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**POLITICAL CONFLICTS
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POLITICAL CONFLICTS

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We Still Stand a Chance

The path to a nuclear weapons free world is strewn with rocks but the issues can be resolved

By PANG SEN



COURTESY OF PANG SEN

During the past year, Korean and Iranian nuclear issues have undergone a series of worrisome developments. Declared or undeclared nuclear activities, testing of missiles and satellite launches, together with on-and-off military exercises kept hitting media headlines while diplomatic talks—either among the six parties over the Korean issue or between the 5+1 (the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and Germany) with Iran over the Iranian nuclear issue—appeared to be going nowhere. UN Security Council resolutions bringing in new sanctions were adopted one after another, yet without much effect.

In July 2007, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) shut down its nuclear facilities at Yongbyon, a major breakthrough in the six-party talks. A year later, the DPRK blew up the cooling tower at the nuclear site, another step forward, giving people hope the goal of a denuclearized Korean Peninsula was within reach.

But the progress soon hit a snag. This year a number of negative events have occurred. In January, the DPRK's Foreign Ministry said it would not give up nuclear deterrent capability unless the United States renounces its nuclear threat against the DPRK and no longer provides nuclear protection to the Republic of Korea (ROK).

In March, a 12-day military exercise conducted jointly by the United States and the ROK further angered the DPRK, which reciprocated with the launching of a satellite. After the Security Council issued a presidential statement criticizing the launch, the DPRK declared its withdrawal from the six-party talks and the restoration of its defunct nuclear facilities, culminating in a "successful nuclear test" toward the end of May.

On the Iranian issue, the prospect is no less gloomy. In October, Mohamed ElBaradei, then Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency

(IAEA), launched a bold proposal, requesting Tehran to send 1.2 tons of low-enriched uranium, or 70 percent of its stockpile, to Russia by the end of the year for further enrichment. The enriched material would then be sent to France to be converted into fuel rods that would be returned to Iran for use in a reactor that produces medical isotopes.

These steps could prevent Iran's nuclear materials from being further processed into weapons-grade material, thus easing international concerns. The United States, Russia and France quickly gave their support. Iran also indicated that it was considering the proposal in depth and in a favorable light. The not-so-negative response from Iran heartened negotiators who had been searching desperately for a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue. If accepted by all parties and implemented, it would be indeed substantial progress.

But hopes were soon dashed. A month after the proposal was put on the table, an unexpected downside emerged. ElBaradei said in Vienna that the talks between the IAEA and Iran had reached deadlock. Moreover, he informed the IAEA Governing Board that a newly discovered nuclear plant in Qom with about 3,000 centrifuges to produce enriched uranium was "under construction." Iran failed to notify the agency of the existence of this facility. Iran has not suspended its enrichment-related activities or its work on heavy water-related projects as required by the Security Council, nor has it implemented the additional protocol of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

The IAEA reacted by adopting a resolution condemning Iran's move. Iran's response was quick and firm. It decided to build 10 more nuclear plants, a dramatic expansion of its existing nuclear program.

A disconcerting pattern

The Iranian and Korean nuclear issues appear to be repeating a remarkably similar pattern: talks between the parties break down from time to time and crises appear not infrequently. Whenever a crisis reaches an explosion point, flexibility would be shown and talks would resume—a dim light of hope to an anxious world that a

turning point has appeared and we are one step closer toward the end of the tunnel. Yet, when the tension diminishes, another crisis soon crops up. The old scenario reappears. We are invariably repeating the same and endless cycle of "crisis easing of tension-crisis again."

The end result: for every step forward, there are two backward ones. Each crisis and its subsequent resolution take the world farther and farther away from its set goals. The Korean Peninsula, instead of being denuclearized, is moving quickly along the track of nuclear weaponization. In Iran, nuclear facilities are being built at a nonstop pace, and increasingly unnerving activities are going on all the time.

These gruesome cycles inevitably lead people from expectation to frustration and from exasperation to desperation.

Progress and its retrogression worry not only diplomats who are directly involved in the talks and the public who can do little to influence the situation, but also state leaders who face mounting domestic and international pressure to find solutions one way or another.

U.S. President Barack Obama has, on a number of occasions, publicly expressed his impatience with Iran. He said the patience of the United States is limited and time is running out for Iran.

Russia, a traditional ally of Iran, also toughened its position. Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said in a recent interview with the German magazine *Der Spiegel*: "I wouldn't like to see all that ending in the introduction of international sanctions, as sanctions are usually steps in a very difficult and dangerous direction. But if there is no movement forward, no one is excluding such a scenario."

Seeking a solution

Judging from past experience, methods for resolving issues of international concern are limited to diplomatic negotiations, mandatory sanctions and military action.

Sanctions have been applied in both cases and have produced little effect so far. Military actions are still less handy tools to be used lightly. The war with Iraq has proved to be disastrous for both Iraq and the United States. Apart from human, material and financial losses, it served as a

The author is vice president and director general of the United Nations Association of China

negative example for countries with ambitions for weapon of mass destruction. That is, if Saddam Hussein had acted quickly to attain nuclear armament capacity, the United States might have had second thoughts before starting Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom and the fate of Saddam might have been entirely different.

With negotiations suspended, military options out and sanctions not working, will there ever be any solution? What can the international community do to put the shaky non-proliferation regime on hold?

To find a solution to this issue, we need to diagnose its root cause first.

If we try to read the minds of the two countries, it is not too difficult to discern a sense of insecurity behind all the troubles confronting us. The feeling of being threatened gave rise to the urge to acquire nuclear weapons either as deterrence or as a means to defend oneself. Therefore, the first and foremost action of the international community to take is to build mutual trust and improve relations among the parties concerned. This would help remove underlying security concerns and reduce the incentives to go nuclear.

When talking with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, the DPRK's top leader Kim Jong Il clearly expressed what his country wanted: The hostile relationship between the United States and the DPRK must be changed into a peaceful one through bilateral talks. It is clear that improved bilateral ties between the United States and the DPRK and the removal of the security concerns of the latter would pave the way for meaningful progress toward a denuclearized Korean Peninsula.

Equally important, double standards should be abandoned, so that no nation would expect positive recognition of whatever nature for its nuclear ambitions. In this regard, the case of India is a telling example. Having conducted nuclear testing and declared itself a nuclear weapons state, India received unanimous international condemnation. But, after a short period of sanctions, the United States not only pardoned India, but also awarded it a bilateral nuclear pact, later approved by the Nuclear Suppliers Group, allowing the United States to lift its nuclear trade embargo so

India could access U.S. civilian nuclear technologies.

The U.S.-India nuclear deal certainly opens the door to countries eager to cross the nuclear threshold. That is, if they persevere and succeed in their nuclear programs, their positions would be greatly strengthened and they might ultimately receive similar recognition. With such a prospect in sight, why give up?

Besides, international cooperation for the peaceful use of nuclear energy should be enhanced, so that the nuclear genie, whether in or out of the bottle, is harnessed, which serves the interests of all. In this respect, the IAEA should and could play a vital role. International cooperation should be strengthened—together with non-proliferation efforts. Safeguards should be strengthened and universality of NPT membership should be achieved.

Last but not least, progress in nuclear disarmament is needed to reassure the world that a nuclear-free world is not merely a slogan, but a goal for all.

Though the challenges are daunting, we cannot afford to be disheartened. So far, neither Iran nor the DPRK has totally shut the door on dialogue.

During Wen's Pyongyang visit in October, Kim Jong Il said denuclearization was the will of late leader Kim Il Song and there had been no change on the part of his country to achieve that goal. He also told Wen the DPRK would return to multilateral negotiations, including the six-party talks. Upon concluding his visit to the DPRK in early December, Stephen Bosworth, President Obama's special envoy, said "there is common understanding with the DPRK on the need to implement the 2005 joint statement and to resume the six-party process."

Iran, on the other hand, has all along insisted on the peaceful nature of its nuclear program. Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has repeatedly expressed willingness to cooperate with the international community on condition that Iran's right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy is not in any way jeopardized.

So, we still stand a chance. Whether negotiations are successful depends on the political will and wisdom of parties concerned. ■

Nuclear double standards should be abandoned, so that no nation would expect positive recognition of whatever nature for its nuclear ambitions

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Working Toward Rapprochement

U.S. President Barack Obama's election and his strategy present opportunities for the United States to build a better relationship with China but both sides have work to do

By DREW THOMPSON



The year 2009 began with celebrations in Beijing marking the 30th anniversary of the establishment of China-U.S. diplomatic relations. President Barack

Obama's inauguration also struck a new tone for the vitally important and complicated relationship between the two countries, which had benefited from its careful stewardship during the previous administration. But President Obama was determined to employ a "new realism" in his approach to China by breaking the cycle of previous administrations that came into office critical and dismissive of China, only to try to repair the relationship later in the term.

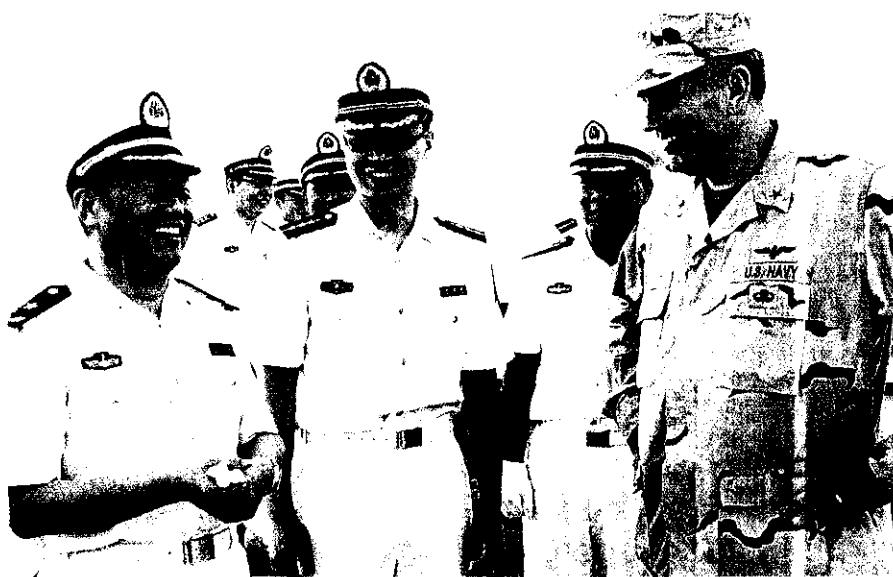
The government-to-government relationship has become increasingly institutionalized and regular with the outgoing Bush administration organizing the last Strategic Economic Dialogue in December, creating momentum for the forum's continuation, with a new format labeled the Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S&ED). Regrettably, the China-U.S. civilian relationship far outstrips the military one in terms of consistency and substance. The Obama administration came into office with bilateral military relations on hold following China's cancellation of military exchanges in response to announced U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. China released its defense white paper on Obama's inauguration day, assuring that it would receive little attention by U.S. media and senior officials not yet settled in their new offices. This low-key approach on China's part, coupled with the Obama administration's concerted strategy to engage China constructively from the outset was tested soon after the national security team was in place.

In March, the Pentagon lodged a formal protest with China and released video

of Chinese vessels harassing a U.S. Navy surveillance ship operating 75 miles off the coast of south China's Hainan Province. This incident was part of an escalating series of encounters at sea between Chinese and U.S. vessels, which could have potentially resulted in a collision and pitted the two countries against one another in a standoff. But within days of the incident, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi met in Washington, with Secretary Clinton saying both sides "must work hard in the future to avoid such incidents." Unlike the April 2001 collision between a Chinese fighter plane and the U.S. Navy surveillance plane that crash-landed on Hainan in the first months of the Bush administration, in 2009 China and the United States controlled rhetorical rejoinders and quickly engaged in discussion, preventing the situation from escalating or undermining attempts to strengthen overall bilateral relations.

Those efforts to strengthen the bilateral relationship are conspicuous. President Obama's visit to Asia in his first year in office—the first ever for a U.S. president—is an important indication of the relative importance that China, South Korea, Japan and Southeast Asia occupy in Washington's strategy. Military-to-military rapport is tentatively improving as well, culminating in October with a visit of General Xu Caihou, Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission, to Washington, D.C. Despite progress, mistrust runs deep on both sides and there is considerable room for improvement, prompting Secretary of Defense Robert Gates to ask General Xu to break the cycle of "on-again-off-again" military relations and commit to sustained contact.

Trade continues to be the most important pillar for the China-U.S. relationship, though tensions were heightened by the global financial crisis and high-profile trade cases. China's worries about the security of their investments in U.S. Treasury holdings and American concerns about a ballooning trade deficit and job losses will continue to test the relationship. However, U.S. officials such as Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner, who studied at Peking University, and Commerce Secretary Gary Locke, the first Chinese-American governor and commerce secretary, both have a solid understanding of China and will undoubtedly be able to work through difficult challenges with their Chinese counterparts. Recent moves by the White House to simplify export approvals for restricted hi-tech products, as well as continued support for engagement through dialogues such as the



FIGHTING CUTTHROATS: Scott Sanders (front right), Commander of the U.S. Combined Task Force 151, visits China's *Zhoushan* warship in the Gulf of Aden on November 1 along with Wang Zhiguo (front left), Commander of the Chinese convoy fleet

The author is director of China Studies and Starr Senior Fellow at The Nixon Center in Washington, D.C.



HUANG JINGWEN

IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION: Chinese President Hu Jintao holds talks with U.S. President Barack Obama in Beijing on November 17 during Obama's first state visit to China

S&ED and JCCT (Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade), underscore that despite disputes that might result in trade cases being filed at the World Trade Organization, the U.S. side is making a serious effort to ensure the bilateral trade relationship remains sound and develops steadily during the Obama administration.

President Obama's visit to Beijing in November marked a major diplomatic milestone in his first year in office. The wide range of issues discussed illustrate the depth and breadth of the bilateral relationship, making this perhaps the first meeting between the two countries' leaders where global issues dominated the agenda. However, President Obama is not taking the path of least resistance as he seeks to build the U.S.-China relationship, evidenced by decidedly negative portrayals of his visit in major U.S. newspapers. He is taking a high-risk, low-profile approach that seeks long-term gains for U.S. interests at the expense of attaining "quick wins" that potentially alienate China and reduce the likelihood of Beijing's cooperation on major issues. This approach is of high risk for the president because it potentially displeases some of his important domestic constituencies who might like to see him press more visibly on key issues such as human rights. U.S. organized labor groups are also looking for concrete actions to protect American jobs, reduce the trade deficit and roll back China's successful industrial protection and import substitution policies. Obama's low-key strategy entails a commitment to frequent dialogues with the expectation that incremental progress will be made over the long term.

Consistent with the "comprehensive" approach to U.S.-China relations, this low-profile, high-risk strategy is being applied

not only to economic issues, but strategic security challenges as well. There is a great sense of urgency in the United States about North Korea's and Iran's nuclear aspirations and the threat of regional instability each poses. But many Western observers feel China does not share these concerns or their sense of urgency, and chooses instead to protect both countries from UN sanctions and make significant investments and trade deals that empower Tehran and Pyongyang. On North Korea and Iran, Obama's strategy is high-risk because he is not directly confronting China or "delivering" high-profile results that satisfy critics and preempt accusations Obama is not taking a firm stand. To overcome this, the White House has to communicate tactfully the low-profile achievements that will contribute to finding durable solutions to these difficult problems, such as carefully lining up Chinese support for U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy Stephen Bosworth's visit to Pyongyang and gaining North Korea's willingness to return to the six-party talks. Of course, the six-party talks in and of themselves do not signal the resolution of the issue, but they are a step in the direc-

The atmospherics of the China-U.S. relationship are generally positive as engagement takes on a new importance

tion toward denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Similarly on Iran, President Obama will have to elucidate his expectations of China's behavior and set objectives for U.S. engagement with China that will contribute to a multinational effort that ultimately leads to Iran's abandonment of its nuclear weapons program.

The atmospherics of the China-U.S. relationship are generally positive as engagement takes on a new importance. It is becoming increasingly apparent China is important to solving key global challenges and its rise needs to be accommodated so its expanding global footprint does not upset international norms or undermine architectures from which it has up to now benefited. The U.S. strategy presumes that to engage China effectively requires a veneer of affability which has so far proven relatively easy to maintain. However, the U.S. approach presumes China will take meaningful actions, not just rhetorical ones, to address key challenges, including climate change and non-proliferation.

The United States recognizes China is not ready to "take the lead" on international issues, but frustration will undoubtedly grow in the United States, both with China and President Obama's strategy, if China continues to support countries that undermine regional security or if Beijing refuses to take on greater responsibilities. President Obama risks being seen as coddling a free-riding China and will be increasingly pressured to try a different strategy. In the absence of results, giving face to China and treating it as an equal will be less palatable and the administration could be pressured to set up confrontational encounters with Chinese leaders. Should China not take meaningful action to address challenges, Beijing's global credibility will slip as well, for example, as with Gulf states if Beijing does not take a firmer stand with Iran, or Central Asian states if China does not contribute meaningfully to Afghan reconstruction. China will not be able to look indefinitely at challenges such as climate change, trade imbalances, Iran and North Korea and determine the impending threats are America's fault or problem while it pursues a course that sustains those threats, and seeks only to benefit itself at the expense of others.

In 2009 a novel strategy for a new president to build a more comprehensive, pragmatic relationship with China was introduced. But China cannot just sit back and bask in the abstract camaraderie and predictability now characterizing the China-U.S. relationship. For this to continue, China will have to "step up" in 2010, look beyond its domestic challenges, narrow national interest and begin to contribute to international efforts to solve global problems. ■

Better Times Ahead

The Lisbon Treaty and a new EU hierarchy point to greater stability and a resurgent dynamism

By STANLEY CROSSICK



The year 2009 was a difficult one for the European Union (EU). The European Parliament elections, held in June, are always disruptive. The results were disappointing with a low turnout and many eurosceptics elected.

The uncertainty of the Lisbon Treaty's coming into force was an overhanging cloud for most of the year. The obstacles to this were the legal process before the German Constitutional Court and two processes before the Czech Constitutional Court, the second Irish referendum in October and the refusal of the Czech President Vaclav Klaus to sign the ratification instrument. But all these issues were satisfactorily resolved and the new treaty came into force on December 1.

The appointment of a "permanent" European Council president and a high representative of the EU for foreign affairs and security policy (foreign minister in all but name) on November 19 ended a long period of speculation and media interest. Finally, the member state nominees for the new European Commission were announced and President José Manuel Barroso, with his five-year mandate already renewed, allocated the portfolios on November 27.

Thus the year ended on a high note—but the commissioners face parliamentary hearings in January and will not take office until February at the earliest. It is expected that European Parliament will object to more than one nominee.

The EU is effectively at the end of a long period of uncertainty. This uncertainty has led to a loss of momentum and dynamism in EU developments, making the union much more reactive than proactive. Its position on the world stage has been weakened. There has also been a considerable loss of morale among EU officials. But this has not materially affected legislation: It remains remarkable how the EU manages to adopt complex legislation, working in over 20 languages.

The dark cloud is lifting, the mood is brightening in Brussels and the union is looking forward more optimistically to the year 2010.

The author is a senior research fellow with the Brussels Institute of Contemporary China Studies

Demarcation of roles

It will take some months for the new European Commission team, the European Council president and the foreign policy chief to settle down. Although Herman van Rompuy and Catherine Ashton took office on December 1, when the new treaty came into force, the new commission will not take office until probably February 2010, after approval by the European Parliament.

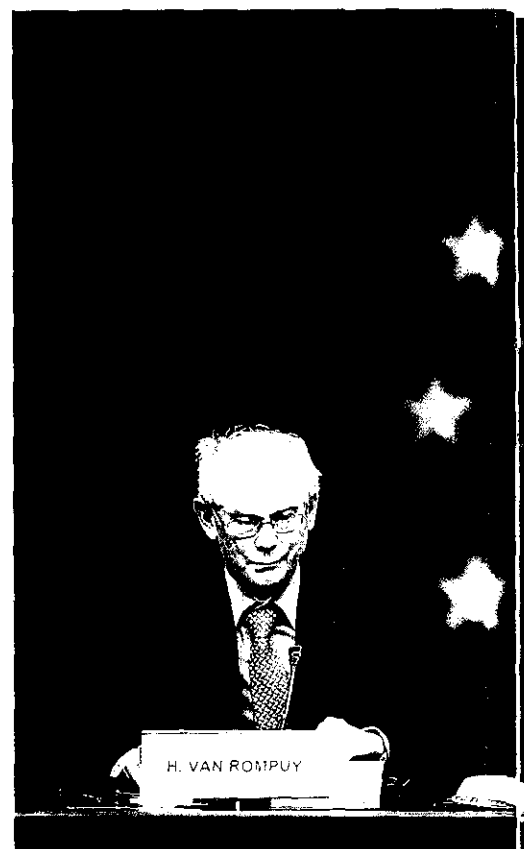
This leads to a somewhat messy couple of months with, for example, former External Affairs Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner taking responsibility for trade.

Many reactions to the appointments of Herman van Rompuy as president of the European Council and Catherine Ashton as foreign policy chief have been negative. They deserve further consideration.

There is a built-in conflict between the roles of European Council president and foreign policy chief. The Lisbon Treaty prescribes for the former a chairperson with an essentially internal job. The president also ensures the external representation of the EU on issues concerning its common foreign and security policy, without prejudice to the powers of the foreign policy chief. This is hardly consistent with the treaty provision that the latter represents the EU in matters relating to the common foreign and security policy, conducts political dialogue with third parties on the EU's behalf, and expresses the EU's position in international organizations and at international conferences.

Van Rompuy appears made for the basic job specification and his character suggests that he will concentrate on increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the European Council, and not seek to project himself on the world stage and relegate Ashton's role. Ashton will not seek to emulate Javier Solana and is expected to focus initially on building and organizing the new diplomatic corps—the European External Action Service. This task is both difficult and important. The significance of the new service will be influenced by the caliber of secondees from member states and the relationship between the service and national diplomatic corps.

Although neither Van Rompuy nor Ashton has much international experience, both have been effective in domestic politics and Ashton has done well as the EU trade commissioner. Both appointees are well suit-



ed to work closely with each other and with European Commission President Barroso. They are hardworking and are likely to be effective in agreeing a sensible demarcation of their roles.

There is a good argument for saying that two low-key appointees are more likely to construct the necessary basis for a stronger and more unified role for the EU on the world stage. High-profile appointees would have put the leaders of the big member states on their guard. Remember foreign policy is the only major policy area, in which these leaders can appear to wield international influence. If all goes well, a high profile foreign policy chief will be acceptable in 2015.

The European Commission comes out of this new arrangement in a strengthened position. Barroso is well known and established, having served for five years as its president. Ashton was a commissioner under his leadership and is now vice president. Van Rompuy is not a forceful person and an integrationist.

The real test

The real test of further integration will come in internal affairs—the future of the single market, in particular in financial services. The single market is the EU's greatest success and the foundation of today's EU. It is inevitably strained in difficult economic times, particularly when member states wish



TOP GUN: Belgian Prime Minister Herman van Rompuy (left) and Briton Catherine Ashton (third left) are elected the EU's first-ever full-time president and high representative for foreign affairs and security policy respectively on November 19 in Brussels

to give financial support to domestic industry. This is frequently in conflict with the treaties which lay down the basic principle that state assistance which distorts or threatens to distort free competition is incompatible with the common (i.e. internal) market and is illegal.

Furthermore, there are serious divisions over how to regulate financial services in the wake of the financial and economic crisis. The fundamental division is between France and the UK, over whether the legislation should be "heavy" or "light" and to what extent the industry should be controlled at European and national levels. There are fundamental differences in approach, exacerbated

by the British belief the French want to weaken London as a financial center. This is not in French or European interests, but has been fed by President Nicolas Sarkozy's irresponsible outburst on the appointment of Michel Barnier as commissioner responsible for the internal market and services:

"Do you know what it means for me to see for the first time in 50 years a French European commissioner in charge of the internal market, including financial services, including the City [of London]?" "I want the world to see the victory of the European model, which has nothing to do with the excesses of financial capitalism."

He gave two wrong signals. First, that the appointment ensures the "European model," or rather the French model, will be the future blueprint, because of the appointment of Barnier. Second, that Barnier alone decides on the relevant legislation. This kind of public statement does not help Sarkozy achieve his declared objective, as it heightens the guard of the British and riles other would-be supporters.

It also makes life more difficult for Barnier, who as a former commissioner well knows that commissioners do not represent their country nor take instructions from its president. Any legislation will require support within the European Commission services, extensive consultation, an impact assessment,

an agreed draft, approval by the full college of commissioners, adoption by qualified majority of the members states in the European Council, and of course adoption by the European Parliament.

Worst of all, Sarkozy's outburst plays into the hands of critics of European integration. It's this kind of member state leadership that makes integration more difficult. Unfortunately, Europe currently has too many weak national leaders.

The European Parliament is the biggest institutional winner as its powers have been materially increased by the Lisbon Treaty. The main integrating force has historically been the European Commission, with the European Parliament's support. The extent to which they pursue integration together, and the extent to which European Parliament will (wrongly) regard the European Commission as a competing institution remains to be seen.

The EU had a poor 2009 but there is hope that, following the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, and the settling down of the new team, dynamism will return. However, poor economic conditions never bode well for integration and too many member state leaders prefer inter-governmentalism to integration.

Notwithstanding these negative elements, effective leadership from Brussels can drive the EU down the road to further integration. ■

The EU had a poor 2009 but there is hope that, following the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, and the settling down of the new team, dynamism will return

Middle East Solution

The Obama administration takes a star turn toward peace in the Middle East

By WANG JINGLIE



COURTESY OF WANG JINGLIE

U.S. President Barack Obama began this year with an eye toward sweeping reform. The Israeli-Palestinian issue has been very high on the agenda—a stark contrast to that of his predecessor.

Obama has promised to maintain a special relationship with Israel while supporting the creation of a Palestinian state by 2011. Moreover, he also cited the need to ensure the security interests of Israel.

This priority was evident in January, when Obama made his first international phone call to Mahmoud Abbas, President of the Palestinian National Authority.

Further desires to resolve tensions in the region also came three days after he took office when he appointed veteran diplomat and former Senator George Mitchell as his special Middle East Envoy. Since then, Mitchell has visited the Middle East seven times, pushing hard for Obama's regional policies for peace and reconciliation.

In early March, the U.S. president sent Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to visit Israel and the Palestinian territories respectively, proclaiming his active desire to see the establishment of a Palestinian state. Meanwhile, the United States pledged to provide \$900 million in reconstruction funds for Gaza.

In June, Obama visited the Middle East himself. In a poignant speech at Cairo University, he expressed sympathy for the Palestinian people, and said the only resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict "is for the aspirations of both sides to be met through two states, where Israelis and Palestinians each live in peace and security."

In late September, Obama successfully led to the tripartite U.S.-Israeli-Palestinian summit, trying to persuade Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to stop building settlements in the occupied territories. Meanwhile, he asked the Palestinians for a positive response, saying negotiations can be a shortcut to freeze the settlement construction.

Then in October, he telephoned Abbas once more, reiterating his support on the es-

tablishment of a Palestinian state. Later on, in early November, Hillary Clinton followed up by flying to the Middle East again for meditations.

Indeed, on the Middle East issue, Obama has taken a carrot-and-stick approach, imposing pressure by putting forward demands while offering benefits by making commitments. However, the actual result is not satisfactory enough.

Hardliners remain steadfast

Under pressure from the United States, the Israeli Government made some conciliatory measures.

Netanyahu put forward his plan for Middle East peace in mid-June. According to the plan, the Palestinians must explicitly recognize Israel as a Jewish state. In other words, the Palestinian refugee problem must be resolved outside the borders of Israel.

Beyond that, Netanyahu endorsed a "Demilitarized Palestinian State" with no armed forces, military alliance with other parties or control of airspace. He further noted that effective security measures should be taken to prevent weapons smuggling into the Palestinian territories.

Indeed, Netanyahu said he believes firmly

that Israel needs defensible borders, and that Jerusalem must remain the "united" capital of Israel. The construction of new settlements can be cancelled, he said, but the existing settlements and settlements under construction should be retained and continued, allowing the Jewish settlers there to live a normal life.

The international community, led by the United States, has repeatedly demanded that Israel stop building settlements in the occupied territories. But the Netanyahu Government has not compromised, and continues the hard-line stance.

In June, for example, Netanyahu approved the construction of 300 housing units in the West Bank. Then, at the end of November while making suggestions of a temporary freeze on settlement construction, he approved the final construction of 28 partially built settlements.

Netanyahu has long held the two-state solution as an international arrangement. Everything, he said, should be negotiated based on the real conditions. In fact, it means he does not accept the two-state solution. He merely regards Palestine as an "entity" rather than a state.

Israel's tough stance has consistently won the support of its domestic right-



XINHUA

The author is director of the Division of Middle East Studies at the Institute of West Asian and African Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

wing forces. Still, far-right members of the Knesset, the Israeli Parliament, have sardonically said that Netanyahu lost his qualifications to lead as soon as he brought forward the idea that the Palestinians could establish a state without an army.

This kind of compromise, they said, is actually the victory of Palestinian terrorism.

Palestinian variables

The Palestinian National Authority believes Obama's two-state solution, as well as his policy of supporting the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, is an active stance in promoting peace in the Middle East. The Palestinians emphasize that the key to the peace process lies in whether Israel can really accept the two-state solution, stop the expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, withdraw the checkpoints and roadblocks in the West Bank and lift the blockade on Gaza.

For long, the frictions between Palestinian groups have overshadowed

peace in the occupied territories. Hostilities between Hamas and Fatah show no sign of abatement.

The Palestinians have kept making efforts to eliminate its internal disputes, but the result has yet to be satisfactory. A new Palestinian Government was established in May. Then, in August, Fatah held its Sixth General Conference and elected a new Central Committee and Revolutionary Council.

Later the Palestinian National Council, the legislative body of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), elected six new members to its Executive Committee at the end of August to ensure the improvement of leadership. Nevertheless, all these have failed to eliminate the Palestinians' internal disputes.

It is noteworthy that Hamas has accepted the two-state solution—establishing a Palestinian state of full sovereignty with the lines of June 4, 1967, as its border and East Jerusalem as its capital.

However, discouraged by the repeated failures of a peace deal, Abbas, who was at an advanced age, declared at the beginning of November not to participate in the January 2010 elections. This further increases uncertainties for the future Palestinian political situation.

Abbas is a moderate who has been overwhelmingly trusted by Israel, the United States and Europe. In 2006, Hamas' big victory in the Palestinian legislative elections dealt a heavy blow to Fatah. But now, if the moderates led by Abbas were defeated once more, the political situation in the Palestinian territories will very likely be filled with new variables.

No pending agreement

Currently, the international community, including the UN and major big countries, are actively pushing for the solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Obama has made a lot of good efforts. The attention he paid and the measures he took have surpassed any other one of his predecessors. But the Americans cannot play the end role in resolving the Palestinian-Israeli dispute, which must ultimately be addressed mainly by the Israelis.

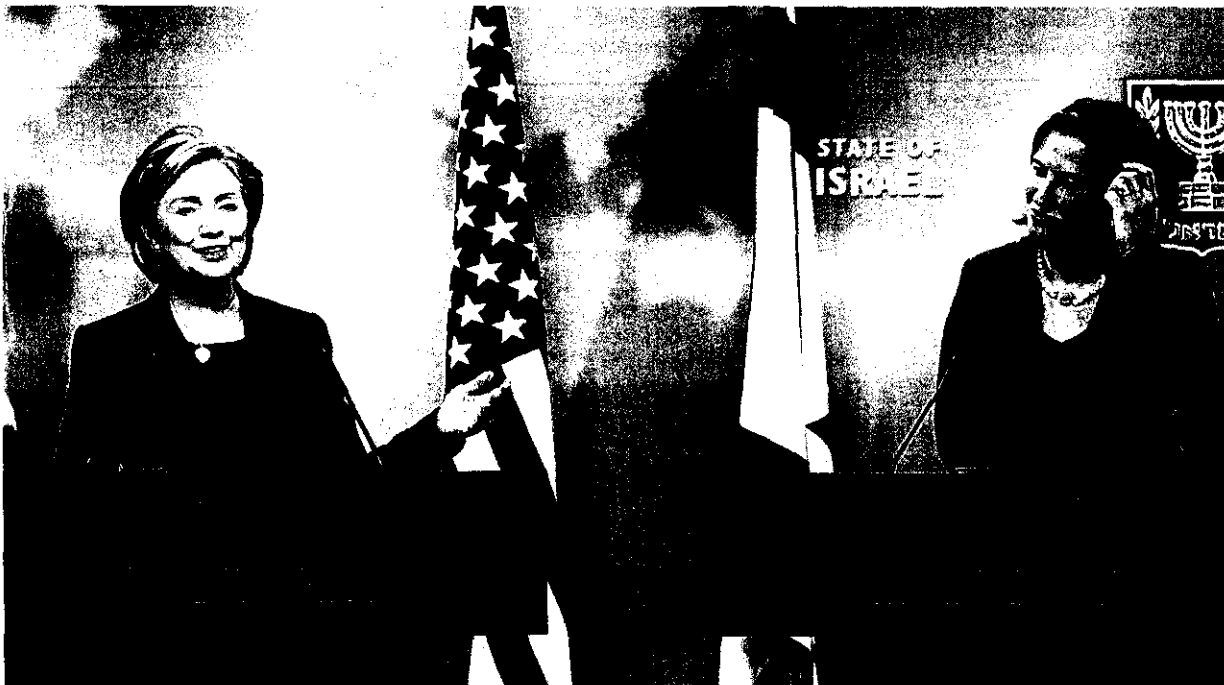
It is safe to say that the conservative Israeli Government has allowed this conflict to fester. It will, thus, be difficult for the two sides to restart peace talks in the near future.

There are a number of reasons for Israel's intractability. Inside Israel, for example, the right-wing elements maintain a huge influence, thus the Israeli Government can hardly change its hard-line stance.

What's more, after the Cold War, a large number of immigrants flowed into Israel, which created stress on infrastructure and housing availability and thus intensified its social problems. Both the hardliners' stance and the expansion of settlements are due to the Israeli domestic political needs to certain extent.

The PLO, which has fought for national rights for decades, is not powerful enough to play a bigger role. Internal disputes and the existence of armed, independent regimes have severely undermined its strength and status. The Israeli Government, which is in a stronger position, is reluctant to reach a peace agreement with a divided opponent. ■

But the Americans cannot play the end role in resolving the Palestinian-Israeli dispute, which must ultimately be addressed mainly by the Israelis



(Left) AN EYE FOR AN EYE: Palestinians search the rubble of a factory building damaged in an Israeli air raid on May 20. Israel bombed a Hamas stronghold in Gaza the day before in retaliation for rocket attacks from Gaza

PEACEMAKER: U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton attends a joint press conference with then Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni in Jerusalem on March 3 during her visit to Israel

Thailand's restive south and Malaysia

The trouble in between

BANGKOK

Najib and Abhisit have a look-see

PEOPLE in Thailand's three southern-most provinces have heard plenty of promises from Bangkok since January 2004, when Muslim insurgents began a campaign of separatist violence. Government ministers, royalty and military brass have descended in droves to dispense advice, arms and money. But the conflict, which has so far claimed the lives of nearly 4,000 Thais, shows no signs of ending.

Last year saw a surge in troops and a dip in violence. But the shootings and bombings have increased again, with gruesome tactics such as the beheading of victims. The militants behind the killings do not declare themselves. They have neither taken their violent campaign to the rest of Thailand nor combined forces with foreign, anti-western terrorists. Caught up in their own political drama, few Thais pay close attention to the southern conflict.

On December 9th Abhisit Vejjajiva, the prime minister, accompanied his Malaysian counterpart, Najib Razak, on a one-day trip to the area, a former sultanate that is populated mostly by ethnic-Malay Muslims. Mr Najib is the first Malaysian leader to visit since the insurgency began. Thai diplomats have worked hard to prevent the conflict from becoming an international issue, though America has begun to look more closely and has earmarked aid money for peace-building projects.

Mr Najib's visit comes amid increased discussion of the need for a political solution that includes a degree of self-rule in the south. In theory, this should blunt local demands for independence. Duncan McCargo from the University of Leeds,

who has written a book on the conflict, believes the idea is winning supporters in some unlikely quarters, and that a consensus could be emerging, though one that is held hostage to political rivalries.

Mr Abhisit has offered support for self-rule, but is loth to expend any political capital on it. The Thai security forces and bureaucracy recoil at any hint of autonomy. The army is doing rather nicely out of what a new report by the International Crisis Group (ICG), a think-tank, calls "the industry of insecurity". Over \$3 billion has been poured into the south since 2004. This explains why the army whose support Mr Abhisit needs, dismisses his calls to put civilians in charge.

That Mr Najib favours autonomy for his ethnic brethren in southern Thailand will arouse the suspicion of Thai security forces. They have accused Malaysia of affording insurgents a refuge and of turning a blind eye to their activities. For its part, Malaysia grumbles that Thailand's human-

rights abuses stoke the anger of Muslims on both sides of the border. The ICG points out that during nearly six years of violence, no Thai official has been prosecuted.

This mutual mistrust will keep Malaysia on the sidelines, in contrast to the southern Philippines, where it has played a useful role in hosting peace talks between Muslim rebels and government negotiators (see box). But the conflict in Mindanao points both to the difficulty of striking political settlements with fractious rebels and of the dangers of fighting fire with fire. Private armies there began as self-defence against Muslim insurgents. Southern Thailand is increasingly awash with privately owned guns, including those provided by the authorities to village self-defence groups and other paramilitary forces. The killing in June of ten Muslims inside a mosque has been blamed on a Buddhist militia, which was probably taking revenge for Muslim attacks. The cycle of violence is far from over. ■

Violence in Mindanao

A martial plan?

MANILA

A looming rebellion, or perhaps a chance to cover up embarrassing links

THE massacre last month of 57 people in the southern Philippine province of Maguindanao, on Mindanao, has provoked outrage. In response, the government of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo has been striving to give the impression that it is doing its utmost to uphold the rule of law. The opposition thinks first impressions can be deceptive.

The killings involved a group on the way to file a candidacy for elections next year, accompanied by about 30 members of the press. Armed men shot or hacked to death all in the convoy, as well as some unconnected passers-by. Suspicion immediately fell on a local mayor, Andal Ampatuan, a member of a Muslim clan with a private army that lords it over the local government. The authorities in Manila soon arrested him and charged him with multiple murder, which he has denied. The security forces began uncovering arms caches on Ampatuan property. On December 4th the government declared martial law in Maguindanao, saying a rebellion was looming. Several more leading Ampatuans were detained.

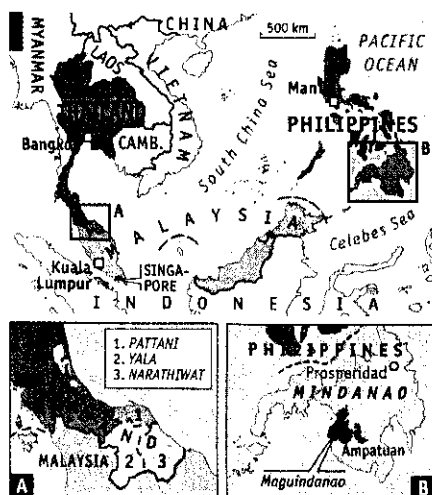
The government said it would abide by the constitution. But martial law makes Filipinos nervous, because President Ferdinand Marcos used it in the 1970s to establish a dictatorship. So the opposition is suspicious. Until the massacre the government seemed to connive in Ampatuan control of Maguindanao.

Successive administrations have

allowed warlords to dominate parts of the country, using private armies to keep voters in line and to keep communist or Muslim separatist guerrillas out. The Ampatuan alleged to be the mastermind of the massacre blamed it on Muslim separatists of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which this week resumed peace talks (in Kuala Lumpur) with the government after a hiatus of over a year. The MILF denied the accusation. Its fighters hold sway over parts of Maguindanao, and these areas are not covered by the martial-law declaration. Nor is the area around Prosperidad, where, in a seemingly unrelated incident, gunmen this week abducted 65 students and a teacher from a school.

The opposition suspects the government is using martial-law rule to cover up evidence of an unscrupulous relationship with the Ampatuans, including an alleged plot to manipulate the voting when Mrs Arroyo was elected president in 2004. The constitution says she must step down next year. Her more extreme opponents suspect that the declaration of martial law in Maguindanao is a dry-run for its imposition more broadly.

This is probably fantasy. But the government has shown itself ready to use all the powers the constitution gives it. Critics say it had already shown a willingness to use some it does not, by dabbling in the political shadows inhabited by the Ampatuans and clans like them.





Democracy, China and the Communist Party

Big surprise

BEIJING

Attempts to democratise the Communist Party have failed. Again

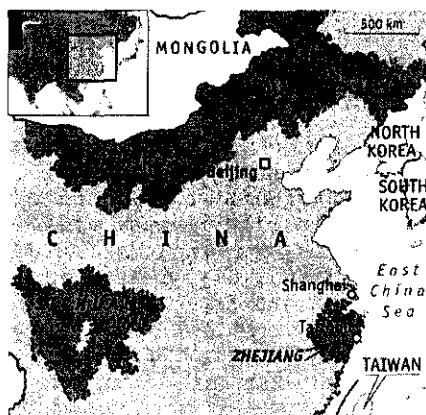
"INNER-PARTY democracy is the life of the party," enthused China's former president, Jiang Zemin, as he prepared to hand over to Hu Jintao seven years ago. It could, he said, promote democracy in the country as a whole. But Mr Hu's cautious experiments with reform inside the party appear to have fizzled. So too, it seems, has his own commitment to the idea.

Rhetorically at least, Mr Hu had shown more enthusiasm for reform than did Mr Jiang who, as party chief from 1989 to 2002, made no obvious effort to change the party's top-down dictatorial style. But in September Mr Hu dropped a not-so-subtle hint of his own reservations, emphasising the principle of "centralism"—which means upholding party decisions without dissent. The party's own literature, especially that intended for official readership, suggests his reforms have often resulted in more pointless rubber-stamp meetings, confusion and disillusionment. They have also been a drain on government funds.

Party reformers had hoped that the new generation of leaders who will come to the top in 2012 would be chosen after at least a modicum of competition. The transfer of power, during which Mr Hu himself is expected to step down, is getting under way. But the stagnation of reform experiments at the bottom, together with the recent appointment at the top of five new provincial party leaders, apparently without any real consultation, does not bode

well for inner-party democracy.

A critical feature of that reform involves a system that Mao Zedong briefly toyed with in the mid-1950s. Known as the "tenure system" (*changrenzhi*), it gives delegates to party congresses notional supervisory powers over officials for the entire five years of a congress, instead of just for one meeting at the beginning of it. It also gives delegates some say in the appointment of party officials. The system was written into the party's constitution in 1956, during the "hundred flowers" campaign of modest liberalisation. But Mao rapidly lost his appetite for such things as he moved to crush growing dissent. It was removed again in 1969 during the Cultural Revolution.



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Not until the late 1980s, more than a decade after Mao's death, did party officials dare revisit the idea. They were still far from brave enough to promote it from top to bottom of the party, as Mao did. But they chose a dozen county towns and urban districts for experiments. Then came the bloody suppression of the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989 and the leadership's enthusiasm waned once more. Under Mr Jiang, more than half the selected areas abandoned their trials. Mr Jiang instead tried to bolster his reformist credentials by promoting direct elections to village-level posts.

For a while these elections entranced Western governments and lobby groups, which hoped they would lead to competitive elections higher up the political system. They did not, except in rare cases. And they had problems of their own. By the time Mr Hu took over in 2002, village democracy had become mired in disputes over the role of elected leaders, and cramped by the resurgence of ancient clan rivalries. Soaring numbers of rural protests suggested that village-level democracy had done little to make peasants happier, or to resolve their disputes.

To Mr Hu, anxious to show that he still believed in political reform (a central if often-ignored plank of party policy since the 1980s), reforming the party itself seemed a safer option. Once again, the tenure system was taken down and dusted off. Party officials got experiments going in 97 counties and urban districts spread across two-thirds of China's provinces.

But now their enthusiasm has faltered. At the last national party congress in 2007, Mr Hu merely reaffirmed the need for experiments. There has been little further expansion of the tenure system to the rest of China's more than 2,800 counties, and none at all to congresses at the prefectural, ▶▶

► provincial or central levels. Inner-party democracy was a theme of the party's annual central-committee meeting in September. But the communiqué at the end of the meeting did not mention the tenure idea, nor did it specify plans for wider trials of any other reforms.

A particularly frank admission of the tenure system's lacklustre progress appeared in a recent edition of a journal published by the party's Central School. It was written by researchers from Yaan prefecture in southwestern Sichuan province—an area that only last year was being hailed by China's state-run news agency for having achieved “notable success” with the tenure system. The researchers' findings revealed an entirely different picture. During the past seven years of tenure-system trials, they said, the “bold reformist spirit” of party members in Yaan had ebbed. Reforms, they said, were often mere window-dressing.

It looked good on paper. Congresses would be elevated to what the party constitution says they are supposed to be: the supreme organs of party power. Their delegates would be directly elected by party members (or in the case of higher-level congresses, by their lower-level counterparts). They would meet annually instead of every five years. They would debate and vote on key party decisions. They would conduct competitive elections for party committees which, in turn, would elect the top leadership at that level.

As the Yaan researchers found, however, snags abound. The tenure system is supposed to set up “parliaments within the party”, as Mao called them. Many party bosses have dug in their heels to resist this and cautious delegates have shied away from challenging them. The majority of delegates are still senior officials (68% in one Yaan county cited). Even in Jiaojiang, a district of Taizhou city in the eastern province of Zhejiang which has been trying out the tenure system for 21 years and is often cited as a model for such reform, regulations keep the share of senior officials among the delegates at around 55%. As if this rigging were not enough, the party constitution allows for leaders to be removed or transferred without reference to the congresses to which they are notionally answerable.

Critics of the tenure system say that annual meetings of party congresses often just repeat the work of parliamentary bodies, themselves stacked with the party faithful. Officials who are members of several such bodies end up wasting a huge amount of time. The costs of party congresses are borne by local governments, many of which struggle to sustain their own bloated bureaucracies.

The core of the problem is the principle of “centralism”. This means that members must uphold party decisions without dis-

sent. Liberals think reforms will not work unless this requirement is changed. But at the party meeting in September, Mr Hu qualified his predecessor's remark. “Inner-party democracy is the life of the party,” he said, before adding: “Centralism and unity are the guarantee of its strength.”

Mr Hu is doubtless especially keen that the party follows his orders as he tries to line up like-minded successors to take over in 2012. At the end of November new party chiefs were appointed in five provinces in what appeared to be a prelude to the upcoming changes. Much attention focused on the choice of two unusually young men, both aged 46—Hu Chunhua in Inner Mongolia and Sun Zhengcai in Jilin. If Mr Hu is grooming them for Politburo slots, he will leave nothing to chance—least of all the possibility that party congresses might block their rise. Li Fan, a Beijing-based consultant on grassroots democracy, believes that the tenure system has “basically failed”. ■

Indian states

Divide but not rule?

DELHI

Attempts to satisfy demands for local autonomy backfire

PROTESTERS fought with police. Politicians yelled so loudly that parliament was adjourned. The Indian government's announcement on December 9th that it would eventually create a 29th state by splitting up Andhra Pradesh (AP, see map) caused a wave of protests even bigger than the one it sought to calm.

Activists in AP have long been demanding statehood for Telangana, an impoverished region in the centre of the state, and recently closed down the prosperous capital, Hyderabad, with their noisy protests. But it was a fast “to the death” by a local politician, K. Chandrasekhar Rao, whose increasingly gaunt face appeared daily in the national media, that prompted India's central government, led by the Congress party, to bow to the demands of the five-decade-long campaign. Since then, apparently wishing it had not acted with such haste, and worried about the political fallout in one of its strongholds, Congress has been back-peddalling furiously.

In AP itself, the main focus of outrage has been Hyderabad, the capital, which rivals Bangalore, in neighbouring Karnataka, as a software hub. Companies including Google and Microsoft have their Indian headquarters there. But the city lies deep inside Telangana. Its loss would mean a sharp drop in tax revenues for AP, and entrepreneurs who have helped de-



The face that launched a new state

velop the city, as well as other jittery investors, worry about how business-friendly a new state would be. “No one will be interested in Hyderabad now,” frets Chandrababu Naidu, AP's former chief minister, who was instrumental in developing the city's strengths in IT. Advocates of statehood for Telangana, part of the princely dominion of Hyderabad before it was absorbed into AP in 1956, reply that the region has long been neglected and needs its own government if it is to thrive.

Their tentative success has, not surprisingly, given fresh impetus to demands for other new states. In the past week the Gorkhas, ethnic Nepalis living in West Bengal, have said they will organise strikes to promote their demand for a Gorkhaland, while the Bodo tribe has issued new demands for a Bodoland, separated from the state of Assam. Mayawati, chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, which is India's largest state and one of its poorest, with 170m people, has been quick to demand that it be carved into four. This could quadruple the number of states ruled by her Bahujan Samaj Party, though many believe it would bring improvements in administration.

India had 16 states in 1971. Today it has 28, of which three—Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttarakhand—were created as recently as 2000. Though India's big-state ►





● Asia Focus

A Greenpeace activist inside an earth ball protests with fellow activists on the sidelines of the ASEAN Summit in Cha-am, Hua Hin, southern Thailand.

skeptical members to take similar initiatives.

Dr Anish Kumar Roy, ASEAN's Director for Community Affairs Development, acknowledged the fact that it needs time for some countries with particular political histories and back-

ASEAN Reaching Out

Sakia Kyu

ASIAVIEWS

LOOSELY defined, civil society organizations are the bridge or intermediary between governments and people. They work to express the interests of the people at different layers of society, particularly at grassroots level, and amplify their voices of views and concerns so that decision-making and policies of the governments reflect the real needs and interests of the people.

ASEAN defines a civil society organization as a non-profit making association of ASEAN persons, natural or juridical, organized to promote, strengthen and help realize the aims and objectives of ASEAN cooperation in the political, economic, social, cultural, scientific, medical and technological fields. But within ASEAN itself, some members have their own interpretation of CSOs.

However the concept of CSOs is interpreted, the reality is that with the people's growing awareness of their right to participate in the decision- and policy-making processes that affect their lives, the role and relevance of CSOs are becoming increasingly more important.

ASEAN has long conceptualized the collaboration with ASEAN CSOs and has established working links with them, aiming to draw the latter into the mainstream of ASEAN activities so that they are kept informed of major policies, directives and decisions of ASEAN and are given the opportunity to participate in ASEAN activities. This is to ensure interaction and fruitful relationships between the existing ASEAN bodies and the CSOs and to help pro-

mote the development of a people-centered ASEAN community

The actual realization of these objectives, however, is not without obstacles and resistance as some member countries, such as those with limited or no democracy, are still reluctant to embrace community-based CSOs, thus the actual participation of the CSOs of these countries are still limited to government-sponsored organizations.

This lack of common understanding of how CSOs should be represented was apparent during the last ASEAN Summit in Cha-am, Thailand, in October this year where five out of 10 civil society representatives from Cambodia, Laos, Singapore, the Philippines and Burma were banned from the interface meeting with the ASEAN leaders. The governments cited an internal agreement on selection criteria giving authority to individual member government to choose its own CSO representative whereas the civil representatives and NGOs reject such government-sponsored representatives on the grounds that they do not represent the society.

The rift was a reminder that all stakeholders must first reach a common understanding of how CSOs are defined and represented. How to reach a consensus on this very much depends on the willingness of the member countries to shift towards a more transparent and inclusive approach.

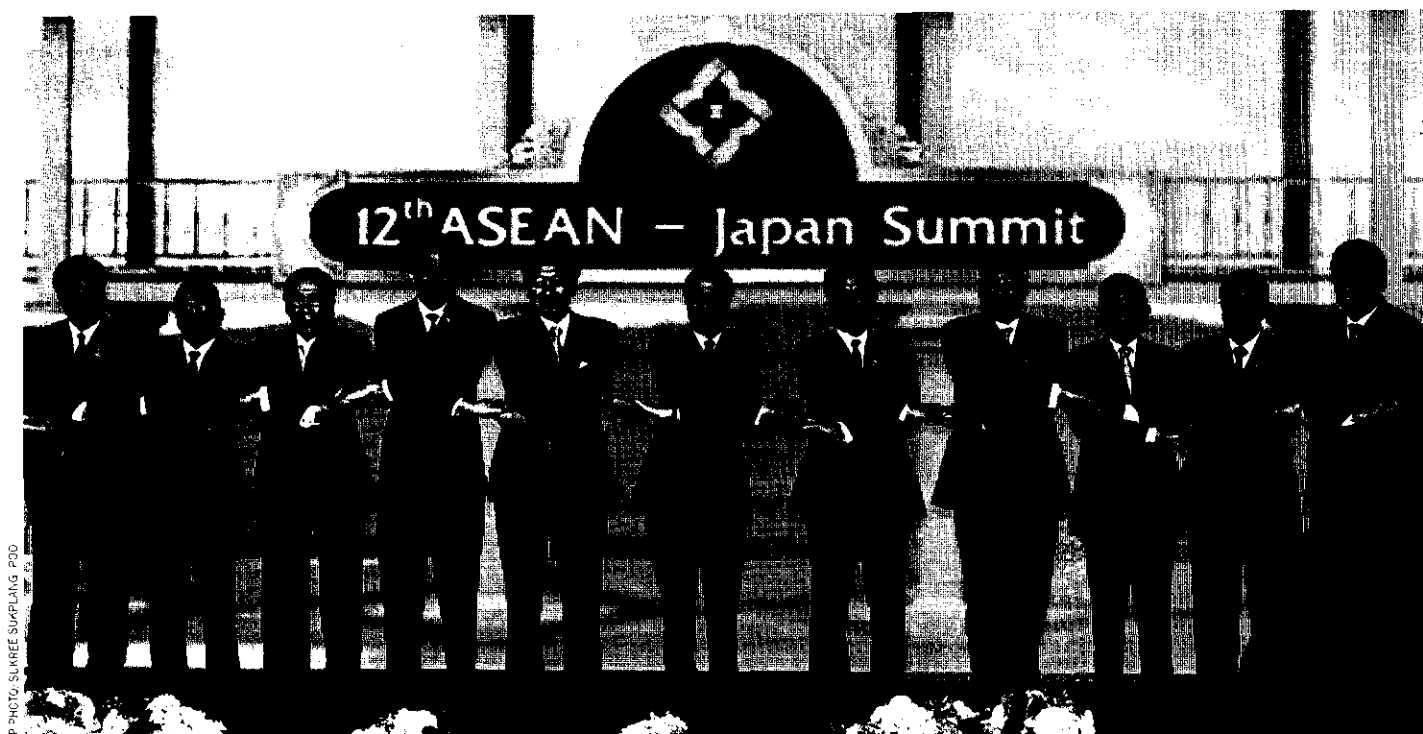
There is of course hope to reconcile the members' dissimilarity of outlook towards CSOs as some member nations such as Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia are setting examples of giving their civil societies the freedom to select their representatives thereby pushing forward the active participation and engagement of independent and community-based CSOs in ASEAN initiatives. Their example should encourage other

grounds to relax their stringent rules on participation of their CSOs, particularly in the areas of ASEAN's economic and political pillars. But he pointed out that ASEAN's collaboration with CSOs are highly successful at the sectoral level, such as in Health, Protection of Women and Children, HIV/Aids prevention, where CSOs are closely interacting with governments and playing active roles in the decision- and policy-making processes.

Understandably, as this practice of ASEAN engaging the CSOs is still relatively new and ASEAN being an inter-governmental organization, rifts are likely to occur. Progress cannot be as swift as all stakeholders wish them to be.

CSOs are valuable partners for ASEAN in reaching its ambition to become a people-centered regional organization. To achieve this, ASEAN must forge closer ties with people-based CSOs through intensive and comprehensive interaction. There should be more engagements between the two, outside normal interfaces on the sidelines of summits. The upcoming ASEAN Secretariat Symposium on Methods of Stakeholder Involvement in Regional Organizations, organized by the ASEAN Secretariat in cooperation with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung on November 23-25, is the first workshop of its kind between ASEAN and CSOs. It is a positive step in the right direction.

Vietnam, the next chair of ASEAN, has pledged its commitment to facilitate wider engagement with civil society representatives in the future. The next ASEAN Summit to be held in 2010 will be an acid test for the host and for ASEAN as a whole to substantiate its commitment to creating a people-centered ASEAN Community in the true sense of the word. ●



ASEAN leaders stand united at the 12th ASEAN-Japan Summit held in conjunction with the 15th ASEAN Summit

No More Empty Promises

Yuyun Wahyuningrum

Policy Advisor on ASEAN, OXFAM International, and Indonesian delegate who walked out of the interface meeting with the ASEAN leaders

EXPECTATIONS run high when the ASEAN Charter includes people participation as one of the important elements of ASEAN integration and community building. Article 1.13 of the Charter clearly mentions that people participation is one of the purposes of the association, guaranteeing that "all sectors of society are encouraged to participate in, and benefit from" the ASEAN processes. After being state-centric for 42 years, the association has thus taken a step further to becoming more people-oriented. This commitment has been expressed in the three Community blueprints and in statements made at ASEAN meetings.

The two summits since the Charter

came into force in December 2008, however, revealed a different reality of this commitment.

At the 14th ASEAN Summit in Thailand in February 2009, the first summit after the ASEAN Charter, civil society representatives from Burma and Cambodia were not able to meet their own government officials. The Laotian representatives were reluctant to see their government officials due to security concerns of their families back home. The meeting was attended by the 10 heads of states, together with their foreign ministers and the ASEAN Secretary-General. In the 20-minute dialog, the Prime Minister of Thailand and of Vietnam responded to the questions from the civil society delegation. Another 10 minutes were used by the ASEAN chair to meet the civil society members who had been turned away. Ironically, the theme of that summit was on the "ASEAN Charter for ASEAN peoples".

At the 15th ASEAN Summit in October 2009, again in Thailand, five civil society representatives who were selected through a democratic process held during the 2nd ASEAN Peoples' Forum

(APF) and the 5th ASEAN Civil Society Conference (ACSC) were barred from meeting their governments in the informal meeting with ASEAN leaders. They came from the Philippines, Laos, Burma, Cambodia and Singapore. Rubbing salt into the wound, the representatives were appalled to hear that Singapore and Burma selected members of government-sponsored agencies to attend in their place. Burma chose two members from the Myanmar Narcotics Association, Sitt Aye and Win Myaing (Win Myaing is a former high-ranking police officer), while Singapore sent the Mercy Relief organization.

It was said that during the 42nd ASEAN Foreign Ministerial Meeting (AMM) in Phuket in July 2009, the 10 foreign ministers requested the ASEAN chair to submit the names of civil society representatives before the interface meeting. Some governments interpreted this as providing their own names of civil society representatives. The Singaporean Foreign Affairs Ministry's response to the anger of civil society was that "The 42nd ASEAN Foreign Ministers Meeting in Phuket last July, had

agreed that each ASEAN member state would choose its own CSO for the informal dialog with the ASEAN leaders at the summit." (*Bernama*, 23 October 2009).

The 20 July 2009 Joint Communiqué of the 42nd AMM stated, "We reiterated our commitment to promote greater participation by our peoples in the ASEAN Community-building process. In this connection, we were pleased with the outcomes of the informal meeting between our leaders and the representative from various groups namely the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA), youth and civil society organizations from ASEAN Members states during the 14th ASEAN Summit in

representatives of civil society being denied access to the interface meeting. As an act of solidarity, the other representatives from Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand withdrew their participation.

Thailand as ASEAN chair has established a good precedent by organizing the informal meeting of the stakeholders, including civil society, with the ASEAN leaders as part of the program of the ASEAN Summit. The meeting was supposed to offer space for civil society to engage with government officials. However, the process was undermined by the governments of Cambodia, Laos, Singapore, the Philippines and Burma. Picking people the ASEAN leaders feel comfortable with, who will

than peoples' concerns, undermining core tenets of its Charter on civil liberties, fundamental freedoms and good governance.

As the next ASEAN chair, Vietnam's initiative to put "people-oriented" community building by engaging civil society still needs to be assessed even though during the 14th Summit's interface meeting with civil society, the Prime Minister of Vietnam had already said that Vietnam will maintain the people's participation and civil society engagement during its chairmanship in 2010. Quite often, Vietnam prefers to protect the grouping's status quo and the "ASEAN way".

Given this strong "iron curtain" men-



Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (third right) and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao (third left) look on during a delegation level meeting at the annual summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Cha-am, Thailand, Saturday, Oct. 24, 2009.

Cha-Am, Hua Hin". This communiqué contains no mention of any agreement that each ASEAN government should choose its own civil society representative for the meeting at the 15th ASEAN Summit.

At the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Council Meeting in Bangkok in August 2009 it was agreed that the civil society representatives should be chosen from the humanitarian and development sectors only. Civil society also heard that the Meeting had decided that the informal meeting with civil society would only be optional. None of this information was conveyed to the APF or ACSC as the platform for civil society and a parallel event to the ASEAN processes. It was also unclear whether the four accepted representatives from Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia would be allowed to speak or only the appointed team leader, Dr Surichai Wangaeo of Chulalongkorn University.

The uncertainty and unilateral decisions made by some ASEAN governments with respect to civil society representation led to the five elected rep-

echo what they want, does not solve the problem but merely prolongs it.

Ironically, the 15th ASEAN Summit, once again takes 'people' as its theme: "Enhancing Connectivity, Empowering People". The ASEAN leaders should know that rejecting their citizens is not an empowering act. Keeping information to themselves, changing the rules all the time, are not acts of empowerment. These are all acts of bullying. If these problems persist, the ASEAN leaders' credibility and the legitimacy of their so-called "people-oriented" Charter will suffer.

The launch of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) on the same date of the interface meeting with civil society was supposed to be one of ASEAN's milestones. Yet, it experienced a similar story. Eight representatives of the AICHR are government appointees. Only Thailand and Indonesia, with domestic human rights commissions, are represented by autonomous, non-government members. ASEAN is palpably still much more about government preferences

tality among nearly half of the grouping's members, can the ASEAN Community become a reality?

Although the legal basis of centering people at the heart of community building in ASEAN exists, the governments' commitment to a people-oriented community integration remains a big question. Failure to positively address the issue will endanger the credibility of ASEAN as a regional grouping and damages the reputation of ASEAN in international diplomacy. ASEAN should proactively find its relevance among its citizens. This proposition leads to the need for long-term evolutionary cooperation between ASEAN and its people through frequent and continuous dialogs. Creating a unit as a mechanism for civil society engagement and people's participation within the ASEAN structure which includes greater information disclosure, translation of ASEAN documents, and people's participation in monitoring mechanisms, would be one step in the right direction.

Vitit Muntarbhorn

Professor of Law at Chulalongkorn University writing for the *BANGKOK POST*

THE ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) was established recently at the ASEAN Summit in Cha-am, Thailand, with the blessings of the heads of government. It is a 10-member body, with one representative drawn from each ASEAN country. Amidst the flurry of comment on the nature of its composition/selection and a degree of divergence between some countries and civil society on its formation, the AICHR's work now begins with great anticipation.

In reality, predictions on its work and related expectations should be modest, given that ASEAN itself is not a human rights organization but remains quintessentially a political-security entity with some economic orientation.

Three projected meetings of the Commission will formally set the ball rolling next year, preceded possibly by an informal meeting in Thailand at the end of 2009, before Vietnam takes over from Thailand as ASEAN chair.

In this setting, it is worth recalling the long and winding road towards the establishment of the AICHR. It was after the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights in 1993 that the ASEAN foreign ministers stated in their communique that they would look to the possibility of a human rights mechanism in ASEAN. The pledge would almost have been forgotten, had it not been for civil society which kept the dream of such a mechanism on the agenda.

The Civil Society Working Group for an ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism was formed in the 1990s specifically for this purpose and it was joined by other civil society groups which increasingly pressed for the setting up of a mechanism covering the ASEAN region. At the end of the decade, they put to the ASEAN foreign ministers a draft agreement to establish an ASEAN Human Rights Commission, but the body language from official circles was that ASEAN was not yet ready to make that quantum leap.

The impetus for a regional human rights mechanism then came with more confidence-building between ASEAN governments and civil society through the channel of various meet-



Ten Tips for 'Humanizing' ASEAN

ings and seminars between civil society groups and senior ASEAN personnel and other officials on an annual basis. At the turn of the new millennium, the rise of the three ASEAN communities—the ASEAN Security Community, the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community and the ASEAN Economic Community—set apace a more genuine commitment to establish a human rights mechanism for the region.

Thus it was the full ratification of the ASEAN Charter in 2008, acting as a kind of constitution for ASEAN, which sanctioned the setting up of an ASEAN

human rights "body" to promote and protect human rights in the region. The Charter opened the door to the setting up of a high-level panel to draft the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the body, and the ToR was submitted to and approved by the ASEAN foreign ministers at the ASEAN Summit in Phuket in mid-2009. This paved the way to the formal setting up of the body in Cha-am in October 2009.

Of course, the AICHR is faced with a host of challenges in its path to be credible and to evolve on a step-by-step basis. There are perhaps 10 considerations



Anti-Burma protesters picketing the Thai embassy in the Makati financial district, Manila, Philippines.

in this regard:

- First, the notion of "intergovernmental" should not mean that it will be prejudiced towards states vis-a-vis individuals and other actors in ASEAN. At the heart of any human rights mechanism should be the protection of individuals and communities rather than of states, simply because states already have a variety of ways and means to constrain the rights of individuals and communities due to the states' omnipotent nature and broad range of powers. The representatives on the AICHR are also supposed to act "impartially" according to the ToR.

- Second, the fact that the AICHR is stated to be a "consultative" body does not imply that it should be a taciturn body without the power to make recommendations to ASEAN and its member countries. While it is understood that the AICHR is not a judicial body and cannot issue judgments, it is vested with the power to advise and recommend.

- Third, the human rights standards mentioned in the ToR and to be applied by the AICHR and ASEAN are universal human rights standards as basic minimum standards for the region and beyond. The ToR states that the AICHR will "uphold international human rights standards as prescribed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Vienna Declaration [of the World Conference on Human Rights] and its Program of Action, and international human rights instruments to which ASEAN member states are parties". The two human rights treaties to which all ASEAN countries are parties are the Child Rights Convention and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

- Fourth, the ASEAN Charter and the ToR refer emphatically to the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference in the domestic affairs of ASEAN states. Yet, these principles are not absolute but fall under the ambit of international law; they are to be assessed objectively, not subjectively. Moreover, the advocacy of human rights cannot be seen as interference in a country's internal affairs, since such advocacy is an integral part of international law and jurisdiction. International protection of human rights comes into play when the national setting is unable or unwilling to provide human rights protection.

- Fifth, ASEAN's preoccupation with a non-confrontational and evolutionary approach, based on consensus, also stated in the ToR for the AICHR, should not lead to the condoning of egregious human rights violations such as genocide and crimes against humanity.

- Sixth, while the ToR are substantively more to do with promotion than protection of human rights, this should not close the door to creative ways of covering human rights protection more proactively. The promotion angle is related particularly to education, awareness raising and capacity building. Internationally, the protection angle usually covers the ability of individuals to complain to regional human rights bodies (after exhausting local/national remedies), and the power of such bodies to monitor and investigate cases and situations. While the majority view in the panel that drafted the ToR rejected the explicit mention of these protection elements, it is also of note that members of the panel were generally agreeable to the understanding that "what is not prohibited in the ToR is not forbidden".

- Seventh, the AICHR has to take care to prevent retrogression and to ensure

forward-looking action of an internationally credible kind. One of the future steps mentioned in the ToR will be to draft an ASEAN Human Rights Declaration. Such document and related instruments should help to elevate international standards and not back-track. Regional particularities which conflict with universal standards are inadmissible.

- Eighth, the AICHR is empowered to undertake a dialog with civil society, national and other institutions on human rights, and to obtain information from ASEAN states on human rights, as well as to undertake thematic studies on human rights and to prepare annual and other reports on such matters. This provides room for broad discourse on human rights matters which need to be increasingly open to engagement with civil society and other actors. This is a particularly useful entry point for the preparation of the AICHR's forthcoming five-year work plan.

- Ninth, the AICHR reports to the ASEAN Foreign Ministers and is assisted by the ASEAN Secretary-General and Secretariat. It is thus important to ensure that key human rights situations are not only conveyed to the AICHR but also to the foreign ministers, the secretary-general and importantly at the summits of heads of government. In future, an ASEAN Commission on women's and children's rights may also be set up, and there is already an ASEAN committee on migrant worker rights, all of which need to be aligned with the AICHR.

The AICHR should not be seen as self-contained but as one of the many components in the ASEAN framework to be used, in the setting of checks and balances to prevent human rights transgressions and to respond to human rights promotion and protection effectively.

National human rights commissions should be seen as complementary to this.

- Tenth, the AICHR powers under the ToR have to be read together with the ASEAN Charter which integrates human rights, democracy and the Rule of Law substantively into the total ASEAN structure. In other words, human rights has been legitimized fully as a permeating principle, applying to all actors in ASEAN—governmental and non-governmental.

These 10 suggestions should surely help to tip the balance in favor of the preferred *raison d'être* of ASEAN—to be an ASEAN "with a human face".

Kalinga Seneviratne

Head of Research at the Asian Media Information and Communication Center in Singapore

CRITICS of developed countries have been rather slanted and sly in categorizing us Information Ministers as 'Misinforming Ministers'. What ever they say, we have to carry out our responsibilities because if we don't inform, others will do the job for us" warned Malaysia's Minister of Information, Communication and Culture, Dr Rais Yatim in a combative speech to the 10th Conference of ASEAN Ministers Responsible for Information (AMRI) held in the Laotian capital Vientiane from 5-6 November.

This was a strong theme of the conference titled Enhancing Media Cooperation in ASEAN Community Building and this year's conference also included an AMRI + 3 component, where ASEAN Information Ministers were joined by their counterparts from China, South Korea and Japan on the second day.

Even Korea joined in the call for Asian nations to pool their media resources to blunt Western media's power to set the regional political and cultural agenda. "It is true that the global perception of Asia is not that positive considering the region's economic influence. To the eyes of the people of the other parts of the globe, Asia is no more than a poor, peripheral region with a development gap, which suffers economic crisis, terrorism and disasters," observed Kim Kab-soo, Director of the Media Policy Bureau at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism in Seoul, in an address to the first ever AMRI+3 conference.

Kim added that this "misrepresentation justifies the need for enhancing media cooperation at the ASEAN+3 level", as it is necessary to "disseminate various uniquely East Asian viewpoints to the media in the rest of the world".

Myanmar couldn't agree more. "ASEAN peoples are receiving news and information on the member states based on the West's points of views and norms", noted Brig-Gen Kyaw Hsan, Minister for Information of Myanmar. "Some of us are relying on Western media for content, the peoples, especially youth, are more familiar with Western traditions and culture than with Oriental ones. It is the main obstacle in building the ASEAN as 'One Vision, One Identity, One Community'".

The failure of the national media sys-



ASEAN Moves to Blunt Western Media's Power

tems in the Asian region to pool their resources together to create a powerful Asian voice both in the region and international media has allowed alternative media—which is often funded by western donor agencies—to permeate this Asian viewpoint.

Dr Rais believes that it also reflects a negative viewpoint of Asia and a touchy

question governments have to deal with these days is that people tend to be convinced by these alternative media viewpoints. "Those materials in the Web do much at times to discredit us and our work", he said, but, adding a rather positive note by calling on information ministers to learn how to utilize this new media "to the advantage of ASEAN and



Local journalists swarm Endro Sudarsono, the family lawyer of suspected terrorists Air Setiawan and Eko Joko Sarjono, at police headquarters in Jakarta, Indonesia.

its people".

In the joint media statement released at the end of AMRI the ministers agreed that the media has to play a pivotal role in creating a sense of belonging and enhancing deeper understanding among the people of the region in building the path towards a one ASEAN community by 2015. Towards this end, they agreed on the need to deepen media cooperation to support community building by closer coordination of projects, media networking and human resource development. Needless to say, these activities will be focused mainly through government media institutions and training arms.

Conrado Limcaoco, Secretary of the Philippines Information Agency does

not see the focus on government media arms as an obstacle to greater media cooperation in the region, where private media has been expanding at a rapid pace in the past decade or more. "In all ASEAN countries government media plays a prominent role without exception" he argued in an interview with *ASIAVIEWS*. "Government media because of history of each country continues to play an important role, often at times the dominant role".

"In countries like the Philippines, where we have a relatively free media, we do maintain a share of the voice in that we have three television stations and a radio station and wire service, and a press office out of the palace regularly comes out with statements from the president and various spokespersons of the president. I think that's the reality. In the Philippines, and like in most other countries the government is responsible for most of the news in a given day, about 70 percent", explained Limcaoco.

Azmi Ali, Head of Information of Malaysia argues that if the government media is not strong enough in the ASEAN countries, all what they will get is entertainment and not information about each other. "We make it compulsory for them to broadcast ASEAN information in the government media for the benefit of the people. If we don't do that most of the media will be entertainment," he said in an interview. "We also want all the media to transmit government information, national inspiration, rather than sitting on entertainment only".

Recognising this fact, for almost a decade, the ASEAN Secretariat via the Committee on Culture and Information (COCI), which consists of Information Ministry representatives and government media institutions, has funded a regional media exchange, the ATV and ASEAN In Action (AIA). The former is a weekly exchange of television news where each country send one or two television news features to Brunei television which package it into a 40 minute feed and sends it via Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union's *Asiavision* satellite news feed. AIA, which is coordinated by the Philippines, exchanges radio material on a weekly basis.

Due to the different languages used for national broadcasting in member countries, the ASEAN programme exchanges have had limited success. Some also blame it on the apathy of government broadcasters who may see it as extra tasks to translate/dub foreign (mainly English) language material into their own language broadcasts.

Him Suong, Deputy Director of TVK

Cambodia agrees that language is a major obstacle to greater ASEAN media exchanges, especially in the broadcast media. "In the MoU (with ASEAN) we have a framework to translate and dubbing in local language. If we use foreign language nobody understands at the other side (but) dubbing costs have to be borne by recipient country. Cambodia is economically not in a position and we need funding to cover dubbing," he told *ASIAVIEWS*.

Another question raised by many analysts is the different levels of media freedom across the 10-member ASEAN grouping with countries like Philippines and Indonesia enjoying a high degree of freedom and others like Brunei, Myanmar, Singapore, Laos being tightly controlled by the government.

"It is the policy of ASEAN leaders that we work together in order to build an ASEAN community by 2015, with the understanding that in ASEAN we are diverse both in political system and economic development. Under this understanding all sectors of society must make a contribution to it rather than diversity making it difficult to build. I'm very optimistic that we can work together," said Sayakane Sisouvang, Deputy Secretary General of ASEAN, when this question was posed to him by *ASIAVIEWS*.

"The exchange of information is very important and how much degree we can exchange depends on the capacity of each individual member state. For example the new members of ASEAN are in a lesser position to be able to exchange and share more information because of their lack of manpower as well as capacity. They also lack facilities of means. But it doesn't mean that these countries are not ready to share information," added Sisouvang, who is from Laos. He believes that for ASEAN information exchanges to be really effective that the more advanced ASEAN member states must help the lesser developed ones to build capacity.

Ali says that Malaysia has been doing exactly that. "In ASEAN projects there is a lot of training for journalists, media managers so forth. We have developed training, for example, media editors and television producers. We have no problem in giving training to member countries as listed in the projects," he said.

Singapore has also offered a unique scheme called ASEAN Newsmakers, where youth are trained using a 'news-maker' software to produce their own contents and upload to the ASEAN Media Portal coordinated by Singapore. The wealthy island nation is offering

two days of training to member countries in using this software.

Thailand meanwhile has started a satellite television project called ASEAN TV and is offering air time to any ASEAN country to use their network to broadcast their material to the region free of charge. The channel, which broadcast in English, was launched at the recent ASEAN Summit in Thailand on October 23. It is run by the state media company MCOT and they have established a studio in Bangkok and plan to set up news bureaus in most ASEAN capitals soon.

"We realised that ASEAN needs a centralized place where member countries could come in and exchange material. Since we have infrastructure and we feel it is in line with the goal of the organisation, we proposed this to the

(Thai) prime minister and he agreed", Tanawat Wansom, President of MCOT told *ASIAVIEWS*.

"MCOT invested on infrastructure including transmission (satellite and internet). We got some commitment from Thai government and we provide this platform for ASEAN countries free of charge. We would like to get companies that are providing goods and services in the ASEAN community to use the channel to reach out to the markets," he explained, adding, "long term it should be self-funded. Initially we want to get endorsement of all the ASEAN member countries".

Most ASEAN countries see the Internet as the most effective and cheapest way to exchange information, and English being the lingua franca of ASEAN, most of this information will be transmitted in English. Malaysia has offered an 'ASEAN Gateway' project to exchange information, while the ASEAN Media Portal is already creating audio-visual linkages, but, it is the interface between the Internet and the tra-

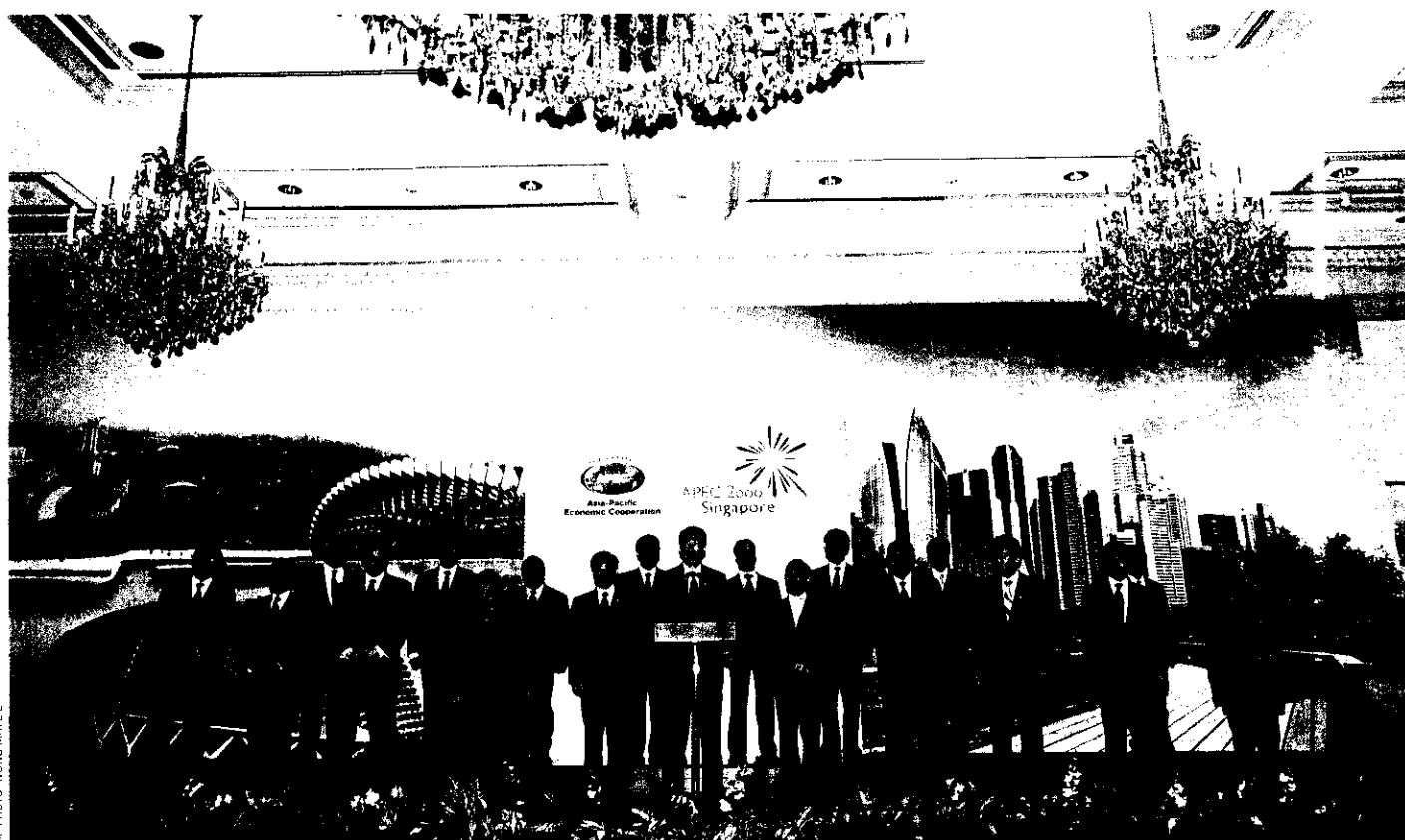
ditional media such as radio and television, which will make an impact on creating an ASEAN community which is well aware of each other's culture, social norms, as well as politics. For these, translation and dubbing would also play a major role, as well as the integration of the private sector media to ASEAN media exchanges.

"ASEAN member states are very realistic and practical", argues Sisou-vong. "With the existing mechanism we have now with +3 we add on information for the first time here. I think they will think of transferring technology to us, they will help us. With the pull of these states ASEAN will have more resources to implement what we already have agreed under the ASEAN blueprint (for ASEAN Community by 2015)".

"We have to live with the disparities. Keep pushing and pushing. Success can breed on success. If the Internet projects work, if the ASEAN Media Portal works, then things could speed up," noted Limcaoco optimistically.

Photojournalists united in the Coalition Against the Criminalization of the Press hang up their cameras in protest in front of the National Police Headquarters in Jakarta, Indonesia.





AP PHOTO: WONG MAY E

Less about APEC and More about East Asia

Datuk Deva M. Ridzam

Former Malaysian ambassador to Cambodia (1991-1996) and to the European Union, Belgium and Luxembourg (1999-2005)

WE live in a changed and rapidly changing world and whether the world likes it or not, there will be a shift in global governance as a share of the world's economic power moves towards emerging developing countries, big and small. Indeed, this has already been happening.

Beginning November 13, ASEAN and Northeast Asia will take global centre stage for a whole week. Barack

Obama will make his first visit to Asia as President since his electoral victory a year ago and as if to emphasise the importance of Southeast Asia, an ASEAN-US Summit will be held on November on the margins of the multilateral Asia Pacific Economic Conference (APEC). The subject of Myanmar, the US working with ASEAN and Northeast Asia for peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons, are expected to feature prominently.

Combining ASEAN, Japan, South Korea and China is, perhaps, tacit recognition of the geographical region of East Asia (the 10 ASEAN countries plus China, Japan and South Korea—otherwise known as the 'ASEAN Plus Three', the APT grouping) as the future arena for global economics and politics in Obama's diplomacy.

The President's stated preference for

multilateralism was explained by Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, in July this year at the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in Phuket, Thailand. She told Asia Pacific countries present that the Obama Administration would strive for a "multipartner", not a "multipolar" world. Thus in the context of Obama's current Asian tour, it is about ASEAN, Japan, South Korea and China more as multi-partners and friends and less as allies, competitors or even enemies.

For Obama and most ASEAN leaders, it will be their first face-to-face interactive exchange of views, an encounter they all surely look forward to. Since his early years in Indonesia, countries of Southeast Asia, unlike other parts of Asia, have really moved on to become responsible and pragmatic members of the international community. Indeed, it is a strategic region that has not been a bur-

Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (center) makes the Leaders Declaration at the APEC Leaders Summit in Singapore (left).



US President Barack Obama addresses the media in Tokyo, Japan.

REUTERS/JIM YOUNG

den to the world in a long time. So much so that had it not been for the fact that it is the turn for the Asia Pacific leaders to meet this time around in Singapore, there may not have been reason enough for Obama to be in Southeast Asia—and even at APEC.

As an economic grouping, APEC has basically become meaningless, if not dying. Even if trade among the 21-member economies has increased, this is despite, rather than because of, APEC. In other words, Southeast Asia/ASEAN and Northeast Asia, in some strange and interesting way, has given APEC a longer lease on life.

Looking from the perspective of officials at the State Department—especially an administration held down by two inherited and seemingly intractable wars (Afghanistan and Iraq), along with continuing financial turbulence—they too might have asked themselves: “Do we really have to go to the APEC Summit?”

In fact, most member governments, including the Obama Administration, are today less convinced than ever about APEC's utility. Even the Australians lack the gung ho enthusiasm about APEC. The question now is how the Americans rationalize the President's attendance at APEC and what possible pronouncement could he make there?

APEC has been waiting for Obama

to come clear on the US policy on trade. But because of domestic problems, Obama to-date has not revealed much of his thinking on the subject given the generally protectionist bent prevailing in America. In Singapore, Obama would have to do a lot of shuffling and mumbling about the importance of trade without really saying much.

Short of a pro-trade stance, the most APEC countries could expect is for Obama to make some reference to the long talked about Free Trade Area for the Asia Pacific (FTAAP), merely underlining that his trade policy remains one of free and fair trade, lowering of tariffs and for the US to export more, especially to East Asia. He is also expected to say something to the effect that APEC must re-focus on its original goals and core objectives of trade and drop all extraneous non-trade issues.

Be that as it may, while no one is likely to suggest that APEC be wound down, the summit nevertheless is an opportunity to review justification or redefine purpose, trim ambitions about APEC without wrecking the whole enterprise.

Perhaps, it would be better still if the Australian Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, take steps to subsume his own idea of a ‘Asia Pacific community’ (Ape) under the existing 16-member East Asia Summit (EAS), the geopolitical leadership forum for strategic dialog set-up in

Kuala Lumpur in 2005, comprising the thirteen APT countries, Australia, New Zealand and India.

The US and Russia can now join the EAS as they have fulfilled all the membership criteria, especially after acceding to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia.

Indications are that the Obama Administration is favorably disposed to joining the 16-member EAS forum. The US has also no difficulty with the work-in-progress by the 13-member APT, which exists as a mechanism for functional cooperation and East Asian regional integration.

As for Japan, like Prime Minister Rudd's own pet idea of an ‘Ape’, Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama's own version of an ‘East Asian Community’ also lacks content. Indeed, there is deep hesitation in ASEAN and elsewhere over the Australian and Japanese ideas which, it must be remembered, are only ideas, not initiatives.

Against the above backdrop, the President's decision to do an ASEAN-US Summit while in Singapore is indeed a way a clever distraction from the real problems of APEC's future and his own trade policy towards the Asia-Pacific.

It would therefore appear that the only thing that the President has going for him in attending the APEC Summit is the ASEAN-US summit. Non-APEC members—Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar—will be there for the mini-summit.

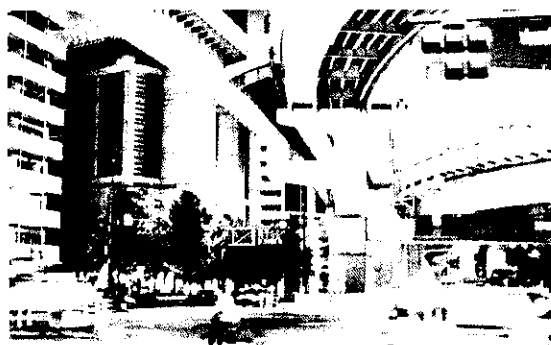
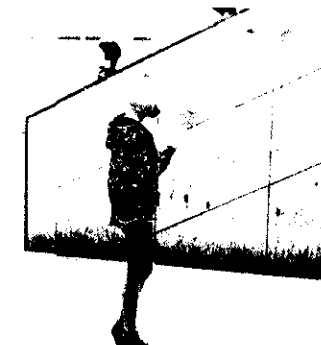
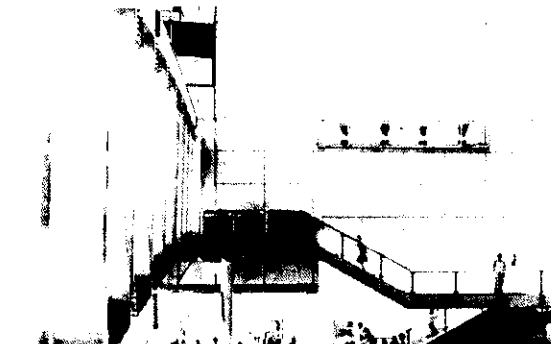
The Obama Administration has surprised many observers by holding direct talks with the junta in Myanmar. This rather unilateral American stance on Myanmar is something to be welcomed, particularly when the feeling in the region and abroad is that despite the ASEAN Charter, the regional grouping has lost its moral compass to deal with Myanmar.

But will there be some sort of a breakthrough regarding Myanmar in Singapore? Can the world expect a launch of a three-way substantive engagement involving the junta, the US and Aung San Suu Kyi? Better still, would the junta be prepared to make a grand gesture of sorts, like announcing the release of Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's on the eve of the Summit?

The above scenario certainly conforms to the changing tide of history. Indeed, given the vibrancy and dynamism of East Asia, global governance would certainly be better off on three legs, rather than two (North America and the European Union). The new reality today is all about a “tripolar” world comprising the US, the EU and East Asia. ●



RADICAL
TOKYO'S
SHINJUKU
DISTRICT.



GETTY IMAGES

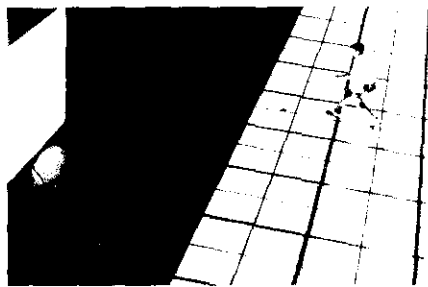
GOVERNMENTS JAPAN

TOKYO LOOKS TO LONDON

BY TOBIAS HARRIS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRIS MCGRATH

A RADICAL POLITICAL SHIFT IS UNDERWAY in Tokyo. For the past several decades, bureaucrats have ruled Japan. It has been they, not elected officials, who have played the leading role in drafting budgets, writing legislation, and regulating Japan's industries. Politicians from the entrenched Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) not only looked the other way, they actively abetted the bureaucrats, cooperating with them behind closed doors to stuff the budget with pet projects and undermine the ability of the prime minister and cabinet to set the agenda. The result was that private interests often trumped the public interest. Debt ballooned—to what is now a staggering 190 percent of GDP, the highest of any wealthy nation. What's more, Japan punched well below its weight on the world stage, as one



THE NEW GUARD, LED BY PRIME MINISTER YUKIO HATOYAMA, HAS PROMISED 'TRUE REGIME CHANGE.'

inept prime minister after another struggled to make his mark.

But in a landmark election this summer, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) won an overwhelming victory over the LDP, which had held power in Japan for more than a half century, virtually without interruption. The new guard, led by Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, has vowed "true regime change"—which means taking the right to make policy out of the hands of bureaucrats and giving it to the politicians elected to do that job. Their argument is that only political leaders accountable to voters can make the decisions that are needed for Japan to thrive. So they are doing something that is possibly unprecedented for a rich country in the modern era: they are looking nearly 9,700 kilometers away to another rich country—the United Kingdom—and attempting to graft its Westminster system of government onto the Japanese way of policymaking.

If they are successful, Tokyo will work more like London. Policies that now bubble up from obscure bureaucrats will instead trickle down from the prime minister and his cabinet, in the British fashion. Elected officials will formulate the budget, draft laws, and set policies on the basis of the mandate they received in elections. For the first time in modern Japanese history, policies will be debated, negotiated, and hashed out in broad daylight, and then put to a vote in the Parliament. The job of the bureaucrats will be, as Hatoyama put it, to "assist politicians in formulating, coordinating, and deciding upon policies," and then to implement those policies once the cabinet has made its decision. In other words, Japanese politicians will start to do what leaders in other democracies have always been expected to do: lead.

The implications of this are likely to be enormous. For starters, it will centralize power in the prime minister's office. By itself, that will help the government to do what it promised in the DPJ manifesto: to control government spending; to shift Japan to a new growth model, less dependent on exports and more friendly to consumers; and to build a new social safety net for a rapidly aging society. It will enable Japan's government to outline its priorities publicly, and it will allow the electorate to judge the government's progress. Bureaucrats who had packed the budget with payoffs to political allies, and who had resisted any change in the export model and welfare system, will no longer have enough power to freeze the status quo. Japan, for so long the nation voted least likely to reform, may start to change. More broadly, centralizing power will give the prime minister a stronger voice on global issues. When Hatoyama speaks about Japan's relationship with the United States or China, or its response to climate change or the war in Afghanistan, other leaders will know that he has real authority to follow through on his promises, and that he will not be undermined by bureaucrats and party backbenchers with their own agenda.

DPJ officials have been looking to London as a model for years. In 1993 powerful LDP politician Ichiro Ozawa left his party in a bitter split after writing a manifesto, titled *Blueprint for a New Japan*, in which he praised the British system for creating a strong cabinet and prime minister, while ensuring that the prime minister would face public scrutiny through regular appearances before Parliament. Ozawa argued that if Japan's leaders wanted to revital-

ize its flagging economy and manage its foreign relations in the uncertain post-Cold War world, reforms had to be introduced to strengthen the prime minister's office and unify the cabinet and the ruling party. The electoral system would have to be reformed, he said, by shifting from multimember districts to small, single-member districts that would encourage the formation of a two-party system characterized by vibrant and even tumultuous policy debates.

Since then, Ozawa has traveled to Britain several times. Most recently, in September, he visited in his new capacity as DPJ secretary-general—essentially the party whip—to discuss with both Labour and Conservative M.P.s strategies for pushing the cabinet's agenda through Parliament. Other top DPJ officials have also visited London on fact-finding missions. The new deputy prime minister, Naoto Kan, took a study trip there in June and consulted with senior Tory and Labour politicians on how to control the bureaucracy. In the introduction to a subsequent report on the trip, he described how he learned from the "mother country of the parliamentary cabinet system" to concentrate policymaking in the hands of cabinet ministers. In a recent book, Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada also praised the British model and stressed that reforming Japan's system of government was a prerequisite for other policy changes. Hatoyama himself has made blunt reference to the powers of the British cabinet. Before the election, a vice minister for agriculture criticized the DPJ plan to introduce income support for farmers as "unrealistic." Hatoyama replied by saying that if a British civil servant were

POLICIES THAT BUBBLED UP FROM BUREAUCRATS WILL INSTEAD TRICKLE DOWN FROM THE PRIME MINISTER.



to criticize a political party in the same manner, he would be sacked.

Now that he is in power, he has managed to overhaul the political structure with surprising speed. In just a few months, the government has dissolved the Council of Administrative Vice Ministers, an institution created in the late 19th century that met before cabinet meetings to hammer out policy disagreements among ministries. The government has also introduced committees of elected cabinet ministers to coordinate policy, an idea that also emerged from the British system. Perhaps most important, it has made good on a campaign vow to remove the power to draft budgets from the bureaucracy and put it instead in the hands of a committee looked after by Deputy Prime Minister Kan, an elected official. Another committee, overseen by another minister, rather than an unelected bureaucrat, will review the budget programs for signs of waste and mismanagement.

One result is that the normally staid style of Japanese policymaking looks more disorderly. This fall a very public debate emerged over a controversial moratorium on debt repayments for small businesses, which in its most extreme form would free them from repaying loans for three years, a major blow to bank balance sheets. In the past, consideration of such a policy would have wended its way through the bureaucracy at the same time that LDP policy subcommittees debated it. A compromise would have been hammered out before it even appeared before the cabinet. This time, Shizuka Kamei, the head of the People's New Party in the cabinet, with a portfolio that includes the Financial Services Agency, insisted on the need for a three-year mandatory

moratorium, which would have likely led banks to curtail lending sharply, possibly reversing Japan's fragile economic recovery. Hirohisa Fujii, the finance minister, and other ministers publicly questioned the wisdom of the policy. A committee headed by a parliamentary vice minister—an elected official—was convened, and in a transparent process drafted a compromise bill to be put to Parliament.

The same sort of public debate is now underway on how the new government should deal with the U.S. The big issue right now is the DPJ's campaign promise to reduce the American military footprint on Okinawa, and to revise a 2006 agreement in which the U.S. agreed to close the Futenma air station on the island. Now that the DPJ is in office, Okada is pushing for a revision that would shut down Futenma and move its operations to the Air Force base at Kadena on Okinawa—an option that Washington had previously rejected. Toshimi Kitazawa, the defense minister, has taken the opposite side, in support of the 2006 deal. Hatoyama, for his part, has so far said only that the ultimate decision will be his own.

It's far from clear the British model will catch on. It requires a strong personality in the prime minister's office, and so far Hatoyama has been no Margaret Thatcher. While he has articulated a vision for Japan's role in the world, he has been less forthcoming when it comes to the specifics of the government's agenda. Moreover, the introduction of a more freewheeling kind of public debate is no guarantee that the government will find solutions to the tough problems Japan faces. The government may simply fail to find a new growth model for the economy, which might force it to return to the LDP model. That means promot-

ing exports and providing subsidies to inefficient domestic producers, coupled with more social spending, which would worsen the debt load. In foreign affairs, a transition to the more flexible, Asia-centered policy that Hatoyama campaigned on could be derailed by any one of many hot-button issues, including Futenma and Japan's role in Afghanistan. If there is too much visible disarray in the government, public support for it could plummet.

So far, though, the changes in the political structure seem to be sticking, despite the fierce resistance of the bureaucrats who have carved out cushy roles for themselves over the decades. The ministries have complied with the Hatoyama government's orders, most notably its demand that the Finance Ministry scrap work that had already been done on the budget and allow the government to review next year's budget requests from scratch. DPJ backbenchers have grumbled to the press about having no policy role to play under the new system—but there is little else they can do. So for now, the cabinet rules, unobstructed to an unprecedented degree by mandarins of the ruling party and the bureaucracy. For better or worse, the cabinet's deliberations will henceforth be open, and it will be held accountable for policy failures. Other nations—and the Japanese people—will start to expect the government to make decisions and stick by them. The road from Westminster to Tokyo will be complete, and it will come to a stop squarely at Hatoyama's desk.

*HARRIS, a doctoral student in political science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, writes the blog *Observing Japan* and has written for numerous publications in Asia and the U.S.*

ISSUES 2010

GOOD TIMES
CHINA (SHOWN)
AND OTHERS ARE
STILL BOOMING.

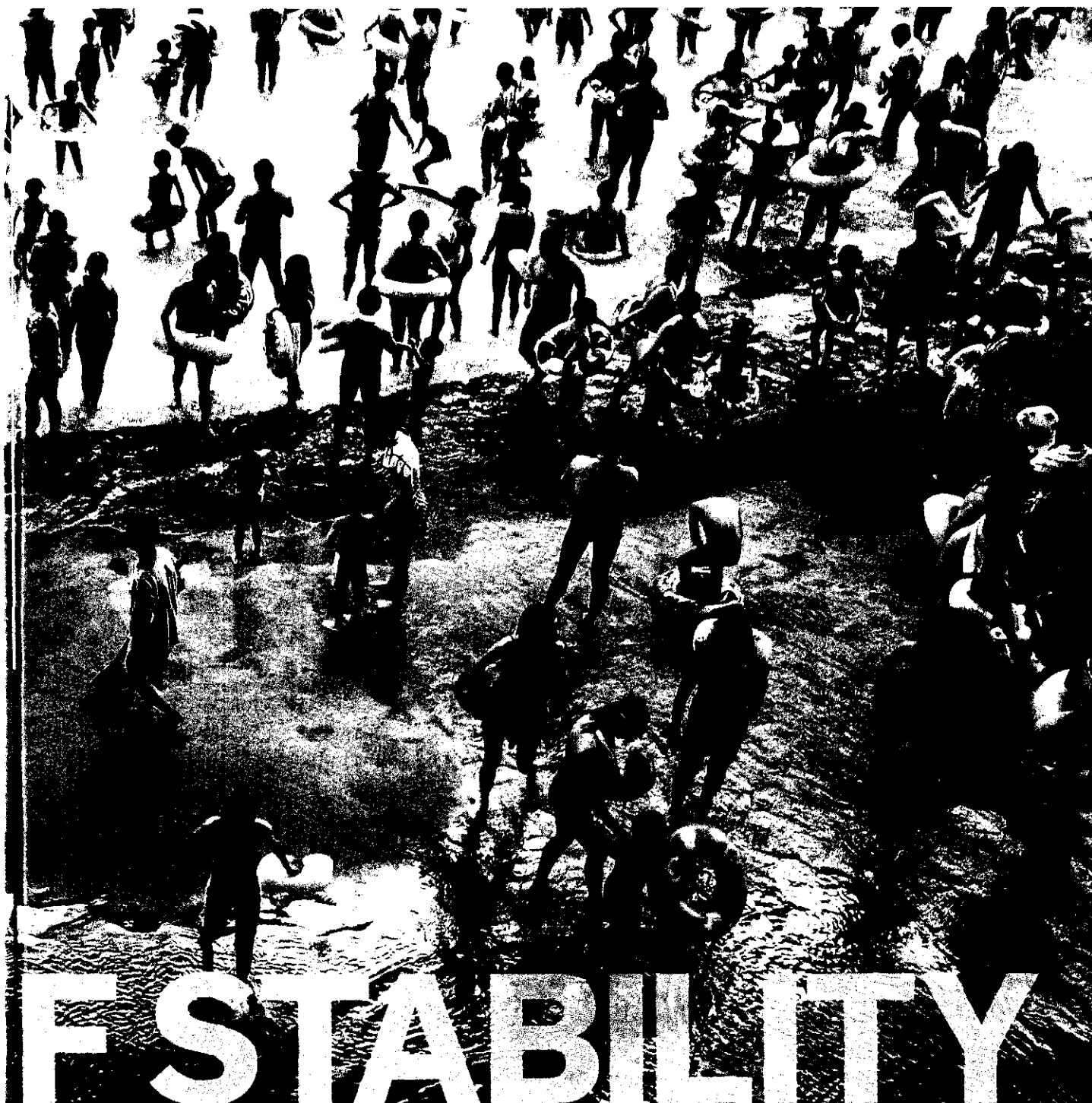
THE ROOTS OF

BY FAREED ZAKARIA

ONE YEAR AGO, IT SEEMED THE WORLD WAS COMING APART. The global financial system, which had fueled the great expansion of capitalism and trade across the world, was crumbling. The American model looked hollow, and the certainties of the age of globalization—about the virtues of free markets, trade, and technology—were under stress. Emerging markets that had once been buoyant were sinking, trade was dropping by levels not seen since the 1930s, and forecasters began talking about the rise of political instability and violence in crisis-stricken areas. Of one thing everyone was sure: nothing would ever be the same again.

One year later, there are two fewer investment banks on Wall Street (three, if you count Merrill Lynch), and some regional banks have gone bust. But other than that, the world seems remarkably unchanged. It certainly doesn't look anything like the 1930s. Of course, severe problems remain, like high unemployment in the West. We also face some new problems caused by responses to the crisis, such as worries about debt levels and inflation. But the system appears remarkably stable. Just look at debt levels in risky countries as an indicator of levels of fear and fragility: Pakistan's sovereign bonds rallied by 125 percent by the end of 2009. The return to normalcy has been so rapid

CHUNG MING-AN/PHOTO—GAMMA-LIAISON



that many close observers remain puzzled. "The question I have at the back of my head," says Charles Kaye, the co-head of Warburg Pincus, "is 'Is that it?' We had this huge crisis and now we're back to business as usual?"

There are probably many explanations for the rebound. Governments, having learned the lessons of the Great Depression, were determined not to repeat the same mistakes and engaged in a massive expansion of state support for the economy—both by central banks and national treasuries. (Whether they made new mistakes in the process remains to be seen.) Extensive social safety nets across the industrialized world also cush-

ioned the pain felt by many. Times are still tough, but things look nothing like the 1930s, when governments were a tiny presence in national economies.

The stock-market rally we are now enjoying might also be an indirect result of the government rescues. *NEWSWEEK*'s Rana Foroohar has described this as an "echo bubble," created when governments provided banks, companies, and consumers lots of cheap cash. Yet the return of confidence is itself a very powerful economic force. When John Maynard Keynes described his own prescriptions for economic growth, he believed government action could provide only a temporary

Band-Aid until the real motor of the economy started cranking again—the animal spirits of investors, consumers, and companies seeking risk and profit.

Beyond all this, there is another reason, I believe, why we have not faced systemic collapse in the last year. It is the same reason that we weathered the stock-market crash of 1987, the recession of 1992, the Asian crisis of 1997, the Russian default of 1998, and the tech-bubble collapse of 2000. The system is more stable than we think. The world today is characterized by three major forces for stability, each reinforcing the other and each historical in nature.

The first is great-power peace. Since the end of the Cold War, the major powers have not competed with each other in geo-military terms. There have been some tensions, but measured by historical standards the world today is stunningly free of friction between the mightiest nations. Such amity is extremely rare in history. You would have to go back at least

Western-style trade and commerce. In effect, it created a single global economy in which everyone is invested. Thus today, while Eastern Europe might face an economic crisis, it won't likely lead to hypernationalism, expansionist communism, or ethnic war.

Despite the many shocks over the years, the global economy today shows signs of fundamental stability—it keeps bouncing back. The conditions for this stability were laid in the 1970s with the victory over inflation. Inflation plagued most of the world in those years, with deep social and political consequences. It led to the destruction of the middle class, which was the background condition for so many of the problems of the era—coups in Latin America, martial law in India, the overthrow of the shah in Iran. But starting with the U.S. Federal Reserve under Paul Volcker, central banks managed to decisively beat hyperinflation during that decade, leading to a prolonged period of low inflation—and economic stability.

The third force for growth has been technological connectivity, which has wired the world, creating a much deeper, richer, and more interconnected system. Globalization has always existed in a sense, but until recently it mostly meant trade—countries made goods and sold them abroad. Today globalization has a much fuller meaning. It refers to the way companies operate supply chains that span the planet, to the way people work together and learn from each other, and to the way knowledge is dispersed across our world.

This diffusion of knowledge may actually be the key reason for the stability of the current system. The majority of the world's nations have learned some basic lessons about political stability and wealth creation. They have used the opportunities provided by peace, low inflation, and technology to plug into the global system. They have seen the results. Despite all the turmoil, more people have moved out of poverty over the last two decades than in the preceding 10. And people around the world are determined not to lose these gains by falling for some ideological chimera like ethnic war or a worker's utopia. They've been there, done that. They know the price.

In fact, the most remarkable aspect of the last few years has been the way China, India, Brazil, and other emerging markets have managed their affairs prudently, taming growth by keeping interest rates up and restricting credit in the middle of the bubble—just as an economics textbook (and common sense) would advise. It was the advanced industrial world, which always taught everyone else about good political and economic management, that handled its affairs poorly, fueling bubble after bubble, being undisciplined in the boom, and now suffering most during the bust. The students of the global system are doing better than their teachers. New countries are rising in power and prominence, and that process has accelerated in the last year. This may prove the longest-lasting legacy of the crisis of 2008. How the established powers deal with this shift, and how they handle their own economic woes—especially high debt and low growth—will be the primary challenge of the next decade. If these problems are mishandled, then the world will not look so stable after all.



PEACE, LOW INFLATION, AND TECHNOLOGY HAVE PRODUCED UNPRECEDENTED WEALTH.

175, if not 400, years to find any prolonged period like this. You can measure the reality by looking at the number of people who have died as a result of wars, civil conflicts, and terrorism over the last 30 years: the chart shows a sharp decline. And no wonder—three decades ago, the Soviet Union was still funding violence around the world and the United States was funding the other side in every one of those places. That clash caused enormous bloodshed and instability—3 million people died in Indochina alone during the 1970s.

Peace is like oxygen, Harvard's Joseph Nye has written. When you have it, you don't think about it, but when you don't have it, it's all you can think about. Peace also allows for the possibility of things such as stable economic life and trade. The end of the Cold War enabled the expansion of the global economy and the entry of dozens of new countries into

WHY **CHINA** WON'T RULE THE WORLD

BY MINXIN PEI



UNEASY PRIDE
THE CHINESE MAY
CELEBRATE, BUT BEIJING
REMAINS NERVOUS.



CONVENTIONAL WISDOM CAN BE DEVILISHLY hard to dispute. For example, most pundits agree that the Great Recession helped China more than any other state. At first glance, this claim seems obviously true. Unlike the United States and the other major Western powers, which saw their economies plummet and their financial institutions come close to ruin, the Chinese economy has kept on growing. Chinese financial institutions, considered technically insolvent only a few years ago, now boast balance sheets and market capitalizations that Western banks can only dream of. With its economy expected to grow at 9 percent in 2010, China will soon surpass Japan as the world's second-largest economy (measured in U.S. dollars). Pundits like Martin Jacques, a veteran British journalist, are predicting that China will soon rule the world—figuratively, if not literally.

Yet before declaring this the Chinese century, you might want to take another look at what's actually taken place in the country over the past year.

One of the strangest things about predictions of Chinese dominance is that they tend to impress everyone but the Chinese themselves. Take China's supposedly miraculous economic recovery. While the international business community has practically run out of words to praise Beijing's handling of the crisis, Chinese leaders haven't stopped worrying. They fret that their banks have gone on a reckless lending binge; Liu Mingkang, China's chief bank regulator, warned in September that "all sorts of risks have risen" as a result. He's right. In the first half of 2009, Chinese banks shelled out roughly \$1.2 trillion, creating a potential tidal wave of future non-

performing loans. State-owned enterprises (SOEs) used much of the money to speculate in the real-estate and stock markets and to make questionable expansions; as a result, Dragonomics, a Beijing-based consultancy, now estimates that as much as one sixth of all the bank loans made between 2008 and 2010 could end up not paying off. Yet Beijing is still wary of shutting off the spigot, lest China prove unable to keep growing without it.

Its leaders' frequently voiced trepidation may be overstated. Perhaps the officials are simply being modest or trying to soothe Western worries about the so-called China Threat. It's far more likely, however, that China's leaders are actually telling the truth. They know their country has indeed pulled off the world's most impressive recovery. But they also know that's a relative accomplishment—and China has paid a huge long-term price in the process. In addition to sowing the seeds for future dud loans, its investment-focused stimulus policies have exacerbated the country's economic imbalances by creating new productive capacities—factories and the like—without really boosting China's anemic household consumption. In other words, Chinese plants may be cranking out even more TVs, cars, and toys than before, but no Chinese are buying them. Loosened bank credit has mainly benefited SOEs, allowing these inefficient behemoths to expand at the expense of the private sector, which has been given little access to the government's largess.

Meanwhile, China has yet to confront what has become an enormous overcapacity for producing cheap goods. During the boom, when Americans were hungry for these products,

Chinese exports registered double-digit growth year after year, accounting for nearly a quarter of the country's net GDP growth. Now that nervous and debt-ridden U.S. consumers have virtually shut their pocketbooks, China can no longer expect them to snap up its wares. To account for this change, Beijing must embark on some painful restructuring, shuttering many export-oriented factories and strengthening the social safety net to boost household consumption (which remains stuck below 40 percent of GDP). China's leaders know all this. But they've yet to take the plunge.

Dig a bit deeper, and it becomes very difficult to pin down just how exactly China has gained so much from the crisis. Its failures are much more evident. Take Beijing's lack of success in snap-

holder opposition and the skepticism of Australian regulators doomed the deal, to Beijing's intense frustration. To borrow a colorful Chinese proverb, Chinalco saw its "cooked duck fly away." This ignominious setback served as an uncomfortable reminder of the humiliation of 2005 when CNOOC, one of China's state-owned oil companies, was prevented from taking over Unocal, an American energy producer, by congressional opposition.

Another puzzle: if China is so strong, why doesn't it show more leadership in addressing global problems? While Chinese officials show up at almost every important gathering of world leaders, and their opinions and support are eagerly solicited, they consistently maintain a low profile, preferring to focus on guarding their national

tic stability. Yet here again the news is hardly reassuring. Antigovernment riots and collective protests throughout China are on the rise. Corruption remains rampant. More than a dozen senior officials, ranging from a vice minister of public security to several CEOs of giant SOEs, were arrested in 2009. The political maneuvering for the next succession, due in 2012, has already begun, making Chinese leaders all the more cautious—even a tiny misstep between now and then could be politically catastrophic.

The worst news on this front has been the reemergence of ethnic separatism in China's restive, but resource-rich, border regions. The bloody riots of July 2009 in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang, killed nearly 200 and wounded more than 1,000, making it China's worst ethnic conflict in three decades. Coupled with the Tibet problem, the challenge by the Uighurs to Chinese rule will preoccupy the minds of Beijing's ruling elites for years to come—and keep their sights firmly fixed on matters domestic.

All this helps explain why, while China's leaders may be mightily relieved to have escaped the worst consequences of the world economic crisis, they see no cause to celebrate. True, the crunch enabled China to close the economic gap with its badly ravaged rivals, particularly the U.S. and Japan. And popular perceptions of new Chinese strength have allowed China's leaders to bask in the global limelight and flaunt their elevated international status to the Chinese public. Deep down, however, Chinese leaders are no fools. They understand perfectly well how tough are the challenges they still face—and how quickly fortune can turn. If only foreigners knew this as well. Of course, the Chinese are thrilled that everyone *thinks* they're the biggest winner. The truth, however, is that they're more like the least-bad losers—and they know it.

PEI is the Tom and Margot Pritzker '72 professor of government at Claremont McKenna College.

CHINESE LEADERS MAY BE BASKING IN THE LIMELIGHT, BUT DEEP DOWN THEY KNOW THEY'RE JUST THE LEAST-BAD LOSERS.

ping up prized assets overseas. For several years, Chinese leaders have aimed to secure foreign natural resources by acquiring effective control of or stakes in oilfields, mining companies, and commodity producers in other countries. Beijing is convinced that such moves are essential for its long-term security. Yet opposition by Western politicians, entrenched multinationals, and vigilant governments in developing countries has stymied many attempts by cash-flush Chinese SOEs to execute their government's master plan. During the first months of the crisis, these SOEs and China's sovereign-wealth fund did nab modest stakes in a few minor natural-resource companies. But they failed to score a big hit, and there were some embarrassing failures. In late 2008, for example, Chinalco (a state-owned Chinese aluminum company) reached a tentative agreement to pay \$19.5 billion to increase its stake in Rio Tinto, a global mining giant. But fierce share-

interests and skipping opportunities to showcase their soft power. At the G20 summit in London in April 2009, for example, the only thing China cared about was keeping Hong Kong off the list of offshore tax havens being scrutinized. Beijing's coffers may be bulging with \$2.1 trillion in foreign-currency reserves, but it is not exactly offering to spend that cash on common crises. Besides calling for a new international reserve currency, China has remained mostly silent on how to reform the global financial system. Nor did it take charge in advance of the make-or-break Copenhagen climate-change conference in December 2009. Beijing's foreign policy remains stuck in a reactive mode; if this is a superpower, no one's told the Politburo yet.

Still, most Chinese leaders seem unconcerned with their inability to translate strength into real gains on the international stage. That's because they're far more concerned with domes-

IDEALISM ISN'T DEAD

BY ROBERT KAGAN

THE TURMOIL IN IRAN SINCE ITS CONTESTED elections has created two policy dilemmas for Washington. Suddenly there's more at stake than the future of Tehran's nuclear-weapons program. Since last summer, Iran's political future has hung in the balance, too.

In the simple-minded realist calculus so in vogue these days, the United States, when it sets its foreign policy, must choose between head and heart, interests and ideals, and in both cases favor the former. This is supposed to correct the alleged idealism of the George W. Bush years, even though Bush did very little to promote democracy anywhere. Sure, the new thinking goes, Americans might prefer that democracy succeed in Iran. But right now the most important issue is the mullahs' nukes, and that must dominate Washington's calculus. When ideals and interest collide, ideals must give way. That has certainly been the Obama administration's approach—not just on Iran but also Russia, China, Venezuela, and Middle East dictatorships. The nature of a country's regime is thought irrelevant. The only thing that matters are “interests,” ours and theirs, and making them converge.

This is thought to be the essence of realism. But history suggests it doesn't fit reality. The nature of a coun-

try's regime does matter: not only as a moral issue for the United States but also as a strategic one. That's because ideology is often decisive in shaping the foreign policies of other nations. Ideology determines their ambitions. It is through an ideological lens that countries determine who their friends and foes are. Even a government's perception of its interests is shaped by the nature of the regime.

This is something the godfather of modern realism, George F. Kennan, understood when he wrote his famous article on motivations for Soviet foreign policy back in 1946. Moscow's behavior was heavily shaped by the Soviets' communism and their belief in world revolution. There was no way to understand their ambitions and paranoia without reference to their world view.

The mistake many made after the end of the Cold War was to believe that the relevance of this kind of analysis died with communism—as if only communists based their foreign policies on ideology. In fact, Russia since then has continued to be a prime example of how ideology determines foreign policy. When Russia began its brief foray into political openness in the late 1980s and 1990s, Moscow's attitude toward the United States, Europe, and NATO softened dramati-

cally. Mikhail Gorbachev combined *glasnost* and *perestroika* at home with an open and accommodating foreign policy. He allowed the Berlin Wall to fall, Eastern and Central Europe to gain its independence, and brought Soviet troops home. His successor, Boris Yeltsin, sought both economic and political integration with the democratic West.

Moscow's foreign policies changed in these years not because material circumstances in the world changed. The United States and NATO were no less powerful or threatening. What changed was Moscow's perception. And this perception changed because the nature of the Russian regime and its underlying ideology changed. Moscow's liberalizing leaders suddenly stopped viewing the democratic powers as adversaries.

All this presented a serious problem for so-called realism. As Francis Fukuyama put it, “according to realist theory, democratization of the USSR should make no difference to its strategic position.” But it turned out that perceptions of threat and national interests in Moscow were “heavily influenced by ideology.”

Today the Russian laboratory continues to produce evidence of the role of ideology. Since the Russian experiment in democracy faltered and succumbed to the neo-Tsarism of Vladi-

mir Putin, Russian foreign policy has shifted once more. Suddenly NATO is a threat again. As Russia rolls back liberalism at home, its leaders see liberalizing neighbors such as Ukraine and Georgia as potential enemies and demand the reestablishment of a Russian sphere of influence.

As this suggests, although the link between ideology and foreign policy is not absolute, it can often explain what traditional realism can't. Consider Venezuela. Its foreign policy has shifted dramatically since Hugo Chávez dismantled democratic institutions and imposed his tyrannical rule. Venezuela's previous, democratic leaders were hardly slavish U.S. allies. But it is only since Chávez took over that Venezuela has become militantly anti-American and attempted to organize the hemisphere into an anti-American, pro-Russian, pro-Iranian bloc. Venezuela used to get along reasonably well with Colombia (a close U.S. ally). Now Chávez supports Colombia's narcoguerrillas and warns of armed conflict between the two nations. Did Venezuela's national interests suddenly change? No. Chávez simply redefined those interests.

Just as Kennan asked Americans to view Soviet foreign policy through the lens of communism, Americans today should not let the current fetish for realism blind them to the way autocrats in Russia, Venezuela, China, and Iran rule. Those leaders have many of the same interests as democratic rulers. But they have a few special interests of their own—above all, in their personal survival, since the loss of power by a dictator can often mean imprisonment, bankruptcy, and even death.

Foreign policy is one way such rulers help ensure their survival. Having a foreign enemy can prove extremely useful by justifying a strong hand at home. Thus the Chinese government, for example, often whips up anti-Japanese and anti-American nationalism to distract from domestic discontents, and Putin's government maintains a steady stream of anti-American invective.

And no regime depends more on anti-Americanism than Iran's.

The world's autocrats also share a genuine suspicion of democracy. Even the most secure of them, such as Putin, worry constantly about losing control to popular democratic forces and see the United States and Europe as natural allies of those forces. When the West provided economic aid to the "color revolutions" in Ukraine and Georgia, Putin saw it as an act of aggression. The Chinese responded with similar concern.

Ideology also helps explain why authoritarian regimes tend to stick together even when they don't share obvious interests. Venezuela has chummy relations with distant Iran. Putin sees Chávez as a natural ally in the Western Hemisphere and provides him with advanced weapons and generous loans. At the United Nations Security Council, Russia and China block or slow sanctions

against fellow autocracies, in Iran, Zimbabwe, Sudan, and Burma.

And no regime depends more on anti-Americanism than Iran's.

then develop nuclear weapons, the West would have far less reason to be concerned. For one thing, democracies tend to be more willing to accept international safeguards and inspections of their programs. More important, if there is one iron law in international affairs, it is that democracies rarely go to war with other democracies.

That is perhaps the best reason why ideology still matters. As Americans once understood after learning the harsh lessons of World War II, a world dominated by democracies is not only a better world. It is also a safer world.

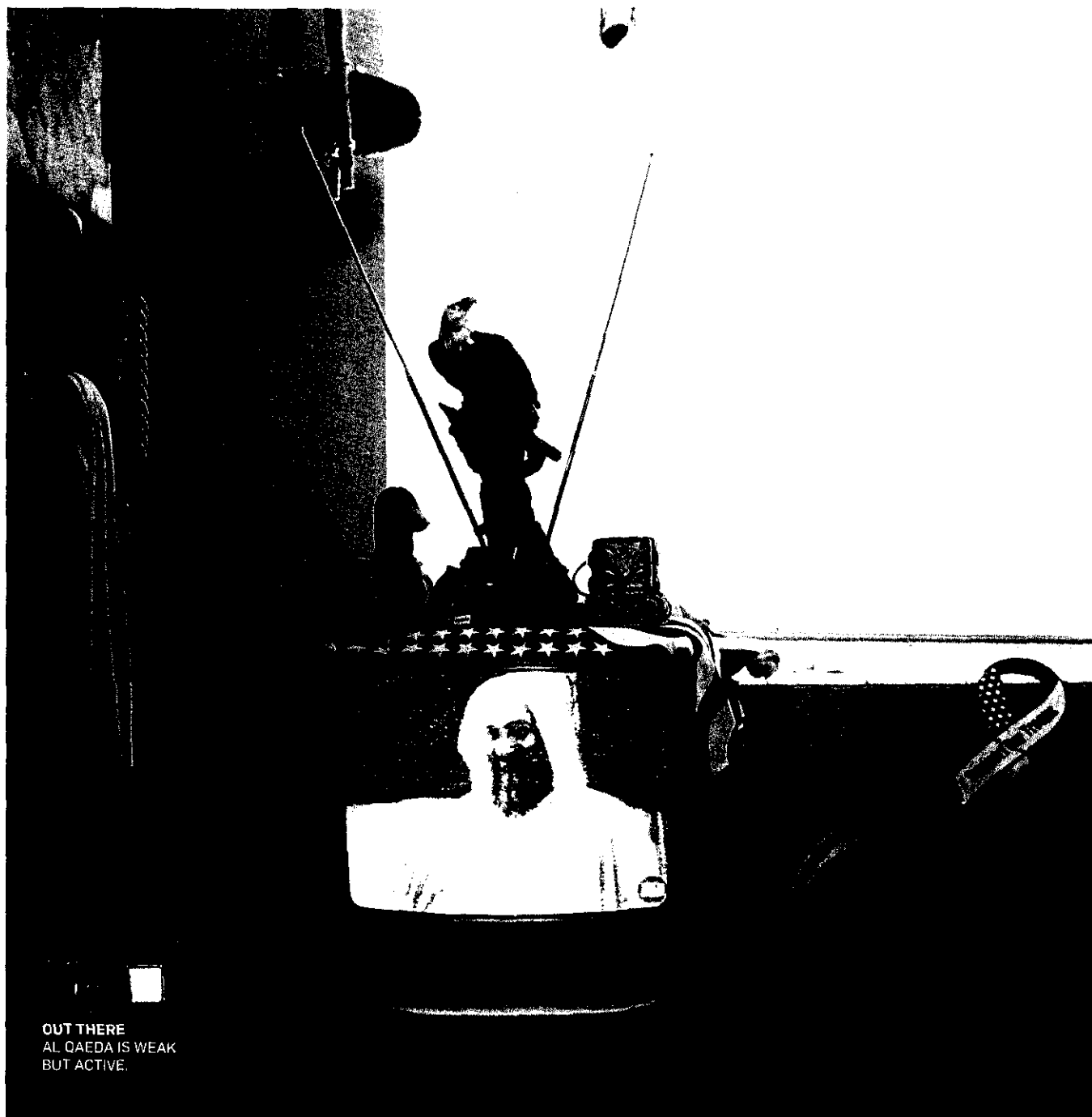
KAGAN is a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the author, most recently, of *The Return of History and the End of Dreams*.

THE PROBLEM WITH SO-CALLED PRAGMATIC REALISM IS THAT IT OFTEN DOESN'T FIT REALITY VERY WELL.

AMERICA

REMAINS AT RISK—FROM ITSELF

BY STEPHEN FLYNN



OUT THERE
AL QAEDA IS WEAK
BUT ACTIVE.

OLIVIER CULMANN—TENDANCE FLOUE

AMERICANS CAN BE EXCUSED FOR thinking that terrorism is largely behind them. Eight-plus years after the 9/11 attacks, Al Qaeda has yet to strike the United States again. Airport screening seems routine and more relaxed, and anxieties over employment, mortgages, and health care have supplanted worries about anthrax and suicide bombers.

Were Americans' fears of terrorism ever justified? Or more hype than reality? The answer is complicated. Al Qaeda and its imitators were and remain committed to attacking the United States. Yet they've demonstrated a very limited capacity for doing so. The ranks of what U.S. intelligence agents call "Al Qaeda Central" have been thinned through many successful kills and captures, and the remaining leaders are now holed up in Pakistan. Although there is a growing number of Qaeda-inspired groups at large, the presence of actual Qaeda operatives on U.S. soil was tiny on 9/11—and was essentially eliminated in the attacks of that day.

Still, U.S. officials are not imagining things when they say, as Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano did in July, that "the terror threat to the homeland is 'persistent and evolving.'" The September 2009 arrest in New York of Najibullah Zazi makes that clear. That said, it's important to retain perspective about the probability and the consequence of potential attacks. Zazi's arrest is an important reminder that today's terrorists are hardly infallible. For example, when he tried his hand at bomb making in the United States, he was quickly tipped off to authorities by a Denver store clerk. Meanwhile, the average American remains far more likely to be a victim of a hurricane, earthquake, or wildfire than a suicide bombing. Add H1N1, avian flu, and SARS to the list and there are few plausible terrorist scenarios that can go head-to-head with Mother Nature.

But that doesn't mean no threat remains. A 2008 survey of 100 U.S. foreign-policy experts found that nearly two thirds think a catastrophic attack is likely within the next five years. Yet the greatest threat today is not an attack but the risk the country would overreact. Major national traumas don't always bring out the best in the U.S. government—at least

at first. Pearl Harbor led, among other things, to the internment of Japanese-Americans. In the wake of 9/11, Washington grounded all airplanes and effectively closed its borders, thereby doing, at least for a short period, what no adversary could: blockade the U.S. economy.

Today the dangers that the United States would overreact are arguably greater than they were on 9/11. That's thanks to the Bush administration. In his farewell address, Bush claimed that his most important legacy was that there had been no more attacks on his watch. In a series of postdeparture interviews, former vice president Dick Cheney has blamed Democrats for putting Americans at risk by wanting to close Guantanamo and limit harsh interrogation techniques. In the process, they've set up a dynamic that provides the Obama administration with little wiggle room if an attack does come. They're likely

THE GREATEST PERIL TODAY IS NOT OF AN ATTACK BUT THE DANGER THE COUNTRY WILL OVERREACT.

to embrace tough security measures in order to face down accusations that they've lowered the nation's guard.

There is one way to avoid this scenario, and it involves ditching the muscular but unrealistic "protection at all costs" approach. A constant refrain heard during the Bush years was that while terrorists need to get things right just once, the nation's defenders have to be right 100 percent of the time. This set an impossible standard. There is no precedent of any government ever getting anything right all the time, and U.S. efforts have been far from flawless. Success in combating terrorism requires timely and accurate intelligence, and America's intelligence services are a long way from effectively recalibrating themselves to meet this imperative. Bureaucratic bat-

tles continue, and the CIA still has too few spies. U.S. borders are not and never will be impermeable.

The Bush approach also (with its bombastic rhetoric and prisoner-abuse scandals) played into anti-American narratives and sidelined the nation's most important asset by telling ordinary citizens to leave terrorism to the professionals. That was a reckless mistake, for nearly every successful thwarting of terrorist activity on U.S. soil relied on civilians. Remember that on 9/11 it was the passengers on United Flight 93 that prevented Al Qaeda from striking the U.S. Capitol or the White House.

Terrorism will remain attractive to America's enemies so long as they can be confident it will generate a big bang for a small buck. Deterring attacks thus requires two things: improving America's ability to detect and intercept terrorist activity and reducing the likelihood that the nation would overreact.

By treating terrorism as a hazard to be managed by all Americans, terrorism can also be starved of its ability to generate dread, panic, and paralysis. Terror works only if it convinces people they are vulnerable and powerless. By being candid with the American people about the threat they face and by giving Americans ways to address their vulnerabilities—such as providing detailed guidance on what suspicious activities to report and encouraging citizens to get emergency preparedness training—Washington could make terrorism far less terrifying.

Instead of feeding Americans a diet of alerts they ignore, the Obama administration should continue reminding them that they are and must be a resilient people. Washington should ask citizens to share the responsibility for preparing the nation to cope with the man-made and natural disasters, for example by expanding funding for the Citizens Corps program. When individuals and communities are better able to withstand, recover, and adapt to catastrophic risks, terrorism will become more like the common cold: a new strain may emerge each season, but it will have little effect on the nation's daily life.

FLYNN is president of the Center for National Policy in Washington, D.C.

LEADERS

KEVIN RUDD

A CALL FOR AN ASIA PACIFIC COMMUNITY.

MY PROPOSAL FOR AN ASIA PACIFIC Community (APC) stems from a simple but deep conviction: that we can act to create a future we want to have, or be passive as the future shapes us in a way we may wish it never had.

The Asia-Pacific region today is in immense flux. It is becoming the center of gravity of global economic and strategic weight in the 21st century, driven by a rising China and India. Japan has long been the world's second-largest economy. The countries of the region represent more than half of global production and close to half of world trade. They contain 60 percent of the world's population and account for about 70 percent of carbon emissions.

Many countries in the region are experiencing significant economic, social, and political change these days. Take, for example, the remarkable success story of Indonesia and its transition from a dictatorship to a prosperous multiethnic democracy. Our region is also home to the world's five largest militaries—those of China, the United States, India, Russia, and North Korea—all of which have nuclear weapons. And it is home to some of the world's potential flash points.

Today the region's biggest challenge is to manage the inevitable stresses and strains these forces produce and their shifting economic and strategic contours. We need to manage such change peacefully, and avoid the mistakes of the first half of the 20th century, when rampant nationalism—unconstrained by regional institutions capable of smoothing the sharp edges of great powers—led to clashes with devastating consequences.

Above all, the Asia-Pacific is where the template for the U.S.-China relationship will be set and where their interests—competitive and complementary—will need to be managed, harmonized, and reconciled. U.S. preeminence has been the bedrock of Asia-Pacific stability and prosperity over the past six decades. Continued U.S. preeminence will remain a bedrock, and the United States will be integral to the region for the foreseeable future.

But the shifting of economic and strategic weight to the Asia-Pacific has introduced a more complex dynamic, with a rising China at the forefront of this trend. We need a strong regional mechanism to ensure that this change does not produce friction or polarization.

A host of other pressures will be brought to bear with the shift of global economic and strategic weight to the Asia-Pacific. These include increasing potential for regional competition over power and territory, and over scarce resources—such as oil and gas, water and food—and the challenges created by pollution and energy security.

Given this, the overriding challenge today is to craft, through institutional design, a Pacific century by developing a culture of cooperation, not conflict, between states.

This idea lies at the heart of my proposal for an Asia Pacific Community to come into being by 2020. There is currently no single institution in the region with the membership or mandate to address the spectrum of challenges the Asia-Pacific faces: economic,



political, strategic, and environmental. We need such an institution to help us manage an increasingly crowded strategic landscape, to help ensure that outward-looking regionalism continues to be the core principle of Asia-Pacific integration, and, critically, to foster the habits of cooperation rather than conflict.

The good news is that this is a view increasingly shared in the region. Over the past 18 months, Australia's special envoy Richard Woolcott has held discussions on the concept of an APC across the Asia-Pacific. There is broad agreement that none of the existing regional institutions as currently configured—such as APEC or the East Asia Summit—is capable of coping with the full range of challenges we will face in the future.

There is growing interest in discussing this shortfall and what the right regional architecture should be. This desire has been reflected in strong regional participation in Australia's APC conference in Sydney in early December. It is also evident in the proposal by Japan's newly elected prime minister, Yukio Hatoyama, to work to create a new regional institution.

Australia does not pretend to have all the answers, or to know what will ultimately work: we have no prescriptive view. My purpose has been to launch a discussion that could help identify the shared vision and goals for our Asia Pacific Community. This discussion is now well underway. And that makes it more likely that this dynamic region will choose to forge a future of strategic cooperation and community rather than one of strategic drift and enmity.

RUDD is prime minister of Australia.

**THE ASIA-PACIFIC,
HOME TO
THE WORLD'S
BIGGEST
ARMIES, NEEDS
A NEW WAY
TO MANAGE
ITS STRESSES.**

THE END OF THE AGE OF WAR

BY JOHN HORGAN

AS THE MEDIA KEEP REMINDING US, the world seems as violent as ever. Armed conflicts rack more than a dozen nations, including Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine, Sudan, Burundi, Somalia, and Colombia. We are awash in weapons, from AK-47s to nuclear-tipped missiles. The eight declared nuclear states possess more than 23,000 warheads among them, and efforts to persuade Iran and North Korea to abandon their nuclear ambitions have failed. The U.S. still spends almost as much on defense as all other countries combined, while growth in global military spending has surged 44 percent since 1999, led by Russia (173 percent) and China (194 percent). "The past year saw increasing threats to security, stability, and peace in nearly every corner of the globe," the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute recently warned.

The economic crisis was supposed to increase violence around the world. The truth is that we are now living in one of the most peaceful periods since war first arose 10 or 12 millennia ago. The relative calm of our era, say scientists who study warfare in history and even prehistory, belies the popular, pessimistic notion that war is so deeply rooted in our nature that we can never abolish it. In fact, war seems to be a largely cultural phenomenon, which culture is now helping us eradicate. Some scholars now even cautiously speculate that the

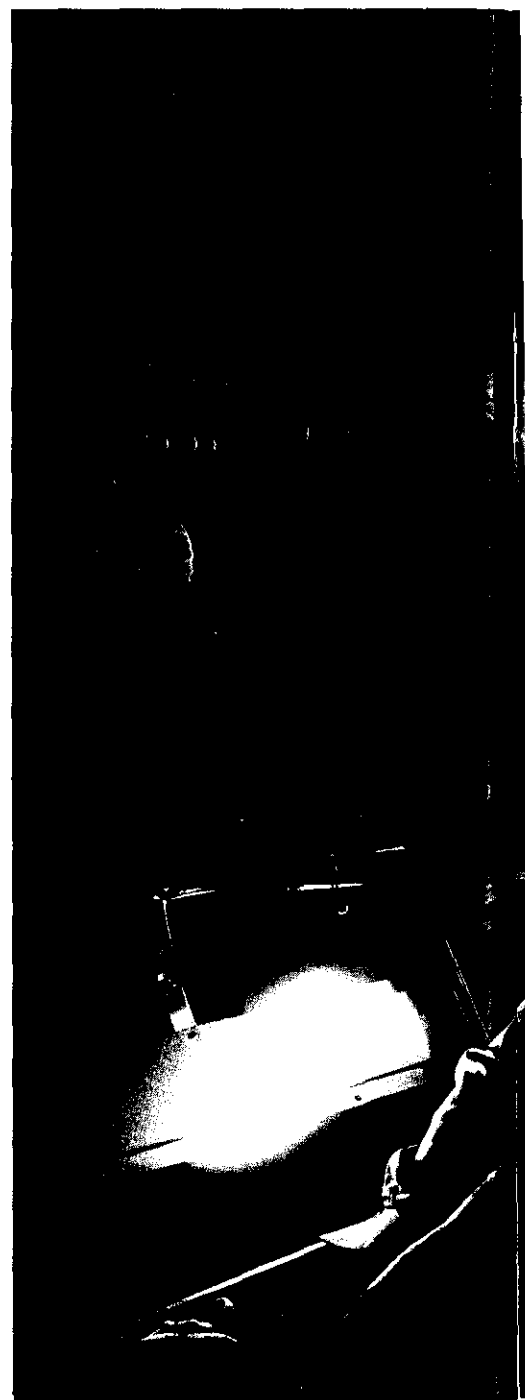
era of traditional war—fought by two uniformed, state-sponsored armies—might be drawing to a close. "War could be on the verge of ceasing to exist as a substantial phenomenon," says John Mueller, a political scientist at Ohio State University.

That might sound crazy, but consider: if war is defined as a conflict between two or more nations resulting in at least 1,000 deaths in a year, there have been no wars since the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 and no wars between major industrialized powers since World War II. Civil wars have also declined from their peak in the early 1990s, when fighting tore apart Rwanda, the Balkans, and other regions. Most armed conflicts now consist of low-level guerrilla campaigns, insurgencies, and terrorism—what Mueller calls the "remnants of war."

These facts would provide little comfort if war's remnants were nonetheless killing millions of people—but they're not. Recent studies reveal a clear downward trend. In 2008, 25,600 combatants and civilians were killed as a direct result of armed conflicts, according to the University of Uppsala Conflict Data Program in Sweden. Two thirds of these deaths took place in just three trouble spots: Sri Lanka (8,400), Afghanistan (4,600), and Iraq (4,000).

Uppsala's figures exclude deaths from "one-sided conflict," in which combatants deliberately kill unarmed civilians,

and "indirect" deaths from war-related disease and famine, but even when these casualties are included, annual war-related deaths from 2004 to 2007 are still low by historical standards. Acts of terrorism, like the 9/11 attacks or the 2004 bombing of Spanish trains, account for less than 1 percent of fatalities. In contrast, car accidents kill more than 1 million people a year.



DANIEL DENNIS



TIME OF PEACE
THE AFGHAN
CONFLICT IS NOW
A RARE OUTLIER.

The contrast between our century and the previous one is striking. In the second half of the 20th century, war killed as many as 40 million people, both directly and indirectly, or 800,000 people a year, according to Milton Leitenberg of the University of Maryland. He estimates that 190 million people, or 3.8 million a year, died as a result of wars and state-sponsored genocides

during the cataclysmic first half of the century. Considered as a percentage of population, the body count of the 20th century is comparable to that of blood-soaked earlier cultures, such as the Aztecs, the Romans, and the Greeks.

By far the most warlike societies are those that preceded civilization. War killed as many as 25 percent of all pre-state people, a rate 10 times higher

than that of the 20th century, estimates anthropologist Lawrence Keeley of the University of Illinois. Our ancestors were not always so bellicose, however: there is virtually no clear-cut evidence of lethal group aggression by humans prior to 12,000 years ago. Then, "warfare appeared in the evolutionary trajectory of an increasing number of societies around the world," says anthro-



LEARNING
A SCHOOL IN
ZIMBABWE HELPS
WORLD PEACE.

pologist Jonathan Haas of Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History. He attributes the emergence of warfare to several factors: growing population density, environmental stresses that diminished food sources, and the separation of people into culturally distinct groups. "It is only after the cultural foundations have been laid for distinguishing 'us' from 'them,'" he says, "that raiding, killing, and burning appear as a complex response to the external stress of environmental problems."

Early civilizations, such as those founded in Mesopotamia and Egypt 6,000 years ago, were extremely warlike. They assembled large armies and began inventing new techniques and technologies for killing, from horse-drawn chariots and catapults to bombs. But nation-states also developed laws and institutions for resolving disputes nonviolently, at least within their borders. These cultural innovations helped reduce the endless, tit-for-tat feuding that plagued pre-state societies.

A host of other cultural factors may explain the more recent drop-off in international war and other forms of social violence. One is a surge in democratic rather than totalitarian governance. Over the past two centuries democracies such as the U.S. have

rarely if ever fought each other. Democracy is also associated with low levels of violence within nations. Only 20 democratic nations existed at the end of World War II; the number has since more than quadrupled. Yale historian Bruce Russett contends that international institutions such as the United Nations and the European Union also contribute to this "democratic peace"

OVER THE PAST CENTURY, AVERAGE LIFE SPANS HAVE DOUBLED, ONE FACTOR MAKING US LESS WILLING TO RISK OUR LIVES IN COMBAT.

phenomenon by fostering economic interdependence. Advances in civil rights for women may also be making us more peaceful. As women's education and economic opportunities rise, birthrates fall, decreasing demands on governmental and medical services and depletion of natural resources, which can otherwise lead to social unrest.

Better public health is another contributing factor. Over the past century, average life spans have almost doubled, which could make us less willing to risk our lives by engaging in war and other forms of violence, proposes Harvard

psychologist Steven Pinker. At the same time, he points out, globalization and communications have made us increasingly interdependent on, and empathetic toward, others outside of our immediate "tribes."

Of course, the world remains a dangerous place, vulnerable to disruptive, unpredictable events like terrorist attacks. Other looming threats to peace include climate change, which could produce droughts and endanger our food supplies; overpopulation; and the spread of violent religious extremism, as embodied by Al Qaeda. A global financial meltdown or ecological catastrophe could plunge us back into the kind of violent, Hobbesian chaos that plagued many pre-state societies thousands of years ago. "War is not intrinsic

to human nature, but neither is peace," warns the political scientist Nils Petter Gleditsch of the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo.

So far the trends are positive. If they continue, who knows? World peace—the dream of countless visionaries and beauty-pageant contestants—or something like it may finally come to pass.

HORGAN is director of the Center for Science Writings at Stevens Institute of Technology and a correspondent for *Bloggingheads.tv*.

LINKED
OBAMA'S TRIP
TO BEIJING.



WHY CHINA AND THE U.S. WILL ONLY GET CLOSER

BY ORVILLE SCHELL

IT LOOKS, AT FIRST, LIKE A CLASSIC story of imperial rise and fall: the West's confidence in its institutions and economies has been badly shaken by the financial crisis, while China has increased its global role and basked in the vindication of its more state-dominated development model. Having grown accustomed to dominance, many Americans now find China's boom unsettling. After all, two states like this are historically expected to clash.

Yet that clash is not guaranteed. What happens next will depend in large part on how Washington leads. China and the United States could easily become antagonistic. But things could unfold much more positively—if leaders on both sides recognize how many interests they share.

That's not to say it will be easy. The two countries share a lot of historical baggage. For a century and a half, China smarted over its domination by the West, leaving it with a deep sense of humiliation. But for years now, China's

economic miracle has been easing its insecurity. As confidence has grown, China has begun abandoning its tendency to define itself as oppressed and exploited. Beijing has also begun working hard to reassure the planet that its debut on the world stage will be harmonious. As a result, China is now in the right frame of mind to begin fashioning a new sort of partnership with the West.

Creating such a relationship will still take enormous forbearance. For China, it will mean vaulting over its revolutionary ideology and resisting the temptations of hypernationalism. And for the United States, it will mean recognizing that, even though its supremacy is waning, China need not become an adversary. Americans must come to terms with the reality that their own vaunted democratic system has often failed them—by letting the economy run off a cliff, for example—and that China's one-party system, which is able to gather information, formulate

policies, and then effect them quickly—clearly has its advantages.

China and America also have plenty to build on. The two countries have an unusually strong sentimental and historical bond. Thanks to a century of U.S. missionary activity in China, many Chinese admire America's generosity, entrepreneurialism, and fair-mindedness—even if they often resent U.S. power and self-righteousness.

More important, the two countries now face, and must work together to solve, two critical questions: how to construct a new financial architecture and how to solve climate change. Take the economy: the U.S. relies on China to fund its debt, and China relies on the U.S. to buy its goods. While Americans have started to save more and Chinese to consume more, this codependency is not about to end. So without China participating in the rebuilding of a new post-crisis economic architecture, both countries could run into serious trouble. And they know it.

Climate change is even more urgent. The U.S. and China together produce almost 50 percent of the world's greenhouse-gas emissions. Unless they find a way to stop hiding behind each other and start dealing with this problem, it will not matter what all the other well-intentioned states do. Everyone will suffer.

So the challenge is not whether the U.S. and China can draw closer, but how to get them to recognize that they already are intimately intertwined. Fate has bound them together, and they must find effective ways to collaborate. Fortunately, this is the very definition of common interest. And there is nothing like common interest—and a looming sense of common threat—to form the basis of a strong, productive relationship.

SCHELL is Arthur Ross director of the Center on U.S.-China Relations at the Asia Society.

CHINA IS GOING **GREEN**

BY GARY DIRKS AND DAVID G. VICTOR

BACK IN THE 1990S, WHEN DIPLOMATS were designing the Kyoto treaty on global warming, they exempted China from any requirement to control emissions. The country was too poor, the thinking went, and had many more urgent priorities to tend to. A decade later, that thinking has changed. Having surpassed the United States as the world's biggest emitter of carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse pollutant, China is now seen as a laggard.

The reality, however, is different. In the past few years, severe pollution and worries over dependence on fossil fuels have prompted the Chinese government to launch a radical transformation in how the country uses energy. It is embracing efficiency, imposing limits on pollution, and investing in new green technology that it can sell worldwide. And while most countries around the world were giving the highest priority to dealing with unemployment and other repercussions of the economic collapse, China's government and industry haven't broken stride on green reforms. With a little more effort, and some help from the United States and a few other countries, China could turn out to be a leader of the coming clean-technology revolution. That's good for China and for the world.

China is already taking the first crucial step: it is cutting emissions by becoming more energy-efficient. Beijing has forced every province and major city to adopt efficiency targets. The top 1,000 companies have their own goals, and Beijing

has created a scheme to help smaller firms do their part. In the past two years, China has pushed its provinces and companies to change faster.

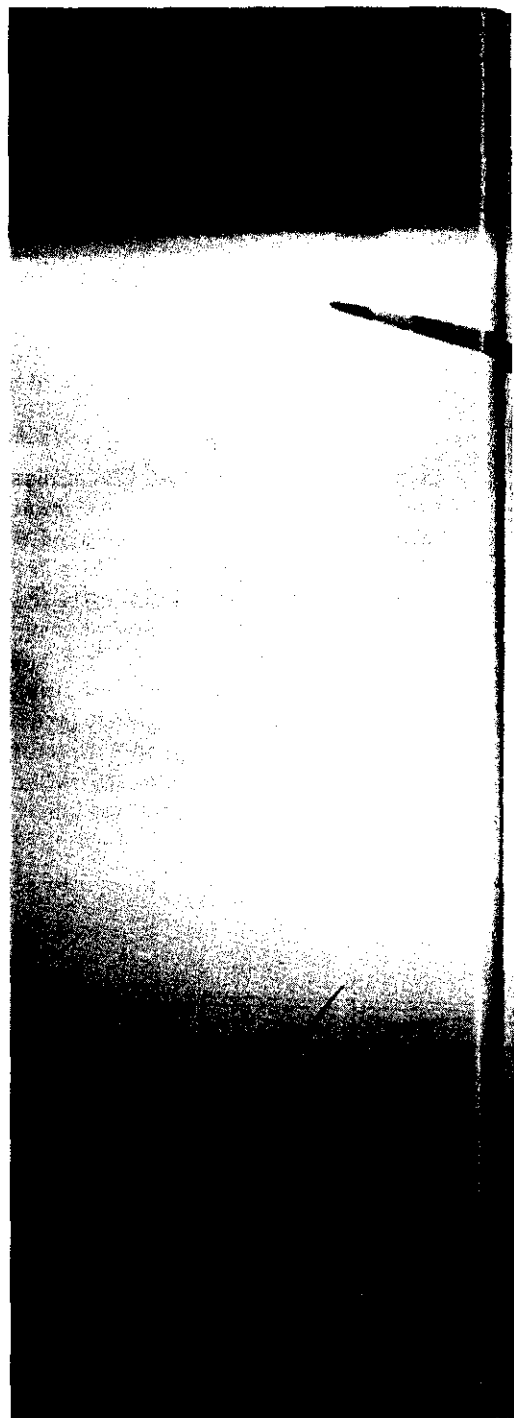
The economic downturn has made it easier to implement these reforms. When the economy was firing on all cylinders, there was no capacity to spare, but in these slack times China has closed some of its oldest (and most inefficient) coal- and oil-fired power plants. At the same time, Beijing shifted away from energy-hungry industries such as steel and concrete to higher-value activities, such as skilled manufacturing, that are more frugal with natural resources.

China is also trying to move away from fossil fuels. Wind turbines are sprouting like weeds, most quickly in the geographical middle and far west. The country sees this construction as a form of development aid to these regions, which have lagged coastal cities like Shanghai in economic growth, but also as a way of nurturing its commercial wind industry. So far, China doesn't export many wind turbines, but as quality rises, so will foreign sales.

China is also embarking on a massive investment in nuclear power. While Western nations fret about safety and politics, China is now building one third of all the world's nuclear-power plants. It has also continued to develop a novel "pebble bed" nuclear reactor that is smaller and probably safer than conventional reactors. Although German and American firms invented the tech-

nology, Chinese firms are improving on it and offering the only credible promise of actually building some plants.

China gets a lot of flak for its reliance on coal, which accounts for nearly 80 percent of its electric power. Because coal is cheap and plentiful, it will be hard to drop. That's why the country is focused on making coal less polluting. Using Western technology, China is building more of the world's most efficient coal plants than any other country.





CLEAN ENERGY
WINDMILLS ARE
SPROUTING LIKE
MUSHROOMS.

All this adds up to a massive impact on greenhouse-gas pollution. By 2011, greater efficiency will have reduced emissions by an amount equivalent to nearly twice Germany's annual emissions, and probably more than the entire effect of the Kyoto treaty. The Chinese government is already exploring scenarios for an even more aggressive effort after 2011 modeled on Japan, the most energy-efficient major world economy. Top Chinese analysts wired into the

country's planning system are now looking at ways to level China's emissions before 2050 and then cut them deeply beyond. By contrast, just a few years ago Chinese planners foresaw exponential pollution growth into the future.

Deeper cuts are possible with new technologies. A generation ago, China was a bit player in worldwide investment in energy research; today it is a rapidly rising star. It is investing in a wide array of technologies, from novel

power-transmission lines to advanced vehicle engines and batteries for electric cars. Despite these gains, however, China needs the West's help in managing R&D. Because most of China's R&D investments are new, it doesn't have much experience in getting new technologies out of the lab and into the marketplace. As the government has shifted to a greater use of market forces, the country's research institutes have become more fragmented and isolated from commercial pressures, which doesn't bode well for fast adoption of new technologies.

The most urgent area for R&D is coal. Power plants that capture carbon-dioxide pollution and inject it safely underground are much discussed these days, but few firms anywhere in the world are actually building them. Chinese scientists have finished mapping the country's geologic sites for places to put the carbon, and a couple of large Chinese firms are in the early stages of testing plants that could be refitted to capture carbon. By partnering with Western firms, the Chinese could bury much of the pollution underground.

We'll know when China is ready to lead when it starts playing offense in climate talks as well as defense. As it proves that it can cut emissions, it can make extra efforts contingent on other countries doing the same. Such an offer would smoke out the United States, which has so far been slow to develop its own plan, in part because American lawmakers use Chinese inaction as an excuse for doing nothing.

Green leadership will not come easily to China, but it is overdue. Basic math makes China indispensable. A more active role could reshape world politics and, along the way, help save the planet.

DIRKS is director of LightWorks at Arizona State University and former president of BP China. VICTOR is professor of international relations and Pacific studies and director of the Laboratory on International Law and Regulation at UC San Diego.

Singh's Shrewd Move

A shift on India's nuclear policy.

BY DAVID P. FIDLER AND SUMIT GANGULY



IT WAS A BOMB-shell by any measure. Since it was signed 40 years ago, Indian leaders have been firmly against joining the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), an agreement

that prohibits nonnuclear states from acquiring such weapons, commits nuclear-weapons states to disarmament, and regulates the peaceful use of nuclear energy to prevent the weaponization of nuclear technology. But in a move that will have significant implications for India as a rising power, and for global diplomacy, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh reversed course publicly on Nov. 29, saying that India is willing to join the NPT as a nuclear-weapons state.

Whether India follows through remains an open question, but pursuing NPT status would confer enormous benefits to the country. It would enhance its image as a responsible great power without forcing it to sacrifice its nuclear deterrent. It would send a message to Iran about its suspected proliferation activities without India having to challenge Iran directly about its nuclear intentions. It would enhance the stature of the treaty itself by throwing India's growing political weight as a responsible nuclear power behind the NPT at a moment when the treaty is under attack in light of North Korean and Iranian violations of it. By signing on, India can claim it is contributing even more to the fight against nuclear proliferation than it has in the past—and blunt criticism that the 2008 nuclear accord Singh's government signed with the U.S. undermines nonproliferation efforts by allowing India to obtain civilian nuclear tech-

nology without being part of the NPT. India's NPT strategy would also wrong-foot Pakistan, which used India's NPT stance to justify its own acquisition of nuclear weapons, and would put greater scrutiny on Islamabad and its poor non-proliferation record.

India's pursuit of NPT status would also force NPT members to engage in far-reaching strategic calculations of their own, concerning how to respond to India and its increasing geopolitical significance. To admit India as a nuclear-weapons state, NPT members would have to amend the treaty—specifically, the provision that defines nuclear-weapons states as those that manufactured and exploded a nuclear weapon before Jan. 1, 1967. That means the member countries will have to decide how to balance their commitment to the NPT with their need to avoid ostracizing India as a strategic actor in world affairs. Two of the most important NPT members, the U.S. and China, will need to make particularly difficult strategic choices. Washington must decide if it is willing to oppose the NPT amendment, even if doing so would mean risking its improved relations with New Delhi, and harming its efforts to further strengthen ties at a time that U.S. interests in South Asia and concerns about China are deepening. Beijing, for that matter, must decide if it is willing to oppose Indian membership and risk being perceived as acting selfishly rather than in the interests of nonproliferation.

India may have other motivations in changing its policy. Singh's move

may help India deflect arguments that it should also accept the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), an agreement that would ban all testing of nuclear weapons,

which proponents of a nuclear-free world consider critical. By changing India's NPT stance, Singh has heightened its policy importance and moves the CTBT to the diplomatic background. In doing so, he has made it easier for New Delhi

to resist entreaties to join the CTBT, while it negotiates accession and implements its NPT obligations, thus preserving its ability to test weapons to maintain its nuclear deterrent. Indian accession to the NPT might actually create obstacles to

the goal of a world free of nuclear weapons by complicating efforts to achieve a comprehensive ban on all nuclear testing.

For India, expressing interest in joining the treaty as a nuclear-weapons state is a shrewd move. It realigns critical aspects of global nuclear diplomacy around Indian ideas, interests, and influence in ways New Delhi's hostility to the NPT never achieved. No matter what happens now, India's shift on the treaty promises to bring benefits to the country and present difficult challenges to friends and rivals alike.

FIDLER and GANGULY are the director and director of research, respectively, of the Center on American and Global Security at Indiana University, Bloomington.



India's shift on the nonproliferation treaty will enhance its image as a great power.

ESSAY

Ties That Bind

Despite a seemingly waning alliance, India and the U.S. still have a special relationship

BY ISHAAN THAROOR

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA'S TOUR OF CHINA WAS an exercise in awkwardness, micromanaged and tightly controlled by a host intolerant of spontaneity. His meeting with Chinese counterpart Hu Jintao was, to put it kindly, stilted. Flash forward a week to the lawns of the White House and the difference couldn't be more palpable. India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, the guest of honor at the first-ever official state dinner in the Obama era, was feted in an atmosphere of easy conviviality, surrounded by a bubbly cast of celebrities and power brokers who toasted the bonds between the world's largest democracies.

But while the pomp and ceremony with which Obama hosted Singh on Nov. 24 may have prompted breathless gushing from the Indian media, it still can't shake a perception in India that it has lost ground to China in the new Administration's Asia policy. Many in New Delhi saw Obama's performance in China as acquiescent toward an emboldened Beijing. And they see India having a diminished role in the strategic calculations of Obama's White House, at least in comparison to the centrality it enjoyed during George W. Bush's eight years in office.

Despite Bush's blunders in Iraq and elsewhere, many Indians welcomed his embrace, which strengthened ties to an unprecedented degree after decades of Cold War estrangement. Prime Minister Singh faced opposition at home from politicians skeptical of closer relations with the U.S.—his government was almost deposed by parties of the left protesting a nuclear-technology deal he concluded with the Bush Administration. But Singh staked his political reputation on the growing relationship. "Under Bush, India was being encouraged to be an Asian power," says Brahma Chellaney, professor of strategic studies at the Centre for Policy Research, a New Delhi-based think tank. Implicit in the Bush agenda was the idea of helping a rising India become a democratic bulwark against authoritarian China. Now, says Chellaney, "Obama sees things through a different prism."

Indian analysts believe Obama's foreign policy team imagines India mostly in the context of other regional challenges, particularly the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan. China, with its booming economy and position as America's primary creditor, now carries far more weight in U.S. strategy. "The ground reality is India at the moment does not count for the U.S. in the

same way that China and Pakistan do," says Bahukutumbi Raman, a former top Indian intelligence official and head of the Centre for Topical Studies in Chennai.

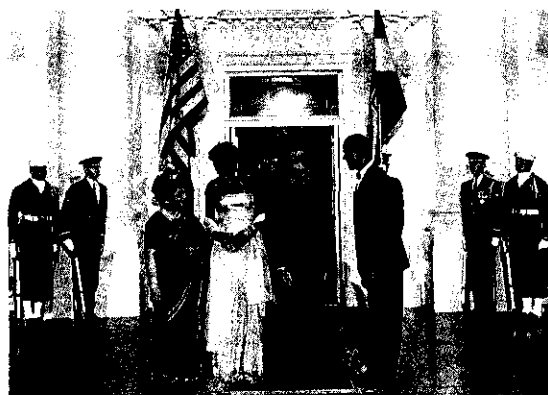
Part of the price for that new reality, many in India believe, is a downgrading of their own concerns. Singh's U.S. visit coincided with the anniversary of last year's Mumbai terror attacks, which were orchestrated by Pakistan-based groups traditionally associated with Pakistan's military intelligence organization, the ISI. Obama and his envoy to Pakistan and Afghanistan, Richard Holbrooke, have urged India to make concessions on the decades-old Kashmir dispute in order to help Washington's efforts to get Pakistan to finally deal with the

Taliban. But little has been done to coerce Pakistan to crack down on extremists using its territory as a base for targeting India.

More troubling for the Indians than the Obama Administration's prioritizing of Afghanistan was a paragraph in the joint statement released during the President's Beijing visit: it welcomed Chinese involvement in South Asia and spoke of Beijing's ability to "promote peace, stability and development in that region."

In New Delhi, this was read as a sign of U.S. acceptance of China viewing South Asia—India's neighborhood—as part of its own sphere of influence. Chellaney sees the statement as a "return to a kind of Cold War thinking where two great powers can dictate terms to a lesser one." China's long-standing border disputes with India and its building up of the Pakistani military make many in New Delhi reluctant to welcome Beijing as a benign presence.

And yet, New Delhi and Washington have something special going for them, something the Americans will probably never have with the Chinese. At the state dinner, Obama extolled the values of democracy and pluralism held dear by both the U.S. and India, and the shared legacy of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. The natural alliance between the two nations seems as fitting as the fusion cuisine of chickpeas and okra, naan and cornbread, munched on by the guests. And it won't need scripted summits to grow. More than 3 million people of Indian origin live in the U.S.; Indians comprise the biggest pool of foreign students in American universities, and wealthy Indian professionals are creating an increasingly effective India lobby in Washington. These, not the fluid world of geopolitics, are the ties that truly bind.



At ease The Singhs and Obamas at the White House, Nov. 24

ESSAY

Shrinking The War on Terrorism

Obama's foreign policy takes a narrower view of U.S. power—you can't fight everyone all at once

BY PETER BEINART



TO UNDERSTAND BARACK OBAMA'S Afghanistan decision, it's instructive to go back to one history-shifting sentence, uttered by his predecessor more than eight years ago. It was Sept. 20, 2001. The nation was in agony, and George W. Bush stood before a joint session of

Congress, telling Americans where to direct their rage. "Americans are asking, 'Who attacked our country?'" Bush declared early in his remarks. "The evidence we have gathered all points to a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organizations known as al-Qaeda."

Had Bush stopped there, everything would be different today. But a few minutes later, he made this fateful pivot: "Our war on terror begins with al-Qaeda, but it does not end there." After that, Bush mentioned *terror*, *terrorists* or *terrorism* 18 times more. But he didn't mention al-Qaeda again. When he returned to Congress a few months later for his January 2002 State of the Union address, he cited Hamas, Hizballah, Islamic Jihad, North Korea, Iran and Iraq and employed variations of the word *terror* 34 times. But he mentioned al-Qaeda only once.

For Obama, this is the original sin whose consequences must now be repaired. His foreign policy in the greater Middle East amounts to an elaborate effort to peel back eight years of onion in hopes of finding the war on terrorism's lost inner core: the struggle against al-Qaeda and al-Qaeda alone. That's the subtext underlying his new Afghan strategy. He's raising troop levels, but less to vanquish the Taliban than to gain the leverage to effectively negotiate with them—in hopes of isolating al-Qaeda from its Afghan allies. He's boosting America's means but narrowing its ends. The same logic underlies his outreach to Iran and Syria and his rhetoric about groups like Hizballah and Hamas. Obama's not trying to end the war on terrorism, but he is trying to downsize it—so that it doesn't overwhelm the U.S.'s capacities and crowd out his other priorities.

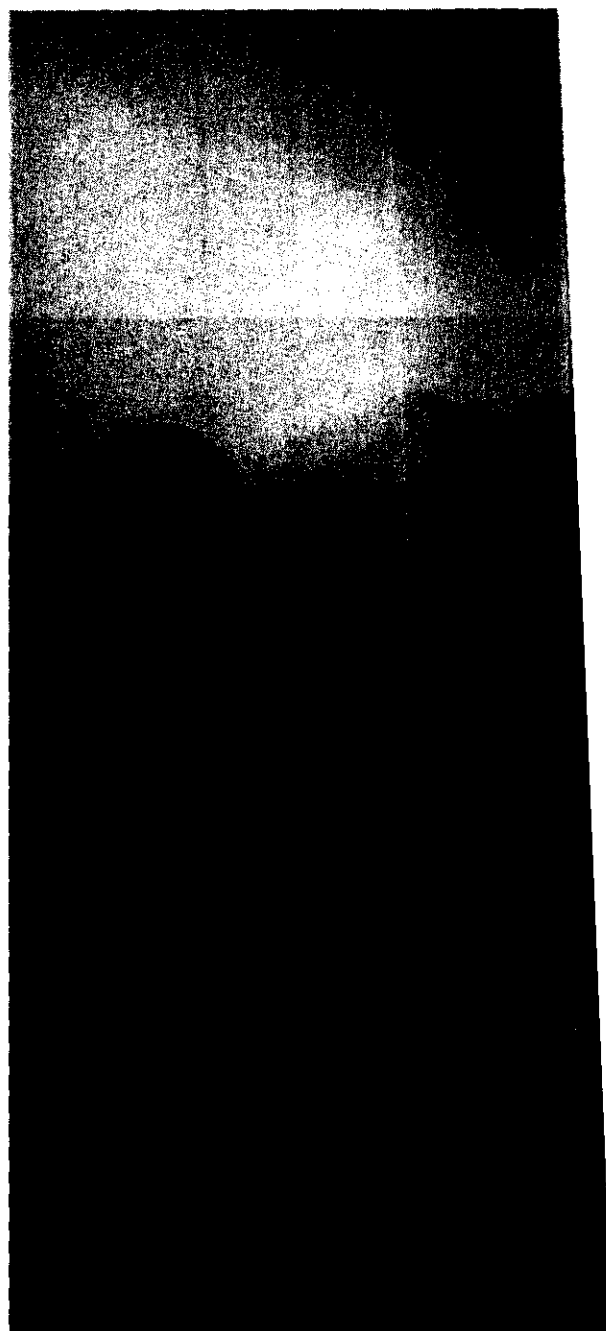
Obama's foreign policy, in fact, looks a lot like Richard Nixon's in the latter years of Vietnam, which sought to scale down another foreign policy doctrine—containment—that had gotten out of hand. And Nixon's experience offers both a warning and an example: pulling back from your predecessor's overblown commitments can be vital. The risk is that it can make you look weak or immoral, or both.

The End of Omnipotence


OBAMA'S EFFORT TO DOWNSIZE THE WAR ON TERRORISM IS PARTLY a function of personality and mostly a function of circumstance. George W. Bush loathed what he called "small ball." He saw both

his father's presidency and Bill Clinton's as inconsequential and yearned to invest his own with world-historical significance. After 9/11, he immediately began comparing the war on terrorism to World War II and the Cold War—a global, generation-defining struggle against an enemy of vast military and ideological power that would transform whole chunks of the world.

Obama, by contrast, doesn't need to go hunting for grand challenges. From preventing a depression to providing universal health care to stopping global warming, he has them in spades. Bush could afford to define the war on terrorism broadly because he didn't think anything going on at home was nearly as important. Obama, on the other hand, must find space (and money) for what he sees as equally grave domestic threats. Bush



DAVID FURST—AFP/GETTY



Gearing up A group of U.S. Marines prepares for a mission in Farah province in October

loved the ominous, elastic noun *terrorism*. Obama, according to an analysis by Politico, has publicly uttered the words *health* and *economy* twice as often as *terrorism*, *Iraq*, *Iran* and *Afghanistan* combined. Even his decision to temporarily send more troops to Afghanistan was framed as a way to allow the U.S. to eventually disengage from the war.

Obama is also shrinking the war on terrorism because, although he won't say so out loud, he's scaled back Bush's assessment of American power. When Bush invaded Iraq, the U.S. was coming off a decade of low-cost military triumphs—from Panama in 1989 to the Gulf War in 1991 to Bosnia in 1995 to Kosovo in 1999. And back then, Afghanistan looked like a triumph too. It was easy to believe that the U.S. military—through a combination of force

and threats of force—could prevail over a slew of hostile regimes and movements at the same time. And it was easy to believe that the U.S. could afford these military adventures, particularly for conservatives like Dick Cheney, who famously declared that “deficits don't matter.” Finally, in the wake of communism's collapse and the spread of democracy throughout the developing world, hawks tended to see dictatorships as brittle, devoid of popular support. This epic faith in the U.S.'s military, economic and ideological power fueled Bush's decision to define the war on terrorism as the U.S. against the field. It was like the way Americans once talked about Olympic basketball: the U.S. team was so much better than all the others that they might as well combine into one opposing team so they could all be defeated at once.

These days the U.S. doesn't look quite so omnipotent. Insurgents in Iraq and now Afghanistan have learned how to throw sand in the war-fighting machine. Economically, gaping deficits are making it harder to run the war on terrorism on a blank check. And ideologically, violent, illiberal movements like Hamas, Hizballah and the Taliban have proved that they have deeper roots in native soil than the Bushies assumed. At West Point, Obama said he would not "set goals that go beyond our responsibility, our means or our interests." Bush never spoke in that language of limits.

So Obama is trying to make a virtue of necessity. Since the U.S. can't defeat all terrorism-supporting movements and regimes, he's arguing that it doesn't have to, since most of them are not committing terrorism against the U.S. As Bruce Riedel, who ran Obama's initial Afghanistan and Pakistan review, puts it, "He's going after the organization that attacked the U.S. on 9/11 and before and since rather than pursuing a vague and murky war on terrorism everywhere." Team Obama has junked the phrase *war on terror*, not to mention *Islamofascism*. And the World War II and Cold War analogies have mostly ceased. Even in Afghanistan, Obama has sharply narrowed the U.S.'s goals. While still aiming to "defeat al-Qaeda," the U.S. will now try only to "reverse the Taliban's momentum and deny it the ability to overthrow the government." In other words, Taliban control over large chunks of the Afghan countryside will be tolerated.

Narrowing the Struggle

PRACTICALLY, THIS EXERCISE IN SUBTRACTION STARTS WITH Iran. By defining the U.S.'s enemy as "terror," Bush implied that Iran was as big a problem as al-Qaeda. After all, Tehran's mullahs began sponsoring terrorism before al-Qaeda was even born. In so doing, Bush made normal relations with the Islamic Republic virtually impossible. While he didn't actually declare war on Tehran, he initiated the coldest of cold wars: threats of force, no diplomacy and an ideological campaign aimed at making the regime crack.

In Obama's narrower struggle against al-Qaeda, however, a cold war with Tehran makes little sense. For all its nastiness, the Iranian regime doesn't direct its terrorism against the U.S. And Iran's Shi'ite theocrats have a mostly hostile relationship with the anti-Shi'ite theocrats of al-Qaeda. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, Iran has caused trouble for the U.S. largely out of fear that if the U.S. prevails in those countries, Iran will be next. But the Obama Administration seems to believe that if the U.S. can convince Iran's regime that it's not next, Washington and Tehran can cooperate to achieve their common goal in Afghanistan and Iraq: smashing al-Qaeda.

The U.S.-Iranian cold war has shown some signs of a thaw, Tehran's continued defiance of world opinion on its nuclear program notwithstanding. Obama has begun the highest-level diplomatic engagement with Tehran in 30 years and refrained from calling for the overthrow of the regime, even amid mass Iranian protests last summer aimed at accomplishing exactly that. Media coverage of the diplomatic dance between Washington and Tehran focuses on Iran's nuclear program, but by pursuing a fundamentally different relationship with the Islamic Republic, the Obama Administration is also quietly conceding that Iran's militancy is different from the terrorism of al-Qaeda, an organization that no U.S. diplomat would ever sit across a table from.

And even as it works to remove Iran from the U.S.'s post-9/11 enemies list, the Obama Administration is trying something similar with another traditional Middle Eastern irritant, Syria. Under George W. Bush, Syria got the cold war treatment as well: rhetorical belligerence, veiled military threats, a withdrawal of the U.S. ambassador. Under Obama, by contrast, Middle East

envoy George Mitchell has been to Damascus, the Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister has been to Washington, and the rhetoric has become noticeably less hostile.

The best precedent for all this is what Nixon did in the late Vietnam years. For roughly two decades, the U.S. had been trying to contain "communism"—another ominous, elastic noun that encompassed a multitude of movements and regimes. But Vietnam proved that this was impossible: the U.S. didn't have the money or might to keep communist movements from taking power anywhere across the globe. So Nixon stopped treating all communists the same way. Just as Obama sees Iran as a potential partner because it shares a loathing of al-Qaeda, Nixon saw Communist China as a potential partner because it loathed the U.S.S.R. Nixon didn't stop there. Even as he reached out to China, he also pursued détente with the Soviet Union. This double outreach—to both Moscow and Beijing—gave Nixon more leverage over each, since each communist superpower feared that the U.S. would favor the other, leaving it geopolitically isolated. On a smaller scale, that's what Obama is trying to do with Iran and Syria today. By reaching out to both regimes simultaneously, he's making each anxious that the U.S. will cut a deal with the other, leaving it out in the cold. It's too soon to know whether Obama's game of divide and conquer will work, but by narrowing the post-9/11 struggle, he's gained the diplomatic flexibility to play adversaries against each other rather than unifying them against the U.S.

Gaining Leverage

LURKING BEHIND OBAMA'S DIFFERENT VIEW OF IRAN AND SYRIA is a different view of the terrorist movements they support: Hizballah and Hamas. For Bush, the only distinction among Hizballah, Hamas and al-Qaeda was that the first two terrorized Israelis, not Americans, and since Israel was the U.S.'s close ally, that was no difference at all. But the Obama Administration has hinted at a different perspective: a recognition that unlike al-Qaeda, Hizballah and Hamas are nationalist movements with deep roots in their particular societies. That means that unlike al-Qaeda, they can't simply be destroyed. Rather, the goal must be to transform them from military organizations into purely political and social ones, as happened with the Irish Republican Army. The U.S. might still dislike their Islamist, anti-Western, anti-Israeli agenda, but as Obama said in an interview with the Arab-owned news channel al-Arabiya during his first week in office, he would be "very clear in distinguishing between organizations ... that espouse violence, espouse terror and act on it—and people who ... have a [different] viewpoint [from the U.S.'s] in terms of how their countries should develop." Hizballah and Hamas would have to transform themselves to gain U.S. recognition, but while Bush's goal was to smash the two movements, Obama's seems to be to nudge that transformation along.

The most urgent and high-profile item on Obama's downsizing agenda is, of course, Afghanistan. For eight years, the Bush Administration lumped al-Qaeda and the Taliban together. It was the most obvious application of Bush's famous declaration that "we will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them." But now the Obama Administration is making exactly that distinction. "There is clearly a difference between" the Taliban and al-Qaeda, press secretary Robert Gibbs said recently. A host of Obama officials have insisted that the Taliban is a tribal and national movement and that while it may want to terrorize Afghan secularists and women, it is not particularly interested in terrorizing the American homeland.

The Taliban's local roots, Obama officials suggest, also make it harder to vanquish than al-Qaeda. The implication is that as with



Chasing ghosts U.S. troops await a helicopter after a two-day mission in Paktika province searching for Taliban hideouts

Hizballah and Hamas, the U.S.'s only realistic goal is to bring the Taliban into the political process. Despite his decision to send 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan, Obama has abandoned the goal of making the country Taliban-free. For all the attention it has received, the decision about troop levels is essentially tactical: it's an effort to win the military leverage necessary to persuade elements of the Taliban that they're better off in government than on the battlefield. "Ultimately," Defense Secretary Robert Gates has declared, there must be "reconciliation with the Taliban."

The Downside of Downsizing

IN GENERAL, OBAMA'S BID TO SHRINK THE WAR ON TERRORISM makes sense. Since the U.S. lacks the capacity to eliminate Hizballah, Hamas and the Taliban and since it is probably unable to overthrow the regimes in Syria and Iran, the goals need to be rethought. Many on the American right believe the lesson of the Reagan years is that the U.S. can bludgeon its enemies into submission if only it doesn't lose its will. But Ronald Reagan didn't bludgeon Mikhail Gorbachev into submission; he seduced him with intensive diplomatic engagement and arms-control agreements that thawed the Cold War. It was only after that thaw that Gorbachev let Eastern Europe go free. Eventually, it will probably take a similar thawing to get regimes like Iran and Syria out of the terrorism business.

Obama's effort to downsize the war on terrorism can also free up time and resources for the rest of American foreign policy. During the Bush Administration, the post-9/11 agenda often seemed to constitute a good 75% of the U.S.'s international agenda. If Obama could eventually get that down to, say, 50%, it would free him up to devote attention to long-term challenges like climate change and the global economy that Bush gave short shrift.

But downsizing also has its costs. The first is moral. Obama may be right that the U.S. can't vanquish movements like Hizballah and the Taliban or even an embattled regime like Iran's. Legitimizing them, however, will be hard for some Americans to swallow. Already, hawks have slammed Obama for negotiating with Iran's mullahs while the blood of Iranian protesters is still fresh on their hands. And "reconciliation" with the Tali-

ban, while necessary for the U.S.'s eventual withdrawal from Afghanistan, might be a horror show for Afghan women. It is worth noting that while many historians applaud Nixon's retreat from global containment, his decision to cozy up to dictators in Beijing, Moscow and elsewhere elicited revulsion from Americans on both left and right.

The second problem with Obama's agenda is that although he wants to cut deals with regimes like Iran's and movements like the Taliban, he's not in a particularly strong position to do so. Back in 2002 or 2003, when the U.S. looked almost invincible, the Iranians appeared willing to concede a lot simply to forestall a U.S. attack. Now, with the U.S. mired in Afghanistan and Iraq, they are less afraid and thus less willing to deal. Similarly, the Taliban have little incentive to break with al-Qaeda so long as they feel they're gaining momentum in the Afghan war. It will be hard for Obama to win at the negotiating table what he can't win on the battlefield. After all, despite Nixon's intricate diplomacy with Moscow and Beijing, neither communist superpower helped him where he wanted it most—in preventing a U.S. defeat in Vietnam.

Therein lies the irony of Obama's downsizing effort: he needs to ratchet up conflicts at first—by sending more troops to Afghanistan and perhaps pushing new sanctions against Iran—to gain the diplomatic muscle to cut deals that don't look like abject American defeats. It's a risky strategy, since there's no guarantee that the bigger sticks will work, and if they don't, pulling back will be even harder. But it's a gamble Obama may have to take. The harsh truth is that the U.S. is significantly weaker in the Middle East now than it was in 2002. For close to a decade, adversaries of the U.S. have not only survived; they've also realized that conflict with the U.S. has its advantages. Now Obama wants to call off the feud. Unfortunately, it's not that simple. He may want to pare down the enemies list. But the other guys have to take the U.S. off their enemies list too. ■

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