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**POLITICAL CONFLICTS
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Clashing Over the Climate

At the Copenhagen climate change summit, poor nations challenge Western domination

By HAIDER RIZVI



Is the glass half empty or half full? As the year 2009 approached its end, the leaders of developing countries who attended the UN summit on climate left the Danish capital of Copenhagen with this question constantly nagging in their minds.

At the end of the Copenhagen climate talks that continued for about two weeks, developing nations seemed relatively satisfied with the final outcome, but not all of them. Those from Africa and small island nations declared it was nothing but another empty promise.

"[It's] the lowest level of ambition in terms of emissions reductions imaginable," the Sudanese envoy, Lumumba Di-Aping, who chaired the G77 group of developing countries plus China, told reporters at the end of the summit. "[It's] a climate change denial in action."

The deal became final at the last minute on December 19 after U.S. President Barack Obama met with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, South African President Jacob Zuma and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

Di-Aping accused the U.S. and Danish governments of "superimposing a deal on the rest of the world," but eventually went along with the rest, amid hopes that a real deal on climate change was more likely to be signed through further negotiations.

In early December, during the first round of talks, delegates from African nations walked out of talks in protest against what they described as "undemocratic" behavior by the president of the conference, who held private meetings with the representatives of rich Western nations to shape the summit's outcome.

Delegates from the emerging economic giants in the developing world, such as China, Brazil, India and South Africa, also joined that boycott for a few hours. Those representing the G77 and China charged that Western nations were conspiring behind the scenes to derail the summit agenda.

The five-hour suspension came after the summit president seemed to lead talks in the direction of canceling the Kyoto Protocol, which limits carbon emissions by rich nations. The 1997 agreement does not put limits

on carbon emissions by developing countries.

Developing nations want to extend the Kyoto Protocol—the only treaty that currently commits industrialized nations to reduce emissions responsible for global warming. But that approach does not have the support of rich countries, particularly the United States.

U.S. Special Envoy for Climate Change Todd Stern told reporters in Copenhagen on December 9, "We are not going to become part of the Kyoto Protocol, so that's not on the table."

"If you mean basically taking the Kyoto Protocol and putting a new title on it, we're not going to do that either...We're not going to Kyoto, and we're not going to do something that's Kyoto with another name," said Stern.

But under immense pressure from developing countries, which enjoyed strong support from China, the United States and other industrialized countries changed their stance toward the end. The accord signed by 194 parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) now confirms the continuation of the Kyoto Protocol.

According to the agreement, developed countries will provide \$30 billion in new, additional funding for developing countries in the next three years. It also says developed countries support a goal of mobilizing jointly \$100 billion a year by 2020.

The Copenhagen Accord, however, does not specify precisely where this money would come from. It has set a target of limiting global warming to about 2 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial times—seen as a vital step in dealing with more floods, droughts, mudslides, sandstorms and rising seas.

"This basically is a letter of intent ... the ingredients of an architecture that can respond to the long-term challenge of climate change, but not in precise legal terms. That means we have a lot of work to do on the long road to Mexico," said Yvo de Boer, the top UN climate official.

Another round of climate negotiations is due to take place in Mexico in November 2010. At stake is a proposed deal to fight global warming and promote a cleaner world economy. Negotiators are hoping they will be able to create a new treaty to replace the Kyoto Protocol.

Holding high moral ground

Despite having signed the Copenhagen agreement, many delegates from the devel-

oping world expressed great disappointment at the final outcome and held the United States and other industrial nations as chiefly responsible for failing to create a legally binding treaty.

Toward the end of the summit, Bruno Sekoli of Lesotho, Chair of the Least Developed Countries' Group, said, "1.5 degrees are non-negotiable—more than that means death to Africa. It will cause unmanageable consequences."

The industrial nations stated they were willing to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 2 degrees or less. That, according to the UN, is not enough to keep the rise in the global average temperature under control. Scientists say it will leave millions of people suffering from hunger, diseases, floods and water shortages.

Shortly before the end of the conference, 106 countries publicly opposed the industrial nations' position on emissions cuts. They represented Africa, small island states, least developed countries and South America's Bolivarian Alliance, which constituted the majority of the parties to the conference.

The UN's research shows Africa and small island nations are the ones being hit hard by natural disasters caused by rising temperatures. Leaders of the industrial world



The author is a UN correspondent



FOR A FINAL DEAL: Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva chats with South African President Jacob Zuma at the Copenhagen climate change conference on December 18, 2009, when the participating countries failed to reach an agreement by the scheduled deadline

acknowledge that millions of people in poor countries are suffering the most from the impacts of climate change, yet they remain reluctant to take drastic measures on emissions.

Like many other leaders from the developing world, Brazilian President Lula raised his concerns about the vulnerability of Africa and small islands to the impacts of climate change and urged rich nations to finance mitigation and adaptation efforts in poor countries.

"It's necessary to keep commitments on emissions cuts and financing," he told the leaders of industrial countries and reminded them of their obligations under the Kyoto Protocol, which makes a clear distinction between the developed and developing nations and sets different tasks for both to address climate change.

Since the industrial countries are responsible for about 80 percent of atmospheric pollution, under the Kyoto Protocol, the first commitment period of which will expire in 2012, they are obliged to take greater responsibility than those nations that are not fully industrialized.

Negotiators held that most countries in Africa and small island nations are least responsible for atmospheric pollution, and are therefore justified in demanding enhanced commitments from rich nations on emissions reduction.

For their part, the industrial nations have indicated their willingness to set up a \$100-billion-a-year fund for developing countries. The developing nations have welcomed the proposal but, at the same time, made it clear they would not compromise on the question of emissions cuts.

The developing countries want the rich countries to cut emissions by 25 percent by 2020. Currently, no industrial nation seems willing to accept this demand. Instead, the

developed countries are calling for major developing economies, such as China and India, to curb their own, no matter whether they have adequate resources or not.

Without naming China and India, the industrial nations emphasized that developing countries must reveal their records on emissions cuts to the international community. "For certain countries, transparency is off the table, which is unacceptable," said U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at the summit.

But emerging economic powers have flatly rejected this demand, arguing they are not equally liable for growing levels of carbon emissions. India said it wants to protect its future economic growth, and declared it would commit only to slowing the growth of its carbon emissions. India also said it would not accept a legally binding target.

Despite having limited resources, however, both China and Brazil have pledged financial support for poor countries in the fight against global warming.

Although millions of people in Brazil remain poor, "we will give money to help other countries," President Lula told world leaders in reference to international efforts to set up a fund for Africa and other countries that are becoming increasingly vulnerable to the impending threat of global warming.

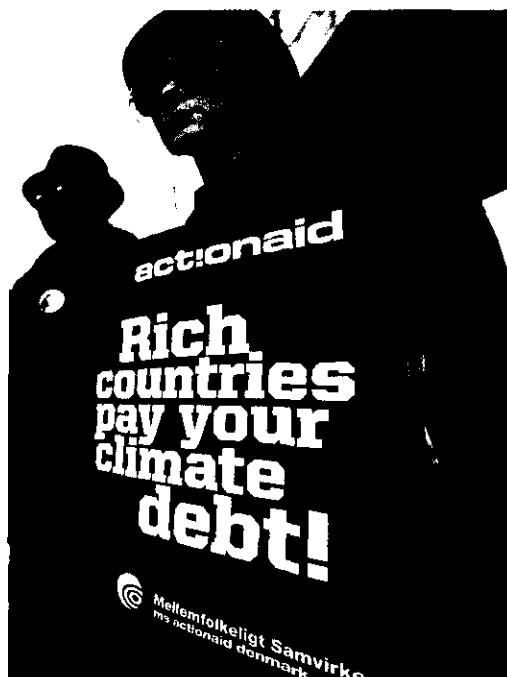
The Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change says that Africa will warm around 1.5 times the global average temperature increase. Therefore, average warming of 2 degrees Celsius globally could entail warming of around 3 degrees in Africa, which, says South Africa's Nobel laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu, is to "condemn Africa to incineration."

"Africa is paying with the misery and death of its people for the wealth and well-being that was created in the developed countries through carbon-intensive development," said Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, who spoke at the summit on behalf of the African bloc. "That is fundamentally unjust."

In reflecting on the summit outcome, Michael Dorsey, professor of environmental studies at Dartmouth College in the United States, concluded that in the two weeks in Copenhagen and nearly two decades, the developing countries braved not only "backsliding," but also "non-commitments, and sycophantic posturing of the industrialized world as wealthy nations have sought to gut both the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol."

In his view, during the Copenhagen talks, small island states and African nations were able to get nothing but one thing: "They held the very high moral and ethical ground." ■

(Reporting from Copenhagen, Denmark)



CLIMATE DEBATE: Environmentalists stage a protest outside the main venue of the UN climate change conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, on December 9, 2009

A Global Responsibility

China plays a bigger role in international peacekeeping efforts

By HU YUE

By increasing and diversifying its involvement in UN peacekeeping missions, China is fulfilling its obligations as a responsible and peaceful power in the world community. In providing critically needed aid in some of the world's most dangerous places, moreover, Chinese peacekeepers have sown the seeds of peace—but very often at the risk of their own lives.

Chinese peacekeepers made their global debut in April 1990 when China dispatched five military observers to Cambodia. Then, in April 1992, it sent an engineering unit to Cambodia to repair roads, maintain airports and construct barracks. Later at the UN's request in January 2000, Beijing deployed its first contingent of peacekeeping police to East Timor, opening a new chapter in its efforts to help secure world peace while easing regional tensions.

According to data from China's Ministry of National Defense (MOD), more than 14,000 Chinese peacekeepers—including 1,569 police officers—have participated in UN missions to conflict-stricken nations like Lebanon and Liberia, making China the biggest contributor among all five permanent members of the UN Security Council. In addition, China has offered these countries a large number of facilities to help address their pressing needs.

Currently, there are more than 2,100 Chinese peacekeepers serving in 10 UN missions. They have embarked on a variety of work projects—ranging from engineering and transportation to medical services and disaster relief. The UN now operates 15 peacekeeping missions worldwide, employing a total of 115,000 peacekeepers.

Up until January 2010, Chinese peacekeepers have built or repaired more than

8,000 km of roads and more than 200 bridges, cleared 8,700 landmines and explosives and treated more than 60,000 patients, according to a report by Xinhua News Agency. They have also played a significant role in cracking down on local crime, resettling refugees, as well as providing protection for Chinese nationals overseas.

China has maintained strict selection criteria for its peacekeepers. Foreign language proficiency and physical stamina, for one, are among the basic requirements, along with mission-specific expertise. Prior to departure, they must also undergo intense trainings on skills such as emergency aid and basic field survival. This, in part, explains why they can weather difficulties on the ground, however intense they may be.

In the “death zone” of southern Lebanon, for instance, Chinese peacekeepers had to navigate rough terrain and detect active landmines inch by inch. The challenges facing Chinese peacekeepers are no less arduous in Africa, where infectious disease proliferates, widespread malaria puts millions of lives at risk and armed conflicts are common.

Such dedication to peace has won China praise and respect around the world. Many roads and bridges in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia are even named after the People's Republic of China in honor of the contributions of its workers and peacekeeping units.

Around the world, Chinese peacekeepers “take their duties very seriously and put hard effort into helping others secure peace and a

normal life,” said Dai Shao'an, Deputy Director of the MOD's Peacekeeping Affairs Office.

“Wherever they go or whatever they do, they are always mindful that they are messengers of peace, representing China,” he added. “This sense of responsibility and dignity naturally leads to good deeds.”

International observers agree. “All the soldiers, policemen and civilians coming from China in our peacekeeping missions are extremely well trained, well disciplined, professional and able to live in very hard conditions,” said Alain Le Roy, UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, during a visit to China in November 2009.

While helping ensure the viability and success of peacekeeping operations, China's “blue helmets”—a common nickname for UN peacekeepers based on their attire—have also gained valuable field experience, as well as opportunities for exchanges with military forces and peacekeeping units from other countries, according to Shi Zhengbo, Director of the MOD's Peacekeeping Affairs Office.

As China's burgeoning economy continues to expand at a rapid pace, expectations for Beijing to play a bigger role in global peacekeeping efforts continue running apace.

China has already proven itself up to the task. With its agenda to assist countries stricken by wars and natural disasters under the aegis of UN peacekeeping operations, said Dai, Beijing wants “a peaceful world free from war or conflict, so people do not have to feel the pain.” ■

DEVOTION AND CONTRIBUTION: Members of a Chinese peacekeeping engineering unit rally shortly after their arrival at Nyala, capital of South Darfur, Sudan, on November 24, 2007





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Climate change after Copenhagen

China's thing about numbers

COPENHAGEN

How an emerging superpower dragged its feet, then dictated terms, at a draining diplomatic marathon

AMID the alphabet soup and baffling procedures of last month's climate-change conference in Copenhagen, it was easy to forget the overall aim: to move from a world in which carbon dioxide emissions are rising to one in which they are falling, fast enough to make a difference.

How fast is enough? A fair measure is carbon and other greenhouse emissions in 2050; if by that date they are only half their 1990 level, most people agree, then things would be on the right track. Another widely accepted calculation: if developing countries are to grow a bit between now and then, rich countries would need to slash emissions to a level at least 80% below what they were in 1990.

Many prosperous states have duly accepted that target; and in recent years the expression "80% by 2050" has become a familiar, if optimistic, touchstone for discussions about climate change—both in the rich world and among most other parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

When drafts of a last-ditch agreement began circulating on December 18th, which should have been the meeting's final day, the "80% by 2050" formula was still in place. But, hours later, it vanished. By this stage, efforts to find consensus among almost 200 delegations had given way to bargaining sessions among small-

ish groups of countries behind closed doors. When the fruits of that back-room trading were presented to the world by Barack Obama, the numbers were conspicuous by their absence.

So too were a number of other conditions that Europeans and others would have liked, such as a date for peak emissions. "Why?", a cluster of journalists asked Lars-Erik Liljelund, the Swedish government's point man on climate, in the early hours of Saturday December 19th. Why would a pledge that applied only to rich nations, and to which all those nations seemed to agree, have vanished from the final document? After maybe ten seconds of what-can-I-say silence came the flat reply: "China don't like numbers."

This is not entirely true. President Wen Jiabao's speech to the conference that morning included a lot of numbers. There had been 51% growth in China's renewable-energy output over the three years to 2008; China had planted 20m hectares of forests between 2003 and 2008; developed countries had produced 80% of emissions over the past 200 years; and so on. The numbers that China had resisted were those that could be read in any way as commitments. It had insisted on stripping all figures, even ones that did not apply to China, out of the text that finally became the Copenhagen accord.

In their zeal to avoid being pinned down, the Chinese went further. They secured the removal of language contained in early drafts that spoke of a Copenhagen deal as a step on the road to a legally binding treaty. As the world's largest emitter (without which any agreement is dead), China was in a strong position, and it took full advantage.

Such was the messy denouement of ten days of largely fruitless UN-guided negotiations, in which China did nothing to push things along. Indeed, some suspected China of doing something worse than just folding its arms. The atmosphere was poisoned, early in the meeting, by the leaking of a draft (one of several texts circulated by the Danish chair) that favoured the rich world; various parties thought the Chinese were the leakers.

On the final day, tension rose when President Obama was obliged to conduct negotiations with comparatively junior Chinese delegates. At one point, Mr Obama expected to meet his Chinese opposite number one-on-one but instead found himself with the leaders of South Africa, Brazil and India as well.

All that said, China also gave some ground. It satisfied the Americans on one sticking-point: the principle of "monitoring, reporting and verification" of actions promised by developing countries. Unless China, in particular, can be shown to live up to its promises, it will be very difficult to get a climate bill through America's Senate. To Mr Obama's relief, the accord allows for an international role in such monitoring, which China and India had been resisting. This is not just an academic point: China has pledged a reduction, of between 40% and 45% by 2020, in the level of its "carbon intensity"—the amount of carbon emitted ►►

in proportion to output. It is hard to tell how big a change the Chinese promise represents from business as usual; but it has an impressive ring.

Among the accord's other features were a new system for recording pledges on emission reduction and other actions; a review of those commitments, due in 2015; and an as yet undefined mechanism for North-South technology transfer. And there is money on the table: an initial promise of \$10 billion a year, for three years, from developed countries to help poorer states mitigate climate change and adapt to it. Some of this money will go to towards implementing a "REDD-plus" deal on deforestation, an issue on which real progress was made. Part of the rich-to-poor transfers will flow through a "Copenhagen Green Climate Fund", which some poor countries prefer to the World Bank.

The process will, in theory, accelerate. Rich countries vowed to mobilise \$100 billion a year by 2020 for more ambitious adaptation-and-mitigation projects in the poor world. The UN is supposed to set up a "high-level panel" to work out the details of who gets what. Maddeningly vague? Almost everybody admitted that the deal was not nearly as ambitious as they would have liked. According to most climate models, the commitments made in Copenhagen fall a long way short of what would be needed to keep global warming to 2°C.

Still, it was widely held to be better than nothing—though, in the final moments, nothing nearly triumphed. On the evening of December 18th heads of state claimed victory as they drove off to the airport; but their offstage bargains were unlikely to make much difference without a nod, at least, from the whole meeting. So the big-wigs left it to more junior negotiators to present the result of their horse-trading to the world's grumpy, exhausted delegates.

When it was introduced to a conference plenary in the small hours of Saturday morning, a few countries—notably Cuba, Venezuela, Bolivia and Nicaragua—tried to thwart any such benediction. They insisted that, as it had not been drafted by any official procedure, the deal struck by hand-picked leaders was just a "miscellaneous document" of no practical consequence. The accord would throw Africa "into the furnace", added Lumumba Stanislaus Di-Aping of Sudan, who spoke for the "G77 plus China" group of developing nations, and compared the rich countries' heartlessness to Hitler's genocide.

Such rhetoric proved self-defeating; more passion was expended on countering it than could be mustered for the accord itself. "I call on my brother from Sudan to rethink his conclusions and get hold of his emotions," said Dessima Williams of Grenada, representative of the Alliance of Small Island States, as she accepted a deal that fell far short of the islanders' hopes.

After more than three hours of back and forth, the British energy and climate-change minister, Ed Miliband, called for an adjournment just as Lars Lokke Rasmussen, the Danish prime minister, who was chairing the session, seemed to be accepting that the accord would founder.

Only after more hours of back-room wrangling did a restarted plenary, with a new chair, get the accord adopted after a fashion. Thanks to rapid gaveling, the world's delegates found they had decided to "take note" of the leaders' agreement—a formula that was held both to permit the deal to come into effect and to allow some nations to renounce it. A bid to reinsert the notion of a future binding treaty was firmly quashed by China, India and Saudi Arabia. The next step is for the nations signing

up to the accord to do so, and to affix to it any commitments they are making, which is due to happen by February 1st.

At that point, it appears, various steps to implement the accord and distribute the money that it speaks of can begin. How that implementation will fit into the ongoing UN talks—the next full conference will be in Mexico on November 29th—is, as yet, unclear. Equally uncertain is the degree to which it can breathe new life into market mechanisms for helping poor countries, and how the promised verification regime will actually build trust.

At some stage documents with numbers, and even long-term aspirations, will become necessary again, and the nation that invented the abacus will have to overcome its aversion to arithmetic. ■

Agriculture and climate change

Why farms may be the new forests

In the war against climate change, peasants are in the front line

FOR people who see stopping deforestation as the quickest climate-change win, Copenhagen seemed a success. Although there is still work to be done on the initiative known as REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation), the deal struck in Copenhagen made it into a real thing, not just an idea. The notion of reducing net deforestation to zero was not explicitly mentioned, but it looks much more credible than it did two years ago.

As well as giving heart to the protectors of trees, this outcome is encouraging for people whose focus is not on forests but on fields. Climate and agriculture matter to each other in several ways. On the downside, farming is a cause of deforestation, and also emits greenhouse

gases in its own right—perhaps 14% of the global total. On the upside, agriculture can also dispose of heat-trapping gases, by increasing the carbon content of soils.

And because farmers (unlike say, coal-producers) feel the effects of the changes their activities may be causing, they have a role in adapting to climate change. Farms, particularly marginal ones, are the first to suffer when the climate shifts; increase their resilience and you help a lot of people. Whether the aim is adaptation to climate change or slowing it, there is an obvious need for more research on the benign contributions that agriculture can make. For people who are seized of this need, there was a welcome boost on December 16th when 21 countries pledged \$150 billion to a Global Research Alliance on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases.

One of the attractions of a focus on agriculture is that even poor countries have farms; in some cases credits for carbon newly locked away in their soil may be a more plausible way of attracting money than rewards for low-carbon industrialisation. A more remote possibility is that such countries will earn credits by hosting efforts to pump carbon dioxide out of the air and store it away.

Such "geoengineering" is still seen as far-fetched and in some circles misguided, but a reference to it was made in the Copenhagen documents. It was cited as a possible future direction for the Clean Development Mechanism, which provides credits for carbon-saving projects in poorer countries. In the aftermath of negotiations with a hint of slash-and-burn, new seeds may be taking root.



Into battle in the eco-war

Universities and Islam

Hearts, minds and Mecca

ISTANBUL, LAGOS AND TORONTO

The rising profile of Muslim students in the Western world

WHEN news emerged of the life-story of the Nigerian who tried to blow up a flight from Amsterdam to Detroit on Christmas Day, there were cries of bewilderment in some quarters, groans of dismay in others, and shouts of "I told you so" from a small army of Cassandras.

Whatever motivated Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab to become a terrorist, it was not material deprivation; he came from a rich family. The biographical detail that fascinated many terrorism-watchers was his record as president of the Islamic Society at University College London, where he had studied engineering.

Some found his choice of subject significant. A forthcoming book by Steffen Hertog, a sociologist, will argue that terrorists include a high number of engineers—not because of their need for bomb-making skills, but perhaps because of a mindset that likes rigidity and binary choices.

In the young man's homeland, meanwhile, people noted that for all their problems—including the existence of rival, armed fraternities known as "cults" but unconnected to faith—Nigerian universities are not known as hotbeds of Islamic extremism. It was apparently the loneliness and confusion of life in Britain that set this student on a path that led to terror.

Long before his bungled effort hit the headlines, the role of Islamic Societies (ISOCs in student jargon) in British colleges—and of similar associations on other Western campuses—was sparking arguments. In 2008 a report and opinion poll from the Centre for Social Cohesion, a right-of-centre think-tank, had argued that these Muslim student associations in Britain needed much more careful watching. They seemed to be acting as incubators for fundamentalist ideas that favoured self-segregation by Muslims, and dreamt of Islamic governance and law. And as the report noted, several young Britons involved in terrorism had a record of ISOC activism; for example, Yassin Nassari, convicted in 2007 of bringing missile plans into Britain, had led one branch of the ISOC at the University of Westminster.

The CSC report triggered an angry response from Britain's Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) and 52 of its member bodies, calling the study "ideologically biased" and "motivated by...malice". The current FOSIS president, Faisal Hanjra, responded to the news of Mr Abdulmutallab's failed attack by insisting that

there was "no credible evidence" to suggest that British universities were "arenas of radicalism".

But much of the information cited in the CSC report is uncontroversial. At almost every British university, there is an ISOC to which practising Muslim students, seeking soulmates, soon gravitate. The societies' roles include organising prayer rooms and Friday sermons, and securing halal food. Since it was created in 1962, the leadership of FOSIS has often had some ideological overlap with the Egyptian-based Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat e-Islami, the Pakistani Islamist party. That does not imply sympathy for al-Qaeda's campaign of global terror, but it does imply adherence to a version of political Islam.

In their countries of origin, Islamist political movements have long experience of recruiting on campus and of forming small groups which owe something to far-leftist prototypes. In Sudan, for example, veterans of the Brotherhood, which took power in the 1989, retain vivid memories of student activism, with a cell structure that Leon Trotsky would have recognised. Such secrecy is not usually necessary in Western countries, but the memory of working in semi-covert conditions must have an effect on the culture of Islamist movements wherever they function.

In the 1990s another global Islamist movement, Hizb ut-Tahrir—which aspires

to a caliphate and eschews electoral democracy—was very active on British campuses. It has since lowered its profile.

At the other end of the Islamic spectrum, Turkish students who find themselves far from home (either in their homeland or in a foreign country, such as Britain) often fall under the influence of the Fethullah Gulen movement, which is impeccably moderate in its political views but encourages Muslims to practise their faith rigorously. With its deep pockets, the movement helps many students with practical problems like accommodation; they are then urged to pray more often.

Among Western countries, Britain stands out as a place where Muslim students (who number about 100,000 or around 5% of the total student population) are visible and self-confident. But all over the world, the increased profile of Islam on campus has created tension, curiosity and unlikely partnerships.

Sohaib Nazeer Sultan, the newly appointed Muslim chaplain at Princeton University, says that neither there, nor at the two other American campuses where he has worked, did any student under his care show signs of real extremism. But theological differences certainly exist, and have to be managed. Some students hew to the mystical, Sufi reading of Islam whereas others prefer the one-size-fits-all version of the faith that emphasises the unity of all Muslims and is highly suspicious of cultural difference between say, South Asians and Egyptians.

If Muslims on campus hang out together, Mr Sultan notes, it is not merely to pray or burnish each other's faith; they are also looking for a modest social life that does not involve intoxicants. In that quest they often find allies, like Orthodox Jews.

At Canada's McGill University, controversy has been raging since 2005 when the authorities deprived Muslim students (who now number about 2,000) of a prayer room, on the ground that this was inappropriate for a secular institution. The 600 or so who turn up for Friday prayers made their supplications outdoors for a while, until cold weather forced them from one temporary room to another. Nafay Choudhury, a leader of the Muslim Students Association, says things are much better for his co-religionists at most other Canadian colleges; the McGill Muslims are placing their hopes in an appeal to Quebec's Human Rights Commission.

Across the Western world, many Muslim students feel defensive. A request for information from Al-Furqan, an association of Muslim students at the University of Amsterdam, whose aims include the improvement of Islam's image, elicited the following reply: "Thank you for your interest in our student association. However we would like to inform you that we have no interest in answering your inquiry." ■



Learning to mix

changed. Mr Blair described as "extensive, detailed and authoritative" intelligence that was, in fact, patchy and old; he described conclusions that were speculative as "beyond doubt". At the inquiry, Mr Campbell drew a distinction between shifting lines and paragraphs in dossiers and actually fabricating intelligence. Again, fair enough; and it would be futile for the inquiry to try to prove outright lying in Mr Blair's statements about WMD. Their focus should be subtler: on his government's negligent approach to the sources of its claims, its failure to confess uncertainty and its urge to overstate.

Beyond doubt

There is also a string of outstanding questions about the conduct and aftermath of the war. For instance, why did some British troops seem not to have been fully equipped for the task? Indeed, why did the Treasury, overseen by the man who was then chancellor of the exchequer, Gordon Brown, fail to put its money where Mr Blair's mouth was? (Mr Brown himself has dubiously been excused from testifying until after Brit-

ain's pending general election.) Another concern is the increasingly vexed issue of when, precisely, Mr Blair committed British forces to the invasion—and whether he simultaneously said different things to George Bush and the British public. And why did he enter the war without much assurance that the Americans had a plan for post-war reconstruction?

These worries have not arisen because of a petty dispute between Mr Blair and his critics in the media—as Mr Campbell seemed to argue at the inquiry this week. They are important because Saddam turned out not to have any WMD, and because the post-war occupation of Iraq has been disastrous (and for Britain, militarily humiliating). And they are not merely historical curiosities. The unravelling of the case for war, and the calamities of its aftermath, have discredited politicians in the eyes of many Britons, and may inhibit the country's future foreign policy, not to mention the cost in blood and treasure. Mr Blair's turn at the inquiry may be the last, best chance to explain those mistakes and allay some of the anger they provoked—if he is asked the right questions. ■

America and Japan

Okinaw-or-neva

Don't let a festering row over a military base in Japan put a 50-year alliance at risk



A GOLDEN wedding is a terrible time for a marital crisis. But that is the danger unless Japan and America settle a rift over moving an American base on the Japanese island of Okinawa. The dispute could undermine security in East Asia on the

50th anniversary of an alliance that has served the region well. Tough as it is for Japan's new government, it needs to do most, though not all, of the caving in.

Fear of China and Russia brought America and Japan close during the cold war. The Futenma base in Okinawa, an island poised neatly between Taiwan and the Korean peninsula, was both a symbol of their alliance and a strategic asset of great value. But its location, slap bang in the middle of Ginowan City, suits neither the marines nor the Okinawans.

Last year, after 13 years of wrangling, the Japanese and American governments agreed on an alternative site, in a sparsely populated part of the island (see page 27). As part of the deal, the Americans agreed to reduce their troop numbers in Okinawa and move some to American territory in Guam. But not everybody was happy with the agreement. The Democratic Party of Japan, which has since become the governing party, opposed it. The Okinawans, who billet more than half the 50,000 American troops in Japan, regarded the mainlanders' insistence that they must house the Americans as a symptom of their second-class citizenship. When Yukio Hatoyama, then DPJ leader and now prime minister, promised to move not just some but all of the Americans off the island, Okinawans caught a whiff of historical redress. They voted overwhelmingly for his party last summer.

Mr Hatoyama has said that he will decide on the base's fate by May. In the meantime, he is managing the affair badly. He has neither suggested an alternative to Okinawa nor reassured

allies such as South Korea and Taiwan, which rely on American deterrence. But he is not the only one to blame for the mess. The merits of the plan were poorly explained by both America and Japan's former Liberal Democratic rulers. The Obama administration, in a rare display of toughness, has tried to browbeat Japan's new government into submission, giving the impression in a country long fearful of "karaoke diplomacy" that it expects Mr Hatoyama to sing to its tune.

On January 12th Hillary Clinton and her Japanese counterpart, Katsuya Okada, declared in Hawaii that the disagreement would not mar their countries' alliance. But there is a concern that the dispute over the base is widening the distance that has grown between the two countries, partly because they have not resolved how to deal with the rise of China.

Don't wait another 13 years

Japan's desire to become a more equal partner in its relationship with America is understandable, but leaving the future of Futenma in doubt is the wrong way to go about it. Instead, Japan should shoulder more of the burden for its own defence. It could also do more to help prevent terrorism, piracy and nuclear proliferation in its near-abroad. And it needs to set out its foreign-policy goals more clearly. It seems keen to balance relations with America against closer ties to East Asia, particularly China, but has not spelled out how this realignment would affect its still vital security links with America.

As for Futenma, Japan would be recklessly endangering its own security if it allowed the row over the base to put the alliance at risk. Unless he can come up with an alternative on the mainland, Mr Hatoyama will have to break his promise to the Okinawans—and make it up to them somehow. Perhaps a reinvigorated alliance between America and Japan that engages more fully with the region, including China, will eventually allow America to reduce its presence on Okinawa. If this crisis achieves that, so much the better. ■

► some in Japan feel the country has subordinated itself to America, and this has riled nationalists. And in Washington, DC, critics accuse Japan of "cheap-riding" on American security guarantees.

It is against this backdrop that the new government's review of the Futenma accord raised hackles in Washington. Adding to the sense of drift was Tokyo's decision to end an eight-year maritime refuelling mission for troops fighting in Afghanistan this month. It has also promised to investigate secret agreements in the 1960s and 1970s that enabled nuclear-armed American warships to enter Japan.

Above all, since the DPJ took power, it has been unclear how its goal of partially balancing Japan's ties to America with closer ones to China would affect the American alliance. The 50th anniversary of the security treaty might be a good chance to update the accord to reflect China's rise. But security analysts say the Futenma dispute threatens the mutual trust needed for such an undertaking.

Payback time

To make matters worse, most Okinawans seem determined to hold Mr Hatoyama to his word about removing the base altogether. As the painting at the Sakima gallery suggests, Okinawa nurtures an historic grudge against the mother country, piqued by the second world war massacre. Many locals feel that for too long Tokyo has outsourced American bases to the island—it houses 60% of American forces and their families in Japan—and offered only grubby fiscal handouts in return.

Critics accuse the Japanese authorities of producing a cooked-up environmental assessment, which skates over the dangers the new base would pose to the dugong, a rare sea mammal that grazes on sea grasses near the site of the proposed airstrips. Even supporters of the new base admit that it is hard to judge the full ecological impact because America has given imprecise figures about how many troops and aircraft would remain.

If the Hatoyama administration does break its promise to the Okinawans, it would be "suicidal", says Yoichi Iha, mayor of Ginowan and a staunch opponent of the agreement. And even then, some fear that protesters could make it very difficult to start construction work. A mayoral election takes place on January 24th in Nago, the city where the new base is proposed. Relocation is the main campaign issue. If the incumbent who supports it is ousted, that will be a strong indication of the level of anger. An election for governor of Okinawa in November is likely to bring the same tensions to the fore island-wide. But with America sticking to its guns, the Hatoyama administration is bound to upset one side or other. Its battle of Okinawa has only just begun. ■

Malaysia's burning churches

In God's name?

A combustible mixture of race, religion and politics

THE delicate political balance between Malaysia's ethnic and religious groups has been rocked by a series of attacks against churches, blamed on Muslim fanatics. They began after the High Court ruled on December 31st that a Catholic weekly, the *Herald*, could use the term "Allah" in its Malay-language edition.

This overturned an existing ban and offended some Muslims, who claim that "Allah" is exclusive to Islam, even though the word means "God" in Malay, and is used by other faiths in, for example, Indonesia. The supposed fear is that Christians are plotting to convert Malays, who make up some 60% of the population and, under the constitution, must also be Muslims. So sensitive is the issue that on January 6th, after an appeal by the government and with the consent of the Catholic church, the High Court suspended its own ruling.

By then, tempers had flared. Several Islamic groups planned to stage protests against the ruling on January 8th. Hours earlier, arsonists descended on three churches in Kuala Lumpur. By January 14th nine churches, a convent and a Sikh temple across the country had been hit. The prime minister, Najib Razak, condemned the attacks, offered compensation, and stepped up security around churches. Prominent Muslims spoke out against the violence. In fact, many Muslims were unperturbed by the High Court ruling. The Islamic Party of Malaysia, or PAS, part of the

main opposition coalition, argues that people of the "Abrahamic" faiths may indeed use the word "Allah".

Some analysts saw the attacks as evidence less of a broader lurch towards extremism than of the fragility of Mr Najib's own standing. Since an election in March 2008, when the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition suffered its worst-ever performance, competing groups have been jostling for influence. His United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the main party in the coalition, is keen to be seen as the defender of Malay-Muslim identity. Opposition parties are meanwhile arraying themselves as beacons of moderation.

They accuse Mr Najib of pandering to UMNO's far right. Last year the government dithered before prosecuting a group of Muslims who had offended Hindus by using a cow's severed head to demonstrate against the building of a temple. And on January 7th Mr Najib said the government could do nothing to stop the planned demonstrations—though the government has had few qualms about squelching past protests. The extremists may have taken Mr Najib's demurral as a green light.

That would not have been his intention. Burning churches, and the perceived danger of worsening violence, will unnerve foreign investors and tourists. They make Malaysia look far from the tolerant, prosperous country that most of its citizens think they belong to. ■



A scene of worship and crime

Banyan | Mad, bad and dangerous to know

Monetary folly is the latest affliction visited on North Korea's people by the world's worst government



JUST over a month ago North Korea announced a currency reform. All notes and coins in circulation were replaced by a new currency that lopped a couple of zeros from the old North Korean won. New currencies for old, as Ghana and others have shown, can send a strong signal from governments breaking with an inflationary past and putting sound money back into citizens' pockets. In North Korea things are different. As Nicholas Eberstadt, a scholar of the country, puts it, the state has "a deep philosophical problem" with money in anyone's pockets but its own.

Yes, the move was intended to tame inflation. But it was mainly a step towards North Korea's aim, laid down by Kim Jong Il, the Dear Leader, of becoming a "strong and prosperous nation" by 2012. This fragrant date is the centenary of the birth of Kim Il Sung, divine father of the North Korean people and late biological one of the current dictator. The Great Leader and perpetual president, who died in body in 1994, ruled over a fabled era for North Korea, in which money was of no consequence: the state furnished his children with everything. In demonetising an economy, only Pol Pot attained greater purity.

But the collapse of the Soviet Union did for the command economy. A famine in the mid-1990s killed 600,000-1m of North Korea's 22m inhabitants. Informal markets, clandestine at first, sprang up as "coping mechanisms". Very soon, as North Koreans themselves joked, anything was for sale, bar "cat's horns". Economic "reforms" announced in 2002 were a belated recognition of the role of markets—and of money.

But Mr Kim's men have since attempted to squeeze the genie back in the bottle. From 2008, efforts accelerated to revive the public distribution system and clamp down on markets. First, women under 40, the main cohort of traders, were banned from markets, which have since been closed. Travel restrictions, especially near the Chinese border, were reimposed. "Antisocialist Conscience Investigation" teams fanned out. With market activity criminalised, punishments got harsher. In low-level "labour training-centres", where most economic "criminals" are housed, 60% of inmates have seen executions and 90% witnessed forced starvation, refugees tell surveys by Stephan Haggard and Marcus Noland for the Peterson Institute for International Economics.

The currency reform was an effort by Mr Kim to bring his

chicks back under his wing, as if a fabled era is to return. It entailed the destruction of what counted in North Korea for private wealth. A 100,000 old-won limit was placed on what households could convert from old to new, equivalent to one or two years' state wages. But households' meagre state incomes were boosted by market activities. At the prevailing black-market rate, the sum represented just \$30, barely enough to buy a 50kg sack of rice. It is not just traders, petty or great, who need cash for inventories. Households riding out the vagaries of harvests and the public-distribution system need plenty too. And so a remarkable thing happened in this repressive state. The public angrily protested, putting the state's resolve in doubt. It announced a flurry of revisions to soften the impact. In a new-year fanfare of achievements by the state media, no mention was made of the reform.

As for inflation, if it was a problem before—the old won's black-market rate against the dollar had fallen by 95% since 2002—it is much more so now. Thanks to the crackdown on private markets and uncertainties about the currency measures, the black-market exchange rate has apparently tumbled by half. Meanwhile, Good Friends, a South Korean NGO, reports nominal prices for rice higher than before the conversion (implying a 100-fold increase) and still "soaring by the hour".

Punishing state enemies in the private sector is part of it. So is rewarding friends. State salaries, including for soldiers, have been increased by up to 100 times—in new-currency terms. This has brought workers back to their state units. But those units have few inputs or end-buyers, and many factories have anyway long been stripped by managers of machinery, copper wire or anything of value. Last month an edict banned the rapid dollarisation of the economy that is taking place. Yet brutally enforcing it will anger not just market traders with dollars and Chinese yuan, but also the mafia elites at the heart of the regime.

With a nuclear North Korea now on the cusp of hyperinflation, a question is how this will affect relations with China and the West. Many predict a more belligerent tone. But the opposite seems as likely, at least for the time being. The regime is desperate for money and aid, which explains its milder rhetoric towards both South Korea and the United States. As for China, Mr Kim, who is scared of flying, is rumoured to be poised to board his armoured train for Beijing. His chief benefactor will probably give just enough aid to keep him afloat, while demanding concessions. China seems to be behind the revival of plans for a port near the Russian border with access to the Sea of Japan.

The wrong Un

What the currency fiasco means for the regime's standing is still harder to gauge. A succession process is in train, with Mr Kim attempting to anoint his third son, Kim Jong Un, as heir. On his recent birthday, the official media report, the "morning star" Venus shed an unusually bright light above Mount Paektu, on whose sacred slopes the Dear Leader himself was born, a miracle that took place in a log cabin depicted on the new banknotes.

Nothing is known about the 27- or 28-year-old, except that at his Swiss school he was a bossy brat on the basketball court. Now Western spooks claim he is behind the currency reform. For those hoping that a third-generation Kim will be unable to keep this regime from crumbling, that is great news. Should he cling to power, however, such incompetence is more cause for despair. ■



Democracy's decline

Crying for freedom

BUDAPEST AND KABUL

A disturbing decline in global liberty prompts some hard thinking about what is needed for democracy to prevail

MORE than at any time since the cold war, liberal democracy needs defending. That warning was issued recently by Arch Puddington, a veteran American campaigner for civil and political rights around the world.

This week the reasons for his concern became clearer. Freedom House, a lobby group based in Washington, DC (where Mr Puddington is research director), found in its latest annual assessment that liberty and human rights had retreated globally for the fourth consecutive year. It said this marked the longest period of decline in freedom since the organisation began its reports nearly 40 years ago.

Freedom House classifies countries as "free", "partly free" or "not free" by a range of indicators that reflect its belief that political liberty and human rights are interlinked. As well as the fairness of their electoral systems, countries are assessed for things like the integrity of judges and the independence of trade unions. Among the latest findings are that authoritarian regimes are not just more numerous; they are more confident and influential.

In its report entitled "Freedom in the World 2010: Global Erosion of Freedom", the American lobby group found that declines in liberty occurred last year in 40 countries (in Africa, Latin America, the

Middle East and the ex-Soviet Union) while gains were recorded in 16. The number of electoral democracies went down by three, to 116, with Honduras, Madagascar, Mozambique and Niger dropping off the list while the Maldives were reinstated. This leaves the total at its lowest since 1995, although it is still comfortably above the 1990 figure of 69.

Taken as a whole, the findings suggest a huge turn for the worse since the bubbly mood of 20 years ago, when the collapse of Soviet communism, plus the fall of apartheid, convinced people that liberal democracy had prevailed for good. To thinkers like America's Francis Fukuyama, this was the time when it became evident that political freedom, underpinned by economic freedom, marked the ultimate stage in human society's development: the "end of history", at least in a moral sense.

In the very early days after the Soviet collapse, Russia and some of its neighbours swarmed with Western advisers, disseminating not only the basics of market economics but also the mechanics of multi-party democracy. And for a short time, these pundits found willing listeners.

Today, the idea that politicians in ex-communist countries would take humble lessons from Western counterparts seems laughable. There is more evidence of au-

thoritarians swapping tips. In October, for example, the pro-Kremlin United Russia party held its latest closed-door meeting with the Chinese Communist party. Despite big contrasts between the two countries—not many people in Russia think there is a Chinese model they could easily apply—the Russians were interested by the Chinese "experience in building a political system dominated by one political party," according to one report of the meeting.

For freedom-watchers in the West, the worrying thing is that the cause of liberal democracy is not merely suffering political reverses, it is also in intellectual retreat. Semi-free countries, uncertain which direction to take, seem less convinced that the liberal path is the way of the future. And in the West, opinion-makers are quicker to acknowledge democracy's drawbacks—and the apparent fact that contested elections do more harm than good when other preconditions for a well-functioning system are absent. It is a sign of the times that a British reporter, Humphrey Hawksley, has written a book with the title: "Democracy Kills: What's So Good About the Vote?".

A more nuanced argument, against the promotion of electoral democracy at the expense of other goals, has been made by other observers. Paul Collier, an Oxford professor, has asserted that democracy in the absence of other desirables, like the rule of law, can hobble a country's progress. Mark Malloch-Brown, a former head of the UN Development Programme, is still a believer in democracy as a driver of economic advancement, but he thinks that in countries like Afghanistan, the West has focused too much on procedures—like multi-party elections—and is not open enough to ►►

► the idea that other kinds of consensus might exist. At the University of California, Randall Peerenboom defends the "East Asian model", according to which economic development naturally precedes democracy.

Whatever the eggheads may be saying, there are some obvious reasons why Western governments' zeal to promote democracy, and the willingness of other countries to listen, have ebbed. In many quarters (including Western ones), the assault on Saddam Hussein's Iraq, and its bloody aftermath, seemed to confirm people's suspicion that promoting democracy as an American foreign-policy aim was ill-conceived or plain cynical.

In Afghanistan, the other country where an American-led coalition has been waging war in democracy's name, the corruption and deviousness of the local political elite, and the flaws of last year's election, have been an embarrassment. In the Middle East, America's enthusiasm for promoting democracy took a dip after the Palestinian elections of 2006, which brought Hamas to office. The European Union's "soft power" on its eastern rim has waned as enlargement fatigue has grown.

But perhaps the biggest reason why democracy's magnetic power has waned is the rise of China—and the belief of its would-be imitators that they too can create a dynamic economy without easing their grip on political power. In the political rhetoric of many authoritarian governments, fascination with copying China's trick can clearly be discerned.

For example, Syria's ruling Baath party talks of a "socialist market economy" that will fuel growth while keeping stability. Communist Vietnam has emulated China's economic reforms, but it was one of the states scolded by Freedom House this year for curbing liberty. Iran has called in Chinese legal experts and economists. There are limits to how much an Islamic republic and a communist state can have in

common, but they seem to agree on what to avoid: Western-style freedom.

Even Cuba, while clinging to Marxist ideas, has shown an interest in China's economic reforms. And from the viewpoint of many poor countries, especially in Africa, co-operating with China—both economically and politically—has many advantages: not least the fact that China refrains from delivering lectures on political and human freedom. The global economic downturn—and China's ability to survive it—has clearly added to that country's appeal. The power of China (and a consequent lessening of official concern over human rights) is palpable in Central Asia. But as dissidents in the region note, it is not just Chinese influence that makes life hard for them; it is also the dithering of Western governments which often temper their moral concerns with commercial ones.

The argument for open argument

Given that democracy is unlikely to advance, these days, through the military or economic preponderance of the West, its best hope lies in winning a genuinely open debate. In other words, wavering countries, and sceptical societies, must be convinced that political freedom works best.

So how does the case in defence of democracy stand up these days? As many a philosopher has noted, the strongest points to be made in favour of a free political contest are negative. Democracy may not yield perfect policies, but it ought to guard against all manner of ills, ranging from outright tyranny (towards which a "mild" authoritarian can always slide) to larceny at the public expense.

Transparency International, a corruption watchdog, says that all but two of the 30 least corrupt countries in the world are democracies (the exceptions are Singapore and Hong Kong, and they are considered semi-democratic). Autocracies tend to occupy much higher rankings on the corruption scale (China is somewhere in the mid-

dle) and it is easy to see why. Entrenched political elites, untroubled by free and fair elections, can get away more easily with stuffing their pockets. And strongmen often try to maintain their hold on power by relying on public funds to reward their supporters and to buy off their enemies, leading to a huge misallocation of resources.

Yet it is easy to find corrupt democracies—indeed, in a ramshackle place like Afghanistan elections sometimes seem to make things worse. Or take the biggest of the ex-Soviet republics. Russia is authoritarian and has a massive problem with corruption; Ukraine is more democratic—the forthcoming elections are a genuine contest for power, with uncertain results—but it too has quite a big corruption problem. Ukraine has no "Kremlin", wielding authority over all-comers, but that does not make it clean or well-governed.

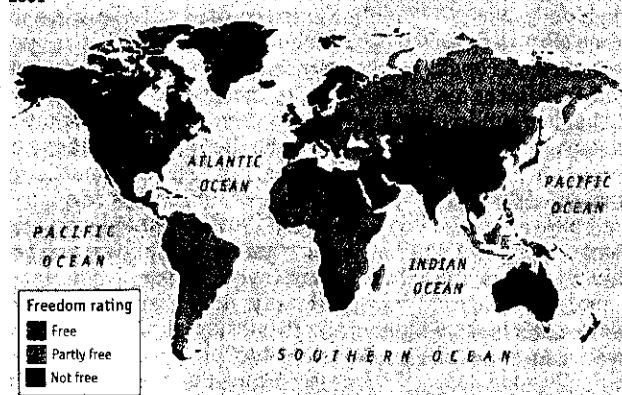
What about the argument that economic development, at least in its early stages, is best pursued under a benign despot? Lee Kuan Yew, an ex-prime minister of Singapore, once asserted that democracy leads to "disorderly conduct", disrupting material progress. But there is no evidence that autocracies, on average, grow faster than democracies. For every economically successful East Asian (former) autocracy like Taiwan or South Korea, there is an Egypt or a Cameroon (or indeed a North Korea or a Myanmar) which is both harsh and sluggish.

The link between political systems and growth is hard to establish. Yet there is some evidence that, on average, democracies do better. A study by Morton Halperin, Joseph Siegle and Michael Weinstein for the Council of Foreign Relations (CFR), using World Bank data between 1960 and 2001, found that the average annual economic growth rate was 2.3% for democracies and 1.6% for autocracies. Other studies, though, are less clear.

Believers in democracy as an engine of ►►

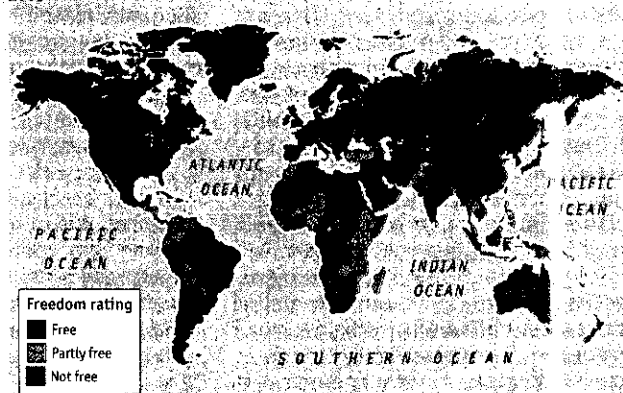
Freedom's fate

2001



Source: Freedom House

2009



progress often make the point that a climate of freedom is most needed in a knowledge-based economy, where independent thinking and innovation are vital. It is surely no accident that every economy in the top 25 of the Global Innovation Index is a democracy, except semi-democratic Singapore and Hong Kong.

China, which comes 27th in this table, is often cited as a vast exception to this rule. Chinese brainpower has made big strides in fields like computing, green technology and space flight. The determination of China's authorities to impose their own terms on the information revolution was highlighted this week when Google, the search engine, said it might pull out of China after a cyber-attack that targeted human-rights activists. Since entering the Chinese market in 2006, Google had agreed to the censorship of some search results, at the authorities' insistence.

Admirers of China's iron hand may conclude that it can manage well without the likes of Google, which was being trounced in the local market by Baidu, a Chinese rival. But in the medium term, the mentality that insists on hobbling search engines will surely act as a break on creative endeavour. And no country should imagine that by becoming as autocratic as China, it will automatically become as dynamic as China is.

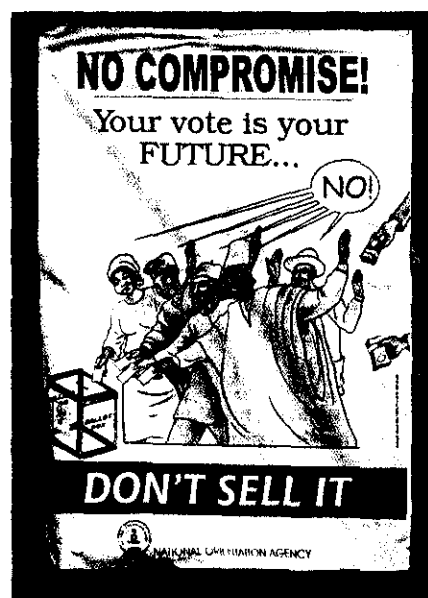
What about the argument that autocracy creates a modicum of stability without which growth is impossible? In fact, it is not evident that authoritarian countries are more stable than democracies. Quite the contrary. Although democratic politicians spend a lot of time vacillating, arguing and being loud and disagreeable, this can reinforce stability in the medium term; it allows the interests and viewpoints of more people to be heard before action is taken. On the State Fragility Index, which is produced annually by George Mason University and studies variables such as "political effectiveness" and security, democracies tend to do much better than autocracies. Tito's Yugoslavia was stable, as was Saddam Hussein's Iraq—but once the straitjacket that held their systems together came off, the result was a release of pent-up pressure, and a golden opportunity for demagogues bent on mayhem.

At the very least, a culture of compromise—coupled with greater accountability and limits on state power—means that democracies are better able to avoid catastrophic mistakes, or criminal cruelty. Bloody nightmares that cost tens of millions of lives, like China's Great Leap Forward or the Soviet Union's forced collectivisation programme, were made possible by the concentration of power in a small group of people who faced no restraint.

Liberal democratic governments can make all manner of blunders, but they are less likely to commit mass murder. Amar-

tya Sen, a Nobel prize-winning economist, has famously argued that no country with a free press and fair elections has ever had a large famine. And research by those three CFR scholars found that poor autocracies were at least twice as likely as democracies to suffer an economic disaster (defined as a decline of 10% or more in GDP in a year). With no noisy legislatures or robust courts to hold things up, autocracies may be faster and bolder. They are also more accident-prone.

For all its frustrations, open and accountable government tends in the long run to produce better policies. This is because no group of mandarins, no matter how enlightened or well-meaning, can claim to be sure what is best for a complex society. Autocracies tend to be too heavy at the top: although decisions may be more



Worth fighting for?

easily taken, the ethos of autocracies—their secrecy and paranoia—makes it harder for alternative views to emerge. Above all, elections make the transfer of power legitimate and smooth. Tyrannies may look stable under one strongman; but they can slide into instability, even bloody chaos, if a transition goes awry. Free elections also mean that policy mistakes, even bad ones, are more quickly corrected. Fresh ideas can be brought in and politicians thrown out before they grow too arrogant.

But if something has been learnt from the recent backlash against democratic enthusiasm, it is that ballot boxes alone are nothing like enough. Unless solid laws protect individual and minority rights, and government power is limited by clear checks, such as tough courts, an electoral contest can simply lead to a "tyranny of the majority", as Alexis de Tocqueville, a French philosopher, called it. That point has particular force in countries where

some variety of political Islam seems likely to prevail in any open contest. In such places, minorities include dissident Muslims who often prefer to remain under the relative safety offered by a despot.

Another caveat is that democracy has never endured in countries with mainly non-market economies. The existence of an overweening state machine that meddles in everything can tempt leaders to use it against their political foes. Total control of the economy also sucks the air away from what Istvan Bibó, a Hungarian political thinker, called "the little circles of freedom"—the free associations and independent power centres that a free economy allows. Free-market economies help create a middle class that is less susceptible to state pressure and political patronage.

Perhaps most important, democracy needs leaders with an inclination and ability to compromise: what Walter Bagehot, a 19th-century editor of *The Economist*, called a "disposition rather to give up something than to take the uttermost farthing". Without a propensity for tolerating and managing differences, rival groups can easily reduce democracy to a ruthless struggle for power that ultimately wears down liberal institutions.

Democracy, this suggests, is more likely to succeed in countries with a shared feeling of belonging together, without strong cultural or ethnic fissures that can easily turn political conflict into the armed sort. Better positioned are "people so fundamentally at one that they can safely afford to bicker," as Lord Balfour, a 19th-century British politician, said. Such was not the case in Yugoslavia in the 1990s or in Lebanon in the 1970s.

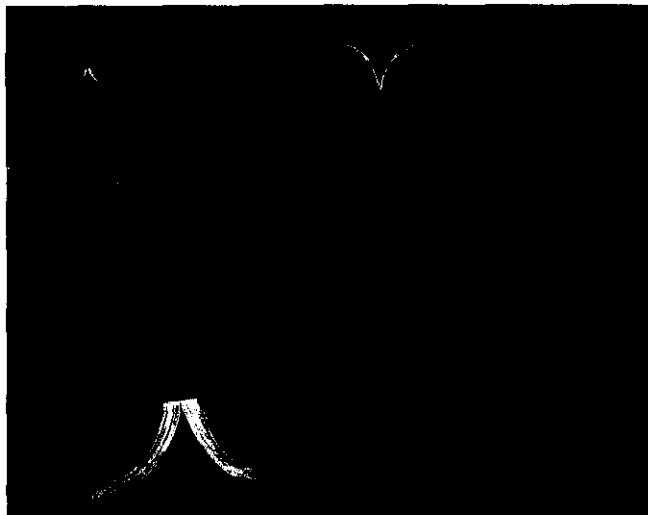
Even where all the right conditions are in place, democracy will not prevail unless its proponents show success at governing. No constitution can, in itself, guarantee good governance. The success of any political system ultimately depends on whether it can provide basic things like security, wealth and justice. And in countries where experiments in democracy are in full swing, daily reality is more complex than either zealous democracy-promoters or authoritarian sceptics will allow.

In Kabul a 26-year-old handyman called Jamshed speaks for many compatriots when he lists the pros and cons of the new Western-imposed order. Compared with life under the Taliban, he appreciates the new "freedom to listen to music, to go out with your wife, to study or do whatever you want." But he cannot help remembering that "under the Taliban, you could leave your shop to pray and nobody would steal anything...now the government is corrupt, they take all your money."

Jamshed has never read John Stuart Mill or Ayn Rand. But whether he is ruled by theocrats or Western-backed election winners, he knows what he doesn't like. ■

Banyan | The books of slaughter and forgetting

Why Indonesia's book bans should not be shrugged off



THE past, even in Indonesia, is a foreign country: they did things differently there. The downfall in 1998 of the 32-year Suharto "New Order" regime seemed to mark the border as clearly as would a checkpoint and a queue for immigration. This side of the boundary, Indonesia enjoys liberties, a raucous free-for-all of competing ideas and the luxury of democratic choice. On the other side lurked repression, rigged elections, stifled opinions and a long list of banned books. So it is odd and not a little disturbing, in this last respect, to find the freely elected government of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono not doing things differently at all. In December the attorney-general's office banned five books. The government is looking at proscribing a further 20, which might, it frets, prove a threat to "national unity".

If this is continuity, it is also an attempt to disguise it. Most of the books in question are histories; guidebooks to parts of that foreign country which the government still wants to keep out of bounds. One tackles the mysterious atrocities that still haunt Indonesia: the massacre of hundreds of thousands of alleged communists and others as Suharto consolidated his power in 1965-66. Few horrors have been so unexamined. In Cambodia a flawed judicial process is at last asking questions about the Khmer Rouge terror from 1975-78. Even in China the show-trial of the Gang of Four served to hold a few responsible for the crimes of the many in the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). But in the villages of Java and Bali people still live side-by-side with their parents' murderers or their families. And the torrent of bloodshed in which they were bereaved has never been officially acknowledged, let alone subjected to a truth-and-reconciliation commission.

Back in 1998 the late Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Indonesia's greatest novelist, a prison-camp veteran who was by then a deaf and cantankerous but still eloquent old man, enjoyed a moment of untypical optimism. At last, he believed, the truth about 1965 would come out. He dismissed the usual guess of up to 500,000 deaths, claiming there had been 2m. Now that Suharto had gone, there was no reason the truth had to lie buried with the many dead. Today Pramoedya's books, at least, are unbanned. But had he lived, he would be raging against the incompleteness of *reformasi* ("reformation") and the resilience of censorship.

Nor is 1965 the only forbidden territory. Also banned (censors

do not do irony) is a book called "Lekra Doesn't Burn Books", a reference to a leftist cultural institute, very influential in the early 1960s, to which Pramoedya belonged and which was later demonised by the Suharto regime. Another banned volume covers Indonesia's controversial annexation of Papua in 1969.

An Australian film has also been banned. "Balibo" presents the story of the deaths of five Australian journalists during the 1975 invasion of East Timor. The film is flawed as a work of history. José Ramos-Horta, president of what is now Timor-Leste, jokingly grumbled to the director that the actor playing him as a young firebrand was not handsome enough. He can have had few other complaints about his portrayal. But its basic plot is the one Australia's courts have decided is true: that the five were murdered by Indonesian soldiers.

Few Indonesians have much time for Australian efforts to dig up this bit of their country's past. And some argue that the fuss the usual civil-libertarian suspects have made over the book bans misses the point. Far from sliding back to the authoritarian ways of the past, Indonesia now has arguably the freest and most vibrant press in South-East Asia. "Law number 4", passed in 1963 to sanction fierce censorship, was lifted for the press in 1999.

So, though books, pamphlets and posters remain under the censor's thumb, newspapers and magazines have proliferated. They report the latest political intrigues involving Mr Yudhoyono with little restraint. The attorney-general's office is reportedly also mulling a ban on a book claiming campaign-finance violations by the president last year. But as soon as this became known hawkers started flogging pirated versions across Jakarta. Indonesia has more than 30m Indonesian internet-users, with access to every fact, theory and guess about their country's recent past. The censors' argument—the one used by their peers everywhere—is that the banned works might divide the nation and lead to bloodshed. That does not hold water, for censorship no longer works.

By the same token, it does not seem to matter overmuch that censors try to keep a couple of fingers in the information dyke. The attempt to suppress recent history, however, does have two serious consequences. One is that the same mistakes keep being made: not because they are forgotten, but because there is little public exploration of other options. So the blunders Indonesia's occupying soldiers made in East Timor—the dependence on torture, the co-option of unreliable local thugs, the closing-off of the region and refusal to discuss it with foreign countries—have been repeated elsewhere, in Aceh and now Papua.

SBY's new New Order?

Second, and more fundamentally, the book bans hint at the identity crisis suffered by the Indonesian political elite. The Yudhoyono regime is rightly proud of its other democratic and liberal credentials. But it is not willing to declare a complete break with the past. The president himself is a New Order general who served in East Timor. Both the main opposing presidential tickets in last year's election featured another Suharto-era general (each with a murkier reputation). It is easy to understand why they are unwilling to confront the past. But until they have—and have repudiated parts of it—Indonesia's democratic transformation will always seem provisional, and the past not so much a foreign country as the place where its leaders still live. ■

Charlemagne | Europe and an inscrutable China

The European Union gets more realistic about China—and China gets more realistic about the EU



ONCE upon a time, or about two years ago, the European Union was full of optimism about China, and how it was becoming a “responsible stakeholder” in the world. Reports poured out of think-tanks with titles like “Can Europe and China shape the new world order?” Europe had a good chance of persuading China that its interests lay in co-operation over climate change, Africa or nuclear proliferation, it was said. And Europe was better placed than America: European co-operation was a model and, unlike America, Europe was not a strategic rival.

Head into ancient history, or to 2004, and such leaders as France’s Jacques Chirac were telling Chinese leaders they shared a “common vision of the world”, based on a “multipolar” system in which “international balance” would be achieved by closer ties between Europe, China and Russia. In case that jab in America’s eye was not clear enough, France and Germany led calls for the lifting of an EU arms embargo imposed on China after the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989. (European discussions on lifting the embargo were shelved in 2005, under heavy American pressure.) This was also the age of books with titles like “Why Europe will Run the 21st Century”. Europe was bullish about its exemplary wealth, social harmony, and “post-national” kindness, and how such values would soon span the globe.

The mood is different now. Inside China, America and Europe several bubbles of optimism have burst at the same time. Charles Grant of the Centre for European Reform, a London based think-tank, says he and others who felt China was about to embrace multilateralism were guilty of “wishful thinking”. A closed-door gathering of Chinese, American and European officials and analysts, known as the Stockholm China Forum, this week heard how China has been unhelpful over climate change, Iran’s nuclear programme (China is counselling patience, not sanctions), its currency (kept artificially cheap despite American and EU protests) and its cyber-attacks on Western corporate and public computer networks. Such attacks, many coming from China, have reached damaging levels of intensity, and are now “high on the radar” of leaders, it was reported.

In 2009 China jailed more dissidents, sacked reformist editors and executed a British citizen for drug smuggling, brushing aside British government appeals that he was mentally ill. China has

bullied Barack Obama over arms sales to Taiwan and meeting the Dalai Lama. In private meetings with European envoys, Chinese officials have unveiled a hubristic new argument for lifting the arms embargo: unless it goes, in years from now Europe “will not be able to buy its arms from China”.

In Brussels it is hard to overestimate the shock caused by the EU’s failure to achieve its goals at December’s climate-change summit in Copenhagen. In the EU hard problems are fixed like this: call a summit of leaders, set out public goals for action, declare a final deadline and then thrash out a compromise behind closed doors. Deals are done with a judicious blend of appeals to principle, arm-twisting and redistribution towards less wealthy nations. That model failed utterly in Copenhagen.

True, everyone has a different story about Copenhagen. Europeans are cross with America, India and others in a “low-ambition coalition”. But their strongest words are reserved for China, accused of a refusal to accept anything touching on its sovereignty and of secretly inciting small, poor allies to obstruct a deal. American officials say the summit came too soon. They complain that the Europeans thought they could bounce Mr Obama into binding emissions caps that Congress was not willing to approve. Senior Chinese analysts say that European threats of border tariffs on Chinese goods fuelled a sense that the rich world was out to “get China” and tax its growth.

American and European officials at least agree that Copenhagen was a disappointment. China’s government hailed the outcome as excellent. That does not sound like a responsible stakeholder talking. China was amazingly rude at Copenhagen, sending a deputy minister to shout at with Mr Obama, for instance. Such assertiveness punctures happy Euro-dreams of a multipolar world. It turns out that the only thing that alarms Europeans more than a swaggering American president is one who seems weak. And Copenhagen popped yet another bubble—the idea that leading by example can be used to coerce others. Europe’s strategy was to press others to match its own concessions on carbon emissions. But the EU barely existed at the talks.

E pluribus disunity?

American and Chinese illusions about European unity are also popping like soapsuds in the sun. The Lisbon treaty came into force in December. EU leaders appointed underwhelming figures to fill the top posts it created, and are now squabbling about how the new structures will work. Although it is early days, officials in Beijing and Washington now suspect that this is about as united as Europe is going to get.

Where now? The good news is that European and American views of China are converging. Arguments about engagement or containment now sound quaint, and fantasies involving China as Europe’s ally against American hegemony sound worse. China looks like a giant that has every right to rise, yet rejects many values that Europe and America share.

The bad news is that clashes with China loom over trade barriers and currency manipulation. Some in Europe and America are converging in the direction of protectionism. The coming year will pose some severe tests. It is in everyone’s interests to avoid a trade war. And European and American policymakers seem to understand what they share, and what China wants from the world, more clearly than before. But that is only a start. ■

► Without votes, however, they can do little to sway the outcome.

They were not always so powerless. Until May, when the war was won and lost, the Tamil diaspora, which accounts for one-quarter of Sri Lankan Tamils and has large populations in Canada, Britain, America and Australia, exerted huge power back home. By financing the rebels—to the tune of \$300m a year by some estimates—overseas Tamils sustained a well-armed guerrilla force, which by the end had even a primitive air force able to bombard the main city, Colombo.

The Tigers' overseas network flourished after many Tamils fled their homeland in the 1980s. It controlled many aspects of diaspora life, including schools and temples. In Tamil-populated areas such as Harrow, the Tigers' defeat is sharply felt. Stories abound of humble shopkeepers made millionaires as the Tigers were wiped out before collecting their loot. But most lost out. "Everyone gave money to the Liberation Tigers," says a 30-year-old waiter in Sambar, a Sri Lankan café in Harrow. "And we lost everything."

Some Tiger supporters have tried to reignite the campaign for a Tamil "Eelam", or homeland. The Global Tamil Forum, one of several new outfits, says it is planning elections for a "transnational government" in April. Around the world, referendums are being organised on the Vaddukkoaddai Resolution, a document adopted in 1976 by a group called the Tamil United Liberation Front, declaring the Tamils' right to statehood.

The Tigers' former following, however, is now rudderless, allowing dissenters to speak up. Brutal towards the very Tamils they claimed to represent at home, the Tigers also put heavy pressure on exiles, threatening to harm their relatives. Raghuvaran, a founder of the Tigers in 1974, who left them a decade later and now lives in London, says their defeat is allowing more moderate views an airing on diaspora radio stations and websites.

His greater hope is that a moderate Tamil voice, without the Tigers to silence it, will now be heard in Sri Lanka itself. Overseas, the diaspora will keep up the calls for investigations into alleged war crimes, and press for a political settlement to ensure lasting peace. But there are fears Tiger activists overseas may seek to undermine Tamil politicians who press for devolution rather than a separate Tamil state. They might, for example, finance rival political parties. The government has always argued that support for the Tigers among the diaspora was almost entirely a result of extortion. Not so, for they have one other selling-point that survives the evisceration of their coercive powers: the government's refusal to make real progress towards reconciliation with its Tamil minority at home. The election may not change that. ■



Political scandals in Japan

Out of the shadows

TOKYO

The DPJ may pay a high price for standing behind its fixer-in-chief

ICHIRO OZAWA (above), who is caught up in a messy funding scandal, is one of those kingmakers of Japanese politics people love to psychoanalyse. He is considered fair game for all manner of theories about his mood swings, his loneliness and his craftiness. Colleagues describe him as an unobtrusive man; enemies find him cold and hard as a hatchet.

His politics are as mysterious as his mind. Bag-carrier to two brazenly corrupt bosses of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in the 1970s and 1980s, he quit the party in 1993. Leading the rival Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), he eventually succeeded in driving the LDP from power last September. He did so using the dark arts of political patronage and cronyism so closely associated with the LDP. As they all too seldom were under the former regime, such practices are now in the dock.

The heat on Mr Ozawa rose sharply on January 15th and 16th with the arrest of his two former secretaries and a current one, on suspicion of violating a law on political fund-raising. The arrests were part of an investigation by the Tokyo prosecutor's office into the source of the funds for a ¥352m (\$3.8m) land-purchase in the city in 2004 by Mr Ozawa's investment arm.

Mr Ozawa's enemies in the justice system may have an axe to grind. The loyalty of the judiciary, like that of most civil servants, has for decades been to an establishment closely allied to the LDP. The prosecutors, meanwhile, have leaked furiously to the media, which, say Mr Ozawa's defenders, hints at an establishment conspiracy. Many in the party, including Yukio Hatoyama, the prime minister, have backed Mr Ozawa, who says the money for the land purchase came from his own family's bank accounts.

Mr Ozawa's decision to clear his name while clinging to his exalted position in the DPJ has already started to spatter the party with mud. It has not helped that Mr Hatoyama has also been involved in a political fund-raising scandal, for which one of his aides has been indicted. Opinion polls show public support for the government falling precipitously. This bodes ill for the DPJ's efforts to secure approval of an ¥7.2 trillion supplementary budget for the fiscal year ending in March, and for next year's budget. Both are exercises intended to keep Japan's precariously sluggish economy from sliding back into recession.

More worrying, analysts say, it may undermine the DPJ's chances of winning a full majority in upper-house elections in July. That could mean a continuation of the scrappy coalition that has undermined Mr Hatoyama's first months in office—or worse, political gridlock.

With polls indicating that most Japanese favour his resignation, Mr Ozawa has changed tack and agreed to be questioned by prosecutors. But the ruling party's position is tricky. Some believe Mr Ozawa is the glue that binds it together; he has huge support among first-time lawmakers who consider him a genius at winning elections. But others fear he may now be an electoral liability. For the DPJ, it may well be best if he resigns, not least because since last year's elections, voters will have developed a taste for kicking out those who let them down. If not, and the party shrinks from kicking him out, the crowning paradox of his life may be damaging the party he so badly wants to succeed. ■

China's assertiveness at sea

Choppy waters

BEIJING

East and south, China makes a splash

"SEA of peace" is the title China has bestowed on its adjacent oceans. But sovereignty disputes between China and its neighbours still roil the waters. In recent weeks, Japan and Vietnam have complained about what they allege to be Chinese encroachments. Attaching blame is difficult. But at a time of a growing perception in the West that China is flexing its muscles (see *Charlemagne*, page 52), countries closer to China's shores also worry that it might be getting more assertive. Their squabbles are often aggravated by rivalry over undersea oil and gas.

Less than two years ago, Japan and China reached an accord on their rival claims in the East China Sea that made it seem as if a long-running war of words might at ►►



Protest in Hong Kong

On track for confrontation

HONG KONG

China for once does Hong Kong's democrats a favour

DEPENDING on your perspective, it was either a pointless bit of argy-bargy outside a milquetoast legislative council—or a soul-stirring “siege of Legco”. Thousands of Hong Kongers, young and old, came together on January 16th to make some noise about spending on public infrastructure. Their protests were in vain, but the noise was heard.

Despite them, Legco approved funding for a high-speed rail-link with Shenzhen and Guangzhou, over the border in China proper. On January 18th Donald Tsang, the region's chief executive, condemned the protesters, warning them to reflect, lest they “suffocate peaceful and rational expression of opinion.”

Protesters organised by means of texting, Twitter and Facebook. On January 1st thousands of the same “post-80s” generation had marched in support of universal suffrage. This challenges both Mr Tsang, who was chosen by an appointed election committee, and Legco

itself. Half of its 60 members are directly elected. The rest, including most of the 31 who backed the rail-link, are chosen by “functional constituencies”—unelected proxies for business and political interests, usually on China's side.

It was this undemocratic set-up, rather than the improved connection to the mainland's railways, that had stoked anger. The protesters see the oft-repeated promise of representative democracy receding into the future. Hong Kong's government and officials in Beijing have reason to feel jumpy. In parallel to the rail-link fracas, some of Hong Kong's democrats have been devising a new form of protest. Frustrated by the delays in implementing democratic reform, two political parties have declared that on January 27th they will quit five seats in Legco, one for each of the territory's voting districts. The quitters plan to contest the same seats in by-elections. Their parties hope to turn these into a de facto referendum on democracy.

This will not be easy. The Democratic Party, the largest of the “pan-democratic” parties, has spurned the campaign. It found many voters disapproved of the idea, or did not understand it. A poll finds that 50% of voters oppose the by-election plan, and 24% support it. Kenneth Chan, who speaks for the campaign, concedes it will be hard work to cast the by-elections as a contest pitting democracy against business-as-usual. China's government, however, is doing its bit to help. This week the State Council, or cabinet, accused the democrats of mounting a “blatant challenge” to the authority of the central government. This made the by-elections look like a real referendum rather than yet another futile protest.

Still, the democrats' manoeuvre is a dangerous gamble. They hold only 23 of Legco's 60 seats at present, so they risk falling below the one-third of seats that allows them to block constitutional reforms. But then, Mr Chan notes, what has this veto done for them lately?



A great night out at Legco

December, to Vietnam's outrage, China included the Paracels in its plans for promoting tourism in its island-province of Hainan. The Paracels boast fine beaches, but are wholly peopled by that uninviting body, the People's Liberation Army.

Worries in the region about China's ambitions have grown since tense encounters in the South China Sea early last year between Chinese vessels and American

surveillance ships. In testimony to Congress on January 13th the American armed forces' Pacific commander, Admiral Robert Willard, said the Chinese navy had increased its patrols in the South China Sea and had “shown an increased willingness to confront regional nations on the high seas and within the contested island chains.” China bristles at any suggestion that it can be a prickly neighbour. ■

last be at an end. Now the two countries are at it again. Japan's press reported that the foreign minister, Katsuya Okada, on January 17th warned his visiting Chinese counterpart, Yang Jiechi, that Japan might take “measures” should China go ahead unilaterally with development of the Chunxiao gasfield (Shirakaba in Japanese).

Chunxiao lies just to the Chinese side of what Japan claims as the line, halfway between the two countries, dividing their exclusive economic zones in the East China Sea. Japan's fear is that gas extraction in Chunxiao could siphon off gas from Japan's side of the field. The agreement reached in June 2008 was supposed to allow joint exploitation of the field. But last year Japan noticed activity suggesting that China was moving in drilling equipment and preparing to go ahead on its own. China said it was just conducting maintenance. Japan had expected a detailed agreement on how it might take part to be reached soon after the 2008 accord. China has stonewalled. Only after heated debate did Mr Yang tell Mr Okada that he still “cherished” the pact.

On January 19th the Chinese foreign ministry, in language that recalled frostier times in bilateral relations, said a “proper” handling of the dispute was crucial to relations between China and Japan as well as to regional stability. For good measure, it also weighed in on a more arcane dispute about a tiny Japanese atoll in the Pacific, Okinotorishima. China suspects Japan of trying to build up what China dismisses as “merely a rock” into a proper island. This could reinforce Japanese claims to an exclusive economic zone stretching 200 nautical miles (370km) from the atoll, which happens to lie on a militarily important route between the American island of Guam and Taiwan. Such claims would gravely damage the interests of the international community, said a Chinese spokesman. (And perhaps, he omitted to say, complicate China's naval activities.)

China is doing some beefing up of its own in the Paracels, an archipelago in the South China Sea also claimed by Vietnam (and, half-heartedly, by Taiwan). In De-



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The resurgence of al-Qaeda

The bombs that stopped the happy talk

It was too soon to say that Osama bin Laden's followers were on the wane—but pessimism should not be overdone

ONLY a few months ago, intelligence experts were saying that al-Qaeda and its allies were in decline, both militarily and ideologically. But two bombs less than a week apart, one failed and the other successful, have put an end to such optimism.

The talk of al-Qaeda's downfall did not come from thin air. In the view of many analysts, the network's central leadership had been decimated through drone attacks in Pakistan's tribal belt; al-Qaeda's Saudi branch was all but defeated; its brethren in Iraq were marginalised; and those in other regions could mount only local attacks. Al-Qaeda had failed to land a blow in the West since the London bombs of 2005. Funds were dwindling, and more Muslims were eschewing global terror.

Though still dangerous, "al-Qaeda is under more pressure, is facing more challenges and is a more vulnerable organisation than at any time since the attacks on 11 September 2001," declared Mike Leiter, the director of America's National Counterterrorism Centre last September.

Such assessments are being hurriedly revised. Mr Leiter, Barack Obama's favourite spook, is now among those having to explain why his newish organisation, which is supposed to fuse all information on terrorist threats, failed to connect several partial warnings about Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab. The Nigerian student, who moved from London to Yemen last

year, tried to set off explosives sewn into his underpants on board a Northwest Airlines flight, carrying 290 people from Amsterdam, as it prepared to land in Detroit on Christmas Day.

Five days later, American intelligence suffered a more direct hit when Humam Khalil Abu Mulal al-Balawi, a Jordanian doctor of Palestinian origin who had been sent to Pakistan to infiltrate al-Qaeda's top leadership, blew himself up in a CIA base in Afghanistan. He killed seven Americans and a Jordanian intelligence officer in one of the biggest-ever losses for the CIA.

America's spy agencies are undergoing their biggest re-examination since the September 11th attacks. President Obama issued orders that people flying to America from 14 countries undergo more stringent security checks; full-body scanners are being rushed into service; the release of Yemenis from Guantánamo Bay has stopped.

Britain, which was hosting successive diplomatic conferences on Yemen and Afghanistan on January 27th and 28th, has raised its terrorist threat level back to "severe", having lowered it to "substantial" last July. It is instituting an American-style "no-fly" list, and has suspended flights to London by Yemen's national carrier.

Osama bin Laden himself, if one believes an audio message aired by the al-Jazeera network, has reappeared to hail the "hero" Mr Abdulmutallab. Speaking "from

Osama to Obama", the voice declared: "With God's will, our attacks on you will continue as long as you continue to support Israel." Mr Obama says the bid to claim credit for the failed attack was "an indication of how weakened he is."

Yet some of the direst worries about al-Qaeda have resurfaced. During a trip to South Asia, Robert Gates, the American defence secretary, said that al-Qaeda led "a syndicate of terrorist operators" seeking to destabilise the region, and even to provoke war between India and Pakistan.

Meanwhile a report by an ex-CIA officer, Rolf Mowatt-Larssen, written for the Belfer Centre at Harvard University, argues that al-Qaeda is still bent on hitting America with weapons of mass destruction; if it has passed up the chance to use a crude "dirty bomb" or simple toxins, it is only in the hope of obtaining a real nuclear device or an effective biological agent, he argues. The next day, a congressionally appointed commission said America was still woefully unprepared for a bioterror attack, and gave warning that "what is likely to occur within a very few years is an attack using weapons of mass destruction—probably a bioweapon—that will fundamentally change the character of life for the world's democracies."

What is al-Qaeda?

How far has the threat from al-Qaeda really grown? One problem in finding an answer is that "al-Qaeda" is nebulous: it is at once a secret organisation, a network of militant groups and a diffuse social revolt.

It includes a cluster of leaders around Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri, thought to be sheltering in Pakistan's wild frontier after being evicted from Afghanistan. "Core al-Qaeda" still tries to organise attacks on the West. But perhaps its bigger ►►

task is to provide ideological inspiration over the internet.

A number of "franchises" use the al-Qaeda name—notably in Iraq, Yemen and the Maghreb—but operate with a lot of autonomy. Al-Qaeda also has a network of allies that includes Afghan, Pakistani and Kashmiri extremists, Somalia's Shabaab movement, Chechen rebels, Indonesian militants and more. A still broader social movement may include self-radicalised groups of young Muslims living in the West. One fertile recruiting ground is among prison converts to Islam.

Something so amorphous is hard to defeat. Attacks can come from anywhere. Al-Qaeda operatives may be killed, but their ideas live on. Denunciation by former jihadists may hurt, but the movement draws on a deep well of anti-Western hate. If jihad in one theatre falters, as it has in Iraq, militants go elsewhere: for example, to Yemen or Somalia. The success of one group boosts all the others.

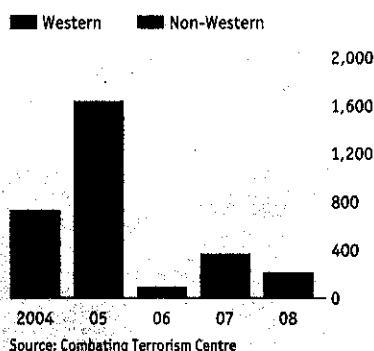
Perceptions are easily swayed by the ebb and flow of events. A successful attack raises alarm, a lull breeds complacency even though the thing that distinguishes the two may well have been luck. Mr Abdulmutallab's crotch-bomb failed to explode properly. Months earlier, a similar device went off but just missed killing a Saudi minister. The CIA's disaster might have been averted had Mr al-Balawi been searched before he got near its officers.

If the optimism of recent times was too glib, this year's fears may be overblown too. Big plots need time and space to prepare; the most ambitious involving, say, biological or nuclear material would probably involve large amounts of money and a stable base from which to research and test techniques. Hence the importance of havens in ungoverned areas. Al-Qaeda's current sanctuaries—whether in Pakistan's tribal frontier, remote corners of Yemen, in Somalia or the Sahara desert—are certainly a worry. But none comes close to matching the refuge that it once had in Afghanistan.

That said, even in the most rocketed part of Pakistan, "core" al-Qaeda leaders still had the ability to run a double-agent against the CIA and land a painful blow. Britain's domestic intelligence service,

A deadly calculus

Fatalities in al-Qaeda attacks, number



M15, says that three-quarters of the plots it faces have links to Pakistan.

An important bit of evidence comes from the "martyrdom" video of Mr al-Balawi. He was filmed next to the leader of the Pakistani Taliban, Hakimullah Mehsud, saying he wanted to avenge the death (in a drone attack) of the Pakistani Taliban leader, Baitullah Mehsud. It was probably recorded in North Waziristan, where Mr Mehsud is thought to be hiding after being ejected from his heartland farther south.

All this points to a greater melding of al-Qaeda, the Pakistani Taliban and militants more focused on Afghanistan, based in North Waziristan. "Al-Qaeda's leadership group may be shrinking. But the network overall is solidifying, and that may compensate for what al-Qaeda cannot deliver itself," says a Western intelligence source.

Another bit of the network that has been strengthened is the Yemen-based al-Qaeda faction that formally merged last year with remnants of the movement in Saudi Arabia. Its resurgence has been helped by two factors. First is the weakening of an already-fragile Yemeni state, owing to shrinking oil and water stocks, a Shia rebellion in the north and secessionism in the south. Second is the influx of experienced manpower into al-Qaeda, both from a large prison break-out in 2006 and from ex-inmates of Guantánamo Bay.

Mr Leiter's warning in September that Yemen might become a "potential regional base of operations" for al-Qaeda has come

true. A Senate report this month said dozens of Americans, many of them converts to Islam radicalised in jail, had gone to Yemen; several had "dropped off the radar". These include "blond-haired, blue-eyed types". The presence of the English-speaking preacher, Anwar al-Awlaki, has also been a draw for militants from the West. He was in touch with, among others, Nidal Hasan, the army psychiatrist who killed 13 people at a base in Texas. The tale of Mr Abdulmutallab, who had a multiple-entry visa to America, will feed the fear that al-Qaeda is trying to use militants with easy access to the West.

Another striking fact, say intelligence analysts, is the speed with which Mr Abdulmutallab evolved from hothead in London, who had "crossed the radar screen" of M15, to active jihadist after moving to Yemen in August. Past plots have taken a year or two to construct; the Detroit attack seems to have been conceived in a few months. A shorter "decision cycle", say intelligence types, means there is less time for plans to be detected. Moreover, quick plots may be less meticulous and ambitious. Mr Mowatt-Larssen may be wrong to suspect that al-Qaeda is playing a long game to stage a spectacular attack on America. In the view of some analysts, al-Qaeda seems content with smaller attacks, at least to judge from a spate of alleged plots in America (see box). "One theory as to why al-Qaeda have not attacked America is that they have been waiting for something that would outdo September 11th," says one intelligence analyst. "We have seen that is not true. They'd like to do anything significant against the homeland."

Another source of concern lies across the Gulf of Aden in Somalia, where some of al-Qaeda's fighters have helped boost the campaign by the Islamist Shabaab militia which rules much of the country. The Shabaab's links with al-Qaeda are ambiguous, and the group seems mostly concerned with its fight for a greater Somali caliphate. Yet many of those who plotted the 1998 attacks on America's embassies in east Africa operated out of Somalia.

America has fretted about the influx of Somali-Americans to join the ranks of the Shabaab. These include what is the first known American suicide-bomber, Shirwa Ahmed, from Minneapolis, who blew himself up in northern Somalia in 2008.

Meanwhile, the formation of an al-Qaeda branch in the Maghreb, based on veterans of Algeria's civil war, has not yet confirmed the worst fears of Europeans. It has bombed the UN in Algiers, kidnapped Westerners in the desert for ransom and skirmished with the authorities in Mauritania. For the time being, it does not seem to be getting many foreign recruits, or attempting to cross the Mediterranean.

The Maghrebi militants seem contained deep in the Sahara. One worry, ►►

Threats to the American homeland

Aug-06	UK police report foiling a plot to let off bombs on at least seven flights from Britain to North America
May-09	Three Americans and a Haitian arrested in New York over plots to hit synagogues and military aircraft
Jul-09	Daniel Boyd, an American convert to Islam, based in North Carolina, arrested over a terrorist plot. He and an accomplice are accused of conspiring to attack a Marine base in Quantico, Virginia
Sep-09	Najibullah Zazi, an Afghan-born resident of Colorado, arrested along with a New York-based imam by police investigating a plot to attack commuters in New York
Nov-09	Nidal Malik Hasan, an American army officer, shoots dead 13 people at Fort Hood, Texas
Dec-09	Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, a Nigerian, tries to blow up an American aircraft as it nears Detroit
Jan-10	US Senate says intelligence services are worried about several dozen Americans who have gone to Yemen. They include at least 30 ex-convicts who have converted to Islam

Source: The Economist

though, is that the virus of jihadism may spread southward into the rest of Africa, especially into northern Nigeria, where a group dubbed the "Black Taliban" has battled with Nigerian forces. Mr Abdulmutalab does not seem to have been radicalised in Nigeria, but his attack highlights the risk.

Send diplomats, not soldiers

Al-Qaeda likes to boast that its jihad caused America's financial crisis, citing the vast cost of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Stabilising those lands is vital to avoid giving jihadists a victory—but America should perhaps be wary of an overt military response to every al-Qaeda threat. Intervention may neutralise terrorist cells, but it can breed resentment and resistance.

"Our strategy and focus has been almost exclusively on killing and capturing terrorists," says Bruce Hoffman of Georgetown University. "We cannot fight this war as we have until now. We will be exhausted financially and in terms of manpower." Better, he says, to help local governments stop al-Qaeda from taking root and to try to curb radicalisation. Such ideas point to counter-terrorism assistance and more emphasis on the political dynamics of Arab and Muslim countries.

But aid and diplomacy will not solve everything. Local leaders may be too weak, disliked or disinclined to share the West's aims. In Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai has done little to curb corruption. For many Pakistanis, the bigger threat is India rather than militancy; indeed, Pakistan has for years used jihadists as a tool of its foreign policy. Similarly, Yemen's priorities are firstly to crush the Shia rebellion and secondly to stop secession in the south; President Ali Abdullah Saleh got help from veterans of Afghanistan's anti-Soviet jihad to win a civil war in the 1990s.

The London conferences on Yemen and Afghanistan have been grappling with these dilemmas. The one on Yemen started the process of unlocking \$5 billion of aid promised in 2006 in return for political reform and curbing corruption. The aim, said Britain, was to "prevent Yemen becoming a failed state." The task in Afghanistan is to reassemble a state that has already failed in the midst of a growing insurgency. The Afghan meeting is expected to announce the expansion of Afghan security forces; a plan for them to take over from Western troops; measures to woo Taliban fighters, and hints of future talks with some of their leaders.

Counter-terrorism officials, meanwhile, are refining what Britain calls the four "Ps" of fighting terrorism: prevent the radicalisation of Muslims; pursue terrorists and disrupt their plots; protect targets to make attacks harder; and prepare government agencies to minimise the impact of any attack. There now probably needs to be a fifth P: persevere. ■

Scarcity and globalisation

A needier era

The politics of global disruption, and how they may change

THE 1990s was "the age of abundance", argued Brink Lindsey in a book of that title. Round the world, incomes were rising; capital markets were processing endless flows of money and investment; technological gains meant that ever more information was available ever more cheaply. And politics in the age of abundance, Mr Lindsey claimed, was all about values. In America this was the period of the "culture wars" over abortion and gun ownership; internationally, there was a huge expansion in concern over human rights.

The 2010s, it is sometimes said, will be an age of scarcity. The warning signs of change are said to be the food-price spike of 2007-08, the bid by China and others to grab access to oil, iron ore and farmland and the global recession. The main problems of scarcity are water and food shortages, demographic change and state failure. How will that change politics?

In the domestic debates of some rich democracies, things are shifting already. In Europe the talk is of how to distribute the pain of cutting public debts. In America the return of mad-as-hell populism looks like a turn away from the politics of abundance (see page 39). Now, a report for the Brookings Institution, a think-tank in Washington, D.C., and the Centre on International Co-operation at New York University* looks at international politics in an age of want.

The sort of problems governments increasingly face, they say, will be much less predictable than those associated with old great-power rivalries. Pressure from demography, climate change and

shifts in economic power builds up quietly for a long time—and then triggers abrupt shifts.

They claim that the current global system is ill-designed for such a world. It is not just that the foreign policies of big countries are in flux. Rather, the way states deal with new threats is, in the jargon, "stove-piped". As a UN panel said in 2004, "finance ministers tend to work only with the international financial institutions, development ministers only with development programmes."

The authors say that what is needed is not merely institutional tinkering but a different frame of mind. Governments, they say, should think more in terms of reducing risk and increasing resilience to shocks than about boosting sovereign power. This is because they think power may not be the best way for states to defend themselves against a new kind of threat: the sort that comes not from other states but networks of states and non-state actors, or from the unintended consequences of global flows of finance, technology and so on.

What would all that mean in practice? They cite the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation as the sort of institutions they want more of: bodies that use technical expertise—leaving aside the IPCC's mistake over the melting of Himalayan glaciers—to induce countries to recognise their mutual interests. Such agencies can promote foresight, and help governments think harder about the consequences of failure (unlike traditional diplomacy, which likes muddling along). They propose an Intergovernmental Panel on Biological Safety along the lines of the IPCC to improve biosecurity; they also suggest boosting the G20 by giving it a secretariat and getting national security chiefs together.

Many of these ideas may go nowhere; national sovereignty is hugely resilient. But to those who call the whole exercise pointless, they cite Milton Friedman, who, when monetarism was being mocked in the 1970s, replied "our basic function [is] to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes the politically inevitable."



Ideas are in short supply, too

* "Confronting the Long Crisis of Globalization". By Alex Evans, Bruce Jones and David Steven. Brookings/CIC. A member of *The Economist* served on an editorial board that reviewed an early draft of the paper.

WORLD VIEW

THE DEATH OF THEOCRACY

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS



THE TERM "THEOCRACY" TRIPS READILY ENOUGH OFF THE tongue and is an accurate description of a system where mortals claim the right to dominate other mortals in the name of God. But it is also a word that has uncomfortable implications for those who hope to stay out of the "internal affairs" of other societies. The Iranian theocracy, and the crisis of its regime, is a near-perfect illustration of this dilemma.

By the rule laid down by the mullahs, the Iranian people are not even allowed to meddle in their own internal affairs. They are counted as wards of the state, as children in the care of a paternal priesthood. (It's for this reason that the humiliation of dictatorship is felt with especial and stinging keenness by the rising generation of young Iranian adults.) The immediate result

Any government that imagines it has a divine warrant will perforce deal with its critics as if they were profane.

of theocratic policy when measured by the standard of repression is pretty clear and getting ever clearer: any government that imagines it has a divine warrant will perforce deal with its critics as if they were profane and thus illegitimate by definition.

But now see how this plays out in the ordinary human world, and watch what happens to a state or society that forbids itself the secular catharsis of self-criticism. In 1988 a certain Mr. Rafsanjani paid an urgent call on a certain Mr. Khomeini in order to tell him that Iran had no serious choice but to sign a U.N.-sponsored peace deal with Saddam Hussein. Not even the consecrated martyrs of the Revolutionary Guards could go on taking the catastrophic casualties of the war. Khomeini had resisted Rafsanjani's "realism" for a long time, claiming that God was on the side of Iran and that his will would therefore prevail. But he was obliged to sign.

Then, desperate to recover religious credibility and honor, and noticing that there were angry protests against an Indian-born novelist living in England, Khomeini doubled and quadrupled the cultural stakes and pronounced a death sentence on Salman Rushdie. Thus the West came to hear and understand the words "fatwa" and "jihad," as exported to non-Muslim

societies by bribery and force. To this day—as evidenced by the Danish cartoon controversy and other crises—there is a palpable fear of printing or broadcasting anything that may offend Islamic extremist "sensibilities."

My colleague and friend Fareed Zakaria wrote not long ago in these pages that there was a significant difference between, say, the Taliban takeover of the Swat Valley and the launching of suicide attacks on the non-Muslim world. I said to him then and I say once more that in the long run this is a distinction without very much difference. A country that attempts to govern itself from a holy book will immediately find itself in decline: the talents of its females repressed and squandered, its children stultified by rote learning in madrassas, and its qualified and educated people in exile or in prison. There are no exceptions to this rule: Afghanistan under the Taliban was the worst single example of beggary-cum-terrorism, and even the Iranians were forced to denounce it—because of its massacre of the Shia—without seeing the irony.

But when the crops fail and the cities rot and the children's teeth decay and nothing works except the ever-enthusiastic and illiterate young lads of the morality police, who will the clerics blame? They are not allowed to blame themselves, except for being insufficiently zealous. Obviously it must be because the Jews, the Crusaders, the Freemasons have been at their customary insidious work. Thus, holy war must be waged on happier and more prosperous lands.

If you think I exaggerate even slightly, consult the Web sites of the Iranian theocracy and of its Hamas and Hizbullah surrogates and proxies. These exhorting leaders are not content to inflict their doctrines only on their "own" people. A failed state that cannot allow any grown-up internal debate, or any appeal against the divine edict, will swiftly become an even more failed state and then a rogue one because its limitless paranoia and self-pity must be projected outward. Thus we have a very direct interest in having the Iranian people permitted to interfere in their own internal affairs, and a very immediate reason to insist that the regime's thugs not make their next appearance on the historical stage with nuclear weapons with which to undergird their claim of unfailing righteousness and conviction that they alone know what it is to be a victim.

HITCHENS is a columnist for *Vanity Fair* and the author of *God Is Not Great*.

WORLD VIEW

DON'T PANIC

BY FAREED ZAKARIA

IN RESPONDING TO THE ATTEMPTED BOMBING OF AN AIRLINER on Christmas Day, Sen. Dianne Feinstein voiced the feelings of many when she said that to prevent such situations, "I'd rather ... overreact than underreact." This now appears to be the consensus view in Washington, but it is quite wrong. In fact, precisely the opposite is true. The purpose of terrorism is to provoke an overreaction. Its real aim is not to kill the hundreds of people directly targeted but to sow fear in the rest of the population. Terrorism is an unusual military tactic in that it depends on the response of the onlookers. If we are not terrorized, then the attack didn't work. Alas, this one worked very well.

The attempted bombing says more about Al Qaeda's weakened state than its strength. In the eight years before 9/11, Al

The attempted bombing says more about Al Qaeda's weakened state than its strength.

Qaeda was able to launch large-scale terrorist attacks on several continents. It targeted important symbols of American power—embassies in Africa; a naval destroyer, the USS Cole; and, of course, the World Trade Center. The operations were complex—a simultaneous bombing of two embassies in different countries—and involved dozens of people of different nationalities who trained around the world, moved significant sums of money around, and coordinated their efforts over months, sometimes years. And every attack succeeded.

On Christmas a Qaeda affiliate launched an operation using one person, with no special target, and a failed technique tried eight years ago by "shoe bomber" Richard Reid. The plot seems to have been an opportunity that the group seized rather than the result of a well-considered strategic plan. A Nigerian fanatic with (what appeared to be) a clean background volunteered for service; he was wired up with a makeshift explosive and put on a plane. His mission failed entirely, killing not a single person. The suicide bomber was not even able to commit suicide. But Al Qaeda succeeded in its real aim, which was to throw the American system into turmoil. That's why the terror group proudly boasted about the success of its mission.

Is there some sensible reaction between panic and passivity? Philip Zelikow, the executive director of the 9/11 Commission and later a senior State Department official in the Bush administration, suggests that we should try to analyze failures in homeland security the way we do airplane catastrophes. When an airliner suffers an accident, major or minor, the National Transportation Safety Board convenes a group of non-partisan experts who calmly and methodically examine what went wrong and then issue a set of recommendations to improve the situation. "We approach airline security with the understanding that it's a complex problem, that we have a pretty good system, but that there will be failures—caused by human beings, technology, or other factors. The point is to constantly fix what's broken and keep improving the design and execution," says Zelikow.

Imagine if that were the process after a lapse in homeland security. The public would know that any attack, successful or not, would trigger an automatic, serious process to analyze the problem and fix it. Politicians might find it harder to use every such event for political advantage. The people on the front lines of homeland security would not get demoralized as they watched politicians and the media bash them and grandstand with little knowledge.

Overreacting to terrorist attacks plays into Al Qaeda's hands. It also provokes responses that are likely to be large scale, expensive, ineffective, and perhaps even counterproductive. More screening for every passenger makes no sense. When searching for needles in haystacks, adding hay doesn't help. What's needed is a larger, more robust watch list that is instantly available to all relevant agencies in the government. Almost 2 million people travel on planes in the United States every day. We need to isolate the tiny percentage of suspicious characters and search them, not cause needless fear in everyone else.

As for the calls to treat the would-be Christmas bomber as an enemy combatant, torture him, and toss him into Guantanamo, God knows he deserves it. But keep in mind, the crucial intelligence we received was from the boy's father. If that father had believed that the United States was a rogue superpower that would torture and abuse his child without any sense of decency, would he have turned him in? To keep this country safe we need many more fathers and uncles and friends and colleagues to have enough trust in America that they too would turn in the terrorist next door.

MIDDLE EAST WARFARE

WHO NEEDS PEACE UNDERSTANDING,

WHY MANY ISRAELIS NOW BELIEVE THAT PURSUING PEACE WITH THE

BY DAN EPHRON

FOR MORE THAN 15 YEARS NOW, TWO Tel Aviv University political scientists, working with pollsters, have been asking Israelis roughly the same two questions every month: Do you support negotiations with the Palestinians? And do you believe talks will bring about peace between the two sides in the near term? Their project, which started as the Peace Index and was rechristened in 2008 as the War and Peace Index, aimed to track Israeli opinion about a process that began with the 1993 Oslo accord. Optimism has waxed and waned over the years, peaking just after the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 by a right-wing fanatic, when more than 60 percent of respondents felt good about the peace process, and plunging during the suicide attacks of the second Palestinian *intifada*.

But rarely since the start of the proj-

ect have the numbers been as low—consistently low—as in recent years. Only about 40 percent of Israelis now long for a rejuvenated peace process with the Palestinians. An even smaller number, about 20 percent, believe such talks would amount to anything. That doesn't mean Israelis are warmongers, although right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu often complains his government is portrayed that way. Palestinian negotiators were outraged last week when the Israelis approved construction of another roughly 700 housing units in East Jerusalem despite a freeze on new building in West Bank settlements; they claim Netanyahu's professed desire to sit down and talk is disingenuous. Yet in the long years since the Oslo process began, each side has had its turn—several turns—as the spoiler. And in fact, more

Israelis than ever (including Netanyahu, though with major provisions) now say they're willing to live alongside an independent Palestinian state.

What's changed is that more Israelis than ever also seem to feel little urgency about reaching that goal. This, as much as any reluctance on Netanyahu's part, may pose the greatest obstacle to the Obama administration's efforts to reach a peace agreement before 2012. A combination of factors in recent years—an improved security situation, a feeling that acceptance by Arabs no longer matters much, and a growing disaffection from politics generally—have for many Israelis called into question the basic calculus that has driven the peace process. Instead of pining for peace, they're now asking: who needs it?

Few Israelis would have posed that

KATHERINE KWAT—REDOX



PEACE, LOVE, AND ANYWAY?

THE PALESTINIANS IS PASSÉ.

question just a few years ago, when buses and cafés were blowing up with alarming frequency. But the almost total absence of suicide attacks since 2006 has changed attitudes, in ways that were palpable to me when I visited recently for the first time in four years. In that unscientific way that a visitor takes in a national mood, I found Israelis to be more light-hearted and less angst-ridden than I had remembered—also less obsessive about what they call *hamatzav*, literally “the situation.” The practice of turning up the radio when the hourly news bulletin comes on seems to have ebbed, a bewildering turn for anyone who has spent any amount of time in the country. Even Jerusalem, with its relentless feuding between Arabs and Jews, religious and secular, felt less tense. For an interview in the city with a top cabinet minister, I

showed up 30 minutes early, recalling the rigorous security checks that precede such meetings. The guard who was supposed to frisk me couldn’t get his hand-held metal detector to work. Instead of fetching new batteries, he flashed a smile and said in accented English: “Just tell me we can trust you, and I’ll let you in.”

By the standard logic of Middle East peacemaking, this should be the perfect time to negotiate a deal. Israelis, after all, have long argued that real talks about land for peace cannot proceed until terrorism stops and some level of security is achieved. But, as so often happens in the Middle East, the standard logic no longer holds. If security was a prerequisite for peacemaking, now it’s a goal unto itself. And it’s been achieved, Israelis can plausibly argue, through their own hard-nosed measures.

Consider the numbers. Over a six-year period starting in September 2000, about 140 suicide bombers crossed into Israel from the West Bank, killing around 500 Israelis, a huge number for a population of 7 million (though only about one 10th the number of Palestinians killed during the same period). Since mid-2006, the year Israel completed large sections of the new fence around the West Bank (and a wall around parts of Jerusalem), not a single suicide bomber has infiltrated from the area and staged a successful attack. Built in part on Palestinian land, the barrier has generated criticism at home and abroad. But if you set aside the controversy, at least in the short run, the conclusion is clear: the barrier is working.

Gaza has similarly been subdued. In 2008, Palestinians launched around



THANKS TO A PERIOD OF UNPRECEDENTED PEACE, ISRAELI TOURISM AT THE DEAD SEA AND ELSEWHERE IS AT A RECORD HIGH

3,000 rockets at southern Israel, an average of about 250 a month, according to an official tally. (The rockets have caused few casualties but have exacted a psychological and economic toll.) Then, a year ago, Israel waged a controversial war in Gaza. Critics of the campaign have focused, justifiably, on the high number of civilian casualties and the disproportionate use of force. But the results are indisputable: since the war, the number of rocket attacks from Gaza has dropped by 90 percent.

The stability, in turn, has helped Israel's

peace deal have exacted a very high one.

Most Israelis, in this analysis, associate the Oslo accords not just with the historic handshake on the White House lawn but with the first suicide attacks by Palestinians. Ask Israelis what they got in return for their offer at Camp David nearly a decade ago to hand over most of the West Bank and they'll point to the second *intifada*. In Israeli minds, Palestinians should have been grateful for the 2005 withdrawal from Gaza—instead they fired rockets at Israel.

Of course, that version ignores Israel's

period after Oslo, Israelis coined a phrase: eating hummus in Damascus. The expression was shorthand for coexistence in the "new Middle East" that finally appeared to be materializing. But it also had a literal significance. For citizens of tiny and hemmed-in Israel, regional peace would mean they could

'WE'VE ACHIEVED
NORMALCY. WE DON'T
HAVE BOMBINGS.
THE STOCK MARKET'S OK.
WHY SHOULD WE
LAUNCH ANOTHER MESSY
PEACE PROCESS?'



SINCE NEW BARRIERS WENT UP AROUND THE WEST BANK AND PARTS OF JERUSALEM IN 2006, NOT ONE SUICIDE BOMBER HAS GOTTEN THROUGH.

economy. While the global recession plunged other countries into crisis in the past year, nearly all of Israel's indicators have held steady. Tourism, a good gauge of overall welfare, hit a 10-year high in 2008. Astonishingly, the IMF projected recently that Israel's GDP will grow faster in 2010 than that of most other developed countries.

In short, Israelis are enjoying a peace dividend without a peace agreement. Clearly, that can't last. Without a resolution to its conflict, Israel will always face the prospect of international isolation and challenges to its very legitimacy. But the tendency toward short-term thinking is reinforced by another somewhat skewed cost-benefit analysis that Israelis are inclined to embrace: while the absence of peace is exacting a very low price, Israeli attempts to forge a

own provocations and abuses, including the continued expropriation of Palestinian land, the dramatic growth of Jewish settlements in the 1990s and the siege Israel has imposed on Gaza. But it's an account of history that Israelis across the political spectrum accept almost unquestioningly, and it translates into a deep reluctance to push forward too far, too fast. As Tamar Hermann, one of the two political scientists who run the War and Peace Index, told me recently, "In a way, Israelis are looking around and saying, 'We've achieved normalcy. We don't have bombings. The stock market's OK. Why should we launch another messy peace process that may rock the boat again?'"

Hermann concludes that Israelis have intellectually disengaged from peacemaking. Their emotional detachment may run even deeper. In the hopeful

drive their cars across international borders, shop in the souks of Arab capitals, and take road trips from Tel Aviv through Turkey and on to Europe. The national debate between left and right centered on whether that vision was attainable or delusional. But the potential benefits were obvious.

Today, hummus in Damascus has lost its appeal. This happened gradually, starting in the 1990s, when Israelis ventured into the Arab world like never before. The experience was often disappointing. The peace process failed to erase Arab animosity toward Israelis, who were often received with suspicion or even hostility. Those Israelis who had fantasized about combining Israeli know-how with Arab capital—enabling everyone to get rich—found the bureaucracy and inefficiency of Arab countries dispiriting. Meanwhile,

K.A. WIEDENHOEFER

Israel's booming high-tech sector has bound the country more tightly to the global economy, making trade with neighbors less important. As a result, even in the good years, Israel's commerce with the Arab world never amounted to more than 1 percent of its total international trade revenue. These days, says Ori Nir, the Israeli spokesman in Washington of Americans for Peace Now, Israelis would much rather eat pasta in Rome than hummus in Damascus.

Nir says that sense of disillusionment has helped to sink Israel's pro-peace

account when I visited him at his office in Israel, where he had a photo on the wall of himself with the Dalai Lama, and a license plate inscribed with the words CHANGE WE CAN BELIEVE IN—OBAMA IN '08. "People want a clear agenda," he told me, explaining why Meretz had dropped from 12 seats in the 120-member Parliament in 1992 to just three seats last year. "It doesn't have to always be focused on the Arab-Israeli issue."

Of course, Israelis have turned away from politics generally in recent years, largely in response to a swell of corruption

is difficult," says Tamar Hermann, who coauthored the IDI paper. "If you don't trust politicians, you don't want to jump into that water at all." Among other things, the study found that 90 percent of Israelis believe the country is tainted by corruption, and 73 percent would advise their friends and relatives to stay out of politics. Israelis are "drawing away, at times in disgust, from the political establishment," the study concluded.

On some level, the changes Israel is undergoing are part of the normal evolution of a Western democracy. It makes



TIRES BURN IN PROTEST AGAINST A WALL SHIELDING A JEWISH SETTLEMENT IN THE WEST BANK.

THE GOOD TIMES
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parties, which suffered their worst defeat yet in elections last March. The drubbing has led some politicians on the left to shift their priorities. Nir told me that Nitzan Horowitz, a Parliament member from the left-wing Meretz party, had sought help from friends recently to set up meetings in Washington. When the friends inquired which American peace groups he'd like to meet, Horowitz said none: he was more interested in seeing environment and gay-rights advocates. Horowitz confirmed the

in government circles. In 2009 alone, former Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert was indicted for bribery, former finance minister Abraham Hirschson was jailed for embezzlement, and former president Moshe Katsav went on trial for rape. At least two former cabinet ministers have been convicted of graft in the past five years, and an indictment against the current foreign minister, Avigdor Lieberman, is expected any day.

That malfeasance, though it has nothing to do with the peace process, has contributed to the Israeli disaffection for peace-making. According to a recent study by the nonpartisan Israel Democracy Institute, one result of all the scandals is that Israelis feel their politicians can't be trusted to take their interests into account—not in small matters, and certainly not in something as significant as peace talks. "Making peace

sense that Israelis over time would become less obsessed with politics, more cynical about their neighbors, less trusting of their leaders. But for Palestinians next door, nothing is normal. Hamas has rebounded from the Gaza war and is once again smuggling in weapons. In the West Bank, Israel's one reliable peace partner, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, has vowed to resign. Farther off, a conflict with Iran looms. Many Israelis know it's just a matter of time before another bomb blows up in Tel Aviv or Jerusalem. But as one Israeli put it to me: the medication has become so effective at relieving the pain, there's little incentive to actually cure the disease.

NEXT ►

THE ANTI-OBAMA
Haley Barbour,
the Republicans'
Mr. Fix It.

BY JONATHAN DARMAN



THE NEW RULES

NINE IMPERATIVES FOR OUR POST-9/11 WORLD.

BY PHILIP BOBBITT

CRITICS OF THE ADMINISTRATION ON the right have been quick to cite the attempted bombing over Detroit on Christmas Day as proof that President Obama's antiterror policies have put the country at greater risk. Those at the other end of the spectrum have criticized Obama for retaining too many of the previous administration's counterterror programs by endorsing the use of military tribunals, suggesting that at least some prisoners held at Guantánamo ought to remain in custody even if they cannot be successfully prosecuted in ordinary criminal trials, trying to prevent the disclosure of photographs of torture and its victims, refusing to renounce renditions, and escalating targeted killings. Which critique is correct?

They actually have a lot in common. Earlier this year, former vice president Dick Cheney claimed that there "is a great dividing line in our current debate over national security. You can [conclude that the Bush] strategy has worked and therefore needs to be continued . . . Or you can [conclude that 9/11 was] not sufficient to justify a sustained wartime effort." Many of Cheney's most vociferous critics implicitly buy into the same dichotomy—they just think that Obama has, in fact, decided to continue the Bush strategy. The only alternative, they imply, is a wholesale rejection of the practices of the Bush administration and a return to

the policies that characterized U.S. criminal and intelligence practices prior to 9/11.

Both sets of critics are missing the true flaws in the Bush administration's approach—and the virtues of Obama's. Bush and Cheney were not wrong to conclude after 9/11 that the existing statutory framework for dealing with terrorism was outmoded—it was. But rather than changing the laws, they refused to ask Congress for authorization to intercept communications linked to suspected terrorists without seeking warrants. They refused to seek statutory authority for preventive detentions (that was the point of going offshore to Guantánamo, where they thought a habeas-corpus-free zone could be created). They stripped military commissions of the protections recommended by a panel they had convened. In all these decisions, they kicked away the essential support of laws from their efforts and ended up being condemned by allies, handing terrorists a propaganda victory and having their policies repudiated by the American people. They carelessly invited the prosecution of loyal and earnest U.S. personnel whom they directed and refused to pardon for crimes.

And yet, in Talleyrand's famous phrase, their actions were worse than crimes: they were mistakes. That is because what we are fighting for in the wars on terror is precisely the rule of law. Thus, as British Gen. Sir Rupert Smith observed, "to operate tactically outside the law is to attack one's own war aim."

It is often asked, "How can we win a war against terror? Who would surrender? How can we make war against an emotion (terror) or a guerrilla technique (terrorism), neither of which are enemy states?" These questions assume that victory in war is simply a matter of defeating the enemy. In fact, that may be the criterion for winning in football or chess, but not warfare. Victory in war is a matter of achieving the war aim. The war aim in a war against terror is not territory, or access to resources, or conversion to our political way of life. It is the protection of civilians within

**THE AIM IN THE WAR
AGAINST TERROR IS NOT THE
SEIZURE OF TERRITORY OR
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PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS.**

the rule of law. Not coincidentally, this is what General Petraeus realized was necessary in Iraq, and it is what General McChrystal has testified will be his goal in Afghanistan.

If the laws are inadequate, then they

NEW SWEEK

S OF ENGAGEMENT

must be reformed to take account of the new strategic context rather than be ignored or twisted. Failing to do this traps us in the Cheney/ACLU world, in which we either act lawlessly to protect our people and thus turn every success into failure, or we await the next attack with the very practices and rules that invited the last one. When Obama promised in his speech at the National Archives to go to Congress for new statutory counterterrorism authorities, he made a decision as important strategically as it was constitutionally.

A short list of initiatives to accompany the successful reform of electronic surveillance laws passed by Congress earlier last year should include:

STATUTORY RULES TO AUTHORIZE PREVENTIVE DETENTIONS, which Obama recognizes we need and which our European allies already have, but which the administration has mistakenly backed away from under pressure.

A SPECIAL ARTICLE III COURT TO TRY TERRORISTS, with the appropriate evidentiary rules and safeguards for defendants.

REGULATIONS STRENGTHENING EXTERNAL OVERSIGHT OF DATA MINING so that this valuable tool can be more usefully employed: if the government had taken the names it already had on its terrorist watch list and swept airline reservations, then cross-checked these with street addresses, telephone numbers, postal and immigration records, frequent-flyer and credit-card numbers, all 19 of the hijackers would have been identified and seen to be flying together on 9/11.

ADDRESSING THE PRIVACY CONCERNS that have prevented the installation of millimeter-wave scanners and other body-scanning devices at U.S. and international airports.

A NATIONAL ID CARD LAW that requires a template for all state driver's licenses and sets rules for the inclusion of biometrics and safeguards for the use of personal information. (Can most policemen in New York really tell a proper Idaho driver's license from a forgery?)

ADOPTION OF THE ISOLATION-AND-QUARANTINE STATUTE crafted by the Centers for Disease Control, which would provide federal legal authority and rationalize the hodgepodge of current state and local laws in order to prevent the potentially fatal confusion that would ensue if a significant biological attack or epidemic should strike.

ESTABLISH NEW LAWS TO GOVERN THE USE OF FEDERAL TROOPS IN DISASTERS and provide for disaster relief. Current laws—beyond the inexperience and incompetence of managers—bedeviled rescue operations during Hurricane Katrina.

MANDATORY INSURANCE FOR CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE, which is largely in private hands and is highly vulnerable to cyberattacks.

NEW RULES GOVERNING THE REPLACEMENT OF MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, the Supreme Court, and the executive branch in case of mass attacks on these institutions: to take just a single example, the

fourth plane on 9/11 would have hit the Capitol during a roll-call vote in the House, quite possibly requiring months before a quorum could be legitimately reestablished by elections and thus forcing the U.S. into an extended period of martial law.

These are controversial proposals, and I have no illusions that they will effortlessly win support from Congress. What's most important is that we debate them openly and not be intimidated by those, at both ends of the political spectrum, who wrongly assume that security and liberty

are opposing objectives. It is not necessary to sacrifice our civil liberties to realize these reforms, unless you think constitutional rights are declared by editorial boards and pressure groups and not by the U.S. Supreme Court. Nor is it necessary to compromise the protection of our people unless you have lost sight of the war aim and how to achieve it.

It is too early to praise the Obama administration, which has yet to deliver on the important changes in approach promised by the president. But it is not too soon to encourage them. Indeed, as events of this week showed, it could easily have been too late.

BOBBITT, the author of Terror and Consent, is a professor at Columbia Law School, a fellow at the University of Texas School of Law, and serves on the Task Force on Law and Security at the Hoover Institution.

NEXT ►

WHO NEEDS PEACE, LOVE, AND UNDERSTANDING, ANYWAY?

Many Israelis are weary of pursuing a deal with the Palestinians.

BY DAN EPHRON

CLIMATE SUMMIT'S BIG FAILURE

BY CRAIG SIMONS

SCIENCE

THE VERDICT ON COPENHAGEN is in: guilty of failure.

Every serious study of commitments made at the environmental summit shows it will fall short of its goal to cut carbon emissions sharply enough to hold off a 2-degree-Celsius rise in global temperatures. After the conference, the United Nations Environment Program found that the world had locked in less than half of the greenhouse-gas reductions needed to provide a 50-50 chance of preventing the temperature increase by 2050. A second study by MIT, Ventana Systems, and the U.S.-based Sustainability Institute calculated that Copenhagen's proposals will likely leave the world 3.9 degrees warmer by 2100. A third report from Germany's Potsdam Institute found that even if every Copenhagen proposal is fully funded, average global temperatures will be 3.2 degrees higher by century's end.

The final tallies differed slightly since scientists made different assumptions about how quickly emissions will grow, or fall, in each nation. But "independent groups looking at this from different angles reached the same conclusions," said Michiel Schaeffer,

Fleeing drought.

the senior scientist of Climate Analytics, a research firm that worked with the Potsdam Institute. As all three groups pointed out, if the world delays action by even a few years—as now seems inevitable—emissions cuts will have to be considerably larger to stay within the 2-degree range. "It becomes increasingly difficult to achieve reduction and increasingly costly if you wait," said Nick Nuttall, the UNEP's chief spokesman.

So what will the warming do to the world? An average temperature rise of 2 to 4 degrees is expected to cause much of the Amazon rainforest to dry out and then burn, dumping millions of tons of additional carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Greenland's ice would eventually melt, causing sea level to rise by as much as seven meters. Agricultural yields could fall across most of the globe. Glaciers and snowpack would recede, with potentially devastating consequences for billions of people who rely on them for water. And

this assumes that governments take at least the actions they are promising. The most recent assessment by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change suggests that a business-as-usual approach could push temperatures up by more than 6 degrees Celsius by 2100.

There's still time to stall the global temperature rise. But that will require a truly global commitment to deeper cuts. China and other developing nations will have to agree to binding reductions, something Beijing has stridently resisted. The U.S.—which has emitted more greenhouse gases than any other nation—will have to ensure much deeper cuts than those President Obama offered in Copenhagen. The good news is that world leaders are talking, providing hope that progress could be made when they meet again next December. The bad news is that the Copenhagen failure reveals deep global divisions—and each year we wait, the solutions become harder to attain.

THE NEXT HEALTH THREAT

BY ANDREW BAST



NEWARK:

DISEASES

LAST SPRING THE THREAT of swine flu sparked a panic: the World Health Organization declared a pandemic, universities and drug companies kicked into overdrive to develop new vaccines, and governments raced to stop the virus's spread. Meanwhile, another global public-health threat proliferated virtually ignored: dengue fever, a potentially lethal mosquito-borne disease traditionally found mostly in Central America and Southeast Asia.

The numbers on dengue's expansion are staggering. While the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control reported that H1N1 had killed 11,749 people as of December 2009, the WHO reports that "explosive outbreaks" of den-

gue hospitalized half a million people last year. Forty years ago, the disease struck only nine countries; it is now endemic in more than 100. And it's not just a disease of the poor south. Dengue has spread into a large swath of the U.S. (39 states) and has climbed to the second most common illness that European travelers bring home. If global warming continues and the mosquito's habitat spreads, more than half the world's population will be at risk, according to the Sydney-based Lowy Institute. While London, New York, and Beijing pour millions into warding off swine flu, dengue's scourge—and spread—continues. It may not threaten to shut down the global economy, but it's a growing killer that deserves some attention of its own.

TOP TO BOTTOM: JAN GRABUP—MOOR; CHRISTOPHER BROWN—THE INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE/REXUS

All Politics Are Local

Beijing isn't trying to impress us.

BY RANA FOROOHAR



THERE'S BEEN A lot of media buzz about China's awkward efforts to promote itself as a soft, friendly power. Still growing at an almost rude 8 percent a year, China may deliver

like no other nation on the economic front, but when it comes to winning hearts and minds, Beijing seems not to get it. After the inconclusive Copenhagen summit to save the world, China simply refused to address questions about how and why it played hardball against an agreement to cut carbon emissions. Then, on Christmas Day, China celebrated the spirit of the season by handing down an 11-year jail term to Liu Xiaobo, a pro-democracy advocate whose main crime seems to be criticizing the Communist Party in print. Days later, Beijing pushed ahead with the execution of British citizen Akmal Shaikh on heroin-smuggling charges, despite desperate pleas from Britain and Shaikh's family that he was mentally ill and got tricked into being a mule.

But pundits have missed a key point: an increasingly confident China is not playing to an international crowd. Politics is always local, and never more so than in China today, where an autocratic regime must ensure political stability above all. The need to project power internally has also become a particularly important goal in the run-up to 2012, the year that China will announce new leadership. For the first time in decades, there is an internal

jockeying for control within the party, in which populists led by President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao are duking it out with a group of coastal elitists. Hu is already under fire from the rival faction for being indecisive and ineffectual on everything from dissent to economic policy, and those internal critiques ring louder in his ears than the complaints of international human-rights activists.

If the execution of a mentally disabled Brit seems particularly gratuitous to outsiders, it looks a bit different inside China, which has recently been dealing with a series of deranged murderers, at least one of whom officials claim had a history of mental illness.

Hu does need to maintain prestige internally in order to maintain influence over the choice of his own successor and six other members of the party's standing committee in 2012, says Minxin Pei, a professor of government at Claremont McKenna College. "If he's perceived to be weak, he can't do this," says Pei, who ties many of Hu's recent tough-guy moves to his desire to sustain influence after 2012. Pei notes that former Chinese president Jiang Zemin wielded power behind the scenes for years via acolytes whom he had appointed to the standing committee.

Indeed, the importance of not making any mistakes before the power handover may also be a key reason that the Chinese leadership continues to dodge Western pressure to raise the value of the yuan as a way of slowing Chinese exports. While outsiders fear a glut of cheap Chinese goods could produce global deflation,

Beijing knows there are potential problems coming down the pike and wants to keep the export jobs machine humming. What's more, as Council on Foreign Relations Asia studies director Elizabeth Economy notes, Hu was never inclined to be a progressive on either the currency front or on human rights.

It's also worth remembering that to the extent that China cares about what the rest of the world thinks, exactly whose opinions it cares about are changing. At Copenhagen, for example, China cared less about the U.S. than about how its positions would be perceived in the developing world, "because it thinks of itself as the leader of that world," says Economy. Likewise, leaders in Beijing may now be more inclined to listen to African complaints about the treatment of workers producing oil for export to China than to entertaining British or American complaints about threats to human rights and Western jobs.

This is not to say that China won't make further efforts to try to build its soft power more broadly on the international stage. Indeed, in a speech this past summer, Hu cited the need to improve the country's image in order to cement China's position as a great world power. That's one reason Beijing is throwing lots of money at new Confucius institutes at key universities around the world: Americans and Europeans in particular tend to associate the great sage with warm and fuzzy wisdom, rather than scary autocracy. But don't expect China's leaders to give as much thought to what Westerners say about human rights, the environment, or even financial matters. As ever, it's the opinions inside the Middle Kingdom that really matter.

With ISAAC STONE FISH in Beijing

It has become more important for Hu to project power in the run-up to the 2012 leadership turnover.

WORLD VIEW

WHEN 'REVOLUTION' TURNS TO DESPAIR

BY PAUL J. SCALISE

SWEPT INTO OFFICE BY AN UNPOPULAR LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (LDP), aided by the self-serving calculations of party defector Ichiro Ozawa, an inexperienced idealist at the helm hoists the reform banner onto Japan. Almost immediately the new prime minister's ragtag coalition is greeted by enthusiastic media attention abroad and unprecedented cabinet approval at home. Over and over again, one word is heard: "Revolution!"

Yet what starts as irrational exuberance degenerates into hopeless despair. The premier finds himself entangled in yet another campaign-financing scandal. Cabinet approval plummets. Inter-party bickering ensues as the cabinet's agenda is bogged down by protracted ministerial discussions, regulatory uncertainties, and budget constraints. A demoralized premier, now beleaguered by an unsympathetic Japanese media, an impatient public, and a

In moments like this, the standard rebuttal from ruling parties is a plea for *gaman*, or endurance. But voters rarely see it that way.

stalled legislative agenda, resigns in humiliation. So begins the long road to LDP rehabilitation.

No, we are not talking about the current coalition government led by Yukio Hatoyama's Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ)—though, let's face it, the parallels are striking. We are talking about Hosokawa Syndrome, so named after the former prime minister whose impractical love of abstract ideas both made and broke a government.

The rapid rise and fall of Morihiro Hosokawa's coalition government in 1993—the first non-LDP government since 1955—marked a missed opportunity in Japan's postwar history. Barely lasting a year, the Hosokawa cabinet was heralded as historic, but left behind an anticlimactic legacy.

Will history repeat itself in 2010? The evidence increasingly suggests an encore performance. Hatoyama's DPJ began its rule in September 2009 with 75 percent of Japanese strongly approving of the cabinet's performance (Hosokawa's earlier coalition enjoyed 72 percent) and ended the year with 47 percent feeling that way (Hosokawa had 50 percent). As was the case in 1993–94, Hatoyama's cabinet presides over a strengthening yen, stagnating export growth, falling asset prices, and the world's largest debt-to-GDP ratio. Deflation is

back, and the Bank of Japan is no more willing to halt it today than it was 17 years ago. If these obstacles weren't enough, economists now forecast extended economic-growth lapses in January–March 2010. A protracted downturn will mean rising unemployment and personal bankruptcies among critical DPJ rural constituencies at precisely the moment when the ruling party will seek to snore up a majority in the crucial upper-house elections in July.

In moments like this, the standard rebuttal from ruling parties is a plea for *gaman*, or endurance. A government has no more control over the short-term business cycle than a ship's captain has over the changing tides in the ocean. But voters rarely see it that way. Either a scapegoat in government must be blamed or the government itself must project a faux strength. Neither is happening. Instead of showing leadership, Hatoyama remains the indecisive

intellectual. And here is where contracting Hosokawa Syndrome can be a real problem. Few voters care to wait years for the spillover effects of "the vision thing" without concrete blueprints. Most want to be assured exactly how, when, and where they stand to benefit from promised consumer-welfare gains, job creation, and income growth.

For Hosokawa, this dilemma was wrapped in the rhetoric of *kisei kanwa*, or deregulation. "We may not know yet how, when, and where the benefits of deregulation will occur," he assured the electorate, "but we will deregulate. Your lives will improve someday." Someday. Hatoyama's DPJ also claims to care about "ordinary people." And while it may not harbor much love for deregulation, it feeds the electorate a steady diet of anti-Keynesian, anti-LDP, and anti-bureaucracy rhetoric. Tax revenues fall and expenditures rise, but Hatoyama refuses to go back to the LDP model of "wasteful spending." Consequently, fewer public works translate into fewer jobs in 2010.

The ability of the LDP to prop itself up in power was always a bit of a mystery. Former prime ministers were able to pump-prime the economy with minimal success while allowing the representative elites in the decision-making process to deliberate on policy for sometimes indefinite periods. If Junichiro Koizumi, a three-term prime minister, could do that for the LDP, can't, say, Hatoyama do it for the DPJ? It might well be too little too late, but without swift action the Hatoyama cabinet will likely go the way of Hosokawa's rather than Koizumi's. The clock is ticking.

SCALISE is a research fellow at the Institute of Contemporary Asian Studies, Temple University Japan.



SCOPE InternationalList

BEIJING'S LOVE AFFAIR WITH BAD GUYS

BY ISAAC STONE FISH

CHINA CHINA IS OFTEN CAST IN the West as coldblooded, especially when it refuses to push repressive regimes to play nice. Just last week, China's Foreign Ministry reiterated its intention not to punish Iran with sanctions over Tehran's nuclear program. This move was generally interpreted as China protecting its investments in, and weapon sales to, Iran. But the truth is that when it comes to rogue nations, China's behavior is about more than economic self-interest. Beijing actually has a soft spot for maverick states.

During the Mao Zedong years, China's seclusion rivaled that of North Korea's. They were peers who could offer each other the trade and support they couldn't get elsewhere, and China hasn't forgotten those moments of solidarity. Similarly, China's old guard, ostracized as recently as the 1989 Tiananmen massacre, can still relate to the isolation of the Burmese junta today. That's one reason China positions itself as the ask-no-questions leader of developing nations. Supporting Sudan's leaders, delaying sanctions to Iran, and propping up North Korea



with aid are all examples of China's diplomatic love letters to outcasts. The other reason is resources: China imports about 15 percent of its oil from Iran and 5 percent from Sudan. South Koreans sometimes refer to North Korea as a Chinese province because of Chinese companies' designs on the North's untapped mineral wealth.

Perhaps most important, China backs the repressive status quo because change would be a big problem for Beijing. If North Korea failed, it would send waves of refugees into China. But if it unified with South Korea, it could put U.S. troops on China's border. In Sudan, China has allied itself with Omar

al-Bashir's government, so its failure would be an embarrassment, and its opening up could force China to compete with Western companies for Sudanese oil. In Iran, nationalist Chinese cyberactivists are working in support of the regime, because its failure could inspire Chinese dissidents and threaten China's crucial oil and gas investments. On a recent visit to Pyongyang, China's defense minister reminisced about his time as a soldier in Korea, fighting with the North against the U.S., and vowed that the bonds forged then between China and North Korea "will last forever." Don't expect China to question the status quo any time soon.

PURIFYING THE CITY OF GOD

BY MAC MARGOLIS



BRAZIL RIO DE JANEIRO HAS long been plagued by brazen violence—the city's drug gangs have turned the slums, home to one in five residents, into a Brazilian War-torn. But with the clock ticking to Rio's debut as host of the 2016 Olympic Games, mopping up has taken on a new urgency. Rio's lawmen are once again confronting *favela* drug lords: six of the meanest slums have been declared bandit-free, including the infamous Cidade de Deus (City of God). In a city of 1,000 *favelas*, half of which are rotten with *traficantes*, that's a drop in the ocean, but police plan to "pacify" 34 more this year, says Rio chief of security José Mariano Bel-

trame. More important, this time the cops plan to stay. In the past, Rio's police have gone to battle, only to let the criminals slink back once the heat was off, often with a wink from flatfoots on the take. Now officials are following up the shock and awe with a permanent police presence, getting cops out of their beloved cruisers to walk the streets and get to know the residents. Just as important, the neighborhood patrols will be drawn from recruits right out of the academy (and, so, with hope, untainted by the culture of corruption). Whether all this will work remains an open question. The only sure thing is that this time the world will be watching.

FROM TOP: JAMES WHITLOW DELANO—REDUX, JR.—AGENCE VU-AURORA

Google vs. China

CHINA INTERNET

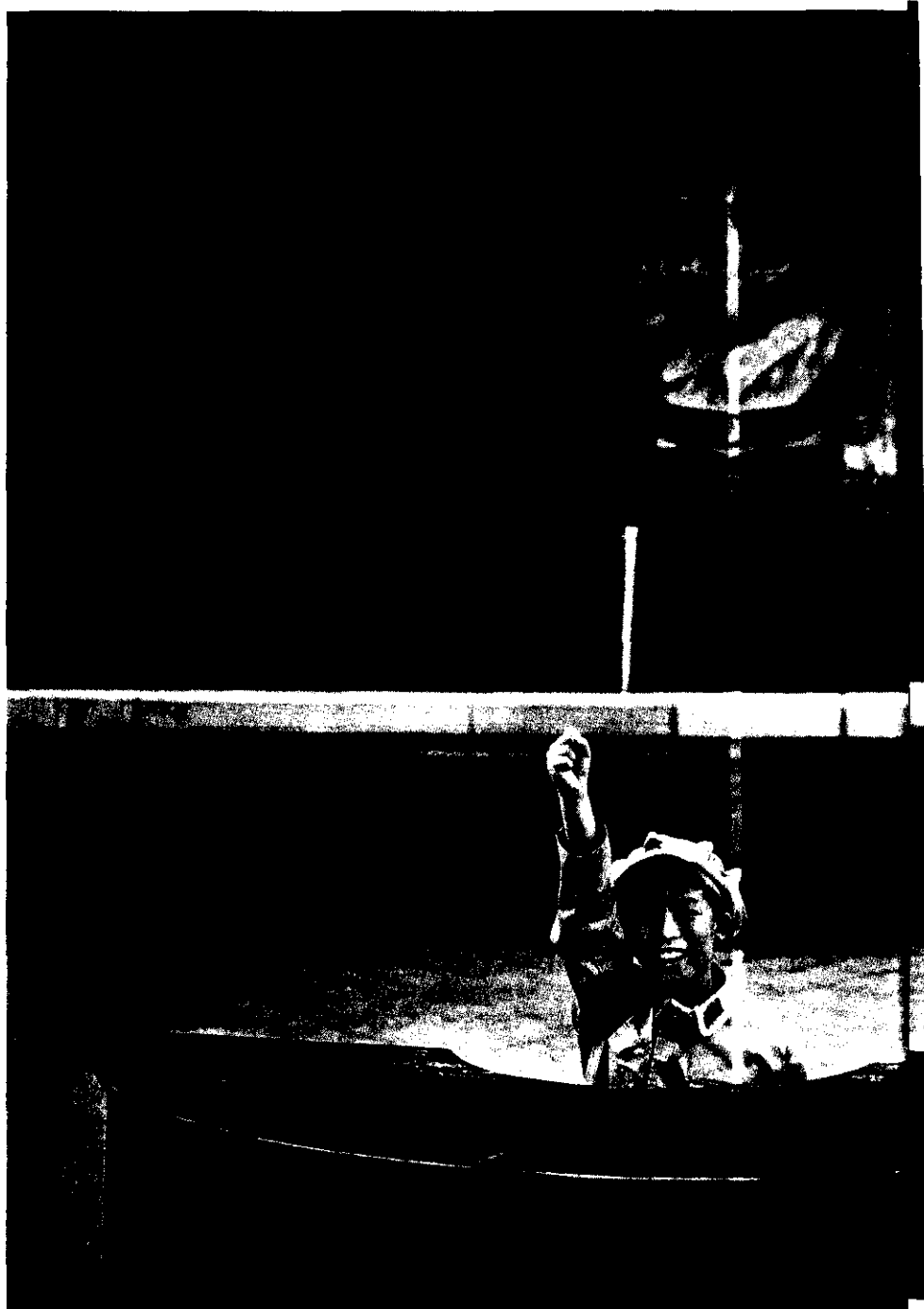
NO CHANCE AGAINST CHI

Google's defeat foretells the day when Beijing rules t

BY MARTIN JACQUES

THE BLUNT TRUTH IS THAT MOST Western forecasters have been wrong about China for the past 30 years. They have claimed that Chinese economic growth was exaggerated, that a big crisis was imminent, that state controls would fade away, and that exposure to global media, notably the Internet, would steadily undermine the Communist Party's authority. The reason why China forecasting has such a poor track record is that Westerners constantly invoke the model and experience of the West to explain China, and it is a false prophet. Until we start trying to understand China on its own terms, rather than as a Western-style nation in the making, we will continue to get it wrong.

The Google affair tells us much about what China is and what it will be like. The Internet has been seen in the West as the quintessential expression of the free exchange of ideas and information, untrammelled by government interference and increasingly global in reach. But the Chinese government has shown that the Internet can be successfully filtered and controlled. Google's mission, "to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful," has clashed with the age-old presumption of Chinese rulers of the need and responsibility to control. In this battle, there will be only one winner: China. Google will be obliged either to accept Chinese regulations or exit the world's largest Internet market, with serious consequences for its long-term global ambitions. This is a metaphor for our times: America's most dynamic company cannot take on the



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s t he world.

PATERNAL STATE
THAT'S THE BIG
REASON IT'S SO
STRONG.

Chinese government—even on an issue like free and open information—and win.

Moreover, as China becomes increasingly important as a market and player, what happens to the Internet in China will have profound consequences for the Internet globally. It is already clear that the Google model of a free and open Internet, an exemplar of the American idea of the future, cannot and will not prevail. China's Internet will continue to be policed and controlled, information filtered, sites prohibited, noncompliant search engines excluded, and sensitive search words disallowed. And where China goes, others, also informed by different values, are already and will follow. The Internet, far from being a great big unified global space, will be fragmented and segmented. Another Western shibboleth about the future will thereby fall. It will not signal the end of the free flow of information— notwithstanding all the controls, the Internet has transformed the volume and quality of information available to Chinese citizens—but it will take place more on Chinese than Western terms.

If we want to understand the future, we need to go back to the drawing board. China—as we can see with increasing clarity—is destined to become the world's largest economy and is likely in time to far outdistance the U.S. This process will remorselessly shift the balance of power in China's favor. Just as once a large share of the American market was a precondition for a firm being a major global player, this mantle will increasingly be assumed instead by the Chinese market, except to a far greater extent because its population is four times the size. Furthermore, China's expanding economic clout means that its government is enjoying rapidly growing global authority. It can even take on Google and be sure of victory.

Facing up to the fact that China is very different from the West, that it simply does not work or think like us, is proving far more difficult. A classic illustration is the West's failure to understand the strength and durability of the Chinese state, which defies all predictions of its demise, remains omnipresent in Chinese lives, still owns most major firms,

and proves remarkably adept at finding new ways to counter the influence of the U.S. global media. Western observers typically explain the intrusiveness of the Chinese government in terms of paranoia—and in a huge and diverse country the rulers have always seen instability as an ever-present danger—but there is a deeper reason why the state enjoys such a high-profile role in Chinese society.

It is seen by the Chinese not as an alien presence to be constantly pruned back, as in the West, especially the U.S., but as the embodiment and guardian of society. Rather than alien, it is seen as an intimate, in the manner of the head of the household. It might seem an extraordinary proposition, but the Chinese state enjoys a remarkable legitimacy among its people, greater than in Western societies. And the reason lies deep in China's history. China may call itself a nation-state (although only for the past century), but in essence it is a civilization-state dating back at least two millennia. Maintaining the unity of Chinese civilization is regarded as the most important political priority and seen as the sacred task of the state, hence its unique role: there is no Western parallel.

Chinese modernity will not resemble Western modernity, and a world dominated by China will not resemble our own. One consequence is already apparent in the developing world: the state is back in fashion; the Washington Consensus has been eclipsed. In this new world, Chinese ways of thinking—from Confucian values and their notion of the state to the family and parenting—will become increasingly influential. Google's fate is a sign of the world to come, and the sooner we come to appreciate the nature of a world run by China, the better we will be able to deal with it.

JACQUES is the author of *When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order*.

NEXT ►

THE FUTURE OF THE CITY

The CEO of IBM on the urbanization of the planet.

BY SAMUEL L. PALMISANO

TOMMASO BONAVENTURA—CONTRASTO-REDUX



What al-Qaeda Can't Do

The failed Christmas bombing shows how far the terrorist network has fallen since Sept. 11

HERE'S A FACT ABOUT THE UNDERWEAR attack that you might have missed in the media shoutfest: it failed. It failed, first of all, because Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab was just one terrorist. Once upon a time, al-Qaeda's modus operandi was to launch multiple, simultaneous attacks. That way, even if one attack failed, the entire operation wouldn't. On 9/11, the network deployed 19 hijackers on four planes; on 12/25, by contrast, it managed only one. Second, the underwear attack failed because Abdulmutallab wasn't particularly well trained. The 19 Sept. 11 hijackers were personally selected by Osama bin Laden from the tens of thousands of potential killers who went through al-Qaeda's Afghan training camps in the 1990s. The ringleaders got extensive training on the design of airplanes and the behavior of aircraft crews, even before they enrolled in U.S. flight schools. The grunts were made to slit the throats of camels and sheep to overcome their inhibitions about murder. Abdulmutallab, by contrast, reportedly used a syringe to try to detonate a notoriously hard-to-detonate explosive called PETN. "To make this stuff work," says Van Romero, an explosives expert at New Mexico Tech, "you have to know what you're doing." Abdulmutallab, it appears, did not.

What's more, even if Abdulmutallab had succeeded in blowing up Northwest Flight 253, he would have killed only one-tenth as many people as died on 9/11. Yes, using the word *only* is ghoulish when you're talking about hundreds of lives. But after Sept. 11, George W. Bush warned about terrorists killing "hundreds of thousands of innocent people"

Even in places where al-Qaeda has some organizational presence, it is much harder to train terrorists for complex, mass-casualty attacks

in "a day of horror like none we have ever known." The conventional wisdom was that the next terrorist attack would not merely equal 9/11 but be worse.

In fact, terrorists have not pulled off another attack on the scale of 9/11 anywhere in the world. A 2007 study by Canada's Simon Fraser University found the global death toll from terrorist attacks has substantially decreased since



2001. While al-Qaeda plots do sometimes succeed—like the double-agent operation that killed seven CIA officers in Afghanistan last month—they have become, Rand terrorism expert Brian Jenkins points out, less frequent and less potent.

Why can al-Qaeda no longer pull off the big one? For one thing, it's under more pressure. In preparing the 9/11 attacks, the hijackers and their bosses took dozens of international flights and repeatedly opened U.S. bank accounts under their own names. Al-Qaeda operated a document center at the Kandahar airport. All that would be virtually impossible today, as hordes of counterterrorism officials scrutinize financial transactions and cell-phone calls, and drones track al-Qaeda leaders around the clock. And while government no-fly lists remain flawed, at least they exist. Today,

the number of suspected terrorists prohibited from boarding a plane in the U.S. is about 4,000. Before Sept. 11, according to al-Qaeda expert Peter Bergen, it was 16.

Al-Qaeda is not just under more pressure from the West. It's also under more pressure from fellow Muslims. Across the greater Middle East, notes Jenkins, governments that once took a passive, or even indulgent, view of al-Qaeda have been frightened into action by jihadist attacks on their soil. Al-Qaeda's butchery has wrecked its image among ordinary Muslims. After jihadists bombed a wedding in Amman in 2005, the percentage of Jordanians who said they trusted bin Laden to "do the right thing" dropped from 25% to less than 1%. In Pakistan, the site of repeated attacks, support for al-Qaeda fell from 25% in 2008 to 9% the next year. In 2007, the Pew Research Center found that in Pakistan, Lebanon, Indonesia and Bangladesh, support for terrorism had dropped by at least half since 2002.

All this means that even in places like Pakistan and Yemen where al-Qaeda or its affiliates retain some organizational presence, it is much harder to train lots of would-be terrorists for complex, mass-casualty attacks. In response, al-Qaeda seems to be relying more on solo operators, people like Abdulmutallab, Fort Hood gunman Major Nidal Malik Hasan and Najibullah Zazi, the Afghan American arrested last year for allegedly plotting to blow up buildings in New York. These lone wolves are harder to catch, but they're also less likely to do massive damage. Al-Qaeda's new motto, according to New York City police commissioner Raymond Kelly, seems to be "If you can't do the big attacks, do the small attacks." Not exactly cause for celebration, but certainly not cause for the hysteria that has gripped Washington since Christmas Day. ■

Beinart is an associate professor of journalism and political science at the City University of New York and a senior fellow at the New America Foundation