



Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia

**NEWSCLIPPINGS AND ARTICLES
ON
POLITICAL CONFLICT**

JUNE 1 - 15, 2009

**INFORMATION SERVICES DIVISION
ISIS MALAYSIA**

U.S. may reinforce defenses in Asia

BY PETER SPIEGEL

SINGAPORE—Defense Secretary Robert Gates began to lay the groundwork for building up U.S. and allied military defenses in East Asia should the Obama administration fail to persuade China and Russia to join in a multilateral diplomatic response to North Korea's nuclear test.

In closed-door meetings with the defense ministers of Japan and South Korea—and a separate half-hour discussion with a senior Chinese general—Mr. Gates said the U.S.

preferred for the five countries that have engaged Pyongyang in talks on its nuclear program to present a unified front to punish North Korea.

But according to U.S. defense officials who attended the Saturday meetings on the sidelines of an international security conference here, Mr. Gates also told the Asian leaders the U.S. was obligated to begin planning for new defensive measures in case such talks fall through.

"The secretary made it clear and the administration's goal is to have the five nations work together," said one senior defense official. "What the secretary pointed out is we certainly have to think about what happens if that fails, and we have to start planning and taking some actions on our own and with our allies to look at defenses."

The U.S. officials said no specifics were discussed in any

Please turn to page 19

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

MONDAY, JUNE 1, 2009

U.S. and East Asian allies must plan defense moves, Gates says

Continued from first page
of the meetings. But another senior defense official said such contingency planning could include stepped-up missile defense cooperation or allied troop movements. The U.S. has Cold War-era defense treaties with both Japan and South Korea.

Earlier Saturday, Mr. Gates gave North Korea the sternest warning from Washington since Monday's test of a nuclear weapon, saying the U.S. "will not stand idly by" as Pyongyang develops nuclear and missile technologies that could threaten America and its allies in the region.

"President Obama has offered an open hand to tyrannies that unclench their fists; he is hopeful, but he is not naive," Mr. Gates said at the opening of the annual Asian defense gathering. "North Korea's latest reply to our overtures isn't exactly something we would characterize as helpful or constructive."

Mr. Gates's tough language comes as tensions continued to escalate on the Korean peninsula, with Pyongyang testing its sixth short-range missile since the nuclear test on Friday, just hours after U.S. and South Korean troops based in the south raised their alert level to the highest point in two years.

North Korea also appears to be preparing to launch a long-range missile, said a South Korean defense official Sunday, according to the Associated Press. U.S. military officials say there are signs of activity at North Korea's nuclear reactor that could indicate work to restart the facility and resume production of nuclear fuel.

The possible defensive measures that Mr. Gates hinted at Saturday are expected to be discussed in a series of meetings next week by a high-level U.S. delegation traveling to Tokyo, Seoul, and Beijing led by James Steinberg, the deputy secretary of

state. The group is also likely to visit Moscow before week's end, officials said.

Officials said the delegation will focus on finding a consensus between the five countries on North Korea sanctions, but they are expected to spend at least some time discussing defensive measures the U.S. and its treaty allies might need to take. The officials said there is no timeline for when the U.S. will decide whether multilateral talks have failed and defensive measures need to be implemented.

Although the meetings with Chinese, South Korean and Japanese leaders here took place in private, Mr. Gates touched upon the prospect of a new tack during a question-and-answer session following an address

to the security summit.

"We have to reassess," Mr. Gates said of the so-called six-party talks, the primary negotiations over North Korea's nuclear program.

"The reality is, given the objectives of the six-party talks that were established some years ago, it would be hard to point to them at this point as an example of success."

Following a three-way meeting between Mr. Gates and his Japanese and South Korean counterparts, none of the ministers alluded publicly to the prospect of building up military defenses. But

all three committed to work together on a response to North Korea. Mr. Gates's meeting with Lt. Gen. Ma Xiaotian, deputy chief of the People's Liberation Army's general staff and the highest-ranking Chinese rep-

resentative at the summit, was longer than originally scheduled, with U.S. defense officials saying Mr. Gates wanted more time to discuss North Korea.

Gen. Ma touched only briefly on North Korea in his own address to the conference, saying Beijing was committed to a nuclear-free Korean peninsula and restating his country's "firm opposition" to North Korea's nuclear test this week.

In a development that slightly complicated Mr. Gates's trip, the defense secretary's high-tech Boeing 747—which is specially equipped to communicate with submarines in the sea, bombers in the air, and fight a world war from high above the earth if necessary—was grounded in Singapore Sunday after a series of mechanical problems, which have plagued the aircraft since his five-day Asia trip started Wednesday evening. Mr. Gates was scheduled to fly to the Philippines Sunday.



Robert Gates

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

MONDAY, JUNE 1, 2009

Nuclear Test Ban Trouble

By Paula A. DeSutter

North Korea has announced that it has tested another nuclear weapon. Detection of North Korea's October 2006 nuclear test has been touted as evidence that the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) is verifiable. CTBT advocates will undoubtedly make the same argument for last week's test and assert that CTBT is important and that the United States should ratify it. Here is why both arguments are wrong.

Verification has two purposes: detection and deterrence. If you can't detect, you can't deter. But even if you can detect, you may not be able to deter.

With regard to seismic detection, North Korea is a best-case scenario. It is small, its known test site is granite, and it is not a seismically active region. In 2006 the U.S. collected noble gases to confirm the explosion was nuclear. Moreover, North Korea announces its tests. Detection of announced tests cannot be sold as proof of verifiability.

As for deterrence, it's a simple concept: convince others that the cost of taking an action you wish to prevent is far greater than any benefits. At a minimum, violators should not benefit from their violation.

The Obama administration's special en-

voy for North Korea, Stephen Bosworth, has been touring the region warning of "dire consequences" if North Korea tests. Strong words, but likely empty of substance. Will we bomb their nuclear sites? Unlikely, even if we knew where most of them were. Trade restrictions? North Korea has nothing to sell to non-rogue states. Stop food aid? Americans don't want to punish the starving slave-citizens of North Korea for actions over which they have no influence. In fact, we've taught North Korea since the early 1990s that crime pays.

The Clinton administration had declared its policy goal with respect to North Korea to be "regime change." North Korea then blatantly violated the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). The U.S. was in the lead-up to an NPT review conference where the goal was the indefinite extension of that treaty. The arms controllers saw North Korea's violation as threatening a successful review conference. So the Clinton administration had direct negotiations resulting in the 1994 Agreed Framework. North Korea was given heavy fuel oil, food and offered two light-water nuclear reactors at no cost. All it had to do was freeze plutonium reprocessing facilities at Yong-

byon until new reactors were near completion, at which point it would have to dismantle Yongbyon. The new Clinton policy goal: regime stability in order to ensure implementation of the agreed framework. So by violating the NPT, North Korea got the most powerful country in the world to abandon regime change and declare that it was in our interest to keep the regime in place. Crime paid.

In the initial aftermath of the 2006

test, there were actions to impose costs. The U.S. led the adoption of U.N. resolution 1718, which required member states to prevent the transfer of weapons-related goods to North Korea and called for financial sanctions. But these measures

were abandoned by the Bush administration in favor of accommodating the regime so talks could continue. The U.S. quit asking for complete, verifiable and irreversible disarmament. The U.S. pretended that North Korean promises were something other than a farce. The U.S. pretended that disablement at Yongbyon was something other than an opportunity for the North Koreans to refurbish the facilities. The U.S. pretended that there was no uranium enrichment program, despite

evidence to the contrary. The U.S. halted financial sanctions, which were the first response to North Korean bad actions that seemed to influence the country. Again, crime paid.

North Korea's engineers and scientists will gain information from their tests to help them improve their nuclear weapons, and perhaps market their skills to other rogues. We cannot reverse the knowledge they gained. These tests are irreversible.

Suppose that both the United States and North Korea were parties to the CTBT. Despite popular arms-control rhetoric, the treaty would give the U.S. no more leverage over North Korea than it has now. Pyongyang violated agreements in the past and would be likely to test. But the U.S. would still be prohibited from ever testing its nuclear weapons to ensure their safety and reliability and to strengthen deterrence. The U.S. nuclear umbrella, already thin, will become increasingly tattered as the North hones its weapons and delivery systems.

There is a link between the North Korean nuclear tests and CTBT, but it argues against U.S. ratification, not for it.

Ms. DeSutter was assistant secretary of state for verification, compliance and implementation from 2002-09.

**North Korea
shows how the
ban would help
rogue regimes.**

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

MONDAY, JUNE 1, 2009

North Korea and Diplomacy

Right after North Korea's first nuclear test, in October 2006, Senator Bob Menendez explained that the event "illustrates just how much the Bush Administration's incompetence has endangered our nation." The New Jersey Democrat hasn't said what he thinks North Korea's second test says about the current Administration, so allow us to connect the diplomatic dots.

At the time of the first test, the common liberal lament was that Kim Jong Il was belligerent only because President Bush had eschewed diplomacy in favor of tough rhetoric, like naming Pyongyang to the "axis of evil." Never mind that the U.S. had continued to fulfill its commitments under the 1994 Agreed Framework, including fuel shipments and the building of "civilian" nuclear reactors, until the North admitted it was violating that framework in late 2002. Never mind, too, that by 2006 the Bush Administration had participated in multiple rounds of six-party nuclear talks, or that it had promised to normalize relations with the North.

Nevertheless, President Bush adopted the views of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who had internalized the views of Bush Administration critics. Led by Christopher Hill (now President Obama's ambassador in Baghdad), the U.S. announced the resumption of

the six-party talks—only three weeks after the first North Korean test. Mr. Hill also held direct bilateral talks with the North Koreans, something Pyongyang had long sought and Mr. Bush had long resisted.

In February 2007, the six parties agreed to a statement in which North Korea promised to shut down and seal its nuclear reactor and bring in inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency to monitor compliance. The typical reaction was that the Bush Administration had finally seen the error of its ways. Columnist Steve Chapman of the Chicago Tribune captured the media consensus by calling it a "surprising breakthrough that belied [Mr. Bush's] hard-line record and shrewdly advanced American interests in a vital part of the world."

As part of the deal, the North promised to provide a complete list of its nuclear programs within 60 days. But Kim's minions refused to provide the list until the U.S. released \$25 million in North Korean assets deposited at the Macau-based Banco Delta Asia, which had been sanctioned under the Patriot Act for money laundering and counterfeiting. The Administration even enlisted the Federal Reserve Bank of New York to get the funds to Pyongyang af-

ter no international bank would go near the transaction.

By then it was summer and North Korea promised again to provide a complete nuclear report, this time by the end of the year. In exchange, it got more diplomatic goodies: The U.S. said it would work toward a peace agreement with the North once the nuclear issue had been resolved; South Korea pro-

posed a "South-North economic community"; and Japanese Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda pledged to improve relations despite unresolved issues regarding Japanese citizens abducted by the North.

Amid this Western accommodation, in September 2007 Israel bombed a Syrian nuclear facility that U.S. and Israeli intelligence believe was supplied by North Korea. Pyongyang denied any role, and the U.S. kept its diplomacy active. However, North Korea ignored its end-of-year deadline for producing its nuclear declaration. When it did finally produce one, six months later, it included an incomplete plutonium record and nothing about its uranium nuclear program. The North did publicly destroy the cooling tower of its reactor at Yongbyon for the TV cameras, but it balked at any credible verification process.

Still, the Bush Administration de-

cided to put the best face on it. Mr. Bush announced last June that he was lifting restrictions on the North under the Trading With the Enemy Act. He also removed North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism.

This is the state-of-play that the Bush Administration bequeathed its successor. And it was a diplomatic approach that the Obama Administration made clear it was ready to pursue. But then Kim Jong Il decided to return to his familiar script, raising the ante by launching a ballistic missile in April, expelling U.N. inspectors, boycotting the six-party talks and then detonating a second bomb last week.

Whatever is driving Kim, no one can say it's U.S. bellicosity. Our guess is that Kim must figure President Obama will soon come calling with his own "carrots" in return for more empty disarmament promises. That's what the U.S. has always done before.

We offer this timeline of diplomatic futility as a suggestion that maybe it's time to try something different. The U.S. is now working to secure a fresh U.N. sanctions resolution, and good luck making that stick. North Korea has never honored any commitment, or abided by any convention, or respected any international law. And until some very clear signal is sent by the U.S. and its allies that they will not be gulled again by the allure of negotiations, it never will.

A timeline of Bush futility holds lessons for Obama.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.
TUESDAY, JUNE 2, 2009

Voting Against Islamists

By Joshua Muravchik

The results of Kuwait's elections last month—in which Islamists were rebuffed and four women were elected to parliament—will likely reinvigorate the movement for greater democracy in the region that has stalled since the hopeful “Arab spring” of 2005. It also puts pressure on the Obama administration to end its deafening silence on democracy promotion.

Although ruled by a hereditary monarch, Kuwait is the most democratic of the Arab countries. The press is relatively free, parliament has real power, and politicians are chosen in legitimate elections. However, Kuwait is a part of the Persian Gulf, where the subordination of women is traditionally most severe. Historically, Kuwait's political process was for males only. But in 2005 parliament yielded to female activists and approved a bill giving women the right to vote and hold office.

In 2006 and 2008, several women ran for parliament, though none won. The women that captured four of the 50 seats last month weren't aided by quotas; they won on their own merits. Their success will undoubtedly inspire a new wave of women's activism in nearby countries.

Almost as significant as the women's gains were the Islamist losses. The archconservative Salafist Movement's campaign

for a boycott of female candidates obviously fell flat, and the number of seats held by Sunni Islamists fell sharply.

Thus continues a string of defeats for Islamists over the last year and a half from west to east. In September 2007, Morocco's Justice and Development Party, a moderate Islamist group, was widely forecast to be the winner. Its support proved chimerical: It came away with 14% of the seats, trailing secularists. Iraq's provincial elections this January signaled a turn away from the sectarian religious parties that had dominated earlier pollings. This trend, capped by Kuwait's elections, has important implications.

What sapped the vitality of the “Arab spring” was the triumph of Islamists—the Muslim Brotherhood's strong showing in Egypt's 2005 parliamentary election, Hamas's victory in Gaza, and Hezbollah's ascendance in Lebanon. In response to these election results, the Bush administration muffled its advocacy of democracy in the Middle East. Some democrats in the region even took a go-slow stance.

To put it bluntly, these outcomes renewed questions about whether the Arabs were ready for democracy. If elections produce victory for parties that are not them-

selves democratic in practice or philosophy, then democracy is at a dead end. But the Kuwait election, following those in Iraq and Morocco, suggests that such fears may have been overblown.

If this election is a harbinger of larger

developments, its symbol is Rola Dashti, an American-educated economist who led the fight for women's political rights in Kuwait and who lost narrowly in 2006 and 2008 before triumphing this year.

Her victory was remarkable for several reasons. Half-

Lebanese by birth, Ms. Dashti speaks Arabic with a distinct Lebanese accent that stamps her as an outsider in a relatively insular country. She is also proudly secular. She wears no head covering and makes no effort to conceal the fact that she remains unmarried although she is in her forties.

This flies in the face of the custom that is the essence of women's subordination in the culture of the Gulf. The system of “guardianship” requires that women be under the supervision of some male—father, uncle, husband, brother or even son—at all times. Ms. Dashti lives with her divorced mother in a household devoid of males. She has brothers, but they serve as campaign aides rather than as guardians.

The fact that Kuwaiti voters sent Ms. Dashti and three other women to parliament suggests that the Arab world may be ready for democracy after all. The Obama administration should take heed.

Mr. Muravchik is a fellow at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies. His book, “The Next Founders: Voices of Democracy in the Middle East,” has just been published by Encounter.

Kuwait's
election is part
of a positive
trend.

Global View / By Bret Stephens

The Axis of Evil, Again

Not 24 hours after North Korea's nuclear test last week, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad issued a statement insisting "we don't have any cooperation [with North Korea] in this field." The lady doth protest too much.

When it comes to nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them, history offers two hard lessons. First, nearly every nuclear power has been a secret sharer of nuclear technology. Second, every action creates an equal and opposite reaction—a Newtonian law of proliferation that is only broken with the intercession of an overwhelming outside force.

On the first point, it's worth recalling that every nuclear-weapons state got that way with the help of foreign friends. The American bomb was conceived by European scientists and built in a consortium with Britain and Canada. The Soviets got their bomb thanks largely to atomic spies, particularly Germany's Klaus Fuchs. The Chinese nuclear program got its start with Soviet help.

Britain gave France the secret of the hydrogen bomb, hoping French President Charles de Gaulle would return the favor by admitting the U.K. into the European Economic Community.

(He Gallicly refused.) France shared key nuclear technology with Israel and then with Iraq. South Africa got its bombs (since dismantled) with Israeli help. India made illegal use of plutonium from a U.S.-Canadian reactor to build its first bomb. The Chinese lent the design of one of their early atomic bombs to Pakistan, which then gave it to Libya, North Korea and probably Iran.

Now it's Pyongyang's turn to be the link in the nuclear daisy chain. Its ties to Syria were exposed by an Israeli airstrike in 2007. As for Iran, its military and R&D links to the North go back more than 20 years, when Iran purchased 100 Scud-B missiles for use in the Iran-Iraq war.

Since then, Iranians have reportedly been present at a succession of North Korean missile tests. North Korea also seems to have off-shored its missile testing to Iran after it declared a "moratorium" on its own tests in the late 1990s.

In a 2008 paper published by the Korea Economic Institute, Dr. Christina Lin of Jane's Information Group noted that "Increased visits to Iran by DPRK [North Korea] nuclear specialists in 2003 reportedly led to a DPRK-Iran agreement for the DPRK to either initiate or accelerate work

with Iranians to develop nuclear warheads that could be fitted on the DPRK No-dong missiles that the DPRK and Iran were jointly developing. Thus, despite the 2007 National Intelligence Estimate stating that Iran in 2003 had halted weaponization of its nuclear program, this was the time that Iran outsourced to the DPRK for proxy development of nuclear warheads."

Another noteworthy detail: According to a 2003 report in the L.A. Times, "So many North Koreans are working on nuclear and missile projects in Iran that a resort on the Caspian coast is set aside for their exclusive use."

Now the North seems to be gearing up for yet another test of its long-range Taepodong missile, and it's a safe bet Iranians will again be on the receiving end of the flight data. Nothing prevents them from sharing nuclear-weapons material or data, either, and the thought occurs that the North's second bomb test last week might also have been Iran's first. If so, the only thing between Iran and a bomb is a long-range cargo plane.

Which brings us to our second nuclear lesson. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has lately been in Asia taking a tough rhetorical line on the North's nuclear activities. But it's hard to deliver the message credibly after Mr. Gates rejected suggestions that the U.S. shoot down the Taepodong just prior to its April test, or when the U.S. flubbed the diplomacy at the U.N. So other countries will have to draw their own conclusions.

One such country is Japan. In 2002, Ichiro Ozawa, then the leader of the country's Liberal Party, told Chinese leaders that "If Japan desires, it can possess thousands of nuclear warheads. Japan has enough plutonium in use at its nuclear plants for three to four thousand. . . . If that should happen, we wouldn't lose to China in terms of military strength."

This wasn't idle chatter. As Christopher Hughes notes in his new book, "Japan's Remilitarization," "The nuclear option is gaining greater credence in Japan because of growing concerns over the basic strategic conditions that have allowed for nuclear restraint in the past. . . . Japanese analysts have questioned whether the U.S. would really risk Los Angeles for Tokyo in a nuclear confrontation with North Korea."

There are still good reasons why Japan would not want to go nuclear: Above all, it doesn't want to simultaneously antagonize China and the U.S. But the U.S. has even better reasons not to want to tempt Japan in that direction. Transparently feckless and time-consuming U.S. diplomacy with North Korea is one such temptation. Refusing to modernize our degraded stockpile of nuclear weapons while seeking radical cuts in the overall arsenal through a deal with Russia is another.

This, however, is the course the Obama administration has set for itself. Allies and enemies alike will draw their own conclusions.

Write to bstephens@wsj.com

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 3, 2009

Swat Is Not Enough

By Bahukutumbi Raman

The Pakistani army recaptured the largest city in Swat Valley Saturday in what was hailed as a major victory. But the army's mission against the Pakistani Taliban is far from finished. Troops are likely to face a stalemate in operations in other areas of the Swat Valley, the Northwest Frontier Province and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. The success or failure of Pakistan's fight against terror will hinge on cleaning out the terrorists from these areas.

The month-long operation in Swat is a good start. The army is reportedly back in control of Mingora, the most important town in the valley that had come under the control of the Taliban. The army is also making headway against the Taliban in other adjoining districts.

Yet this is a difficult, ongoing fight. The Pakistani Taliban is emulating tactics used by the Afghan Taliban against U.S.-led troops. Its leaders, senior commanders and junior-level fighters have dispersed into small groups and taken shelter in the mountainous areas. These areas can only be attacked from the air and through long-range artillery—not from the ground by infantry units.

The army claims to have killed more than 1,200 junior-level fighters of the Tali-

ban over the past month, but no senior leaders or commanders have been confirmed captured or dead. The command and control of the Pakistani Taliban, like that of the Afghan Taliban, remains intact. So long as their leaders remain alive, the Pakistani Taliban will be able to stage a comeback.

Other battles in the Northwest Frontier Province and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas are also hitting roadblocks. In the Khyber area, the Taliban continues to disrupt logistic supplies to NATO troops from Karachi. In South Waziristan, the army's control is weak. In North Waziristan, where al Qaeda remnants are based, the army is not active.

To win this battle once and for all, the Pakistani Taliban must be neutralized operationally and ideologically. Operational neutralization means strengthening the Pakistani army's control over the areas freed from the Taliban and protecting them from future attacks until stability is restored. Ideological neutralization means weaning the local population away from the negative ideas of the Taliban.

Both would require difficult sacrifices. To win the operational war, the army would need to withdraw troops from the

Indian border. The army is disinclined to do this. To win the ideological war, Pakistan would have to invest heavily in social and economic infrastructure—such as affordable schools, higher educational institutions, and the creation of jobs for the unemployed so jihad ceases to be a means of livelihood for the youth.

This project may take well over a decade to show results. But there is no alternative to it. The Pakistani Taliban is the result of more than 60 years of neglect in the tribal areas—neglect of education,

economic development, basic governance, police administration and communications infrastructure. While the Pakistani army may win some tactical victories, a strategic triumph can come about only if the political and military leadership reverse that course.

Pakistan's leaders now seem to realize the spreading Talibanization poses an existential threat to Pakistan. But they have yet to admit their earlier policies are largely responsible for the present state of affairs. They seem to think that to end the Taliban, all they need is a few military victories. Such victories are important, but their results will not be enduring without an improvement in governance.

Pakistan's army faces a long, uphill struggle to beat the Taliban.

The Pakistani Taliban isn't the only threat to Pakistan's existence. There are other terrorist groups of older vintage in the Punjab, such as Lashkar e Taiba—an outfit that developed and flourished despite the fact of the Punjab province being economically the most well-developed area. They owe their existence and growth to the Pakistani intelligence service, which funded them and closed its eyes to their training camps. They are seen not as existential threats but as strategic assets necessary for the existence of Pakistan. Their ideology is no different from that of the Pakistani Taliban, and their links with al Qaeda are just as strong.

By failing to act against these groups, Pakistan is sowing the seeds of new pockets of instability and radicalization. First the army needs to win the war in Swat and the border regions. Then it needs to win the hearts and minds of Pakistanis and prevent the radicalization of its officers and other ranks. The Taliban is unlikely to capture Pakistan's nuclear arsenal outright. But radicalizing the top echelons of the army would be just as dangerous.

Mr. Raman served in India's external intelligence agency from 1968 to 1994 and on the National Security Advisory Board of the government of India from 2000 to 2002.

PAS nixes Malaysia alliance idea

BY JAMES HOOKWAY

Malaysia's Islamist opposition party Thursday punctured the government's hopes of creating a powerful alliance to represent the country's majority Malay population, saying instead it would stay with a multiracial minority coalition led by opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim.

Leaders of the Pan Malaysia Islamic Party, or PAS, said at their national assembly in Kuala Lumpur they would turn down any offer to create a national unity government from the United Malays National Organization, or UMNO, the party that leads the ruling National Front coalition.

The prospect of continued division among Malaysia's Malays, who are virtually all Muslims and make up 60% of the country's 27 million people, strengthens the hand of Mr. Anwar's so-called People's Alliance, which in elections last year broke the National Front's two-thirds parliamentary majority for the first time in decades. Political analysts said PAS's decision indicates it senses an opportunity of unseating the National Front and sharing power for the first time with its opposition allies.

Thursday's decision also is a setback for Prime Minister Najib Razak, who has tried to strengthen UMNO's support base and explore potential alliances with groups like PAS over the past year. Some leading UMNO figures, such as youthwing chief Khairy Jamaluddin, have called for PAS to work together

with the party to safeguard the interests of the country's Malays.

But in a speech to a PAS meeting that opened Wednesday, deputy president Nasharuddin Mat Isa said his party's top leaders "never had any intention or plan" to join the National Front, the Associated Press reported. He described Mr. Najib's government as "increasingly weak" as it slips "faster into the valley of destruction."

James Chin, a political-science professor at the Malaysian campus of Australia's Monash University, said PAS's refusal to seal a pact with the National Front and UMNO would likely be a disappointment to Mr. Najib. "It shows that PAS has decided to throw its lot in with Mr. Anwar for the next general elections in 2013," he said.

If Mr. Anwar's alliance wins a parliamentary majority—which is by no means certain—it would be the first time a group other than the National Front would lead Malaysia since it became independent from Britain in 1957.

Mr. Najib's government has struggled to attract voters in a series of local and special elections in recent months. Frustrated by years of race-based politics and, lately, a deteriorating economy, increasing numbers of voters from Malaysia's ethnic-Malay, Chinese and Indian communities have abandoned the National Front in favor of Mr. Anwar's alliance, which is comprised

of his People's Justice Party, the Democratic Action Party and PAS. At some polls, ethnic-Chinese and Indian activists have campaigned for PAS candidates—an unusual sight in this long-divided country.

Among other policies, Mr. Anwar's alliance is pushing for a rollback of Malaysia's decades-old affirmative action policies. The policies were designed to help the majority Malay population catch up economically with ethnic-Chinese, but many critics say they have created inefficiency and hindered Malaysia's ability to compete against new economic rivals such as Vietnam.

Mr. Najib's government has responded to its falling popularity by unleashing multibillion-dollar stimulus programs to help pull the nation out of recession, and making it easier for foreigners to invest in services and financial-oriented businesses. The government expects Malaysia's export-driven economy will contract between 4% and 5% this year.

Authorities, meanwhile, are prosecuting Mr. Anwar for allegedly sodomizing a former male aide. Mr. Anwar, a former deputy prime minister who was convicted and then acquitted of the same crime after challenging the government in 1998, says he is innocent and maintains the allegation is part of a conspiracy to tarnish his reputation among conservative Malays. Mr. Najib has denied having anything to do with the allegation against Mr. Anwar. The trial begins in July.



Najib Razak



Anwar Ibrahim

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.
FRIDAY - SUNDAY, JUNE 5 - 7, 2009

Beijing Won't Push Pyongyang

By Andrew Gilholm

As United Nations Security Council members again struggle to respond effectively to a North Korean nuclear test, hopes—and frustrations—are turning once again to China. After two decades of trying and failing to negotiate away Pyongyang's nuclear aspirations, despairing observers are demanding that China make the problem go away. This wishful thinking is unrealistic and distracting.

China most certainly does not want a nuclear North Korea. As that prospect nears, a strategy of hoping the threat could be bought off with American cash and concessions, or contained and ignored until a more pliant North Korean regime appears looks increasingly inadequate. However this approach will probably re-

main Beijing's default position unless its wider concerns about the future of the Korean peninsula can be addressed.

This reluctance comes despite China's unique potential leverage over North Korea. A decline in the growth of South Korean trade with the North has accentuated China's emergence as the crucial factor in Pyongyang's external economic and financial fortunes. China accounted for roughly three-quarters of the North's international trade last year and supplies the vast majority of the North's oil.

Beijing has used this economic muscle to push Pyongyang back to talks before and may do so again now. There is no doubt that Chinese policy makers have been growing increasingly frustrated with Pyongyang for years. The North's first nuclear test in 2006 bolstered those in China's policy community who argue that North Korea has become more liability than asset; the second test has further promoted this view.

One strong incentive for Beijing to rein in the North is to curb the military development of China's regional rivals. After the North's second nuclear test last week, Japanese newspapers ran editorials calling for bolstering Japan's military capabilities in the face of a growing North Korean threat. This should give Beijing serious pause. Japan's process of military normalization is a major long-term concern for China, and few things are likely to accelerate it more than public alarm in Japan about the prospect of attack by North Korea.

Another often overlooked factor is that Beijing too must consider the risks to its

own security of a highly militarized neighboring state successfully testing nuclear weapons. The prospect of the North ever turning on its only powerful ally is sufficiently remote that China has been able to tolerate the North's activities. But the thought still is uncomfortable enough to make Beijing unwilling to live with a nuclear North Korea except as a temporary situation. At the same time, the North's prospective nuclear status also means Beijing must think twice about how forcefully it really wants to treat Pyongyang.

Despite Beijing's desire for the North's denuclearization, under current circumstances China will push the North only far enough to get them back to the negotiating table. It is extremely doubtful that China has the ability to go beyond this and force the current regime in Pyongyang to fundamentally give up on its nuclear program. Even if it does, the risk that the intense pressure required to achieve such a capitulation would trigger some unpredictable, unstable outcome in the already precarious North is too high for China to contemplate.

The prospect of a refugee crisis is one concern in Beijing. A major influx of refugees would be a genuine, albeit localized, threat to stability. A more fundamental strategic concern, however, would be the possibility of a collapse in the North prompting United States and South Korean or international intervention, and leaving China sharing another border with a U.S.-allied state. Such scenarios involve risks and enormous uncertainties that leaders in Beijing do not want to take on. It is

these fears and uncertainties that make upsetting the status quo unpalatable for China, both in terms of military contingency planning and long-term strategic concern about "encirclement" by the U.S. and its allies.

Even if China does sign up for a relatively strong U.N. resolution and push the North Koreans to restart talks, that's certainly not a sure sign that Beijing has reversed its North Korea policy and will squeeze Pyongyang into submission and denuclearization. The chances of a policy shift are indeed greater than ever before, but China's will, influence and options are limited. They can only be harnessed if U.S. leaders recognize this, and if Washington, Beijing and Seoul engage to an unprecedented extent in serious discussions about their respective interests on the Korean peninsula.

Given how the U.S.-South Korea alliance has struggled to plan for change in North Korea amid fears and differences about the future, achieving workable understandings with China is a massive, and currently improbable, challenge. But significant progress could be a hugely positive breakthrough in U.S.-China cooperation on crucial international issues. Without progress, the world can only cross its fingers and hope—with little ground for optimism—that leadership succession in Pyongyang will bring positive change.

Meanwhile, proliferation risks will continue to grow, and potentially dangerous uncertainties about instability and intervention scenarios will persist.

Mr. Gilholm is a China-based Northeast Asia analyst at Control Risks, a risk consultancy headquartered in London.

A multilateral
solution is the
only workable
option.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.
FRIDAY - SUNDAY, JUNE 5 - 7, 2009

Populism Erodes Thailand's Old Order

By Colum Murphy

BANGKOK—On June 2, Thailand got another political party in the form of the New Politics Party, led by Somsak Kosaisook. While this new party touts anticorruption and democracy as its main goals, in reality, its appeal is good old-fashioned populism. "We would like income redistribution," Mr. Somsak told me in a recent interview. "The parliament of Thailand has no farmers, no poor people, no good businessmen."

This is not the first time Thailand has flirted with such policies. Former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's huge appeal to the rural poor was largely the result of government handouts to villagers. But this time, the populist appeal could prove more widespread and more sustainable—because both sides in Thailand's defining political divide are increasingly taking up the banner of egalitarianism.

Thailand has been torn by political turmoil for the past three years. On one hand, the People's Alliance for Democracy, or the Yellow Shirts, a broad alliance of groups originally bound together by their support for King Bhumibol Adulyadej and now formally represented by Mr. Somsak's party. On the other, the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship, or the Red Shirts, supporters of Mr. Thaksin.

It's too early to say how successful Mr. Somsak's New Political Party will be. It is backed by the Yellow Shirts' powerful access to media, both broadcast and online. The Yellow Shirts' message is evolving. There is less of an emphasis on the group's pro-monarchy nature and a marked move toward the realm of social justice. Mr. Somsak says Thais should be self-reliant, consume in moderation and look more to the domestic market for growth opportunities rather than rely on foreigners for exports and investment. It is a world view that is

close to that of the king's philosophy of "sufficiency" economy.

Change is also coming to the Reds, spurred by street riots that took place in April during Thai New Year. The Red Shirt movement may have been weakened by the riots, which resulted in two deaths and the face-losing evacuation of visiting foreign leaders attending a regional summit in Pattaya. But they too are regrouping and rethinking their strategy. They are playing down the role of Mr. Thaksin as their movement's *raison d'être* and increasing calls for social and economic justice. They are also taking a leaf from the Yellow Shirts' media book by planning to

set up their own television station and newspapers to mobilize and inform people.

There are even suggestions, from both Yellow and Red sides, that the two might one day unite. "Both Yellow and Red have right and wrong," says Mr. Somsak. "Both of them have idealism—they want a better life for the people." It is a sentiment echoed by Somyos Prueksakasemsuk, a leader of the Red Shirts. "In the near future, when both groups understand the same meaning of democracy, they will be together," he says.

At present, this prospect might seem fanciful: given the animosity the two sides have for one another. But seen from a different angle, they have much in common. Borwornsak Uwanno, secretary-general of King Prajadhipok's Institute, a think tank monitored by Thailand's National Assembly, says the Red-Yellow divide is at root economic. "Deep down it's a structural conflict between those who have and those who have not," says Mr. Borwornsak. "A vote is no longer a vote. It is a demand to access resources."

Economic statistics show why. In the period 1992 to 2007, the percentage share of household income held by Thailand's poorest 20% has remained roughly unchanged

at 6%. Households in Bangkok and its environs had an average monthly income of around 35,000 baht (about \$1,000) in 2007. In the poorest region, the northeast, that figure was 13,000 baht. One explanation for this is that the agriculture-dependent rural areas benefited less from industrialization and globalization than urban centers, especially Bangkok.

The current global financial and economic crisis is also hitting Thailand hard. The country's political crisis has deterred foreigners from investing or visiting Thailand. The kingdom officially slipped into recession in the first quarter this year. Exports in the same period were down by more than 20% when compared to the same period in 2008. Such grave economic concerns—both long standing and current—could

fuel further political tensions. They could also enhance the appeal of the Red and Yellow Shirts and their calls for a more inclusive society.

These developments do not augur well for the country's power brokers. To date, the elite have successfully used the Yellow Shirt movement to counter Mr. Thaksin's and the Red Shirt's populism. While the Yellow Shirts are loyal to the king, the group has openly criticized the army, for example, for taking part in the coup. How long the cozy relationship between the Yellow Shirts and the elite will continue remains to be seen.

The Red Shirts never courted the elite but focused on their supporters in the rural north and northeastern provinces. The

Reds have also been very careful also to pledge their loyalty to the king. Yet now they openly express their disappointment that the king has not intervened to put Thai politics back in order.

A growing number of Thais seeks to build a nation where the rigid divisions of status—political, economic and social—are broken down and power is devolved closer to the grass roots. As one Bangkok-based Western diplomat notes, underclass demands are often more cultural than political. "They want to be treated with more respect and less arrogance."

The proselytizing tendencies of the Red and Yellow camps suggest their numbers will grow. As poor Thais learn more about their rights, demand greater transparency and exhibit less tolerance for privilege-based behavior and extraconstitutional interference in government by

the army and other quarters in the elite, the pressure to reconcile the needs of different sections of Thai society will increase.

That tipping point may yet be some years off. Yet the elite would do well to acknowledge its imminent arrival and prepare itself. If it faces up to this reality, there is still time to shape the outcome and secure a role—albeit a diminished one—for itself.

Mr. Murphy is deputy editor of the Far Eastern Economic Review. This article is adapted from an op-ed in the June 2009 edition of the magazine and is available for free at www.feer.com.



Yellow Shirts protestors rally in Bangkok, August 2008.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

MONDAY, JUNE 8, 2009

Mixed signals from Malaysia Islamic party

*Non-Muslims gain,
but conservative
is chosen as deputy*

BY JAMES HOOKWAY

Malaysia's Islamist opposition party pledged to open its doors to non-Muslim ethnic-Chinese and Indians as it attempts to take on a role as potential king-maker in this racially-divided, resource-rich country.

But the reformist wing of the Pan Malaysian Islamic Party, or PAS, hit a road bump when party delegates voted to retain as deputy president a conservative cleric, Nasharuddin Isa Mat, at their annual assembly on Saturday.

Political analysts say the conflicting signals from PAS suggest Malaysia's oldest opposition party is still struggling to determine how quickly it should consolidate its surprising and successful alliance with Malaysia's two other main opposition parties: opposition leader An-

war Ibrahim's People's Justice Party and the secular, left-leaning Democratic Action Party.

The outcome could determine the political future of one of Southeast Asia's most significant suppliers of palm oil, timber and natural gas to the world economy.

Ooi Kee Beng, a fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, says the fate of Malaysia's growing opposition alliance hinges on what PAS chooses to do. A big unknown, he says, is "can PAS shed its reputation as a race-biased party and turn into one that—though religious—is race-blind?"

Malaysia has been ruled by the National Front coalition—an amalgamation of race-based parties led by the United Malays National Organization, or UMNO—since independence from Britain in 1957. Opposition parties have nearly always been fringe players, allowing UMNO to effectively set Malaysia's course.

Under Mr. Anwar's leadership, the three opposition parties last year joined forces to break the ruling National Front coalition's decades-old two-thirds parliamen-

tary majority.

Since then, the People's Alliance, as it is known, has capitalized on Malaysia's cratering export-driven economy and a series of corruption scandals to win a string of local and special parliamentary elections.

In April, Najib Razak became prime minister after Abdullah Ahmad Badawi resigned. The new leader has attempted to revitalize the National Front but the economy—and the Front's electoral prospects, according to some analysts—have continued to weaken. Last month, Mr. Najib projected Malaysia's economy would contract between 4% and 5% this year thanks to shrinking exports of commodities.

Ethnic-Chinese and Indian Malaysians, meanwhile, are growing increasingly frustrated with a decades-old affirmative action program that accords the majority Malay population preferential treatment in securing jobs, government contracts and university places.

Political analysts say there is a real possibility of an opposition alliance toppling the National Front for the first time in the next general elections, which must be held by 2013. Much depends on whether Islam-based PAS can continue working together with Mr. Anwar's multiracial party and the predominantly Chinese-based Democratic Action Party.

PAS was founded before Malaysia's independence as a vehicle to push for Shariah, Islamic law. The party's main support bases are still in the strongly Islamic northern states of Kelantan and Terengganu. PAS's leaders have frequently hit out at alleged corruption within UMNO. At present, PAS controls 24 of the opposition's 83 seats in Malaysia's 222-seat parliament. Although that's fewer than Mr. Anwar's party and the Democratic Action Party, analysts say PAS could attract more defectors from the National Front in the coming years.



Anwar Ibrahim

Since 2004, PAS has moderated its hard-line Islamist platform and a new generation of activists has emerged in the party to cooperate with non-Islamic groups. They refer to themselves as "Erdogans", after Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan who combined Islamist beliefs with pragmatic politics to rise to power.

Non-Muslim ethnic-Chinese Malaysians have actively campaigned for PAS in some parts of the country—something many analysts say was unthinkable a decade ago—and at some point they should be able to join the party, which has announced plans to amend its constitution.

On Saturday, 10 of the 18 members elected to PAS's main policy-making body were from the reformist wing of the party, although the reformers' candidate for the vice presidency, Husam Musa, lost to the incumbent, Mr. Nasharuddin. Although the 47-year-old Islamic scholar's intentions aren't yet clear, he is widely expected to push back against the reformists in a bid to keep the party true to its Malay roots.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

MONDAY, JUNE 8, 2009

Barack Hussein Bush

One benefit of the Obama Presidency is that it is validating much of George W. Bush's security agenda and foreign policy merely by dint of autobiographical rebranding. That was clear enough Thursday in Cairo, where President Obama advertised "a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world." But what he mostly offered were artfully repackaged versions of themes President Bush sounded with his freedom agenda. We mean that as a compliment, albeit with a couple of large caveats.

So there was Mr. Obama, noting that rights such as "freedom to live as you choose" and "the ability to speak your mind and have a say in how you are governed" were "not just American ideas, they are human rights." There he was insisting that "freedom of religion is central to the ability of peoples to live together," and citing Malaysia and Dubai as economic models for other Muslim countries while promising to host a summit on entrepreneurship.

There he was too, in Laura Bush-mode, talking about the need to expand opportunities for Muslim women, particularly in education. "I respect those women who choose to live their lives in traditional roles," he said. "But it should be their choice."

Mr. Obama also offered a robust defense of the war in Afghanistan, calling it "a war of necessity" and promising that "America's commitment will not weaken." That's an important note to sound when Mr. Obama's left flank and

some Congressional Democrats are urging an exit strategy from that supposed quagmire. On Iraq, he acknowledged that "the Iraqi people are ultimately better off without the tyranny of Saddam Hussein" and pledged the U.S. to the "dual responsibility" of leaving Iraq while helping the country "forge a better future." The timeline he reiterated for U.S. withdrawal is the one Mr. Bush negotiated last year.

The President even went one better than his predecessor, with a series of implicit rebukes to much of the Muslim world. There would have been no need for him to specify that six million Jews were murdered by the Nazis if Holocaust denial weren't rampant in the Middle East, including Egypt, just as there would have been no need to name al Qaeda as the perpetrator of 9/11 if that fact were not also commonly denied throughout the Muslim world. There also would have been no need to insist that "the Arab-Israeli conflict should no longer be used to distract the people of Arab nations from other problems," if that were not the modus operandi of most Arab governments.

Mr. Obama also noted that "among some Muslims, there is a disturbing tendency to measure one's own faith by the rejection of another's," a recognition of the supremacist strain in Islamist thinking. He also included a pointed defense of democracy, including "the ability to speak your mind and have a say in how

you are governed" and "confidence in the rule of law." We doubt the point was lost on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, now in his 29th year in office. All of this will do some good if it leads to broader acceptance among Muslims of the principles of Mr. Bush's freedom agenda without the taint of its author's name.

The freedom agenda gets a new cover, but Iran is his real test.

As for the caveats, Mr. Obama missed a chance to remind his audience that no country has done more than the U.S. to liberate Muslims from oppression—in Kuwait, Bosnia, Kosovo and above all in Afghanistan and Iraq, where more than 50 million people were freed by American arms from two of the most extreme tyrannies in modern history. His insistence on calling Iraq a "war of choice" is a needless insult to Mr. Bush that diminishes the cause for which more than 4,000 Americans have died.

He also couldn't resist his by now familiar moral self-indulgence by asserting that he has "unequivocally prohibited the use of torture" and ordered Guantanamo closed. Aside from the fact that the U.S. wasn't torturing anyone before Mr. Obama came into office, his Arab hosts can see through his claims. They know the Obama Administration is "rendering" al Qaeda detainees to other countries, some of them Arab, where their rights and well-being are far less secure than at Gitmo.

The President also stooped to easy, but false, moral equivalence, most egreg-

iously in comparing the U.S. role in an Iranian coup during the Cold War with revolutionary Iran's 30-year hostility toward the U.S. He also compared Israel's right to exist with Palestinian statehood. But while denouncing Israeli settlements was an easy applause line, removal of those settlements will do nothing to ease Israeli-Palestinian tensions if the result is similar to what happened when Israel withdrew its settlements from Gaza. We too favor a two-state solution—as did President Bush—but that solution depends on Palestinians showing the capacity to build domestic institutions that reject and punish terror against other Palestinians and their neighbors.



Barack Obama

Hanging over all of this is the question of Iran. In his formal remarks, Mr. Obama promised only diplomacy without preconditions and warned about a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. Yet surely Iran was at the top of his agenda in private with Mr. Mubarak and Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah, both of whom would quietly exult if the U.S. removed that regional threat. They were no doubt trying to assess if Mr. Obama is serious about stopping Tehran, or if he is the second coming of Jimmy Carter.

It is in those conversations, and in the hard calls the President will soon have to make, that his Middle East policy will stand or fall.

Information Age / By L. Gordon Crovitz

The New Presumption of Transparency

During the Cold War, the joke went that an American explained to a Russian that, in the U.S., anyone could stand in front of the White House and criticize the president. The Russian shrugged and said anyone could stand at the gates of the Kremlin and criticize the American president, too.

We live in a new era, as seen in such varied efforts to suppress information as expense fiddling by British parliamentarians, Beijing's censorship of Tiananmen Square, and libel laws that deter reporting on terrorism. A growing list of institutions and countries find themselves on the wrong side of this shift in expectations. Information that was once locked away is fair game, and anyone who refuses to play by the new rules is presumed guilty of having something to hide.

In Britain, the Daily Telegraph led a media pounding of members of Parliament for claiming personal expenses that, once brought to light, were impossible to justify. An electronic database disclosed British taxpayer funding for clearing the moat at an MP's country house, massages and even candy bars. The details, following a refusal to disclose them and a threat to prosecute the Telegraph, led to the first forced resignation of the speaker of the House of Commons since 1695. Dozens of MPs will be barred by their parties from running for reelection.

The U.S. Congress is likewise under new scrutiny. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi announced last week that she was "very excited" finally to yield to years of pressure to publish online the details of congressional office expenses. These are now printed in hardly legible volumes kept in a hidden-away cupboard in the Capitol.

Whatever the upshot, Mrs. Pelosi said, "it's very important that it be online, that there be that transparency."

This trend against secrecy is in stark contrast to countries such as China, which censored coverage of the 20th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre last week. Beijing has done such a good job of erasing history that most young Chinese people know nothing about the 1989 crackdown. The PBS documentary "The Tank Man" made clear that the best and brightest interviewed at Beijing University had never seen the iconic photograph of a citizen facing down the tanks.

Yet savvy Web users are finding ways to push the information envelope. An elaborate cat-and-mouse game has evolved between the tens of thousands of government censors known as "mud crabs" and Chinese bloggers trying to evade them. Since the dates "1989" and "June 4" can easily be blocked by Beijing, Chinese Web users refer to the crackdown as having occurred on "May 35."

Perhaps the best example of how the old control model has broken down is the British libel system, a new focal point in the argument that greater transparency can mean greater security. In the U.S., public figures have to prove that statements about them are false and made with malice—but in Britain a statement that harms one's reputation is enough to justify a libel action. Defendants must

prove that statements are true or "fair comment." This has a chilling effect on the reporting of damaging facts.

English courts thus have become the preferred venue for lawsuits by Saudi and other financiers against reporting on top-

sued over information reported in good faith on matters crucial to our defense, matters such as the financial networks supporting jihadist terror, then we cannot make sound security policy," former federal prosecutor Andrew McCarthy said at a recent conference on "libel lawfare." This is a useful term to describe lawsuits to suppress facts about radical Islam and terrorism.

Authors, investigative reporters and their publishers need help. The Web means that publishing anywhere means publishing everywhere, thus subjecting authors and publishers to litigation in pro-plaintiff jurisdictions. Exposés that meet U.S. standards for fairness and accuracy may not get published anywhere for fear of litigation. Among the proposals under consideration is to broaden the law to give American publishers the right in the U.S. to sue plaintiffs who bring what U.S. law would consider abusive lawsuits.

There are bound to be unforeseen consequences of this change in our culture toward suspicion of anyone trying to keep information confidential. But more information about how public servants spend

public funds is better than less; and political and legal systems that censor news and protect reputations at the expense of facts are on the wrong side of history. Digital technology makes sharing information possible and, increasingly, makes it mandatory.

Write to informationage@wsj.com



Nancy Pelosi

ics such as funding of the groups behind 9/11. As a result, one book was destroyed by the Cambridge University Press. Another, by an American author and publisher, became the subject of litigation in England despite being available in Britain only through the Web.

"If information cannot be freely exchanged, if journalists must fear being

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 2009

North Korea Deserves the Diplomacy of Silence

By Edward N. Luttwak

In recent weeks, North Korea has detonated a nuclear bomb and violated U.N. Security Council prohibitions by launching ballistic missiles. It has threatened war against South Korea, repudiating the July 1953 armistice agreement and thus ostensibly reverting to a state of war with the United States. It has also sentenced two American journalists—Euna Lee and Laura Ling—to 12 years in a labor camp.

These are extreme provocations. Only a military attack could exceed them. Our response, of course, must be diplomatic. But only a very special kind of diplomacy can yield positive results: a diplomacy of silence.

Under it, no communications whatever would be sent to the North Korean regime, there would be no informal dialogues with any North Korean diplomats anywhere, and, above all, no attempt would be made to renew negotiations in any format.

This would contradict all the usual

doctrines and preferences of diplomats. Their instinct is to talk with every adversary with whom it is possible to talk. Historically inclined diplomats often cite pugnacious Winston Churchill's dictum that it is always better to "jaw-jaw than war-war."

When there is no diplomatic recognition to be traded in exchange for concessions, diplomats assume that talking is always a good idea because words cost nothing but can produce tangible results.

This time that is the wrong assumption. For years, the U.S., China, the Russian Federation, Japan and South Korea have been patiently negotiating with North Korea, offering economic aid, security guarantees, and the benefits of "normalization" in exchange for it abandoning its nuclear programs. South Korea provided advance payments in the form of investments,

food aid and large cash gifts.

Thus over a period of years, while the dictatorship of Kim Jong Il continued to starve its own population as it accumulated more military equipment and repeatedly sold nuclear and missile technology to Iran and Syria, it was greatly rewarded diplomatically. Kim Jong Il's delegates sat alongside those of the U.S., China, Russia and Japan—a huge concession in itself that added to the prestige of the regime. Every time the North Koreans committed a new outrage, from launching ballistic missiles over Japan to selling ballistic missiles to Iran, the response was to resume the talks, with no reduction in the concessions on offer and even some more gifts from South Korea.

This must now stop. The North Korean regime never yielded anything of significance in past negotiations, which have served nobody but them. This time, provocation must not be rewarded. Evidently, the North Korean aim is to evoke more attention, more offers of concessions, more gifts. They must receive nothing at all. Talking has failed utterly. Si-

lence might yet persuade the North Koreans to improve their behavior.

Mr. Luttwak is a senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington and the author of "Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace" (Belknap, 2002).



Kim Jong Il

What If Israel Strikes Iran?

By John R. Bolton

Whatever the outcome of Iran's presidential election today, negotiations will not soon—if ever—put an end to its nuclear threat. And given Iran's determination to achieve deliverable nuclear weapons, speculation about a possible Israeli attack on its nuclear program will not only persist but grow.

So what would such an attack look like? Obviously, Israel would need to consider many factors—such as its timing and scope, Iran's increasing air defenses, the dispersion and hardening of its nuclear facilities, the potential international political costs, and Iran's "unpredictability."

Central to any Israeli decision is Iran's possible response.

Israel's alternative is that Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programs reach fruition, leaving its very existence at the whim of its staunchest adversary. Israel has not previously accepted such risks. It destroyed Iraq's Osirak reactor in 1981 and a Syrian reactor being built by North Koreans in 2007. One major new element in Israel's calculus is the Obama administration's growing distance (especially in contrast to its predecessor).

Consider the most-often mentioned Iranian responses to a possible Israeli strike:

1) *Iran closes the Strait of Hormuz.* Often cited as Tehran's knee-jerk answer—along with projections of astronomic oil-price spikes because of the disruption of supplies from Persian Gulf producers—this option is neither feasible nor advisable for Iran. The U.S. would quickly overwhelm any effort to close the Strait, and Iran would be risking U.S. attacks on its land-based military. Direct military conflict with Washington would turn a bad situation for Iran—disruption of its nuclear program—into a potential catastrophe for the regime.

2) *Iran cuts its own oil exports to raise world prices.* An Iranian embargo of its own oil exports would complete the ruin of Iran's domestic economy by depriving the country of hard currency. This is roughly equivalent to Thomas Jefferson's 1807 em-

bargo on American exports to protect U.S. shipping from British and French interference. That harmed the U.S. far more than the Europeans. Even Iran's mullahs can see that. Another gambit with no legs.

3) *Iran attacks U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.* Some Tehran hard-liners might advocate this approach, or even attacks on U.S. bases or Arab targets in the Gulf—but doing so would risk direct U.S. retaliation against Iran, as many U.S. commanders in Iraq earlier recommended. Increased violence in Iraq or Afghanistan might actually prolong the U.S. military presence in Iraq, despite President Barack Obama's current plans for withdrawal. Moreover, taking on the U.S. military, even in

an initially limited way, carries enormous risks for Iran. Tehran may believe the Obama administration's generally apologetic international posture will protect it from U.S. escalation, but it would be highly dangerous for Iran to gamble on more weakness in the face of increased U.S. casualties in Iraq or Afghanistan.

4) *Iran increases support for global terrorism.* This Iranian option, especially stepping up world-wide attacks against U.S. targets, is always open. Assuming, however, that Mr. Obama does not further degrade our intelligence capabilities and that our watchfulness remains high, the terrorism option outside of the Middle East is extremely risky for Iran. If Washington uncovered evidence of direct or indirect Iranian terrorist activities in America, for example, even the Obama administration would have to consider direct retaliation. While Iran enjoys rhetorical conflict with the U.S., operationally it prefers picking on targets its own size or smaller.

5) *Iran launches missile attacks on Israel.* Because all the foregoing options risk more direct U.S. involvement, Tehran will most likely decide to retaliate against the actual attacker, Israel. Using its missile and perhaps air force capabilities, Iran could do substantial damage in Israel, espe-

cially to civilian targets. Of course, one can only imagine what Iran might do once it has nuclear weapons, and this is part of the cost-benefit analysis Israel must make before launching attacks in the first place. Direct Iranian military action against Israel, however, would provoke an even broader Israeli counterstrike, which at some point might well involve Israel's own nuclear capability.

6) *Iran unleashes Hamas and Hezbollah against Israel.* By process of elimination, but also because of strategic logic, Iran's most likely option is retaliating through Hamas and Hezbollah. Increased terrorist attacks inside Israel, military incursions by Hezbollah across the Blue Line, and, most significantly, salvos of missiles from both Lebanon and the Gaza Strip are all possibilities. In plain violation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701, Iran has not only completely re-equipped Hezbollah since

and Hamas in conjunction with a strike on Iran's nuclear facilities. Obviously, Israel will have to measure the current risks to its safety and survival against the longer-term threat to its very existence once Iran acquires nuclear weapons.

This brief survey demonstrates why Israel's military option against Iran's nuclear program is so unattractive, but also why failing to act is even worse. All these scenarios become infinitely more dangerous once Iran has deliverable nuclear weapons. So does daily life in Israel, elsewhere in the region and globally.

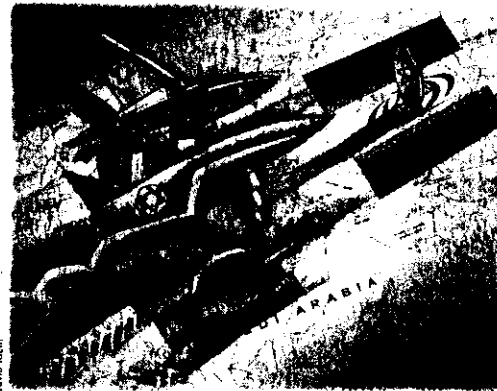
Many argue that Israeli military action will cause Iranians to rally in support of the mullahs' regime and plunge the region into political chaos. To the contrary, a strike accompanied by effective public diplomacy could well turn Iran's diverse population against an oppressive regime. Most of the Arab world's leaders would

welcome Israel solving the Iranian nuclear problem, although they certainly won't say so publicly and will rhetorically embrace Iran if Israel strikes. But rhetoric from its Arab neighbors is the only quantum of solace Iran will get.

* * *

On the other hand, the Obama administration's increased pressure on Israel concerning the "two-state solution" and West Bank settlements demonstrates Israel's growing distance from Washington. Although there is no profit now in complaining that Israel should have struck during the Bush years, the missed opportunity is palpable. For the remainder of Mr. Obama's term, uncertainty about his administration's support for Israel will continue to dog Israeli governments and complicate their calculations. Iran will see that as well, and play it for all it's worth. This is yet another reason why Israel's risks and dilemmas, difficult as they are, only increase with time.

Mr. Bolton, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, is the author of "Surrender Is Not an Option: Defending America at the United Nations and Abroad" (Simon & Schuster, 2007).



the 2006 war with Israel, but the longer reach of Hezbollah's rockets now endangers Israel's entire civilian population. Moreover, Hamas's rocket capabilities could easily be substantially enhanced to provide greater range and payload to strike throughout Israel, creating a two-front challenge.

Risks to its civilian population will weigh heavily in any Israeli decision to use force, and might well argue for simultaneous, pre-emptive attacks on Hezbollah

A New Plan for Pyongyang

By Nicholas Eberstadt

As Presidents Barack Obama and Lee Myung-bak prepare for their first official summit next week, the North Korean nuclear crisis is surely at the top of their agenda. This summer marks the start of the 20th year of the Western diplomatic process pursued in the hope of "finding a solution" to the "North Korean nuclear problem." At the beginning of this effort, a North Korean nuclear arsenal was nothing more than a twinkle in the eye of Pyongyang's "Great Leader," Kim Il Sung. Today, many years of "denuclearization talks" later, North Korea is a self-declared nuclear weapons state.

To avoid eventual catastrophe, Messrs. Obama and Lee must discard the comforting illusions that have permitted generations of statesmen to sleepwalk through nearly two decades of progressively mounting North Korean nuclear menace. The continuing, overarching failure of Western diplomacy with North Korea is due to a flaw in fundamental premises. Washington, Seoul and others have long assumed (or hoped) that Pyongyang will have an interest in helping us to "solve" the "problem" it poses to us. But nothing could be further from the truth. Our North Korean "problem" is their North Korean "solution."

North Korea's strategy, accordingly, is to make what we regard as the "North Korean nuclear problem" bigger—much bigger. Kim Jong Il has been patiently and methodically laying his groundwork for years. The regime needs not only a stockpile of nuclear weapons, but an inventory of intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear warheads. The eventual purpose is to threaten the American heartland. To date, North Korea has attempted two nuclear detonations and amassed a stockpile of atomic devices.

The only way forward is a fundamental paradigm shift in dealings with Pyongyang: The goal of the United States and its partners should not be a negotiation breakthrough but rather a threat reduction. This can be carried out in many separate theaters. In the Korean peninsula, it would require *inter alia* a significant redress of Pyongyang's military menace against Seoul. In the Northeast Asian region, more effective missile defense, an enhanced proliferation security initiative and a more muscular police effort against criminal sources of state revenue for Pyongyang would all seem in order. Globally, one could

envision a more serious international human-rights strategy for North Korea that involves Europe and the United Nations; a more activist approach to bring North Korea to court on its world-wide violations of commercial con-

tracts; and more carefully tailored initiatives to emphasize North Korea compliance with her *existing* international obligations. (Note that military instruments of coercion have not been mentioned here.)

There would clearly be room in this paradigm for diplomatic dialogue with North Korea—but such interactions would be evaluated by their efficacy in reducing the North Korean threat to the international community and her member states. A shift to "threat reduction" would by no means imply abandoning the objective of North Korean denuclearization. To the contrary, a more practical approach for dealing with Pyongyang could actually increase the odds of bringing about big changes in the behavior of this revisionist state. As long as we yearn for "diplomatic breakthroughs," all the cards are in the Dear Leader's hands. Once we conceptualize the North Korean problem in terms of "threat reduction," the cards are in our hands.

A threat reduction strategy should be complemented by a high-level dialogue in the West for contingency planning. The U.S. and her allies should think through their interests and objectives for eventualities that might alter the political and strategic landscape in Korea. Institutionalizing a high-level architecture for such deliberations would be an important step toward more coordinated assessment of potential problems from North Korea—and according responses. Given its asymmetric interests in the North Korean problem, Beijing is not currently a suitable partner in such deliberations—but it could be informed about these deliberations, or even eventually included in them, as China's contribution to North Korean threat reduction warranted.

The U.S. should never waver in its vision: a successful transition from the current division to a Korea that is democratic, economically free and—at long last—whole. This vision promises prosperity and security—not just to Koreans, but to many others in Asia, and beyond.

Mr. Eberstadt holds the Henry Wendt Chair in Political Economy at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, D.C. This essay is adapted from a speech given at an AEI conference earlier this week.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.
FRIDAY - SUNDAY, JUNE 12 - 14, 2009

Palau to the Rescue

Months of moral grandstanding and intense diplomacy are finally yielding dividends: President Obama has convinced Palau, a Pacific archipelago and long-standing U.S. ally, to resettle a small group of the least dangerous Guantanamo detainees. All it took was \$200 million in foreign aid to a country with 20,000 residents and a GDP of about \$164 million.

Headed to Palau are the Uighurs, ethnic Chinese Muslims who were picked up

in 2002 near Tora Bora. Some of them received weapons training at Afghan camps affiliated with al Qaeda or the Taliban as part of their separatist movement—the Uighur minority is brutally repressed by the Chinese government—though they are not considered threats to the U.S. or other Western nations. But they were left in legal limbo because they could not be returned to China, where they would likely be tortured or worse, and no other country would give them sanctuary.

The Uighurs are not America's problem

alone—they were captured during “the good war,” after all. Yet for all Europe’s excoriations of Gitmo as a blight on America, no one jumped at this easy chance to reduce the prison population. This was true during the Bush Administration and has remained so for its supposedly more enlightened predecessor. According to news reports, the Obama Administration asked more than 100 allies (i.e., basically everyone) to accept custody.

Those same objections are bedeviling the Administration’s efforts to resettle

the 250 or so remaining terrorists at Gitmo, nearly all of whom are far more dangerous than the Uighurs. Palau deserves credit for its “humanitarian gesture,” as Palau President Johnson Toribiong called it, though the \$200 million in aid probably helped. That works out to \$11.7 million for each detainee—or about \$10,000 for every Palau citizen. At the going per capita rate, it would only cost \$615 billion to move Gitmo to France. No doubt the French would still have to think about it.

The Journal Interview with Lee Myung-bak / By Mary Kissel

South Korea's Bulldozer Heads for the White House

SEOUL—"I fully support President Obama's call to have a world without nuclear weapons. . . . But in the meantime we are faced with North Korea trying to become a nuclear power and this really is a question we must deal with now."

South Korean President Lee Myung-bak—nickname: The Bulldozer—isn't a man who minces words, as Barack Obama will discover when he hosts a summit with him on Tuesday. Mr. Lee, known for persistently asking "Will it work?" in meetings, is taking a hard-nosed look at his country's despotic northern neighbor and planning the next steps. The task gained increased urgency late last month when Kim Jong Il's regime tested its second nuclear weapon. Pyongyang is reportedly readying another.

Until now, South Korean presidents have unreservedly backed the six-party talks—a forum that includes the U.S., the two Koreas, Japan, China and Russia. The multilateral group was launched by the Bush administration in 2003 after Pyongyang withdrew from the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty, and it has been enthusiastically supported by the Obama White House. All six parties say they agree about the need to "denuclearize" the Korean peninsula. Yet the North is believed to have two nuclear programs: a plutonium program and a highly enriched uranium program that Pyongyang alternately denies or boasts about.

The talks—only the latest iteration of a two-decade effort to stunt North Korea's nuclear program—haven't worked. And Mr. Lee, speaking to me Friday at the Blue House, which houses the president's private offices, is the first national leader to publicly acknowledge their failure.

"The North Koreans have gained, or bought, a lot of time through the six-party talks framework to pursue their own agenda. I think it's important now, at this critical point in time, for us not to repeat any past mistakes," he says. Now, it's "very important for the remaining five countries—which excludes North Korea—to come to an agreement on the way forward."

Mr. Lee is obliquely referring to the conflicting goals of the six-party talk participants. South Korea's stated goal is the denuclearization and ultimate reunification of the Korean peninsula—a vision the U.S. and Japan support. But China and Russia don't want to see the Kim regime fail, fearing floods of refugees, weapons proliferation, and, most importantly, the potential collapse of a buffer state between them and the democratic nations of North Asia. China has proved an especially difficult negotiating partner since it has served as the North's main economic support since the collapse of the Soviet Union. After the North's first nuclear test in 2006, Beijing increased its sizeable trade with Pyongyang.

I start to probe: Should the three democratic nations in the six-party talks push China harder? "I am confident that China

will take a more active role in our effort," Mr. Lee says, evading the question. The United Nations resolution calling for increased sanctions looks weak. Mr. Lee says he was "very encouraged" to see the five countries "working very closely together"—another dodge.

What about stricter financial sanctions, like the kind the U.S. Treasury successfully leveled against Banco Delta Asia (a North Korea enabler) in Macau in 2005? That is "one type of sanction that we can level."

The president is taking a tough line on North Korea. Will the U.S. support him?

Should the U.S. add the North to the list of terror-sponsoring nations? "That in itself may have some symbolic meaning. But in actuality, having North Korea on the list or not will not make really much of a difference," he says.

The bottom line: "Our ultimate objective is to try to convince North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons

program, but we must also ask ourselves: What do the North Koreans want in return for giving up their nuclear weapons program? I think this is the type of discussion that the five countries should be engaging in now, robustly." Yet another reference to excluding North Korea from the talks until the five countries can get their message straight.

Mr. Lee has already embarked on his own policy experiments with regard to the North. During his election campaign in 2007, he promoted the "Vision 3000." The mini-Marshall Plan promised to raise the North's annual per capita GDP to \$3,000 (from around \$500-\$600) in exchange for denuclearization. The North didn't bite.

When Mr. Lee won—"with the highest margin of victory in Korean political history," he reminds me—he cut off almost all nonhumanitarian aid to the North if its uses couldn't be verified. According to the Ministry of Unification—a relic of prior administrations that Mr. Lee has politically sidelined—even the South's humanitarian aid to Pyongyang dropped to 116 billion won (\$93 million) last year from 439.7 billion won in 2007.

Meanwhile, the South has quietly started to beef up its defenses. After last month's nuclear test, South Korea signed on to the U.S.-led Proliferation Security Initiative to halt trafficking in weapons of mass destruction. After years of neglect, the South has started to rebuild its spy networks in the North. And it inked a defense agreement with Australia. This month the American, Japanese and South Korean defense ministers met together for the first time at the Shangri-La dialogue, a regional defense forum. Would South Korea ever consider developing its own nuclear deter-

rent? "At this moment, no, absolutely not. . . . I think you wanted me to say yes?" Mr. Lee asks, chuckling.

The president is also trying to bolster the South's economic defenses through an ambitious supply-side reform program. His efforts have stalled in the face of the financial crisis and domestic political spats. Mr. Lee has had better luck with his free trade agenda—"I'm a firm believer," he says. He ticks off a list of countries with which Seoul is negotiating: India, Japan, the European Union and others. For him, the pending U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement "will strengthen our alliance" and has "strategic value." What if Congress doesn't pass it? "I don't know what to make of this, really," Mr. Lee says, shrugging.

One of the president's biggest achievements has been to reverse Seoul's disgraceful silence on the North's human-rights violations. Former governments thought speaking out "would somehow harm improvement of the inter-Korean relationship. But I don't think that is true," he says. Last year, the South co-sponsored a United Nations resolution condemning North Korea's human-rights violations. (Meanwhile, China has beefed up its border defense so much that the refugee flow has slowed dramatically.) Has Mr. Lee himself met with any refugees? A blunt answer: "Of course I did."

The North has reacted to Mr. Lee's approach by trying to bully him back to the bargaining table. Beginning last year, Pyongyang started to refuse humanitarian aid. The North seized a South Korean citizen working at the Kaesong industrial complex—a business park just north of the demilitarized zone where South Korean companies employ North Korean workers—and threatened to shut the place down. In April, the North fired off a long-range rocket. Then came last month's nuclear test, followed by a barrage of missile tests.

But the North miscalculated. Mr. Lee hasn't budged on his aid conditions, and he's held firm on Kaesong too. If Kaesong shut down, "some of our South Korean companies investing in there will incur some loss," he concedes. "But I think the loss on the side of the North Koreans will be much more dramatic and much more severe, because 40,000 North Korean workers will lose their jobs." This week, a Korean company shut down its operations in Kaesong. What if more decide to leave? "There isn't much that the [Lee] government can do," the president says.

Opposition politicians like to characterize Mr. Lee as a "dictator" and blame him for the North's actions. But the North's militarization is not a problem of Mr. Lee's making. For more than a decade, South Korean leaders have fed the Kim regime billions of dollars in cash and aid without verifying its uses, ignored human-rights violations on a massive scale, and relied on a

multilateral diplomatic process that has produced no tangible results. Former Presidents Kim Dae-jung and the late Roh Moo-hyun decimated the South's intelligence networks and whipped up anti-Americanism.

Mr. Lee, a man who climbed his way to the top of one of Korea's largest companies from poverty in a mere 12 years, is more clear-headed. "One of the most important reasons for North Korea continuing its nuclear ambitions is to consolidate the power to stay within the Kim Jong Il family," he says. Kim also wants the North to "achieve the status of what they call a 'strong' or 'mighty' nation," he says. "Of course he cannot achieve the status of a mighty nation economically, so by possessing nuclear weapons I think he's trying to achieve that goal."

Complicating matters, there is now speculation that Kim, who appeared wan in recent propaganda photographs, is readying to transfer power to his third son, Kim Jong Un. Is there any evidence that the son will be more reasonable than his father? "I think it's more important for us to look at [the situation] from this perspective: Is it going to be beneficial for North Korea, and also for peace and stability here on the Korean peninsula, for North Korean leadership to enter into the . . . third generation of leadership in the Kim family?"

This isn't just a problem for North Asia. "If we are to assume that North Korea becomes a nuclear-power state, of course the danger of having an all-out nuclear war, that possibility is very slim," he says. "However, what really should concern us, and what concerns me, is the fact that North Korea nuclear capabilities may be used for nuclear terrorism." Mr. Lee worries about the effect a nuclear North Korea could have on countries like Syria and Iran. The war on terror "is still very much alive," he says. Mr. Lee may consider sending Koreans to Afghanistan to help with reconstruction efforts.

My scheduled interview time is drawing to a close. I ask the president: Does he have a message for the American people?

"I know that throughout their history, the people of the United States defended their freedom, their liberty, their justice, and their rights—if need be—with their lives. I think their courage is so admirable."

After next week's summit with President Obama, we may soon see how far America and South Korea are willing to go to defend those rights for North Koreans.

Ms. Kissel is editorial page editor of *The Wall Street Journal Asia*.

Obama must build on the Arab peace initiative

Ghassan Khatib

The positive atmosphere surrounding last Thursday's meeting between President Barack Obama and Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian president, confirms the new US administration has changed the approach to the Middle East. This was already apparent in Mr Obama's talks the previous week with Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister, which were far from routine in spite of the long, close relationship between the two countries they lead.

Israel, under Mr Netanyahu, is no longer committed to the two-state solution that has underpinned the peace process between Israelis and Palestinians for the past 18 years. Mr Obama, meanwhile, seems to be moving towards substantive engagement in the peace process on the basis of the "land for peace" formula on which it was conceived. New pressure from Washington for Israel to comply with the nuclear non-proliferation treaty indicates that this engagement is strategic, not merely window-dressing.

The result is a collision waiting to happen. Mr Netanyahu seeks Palestinian "autonomy", while Mr Obama has reiterated his commitment to a Palestinian state. The US president has also underscored Israel's obligations under the Washington-brokered "road map" to stop building Jewish settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Half a million Jews live in more than 100 settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, built since Israel occupied the area in the 1967 war. It is indicative of Mr Netanyahu's policies that, only one day before the Israel-US summit in Washington, Israel announced bids for the construction of 20 new housing units in an illegal West Bank settlement in the occupied Jordan valley.

Mr Obama's shift in policy is born

Israel's behaviour, with its new policy of rejecting the two-state solution, will give Iran and allies a groundswell of support

out of the recognition that the main factor behind the radicalisation of Palestinian and Arab society is the failed peace process. The Palestinian public considers a peace process that continues the acquisition of Palestinian land through settlement construction to be no peace at all.

"Moderate" Arab leaders and governments allied with the US are losing ground against Islamist political opposition. Among Palestinians, continuing tension between Hamas and Fatah is a prime example. Fatah, which dominates the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, proposes achieving Palestinian aspirations of ending Israel's occupation by peaceful and negotiated means. Hamas, which wrested control of Gaza from the Palestinian Authority in June 2007, argues that Israel understands only the language of force. The Islamist group points to Israel's evacuation of southern Lebanon after armed resistance from Hizbollah and to the unilateral disengagement from Gaza after its own resistance.

By contrast, those who support negotiations lose ground when their opponents raise the issue of Israeli settlements. It is no surprise, then, that Hamas has been able to stand its ground in Gaza, despite a crushing Israeli blockade on the entry and exit of people and goods. Cairo is mediating between Fatah and Hamas to resolve the split but with little success to date.

Israel's behaviour - specifically its expansion of settlements - alongside its new policy of rejecting the two-state solution, will only give Iran and allies such as Hamas a groundswell of support. A change in direction, on the other hand, meaning real progress in the Palestinian-Israeli political process, would contribute to achieving US objectives in the region, particularly improving its relationship with Iran.

Mr Obama faces an enormous challenge in reversing the trend of radicalisation. The damage caused by the previous US administration is deep and far-reaching. Two things are needed. The first is a focus on Israel's illegal settlement activity, which is creating the kind of facts on the ground sure to pre-empt the vision of two states. The second is a credible negotiations process that will convince Israelis and Palestinians it is possible to end the occupation and achieve other legitimate objectives by peaceful means.

To do this, Mr Obama should take advantage of the Arab peace initiative, proposed in 2002. The Arab states promised Israel unanimous Arab recognition, security and regional integration if it were to end its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and negotiate a solution for Palestinian refugees. Mr Obama needs to start work on such an approach when he meets Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak this week. Given the pressure moderate Arabs are under, there is no time to be lost.

The writer is a vice-president at Birzeit University and a former Palestinian Authority minister of planning

It is China that holds the key to North Korea

Dennis Wilder

North Korean leader Kim Jong Il is taking advantage of Beijing's desire for stability on the Korean peninsula by engaging in provocative actions that could permanently alter the north-east Asian security situation. Mr Kim's moves are calculated – they are designed to help secure a dynastic succession and North Korea's status as a nuclear weapons power. Fearful of a flood of refugees should Mr Kim's regime implode, China has responded cautiously. Beijing apparently still believes that its national interests are best served by a weak North Korean regime that is dependent on China.

The clearest signal of Mr Kim's intentions came in an editorial published in the authoritative party daily, *Rodong Sinmun*, on his 67th birthday in February. It states that the future of North Korea depends on a "brilliant succession" of the "bloodline of Paektu". Paektu is the sacred mountain where Mr Kim is said to have been born. The long-range missile test on April 5 appears to have been timed to occur just before Mr Kim promoted his brother-in-law, Chang Sung-Taek, to the powerful National Defence

Commission. Mr Chang now appears at Mr Kim's side on most occasions and he appears destined for the role of regent to Mr Kim's youngest son.

The new nuclear and missile tests are just part of a series of provocative moves by Pyongyang this spring, but even by North Korean standards Mr Kim's actions since April are outrageous. Yet China's response has been very restrained. It argues that the best option for stability in North Korea is a smooth transition of power. It therefore is hesitant about supporting sanctions that really bite, such as cutting the supply of oil and coal, which would cripple the dysfunctional

If left unchecked, surely Pyongyang will try to define a new reality that allows it to maintain nuclear weapons

North Korean economy. True, such measures could destabilise the regime. But tough, targeted sanctions may get North Korea back to the negotiating table if done with a clear offer of resuming the principles of reciprocal action embedded in the February 2007 agreement. North Korea is not Iran. It does not have oil and gas to sell to get around sanctions. If left unchecked, surely Pyongyang will try to define a new reality that allows it to maintain nuclear weapons. Which is more destabilising: instability in succession or North Korea seeking to redefine the nuclear status of the Korean peninsula? That is the real question of instability before China.

Why is China so careful? It is partly the product of its historically strained relations with Mr Kim and worries that it may be embarrassed if it presses him without success. But Beijing also appears to have decided that the best chance of stability in North Korea lies in another hereditary transfer of power. By muting criticism of

Pyongyang's actions the Chinese are sending any contenders for power a strong message that China supports the current power arrangements.

China may have good reasons for its calculations but it is incumbent on US policymakers to remind Beijing of the dangers of allowing Mr Kim too much leeway. Mr Kim's new nuclear test may well be a game-changer in north-east Asia security dynamics. Some South Korean politicians have already begun to question whether they should continue to abide by restrictions on their missile capabilities agreed to with the US in 1999. Pyongyang's actions might also force others in north-east Asia to consider their own nuclear options.

Not holding Mr Kim to account also risks allowing him to think that he has the space to engage in further illicit nuclear transfers. We know that nuclear co-operation between North Korea and Syria yielded a secret agreement for Pyongyang to build a covert plutonium reactor for Syria. The Israeli air force took care of that problem in September 2007.

But can we risk a strategy of watching and waiting, leaving Mr Kim to his own devices? China's leverage over North Korea is limited but it is more significant than that of any other nation. Indeed, Chinese leverage proved critical to bringing Pyongyang back to the six-party talks after the nuclear test in 2006. It remains to be seen whether China can again place sufficient pressure on North Korea to alter its current course.

We will never know the answer unless Beijing tries.

The writer is a visiting fellow in the John L. Thornton China Center at the Brookings Institution. He served as China director and then senior director for east Asian affairs at the National Security Council from August 2004 to January 2009

The politics of self-abasement



Christopher Caldwell

With his speech to the Muslim world at Cairo University on Thursday, Barack Obama put a new face on American foreign policy, or at least a face that the world has not seen since the 1970s. This is America's penitent, humbled and even sycophantic face.

President Obama seeks a "new beginning" to US-Muslim relations through frank self-examination and mutual respect. The US is locked in a battle for the hearts and minds of Muslims, whether it likes it or not. Self-examination can be a sign of strength. But we should not delude ourselves that the Muslim world sees it as such. The Iranian Ayatollah Ali Khamenei speaks for many when he says that it is "the power of Muslims which [has] made the new US administration try to portray a new image". And there is another problem: the politics of national self-abasement, from Jimmy Carter to Mikhail Gorbachev, is not popular with voters. It cannot be practised for long because it entails a huge - usually fatal - drawing down of political capital.

The US is still, paradoxically, the country that has felt the lash of globalisation least. The president's trip to the Middle East gave an inkling of what diplomacy is like when someone else has the upper hand. In part it was the atmospherics: the state department memo warning journalists accompanying Mr Obama to Saudi Arabia that they were "expressly prohibited from leaving the hotel or engaging in any journalistic activities outside of coverage of the Potus visit"; the photos of Hillary Clinton, the secretary of state, in a headscarf; the invitations extended to members of the Muslim Brotherhood in Cairo.

In part it was the president's oratorical tics: the greeting of *assalam alaykum*; describing

the Middle East as the region in which Islam was first "revealed" (a formulation usually used by believers, not outsiders); or "peace be upon them" (a phrase many Americans know only from Osama bin Laden's internet videos). What looks polite to most of the world looks obsequious to American voters. The carefully vetted Cairo audience clapped primarily for Koranic citations or concrete concessions ("I have ordered the prison at Guantánamo Bay closed"), and rarely for the soaring sentiments of which a US listener would be proudest.

"Turning the page on the Bush era" means partly a change in tone. Mr Obama distinguishes the Iraq war (which he opposed) from the Afghan one (of which he plans a major escalation this summer) by calling Iraq a "war of choice". That is an artificial distinction. The US had other choices at its disposal after 9/11 besides invading Afghanistan. They may have been foolish or ineffective or cowardly, but they were choices. Choosing to invade, even after 9/11, provoked fury in the Muslim world. On Thursday, Mr Obama made important concessions to this fury. The US, he said, would seek no permanent bases in either Iraq or Afghanistan.

But the key point of the speech was to downgrade the US alliance with Israel, to shift US support from the Israeli position to the Muslim one. "The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements [in the West Bank]," Mr Obama said. The US suddenly finds itself with roughly the same Middle East policy as the European Union. Israelis will not find the blow much softened by a few tough remarks about Holocaust denial and some warnings to Palestinians against terrorism - a word Mr Obama did not use.

Mr Obama's criticism of terrorism is two-pronged. On the one hand he sees terrorism as morally wrong, and here he was most eloquent: "It is a sign neither of courage nor power to shoot rockets at sleeping children, or to blow up old women on a bus," he said. On the other hand, he sees terrorism as ineffective, and here he is far less

persuasive. "For centuries, black people in America suffered the lash of the whip as slaves and the humiliation of segregation," Mr Obama said. "But it was not violence that

Obama's Middle East trip gave an inkling of what diplomacy is like when someone else has the upper hand

won full and equal rights."

You can say it was not violence alone that won black people their rights. But an American should not need reminding that the US civil war - fought over nothing but slavery and its constitutional implications - was spectacularly bloody, complete with starvation camps, torched cities and actual terrorism, too. Even the last century's civil rights movement required not just the marches of Martin Luther King, but federal troops.

What is most inspiring about Mr Obama's oratory is also what is most disturbing about it. In his oratorical universe, the right thing and the effective thing tend to coincide. In his discussion of the Muslim headscarf he displayed the same highly appealing libertarian conservatism that won him many votes in the centre of the American electorate last fall. "I reject the view of some in the west that a woman who chooses to cover her hair is somehow less equal," he said. "I respect those women who choose to live their lives in traditional roles. But it should be their choice."

If "choice" is the way forward, then Mr Obama is addressing his audience not as Muslims but as citizens. Politics is about choice. Religion is not - it is about truth. As soon as there are meaningful free choices about whether to be liberated or traditional, the problem defines itself away. The point of the Cairo speech was to break faith with Israel on peace negotiations, in hope that the move will provoke concessions from Muslims. Wrapped around that realpolitik was an oration which was heartfelt and subtle - but which neither made the US stronger than before, nor made the world safer.

The writer is a senior editor at The Weekly Standard. His book, Reflections on the Revolution in Europe: Immigration, Islam and the West, was published in May

The truth of America's clinch with Pakistan



David Pilling

"Excuse me, sir, but may I be of assistance? Ah, I see I have alarmed you." – Mohsin Hamid, "The Reluctant Fundamentalist"

The opening lines of Mohsin Hamid's tense and ambiguous novel, spoken by a bearded Pakistani to a barrel-chested American, could just as well be Islamabad addressing Washington. Ever since General Pervez Musharraf, Pakistan's former military ruler, pledged his country as a pivotal ally in the war on terror after the attacks of September 11 2001, the US and Pakistan have been locked in a strange and ambivalent embrace. Pakistan has been of assistance. The US has been alternately grateful and alarmed.

Evidence that the joint war is not going smoothly – as if any were needed – came again this week when suicide bombers drove a truck of explosives into the Pearl Continental hotel in Peshawar, north-west

Pakistan, killing at least 15 and injuring more than 60. It was merely the latest barbarity. Last week 40 died when suicide bombers targeted a mosque; the week before, militants drove a bomb-laden van into a police station in Lahore, killing 35 and injuring 300.

The latest round of suicide slaughter comes in response to a military offensive on Taliban forces. Until April, the Taliban had been running affairs in the picturesque valley of Swat, 100 miles from Islamabad, causing Hillary Clinton, US secretary of state, to make her oft-quoted comment about the "existential threat" facing Pakistan.

The Pakistani state has responded. It claims, in just four weeks, to have killed 2,000 Taliban and to have all but retaken Swat. Some 2.5m people have fled the valley in the biggest human exodus since the Rwandan genocide 15 years ago. The offensive has also ignited a wave of what Pakistanis call "blowback", as jihadi militants turn on the state that once gave them succour.

Pakistan's troubles with blowback date back to at least 1980 when, after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the CIA teamed up with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency to begin its biggest ever covert operation. Together, they trained

mujahideen fighters and sent them across the Afghan border to kill the communist invaders. The jihadis, many poor and illiterate, were intentionally radicalised, taught that they were defending Islam against godless usurpers. They included fighters from all over the Arab world, including Osama bin Laden, who was later to take his holy war to New York and Washington.

The joint US-Pakistan flirtation

Neat on paper, probably sensible, Washington's new anti-terrorism strategy, Afpak, comes with huge problems

with militant Islam continued into the 1990s. According to Zahid Hussain, author of *Frontline Pakistan*, US diplomats stationed in Islamabad championed another radical group, the Taliban, which they thought could restore order to a lawless Afghanistan. Pakistan's military has also found the hydra-headed jihadi useful at times: militant fighters have provided Islamabad with what is known as "strategic depth" in Afghanistan and,

more importantly, kept hundreds of thousands of Indian troops on their toes in Indian-controlled Kashmir.

Now the US has a new anti-terrorism strategy, Afpak. It wants to treat Afghanistan and Pakistan as a single theatre of war, based on the fact that militants cross the long, empty border between the two countries almost at will. Neat on paper, probably sensible, the Afpak strategy comes with huge problems.

First, US troops are not allowed inside Pakistan. If they drive militants to the border, they cannot pursue them far into the "Pak" bit of Afpak. Once inside, militants can hide in the mountains of Waziristan, a badland region only nominally controlled by Islamabad, or melt into the cities of Karachi, Lahore and Peshawar, where their madrassa-trained sympathisers are many.

Second, Pakistan has a brand new civilian government and a judiciary that has boldly defended its independence. Both should be to Washington's liking. But the civilian government of Asif Ali Zardari does not have convincing control over a military and intelligence service that may – even now – include those who maintain friendly ties with some militant groups.

Nor can the courts be relied upon to tackle militancy as Washington

might wish. Last week the Lahore High Court, lacking specific evidence, released the founder of Lashkar-e-Taiba, the organisation suspected of masterminding last November's Mumbai attacks. Some Pakistani lawyers have also, quite reasonably, questioned the legality of US drone attacks (secretly supported by Islamabad) that have killed scores of civilians and inflamed anti-US opinion inside Pakistan.

Finally, there is the question of Kashmir, another crucible of jihad. Barack Obama sensed, correctly, that any genuine effort to tackle militancy in Afghanistan must involve the resolution of problems not only in Pakistan but also in Kashmir. India quickly warned the US president that he was "barking up the wrong tree" if he intended to broker a Kashmir deal. Yet without resolution of that festering sore, Pakistan will continue to be a jihadi factory and to harbour sympathy for some of the militants in its midst.

Mohsin Hamid's novel ends when one of the two main characters appears to reach for a gun. It is never clear whether it is the American or the Pakistani who faces greater danger. The same holds true for the countries' joint war on terror.

david.pilling@ft.com

Iranian theocrats impose their will

Ahmadi-Nejad's apotheosis should not derail engagement

As passionate street protests erupt in parts of Tehran at what looks, *prima facie*, like an assisted landslide to re-elect Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad in a highly contested presidential vote, only one thing is clear: Iran's ruling theocrats are taking a huge gamble with the future of the Islamic Republic.

Domestically, they are patching up a dam that is starting to burst with pent-up desire for change. Abroad they are courting isolation: Barack Obama's hand, remember, was extended to those who would unclench their fists – not, on the face of it, what has just happened.

It was always the case that Mir-Hossein Moussavi, the former premier whose campaign realigned chastened reformists with pragmatic conservatives, and pulled hundreds of thousands of young and women supporters on to the streets, had a mountain to climb. The rural and urban poor and the regime's paramilitaries (the *basisi* militia alone is about 12m strong) meant the president had vast reserves of pre-positioned support.

Change for the poor means food and jobs, not a relaxed dress code or mixed recreation. Change to the theocrats and their praetorians threatens the vested interests they have built up since the 1979 revolution. Politics in Iran is a lot more about class war than religion.

Still, the size of Mr Ahmadi-Nejad's victory is not credible and the regime – under the ultimate authority of Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader – would not need to come down so hard if it were real. So what has spooked them?

They appeared to fear a "green" revolution that might split institutions such as the Revolutionary Guards the way the reformist avalanche for Mohammad Khatami did in 1997 – a fear magnified once figures such as Hashemi Rafsanjani, a former president still at the fulcrum of Iranian politics, tilted towards Mr Moussavi. They will also have found Mr Obama's overtures unhelpful in enforcing national unity, much easier when Iranians feel under external siege.

The US and its allies should remember it is engagement more than confrontation that unnerves the mullahs. Mr Moussavi, moreover, while he might have been more straightforward on Iran's nuclear ambitions, would not have been more pliant. Furthermore, however bad vote fraud was in this contest, the way it has been managed shows it is no president, but Mr Khamenei, who is in charge.

But for anyone who prefers confrontation with Iran, the apotheosis of Mr Ahmadi-Nejad, a pantomime villain out of central casting, is undeniably a political windfall.

What Obama should tell Muslims

Speaking in Cairo this week, Obama can change the way America is viewed.

Juan C. Zarate
James K. Glassman

When President Obama delivers his much-anticipated address in Cairo this week, he should counter the deadly and pervasive narrative that "the West is at war with Islam" and replace it with a more accurate story line that offers Muslims both responsibility and pride.

With his Muslim family members and his personification of the American dream, Obama is uniquely placed to recast the way American power and influence are viewed.

Although he will need to acknowledge what most Muslims see as U.S. mistakes, an endearing and short-lived mea culpa is not ambitious enough for the task at hand. Instead, the president should shape a new narrative — one that reminds the world of American ideals and challenges Muslim communities to confront conflicts in their midst. While the United States will continue to be a partner, the ultimate outcome will be determined by them, not us.

The president should point to three separate but overlapping struggles:

• **Religion and terror:** A small group of violent reactionaries — led by Al Qaeda, the Taliban, and allied groups — is trying, through horrifying brutality, to bring more than 1 billion Muslims into line with a sweeping totalitarian

doctrine, inconsistent with the tenets of Islam. It's up to Muslims to oppose and ostracize the violent extremists in their midst. Growing numbers of them are doing that — even in Pakistan, where a terrible threat had been widely ignored.

• **Iran and proxies:** Along with its proxies — Syria, Hezbollah and Hamas — Iran is confronting the vast majority of Arab nations, including Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt. This Iran-v-Arab conflict is also part of the Sunni-Shiite conflict that is playing out elsewhere, including Iraq, but Iran's threat transcends religion. Regardless of sectarian bent, Muslim communities need to oppose the attempts by Iran and its intelligence services — in particular the Qods Force — to extend Shiite extremism and influence throughout the world.

Articles in the Arab press have expressed concern that the United States is softening its stance toward the Iranian camp. Egyptians would welcome a statement that clarifies America's opposition to Iranian domination of the Middle East.

• **Democracy and human rights:** Many Arab governments have denied their citizens what Egyptian activist Saad Eddin Ibrahim has called "the infrastructure of democracy": rule of law, independent judiciary, free media, gender equality and autonomous civil society. These necessities of liberty are more important than ballots dropped in a box, as we have seen by the actions of the Hamas regime in Gaza.

A widespread criticism among Muslims is

that the United States has not pressed authoritarian allies to democratize. For both moral and strategic reasons, we have a stake in supporting free societies with accountable governments. The reality of democracies thriving in Muslim societies like Turkey and Indonesia is a powerful counterweight to the canard that Islam and political freedom can't coexist.

In framing the narrative as a series of struggles within Muslim societies, Obama must also emphasize America's values — concepts of pluralism, freedom and opportunity that run counter to the extremists' ideology. He should emphasize that the United States won't be a passive bystander in these struggles.

We will advance our own ideals and interests — which include promoting a comprehensive two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians. Challenging and empowering Muslim communities to take on the three great struggles themselves, with the United States as a constructive partner, is an approach that will overturn the extremists' narrative and help shape a new, honest, and positive story line in which Muslims see themselves not as victims but as central protagonists in global struggles for justice.

JUAN ZARATE, former deputy national security adviser, is senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. JAMES K. GLASSMAN, former undersecretary of state, is president of the World Growth Institute.

MR. OBAMA AND MR. ABBAS

Obama must urge Arab leaders to support Mahmoud Abbas.

President Obama's meeting this week with the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, was a reminder of how much the Palestinians and leading Arab states, starting with Saudi Arabia and Egypt, must do to help revive foundering peace negotiations.

We have sympathy for Mr. Abbas, the moderate-but-weak leader of the Fatah party. Israel, the Bush administration and far too many Arab leaders have failed to give him the support that he needs to make the difficult compromises necessary for any peace deal.

The refusal of Israel's new prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, to commit to a two-state solution or halt settlement activity is feeding militancy and strengthening Mr. Abbas's Hamas rivals. That's no excuse, however, for the depressing passivity that Mr. Abbas displayed in an interview with *The Washington Post* before his White House meeting.

Mr. Abbas suggested that his only role in the American-led peace initiative is to wait — for Hamas to join in a unity government, for Mr. Netanyahu to act. He said he can't ask Arab states to have anything to do with Israel, "until Israel agrees to freeze settlements and recognize the two-state solution," the columnist Jackson Diehl quoted him as saying. "Until then, we can't talk to anyone," he said.

Mr. Abbas has made some important progress. Palestinian security forces (financed and trained by the United States and other countries) have become more professional and more willing to head off attacks.

He needs to do a lot more. He must keep improving those forces. He must

redouble efforts to halt the constant spewing of hatred against Israel in schools, mosques and media. He must work harder to weed out corruption. Unless Mr. Abbas's government does more to improve the lives of Palestinians it will surely lose again to Hamas in elections scheduled for January.

Arab states have shirked their responsibilities to bolster Mr. Abbas with aid and with actions that could advance Palestinian statehood. They say they are committed to a worthwhile 2002 Saudi initiative — offering Israel normalized relations in exchange for a two-state agreement — but are vague about details.

When Mr. Obama visits Saudi Arabia and Egypt next week he must urge leaders to do more. They could help ratchet up pressure on Mr. Netanyahu with preliminary — but symbolically important — steps like opening commercial offices in Tel Aviv and holding publicly acknowledged meetings with Israeli officials.

When Mr. Netanyahu visited the White House last week, Mr. Obama publicly pressed the Israeli leader to freeze settlements and commit to a two-state solution. Now he has set markers for Mr. Abbas, urging him to make greater efforts to rein in militants and halt incitement against Israel. We hope he will do the same for leading Arab states.

For eight years, Arab leaders and the Palestinians complained bitterly because President George W. Bush wasn't willing to invest in Middle East peace. Now that they have an American president who is willing, they finally have to do their part.

Obama's Muslim speech

Madeleine K. Albright

On Thursday, President Obama will deliver a speech on American foreign policy to a predominantly Muslim audience in Egypt. Aside from fulfilling a campaign pledge, why has the president decided to give such a speech? When he approaches the microphone, what are the key issues he should address?

I have attended a number of conferences designed to promote understanding between the United States and people who live in Muslim-majority states. According to Muslim speakers at such events, one fact stands out: When the cold war ended, America needed an enemy to replace Communism and chose Islam.

How else, they ask, to explain the two Gulf wars, Afghanistan, Guantánamo and the plight of the Palestinians? To support their thesis, they cite the bellicose post-9/11 rhetoric of U.S. officials, the Western media's preoccupation with Muslim extremists and the plethora of pundits who have identified Islam, especially "political Islam," as the leading threat to civilization in the 21st century.

To most Americans, the idea that our country is attacking Islam or that we view the Islamic faith as an enemy is absurd. The first Gulf War

was a response to Saddam Hussein's invasion of a neighboring Arab country. On 9/11, America was the victim, not the aggressor. In Iraq, President Bush's rationale for regime change, though misguided, was hardly anti-Islamic. U.S. leaders can't be held accountable for what some writers say in order to scare people and sell books. What is more, in the 1990s, America twice led NATO into conflicts on behalf of Muslim populations — first in Bosnia, then Kosovo.

Nevertheless, the perception that America is hostile to Islam remains widespread, much to the satisfaction of Al Qaeda, the Taliban and the government of Iran. To his credit, President Bush attempted on several occasions to communicate his respect and peaceful intentions to Muslim audiences. Sadly, those efforts fell on deaf ears.

On Thursday, President Obama can be assured of a wide audience, and he will speak with a far cleaner slate than his predecessor. Mr. Obama has a family connection to Islam; he also has a well deserved reputation for weaving moral and political themes together in a coherent and thoughtful way. His challenge — not unusual for this president — will be to fulfill the expectations he has raised.

Mr. Obama's dilemma is that no speech, however eloquent, can disentangle U.S.-Muslim relations from the treacherous terrain of current events in places such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and the Middle East.

Since the president is unlikely to announce major policy changes, he must persuade Muslims abroad to view our existing policies in a new light. That is no small job. It requires separating the rationale for contemporary actions from the long history of clashes between Islam and the West, and it requires overcoming the resentment caused when Muslim noncombatants are killed as a byproduct of conflict.

The more direct the president is in acknowledging these problems, the more likely it is that Muslims will think objectively about his words.

Muslims desire respect and respect demands frankness. We cannot pretend that American soldiers and aircraft are not attacking Muslims. We can, however, remind the world that the people we oppose are murdering Muslims and other innocents every day. In Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, our allies are Muslims. We have partners in Lebanon and

among Palestinians, as well.

We understand the desire of every country to be free from foreign domination. We will be neither intimidated nor dissuaded from our purpose, but our goal isn't to wage war; it is to help establish security for local populations and our fondest hope is to return home as soon as possible.

Although the president will be speaking to a Muslim audience about American policy, it is equally important that he address the audience in the United States. Muslims abroad need to embrace a more accurate picture of America; but Americans need to learn more about Muslims. It cannot be said too often that Islam is a religion of peace, that terrorism is as indefensible in Islam as it is in the other two Abrahamic faiths, and that the vast majority of Muslims — including the millions who are citizens of the United States — want to live in dignity and without violence.

Finally, President Obama can remind his Egyptian hosts that repression in the name of moderation is still repression. Despite the mistakes of recent years, support for democracy should remain a central theme of U.S. foreign policy. Armed groups, such as Hamas, have no place in an election. But democracy is why women have led governments in four of the five most populous Muslim-majority states and why women were recently elected to the parliament of Kuwait.

January's provincial balloting in Iraq has helped to unify the country, while legislative debate has provided a peaceful outlet for anger. Upcoming votes in Iran and Afghanistan will no doubt influence the course of those nations. Democracy's advantage is that it contains the means for its own correction through public accountability and discussion. It also offers a non-violent alternative for the forces of change, whether those forces are progressive or conservative.

It would be unreasonable to expect too much of any speech, especially on a topic as prone to subjective interpretation as U.S. foreign policy and Islam. Given President Obama's record, however, we can be confident that a brave and possibly historic effort is in store.

MADELEINE K. ALBRIGHT was the U.S. secretary of state from 1997 to 2001.

North Korea's gauntlet

NORTH KOREA I

No issue is better suited to cooperation among the Great Powers than North Korea.

Henry A. Kissinger

The Obama administration has so far dealt publicly with the North Korean challenge in an understated, almost leisurely, manner. Emphasizing continued reliance on multilateral diplomacy, it has invited Pyongyang to return to the conference table, even while North Korea threatens military action and tests nuclear weapons and the missiles to deliver them.

The challenge goes far beyond the regional security issue. For America, it involves relations with an emerging superpower (China); relations with a re-emerging Russia; relations with key U.S. allies (Japan and South Korea); and a major escalation in the threat of proliferation to non-state parties.

The resumption of nuclear and missile testing by North Korea represents an abrupt reversal of a negotiating process that has been going, with only brief interruptions, for nearly two decades. Since 2004, six-party talks in Beijing included all the countries (North and South Korea, China, Russia, Japan and the United States) directly threatened by North Korean missiles and nuclear weapons. For a while, it was argued that bilateral negotiations between the United States and North Korea would prove more effective.

That debate has become largely academic. Both approaches were pursued; both contributed to the stalemate inherited by the Obama administration. I favored negotiations with Pyongyang and have occasionally participated in Track II dialogue with Korean officials outside formal channels. But with North Korea kicking over all previous agreements repeatedly, process has overwhelmed substance.

The ultimate test of the Korean diplomacy always had to be the elimination of North Korea's stockpile of fissionable material and nuclear weapons. But those were growing while the negotiations were proceeding at their stately pace. The negotiating process thereby ran the risk of legitimizing North Korea's nuclear program by enabling Pyongyang to establish a fait accompli by means of diplomacy. That point is fast approaching if it has not already been reached.

The incoming Obama administration gave North Korea every opportunity to accelerate the negotiating process. While on a visit to Beijing, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton hinted that she was seriously considering a visit to Pyongyang. Stephen Bosworth, a distinguished scholar and moderate diplomat, was appointed principal negotiator.

These overtures were vituperatively rejected. Pyongyang used the change of American administration to signal a major shift in course. Bosworth was rebuffed while on a visit to the region. Refusing to return to the negotiating table, Pyongyang also revoked all the concessions it had previously made. It has restarted its nuclear reprocessing plant and conducted another nuclear weapons test.

Many explanations have been advanced for the brazenness of North Korean tactics, such as a domestic struggle for succession to the clearly ailing "Dear Leader" Kim Jong-il. But the only partially rational explanation is that North Korea's leaders have recognized that no matter how conciliatory United States diplomacy, it would in the next phase demand the destruction of North Korea's existing weapons capability.

Pyongyang's leaders have obviously decided to reject this outcome in the most absolute and confrontational manner. They must have concluded that no degree of political recognition could compensate for abandoning the signal (and probably sole) achievement of their rule, for which they have obliged their

There is no more middle ground between the abandonment of the North Korean program and the status quo.

population to accept a form of oppression and exploitation unprecedented even in this period of totalitarianism. They may well calculate that weathering a period of protest is their ticket to emerging as a de facto nuclear power.

Hence the issue is no longer what forum should be used for negotiations but what their purpose is to be.

The minimum precondition for a resumption of either of the existing forums would be that Pyongyang restore the previously implemented agreements that it has recently abrogated — especially the mothballing of the plutonium separation plant. But that is not enough.

However the next diplomatic phase is conducted, the United States needs to enter it with the recognition that there is no longer any middle ground between the abandonment of the North Korean program and the status quo.

Any policy that does not do away with North Korea's nuclear military capability, in effect, acquiesces in its continuation. A program of marginal additional sanctions followed by another protracted period of give-and-take would have that practical consequence.

The North Korean challenge thus confronts the administration with two basic options:

- To accept tacitly or openly that the North Korean nuclear program is beyond the point where it can be reversed and to seek to cap it and proscribe any proliferating activities beyond North Korea's borders;
- To attempt to end the North Korean nuclear program by a maximum deployment of pressures, which requires the active participation of Korea's neighbors, especially China.

Acceptance of the North Korean nuclear program would fly in the face of American foreign policy since we shepherded the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty through the international community in 1967, as well as of the policy put forward by President Obama only two months ago in a seminal speech in Prague.

Acquiescence in a North Korean nuclear program would undermine prospects of the proposed negotiations with Iran. If the North Korean methods practiced during the Korean negotiations become a model for negotiations on Mideast nuclear programs, a chaotic world will beckon.

De facto acquiescence in a North Korean nuclear program would require a reconsideration of current U.S. strategic planning. More emphasis would need to be given to missile defense. It would be essential to redesign the American deterrent strategy in a world of multiple nuclear powers — a challenge unprecedented in our experience. The enhanced role of non-state actors with respect to terrorism would have to be addressed.

A new argument in favor of acquiescence in North Korea's nuclear program has recently made its appearance. It contends that Pyongyang's conduct is really a hidden cry for assistance against Chinese domination and thus deserves support rather than opprobrium. But turning North Korea into a ward of the United States is neither feasible nor acceptable to the countries whose support for a solution of the North Korean nuclear issue is imperative.

No long-term solution of the Korean nuclear problem is sustainable without the key players of Northeast Asia, and that means China, South Korea, the United States and Japan, with an important role for Russia as well.

A wise diplomacy will move urgently to assemble the incentives and pressures to bring about the elimination of nuclear weapons and stockpiles from North Korea. It is not enough to demand unstated pressures from other affected countries, especially China. A concept for the political evolution of Northeast Asia is urgently needed.

Too much of the commentary on the current crisis has concerned the *deus ex machina* of Chinese pressures on North Korea and complaints that Beijing has not implemented its full arsenal of possibilities. But for China, the issue is not so much a negotiating position as concern about its consequences. If the Pyongyang regime is destabilized, the future of Northeast Asia would then have to be settled by deeply concerned parties amidst a fast-moving crisis. They need to know the American attitude and clarify their own for that contingency.

China faces challenges perhaps even more complex than America's. If present trends continue, and if North Korea manages to maintain its nuclear capability through the inability of the parties to bring matters to a head, the proliferation of nuclear weapons throughout Northeast Asia and the Middle East becomes probable.

China will then face the prospect of nuclear weapons in all surrounding Asian states and an unmanageable nuclear-armed regime in Pyongyang. But if China exercises the full panoply of its pressures without an accord with America and an understanding with the other parties, it has reason to fear chaos along its borders at or close to the traditional invasion routes of China. A sensitive, thoughtful dialogue with China, rather than peremptory demands, is essential.

The outcome of such a dialogue is difficult to predict, but it cannot be managed unless America clarifies its own purposes to itself. Some public statements imply the U.S. will try to deal with specific North Korean threats rather than eliminate the capability to carry them out. They leave open with what determination Washington will pursue the elimination of the existing stockpile of North Korean nuclear weapons and fissionable materials. It is not possible to undertake both courses simultaneously.

The ultimate issue is not regional but concerns the prospects for world order. There could scarcely seem to be an issue more suited to cooperation among the Great Powers than nonproliferation, especially with regard to North Korea, a regime run by fanatics, located on the borders of China, Russia and South Korea, and within missile range of Japan. Still, the major countries have been unable to galvanize themselves into action.

In this multipolar world, many issues like nuclear proliferation, energy and climate change require a concert approach. The major powers of the 21st century have proved to be heterogeneous and without much experience as part of a concert of powers. Connecting their purposes, however, needs to be their ultimate task if the world is to avoid the catastrophe of unchecked proliferation.

HENRY A. KISSINGER served as national security adviser and as secretary of state in the administrations of Presidents Nixon and Ford.

TRIBUNE MEDIA SERVICES

Don't make it worse

NORTH KOREA II

Military threats will only make Pyongyang more reckless and divide the world.

Mikhail Gorbachev

News of the nuclear test in North Korea on May 25 came while I was visiting the demilitarized zone on the Korean Peninsula. I had been invited to the inauguration ceremony for a peace bell on the 38th parallel — the truce line where the hostilities between North and South Korea ceased in 1953.

At a press conference that morning and in my private discussions, the breaking news naturally topped the agenda.

Listening to the South Koreans, I felt their alarm and concern for their own security, but also for the situation in North Korea. I saw deep and sincere sympathy for their compatriots on the other side of the demarcation line and their abiding hope for eventual reunification.

There was no panic. Emotions ran high, though, and everyone I talked to wondered anxiously about what would happen next.

Just a few months earlier, it had seemed that events might take a different course. In February 2007, North Korea had agreed to shut down its main nuclear reactor in Yongbyon. In June 2008, the reactor was partly deactivated, and television channels everywhere showed the implosion of its cooling tower.

North Korea gave the United States and China no less than 18,000 pages of documentation on the progress of its nuclear program since 1990. U.N. inspectors were allowed access to its nuclear facilities. The prospect of a Korean Peninsula free of nuclear weapons appeared increasingly realistic.

Then, suddenly, came the U-turn late last year. Inspectors were denied access and the deactivation of the reactor was suspended. This spring, North Korea withdrew from six-party talks with the United States, China, Rus-

sia, Japan and South Korea. Now it has conducted its second nuclear test — the first was in October 2006 — and test-fired at least six missiles in less than a week.

Diplomats and experts differ in their assessments of what is behind this turnaround. Some regard North Korea's actions as irrational; others see an attempt to pressure the international community into giving more aid; still others suggest that a succession struggle is heating up. In South Korea, some believe that the tougher line taken by their new president toward the North has been counterproductive.

Serious thought needs to be given to all of this. In rethinking the situation, we must be

Responding with the retaliatory logic of the Cold War could put us on a slippery slope.

very clear about the goal: It is to find a way toward resuming the political and diplomatic dialogue, in particular the six-party talks. Calls for switching to a military track should be resisted.

Such calls have already been heard in Japan, where North Korea's nuclear test has given the proponents of remilitarization a new card to play. A U.S. assistant secretary of defense, Wallace Gregson, has said that the United States would be ready to support Japan's acquiring a capability for preemptive strikes at enemy bases. Even the main taboo of post-war Japan — acquiring nuclear weapons — may be in jeopardy.

Such steps would only make the situation worse. They would push the North Koreans to even more recklessness and undermine the unanimity of the world's reaction to the nuclear test, as seen in the strong statement made by the U.N. Security Council.

The Security Council is devising more concrete actions to underline its members' firm stance. What is the right mix of measures here? Certainly it must be made clear to the

North Koreans that their behavior has consequences. But those who pin all hopes on tougher sanctions should keep two things in mind. First, the suffering people of North Korea must not be held hostage to the nuclear problem. Second, the collapse of a nuclear-weapons state could be catastrophic.

We need to seek the keys to a political solution. Much will depend on those members of the six-party talks who still have channels of communication with and leverage over North Korea. China maintains relations with the North on both governmental and party levels and provides vital economic aid. It has the right and every reason to tell Pyongyang that continuing the present course could bring a hard fall. China could also ask questions: Where is the "threat to the country's sovereignty," so often invoked by North Korea to justify nuclear tests?

The latest news from the region is alarming. North Korea has said it no longer considers itself bound by the armistice that ended the fighting between North and South Korea. It has launched at least six missiles since the second nuclear test. It may now be preparing to test an intercontinental missile. American and South Korean troops have been put on their highest alert in three years. Responding with the retaliatory logic of the Cold War could put us on a slippery slope, with unpredictable consequences.

The art of politics is not to turn a problem into a threat and a threat into an armed conflict. This becomes clear when one visits the region and talks to the people who are directly affected by this situation. They are right when they say we must leave no stone unturned in seeking to resume dialogue — one that one day may solve this and other problems in the region.

MIKHAIL GORBACHEV, the last leader of the Soviet Union, is president of the International Foundation for Socio-Economic and Political Studies in Moscow.

Iraq's road ahead

Jawad al-Bolani

BAGHDAD The marking of Memorial Day last month in the United States was not lost on the Iraqis. We recognize the valor and sacrifice of Americans to secure our freedom from tyranny. The 500,000 police and security personnel who comprise Iraq's Interior Ministry — and who will inherit much of the job of keeping Iraq safe after U.S. troops leave — must now ensure that America's courage and suffering will not be in vain.

The June 30 deadline for U.S. troop withdrawal from Iraqi cities is non-negotiable. Beyond it lies the Iraqi nation, sovereign and united. But as we enter this new, uncharted phase in our self-governance, we know there are challenges and changes ahead.

First, the war going forward will continue to shift from a widespread military conflict to a highly targeted "war of intelligence." While high-profile attacks in Iraq are down some 60 percent according to Iraqi and U.S. military reports, Al Qaeda in Iraq, even in its death rattle, is still unleashing violent sleeper cells in a bid to assert itself. As the spike in violence in April demonstrates, these insurgents can still cause

misery and disruption with their suicide attacks and car bombs. But information, not major military operations, is the key for Iraqi police and security forces on the hunt for these remaining extremists. We hope for greater intelligence support from the U.S., although our police and security forces have been steadily building our capacity and readiness for this new reality.

The best way to honor the sacrifices of our allies is to build a stable, peaceful country that can stand on its own feet.

more than 62,000 employees on corruption charges in the last two years. But the problem cannot be overstated: Corruption is truly the second insurgency in Iraq. Corruption hinders development and relief efforts in the country by siphoning off billions of dollars of scarce funds and goods; it undermines faith in our new democracy to the point where some ordinary Iraqis are openly longing for the days of Saddam Hussein; and, most ominously, it threatens our

security by compromising the people meant to keep Iraq safe. One of the authors of the report was himself shot and killed on the streets of Baghdad.

The third front in the war for Iraq's future is the effort to restore adequate services and infrastructure. The country is still in shambles, and many are in poverty. The existence of grievance and want feeds insurgencies by expanding the pool of the marginalized and the disaffected. The lack of basic services erodes public support for our efforts to pull the country together around national political goals. This situation is all the more dire because Iraq's oil revenues, our main source of income, have plummeted as the price of oil has fallen.

Of course, we cannot do any of this alone. We will continue to rely on American expertise, investment and intelligence. We will also need financial and political support from our neighbors and their cooperation in ensuring the integrity of our borders.

The best way for Iraq to honor the sacrifices of our allies is to build a stable, peaceful country that can stand on its own feet, free of foreign interference. Normal. As June 30 fast approaches, we see not an "end," but a beginning.

JAWAD AL-BOLANI is minister of the interior in the Iraqi government.

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

SATURDAY-SUNDAY, JUNE 6-7, 2009

Democracy's price of admission

Those who seek the benefits of the democracy must accept its underlying principles.

Tzipi Livni

JERUSALEM In his speech in Cairo yesterday, President Obama acknowledged an important principle: "Elections alone do not make true democracy." That principle will be tested this weekend when the Lebanese people go to the polls. Many have called for the elections to be free and fair. But few have asked whether this is even possible if Hezbollah — the radical Shiite party with a huge arsenal and a deeply anti-democratic agenda — is viewed as a legitimate participant in the process.

A similar question arose before Hamas's participation in the 2006 Palestinian Authority elections. Then, as Israeli justice minister, I tried in vain to persuade the international community that to promote democracy it was not enough to focus on the technical conduct of elections, it was necessary to insist that those who sought the benefits of the democratic process accepted its underlying principles as well.

At the time, the counter-argument was that the very participation in elections would act as a moderating force on extremist groups. With more accountability, such groups would be tempted to abandon their militant approach in favor of a purely political platform.

But this analysis ignored the possibility that

some radical groups sought participation in the democratic process not to forsake their violent agenda but to advance it. For them, electoral participation was merely a way to gain legitimacy — not an opportunity to change. Some of these groups were better seen as "one-time democrats" determined to use the democratic system against itself.

I believe that democracy is about values before it is about voting. These values must be nurtured within society and integrated into the electoral process itself. We cannot offer international legitimacy for radical groups and then simply hope that elections and governance will take care of the rest. In fact, the capacity to influence radical groups can diminish significantly once they are viewed as indispensable coalition partners and are able to intimidate the electorate with the authority of the state behind them.

For this reason, the international community must adopt at the global level what true democracies apply at the national one — a universal code for participation in democratic elections. This would include requiring every party running for office to renounce violence, pursue its aims by peaceful means and commit to binding laws and international agreements. This code should be adopted by international institutions, like the United Nations, as well as regional bodies. It would guide elections monitors and individual nations in deciding whether to accord parties the stamp of democratic le-

gitimacy, and signal to voters that electing an undemocratic party would have negative international consequences for their country.

The intent here is not to stifle disagreement, exclude key actors from the political process or suggest that democracy be uniform and disregard local cultures and values. The goal is to make clear that the democratic process is not a free pass — it is about responsibilities as well as rights. (This is why, for instance, Israel banned the radical Kach movement from the electoral process.)

Mr. Obama's call to support genuine democracy has implications for the kinds of elections the international community promotes and endorses. Radical groups can become legitimate political players in the democratic process if they accept core democratic principles and abandon the use of force as a political tool. Or they can maintain armed terrorist militias in order to threaten their neighbors and intimidate their people. The international community should not allow them to do both.

Unless such groups are forced to choose between these conflicting identities, their participation in elections not only risks empowering extremists, it risks debasing the values of democracy itself.

***TZIPI LIVNI**, a former vice prime minister and minister of foreign affairs of Israel, is the leader of the Kadima party, and head of the Israeli opposition.*

U.S. thinking of restoring North Korea to terror list

WASHINGTON

Obama might withdraw carrot that Bush offered Pyongyang, Clinton says

BY BRIAN KNOWLTON

Concerned by North Korean behavior that she called "very provocative and belligerent," Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said in an interview aired Sunday that the United States was considering putting North Korea back on its list of state sponsors of terrorism, a clear signal that any slim hopes once held for improved relations had been dashed.

"We're going to look at it," Mrs. Clinton said in an interview recorded earlier for the ABC News program "This Week" when asked about returning Pyongyang to the list.

She suggested that international concern over North Korea had clearly sharpened following its recent nuclear and missile tests. She said that both China and Russia, which had balked earlier, seemed more ready now to increase pressure on North Korea. A strong sanctions resolution against the North would most likely emerge from the U.N. Security Council, backed by both countries, she said.

"What is going somewhere is additional sanctions in the United Nations — arms embargo, other measures taken against North Korea with the full support of China and Russia," she said. "We think we're going to come out of this with very strong resolution, with teeth, that will have consequences for the North Korean regime."

Mrs. Clinton said that the Obama administration was still evaluating reports that the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-il, had designated his youngest son, Kim Jong-un, as his successor.

And as the administration presses Pyongyang to release two young Americans being held as spies, she said it remained unclear who in North Korea would decide their fate. That uncertainty reflects the opaque nature of the Pyongyang government, particularly as the end of Kim Jong-il's rule appears to be moving closer.

Regarding the terrorism list, Mrs. Clinton suggested that such an action would not be taken simply out of exasperation with North Korea.

"There's a process for it," she said. "Obviously we would want to see recent evidence of their support for international terrorism." Asked whether such evidence was already in hand, she added: "We're just beginning to look at it. I don't have an answer for you right now."

When the Bush administration removed North Korea from the list in October, it was largely seen as a political move meant to salvage a fragile nuclear deal. The State Department said at the time that the decision had been made after Pyongyang agreed to resume disabling a plutonium plant and to allow inspections to assure that it had halted its nuclear program. "Obviously they were taken off of the list for a purpose, and that purpose is being thwarted by their actions," Mrs. Clinton said Sunday.

"If we do not take significant and effective action against the North Koreans now," Mrs. Clinton said, "we'll spark an arms race in Northeast Asia. I don't think anybody wants to see that."

After Cairo, it's Clinton time



Thomas L. Friedman

It's hard to know whether to laugh or cry after reading the reactions of analysts and officials in the Middle East to President Barack Obama's Cairo speech. "It's not what he says, but what he does," many said. No, ladies and gentlemen of the Middle East, it is what he says and what you do and what we do. We must help, but we can't want democracy or peace more than you do.

What should we be doing? The follow-up to the president's speech will have to be led by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. This will be her first big test, and, for me, there is no question as to where she should be putting all her energy: on the peace process.

No, not that peace process — not the one between Israelis and Palestinians. That one's probably beyond diplomacy. No, I'm talking about the peace process that is much more strategically important — the one inside Iraq.

The most valuable thing that Clinton could do right now is to spearhead a sustained effort — along with the U.N., the European Union and Iraq's neighbors — to resolve the lingering disputes between Iraqi factions before we complete our withdrawal. (We'll be out of Iraq's cities by June 30 and the whole country by the close of 2011.)

Why? Because if Iraq unravels as we draw down, the Obama team will be blamed, and it will be a huge mess. By contrast, if a decent and stable political order can take hold in Iraq, it could have an extremely positive impact on

the future of the Arab world and on America's reputation.

I have never bought the argument that Iraq was the bad war, Afghanistan the good war and Pakistan the necessary war. Folks, they're all one war with different fronts. It's a war within the Arab-Muslim world between progressive and anti-modernist forces over how this faith community is going to adapt to modernity — modern education, consensual politics, the balance between religion and state, and the rights of women. Any decent outcome in Iraq would bolster all the progressive

The secretary of state's first big test will be to help resolve Iraq's lingering disputes.

forces by creating an example of something that does not exist in the Middle East today — an independent, democratizing Arab-Muslim state.

"The reason there are no successful Arab democracies today is because there is no successful Arab democracy today," said Stanford's Larry Diamond, the author of "The Spirit of Democracy." "When there is no model, it is hard for an idea to diffuse in a region."

Rightly or wrongly, we stepped into the middle of this war of ideas in the Arab-Muslim world in 2003 when we decapitated the Iraqi regime, wiped away its authoritarian political structure and went about clumsily midwifing something that the modern Arab world has never seen before — a horizontal dialogue between the constituent communities of an Arab state. In Iraq's case, that is primarily Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds.

Yes, in a region that has only known top-down monologues from kings, dictators and colonial powers, we have helped Iraqis convene the first horizontal dialogue to write their own social contract for how to share power.

At first, this dialogue took place primarily through violence.

Liberated from Saddam's iron fist,

each Iraqi community tested its strength against the others, saying in effect: "Show me what you got, baby." The violence was horrific and ultimately exhausting for all.

So now we've entered a period of negotiations over how Iraq will be governed. But it's unfinished and violence could easily return.

And that brings me to Clinton. I do not believe the argument that Iraqis will not allow us to help mediate their disputes — whether over Kirkuk, oil-sharing or federalism. For years now, our president, secretary of state and secretary of defense have flown into Iraq, met the leaders for a few hours and then flown away, not to return for months. We need a more serious, weighty effort. Hate the war, hate Bush, but don't hate the idea of trying our best to finish this right.

This is important. Afghanistan is secondary. Baghdad is a great Arab and Muslim capital. Iraq has something no other Arab country has in abundance: water, oil and an educated population. It already has sprouted scores of newspapers and TV stations that operate freely.

"Afghanistan will never have any impact outside of Afghanistan. Iraq can change minds," said Marnoun Fandy, of the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

You demonstrate that Iraqi Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds can write their own social contract, and you will tell the whole Arab world that there is a model other than top-down monologues from iron-fisted dictators. You will expose the phony democracy in Iran, and you will leave a legacy for America that will help counter Abu Ghraib and torture.

Ultimately, which way Iraq goes will depend on whether its elites decide to use their freedom to loot their country or to rebuild it.

That's still unclear. But we still have a chance to push things there in the right direction, and a huge interest in doing so. Clinton is a serious person; this is a serious job. I hope she does it.

South Koreans should be worried

The North is more unstable and dangerous than people realize.

B. J. Lee

SEOUL For most South Koreans, a North Korea that fires missiles, threatens war and conducts a nuclear test or two is nothing new. That's the North the South has lived with for more than half a century. So last month, while the rest of the world was captivated by Pyongyang's belligerent words and actions, South Koreans were preoccupied with what was real news to them: the suicide and funeral of their late president, Roh Moo-hyun.

But they should be worried.

Pyongyang's belligerence is much stronger than before. It seems ready to take chances. Internal factors, notably rising uncertainties about the succession of leadership, make Pyongyang more adventurous. The development of a nuclear arsenal and other advanced weapons is not just a bargaining chip, it's a serious effort to solidify the country's leadership, which needs to show evidence of progress to its increasingly doubtful people. Nothing is more convincing than nuclear warheads mounted on long-range missiles that can reach its archenemy, the United States.

There are increasing conventional provocations as well. After the United States and other nations condemned the North's nuclear and

missile tests and threatened sanctions, Pyongyang sharply raised its hostile rhetoric toward the South. When the North threatened to attack South Korean and U.S. shipping along the Northern Limit Line of the Yellow Sea, Chinese fishing boats in the region disappeared en masse. It is not clear whether they retreated at Pyongyang's request, but the incident clearly raises tensions. The limit line, imposed by the U.S.-led United Nations after the Korean War, has been constantly challenged by the North.

Why do these threats fail to intimidate South Koreans? Partly, it is a case of crying wolf. They have lived under the North's threats for so long that they have become almost numb to them. Older people are used to hearing warnings of war, so often used by past military rulers to justify or prolong their grip on power.

Younger South Koreans are indifferent to the North's hostility for different reasons. Not having experienced the Korean War, they often fail to see the true face of the North. Moreover, South Korea's economy ranks 13th in the world, and they are increasingly sympathetic to their starving neighbors. Those who make rare trips to the North are often surprised by the pervasive malnutrition, which has left northern soldiers skinny, frail and seemingly unable to wage war.

For the past 10 years, South Koreans have offered aid and emphasized brotherhood between the two Koreas. But even as they were

shipping food and fertilizer to the North, setting up factories there, hiring Northern workers, and building luxurious tourist hotels, Pyongyang never slowed its military build-up. Huge amounts of South Korean aid were used for nuclear and missile tests.

The North is now far ahead of the South in its military capabilities. The planned transfer of wartime command control from Washington to Seoul in 2012 will further weaken the South's defense posture. Seoul hopes to beef up its own military power, but economic difficulties limit its spending on advanced weaponry.

All these are good reasons to worry South Koreans. And June is particularly a good month for South Koreans to remember the North's unsavory side. It was in June 1950 that North Korean troops stormed over the border to start the Korean War. Two clashes since then — the Yellow Sea battles of 1999 and 2002 that took several lives on both sides — also happened in June.

Although the North is unlikely to wage an all out war on the peninsula at the moment, it could again test the world with small provocation along the DMZ or the Northern Limit Line. It is perhaps time for southerners to focus on their belligerent neighbors. The South's lack of alertness was precisely the reason why the North took chances in June 1950.

B. J. LEE is a Seoul-based journalist.

Rethinking Iran

IRAN I

We can't wait for the nuclear issue to be resolved before engaging Tehran on other crucial fronts.

Franco Frattini

ROME Why does Iran matter so much to the rest of the world? There are at least three reasons. First, Iran has become a key test case of the international community's capacity to prevent nuclear proliferation, which would make the world increasingly unpredictable and dangerous. Second, Iran matters for the future stability of the Middle East, where its influence as well as the influence of the Shiites is on the increase. Third, Iran matters for the stabilization of neighboring Afghanistan.

For years the international community has been focusing almost exclusively on the nuclear aspect. Alas, diplomatic efforts to persuade Iran to suspend the enrichment of uranium have failed to break the stalemate. After six years of "nuclear-only" diplomacy, the time has come to tackle the Iranian question in a more comprehensive manner. The new strategy should be based on two assumptions.

First, we cannot wait for the nuclear issue to be resolved before engaging Iran on other crucial fronts. An indefinitely isolated Iran could become an incorrigible saboteur in many areas, from Central Asia to the Middle East to Afghanistan.

Second, Turkey and the moderate Arab countries, as well as India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, have just as much of an interest in Iran as

do the United States, the European Union, China and Russia. These countries legitimately expect their interests to be taken into account. They should be more closely involved in the international decision-making process if we want our policies on Iran to become more effective.

Italy was the first to propose that Iran should be directly involved in the debate on Afghanistan. We have been supported in our endeavor by the pragmatic approach adopted by the U.S. administration. The governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan also have apprised Italy of their belief that Iran can be part of the solution for the stability of their region.

The top-level leadership talks held in Tehran recently point to the three countries' willingness to work together. Moreover, Western and Iranian interests in Afghanistan potentially coincide. Tehran has an objective interest in seeing Afghanistan "de-Talibanized" and stable, and in seeing a government in Kabul willing and able to keep narcotics from flooding into Iran, where drug abuse has become a national emergency.

For that reason, Italy has invited Iran to take part in the G-8 meeting of foreign ministers that is to be held in Trieste on June 26 and 27 and whose "outreach" session will be devoted to the stabilization of Afghanistan and Pakistan. We want Iran, along with other regional actors, to play a constructive part in a new regional compact designed to consolidate Afghanistan's stability.

We urge Iran to contribute to the collective

achievement of a number of regional benchmarks in several areas. These benchmarks range from border control, to fighting narco-trafficking and arms smuggling, to the implementation of a number of regionally co-sponsored economic projects designed to help revive the Afghan economy.

The Trieste meeting is meant to launch a process whose implementation will demand a sustainable commitment from every single regional and international player involved. Thus Afghanistan can be an important test for measuring Iran's willingness to modify its conduct and to adopt a cooperative posture toward its neighbors and the international community.

Italy believes that Iran's full and direct involvement in the Afghan question should be pursued at once and independently of attempts to resolve the nuclear issue. The nuclear issue can follow the path mapped out by the "5 plus 1" group (the United States, Britain, France, China, Russia and Germany), although that group will need to become more inclusive by bringing in other relevant stakeholders if it is to increase its chances of success.

If Iran is re-engaged over Afghanistan and Pakistan, it may feel more motivated to interact constructively with the international community on the nuclear issue and on the Middle East, where its interests are now at variance with those of the international community.

FRANCO FRATTINI is Italy's minister of foreign affairs.

With Hezbollah's loss, hints of a larger shift in attitudes toward the U.S.

BEIRUT

BY MICHAEL SLACKMAN

There were many domestic reasons voters handed an American-backed coalition a victory in Lebanese parliamentary elections last weekend — but political analysts also attribute it in part to

NEWS ANALYSIS

President Barack Obama's campaign of outreach to the Arab and Muslim world.

Most analysts had predicted that the Hezbollah-led coalition, already a crucial power broker in the Lebanese government because of its support from Shiites who make up a large part of Leb-

anon's population, would win handily. In the end, though, the American-aligned coalition won 71 seats, while the Syria-Iranian aligned opposition, which includes Hezbollah, took only 57.

It is hard to draw firm conclusions from one election. But for the first time in a long time, being aligned with the United States did not lead to defeat in the Middle East. And since Lebanon has always been a critical testing ground, that could mark a possibly significant shift in regional dynamics with another major election, in Iran, just days away.

With Mr. Obama's speech on relations with Muslims fresh in Lebanese minds, analysts pointed to steps the administration had taken since assuming office.

Washington is now proposing talking

to Hezbollah's patrons, Iran and Syria, rather than confronting them — a move that undermines the group's attempt to demonize the United States. The United States is also no longer pressing its allies in the Lebanese government to unilaterally disarm Hezbollah, which, given the party's considerable remaining clout, could have provoked a crisis.

"Lebanon is a telling case," said Osama Safa, director of the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies here. "It is no longer relevant for the extremists to use the anti-American card. It does look like the U.S. is moving on to something new."

In fact, some analysts said that it was possible that Lebanon's election Sunday could be a harbinger of the presidential vote on Friday in Iran, where a

hard-line anti-American president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, may be losing ground against his main moderate challenger, Mir Hussein Moussavi.

While Mr. Ahmadinejad has grown unpopular for many reasons, including his troubled stewardship of the economy, political analysts said that Mr. Obama had blunted the appeal of Mr. Ahmadinejad's confrontation with the West.

The results in Lebanon may also make it more difficult for Israel to capitalize on fears of Hezbollah dominance and shift the conversation away from the peace process with the Palestinians — a tactic that many analysts here attributed to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"I think the speech of Obama in Cairo more likely played a role in neutralizing

anti-Americanism," said Khalil al-Dakhil, a sociologist from Saudi Arabia.

Nonetheless, there are many other factors at play that do not depend on the United States. The Lebanese election did little to change the balance of power in a country where Hezbollah is by far the strongest player. Christians, who played a moderating role and have traditionally tilted toward the United States, are not a political force elsewhere in the region. And it will probably be weeks, even months, before all sides can agree on the makeup of a new government.

Power in Lebanon is divided along sectarian lines. Christians control half of the 128-seat Parliament. The other half is divided between Sunni, Shiite, Druse and a few other sects. In this election, Shiites

voted largely with Hezbollah and the opposition, and Sunnis and Druse mostly voted with the majority. The real contest was among Christians, who were divided between the camps. And the American-backed, Sunni-led coalition appears to have conducted a well-calculated negative campaign, stoking sectarian tensions and fears of Iranian and Syrian dominance. Hezbollah and its allies charged that the Western-backed coalition had allowed the United States to control Lebanon and served as an agent of Israel.

But among important Christian swing voters, fears of Iran and Syria appeared to trump concerns about interference from Washington.

Hwaida Saad contributed reporting.

Islam's diversity



**Philip
Bowring**

HONG KONG It would be churlish to criticize President Obama's Cairo address to the Muslim world. It was finely crafted and typically well-delivered. It had the impact that was intended, even if actions to back the words will be difficult.

However, the speech suggested that the Muslim/non-Muslim divide is greater than it actually is. There was an implicit lack of recognition of the sheer diversity of Islam, a religion that like Christianity has shaped, and been shaped by, the societies to which it has attached itself.

That diversity is not primarily reflected in the division between Sunni and Shiite but in the actual practices of the Muslims — almost all Sunni — in South and Southeast Asia, Central Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. These non-Arab Muslims constitute by far the largest part of global Muslim community.

Diversity is also not sufficiently recognized by many in the Islamic world. The result is that one orthodoxy is imposed as vigorously as Catholic countries once discriminated against other interpretations of Christianity.

It was said, supposedly by Voltaire, that England had 60 religions but only once sauce, France one religion but innumerable sauces.

The multiple religions were, of course, all branches of Christianity. The issue

for society was acceptance of diversity and the separation of church and state. America achieved that with its Constitution, while in France anti-clericalism became a defining political force against the secular claims of the one religion.

Obama recognized that America, despite its pluralism and a Muslim community almost as large as its Jewish one, had much healing to do in its relationship with the Islamic world. He also aimed to push the Middle East peace process by showing even handedness toward Israelis and Palestinians. But those objectives, while they partly overlap, are far from identical. Sympathy for the Palestinian situation is common in developing

countries formerly ruled by Europeans.

To their detriment, Arabs and the West tend to see Islam through the prism of Middle East politics.

On the other hand, the farther Muslims are from Jerusalem the less they are emotionally involved in what is more of a struggle between nations than religions.

Indeed, the failure of the Muslim community in the United States to have much influence on Middle East policy is partly a result of the sheer diversity of its origins and interests. Arabs are a minority among American Muslims as in the rest of the Muslim world.

Yet both Arabs and the U.S. — indeed the West more generally — see Islam through the prism of Middle East politics, Al Qaeda and Iraq. That is a natural outcome of recent events but has also played to the Arab sense of being the guardian of Islam. By speaking to the Muslim world from Cairo, Obama may have fortified such perception.

That could be a misfortune. Oil money has added to the influence of narrow Arabian interpretations of Islam even as most social and economic

progress in the Muslim world has been found in non-Arab countries — Turkey, Indonesia, Bangladesh, for example. Even Pakistan, for all its troubles, displays a diversity of interpretations of Islam, some with strong liberal and individualistic leanings that helps sustain democratic debate and keep alive the notion that it is a "state for Muslims" not an "Islamic state."

Acceptance of diversity within Islam, as well as tolerance of Christians and Hindus, is perhaps most marked in Indonesia. There, as in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa and India, not to mention Bosnia and the Central Asian republics, the social mores of Muslims are often almost identical to those of Christians and nonbelievers.

The problem is often not so much between Muslims and non-Muslims but the efforts of state controlled religion to deny Muslims the diversity of interpretation that should be their birthright. Thus, non-Muslims in Malaysia face only modest obstacles. Even in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Christians are free to drink alcohol as well as worship. Yet in both countries Muslims themselves are the ones denied freedom by state religious authorities trampling on centuries of local traditions to impose their orthodoxy.

Obama has a background in two countries where Islam and Christianity co-exist and where politics is mostly not about religious affiliation — Kenya and Indonesia. Perhaps when he has a chance to visit either of them he could emphasize — to his home audience as well as his hosts — the diversity of Islamic traditions and the importance of their separation of church and state as the keystones of the freedom and pluralism that define America's success.

The battle is not between Islam and others, it is between the open society and its enemies.

Iran awakens yet again



Roger Cohen

GLOBALIST

TEHRAN They're calling it the "green tsunami," a transformative wave unfurling down the broad avenues of the Iranian capital. Call it what you will, but the city is agog at the campaign of Mir Hussein Moussavi, the reformist candidate seeking to unseat President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the 10th post-revolution election.

Iran, its internal fissures exposed as never before, is teetering again on the brink of change. For months now, I've been urging another look at Iran, beyond dangerous demonization of it as a totalitarian state. Seldom has the country looked less like one than in these giddy June days.

I wandered in a sea of green ribbons, hats, banners and bandannas to a rally at which Ahmadinejad was mocked as "a midget" and Moussavi's wife, Zahra Rahnavard, sporting a floral hijab that taunted grey-black officialdom, warned the president that: "If there is vote rigging, Iran will rise up."

A Moussavi kite hovered; a shout went up that "It's even written in the sky." I don't know about that, but something is stirring again in the Islamic Republic, a nation attached to both words in its self-description.

That stirring has deep roots. The last century taught that Iran's democratic impulse is denied only at peril. Ever since the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, the quest for representative government has flared. Moussavi is dour but seen as a man of integrity, the anti-Ahmadinejad who can usher back the 1979 revolution's promise rather than incarnate its repressive turn.

Rahnavard, a professor of political science, is not dour. She has emerged as a core figure in Friday's vote through her vigorous call for women's rights and the way she goaded Ahmadinejad into a rash attack on her academic credentials during his no-holds-barred televised debate last week with Moussavi.

"Make up your files," Rahnavard declared at the rally, in a derisive allusion to Ahmadinejad's Stasi-like brandishing of a document about her before some 40 million TV viewers of the debate. "But the file-makers will be defeated!"

Iran's democracy is incomplete (a Guardian Council representing the Islamic hierarchy vets candidates) but vigorous to the point of unpredictability. Nobody knows who will triumph in an election that chooses the second most powerful figure in Iran under the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, but some things are already clear.

The first is that the frank ferocity of politics here in recent weeks would be unthinkable among U.S. allies from Cairo to Riyadh, a fact no less true for being discomfiting. The problem with Iran caricatures, like Benjamin Netanyahu's absurd recent description of the regime as a "messianic, apocalyptic cult," is that reality — not least this campaign's — defies them.

The second is that while Ahmadinejad still marshals potentially victorious forces, including the Revolutionary Guards and the Basij militia, he now faces a daunting array of opposition ranging across the political spectrum.

If his attack on Rahnavard was rash, his broadside in the same debate against Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the regime's éminence grise, looks like recklessness. It has ushered this election into the inner sanctum of authority. That's a transgression Ahmadinejad may not survive.

Rafsanjani, a former president, was so incensed by Ahmadinejad's accusations of Mafia-like corruption that he responded with a blistering letter to Khamenei, who's supposed to sit above the fray. The president's suggestion that corruption was endemic to the revolution also angered the Qom clerical

establishment, which responded with its own dissenting letter: How dare Ahmadinejad defile the very system?

"Ahmadinejad has exposed rifts and spread distrust vis-à-vis the whole regime," said Kavous Seyed-Emami, a university professor. "That's groundbreaking."

The Rafsanjani letter, alluding to "volcanoes of anger" among Iranians, including at the alleged disappearance of \$1 billion from state coffers, will belong in any history of Iran's revolution. It says tens of millions watched as Ahmadinejad "lied and violated laws against religion, morality and fairness, and as he targeted the achievements of our Islamic system." It insists that Khamenei now ensure free and fair elections.

Khamenei has leaned on Ahmadinejad, but much less so of late. He cannot be impervious to the rage of Rafsanjani, who is chairman of the powerful Expediency Council, which mediates disputes, and the Assembly of Experts, which oversees the supreme leader's office. Ahmadinejad now confronts surging forces from without (the street) and within (the clerical hierarchy).

Why the sudden turbulence? Here we come to the third critical characteristic of this campaign. Radicalism in the Bush White House bred radicalism in Iran, making life easy for Ahmadinejad. President Obama's outreach, by contrast, has unsettled the regime.

With Lebanon denying an electoral victory to Hezbollah, the oil-driven Iranian economy in a slump, and America seeking reconciliation with Muslims, the world now looks a little different.

Moussavi's attacks on the "exhibitionism, extremism and superficiality" of Ahmadinejad's foreign policy resonate.

Rafsanjani believes in a China option for Iran: a historic rapprochement with the United States that will at the same time preserve a modified regime. I also think that's possible — and desirable — and that Khamenei's margin for resisting it has just narrowed. So, too, has the margin for the foolishness of anti-Iran hawks.

COMMENT Readers are invited to comment at global.nytimes.com/opinion

Why China props up Pyongyang

Beijing dislikes a nuclear North Korea, but it fears a collapsed North even more.

Andrei Lankov

SEOUL The situation around North Korea is deteriorating fast. A missile launch in April was followed by an underground nuclear test in May, and an intercontinental ballistic missile seems to be on its way to the launch pad. Two American journalists arrested in North Korea received an unusually harsh prison sentence, and North Korea has made new demands that are bound to undermine the last surviving North-South cooperation project.

International sanctions, introduced after the first nuclear test in 2006, have not had any noticeable effect — in part because they have not been seriously implemented. It is clear that no “stern warnings” from the United States or the United Nations Security Council will have any effect on Pyongyang’s behavior.

With all other approaches failing, one last hope is often cited — China. Today, some 45 percent of all North Korean trade is with China, and between 30 and 50 percent of China’s entire foreign aid budget is spent on this one small country. So, the reasoning goes, Beijing must have tremendous leverage over Pyongyang.

Indeed, there have been changes in the Chinese approach to North Korea. Beijing has taken an increasingly critical stance on Pyongyang’s nuclear program and supported a strongly worded U.N. resolution on the nuclear test. The official Chinese media has been unequivocal in its condemnation of North Korean actions. So, is China coming to the rescue?

Well, don’t hold your breath.

China clearly does not want a nuclear North Korea. Such a blatant violation of the nonproliferation regime undermines China’s own privileged standing as a “legitimate” nuclear power. In addition, the emergence of a nuclear North Korea is likely to provoke a nuclear arms race in East Asia, with Japan possibly emerging as a nuclear power — a nightmare for Chinese strategists. So North Korea’s nuclear ambitions are creating problems for China.

Nonetheless, there are compelling reasons why China is unlikely to press North Korea hard.

North Korea accepts Chinese aid, but it has shown no inclination to heel to Beijing’s advice. The North Korean regime is such that it is largely immune to foreign pressure. It has been tried before, but when the pressure is only moderate — such as a partial reduction of aid or less favorable trade conditions — North Korean leaders have simply ignored it.

That may lead to a further deterioration of living standards, but the well-being of the population has never been among Pyongyang’s major concerns. North Koreans have no influence on the state’s policies, and are unlikely to rebel. If deprived of food, they starve and die quietly. So in order to influence Pyongyang’s behavior, it has to be hit really hard — in China’s case, that might mean cutting all aid and stopping all shipments of fuel.

Such drastic measures, which approach a land blockade, would likely destabilize the fragile domestic situation inside North Korea, with regime collapse being a probable outcome.

For China, collapse of the North Korean state would mean millions of refugees, many of them armed soldiers, crossing into China. That would

increase instability in some of China’s major industrial and population centers. Finally, it would result in a loss of control over North Korea’s stockpiles of weapons-grade plutonium, as well as chemical and biological weapons.

The longer-term consequences of a North Korean implosion are also unwelcome to Beijing. It would probably lead to the unification of the country under Seoul, depriving China of a strategic buffer and, even worse, creating a large U.S. ally.

The North Korean regime remains largely immune to foreign pressure.

The alternative — military intervention — is a costly and risky option that Beijing would prefer to avoid.

In other words, China faces a choice between two evils: a nuclear North Korea or a collapsing North Korea. And a collapsing North Korea

clearly represents a greater evil. This is why Beijing is negative on severe sanctions and is willing to continue providing aid to North Korea.

Thus Chinese inaction over North Korea is not a mistake but a rational choice that has shaped Beijing’s policy for the past decade and is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future.

China will make gestures of condemnation and, contrary to what some China-bashers believe, they will be sincere. But Beijing will not go much further: It will do nothing that might jeopardize the internal stability in the North. Like any rational player, China prefers to stick with a lesser evil.

ANDREI LANKOV is an associate professor at Kookmin University in Seoul and the author of several books about North Korea.

LEBANON'S ELECTION

The winning pro-Western coalition must now be pressed to calm divisions among Sunnis, Shiites and Christians.

Good news in the Middle East is rare. So last weekend's parliamentary election in Lebanon stands out. Pro-Western forces scored a solid victory over Hezbollah. That is also a major setback for the militant group's supporters in Iran and Syria.

After years of strife, Lebanon's voters seemed eager for normalcy. President Obama's outreach to the Muslim world seems to have helped undercut the extremists at the polls. So may have Vice President Joseph Biden's pre-election visit to Lebanon — a welcome show of support for the pro-Western coalition.

But Hezbollah, whose militia may be stronger than Lebanon's army, is still the country's most powerful political force. Syria and Iran are unlikely to stop their meddling. President Obama was wise to send his Middle East envoy, George Mitchell, to Beirut and Damascus. There is a lot to talk about.

In Lebanon, that includes the possibility of more American aid to strengthen the army and pay for development programs that might undercut Hezbollah's appeal. The coalition also must be pressed to calm divisions among Lebanon's Sunnis, Shiites and Christians rather than stoke them as critics alleged in the campaign.

In Syria, Mr. Mitchell must drive home the message that if Damascus

wants an easing of sanctions and increased diplomatic contact, it must restrain Hezbollah and move away from Iran. The Syrians could draw the wrong message from Hezbollah's defeat and sow more mayhem. Mr. Mitchell needs to evaluate whether it is time to encourage Syrian peace talks with Israel.

The voting gave the pro-Western March 14 coalition, which is led by the wealthy Sunni businessman Saad Hariri, 71 of Parliament's 128 seats. The Hezbollah-led opposition won 57 seats. The complex nature of Lebanese politics — the opposition has veto power in the current cabinet — makes it almost certain that there will be weeks of infighting before a government is sorted out.

Political tensions could also erupt into renewed civil war. We hope that Syria and Iran do not feed that.

We also hope that Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, meant it when he said that he accepts the election results. Mr. Hariri's offer to consider giving Hezbollah a place in a coalition government is worth exploring — if Hezbollah is ready to forsake violence for democratic politics.

In his Cairo speech, President Obama held out the possibility of working with Hezbollah if it does that. Lebanese voters have sent their message. They are tired of extremism. Hezbollah and its patrons should listen.

Lebanon's triumph, Iran's travesty

The elections in Lebanon and Iran both matter, but only one was free.

Elliott Abrams

WASHINGTON With elections in Lebanon and Iran occurring in the same week, it's inevitable that they are viewed as twin tests of efforts to spread democracy to the Muslim world.

Should we Americans celebrate the outcome in Lebanon and push for elections throughout the Middle East, or sourly note that Hezbollah has exactly as many guns now as it had when it was defeated at the polls on Sunday? Is the Iranian presidential election Friday a festival of freedom or a cover for theocracy?

What the United States should be promoting is not elections, but free elections, and the voting in Lebanon passed any realistic test. Anyone who wanted to run could run. The participation rate was 53 percent, close to America's turnout in last year's presidential race. By all accounts the votes were counted fairly. There are rumors about large amounts of Saudi money floating in to support the victorious March 14 coalition, but so what? Hezbollah gets at least \$200 million a year from Iran. It is striking that the losers are not crying foul; they too agree the election was fundamentally fair.

However, was it fair but meaningless, given Hezbollah's military might? That is not the judgment of the winners — the pro-Western March 14 group — who believe they have crippled any claim by Hezbollah and its leader, Hassan Nasrallah, to speak for the Lebanese people.

Hezbollah's inability to win support outside its Shiite base, along with the poor showing of its Christian ally, General Michel Aoun, leaves Sheikh Nasrallah diminished and less able to drag Lebanon into another war with Israel. He will play hardball, no doubt, in the negotiations over the next Lebanese government, and he retains the ability to take over downtown Beirut as he did in May 2008. But such displays of power were apparently the exact kind of thing that turned off swing voters — mostly

Christians — and Hezbollah now uses them at its political peril.

We should not idealize Lebanon's election, nor its politics. Most voters support only candidates from their own religious group, and the political talk is not of liberals and conservatives but of Armenians, Maronites, Druze, Shiites and Sunnis. Some districts seem as permanently owned by one family as any "rotten borough" in 19th-century England. Still, the election produced a consequential result: The majority of Lebanese have rejected Hezbollah's claim that it is not a terrorist group but a "national resistance."

There was no chance for Iranian voters to tell the ayatollahs to go back to the mosques.

Unfortunately, Iran's election presents the voters with no similar opportunity. There is no chance for voters to register their opposition to the theocratic system or tell the ayatollahs to go back to the mosques. The candidates have been carefully screened to exclude anyone opposed to the ruling clerical establishment; each is part of the Islamic Revolution's old guard.

Nor is it likely that the votes will be fairly counted; indeed most analysts concluded that the 2005 election was manipulated to produce Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's presidential victory. Vote destruction and ballot stuffing are easy in a hidden process controlled by the Interior Ministry. And if all else fails, the 12-man Guardian Council has the power to throw out the results in districts where there were "problems" — problems like a reformist victory.

Voting in Iran is a contrivance for settling certain policy disputes and personal rivalries within the ruling elite. Elections are not without meaning; if Mr. Ahmadinejad loses, it may result in more sensible economic policies and fewer loud calls for the destruction of Israel.

But Iran doesn't hold elections for supreme leader — Ayatollah Ali Khamenei will hold that post for the indefinite future — and the failed presidency of Mohammad Khatami from 1997

to 2005 reminds us that the power of a putative reformist is illusory. The Khatami years saw increased repression inside Iran, growing support for Hezbollah and Palestinian terrorist groups, and the covert construction of the uranium enrichment facility at Natanz.

Mr. Ahmadinejad's defeat would probably be welcomed abroad as a sign that Iran is moving away from his policies, but Iran's policies aren't his — they are dictated by Ayatollah Khamenei and his supporters in the Revolutionary Guard and Basij paramilitary.

In fact, a victory by Mr. Ahmadinejad's main challenger, Mir Hussein Moussavi, is more likely to change Western policy toward Iran than to change Iran's own conduct. If the delusion that a new president would surely mean new opportunities to negotiate away Iran's nuclear program strikes Western leaders, solidarity might give way to pre-emptive concessions.

Elections matter, but how much they matter depends entirely on how free, open and fair they are. The Lebanese had a chance to vote against Hezbollah, and took the opportunity.

Iranians, unfortunately, are being given no similar chance to decide who they really want to govern them.

ELLIOTT ABRAMS, who was a deputy national security adviser in the George W. Bush administration, is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations.

The big hate



**Paul
Krugman**

Back in April, there was a huge fuss over an internal report by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security warning that current conditions resemble those in the early 1990s — a time marked by an upsurge of right-wing extremism that culminated in the Oklahoma City bombing.

Conservatives were outraged. The chairman of the Republican National Committee denounced the report as an attempt to “segment out conservatives in this country who have a different philosophy or view from this administration” and label them as terrorists.

But with the murder of Dr. George Tiller by an anti-abortion fanatic, closely followed by a shooting by a white supremacist at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the analysis looks prescient.

There is, however, one important thing that the D.H.S. report didn't say: Today, as in the early years of the Clinton administration but to an even greater extent, right-wing extremism is being systematically fed by the conservative media and political establishment.

Now, for the most part, the likes of Fox News and the R.N.C. haven't directly incited violence, despite Bill O'Reilly's declarations that “some” called Dr. Tiller “Tiller the Baby Killer,” that he had “blood on his hands,” and that he was a “guy operating a death mill.” But they have gone out of their way to provide a platform for conspiracy theories and apocalyptic rhetoric,

just as they did the last time a Democrat held the White House.

And at this point, whatever dividing line there was between mainstream conservatism and the black-helicopter crowd seems to have been virtually erased.

Exhibit A for the mainstreaming of right-wing extremism is Fox News's new star, Glenn Beck. Here we have a network where, like it or not, millions of Americans get their news — and it gives daily airtime to a commentator who, among other things, warned viewers that the Federal Emergency Management Agency might be building concentration camps as part of the Obama administration's “totalitarian” agenda (although he eventually conceded that nothing of the kind was happening).

**The rise of
right-wing ex-
tremism is be-
ing systemati-
cally fed by
the conserva-
tive media
and political
establishment.**

But let's not neglect the print news media. In the Bush years, The Washington Times became an important media player because it was widely regarded as the Bush administration's house organ. Earlier this week, the newspaper saw fit to run an opinion piece declaring that President Obama “not only identifies with Muslims, but actually may still be one himself,” and that in any case he has “aligned himself” with the radical Muslim Brotherhood.

And then there's Rush Limbaugh. His rants today aren't very different from his rants in 1993. But he occupies a different position in the scheme of things. Remember, during the Bush years Mr. Limbaugh became very much a political insider. Indeed, according to a recent Gallup survey, 10 percent of Republicans now consider him the “main person who speaks for the Republican Party today,” putting him in a three-way tie with Dick Cheney and Newt Gin-

grich. So when Mr. Limbaugh peddles conspiracy theories — suggesting, for example, that fears over swine flu were being hyped “to get people to respond to government orders” — that's a case of the conservative media establishment joining hands with the lunatic fringe.

It's not surprising, then, that politicians are doing the same thing. The Republican National Committee says that “the Democratic Party is dedicated to restructuring American society along socialist ideals.” And when Jon Voight, the actor, told the audience at a Republican fund-raiser this week that the president is a “false prophet” and that “we and we alone are the right frame of mind to free this nation from this Obama oppression,” Mitch McConnell, the Senate minority leader, thanked him, saying that he “really enjoyed” the remarks.

Credit where credit is due. Some figures in the conservative media have refused to go along with the big hate — people like Fox's Shepard Smith and Catherine Herridge, who debunked the attacks on that Homeland Security report two months ago. But this doesn't change the broad picture, which is that supposedly respectable news organizations and political figures are giving aid and comfort to dangerous extremism.

What will the consequences be? Nobody knows, of course, although the analysts at Homeland Security fretted that things may turn out even worse than in the 1990s — that thanks, in part, to the election of an African-American president, “the threat posed by lone wolves and small terrorist cells is more pronounced than in past years.”

And that's a threat to take seriously. Yes, the worst terrorist attack in U.S. history was perpetrated by a foreign conspiracy. But the second worst, the Oklahoma City bombing, was perpetrated by an all-American lunatic. Politicians and media organizations wind up such people at their, and our, peril.

Iran on a razor's edge



Roger Cohen

GLOBALIST

TEHRAN Mahdi Alizadeh, a doctor, was telling me about the bravery of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, his glorious electoral victory, and how Iran is "the most democratic country in the world," when a woman named Yassamin approached and demanded: "If your side won, why are you doing this?"

By "this," Yassamin meant the beatings. She said she'd just seen women and children being struck by the baton-wielding police.

I had, too. The image of a slender woman outside Tehran University, her face contorted in pain, clutching her upper arm where the blow fell, had lodged in my mind.

There's nothing more repugnant than seeing women being hit by big men armed with clubs and the license of the state.

Black smoke had been rising from the main gate of the university when that grief-stricken woman crossed my path. Police were massed outside the campus, faced by stone-throwing stu-

dents yelling "Savages, get lost!"

The thugs-for-hire of the Basij militia, clad in sleeveless camouflage shirts, had arrived en masse on government-issue scooters. Their demeanor suggested Iran's prison gates had been flung open.

Iran is close to the brink, a place it has found itself on other occasions since the 1979 revolution without finding any resolution of its long quest for a form of governance reflecting the country's democratic yearning, Islamic faith and proud independence.

It's one thing to steal an election, another to steal it with the effrontery and ruthlessness apparent here in recent days. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader, said "the miraculous hand of God" was evident in the "great epic" of the election. I guess that's one way of explaining results of an implausible strangeness.

Khamenei, perhaps playing for time, later said the Guardian Council, which oversees elections, should seriously investigate claims of irregularities.

Certainly, millions of Iranians are questioning the result. Rather than the hand of God, they see the hand of a regime that perceived its most dreaded specter — "velvet revolution" — in the green banners of the opposition candidate, Mir Hussein Moussavi, and opted for fraud and force.

Violence is simmering everywhere. When Alizadeh and Yassamin confronted each other before me on the street, as tens of thousands of Ahmadinejad supporters streamed by, the argument quickly escalated, watched by a growing cluster of people.

Alizadeh said it was an outrage that Yassamin thought the election was stolen just because it did not come out as she wished. Yassamin said he could not explain a "victory" accompanied by such violence.

He said the real violence was America's, invading Iraq and Afghanistan. She said the only way to talk to people like him was to agree, because otherwise you get beaten.

Now Alizadeh's mother started screaming: "You are blind! Let God and light come into your life."

Yassamin, a documentary movie maker, turned away. "We need a Gandhi," she said to me. "We need Moussavi to risk his life and stand there."

That's about where we are in Iran. Moussavi, confined, has not been seen since shortly after the voting closed. Nor has his strong supporter, former President Mohammad Khatami, who retreated before earlier crackdowns. A huge mass of people is searching for visible leader.

I received this note from an Iranian-American with family here: "The bottom line right now is whose violence threshold is higher? How much are the hard-liners willing to inflict to suppress the population and tell yet another generation to shut up? And how much are Moussavi and his supporters willing to stand to fulfill their dreams? It sounds so inhuman, but that's what it comes down to. It's very scary."

Many women are trying quietly to bridge the chasm and avoid the worst. I've heard them whispering to the Basij and the police that "We are all Irani-

ans," urging them to hold back. They remind me of those who placed flowers in the barrels of soldiers' guns during the 1979 revolution.

At this critical juncture, what should the Obama administration do? I think it's still right to pursue engagement, but America must now do so with a far greater skepticism over the good faith of a government so apparently ready to steal and lie.

The United States should also, with its European allies, find stronger means to register repugnance at Ahmadinejad's use of violence and demand some credible accounting of the election result, including an answer to the question of where the ballots are now. Having Vice President Joe Biden say, "There is real doubt" about the result is not quite enough.

Calibrating a response that does not give ammunition to the regime by suggesting American interference is delicate — and President Obama has been suitably restrained. But the air of business as usual at the White House is off-key. Millions of defrauded Iranians are thirsting for a little more.

As dusk comes, people gather on the roofs of their apartment buildings and the haunting sound of "Allah-u-Akbar" — God is great — and "Death to the dictator" echoes across the megalopolis. The Iranian yearning in these cries is immense, a measure of all that was not delivered by the 1979 revolution, when the same cries went up and liberation was promised.

COMMENT Readers are invited to comment at global.nytimes.com/opinion

Time for change?



**H. D. S.
Greenway**

Springtime has not been the best of times for Barack Obama's new outreach foreign policy. First North Korea slams the door on any accepted agreement by testing a new atomic bomb as well as the missiles that could one day deliver it. The carefully constructed six-party edifice trying to woo Pyongyang away from nuclear weapons with enticements and the threat of sanctions now stands in ruin, with nobody knowing quite what to do.

Added to that is the uncertainty of succession. Newsreels of Kim Jong-il's gaunt face and hesitant shuffle portray the ravages of his stroke. Word has it that he has picked his youngest son, Kim Jong-un, as the next "beloved" leader of North Korea. Other than the fact that the young man secretly skied in Switzerland, nobody knows what to expect from him.

In Iran, however, everybody knows exactly what to expect from Mahmoud Ahmadinejad — another four years of belligerence. His dubious victory collapses the hopes of Iranians who were sending signals that things could get a lot better under Mir Hussein Moussavi, who was considered the front runner.

One cannot know whether the election was stolen, or won legitimately. Foreign observers are often lured into thinking that the people they most see and talk to represent the prevailing opinion in an entire country. Moussavi's own polls may have been understandably optimistic. In this case the educated elites in the capital, and the impatient urban young, may have been far more pro-Moussavi than the less-educated and rural population whose opinion is less sought and harder to obtain. Yet there is enough evidence of fraud to have triggered an official investigation.

As one of those who has been deeply involved with trying to improve U.S. relations with Iran, the former Under Secretary of State Thomas Pickering said to *The New York Times*: "This is the

worst result. The U.S. will have to worry about being perceived as pandering to a president whose legitimacy is in question. It clearly makes the notion of providing incentives quite unappetizing."

The Iranian election will certainly give comfort to Obama's critics on the right who see Obama's outreach as rewarding the axis of evil. It will make dealing with Israel's staunchly right-wing government far more difficult, as former members of the Bush administration, such as the former U.N. ambassador John Bolton, all but encourage Israel to attack Iran.

The Iranian election will encourage Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to link any progress on peace with the Palestinians to Obama's progress with the Iranians, as he has previously suggested. His speech on Sunday continued his defiance of Obama's plan to stop settlement activity.

Avigdor Lieberman, Israel's foreign minister, may have chatted in Russian with Vladimir Putin last week, but the suggestion that Israel is going to use Russia to balance U.S. influence is a non-starter. Lieberman may wish he could deal with his Muslims the way Vladimir Putin dealt with his in Chechnya, but that's about the extent of it.

Ultimately, the progress of any U.S.-Iranian dialogue will be up to Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. It is by no means certain that he will totally reject Obama's overtures, and if he was inclined to do so it wouldn't matter who was elected president. Change is unsettling, and the enthusiasm for change that so many Iranians demonstrated on the streets in the run-up to the election must have been worrisome to the ayatollahs. If there was election fraud, that worry may have been the reason for it.

Secondly, Moussavi's election would not have changed the outlook for Iran's nuclear program. There is a consensus in Iran that uranium enrichment should continue, and the Western world may have to live with that.

Obama's outreach policy can, and should, continue. Nobody ever said it was going to be easy, or that there wouldn't be setbacks. But there is no option of using force against North Korea, and it would be a colossal mistake to do so against Iran. America's over-reliance on the use of force and threats as a substitute for a foreign policy had run its course even before George W. Bush left office.

The nuclear nightmare



**BRAHMA
CHELLANEY**

New Delhi

North Korea and Pakistan present unique nuclear-proliferation risks because they challenge the very premise on which the international anti-proliferation measures have been built.

While North Korea is often compared with Iran, the challenge it poses is more akin to Pakistan's. Both Pakistan and North Korea are actual proliferation threats as opposed to Iran's potential proliferation challenge. But while North Korea is a growing regional threat, Pakistan — with its expanding nuclear armory, terrorists and jihadist-infiltrated military and nuclear establishments — presents itself as an international nightmare.

In the past, these two countries have clandestinely bartered Pakistani uranium-enrichment knowhow for North Korean missile technology. Today, they are showing that the nuclear abolition debate is not germane to the key proliferation challenges in Asia, even if movement on the stalled disarmament process helps reduce incentives to proliferation in some other cases.

The present global anti-proliferation measures are tied to three key elements: The continued stability and credibility of the nonproliferation regime; the exercise of punitive power, when necessary, to enforce observance of global norms and rules; and the raising of costs for proliferators.

The outlook of North Korea and Pakistan, however, is founded on a fundamentally antithetical premise, which can be summed up as: Threaten to fail, then reap rewards.

For these two dissimilar nations, potential state failure actually serves as an incentive to extort ransom money internationally. Both have assiduously sought to leverage their weakness into strength diplomatically, with Pakistan more successful than North Korea. "We'll fail if you don't come to our support" is their refrain. That is another way of saying: "Pay up or face the consequences."

In that light, it is proving very difficult to hold them to any international standards.

In fact, Pakistan's success in extracting ever-more international aid has only emboldened North Korea to follow suit. Pyongyang's latest nuclear test — its second in less than three years — is a desperate move to garner international aid.

If Islamabad can play nuclear poker to shield its export of terrorism and still get rewarded with \$23.6 billion in international aid commitments just in the last six months (\$5.5 billion of which came

at the April donors conference in Tokyo), Pyongyang reckoned it could stage its own nuclear-and-missile show to draw the world's attention.

While vowing to "take action" against North Korea over its test, U.S. President Barack Obama has set out to make Pakistan the single largest recipient of U.S. assistance in the world, leaving Israel and Egypt behind in the aid sweepstakes.

When Pakistan rakes in a windfall, North Korea can hardly be faulted for using the possibility of becoming a failed state as a means to collect some small change.

If Obama thought that succumbing to Pakistani demand would set no international precedent, North Korea's ailing "dear leader" has made sure the chickens will come home to roost in Washington.

Even as America worries about Iran's potential nuclear-weapons capability, its handling of the actual problem thrown up by Pakistan's military-controlled weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and military-nurtured terrorists threatens to send the wrong signal to Tehran. According to a just-released Congressional Research Service report, Pakistan has approximately 60 nuclear warheads. It also has biological weapons, including pathogens no less dangerous than the H1N1 virus.

Bountiful U.S. aid, in fact, is allowing Pakistan to divert more of its scarce resources to expand WMD capability, as illustrated by the two new plutonium-production reactors now under construction in Khushab with Chinese assistance. Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, has been constrained to acknowledge at a May 14 congressional hearing that there is evidence showing Pakistan is expanding its nuclear arsenal.

Existing WMD in a country with jihadists are a matter of deep global concern; an expanding arsenal makes the scenario terrifying.

America has little incentive to start the flow of major international aid to North Korea, which, as U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates admitted recently at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, poses no direct military threat to the U.S. at present. Strategically, North Korea is of little positive value to U.S. policy.

By contrast, China over the decades has maintained close ties with Pyongyang and Islamabad and, besides providing direct WMD aid to both, may have even encouraged North Korean-Pakistani technology exchanges. But Beijing lacks the leverage to control their steps and gets surprised now and then by their actions, as exemplified by the latest North Korean nuclear and missile testing.

More broadly, the traditional carrots-and-sticks approach of the nonproliferation regime has been derailed by the North Korea and Pakistan

cases. The derailment happened because the punitive component was rendered blunt by the continuing intent of the major geopolitical players not to let North Korea or Pakistan become a failed state.

So, the more North Korea and Pakistan appear likely to become failed states, the more it becomes evident that the international response is constrained by the objective not to let them fail. The international approach toward them thus is to bark but not to bite.

In dealing with North Korea, China, Russia, the United States and Japan do not want to go so far as to cause the collapse of the regime. Although not necessarily motivated by the same interest, these powers are not geopolitically ready for Korean reunification, which will be a logical corollary to the regime collapse in Pyongyang. South Korea, too, is not prepared for that development because it would unleash a torrent of refugees and saddle Seoul with colossal reunification costs, as the continuing domestic costs of German reunification attest. So, not wanting the Stalinist North Korean state to unravel, the external players do little more than pass tough resolutions or statements.

Pakistan, for its part, has for long served as a useful pawn in Chinese and American policies. It remains Beijing's "all-weather ally," although its utility to U.S. policy has eroded to the extent that today it appears more of a strategic liability than an asset. Yet the old mind-set in Washington has not sufficiently changed. As a result, the deeper Pakistan has dug itself into a jihadist dungeon, the more the U.S. has gotten involved in that country. Such growing involvement, far from serving U.S. interests, has fueled an Islamist backlash in Pakistan, where anti-American sentiment is among the strongest in the world and where America is unfairly blamed for everything.

Washington also does not face up to another reality: Pakistan's political border with Afghanistan has ceased to exist in practice. The so-called Durand Line — a British-colonial invention that left the large Pashtun community divided into two — now exists only in maps. Its disappearance is irreversible. Given that reality, how can U.S. policy expect to prop up the Pakistani state within political frontiers that, in part, no longer exist?

It is sad but true: The only way the international community can regain leverage against North Korea and Pakistan is to unflinchingly pursue a forward-thinking nonproliferation course that is not constrained by the specter of state collapse. That means standing up to them to disable their nuclear terror.

Brahma Chellaney, professor of strategic studies at the privately funded Center for Policy Research in New Delhi, is the author, most recently, of "Asian Juggernaut: The Rise of China, India and Japan" (HarperCollins).

Don't expect much change in U.S. Middle East policy



WILLIAM
PFAFF

Paris

This week President Barack Obama travels to Cairo to deliver what is expected to be a major statement on relations between the United States and the Islamic world.

The speech is expected to offer a redefinition of American foreign policy in the region; it's meant to replace the Bush administration's "war against terrorism" and to repudiate Samuel F. Huntington's famous formulation of a war between Islamic civilization and the West, which many in the Middle East believe motivates American policy.

Certainly, Barack Obama will deny that the U.S. government thinks that Islam itself, or Muslims, are America's enemies. He will note, as he has done in the past, that his own father was a Muslim, that his middle name is Hussein, and that he attended a Muslim school as a child and has lived in Muslim society.

That says relatively little about the foreign policy choices of a nation, although it offers some insurance against the gross ignorance that has made itself felt in some aspects of U.S. policy.

The president is expected to deplore the atrocities committed by American forces during the Iraqi and Afghan wars, and promise to reduce the incidence of civilian casualties in American military operations. None of this will be a surprise. He will stress the need for cooperative action against terrorists and pirates.

But will anything seriously change? Informed Israeli circles say that Obama's

supposedly new policy will be one that American observers will recognize as the continuation of a policy inaugurated in the late months of the Bush administration.

Israel's wish to instigate an American attack on Iran will be rejected, and Israel will be warned not to try this alone — at least not in the foreseeable future.

Overtures to Iran to negotiate the issues that stand between the U.S. and renewed good relations will continue, but are not expected to be rewarded.

Israel will be expected to halt the expansion of its colonies in the Palestinian territories — at least for the present. It will be offered the reward of recognition by all the Muslim countries in exchange for a two-states settlement with Palestine.

There will be much resistance to this in Israel, and much pressure put on Obama by the Israeli lobby in the U.S. Whether he resists will be important to the credibility of his policy.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Salam Fayyad will continue to be backed by the U.S. to dominate the Palestinian situation on the West Bank and to hold the line against growth in the influence of Hamas.

To judge from what already has been said in administration circles, the effort initiated under Condoleezza Rice and President George W. Bush to rally an alliance of supposedly stable Sunni nations will continue. These are Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and possibly Syria. They will be relied upon to check the radical Islamic movements supported by Iran: Hezbollah and Hamas.

A discussion of this by the commentator Aluf Benn in the Israeli daily Haaretz calls the plan "a classic of power diplomacy," and attributes it to the influence of Henry Kissinger.

This may not be much of a compliment to Henry Kissinger, although he would approve of abandoning the Bush claim

that the U.S. is expanding democracy and abolishing tyranny in the Middle East.

Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Syria are not part of any democracy movement in the region, any more than the military regime of Lon Nol in Cambodia or the Chile of Pinochet and the Argentina of the generals were when Henry Kissinger was in the White House and the State Department. The alliance of authoritarian rulers with the U.S., against radical and populist forces, is consistent with past U.S. policy.

It usually is described as "realistic" to make alliances with governments thought to be in firm control of their countries, and to discount the value or political merits of pushing such issues as human rights practice in places where they are unwelcome.

One also must ask how realistic this really is. The precedents of Cambodia's, Chile's and Argentina's defense of what Washington conceived to be American interests in those regions are un reassuring.

The possibility that scarcely seems worth mentioning is that Obama declares in Cairo that he wishes to withdraw all American forces from Muslim countries, and seeks the support of all Muslim governments to make this possible. That while he will honor guarantees given to governments in the region, the objective of his government is a creative disengagement, leaving the people and political forces of the region to settle their own affairs, with — should they wish — generous financial help from the U.S., and no doubt from Europe.

Now that would make headlines, and history.

William Pfaff is a Paris-based veteran political analyst and columnist for the International Herald Tribune.

© 2009 Tribune Media Services International

The path with North Korea



RALPH
COSSA

Honolulu

What is North Korea up to? Is it trying to undermine the six-party talks in order to force Washington to deal with Pyongyang directly, as some experts claim? Or, as others maintain with equal certainty, is it sending a signal that it is not interested in talks at all, given current domestic political uncertainties surrounding the poor health of leader Kim Jong Il?

Or is Pyongyang merely laying the groundwork for eventual talks, but only on its terms, which include acceptance of North Korea as a nuclear-weapons state?

The real answer is probably some combination of all of the above but the truthful answer is we really don't know; when it comes to understanding North Korean motives, we're all guessing.

Guessing North Korea's objectives should not preclude Washington and its other dialogue partners — South Korea, China, Japan and Russia — from being clear about what our objectives are. The primary objective is not, as is all too frequently implied, to get Pyongyang back to the six-party negotiating table. The six-party talks are one — perhaps still the best but not the only — means of achieving our common long-term objective, which should and must remain the complete, verifiable, irreversible elimination of all North Korean nuclear weapons programs. The major stumbling block is that Pyongyang has clearly and repeatedly asserted that it has no intention of giving up its nuclear arsenal anytime soon (if ever).

This presents the Obama administration and its interlocutors with a dual challenge: first and foremost to contain the threat posed by North Korea's nuclear weapons capabilities; then to persuade Pyongyang that giving up these

weapons is the best way to ensure its own survival.

First things first! The most immediate near-term objective is not only to keep North Korea from using its nuclear arsenal, but also to keep what's currently in North Korea in North Korea and to keep anything else that would help the regime develop its nuclear or missile capabilities out.

The first half of this task is the easier one. Surely Pyongyang realizes that using a nuclear weapon against the U.S., South Korea, Japan, or anyone else is likely to draw an American military response "using all available means." Secretary of Defense Robert Gates emphasized this point at the recent Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore when he noted that the U.S. "will not stand idly by" in the face of North Korean provocations: "We unequivocally reaffirm our commitment to the defense of our allies in the region," he declared, further asserting that Pyongyang would be held "fully accountable" for its actions.

If survival is a key North Korean objective — and this is the only objective upon which virtually all the experts agree — it will not do anything that is clearly suicidal.

Containing North Korea's nuclear capabilities — keeping its weapons of mass destruction out of the hands of others that might be more inclined to use them — is a more difficult task which the United States cannot do alone. There is a vehicle in place for achieving this objective: United Nations Security Council Resolution 1718, which prohibits the movement in or out of North Korea of such weapons and components. UNSC members are currently meeting to discuss ways of strengthening this resolution in the wake of North Korea's recent nuclear weapons test (which has already been condemned as a clear violation of UNSCR 1718, as was its early April long-range missile test).

At a minimum, one hopes that the list of prohibited items will be expanded to include all military-related hardware and equipment. But the key will not be merely strengthening sanctions but actually

enforcing them and this will require close monitoring of all land shipments going into or coming out of North Korea by its immediate neighbors — something China and Russia have been reluctant to do in the past — and the inspection of all shipping into and out of North Korea whenever these ships make port calls anywhere in the world.

Such measures are not "declarations of war" as Pyongyang frequently claims, but a sovereign right that is reinforced by UNSCR 1718. (Stopping and inspecting ships on the high seas may also become necessary and should be authorized under a new and improved version of UNSCR 1718 but may not be necessary as a first step.)

Such action will also help, over time, to achieve the long-term objective of persuading the North that the consequences of having nuclear weapons outweigh the current perceived benefits of going down this path. As one former senior U.S. official noted somewhat impolitely but all too accurately, "we have taught this puppy that it is OK to pee on the rug."

By now the cycle is all too predictable. North Korea behaves outrageously. The others provide generous incentives to get it to come back to the table. It returns, reaps the benefits, and then once again behaves outrageously and waits for the incentives to once again be offered. This cycle must be broken.

The main task now is not to get the North to return to negotiations but to demonstrate that bad behavior has serious, enforceable, and long-lasting consequences. The elimination of Pyongyang's nuclear weapons capabilities will be a multistage process. Tightening the noose around Pyongyang to increase the political, military and economic costs associated with going down the nuclear path is a long overdue vital first step in this process.

Ralph A. Cossa is president of the Pacific Forum CSIS, a Honolulu-based nonprofit research institute affiliated with the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, and senior editor of Comparative Connections, a quarterly electronic journal.

New start with Muslim nations

Rhetorically, at least, President Barack Obama moved mountains in the land of Muhammad. Speaking from Cairo University to the world's estimated 1.5 billion Muslims, the American president made a frank appeal for a new relationship based on mutual respect. Language matters, and this was an eloquent address of historic and moral importance meant to turn the page on strong-arm politics and ultimatums.

The first U.S. president of color and the son of a Muslim, Obama brought his personal credibility to the podium, not to apologize but to acknowledge the country's past mistakes and to set an agenda for the future. Certainly words alone will not bring peace to the Middle East or persuade America's enemies to abandon their anger. As Obama noted, "recognizing our common humanity is only the beginning of our task." Still, this was a new beginning.

In recent years, U.S. relations with Muslim nations have been shaped largely by hostilities, from the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington to the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The U.S. role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been an open wound bleeding distrust and anger.

While vowing to confront violent extremism and defend Americans, Obama sought to end that era with a declaration: The United States is not at war with Islam. Rather, he said, the ties stretch from the American Revolution, when Morocco became the first country to recognize U.S. independence, to the present, with 1,200 mosques in the U.S. offering convincing testimony that "Islam is part of America."

Many times during the nearly hourlong speech, Obama seemed to be trying to right the wrongs of linguistic omission. While maintaining that the war against al-Qaida and the Taliban in Afghanistan was necessary, he stated that Iraq was "a war of choice" that sowed discord within the U.S. and around the world. He

condemned a history of colonialism and the Cold War treatment of Muslim countries as proxies.

Speaking to Iran, Obama acknowledged that the U.S. "played a role in the overthrow" of the democratically elected government of Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddeq in 1953 — a long-awaited admission in our fractious relations with that Muslim nation.

On the issue of most concern to his Middle East audience — Israel and Palestine — Obama was boldly evenhanded, leading critics to charge that he was abandoning America's most stalwart and reliable ally in the region. To the contrary, Obama expressed unequivocal U.S. support for Israel.

"This bond is unbreakable," he said. Palestinians must recognize the permanence of the Jewish state. He noted that the murder of 6 million Jews in the Holocaust is "a tragic history that cannot be denied," and warned that threatening Israel with destruction revives that pain and hinders the pursuit of peace.

But unyielding support for Israel need not require the denigration of its adversaries. Obama paved new ground by granting equal time and consideration to the Palestinians' 60-year struggle for a homeland. He pointedly referred to their struggle against Israeli occupation as "resistance." He deplored the "intolerable situation" for Palestinians living in refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and in other countries, and all those who "endure the daily humiliations — large and small — of occupation."

Americans, he said, "will not turn our backs on the legitimate Palestinian aspiration for dignity, opportunity and a state of their own." He acknowledged that the Islamic movement Hamas has support among Palestinians, yet insisted that it abandon violence and recognize Israel's right to exist.

On the issue of democracy, Obama also

made strides toward overcoming a double standard for friends and adversaries in the Muslim world. Without specifically condemning allies such as Saudi Arabia or Egypt, he nonetheless spoke forcefully for free speech, rule of law, government by consent and other human rights they often deny. Beyond this, the president's agenda included equal rights for women, economic development and halting the spread of nuclear weapons.

In a global public diplomacy campaign, the government translated the speech into 13 languages, posted it on the Web in Arabic, Persian, Urdu and English, and made it available on cell phones as well as the Internet.

The question now, of course, is how to turn words into deeds, and how to ensure that U.S. deeds in the far reaches of Afghanistan and Pakistan don't undermine Obama's reconciliation goals. Many U.S. presidents have tried and failed to make peace in the Middle East.

Obama's speech came a day after Osama bin Laden accused the U.S. of sowing new seeds of hatred in the Muslim world by "ordering Pakistan" to block Islamic law in the Swat Valley and to crack down on militants. Those are the views of a fanatic, but we do fear that the killing of civilians in U.S. bombing raids in Pakistan and Afghanistan risks drawing new recruits into the Islamic insurgencies fighting U.S.-backed governments.

And yet, one important change took place Thursday. Obama went to Cairo to talk, not lecture. He addressed the Muslim world honestly and directly. He spoke not as an imperial power to an underling, or a parent to a child, but as a statesman speaking to millions of men and women who have long deserved — and rarely received — the respect of an American president.

Los Angeles Times (June 5)

Malaysia's Islamists take liberal gamble

ANALYSIS

Kuala Lumpur

AFP-JIJI

For the first time in two decades, moderates outnumber clerics on a powerful committee in Malaysia's main Islamic opposition party, a move analysts say will help it win non-Muslim votes.

Delegates from the Pan-Malaysia Islamic Party (PAS) on Saturday elected 11 reformers and seven conservatives to the party's 18-seat decision-making Central Committee, the latest part of a rebranding that began in 2005 in a bid to woo voters and shed its hardline image.

But the vote for the post of deputy president was won by conservative incumbent Nasharudin Mat Isa at the party's annual congress, which ended Sunday.

"If you see the combination, it is clerics and professionals. It is a manifestation of what the members want — (for) PAS to consist of a collective leadership," Nasharudin said.

Ibrahim Suffian, a pollster from Merdeka Center research, said the poll outcome shows the majority of delegates want more liberals to hold influential posts.

"They want a moderate face

... to attract broad-based Malaysian support," he said. "I think they want to win non-Muslim votes."

Some 60 percent of Malaysians are Muslim Malays, but the population also has big Chinese and Indian communities.

Ibrahim said the delegates still voted in clerics because PAS needs to strengthen its Islamic credentials to win seats from the Malay-majority focused United Malays National Organization (UMNO).

Mazni Buyong, an independent political analyst, said that the success of moderates in the elections could see more non-Muslims in multiracial Malaysia voting for the Islamic party.

"I think they will be able to make more inroads in the next election because the moderates are seen as more tolerant and do not push for the Islamic way of life, unlike the clerics," she said.

James Chin, a political science professor at Monash University said that PAS — with a membership of 1 million — now sees itself as a party capable of replacing UMNO in the next polls, which are expected to be held by 2012.

"PAS is becoming more mainstream. It used to be a parochial party. They see themselves as the alternative party to UMNO," he said.

Educating Americans about Muslim voices

Vishakha N. Desai, Karen Brooks Hopkins
and Mustapha Tlili
New York

President Barack Obama has extended an open hand of friendship in his landmark Cairo speech to the Muslim world — seeking to engage Muslims with a commitment of mutual respect. No one can doubt his sincerity. From his first days in office, he has emphasized the importance of embarking on a new chapter in relations between the United States and the world's Muslims.

But this aspiration will remain elusive without acknowledging the sad fact that most Americans remain woefully ignorant about the basic facts of Islam, and about the broad geographic and cultural diversity of Muslim cultures.

A majority of public opinion polls taken in the last four years show that the views of Americans about Islam continue to be a casualty of the 9/11 attacks. Washington Post/ABC News polls from 2006, for example, have found that nearly half of Americans regard Islam "unfavorably" while one in four admits to prejudicial feelings against Muslims.

American views of the Muslim world are so colored by the conflict in the Middle East and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan that U.S. citizens have no collective appreciation of the fact that most Muslims live in Asia. Or that the four countries with the largest Muslim populations — Indonesia, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh — are all cultures with millenniums-old histories of coexisting with other religions and cultures.

A 2005 report by the U.S. State Department's Advisory Committee on Cultural Diplomacy called for a new vision of cultural diplomacy that "can enhance U.S. national security in subtle, wide-ranging and sustainable ways." In 2008, a bipartisan group of American leaders — the U.S.-Muslim Engagement Project — convened by the Search for Common Ground and the Consensus

Building Institute, issued a report calling for a new direction for U.S. relations with the Muslim world. A primary goal would be "to improve mutual respect and understanding between Americans and Muslims around the world."

It is time for U.S. citizens to commit themselves to working alongside the Obama administration to turn a new leaf in relations with the Muslim world.

The first step is to make a concerted effort to become better educated about the multifaceted societies that comprise the 1 billion-strong Muslim population throughout the world. The power of culture resides in its ability to transform perceptions.

Through next Sunday, New Yorkers are experiencing the rich diversity of Muslim cultures through a citywide initiative, entitled "Muslim Voices: Arts and Ideas." More than 300 artists, writers, performers and scholars from more than 25 countries, including the U.S., are gathering for this unprecedented festival and conference.

Presentations include a dizzying variety of artistic forms from the Muslim world, ranging from the traditional (calligraphy, Sufi devotional voices) to the contemporary (video installations, avant-garde Indonesian theater and Arabic hip-hop). A companion policy conference has attracted scholars and artists from around the world, exploring the relationship between cultural practice and public policy and suggesting new directions for cultural diplomacy. A critical goal of this project is to help break stereotypes and create a more nuanced understanding of Muslim societies.

Despite our enthusiasm for the possibilities of what this initiative can do to broaden understanding, a performance, a film or an art exhibition cannot find solutions to all the problems that divide Americans and the Muslim world. The current distance is rooted as much in ignorance as in hard political issues, many of which go beyond what

arts and culture can realistically address.

However, cultural diplomacy and initiatives such as "Muslim Voices" can open the door to the reality of the Muslim world as a rich space for world-class artistic production. That, in turn, can encourage an interest in addressing the harder political issues with respect and a sense of equity.

For too long, the differences between the U.S. and the Muslim world have been framed not in terms of diversity, but as the foundations of a permanent global conflict. But when people participate in an aesthetic experience that both addresses and transcends a particular culture, perceptions are bound to change.

America has reached a pivotal moment in its national and global history, with new hopes for intercultural exchange, dialogue and mutual understanding. President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton say theirs will be an age of "smart power" that will effectively use all tools of diplomacy at their disposal, including cultural diplomacy.

The U.S. must focus once again on the arts as a meaningful way to promote stronger cultural engagement and, ultimately, to find new channels of communication with the Muslim world. Doing so will show that relations need not be defined only through political conflict. Rather, there is now an opportunity to define connections between America and the Muslim world by sharing the richness and complexity of Muslim artistic expressions — as a vital step in finding grounds for mutual respect.

Vishakha N. Desai is president of the Asia Society. Karen Brooks Hopkins is president of the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Mustapha Tlili is founder and director of the Center for Dialogues: Islamic World-U.S.-The West at New York University.

©2009 Project Syndicate
(www.project-syndicate.org)

Obama hits the right notes



WILLIAM
PFAFF

Paris

U.S. President Barack Obama's eloquent Cairo speech was distinguished by the quality of his previous major speeches, that of speaking as an adult to adults. He promised to say what he thought, and did so on all of the topics he addressed. He was not a comfortable guest for the Egyptian government, although a courteous and honest one.

He said things many of his listeners would have preferred not to hear, among them his host, President Hosni Mubarak, to whom he indirectly recommended nonrepressive domestic policies with freedom of speech, a suggestion that if followed could terminate the career of the Egyptian president, and abort that of his son and presumptive successor.

Obama's newsworthy statement was his adamant reiteration of his conviction that Israeli settlement expansion must be halted, in conformance with the commitment made by Israel in the road map agreement, and that an independent Palestinian state must come into being.

This uncompromising declaration is a blow to the Netanyahu government in Israel, which has expected that its political influence inside the United States would prevent the Obama administration's interference with its expansion of Jewish colonization of annexed Palestinian territories.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has made continued illegal expansion into Palestinian lands the policy of his government. He declares his policy is never to accept a Palestinian state. He speaks of an arrangement by which residual

Palestinian-occupied territory could become an economic dependency of Israel, but under no circumstances sovereign.

With his American upbringing, he long has traded in Israeli politics on his supposed ability to "read" American politics, and get his way by bluff and threat, and blackmail when necessary, should an American government reject Israeli government demands.

This time he has miscalculated, mistaking Obama's determination, and probably misestimating the American political and popular mood. During the Bush years, the cost to American national interests and reputation in the Middle East of uncritical support for Israel became so blatant that a significant shift in public opinion has occurred.

This is certainly true in serious American circles, in the past aware of the damage being done to American interests. But the control of Congress by the so-called Israel Lobby (Likud Lobby is closer to the truth, since the right wing of the Israeli political spectrum has for years controlled the public presentation of the Israeli case in the U.S.) has made protest seem futile, and dangerous to political and academic careers.

This no longer is entirely true, in part due to the calm discussion of the lobby by the John Mearsheimer-Stephen Walt book two years ago, the growing willingness of a part of the press to deal with the issue honestly, and the effect of events themselves in the Middle East.

The invasion of Lebanon two years ago, and the assault on Gaza last year, were not episodes that won the sympathy of very many serious American political observers, and they shocked a significant part of American public opinion.

We are at an interesting point. Israeli voters elected Netanyahu. But this electorate is said to be deeply discouraged over the possibility of peace with the Arabs. There is a significant drain of the Ashkenazim population toward Europe and the U.S., and a steady growth in

millenarian-minded, ultra-Orthodox immigrants coming to witness the Last Times and the Messiah's arrival. A third of the settler population is composed of American sectarian Orthodox Jews.

The Israeli prime minister is now trapped, since Obama has called his bluff. His friends complain that Obama is not living up to a Bush administration promise that the road map agreement was just a scrap of paper Israel could ignore.

They say they had that assurance from Elliot Abrams and Stephen J. Hadley. But if they were foolish enough to think that a new Obama administration would value the secret and illegal advice of secondary and notoriously pro-Israel figures in the Bush administration over the signed documents of the Israeli and American governments, they were, in the phrase, kidding themselves.

Time seems to be up for duplicity. Yet there now are nearly a half-million people in the illegal settlements, caught between the encouragement of Netanyahu and his American Likud allies, and the American government of Obama. What will they now do?

The second noteworthy declaration by Obama was that he intends to withdraw all American military forces from Iraq and Afghanistan; to establish no U.S. bases there; and to demand no privileged access to the region's resources.

This is surely as much of a blow to Pentagon planners as his statement to Israel was to the settler community. It would seem a renouncement of the American military program of world-girdling strategic bases, pursued for the past 30 years. It comes as more of a surprise than the Obama statement concerning Israel. It could be much more important to America and its future. One awaits elaboration.

William Pfaff is a political analyst and columnist for the International Herald Tribune.

© 2009 Tribune Media Services International

Reaching out to the Muslim world

Few speeches in recent history have been as widely anticipated as the June 4 address of U.S. President Barack Obama to the Muslim world. The speech, delivered in Cairo, was the high point of a four-nation trip to the Middle East and Europe. The speech is intended to signal a "new beginning between the United States and Muslims." But it will take far more than words, no matter how sincerely felt or well delivered, to reset relations between the U.S. and the billions of Muslims who view it with deep-rooted suspicion.

While it is tempting to see the rift between the U.S. and the Muslim world as an outgrowth of the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, it long predates that horrific day. Some Muslims consider U.S. values a challenge to or repudiation of their religion; the heavy hand of Christian fundamentalism that weighs upon U.S. politics contributes to their sense of alienation. Others are angered by U.S. support for Israel and a seeming indifference to the sufferings of Palestinians (many of whom are Muslims, but some of whom are not). Some resent U.S. support for autocratic Middle Eastern leaders who repress Islamic movements. Compounding all those irritants is frustration and loss of status. Muslims remember how they were for centuries the leading edge of modernity; today most of the Islamic world lags the West. That is an enduring source of shame and anger.

Sept. 11 compounded the pain. Few in the West, especially in the U.S., were ready or able to separate the guilty from the innocent. All Muslims were tarred with the stain of extremism. American anger was intensified by scattered applause for the humbling of the U.S. and the failure of many Islamic leaders to unambiguously condemn the terrorists. Talk of "legitimate grievances" widened the gulf between the U.S. and the Muslim world.

Mr. Obama sought to close that gap. Few Americans, much less presidents, have been better positioned to succeed. Mr. Obama spent part of his childhood in Indonesia — a fact he noted in his Cairo address when he mentioned hearing prayer calls daily as a boy — and his middle name — Hussein — is of Arabic provenance. His election was heralded as repudiation of the "cowboy policies" of his predecessor, Mr. George W. Bush, and the beginning of a new era of engagement with the world. That process has been under way since Mr. Obama took office: one of the stops on Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's first trip overseas was Indonesia, and the president himself sent Persian New Year's greetings to Iranians.

Acknowledging faults on both sides, Mr. Obama said, "This cycle of suspicion and discord must end." He conceded divisions

were sown by "colonialism that denied rights and opportunities to many Muslims, and a Cold War in which Muslim-majority countries were often treated as proxies without regard to their own aspirations." He spoke of the sufferings of ordinary Palestinians. But he demanded that both sides look firmly at themselves before blaming others. "Just as Muslims do not fit a crude stereotype, America is not the crude stereotype of a self-interested empire."

He waded directly into the policies that have sown discord. He condemned terrorism, quoting the Quran in defense of his argument that such action is "irreconcilable with the rights of human beings." He took square aim at the policies of Israelis, Palestinians and other Arab states: "The Palestinian Authority must develop its capacity to govern, with institutions that serve the needs of its people." Hamas "must put an end to violence, recognize past agreements, and recognize Israel's right to exist." Meanwhile, "Israelis must acknowledge that just as Israel's right to exist cannot be denied, neither can Palestine's." Bluntly, he said his government "does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements" on the West Bank and outskirts of Jerusalem: "It is time for these settlements to stop." He then called on Arab governments to stop using the conflict with Israel as an excuse for or distraction from their own failures.

Given expectations surrounding the speech, it was bound to disappoint. Ironically though, one measure of its success is the criticism it garnered among every audience. American critics accused him of sycophancy — his use of an Arabic greeting was the chief offense — and of going soft on terrorists, noting the word "terrorism" was not uttered in the speech. Israelis complained that their sufferings were seemingly put on par with those of Palestinians, while Arab and Palestinian audiences were disappointed because the speech contained no concrete proposals to address their grievances.

That last charge is accurate. But Mr. Obama knows that one speech is no substitute for the hard work of creating peace in the region. His special envoy, Mr. George Mitchell, is following up and building on the work that has already begun.

Progress depends on changing the atmosphere. Here, Mr. Obama is making progress. Mainstream Islamic leaders applauded his outreach, calling it "a good start" and "an important step." But real success is only possible when all parties recognize their own roles and responsibilities for making and sustaining peace. It is not someone else's job, no matter how powerful he may be.

Earnest good will doesn't make foreign policy

Robert Kagan
Washington
THE WASHINGTON POST

U.S. President Barack Obama likes to see himself as a pragmatist, but in foreign policy he is proving to be a supreme idealist of the Woodrow Wilson variety.

Like Wilson's, Obama's foreign policy increasingly seems to rest on the assumption that nations will act on the basis of what they perceive to be the good will, good intentions or moral purity of other nations, in particular the United States. If other nations have refused to cooperate with us, it is because they perceive the U.S. as aggressive or evil. Obama's job is to change that perception.

From the outreach to Iran and to Muslims, to the call for eliminating all nuclear weapons, to the desire for a "reset" in relations with Russia, the central point of Obama's diplomacy is that America is, suddenly, different. It has changed. It is better. It is time, therefore, for other nations to cooperate.

But how has America changed? Obama's policies toward Iran, the Mideast, Russia, North Korea, China, Latin America, Afghanistan and even Iraq have at most shifted only at the margins — as many in those countries repeatedly complain. So what, for instance, is the source of the "new beginning" in U.S.-Muslim relations that Obama called for in Cairo?

The answer, it seems, is Obama himself. In the speech, *The Washington Post* reports, "Obama made his own biography the starting point for a new U.S. relationship with Islam." Or as *The New York Times* put it, while "the president offered few details on how to solve problems around the globe," his basic argument "boiled down to this: Barack Hussein Obama was standing on the podium in this Muslim capital as the American president."

Critics complain that Obama's speeches are too self-referential. If so, this is not a mark of vanity. It is a

strategy. Obama believes that his story is a powerful foreign policy tool, that drawing attention to what makes him different, not only from George W. Bush but from all past American presidents, will persuade the world to take a fresh look at America and its policies and make new diplomatic settlements possible.

In Cairo, he emphasized his Muslim heritage to show Muslims around the world that he empathizes with them as no previous American president possibly could. His apologies for America's past behavior also highlight his uniqueness. He is not the first president to apologize. Wilson apologized to the peoples of the Western Hemisphere for the interventionist policies of his Republican predecessors. Bill Clinton apologized to Africans for America's history of slavery. But Clinton accepted responsibility for America's sins as if they were his own.

Obama, on the other hand, does distance himself from America's past sins. His response to Daniel Ortega's long recitation of U.S. misdeeds in Latin America was to point out that he personally had nothing to do with them — "I was three months old." When he admits American sins in relations with Iran, he wants Iran's revolutionary leaders to distinguish between America, which they hate, and America's new president, whom they can like and with whom they can do business.

Can this work even without fundamental change in the conduct and parameters of U.S. foreign policy? Obama obviously hopes so. Take the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Obama calls for a freeze on settlements, but the question for many Arabs and Palestinians is what he will do to force Israel to comply with his demands. Will he cut off aid? The answer is almost certainly no. But Obama must believe that the expression of his good intentions is enough.

Or take Obama's declared desire to eliminate all nuclear weapons. Of course he admits that he cannot make this

happen. But he believes that by agreeing with American critics that the present American-dominated order is unjust, he can buy the international good will necessary to end Iran's and North Korea's nuclear weapons programs.

Finally, Guantanamo. Who knows when Obama will be able to close it, what he will be able to put in its place or

whether, ultimately, he will be able to strike a fundamentally different balance between American security and the legal rights of detainees than was struck by Bush or by previous presidents in times of perceived national security threats. It probably won't be all that different. But Obama hopes that by displaying earnestness to change American practices, he can build an image of greater moral authority and that this in turn will produce diplomatic results that have hitherto eluded us.

This theory may prove correct. Certainly, it will soon be tested. But let us not call it realism. The last president who sincerely pursued this approach was Wilson. He, too, believed that the display of evident good will and desire for peace, uncorrupted by the base motives of national interest or ambition, gave him the special moral authority to sway other nations. And Wilson was as beloved around the globe as Obama is today, possibly more beloved, at least for a moment. Millions took to the streets in the great cities of Europe when he crossed the Atlantic in 1918. His gifts to persuade, however, proved ephemeral, and the results of his efforts were, from his own perspective, an utter failure. Not only the nations of Europe but his own U.S. proved more self-interested and less amenable to moral appeals. We will see whether Obama, the most Wilsonian president in a century, fares better.

Robert Kagan is a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Losers can live with Lebanon's 'West' vote

Paul Salem
Beirut

Lebanon's voters have handed a clear defeat to the Hezbollah-led March 8 alliance. In a smoothly run and peaceful election, the pro-Western March 14 alliance emerged with a clear majority of 71 seats, compared to 58 seats for its rivals. The results elicited a nearly audible sigh of relief from Arab capitals, as well as from leaders in Europe and North America.

The fear that the pro-Syrian and pro-Iranian March 8 alliance might secure a victory was palpable prior to the vote. Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had eagerly and publicly anticipated such an outcome.

The March 14 Alliance's victory is good news for Lebanon and the region, ensuring good relations with Lebanon's Arab and Western friends, and constituting a quiet triumph for moderation and pragmatism over extremism and confrontation.

It is also good news for the Obama administration, which had feared a regional setback soon after Obama's historic address in Cairo on June 4.

The election also brings a much needed measure of stability and legitimacy to the governing March 14 coalition, which comprises the mainly Sunni Future movement, led by Saad Hariri (son of slain former Prime Minister Rafik al Hariri), the Socialist party, led by Druse leader Walid Junblat, and a number of Christian parties. Although the March 14 coalition already controlled Parliament, its majority had been repeatedly attacked as the result of a severely skewed election law.

Although the March 8 alliance lost the election, not all of its members were equally distressed by the results. Aside from Hezbollah, March 8 includes the more secular Shiite Amal movement and the Free Patriotic Movement, a large Christian group led by Gen. Michel Aoun. Whereas Hezbollah and Amal swept the Shiite districts in the South and the Beqaa Valley, confirming their dominant position

among Lebanon's Shiites, Aoun delivered less than half the Christian votes.

Hezbollah may be quite comfortable with the returns. Winning would have placed Hezbollah in a challenging position. Arab and international governments would have reacted negatively, and investor confidence in Lebanon would have been undermined, jeopardizing Lebanon's political and economic relations. A victory for the March 8 alliance also would have strengthened Israel's argument that Hezbollah dominates Lebanon, leaving

The March 14 Alliance's victory, and the defeat of the pro-Syrian and pro-Iranian alliance, are also good news for the Obama administration, which had feared a regional setback soon after Barack Obama's historic address in Cairo on June 4.

the country more exposed to attack.

Moreover, if the March 8 coalition had won, it would have largely been on the back of Christian voters delivered by Aoun, who might have then demanded the Lebanese presidency, which is reserved for a Christian. Neither Hezbollah nor Amal wanted this.

With a March 14 victory, Hezbollah is more secure vis-a-vis Israeli attack or international isolation, can worry less about managing Lebanon's economy and finances, and can maintain its alliance with Aoun without delivering him the moon.

Moving forward, the immediate challenge will be to form the next government. The March 14 alliance has said it would welcome a national unity government with the March 8 coalition, but without the veto power that the opposition has been demanding. This wrangling is likely to take weeks, but is unlikely to come to blows or to reach a complete impasse.

Neither side is interested in escalation

or a breakdown. Their patrons in the region and internationally — Saudi Arabia, the United States, Syria and Iran — are also more interested in negotiation than escalation at this point.

On national sovereignty, the new government must continue to build up the national army and police forces, negotiate with Hezbollah over the integration of its militia into the state security structure and push for regional peace, all of which would strongly benefit Lebanon.

With regard to economic and social policy, the government must manage the national debt while encouraging investment and employment and strengthening public education and health programs.

The government must also move forward on further electoral reform, expand administrative decentralization, hold local elections in 2010 and come up with a credible program to combat rampant corruption. None of these challenges will be easy.

Lebanon has undergone much in the past four years: the withdrawal of Syrian forces, a string of painful assassinations, a devastating 2006 war with Israel, a difficult battle between the Lebanese Army and an entrenched terrorist group called Fateh al-Islam, a year and a half of institutional paralysis (late 2006 to early 2008), and a brief civil war in the streets of Beirut in May 2008. Since then, however, Lebanon has put together a coalition government, regained security and stability, weathered the global economic crisis and now organized a largely free and fair election.

Much of this has been achieved through regional and international assistance, but on June 7 the Lebanese people, through the ballot box, proved that they hold ultimate decision-making power over the country's precarious but potentially promising future.

Paul Salem is director of the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut.

*© 2009 Project Syndicate
(www.project-syndicate.org)*

Punishing North Korea

The United Nations Security Council has agreed to take tougher measures against North Korea for conducting its second nuclear test on May 25. The measures include a “call” — rather than a demand — that U.N. members inspect suspect cargo transported on ships to and from North Korea, additional financial sanctions, and an expanded trade embargo on the export of weapons to the country. The UNSC’s move is stronger than Resolution 1718, adopted following Pyongyang’s first nuclear test in October 2006.

The North should consider the move a stern warning from the international community and return to the six-party talks, whose ultimate aim is to denuclearize the country in exchange for aid from other member-states in the talks and the opening of diplomatic ties with the United States and Japan.

It took the UNSC a relatively long time to reach agreement because China, which chairs the six-party talks and is North Korea’s largest trade partner, was cautious about taking measures deemed as too strict. Japan and the U.S. had called for mandatory inspection of cargo shipped to and from North

Korea, but China preferred an “appropriate and balance” approach to avoid possible military conflict with North Korea. So, the UNSC now “calls upon” all U.N. members to inspect cargo carried to and from North Korea in their territories and to inspect North Korean ships on the high seas with the consent of the flag country — if there is reasonable grounds to believe that the cargo contains nuclear and missile-related materials. Japan needs to weigh the issue of cargo inspections carefully.

The UNSC also calls for expanding the freeze on the assets of North Korean entities and individuals to reduce the likelihood of financial services and sources contributing to Pyongyang’s programs to develop nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles and other weapons of mass destruction.

Toward the end of May, North Korea said it would not accept UNSC resolutions and decisions. It is also preparing for further ballistic missile test launches. U.N. member nations should faithfully implement the new UNSC decision. If the North carries out further provocative acts, the U.N. should be ready to take additional action against it.