bombing earlier this month. Suicide bombers entered the Marriot and the Ritz-Carlton hotels in Kuningan, South Jakarta. The attack killed seven people, some of whom were expatriates, and wounded 50 others.

He said leaders of Islamic countries must work to change the differences in wealth to create more balanced states, adding that the leaders had more to lose if they did not pursue such policies.

"Terrorism creates a lot of losses. With a bomb that only costs 7,000 dollars, terrorists can incur losses of nearly 25 million dollars," he said.

---

Copyright © 2008 The Jakarta Post - PT Bina Media Tenggara. All Rights Reserved.

**Source URL:** <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/07/27/kalla-blames-unbalanced-prosperity-muslim-world-terror-attacks.html>

[Election 2009](#)[Paper Edition](#)[Weekender](#)[About Us](#)[Contact Us](#)

# The Jakarta Post

[Home](#) [Headlines](#) [Jakarta](#) [Opinion](#) [National](#) [World](#) [Business](#) [Sports](#) [Sci-Tech](#) [Education](#) 1

Tuesday, July 28, 2009 2:46 PM

[Be a member & get the benefits!](#) [Register](#) or [login](#)

## Air Force opens new base near Ambalat

Andi Hajramurni | The Jakarta Post | Tarakan | Tue, 07/28/2009 2:14 PM | The Archipelago

In anticipation of future security concerns regarding the nation's borders with Malaysia, particularly around the disputed maritime zone of Ambalat, the Indonesian Military (TNI) officially opened an air force base in Tarakan, East Kalimantan, on Monday.

Air Force chief of operational command Rear Marshall Yushan Sayuti said the new air base would ensure the effectiveness of military patrols in the areas around Ambalat, which both Indonesia and Malaysia have laid claim to.

"We build the Tarakan air base to bolster our border patrols, security and control, especially at the Ambalat block," he said at the inaugural ceremony for the air base.

Yushan said the TNI did not want to trigger "hostilities" with Malaysia regarding Ambalat, but warned that any country encroaching on Indonesia's sovereignty would meet resistance from its military forces.

"We are not hostile toward Malaysia or any other country but we will defend our country's sovereignty from any kind of threat, especially against our air territory," he said.

So far the TNI has controlled Ambalat from its air force base in Balikpapan, East Kalimantan, which is a fair distance from the disputed area.

The TNI reportedly stated that the distance of that base made patrolling and controlling the area "less than optimal".

Yushan said that apart from strengthening the security at the border area, the Tarakan air force base would also monitor threats against the country's natural resources in the area. Illegal logging and mining activities are rife throughout in that area, he said.

The Air Force is planning to assign up to 250 personnel to the Tarakan air base and send F-5 and F-16 fighter jets where necessary.

The air base is commanded by Lt. Col. Erwan Andrian, who was installed during Monday's inauguration ceremony.

The Jakarta Post observed Monday that several office buildings and the commander's official residence had been built at the 168-hectare air base complex, but so far no housing for Air Force personnel has been completed. That infrastructure, including support facilities, is expected to be complete by 2012.

[Comments \(0\)](#) | [Post comment](#)
[A](#) | [A](#) | [A](#) | [✉](#) | [📄](#) | [👤](#) | [📺](#) | [📱](#) | [📺](#) | [📺](#) | [📺](#)

# The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

## 'We've done much and made progress on anti-terrorism'

Hassan Wirajuda , , Phuket, Thailand | Tue, 07/28/2009 1:38 PM | Opinion

Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the ARF has been actively promoting regional and international cooperation to combat extremism and terrorism.

And yet, since July 2008 until this month there were at least 94 terrorist incidents in Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia and Southwest Asia - from Indonesia in the south to China in the north, and from Pakistan in the west to the Philippines in the East. Terrorism remains a real threat to regional and international peace and security.

We have done much to combat terrorism. Considerable progress was made. We must vigorously implement the ARF Work Plan on Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crimes. But the gloomy statistics of incidents and casualties show that we need to do more.

Last Friday, early in the morning, international terrorism once again struck with deadly ferocity in our region - this time, again, in Jakarta. And this time, nine innocent persons lost their lives and scores were wounded.

The target of the attack was not any individual or particular group. The target was Indonesian society - a society that is overwhelmingly made up of moderate Muslims, a society that is democratic and growing more democratic every day - as evidenced in our recent peaceful, fair and free parliamentary and presidential elections.

The attack had no significant effect on Indonesia's social, economic or political life. As in previous terrorist attacks that we suffered, we will bring the perpetrators to justice. We will do so without sacrificing our commitment to democratic due process, rule of law and respect of human rights.

The terrorists have not changed anything in Indonesia. They have therefore failed once again.

But the threat remains - because there are people who distort the teachings of Islam for their political ends - who do not believe in the nation-state concept - and who are trying to build a Caliphate of Southeast Asia in this region.

They are Indonesians, Singaporeans and Malaysians, Filipinos, and perhaps some Thais. They used to have training camps in southern Philippines. Many of them are veterans of the Afghan war in the 1980s. That's how they got connected with al-Qaeda. That's what the Jamaah Islamiyah is all about.

They justify their brutality by foisting themselves as avengers of injustice not only here but

elsewhere in the world. They gain followers by capitalizing on the grievances of the poor, the ignorant and those blinded by the heat of conflict.

Bring to a peaceful end the conflicts in Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan as well as pockets of local armed conflicts in this region - you take away the wind from the sails of terrorist recruitment.

The terrorists have only one advantage. To frustrate their violence, the government must succeed one hundred percent of the time. The terrorists need to breach a security system only once to carry out a massacre.

But they can be defeated. And I believe that if we can defeat them here, they will also be defeated everywhere else in the world - in South Asia, in the Middle East, in Europe.

We will win if we work hard together. By "we" I mean all nations and all sectors of society.

We will win not through law enforcement alone but also by empowering the moderates in our society and by strengthening their voice of moderation.

The results of the recent Indonesian elections show the failure of militant Islamists and the strength of moderate Islam.

From the Indonesian experience we know that democracy is also part of the solution.

Through sincere dialogue that empowers the moderates, through the redress of legitimate grievances, and through skilful and sophisticated police work - we will defeat the terrorists.

To those who conveyed their condolences to us and to the loved ones of the victims, we in Indonesia are deeply grateful.

To those who are helping us fight the terrorists through various forms of assistance, we thank you sincerely. Let us fight on!

Again, I thank you for all the support that you have given and will continue to give to Indonesia. Thank you.

*The writer is Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. The article is an excerpt of the minister's speech at the 16th ASEAN Regional Forum, Phuket, Thailand, on July 23, 2009.*

Copyright © 2008 The Jakarta Post - PT Bina Media Tenggara. All Rights Reserved.

---

**Source URL:** <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/07/28/we039ve-done-much-and-made-progress-antiterrorism039.html>



# The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

## What lies ahead for RI's counter-terrorism policy

Ali Abdullah Wibisono, Jakarta | Tue, 07/28/2009 10:48 AM | Opinion

They came without a warning, lamented Chief of State Intelligence Agency (BIN) Syamsir Siregar while commenting on the bombs that ransacked the JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton hotels on July 17, killing nine people and wounding scores of others.

Some Indonesians are wondering why one earth is this happening in Indonesia? Why are those terrorists, linked to Jamaah Islamiyah (JI) and al-Qaeda, targetting Indonesia? Former chief of the police's anti-terror task force Brig. Gen. (ret) Suryadharma Salim said that as funding to fight terrorism was scarce in Indonesia, this poor nation had to "surrender" to being not only a training ground but also a target for terrorists in the region.

While this is technically true, this author believes the reason Indonesia was chosen for those attacks is more fundamental. Basing the threat of terrorism merely on the frequency of attacks, and considering the threat as low when there are no attacks, is totally misinformed. Unfortunately terrorists have identified the weakness in this thought process and utilized it to their success.

This framework has been adopted by many policy makers and has clearly led to repeated attacks in Indonesia. The choice of Indonesia as a stage or "practice field" for terrorist attacks is simply the result of the absence of a counterterrorism policy in Indonesia.

Could it be true that our intelligence agencies totally failed to collect and analyze the necessary information that would have sent an early warning to other security forces and the government? Or did they actually have the information but failed to warn the police?

It is true that in developed countries, intelligence successes are not publicized and failures are often scrutinized, but like it or not, if there is anything popular about our intelligence agencies, it is their capacity to serve whatever the incumbent government requires to stay in power.

The government must ensure its legitimacy does not depend on projecting false positive images that everything is "under control", but on its actual ability to provide security for its citizens.

Counter-terrorism measures in developed countries have been implemented through effective policies and mechanisms so as to avoid repeat terrorist attacks. Terrorist attacks have never occurred in the US since Sept. 11, 2001, and occurred only once in Spain and Britain since then.

This has not been the case in Indonesia, where terrorist attacks have repeatedly occurred since the Christmas Eve bombing in 2000. Indonesia's counter-terrorism effort is still considered reactive

and falls victim to terrorist masterminds. Simply uncovering terrorists hideouts and explosives is not sufficient to stop terrorists.

A bomb is a weapon of choice, but so is a hammer or a paper cutter. Uncovering terrorist plots, trafficking of weapons, money and personnel into and from Indonesia should be the top priority for our security forces, the intelligence community and the police.

The July 17 bombings must be a turning point for our counter-terrorism policy. But let us first be clear about how we should frame the issue of terrorism as national security. Addressing terrorism through the lense of domestic power politics will be reckless and counterproductive, leading to useless rounds of blame-games and ridiculous speculations.

The enemy is clear. There are terror cells still operating in Southeast Asia. Four key figures are still at large, including leader of JI splinter group and al-Qaeda East Asia Network Noordin M. Top, military commander Zulkarnaen, bomb-making expert Dulmatin and recruitment specialist Umar Patek. These individuals are a few of the remaining figures that still aspire to commit terror attacks in Indonesia.

While analysts have suggested that JI as a whole is too fractured and under-resourced to organize an attack, it is unwise to suggest that future attacks are unlikely. Maintaining an organization requires an array of logistical operators, ideologues, trainers, recruiters and "foot soldiers", but an isolated attack can be carried out by a handful of individuals.

More to the point, observing JI's pattern of activity requires regional security level analysis. Just two weeks before the July 17 bombing, Mindanao in the Philippines was hit by three blasts using similar methods. The scope of Noordin's network is not exclusively to Indonesia, but to the whole of Southeast Asia.

The release of more than a hundred JI members from prisons upon completing their sentences and undergoing some forms of rehabilitation may strengthen JI's militant faction.

It is not difficult to imagine them joining Noordin's faction or other splinter groups that have managed to dodge Indonesian security agencies, which may have been "energized" by violent attacks on the Marriott and Ritz-Carlton.

There are signs the counter-terrorism policy will be better in the future. Indonesia's urban society has proved its psychological resilience to events such as terrorist attacks. Londoners proved their resilience to the July 7, 2005 bus bombing as they walked the streets and ran their businesses as usual the day after. Britons are indeed "well-trained" to resist sudden shock-waves since World War II.

It is the new government's responsibility to ensure this resilience is durable by using Indonesia's potential optimally. Western nations have seen Indonesia is capable of avoiding the global economic crisis by strengthening international trade, inviting foreign investors, and creating stability in its financial sector.

However, our economic achievements are still considered as underwhelming with regards to our potential, given our abundant stock of natural resources and workforce. Anti-corruption policies,

empowerment and protection of the middle to lower economy, and a healthy investment environment should be the priority of the next presidency, thus creating resilience towards terror attacks.

Lastly, a working policy on counter-terrorism is also the constant subject of a heated debate that even advanced democracies are facing. President Obama's hesitance to fulfill his own executive order to close down terrorists detention facilities in Guantanamo is a testament to this.

Despite US soldiers' alleged torturing of prisoners in Guantanamo bay and its detaining of 240 people who are not terrorists, the facility has helped America keep the most dangerous individuals to its national security at bay. America's Gitmo problem reflects the difficulty in balancing effectiveness and accountability, which we must devote our attention to if we want to save our democracy, the true nemesis of terrorism.

*The writer is a lecturer in International Relations Department, University of Indonesia.*

Copyright © 2008 The Jakarta Post - PT Bina Media Tenggara. All Rights Reserved.

---

**Source URL:** <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/07/28/what-lies-ahead-ri%E2%80%99s-counterterrorism-policy.html>

## Opinion

---

### Aiming to bring people together again in the south

Published on July 17, 2009

**A multi-faith and multicultural society is something that really exists in Thailand but Thais are unaware of it because, since the era of democracy, the Thai elite has implanted and imposed a monoculture to make all citizens of the kingdom Thai, rather than allowing them to be as they are.**

The idea of a monoculture began in the late 1950s during the regime of Field Marshal Plaek Pibulsongkram, to assimilate Muslim Malays within Thai society or, in other words, to force people in the southernmost provinces to become Thai. The policy enforcement consequently created frustration for the Muslim Malay population and has resulted in a number of resistance groups that persist up to the present day.

Violence in the South erupted at the beginning of 2004 and has left more than 3,500 people dead so far. Some in the Thai bureaucracy mull over the concept of a multi-faith and multicultural society being a solution to allow people in the deep South to live in harmony with the vast majority of Buddhist Thais in the rest of the country.

The Foreign Ministry's American and South Pacific Affairs Department took 20 community leaders, both Buddhist and Muslim, from the deep South to visit Australia in July, to show them how a multicultural system works.

They learnt from a series of lectures by government officials, community leaders, religious leaders, academics, non-governmental organisations and workers that Australia is home to many races, faiths, cultures and languages.

Of Australia's 21 million people, 42 per cent are either born, or have parents born, in another country. In fact, Australia is a country of migration. Beside indigenous people, its citizens come from 200 countries around the world, speak hundreds of languages, and follow nearly 100 religions and sects.

Stepan Kerkyasharian, chairperson and chief executive officer of New South Wales's Community Relations Commission, told the delegation from Thailand that Australia had three options when dealing with its new multicultural society. First, ignore it and do nothing - which may have risked conflicts and clashes. Second, decide what should be the sole identity or national characteristic and how people should behave - but again, there would

have been difficult consequences if some refused to comply. Third, create and foster a multicultural society in which all groups live in harmony.

Australia chose the third option, allowing people of different races, religions, languages and ethnicity to live together in peace and harmony. Australian citizenship is based on shared "values" that are common for everyone in the country, Kerkyasharian said.

The term "value" is very subjective, so the acceptable common values are defined by laws and regulations. For instance, the English language is the common language in Australia, but no law says it is the "official" language of the country, he said.

If people don't know English, the government is obligated to help them by hiring interpreters for them if they have problems with the police or at hospital, he said.

A Muslim leader from the deep South whispered while listening to the presentation that it would be good if Thailand enforced the same policy. Thai is the official language here. A proposal to have Malay as a "working" language in the southernmost provinces, where the majority of people are Malay, was immediately shot down by the elite in Bangkok.

In Australia, discrimination is against the law. The state governments have issued anti-discrimination laws to guarantee people will be treated equally. Nobody should get privileges because of their race, ethnicity, religion or language, Kerkyasharian said.

Communities themselves play significant roles in promoting the multicultural and multi-faith society by forming interfaith dialogue networks to give a better understanding among people of different backgrounds. The federal and state governments help with financial and moral support to promote the dialogue.

People are encouraged to take a leading role in their community without discrimination. Pinar Yesil, for example, was elected this year as the new mayor of greater Dandenong city. She is the first Muslim woman elected to the position in Victoria. Yesil is a Turk who was born in Australia in 1980. She went back to Turkey with her parents when she was six years old and returned to Australia again when she was 18 to continue her education. She settled and was elected leader of her community, where people from Bosnia-Herzegovina make up a significant proportion of the population.

The young mayor told the Thai delegation that good will, harmony and tolerance are key components in enabling people to live together peacefully.

In order to make a commitment on better understanding between communities and law-enforcement officers, Victoria's police set up a multicultural commission and a multi-faith council. The police commissioned officials to work with emerging multicultural communities, hoping to provide better police service and prevent crime. The commission is a helpful mechanism in enabling police to deal with people of different cultures and faiths, notably those who are newly arrived in Australia. The Victorian police have even dispatched officials to Sudan and the Thai-Burma border to prepare refugees for settlement in Australia.

Tuanbukharee Tokkubaha, an imam from Pattani's Puyud Mosque, praised Australia's multicultural society, saying people in the deep South understand the nature of a multicultural system and indeed lived under such conditions for a long time before the 2004 violence erupted.

"But somebody wanted to emphasise the difference and deepen the divide among people in the region," he said.

"The Thai government must trust the people and make people trust it," he said. To gain trust, the authorities must tell the truth, he added, referring a recent massacre at a Narathiwat mosque in which 10 men were killed while praying. "If the truth can be told about who was behind the massacre, people would trust the authorities", he said.

Tasneem Jehtu, a village head from Narathiwat, said the majority of Muslim Malays in the deep South do not want to separate but to live in harmony with the rest of the people in Thailand although they are culturally different.

"The violence that takes place is because of the government's ignorance. The majority of people in the deep South are poor and want education, while a small group wants the return of the Sultanate of Patani," she said.

The government should realise the differences among people and find proper ways to deal with this, she said. "Providing the same treatment to different people will never solve the problem," she said.

---

Privacy Policy © 2006 Nation Multimedia Group 

July 20, 2009 10:46 am (Thai local time)  
[www.nationmultimedia.com](http://www.nationmultimedia.com)

## Opinion

---

### EDITORIAL

### Keep extraneous issues out of the Asean meeting

Published on July 19, 2009

#### **Any mention of Thaksin risks derailing the proceedings, perhaps violently**

Thailand as the host and chair of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) should not allow any domestic controversies to dilute the substance of the Asean Ministerial Meeting in Phuket next week. Foreign ministers of Asean and their dialogue partners will have a series of discussions on the transformation of the group into a real legal-based regional community and many other important issues such as the deadly virus type-A (H1N1) pandemic and the ongoing global economic crisis.

Asean is in the process of becoming a community. Its charter came into force in December last year, and its economic, political-security and social communities are being established. The group aims to be a caring organisation, and terms of reference for the human-rights body are to be adopted by the foreign ministers during the Phuket meeting. The establishment of the mechanism will be officially announced at the 15th summit in October in Thailand.

The Asean Ministerial Meeting and Post Ministerial Conference in Phuket this week is also important for a high-profile dialogue partner like the United States, since Washington will sign in the Instruments of the Accession and Extension to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, a founding document of Asean, to foster the US role in the region.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will call a sideline meeting with Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam on Mekong-basin development and cross-border issues, suggesting a significant move by the US in the sub-region under the Asean footprint. Clinton will also take the opportunity to address US concern over political developments in Burma, notably the ongoing trial of opposition leader Aung San SuuKyi.

Every move during the Phuket meeting is significant and important for the future of Asean and its members. Nothing should overshadow the meeting.

Thailand took the position of rotating chairman of the group last year, and officials at the Foreign Ministry are already aiming high for many remarkable turning points in Asean. The group was born in Bangkok in 1967 as an ad-hoc grouping, and Thailand hoped that it

would turn into a legal-based international organisation in its native Bangkok last year.

The Asean charter really came into force with Thailand's chairmanship, but unfortunately the announcement could not be made in the Kingdom due to political difficulty after the airport closure by the protesting People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD), of which the current foreign minister Kasit Piromya is an active member and the Democrat Party a major supporter. The charter's announcement was scheduled for the 14th Asean summit due in Chiang Mai in December but was made at Asean headquarters in Jakarta instead.

Thailand's domestic political problems have hurt Asean again since then. The PAD's enemy red-shirt movement took revenge on the Democrat-led government by disrupting a major Asean summit with partners from Asia and the Pacific in Pattaya in April, storming into the meeting venue.

Internal political conflict is not over yet. The government has not given up its attempts to hunt down its foe former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, and Thaksin's supporters are not giving up either. The red shirts keep up anti-government protest.

They say they will not stage any protest in Phuket to disrupt the Asean meeting, but nobody believes them since Thaksin has called on them to take action against the meeting to discredit the government.

The military has stepped up restrictions and security measures to control the whole of Phuket island during the Asean meeting. Security is so tight as to disturb local people and tourists. The military has set up a lot of checkpoints on the island and will keep all unregistered vehicles off the island. The atmosphere in Phuket is almost like that in the restive South, where troops pop up everywhere hunting for insurgents.

The red shirts have not moved yet, but the opposition has begun to use the Asean event to campaign against the government. Pheu Thai spokesman Prompong Nopparit on Tuesday petitioned Clinton via the US Embassy accusing Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva's government of having no legitimacy to administer the country.

The government will not sit still and will take the opportunity of the Asean meeting to move against Thaksin, with Kasit in the chair informing his Asean counterparts of his government's stance on Thaksin and asking them to block Thaksin's movements.

The foreign minister used the forum of the Non-Aligned Movement in Egypt to move against Thaksin, meeting his counterparts from Malaysia and Montenegro to verify recent reports of the presence of the deposed premier in those countries. Thaksin claims he holds a Montenegrin passport and has stopped over in Kuala Lumpur with the protection of the Malaysian special branch.


Kasit may repeat his performance during the Asean meeting and thus provoke Thaksin's supporters to retaliate. If both sides spoil the Asean forum for their own political gain, the meeting will be overshadowed by a domestic issue. If the retaliation is strong, it could turn



into violence and disrupt the meeting.

The best way is for the government to concentrate on the substance of Asean and not try to bring Thaksin or anything related to Thaksin to Phuket.

---

Privacy Policy © 2006 Nation Multimedia Group 

July 20, 2009 10:38 am (Thai local time)

[www.nationmultimedia.com](http://www.nationmultimedia.com)

## Regional

---

### **Asean turns to Big 3 in setting up bond guarantees for private sector**

Published on July 20, 2009

**Asean plans to join China, Japan and South Korea in setting up a multibillion-dollar bond-guarantee fund so firms can more easily raise capital and invest in the region.**

"China, Japan and South Korea, have already committed to contributing to the fund with an initial size estimated at about US\$1 billion [Bt34.6 billion]," a source said last week.

Meanwhile in Thailand, the final draft of a national pension fund prepared by the Finance Ministry offers more incentives to savers. Earlier, finance ministers from the 10 Asean members and three East Asian countries assigned the Asian Development Bank to study the bond guarantee mechanism.

The source said officials from the three nations have said their governments were willing to pitch in. Due to their large foreign-exchange reserves, they would not find it difficult to finance the fund, the source said, adding that the fund would be designed to enhance the credit rating of corporate bonds issued by local firms.

"At the same time we will promote local currency denominated bonds in the Asean+3 countries," the source said.

The bond-guarantee fund will be submitted to the summit of Asean leaders and their counterparts in Phuket in October.

Earlier, Finance Minister Korn Chativaniij said central banks could only invest only in "AAA"-rated bonds, though he expects the fund to bolster the credit ratings of firms in the region and make them attractive to investors.

Asean and the three countries have already agreed to create a multilateral currency swap mechanism worth \$120 billion, and setting up the bond-guarantee fund will be another landmark agreement.

Korn is today meeting with senior officials to discuss plans for a national pension fund and other bond development measures.

Somchai Sujjapongse, director-general of the Fiscal Policy Office, said the office proposed a new rate for government contributions to the national pension fund, which will cover people in the informal sector who are not covered by existing retirement schemes such as the Social Security Fund or Government Pension Fund.

Under the final draft, savers are divided into three age groups: 20-30; 31-50; and 51-60. After joining, members would be required to contribute at least Bt100 per month, while the government chips in Bt50 for the first group, Bt80 for the second and Bt100 for the third group.

Upon retirement, members will receive a monthly payment of Bt2,500 plus the Bt500 elderly allowance, he said. Currently, each senior citizen is given Bt500 every month, which is not enough.

The national pension fund will cost about Bt20 billion in its first year, and more than 20 million people are expected to receive benefits under this new scheme.

Somchai said Korn would decide when he would propose the national pension fund to the Cabinet for approval before it is forwarded to the legislature. Korn had earlier vowed to present the bill to Parliament.

---

Privacy Policy © 2006 Nation Multimedia Group 

July 20, 2009 10:47 am (Thai local time)  
www.nationmultimedia.com

## Opinion

---

### THINK ASIAN

#### Why Asia has been missing out on the global value chain

Published on July 22, 2009

**ASIAN corporate strategies play a great role in the development of Asia, but their limitations are also the limitations to Asian growth. Asia's great success in its export-led manufacturing strategy is attributed historically to Asia being a monsoon economy. The seasonal nature of rice farming has led to Asians being culturally adept at working together in the fields and, in the dry season, in skilled handicrafts such as weaving. Thus the agricultural labour force adapted quickly to the arrival of assembly line manufacturing.**

Of course, forward-looking government policies to open up to foreign manufacturing, and attention to social infrastructure and education, helped to equip Asian economies. They learned and slowly moved up the value chain.

The Japanese export-led manufacturing strategy was successfully imitated throughout East Asia. In the famous flying geese formation, the four "Dragon" economies - Taiwan, Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore - were followed by four "Tigers" - Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia. These countries rapidly formed a global supply chain. China did not emerge as an export giant until the early 1990s, but today forms the core of the supply chain through its sheer size and market capacity. No regional corporation with global ambitions can ignore its China strategy.

South Asia took a slightly different path. Heavily influenced by Fabian socialist philosophy, the region adopted a protected import-substitution strategy, so that its manufacturing prowess could not compete with East Asia.

But India was able to find a market niche in IT services, exploiting its human talent in science and mathematics and in knowledge based work. Nevertheless, Indian manufacturers, particularly the family companies, have become formidable competitors globally in steel and other areas.

But the Asian corporate and economic strategy had a fundamental flaw. In mobilising savings to invest in manufacturing, East Asian governments typically protected the services and distribution sectors, so that the financial sectors were not well developed. The result is that trade surpluses generated from manufacturing exports remain largely utilised via

Western banks and the financial centres of London, New York, Hong Kong and Singapore, rather than through domestic capital markets.

Ultimately, this dualistic strategy - strong in manufacturing, weak in financial services - led to the Asian crisis and also the global imbalance. Of course, the Western banks also failed because they did not utilise their savings in a prudent manner. But Asians must understand where they failed before we can avoid the same mistakes.

As my forthcoming book - "From Asian to Global Financial Crisis" to be published by Cambridge University Press in the autumn - will demonstrate, the global supply chain is a network and the Asian and current financial crises are, in effect, network crises. First of all, Asian manufacturers learnt that Metcalfe's Law works through the cluster and economies of scale effect.

Metcalfe's Law states that the value of the network is exponentially related to the number of users. In their search for scale, Japanese, Korean, and now Chinese, firms have expanded at almost any cost, very often through high leverage, incurring huge risks.

But if you look at value chains, you discover three key parts - manufacturing, distribution and trading. A T-shirt could cost less than US\$1(Bt34) to manufacture, but the distribution, marketing and trading costs will take more of the margin, so that the final product could be sold for \$20-\$100 depending on the design, branding and quality. You can imagine how much profit the cotton farmer gets from his sale of raw cotton.

East Asian corporations are waking up to the fact that as their production becomes commoditised, and even high-value items such as mobile phones and computers have become commodities, the value chain, or profit, lies more in the trading and distribution side. The key question is whether these corporations have the skills and ability to exploit value in this part of the game, which is currently dominated by Western firms. This is not for want of trying.

Japanese manufacturers initially used trading houses (sogoshoshas) such as Mitsubishi and Mitsui to source their raw materials, and in-house banks to finance their trade.


Gradually, as the manufacturers gained confidence, they established their own distribution chains, so that you can now find Sony and Toyota manufacturing and distribution companies throughout the world. The relative role of the trading houses diminished, but not before a few, like Sumitomo, lost money by trading in commodities.

In my experience, one thing is remarkable - that Asian corporations have not yet established world-class trading companies. The reason is that the trading side is the most knowledge intensive and individualistic part of business. This is not to say that a few, like Li and Fung, have not been pioneers in the distribution and services sides of the export supply chain.

But it is obvious that despite the efforts of, particularly, the Japanese and Singaporeans, no Asian houses have successfully established investment banks or made consistent large

profits in proprietary trading on a global scale. Hong Kong's home grown investment bank, Peregrine, imploded in 1998. You only have to read the autobiography of Robert Rubin - "In an Uncertain Age", 2003 - in which he describes how he grew up under the tutelage of traders and bankers, before you realise the specialist and deep knowledge embedded in old houses like Rothschild, Morgan and Goldman. It takes a lot to breed a great trader; so much easier being a property developer.

---

Privacy Policy © 2006 Nation Multimedia Group 

July 22, 2009 10:05 am (Thai local time)

[www.nationmultimedia.com](http://www.nationmultimedia.com)

## Regional

---

### Asean rejects US call to kick Burma out

Published on July 23, 2009

**Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva downplayed on Thursday a suggestion from US Secretary of States Hillary Clinton that Asean should kick Burma out because of its poor human rights record.**

Abhisit said an isolated Burma would not help the reconciliation and democratisation process in the militaryrun state.

Speaking as current chair of the 10-state grouping, Abhisit said that while Asean and the West "have the same goal, we cannot implement the same policy."

"There are not enough grounds to do that (expel Burma). We have already done what we can under the Asean mechanism."

"If Myanmar is expelled it will further isolate (the regime) and would that solve the problem?"

Asked on Thai television interview whether Asean should expel Burma if it does not free the pro democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, Clinton replied: "It would be an appropriate policy change to consider."

"If she were released that would open up opportunities at least for my country to expand our relationship with Burma, including investments in Burma," she told reporters on Thursday. But such opportunities were "up to the Burmese leadership".

Abhisit said Asean would continue to engage Burma and continue to assist Burma with its reconciliation process.

Asean and the international community have called on Burma to release all political prisoners, including prodemocracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, and to include all stakeholders in the democratisation process.

---

## Regional

---

### ASEAN TALK

#### North Korea, Burma come under fire at Asean meet

Published on July 23, 2009

**Phuket - North Korea and Burma came under heavy political pressure yesterday at the meeting of Asean ministers plus observers from China, Japan and South Korea.**

The ministers expressed grave concern over Pyongyang's recent underground nuclear test and missile launches in violation of UN resolutions.

They urged North Korea to comply with UN resolutions and return to six-party talks on its nuclear programme.

North Korea is not an Asean Plus Three member but is a member of the Asean Regional Forum, which will meet today.

Pyongyang tried to escape criticism by sending only a low-ranking representative to the Asean meeting rather than Foreign Minister Pak Ui-chun.

North Korea's nuclear ambitions were a key issue of the discussions. Japanese Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone and Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi also had a bilateral meeting to discuss the rising tension on the Korean Peninsula.

"Japan and China cannot accept North Korea possessing nuclear weapons or developing ballistic-missile technology. This poses a grave threat to regional security," said Japanese press secretary Kazuo Kodama.

However, yesterday's Asean Plus Three Ministerial Meeting, in which Burmese Foreign Minister Nyan Win also attended, took a softer stance towards the military junta, saying they "encourage" the military leaders to hold free, fair and inclusive elections next year.

Unlike US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, the Asean Plus Three ministers did not mention military ties between Burma and North Korea.

Clinton, who today will sit with diplomats from Burma and North Korea at the Asean Regional Meeting in Phuket, earlier said Pyongyang could transfer nuclear technology to



Burma.

The Asean Plus Three ministers welcomed UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's recent visit to Burma and urged the junta to cooperate with the UN role in the process of national reconciliation.

Japan's Nakasone met his Burmese counterpart, Nyan Win, to push for the democratisation of the junta-ruled country.

Nakasone expressed hope the Burmese government would respond positively to the issue raised by the UN chief, release all political prisoners and resume political dialogue with the opposition. The Asean Plus Three ministers also discussed the non-security threat of the type-A (H1N1) influenza pandemic, calling for timely implementation of measures by health ministers of member countries adopted at a meeting in Bangkok in May.

Japan said it contributed 500,000 courses of antiviral drugs and 350,000 sets of personal-protection equipment to the Asean stockpile in Singapore last December.

The drugs and equipment were initially stockpiled for the bird-flu outbreak but are also suitable for the type-A (H1N1) virus, Kodama said.

---

Privacy Policy © 2006 Nation Multimedia Group 

July 28, 2009 03:32 pm (Thai local time)

[www.nationmultimedia.com](http://www.nationmultimedia.com)

## Opinion

---

### EDITORIAL

### Settlements blocking the road to peace

Published on July 30, 2009

#### **Israel must end its occupation of Palestinian land before there's any hope of an end to the Mideast conflict**

Earlier this week, top US Mideast envoy George Mitchell and Israel's prime minister claimed to have made some progress on the dispute over the occupation of the West Bank by Israeli settlers - but this so-called achievement is still short of a needed breakthrough. No details were given on how close they are to resolving the disagreement. Washington has been pressing Israel to halt all construction in Jewish settlements built on Palestinian land, believing that such action will improve the prospects of a peace deal.

Mitchell is one of four senior US envoys visiting Israel this week, all part of a US effort to forge a wider peace that would end Israel's conflicts with the Palestinians, Syria and Lebanon, and normalise Israel's ties with the rest of the Arab world.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, on the other hand, maintains that "natural growth" must be permitted in the existing settlement population. It is another way of saying that Israel will not give up the land regardless of how it was obtained. Indeed, the settlement issue has given rise to the worst public tension between Israel and its closest ally in nearly two decades.

Israel captured the West Bank, now home to some 2.5 million Palestinians, in 1967. The number of Israeli settlers there has more than doubled since the mid-1990s and now stands at around 300,000, in addition to another 180,000 Israelis living in Jewish neighbourhoods built by Israel in East Jerusalem, also captured in 1967. Palestinians regard the West Bank and east Jerusalem as part of their future state.

During the previous US administration, President George W Bush permitted Israel to have its way with the so-called "natural growth" while paying lip service to the two-state notion, but did nothing to follow through. And now Netanyahu is painting the Palestinians as the big bad wolf for refusing to restart negotiations with Israel unless Israel freezes all settlement activity. Netanyahu will also have to contend with a growing anti-US sentiment among Israel's population. These people see nothing wrong with building more communities in occupied territory.

Something has got to give. Tense relations between the US and Israel will not go down well with voters in the Jewish state. As the old saying goes, you reap what you sow.

On the surface, Netanyahu's "economic peace" plan appears to have borne some fruit. Military checkpoints have been lifted in the West Bank, while permits for importing raw materials are being granted. Shopping centres and movie theatres are popping up, and concerts and sporting events are taking place. It may be true that Netanyahu's so-called peace has succeeded in bringing some degree of normalcy to the West Bank. But a lasting peace is still nowhere in sight. Netanyahu's message appears to be directed towards the Palestinians in Hamas-controlled Gaza: Kick out the Islamist Hamas leadership and we can talk peace and prosperity.

There were peace talks between the Palestinians and Netanyahu's predecessor, Ehud Olmert. But the demand to stop all settlement construction was not a condition placed on Israel then. This begs the question why the Palestinians are doing this at this juncture? Could it be because they have friendly ears in Washington or because they have a higher degree of distrust for Netanyahu, the leader of a coalition of rightists opposed to territorial compromise.

The thought of uprooting tens of thousands of Jewish settlers to make room for a Palestinian state is more than enough to bring the administration to its knees. Perhaps Israel should have thought of this scenario decades ago. But then again, crying over spilled milk helps no one.

Yes, Netanyahu is offering real improvements in the West Bank, more so than Olmert did. But is "economic peace" enough to bring a similar breakthrough in the deep-rooted political dispute? It is hoped that Washington will not be lured into this false sense of comfort. The "economic peace" brought about by Netanyahu comes across more as a strategy to deflect attention from the occupation and settlement of Palestinian land than a precursor to a historic compromise.

The West Bank's economic revival sharply contrasts with the misery of Hamas-controlled Gaza, where an Israeli- and Egyptian- imposed blockade is making life for Palestinians more unbearable by the day.

The rockets that Gaza militants have been firing into southern Israel for the past eight years have all but stopped, after a punishing war at the start of the year that killed more than 1,000 Palestinians. Perhaps it is time for the US to use this opportunity to rethink its strategy on Hamas.

Palestinian leaders in Gaza and the West Bank may be savouring the tensions brewing between the Netanyahu administration and Washington. But they, too, should not be so shortsighted as to think the future is on their side. American administrations come and go. The bottom line is that all stakeholders need to seize the moment and work for peace. And that means Israel must stop building settlements on Palestinian land.

---

## Opinion

---

### Israel's Iran dilemma: To strike or not to strike

Published on July 31, 2009

**FROM the corridors of power to downtown coffee shops, there is an undercurrent of anxiety in Israel: not due to the stalemate with the Palestinians, or the economic crisis, but the looming threat of Iran and its nuclear programme. Complicating matters is a deep discomfort with the seemingly pacifist approach of the Obama administration, which is quite in contrast to that of the Bush White House.**

When Obama spoke in Cairo recently, reaching out to the Muslim world, almost every word was dissected, weighed and analysed. While some sought solace in his remark that US-Israel bonds were unbreakable, it did little to bolster confidence.

Obama has set two conditions for Israel: an end to settlement building in the West Bank, and acceptance of a two-state solution. Both are issues Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been reluctant to subscribe to. But since then, the Israeli premier has declared his willingness to accept a demilitarised Palestinian state.

But it is Obama's policy of engaging Iran diplomatically that is causing great angst. Israelis believe Tehran is only buying time in its quest for nuclear weapons.

Israel has been exercising great pressure on the world community for the past few years to tackle the issue of Iran's nuclear programme and has never ruled out strikes as an offensive option, something the Obama administration is opposed to.

There was a ray of hope that the US was lifting the yoke of restraint when Vice President Joe Biden said earlier this month that Israel was a sovereign nation that could launch strikes on Iran if it felt threatened, irrespective of whether "we agree or not". Many saw it as a green light for an Israeli strike. But within a couple of days, Washington had clarified unequivocally, warning Israel that the US remained opposed to the strike option.

The signals from Washington continue to be mixed and confusing. Last month, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton promised "to extend a defence umbrella over the Middle East if Iran developed nuclear weapons." Israeli policymakers see that as a sign of weakness and resignation to the possibility of a nuclear Iran.

Across the spectrum of society, Iran is being seen as the greatest threat to the existence of the Jewish state since its creation in 1948. Some even draw parallels between the current Iranian Islamist regime and the Nazis, prominent among them being Netanyahu himself. Speaking to delegates at the annual United Jewish Communities General Assembly in 2007, Netanyahu, then the opposition leader, said: "It's 1938, and Iran is Germany. And Iran is racing to arm itself with atomic bombs."

Alluding to Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and his diatribes challenging the holocaust and calling for the destruction of Israel, Netanyahu said: "Believe him and stop him. This is what we must do. Everything else pales before this."

Stepping up the rhetoric, Netanyahu said that while the Iranian president denied the holocaust, he was "preparing another Holocaust for the Jewish state".

Prof Efraim Inbar, director of the Begin-Sadat Studies Centre in Jerusalem, says Netanyahu has a point in comparing the Iranian regime with the Nazis.

"The Islamic Republic wants to destroy the Jewish state. In this respect, they are just like the Nazis. Fortunately, Israel's Jews of today can defend themselves."

"Iran is a nation of 70 million people with a radical leadership. Theirs is a genuine ideological effort to get what they believe to be Muslim land. We have to take such a threat seriously."

Jonathan Spyer, senior research fellow at the Global Research in International Affairs Centre in Herzliya, sees two movements under way in the Middle East.

"There is the rise of Iran's Islamist extremists, personified by Ahmadinejad, who want to revive the fire of the 1979 Islamic revolution, and there is the ongoing Islamisation of regional politics."

Spyer believes if free and fair elections were to be held, "most countries in the region would see right-wing Islamists taking power". He says a combination of these two factors is spawning a whole new conflict in the region, beyond the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

This is also mobilising Israelis and making them cling more to national symbols. "This has led to the virtual eclipse of the left in Israeli politics," says Spyer.

Inbar believes the secretive nature of Iran's nuclear programme need not pose difficulties.

"I believe adequate intelligence and capability exists for a strike. It is not difficult to identify the Natanz uranium enrichment installation. We're in much better shape today strategically than before. Our economy is booming, there is political stability at home and the conflict with the Palestinians has been reduced to low-intensity."

The doctrine of pre-emption is not new to Israel. In 1981, Israeli jets crippled Iraq's Osirak

reactor, dealing a crushing blow to Saddam Hussein's ambition of acquiring nuclear weapons. Had Saddam been successful, it would have been hard to imagine today's Middle East. Israel also bombed Syria's nuclear reactor in 2007, suspected to have been built with North Korean help, sending out the message that it will not allow a nuclear-weapons state in the region that could threaten its own existence.

At a time when Arab leadership is at its nadir, Inbar believes the rise of Iran has caused great discomfiture, and even Arab regimes may give tacit support to a strike by Israel. The issue of direct Iranian reprisals seems less of a worry, though Tehran is known to possess missiles with a striking distance of some 2,000km.

"Missiles with conventional warheads can cause only limited damage. Israel has been through such an experience, in 1991 when Saddam sent 40 Scuds into Israel," says Inbar.

Last month, the Israeli Air Force held its 17th test of the Arrow 2 interceptor, shooting down a missile that mimicked an Iranian Shahab ballistic missile, although that technology needs more fine-tuning.

Israeli experts believe a strike, either unilaterally, or with US backing, may become inevitable sooner or later.

"We don't have to destroy the entire facility," says Inbar, who was a paratrooper in the Israeli Defence Forces. "Even if we hit a part of the enrichment facility, it should help set the programme back by a few years. We could either launch air strikes or commando operations from the sea. Of course, there will be a price to pay. We could lose a few soldiers and planes. But the price would be just right."

With a centre-right government in power, Israel is unlikely to be wanting in the political will to launch strikes. The real decision the leadership will have to make is how imperative it is, and how equipped the state is to pay the price for such an adventure.

---

Privacy Policy © 2006 Nation Multimedia Group 

August 3, 2009 11:06 am (Thai local time)  
[www.nationmultimedia.com](http://www.nationmultimedia.com)