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Mr. Singh's Pakistan Outreach

By G. Parthasarathy

Buoyed by the decisive mandate the ruling coalition received in recent general elections, India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has set an ambitious agenda for his government. His primary focus is reviving economic growth through increased infrastructure investment and substantive financial sector reforms. But equally important, Mr. Singh is trying to set out a coherent Pakistan policy.

Addressing parliament on June 8, Mr. Singh indicated India was ready to "try again to make peace with Pakistan." He called on Islamabad to "bring to justice" those responsible for the terrorist attack in Mumbai last November. He added: "I expect the government of Pakistan to take strong, effective and sustained action to prevent the use of their territory for acts of terrorism on Indian Territory, or against Indian interests." (The reference to "Indian interests" was a nod to the attack on the Indian Embassy in Kabul, which was carried out in July 2008 by elements of the Taliban based in Pakistan.)

Washington, too, has an obvious interest in seeing that India-Pakistan tensions do not get out of hand. It would like Pakistan to remain focused on military action against the Taliban on its western frontiers with Afghanistan. The Obama administration also knows

that another major terrorist attack on India from across its borders would provoke a strong Indian response. The U.S. has told Islamabad that it has a "special responsibility" to act immediately and firmly against those responsible for the Mumbai attack and bring them to justice.

The last years of former President Pervez Musharraf's rule saw considerable improvement in the India-Pakistan relationship. A cease-fire across the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir was agreed upon in November 2003. Subsequent dialogue led to wider contacts and the resumption, after half a century, of trade and travel across the Line of Control. "Back channel" negotiations between India and Pakistan from 2005 to 2007 came close to producing an innovative solution to the Kashmir issue.

The settlement envisaged grant of extensive autonomy on both sides of the Line of Control, with this Line dividing the state becoming "irrelevant" in course of time, by free movement of people, goods, services and investment across it. With declining violence, there would be a phased reduction of forces that now face one another and representative institutions set up for promoting trade, travel, tourism and cooperation on issues like health, environmental

protection and education. Mr. Singh and former Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri have acknowledged that they were close to reaching a solution in 2007.

While Pakistan calls for immediate resumption of the dialogue process, New

Delhi has been cautious. The Indian public remains outraged by the brazen Mumbai terrorist attack of Nov. 26, 2008. Mr. Singh would face severe criticism if further terrorist attacks took place once the dialogue process re-

sumed. New Delhi also believes that, though a civilian government ostensibly rules Pakistan, the Pakistan army has a preponderant say in relations with Afghanistan and India. This is evident from the fact that foreign dignitaries visiting Pakistan invariably seek a meeting with Army Chief General Ashfaq Pervez Kayani, without bothering to call on his direct boss, Defense Minister Ahmed Mukhtar. Whether the Pakistan army establishment can be associated with the dialogue process with India is a question to be considered. Most importantly, demonstrable action by Pakistan to bring those responsible for the Mumbai outrage to justice will facilitate early resumption of dialogue.

India is also cautious because of perceived divisions with the Pakistani govern-

ment. New Delhi senses there are differences between President Zardari on the one hand, and Prime Minister Yusuf Gilani and the Foreign Office and intelligence establishment on the other, on issues ranging from trade and economic relations with India to the resumption of the stalled dialogue process on Jammu and Kashmir. The indications are that Islamabad, led by the army establishment, would like to repudiate what was agreed upon in earlier "back channel" negotiations.

To resume the formal dialogue process, careful preparatory work behind the scenes would be necessary. This week, there will be occasion for President Zardari and Prime Minister Singh to exchange views at the Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in Yekaterinburg, Russia, and they could also meet during the forthcoming Summit of the Nonaligned Movement in Egypt in July. These meetings could help address existing doubts and differences. In the meantime, India could make some unilateral gestures to promote people-to-people contacts and ties between civil society organizations. The people of India and Pakistan both stand to benefit if this process goes well.

Mr. Parthasarathy, a visiting professor at the Center for Policy Research in New Delhi, was India's ambassador to Pakistan from 1998 to 2000.

Can Delhi and Islamabad make peace?

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 2009

THE NEXT STEP IN SECURING IRAQ'S FUTURE

As U.S. troops withdraw from cities, it remains unclear whether Iraq's factions can summon the will to get along.

There is certain to be some quibbling about the details, and there may be temporary delays in one or two cities, but the withdrawal of American forces from Iraqi urban areas is on track to be completed by June 30, in accordance with President Obama's plan for winding down the U.S. occupation. For Iraqis, handing over security responsibilities in cities is likely to prove a mixed blessing, at least at first. The levels of violence in the coming months will largely be determined by the ability of the Iraqi people to cooperate across ethnic and sectarian lines.

But for Americans, the removal of combat forces from urban areas signifies a belated recognition of reality. The U.S. military's use of Sunni Arab tribal groups to drive Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia out of Anbar Province, combined with a successful counter-insurgency strategy of clearing and holding previously contested areas, has reduced the level of violence about as much as any foreign force could reduce it.

Indeed, it is a common complaint among Iraqis that the presence of an occupying army acts as a magnet, drawing suicide bombers and truck bombs to population centers. And even if American troops may be withdrawing from the northern city of Mosul before they have established an acceptable level of security there, sooner or later Iraq's army and police forces would have had to take on the task of protect-

ing the population from terrorists and criminal gangs themselves.

In the case of Mosul — the mixed-population city to which Al Qaeda retreated after being crushed in the western region of Iraq — the U.S. military is discussing with the Iraqi government a continuing advisory role after June 30. There is a value for both the Obama administration and the Iraqi government of Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki in adhering to the June 30 deadline. But U.S. forces should be able to help their Iraqi counterparts resist Al Qaeda in Mosul without violating President Obama's pledge to withdraw combat forces from Iraqi cities. Even after withdrawing, the Americans can provide intelligence, logistics assistance and operational advice.

For the longer term, the path to true security in Iraq must pass through two distinct political compacts: one between Arabs and Kurds; the other between Sunnis and Shiites. Thus far, the prospects for bridging either the Arab-Kurd ethnic divide or the sectarian antagonism between Sunnis and Shiites are not encouraging.

But since the presence of U.S. combat forces in Iraqi cities has done little to persuade Iraqi politicians of the need to share power equitably, perhaps they will be more inclined to overcome their internecine conflicts once the Americans begin leaving them to their own devices.

BOSTON GLOBE

Democracy could still win in Iran



Gideon Rachman

Thirty years after the Iranian revolution, could we be witnessing an Iranian counter-revolution? In the short term, events in Iran are depressing and alarming – a stolen election, violence in the streets, repression. In the long term, the weekend has provided heartening evidence that Iran, and the Middle East in general, need not be immune to the great wave of democratisation that has swept the world since the late 1970s.

Of course, there are those who think that – despite the turmoil in Tehran – President Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad may actually have won the election. Their line of argument is that western journalists and middle-class Iranians have been deceived by focusing too much on opinion in the capital city and amongst the educated elite. Iran might be like Thailand – a country that has recently been through political turmoil because the urban middle-classes are regularly out-voted by the rural poor.

These arguments are unconvincing. The Iranian election bears all the hallmarks of a stolen vote. The official count has Mr Ahmadi-Nejad winning even in the home town of Mir-Hossein Mousavi, his main challenger. Mr Ahmadi-Nejad is said to have won even in Azeri-speaking constituencies, despite the fact that Mr Mousavi comes from an Azeri background. The official tally gave Mr Ahmadi-Nejad 63 per cent of the vote, which is way out of line with most pre-election predictions. The Iranian regime has reacted to popular protests with all the instincts of a dictatorship – beating up protesters, locking up opponents, shutting down text messaging services and internet sites.

It used to be said that Iran was a rare example of a semi-democracy in the Middle East. But the weekend elections have ripped away the country's democratic veil.

In retrospect, the Iranian revolution of 1979 replaced one despotic regime with another – and so cut the country off from the democratising forces that were just beginning to make themselves felt

throughout much of the rest of the world. During the 1980s most of the Latin American authoritarian regimes were swept away.

Democracy came to the Philippines, South Korea and Taiwan in the 1980s – and to central Europe in 1989. In the 1990s apartheid fell in South Africa and so did the Suharto regime in Indonesia.

In recent years, the global democratic revolution has threatened to run out of steam. Russia has slipped backwards towards authoritarianism and China has made the case for a new form of enlightened one-party rule. The chaos that followed the US-led invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan has threatened to discredit the whole case for democratisation.

Some conservative realists have argued that it is, in any case, a mistake to promote democracy in the Middle East, since Islamists are liable to win power and impose illiberal regimes. The joke has been that it would be “one man, one vote, one time”. The best response to this has always been that Islamism is only likely to lose its popular allure when Muslim fundamentalists are allowed to govern – and prove themselves to be incompetent, oppressive and corrupt.

That cycle is now playing itself out in Iran. Even if Mr Ahmadi-Nejad and his cohorts succeed in clinging on to power, their claim to represent a popular Islamic revolution is now in shreds.

In the meantime, how should the outside world react to Iran's stolen election? The Obama administration has already been criticised for what some conservatives regard as an excessively mild and cautious response to events in Iran.

But heavy-handed intervention by the west would be mistaken at this stage. The Iranian regime has three possible sources of domestic

legitimacy: popular support, economic success or an external threat. The economy is doing badly and the stolen election has wrecked the idea that this is a government that rests on a broad popular mandate.

That leaves the possibility that the regime will use the bogeyman of foreign intervention to rally patriotic support and to crack down even harder on the opposition. There is a history of western meddling in Iranian politics – for example the US-backed coup of 1953, acknowledged by President Barack Obama in his recent speech in Cairo. So an appeal by the regime to rally all patriotic Iranians against foreign intervention might resonate.

The crucial lesson of the long wave of democratisation that has rolled round the world since 1979 is that democratic revolutions ultimately succeed for almost entirely domestic reasons. Occasionally, outsiders can influence events. The Russian decision not to intervene in 1989 was obviously crucial to the success of the democratic revolutions in central Europe. America's decision to spirit away Ferdinand Marcos in 1986 clinched the “people power” revolution in the Philippines.

But these were client regimes. In most cases, democratic revolutions have been driven overwhelmingly by “people power” at home – usually followed by a loss of nerve or cracks in the ruling regime. This might yet happen in Iran.

It is still possible that the country will have a successful “Green” revolution to match the Orange and Rose revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia. But the sad truth is that all the outside world can do, for the moment, is offer rhetorical support for Iranian democrats, watch, wait and hope.

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Netanyahu pushes one right button

But what he is not offering is a viable Palestinian state

As a speech, it targeted headline writers with perfect accuracy. The words "Netanyahu", "Palestinian" and "state" duly appeared in the same sentence, without the word "not". But nothing in Sunday's speech by Israel's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, suggests he believes that freedom for the Palestinians, in their own state, on their own land, is the key to peace and the long-term security of Israelis.

Mr Netanyahu was replying to Barack Obama's trenchant speech in Cairo on June 4, when the US president said that "just as Israel's right to exist cannot be denied, neither can Palestine's". Mr Obama also said the US would "not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements" in the occupied territories.

The Israeli premier, who has dedicated his political life to thwarting a Palestinian state and to the cause of a Greater Israel, needed to address this alarming turn in US policy, while reassuring the irredentist and religious right on which he depends.

His utterance of the word "state" looks a purely semantic concession, so hedged by sovereign limitations as to be vitiated of meaning. Israel would have the same control over the West Bank as it now has over Gaza. Palestinians would get supra-municipal rule.

The settlements would stay and Israel would keep Arab east Jerusalem. Mr Netanyahu also set a new bar for the Palestinians: recognition of Israel as "nation state of the Jewish people". This "Jewish state" demand evades the question of where the frontiers of Israel end and would also appear to preempt any negotiation of the "right of return" of Palestinian refugees.

Netanyahu watchers like to point out that though he last came to office in opposition to the Oslo peace accords he was nevertheless forced to accept them. Yet, with the exception of a partial withdrawal from the city of Hebron, he did not honour his agreements: the Wye Plantation deal whereby Israel was to return a further 13 per cent of the West Bank was never implemented. He turned the drive for peace into pure process, piling up unresolved disputes to be parked in "final status" negotiations he never intended to begin.

Mr Netanyahu will probably now give up settler "outposts" – pawns on the political chessboard – to try to isolate Mr Obama from his support in Congress. A clash looks inevitable. Yet past Israeli leaders who endangered the unique alliance with the US, Israel's protector and patron, got punished by public opinion and voters. This is shaping up as an epic test of wills.

Netanyahu supports Palestinian state with conditions

Jerusalem/Luxembourg

LOS ANGELES TIMES, AP

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu bowed to U.S. pressure Sunday and accepted the goal of a Palestinian state. But it is unclear whether the breakthrough, welcomed by President Barack Obama, will lead to a revival of peace talks with the Palestinians, who immediately rejected the sharp limits Netanyahu would place on their nation's sovereignty.

Netanyahu said Israel needs international guarantees that a Palestinian state will not have its own military. In his first policy speech on the conflict since taking office 10 weeks ago, he also insisted that the U.S.-backed Palestinian Authority give up claims to Jerusalem as a future capital, recognize Israel as the Jewish state, and "impose law and order" on the Hamas militants who run the Gaza Strip.

While those demands were not explicitly held out by Netanyahu as conditions for resuming American-brokered peace negotiations, Palestinian leaders interpreted them as such and rejected his call to start talks immediately. But the White House said Obama welcomed the speech as an "important step forward" and will continue working to bring the two sides together.

The European Union also praised Netanyahu's backing for a Palestinian state, calling it a "step in the right direction" Monday, but questioned his stance on other disputed peace issues such as Jewish settlements and Jerusalem's future status.

Czech Foreign Minister Jan Kohout, whose country holds the EU presidency, said while Netanyahu's comments Sunday needed more analysis, "the acceptance of a Palestinian state is there."

Netanyahu's half-hour address, televised in Israel during prime time, staked out a strikingly different approach to the conflict from the one Obama offered 10 days earlier in an address to the Muslim world from Cairo. He again rebuffed Obama's call for a halt to the growth of Jewish settlements in the West Bank as a first step toward engaging Arab states in a broad regional peace effort.

Speaking two days after

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

Netanyahu backs goal of Palestinian state

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Iran's government proclaimed the re-election of its hardline leader, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Netanyahu said the threat of an Iran armed with nuclear weapons is "the greatest danger confronting Israel" and the region. And he said the "fundamental condition" for ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is not stopping Jewish settlements but securing "a public, binding and honest Palestinian recognition of the state of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people."

But it was his turnabout on Palestinian statehood, qualified though it was, that marked a watershed.

The staunchly conservative leader had spent more than

two decades in public life rejecting a "two-state solution" as other Israeli governments and successive U.S. administrations embraced that goal.

Sunday was the first time he brought himself to utter the word "state" in public to define the homeland Palestinians would get in a peace accord.

In falling closer into line with the American president on one of his top foreign policy goals, Netanyahu took a risk that his right-leaning coalition might rebel. Leaders of Jewish Home said Sunday they might pull their small party out of the government in protest.

But leaders of bigger parties that hold the coalition together swallowed hard, aware of the need to repair a rift with Israel's superpower ally and apparently

placated by the rigid terms in Netanyahu's speech.

He said Israel will not tolerate a Palestinian state with its own army, control of its own borders and airspace, and the ability to make defense pacts with other countries. For the first time, he said Israel wants the United States and other countries to guarantee the future state's demilitarization.

"If we receive this undertaking, for demilitarization and the security arrangements required by Israel, and if the Palestinians recognize Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people," he said, "we will be prepared as part of a future peace accord to reach a solution of a demilitarized Palestinian state alongside the Jewish state."

Palestinian leaders dismissed Netanyahu's call to begin peace talks "immediately, without preconditions" as a nonstarter.

"Netanyahu left us with nothing to negotiate, as he systematically took nearly every issue off the table," said Saeb Erekat, the chief Palestinian Authority negotiator. "Nor did he accept a Palestinian state; instead, he announced a series of conditions and qualifications that render a viable, independent and sovereign state impossible."

Nabil abu Rudaineh, an aide to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, said the speech "is not enough to start a serious peace process."

Ahmad Bahr, a Hamas leader in Gaza, said the speech "proves that resis-

tance is the only way for the Palestinians to regain their legitimate rights." Hamas' alliance with Iran, hostility to Israel, and violent opposition to Abbas' administration make Israelis wary that any peace accord can work.

It remains to be seen whether the tough positions laid out by Israel and Abbas' aides Sunday represent a continued standoff or the beginning of posturing for a new round of peace talks.

"Netanyahu's speech leaves me confused," said Yossi Alpher, co-editor of bitterlemons.com, an online forum on Israeli-Palestinian issues. "Is he saying there will be no peace talks unless his conditions are agreed to in advance? I think he was deliberately vague."

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 2009

Asean's Burma Burden

By Eva Kusuma Sundari

According to the new charter of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, member states are required to act in accordance with certain principles: the rule of law, good governance, democracy, constitutional government, respect for fundamental freedoms, protection of human rights and the promotion of social justice.

By anyone's measure, the military government of Burma, which has been a member of Asean since 1997, has failed in these responsibilities. The farcical trial of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi is only the latest incident in a long history of violence, corruption, ineptitude and complete disregard for the lives and rights of Burma's citizens.

Asean member states, especially Indonesia, must assume a leadership role in putting pressure on the Burma regime with strict and targeted sanctions. Asean members are in a prime position to cut the junta's financial lifeline. Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam are among the junta's top trading partners. Thailand alone purchases more than 44% of Burma's exports each year. Sanctions by Asean member states would deprive Burma's generals of a large portion of the more than \$11 billion they earn from

foreign trade annually.

Ms. Suu Kyi and members of Burma's democracy movement have repeatedly called for international sanctions on the junta. If the people of Burma, who suffer

daily under the junta, are asking us to do so to help them, why are we not listening? The United States and the European Union have extensive sanctions in place, but

their effectiveness is limited because neither the U.S. nor the EU ranks among Burma's top trading partners.

Some Asean members argue that sanctions would only hurt the Burmese people, who are already among the poorest in Southeast Asia. But that is not the case: Export revenues, particularly from natural gas, have created enormous budget surpluses over the last five years. But much of this goes toward the personal enrichment of the generals and their cronies, or toward ill-conceived large-scale projects. The construction in 2005 of a brand new administrative capital in Naypyidaw is but one example of the junta's incompetent and erratic use of state funds.

While the generals relish life in their new capital, the rest of Burma's citizens languish in pov-

erty. The junta spends just 1.4% of GDP on health and education. The public education system in the country has decayed so badly that many parents rely on free, local monastic schools for their children's education. Infectious diseases, including AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis are rampant. How much longer is Asean willing to be dictated to by Burma's human-rights violators?

Strong leadership is necessary to bring about a change, especially because Asean insists on working with its "consensus and collectiveness" approach to resolving regional issues. Trade with Burma's regime is a clear sign of a lack of seriousness in wanting to resolve the country's human-rights problems and it contradicts commitments of enforcing principles found in the Asean Charter.

Asean states will forever have to assume blame for Burma's crisis if they continue to contribute to the regime's political and economic strength. There is no time like the present for Asean to take action and spur the junta into starting the process of national reconciliation.



Aung San
Suu Kyi

Ms. Sundari is a member of the Indonesian parliament and a committee member of the Asean Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus, an independent organization of Asean parliamentarians.

**Sanctions can
help bring
down the junta.**

Recession and revolution



Ross Douthat

Economic fiascos usually have political consequences, and it was only a matter of time before the ripples from the Great Recession produced a crisis in one of the world's more volatile powers.

Luckily for America, it's happening in Iran.

Americans are accustomed to fretting about how theology shapes Iranian politics. But you don't need to be an expert in Shiite eschatology to understand how last week's volatile election gave way to an exercise in self-discrediting thugery by Iran's clerical leadership. Worldly forces made the current crisis possible: Stagnating G.D.P., rising joblessness and runaway inflation.

Even if this week's crackdown somehow strengthens Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's hand within the ruling clique, the regime as a whole has been severely weakened. The patina of democracy was a useful thing for the ruling mullahs, and riot police can't make Iran's economic problems go away. (Iranian statistics put unemployment at 17 percent and the inflation rate at 25 percent; the real numbers may be higher. And chronic mismanagement may even send Iran's oil revenues — the backbone of its faltering economy — into steep decline.) Their monopoly on violence notwithstanding, the leaders of the Islamic Republic look less like the Nazis of the Middle East, and more like hapless Weimar functionaries watching their country's finances circle the drain.

In 1930s Europe, a economic crisis toppled democratic governments, and swept dictators into power. Liberal societies seemed ineffectual; authoritarianism was the coming thing.

The crash of 2008, though, may end up having the opposite effect. Over the last few years, both American alarmists and anti-American triumphalists have emphasized the disruptive power of populist, semi-authoritarian political actors — from Ahmadinejad's Iran to Vladimir Putin's Russia to Hugo Chavez's Venezuela. But these regimes, which depend on petro-dollars for stability at home and influence abroad, may prove far more vulnerable to economic dislocation than their democratic rivals.

Amid the wreckage of the Great Depression, intellectuals and policy-makers looked to fascist Italy and the Soviet Union for inspiration. But it's hard to imagine anyone seeing a model in the current crop of authoritarian governments. It's much easier to imagine them being swept away, if the recession endures, by domestic discontent.

Maybe something worse would take their place. Certainly there are authoritarian states — Egypt, Saudi Arabia — where the danger of an Islamist revolution should keep American policy-makers awake at night.

But as an ideological rival to liberal democracy, Islamism isn't in the same league with the totalitarianisms of the 1930s. And there aren't any other likely candidates on the horizon. Indeed, for all the talk about a crisis of global capitalism, what's most striking about the great financial meltdown is how little radicalism it's spawned.

In the West, especially, there's been more hysteria about the specter of extremism than actual radical activity. If you listen to certain conservative media personalities, you'd think Obama is channeling Leon Trotsky. If you listen to certain liberal pundits, you'd think that talk radio was fomenting a wave of

right-wing violence.

But nothing of the sort is happening. Barack Obama is pushing the United States leftward, but his wish list — universal health care, a green industrial policy — has been pinned to the Democratic National Committee's bulletin board since the 1970s. Glenn Beck and Bill O'Reilly do not, in fact, command an army of gun-toting vigilantes, the crimes of a few lunatics notwithstanding. And in Europe, despite the angst over a few penny-ante racists getting themselves elected to the E.U. Parliament, the crisis's major beneficiaries have been the cautious, incrementalist parties of the center-right.

In Iran, students are protesting for democracy and shouting for Obama. In the West, meanwhile, nobody's talking about adopting Putinist economic nationalism, or renovating the financial sector using the tenets of the Islamic banking system, or imitating Hugo Chavez's "Bolivarian Socialism." (You'll sometimes hear admiring comments about China's recent economic management — but never their one-party dictatorship.)

Our current global economic crisis was created by Western-style democratic capitalism. But it hasn't turned into a crisis for democracy and capitalism, because nobody has a plausible alternative.

The appeal of authoritarianism, once upon a time, was based on the hope that it might deliver growth, prosperity, and happiness more efficiently than its liberal rivals. But nobody thinks that anymore — not in Washington or London or Tokyo or Berlin, and not, on the evidence of this week's events, in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Which is why, if the West is fortunate, the current crisis could reverse the pattern of the Great Depression — by demonstrating the resilience of a global democratic order, and the weakness of its challengers.

China tests the waters



**Philip
Bowring**

HONG KONG China is testing its influence in every direction, trying to balance its need to be seen as a fair global player with its nationalist instincts, to balance a genuine internationalism against the paranoia that comes naturally to a closed political system.

This week the locus has been the Ural city of Yekaterinburg, host to the first official meeting of the BRIC—the catchy acronym invented by Goldman Sachs to make a group from the four largest emerging markets, China, India, Brazil and Russia. If the meeting showed anything it was that their strategic economic interests are very different, though tactical alliances do occur.

The one thing they appeared to agreed on was that however much they

would like to reduce the role of the dollar in the international financial system, doing so was another matter. So much for the BRIC as a coherent group rather than a stock salesman's slogan. China will continue to play along if the others want but is under few illusions about BRIC.

Next, also in Yekaterinburg, was the annual meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization that brings together China, Russia and the Central Asian republics, with India, Pakistan and Iran as observers. Founded as a counter both to U.S. influence in the region and to radical Islam, it is publicly seen as an example of Sino-Russian cooperation.

In practice, however, its relevance may be declining. The United States is being less pushy in Central Asia; Sino-Russian rivalry for influence in that region is clearer than ever; and there is more worry than anger over the U.S. predicament in Afghanistan and Pakistan. And all are wary of an Iran combining theocratic nationalism with domestic power plays.

More significant than these talk-fests for China and the U.S. are the minor confrontations that have been occurring in the South China Sea. In March, the U.S. complained of the harassment

of an unarmed naval vessel that was in international waters, but within China's exclusive economic zone. The U.S. claimed right of "innocent passage"; the Chinese alleged that the vessel was interfering with its economic rights.

In another encounter last week, a Chinese submarine hit a sonar device being towed by a U.S. naval vessel near the Subic Bay naval base but outside Philippine territorial waters, where it was taking part in joint exercises. The United States has chosen to play down the incident as an "inadvertent encounter," but it again gave notice of China's long-term goal of making the South China Sea a Chinese lake.

The incident drew mixed responses in the Philippines, which sum up the dilemma among China's small neighbors of how to respond to its power and its ability to enforce its territorial claims. Some Philippine voices called for strengthening of their own defenses and their alliances with the U.S. and Japan. Others suggested that its Visiting Forces Arrangement, under which the exercises were taking place, was an unnecessary provocation to China.

On the economic front, China has had to face the harsh realities of the limits of its buying power and cash in the inter-

national marketplace, as exemplified by the failure of the bid by state-owned Chinalco to acquire a major stake in mining giant Rio Tinto.

Instead of getting influence in the world's No. 3 iron ore producer, China, as chief customer, now finds itself facing two groups dominating global iron ore trade—a new alliance between Rio Tinto and fellow Anglo-Australian miner BHP-Billiton, and Brazil's Vale do Rio Doce. The Brazilians are unlikely to get into a price war with the Australians for the sake of their BRIC partner.

Although Chinese Internet chat rooms were abuzz with nationalist resentment at Chinalco's rebuff, official Beijing took the news calmly, acknowledging that its enterprises were often poorly equipped for big international forays. However it is threatening a challenge to the Rio-BHP alliance on monopoly grounds. China would deserve sympathy on that score but for its own preference that state-owned oligopolies control the commanding heights of the economy.

China is finding that domestic and international policy on competition and ownership issues can no longer be separated.

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Obama's Iran Abdication

The President Tuesday denounced the "extent of the fraud" and the "shocking" and "brutal" response of the Iranian regime to public demonstrations in Tehran these past few days.

"These elections are an atrocity," he said. "If [Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad had made such progress since the last elections, if he won two-thirds of the vote, why such violence?" The statement named the regime as the cause of the outrage in Iran and, without meddling or picking favorites, stood up for Iranian democracy.

The President who spoke those words was France's Nicolas Sarkozy.

The French are hardly known for their idealistic foreign policy and moral fortitude. Then again many global roles are reversing in the era of Obama. The American President didn't have anything to say the first two days after polls closed in Iran on Friday and an improbable landslide victory for Mr. Ahmadinejad sparked the protests. "I have deep concerns about the election," he said Tuesday at the White House, when he finally did find his voice. "When I see violence directed at peaceful protestors, when I see peaceful dissent



Nicolas Sarkozy

being suppressed, wherever that takes place, it is of concern to me and it's of concern to the American people."

Spoken like a good lawyer. Mr. Obama didn't call the vote fraudulent, though he did allow that Ayatollah Ali Khamenei "understands the Iranian people have deep concerns about the election." This is a generous interpretation of the Supreme Leader's effort to defuse public rage by mooted a possible recount of select precincts. "How that plays out," Mr. Obama said, "is ultimately for the Iranian people to decide." Sort of like the 2000 Florida recount, no doubt.

From the start of this Iranian election, Administration officials said the U.S. should avoid becoming an issue in the campaign that the regime might exploit. Before votes were cast, this hands-off strategy made sense in that the election didn't present a real choice for Iranians. Whether President Ahmadinejad or his chief challenger, Mir Hossein Mousavi, won wouldn't change the mullahs' ultimate political control. Mr. Mousavi had been Ayatollah Khomeini's Prime Minister, hardly the resume of a revolutionary.

But Friday's vote and aftermath have changed those facts on the ground. Like other authoritarians—Ferdinand Marcos in 1986 or Slobodan Milosevic in 2000—Tehran misjudged its own peo-

ple. Having put a democratic veneer around their theocracy, they attempted to steal an election in such a blatant way that it has become a new and profound challenge to their legitimacy. Especially in the cities, Iranians are fed up with the corruption and incompetence rampant in the Islamic Republic. This dissatisfaction was galvanized by the regime's contempt for their votes and found an accidental leader in Mr. Mousavi. The movement has now taken on a life of its own, with consequences no one can predict.

Democracy interferes with his nuclear diplomacy script.

The Obama Administration came into office with a realpolitik script to goad the mullahs into a "grand bargain" on its nuclear program. But Team Obama isn't proving to be good at the improv. His foreign policy gurus drew up an agenda defined mainly in opposition to the perceived Bush legacy: The U.S. will sit down with the likes of Iran, North Korea or Russia and hash out deals. In a Journal story on Monday, a senior U.S. official bordered on enthusiastic about confirming an Ahmadinejad victory as soon as possible. "Had there been a transition to a new government, a new president wouldn't have emerged until August. In some respects, this might allow Iran to engage the international community quicker." The popular uprising in Iran is so inconvenient to this agenda.

President Obama elaborates on this point with his now-frequent moral equivocation. Tuesday he invoked the CIA's role in the 1953 coup against Iranian leader Mohammad Mossadeq to explain his reticence. "Now, it's not productive, given the history of the U.S.-Iranian relations, to be seen as meddling—the U.S. President meddling in Iranian elections," Mr. Obama said.

As far as we can tell, the CIA or other government agencies aren't directing the protests or bankrolling Mr. Mousavi. Beyond token Congressional support for civil society groups and the brave reporting of the Persian-language and U.S.-funded Radio Farda, America's role here is limited. Less than a fortnight ago, in Cairo, Mr. Obama touted his commitment to "governments that reflect the will of the people." Now the President who likes to say that "words matter" refuses to utter a word of support to Iran's people. By that measure, the U.S. should never have supported Soviet dissidents because it would have interfered with nuclear arms control.

The Iranian rebellion, though too soon to call a revolution, is turning out to be that 3 a.m. phone call for Mr. Obama. As a French President shows up the American on moral clarity, Hillary Clinton's point about his inexperience and instincts in a crisis is turning out to be prescient.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 2009

Message to Kim Jong Il

By Chung Min Lee

At the South Korea-U.S. summit Tuesday, Presidents Lee Myung-bak and Barack Obama issued a joint statement reconfirming America's unflinching security commitment to Seoul in light of North Korea's recent missile launches and nuclear test. While this measure is welcome, the road toward denuclearizing North Korea is far from certain and replete with speed bumps. For the Lee and Obama concord to work, three key perceptual changes are in order.

First, both leaders must realize that the North Korean nuclear saga is likely to persist so long as the Kim Jong Il regime remains in power. For nearly two decades the key assumption was that given the right incentives—guaranteeing regime security, diplomatic normalization and extensive aid—Pyongyang would give up its nuclear program and capabilities. While efforts to restart the six-party talks between the two Koreas, the United States, Japan, Russia and China should continue, the five parties excluding the North must now realize that Pyongyang was never really serious about negotiating away its nuclear weapons. Moreover, even with repeated security guarantees, regime survival simply cannot be guaranteed by outside powers.

Second, the North Korean nuclear conundrum is inseparable from dynastic politics in Pyongyang, especially as Kim Jong Il prepares to anoint his 26-year-old third son, Kim Jong Un, as his heir. While the el-

der Kim had two decades to prepare for his coronation, Kim Jong Un remains an untested youth with two older brothers and no real claim for legitimacy, even though he's part of a family dynasty that dominates the country's military government. No one knows how the succession game is going to pan out (not even the post-stroke Kim Jong Il), who is trying to bolster his son's gravitas.

Third, North Korea's systemic crisis is as significant as the nuclear threat given that a failed economy is being kept afloat only through a lifeline from China. China continues to supply nearly 80% of North Korea's oil and food, but even China's patience is running thin. If Pyongyang conducts a third nuclear test or another Taepodong-2 ballistic missile launch, Beijing might consider the imposition of unilateral sanctions. Japan is already implementing stricter trade sanctions and may consider going further by targeting financial flows and preventing visits to the North by officials from the pro-Pyongyang Chosen Soren, a North Korean residents' organization based in Japan. With an economy that is 100 times smaller than South Korea's and has no access to hard currency except through missile sales, counterfeit notes and drug trafficking, Kim Jong Il's economic options are limited.

Tuesday's meeting is a good first step.

Messrs. Lee and Obama's joint statement reconfirmed that the U.S. includes South Korea under its nuclear umbrella. This sent a strong signal to North Korea. The move should also allay concerns in some quarters that South Korea and Japan may need to pursue their own nuclear options. The two leaders also agreed to follow through

on the most recent United Nations Security Council resolution, including new financial sanctions. For added measure, Seoul earlier fully joined the Proliferation Security Initiative, a U.S.-led initiative to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and announced that any direct North Korean military aggression will be met with immediate and proportionate responses.

It may be easy to dismiss Tuesday's meeting as a repeat of previous declarations. Past Korean and American administrations signed on to common roadmaps but soon succumbed to the lure of "genuine" negotiations after North Korea pushed the threat envelope and then promised to negotiate in "good faith." Thus, previous red lines virtually evaporated the moment they were announced because neither Seoul or Washington were willing to back up their "zero tolerance" stances with viable policies.

In contrast, President Lee's message to North Korea has been very clear: If Kim Jong Il is really serious about regime sur-

vival, his best bet is to give up his nuclear weapons and to legitimately receive aid to revive the North Korean economy. Yet at the end of the day, Kim's strategic choices are likely to hinge not on the overwhelming needs of his own people but on the survival of his family and his cronies in the Korean Workers' Party and the army. In the end, the key question Messrs. Lee and Obama have to grapple with is that the North Korean nuclear crisis is here to stay.

President Lee has been vilified by North Korea as a warmonger and criticized by political opponents at home for doing what he was elected to do: namely, to revisit the policy of open-ended engagement with the North, unless there were meaningful progress in North Korea's denuclearization. While political pressure on both him and Mr. Obama to offer "bold" initiatives will continue to mount, they should remind Pyongyang that brinkmanship will no longer result in payoffs for the North. That's the real message the two leaders have to maintain after their Washington summit.

Mr. Lee is Dean of the Graduate School of International Studies at Yonsei University in Seoul.

The U.S. and South Korea must stand firm in the face of nuclear threats.

HEADING OFF NORTH KOREA'S THREATS

This is a very dangerous time.
No one knows for certain how
Pyongyang's leaders will respond.

North Korea is developing a frightening track record of making good on its threats. True to its word, in recent weeks it has conducted a second nuclear test and several missile tests. It also may have resumed making fuel for nuclear weapons.

And the threats keep coming. Over the weekend, the North vowed to make more nuclear weapons and to take "resolute military actions" against efforts to isolate it.

Whether new sanctions adopted unanimously by the United Nations Security Council can deter even more dangerous actions is anyone's guess. We know there is no chance if they are not implemented. The resolution leaves a lot of room for governments to avoid enforcement should they choose.

The resolution bars North Korea from selling weapons (ballistic missiles and parts are exports) or buying them. It authorizes states — but does not require them — to inspect cargo vessels and airplanes suspected of carrying North Korean weapons or nuclear technology. The North has sold missiles to Iran and other unsavory customers and a nuclear reactor to Syria.

The resolution also calls on — but does not require — states and financial institutions to stop providing banking services, loans and credits that could support its nuclear or missile programs. That could have the biggest impact, if countries and banks heed the call.

It is encouraging that China, North Korea's top supplier of food and fuel, and Russia were heavily involved in drafting the resolution. China's ambassador endorsed what he called the international community's "firm opposition" to the North's nuclear ambitions.

But talk is cheap. China and Russia exposed their continued ambivalence by blocking efforts to make certain elements of the new sanctions mandatory. China also insisted on carving out an exception so that it could continue selling small arms to the North.

No one has more influence with the North Koreans than China, but it has repeatedly blocked tough sanctions for fear of destabilizing the North and unleashing a flood of refugees. The Obama administration is doing its part. It has said that it would confront any ship suspected of carrying banned items and is exploring new ways to squeeze the North financially.

After all that has happened, administration officials are understandably skeptical that any negotiated deal is possible. And they are right to insist that they will not keep paying the North to live up to commitments it has repeatedly made and then reneged on. But they are also right to leave the door open to negotiations.

After meeting on Tuesday with South Korea's president, Lee Myung-bak, President Obama called a nuclear-armed North Korea a "grave threat." He also said that the North had "another path available" and that it could still come in from the diplomatic cold if it returns to the bargaining table and abandons its nuclear ambitions.

This is a very dangerous time. As the pressure mounts, no one can be sure how North Korea's erratic leaders will respond. But it would be even more dangerous to allow the North to churn out more nuclear weapons or sell them to the highest bidder. The United States and the other powers, starting with China, must use all of their influence to head off the worst.

The virtual mosque



Thomas L. Friedman

Watching events unfolding in Tehran raises three intriguing questions for me: Is Facebook to Iran's Moderate Revolution what the mosque was to Iran's Islamic Revolution? Is Twitter to Iranian moderates what muezzins were to Iranian mullahs? And, finally, is any of this good for the Jews — particularly Israel's prime minister, Bibi Netanyahu?

Here is why I ask. During the past eight years, in Iraq, Lebanon, the Palestinian territories, and, to a lesser extent, Egypt, spaces were opened for more democratic elections. Good news. Unfortunately, the groups that had the most grass-roots support and mobilization capabilities — and the most energized supporters — to take advantage of this new space were the Islamists. That is, Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza and the West Bank, the various Sunni and Shiite Islamist parties in Iraq and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. The centrist mainstream was nowhere.

One of the most important reasons that the Islamists were able to covertly organize and mobilize, and be prepared when the lids in their societies were loosened a bit, was because they had the mosque — a place to gather, educate and inspire their followers — outside the total control of the state.

In almost every one of these cases, the Islamists overplayed their hands. In Lebanon, Hezbollah took the country into a disastrous and unpopular war. Ditto Hamas in Gaza. The Sunni and Shiite Islamists in Iraq tried to impose a

religious lifestyle on their communities, and the mullahs in Iran quashed the reformists. In the last year, though, the hard-liners in all these countries have faced a backlash by the centrist majorities, who detest these Islamist groups.

Hezbollah was defeated in the Lebanese elections. Hamas is facing an energized Fatah in the West Bank and is increasingly unpopular in Gaza. Iraqi Sunnis have ousted the jihadists thanks to the tribal Awakening movement, while the biggest pro-Iranian party in Iraq got trounced in the recent provincial runoff. And in Iran, millions of Iranians starving for more freedom rallied to the presidential candidate Mir Hussein Moussavi, forcing President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to steal the election. (If he really won the Iranian election, as Ahmadinejad claims, by a 2-to-1 margin, wouldn't he invite the whole world in to recount the votes? Why hasn't he?)

What is fascinating to me is the degree to which in Iran today — and in Lebanon — the more secular forces of moderation have used technologies like Facebook, Flickr, Twitter, blogging and text-messaging as their virtual mosque, as the place they can now gather, mobilize, plan, inform and energize their supporters, outside the grip of the state.

For the first time, the moderates, who were always stranded between authoritarian regimes that had all the powers of the state and Islamists who had all the powers of the mosque, now have their own place to come together and project power: the network. The New York Times reported that Moussavi's fan group on Facebook alone has grown to more than 50,000 members. That's surely more than any mosque could hold — which is why the government is now trying to block these sites.

But while that puts the moderate mainstream on par with the Islamists in communications terms, we should not get carried away. First, "moderates" is a relative term. Iraq's prime minister, Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, while

more secular and nationalist than the extreme Iraqi Islamists, nonetheless wants to centralize power and solidify his Dawa group as the ruling party.

Second, even if defeated electorally, the Islamists and their regimes have a trump card: guns. Guns trump cell-phones. Bang-bang beats tweet-tweet. The Sunni Awakening in Iraq succeeded because the moderates there were armed. I doubt Ahmadinejad will go peacefully.

And that brings me to Netanyahu. Israel was taken by surprise by events in Lebanon and Iran. And Israeli officials have been saying they would much prefer that Ahmadinejad still wins in Iran — not because Israelis really prefer him but because they believe his thuggish, anti-Semitic behavior reflects the true and immutable character of the Iranian regime. And Israelis fear that if a moderate were to take over, it would not herald any real change in Iran, or its nuclear ambitions, but simply disguise it better.

But there are signals — still weak — that another trend may be stirring in the region. The Iranian regime appears to be splitting at the top. This could challenge Netanyahu's security framework. Israel needs to be neither seduced by these signals nor indifferent to them. It has to be open to them and must understand that how it relates to Palestinians and settlements can help these trends — at the margins. But a lot starts at the margins.

"The rise of these moderate forces, if it is real and sustained, would be the most significant long-term contribution to Israeli national security," argued Gidi Grinstein, the president of the Reut Institute, a think tank. "If some of these moderate forces started to converge, then the overall status of Israeli security would improve radically." It is still way too early to know, he said, "but Israel needs to be alive to this process and not simply rely on its old framework."

Ship inspections could be a recipe for conflict

Mark J. Valencia
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SPECIAL TO THE JAPAN TIMES

In response to North Korea's latest nuclear weapons test, the U.N. Security Council has passed a resolution (1874) that expands and tightens the sanctions specified in its earlier resolution (1718), passed in response to North Korea's first nuclear test in 2006. But it goes a step further and endorses "inspections" of vessels suspected of carrying prohibited items to or from North Korea. This could be a recipe for conflict.

To choke off its main source of foreign currency, the resolution imposes almost a complete embargo on the export and import of weapons from and to North Korea. It establishes detailed expectations and obligations for all states regarding the inspection of suspected prohibited cargo bound to or from North Korea on their territory or in their airports or ports.

It also "calls upon" states to consent to inspection of their flag vessels on the high seas if there are "reasonable grounds" to believe they are carrying prohibited cargo. If the flag state does not consent, then "the flag state shall direct the vessel to proceed to an appropriate and convenient port for the required inspection." The resolution also prohibits the provision of bunkering services to North Korean vessels believed to be carrying contraband.

Moreover it expands financial sanctions related to WMD and missile production, and provides for the designation of additional banned goods, entities and individuals and enhances monitoring of the implementation of these sanctions.

While robust, the resolution does not close all the gaps and leaves key terms undefined. The UNSC issued the resolution under Chapter III, Article 41 of the U.N. Charter, which does not authorize the use of force. That means that if a North Korean (or other) flagged vessel refuses to consent

to inspection and further, refuses to proceed to an "appropriate port" as "directed" for the "required" inspection, the interdicting vessel could not threaten or use force to make it do so.

If it did it would itself be violating the resolution's call that any inspection be consistent with international law and that all states refrain from any action that might aggravate tensions. This would be particularly so if the interdicted vessel were a state-owned or operated vessel used only for noncommercial purposes which, under the 1982 U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea, has sovereign immunity.

Moreover, the resolution contains several key terms that may be interpreted in different ways, such as "reasonable grounds" to believe that the vessel is carrying prohibited items. There also seems to be some disagreement as to whether "calls upon" means states "should," "may" or are "expected" to inspect such suspect vessels. This "wiggle room" could be dangerous.

For example, the resolution appears to provide U.N. cover for a U.S. unilateral declaration of "reasonable grounds" and interdiction of North Korean vessels on the high seas or even in others' territorial waters — and thus erodes the age-old regime of freedom of navigation. The United States says it will interdict North Korean vessels "but not forcibly board them." Nevertheless, North Korea has repeatedly vowed that it would consider interdiction of its vessels an act of war and respond accordingly.

Given U.S.-North Korean antagonism, and the fact that Pyongyang has made good on many of its threats, there is reason to believe that implementation of this aspect of the resolution by the U.S. may result in conflict — an outcome the U.S. and the region can ill-afford.

China and Russia resisted a binding use of force resolution because they don't want to encourage U.S. military operations in

their waters. They also fear that such interdiction will generate a violent North Korean response and that the decision to interdict will be made unilaterally.

To get China and Russia to agree to more binding and mandatory language, the U.S. should "walk the talk" of President Barack Obama's promise to "listen," "compromise" and "cooperate" in multilateral endeavors. In other words, it will have to give up control of the decision to interdict, the definition of "reasonable grounds" to do so, and the actual interdiction itself.

One way to do this would be to have any interdictions/inspections on the high seas carried out by U.N.-flagged vessels. They would be acting on behalf of a U.N. organization (perhaps an enhanced sanctions committee or a group of "experts") that would assess intelligence, coordinate and fund activities, and make recommendations or decisions regarding specific or generic interdictions.

Such an organization — if perceived to be neutral, transparent, fair and objective — could eliminate double standards, increase transparency and answer key questions such as what combinations of actors and materials represent threats and what are "reasonable grounds" for interdiction. It would also help avoid erroneous judgments and disagreements that might impede legitimate commerce, delay action or increase tensions.

Further, the organization would provide a concrete structure with a consistent strategy and modus operandi, as well as a budget to fill gaps in interdiction and intelligence collection efforts. It could also ensure that such activities stay within existing international law or serve as a vehicle for changing it. Most important, it would avoid direct confrontation between North Korea and the U.S.

Mark J. Valencia is a visiting senior fellow with the Maritime Institute of Malaysia.

Roadblock to peace

What he gave with one hand, he took back with the other. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's acceptance of a Palestinian state this week was overdue, but it was weighted down by so many qualifications that it may have doomed negotiations before they could be revived.

Netanyahu, leader of the rightwing Likud Party, has made a political career of opposing Palestinian statehood, and one wonders how many times he had to practice in front of the mirror to get the words out without choking. When he finally did utter them Sunday, under U.S. pressure, a lot was missing. He ignored prior negotiations over two decades, particularly the road map agreement under President George W. Bush. He offered no Obama-esqe acknowledgments of Israeli occupation or of suffering by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Netanyahu invited the Palestinians to begin peace negotiations "without

preconditions" but then immediately dictated what sounded like his own conditions on the central issues. He said Palestinians must recognize Israel as a Jewish state, which most Palestinians believe ignores Israel's Arab population and is tantamount to accepting that Arab refugees from 1948 will not be allowed to return. Netanyahu also insisted that the state of Palestine be "demilitarized," without an army or control of its airspace.

He said Jerusalem would remain the undivided capital of Israel, although Palestinians claim it as their capital too. He rejected President Barack Obama's call to freeze construction in West Bank settlements, which to Palestinians are part of a land grab prior to an agreement on borders. Not surprisingly, Palestinians rejected these terms.

To be sure, the Palestinians present their own obstacles to peace negotiations. Their leadership is split, with President

Mahmoud Abbas in charge of a truncated West Bank and the militant Islamic movement Hamas in control of the Gaza Strip. Hamas doesn't recognize the state of Israel, let alone its Jewish character. And Netanyahu must contend with hardliners in his own coalition of Jewish settlers, religious parties and conservative Israelis simply fed up with years of suicide bombings and rocket attacks.

Yet more than two-thirds of the Jewish public in Israel thinks that a two-state solution is the only path to peace with the Palestinians, according to a poll by the Tami Steinmetz Center at Tel Aviv University. Now, Netanyahu is on record agreeing with that approach. So are we, and there is only one way to get there: negotiations without preconditions. Obama must continue to work as an honest broker to push the two sides back to the bargaining table.

Los Angeles Times (June 16)

 Thursday, June 18, 2009

The South: Consult the locals first

Posted by Sanitsuda Ekachai , Reader : 3369 , 15:01:59

Remember the public's reaction when the idea of setting up a special administrative zone for the Muslim-dominated South was introduced five years ago? The proposal came from former PM Gen Chavalit Yongchaiyudh. And boy, how that was torn to shreds!

The criticism stemmed partly from his image problem. The Establishment did not trust his political ambitions. The public was also weary of his patronising and vague talking style which barely hid his ulterior motive, which was to keep himself in the power game.

But the deeper problem is the mainstream society's ethnic prejudice and ultra nationalism, which make people immediately lump political decentralisation together with secessionism.

The political sensitivity is so fierce that even the highly popular former PM Anand Panyarachun, in his capacity as chair of the now-defunct National Reconciliation Commission, had to repeatedly stress that his peace commission's special administrative zone proposal was not autonomy, but a form of power-sharing.

No matter who said it or how it was phrased to make it appear more palatable to mainstream society, this alternative model always fell flat afterwards. Will PM Abhisit Vejjajiva make a difference this time around?

Gen Chavalit's proposal followed the Krue Se massacre in 2004, to appease the southern Muslims' hurt and fury. PM Abhisit's proposal, though he is reluctant to call it a special administrative zone, comes after escalating violence following the Tak Bai verdict which frees the military from one of the country's most severe state crimes against the southern Muslims.

A pregnant woman shot to death. A score of teachers killed. Soldiers ambushed. A farmer beheaded. Police stations, tea shops and mini-buses bombed. Indiscriminate killings at a mosque while people were praying. A monk shot to death during an alms round.

Is this an-eye-for-an-eye revenge? Is it a step closer to secession? Or is it the work of local mafias and some bigwigs in uniform to perpetuate the atmosphere of violence in order to protect their power turfs?

Or is it all of the above? No one knows. What we know for a certainty, however, is that no one is safe now in this seeming all-out war in the deep South.

Let's look at the feedback on Mr Abhisit's proposal. The military has remained silent. Buddhist organisations have expressed opposition, claiming that it would eventually lead to secession. Meanwhile, the new political party Matubhum, consisting of southern Muslim politicians, has welcomed the idea and urged the government to promptly pass the Democrat-sponsored bill to establish a special administrative body in the deep South.

Wait a minute. What bill? Do people there know about this? Have they been consulted? Is this going to be the same old ball game of daddy-knows-best when talk about people's participation is mere empty talk and a policy that crucially affects the locals' livelihood remains in the politicians' hands without heeding the voices of the locals?

The same goes for Mr Abhisit's promise to pour development money into the far South to appease local frustrations. But will it? Does he realise how the so-called development projects in the past have destroyed the natural environment, the locals' ways of life, and trust in the government? Has he asked what kind of development the locals want?

Actually, the local anxiety is rising amid talk about dams and other mega projects which will benefit only big business, construction godfathers and the local political elites.

The deep South certainly needs a kind of self-government. But by whom, and how? Sharing a faith does not mean the southern Muslims have uniform needs. And if the special administrative zone is a miniature of top-down bureaucracy that favours the local elites' vested interests, the new order will not lead to better human security and human rights protection for ordinary people.

Empowering civil society and fostering community rights will provide the balancing factors. Unfortunately, this element of democracy is sorely missing in the special administrative zone move because the powers-that-be, Buddhist or Muslim, do not listen to little people's voices.

The Jakarta Post

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KL a step ahead of RI in maid protection

, The Jakarta Post , Jakarta | Thu, 06/18/2009 12:12 PM | Headlines

The Malaysian government has decided to revise its labor laws to regulate foreign housemaids, including giving them a weekly day off, in a positive move that shows up the Indonesian government's lethargy in devising regulations to protect domestic helpers here and abroad.

Malaysian state news agency Bernama quoted the country's Human Resources Minister S. Subramaniam as saying Tuesday his ministry would make it mandatory for employers, maids and their agencies to sign employment contracts "containing provisions like the salary, the name of employers, their workplaces and the compulsory one day off a week".

"We may be able to implement it this year," the minister said.

Housemaids - mostly women - are not considered formal-sector workers in Malaysia or Indonesia. Neither country's labor laws apply to them, making them particularly vulnerable to abuse and forced labor.

Malaysia's plan to revise its labor laws comes amid concerns raised by Indonesian authorities and Malaysian trade unions about the protection of foreign workers in the country, after an Indonesian maid was recently found to have been brutally tortured and forced to work without pay by her employer for three years, in the latest of several such cases.

Subramaniam was quoted by AP as saying that foreign maids in Malaysia would be given a list of telephone contacts for embassy, police and welfare officials to report any abuse, adding the ministry would conduct random checks on households. "We hope these measures will provide maids with better security and welfare," he said.

Jakarta has said it planned to temporarily stop sending migrant workers to Malaysia, after reports surfaced of the abuse experienced by Siti Hajar of West Java, while awaiting the revision of a memorandum of understanding signed by the two countries in 2006 to protect migrant workers.

National Board for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers (BNP2TKI) head M. Jumhur Hidayat said a weekly day off was among the planned revisions, as well as the provision that migrant workers keep their passports in their possession. Indonesia sent 66,816 migrant workers to Malaysia last year, according to the BNP2TKI's data available on its Website.

Jala PRT, an Indonesian NGO promoting the rights of domestic workers, said domestic workers here were just as vulnerable as their counterparts in Malaysia, with most still working seven-day weeks, and left in the dark over their salaries.

"They don't sign contracts; they often have their salaries cut and never get a raise," the group's coordinator, Lita Angraini, said.

The Justice and Human Rights Ministry is currently drafting a law on domestic workers, but it is unlikely to be passed into law this year.

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Politics

Calls for urgent moves to ease crisis in far South

Published on June 18, 2009

The government came under mounting pressure yesterday to counter the worsening violence by insurgents in the far South.

MPs and senators called for urgent measures to ensure safety for local residents and speed up inquiries to find the culprits behind the recent wave of attacks.

Narathiwat MP Najmuddin Uma suggested the government set up an independent panel to investigate the violence to ensure neutrality.

Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva agreed to the idea of an independent panel. He said local religious leaders would also be appointed to such a committee.

The premier said his government focused on creating a good understanding rather than use of force or suppression in dealing with the insurgency problem.

He said his administration expected to present a draft law in the August parliamentary session to set up a permanent body, called the Office for the Management of Southern Border Provinces, to handle such matters.


A group of Senators who call themselves "Senate Friends of the Southerners" called a press conference at Parliament yesterday to propose measures to deal with the insurgency in the far South.

Pattani Senator Worawit Baroo said the group wanted urgent measures to ensure people's safety in the restive region. The government should expedite investigations to determine the culprits behind violent attacks, especially the fatal shooting of 11 people in a mosque in Narathiwat last week.

Meanwhile, the Advisory Council to Promote Peace in the Southern Border Provinces made a three-point proposal in a bid to end the insurgency.

Council members, who include local community and religious leaders, bureaucrats, soldiers and police, met yesterday in Pattani. After, Chairman Aziz Benhawan called for the authorities find the culprits as soon as possible.

He said the council wants the government to focus on education, religion and the economy in ending violence in the region, as well as allowing "genuine public participation" in the formulation of policies for the region.

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Iran exposes the gap between idealism and realism for Obama



Philip Stephens

You can touch the tension in Washington as heart battles with head. One part of Barack Obama's administration and, one suspects, of the US president, would like to join the international applause for the demonstrators filling Tehran's streets. Pushing against this Wilsonian reflex is foreign policy pragmatism. As much as it holds up freedom as a universal value, the White House does not want to be seen as calling for regime change.

The strains have shown in the public pronouncements. Mr Obama has voiced concern about the allegations of vote-rigging and the violent reaction of the Iranian authorities to peaceful demonstrations. There have been gentle admonitions about the need for the Iranian regime to respect the democratic process. But there has also been an insistence that Iranians must sort out their own affairs. US meddling, the president has said, would be "counterproductive".

Most Republicans have shown no such restraint. US officials lack concrete evidence that Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad's presidential victory over Mir-Hossein Moussavi was fixed. They are pretty certain that the results were falsified, but they do not rule out the possibility that Mr Ahmadi-Nejad secured a genuine majority, albeit probably not by the announced margin.

No matter. John McCain has led the Republican charge, declaring that Mr Obama should roundly condemn a "corrupt, flawed sham of an election". The US news channels

have echoed to Republican commentators declaring that the "rigging" of the election has strangled at birth Mr Obama's strategy of engagement with Tehran.

Mr Obama's reticence has also seemed to leave him out of step with some Europeans. Angela Merkel's government in Germany, questioning election irregularities, summoned the Iranian ambassador to lodge a formal protest at the official violence.

France's Nicolas Sarkozy described the crackdown as a measure of the "fraud" perpetrated by Mr Ahmadi-Nejad.

Mr Obama need not pay too much attention to the European rhetoric. Howls of outrage from Berlin and Paris are often in inverse proportion to their willingness to act. Think back to the Russian invasion of Georgia. Few were as firm as Mrs Merkel in their condemnation of Moscow's aggression. Mr Sarkozy claimed that it was his pressure that halted the Russian advance. And now? The Russians still occupy Georgian territory, and Germany and France forever argue that nothing should be done to upset Moscow.

Mr Obama's Republican critics make a different mistake. Their assumption is that by seeking to isolate Tehran, the US can somehow bring Iran into line internationally. Three decades of experience and the disaster that was George W. Bush's foreign policy say otherwise.

As far as Iran's nuclear ambitions go, it may well prove impossible, whatever the west does, to prevent Tehran from acquiring a weapons capability. But one thing that can be said for certain is that an attempt to bomb its nuclear installations would not halt the programme. To the contrary, nothing would be more calculated to entrench the present regime. The hawks in Washington decrying diplomacy have no credible alternative.

Many of the differences between

Mr Obama and the less excitable critics are tactical. Mr Obama's carefully calibrated response reflects a consciousness of America's long history of interference in the domestic affairs of Iran. The president also lives with the lethal association between democracy promotion and US military intervention that has been the legacy of Mr Bush.

Mr Obama is right that overt US backing for Mr Moussavi would hand a weapon to Mr Ahmadi-Nejad. He is correct also in observing that while Mr Moussavi has campaigned on a platform of domestic reform, he has scarcely proposed a transformative foreign policy.

Too much of the discourse in Washington has seemed to presume that Mr Moussavi is a western-style

It may prove impossible, whatever the west does, to prevent Tehran from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability

democrat eager to abandon Iran's nuclear ambitions and its support for groups such as Hamas and Hizbollah. A notable exception in his own party has been Richard Lugar, the senior Republican on the senate foreign relations committee. Mr Lugar has echoed the White House in warning that vocal US interference gives hardline clerics in Iran a convenient stick with which to beat the moderates.

In another dimension, though, the events of the past few days do expose the fundamental tension between idealism and realism at the heart of Mr Obama's foreign policy. On the one hand, the president has rightly abandoned the democracy-at-the-point-of-a-gun

zealotry of the neo-conservatives. On the other he cannot ignore the reality that the west's interests do indeed lie in the spread of pluralist political systems.

Mr Obama sought to address the issue in his Cairo speech. No system of government should be imposed on one nation by another, he avowed. But, if the US did not presume to know best for everyone else, certain rights – freedom of speech and a say in government, the rule of law and equal justice – were universal. America would support these values everywhere.

Practice, as events in Iran have shown, is never as neat as theory. The liberal internationalist impulse must be to offer moral support for those Iranians demanding their voices be heard. The realist says how can the White House demand Iran levels of freedom that it does not ask of close allies such as Egypt or Saudi Arabia? The most lethal charge levied against the US in the region is that of double standards. It will not be an easy one to shake off.

As far as Iran is concerned the answer can only be engagement – with whatever regime is in power and, crucially with Iranians in all their manifestations. Tehran's nuclear ambitions must be only one part of a much bigger conversation.

There must be no preconditions. The priority for Mr Obama's administration must be to demolish the idea that the establishment of broadly based relations with Iran would somehow reward the regime. The reverse is true. The champions of modernity in Iran will thrive to the extent that the relationship with the west is seen to be one of mutual respect and mutual interests. Mr Obama has so far got this one right. He will feel no more comfortable for that.

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Think small to tackle the world's biggest problems

Moises Naim

Never say never. Because of the economic crisis, habits that seemed unalterable are suddenly being altered. Americans are now saving more and consuming less. Financial institutions are no longer betting the house on risky investments they do not understand. Many wealthy oil-exporting countries are tightening their belts. Everywhere, change is in the air.

Everywhere, that is, except in the way humanity responds to its most menacing threats. You know the list: climate change, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, pandemics and trade protectionism. Not one can be solved, or even effectively contained, without more successful international collaboration. That is not happening.

Indeed, when was the last time you heard that a large number of countries agreed to a major international accord on a pressing issue? Not in more than a decade. The last successful multilateral trade agreement was in 1994, when 123 countries gathered to negotiate the creation of the World Trade Organisation and agreed on a new set of rules for international trade. Since then, all other attempts to reach a global trade deal have crashed. The same is true with multilateral efforts to curb nuclear proliferation; the last significant agreement was in 1995, when 185 countries agreed to extend an existing nonproliferation treaty. In the past 15 years, moreover, India, Pakistan and North Korea have demonstrated their certain status as nuclear powers. On the environment, the Kyoto Protocol, a global deal aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions, has been ratified by 184 countries since it was adopted in 1997, but the US, the world's largest polluter, has not done so and many of the signatories have missed targets.

**The defects of
minilateralism pale in
comparison with the
stalemate characterising
modern multilateralism**

The most recent multilateral initiative endorsed by a large number of countries was in 2000, when 192 nations signed the United Nations Millennium Declaration, an ambitious set of eight goals including providing universal primary education by 2015. Although some progress has been made, the failure of rich countries to fully fund these efforts, execution problems and the downturn make meeting the deadline unlikely.

The pattern is clear. Since the early 1990s, the need for effective multi-country collaboration has soared, but at the same time multilateral talks have inevitably failed, deadlines have been missed and execution has stalled. These failures represent not only the perpetual lack of international consensus, but also a flawed obsession with multilateralism as the panacea for all the world's ills.

So what is to be done? To start, we should forget about trying to get the nearly 200 countries to agree. We need to abandon that fool's errand in favour of a new approach: minilateralism. By this I mean a smarter, more targeted approach. We should bring to the table the smallest possible number of countries needed to have the largest possible impact on solving a particular problem. Think of this as minilateralism's magic number.

The magic number, of course, will vary depending on the problem. Take trade, for example. The Group of Twenty leading nations accounts for 85 per cent of the world's economy. The G20 members could reach a major trade deal among themselves and make it of even greater significance by allowing any other country to join. Presumably, many would. It is the same with climate change. There the magic number is about 20. The world's 20 top polluters account for 75 per cent of the planet's greenhouse gas emissions. The number for nuclear proliferation is 21. African poverty? About 12, including all the major donor countries and the sub-Saharan countries most in need. As for HIV/Aids, 19 countries account for nearly two thirds of the world's Aids-related deaths.

Of course, countries not invited to the table will denounce this approach as undemocratic and exclusionary. But the magic number will break the untenable gridlock and agreements reached by the small number of countries that can provide the foundation for more inclusive deals. Minilateral deals should be open to any country willing to play by the rules agreed by the original group.

The defects of minilateralism pale in comparison with the stalemate that characterises 21st-century multilateralism. The minilateralism of magic numbers is not a magic solution but is a better bet than the multilateralism of wishful thinking.

The writer is editor in chief of Foreign Policy magazine, where a version of this article is forthcoming

National

No government forces involved in mosque massacre

Published on June 19, 2009

DNA testing results showed that no security personnel were involved in the massacre in Narathiwat, where 11 Thai Muslim worshippers were killed, Deputy Prime Minister Suthep Thuagsuban said on Friday.

He said DNA samples have been collected from the crime scene and that the testing results indicated that the samples do not match with any police, soldiers or state officials.

"I have been informed that the DNA tests proved that no state officials were involved in the massacre as claimed in rumours circulated by some group of people," Suthep said.

He was making the comment after visiting Pattani to instruct security forces to step up security measures for local residents, teachers, monks and Muslim religious leaders.

"But I can't give more detail on that. Authorities involved have been instructed that arrest warrants must be issued as soon as possible and the real suspects must be arrested, not scapegoats."

A group of gunmen raided a mosque in Cho Ai Rong district through a back door on June 8, firing on about 50 Muslims who were performing evening prayers inside the mosque. Eleven were killed, while a dozen others were seriously wounded and sent to hospital.

The government is not worried that the insurgent groups will apply more violent attacks, Suthep said, adding it is the government's duty to work together to solve the problem without fear or worry.

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June 22, 2009 02:55 pm (Thai local time)
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National

HRW condemns killings of teachers in deep South

Published on June 19, 2009

New York-based Human Rights Watch on Friday condemned the killings of public school teachers in Thailand's deep South and called on the authorities to take appropriate measures to bolster security at schools.

"In a sickening trend, separatist insurgents are increasingly attacking teachers, who they consider a symbol of government authority and Buddhist Thai culture," said Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "There is no excuse for such brutality."

Tensions flared up on June 8 after six masked gunmen opened fire with assault rifles and shotguns on a crowd of worshipers as they were performing the evening prayer at Al-Furquan mosque in Narathiwat's Joh I Rong district. Ten people died at the scene, including the imam, and one later at the hospital. At least another 12 people were seriously wounded. Local residents blamed the government's death squad for the attack. Joh I Rong is an insurgents' stronghold where Malay Muslims enjoy tremendous local support.

The spike in violence came immediately after a Thai court on May 29 cleared Thai security forces of any wrong doing in their handling of the Tak Bai massacre, an incident that ended in the death of 85 unarmed Malay Muslim demonstrators, 78 of whom died from suffocation when they were stacked on the back of military truck one on top another.

A series of killings of teachers, as well as highly coordinated attacks, followed the controversial verdict.

On June 15, separatist insurgents stabbed to death Kimsiang Sae-tang, a Thai rubber tapper of Chinese descent, then cut off his head, arms, and legs before setting his body on fire. A leaflet, found near Kimsiang's head, claimed the killing was in retaliation for the previous week's massacre of ethnic Malay Muslims at Al-Furquan mosque in Joh Ai Rong district of Narathiwat province.

The following day, insurgents shot dead Lekha Issara, a teacher at Ban Poh Maeng school, while she was riding on a motorcycle from home to work in Raman district of Yala province.

Other incidents highlighted by HRW include the one on June 6 when insurgents killed Matohe Yama, a teacher at Ban Palukasamo in Bajoh district of Narathiwat province. Prior to

that, on June 2, insurgents attacked a pickup truck transporting six teachers from their schools in Ja Nae district of Narathiwat province. Two Buddhist Thai teachers were singled out and killed: Atcharaporn Thepsorn, a teacher at Ban Dusung Ngor school who was eight months pregnant, and Warunee Navaka, a teacher at Ban Ri Nge school.

On May 19, Natthapol Janae, a teacher at Nikhom Pattana Park Tai school, was shot dead as he was riding a motorcycle from his home to his school in Bannang Sta district of Yala province.

So far hundreds of teachers have requested transfer from the region. Measures taken to protect the teachers include the closing down of schools in affected areas and stepping up in security details to escort them to and from schools.

In all more than 115 teachers have been killed since January 2004 when the violence flared up in the region. The trended stopped last year but observers warned that it could go back up if this past two weeks is any indication.

At least 164 schools came under arson attack in 2007, a jump from 43 in 2006. But in 2008 the number went down to 14 and less than five from January to May 2009. HRW said the past five years also saw an alarming number target killings of Muslim religious teachers and attack on Islamic schools.

"There have been no successful criminal investigations of these cases, leading many in the ethnic Malay Muslim population to conclude that the Thai government has been involved in a cover-up and has made it clear to the perpetrators that they can act without fear of punishment," HRW said in a statement.

"Separatist insurgents claim that abuses by the security forces justify their attacks, but the Thai government should not allow its troops to adopt the same logic," Adams said.

"Any attempt to cover up the misconduct of security forces, or to protect them from criminal responsibility, will further escalate a cycle of reprisal violence. It is time for the Thai government to deal with the root causes of the conflict."

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Siding with Iran's regime

Robert Kagan
Washington
THE WASHINGTON POST

The turmoil in Iran since last week's election has confused the foreign policy debate here in the United States in interesting ways.

Supporters of U.S. President Barack Obama, who until very recently had railed against the Bush administration's "freedom agenda" and who insisted on a new "realism," have suddenly found themselves rooting for freedom and democracy in Iran. And in their desire to attribute all good things to the work of Obama, they have even suggested that the ferment in Iran is due to Obama's public appeals to Iranians and Muslims.

If so, this will be one of those great ironies of history. For, in fact, Obama never meant to spark political upheaval in Iran, much less encourage the Iranian people to take to the streets. That they are doing so is not good news for the president but, rather, an unwelcome complication in his strategy of engaging and seeking rapprochement with the Iranian government on nuclear issues.

One of the great innovations in the Obama administration's approach to Iran, after all, was supposed to be its deliberate embrace of the Tehran rulers' legitimacy. In his opening diplomatic gambit, his statement to Iran on the Persian new year in March, Obama went out of his way to speak directly to Iran's rulers, a notable departure from George W. Bush's habit of speaking to the Iranian people over their leaders' heads. As former Clinton official Martin Indyk put it at the time, the wording was carefully designed "to demonstrate acceptance of the government of Iran."

This approach had always been a key

element of a "grand bargain" with Iran. The U.S. had to provide some guarantee to the regime that it would no longer support opposition forces or in any way seek its removal.

The idea was that the U.S. could hardly expect the Iranian regime to negotiate on core issues of national security, such as its nuclear program, so long as Washington gave any encouragement to the government's opponents. Obama had to make a choice, and he made it. This was widely applauded as a "realist" departure from the Bush administration's quixotic and counterproductive idealism.

It would be surprising if Obama departed from this realist strategy now, and he hasn't. His extremely guarded response to the outburst of popular anger at the regime has been widely misinterpreted as reflecting concern that too overt an American embrace of the opposition will hurt it, or that he wants to avoid American "moralizing." (Obama himself claimed this week that he didn't want the U.S. to appear to be "meddling.")

But Obama's calculations are quite different. Whatever his personal sympathies may be, if he is intent on sticking to his original strategy, then he can have no interest in helping the opposition. His strategy toward Iran places him objectively on the side of the government's efforts to return to normalcy as quickly as possible, not in league with the opposition's efforts to prolong the crisis.

It's not that Obama preferred a victory by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. He probably would have been happy to do business with Mir Hossein Mousavi, even if there was little reason to believe Mousavi would have pursued a different approach

to the nuclear issue. But once Mousavi lost, however fairly or unfairly, Obama objectively had no use for him or his followers. If Obama appears to lend support to the Iranian opposition in any way, he will appear hostile to the regime, which is precisely what he hoped to avoid.

Obama's policy now requires getting past the election controversies quickly so that he can soon begin negotiations with the re-elected Ahmadinejad government. This will be difficult as long as opposition protests continue and the government appears to be either unsettled or too brutal to do business with. What Obama needs is a rapid return to peace and quiet in Iran, not continued ferment. His goal must be to deflate the opposition, not to encourage it. And that, by and large, is what he has been doing.

If you find all this disturbing, you should. The worst thing is that this approach will probably not prevent the Iranians from getting a nuclear weapon. But this is what "realism" is all about. It is what sent U.S. National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft to raise a champagne toast to China's leaders in the wake of Tiananmen Square. It is what convinced U.S. President Gerald Ford not to meet with Alexander Solzhenitsyn at the height of detente. Republicans have traditionally been better at it than Democrats — though they have rarely been rewarded by the American people at the ballot box, as Ford and U.S. President George H.W. Bush can attest.

We'll see whether Obama can be just as coldblooded in pursuit of better relations with an ugly regime, without suffering the same political fate.

Robert Kagan is a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Prime Minister Netanyahu feeling the heat

Harold Meyerson
Washington
THE WASHINGTON POST

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has at last acknowledged, with caveats, the need to establish a Palestinian state. Actually, Netanyahu's Palestine is primarily caveats, with a dash of state thrown in for appearances' sake.

In his speech last Sunday, the prime minister failed to address the continual growth of Israeli settlements on the occupied West Bank, where close to 300,000 Israeli settlers live. The Palestine that Netanyahu envisions must steadily shrink to accommodate the growing number of Israeli settlers in its midst. It would be a collection of barely contiguous cantons.

By refusing to address the growth of the settlements, Netanyahu has avoided a fight with the hard-right forces in his governing coalition. Yet he has asked the leaders of the Palestinian Authority to accept a state whose contours no Palestinian could willingly accept. He demands a Palestine with no army, yet also demands that the Palestinian Authority suppress Hamas as a precondition for negotiations with Israel — something, as my American Prospect colleague Gershom Gorenberg has pointed out, that the very well-armed Israeli Army has been unable to do.

By refusing to take on the settlers, however, Netanyahu may be cruising for a clash not just with Israel's longtime critics but with its longtime supporters as well. The Obama administration, Democrats on the Hill who have long championed Israel's interests and a clear majority of American Jews all view the growth of the settlements as a major impediment to a two-state solution, and, therefore, a threat to Israel's long-term survival.

The Israeli government speaks of the "natural growth" of the settlements, but, says Queens Democrat Gary Ackerman, "having children can't be an excuse to expand a settlement. Neither side should be expanding beyond its perimeters or attacking the other side. No expansions, no how, no way, no shticks, no tricks."

What underpins the resolve of both the administration and Congress to push the Israelis, no less than the Palestinians, toward a settlement is the clear approval this approach commands among American Jews. A poll taken in March for J Street, an organization of American



Jews that favors a territorial accord, showed 72 percent support among Jewish Americans for U.S. pressure on Israel and its Arab neighbors to reach an accord, and, remarkably, 57 percent support for U.S. pressure just on Israel. The poll also found 60 percent opposition to the expansion of settlements.

These numbers reflect changes in American Jewish life and thought that have been building for decades. At a broad level, the intense identification of American Jews with Israel has been waning for many years.

More narrowly, the past couple of decades have brought the rise of American Jewish groups that try to pressure the U.S. government to push for a two-state solution — a clear counterweight to more established organizations such as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee that generally try to pressure the U.S. government to do whatever the Israeli government would like it to do. The J Street PAC, an organization that's just three years old, raises funds for members of Congress who back policies leading to a two-state solution, much as AIPAC encourages its backers to donate to candidates who toe a more hawkish line.

But why the waning of American Jewish identification with Israel over the past few decades? At its birth, and for

several decades thereafter, Israel commanded virtually consensual support among American Jews. But for the past 42 of its 61 years, Israel has ruled over Palestinians who are citizens neither of Israel nor of a Palestinian state. They are — a condition that should be familiar to Jews — stateless. The blame for their statelessness is surely their own as well as the Israelis', but in time, the Israeli role in the Palestinian disaster has eroded American Jewish identification with Israel.

By every measure, American Jews remain intensely committed to liberalism and to universal and minority rights. As a democratic state rising on the ashes of the Holocaust, Israel once embodied those values to its supporters, but 42 years of occupation have rendered Israel a state that tests those values more than it affirms them. Its most fervent American Jewish backers, to be found disproportionately among the Orthodox, identify with it for reasons that are more tribal than universal. All of which has created the political space for U.S. President Barack Obama to try to craft a resolution to one of the planet's most venerable and dangerous disputes.

Harold Meyerson is editor at large of American Prospect and the L.A. Weekly.

The Jakarta Post

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Comments: US faults Malaysia for trafficking record

, , | Sat, 06/20/2009 12:10 PM | Opinion

The Obama administration has faulted Malaysia for failing to do enough to stop the sexual and forced labor exploitation of women and children. The State Department's annual "Trafficking in Persons Report" on Tuesday put the Southeast Asian country on its list of top trafficking offenders. Repeat offenders on that list include North Korea, Myanmar and Fiji.

Your comments:

Thumbs up to the Obama administration for recognizing Malaysia for its failure to curb human exploitation, resulting in foreign worker abuses, and for not protecting foreign refugees within its borders.

Human trafficking and abuses of all form is simply wrong and backward. There should be honest and educated law enforcement and the willingness to stop illegal activities in the community, wherever they may be.

But believers in Malaysia have failed, ultimately, in making a more sensible and important point in their religious rationale: that human exploitation is perceived as modern-day slavery and should be considered unacceptable.

It has been known for a number of years that some EU member countries have extended a visa waiver to Malaysia, regardless of its present-day unwillingness to do more to tackle its domestic human trafficking issues.

Edward K.

Jailing US journalists could prove costly--June 13, p. 6

Call me a dupe of the Commies, if that makes you happy - I really don't care at this point. Maybe all these years I have been wrong to argue that we can negotiate with North Korea; maybe my critics are right and the regime does need to be either totally ignored and further isolated or, in the worst case scenario, attacked. All I care about right now is getting those two American journalists out of that Pyongyang jail.

Your comments:

Wow, he writes as if he stands right in the center of the universe. Now that one of his star students is in trouble, Tom is ready to leave the theories of his classroom and deal with reality and demand action and results.

When it was merely North Koreans suffering and South Koreans, American military personnel and Japanese being threatened, he was all too willing to experiment with thoughts of negotiating with the NK regime.

Andrew Greene

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The Jakarta Post

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The unfinished business of war on terror

Juwono Sudarsono , Jakarta | Sat, 06/20/2009 12:09 PM | Headlines

First it was the GWOT (Global War On Terrorism), then for a time it was known as the SAVE (Strategy Against Violent Extremism) before it later became the CONTEST (Counter Terrorism Strategy) complete with its "4Ps": Prevent, Pursue, Protect and Prepare.

Now, albeit unofficially, their being called OCOs (Overseas Contingency Operations). When it comes to counter-terrorism, there has been no shortage of acronyms popping up in the bureaucracies of the security and intelligence communities in the United States and the United Kingdom.

The GWOT sprang up immediately after September 11, 2001, when President George W. Bush pronounced famously that "you're either with us or you're with the terrorists", perhaps understandably under CD the circumstances. To the credit of the then French president, who was the first foreign head of government to visit President Bush, less than two weeks after 9/11, Jacques Chirac expressed reservation over the choice of the word "war".

Chirac understood the danger that using the expression "war on terror" could elicit the notion of the war of the Christian "crusaders" against Islamic "jihadists" among France's Muslim community, the largest in Western Europe. It would play into Al Qaeda's strategy of provoking tension between the "Christian West" and the "Muslim East".

But the GWOT became a popular rallying cry among right-wing and hard-line "security first" politicians in North America and Western Europe. It captured the imagination of bureaucrats who pushed for tighter domestic security policies against potential Muslim "sleepers" or "Trojan horse" subversives.

Then the SAVE came into fashion around 2005-2006, when the "global war", pursued in Iraq, Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan, persuaded politicians in the US and UK that a successful long-term strategy against Muslim terrorism had to go right to the "cultural roots of the problem" in a particular country. Kinetic-based counter-terrorist actions, including the use of special forces and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles operated from Nevada often inadvertently targeted innocent civilians suspected of involvement in terrorist acts in the Middle East and Afghanistan.

Over the past decade, intelligence chiefs throughout South East Asia have exchanged notes on handling home grown, regional as well as internationally linked radical groups that often utilize terrorists attacks to manipulate Islamic teachings about "jihad". Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia have undertaken "re-integration programs", in which suspected terrorists or those convicted of violent acts are provided with "remedial programs" that incorporate welfare related schemes with educational rehabilitation sessions in the hops of guiding ex-radicals down the true path of Muslim

moderation.

The Indonesian Military (TNI), particularly the Army, has discretely but effectively recalibrated its role to provide Territorial Capacity Building (TCB) programs. Its twin track scheme of providing governance capacity building for villages, by ensuring better management of townships, and at the same time supporting economic development is working. Reinforcing governance capacity and providing economic support (repairing irrigation canals, bridges, rehabilitating house of worship in areas previously ravaged by sectarian conflict, teaching arithmetic and Bahasa Indonesia in isolated areas) and in general creating a positive environment of "nation-building" and "nation replenishing" at the grass roots level are all included in this strategy.

This is the other side of the GWOT, the SAVE and OCOs. The real issue is matching the satellite-based and airborne technology of with the ground-level anthropological challenge of winning hearts and minds. The GWOT, the SAVE and OCOs can only succeed if these ground level issues are resolved at the scope and speed willingly agreed to by local leaders.

The writer is Indonesia's defense minister.

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Six-party talks offer best hope for peace

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Newspaper section: News

No one really knows for certain what led to North Korean leader Kim Jong-il's decision to abandon a path that was bringing about a slow thaw in its global relations and settle back on the road to total isolation. The first act in this regression was the conducting of a long-range missile test on April 5, done with the knowledge that it would be greeted with strong rebuke. When the United Nations condemned the test, Pyongyang pulled out of the six-party talks with South Korea, Japan, China, Russia and the United States.

Since the talks were initiated in 2003 there has at least been a safety valve in place between the two Koreas. Now every effort must be made to get North Korea back to the table at the six-party talks and reduce the possibility of a single irrational act plunging East Asia and the world into a senseless tragedy of tremendous proportion. On May 25 North Korea conducted an underground nuclear test that was condemned around the world and it has also announced it would reopen a nuclear processing plant to produce weapons grade plutonium.

Earlier this month even Russia and China _ traditionally allies of North Korea _ signed off on sanctions in the United Nations Security Council, which apparently has only made Mr Kim more belligerent. For a time it appeared that the North Korean leader was willing to forego his nuclear ambitions and "come in from the cold" to a certain extent, having agreed in February 2007 to abandon the country's attempts to create nuclear weapons in return for aid and diplomatic concessions.

Now, however, it looks as if his isolationist _ and to all appearances paranoid _ tendencies are back in full control, which is a cause for global alarm. He has threatened to start a war with South Korea if it takes part in the US Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), which was set up in 2003 to stop countries such as North Korea and Iran dealing in weapons of mass destruction. Under the initiative ships believed to be carrying weapons or parts of weapons of mass destruction can be stopped and searched. The present UN sanctions regime endorses the initiative but does not allow for the forcible boarding of such vessels.

This weekend a drama is playing out on the high seas as a US naval destroyer tracks a North Korean ship suspected of carrying weapons. If the North Koreans refuse to allow a US crew to search the ship, the US could order it into the nearest port or follow it until it reaches port. The US would then be entitled to demand, under the UN sanctions agreement, that that country inspect the ship. North Korea has said a forcible search would be regarded as an act of war.

To add fuel to the fire, there are reports that North Korea is preparing to fire a long-range missile in the direction of Hawaii. Japanese media have reported that Japan's Defence Ministry believes the North Koreans are preparing for a long-range test and that a long-range missile was delivered to a launch site on North Korea's west coast on May 30. There are doubts that the country's missiles have the capability to hit Hawaii, but regardless, US Defence Secretary Robert Gates has said deployment of missiles and radar has been approved to "provide support" in the event of an attack.

Clearly this is a dangerous situation. Getting the six-party talks back on track would at the least provide a channel to defuse the tensions. Toward that end, it is reported that a South Korean-initiated plan to bring about a five-party meeting between the US, South Korea, China, Russia and Japan is being discussed at a high level. According to an Associated Press report, an anonymous official source has said the US, South Korea and Japan have already endorsed the plan, but China and Russia had not yet committed to a meeting. Both Russia and China have urged North Korea to resume negotiations however, so it is likely that they will take part.

According to the source, if it can be worked out the meeting could take place at the Asean Regional Forum scheduled in Phuket in July. This is quite interesting, as North Korea also sends a high-level delegation to the Asean forum, in a rare gesture of international diplomacy. Last year former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice met with North Korean Foreign Minister Pak Ui Chun at the forum held in Singapore. It can only be hoped that Thailand will have the opportunity next month in Phuket to play an important role in providing a venue to re-start negotiations that should make the world a much safer place.

Opinion

HEADLINE MAKER

Something to give the South

Published on June 21, 2009

Senator Worawit Baru, a Pattani native, doesn't think Thailand's southernmost provinces should be granted the autonomy they covet, but he's convinced that special administrative status is the only path to peace.

Granting such status to the predominantly Muslim region remains a taboo subject elsewhere in the country, the former academic acknowledges, but he sees no alternative.

"I am not proposing autonomy for the Deep South, but we need something unique for this unique region," Worawit says.

What he has in mind is a new ministry, backed by legislation to restructure the South's administration. It would handle all affairs in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat, as well as in Songkhla's four mainly Malay-Muslim districts.

The provincial governors would become the new ministry's permanent secretaries, Worawit proposes, focusing primarily on development and education.

"Local participation is a key element, so existing administrative bodies like the Tambon Administrative Organisation would be under the new ministry," he says.

Bangkok would lose nothing in the transfer of responsibilities, he suggests, retaining control of security forces and budgeting.

What's in place now has failed to ensure the southerners justice and fair treatment, Worawit says.

"For example, the government allocates money for Buddhist activities, but the locals have to finance Islamic events by themselves."

The state has poured more than Bt100 billion into the region in the past five years, Worawit says, but it's all been spent on military operations to contain the violence. The residents rarely benefit.

More than 3,500 people have been killed in the Deep South since violence erupted anew in 2004. The authorities struggle to stem the bloodshed, but nothing has improved since the outset of the unrest.

The South has a different history and culture from the rest of the country, having been annexed by Siam more than a century ago. Bangkok has never been able to assimilate the region, with bouts of violence recurring intermittently as southerners seek self-rule.

Worawit says Bangkok must adopt a new line of thinking to tackle the problem. Its politicians are concerned about unity, but fail to understand that "unity is not uniformity".

Following his 1976 graduation from the University of Malaya with a PhD in social linguistics, Worawit spent decades helping his fellow southerners.

"I understand how important the language is, because people in my home province speak another dialect, not Thai," he points out.

While teaching at Prince of Songkhla University's Pattani campus, Worawit also worked within the community to improve local living standards. He set up the Ibnu Affan Savings Cooperative in 1992, which currently has 63,000 members and Bt600 million in capital.

The cooperative, he says with pride, gives his fellow Muslims a source of cash in accordance with Islamic principles. "Muslims cannot borrow or lend money with interest, so the cooperative is the proper approach."

It has since expanded, with Worawit chairing the southern network of Islamic savings cooperatives.

Worawit offers it as an economic model by which the central government could help the people of the Deep South.

"Don't worry so much about territory and the separatists," he recommends. "Look at the people. Develop the people in accordance with their way of life, culture and religion."

Worawit resigned from his university to enter politics, contesting last year's Senate race. He was elected with a promise to use his office to advocate special administrative status for the South, but soon discovered how daunting his mission would be.

It's not easy to change the administrative structure, he notes, with the military dominating the Internal Security Operation Command, which controls an annual budget of around Bt7.5 billion.

"But the military should admit that its approach over the past five years has failed," Worawit says. "Why not try another way?"

Gloria's Power Grab

By Brett M. Decker

Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo is a lame duck struggling to stay afloat. With less than a year left in her constitutionally mandated last term, national politics is dominated by next May's election and the president's efforts to cling to power. In the meantime, policy efforts to address the country's myriad problems are at a standstill.

Ms. Arroyo's latest gambit is to run for her son's congressional seat when her presidential term expires next year. Members of her cabinet have openly advocated this plan, and her son Mikey has said he would consider running for governor of their home province of Pampanga if Ms. Arroyo chooses this path. Last Monday, the Commission on Elections declared that there is no legal barrier preventing a former president from running for Congress.

There is only one reason why this sitting head of state—who previously served as vice president, a cabinet secretary and in the Senate—would be interested in a comparably lowly seat in the House of Representatives. She is angling to be prime minister in a restructured government composed of a unicameral parliament. Reformists assert that two contending chambers make the legislative process too slow, and the Philippines needs to implement fast-paced change that would be eased by removing gridlock caused by the inert Senate. The Philippine government currently is based on the U.S. presidential system with a bicameral legislature, so this conversion would require rewriting the constitutional charter.

For Ms. Arroyo and her supporters, maintaining power is not just about keeping the pork and perks of office. It's a matter of survival. The leading contenders for the presidency all have said they will investigate rampant corruption in the Arroyo administration if elected. This poses an existential threat to Ms. Arroyo and her family, especially if the opposition wins. It has not been forgotten that the Arroyo administration put her predecessor, Joseph Estrada, in prison after he was overthrown, although she later pardoned him. Mr. Estrada is still one of the most popular figures in the Philippines; his many support-

ers have been waiting a decade for revenge for his ouster and seven-year incarceration.

It might sound implausible that the nation's form of government could be altered to suit the president's demand for power, but there is a precedent for such an action. Former President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law and suspended Congress in 1972, only to reopen the legislature as a unicameral parliament in 1978. At that time, he added the title prime minister to his previous position as president.

It's ironic that Ms. Arroyo is pursuing the Marcos model because the authoritarian leader beat her father, Diosdado Macapagal, in the 1965 presidential race. There are many similarities between the Philippines today and the status of the country 44 years ago: the economy was in decline; corruption hobbled government; and national security was threatened by Muslim insurrection in the southern islands and armed Communist revolution in the mountains.

Mr. Marcos defeated Mr. Macapagal's bid for reelection because the latter was perceived to be an ineffectual leader in a period of crisis. Today, the position of President Arroyo's advisers is that the country is too unstable for a transition. There have been discussions at Malacanang presidential palace about the possibility of declaring a state of emergency to delay elections and thus stall Ms. Arroyo's departure from office. One longtime Arroyo insider told me the main reservation is that administration officials are not sure they can pull it off.

It would be a risky strategem. Ms. Arroyo may not have a strong enough hold on power to declare and enforce a state of emergency. The public sends mixed signals. Street protests against the administration are routine, but voter apathy is a more prevalent national trait than serious opposition. Perhaps most important, Ms. Arroyo is backed by the military command structure. The support of the generals composed the balance of power that was necessary to oust President Estrada and install Ms. Arroyo in his place in 2001.

Changing the constitutional charter is a safer route to maintain power than declaring a state of emergency because it would instigate less public outrage. A constitutional assembly offers the veneer of legislative legitimacy, and a workable strategy to secure charter change has been crafted over the past few years. A

little over two weeks ago, the House of Representatives passed a resolution to convene a constitutional assembly to work toward charter change. A three-fourths majority vote is needed to amend the constitution. House leaders are pushing to hold that vote next month.

There is disagreement over the makeup of that vote. Senators, who overwhelmingly oppose parliamentary change since it would abolish their chamber, argue that separate three-quarter votes are necessary in the House and Senate. House leaders maintain that the tally required comes from a joint session of both chambers. This view is convenient because the margin in the House might be large enough for passage over the opposition of a majority of senators. In any case, the dispute is likely to go to the Supreme Court, where 11 of the 13 sitting justices were appointed by Ms. Arroyo.

The president solidified her hold on the House of Representatives through patronage politics. As Senator Manuel "Mar" Roxas, a former member of the Arroyo cabinet and frontrunner to win the presidency next year if elections are held, explains, "The system created by the Arroyo administration has made corruption, official opacity and the dole-out culture almost endemic at all levels." At one notorious meeting a few years ago, legislators were photographed leaving Malacanang presidential palace with shopping bags full of cash. The palace also allocates "countrywide development funds," pork-barrel money that individual congressmen can direct as they see fit.

According to a poll released June 11 by Manila-based Social Weather Stations, only 31% of 1,200 Filipinos surveyed believe that Ms. Arroyo intends to step down in 2010 when her term is up. Staying in power may be the only way Ms. Arroyo can stay out of jail. The president is a political survivor who has beaten back numerous attempts to unseat her, so anything is possible. But whether through the bayonet or charter change, subverting next year's presidential elections would set back the maturation process of the Philippines' fragile democratic institutions.

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Declarations / By Peggy Noonan

Whose Side Are We On? You Have to Ask?

America so often gets Iran wrong. We didn't know when the shah was going to fall, didn't foresee the massive wave that would topple him, didn't know the 1979 revolution would move violently against American citizens, didn't know how to handle the hostage-taking. Last week we didn't know a mass rebellion was coming, and this week we don't know who will emerge the full or partial victor. So modesty and humility seem appropriate stances from which to observe and comment.

That having been said, it's pretty wonderful to see what we're seeing. It is moving, stirring—they are risking their lives over there in a spontaneous, self-generated movement for greater liberty and justice. Good for them. In a selfish and solipsistic way—more on that in a moment—the uprising, as it moves us, reminds us of who we are: lovers of political freedom who are always and irresistibly on the side of the student standing in front of the tank or the demonstrator chanting “Where is my vote?” in the face of the billy club. Good for us. (If you don't understand who the American people are for, put down this newspaper or get up from your computer, walk into the street and grab the first non-insane-looking person you meet. Say, “Did you see the demonstrations in Iran? It's the ayatollahs versus the reformers. Who do you want to win?” You won't just get “the reformers,” you'll get the perplexed-puppy look, a tilt of the head and a wondering stare: You have to ask?)

If the rebels on the street win, however winning is defined, they, being more modern and moderate than the ruling government, will likely have a moderating influence on their government. If the rebels on the street lose, however that is defined, this fact remains: Something has been unleashed, and it won't be going away. A thugocracy has been revealed as lacking the support and respect of a considerable portion of its people, and that portion is not solely the most sophisticated and educated but, far more significantly, the young. Half the people in Iran are under 27. When the young rise against the old, the future rises against the past. In that contest, the future always wins. The question is timing: soon or some years from now? (A heartening Twitter feed Thursday, from Andrew Sullivan's site: “Fact is, we've seen variety of protesters grow: young+old, students+professionals, women in chador+westernized students.”)

Stifling and corrupt religious autocracy has seen its international standing diminished, and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who is

among other things a Holocaust denier, has in effect been rebuked by half his country, and through free speech, that most painful way to lose your reputation, which has broken out on the streets. He can no longer claim to speak for his people. The rising tide of the young and educated seems uninterested in reflexively hating the West and deriving their meaning from that hatred.

To refuse to see all this as progress, or potential progress, is perverse to the point of wicked. To insist the American president, in the first days of the rebellion, insert the American government into the drama was shortsighted and mischievous. The ayatollahs were only too eager to demonize the demonstrators as mindless lackeys of the Great Satan Cowboy Uncle Sam, or whatever they call us this week. John McCain and others went quite crazy insisting President Obama declare whose side America was on, as if the world doesn't know whose side America is on. “In the cause of freedom, America cannot be neutral,” said Rep. Mike Pence. Who says it's neutral?

This was Aggressive Political Solipsism at work: Always exploit events to show you love freedom more than the other guy, always make someone else's delicate drama your excuse for a thumping curtain speech.

Mr. Obama was restrained, balanced and helpful in the crucial first days, keeping the government out of it but having his State Department ask a primary conduit of information, Twitter, to delay planned maintenance and keep reports from the streets coming. Then he made a mistake, telling the New York Times in terms of our national security there is little difference between Mr. Ahmadinejad and his foe, Mir Hossein Mousavi, which may or may not in the long run be true but was undercutting of the opposition.

What now? Americans, and the West, should be who they are, friends of freedom. Iranians on the street made sure they got their Twitter reports and videos here.

They trust us to spread the word through our technology. A lot of the signs they held were in English. They trust us to be for change and to advance their cause, and they're right to trust us.

Should there at this point, more than a week into the story, be a formal declaration of support from the U.S. government? Certainly it's time for an indignant statement on the abuses, including killings and beatings, perpetrated by the government and against the opposition. It's never wrong to be on the side of civilization. Be-

yond that, what would be efficacious? It must be asked if a formal statement of support for the rebels would help them. And they'd have a better sense of it than we.

If the American president, for reasons of prudence, does not make a public statement of the government's stand, he could certainly refer, as if it is an obvious fact because it is an obvious fact, to whom the American people are for. And that is the protesters on the street. If he were particularly striking in his comments about how Americans cannot help but love their brothers and sisters who stand for greater freedom and democracy in the world, all the better. The American people, after all, are not their government. Our sentiments are not controlled by the government, and this may be a timely moment to point that out, and remind the young of Iran, who are the future of Iran, that Americans are a future-siding people.

A small point on the technological aspects of the Iranian situation. Some ask if the impact of the new technology is exaggerated. No. Twittering and YouTubeing made the story take hold and take off. But did the technology create the rebellion? No, it encouraged what was there. If they Twittered and liveblogged the French Revolution, it still would have been the French Revolution: “this aft 3pm @ the bastille.” It all still would have happened, perhaps with marginally greater support. Revolutions are revolutions and rebellions are rebellions; they don't work unless the people are for it. In Iran, Twitter reported and encouraged. But the conviction must be there to be encouraged.

* * *

The interesting question is what technology would have done after the Revolution, during the Terror. What would word of the demonic violence, the tumbrels and non-stop guillotines unleashed circa 1790-95 have done to French support for the Revolution, and world support? Would Thomas Jefferson have been able to continue his blithe indifference if reports of France grimly murdering France had been Twittered out each day?

The great question is what modern technology can do not in the short term so much as the long. It is not the friend of entrenched tyranny. Connected to which, it would be nice if the technologies of the future were not given babyish names. Twitter, Google, Facebook, etc., have come to be crucial and historically consequential tools, and yet to refer to them is to talk baby talk. In the future could inventors please keep the weight and dignity of history in mind?

Bullets and barrels



Thomas L. Friedman

The popular uprising unfolding in Iran right now really is remarkable. It is the rarest of rare things — more rare than snow in Saudi Arabia, more unlikely than finding a ham sandwich at the Wailing Wall, more unusual than water-skiing in the Sahara. It is a popular uprising in a Middle Eastern oil state.

Why is this so unusual? Because in most Middle East states, power grows out of the barrel of a gun and out of a barrel of oil — and that combination is very hard to overthrow.

Oil is a key reason that democracy has had such a hard time emerging in the Middle East, except in one of the few states with no oil: Lebanon. Because once kings and dictators seize power, they can entrench themselves, not only by imprisoning their foes and killing their enemies, but by buying off their people and using oil wealth to build huge internal security apparatuses.

There is only one precedent for an oil-funded autocrat in the Middle East being toppled by a people's revolution, not by a military coup, and that was in... Iran.

Recall that in 1979, when the Iranian people rose up against the shah of Iran in an Islamic Revolution spearheaded by Ayatollah Khomeini, the shah controlled the army, the Savak secret police and a vast network of oil-funded patronage. But at some point, enough people taking to the streets and defying his authority, and taking bullets as well,

broke the shah's spell. All the shah's horses and all the shah's men, couldn't put his regime back together again.

The Islamic Revolution has learned from the shah. It has used its oil wealth — Iran is the world's fifth-largest oil producer, exporting about 2.1 million barrels a day at around \$70 a barrel — to buy off huge swaths of the population with cheap housing, government jobs and subsidized food and gasoline. It's also used its crude to erect a vast military force — namely the Revolutionary Guard and the Basij militia — to keep itself in power.

Therefore, the big question in Iran today is: Can the green revolution led by Mir Hussein Moussavi, and backed by masses of street protesters, do to the Islamic regime what Ayatollah Khomeini and the Iranian people did to the shah's regime — break its spell so all its barrels and bullets become meaningless?

Iran's ruling mullahs were always ruthless. But they disguised it a bit with faux elections. I say faux elections because while the regime may have counted the votes accurately, it tightly controlled who could run. The choices were dark black and light black.

What happened this time is that the anger at the regime had reached such a level — because of near-20 percent unemployment and a rising youth population tired of seeing their life's options limited by theocrats — that given a choice between a dark black regime candidate and a light black regime candidate, millions of Iranians turned out for light black: Mr. Moussavi. The Iranian people turned the regime man into their own candidate, and he seems to have been transformed by them. That is why the regime panicked and stole the election.

The playwright Tom Stoppard once observed that democracy is not the voting, "it's the counting." Iran's mullahs were always ready to allow voting, as

long as the counting didn't matter, because a regime man was always going to win. But what happened this time was that in the little crack of space that the regime had to allow for even a faux election, some kind of counter-revolution was born.

Yes, its leader, Mr. Moussavi, surely is less liberal than most of his followers. But just his lighter shade of black attracted and unleashed so much pent-up frustration and hope for change among many Iranians that he became an independent candidate and, thus, his votes simply could not be counted — because they were not just a vote for him, but were a referendum against the entire regime.

But now, having voted with their ballots, Iranians who want a change will have to vote again with their bodies. A regime like Iran's can only be brought down or changed if enough Iranians vote as they did in 1979 — in the street. That is what the regime fears most, because then it either has to shoot its own people or cede power. That is why it was no accident that the "supreme leader," Ayatollah Khamenei, warned protesters in his Friday speech that "street challenge is not acceptable." That's a man who knows how he got his job.

And so the gauntlet is now thrown down. If the reformers want change, they are going to have to form a leadership, lay out their vision for Iran and keep voting in the streets — over and over and over. Only if they keep showing up with their bodies, and by so doing saying to their regime "we cannot be bought and we will not be cowed," will their ballots be made to count.

I am rooting for them and fearing for them. Any real moderation of Iran's leadership would have a hugely positive effect on the Middle East. But we and the reformers must have no illusions about the bullets and barrels they are up against.

New world order? Not yet

Bashing the United States remains a popular sport even after the departure of President George W. Bush from the White House. Criticism of Washington has intensified in the past year as the world grapples with an economic crisis that many believe was made in the U.S.

This discontent drives calls for reorganization of the international monetary system, a system that confers special advantages on the U.S. Yet, unsatisfying as the system may be for many, change will be slow. Even as the global economy reorients and diversifies, and economic power moves toward Asia, the U.S. will retain its place at the center of that system.

That dissatisfaction provided the backdrop for a meeting in the Russian city of Yekaterinburg on June 16. Leaders of Brazil, Russia, India and China held the first summit of the so-called BRIC nations. The term was coined in 2001 by a U.S. investment banker who touted the considerable potential power and influence of those four nations. They account for slightly more than 40 percent of the world's population, make up about 15 percent of the global economy, and hold 40 percent of global currency reserves. In 2001, the four were expected to overtake the combined economies of the industrialized world by 2040. Recent woes have accelerated that timetable: The new date is 2027.

Despite impressive prospects, the four remain secondary players in international decision-making. Only Russia and China have permanent seats on the United Nations Security Council. Moscow is the only member with a reserved place among the Group of Eight leading industrialized nations. The four agree not only that they deserve more of a say in how the world is run but also that the very structure of the current system gives the U.S. too much power.

Thus their declaration, released after the meeting, called for "a stable, predictable and more diversified international monetary system." The four heads of state seek changes in the world's financial and economic architecture that will yield "democratic and transparent decision-making and an implementation process at the international financial organizations." While urging all nations to help build stability into the multilateral trading system and to curb protectionism, they also want "reform of international financial institutions to reflect changes in the world economy."

In practical terms, that means new voting weights in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank to give previously disenfranchised governments a louder voice. Equally

important is U.N. reform — a call that Japan would support.

Conspicuous by its absence in the BRIC communique was explicit criticism of the dollar as the world's reserve currency. That status is a pillar of U.S. economic power and influence and forces other nations to bear the costs of Washington's economic mismanagement. There have been growing calls to use other currencies to complement or even replace the dollar in this role. Earlier this year, the governor of the People's Bank of China published an essay that sent shock waves by suggesting that special drawing rights, a currency used by the IMF, might do the job. During the BRIC meeting, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, host of the summit, called for a new reserve currency. Yet the final declaration was silent on the subject.

The silence is a reminder that the BRIC nations are four big countries, not one powerful bloc. They agree in principle on a more democratic international system and a smaller role for the U.S., but specific steps toward those goals remain beyond their reach. For example, despite its rhetoric, China is not thrilled with the idea of U.N. Security Council reform, if that means seating India and Japan, two of its rivals.

Moreover, calls to replace the dollar as the world's reserve currency are a vote of no-confidence in the greenback, which would diminish the value of dollar holdings. China had, as of April, \$763.5 billion in U.S. Treasury bills, making it the single largest holder of U.S. government debt (Japan is No. 2); Russia has \$137 billion. A fall in the dollar devalues those holdings.

Nor do those governments want to hold large amounts of other currencies. In each case, the U.S. is a major trade and investment partner; only Brazil trades more with China than it does with the U.S. (and China has far more trade with the U.S. than with Brazil). There may be a willingness among the BRIC treasuries to diversify their foreign exchange holdings, but they still need dollars to do business. As a group, they seek to diminish U.S. status and influence; individually they want to build stronger relations with Washington to lift their own international standing.

The world has been transformed since 1945, yet international institutions have been slow to adapt. Reform is long overdue — not just because democratic principles demand that these countries have a bigger voice but also because elevating their seat at the table gives them a stake in the outcomes. With power comes responsibility. It makes no sense to virtually disenfranchise nations that can and should be contributing to efforts to build a more stable, secure and prosperous world.

Malaysia court sets date for Anwar sodomy trial

By: AFP

Published: 22/06/2009 at 02:58 PM

Malaysia's high court has set a new date for Anwar Ibrahim's sodomy hearing, his counsel has said, voicing fears that the opposition leader will not get a fair trial. Sankara Nair told AFP that the high court has said it will now try Anwar, a former deputy prime minister, July 8 rather than July 1 for sodomy charges levelled by a former aide. "We are not fully prepared for the trial because we do not have the full set of documents. The prosecution has not given us crucial documents to help us in our defence. It will lead to (an) unfair trial," he said.

The lawyer said that among the documents the defence needs are witness statements, CCTV footage and original swabs taken from Anwar and his accuser for re-testing. Sankara also said that the trial judge would hear Anwar's request to have the charge dropped on the same date. "We maintain the charge is baseless and should be withdrawn. There is no case against Anwar," he said. The opposition leader said last week that the charge against him should be dropped because it was a "political ploy" but vowed to fight hard in court to clear his name.

In an interview with AFP, he voiced concern false evidence would be introduced in a bid to jail him and end his political career. "It's a convenient way for UMNO to get rid of me to settle their political problem," he said, referring to the United Malays National Organisation which is the dominant party in the ruling National Front coalition. Anwar, 61, has consistently rejected the allegations levelled by a 23-year-old former aide -- the same charge that saw him jailed a decade ago -- as a government conspiracy to derail his plan to topple the ruling coalition. Sodomy, even between consenting adults, is illegal in predominantly Muslim Malaysia and carries a penalty of 20 years' imprisonment.

Anwar has the best ever chance of ousting the weak National Front government that has ruled Malaysia since 1957 after the opposition deprived the government of a two-thirds majority in 2008 elections. The opposition leader is currently out on a 20,000-ringgit bail (5,700 dollars) pending his trial but supporters have expressed fears that it might be revoked during the hearing.

ICG says Islamic schools are recruiting insurgents

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Newspaper section: News

Private Islamic schools in the South are being used to recruit and train young Muslims to become fighters in the insurgency movement, a new report says. The insurgency movement in the South continues to enlist young men, especially from private Islamic schools known as *pondok*, the Brussels-based International Crisis Group says in its latest report, *Recruiting Militants in Southern Thailand*. "Recruiters appeal to a sense of [ethnic] Malay nationalism and pride in the old Pattani sultanate," said Rungrawee Chalermripinyorat, ICG's Thai analyst. "They tell students in these schools that it is the duty of every Muslim to take back their land from the Buddhist infidels."

The pondok classroom is the first point of contact. Recruiters target devout, hard-working, well-mannered students to join extracurricular indoctrination programmes, Ms Rungrawee said. Religious lessons, field trips and sports activities provide opportunities for recruiters to assess students for a period that can range from a few months to over a year. Students seen as potential recruits are asked to take an oath of allegiance. Some then undergo physical conditioning and military training before being assigned to various roles in village-level operations. For those rejected for front-line service, there are secondary roles in the organisation, such as psychological warfare.

Students under 18 are mostly given tasks such as spying, arson and spray-painting "Free Pattani" on roads. Recruitment has also been fuelled by human rights violations by the government, and by the failure to hold security forces accountable for past abuses, the report says. However, Islamic schools are not the only place where young Muslims are radicalised, "nor should all such schools be stigmatised as militant breeding grounds", the report says. The southernmost region has more than 100,000 students in Islamic schools, a big pool of potential recruits for the estimated 1,800 to 3,000 fighters, it says. "The government has been distracted by its own turmoil but needs to refocus attention on the South," said Jim Della-Giacoma, ICG's Southeast Asia project director.

"The violence will not end unless [ethnic] Malay Muslims' grievances are addressed." Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva yesterday said the government would step up its operations to bring those involved in the insurgency to justice. Security officers would act in line with the law, but violent clashes with suspects were inevitable in some cases, Mr Abhisit said during his weekly public address on state-run media. Four suspected militants were killed in a gun battle on Thursday after security officers tracked down suspects wanted on arrest warrants in Yala's Bannang Sata district.

"Such operations are necessary and it is a matter of law enforcement," the prime minister said. "I confirm that all processes are subject to law. We will never violate anyone's rights." Police in Yala province have been told to look out for suspicious activity around state buildings after a handmade grenade was thrown outside a school yesterday. A male pillion rider threw the bomb in front of Toh Pakeh School on Kota Baru-Thung Yang Daeng Road in tambon Wang Phaya of Raman district about noon. The explosive was contained in a plastic pipe and did not go off at first. However, as paramilitary rangers and defence volunteers were attempting to destroy it, the bomb exploded and injured a defence volunteer from the school.

In Narathiwat province, five men were taken in for questioning yesterday after police and soldiers found them hiding in Ban Mue Laeh village in tambon Sawor of Rueso district. Authorities were acting on a report from local people who said a group of four or five men new to the area had taken shelter in the village. Police found the men at an un-numbered house. They also unearthed a 20-litre plastic tank buried nearby. The tank contained bullets, shotgun rounds, walkie talkies, radios, camouflage outfits, about five kilogrammes of gunpowder, a mobile phone and batteries for detonating bombs.

Thailand rebels recruiting from Islamic schools

By: AFP

Published: 22/06/2009 at 02:58 PM

Insurgents in Thailand's south are recruiting and radicalising young Muslim men from Islamic schools, but their struggle is independent of global jihadi movements, a think-tank has said. Separatist militants are inviting devout, hard-working Muslims mainly from private schools to join indoctrination programmes -- sometimes disguised as football training, an International Crisis Group (ICG) report said.

More than 3,700 people have died in the troubled provinces of Narathiwat, Pattani, Yala and some parts of Songkhla in a five-year insurgency against the rule of the central government. Recruiters appeal to a sense of Malay nationalism in the mainly Muslim region, which was a Malay sultanate until it was annexed by Thailand in 1902, said ICG's Thailand analyst, Run-grawee Chalermripinyorat. "They tell students in these schools that it is the duty of every Muslim to take back their land from the Buddhist infidels," he said.

Islamic schools are the "breeding grounds" of the insurgency, according to the report, where teachers covertly recruit from the thousands of religious young males -- the "natural foot soldiers" of the movement. The group said the movement was ideologically dissimilar from Islamist groups such as Al-Qaeda, although it may use similar words to mobilise support. "The recruits are driven not by global jihad but by a desire to defend their ethnic and religious identity from what they perceive as oppression by the Thai Buddhist state," the report said.

Insurgents are drawing in students "moved by the history of oppression, mistreatment and the idea of armed jihad", who go on to take an oath of allegiance followed by physical and military training, the report said. The students are then assigned to different roles in village-level operations. Those rejected for frontline service can take on secondary roles, for example in psychological warfare. Recruiters also draw on local culture -- even though it angers some religious purists -- using ancient charms and spells to protect fighters from harm, at the same time as disseminating propaganda videos on YouTube and VCDs.

ICG said the recruits were fuelled by the Thai military's human rights abuses in the south, and that a regional political solution was undermined by policies concentrating power in Bangkok. "Changing these policies and practices is essential as the government tries to respond to the insurgents' grievances in order to bring long-lasting peace to the region," ICG said.

Thailand's government is struggling to curb a recent surge in violence in the south, which included a bloody attack on a mosque this month in which gunmen shot dead 11 people during evening prayers. Insurgents target civilians of all religions and more Muslims have been slain in the conflict than Buddhists -- many of them marked as "traitors" to Islam, the report said. Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva has raised the possibility of making the south a special administrative zone as a political solution to the unrest but he has ruled out granting any form of autonomy.

The ICG report, based on extensive interviews with religious teachers, students involved in underground activities and security officials, warned against "quick fixes" for the complex conflict. It said Thailand also needed to address the disregard for Malay ethnic identity and language and the under-representation of Malay Muslims in local political and government structures to prevent an "enduring struggle".

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Obama and the Rogues

President Obama took office loudly promising to be the anti-George W. Bush of foreign policy, vowing to "extend a hand" to adversaries "willing to unclench" their fists. What he has received instead is an education in the reality of global rogues, and how he responds has become a major test of his Presidency.

The immediate challenges are North Korea and Iran, governments that the American left claimed were "evil" only because Mr. Bush had declared them so. Perhaps Mr. Obama believed this too, though five months later he has learned otherwise. North Korea has rejected his every overture and is now defying the U.N. to press its nuclear and proliferation ambitions. As for Iran, the mullahs are attempting to crush a popular uprising after a stolen election while also showing disdain for Mr. Obama's diplomatic entreaties.

The question is whether Mr. Obama will now adapt his policies to meet challenges he clearly didn't expect. Jimmy Carter took office with similar illusions about the Soviet Union, promising to cure our "inordinate fear of Communism." Our enemies pushed back at what they perceived to be U.S. weakness, and Mr. Carter and his NSC adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski never recovered. We'll soon learn if Mr. Obama is made of sterner stuff.

On North Korea, for example, the President has vowed that "words mat-

ter" and that renegade missile and A-bomb tests must have "consequences." The U.S. has rallied the U.N. to pass sanctions against Pyongyang, albeit no tougher than those the U.N. issued in 2006. Those sanctions include a Security Council "call" to intercept North Korean attempts to sell or spread weapons and delivery systems of mass destruction. The issue is whether those sanctions will be enforced.

North Korea and Iran intrude on his diplomatic hopes.

As it happens, a U.S. Navy destroyer is currently tailing a North Korean ship suspected of carrying illicit weapons toward Burma via Singapore. The cargo ship Kang Nam left a North Korea port last Wednesday, and a South Korean intelligence report said it is believed to carry missiles and other parts. This would violate U.N. sanctions, and the U.S. has every legal right to board the ship. Alternatively, the USS John S. McCain (named for the Senator's father and grandfather) could steer the Kang Nam to Singapore and inspect her there.

Either action carries risks because North Korea has said it will consider such an inspection to be an act of war. No one knows how the North would respond, though its leaders must know that any attack on South Korea would guarantee the end of their rule. It's also possible the entire North Korean crew could defect if promised asylum.

The risks of doing nothing are even more serious because it would show the North—and the world—that the U.N.

sanctions once again mean nothing. The threat of a North Korean attack on the South is small, but the danger of nuclear proliferation to the U.S. and its allies is clear and present. We know Pyongyang has proliferated to Iran and Syria in the recent past. Senator John McCain said yesterday the U.S. should board the Kang Nam, a sign that Mr. Obama could count on domestic political support. Will the President let Kim Jong Il make a mockery of U.N. condemnations?

Regarding Iran, Mr. Obama will also have to rethink his hopes for a grand nuclear bargain with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. This diplomatic desire explains the President's cautious refusal last week to take sides in the post-election standoff—or, as a Washington Post headline put it, quoting Administration sources, "Obama Seeks Way to Acknowledge Protesters Without Alienating Ayatollah." It's impossible to imagine the Reagan Administration whispering something similar about Soviet dissidents and the Politburo.

The Supreme Leader gave his reply by endorsing the election results, arresting opponents and unleashing security forces to beat the demonstrators. Like the Shah in 1979, the government is now firing on its own people chanting "death to the dictator." Even if the mullahs succeed in stopping the immediate unrest,

their legitimacy will never be the same. As Iranian journalist and Journal contributor Amir Taheri notes, the "republic" half of the Islamic Republic of Iran has been exposed as a fraud.

Mr. Obama finally stiffened his rhetoric on Saturday, calling "on the Iranian government to stop all violent and unjust actions against its own people. The universal rights to assembly and free speech must be respected, and the United States stands with all who seek to exercise those rights." This is an improvement, though he said this only after both houses of Congress condemned Iran's crackdown on Friday.

Going forward, Mr. Obama will have to consider that any negotiations with the current government will lend it legitimacy at the expense of the Iranian people. That would be precisely the kind of "meddling" in Iran's politics that Mr. Obama says he wants to avoid. Opposition leader Mir Hussein Mousavi might not take any less a hard line on Iran's nuclear program than the current government, but he does now represent the aspirations of millions of Iranians. And there is even less chance that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Ayatollah Khamenei will bend on nukes now that nationalism and thuggish power are their main claims to legitimacy.

Focused as he is on domestic matters, Mr. Obama no doubt wishes he could return to his campaign illusions about the powers of diplomacy. But the world's rogues have other priorities, and stopping them will take more than an extended handshake.



Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

Check-list for an Iranian revolution



Gideon Rachman

What does it take to make a successful revolution? That question is clearly weighing on the mind of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. In his long rant at last Friday's prayers at Tehran university, Iran's supreme leader accused foreign governments of trying to foment a revolt in his country. He claims that foreigners are using the uprisings in the former Soviet Union as a model. "They are comparing the Islamic Republic with Georgia," he complained.

Mr Khamenei is right about one thing. The comparison between events in Iran and the "colour revolutions" in the former USSR is certainly suggestive. Andrew Miller, a journalist at The Economist who witnessed the colour revolutions in Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan has come up with a useful "checklist" of some of the factors that can help a revolution to succeed.

- "Critical mass": small demonstrations of 5,000 people can be ignored or suppressed. But half a million people in the streets is another matter.
- Weak or divided security services.
- Some independent media.
- Money.
- Serious corruption, which Mr Miller argues is "generally the main mass motivator".
- Opposition leaders who have served a stint in government.
- A history of rebellion from which lessons can be learnt.
- Strong support in the capital city.
- A rigged election that provides a spark for the revolt.

I would add more elements to Mr Miller's list:

- A divided ruling elite.
- A sense of revolutionary momentum from events overseas; Europe in 1989 and 1948 show that revolution can be catching.

- External help.
- The use of violence by the authorities, which can either make or break a revolution.

Every element on these two lists is now present to some degree in Iran – with the possible exceptions of division within the security forces and significant external assistance.

The demonstrations in Tehran have been huge. Even after Mr Khamenei's warnings of impending bloodshed, very big crowds turned out on Saturday – some were killed and almost 500 were arrested. The task for the opposition now is to find a way of motivating people to keep demonstrating, despite the dangers. Many Iranians will recall that it took more than a year of sustained unrest to topple the Shah in 1979.

For the moment, the Iranian security services seem grimly united and willing to shed blood. The Basij militias and Revolutionary Guard show little sign of wavering. The real signs of division are within Iran's ruling elite. Mr Khamenei did his utmost to paper over these at Friday prayers. He praised both President Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad and Mr Ahmadi-Nejad's bitter enemy, former president Ali Akbar Rafsanjani. But since then Mr Rafsanjani's daughter has briefly been arrested. A power struggle is clearly under way.

As for money and the media: the media is controlled, but independent reports on the internet and foreign journalists are helping to fill some of the gap. The Tehran middle class is not on the breadline. And the street demonstrations that are keeping the opposition going do not, anyway, require huge resources.

Corruption is clearly an acutely sensitive issue. Mr Khamenei addressed it directly on Friday. "Everybody must fight corruption," he urged. "If it is not brought under control it will spread, like it has in some western countries."

The Ukrainian and Georgian revolutions were led by former ministers who had turned against the government. If this does matter,

then as a former prime minister Mir-Hossein Mousavi, the leader of the Iranian opposition, certainly ticks the box. Some cast doubt on his credibility as an opponent of the regime, given that he was one of only four candidates regarded as sufficiently ideologically-sound to run in the first place. But Mr Mousavi has now come to symbolise far more than his own rather cautious views.

As for a history of revolt: these are by far the biggest demonstrations since the foundation of the Islamic Republic in 1979. But there has been repression before, of student and reformist movements. When it comes to "support in the capital city" and allegations of a rigged election – both elements have clearly been critical to sustaining the revolt.

It suits the Iranian government to blame the revolt on foreigners. (Flatteringly, Mr Khamenei insisted on Friday that "the most evil of them all is the British government".) But whether the regime likes it or not, the demonstrators on the streets of Tehran are angry Iranians, who need little encouragement from outsiders. However, events in the outside world might have influenced the politics of Iran in more subtle ways – the election of Barack Obama and political change in Iraq and Lebanon may have helped to fan a wind of change in Iran as well.

The great unknown is the effect of violent suppression of the demonstrations. Once a regime starts killing its own people it crosses a line. Sometimes, as in Iran in 1979, bloodshed on the streets leads to such a loss of confidence and popularity that it spells the end for a government. On other occasions, if a government is brutal and ruthless enough, violent repression can work – China in 1989 is the obvious recent example.

Killing demonstrators, however, has stripped the Iranian government of its claims to legitimacy. It may secure the regime's survival in the short term. In the long term, it surely dooms it.

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Iran protests enter dangerous waters

Run-off at polls can prevent bloodbath, restore legitimacy

After more than 10 days of protests against what now looks emphatically like a part-manufactured landslide to re-elect President Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad, the opposition in Iran has cracked the cohesion of the leading players in the regime. But Mir-Hossein Moussavi and his backers have not broken their will to retain power.

How could they? Mr Moussavi, a former premier, and Mohammad Khatami and Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, former presidents, are the offspring of the revolution. They seek the reform of the Islamic Republic, not to overthrow it.

Nevertheless, the vast reformist mobilisation in this disputed election, and the way the theocrats burgled the results then bloodied the streets, has brought about one huge and irrevocable change. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader at the apex of the system, has recklessly forfeited his position as its supreme arbiter.

From above the fray he has descended into the arena in an overtly partisan way. This calls into question the legitimacy of the regime in three fundamental ways.

First, it is no longer possible – after the supreme leader's endorsement of the results and chilling threats to demonstrators who continue to question them – to oppose Mr Ahmadi-Nejad without confronting Mr Khamenei, now reduced to just another factional leader. Second, this episode has destroyed the ambiguous balance within the Islamic Republic, whose theocratic institutions have overwhelmed its democratic redoubts, and the will of the Iranian people.

Third, moreover, the regime's management of this crisis is a powerful reminder that Mr Khamenei never had the theological credentials to succeed Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. This has never been forgotten by influential members of the higher Shia clergy in Qom – fed up of seeing their religion dragged through the dirt of factional feuding around vested interests – or Mr Moussavi and others who now preach a return to the principles of the Imam Khomeini.

Away from this intra-regime manoeuvring, thousands and tens of thousands of Iranians daily continue to risk their lives against the regime's militias on the streets, in a movement that seems protean and driven by pent-up anger rather than centrally directed – and which would therefore take a lot of bloodshed to quell.

Mr Khamenei had one chance to defuse this crisis: he could have decided that the partial recount had revealed enough irregularities to merit a second round run-off between Mr Ahmadi-Nejad and Mr Moussavi. He spurned it.

The protesters appear intent on forcing Mr Khamenei and the theocrats to respect Iran's democratic institutions – and Iranians' votes.

The idea, emanating from Mr Rafsanjani's allies, of a big, unified opposition bloc seems a necessary next step. They all need it for self-protection. The regime might come to feel it needs it to retrieve some legitimacy. Most of all, a return to politics and a return to the ballot box through a second round offers the only way forward short of the violent convulsion of the country.

Netanyahu's gambit

ISRAEL II
Netanyahu
has accepted a
Palestinian
state, but it
must be
demilitarized.
Obama's move.

Ari Shavit

The syndrome is clear: since 1992 every Israeli hawk, once elected prime minister, turns into a dove. Yitzhak Rabin, Ehud Barak, Ariel Sharon and Ehud Olmert all shifted radically to the left after taking office. What you see from here is not what you see from there, said one of them.

And what any reasonable person sees after he enters the PM's claustrophobic chamber in Jerusalem is that occupation is futile. That is why Rabin went to Oslo (1993) and Barak went to Camp David (2000). That is why Sharon pulled out of Gaza (2005) and Olmert offered a withdrawal from the West Bank (2008).

Is it Netanyahu's turn now? Will the defiant leader of the Israeli right surprise the world with peace?

During his previous tenure, Benjamin Netanyahu failed to deliver. Like the other four prime ministers, he made some painful concessions, but never achieved peace. That is why the American administration and the Israeli left greeted his comeback with apprehension and suspicion.

Hence, the prime minister had to make a move. In a formative speech which he gave at Bar-Ilan University last week, Netanyahu tried to redefine himself. For the first time in his life he uttered the forbidden words: Palestinian state. At long last Netanyahu has accepted the idea of a two-state solution.

But even the new Netanyahu did not accept the idea as is. The cornerstone of his speech was a new, somewhat revolutionary formula for the envisioned peace: a demilitarized Palestinian state alongside the Jewish state.

Many failed to see what was new in Netanyahu's vision. For decades, peace profession-

als and activists believed that when peace comes, Palestine will be demilitarized and Israel will be Jewish. Americans, Europeans and Israelis involved in the peace process took this premise to be self-evident.

But the Palestinians never accepted this premise. They did not agree to limit the sovereignty of their future state so that Israel's security would be guaranteed.

Making his concession, Netanyahu challenges the Palestinians — and also the Americans and Europeans.

They did not recognize the existence of a Jewish people which expresses its right of self-determination in the Jewish nation-state. They did not go through the profound ideological conversion required so that a real two-state peace could be achieved and sustained.

That is why Netanyahu's new interpretation of the two-state solution is of historical importance.

Its significance is two-fold. On the one hand it seals Israel's psychological and ideological conversion regarding the Palestinians; on the other hand it calls for a similar Palestinian conversion. It commits even the Israeli right to the need to establish a Palestinian state, but it demands an unequivocal Palestinian recognition of the Jewish state.

Peace is a two-way street, says Netanyahu. It is a joint-venture. Israel contributes its share by recognizing the Other, but the Other must also recognize Israel's national identity and legitimacy.

Thirty years ago the leader of the Labor party, Golda Meir, said there is no Palestinian people. Fifteen years ago Israel's peace leader, Yitzhak Rabin, was not willing to grant the Palestinian people a state.

Now comes the leader of Israel's right who says what neither Meir nor Rabin would say.

This is a poignant moment: Netanyahu's statement unifies Israel around the idea of a two-nation-state solution.

But while taking a step forward and making a dramatic concession, Netanyahu challenges not only Palestinians but also the Americans and Europeans. He demands that the international community issue a solid guarantee assuring that the future Palestine will indeed be demilitarized. Netanyahu's peace has three components: Israel accepts a Palestinian state; Palestinians recognize a Jewish state; the international community guarantees that the Palestinian state will not jeopardize the existence of the Jewish state.

Netanyahu has crossed his Rubicon. He has abandoned his old ideological home. No, his new persuasion is not that of Jimmy Carter. He still believes the Middle East is a rough neighborhood. He still believes the cause of the conflict is not occupation but the failure of most Arabs to recognize Jewish history and Jewish sovereignty.

But this harsh worldview no longer leads to an obsession with occupied territories and illegal settlements. It leads to the two core principles which are both realistic and moral: recognition of the Jewish state and demilitarization of the Palestinian state.

The two new Netanyahu principles unite the vast majority of Israelis. If the international community rejects them, it will encounter a rigid Netanyahu and a stubborn Israel. But if President Obama endorses the self-evident principles, he will see change. If Israel gets an international peace guarantee, peace will happen. In his own way, Netanyahu has met his moment of truth. Now Obama must.

ARI SHAVIT, a columnist for the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, is at work on a book about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Fictions on the ground

ISRAEL 1

If Obama plays along with Netanyahu, he would be seen as a fool in the Mideast and beyond.

Tony Judt

I am old enough to remember when Israeli kibbutzim looked like settlements ("a small village or collection of houses" or "the act of peopling or colonizing a new country" — Oxford English Dictionary).

In the early 1960s, I spent time on Kibbutz Hakuk, a small community founded by the Palmah unit of the Haganah, the pre-state Jewish militia. Begun in 1945, Hakuk was just 18 years old when I first saw it, and was still raw at the edges. The few dozen families living there had built themselves a dining hall, farm sheds, homes and a "baby house" where the children were cared for during the workday.

But where the residential buildings ended there were nothing but rock-covered hillsides and half-cleared fields. The community's members still dressed in blue work shirts, khaki shorts and triangular hats, consciously cultivating a pioneering image and ethos already at odds with the hectic urban atmosphere of Tel Aviv. Ours, they seemed to say to bright-eyed visitors and volunteers, is the real Israel; come and help us clear the boulders and grow bananas — and tell your friends in Europe and America to do likewise.

Hakuk is still there. But today it relies on a plastics factory and the tourists who flock to the nearby Sea of Galilee. The original farm, built around a fort, has been turned into a tourist attraction. To speak of this kibbutz as a settlement would be bizarre.

However, Israel needs "settlements." They are intrinsic to the image it has long sought to convey to overseas admirers and fund raisers — a struggling little country securing its rightful place in a hostile environment by the hard moral work of land clearance, irrigation, agrarian self-sufficiency, industrious productivity, legitimate self-defense and the building of Jewish communities. But this neo-collectivist frontier narrative rings false in modern, high-technology Israel. And so the settler myth has been transposed somewhere else — to the Palestinian lands seized in war in 1967 and occupied illegally ever since.

It is thus not by chance that the international press is encouraged to speak and write of Jewish "settlers" and "settlements" in the West Bank. But this image is profoundly misleading.

The largest of these controversial communities in geographic terms is Maale Adumim. It has a population in excess of 35,000, demographically comparable to Montclair, New Jersey, or Winchester, England. What is most striking, however, about Maale Adumim is its territorial extent. This "settlement" comprises more than 30 square miles — making it one and a half times the size of Manhattan and nearly half as big as the borough and city of Manchester, England. Some "settlement."

There are about 120 official Israeli settlements in the occupied territories of the West Bank. In addition, there are "unofficial" settlements whose number is estimated variously from 80 to 100. Under international law, there is no difference between these two categories; both are contraventions of Article 47 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which explicitly prohibits the annexation of land consequent to the use of force, a principle restated in Article 2(4) of the U.N. Charter.

Thus the distinction so often made in Israeli pronouncements between "authorized" and "unauthorized" settlements is specious — all are illegal, whether or not they have been officially approved and whether or not their expansion has been "frozen" or continues apace.

(Israel's new foreign minister, Avigdor Lieberman, belongs to the West Bank settlement of Nokdim, established in 1982 and expanded since.)

The blatant cynicism of the present Israeli government should not blind us to the responsibility of its more respectable-looking predecessors. The settler population has grown consistently at a rate of 5 percent annually over the past two decades — three times the rate of increase of the Israeli population as a whole.

Together with the Jewish population of East Jerusalem (itself illegally annexed to Israel), the settlers today number more than half a million people: just over 10 percent of the Jewish population of so-called Greater Israel. This is one reason why settlers count for so much in Israeli elections, where proportional representation gives undue political leverage to even the smallest constituency.

But the settlers are no mere marginal interest group. To appreciate their significance, spread as they are over a dispersed archipelago of urban installations protected from Arab intrusion by 600 checkpoints and barriers, consider the following: Taken together, East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Golan Heights constitute a homogenous demographic bloc nearly the size of the District of Columbia. It exceeds the population of Tel Aviv itself by almost one-third. Some "settlement."

If Israel is drunk on settlements, the United States has long been its enabler. Were Israel not the leading beneficiary of American foreign aid — averaging \$2.8 billion a year from 2003 to 2007, and scheduled to reach \$3.1 billion by 2013 — houses in West Bank settlements would not be so cheap: often less than half the price of equivalent homes in Israel proper.

Many of the people who move to these houses don't even think of themselves as settlers. Newly arrived from Russia and elsewhere, they

simply take up the offer of subsidized accommodation, move into the occupied areas and become the grateful clients of their political patrons.

Despite all the diplomatic talk of disbanding the settlements as a condition for peace, no one seriously believes that these communities — with their half a million residents, their urban installations, their privileged access to fertile land and water — will ever be removed.

The Israeli authorities, whether left, right or center, have no intention of removing them, and neither Palestinians nor informed Americans harbor illusions on this score.

To be sure, it suits almost everyone to pretend otherwise — to point to the 2003 "road map" and speak of a final accord based on the 1967 frontiers. But such feigned obliviousness is the small change of political hypocrisy, the lubricant of diplomatic exchange that facilitates communication and compromise.

There are occasions, however, when political hypocrisy is its own nemesis, and this is one of them. Because the settlements will never go, and yet almost everyone likes to pretend otherwise, we have resolutely ignored the implications of what Israelis have long been proud to call "the facts on the ground."

Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister, knows this better than most. On June 14 he gave a much-anticipated speech in which he

artfully blew smoke in the eyes of his American interlocutors. While offering to acknowledge the hypothetical existence of an eventual Palestinian state — on the explicit understanding that it exercise no control over its airspace and have no means of defending itself against aggression — he reiterated the only Israeli position that really matters: We won't build illegal settlements, but we reserve the right to expand "legal" ones according to their natural rate of growth.

The reassurances Netanyahu offered the settlers and their political constituency were as well-received as ever, despite being couched in honeyed clichés directed at nervous American listeners. And the American news media, predictably, took the bait — uniformly emphasizing Netanyahu's "support" for a Palestinian state and playing down everything else.

However, the real question now is whether President Barack Obama will respond in a similar vein. He surely wants to. Nothing could better please the American president and his advisers than to be able to assert that, in the wake of his Cairo speech, even Netanyahu had shifted ground and was open to compromise. Thus Washington avoids a confrontation, for now, with its closest ally.

But the uncomfortable reality is that the prime minister restated the unvarnished truth: His government has no intention of recognizing international law or opinion with respect to Israel's land-grab in "Judea and Samaria."

Thus Obama faces a choice. He can play along with the Israelis, pretending to believe their promises of good intentions and the significance of the distinctions they offer him. Such a pretense would buy him time and favor with Congress. But the Israelis would be playing him for a fool, and he would be seen as one in the Mideast and beyond.

Alternatively, the president could break with two decades of American compliance, acknowledge publicly that the emperor is indeed naked, dismiss Netanyahu for the cynic he is and remind Israelis that all their settlements are hostage to American goodwill. He could also remind Israelis that the illegal communities have nothing to do with Israel's defense, much less its founding ideals of agrarian self-sufficiency and Jewish autonomy. They are nothing but a colonial takeover that the United States has no business subsidizing.

But if I am right, and there is no realistic prospect of removing Israel's settlements, then for the American government to agree that the mere nonexpansion of "authorized" settlements is a genuine step toward peace would be the worst possible outcome of the present diplomatic dance. No one else in the world believes this fairy tale; why should we?

Israel's political elite would breathe an unmerited sigh of relief, having once again pulled the wool over the eyes of its paymaster. The U.S. would be humiliated in the eyes of its friends, not to speak of its foes. If America cannot stand up for its own interests in the region, at least let it not be played yet again for a patsy.

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What North Korea wants

Victor Cha
Washington
THE WASHINGTON POST

We'd been negotiating since 2004 — the famous "six-party" talks featuring the United States, China, Japan, Russia, South Korea and, of course, North Korea — trying to hammer out an agreement that would end Pyongyang's nuclear program. The issue in Beijing in September 2005 was a clause that had just been approved in Washington, stating that the U.S. "would not attack North Korea with nuclear or conventional weapons."

It was a big step for the Americans, and the Russians, at least, recognized that. It meant that Kim Jong Il had finally received the security guarantee — and the end to alleged American hostility — that he'd always sought. But when the North Korean delegates later brushed off the clause as a mere piece of paper that did nothing to truly assure North Korean security, it dawned on me that things that seem exquisitely important to the North Koreans at one moment can suddenly become unimportant the next.

For years we've debated whether North Korea is willing to trade nukes for security, or whether it considers nuclear weapons the ultimate security guarantee. But that misses the point. North Korea's aims are much bigger than that.

Take the regime's nuclear ambitions. Even after long insisting that their nuclear program was ultimately peaceful and intended for energy, the North Koreans would tell Ambassador Christopher Hill, our lead negotiator, that the U.S. should accept North Korea as a nuclear weapons state, like India or Pakistan. When we told them that this was not likely to happen, one official countered that denuclearizing North Korea unilaterally was tantamount to "stripping us naked." Real talks, the official told us, should focus on mutual nuclear arms reductions between two established nuclear powers, "you know, like you used to have with the Soviet Union during the Cold War."

North Korea doesn't just want the bomb. It wants to be accorded the status and prestige of a nuclear power. And it doesn't just want a security guarantee against a U.S. attack. It wants a promise that Washington will help prop up the current regime — even in a post-Kim Jong Il incarnation — should it start to crumble.

These goals help explain North Korea's rhetoric and provocations, which have culminated in a recent second nuclear test and the sentencing of two American journalists. But understanding North Korea's core goals also reveals how spectacularly unsuccessful Kim has been as he prepares to step down and transfer power to his son. What the world sees as Kim's successful second nuclear test — and our failure to stop him — are actually the last gasps of a dying regime, materially and ideologically bankrupt.

It is easy for analysts to blame North Korea's belligerence on U.S. inconsistency. Pyongyang has dealt with wild swings from Washington, from Bill Clinton's affinity for bilateral negotiations in 1994 to George W. Bush's wholesale rejection of them in his first term to the hard-charging deal-making of his second term. Sure, a consistent U.S. approach would help, but shifts from Washington are not what drive Kim to threaten the peninsula periodically with war.

Other observers consider Pyongyang's recent nuclear and missile tests to be an effort by the ailing Dear Leader (who suffered a stroke last year) to establish the North's nuclear status before he transfers power to his son and to secure his own place in Korean history. Even dictators need to polish their legacies.

Yet I don't think that Kim's recent actions represent the final jewels in the crown he will hand his son. Instead, they reflect a desperate attempt to achieve a greatly scaled-back version of more ambitious objectives. Diplomatically, Kim's true goal may indeed be a deal with the West, not through six-party talks, but through a bilateral U.S.-North Korean agreement in which Pyongyang is treated as a nuclear weapons state.

The ideal outcome of this negotiation, in the North's view, is a situation similar to India's; that is, an agreement in which North Korea accepts safeguards and monitoring under the International Atomic Energy Agency but is also assured of a civilian nuclear energy program. Most important, Pyongyang would want to keep part of its nuclear program beyond the reach of international inspectors, serving, in the North's eyes, as a nuclear deterrent. The regime would certainly also want energy and economic assistance, normalized relations with the U.S. and a treaty ending

the Korean war. But on the nuclear side, they want the global rules rewritten for them, much as they were for India.

If this is the Dear Leader's goal, as I believe it is, then he has fallen far short. Like a student who rushes through the exam before time runs out, Kim is racing against his own mortality to achieve the minimum he can for his son, rather than the maximum possible for his legacy.

Similarly, I believe the reason North Korea was uninterested in the "negative security assurance" Washington offered in 2005 was that Kim is focused on a more fundamental guarantee — his regime's survival. North Korea recognizes its dilemma: It needs to open up to survive, but the process of opening can lead to the regime's demise. Thus, what Pyongyang wants is an assurance that the U.S. will offer support as the Kim Jong Il regime (or a post-Kim Jong Il regime) goes through the dangerous and destabilizing effects of reform.

Here, too, Kim has failed. He leaves his son with a regime that has neither reformed economically nor gained an ounce of international good will. And the sentencing of American journalists Euna Lee and Laura Ling to 12 years in a prison camp have put North Korea's human rights abuses squarely in the sights of Americans who might otherwise care less about the quirky dictator.

I have no confidence that the North will give up all its nuclear weapons in a complete and irreversible manner, nor do I think that Barack Obama or any other U.S. president will treat North Korea like India or backstop the Kim clan. That, however, should not mean abandoning the opportunity to negotiate. If the choice is between dealing with a dictator with a runaway nuclear weapons program or one with a program capped and under international monitoring, the latter surely serves U.S. and Asian interests. Freezing, disabling and degrading North Korea's nuclear capabilities is an important object, even if the stated goal remains total denuclearization.

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U.S. domestic affair impacts ties with China



FRANK
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Relations between China and the United States are now so complex and intertwined that even American policies stemming from purely domestic issues may impact on Sino-American relations. One example is President Barack Obama's order, issued two days after he assumed office, to shut down detention facilities at Guantanamo Bay.

The fate of the Guantanamo Bay detention camp has been very much a part of policy debate in the U.S. The Bush administration moved prisoners captured in Afghanistan into Guantanamo and asserted that detainees, classified as "enemy combatants," were not entitled to any of the protections of the Geneva Conventions.

After the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Americans commandeered Baghdad's Abu Ghraib prison, where suspected terrorists were kept. By early 2004, accounts surfaced of physical, psychological and sexual abuse of prisoners. Photographs were released showing naked inmates stacked in piles; others showed inmates being threatened by guards dogs.

Both Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo became synonymous with the torture and abuse of prisoners, leading to the decline of America's moral authority. Abu Ghraib was closed in 2006. To restore America's international image, many demanded the closing of Guantanamo's

detention facilities. Both the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates called for this. Under President Obama's executive order, the Guantanamo facilities must close by Jan. 22, 2010.

This means that the 245 or so inmates there have to be released or moved. The U.S. itself is unwilling to take any of them, even ones that it considers no longer a threat. Instead, it has been calling on other countries to take them.

Among the inmates were Chinese nationals — Muslims from a Turkic ethnic group known as Uighurs who live in Xinjiang, in western China.

Twenty-two Uighurs were captured by U.S. forces in Afghanistan and Pakistan in 2001 and taken to Guantanamo.

After years of confinement, the U.S. government determined that the Uighurs were not "enemy combatants" and cleared them for release. But no U.S. state would take them and Washington rejected the option of sending them back to China for fear that they might be subject to persecution. So other countries were asked to take them.

In 2006, Albania accepted five. Beijing denounced the transfer as a violation of international law, saying they should have been returned to China. That still left unresolved the problem of the 17 remaining Uighurs.

While all Guantanamo detainees have to be released or transferred by January 2010, there is a different deadline where the Uighurs are concerned. That's because the Uighurs have instituted a court case. Last October a U.S. district court judge ruled that they should be released in the U.S. That ruling was overturned by an appeals court, but lawyers for the Uighurs want to take their case to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The court is scheduled to consider the matter this week. Apparently, the Obama

administration is loath to take a chance on what the court might decide and has sought to resolve the matter before then. Meanwhile, China continues to demand that the Uighurs, whom it calls "suspected terrorists," be sent home. Beijing also put pressure on other countries not to take them.

On June 10, Washington suddenly announced that four Uighurs had been resettled in Bermuda. However, Bermuda is a British territory and the decision was made without London's knowledge. Whether Britain will allow them to remain is not clear.

About the same time, Washington prevailed on the Pacific island nation of Palau, a former U.S. trust territory, to take the remaining 13 Uighurs. Palau, which recognizes Taiwan, does not have diplomatic relations with Beijing and thus was less vulnerable to Chinese pressure.

There, for the moment, matters rest. It is unclear how the Uighurs, whose homeland is largely desert and mountains, will do on Palau, a tropical island known for its beautiful beaches and for snorkeling. But at least they will no longer be a live issue between the U.S. and China — until something else happens. While China insists on its principles of sovereignty and national integrity, it is pragmatic enough to let sleeping dogs lie.

Still, other issues will continue to pop up and bedevil the American-Chinese relationship, even issues that on the surface look as if they have nothing to do with China. That is because relations between the two countries now cover almost every conceivable aspect of life, not just politics and economics.

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A strong interest in helping to solve the climate crisis

Haruhiko Kuroda , , Manila | Tue, 06/23/2009 12:26 PM | Opinion

The latest round of negotiations on a new global climate change agreement that recently concluded in Bonn showed promising signs that governments everywhere realize the urgency of cooperative action to address this global challenge.

It is critical that industrialized countries commit to significant cuts in their current greenhouse gas emissions, and developing countries also must take appropriate measures to put their economic development onto low-carbon paths. There are only six months left to conclude a global deal in Copenhagen.

The extraordinary economic growth in Asia and the Pacific over the past two decades has successfully lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty, but the development pattern followed has not been environmentally sustainable - either locally or globally.

Developing Asia already accounts for about one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions. Unless urgent measures are taken to alter the pathway to development, the region's share could easily increase to 40 percent or higher by 2030. With large emission reductions expected in industrialized countries, this would make Asia the main driver of global warming.

A recent Asian Development Bank (ADB) report, for example, warned that the impacts of climate change are threatening the livelihoods of millions of people in the region. According to A Regional Review of the Economics of Climate Change in Southeast Asia, the cost of adverse impacts will continue to rise - drawing away between 6 and 7 percent of Southeast Asia's income each year by the end of the century unless steps are taken to counter these trends. Similar costs can be expected elsewhere in the region.

With this level of predicted economic damage, the countries of Asia have a strong incentive to help solve the global climate change crisis. In the face of this common threat, there is a convergence of interests as the entire world seeks a solution. Industrial countries must cut back on their current emissions, and Asia's growth must be decoupled from future increases in the level of greenhouse gas emissions.

This was the clear conclusion of a high-level dialogue on climate change convened in Manila last week by ADB and The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), led by Rajendra Pachauri, who also chairs the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Through new technologies and policy incentives, Asian and Pacific countries can produce and use

energy much more efficiently and lower their reliance on conventional fuels. The region can switch to more efficient modes of transport, and find ways to alter the environmental footprint of rural development, especially by arresting deforestation. New clean energy programs also can help generate 'green jobs' as a byproduct of this economic transformation.

Investing in low-carbon, climate-resilient economic growth need not entail a sacrifice of competitiveness; rather, it should represent an investment in long-term economic efficiency, it can generate local as well as global environmental gains, and it also can contribute to improved energy security.

ADB is supporting this transition. Having set a minimum target of US\$1 billion per year for our clean energy investments, this was exceeded last year based on strong demand from our client countries. So now we have decided to increase this annual target to \$2 billion from 2013 to push ourselves even harder. We have also adopted a new energy policy that will help countries in the region secure adequate energy supplies while cutting levels of greenhouse gas emissions.

The ADB is working with the governments of the People's Republic of China and India to develop wind power, and is supporting a wide range of energy efficiency improvements, such as a program to phase out the use of inefficient light bulbs across the Philippines. The ADB is also supporting the expansion of mass transit systems to reduce reliance on cars and exploring ways to use new carbon market options to conserve Asia's forests.

With respect to climate change adaptation, we must improve our understanding of the risks posed to development and find cost-effective measures for countries to cope with rising climate impacts. Building climate-resilient economies will mean building such concerns into economic development planning, based on still evolving understanding of climate change science. To help understand these vulnerabilities, ADB is currently conducting analyses of climate impacts on the agriculture sector in Asia as well as the prospect of climate-induced migration.

Though many Asian and Pacific countries are already committing to domestic actions, a comprehensive agreement in Copenhagen will provide the structure for global cooperation to avoid the most damaging consequences of climate change.

None of this will be easy, but the impetus for action lies in the knowledge that any further delay will only increase the chance of devastating consequences from climate change that would threaten continued prosperity improvements in the Asia and the Pacific region.

The writer is President of the Asian Development Bank.

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National

DEEP SOUTH

New recruits chosen from Islamic schools

Published on June 23, 2009

Report says govt should change tactics and end military action

Violence in the deep south would intensify as the recruitment of young militants from Islamic boarding schools accelerated unless the government changed solution from military mean to political way, Brussels-based International Crisis Group (ICG) said yesterday.

In its latest report "Recruiting Militants in Southern Thailand", the ICG said the insurgency movement managed to recruit their fighters mostly from private Islamic schools in the region.

Of some 100,000 students in the Islamic schools in the deep south, the report quoted Thai officials as saying there were about 1,800-3,000 were recruited into the militancy.

Thai military estimated there were some 4,000 Muslim fighters in the unrest region. The government deployed some 40,000 all kinds of armed forces to search and destroy them.

A spate of violence erupted in the predominantly Muslim region since the beginning of 2004 has killed more than 3,500 people so far. Nobody claimed responsibility and the authority has been struggling to contain the violence since then.

Malay-Muslim in southernmost provinces Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat have fought to release frustration from Bangkok domination for over a century.

The militant recruits are driven by a desire to defend their ethnic and religious identity from what they perceive as oppression by the Thai Buddhist state, the ICG's report said.

"Recruiters appeal to a sense of Malay nationalism and pride in the old Patani sultanate," says Rungrawee Chalermripinyorat, Crisis Group's Thailand analyst.

"They tell students in these schools that it is the duty of every Muslim to take back their land from the Buddhist infidels."

Although some Islamic schools have been used as breeding ground for insurgent activities,

the government should not close down troubled schools, Rungrawee said in a separate interview.

"It should focus its effort in addressing the grievance of Malay Muslims by recognizing their distinct cultural identity, ending human rights violation and opening more political space for them," she said.

Some Islamic boarding schools including Jihad Witthaya in Pattani and Islam Burapha in Narathiwat were crackdown and shut down since their students and teachers involved in violent cases.

Recruitment young Muslim to the movement has also been fuelled by human rights violations of the Thai government, the ICG's report said.

The arrest or killing of a relative is a strong incentive to join the movement; so are cases of torture and enforced disappearances.

Senator Worawit Baru said the government should change the way of handling the restive south since the military solution has been used over the past five years have never worked. "The military should admit it fails and allows the government to try other ways," he said in an interview.

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The China-India Border Brawl

By Jeff M. Smith

The peaceful, side-by-side rise of China and India has been taken for granted in many quarters. But tensions between the two giants are mounting, and Washington would do well to take note. On June 8, New Delhi announced it would deploy two additional army divisions and two air force squadrons near its border with China. Beijing responded furiously to the Indian announcement, hardening its claim to some 90,000 square kilometers of Indian territory that China disputes.

To understand what the tussle is about, consider recent history: The defining moment in the Sino-Indian relationship is a short but traumatic war fought over the Sino-Indian border in 1962. The details of that conflict are in dispute, but the outcome is not: After a sweeping advance into Indian territory, China gained control over a chunk of contested Tibetan plateau in India's northwest but recalled its advancing army in India's northeast, leaving to New Delhi what is now the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh. Relations have been characterized by mistrust ever since, but neither nation has shown any inclination to return to armed conflict.

In recent years however China has been raising the temperature at the border. Chinese claims to Arunachal Pradesh and frequent Chinese "incursions" into the nearby Indian state of Sikkim have begun to multiply in line with Beijing's rising economic and political influence. Moreover, unlike India, China has methodically developed its infrastructure along the disputed border, littering the barren terrain with highways and railways capable of moving large numbers of goods and troops.

For its part, New Delhi has become both increasingly aware of its disadvantage and exceedingly suspicious of China's intentions. India's June 8 announcement that it will deploy two additional army mountain divisions to the northeastern state of Assam will bring India's troop levels in the region to more than 100,000. The Indian Air Force, meanwhile, announced it will station two squadrons of advanced Sukhoi-30 MKI aircraft in Tezpur, also in Assam. They will

be complemented by three Airborne Warning and Control Systems and the addition or upgrade of airstrips and advanced landing stations. This is part of a broader effort to bolster India's military and transportation infrastructure in its neglected northeast.

An old dispute over territorial claims rears its ugly head.

Upon hearing India's plans, Beijing became irate. The People's Daily, a Communist Party mouthpiece that serves as a window into the thinking of Beijing's insular leadership, published an exceptional broadside against New Delhi on June 11. It described India's "tough posture" as "dangerous," and asked India to

"consider whether or not it can afford the consequences of a potential confrontation with China." China is not afraid of India, the editorial taunted, while mocking India for failing to keep pace with China's economic growth. The editorial reminded New Delhi that Beijing had friends in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal but most importantly, it left no doubt about Beijing's future position on Arunachal Pradesh: "China won't make any compromises in its border disputes with India."

This is not the first time China has lost its cool over the border issue. Back in 2006, China's Ambassador to India ignited a political firestorm when he declared the "whole state of Arunachal Pradesh is Chinese territory... we are claiming all of that. That is our position." Later, on two separate occasions, China denied visas to Indian officials from Arunachal Pradesh, explaining Chinese citizens didn't require visas to travel to their own country.

Generally coy about its suspicions, India has been turning up the diplomatic heat. Indian officials have been speaking more openly about their concerns with China of late. A growing chorus in New Delhi is arguing that India's uniform focus on Pakistan may be exposing it to a threat from the East. Indian officials have also accused China of supporting the

Naxalites, a tenacious and growing band of Maoist insurgents Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has described as the "greatest threat to [India's] internal security."

China has been applying pressures as well. This March, China broke with Asian tradition and tried to block a \$2.9 billion loan to India at the Asian Development Bank, furious that the loan would fund a \$60 million flood-management program in Arunachal Pradesh. (Last week China was overruled with help from the U.S., and the loan went through.) Before that, Beijing clumsily attempted to torpedo the U.S.-India nuclear deal from its seat at the Nuclear Suppliers Group. And of course, China remains an opponent of India's bid to join the United Nations Security Council and a staunch ally of India's nemesis, Pakistan.

But what riles India most is China's incursion into its backyard and the belief

kistan now all host Chinese "projects;" China's crown jewel is the Pakistani deepwater port of Gwadar.

Then there are Sri Lanka and Nepal, India's immediate neighbors, where civil wars have opened space for Beijing to peddle influence. A bloody insurgency by Maoist rebels in Nepal gave way in 2006 to power-sharing agreement now on the brink of collapse. China has openly supported the Maoists against the royalist establishment backed by India. In Sri Lanka, meanwhile, the decades-long civil war between the Hindu Tamil minority and the Buddhist Sinhalese majority was decisively ended by the latter May, but not before Beijing could gain a foothold in the island-nation. Appalled by the brutality of the fighting, India had scaled back its arms sales to Colombo in recent years. China happily filled the vacuum, in

return gaining access to the port at Hambantota on the island's southern coast.

What is Washington's role in this Asian rivalry? In the short term, a priority must be to tamp down friction over the border. In the longer term, Washington should leverage its friendly relations with both capitals to promote bilateral dialogue and act as an honest broker where invited. But it should also continue to build upon the strategic partnership with India initiated by former president George W. Bush, and support its ally, as it did at the Nuclear Suppliers group and the ADB, where necessary. Washington must also make clear that it considers the established, decades-old border between the two to be permanent.

Most importantly, though, the Sino-Indian border dispute should be viewed as a test for proponents of China's "peaceful rise" theory. If China becomes adventurous enough to challenge India's sovereignty or cross well-defined red lines, Washington must be willing to recognize the signal and respond appropriately.

Mr. Smith is the Kraemer Strategy Fellow at the American Foreign Policy Council.



Heating up: The border outpost at Nathu-La.

China is surrounding the subcontinent with its "string of pearls"—Chinese "investments" in naval bases, commercial ports and listening posts along the southern coast of Asia. There are port facilities in Bangladesh and radar and refueling stations in Burma, Thailand, Cambodia and Pa-

Hide and seek

ARMS

INSPECTIONS

have their uses, but they cannot be a goal in themselves, as we learned in Iraq.

Charles A. Duelfer

North Korea and Iran get closer and closer to a full-fledged nuclear capability by the day, and as they do, attention repeatedly turns to inspections as the remedy.

Yet, too often, too many have expected too much from such mechanisms. Inspections are not a goal in themselves. Having served as deputy chairman of UN inspections in Iraq for seven years, I know that arms inspections are no substitute for war or political compromise — or good independent intelligence.

There is perhaps no better case study for the limits and opportunities provided by monitors than Iraq. Baghdad manipulated the great powers, and infighting among them eventually led to a dramatic and unceremonious end to inspections without any clear knowledge of Baghdad's WMD program.

There are lessons to be learned from this fiasco — North Korea and Iran are equally recalcitrant, dangerous and advancing apace in realizing their nuclear ambitions.

Back in 1991, at the conclusion of the first Gulf War, the UN Security Council crafted a cease-fire resolution that continued sanctions on Iraq, and the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) was created to verify Iraqi disarmament.

The resolutions accorded UNSCOM sweeping authority, allowing inspectors authority to go virtually anywhere, anytime, without notice; to take any samples and documents; to interview any individual; to bring into the country any material or device deemed necessary.

Thus began the most intrusive inspection regime backed by force since the Versailles Treaty imposed similar measures on Germany after World War I.

So by 1998 I found myself in Iraq at the center of a circus. I was leading a team of 70 monitors from a dozen countries to "inspect" over 1,000 buildings in eight large presidential areas, considered the most secure of Iraqi sites, access to which had been completely denied in the past. Per an agreement between Saddam Hussein and Kofi Annan, the increased oversight would hopefully lead to the end of this intrusive inspections regime. But alas, this was not exactly to be.

We traveled from one palace area to another in a huge Slinky-like convoy of over 70 vehicles, and, at every location, we found the Iraqis had meticulously cleansed each building. There was not a scrap of paper anywhere. Computers had vanished.

Because of these infractions, monitors demanded short-notice, anytime, anywhere inspections essentially ad infinitum. They were unwilling to sign off on Iraqi compliance as "good enough." But Annan and some members of the Security Council believed inspectors were seeking to do too much. The French wondered whether we were being too fastidi-

ous. Was sorting out the remaining uncertainties really worth the cost of sanctions?

Making matters worse, Iraq eroded any remaining unity among Security Council members by offering economic incentives to those who aided its case for ending sanctions. Russia and France were given preferential treatment in the allocation of lucrative Iraqi oil contracts under the UN oil-for-food program. Baghdad was also dangling rich oil-field-development rights in front of the noses of Security Council countries. But Washington had no interest in ending sanctions, which were the only tool short of war the U.S. had to contain Saddam.

What this meant in the end was a lack of unity and credibility on maintaining the sanctions regime or even ratcheting up to war by the Security Council. These divisions were the death knell for inspections in Iraq.

Inspectors may have 'rights,' but the other guys have guns, and they determine the real limits of inspection.

In some ways the cases of North Korea and Iran are eerily similar. Both countries are single, dedicated, unitary actors opposed in their WMD activities by a coalition of varying unity, commitment and purpose. Each has sought to sow dissension among the nations that want to deter its programs.

Neither Pyongyang nor Tehran will ever agree to the level of intrusive inspections that happened in Baghdad. Barring difficult-to-imagine military invasions of either state, we will have to settle for less. Yet this is clearly better than nothing.

First, the case of North Korea. It is impossible to know what Kim Jong-Il will decide with respect to future negotiations or the possible return of inspectors. He is not overly vulnerable to sanctions. Like Iraq, North Korea is driven by a tyrant and calculations about policy are deeply affected by how long that ruler may last and what may follow.

Here, though, we have some advantages that we did not have in Iraq. Saddam gave no signs of weakening and seemed likely to survive longer than any U.S. administration. Kim Jong-Il looks to be fading. What we need now is to buy time.

North Korea has demonstrated the ability to produce fissile material and nuclear explosions, though this does not yet indicate an ability to build a deliverable nuclear weapon — especially via ballistic missile. But it is clearly North Korea's goal.

Unchecked, Pyongyang can, over the period of a few years, develop and test nuclear warheads deliverable on missiles. In the nearer term, such missiles can threaten the cities of neighboring Japan, South Korea or China. In the longer term, North Korea may be able to launch a longer-range missile with sufficient payload to carry a weapon to the United States. So the primary goal is to contain or walk back Pyongyang's nuclear capability and, perhaps even more importantly, guard against the transfer of weapons or fissile material to other state or non-state actors.

Sampling and interviews by inspectors can serve as "tipsters" of possible violations. In this way, sampling provides a useful deterrent, and is the most potent element of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspection tool kit for detecting nondeclared nuclear activities.

The inspected party cannot know with confidence how well these sampling procedures work. UNSCOM, for example, deployed air samplers to detect prohibited chemical work at some locations in Iraq. They did not really

work at all, yet Baghdad treated them as if they did. Sampling at a few locations at least constrains cheating at those sites, and sampling at nondeclared sites (even if conducted with prior notice) can create a deterrent effect throughout the entire country.

Interviews can also have a powerful effect. Generally, they make it difficult for an inspected country to sustain deception. UNSCOM experts over the years came to know the Iraqi experts and their work quite well. Over time, as more questions are posed and more and more details provided, the difficulty of staying consistent with a false story increases exponentially.

If we couple sampling techniques with interviews, weapons inspections may well be a sufficient tool (when combined with appropriate political incentives and disincentives) to restrain North Korea's programs.

In the case of Tehran, we are looking less at how to bide our time than how to provide trip wires. Iran can build a nuclear weapon. The questions are when and whether it will decide to do so. Weapons inspectors can perform an alert function.

It would be safe to assume that Iran's intention is to get to a point where the lead time between a decision to build a nuclear weapon and the means to effectively deliver one is relatively short.

There are three key factors here: the length of time to go from low-enriched uranium produced for civilian reactors to the highly enriched uranium required for a weapon; the ballistic-missile technology required to make a long-range weapon; and the creation of a nuclear warhead to place atop the ballistic missile.

While limited, the current IAEA inspection activities do provide some important bounds on uncertainty. If Iran decides to produce highly enriched uranium, the monitoring procedures will force Tehran to either build separate clandestine enrichment facilities or break inspection procedures in a way that provides clear evidence of intent to proceed beyond its purely civil nuclear program.

What is lacking in the current inspection procedure is the ability to detect clandestine enrichment or the kind of weaponization activity that would help produce a functioning ballistic missile with a nuclear warhead. It is improbable that Iran will accept an inspection regime that would make this possible. And lest we forget, the invasive inspections in Iraq couldn't even tell us everything.

We will likely remain in an ambiguous, prolonged diplomatic process with Tehran that will wind up with an "assumed" ability of Iran to go nuclear at a point in the future — the so-called virtual-nuclear-weapons state.

Indeed, United Nations inspectors may have lots of rights written by ambassadors between their long lunches in New York, but on the ground in Iraq and elsewhere, outside some of the most heavily guarded facilities on the planet, these inspectors have only blue hats, cameras and pencils. The other guys have guns, and they determine the real limits of inspection activities.

From the experience in Iraq, we have seen the ability of the international community to hide behind inspectors in some circumstances and to expect too much from them in others.

As we attend to the evolving problems with proliferation in North Korea, Iran and the states to follow, watch out for those trying to place too much responsibility on inspections and inspectors.

CHARLES A. DUELFER served as deputy executive chairman of the UN Special Commission on Iraq from 1993 to 2000. A longer version of this article will appear in the July/August issue of *The National Interest*.

Tough to intercept missiles



MICHAEL
RICHARDSON

Singapore

Due to the severe economic slump, the United States recently announced that it would make substantial cuts to its costly and controversial missile defense program. Several new parts of the planned shield are to be canceled.

Critics say the cuts are being made just when the threat from North Korean missiles to the U.S., its forces deployed in Asia, and its allies and friends in the region is increasing. Among U.S. allies, Japan and South Korea are the most affected.

Following reports that North Korea is preparing more missile launches with ranges that could reach U.S. territory in the Pacific, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates said June 18 that he had ordered special measures to protect Hawaii, which is 7,100 km from North Korea.

Hawaii is the headquarters of the U.S. military in the Pacific. The first Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) interceptors in a batch of eight scheduled to be integrated into the missile defense system this year will be stationed in Hawaii, while a sea-based radar that was docked there will remain for the time being to provide added detection and tracking capability.

However, THAAD is designed to shoot down short- and medium-range missiles just minutes before they hit, not the missiles with ranges of anywhere from 3,000 km to 6,700 km or more that North Korea is expected to fire in coming days.

As North Korea continues to develop its missile and nuclear weapon capability, the key question is whether the U.S. and Japan, its main missile defense partner, could successfully use their interceptor rockets to shoot down an incoming North Korean missile if an order to do so was given.

It seems unlikely that Pyongyang would target the U.S., Japan or any other country with a test missile. The main worry is that it could veer off course and become a threat.

Marine Gen. James Cartwright, the vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,

said recently that he was "90 percent-plus" confident the U.S. could shoot down a North Korean missile.

But what kind of missile and in what numbers? At the end of 2008, the missile shield stationed in the U.S., on U.S. territory or bases in Asia and the Pacific, on U.S. and Japanese warships, and in Japan had a total of 724 interceptors of various kinds.

To counter long-range missiles, the U.S. has stationed at least 26 interceptor rockets in Alaska and California.

However, neither the interceptors in silos in Alaska and California, nor the THAAD batteries, have been tested in combat. Nor have the 32 standard missile interceptors aboard 18 U.S. Navy Aegis ballistic missile defense warships. Their interceptors are designed to hit enemy missiles with ranges of up to 5,500 km.

The other layer of the present U.S.

Ultimately, the only deterrent likely to prevent North Korea using missiles armed with weapons of mass destruction is the knowledge that the counter-strike from the U.S. and its Asian allies would annihilate the North Korean regime.

missile shield, consists of over 635 Patriot Advanced Capability-3 interceptors based in South Korea, Japan and elsewhere to guard against short- and medium-range missile attack. Earlier versions of the Patriots had a mixed performance record against incoming missiles in Middle East conflicts.

In the last two years, the U.S. Missile Defense Agency, which is responsible for testing and integrating the ballistic missile shield, has reported eight significant flight test delays, four target failures out of 18 target launches, and one interceptor failure in flight.

It is also far from certain whether U.S. rockets designed to shoot down longer-range missiles can distinguish between decoys and the real things.

A report to Congress headed by two former U.S. defense secretaries, William Perry and James Schlesinger, concluded that although the interceptors based in Alaska and California to guard against long-range missiles had "demonstrated

some capability against unsophisticated threats," they were presently "incapable of defending against complex threats." Far from deterring missile proliferation, the U.S. and allied missile defense system is in danger of being overwhelmed. It is far cheaper to build more missiles to swamp defenses than it is to put in place costly interceptors, sensors, and command-and-control networks to counter the missiles.

By the end of 2009, there are scheduled to be a total of 864 interceptors in the U.S.-led missile shield. However, the U.S. military calculates that there has been an increase of more than 1,200 additional ballistic missiles in the past five years, bringing the total outside the U.S., NATO, Russia and China to over 5,900. Short-range missiles (150-799 km) make up 93 percent of this total while medium-range missiles (800-2,399 km) comprise six percent.

Many of these missiles are within range of U.S. forces and bases in Northeast Asia and the Middle East. North Korea alone has deployed over 600 short-range missiles and possibly as many as 320 medium-range missiles. The former can strike the whole of South Korea, while the latter can reach much of Japan. Armed with conventional high explosive warheads or chemical weapons and fired in salvos or mixed groups, they would be very difficult to counter and cause havoc for a civilian population.

The big fear, of course, is that with more testing and time, North Korea will be able to develop reliable long-range missiles and arm some of them with nuclear warheads as the ultimate guarantee of survival for the regime in Pyongyang. It is significant that in their meeting in Washington on June 16, Obama and South Korean President Lee Myung Bak issued a joint statement that, for the first time, spelled out in writing that America was extending the protection of its nuclear umbrella to South Korea.

Ultimately, the only deterrent likely to prevent Pyongyang using missiles armed with weapons of mass destruction is the knowledge that the counter-strike from the U.S. and its Asian allies would annihilate the North Korean regime.

Michael Richardson is a visiting senior research fellow at the Institute of South East Asian Studies in Singapore.

Iraq war is a tipping point



DAVID
HOWELL

London

The British are to hold an inquiry into the origins and conduct of the Iraq war, and how Britain came to be so closely involved with the Americans in the 2003 Iraq invasion.

This touches on one of the most divisive and controversial issues in modern British politics and already the air is filled with acrimonious argument about the way the inquiry should be organized, who should conduct it and what it should cover.

The government's initial proposal was that the inquiry should be held in secret, and report after about a year, and that no blame should be apportioned to anyone for what went wrong. Five members have been named as members of the committee holding the inquiry, including a former senior civil servant, a well-known academic, an ex-ambassador and an eminent historian.

But no military figure has been included (despite strong feelings that British troops were poorly equipped); no legal expert has been nominated despite strong doubts about the legality of the invasion; and no senior politicians are present who might know about the way Cabinet policymaking really works.

This suggested formula has been greeted with public uproar. Under pressure the secrecy element has now been slightly modified to allow some evidence to be called in public. But it is clear that the approach commands no confidence. The British public want a full and open expose of the reasons it all happened, what went wrong, what, if anything, was achieved, and who was responsible for the many

errors of judgment.

In particular the families of those whose sons and daughters were either tragically killed or maimed in Iraq want to know why they had to make this sacrifice. This writer was lucky. His son returned from military service in Basra safe and sound. Others were not so lucky.

The reason why so much intense bitterness surrounds the whole issue is that people feel the nation was misled from the start. Weak intelligence about Iraq's military capacity, and its terrorist connections, was mishandled by a plainly inexperienced prime minister, Tony Blair, who described intelligence reports as authoritative and detailed, which clearly they were not. Credence was given to the palpably absurd claim that Iraq President Saddam Hussein not only had weapons of mass destruction but nuclear missiles that could reach the West in 45 minutes.

Worse still, a highly dubious dossier was published by the government to try to prove this claim — a move so misleading that one senior official committed suicide as he saw the truth being distorted.

Persuaded by misinformation, and by the general feeling that America must be supported, both the Labour government and the Conservative opposition in Parliament, also led at the time by inexperience, went along with the invasion decision, although deep divisions emerged subsequently as the occupation descended into bloody chaos and error.

At the same time, people now want to know just what was agreed with the Bush administration and at what stage. Was the United Nations just bypassed by a U.S. leadership determined to destroy Hussein, with Britain on its coattails?

All this needs to be brought out by a proper inquiry. But there is also a sense that something even deeper has all along gone badly wrong.

Admittedly with hindsight, and in historical perspective, it can now be seen that Iraq invasion, together with the other equally tangled Afghanistan

engagement, mark a turning point in modern history — perhaps in a way the Suez invasion did over half a century ago.

Suez was the occasion when the British at last realized they could no longer impose their will across a vast empire. The Iraq and Afghanistan wars show that the West, and America in particular, can no longer easily impose their will in the Middle East or anywhere else, or topple regimes and lecture the rest of the world on how to behave. Even the military contribution to the postinvasion Iraq occupation forces of numerous other nations, including Japan, has not disguised this fact.

U.S. President Barack Obama seems to have begun to understand this; President George W. Bush, and those around him, never did.

Meanwhile, with the last British troops having left Iraq, except for a small training contingent, and the Americans scheduled to leave finally at the end of 2011, the bombing and assassinations continue. A strong man will need to take control, despite all the dreams of establishing a settled and unified pro-Western democracy.

The outcome, and the whole pattern of the new Middle East, will be shaped not in Washington or any Western capital, but by a new alliance of global powers whose center may not be in the West at all.

This may be regretted and even denied by those who yearn to keep the old order of Western hegemony. But the onward march of history, technology and power cannot be resisted. A good inquiry should bring these new realities to light and help shape a wiser and more balanced world. A bad one will keep them secret and lead to more follies in the future.

David Howell is a former British Cabinet minister and former chairman of the Commons Foreign Affairs Committee. He is now a member of the House of Lords (howellid@parliament.uk www.lordhowell.com).

PM takes more active role in troubled South

Interior stripped of SBPAC responsibility

By: MUHAMMAD AYUB PATHAN and PRADIT RUANGDIT

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Newspaper section: News

The Southern Border Provinces Administration Centre will soon come under the direct supervision of the Internal Security Operations Command. Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva yesterday said the SBPAC would answer directly to him as Isoc head once formalities involving the shift of power from the Interior Ministry were complete. The centre, made up of state officials and military personnel, has come under heavy criticism in recent months for its failure to end the violence and bring peace to the troubled southern region.

The SBPAC was dissolved by the Thaksin Shinawatra government but later resurrected by the Surayud Chulanont administration after the insurgency showed no sign of abating. The centre currently answers to the Interior Ministry but recent security flare-ups prompted a rethink. Mr Abhisit said the changes were being made so closer attention could be paid to the SBPAC's activities and how to turn it into a more effective body. The prime minister is the agency's supervisor in name, but the army is in real control of Isoc, a source said.

Nimu Makajey, a former deputy leader of Yala's Islamic provincial committee, yesterday demanded to know why the army had sent companies of special warfare troops to reinforce border areas in the South. He said the "special warfare units" were making local people uneasy. Army chief Anupong Paojinda reportedly sent the units to Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat for a tour of duty from June 18 to 30. "There should be no problem if the aim of the reinforcements is to strengthen the work to ensure public security. What we want is a convincing explanation," Mr Nimu said.

The senior Islamic scholar also said it was too early to conclude that the massacre at al-Furqan mosque on June 8 in Narathiwat was not the work of the security forces. In Yala, Raman district police yesterday said their investigation into the killing of a 55-year-old woman teacher at Ban Pomaeng school on June 16 had found that Zumzuri Panah, leader of the RKK insurgency group, was probably behind the attack. They said they would issue an arrest warrant soon.

Deputy Prime Minister Suthep Thaugsuban, who is in charge of national security, yesterday dismissed media reports that a religious war was possible after eight Buddhists were wounded in an attack on a temple in Narathiwat on Monday. Meanwhile, the cabinet has allocated a special budget for monks to buy food in the far South. Many Buddhist monks have found it dangerous to collect alms after a monk was gunned down and another injured in Yala.

Suu Kyi lawyers make final witness appeal: party

By: AFP

Published: 24/06/2009 at 12:58 PM

Lawyers for Burma pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi pressed the military-ruled nation's top court to overturn a ban on two key witnesses at her controversial trial, her party said. The Nobel Peace laureate faces up to five years in jail on charges of breaching the terms of her house arrest after a bizarre incident in which an American man swam uninvited to her lakeside home in May. A court at Rangoon's Insein prison last month barred two top members of her National League for Democracy (NLD) from giving evidence, but the Supreme Court has agreed to hear an appeal against the decision.

"Both sides have to give their arguments to the Supreme Court today. Our argument is that the decision of the lower court was not in accordance with the law," NLD spokesman and defence lawyer Nyan Win said. The two barred witnesses are Win Tin, a journalist who was Burma's longest-serving political prisoner until his release in September, and detained deputy NLD leader Tin Oo. Aung San Suu Kyi's lawyers earlier this month successfully appealed against a ban on a third witness, while a fourth has already testified. The prosecution has so far had 14 witnesses, adding to opposition and international claims that the proceedings are a show trial designed to keep the democracy icon locked up ahead of elections scheduled by the regime in 2010.

US national John Yettaw and Aung San Suu Kyi's two live-in aides are also on trial and face a similar sentence. Aung San Suu Kyi has spent 13 of the last 19 years in detention since Burma's ruling junta refused to recognise the NLD's landslide victory in the country's last democratic polls in 1990. The UN envoy to Burma, Ibrahim Gambari, may visit the country later this week ahead of a possible trip by the world body's chief Ban Ki-moon in early July focusing on the trial, officials and diplomats say.

"We hope to meet Mr Gambari when he comes, as we did on his previous visits," Nyan Win said. The charges against Aung San Suu Kyi come amid a wide-ranging crackdown on the opposition that has been carried out since the ruling generals crushed protests led by Buddhist monks in 2007. Burma, formerly known as Myanmar, has been ruled by the military since 1962.

Stemming recruits to southern militancy

By: RUNGRAWEE CHALERMSRIPINYORAT

Published: 24/06/2009 at 12:00 AM

When Thai police arrived at a hill plantation in Than To district of Yala province last week, they found the body of Kim-siang sae Tang. The 53-year-old Buddhist worker's head had been hacked off and stuck on a stick. His death is among the most recent of the innocent victims being killed almost every day, as Thailand faces an upsurge in the brutal violence in the deep South, where the insurgency has claimed over 3,400 lives over these past five years.

Leaflets left at the scene said the attack was retaliation for the June 8 slaying of 10 Muslims at prayer in a mosque. Following the mosque attack, a Buddhist monk on his regular early morning alms round was shot dead, and a government school teacher was killed - the 115th educator murdered in this conflict.

Whatever the murky intent of each violent act, communal tension is growing between Malay Muslims and Thai Buddhists. The insurgency remains as enigmatic as when it started in January 2004. No group claims responsibility for any of the attacks, although the military believes the insurgency is largely under the leadership of the National Revolutionary Front-Coordinate (Barisan Revolusi Nasional-Coordinate, BRN-C).

Thailand has used the military in its two-pronged strategy to "neutralise" the insurgency. But cracking down on militants while encouraging village development has not brought peace. The alternative of using political rather than military means has received only lip service from politicians and generals. The prolonged battle between Establishment forces and those loyal to ousted prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra has long diverted top political attention from the violence in the Malay Muslim-dominated southern provinces.

Amid the political turmoil in the capital, the politicians' default position has been to mistakenly leave the government's response to the insurgency in the hands of the Thai military. Upon coming to office in December 2008, the Democrat-led government laid out new policy guidelines focusing on development and justice that could have had a chance in promoting peace. But the government's reliance on the military to cement its power in Bangkok has weakened Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva's resolve to take chances in the South that might offend the generals.

Truly tackling the insurgency will mean a departure from this hopeless course. The inculcation of Malay Muslims with Thai nationalism, as the government is currently doing, will not work. The authorities need to understand militant recruitment and what leads young men to fight. This is not part of any global Islamist network; political grievances and inspiration predominate among Malay Muslims. Thailand needs to address these political grievances that have long fuelled resentment: the disregard for Malay ethnic identity and language, the lack of accountability for human rights abuses and the under-representation of Malay Muslims in local political and government structures.

Fighters aspire to defend their Malay Muslim identity and struggle against oppression. They wish to reclaim an independent Pattani sultanate, annexed by Siam in 1902, from what they perceive as an unjust Thai Buddhist state. Heroic tales of the past Pattani sultanate still resonate in the 21st century, inspiring those who would become foot soldiers of the insurgency. But it is not their pride in their "glorious" past alone that turns them into radicals. It is fresh memories of state repression that give energy to the recruitment of new insurgents. There is hardly a better recruiting tool for the insurgency than mistreatment, or death, of a relative at the hands of the authorities.

The Tak Bai incident, in particular, is pivotal in this regard. On Oct 25, 2004, the military rounded up 1,300 protesters, stacking them into lorries. At the end of the day, 78 had died. Yet no legal consequences ensued for the perpetrators. Last month, a court ruled on a post-mortem inquest on this case, suggesting that the security forces had acted in full accordance with the law and in a justified manner. This only served to rub salt into the deep wound of many Malay Muslims. The anger builds, and recruiters for insurgency have an easier job.

Islamic schools are an important venue of recruitment, and the classroom is the first point of contact, as this is where pious young men are found. Recruiters target the devout, hard-working, well-mannered students through the offer of extra religious instruction, educational trips and sports. In what is often a year-long process, students are convinced of their historic cause and their obligation to wage "jihad" before graduating to physical and military training. Village-level operations on the frontline soon follow.

But while Islamic schools have been a key venue of recruitment, they should not all be stigmatised as insurgent breeding grounds. A crackdown on troubled institutions would hurt more than help. Resolving the conflict requires redressing decades of resentment and addressing the Malay Muslims' grievances.

The heavy hand of the security forces when combined with the weak touch of government in Bangkok will neither end violence nor promote peace. To avoid further beheadings and bloodshed, the government needs to confront the military and change course to prove that it is serious about finding a political solution to this conflict.

- *Rungrawee Chalermripinyorat is an analyst at the International Crisis Group, and author of Recruiting Militants in Southern Thailand, a report now available at (www.crisisgroup.org) the ICG website.*

The Jakarta Post

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Letters: Defense problem: Who is responsible?

Wed, 06/24/2009 11:37 AM | Reader's Forum

National security and national prosperity are the twin interests of any nation, including Indonesia, and national defense readiness is one of the important elements of any country's national security.

Currently, Indonesian defense readiness is considered poor. Although there is no definite evidence of a failure in defense readiness, from the military point of view certain inconvenient situations, such as the critical situation in Ambalat, have been perceived as a failure in Indonesian defense readiness.

In the Ambalat case, TNI defense readiness is deemed critical because the TNI is believed to neither have the strength nor capability to counter the Malaysian Armed Forces' military provocation against Indonesian sovereignty in the Indonesian territorial jurisdiction of Ambalat.

Unfortunately, there have also been several shocking military accidents recently, caused by the technical function failure of certain machine parts or the mechanical malfunction of military hardware, resulting in a number of TNI plane and helicopter crashes and the deaths of qualified officers and trained soldiers; these accidents have added to the suspicion of the TNI's weapons systems' lack of readiness

In 2005, an amphibious tank-landing ship with a number of marines onboard, trapped inside the tanks, was sunk during an amphibious landing exercise held somewhere off a beach in East Java. This accident was seriously debated in the House, and House Commission I strongly criticized the frivolous attitude of the government.

The TNI realized many years ago that a huge amount of the country's budget was needed for the economic development sector, so it fully understands that a big-number budget has been impossible for defense development program spending in terms of procuring modern weapons systems.

In such a situation, the idea to raise a bill on the mobilization and demobilization of civilian infrastructure for military purposes, such as the means of transportation, is believed to be one of the essential requirements. This may be the reason for the government's initiative to raise certain defense regulations, such as the bill on the mobilization and demobilization of civilian infrastructure for defense purposes in an emergency situation. But this kind of thinking cannot be easily appreciated by many groups of people influenced by political prejudice and, maybe, lack of understanding.

To solve this inconvenient political situation, it is likely the old system depending on official documents on the broad outlines of the National Defense Policies (or the State Policy Guidelines on national defense) will be revived to neutralize people's suspicions. Who will compose the

framework for our national defense policy? Based on a presidential decree from the head of state, the People's Consultative Assembly could be appointed the additional job of composing a guideline policy for national defense.

I hope the incoming elected president will understand and be brave enough to speed up management change in the national defense sector; and I do not believe the Constitutional Court would reject a presidential decree on this issue, because I do not think it is against the Constitution.

Lt. Gen. (ret.) Soedibyo
Jakarta

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The Jakarta Post

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Comments: Anwar seeks to block charge

Wed, 06/24/2009 11:34 AM | Reader's Forum

Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim has sought to block his trial on an alleged sodomy charge by asking a Malaysian court to throw out the case, his lawyer said.

The government has repeatedly denied Anwar's claim that the charge was orchestrated to block him from leading a three-party opposition alliance that severely eroded the ruling coalition's parliamentary majority in the March 2008 election.

Your comments:

To Malaysian politicians, let us move forward and stop harping on about this issue. First ask yourself, do you believe this case. The majority of Malaysians believe that by charging Anwar in this way, it would slow him down in the politic arena.

And if Anwar exposes all the "secrets" and "wrongdoings" of the current and previous ministers, then the government can use Anwar's case as a trump card to shut him up and put him under lock and key.

To all politicians, how does this case affect you? The majority of Malaysians do not believe this case. Politicians go back to work and look after the country.

Din

Nature's messages--June 18, p. 7

People around the world have been besieged by the hysteria of the spread of H1N1 flu for the past few months. Even though the threat is not as imminent as first predicted, it is still a major concern.

A distribution map of the disease, recently released by the World Health Organization, shows that affected people have been identified in four continents. The organization is working flat-out to deal with the problem.

Your comments:

The writer asserts "There is nothing wrong with globalization per se". Nothing? The global marketplace efficiently delivers the benefits of progress to many, but it does so by exploiting the weak.

Globalization compels irresponsible exploitation to compete successfully. To counter this threat we need a global "metamarketplace" - an alternative marketplace that complements the global marketplace by serving to protect people and resources.

How do we do this? The difficulty is that in the global arena we can argue about the meaning of "sustainability" until the ice caps melt. But locally (and almost everybody still lives somewhere) we can point at the unsustainable - it's that sweatshop, that outfall pipe, that factory farm - and if our community is prosperous we can do something about it.

Thus, we need a "metamarketplace" that empowers communities to reclaim control of their destinies and resist the exploitation of the global marketplace.

Nations that do this will replace exploitation and sustainable poverty with sustainable prosperity. Why shouldn't Indonesia lead the way?

K. Parce

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Singaporeans likely among 8 terror suspects arrested in C. Java

The Jakarta Post , Jakarta | Wed, 06/24/2009 8:01 PM | World

The National Police said Wednesday it would ask for clarification from the Singapore government whether any of its citizens were among eight terror suspects arrested in Cilacap, Central Java, last week.

Police chief of detectives Comr. Gen Susno Duadji said his unit was waiting for an explanation from the Singaporean government and had not yet decided to dispatch a special team to the island state.

The police antiterrorist team nabbed eight suspected terrorists in Cilacap last Sunday. One of the suspects was local resident Saefudin Zuhry who worked as a honey vendor in Tritih village, Cilacap.

Saefudin is currently being questioned and has asked for legal assistance from a team of Muslim lawyers.

Police have refused to name the other suspects as some of them may be Singaporean.

"We will not name the suspects pending the questioning processes. The 2003 antiterrorism law stipulates that we have one week to investigate them before declaring them as suspects," Susno said as quoted by tempointeraktif.com. (ewd)

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A global nuclear disorder

Gita Wirjawan , Jakarta , | Wed, 06/24/2009 11:13 AM | Opinion

The world is edging precariously toward nuclear anarchy. The warning signs of the collapse of the global nuclear order are clear. The emergence of a dangerous axis of nations with nuclear ambitions - North Korea, Iran and Pakistan - is a very real threat.

They are daggers pointing at the heart of peace and stability. The brute facts emanating from these three states suggest an irreversible bottom line: trends toward nuclear powers in the world are worsening.

Consider the hermit kingdom of North Korea. The rogue regime has revived its nuclear program, conducting its second nuclear test on May 25 following recent missile launches that alarmed the rest of the world.

Shortly after the blast, Russia said it estimated the explosion to have been around 20 kilotons in power, or about equal to the US atom bomb dropped on Nagasaki in Japan that ended World War II.

The United States and the Vienna-based Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization then concluded the strength of the bomb was much smaller, saying it was just slightly larger than the 2006 test which was about one kiloton.

But the upward trajectory is cause for concern. Pyongyang is thought to have enough weapons-grade plutonium for at least half a dozen atomic bombs and is believed to be preparing for another nuclear test.

Worsening the crisis, North Korea responded to fresh sanctions by promising to "weaponize" all its plutonium and step up its manufacture of nuclear weapons by enriching uranium - the first time it acknowledged it had such a program. Both plutonium and uranium are utilized to make atomic weapons.

American officials estimate that North Korea's missiles could hit the US in as little as three years if Pyongyang continues to ramp up its weapons system. Sanctions and stuttering diplomacy have done little to deter an unstable regime in the throes of uncertain leadership as Kim Jong-il's health fails.

Several rounds of six-party talks overseen by China have failed to persuade Pyongyang to scrap the nuclear program in exchange for security guarantees and aid to North Korea's decrepit economy.

Instead, the talks have only brought recriminations: Toward the United States for offering too little;

toward North Korea for remaining intransigent; and toward China for applying insufficient pressure on its dependent neighbor.

Significantly, Pyongyang has pushed open the door to the world's small club of nuclear weapons states. By default - or design - it is also encouraging others. For one, South Korea and especially pacifist Japan could go nuclear, triggering an arms race and even greater uncertainty in a region where there are already three nuclear powers.

An even bigger danger is that North Korea's belligerence might have a ripple effect, extending to Iran. Pyongyang might well attempt to sell nuclear technology to Tehran.

Iranian leader Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is unlikely to cave in to international pressure to stop Tehran from achieving this objective. Surrounded by powers with nuclear weapons - Pakistan to their east, the Russians to the north, the Israelis to the west, and the US in the Persian Gulf - it is Iran's attempt at securing a deterrent that could ultimately be the single most destabilizing factor in the Middle East.

Just before North Korea's defiant nuclear test last month, Iran conducted two successful tests of long-range missiles, including one that Tehran says is more accurate than previous models and can reach Israel.

The Israelis believe that Iran could develop a nuclear bomb by 2014. This is based on the assumption that it acquires enough highly-enriched uranium.

Iran has thus far flouted international efforts to stop its production of low-enriched uranium (LEU), an intermediate step to producing weapons-grade fuel.

About 2,000 pounds of LEU, enriched to 90 percent, can produce enough fuel for a single bomb. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) estimated earlier this year that Iran has about 2,400 pounds.

Given IAEA monitoring, Iran will find it increasingly difficult to produce weapons-grade fuel at its key site for enriching uranium, Natanz, where there are about 7,000 centrifuges for making nuclear fuel are housed deep underground.

But some worry that Tehran might obtain fuel abroad, especially from North Korea - or even Pakistan. After all, AQ Khan, the father of Pakistan's nuclear bomb, was the world's first nuclear black marketer, providing nuclear weapons technology and materials to North Korea and Pakistan.

Being already nuclear-armed, Pakistan presents a more pressing and direct problem. Chronic political instability in the country and the current offensive against the Taliban has raised fears that Islamabad's strategic nuclear assets could be obtained by rogue states or terrorists.

Command and control structures have been radically overhauled since the September 2001 terror attacks. Export controls and personnel security programs have also come into place following revelations about AQ Khan's international proliferation network.

Despite these efforts, there are creeping fears that instability - with some arguing that Pakistan

might become a failed state - could undermine such safeguards and the durability of reforms.

Pakistan, which already has a nuclear arsenal of about 60 nuclear warheads, has been continuing the fissure process for the material production of weapons, as a primary deterrent against its long-standing nemesis India, which is also armed with the bomb. South Asia has become a ticking time bomb as the global nuclear order turns fragile.

In 1963, US President John F. Kennedy predicted that, if left unchecked, 15 to 20 states could join the nuclear club within a decade. His warning saw several initiatives to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, culminating in the 1968 Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT).

Today, 189 countries, many of which have the technical capability to build nuclear arsenals, have denounced nuclear weapons. Only three additional countries - Israel, India and Pakistan - have acquired such weapons in the last 40 years.

But the NPT architecture is now shaking at the core, and could well open the floodgates for others like North Korea and Iran to enter.

Nuclear weapons pose a clear and present danger. A report last year by the US National Intelligence Council suggested that there was a significant risk of nuclear attack, based on spreading technologies and a dramatic weakening of international proliferation systems.

The Middle East is mentioned in that report as an "arch of instability". But South Asia and East Asia are also nuclear flash points. There is also the hellish prospect of a Hiroshima 9/11.

In the end, North Korea, Iran and Pakistan might not even fire a single nuke. But they might well allow these weapons to slip into the hands of al-Qaeda, who would not hesitate pressing the button on New York, London or Tokyo.

The global nuclear regime is weakening dramatically. The major powers - the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France - need to fashion a strategy that will stem further proliferation. But it might just be too late. The daggers are already out to pierce that fragile peace.

The writer is Chairman of Ancora International.

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National

SOUTH CRISIS

Not all Pondok should take blame for breeding militants: Crisis Group

Published on June 24, 2009

Brussels-based International Crisis Group (ICG) defended Wednesday its latest report of militant recruitment saying not all Islamic boarding school in the unrest region should be blamed for being breeding ground.

A long-standing Malay Muslim separatist group on Tuesday lashed out at a recent report that said Islamic schools were breeding ground for an armed ethno-nationalist struggle in Thailand's deep South.

In a detailed report, the International Crisis Group (ICG) has said insurgency groups scout for new militant recruits among students at Islamic schools, locally known as pondok in Thailand's Malay-speaking South.

In a statement released Tuesday, Kasturi Mahkota, the foreign affairs chief of the Patani United Liberation Organisation (PULO), said the report from the International Crisis Group (ICG) played into the hand of "Thai ultra-nationalist" and dismissed allegations that the pondok school system "is being used in any way to propagate violence."

Crisis Group's Thailand analyst Rungrawee Chalermripinyorat, said the report made clear that not all schools have been used as breeding grounds, which could be only a few.


Even in schools where insurgent activities have taken place, not all administrators, teachers and students are necessarily aware of the activities, let alone consent to them.

"Some schools have been used only as cover for the underground activities. We do not blame the entire Islamic institutions," she said.

"ICG certainly has no intention to undermine the religious school system in southern Thailand. We believe that Islamic school is crucial to the education of young Malay Muslims and is an integral part of communities in the Deep South," she said.

ICG does not agree with any closure of Islamic schools. We emphasize the need for the government to address the underlying grievance which drives the Malay Muslims to join the struggle in the first place.

The government should recognize their distinct cultural identity, end human rights violation and open more political space for them, she said.

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July 2, 2009 01:16 pm (Thai local time)

www.nationmultimedia.com

The Mideast's New Spring of Freedom

By Saad Eddin Ibrahim

The hotly contested presidential election in Iran between Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is still unfolding, with uncertain results. But regardless of the outcome, the events in Iran are symptomatic of a larger change in the political landscape of the Middle East—the revival of a regional freedom movement, which stalled in 2006 after the election of Hamas in Palestine.

The results of the recent parliamentary elections in Lebanon and Kuwait clearly indicate that Islamist parties have lost significant ground to their moderate counterparts. By Middle Eastern standards, these two countries, along with Turkey, have well-established democratic traditions.

Young Iranians show inspiring determination to achieve similar gains in their own country. Scholars maintain that societies that manage to have four or more consecutive elections will usually achieve an irreversible democratic transition. Without direct visible foreign intervention, Turkey, Lebanon and Kuwait may have such a transition well under way. The fear that Islamists might somehow impede the process has not yet been realized. Leaders of competing Islamic forces in both Lebanon and Kuwait have conceded defeat. That includes the much-demonized Hassan Nasrallah of Hezbollah.

Along with the dimming influence of Islamists, President Barack Obama's Cairo speech seems to have energized the democratic spirit in the Middle East. In Lebanon

and Iran, voters turned out in record numbers. In his speech, Mr. Obama cited the imperative of upholding minority rights, singling out the Christian Maronites of Lebanon and the Copts of Egypt. He also emphasized the rights of women to education and full inclusion in public life. At least in the case of Lebanon, both Maronites and

women responded by voting at an unprecedented rate (60%).

Similar results were announced last month in Kuwait, where, for the first time, high voter turnout

elected four women to parliament despite fierce resistance from tribal and Islamic elements. And in Iran, women and youth are leading a mass democratic uprising in cities from Tehran to Esfahan. This could be Iran's own Green Revolution, reminiscent of the Velvet, Rose and Orange revolutions.

Beyond the Obama effect, it seems clear that, with a high degree of sociopolitical mobilization, Islamic parties can be cut down to size. It's an encouraging sign that Islamists have suffered repeated electoral defeats despite efforts to capitalize on widespread voter apathy and the fragmentation of secular parties.

The defeat of the Hezbollah coalition in Lebanon was a major blow to its hard-line supporters in Iran led by Mr. Ahmadinejad. If he loses to his challenger, Mr. Mousavi, then moderates could return to power in Iran and strengthen regional democratic forces at large. If the forthcoming elections in Iraq proceed without any major setback, then the entire belt from Iran to Turkey, including Lebanon and Kuwait, would be on the democratic path.

Iran is only part of a trend.

Regardless of the gains of the Middle Eastern moderates, Islamists will continue to be an integral part of the region's political landscape. But they should neither be pathologically feared nor cavalierly excluded. Rather, they should be actively engaged and encouraged to evolve into Muslim democratic parties akin to the Christian Democrats in Europe. By implicitly recognizing Hamas, President Obama may be leaning in this direction.

The next major test for democracy will be the upcoming elections in Egypt, the most populous Arab country and a strategic U.S. ally. Egyptian bloggers have made their Web sites and Twitter accounts available to their Iranian counterparts after the mullahs disrupted Iran's Internet. The youth's use of information technology has proven to be a surprising match to the brutal autocrats and rigid theocrats they oppose. The Egyptians' display of solidarity with the Iranians proves their commitment to the fundamental principles of democracy.

Mr. Obama should insist that the Egyptian regime allow free and fair elections. Given the elections in Lebanon, Kuwait and Iran, he and his advisers should resist overreacting to the mistakes of the Bush administration by backtracking on democracy promotion. A win for democracy in Egypt will consolidate what's already a trend in the Middle East: the flowering of a Spring of Freedom.

Mr. Ibrahim, an Egyptian sociologist and human-rights advocate, was imprisoned by the Mubarak regime. He has lived in exile since 2007 and is currently a visiting professor at Harvard.

Dancing with the dragon



BRAHMA
CHELLANEY

New Delhi

Nearly six months after U.S. President Barack Obama entered the White House, it is apparent that America's Asia policy is no longer guided by an overarching geopolitical framework as it had been under President George W. Bush. Indeed, Washington's Asia policy today appears fragmented. The Obama administration has developed a policy approach toward each major Asian subregion and issue, but still has no strategy on how to build enduring power equilibrium in Asia — the pivot of global geopolitical change.

China, India and Japan, Asia's three main powers, constitute a unique strategic triangle. The Obama administration has declared that America's "most important bilateral relationship in the world" is with China, going to the extent of demoting human rights to put the accent on security, financial, trade and environmental issues with Beijing.

But it has yet to fashion a well-defined Japan policy or India policy. While a narrow East Asia policy framework now guides U.S. ties with Japan, Washington is again looking at India primarily through the Pakistan prism. That translates into a renewed U.S. focus on India-Pakistan engagement, resurrection of the Kashmir issue and preoccupation with counterinsurgency in the "Af-pak" region, including implications for American homeland security.

Obama's choice of ambassadors says it all. While Obama named John Huntsman — the Utah state governor and a rising Republican star seen even as a potential 2012 rival to the president — as his ambassador to China, he picked obscure former Congressman Timothy Roemer as envoy to India and a low-profile Internet and biotechnology lawyer, John Roos, as ambassador to Japan. Obama underlined China's centrality in his foreign policy by personally announcing his choice of Huntsman. In contrast, Roemer and Roos were among a slew of ambassadors named in an official news release.

Huntsman has old ties with China, but Roemer and Roos hardly know the countries to which they have been named as ambassadors. Having served on the 9/11 investigation commission, Roemer, though, fits with the Af-pak and homeland-security policy frame in which India is being viewed by the Obama team.

Whether one agreed with the Bush foreign policy or not, at least its Asia

component was driven by a larger geopolitical blueprint. By contrast, the best can be said about Obama's Asia policy is that it seeks to nurture key bilateral relationships — with China at the core of Washington's present courtship — and establish, where possible, trilateral relationships.

The upshot of this is that the Obama team has just unveiled a new trilateral security-cooperation framework in Asia involving the United States, China and Japan. While announcing this initiative, the Obama administration has failed to acknowledge another trilateral — the one involving the U.S., Japan and India.

It is as if the U.S.-Japan-India trilateral has fallen out of favor with the new U.S. administration, just as the broader U.S.-India-Japan-Australia "Quadrilateral Initiative" — founded on the concept of democratic peace and conceived by then Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe — ran aground after the late-2007 election of Kevin Rudd as the Australian prime minister. Without forewarning New Delhi or Tokyo, the Sinophile Rudd publicly pulled the plug on that nascent initiative, which had held only one meeting.

Now the Obama administration seems intent to bring down the U.S.-Japan-India trilateral. While announcing the new U.S.-China-Japan trilateral, it did not forget to cite the U.S.-Australia-Japan and U.S.-Japan-South Korea trilaterals. But there was no mention of the U.S.-Japan-India trilateral, as if that Bush-endorsed enterprise had become history like Bush.

At a time when Asia is in transition, with the specter of power disequilibrium looming large, it has become imperative to invest in institution-building to help underpin long-term power stability and engagement. After all, Asian challenges are playing into global strategic challenges. But the Obama administration is fixated on the very country whose rapidly accumulating power and muscle-flexing threaten Asian stability.

The U.S., of course, has every reason to engage China more deeply at a time when its dependence on Beijing to bankroll American debt has only grown. Just as America and the Soviet Union achieved mutually assured destruction (MAD), America and China are now locked in MAD — but in economic terms. The two today are so tied in a mutually dependent relationship for their economic well-being that attempts to snap those ties would amount to mutually assured financial destruction. Just as the beleaguered U.S. economy cannot do without continuing capital inflows from China, the American market is the lifeline of the Chinese export juggernaut.

From being allies of convenience in the second half of the Cold War, the U.S. and China now have emerged as partners tied by such interdependence that economic

historians Niall Ferguson and Moritz Schularick have coined the term, "Chimerica." An article in China's Liaowang magazine describes the relationship as one of "complex interdependence" in which America and China "compete and consult" with each other. Together, the two countries make up 31 percent of global GDP and a quarter of world trade.

But China's expanding naval role and maritime claims threaten to collide with U.S. interests, including Washington's traditional emphasis on the freedom of the seas. U.S.-China economic ties also are likely to remain uneasy: America saves too little and borrows too much from China, while Beijing sells too much to the U.S. and buys too little. Yet, such is its indulgence toward Beijing that Washington seeks to hold Moscow to higher standards than Beijing on human rights and other issues, even though it is China that is likely to mount a credible challenge to America's global pre-eminence.

The new U.S.-China-Japan trilateral re-emphasizes Washington's focus on China as the key player to engage on Asian issues. Slated to begin modestly with dialogue on nontraditional security issues before moving on to hard security matters, this latest trilateral is being billed as the centerpiece of Obama's Asia policy. Such is its wider significance that it is also touted as offering a new framework for deliberations on North Korea to compensate for the stalled six-party talks.

Despite its China-centric Asia policy, the Obama team, however, has not thought of a U.S.-China-India trilateral, even as it currently explores a U.S.-China-South Korea trilateral. That is because Washington now is looking at India not through the Asian geopolitical framework but the subregional lens — a reality unlikely to be changed by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's forthcoming stop in New Delhi six months after she paid obeisance in Beijing. While re-hyphenating India with Pakistan and outsourcing its North Korea and Burma policies to Beijing, Washington wants China to expand its geopolitical role through greater involvement even in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

It is shortsighted of the Obama team to lower the profile of India and Japan in America's Asia policy. Tokyo may be ceding political capital and influence in Asia to Beijing, and India's power might not equal China's, but Japan and India together can prove more than a match. The Japan-India strategic congruence with the U.S. is based as much on shared interests as on shared principles.

Brahma Chellaney is professor of strategic studies at the privately funded Center for Policy Research in New Delhi.

Prawase: Govt mishandling far South

By: BangkokPost.com

Published: 25/06/2009 at 12:38 PM

The government has taken the wrong path in its handling of the southern problem, prominent social critic Prawase Wasi said on Thursday. Dr Prawase, who is a senior member of the National Cultural Committee, said the government was mishandling the problem by sending high-level government officials and more soldiers and police to the far southern provinces whenever the insurgents step up their activities.

The government seemed unaware that problems were caused by local officials' failure to pay attention to the local culture and the people's ways of life and centralisation of power. Use of force and authoritative power was not the correct way of dealing with problems in the far South, he said.

The government should concentrate on helping local people be self-reliant, economically and socially. Community councils should be set up where the people could solve their own problems in their own ways, said Dr Prawase.

Neither present nor past governments had been on the right track. He would suggest ways out for the government at a panel discussion organised by the King Prajadhipok's Institute at the Miracle Grand Hotel on June 30.

The Jakarta Post

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North Korea warns of 'fire shower of nuclear' attack

The Associated Press , Seoul | Thu, 06/25/2009 10:27 AM | World

North Korea condemned a recent U.S. pledge to provide nuclear defense of South Korea, saying Thursday that the move boosts its justification to hold onto atomic bombs and invites a potential "fire shower of nuclear retaliation."

The salvo in Pyongyang's main Rodong Sinmun newspaper was the North's latest reaction to last week's summit between President Barack Obama and South Korean President Lee Myung-bak. The allies issued a joint statement committing the U.S. to defend the South with nuclear weapons.

It also came as an American destroyer trailed a North Korean ship suspected of shipping weapons in violation of a U.N. resolution punishing Pyongyang's May 25 nuclear test, and as anticipation mounted that the North might test-fire short- or mid-range missiles.

The North's newspaper claimed in a lengthy commentary that the "nuclear umbrella" commitment made it more likely for the U.S. to mount a nuclear attack on the communist North, and only "provides us with a stronger justification to have nuclear deterrent."

It also amounts to "asking for the calamitous situation of having a fire shower of nuclear retaliation all over South Korea" in case of a conflict, the paper said. "It is as clear as daylight that South Korea cannot survive under that nuclear umbrella."

In a separate editorial marking the 1950 outbreak of the Korean War, the Rodong said the North "will never give up nuclear deterrent no matter what others say and will further strengthen it" as long as Washington remains hostile toward it.

The brutal fighting ended after three years in a truce in 1953, not a peace treaty, leaving the peninsula divided and in a state of war. The U.S. has 28,500 troops in South Korea to protect against an outbreak of hostilities.

North Korea has long claimed that the U.S. is plotting to invade it and has used the claim to justify its development of nuclear weapons. On Wednesday, Pyongyang accused Washington of seeking to "provoke a second Korean War," saying it will "wipe out the aggressors on the globe once and for all."

The U.S. has repeatedly said it has no intention of attacking the North.

The U.N. resolution seeks to clamp down on North Korea's trading of banned arms and weapons-related material by requiring U.N. member states to request inspections of ships carrying suspected

cargo.

The U.S. has been seeking to get key nations to enforce the sanctions aggressively. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton called the foreign ministers of Russia and China to discuss efforts to enforce U.N. punishments of North Korea for its nuclear test, State Department spokesman Ian Kelly said.

The North's ship, Kang Nam, is believed to be the first North Korean vessel to be tracked under the resolution. It left the North Korean port of Nampo a week ago and is believed bound for Myanmar, South Korean and U.S. officials said.

Myanmar state television played down the reports of a possible weapons shipment Wednesday evening, saying another North Korean vessel was expected to pick up a load of rice but that the government had no information about the Kang Nam.

A senior U.S. defense official said Wednesday that the ship had already cleared the Taiwan Strait.

He said he didn't know how much range the Kang Nam has - that is, whether or when it may need to stop in some port to refuel - but that the Kang Nam has in the past stopped in Hong Kong's port.

Another U.S. defense official said he tended to doubt reports that the Kang Nam was carrying nuclear-related equipment, saying the information officials have received seems to indicate the cargo is conventional munitions.

The U.S. officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were discussing intelligence.

The U.S. and its allies have not decided whether to contact and request inspection of the ship, Pentagon press secretary Geoff Morrell said Wednesday.

"That's a decision that will have to be made at some point, and not necessarily just by us or this government," he said at a news conference. "I think we will likely take (the decision) collectively with our allies and partners."

He said he didn't believe a decision would come soon.

North Korea has said it would consider interception of its ships a declaration of war.

Reports about possible missile launches from the North highlighted the state of tension on the Korean peninsula.

The North has designated a no-sail zone off its east coast from June 25 to July 10 for military drills.

A senior South Korean government official said the ban is believed connected to North Korean plans to fire short- or mid-range missiles. He spoke on condition of anonymity, citing department policy.

Yonhap reported that the North may fire a Scud missile with a range of up to 310 miles (500 kilometers) or a short-range ground-to-ship missile with a range of 100 miles (160 kilometers) during the no-sail period.

U.S. defense and counterproliferation officials in Washington said they also expected the North to launch short- to medium-range missiles. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive intelligence.

North Korea had warned previously it would fire a long-range missile as a response to U.N. Security Council condemnation of an April rocket launch seen as a cover for its ballistic missile technology.

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National

Crisis group defends Islamic school charges

Published on June 25, 2009

The International Crisis Group yesterday defended its report on militant recruitment in the deep South, saying not all Islamic boarding schools in the region could be blamed for feeding fighters to the insurgency.

A long-established Malay Muslim separatist group on Tuesday lashed out at the Brussels-based ICG for calling Islamic schools as breeding grounds for an armed ethno-nationalist struggle in Thailand's southern border provinces.

In a detailed report, Crisis Group said insurgency groups scout for new militant recruits among students at Islamic schools, known as pondok in the Malay-speaking South.

In a statement released on Tuesday, Kasturi Mahkota, the foreign affairs chief of the Patani United Liberation Organisation (PULO), said the ICG report played into the hands of "Thai ultra-nationalists".

He dismissed allegations that the pondok school system "is being used in any way to propagate violence".

Crisis Group's Thailand analyst, Rungrawee Chalermripinyorat, said the report had made it clear that not all schools have been used as incubators, that they could be only a few.

Even in schools where insurgent activities have taken place, not all the administrators, teachers and students are necessarily aware of the activities, let alone consent to them.

"Some schools have been used only as cover for the underground activities. We do not blame all the Islamic institutions," she said.

"ICG certainly has no intention to undermine the religious school system in southern Thailand. We believe that Islamic schools are crucial to the education of young Malay Muslims and are an integral part of communities in the deep South," she said.

ICG does not agree with any closure of Islamic schools.

"We emphasise the need for the government to address the underlying grievances that drive

the Malay Muslims to joining the struggle in the first place.

"The government should recognise their distinct cultural identity, end human rights violations and open more political space for them," she said.

The wave of violence in the predominantly Muslim region that flared up in the beginning of 2004 has killed more than 3,500 people so far.

Nobody has claimed responsibility. Authorities struggle to find the root cause of the problem and contain the almost daily violence.

Yesterday, two suspected militants were arrested in Yala's Thanto district. Romalee Kalupae and Sari Sama were caught with many weapons, cell phones and propaganda leaflets.

Lt General Kasikorn Kirisri, commander of the Civilian, Military and Police Task Force, said the two men are key members of the insurgent movement who worked to enlist new fighters and gather financial support.

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Hillary Is Wrong About the Settlements

By Elliott Abrams

Despite fervent denials by Obama administration officials, there were indeed agreements between Israel and the United States regarding the growth of Israeli settlements on the West Bank. As the Obama administration has made the settlements issue a major bone of contention between Israel and the U.S., it is necessary that we review the recent history.

In the spring of 2003, U.S. officials (including me) held wide-ranging discussions with then Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in Jerusalem. The "Roadmap for Peace" between Israel and the Palestinians had been written. President George W. Bush had endorsed Palestinian statehood, but only if the Palestinians eliminated terror. He had broken with Yasser Arafat, but Arafat still ruled in the Palestinian territories. Israel had defeated the intifada, so what was next?

We asked Mr. Sharon about freezing the West Bank settlements. I recall him asking, by way of reply, what did that mean for the settlers? They live there, he said, they serve in elite army units, and they marry. Should he tell them to have no more children, or move?

We discussed some approaches: Could he agree there would be no additional settlements? New construction only inside settlements, without expanding them physically? Could he agree there would be no additional land taken for settlements?

As we talked several principles emerged. The father of the settlements now agreed that limits must be placed on the settlements; more fundamentally, the old foe of the Palestinians could—under certain conditions—now agree to Palestinian statehood.

In June 2003, Mr. Sharon stood alongside Mr. Bush, King Abdullah II of Jordan, and Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas at Aqaba, Jordan, and endorsed Palestinian statehood publicly: "It is in Israel's interest not to govern the Palestinians but for the Palestinians to govern themselves in their own state. A democratic Palestinian state fully at peace with Israel will promote the long-term security and well-being of Israel as a Jewish state." At the end of that year he announced his intention to pull out of the Gaza Strip.

The U.S. government supported all this but asked Mr. Sharon for two more things. First, that he remove some West Bank settlements; we wanted Israel to show that removing them was not impossible. Second, we wanted him to pull out of Gaza totally—including every single settlement and the "Philadelphi Strip" separating Gaza from Egypt, even though holding on to this strip would have prevented the smuggling of weapons to Hamas that was feared and has now come to pass. Mr. Sharon agreed on both counts.

These decisions were political dynamite, as Mr. Sharon had long predicted to us. In May 2004, his Likud Party rejected his plan in a referendum, handing him a resounding political defeat. In June, the Cabinet approved the withdrawal from Gaza, but only after Mr. Sharon fired two ministers and allowed two others to resign. His majority in the Knesset was now shaky.

After completing the Gaza withdrawal in August 2005, he called in November for a dissolution of the Knesset and for early elections. He also said he would leave Likud to form a new centrist party. The political and personal strain was very great. Four weeks later he suffered the first of two strokes that have left him in a coma.

Throughout, the Bush administration gave Mr. Sharon full support for his actions against terror and on final status issues. On April 14, 2004, Mr. Bush handed Mr. Sharon a letter saying that there would be no "right of return" for Palestinian refugees. Instead, the president said, "a solution to the Palestinian refugee issue as part of any final status agreement will need to be found through the establishment of a Palestinian state, and the settling of Palestinian refugees there, rather than in Israel."

On the major settlement blocs, Mr. Bush said, "In light of new realities on the ground, including already existing major Israeli populations centers, it is unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete return to the armistice lines of 1949." Several previous administrations had declared all Israeli settlements beyond the "1967 borders" to be illegal. Here Mr. Bush dropped such language, referring to the 1967 borders—correctly—as merely the lines where the fighting stopped in 1949 and saying that, in any realistic peace agreement, Israel would be able to negotiate keeping those major settlements.

On settlements we also agreed on principles that would permit some continuing growth. Mr. Sharon stated these clearly in a major policy speech in December 2003: "Israel will meet all its obligations with regard to construction in the settlements. There will be no construction beyond the existing construction line, no expropriation of land for construction, no special economic incentives and no construction of new settlements."

Ariel Sharon did not invent those four principles. They emerged from discussions with American officials and were discussed by Messrs. Sharon and Bush at their Aqaba meeting in June 2003.

They were not secret, either. Four days after the president's letter, Mr. Sharon's Chief of Staff Dov Weissglas wrote to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice that "I wish to reconfirm the following understanding, which had been reached between us: 1. Restrictions on settlement growth: within the agreed principles of settlement activities, an effort will be made in the next few days to have a better definition of the construction line of settlements in Judea & Sa-

maria."

Stories in the press also made it clear that there were indeed "agreed principles." On Aug. 21, 2004, the New York Times reported that "the Bush administration . . . now supports construction of new apartments in areas already built up in some settlements, as long as the expansion does not extend outward."

In recent weeks, American officials have denied that any agreement on settlements existed. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said on June 17 that "in looking at the history of the Bush administration, there

were no informal or oral enforceable agreements. That has been verified by the official record of the administration and by the personnel in the positions of responsibility."

These statements are incorrect. Not only were there agreements, but the prime minister of Israel relied on them in undertaking a wrenching political reorientation—the dissolution of his government, the removal of every single Israeli citizen, settlement and military position in Gaza, and the removal of four small settlements in the West Bank. This was the first time Israel had ever removed settlements outside the context of a peace treaty, and it was a major step.

It is true that there was no U.S.-Israel "memorandum of understanding," which is presumably what Mrs. Clinton means when she suggests that the "official record of the administration" contains none. But she would do well to consult documents like the Weissglas letter, or the notes of the Aqaba meeting, before suggesting that there was no meeting of the minds.

Mrs. Clinton also said there were no "enforceable" agreements. This is a strange phrase. How exactly would Israel enforce any agreement against an American decision to renege on it? Take it to the International Court in The Hague?

* * *

Regardless of what Mrs. Clinton has said, there was a bargained-for exchange. Mr. Sharon was determined to break the deadlock, withdraw from Gaza, remove settlements—and confront his former allies on Israel's right by abandoning the "Greater Israel" position to endorse Palestinian statehood and limits on settlement growth. He asked for our support and got it, including the agreement that we would not demand a total settlement freeze.

For reasons that remain unclear, the Obama administration has decided to abandon the understandings about settlements reached by the previous administration with the Israeli government. We may be abandoning the deal now, but we cannot rewrite history and make believe it did not exist.

Mr. Abrams, a senior fellow for Middle Eastern Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, handled Middle East affairs at the National Security Council from 2001 to 2009.

In Arab world, silence speaks volumes

CAIRO

U.S.-aligned nations hope Iran's president will have to moderate his approach

BY MICHAEL SLACKMAN

The rancorous dispute over Iran's presidential election could turn into a win-win situation for Arab leaders aligned with Washington who in the past have complained bitterly that President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was destabilizing the region and meddling in Arab affairs, according to political analysts and former officials around the region.

NEWS ANALYSIS

The good-news thinking goes like this: With Mr. Ahmadinejad remaining in office, there is less chance of substantially improved relations between Tehran and Washington, something that Arab allies of the United States feared would undermine their interests. At the same time, the electoral conflict may have weakened the Iranian president at home and abroad, forcing him to moderate his style and focus more on domestic issues, analysts and former officials said.

"When Iran is strong and defiant they don't like her, and when Iran is closer to the West they don't like her," said Adnan Abu Odeh, a former adviser to King Hussein of Jordan.

Of course, such an outcome could also

prove to be wishful thinking, political analysts cautioned, especially when it comes to Iran, where other arms of government — from the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, to the military — can have more influence over regional policy than the president.

As events have rocked Iran since the disputed presidential election earlier this month, people across the Arab world have watched with a degree of amazement, disbelief and indifference. In some ways, the dispute has served as a cautionary tale for Arab leaders, who have watched as technology like the Internet, social networking sites and cellphones have yet again undermined the ability of authoritarian states to control access to and distribution of information.

But because the cultural and social differences between Iran and Arab states are so great, there was no sense that leaders feared their citizens would be inspired to rise up by images of Iranian protesters demanding change. Iran is an important and influential nation in the Middle East, but it is also distant from the Sunni Arab street as a mostly Persian country with a majority Shiite population.

"A lot of young people in the Arab world would love to see something like that, but the kind of civil society they have makes it much more natural for this to happen in Iran than in a place like Egypt or Saudi Arabia," said Ahmed al-Omran, the Saudi Arabian college student who writes the popular blog saudijews.org.

Still, there was tremendous interest in

the halls of power, where attention was focused on the unfolding events in Iran. One indicator of the interest was the silence. Arab leaders have said little about what is happening in their backyard, hoping to avoid even the appearance that they are trying to influence the outcome, political analysts said. State-controlled news media around the region have also been relatively low-key in their coverage. (Satellite news programs like Al Jazeera have provided heavy coverage.)

"When you are waiting so much for something that makes you happy, you

Arab leaders have said little about what is happening.

hold your breath, you make less noise in order not to affect the outcome," said Randa Habib, a political analyst and columnist in Amman.

The same might also be true for those aligned with Iran, like Syria, Hamas and the Lebanese group Hezbollah. Hamas and Hezbollah rely on Iran for money, weapons and political support. If Iran is shaken badly, it may decide to recalibrate its image in the region, or it may simply find that it needs to spend its limited cash resources at home to help improve a struggling economy, analysts said.

Emad Gad, an Egyptian expert in international affairs, said that he already saw evidence of Iranian allies, especially in Syria, trying to hedge their bets on Tehran. He said that Syria, for example, had been more willing in recent days to help Egypt press for reconcili-

ation between Palestinian factions.

"I think Ahmadinejad will concentrate in the economic field to improve living conditions for his population after this crisis," Mr. Gad said. "That means less giving money, less meddling, less penetration in the Arab world, less involvement."

When the Iranian government first announced that Mr. Ahmadinejad had won a landslide victory, there was a collective sigh of regret among Arab leaders aligned with Washington. They had hoped the reform candidate, Mir Hussein Moussavi, would win but instead ended up — it appeared — with an emboldened incumbent. So it is with a bit of surprise — indeed, disbelief and no shortage of cheer — that events may turn out even better than if Mr. Moussavi had won, analysts said.

"The Arab leaders are watching, and they are very pleased," Mr. Gad said. "The Ahmadinejad after this election will be very different than the Ahmadinejad before this election. He will be weaker."

There is, analysts acknowledged, a potentially darker scenario that could emerge, one in which Mr. Ahmadinejad comes out of this crisis even less concerned about domestic opinion than before and more aggressive in his outlook. Analysts said this could prove difficult for him, though, because of the deep splits that the conflict has already caused among the political elite. But Iran's support for Hamas and Hezbollah is institutional — not dependent on the president.

Mona El-Naggar contributed reporting.

UN should help govt push Burmese reconciliation

By: ACHARA ASHAYAGACHAT

Published: 26/06/2009 at 12:00 AM

Newspaper section: News

More than 3,000 Karen, mostly women and children, have fled from Burma into Thailand to escape heavy fighting since June 2. The influx is creating problems for Thailand which, as Burma's neighbour and chairman of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, is justified in wanting a say on how well the junta's national reconciliation plan is going. In the past 24 years, more than 150,000 displaced persons, mostly members of ethnic groups, have fled from Burma into Thailand, which provides shelter for the Burmese at nine camps along the 2,400km border.

The army has also extended shelter to the most recent 3,000 Karen arrivals, and non-governmental organisations are providing basic humanitarian assistance. However, the government has yet to say unequivocally how it will deal with the security problem at the border. Security agencies are reluctant to allow international organisations a bigger say in dealing with displaced people, although they would be happy if third countries could offer the Burmese migrants a home. But that is not a sustainable solution as long as the cause of the problem goes unaddressed.

Burma bristles when outsiders "interfere" in matters which it regards as domestic concerns. At times like these, Thailand also looks to the United Nations for a lead in addressing Burma's internal worries. The UN secretary-general's special envoy on Burma, Ibrahim Gambari, is scheduled to arrive in Burma again today for a one-day visit. While there, he should raise the problem of refugees sheltering on Thai soil. As Asean chairman, Thailand has called on the UN to intervene in Burma's national reconciliation efforts. As Burma makes slow progress, patience is wearing thin. Blame for inaction should not be pinned on Asean alone. The UN should also take some responsibility.

Mr Gambari, on his eighth visit to Burma, will hopefully obtain at least one concession. That is to secure a guarantee from the junta that it will receive UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon early next month. Mr Ban is visiting Japan from June 30 to July 2 and a trip to Burma could be added to the itinerary, said UN undersecretary-general on public information Kiyo Akasaka. Mr Ban, he said, might not be seen as powerful or convincing in the eyes of the media in dealing with the Burmese government. "However, he does carry weight, and strength," Mr Akasaka said. It is quiet diplomacy that counted and Mr Ban has negotiated with the Burmese leader - but not in an unpleasant way as many people seem to expect. "Burma is aware of Ban Ki-moon's stance. He wants to return to the country to discuss matters beyond what was set down - talks on relief efforts for last year's Cyclone Nargis," he said.

US and S.Korea hold security talks on N.Korea

By: AFP

Published: 26/06/2009 at 04:58 PM

The United States and South Korea Friday held high-level security talks amid high tensions sparked by North Korea's nuclear sabre-rattling, officials said. The meeting between US undersecretary for defence Michele Flournoy and South Korean Defence Minister Lee Sang-Hee lasted for about 30 minutes, Lee's office said.

North Korea topped the agenda, a defence ministry spokesman said, declining to give further details. The North has alarmed the international community by vowing to build more nuclear bombs after the UN slapped new sanctions on the reclusive state for carrying out its second nuclear test and missile launches last month.

The UN Security Council has authorised an arms embargo and inspections of North Korean ships believed to be carrying weapons of mass destruction. Flournoy's Asian trip, which also included stops in Beijing and Tokyo, came as a US Navy destroyer tracked a North Korean ship suspected of carrying a banned cargo.

US officials have said that the ship, the Kang Nam 1, was being tracked by the Aegis destroyer USS John S. McCain under the UN sanctions and could be headed to Burma. South Korea's YTN television news channel, citing an unnamed intelligence source, reported on Sunday the ship was suspected of carrying missiles or related parts and was heading for Burma via Singapore.

The US Defence Department has said that the ship was still being monitored but declined to give its location or say if or when the US Navy might ask to search it. The North has reacted defiantly to the new sanctions. Rodong Sinmun, newspaper of the ruling communist party, warned Thursday that "dark clouds of nuclear war" were gathering over the peninsula. It said Pyongyang would strengthen its atomic arsenal.

Rebels target Tak Bai judges

Leaked letter warns of further killings

By: POST REPORTERS

Published: 26/06/2009 at 12:00 AM

Southern insurgents are threatening the lives of the two senior judges who presided over the inquest into the 2004 Tak Bai deaths in Narathiwat, a security source says. The Interior Ministry's intelligence and special affairs office has sent a confidential letter to the Songkhla provincial court chief to warn of a plot to kill the two judges who are requesting to be transferred from the province, the source said yesterday. The judges presided over a special inquest at Songkhla provincial court and on May 29 cleared security forces of any wrongdoing in their handling of the Tak Bai protesters on Oct 25, 2004. They said security personnel had acted in full accordance with the law and in a justified manner.

Following a demonstration, unarmed Malay Muslims were packed on top of one another in the back of military trucks to be taken to detention, but 78 died from suffocation on the way. In all, 85 people died that day. The source said judges Yingyos Tan-orachorn and Jutharat Sanseewee had asked Supreme Court president Virat Limvichai, also chair of the Judicial Commission, to transfer them out of Songkhla. Their requests have yet to be approved. Office of the Judiciary deputy secretary-general Sarawut Benjakul said yesterday the transfer requests would be raised in today's meeting of the Judicial Commission. The confidential letter mentioned judges Yingyos and Jutharat were the main targets of an insurgency plot. Core leaders of the insurgents wanted to kill the two judges because of their ruling.

The insurgents had also resolved to carry out more attacks on weak targets, including teachers, students, children and state employees, said the source, quoting the confidential letter. Meanwhile Deputy Interior Minister Thaworn Senneam said security leaders should withdraw soldiers who were not under the command of the 4th Army Region which directly supervises the deep South. He said the root cause of southern unrest stemmed from conflicts over culture and ethnicity which local soldiers might understand better than their counterparts from other regions. Pol Maj-Gen Detnarong Suthicharnbancha, the chief of a southern police operation centre, said a 200,000 baht bounty had been placed on the heads of the Al-Furqan mosque attackers.

On June 8, a violent attack on the mosque in Cho Airong district of Narathiwat left 10 worshippers dead and 12 others injured. Social critic Prawase Wasi said the government's policy to increase security personnel in the deep South would not bring permanent peace to the region. He noted centralised power was partly to blame for the violence. Instead of the use of force, a multicultural approach should be incorporated into solving the problem, he said.

EDITORIAL Policy failure fans South fire

Published: 26/06/2009 at 12:00 AM

It has been said countless times before, and the recent report by the International Crisis Group (ICG) says it again: The southern strife is rooted in deep historical wounds which are kept alive by state oppression of the southern Muslims' ethnic Malay identity and political aspirations.

Unless the government and military clean up their act, there is no stopping successive generations of ideological Malay youths from joining the deep South's enduring armed struggle against the Thai Buddhist state. It is very likely that this message will fall on deaf ears once again. Worse, since the report focuses on the role of Islamic schools in fostering Malay nationalism and how some traditional ponoh (religious schools) are engaged in clandestine recruitment of new militants, security personnel may feel they have more legitimacy in stepping up the crackdown.

Now in its fifth year, the current southern insurgency has generated numerous research probing its causes and recommending policy solutions. The general assumption is that policy failure stems from lack of information. These studies, including a comprehensive one by the now-defunct National Reconciliation Commission, similarly highlight ethnic discrimination and political oppression as the causes of the locals' grievances and their desire for more self-governing to safeguard their cultural identity. But these studies have failed to instigate any significant policy changes. This is because the southern insurgency is not about lack of information. It is about deep prejudices. More precisely, it is about the clash between ethno-centric Malay Muslim and Thai Buddhist nationalism.

Amid the state's failure to stem the southern violence and to pin down militant organisations, the ICG report entitled "Recruiting Militants in Southern Thailand" sheds some light on how students in Islamic schools are targeted, indoctrinated, radicalised and militarily trained to join the insurgency with the use of mystical rituals to maintain their secrecy and loyalty.

But if the Islamic schools in the southernmost provinces are guilty of fostering Malay nationalism by glorifying the past of their old Pattani sultanate and by passing on the history of hurt and hatred against the state, Thai schools are committing the same crime by brainwashing young minds that the country belongs to ethnic Thais only and that other ethnic minorities are mere outsiders who should not enjoy the same rights as equal citizens.

The insurgents see themselves as freedom fighters who feel no qualms about the indiscriminate killing of innocents. The soldiers and security personnel see themselves as patriots who risk their lives for national sovereignty. And mainstream society tacitly endorses state abuse as a means to weed out insurgents, although this only triggers fiercer local resistance and violence. This is the poison of racist nationalism.

The report cautions against stigmatising all Islamic schools as militant breeding grounds and against indiscriminate crackdowns on militant suspects. Instead, respect the local culture, stop the abuse, punish the abusers, and allow the locals to take charge through more self-governing, it recommends.

Again, these recommendations are not new. More reports will say more of the same. Yet change will not come until the Thai state learns to embrace cultural pluralism and stops its systematic brainwashing of ultra nationalism. Only then can there be hope for the government to undo the wrong and for Malay and Thai nationalism to co-exist without violent collision. Only then.

UN troubleshooter due in Burma

By: AFP

Published: 26/06/2009 at 09:58 AM

UN troubleshooter Ibrahim Gambari was due in Burma to prepare for a visit by Secretary General Ban Ki-moon against the backdrop of the ongoing trial of democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi. Gambari would confer with members of the ruling junta and politicians including members of the party of Aung San Suu Kyi, who faces up to five years in jail for breaching the terms of her house arrest, UN sources said. He is to brief the UN chief on the outcome of his mission and Ban will then decide whether to go ahead with plans to visit Burma early next month, according to the UN sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

A Burma official who would not be named said Gambari would arrive Friday and leave Saturday. He would land in the main city of Rangoon at 9:20 am (0250 GMT) and travel to the administrative capital Naypyidaw, the official said. The UN boss and Gambari have been trying to persuade Burma's military regime to free all political detainees, including Aung San Suu Kyi, and to steer their country on the path to democracy and national reconciliation.

Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel peace prize laureate, has spent 13 of the past 19 years in detention since the ruling generals refused to recognise the landslide victory of her National League for Democracy (NLD) in 1990 elections. She is being held on charges of violating her house arrest after an American man swam to her lakeside house earlier this year. Aung San Suu Kyi's party spokesman and lawyer Nyan Win said her trial would continue at Insein prison on Friday and he did not yet know if Gambari would meet with the detained democracy leader.

"We will go to the trial at Insein prison today at 10:00 am. Like his previous visit he might meet with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi but we haven't got any information yet," Nyan Win told AFP. The charges against her come amid a wide-ranging crackdown on the opposition that has been carried out since the ruling generals crushed protests led by Buddhist monks in 2007. Burma, formerly known as Myanmar, has been ruled by the military since 1962.

G8 ministers hammering out Iran statement

By: AFP

Published: 26/06/2009 at 09:58 AM

Group of Eight foreign ministers meeting in Italy were expected to condemn post-election violence in Iran while keeping the door open to dialogue with the Islamic republic. As the ministers opened the three days of talks Thursday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warned against isolating Iran, saying it was the "wrong approach." His Italian counterpart Franco Frattini said the G8 was working on "a good document that would include condemnation... but at the same time one that will recognise that electoral procedures are an Iranian question."

Tensions have been rising between Iran and the West over Tehran's suppression of mass street protests sparked by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's contested re-election. Russia has refused to condemn Iran for the turmoil since the June 12 poll, calling it an internal matter, but Moscow has called on Tehran to resolve the dispute peacefully through constitutional means. Lavrov suggested that harsh words would undermine the more important goal of addressing Iran's nuclear programme. "We must focus on the main objectives that will allow us to move forward to resolve the problem of Iran's nuclear programme," he said.

Frattini's spokesman Maurizio Massari insisted "there's no division" among the ministers, who were seeking to balance the need to respond forcefully to the crackdown while "keeping the door open as much as possible for the future." "It is not for us to say how internal procedures should be activated or modified to reach" a peaceful solution to the crisis, he told a press briefing. The Group of Eight -- Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia and the United States -- kicked off the gathering with a working dinner at the Palazzo della Regione in the city overlooking the Adriatic Sea.

The Italian foreign minister earlier voiced confidence that the world powers would stand together in condemning the Islamic regime over violence that has left at least 17 dead, according to state media. "Iran is at a turning point," Frattini said. "It must now choose whether or not it wants to keep the door open to dialogue with the international community -- because the open hand from the United States, that we supported, must not be greeted with a hand covered in blood." US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who is recovering from an elbow injury, could not attend the talks, and is represented by the State Department's number three William Burns.

The meeting had been initially scheduled to focus on stabilising Afghanistan and advancing the Middle East peace process. On Friday, an expanded G8 meeting with regional players will be held to shore up peace efforts in Afghanistan as the Taliban insurgency rages on, nearly eight years after the Islamic militia was ousted from Kabul.

Pakistan's top diplomat Makhdoom Mahmood Qureshi and his Afghan counterpart Rangin Dadfar Spanta will attend, as well as Indian External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna, among others with key roles in the region. Also Friday, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is to attend a meeting of the diplomatic quartet on the Middle East in a bid to jumpstart Israeli-Palestinian talks.

The Quartet principals from the European Union, Russia, the United States and the United Nations are also hoping to meet with League of Arab states members to move forward on a roadmap that calls for the creation of a Palestinian state. The foreign ministers' meeting, which ends on Saturday, is laying the groundwork for the G8 summit in two weeks in L'Aquila, the central Italian city devastated by an earthquake in April.

Suthep: No talks with BRN

By: BangkokPost.com

Published: 26/06/2009 at 01:24 PM

The government will not enter into talks with a southern separatist group as suggested by former prime minister Gen Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, Deputy Prime Minister Suthep Thaugsuban insisted on Friday.

Gen Chavalit said during a panel discussion on security in the southern border provinces on Thursday that the present government had failed to tackle the problems.

He also read out a letter from the Barisan Revolusi Nasional (BRN), a separatist group, which said it wanted talks with the government.

Mr Suthep said the government has a clear policy for dealing with the southern problem. Under this policy, while government officials must respect the human rights of the people, they must not tolerate violations of the law.

The government had not been informed of the BRN letter, he said, but would definitely not hold talks with any separatist group because doing so would lead to other problems.

"I respect Gen Chavalit because he is a former prime minister, but this does not mean everything he says is right," Mr Suthep said.

Rebels target Tak Bai judges

Leaked letter warns of further killings

By: POST REPORTERS

Published: 26/06/2009 at 12:00 AM

Newspaper section: News

Southern insurgents are threatening the lives of the two senior judges who presided over the inquest into the 2004 Tak Bai deaths in Narathiwat, a security source says. The Interior Ministry's intelligence and special affairs office has sent a confidential letter to the Songkhla provincial court chief to warn of a plot to kill the two judges who are requesting to be transferred from the province, the source said yesterday. The judges presided over a special inquest at Songkhla provincial court and on May 29 cleared security forces of any wrongdoing in their handling of the Tak Bai protesters on Oct 25, 2004. They said security personnel had acted in full accordance with the law and in a justified manner.

Following a demonstration, unarmed Malay Muslims were packed on top of one another in the back of military trucks to be taken to detention, but 78 died from suffocation on the way. In all, 85 people died that day. The source said judges Yingyos Tan-orachorn and Jutharat Sanseewee had asked Supreme Court president Virat Limvichai, also chair of the Judicial Commission, to transfer them out of Songkhla. Their requests have yet to be approved. Office of the Judiciary deputy secretary-general Sarawut Benjakul said yesterday the transfer requests would be raised in today's meeting of the Judicial Commission.

The confidential letter mentioned judges Yingyos and Jutharat were the main targets of an insurgency plot. Core leaders of the insurgents wanted to kill the two judges because of their ruling. The insurgents had also resolved to carry out more attacks on weak targets, including teachers, students, children and state employees, said the source, quoting the confidential letter. Meanwhile Deputy Interior Minister Thaworn Senneam said security leaders should withdraw soldiers who were not under the command of the 4th Army Region which directly supervises the deep South.

He said the root cause of southern unrest stemmed from conflicts over culture and ethnicity which local soldiers might understand better than their counterparts from other regions. Pol Maj-Gen Detnarong Suthicharnbancha, the chief of a southern police operation centre, said a 200,000 baht bounty had been placed on the heads of the Al-Furqan mosque attackers. On June 8, a violent attack on the mosque in Cho Airong district of Narathiwat left 10 worshippers dead and 12 others injured.

Social critic Prawase Wasi said the government's policy to increase security personnel in the deep South would not bring permanent peace to the region. He noted centralised power was partly to blame for the violence. Instead of the use of force, a multicultural approach should be incorporated into solving the problem, he said.

EDITORIAL Policy failure fans South fire

Published: 26/06/2009 at 12:00 AM

Newspaper section: News

It has been said countless times before, and the recent report by the International Crisis Group (ICG) says it again: The southern strife is rooted in deep historical wounds which are kept alive by state oppression of the southern Muslims' ethnic Malay identity and political aspirations.

Unless the government and military clean up their act, there is no stopping successive generations of ideological Malay youths from joining the deep South's enduring armed struggle against the Thai Buddhist state. It is very likely that this message will fall on deaf ears once again. Worse, since the report focuses on the role of Islamic schools in fostering Malay nationalism and how some traditional ponoh (religious schools) are engaged in clandestine recruitment of new militants, security personnel may feel they have more legitimacy in stepping up the crackdown.

Now in its fifth year, the current southern insurgency has generated numerous research probing its causes and recommending policy solutions. The general assumption is that policy failure stems from lack of information. These studies, including a comprehensive one by the now-defunct National Reconciliation Commission, similarly highlight ethnic discrimination and political oppression as the causes of the locals' grievances and their desire for more self-governing to safeguard their cultural identity. But these studies have failed to instigate any significant policy changes. This is because the southern insurgency is not about lack of information. It is about deep prejudices. More precisely, it is about the clash between ethno-centric Malay Muslim and Thai Buddhist nationalism.

Amid the state's failure to stem the southern violence and to pin down militant organisations, the ICG report entitled "Recruiting Militants in Southern Thailand" sheds some light on how students in Islamic schools are targeted, indoctrinated, radicalised and militarily trained to join the insurgency with the use of mystical rituals to maintain their secrecy and loyalty.

But if the Islamic schools in the southernmost provinces are guilty of fostering Malay nationalism by glorifying the past of their old Pattani sultanate and by passing on the history of hurt and hatred against the state, Thai schools are committing the same crime by brainwashing young minds that the country belongs to ethnic Thais only and that other ethnic minorities are mere outsiders who should not enjoy the same rights as equal citizens.

The insurgents see themselves as freedom fighters who feel no qualms about the indiscriminate killing of innocents. The soldiers and security personnel see themselves as patriots who risk their lives for national sovereignty. And mainstream society tacitly endorses state abuse as a means to weed out insurgents, although this only triggers fiercer local resistance and violence. This is the poison of racist nationalism.

The report cautions against stigmatising all Islamic schools as militant breeding grounds and against indiscriminate crackdowns on militant suspects. Instead, respect the local culture, stop the abuse, punish the abusers, and allow the locals to take charge through more self-governing, it recommends.

Again, these recommendations are not new. More reports will say more of the same. Yet change will not come until the Thai state learns to embrace cultural pluralism and stops its systematic brainwashing of ultra nationalism. Only then can there be hope for the government to undo the wrong and for Malay and Thai nationalism to co-exist without violent collision. Only then.

Politics

SOUTH CRISIS

Justice needed in far south : Gen Chavalit

Published on June 26, 2009

Most Malay-Muslims in the deep South have never wanted to separate from Thailand but merely hoped for justice and fairness from Bangkok, former prime minister Chavalit Yongchaiyud said yesterday.

In his speech to commemorate the 60th anniversary of Siam Rath newspaper, Chavalit said only the Patani United Liberation Organisation (PULO) considers separation. Muslims who have lived in the southernmost provinces for a long time do not push for independence.

For another movement, the Barisan Revolusi Nasional, or BRN, the call is for justice, he said. Chavalit read out a letter from BRN asking the government under Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva to restore justice for the people in the predominantly Muslim region.

Chavalit quoted the BRN as saying the situation is far from peaceful because those who hold power have created a tense situation. The government is unable to control the military which does not want peace - and the military would never allow the government to enforce a politic-led strategy, he said.

"Don't say a politic-led strategy is being used - as long as the government cannot distinguish between political and military means," Chavalit said.

A demonstration of how the government is unable to bring justice to people, he said, is the case of Sama-ae Thanam - one of a group of PULO leaders arrested in 1998 in Malaysia and handed over to Thai authorities who sentenced him to death, commuted to life imprisonment.

The failure of peace negotiations since Somchai Wongsawat's government has intensified the violence and the enforcement of emergency laws worsened the situation, Chavalit said, quoting the BRN letter.

Iran's anti-reform cleric

The Islamic Republic's supreme leader no longer has the last word, writes **Roula Khalaf**

Man in the News

AYATOLLAH ALI KHAMENEI

Not long ago, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was in an enviable position. Manipulating the levers of power from behind the scenes, the 70-year-old turbaned cleric with oversized glasses was credited with every pragmatic decision taken by the Islamic Republic. Iran's belligerence and extremism, meanwhile, were conveniently laid at the feet of the firebrand president, Mahmoud Ahmadi-Nejad. When the supreme leader spoke, he delivered the last word. No one dared contradict him, or offer an alternative opinion.

But that was before disputes erupted over the presidential election a fortnight ago, before Mr Khamenei declared the controversial vote "a divine victory", and before he unleashed his forces to repress peaceful opposition. Now his followers are forced to remind Iranians, time and again, that he had spoken "the last word". The rage of Iran's protesters has turned against him, with an "I hate Khamenei campaign" launched on Facebook, and cries of *Allahu Akbar* on rooftops at night, an act of defiance borrowed from the days of the 1979 revolution, designed to tell him that no one is above God.

These days, Mir-Hossein Mousavi, the opposition leader who says the election was stolen from him, issues statements responding to the ayatollah. It is not in the interest of the country, he said this week, for the supreme leader to be "equated" with the president. And no, he had no intention of bowing to the brutal pressure and accept-

ing a rigged election result.

As Iran has been gripped by the most intense upheaval since the revolution, Mr Khamenei's abandonment of his traditional role as the neutral arbiter of factional disputes appears to have been a grave miscalculation. He underestimated the mood of the country and the fury of the reformist opposition. His emphatic backing for Mr Ahmadi-Nejad as winner of the election, and hints that the Moussavi campaign was akin to a "velvet revolution" instigated from abroad have torn society apart and plunged the regime into a severe power struggle.

How he reached this point is the mystery many Iranians are trying to unravel. No doubt it is tied to his perception that the Moussavi campaign, backed by the wily Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, his main rival in the regime, was a menace to his own position as supreme leader. As Kayhan, the hardline newspaper, said in a recent editorial, Mr Moussavi crossed "red lines" when he described the leader-approved foreign policy of Mr Ahmadi-Nejad as a "disaster".

The leader's decision to stick with the president is probably also born out of his obsession with reformists, whom he has been determined to crush. As he admitted last week, his views are closest to Mr Ahmadi-Nejad's. Politicians in Tehran say the leader appreciates the president's elevation of Iran into a regional power to be reckoned with, as well as his dogged support for a nuclear programme.

Indeed, the election crisis must be seen in the context of the ayatollah's apparent anxiety over a changing international environment, in which the America he has despised for so long is suddenly offering a

friendly hand. As a study of the leader by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace concluded last year, Mr Khamenei has "a remarkably consistent and coherent, though highly cynical and conspiratorial view of the world", that rests on opposition to US hegemony and disdain for Israel.

Western diplomats in Tehran believe the leader has no intention of accepting limits on Iran's nuclear programme, and so views engagement with the US as a threat. "If he has to engage, then at least he wants his point man - Ahmadi-Nejad - in place to do it," says one diplomat.

Although Mr Khamenei had been known to listen to all sides in the regime, Mr Rafsanjani's allies say that he has relied increasingly in recent years on the president and his administration, as well as the Revolutionary Guard - whose power has expanded at the expense of the clerics. The rising influence of hardliners has been compounded by that of the leader's reactionary eldest son, Mojtaba.

Ironically perhaps, Mr Khamenei started his religious career as an open-minded cleric. Reputed to live a simple life, he is an avid reader - one relative says his library counts 10,000 books. He is a cinema buff, inviting film-makers to screen movies at his house, and a music lover, having once played the *tar*, the Iranian lute.

Born to a father who was also a cleric (and a cousin of Mr Mousavi's father), he became a disciple of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who led the revolution. He preached Khomeini's teachings about Islamic government and was punished with several years in prison under the Shah.

He was not pre-destined to

become supreme leader and only reached the rank of grand ayatollah after his nomination for the top position. But Khomeini had fallen out with his designated heir, Grand Ayatollah Hossein-Ali Montazeri, who had opposed the mass execution of opponents. It was, many believe, the influence of Mr Rafsanjani, who was close to Khomeini, which had, upon the supreme leader's death in 1989, swayed the clerical establishment in favour of Mr Khamenei.

At the time, Mr Khamenei was serving as president, running the country with Mr Mousavi, prime minister and a Khomeini favourite. He repeatedly clashed with Mr Mousavi, partly over Mr Khamenei's more liberal economic views.

The two men are squaring off again, but now in a more dangerous duel. Mr Rafsanjani, too, is back in the picture, this time as the regime insider rallying support against Mr Khamenei and in favour of Mr Mousavi.

Even Mr Montazeri, who has been a dissident cleric, has re-emerged to add his weight to the debate. "The nation's votes are valuable, popular and Godly assets and any government based on altering them has no legitimacy," he warned in a letter last week.

Mr Khamenei may have had a point when he told the nation a week ago that all the actors in the Iran crisis are part of the Islamic regime's family. But he was wrong to suggest that this meant the system remained strong and healthy. The family he rules over today is at its most dysfunctional, its feuds so bitter and violent that they threaten its very existence.

Additional reporting by Najmeh Bozorgmehr

Not enough audacity



**Paul
Krugman**

When it comes to domestic policy, there are two Barack Obamas.

On one side there's Barack the Policy Wonk, whose command of the issues — and ability to explain those issues in plain English — is a joy to behold.

But on the other side there's Barack the Post-Partisan, who searches for common ground where none exists, and whose negotiations with himself lead to policies that are far too weak.

Both Baracks were on display in the president's press conference earlier this week. First, Mr. Obama offered a crystal-clear explanation of the case for health care reform, and especially of the case for a public option competing with private insurers. "If private insurers say that the marketplace provides the best quality health care, if they tell us that they're offering a good deal," he asked, "then why is it that the government, which they say can't run anything, suddenly is going to drive them out of business? That's not logical."

But when asked whether the public option was non-negotiable he waffled, declaring that there are no "lines in the sand." That evening, Rahm Emanuel met with Democratic senators and told them — well, it's not clear what he said. Initial reports had him declaring willingness to abandon the public option, but Senator Kent Conrad's staff later denied that. Still, the impression everyone got was of a White House all too

eager to make concessions.

The big question here is whether health care is about to go the way of the stimulus bill.

At the beginning of this year, you may remember, Mr. Obama made an eloquent case for a strong economic stimulus — then delivered a proposal falling well short of what independent analysts (and, I suspect, his own economists) considered necessary. The goal, presumably, was to attract bipartisan support. But in the event, Mr. Obama was able to pick up only three Senate Republicans

Will Obama compromise so much to get a health plan through Congress that it won't do the job?

by making a plan that was already too weak even weaker.

At the time, some of us warned about what might happen: If unemployment surpassed the administration's optimistic projections, Republicans wouldn't accept the need for more

stimulus. Instead, they'd declare the whole economic policy a failure. And that's exactly how it's playing out. With the unemployment rate now almost certain to pass 10 percent, there's an overwhelming economic case for more stimulus. But as a political matter it's going to be harder, not easier, to get that extra stimulus now than it would have been to get the plan right in the first place.

The point is that if you're making big policy changes, the final form of the policy has to be good enough to do the job. You might think that half a loaf is always better than none — but it isn't if the failure of half-measures ends up discrediting your whole policy approach.

Which brings us back to health care. It would be a crushing blow to progressive hopes if Mr. Obama doesn't succeed in getting some form of universal care through Congress. But even so, reform isn't worth having if you can only

get it on terms so compromised that it's doomed to fail.

What will determine the success or failure of reform? Above all, the success of reform depends on successful cost control. We really, really don't want to get into a position a few years from now where premiums are rising rapidly, many Americans are priced out of the insurance market despite government subsidies, and the cost of health care subsidies is a growing strain on the budget.

And that's why the public plan is an important part of reform: It would help keep costs down through a combination of low overhead and bargaining power. That's not an abstract hypothesis, it's a conclusion based on solid experience. Currently, Medicare has much lower administrative costs than private insurance companies, while federal health care programs other than Medicare (which isn't allowed to bargain over drug prices) pay much less for prescription drugs than non-federal buyers. There's every reason to believe that a public option could achieve similar savings.

Indeed, the prospects for such savings are precisely what have the opponents of a public plan so terrified. Mr. Obama was right: if they really believed their own rhetoric about government waste and inefficiency, they wouldn't be so worried that the public option would put private insurers out of business. Behind the boilerplate about big government, rationing and all that lies the real concern: fear that the public plan would succeed.

So Mr. Obama and Democrats in Congress have to hang tough — no more gratuitous giveaways in the attempt to sound reasonable. And reform advocates have to keep up the pressure to stay on track. Yes, the perfect is the enemy of the good; but so is the not-good-enough-to-work. Health reform has to be done right.

The Jakarta Post

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Editorial: For Muslims only

, , | Sat, 06/27/2009 11:03 AM | Opinion

Many of us Jakartans probably don't realize the danger of the tendency toward segregation in Greater Jakarta, where people choose to live in exclusive areas for those of the same religion. It is very likely that in other cities, it is becoming easier to find residential areas that are provided exclusively for certain groups.

All stakeholders in this city need to wake up to this unhealthy trend before it's too late, when people will want to live, work and socialize only with people come from same religion, ethnicity or social and economic backgrounds.

This newspaper in its City page (page 21) ran a report about the growing preference of Muslims in Depok to live in exclusive Islamic residences. Such residential areas include Permata Darrusalam, Pesona Madani and Mawar Residence. Such residential areas can also be found elsewhere in Greater Jakarta, like in Tangerang, as well as in neighboring Banten, which boasts the Islamic Village and Villa Ilhami. The residents argue they like to live in such "enclaves" because they want to live in an Islamic atmosphere. It means they want to make sure their children grow up, socialize and are educated in purely Islamic ways.

Property developers see this trend as a lucrative business opportunity. But it is hard to understand why the government does not take strong action to discourage this trend. The city administration has the obligation to make sure people are restricted to living in an area just because they are different from their neighbors. It is disappointing that the government allows this negative trend.

It is not impossible that Nahdlatul Ulama or Muhammadiyah members only want to live among fellow members. It can also happen with people from other religions. Do we want to see exclusive residential areas for Catholics, Protestants, Buddhists or Hindus, or exclusive housing complexes for Javanese, Bataks, Sundanese or Chinese? In the past, there are many complaints that our Chinese compatriots preferred to form enclaves for themselves, like the housing compounds in West Jakarta and North Jakarta -Kelapa Gading, Pluit and Pantai Indah Kapuk.

It is really a setback because it occurs despite our efforts to create a modern and pluralistic society, which was introduced by our founding fathers and had become their commitment long before they declared the establishment of this country.

Therefore, all parties who believe that unity in diversity is a really fitting slogan for our country should do something to prevent such a trend from growing.

And because Islam is the religion of the majority of this population, we wonder why there are Muslims who feel insecure living alongside people of other religions. The government and all

stakeholders are responsible for making sure the state treats all Indonesians equally. But is the government aware of the threat of segregation?

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The true colors of Tehran



WILLIAM
PFAFF

Paris

The truly significant result of the suppressed Iranian revolt is that the most important Islamist radical movement in the contemporary world has demonstrated that it has become a brutally repressive dictatorship whose leaders rig elections and beat down clear popular demands for a true election count or repeat of the election itself.

This affair has nothing to do with the alleged war of civilizations or the machinations of the American Great Satan, or of the hereditary enemy of Iran, the British Empire. Rather, it is the consequence of the abuse of power by leaders who established a new form of religious republic, meant to combine what they believe is God's law, as set forth in the Quran, with the exigencies of modern politics and power, among them nuclear power, leading toward nuclear weapons to deter enemy Israel and Infidel America.

Iran has made itself the leading Islamic state in the Middle East, a republic standing alongside the traditional Muslim monarchies of Jordan, Morocco and Saudi Arabia. It was meant as a model of Muslim self-liberation from foreign oppressors.

It had been an exemplar in both 1951 and 1979 of popular uprising against Western domination, and subsequently of the installation of a modern Islamic form of government with a democratic substructure, controlled within clerical institutions, with a clerical Supreme Leader who spoke the divinely inspired

final word on government decisions.

This government now stands discredited internationally, as well as in the eyes of what clearly seems the majority of Iranians, who are ruled today by a massive deployment of police power for the sake of unaccountable personal or clan advantage of the leadership. They, and Muslims in general, should learn from this that the enemies are not all without — they are also within the Islamic world.

The Iranians have been revolutionaries twice in modern times, both times eventually submitting to foreign power. This time it is Iranian and Islamic power that abuses them, not foreign oppressors. Could they successfully revolt once more?

The first rebellion followed World War II occupation by Britain and the Soviet Union, followed by an attempt by the USSR to set up a Soviet-controlled splinter state in the north. Iran's constitutional movement goes back to 1906, when the shah at the time accepted a constitution and Parliament. The country was divided into czarist and British spheres of influence, and the United States took over from both after World War II. In 1945, the national movement was led by a veteran prewar parliamentarian, Muhammad Mossadegh, who demanded nationalization of the British-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Co.

When Parliament voted for nationalization, the shah was compelled to name Mossadegh prime minister. But Mossadegh's resistance to the terms demanded by Britain led to a political crisis in which the shah fled the country — to be brought back and reinstated by the CIA. Mossadegh was sent to prison for three years of solitary confinement, and then held in house arrest for the remainder of his life.

The shah encountered the second rebellion 28 years later, the CIA being unable to save him a second time. The successful Islamic revolt of 1979 installed the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, and

the revolutionaries sacked the U.S. Embassy to boot, successfully holding its members ransom for more than a year.

(Why this was allowed to happen remains a mystery. Instead of recognizing the seizure of the embassy as an implicit act of war, and detaining Iranian officials, businessmen and students in the U.S. for exchange under the auspices of the Red Cross, the Carter administration frantically forced all the Iranians in the country to leave the U.S. as fast as possible. The American embassy staff then endured 444 days imprisonment, and an ill-conceived military rescue fiasco, before the Iranians triumphantly handed them over to Ronald Reagan.)

The admirable Lebanese editor and commentator Rami G. Khouri has just written that ordinary Arabs elsewhere, living under autocratic and potentially vulnerable leaders of their own, have watched this Iranian uprising with "forlorn envy."

Why forlorn? What stops them from their own revolts if that is what they want? The Pakistan tribesmen of the Swat Valley, and elsewhere in the country's northwest territories, are even now fighting to expel Taliban intruders.

The Iranian revolt may not be over. But even if it is, Iranians will one day surely try again. The Iraqis, whose nation seems approaching another sectarian or ethnic precipice, could, if they had wanted, have saved themselves much bloodshed and misery by rebelling against Saddam Hussein themselves, as they had done against previous unwanted rulers.

People must make their own decisions. If not, they risk getting the governments, or the liberators, they deserve.

Visit William Pfaff's Web site at
www.williampfaff.com.

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Malaysia, Indonesia spat on maid dispute

By: AFP

Published: 28/06/2009 at 10:58 AM

Malaysia said it could turn to other neighbouring countries to recruit maids if Indonesia continues to ban its nationals from coming here to work as domestic helpers. Indonesian labour minister Erman Suparno said Thursday his country would stop sending domestic helpers to Malaysia at least until a mid-July bilateral meeting in Kuala Lumpur to discuss a new migrant worker agreement.

It comes after a 43-year-old Malaysian woman was charged earlier this month with causing grievous bodily harm to an Indonesian woman she employed as a maid, allegedly beating her with a cane and dousing her with boiling water.

But Malaysia's human resources minister S. Subramaniam told state media late Saturday it would have been better had Indonesia explored all avenues of discussion before taking its action. "If the decision (to temporarily ban maids) is final, then we will decide on the best option available, like looking at the possibility of getting domestic helpers from other Asean (Association of Southeast Asian) countries," he told state news agency Bernama.

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak pledged earlier Saturday that tough action would be taken against anyone abusing Indonesian maids, urging employers to take greater interest in their welfare. "We have to take stern action under the law against those who abuse maids," Najib told reporters.

Subramaniam said an average of 50 maid abuse cases were reported annually out of the 300,000 Indonesian maids working in Malaysia. Malaysia has no laws governing the working conditions for domestic workers but has promised to draft legislation to protect them from sexual harassment, non-payment of wages and poor conditions.

About 1.2 million documented Indonesians are in Malaysia, with illegals estimated to number about 800,000.

EDITORIAL Mr Ban is needed

Published: 28/06/2009 at 12:00 AM

Newspaper section: News

United Nations special envoy to Burma Ibrahim Gambari arrived in Rangoon on Friday and was driven to the capital of Naypyidaw to meet Foreign Minister Nyan Win. It was Mr Gambari's eighth visit to Burma to try to promote political reconciliation between the military government and the pro-democracy movement led by Aung San Suu Kyi, who is the figurehead for the National League for Democracy (NLD). Mr Gambari flew out last night after failing to meet with either Ms Suu Kyi, who is now imprisoned in Insein Prison in Rangoon, or Senior General Than Shwe.

Through no shortage of effort on Mr Gambari's part, such diplomatic moves have come to be accompanied by a general lack of expectation due to the obstinacy of the military regime. This time the special envoy's trip had been billed as a preparation for a visit by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon early next month. Reportedly the final decision on the UN chief's trip will be made after Mr Gambari briefs Mr Ban upon his return to the UN headquarters in New York. Indications are that the UN chief will make the trip, and that is exactly what he should do.

Mr Ban is said to be especially keen to press the Burmese leadership on the release of Ms Suu Kyi, who is on trial for allegedly violating the terms of her house arrest by allowing an uninvited, trespassing American man to stay in her home. The trial, which is set to resume on July 3, is a sham of course, and that fact will be all the more difficult to hide in the media attention surrounding a possible visit by Mr Ban.

According to some sources, one factor that could discourage him from coming is the possibility that the military junta could use the visit as a propaganda tool, to suggest that the UN approves of the junta's handling of the trial against Ms Suu Kyi.

The remedy for that is simply the kind of candid commitment to human rights and democratisation that Mr Ban has shown all along with regard to Burma. In addition to pressing for the release of Ms Suu Kyi and other political prisoners, if he does decide to come Mr Ban should bring up the renewed assault on ethnic Karen by Burmese security forces, which has sent thousands fleeing onto Thai soil in recent last weeks, as discussed in a column on this page on Friday. In the past 24 years, more than 150,000 displaced persons, mostly members of ethnic groups, have fled from Burma into Thailand, which provides shelter for the Burmese at nine camps along the 2,400km border. The army has also extended shelter to the most recent Karen arrivals, and NGOs are providing basic humanitarian assistance. Also on Mr Ban's agenda should be a push for transparency and the inclusion of all political and ethnic groups in the general election in 2010.

It seems clear that the military government is intent on at least putting on a show of an election, which would require some sort of presence by the NLD. According to some within the opposition camp the NLD may boycott the election altogether if Ms Suu Kyi is not released. On the other hand, there are some who feel that the NLD will be declared an illegal party ahead of the election. As unlikely as it may be, Mr Ban should press for international election monitors.

At the same time, there can be little expectation that anything positive could come out of a trip by Mr Ban or anyone else if they adopt a purely aggressive posture with the generals. This is a job that requires true diplomacy, and success at this time may be measured in small steps and intangibles.

A high profile visit by the UN chief can only be a good thing. If the Burmese leadership were truly oblivious to world opinion they would not allow representatives from the UN in the first place. It may look as though the prospects for real change in Burma are bleak at this time, but that doesn't mean the UN, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations or the world should stop trying.

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The Jakarta Post

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Govt ban may lead to increase in illegal migration to Malaysia

The Associated Press , Kuala Lumpur | Sun, 06/28/2009 3:40 PM | National

Indonesia's decision to ban women from going to Malaysia to find employment as domestic workers in protest over a string of cases of reported abuse could prompt more Indonesians to work in the country illegally, a group representing maid-supply agencies said Sunday.

Raja Zulkeply Dahalan, president of the Malaysian Association of Foreign Housemaids Agencies, said some 4,000 Indonesian maids were recruited each month in Malaysia before Indonesia announced last week it would enforce a ban until greater protection and rights are ensured. More than 300,000 Indonesian women work as maids in the more prosperous Malaysia, outnumber those from every other country.

"If this deadlock continues, everybody will lose," Raja Zulkeply told The Associated Press. "There will be a shortage of maids, and it could encourage more illegal Indonesians to come here for work."

The association represents 153 of Malaysia's 350 private maid agencies, which recruit the maids, arrange for their visas and place them in homes, but are not responsible for their safety.

Raja Zulkeply said the agencies have paid hundreds of thousands of dollars in advance bookings to their Indonesian counterparts who supply the workers.

Senior officials from both countries will hold talks July 15 to seek a resolution to the dispute, which emerged after a series of cases involving the abuse of maids at the hands of their employers.

In the most recent case, a 25-year-old Indonesian claimed she was beaten and punched by her employer and had not been paid for two years. She was rescued with bruises and scars after a neighbor called the police. The case is under investigation.

Earlier this month, a Malaysian woman was charged with scalding her 33-year-old Indonesian maid with hot water and injuring her with scissors and a hammer.

Prime Minister Najib Razak pledged over the weekend that Malaysia would increase enforcement to curb abuses and improve the welfare of maids.

Malaysia has said it would change its labor laws to give maids a weekly day off and other benefits such as compensation for accidents at work. They will also get a list of telephone contacts for embassy, police and welfare officials to report abuse.

Raja Zulkepily said the association has urged the government to recruit domestic workers from other countries, such as Myanmar and China.

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National

Yala gunfight leaves 3 dead

Published on June 28, 2009

A brief gun battle yesterday morning between Thai security forces and suspected insurgents in Yala's Bannang Sata district left two officials and a suspected insurgent dead.

Following a tip-off, a combined force of the Army and police at 7.55am surrounded a house where insurgents of the same network as the late Masorbe Yako were said to be hiding in preparation to launch another attack on security forces.

As the officials were going into the house to search, the suspects inside opened fire on them, triggering a 10-minute gunfight. Later it was found that a suspect insurgent, Sofwan, or Supian Beunae, 26, who was wanted under the Emergency Law had killed with an M16 gun on him.

A Bannang Sata police officer, Pol Sgt-Major Sangsan Kalong, 39, and special task-force member, Sgt-Major 1st Class Pongsathorn Nirapai, were also killed, while special-task-force member Corporal Khamron Jommas, 24, sustained a head injury and was hospitalised.

After the gunfight, the officials called on any insurgents who might remain in the house to surrender but received no response, so they decided to raid the house at noon, using smoke bombs and tear gas, but found no one inside.

The officials also seized eight small gas tanks and three 15-kilogram gas tanks from the house and will question the sister of the deceased insurgent about what they planned to do with them.

The bathing rite was held for the two officials at 4pm at Wat Buddhaphumi in Nakhon Yala Municipality.

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Solidarity With Iran

President Obama finally found his voice on Iran last week, saying the world was “appalled and outraged” by the regime’s suppression of peaceful protests. Mr. Obama also hinted that he was prepared to reconsider direct negotiations with the regime. “We have provided a path whereby Iran can reach out to the international community,” he said. “What we’ve been seeing over the last several days, the last couple of weeks, obviously is not encouraging in terms of the path.”

So where do we go from here, particularly now that demonstrations are abating in the face of increased repression?

The place to begin is by studying the example of U.S. policy toward Solidarity, the Polish trade union that challenged the Communist regime in the early 1980s. As with the “Green Revolution” in Iran, Solidarity did not begin as a frontal assault on the regime itself, but rather as a peaceful shipyard strike. But it quickly grew into a broad social movement, encompassing shipyard and factory workers, intellectuals, priests and nearly everyone who didn’t have a direct stake in the regime’s survival.

The U.S. initially adopted a cautious approach toward Solidarity. The Carter Administration rewarded the Polish government with foreign loans and credits for not cracking down on the movement. Then-Presidential candidate Ronald Reagan also took a restrained view, saying he “didn’t believe it was our place to inter-

vene in a purely domestic affair.” But Solidarity gained greater traction with the American public and particularly with Lane Kirkland’s AFL-CIO, which began collecting donations for Solidarity while refusing to off-load cargo from Polish ships.

Not surprisingly—and as with Iran today—these expressions of public sympathy gave the regimes in Warsaw and Moscow the opportunity to blame the West for “meddling,” even as the U.S. gave Poland financial and food aid. But that ended in December 1981 after Warsaw imposed martial law, to which Reagan responded by suspending Poland’s most-favored-nation trading status and imposing sanctions.

Reagan also offered Solidarity crucial political support, even when the movement seemed crushed. “There are those who will argue that the Polish Government’s action marks the death of Solidarity,” he said in an October 1982 radio address. “I don’t believe this for a moment. Those who know Poland well understand that as long as the flame of freedom burns as brightly and intensely in the hearts of Polish men and women as it does today, the spirit of Solidarity will remain a vital force in Poland.”

That support did not go unnoticed inside Poland, despite the arrest of Solidarity’s leaders and thousands of others. The U.S. government also coordinated with the AFL-CIO, which smuggled money, printing presses and other equipment necessary to keep Solidarity an ac-

tive, underground force.

Also crucial was Pope John Paul II, with whom Reagan coordinated a clandestine aid program. It was an angle Reagan understood intuitively: “I have a feeling,” he wrote a friend in July 1981, “particularly in view of the Pope’s visit to Poland, that religion might very well turn out to be the Soviets’ Achilles’ heel.”

The Church’s involvement made a martyr of Jerzy Popieluszko, the charismatic priest whose sermons were broadcast on Radio Free Europe until his murder, by the secret police, in 1984. The confrontation served to underscore that the regime was morally bankrupt and could only be sustained by force. Ultimately, it was brought down by the combination of internal rebellion, economic pressure, Western support for Solidarity and a Soviet patron no longer prepared to send in tanks. When parliamentary elections were finally held in 1989—before the fall of the Berlin Wall—Solidarity took every seat but one.

Today’s Iran is different in many respects from 1980s Poland. The Iranian economy is a shambles, but the regime can sustain itself through oil and gas exports. Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei can claim his own religious authority. And opposition leader Mir Hossein Mousavi appears to be a man more in the mold of an Alexander Dubcek than Lech Walesa.

Then again, the Iranian regime is now openly detested by a huge segment of the

population, which has produced its own roster of martyrs. The repression has united the opposition and inspired global support, including some prominent former apologists for the mullahs. A large and restive trade union movement could become a locus of opposition, as could a growing number of prominent Shiite theologians who reject the idea of theocratic rule. The country is profoundly vulnerable to a gasoline embargo, for which there is pending legislation in Congress. Digital links to the outside world make it nearly impossible for the regime to arrest or murder dissidents without the world noticing.

All of which means that there are opportunities for the Obama Administration to exploit, provided it envisions a democratic and peaceful Iran as a strategic American aim. That doesn’t mean military confrontation with the mullahs. But it does require taking every opportunity to apply consistent pressure on Iran while exploiting its internal tensions and contradictions.

“I often wondered why Ronald Reagan did this, taking the risks he did, in supporting us at Solidarity,” Mr. Walesa wrote in these pages after Reagan died in 2004. “Let’s remember that it was a time of recession in the U.S. and a time when the American public was more interested in their own domestic affairs. It took a leader with a vision to convince them that there are greater things worth fighting for.”

The circumstances aren’t so different. With similar vision and leadership, the endgame could be the same.

Reagan’s Polish lesson for Obama and the American left.

Silence Has Consequences for Iran

By José María Aznar

If there hadn't been dissidents in the Soviet Union, the Communist regime never would have crumbled. And if the West hadn't been concerned about their fate, Soviet leaders would have ruthlessly done away with them. They didn't because the Kremlin feared the response of the Free World.

Just like the Soviet dissidents who resisted communism, those who dare to march through the streets of Tehran and stand up against the Islamic regime founded by the Ayatollah Khomeini 30 years ago represent the greatest hope for change in a country built on the repression of its people. At stake is nothing less than the legitimacy of a system incompatible with respect for individual rights. Also at stake is the survival of a theocratic regime that seeks to be the dominant power in the region, the indisputable spiritual leader of the Muslim world, and the enemy of the West.

The Islamic Republic that the ayatollahs have created is not just any power. To defend a strict interpretation of the Quran, Khomeini created the Pasdaran, the Revolutionary Guard, which today is a true army. To expand its ideology and influence Iran has not hesitated to create, sustain and use proxy terrorist groups like Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza. And to impose its fundamentalist vision beyond its borders, Iran is working frantically to obtain nuclear weapons.

Those who protest against the blatant electoral fraud that handed victory to the fanatical Mahmoud Ahmadinejad are in reality demanding a change of regime. Thus, the regime has resorted to beating and shooting its citizens in a desperate attempt to squash the pro-democracy movement.

This is no time for hesitation on the part of the West. If, as part of an attempt to reach an agreement on the Iranian nuclear program, the leaders of democratic nations turn their backs on the dissidents they will be making a terrible mistake.

President Obama has said he refuses to "meddle" in Iran's internal affairs, but this is a poor excuse for passivity. If the international community is not able to stop, or at least set limits on, the repressive violence of the Islamic regime, the protesters will end up as so many have in the past—in exile, in prison, or in the cemetery. And with them, all hope for change will be gone.

To be clear: Nobody in the circles of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei or Ahmadinejad is going to reward us for silence or inaction. On the contrary, failing to support the regime's critics will leave us with an emboldened Ahmadinejad, an atomic Iran, and dissidents that are disenchanted and critical of us. We cannot talk about freedom and democracy if we abandon our own principles.

Some do not want to recognize the spread of freedom in the Middle East. But it is clear that after decades of repression—religious and secular—the region is changing.

The recent elections in Lebanon are a clear example. The progressive normalization of Iraq is another. It would be a shame, particularly in the face of such regional progress, if our passivity gave carte blanche to a tyrannical regime to finish off the dissidents and persist with its revolutionary plans.

Delayed public displays of indignation may be good for internal political consumption. But the consequences of Western inaction have already materialized. Watching videos of innocent Iranians being brutalized, it's hard to defend silence.

Mr. Aznar is the former prime minister of Spain (1996-2004).

Milestone on road to Iraq sovereignty

US troop move is a big test of Maliki's leadership ability

The withdrawal of US troops from Iraq's towns and cities from tomorrow is, by any measure, an important milestone. The occupation authorities have many times before announced the restoration of sovereignty to Iraqis. This is more like the real thing.

Whether it will lead to Iraqis working together to rebuild their shattered state is another matter.

Security has improved enormously after the sectarian bloodbath of 2006-07. Yet, as last week's devastating bomb attacks show, the jihadis may have been beaten back but they have not gone away.

More fundamentally, the reform and reconciliation for which the US troops surge was meant to create space has not occurred.

Overmuch has been made of February's provincial elections, won by Nouri al-Maliki, prime minister, and widely interpreted as the victory of a re-emergent Iraqi nationalism over the religious parties.

Mr Maliki, whose Da'wa party is Iraq's original Islamist movement, is no nationalist. In a largely intra-Shia power play, he came out hard for a united Iraq, picking up a lot of the support base of Moqtada al-Sadr (who is essentially an Islamist nationalist) and outflanking the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, his main rival both at home and for the affections of Iran.

Mr Maliki's outlook and policies remain narrowly based. With the exception of some of the Sunni tribal militias in Anbar province – an important shield against al-Qaeda – he has spurned and hounded the *Sahwa* (Awakening) movement of the Sunni as a potential threat. His “nationalist” gambit has alienated his Kurdish allies. These are not small issues.

The jihadis are still menacingly present in the north around Mosul, watching the swell of Sunni disaffection. The dispute between Arabs and Kurds over the oil-rich Kirkuk region is ready to ignite. Baghdad's auctioning of oil contracts today – without a clear legal framework or revenue-sharing deal – will add a bit more tinder.

The US pullback will not only test an untried Iraqi army made up mainly of rebadged militias. It will be a big test of Mr Maliki's ability to outgrow his sectarian roots and become a leader of all Iraqis.

This is an important moment. But it is only the Iraqis who will decide whether they can summon the will to live together and put their nation and state back together. The turn of events in Tehran will not help them if it leads to confrontation rather than engagement between the US and Iran. Iraq has already been an arena for some of that.

Frontier fight against terror

Asif Ali Zardari
Islamabad

THE WASHINGTON POST

After the debacle of Vietnam, the United States could pack up and leave with minimal consequences for its genuine national interests; similarly, for the British in the subcontinent and the French in Algeria.

But the West, indeed the entire civilized world, does not have that luxury in Afghanistan and Pakistan. If the Taliban and al-Qaida are allowed to triumph in our region, their destabilizing alliance will spread across the continents.

In Pakistan today, democracy must succeed. The forces of extremism must be vanquished. Failure is not an option; not for us, not for the world.

How can we ensure that the forces of freedom defeat the forces of fanaticism? The problems that have fueled extremism are multifaceted and the solutions equally multidimensional. We need short- and long-term strategies, and we must realize that to truly eliminate the terrorist menace, we have to succeed not only militarily but politically, economically and socially.

The West, most notably the U.S., has been all too willing to dance with dictators in pursuit of perceived short-term goals. The litany of these policies and their consequences clutter the earth, from the Marcos regime in the Philippines, to the shah in Iran, to Mohammed Zia ul-Haq and Pervez Musharraf in Pakistan. Invariably, each case has proved that myopic strategies that sacrifice principle lead to unanticipated long-term consequences.

Let me focus on Pakistan. The West stood by as a democratically elected government was toppled by a military dictatorship in the late '70s. Because of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the West used my nation as a blunt instrument of the Cold War. It empowered a Gen. Zia dictatorship that brutalized its people, decimated our political parties, murdered the prime minister who had founded Pakistan's largest political party, and destroyed the press and civil society. And once the

Soviets were defeated, the Americans took the next bus out of town, leaving behind a political vacuum that ultimately led to the Talibanization and radicalization of Afghanistan, the birth of al-Qaida and the current jihadist insurrection in Pakistan. The heroin mafia, which arose as a consequence of the efforts to implode the Soviet Union, now takes in \$5 billion a year, twice the budget of our army and police. This is the price Pakistan continues to pay.

Dancing with dictators never pays off. Frankly, the worst democracy is better than any dictatorship. Dictatorship leads to frustration, extremism and terrorism. But the past is the past, and we can't undo it. We can, however, address the consequences of past mistakes and make sure they are not repeated. My most immediate goal is for the civilized world to rally to the support of Pakistani democracy and the Pakistani people's struggle against extremism.

In the battle against international terrorism, we are in the trenches for ourselves but also for the world. We have lost more soldiers — 1,200 of them — fighting the Taliban in Pakistan than all of the countries of NATO have lost, combined, fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan. Thousands of civilians, victims of attacks such as the recent bombing of the Pearl Continental Hotel in Peshawar, have died.

And on a very personal level, I have lost my wife, Benazir Bhutto, the mother of my children and Pakistan's greatest leader. She warned the world, in her speeches and her writings, in her last book and her very last words, that fanaticism is a threat to all people; that dictatorship had led to its spread within Pakistan; that my nation had to wake up; and that the world must take notice. She paid with her life for her prescience and her courage, and I have to answer to future generations and to my own children that she did not die in vain.

We need immediate assistance. The Obama administration recognizes that only an economically viable Pakistan can contain the terrorist menace. The U.S. has committed \$1.5 billion a year for five

years to help stabilize our economy, and the House of Representatives and the Senate Foreign Relations Committee have acted decisively to reorient the Pakistani-American relationship toward not just a military alliance but a sustained economic partnership.

Now, the rest of the world must step up and match the U.S. effort. Pakistan needs a robust assistance package so that we can deliver for the people and defeat the militants. And the rest of the world should again follow the American lead in helping us deal with the millions of internally displaced people who are the most recent victims of terrorism in our nation.

But aid is not enough. In the long term, Pakistan needs trade to allow us to become economically independent. Only such an economically robust Pakistan will be able to contain the fanatics and demonstrate to the 1.5 billion Muslims worldwide that democracy and economic development go hand in hand.

Notably, the U.S. is moving forward with regional opportunity zones in Afghanistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas region of Pakistan that will remove trade barriers and provide economic incentives to build factories, start industries, employ workers — and give hope to the people. This opportunity zone concept should be a model to Europe, as well. Europe must realize that it is in its own self-interest, as the U.S. has realized, to do everything possible to grow the Pakistani economy and to provide incentives for Pakistani exports to the continent.

My wife traveled the world preaching democracy to what should have been its loudest choir. The doors of many Western governments were shut to her, but she was not deterred. She was relentless in her passion for democracy, and unwaveringly optimistic about its ultimate success. She said, famously, that "truth, justice and the forces of history are on our side."

Today, we shall see if America and Europe are on our side as well.

Asif Ali Zardari is president of Pakistan.

Japan pushes N. Korea at G-8

Partial success is achieved by getting abductions mentioned

Trieste Italy
KYODO

Japan vigorously pushed to have North Korea's recent belligerence discussed at this year's meeting of foreign ministers of the Group of Eight nations.

But amid concerns over the violent crackdown on protesters over a disputed presidential election, Iran stole the spotlight, even from Afghanistan, which host Italy had sought to highlight.

Still, Japanese officials are confident they were able to achieve their original purpose at the high-profile political event, which concluded Saturday.

"I am glad that we were able to send a strong message" to North Korea, Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone said during a news conference Friday after leading discussions on the subject with his G-8 colleagues.

He was referring to a G-8 chairman's statement that condemned "in the strongest terms" North Korea's May 25 nuclear test and April 5 rocket launch.

Calling such actions a

threat to regional peace and stability, the G-8 called on all U.N. members to "fully and transparently implement their obligations" stipulated in a new U.N. Security Council resolution against the North.

The G-8 called on North Korea to return to the stalled six-party talks on denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula.

For the Japanese officials, a small but important reference was included in the chairman's statement at the end of the paragraph about North Korea.

"We also urge (North Korea's) prompt action to address the concerns of the international community on humanitarian matters, including the abduction issue," the statement says.

Thanks to the reference to the abductions of Japanese and foreign nationals by the country, Nakasone said he believes that Japan's position was well represented in the document.

G-8 ministers "also listened to my opinions attentively," he told reporters.

While the Japanese officials appeared pleased with the outcome, the dominant issue at the foreign ministers meeting,

which precedes the G-8 leaders summit to be held July 8 to 10, was not North Korea but Iran and Afghanistan.

Iran loomed large on the world stage in recent days because of its bloody crackdown on demonstrators protesting the presidential election.

Iran's absence from the outreach sessions of the talks, to which Rome had invited Tehran as a crucial player in the Afghanistan question, fueled interest in how the G-8 would respond to the Iranian crisis.

The interest in Iran was also evident at the G-8 news conference on Friday. Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini only mentioned North Korea at the very end of his opening remarks, and questions from reporters concentrated on Iran.

Given that all eyes were on Iran, experts say it was natural that Japan had a tough time selling its agenda.

But Hitoshi Tanaka, a former deputy foreign minister, said that having the North Korean issue addressed at the G-8 is still significant in that it is a good place to get endorsements from other major powers.

"The G-8 is not the main place to address the North Korean issue, but the countries participating in the six-party talks are," he said. "What is important for Japan is to get

Europe and Canada to endorse and support the thinking of Japan, the United States and South Korea, which are more aligned than before."

Some observers suggested that because North Korea gets less attention than Iran and Afghanistan, Japan should address the North Korean issue from the viewpoint of nuclear nonproliferation, not just from that of denuclearization.

"Although Japan has not said much about the proliferation of nuclear weapons and materials to produce them, it should stress the importance of the problem," said Hajime Izumi, an expert on North Korea.

"On top of doing so, Japan should declare that possessing nuclear weapons is in and of itself a problem for East Asia," the University of Shizuoka professor said.

Izumi also noted the importance of addressing the North Korean issue at the G-8 given the relative importance attached to the annual gathering these days.

"This is the age of the Group of 20, not the Group of Eight, when you talk about the economy. So in that sense, the significance of the G-8 from the aspects of foreign policy, politics and security has become more evident," Izumi said, adding that the issue should be placed in that context.

Three dead, 15 hurt in Philippines blast

By: AFP

Published: 29/06/2009 at 11:58 AM

Bombs have ripped through a cafe in the southern Philippines, killing three people and wounding 15, the military and witnesses have said. The three dead included a man seen placing one of the devices in a garbage bin at a coffee shop near the town of Datu Saudi Ampatuan on Monday, an overwhelmingly Muslim section of Mindanao island, one witness said, quoting local police.

"(One) bomb exploded prematurely. Among those killed was the bomb courier," said Major Randolph Cabangbang, military spokesman for the region. He blamed a hardline Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) faction for the attack, which he said also injured 15 civilians. "Military bomb experts told me that two bombs simultaneously exploded and they are still looking for the third explosive," said Eduardo Vasquez, a Roman Catholic priest who witnessed the attack.

The MILF, a group that has been waging a decades-old separatist campaign in the region, denied involvement and suggested government forces were to blame. "Villagers saw soldiers arrive in the area at dawn and there was an explosion several hours later," MILF spokesman Eid Kabalu told reporters by telephone.

It was the second bombing in the region in three days, after nine people were wounded in a bus depot blast in the city of Tacurong. Local police said that was also carried out by the MILF. A hardline MILF faction launched a series of raids on Christian settler communities across Mindanao in August 2008 that left dozens of civilians dead and displaced more than half a million people, according to aid agencies.

They followed a Supreme Court ruling that outlawed a draft peace agreement offered by President Gloria Arroyo to the MILF to end decades of rebellion in the south of the largely Roman Catholic nation. The treaty would have given the large Muslim minority political control over large swathes of the south, which Christian politicians alleged would have been disproportionate to Muslim population numbers.

Tak Bai decision contested

Relatives of victims to petition Criminal Court

By: KINGOUA LAOHONG

Published: 29/06/2009 at 12:00 AM

Newspaper section: News

Relatives of people who died in the 2004 Tak Bai crackdown will petition against a Songkhla court ruling which cleared security forces of any wrongdoing in their handling of those held in custody. They will lodge their petition with the Criminal Court on Ratchadaphisek Road in Bangkok today. Yaena Salaemae, who represents the victims' relatives, said villagers were unhappy with the Songkhla court ruling and decided to lodge a petition to contest the court decision.

If the Criminal Court agrees with the victims' relatives that members of the security forces should be held responsible, the prosecution could decide to recommend court action against those involved. "Villagers respect the court decision but at the same time we feel unhappy and disappointed," she said. "Not all victims died of suffocation [while being transported in cramped conditions to an army camp]. Many were beaten and shot."

Mrs Yaena said villagers had testified before the court several times and were disappointed that the court ruled in favour of the authorities. Rassada Manurassada, a lawyer provided by the Lawyers Council of Thailand to represent the relatives of the victims, said accounts from witnesses and evidence including video footage indicated that officials were to blame for the deaths of the 78 protesters who had been piled into the trucks and were later found dead. "Petitioning to contest the court decision is not in contempt of court," Mr Rassada said.

The Songkhla Provincial Court late last month cleared security officials of misconduct and determined the victims had died from suffocation. The court ruled that members of the military were just carrying out their duty and could not be blamed for what had happened. Human rights and justice advocacy groups have presented open letters to the Supreme Court president, the prime minister, the House speaker and the Senate speaker to demand justice over the court ruling.

Somchai Homlaor, president of the Campaign for Human Rights, backed plans by the Tak Bai victims' relatives to contest the court ruling. On Oct 25, 2004, soldiers cracked down on thousands of demonstrators rallying outside the Tak Bai police station. The crowd gathered to demand the release of six village defence volunteers who they said had been unfairly detained.

Seven people were killed during the crackdown, in which police used tear gas, water cannons and batons. Another 1,292 people were arrested and loaded on to army trucks. They were piled one on top of each other with their wrists shackled as the trucks took them to the Ingkayuthaborihaan army camp in Pattani. Seventy-eight died of suffocation en route. In another development, the head of a village in Yala province was shot dead by two gunmen yesterday. Mayuso A-dae, 45, was shot as he rode his motorcycle home from a tea house, police said.

A female teacher found dead in Narathiwat's Rangae district earlier in the day was probably the victim of an accident. The body of Suni Kaewkongtham, 38, was found beside her motorcycle, and an injured cow nearby. Suni, a mother of two, was riding to meet her husband at a grocery in the district. Police believe she hit the cow and died from her injuries.

They initially suspected she was the victim of an insurgent attack, as she had lost her father and a younger brother in an attack in 2007. Witnesses also claimed she was shot in a drive-by killing. But police discounted that theory after forensic results showed she had hit a solid object.

Burma, North Korea in an unholy military alliance

By: AUNG ZAW

Published: 29/06/2009 at 12:00 AM

Newspaper section: News

Burma's burning ambition to acquire modern missile technology and to upgrade its conventional weapons is no longer a secret and, if left unchecked, could pose a destabilising threat to regional stability. Thailand, its most prominent historical enemy, should be concerned - its military leaders would not like to see a Burma in possession of missiles that could easily lead to a tit-for-tat arms race. Also, of course, there's the generals' chronic fear of the West, heightened last year when foreign navy vessels showed up off the Burmese shore in an effort to deliver relief items and water to cyclone victims in the Irrawaddy delta region.

Since then, Burmese leaders have increasingly been looking for a source of medium-range missiles and sophisticated anti-aircraft and radar systems to deter imagined external threats. Gen Shwe Mann, chief of staff of the army, navy and air force, and the coordinator of special operations, made a secret, seven-day visit to Pyongyang on Nov 22, travelling there via China. His 17-member, high-level delegation was given an important sightseeing visit to Pyongyang and Myohyang, where secret tunnels have been built into the mountains to store and shield jet aircraft, missiles, tanks and nuclear and chemical weapons. Accompanied by air defence chief Lt Gen Myint Hlaing, Brig Gen Hla Htay Win, Brig Gen Khin Aung Myint and senior officials from heavy industries, the delegation was clearly on a mission to cement stronger military ties with the reclusive, hermit state.

On Nov 27, Gen Shwe Mann and Gen Kim Kyok-sik, chief of general staff, signed a MoU, officially formalising the military cooperation between Burma and North Korea. North Korea will reportedly build or supervise the construction of some Burmese military facilities, including tunnels and caves in which missiles, aircraft and even naval ships could be hidden. Burma will also receive expert training for its special forces, air defence training, plus a language exchange programme between personnel in the two armed forces. Burmese army sources in Naypyidaw confirmed that the secret arms-procurement mission covered most of the generals' wish list.

During his seven-day visit, Gen Shwe Mann, who is presumed to be the heir apparent to take over Burma's armed forces, visited radar and jamming units in Myohyang, a highly sophisticated anti-aircraft unit, air force units and a computerised command control system in Pyongyang. The delegation also visited a surface-to-surface (Scud) missile factory, partially housed in tunnels, on the outskirts of Pyongyang to observe missile

roduction. Since the late 1980s, North Korea has sold hundreds of Scud-type missiles and Scud production technology to Iran, Syria and Egypt.

The Scud-D missile, with a range of 700 kilometres, and the Scud-E missile, with a range of 1,500km, could easily intimidate Burma's neighbours, including Thailand. It is believed that Burma already has deployed six radar air defence systems along the Thai-Burmese border. During the visit, the Burmese were also particularly interested in short-range 107mm and 240mm multi-rocket launchers - a multi-purpose missile defence system in case of a foreign invasion, analysts said.

Also of great interest was the latest in anti-tank, laser-guided missile technology that can be deployed within an infantry division. Defence analysts say Burma has already purchased short- and medium-range missiles from North Korea under a barter deal.

It is not known if regime leaders have already put in an order for Scud-D or the more powerful Scud-F missiles, with a range of 3,000km. To suppress ethnic insurgents, the regime doesn't need such sophisticated weapons, but Burma's strong interest in missile, radar, Awac air defence systems, GPS communication jammers and search radar indicates that Naypyidaw's leaders envision both defensive and offensive capabilities.

Historically, Burma has procured small arms, jet fighters and naval ships from the West, namely the United States, Britain and some European countries. But after brutally crushing the 1988 democracy uprising, it faced Western sanctions and Burmese leaders desperately looked for new sources of weapons and ammunition to modernise and upgrade its armed forces. Burma has bought jet fighters and naval ships from China but increasingly it's looked for alternatives because of low quality and poor after-sales service

In the past, Burma purchased a "Pechora" air defence system - a Russian-made, surface-to-air, anti-aircraft system. Analysts say the Russians have provided technical training and language courses to Burmese technicians. The junta continues to strengthen its military capacity and spends the country's precious foreign reserves on more and more sophisticated weapons. When Gen Maung Aye, the regime's number two, visited Moscow in April 2006, he told Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov that Burma wished to order more Russian-made MiG-29 jet fighters (in addition to the 12 it had already secured), as well as 12 secondhand MI-17 helicopters.

During the Moscow visit, the deputy chief of the armed forces also expressed a desire to build a short-range guided missile system in central Burma with assistance from Russia. Curiously, say analysts, Gen Shwe Mann and his delegation also studied the subway system in the North Korean capital - in theory an underground subway is an effective way to deploy and mobilise troops during a conflict in an urban area. As early as 2002-2003, Burma begun to build underground tunnels and caves to hide and protect aircraft and weapons, as well as to house a central command and control facility.

Foreign analysts note that Burma was humiliated when it lost serious military skirmishes with Thailand in 2001 and 2002. Thailand employed F-16 jet fighters along its border and successfully disrupted Burma's communication system between its troops in the front line and its central command. The generals seem determined to go into the next field of battle with equal if not superior forces. Aung Zaw is founder and editor of the Irrawaddy magazine - <http://www.irrawaddy.org>

Court rejects petition in Tak Bai case

By: BangkokPost.com

Published: 29/06/2009 at 01:32 PM

The Criminal Court on Monday rejected a petition filed by relatives of people who died in the 2004 Tak Bai crackdown to it to revoke the Songkhla Provincial Court's ruling which cleared security forces of any wrongdoing in their handling of those held in custody.

Rassada Manurassada, a lawyer from the Lawyers Council of Thailand representing the relatives, said the rejection was made on the ground that the case had never been filed with the Criminal Court. The court stated that if the relatives of the killed wanted to petition against the order, they must do so with the Songkhla Provincial Court, not the Criminal Court.

Mr Rassada said the relatives will follow the court's order.

The relatives of the 78 people killed in Oct 25, 2004 incident in front of the Tak Bai police station filed the petition with the Criminal Court on Ratchadapisek road on Monday morning because they were not satisfied with the Songkhla Provincial Court's ruling, which cleared security forces of any wrongdoing and determined the victims had died from suffocation. The court also ruled that members of the military were just carrying out their duty and could not be blamed for what happened.

Somchai Homla-or, president of the Campaign for Human Rights, said video footages and accounts from eyewitnesses clearly said the 78 victims were among 1,292 people who had their hands tied to their backs and were piled one on top of each other in army trucks which took them to Ingkayuthaboriharn army camp in Pattani. They were found dead on arrival at the camp after about 12 hours.

"We will continue to fight for justice," said Mr Somchai.

The Jakarta Post

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Arrests of suspects may lead to 'something bigger'

Dicky Christanto , THE JAKARTA POST , JAKARTA | Mon, 06/29/2009 12:34 PM |
Headlines

An expert says the recent arrest of several terrorist suspects could lead police to the ringleaders of a wider operation and has brushed off speculation that the crackdown was an attempt to boost the image of the incumbent President as the election approaches.

Intelligence expert Dino Chrisbon said it was irrelevant to relate the arrests of several key terrorist suspects, some believed to be connected with top terrorist leaders, with the election.

"This could not have been synchronized with the current election just to gain attention," he said.

"The request for the arrest to be carried out came from Singapore, meaning it would be even less likely for there to be a connection.

"The information about these *suspected* terrorists initially came from the Singapore authorities following the arrest of Mas Selamat Kastari, a top terrorist, in Malaysia several weeks ago," he told The Jakarta Post on Sunday.

The information was then followed up by the police's 88th Anti-Terror Special Detachment, who pursued the suspects.

The police recently arrested three people allegedly involved in several terrorist activities in Singapore and Malaysia.

Nabbed in three different places - Lampung, Cilacap and Sragen, Central Java - the suspects are Syaifudin Zuhry, Syamsul Anwar alias Samad and Husaini.

They are now being interrogated for information about terrorist cells.

Dino said it was believed the suspects supplied bombs to a Palembang, South Sumatra, terrorist cell which planned to attack the Cafe Beduda in Bukittinggi, West Sumatra.

"In fact, these people are believed to be close with Noordin M. Top himself. These arrests might lead police to something bigger later on," he said. Along with his former sidekick, the late Dr. Azahary, Noordin is believed to be the mastermind behind many terrorist attacks within Indonesia.

Police are still hunting for Noordin, who has reportedly been seen several times in places within

Central Java.

Dino said these terrorist suspects were not related to Jemaah Islamiyah, which is near bankrupt due to the arrests of dozens of its members. Remaining members have split into smaller groups and live separately.

"The members are now identifying themselves as the Darul Islam and Indonesia Islamic State (NII) movements."

"By qualification, these people are still as dangerous as their predecessors. Thus there is no reason to stop surveillance of these men."

Noted criminologist from the University of Indonesia, Adrianus Meliala, told the Post that pursuing terrorist activities required patience and persistence.

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The Jakarta Post

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Regional bottlenecks barriers to economic momentum

Aditya Suharmoko , THE JAKARTA POST , JAKARTA | Mon, 06/29/2009 12:33 PM |
Headlines

Being one of the few global economies to book positive growth amid the financial crisis, Indonesia has become more attractive to global investors looking for new markets.

Nevertheless sluggish progress in public administration reform, particularly at the level of regional government, could seriously hamper efforts to make the most of this leverage, a senior government official says.

"There's a lot of foreign representatives coming to my office, for example from Geneva, Switzerland, which means that they see that we are growing. Their chance to invest in Indonesia is now," Edy Putra Irawadi, deputy to the coordinating minister for the economy, in charge of industry and trade, said last week.

Indonesia's economy in the first quarter of 2009 grew by 4.4 percent from a year earlier, according to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), just below the growth rates of China and India, while developed country economies contracted, plunging to minus growth rates, due to the crisis.

Edy said the main concern of foreign investors was Indonesia's rigid bureaucracy, which he said the government was trying to address.

"They *foreign investors* have asked me about the bureaucracy here. I said, for the public service we now have the National Single Window *NSW*, which becomes a guide for exporters and importers. Now we also have a presidential regulation on one-stop integrated services *PTSP*," he said.

He added, PTSP had not been fully implemented, particularly in the regions, where many officials were still working under the old rules.

The World Bank has said Indonesia can recover faster from the global economic crisis by accelerating institutional reforms, as one of the government's main weaknesses is that lengthy and slow bureaucratic procedures cause delays in implementation of government spending intended to spur economic growth.

Slow progress in the reform of the bureaucracy was not only affecting inward foreign investment but also domestic investment, including government expenditure plans.

As of May, government spending was only 27 percent of the expected figure set for the whole year in the 2009 state budget, despite the fact that the country clearly needs a boost from government spending to back up private consumption, the economy's main driver, which is still forecast to slow down somewhat.

Edy said Indonesia had a lot of attractive sectors, including those in infrastructure, foods and energy.

To attract investors here, State Minister for Administrative Reforms Taufik Effendy is in the process of designing guidelines to prevent government officials, particularly in regional government administrations, from issuing regulations that may hamper investment.

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The Jakarta Post

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Letters: Embassy of Pakistan responds

Mon, 06/29/2009 12:35 PM | Reader's Forum

As the spokesperson of Embassy of Pakistan, I would like to say an article titled "A global nuclear disorder," by Gita Wirjawan (The Jakarta Post, June 24) belies facts and uses inappropriate parlance to refer to states and nations which contravenes the established norms of journalism.

It is clarified that every country has specific security requirements depending on its geographical location and strategic importance. These requirements shape the contours of a country's defence and security arrangement. So is the case with Pakistan.

Pakistan's nuclear capability is an outcome of its very strong security concerns in regard to forces with hegemonistic designs and is truly believed to be a deterrent against any one's military adventurism. Pakistan's nuclear assets are placed under a multilayered security and safety mechanism.

Any breach in this kind of security system is beyond imagination, a fact which has even been acknowledged by the top US leadership. There is no question of the nukes falling in the lap of a bunch of foolhardy militants who have already been rejected by the whole Pakistani nation. The people of Pakistan are fully supporting the military's valiant offensive against the extremists whose days are now numbered.

It is rather unfair that the writer has so blatantly bracketed Pakistan with other countries, alleging foul play in terms of nuclear proliferation. Such allegations have been hurled in the past as well to undermine Pakistan's position in the comity of nations but were never considered credible.

The reality that Pakistan is the only Muslim nuclear power in the world is difficult for certain elements to digest. I conclude on the note that the whole world has pinned hopes on Pakistan to eliminate the scourge of militancy which is recognition of its ability to shoulder this immense responsibility.

The international community and all the stakeholders now have a moral obligation to support Pakistan's anti-terrorism drive.

Saeed Javed
Press Attache
The Embassy of Pakistan
Jakarta

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Opinion

EDITORIAL

The EM general who is making a difference

Published on June 29, 2009

Unconventional military leader is winning Muslim-Thai hearts with innovative projects

Lt-General Phichet Visaijorn is facing a test of his time as commander-general of the Fourth Army Area. But he relies on an unconventional path to try to bring peace and security back to the three southern provinces of Thailand. He prefers to rely on the political path to unravel the deep-seated problems there. A military option is secondary. By doing so, he has followed the wisdom of His Majesty the King. To tackle the southern unrest, we must have a real understanding of the people, we must win over the hearts and minds of the people and then we must assist them with development so that they can live normally in society. This is the right prescription.

As the death toll continues to mount from the insurgency, Phichet cannot avoid the harsh criticism. When is the rampant killing going to end? When can the authorities bring normalcy back to the South? Is the military pursuing a sound strategy that will eventually bring about a fruitful result?

These are legitimate questions. But they are open questions that nobody can realistically provide a satisfactory answer to, as the southern problems are multidimensional. As far as Phichet is concerned, he only tries to do his best. He has displayed his leadership quality. He lets his actions do the talking.

Phichet's strategy is unconventional because he spends most of his time on development. He and the authorities now have a very good understanding of the roots of the southern unrest, a combination of separatist and Muslim-led ideals to create an independent Pattani, the drugs and other vices as well as political intrigues at the local and national levels. But the authorities just can't go after them without concrete evidence to arrest the suspects and place them under the due process of law.

But Phichet and the Thai authorities still have a lot of work to do regarding winning the hearts and minds of the Muslim locals, many of whom still have a sense of alienation or dual personality living in the Kingdom of Thailand. This will take time. There are some 1.8 million Muslim-Thais living in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat, compared to about 150,000 Buddhist-Thais. Less than 1 per cent of the Muslim-Thais are involved in the insurgency or separatist

movements, which have also mustered international support and training. Phichet has worked hard to try to separate the good Muslim-Thais from the insurgents so that the insurgents can't have influence over them.

At the same time, Phichet is introducing innovative development projects to the Muslim-Thais. In front of the Sirindhorn Commanding Centre, he has developed a learning centre on sufficiency economics. Every day sees the Muslims from different villages arrive at the centre to learn how to establish a basic living standard. With a small plot of land, one can dig a small pond to raise as many as 1,000 fish, plant vegetables and raise livestock. Phichet is encouraging the local people to turn to organic fertiliser, known as EM or effective micro-organisms, to help improve the crop yields by at least four times. From his experience as commander of the Second Army Region in Nakhon Rachasima, Phichet played an active role in restoring health and productivity to the farmland in the Northeast. Drug addicts undergo rehabilitation at this centre. Those who have played a part in supporting the insurgents one way or another in minor offences are also given a chance to return to their home after going through rehabilitation. A lot of carrots are handed out.

At the same time, the military servicemen have been working almost 24 hours a day to try to contain the violence. Some 60,000 military and police officers as well as civilian volunteers have formed a force to deal with the insurgency. Casualties are occurring almost on a daily basis. But the violence appears to have been brought under control to a certain degree as the authorities have been able to penetrate most of the villages. But whenever calm appears to have been restored, the insurgents would strike again to create even more damage for psychological reasons. For instance, when the red-shirt protesters and yellow-shirt protesters roam Bangkok streets to air out their political grievances, the southern insurgents lay low. They know that their subversive activities would not make headlines because of the coverage of the news on the red-shirt and yellow-shirt protesters. Now the insurgents are trying to dominate the newspaper headlines again. It is a war of attrition that needs patience, time and wisdom to resolve.

Phichet has so far done a good job in his strategy for the South. He is encouraging local people to create a network of volunteers for self-defence. His "pineapple eye" project is an innovation. In this pineapple eye network, local volunteers are given walkie-talkies so that they can alert on the first signs of unusual or violent incidents. This project is working well in Hat Yai, Songkhla. It is now spreading out to other parts of the South. Who can provide better security protection to the communities than the local people living there themselves? If they learn to cooperate and work with each other to defend themselves, they will achieve the best result. That's the philosophy of Phichet, at times called the EM General.

Regional

ROUNDUP: Two killed, 14 injured by bomb in Philippines Eds: Updates death toll, adds details

Published on June 29, 2009

A suspected Muslim secessionist rebel and a civilian were killed Monday when a homemade bomb exploded in a southern Philippine town, a regional military spokesman said.

Major Randolph Cabangbang said 14 people were also wounded in the explosion that occurred at dawn at a busy market in Datu Saudi Ampatuan town in Maguindanao province, 960 kilometres south of Manila.

Cabangbang said the suspect was believed to be a member of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) who was allegedly carrying the bomb. He died instantly.

One of the injured civilians died while being treated at hospital, he added.

"The bomb exploded prematurely or accidentally, that is our assessment," Cabangbang said.

Cabangbang ruled out the possibility of a suicide bombing.

"We have no suicide bombers here," he said. "The modus operandi actually was to leave the bomb and there will be a time delay before the explosion. In this case, the bomber himself was hit."

Cabangbang said the attack could have been aimed at scaring off Muslim civilians who are supporting the military in current offensives against MILF rebels.

"They (rebels) want to terrorize them because the people in the area are supportive of the military," he said.

The province of Maguindanao was the site of recent fierce clashes between government troops and MILF guerrillas, with both sides suffering casualties.

Korean War II

By Gordon G. Chang

At this moment the Kang Nam, a North Korea tramp freighter, is on the high seas tailed by a team of American destroyers and submarines and watched by reconnaissance satellites and aircraft. On board, its cargo could be plutonium pellets, missile parts or semi-ripe melons. In any event, Washington wants to know what is in the rusty ship's hold.

Why the interest in this particular vessel? The Kang Nam is a "repeat offender" and known to carry "proliferation materials." As an unnamed American official told Fox News this month, "This ship is presumed to be carrying something illicit given its past history." United Nations Security Council Resolution 1874, unanimously passed on June 12, broadened the concept of illicit cargoes as far as North Korea is concerned. It prohibits Pyongyang from selling arms, even handguns.

The Security Council, while banning Pyongyang's export of weapons, has not given U.N. member states the means of enforcing the new restrictions. Resolution 1874 calls upon countries to inspect North Korean cargoes on the high seas—but only "with the consent of the flag State," in this case North Korea. Should Pyongyang refuse—as it most certainly would—a member state can, within the terms of the resolution, direct a vessel to "an appropriate and convenient port" for inspection by local officials. Should Pyongyang refuse to divert the ship, the resolution contemplates the filing of a report to a U.N. committee.

It looks as if Washington will file such a report soon. Last week, Washington promised the Chinese to abide by the restraints imposed by Resolution 1874. This means, in all probability, that the United States will be reduced to watching the Kang Nam unload an illegal cargo at its intended destination.

Yet Washington does not have to adopt such a feeble approach. The North Koreans have, inadvertently, given the U.S. a way to escape from the restrictions of the new Se-

curity Council measure. On May 27, the Korean People's Army issued a statement declaring that it "will not be bound" by the armistice that ended fighting in the Korean War. This was at least the third time Pyongyang has disavowed the interim agreement that halted hostilities in 1953. Previous renunciations were announced in 2003 and 2006.

The U.N. Command, a signatory to the armistice, shrugged off Pyongyang's beligerent statement. "The armistice remains in force and is binding on all signatories, including North Korea," it said immediately after the re-

nunciation, referring to the document's termination provisions. That may be the politically correct thing to say, but an armistice as a legal matter cannot remain in existence after one of its parties, a sovereign state, announces its end. Today, whether we like it or not, there is no armistice.

Furthermore, there has never been a peace treaty formally ending the Korean War. This means the U.S., a combatant in the conflict, as leader of the U.N. Command, is free to use force against Pyongyang. On legal grounds, the U.S. Navy therefore has every right to seize the Kang Nam, treat the crew as prisoners of war and confiscate its cargo, even if the ship is carrying nothing more dangerous than melons. Because the Navy has the right to torpedo the vessel, which proudly flies the flag of another combatant in the war, it of course has the right to board her.

But does America have the will to do so? "Rules must be binding. Violations must be punished. Words must mean something," President Barack Obama, reacting to North Korea's test of a long-range mis-

sile, said in the first week of April. Unfortunately, the President's words have apparently meant little because Kim Jong Il's beligerent state has, since that time, detonated a nuclear device, handed out harsh sentences to two American reporters, and announced the resumption of plutonium production. North Korea has threatened nuclear war several times in recent days and this month sent one of its patrol boats into South Korean waters. American envoys, in response, have issued stern warnings, participated in meetings in the region, and engaged in high-level diplomacy in the corridors of the U.N. None of this, however, has led to the enforcement of rules or the punishment of the North Korean regime.

North Korea's words, in contrast, have

Jong Il about selling dangerous technologies but never did anything about it.

Instead, President Bush outsourced the problem to the U.N. In October 2006, in response to the North's first nuclear detonation, the Security Council passed a resolution aimed at halting North Korean proliferation. Unfortunately, Beijing refused to implement the new rules, calling the measures unacceptable, even after voting in favor of them. Since then, more evidence has come to light of North Korea's transfer of nuclear weapons technology to Iran and Syria.

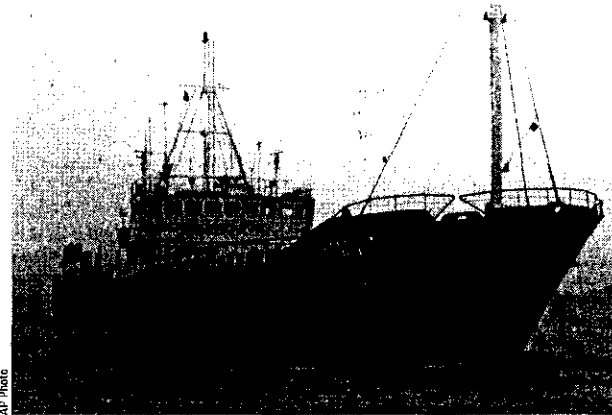
The lesson of the last few years is that the U.N. is not capable of stopping North Korean proliferation. No nation can stop it except the U.S. Of course, ending North Korea's sales of dangerous technologies to

hostile regimes will anger Pyongyang. This month, for instance, the North said that interception of the Kang Nam would constitute an "act of war."

Yet, as much as the international community would like to avoid a confrontation, the world cannot let Kim Jong Il continue to proliferate weapons. Moreover, it is unlikely that he will carry through on his bluster threats. The North Koreans did not in fact start a war when, at America's request, Spain's special forces intercepted an unflagged North Korean freighter carrying Scud missiles bound for Yemen in December 2002. Even though the Spanish risked their lives to board the vessel, Washington soon asked Madrid to release it. At the time, the Bush administration explained there was no legal justification to seize the missiles.

Now, the Obama administration has no such excuse. There is definitely a legal justification to seize the Kang Nam. North Korea, after all, has resumed the Korean War.

Mr. Chang is the author of "Nuclear Showdown: North Korea Takes On the World" (Random House, 2006).



The U.S. has a legal right to board North Korean ship Kang Nam, which is suspected of carrying illicit weapons.

meant something. They have, as noted, ended the armistice. Of course, no one is arguing that the nations participating in the U.N. Command resume a full-scale land war in Asia. Yet recognizing the end of the temporary truce would allow the U.S. to use more effective measures to stop North Korean proliferation of missile and nuclear technologies. The Bush administration sometimes got around to warning Kim

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

TUESDAY, JUNE 30, 2009

Policing Pakistan

By C. Christine Fair

The United States has spent some \$12 billion trying to help Pakistan save itself. Unfortunately, Washington has lavished most of the aid on the Pakistan army. It is time to reconsider that decision and focus instead on improving the country's police force.

There are many reasons why the army can't fix what ails the nation. First, sustained use of the army against its own citizens goes against the grain. A number of Pakistani officers have told me that they did not join the army to kill Pakistanis; they joined to kill Indians. Officers themselves debate whether the army can successfully oust the militants, and even if it can, whether it could hold the area for long. The army's past and recent track record in clearing and holding territory is not encouraging.

Second, the army has resisted developing a counter-insurgency doctrine. It prefers to plan and train for conventional battles and views its struggle against insurgents as a "low-intensity" conventional conflict. Washington has been slow to understand that this is not a quibble over semantics but a serious difference in how the army intends to contend with the threat. The Pakistani army believes India is its principal nemesis, not the insurgents who have occupied the Swat valley and destabilized Pakistan and the region.

Third, the army's sledgehammer attempt to expel militants from their various redoubts has devastated much of Paki-

stan's Pashtun belt, flattening villages and forcing more than three million people to flee. The devastating blitzkrieg shows that the Pakistani army resists developing an effective counter-insurgency capability to secure, not dispossess, the local population.

A police force-led effort would be better than one led by the army, as the history of successful counterinsurgency movements in disparate theatres across the globe shows. Militants understand the potential power of the police even if Washington and Islamabad do not. Since 2005, insurgents and terrorists have killed about 400 police each year in suicide bombings, assassinations, and other heinous crimes, according to Hassan Abbas, a former police officer in Pakistan who is now a research fellow at Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs.

The police make for easy targets because they are outgunned, under-resourced, inadequately equipped and poorly trained. Because most don't even have the same lucrative death benefits as army personnel, many have simply fled the fight to protect their families. Police officers in Swat have even taken out newspaper advertisements declaring that they have left the force in hopes that insurgents will spare them and their families. To take the lead in fighting the militants, Pakistan's police will need training, modern weaponry, personal-protection equipment, life insurance and access to civilian intelligence.

Police in Pakistan are admittedly widely reviled for being corrupt. However there are encouraging signs of change. Several policing organizations, such as the National Highways and Motorway Police, the Islamabad Police and the

Lahore Traffic Police have all gained the trust of their citizenry through professional and courteous conduct. In these forces, police are paid a handsome salary and are subject to strict accountability for their performance. Their new salaries are too valuable to lose

by taking small bribes.

Pakistan's police leadership seems up for the challenge. Since 2000, Pakistan's own police leadership has led the demand for police reform only to be stifled by military and civilian political leadership who benefit from a corrupt police force that does their bidding. It's time for the international community to support these unexpected reformers.

So far, only 2.2% of U.S. funding to Pakistan has gone to assisting the police—\$268 million between 2002 and 2008 for narcotics control, law enforcement and border security. The U.S. has an enormous opportunity to help the one Pakistani institution that actually wants American help.

Should the Obama administration embrace this task, it will need to change its approach to police training, and it will need international partners. The State Department, which has traditional responsibility for this area, cannot do it alone. As the

experience with police training in Afghanistan has shown, the Department of Defense has to step in to take the lead on police training. Unfortunately, the international community has resisted supplying trainers or resources to the Afghanistan effort and some contractors have not performed well.

Now more than ever, Pakistan's insecurity touches the shores of Europe and Asia. Washington and other friends of Pakistan should commit to helping Pakistan's police secure the country. It will take years. But it can only happen if preparations begin now.

Ms. Fair is a senior political scientist at the RAND Corporation.

The army isn't well equipped to fight the insurgency.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

TUESDAY, JUNE 30, 2009

Target: Hawaii

The Pentagon recently announced that it is repositioning ground-to-air radar and missile defenses near Hawaii in case North Korea decides to launch another long-range missile, this time toward the Aloha State. So at least 1.3 million Hawaiians will benefit from defenses that many officials in the current Administration didn't even want to build.

But what about the rest of America? It's an odd time to be cutting missile defense, as the Obama Administration is doing in its 2010 budget—by \$1.2 billion to \$1.6 billion, depending on how you calculate it. Programs to defend the U.S. homeland are being pared, while those that protect our soldiers or allies are being expanded after the Pentagon decided that the near-term threat is from short-range missiles. But as North Korea and Iran show, rogue regimes aren't far from having missiles that could reach the U.S.

In case you're not convinced about the threat, consider this exchange between Arizona Republican Trent Franks and Lieutenant-General Patrick O'Reilly, head of the Missile Defense Agency, in a hearing last month at the House Subcommittee on Strategic Forces:

Rep. Franks: "Do you believe that the threat from long-range missiles has increased or decreased in the last six months as it relates to the homeland here?"

Gen. O'Reilly: "Sir, I believe it has increased significantly. . . . The demonstration of capability of the Iranian ability to put a sat[ellite] into orbit, albeit small, shows that they are progressing in that technology. Additionally, the Iranians yesterday demonstrated a solid rocket motor test which is . . . disconcerting. Third, the North Koreans demonstrated . . . that they are improving in their capacity and we are very concerned about that."

Among the losers in the Administration's budget are the additional interceptors planned for the ground-based program in Alaska. The number will be limited to 30 interceptor missiles located at Fort Greely in Alaska and Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. Also on the chopping block is the Airborne Laser, which is designed to shoot down incoming missiles in the boost phase, before they can

release decoys and at a point in the missile trajectory when it would fall back down on enemy territory. This highly promising technology will be starved.

The Administration may also kill the plan for a missile defense system in Europe. The proposed system, which would place interceptors in Poland and a radar in

the Czech Republic, is intended to protect Europe against Iranian missiles. As is often forgotten, it would also protect the U.S., by providing an additional layer of defense for the Eastern seaboard, which is a long way from the Alaskan defenses.

The Administration is reconsidering the European site due to opposition from Moscow, which says—though it knows it's false—that the European system is intended to defeat Russian missiles. In advance of Barack Obama's visit to Russia next week, there's talk of "cooperation" on missile defense, possibly by adding radars in southern Russia and Azerbaijan. From a geographical perspective, neither location would add much as an Iranian missile headed for Western Europe or the U.S. would be on the periphery of

Missile defenses for Oahu, but cuts for the rest of the U.S.

the radars' vision, at best.

Meanwhile, Moscow says that unless the Administration backtracks on missile defense, it won't agree to mutual reductions in nuclear arsenals under the START Treaty, which expires this year. Mr. Obama is eager to negotiate arms cuts. But it would be a mistake to tie decisions on missile defense to anything except what is best for the security of the U.S. and its allies.

In Congress, bipartisan efforts are afoot to restore some of the funding for missile defense. But even if more money is forthcoming, the bigger problem is the new U.S. mindset. The Obama Administration is staffed with Cold War-era arms controllers who still believe missile defense is destabilizing—except, apparently, now that they need it for Hawaii. They also reject the essential next phase, which is to make better use of space-based systems.

Missile defense is no techno-fantasy. The U.S. has made major strides since President Bush exercised the option to withdraw from the ABM Treaty in 2001. If North Korea launches a missile toward Hawaii, the best demonstration of that ability—and of U.S. resolve—would be to shoot it down.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.
TUESDAY, JUNE 30, 2009

Pyongyang's True Ideology

By B.R. Myers

How long will the U.S. and its allies keep misperceiving North Korea as a communist state? For decades the regime in Pyongyang has preached the racial superiority of the Korean people, and still the red label sticks. Now the country is in the throes of a massive military propaganda campaign exhorting its citizens to increase productivity not to better the people's lives, but to strengthen national defenses against the racial enemy—"the Yankee beasts in human masks," as North Korean television news put it last week. If Washington doesn't recognize Kim Jong Il's regime for what it is—a hardline nationalist state—it will make dangerous policy miscalculations.

Hardly had Pyongyang signed a disarmament agreement with Washington in late 1994 than Kim Jong Il, calling himself Chairman of the National Defense Commission, proclaimed a "military first" policy. Henceforth the country's economy would revolve around the army's needs. Kim's political convictions would be obvious to anyone familiar with fascist Japan.

That country was the world's first self-proclaimed "national defense state." Japan's leaders demonstrated that a leadership cult, a repressive security apparatus and a command economy do not a communist country make. In 1945 former North Korean leader Kim Il Sung, Kim Jong Il's father, and his faction conducted a wholesale

"Koreanization" of imperial Japanese propaganda, taking over everything from the cult of the parental Great Marshall on a white horse right down to the myth of a uniquely virtuous race surrounded by an evil world. The elder Kim paid lip-service to Marxism-Leninism even as he purged his young regime of Korean communists.

This ideological heritage is more obvious today than ever. Current propaganda extolling the ongoing "150 Day Battle," the most hysterical in a long line of production campaigns, likens every worker to a fighter. Signs reading "battle-ground" hang over the entrances to mines and factories. The nation's youth are exhorted, in ever more strident tones, to prepare to sacrifice their lives for the General, to become "resolve-to-die squads" (*gyeolsadae*) and "human bullets" (*yuktan*) in the "holy war" (*seongjeon*) against America. These are exact Korean translations of terms and symbols used in fascist Japan.

North Korea is a state more interested in enhancing national pride and strength than in raising the masses' standard of living. Its militarism is ideologically driven and not a reaction to U.S. policy

shifts. This runs counter to current thinking on the left in Washington, which argues that North Korea, a chronic violator of contracts and treaties, would have adhered religiously to the Agreed Framework of 1994 if U.S. had only kept its side of the bargain. This is worse than mere naivety. The "military first" policy was premised on the principle that a normalization of relations with America was neither possible nor desirable. It proclaimed a mere 10 weeks after that agreement was signed.

Only by recognizing the true nature of North Korea's ideology can the U.S. understand the impossibility of what it now wants the country to do; namely, disassemble its nuclear program. A communist state could conceivably disarm and go back to pursuing its original goal of a workers' paradise. A hardline nationalist state, on the other hand, lives and dies by its record of standing up to the outside world. This is especially so for a regime that must maintain some degree of domestic support with a far richer South Korea next door.

Those in the West who still place their hopes in negotiations and trust-building measures need to ask themselves this simple question: How could the North Korean regime continue to justify its existence after trading national pride for an aid package? The simple answer is that it can't—and won't.

Mr. Myers is a North Korea researcher at Dongseo University in Busan, South Korea.



Kim Jong Il

US shifts its tone on terrorism and discards language of war

'War on terror' is too limiting, says Napolitano

By Edward Luce and Daniel Dombey in Washington

The Obama administration has junked the term "global war on terror" because it does not describe properly the nature of the terrorist threat to the US, according to Janet Napolitano, secretary for homeland security.

"One of the reasons the nomenclature is not used is that 'war' carries with it a relationship to nation states in conflict with each other and of course terrorism is not necessarily derived from the nation state relationship," she told the Financial Times. "In some respects 'war' is too limiting."

Ms Napolitano's comments were the clearest acknowledgement by an Obama official of a widely observed change in language. In March, the White

House denied reports that an internal memo had been issued banning the term. But Mr Obama has studiously avoided the phrase, which officials see as legally troublesome and politically counterproductive.

Ms Napolitano, who arrived last night in the UK, said she was hoping to learn from her British counterparts, and others, how to improve public "resiliency" to terrorist attacks. "You have got to minimise risk and respond with resiliency – there are lessons to be learned from other countries and the UK is one of them," she said.

Ms Napolitano, the former governor of Arizona, is in charge of 22 former agencies that make up the Department of Homeland Security.

Her comments follow increasingly strident criticism from Dick Cheney, the former vice-president, that Mr Obama's actions, including the pledge to close the Guantánamo Bay

detention centre and dropping the term "war on terror", would increase the terrorist threat to the US.

Ms Napolitano dismissed Mr Cheney's warnings. "Pivoting from closing Guantánamo to the argument that [its closure] could be the causal agent for an attack on the US is, to be charitable, a stretch," she said. But she conceded the administration needed to do more to persuade Congress to house Guantánamo detainees on US soil.

Ms Napolitano said she also continued to monitor the threat of domestic terrorism following a DHS report in March warning that the declining economy and the return of military veterans meant that there was an increasing threat of rightwing "lone wolf" terrorist activity.

"The fact of the matter is that this threat is very real and is not solely rightwing or leftwing," she added.

Betraying the planet



Paul Krugman

So the House passed the Waxman-Markey climate-change bill. In political terms, it was a remarkable achievement.

But 212 representatives voted no. A handful of these no votes came from representatives who considered the bill too weak, but most rejected the bill because they rejected the whole notion that we have to do something about greenhouse gases.

And as I watched the deniers make their arguments, I couldn't help thinking that I was watching a form of treason — treason against the planet.

To fully appreciate the irresponsibility and immorality of climate-change denial, you need to know about the grim turn taken by the latest climate research.

The fact is that the planet is changing faster than even pessimists expected: Ice caps are shrinking, arid zones spreading, at a terrifying rate. And according to a number of recent studies, catastrophe — a rise in temperature so large as to be almost unthinkable — can no longer be considered a mere possibility. It is, instead, the most likely outcome if we continue along our present course.

Thus researchers at M.I.T., who were previously predicting a temperature rise of a little more than 4 degrees by the end of this century, are now predicting a rise of more than 9 degrees. Why? Glob-

al greenhouse gas emissions are rising faster than expected; some mitigating factors, like absorption of carbon dioxide by the oceans, are turning out to be weaker than hoped; and there's growing evidence that climate change is self-reinforcing — that, for example, rising temperatures will cause some arctic tundra to defrost, releasing even more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

Temperature increases on the scale predicted by the M.I.T. researchers and others would create huge disruptions in our lives and our economy. As a recent authoritative U.S. government report points out, by the end of this century New Hampshire may well have the climate of North Carolina today, Illinois may have the climate of East Texas, and across America extreme, deadly heat waves — the kind that traditionally occur only once in a generation — may become annual or biannual events. In other words, we're facing a clear and present danger to our way of life, perhaps even to civilization itself. How can anyone justify failing to act?

Well, sometimes even the most authoritative analyses get things wrong. And if dissenting opinion-makers and politicians based their dissent on hard work and hard thinking — if they had carefully studied the issue, consulted with experts and concluded that the overwhelming scientific consensus was misguided — they could at least claim to be acting responsibly.

But if you watched the debate on Friday, you didn't see people who've thought hard about a crucial issue, and are trying to do the right thing. What you saw, instead, were people who show no sign of being interested in the truth. They don't like the political and policy implications of climate change, so they've decided not to believe in it — and

they'll grab any argument, no matter how disreputable, that feeds their denial.

Indeed, if there was a defining moment in Friday's debate, it was the declaration by Representative Paul Broun of Georgia that climate change is nothing but a "hoax" that has been "perpetrated out of the scientific community." I'd call this a crazy conspiracy theory, but doing so would actually be unfair to crazy conspiracy theorists. After all, to believe that global warming is a hoax you have to believe in a vast cabal consisting of thousands of scientists — a cabal so powerful that it has managed to create false records on everything from global temperatures to Arctic sea ice. Yet Mr. Broun's declaration was met with applause.

Given this contempt for hard science, I'm almost reluctant to mention the deniers' dishonesty on matters economic. But in addition to rejecting climate science, the opponents of the climate bill made a point of misrepresenting the results of studies of the bill's economic impact, which all suggest that the cost will be relatively low.

Still, is it fair to call climate denial a form of treason? Isn't it politics as usual? Yes, it is — and that's why it's unforgivable.

Do you remember the days when Bush administration officials claimed that terrorism posed an "existential threat" to America, a threat in whose face normal rules no longer applied? That was hyperbole — but the existential threat from climate change is all too real.

Yet the deniers are choosing, willfully, to ignore that threat, placing future generations of Americans in grave danger, simply because it's in their political interest to pretend that there's nothing to worry about. If that's not betrayal, I don't know what is.

Indonesia, Malaysia seek to ease border tensions

By: AFP

Published: 30/06/2009 at 02:58 PM

Indonesia and Malaysia have agreed to ease military tensions over disputed oil-rich waters off northeastern Borneo, during talks between the countries' defence ministers in Jakarta. Indonesian Defence Minister Juwono Sudarsono met his Malaysian counterpart, Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, in a bid to defuse concerns that military manoeuvres in the sensitive Ambalat area of the Sulawesi sea could lead to clashes.

"Mobilised troops have to be measured in their actions, especially around those areas, so there is no perception of violations," Sudarsono told reporters after the meeting. "We agree that each country's sea patrols have to be extra cautious in determining patrol pathways, in accordance with the line that each regards as its own territory." Jakarta has repeatedly complained that Malaysian warships have violated Indonesian territory around Ambalat, accusations Kuala Lumpur denies.

The issue has stirred strong nationalist sentiment in Indonesia and fed incendiary campaign rhetoric ahead of presidential elections on July 8. Vice President Jusuf Kalla has frequently raised the Ambalat dispute on the campaign trail, saying in a recent speech in East Kalimantan: "We have to defend it by whatever means we have, dialogue or even war." International borders in the area off Borneo island have yet to be determined, with each country claiming the area as its own.

Malaysia's claims are based on a 1979 maritime chart, while Indonesia uses the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, which states the area belongs to Jakarta. "It's about the perception of who started it, provoked or violated. But actually that issue has to be avoided," Ahmad said. "I have told our officials and soldiers that in whatever situation we have to be cautious so we are not regarded as careless."

Islamic teacher, teen killed in Thai south: police

By: AFP

Published: 30/06/2009 at 11:58 PM

Suspected separatist militants killed an Islamic teacher and his teenaged friend in a drive-by shooting in the latest violence in Thailand's troubled south, police said Tuesday. A 25-year-old Muslim, a teacher in a religious school, and another Muslim aged 19 were shot late Monday by two militants who followed them as they left an evening class by motorcycle, police said. They added they found 25 M16 bullet casings at the scene of the attack in Narathiwat province.

In another incident in Narathiwat, on Tuesday, police said militants shot a senior electricity official as he drove his motorcycle back to work after lunch. As officials and villagers gathered to help the wounded man, separatists detonated a bomb hidden in a metal box close by, injuring seven people, police said. The victims were the latest from a spike in violence in the restive provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat, where more than 3,700 people have been killed in an insurgency over the past five years.

The region was an autonomous Malay Muslim sultanate until predominantly Buddhist Thailand annexed it in 1902, provoking decades of tension. Teachers working in mainstream non-religious schools are frequently targeted because militants see the school system as an effort by Bangkok to impose Buddhist culture on the south.

But a report by a think-tank said last week that more Muslims have been killed in the conflict than Buddhists -- many of them marked as "traitors" to Islam. Gunmen stormed a mosque in Narathiwat during evening prayers on June 8 killing 11 people and wounding 12. Police last week offered a 5,900-dollar reward for leads on the attack.

UN chief: Release Suu Kyi

By: AFP

Published: 30/06/2009 at 07:58 PM

New York - UN chief Ban Ki-moon urged Burma on Tuesday to free all political prisoners, including detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, days ahead of a visit to the military-ruled country. Ban is due to arrive in Burma on Friday for rare talks with the military junta, but Aung San Suu Kyi's party says he must also meet her if he hopes to make real progress toward democratic reforms. "They should release all political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi," said Ban, who was in Japan en route to Burma where the Nobel Peace laureate has been detained for 13 of the past 19 years.

"They (the junta) should immediately resume dialogue between the government and opposition leaders," he added after talks with Japanese Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone. His diplomatically risky two-day trip starts on the day a Burma court is due to resume its trial of the 64-year-old on charges of violating her house arrest after an American man swam to her lakeside home. "We welcome Mr Ban Ki-moon's visit," Nyan Win, the spokesman for Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) and a member of her legal team, told AFP.

He said the visit would focus on three issues: "to release all political prisoners, to start dialogue, and also to ensure free and fair elections in 2010." Regarding these three things, he needs to meet with Aung San Suu Kyi. "A UN statement said Ban looked forward to meeting "all key stakeholders," but did not specify whether he would meet the woman he described in May as an "indispensable patron for reconsidering the dialogue in Burma."

Aung San Suu Kyi is currently being held at Insein prison in Rangoon where her internationally condemned trial is taking place alongside that of American John Yettaw. She faces up to five years in jail if convicted. Her NLD won a landslide victory in Burma's last election in 1990, but it was never recognised by the military and she has spent most of the intervening years in detention. Ban decided to go ahead with his mission after being briefed Sunday by his special envoy to Burma, Ibrahim Gambari, who paid a short preparatory visit to the country last week.

Gambari met twice with Burma Foreign Minister Nyan Win in the generals' remote administrative capital Naypyidaw before holding talks with Singapore's ambassador and UN staff in Rangoon, but did not meet with Aung San Suu Kyi. The UN statement said Ban would highlight a resumption of dialogue between the government and opposition as a necessary part of reconciliation.

He would also focus on "the need to create conditions conducive to credible elections," as well as on the release of political prisoners, it added. The junta has vowed to hold elections in 2010, but critics say they are a sham designed to entrench its hold on power and that Aung San Suu Kyi's trial is intended to keep her behind bars during the polls. Diplomats at the United Nations said Ban had faced a dilemma in responding to the invitation from Burma's rulers.

Refusing to visit would be seen as not fulfilling his role as UN secretary general, but to accept and return empty-handed would be seen as a slap in the face, said a diplomat on condition of anonymity. Other diplomats said Ban faced conflicting pressures. Veto-wielding China, a traditional ally of Burma, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, of which Burma is a member, were pushing Ban to go without setting conditions, they said. But Western nations were pressing him to secure at least some concessions from the military regime.

Ban's last Burma trip was in the aftermath of Cyclone Nargis in May last year, when he visited devastated regions and pressured the junta into allowing foreign aid workers into the hardest-hit areas. He was the first UN chief in 44 years to visit Burma but was effectively barred from bringing up issues of political reform.

Central Asian states to secure potential 'dirty bomb' waste

By: AFP

Published: 30/06/2009 at 09:58 AM

Four Central Asian nations agreed on Monday to secure some 800 million tonnes of radioactive and toxic uranium waste sludge that could be used to make a "dirty" radiological bomb, a UN agency said.

"It has been explained to us that the kind of material that exists can be used for dirty bombs, that's the kind of risk that exists today," UN Development Programme deputy regional director Jens Wandel told journalists.

Waste from uranium mines exploited during the Soviet era is held in the open behind fragile dams and also threatens water supplies for millions of people in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, according to the UNDP.

Most of the uranium tailings sites, similar to slag heaps from coal mines, are in densely populated and "disaster prone" Central Asian river basins according to the UNDP. "They represent a major potential risk to the region's water supply and the health of millions of people," said UNDP Administrator Helen Clark.

The four central Asian countries and several international and regional agencies agreed on a joint declaration to cooperate in tackling the problem during a meeting in Geneva. They also urged the international community to support their attempts to deal with the uranium tailings.

Kyrgyz Prime Minister Igor Chudinov warned that without securing storage as a first step, the health and environmental consequences would "be as dangerous as the use of any weapons." He told journalists that international control or monitoring of storage would also act as "a guarantee".

Mosque horror still lingers

Villagers wonder why no one has been arrested over the Al-Furqan massacre,

By: King-oua Laohong in Narathiwat

Published: 30/06/2009 at 12:00 AM

Newspaper section: News

It is three weeks since assailants sprayed bullets at worshippers during evening prayers at Al-Furqan mosque in Narathiwat's Cho Airong district, and authorities are no closer to identifying the culprits. The attack at Ai Payae village on June 8 left 10 people dead and 12 seriously injured. Two people in the mosque escaped the attack unscathed. Following the attack, fearful villagers now lock their windows and doors every night at six o'clock. Authorities have allocated plenty of resources to help people in the village cope with the trauma. Doctors and nurses from the provincial hospital arrived and prescribed anti-stress medication.

Soldiers were mobilised to guard the mosque. But their presence did not instil a sense of ease amid growing distrust between villagers and authorities. Makareeya Kaseng, who lost her husband, Yusoh Mahaha, during the attack, said the presence of soldiers in her village did not make her feel any safer. "If I could choose, I prefer that they don't come," Mrs Makareeya said. "They smiled at us and we smiled at them, but we don't know what they actually think about us." "We're afraid of their weapons. It chills me every time I see their guns." "All locals feel the same. "We can't sleep and we've lost our appetites."

Before the massacre, her 63-year-old husband was in good health and spent his evenings teaching young children to read the Koran at home before going out for prayers at Al-Furqan. Mrs Makareeya said all the people killed in the June 8 attack were elders at Ai Payae village. "Killing in a mosque is an enormous sin," she said. "Until now, locals in the village don't have a clue who could be responsible for such a sin and the reason behind the killings." Religious leader Waedoloh Kuwaekama was one of those who were gunned down in the mosque. His 58-year-old wife, Ya Jehkoh, questioned which group of assailants dared to kill people at a religious site, whether it was a Muslim mosque or a Buddhist temple.

"It's more than a fortnight now. Why can't the authorities yet catch any assailant?" she asked. Authorities are trying to identify the assailants amid widespread rumours they were agents of the state. Col Prinya Chaidilok, spokesman for the Internal Security Operations Command's frontline office of the 4th Army, said the team investigating the attack had received tip-offs which pointed to several possible motivations. One theory was that the assailants were state authorities who wanted to stir up violence for their own ends.

Another suggests the assailants were outsiders who launched the sabotage with support from a team of local insurgents. Some say the attack was an act of revenge, possibly by a group of radical Buddhists, Col Prinya said. No one at the village is convinced a group of radical Muslims could be responsible for the attack, said Col Prinya.

Politicians need to keep quiet for sake of peace in South

By: ACHARA ASHAYAGACHAT

Published: 30/06/2009 at 12:00 AM

Newspaper section: News

The government's proposed "politics guiding military" strategy in dealing with the southern insurgency is being called into question. Critics say the strategy's meaning should be clearly defined to ensure a proper understanding by agencies before its implementation. They said the slogan could be exploited by the government and politicians to win public backing for the strategy without practical action. If a huge budget is involved, the military would also stand to benefit in a big way. The "politics guiding military" policy may have tasted success in fighting communism in the 1980s but the current "war" in the South is different. Without addressing the southerners' basic human rights and, more importantly, recognising their aspirations, sustainable peace in the region should not be expected. However, if the law is not strictly enforced in the three southernmost border provinces, the situation is not going to improve either.

So we need the military presence to remain strong in the region and the politicians to stay quiet as they have not made any positive contribution to the region for several years. Where the rule of law cannot prevail, security authorities must deal seriously with the insurgents to restore peace and stability. But those in charge of security should not encourage a heavy-handed approach. "As long as the southerners have trust in the judicial system, they will back the state. But if they are not certain that justice could be delivered, they will become allies of the insurgents," said a judge with experience in the southern provinces. Army chief Anupong Paojinda has made it clear the "politics guiding military" policy was not being introduced to negotiate with the insurgents. However, some scholars have advised agencies that they should explore other ideas that could help complete the jigsaw puzzle, including talks with groups sympathising with the militants.

Certainly, who to talk to is the key question for those advocating talking. Officers with different hats now seem to agree on one basic fact: That unless the root cause of the problem is recognised, the government cannot easily address the anti-Siam attitudes and separatism. But where to start? The local people don't seem to have much faith in the Democrat Party, but do believe in Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, who once said the area should be made a special administration zone. Last week, Malaysia's Task Force 2010 chief, Datuk Wan Abu Bakar Omar, suggested that the Organisation of Islamic Conference might be the best body if Thailand was looking for external help to quell the insurgency.

Matubhumi pins its hopes on South focus

Published: 30/06/2009 at 12:00 AM

Newspaper section: [News](#)

Former Puea Pandin Party deputy leader Mun Patanotai is now a key figure in the new party, Matubhumi, which emerged from the ashes of the Rassadorn Party. In an interview with NAOWARAT SUKSAMRAN, he explains why he broke with Puea Pandin and what Matubhumi expects from the next general election.

Why did you break away from Puea Pandin?

When we formed Puea Pandin, we hoped it would be a party that did not side with any existing political camp. We wanted it to stay between the two conflicting sides because we wanted the country to break the political impasse. But what we found in joining this government and the previous one was that [the practice of] lobbying for cabinet portfolios and buying MPs to join parties was still rampant. These problems have made politics a business in which politicians exploit their position to protect their own interests.

We just cannot agree with those who get hold of power over the party and the cabinet through cabinet position brokering. We renamed the existing Rassadorn Party into this new party. What's the selling point of Matubhumi? What makes it different than other parties, or is it just another new party?

We have a number of people with the same idea. We're a group of people who hope to see the country move on. Our group includes serving MPs from Puea Pandin, especially those southern MPs from the three Muslim-dominated provinces, other key southern political figures and northeastern political groups, as well as politicians from other parties who have yet to join Matubhumi for the time being.

Those who have moved to the party are MPs from the now-defunct People Power Party. They joined Matubhumi when their party was dissolved. The priority of Matubhumi is to protect the interests of the country. We're working very hard to resolve the southern unrest and social welfare issues such as the social security scheme. We aim to push to extend social welfare to cover all people because we are a welfare state that comprises the government, the private sector and members of the public. These three sides will help make it happen. We won't just be a government with populist policies that only gives out freebies.

Why the emphasis on the southern unrest?

We think the southern violence has persisted for too long and is a significant problem for the country. And, despite how much money is injected into efforts to resolve it, the problem remains unresolved. While the southern region continues to face violence, the economy cannot improve and investors dare not invest. This is not just the southern economy but the overall economy.

We agree with the idea of turning the restive South into a special administration area, the setting up of a special court to take care of security cases, and the provision of equal education to the people of the region. Those MPs from Puea Pandin who agree with this idea are those from the three southernmost provinces.

But we are not just focusing on the South. We also have key figures in each region to look for qualified regional representatives and to study the specific needs of each region for incorporation into the party's core policies. As the party pays much attention to the three southern provinces, isn't it all about paving the way for a new leader like Gen Sonthi Boonyaratkalin (the former army chief and leader of the Sept 19, 2006 coup)?

Gen Sonthi has been a key figure in supporting Puea Pandin for a long time. He worked in the South for a long time and knows those MPs and key figures in that region very well, such as the Wadah group of former MP Den Tomeena. Gen Sonthi has provided us with good advice on the southern issues. Now that he has clearly stated he is willing to help us out with every issue of the country, we see him as one of the potential leaders. Anyway, he is still studying politics and is not ready to enter politics for the time being. We've just encouraged him to become the party leader.

Where does the financial support come from?

From various sides. Some are old sponsors who have similar political doctrines and ideas to resolve the economic problems and bring peace to the South. Our temporary office is on Sawankhalok Road, the same location as the Rassadorn Party's headquarters. Another office is in Soi Lang Suan, which is a house belonging to former Puea Pandin adviser Vatana Asavahame.

What's next?

We will hold a major meeting of the party probably in July to select the leader, secretary-general and executives. I will co-chair the meeting with the other members and key figures. We'll hold a series of seminars in five southern provinces including the far South to brainstorm ideas and proposals for resolving the southern unrest and developing the region. The brainstorming sessions will be attended by community and religious leaders, academics and business sectors.

How many House seats does Matubhumi aim to win?

We think we will be a medium-sized party. We should get no less than 10 MPs given the strong positive reaction in the five southern provinces. We should be a party that has enough House votes to propose a draft law, at the very least. For how much longer, do you think, this government will live on?

I believe it may not live longer than a year. The government is not ready for a general election, given the past gauging of its popularity. The budgets injected and policies implemented have yet to kick in. Key government coalition partners are not ready for a new race.

The Jakarta Post

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RI, Malaysia need great field commanders to guard Ambalat: Minister

Dicky Christanto , The Jakarta Post , Jakarta | Tue, 06/30/2009 11:23 AM | National

Regarding the recent dispute over borders in Ambalat waters between Indonesia and Malaysia, Defense Minister Juwono Sudarsono said both navy were in need of great of field commanders.

"These field commanders should be able to manage the temper of their subordinates so we would be able to avoid clash on the field," Sudarsono told journalists Tuesday.

The statement was issued after an hour meeting between Juwono Sudarsono and his counterpart from Malaysia, Dato Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

The meeting was aimed at discussing the dispute at Ambalat waters and the need to conduct collaboration between both countries' defense industries.

In harmony with Sudarsono, Malaysia Defense Minister Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said following the capable navy commanders was the need to organize more informal meetings between the two authorities.

"We should conduct more informal meetings because we both realize that problems are not only solved by formal meetings but the informal as well," he said.

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The Jakarta Post

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Letters: No appreciation for maids

Tue, 06/30/2009 10:54 AM | Reader's Forum

I would like to express my sorrow for all Indonesian maids or migrant workers who work in Malaysia, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and in other countries around the world. It makes me so sad to hear about the abusive experiences of Indonesian women, not only in Malaysia, but in almost all countries.

When the Indonesian-Malaysian relationship is not going well because of the abuse suffered by Indonesian maids there, the Indonesian government simply stops supplying maids to Malaysia. This ban is not a solution. It is irrational, because the government is not getting to the root of the problem.

The question is why do Indonesian maids or workers have to work in Malaysia or elsewhere? The answer is because Indonesia is neither a good nor safe place to make money. The government just sells dreams of the good life to the people.

We all know that Indonesia is rich in natural resources, yet we import everything from other countries and we export workers, with more and more workers going to work abroad, legal and illegally.

What we need now is for the government to be able to provide more job vacancies by using our own resources. Can that happen? Let us ask the presidential candidates, I wonder how they would answer. Do not just give us dreams, but show us real results.

Tabrani Yunis
Banda Aceh

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Terror suspects charged with forgery

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Five Singaporeans arrested by the National Police for alleged involvement in terrorism have had their charge downgraded to immigration forgery.

The police announced on June 21 that they had arrested five Singaporeans — Syamsul Anwar alias Somad bin Soban, Ahmad Kastari, Husaini Ismail, his wife and a child — as well as an Indonesian identified as Syaifuddin Zuhry, in three different locations.

However, after a series of intensive investigations, the police announced that the suspects were only seeking safe refuge within Indonesia.

“They will be charged with document forgery, immigration violation and various other offenses,” National Police chief of detectives Comr. Gen. Susno Duadji said Monday.

The police previously suspected the group of being involved in an attempt to bomb Changi International Airport and several other strategic locations several years ago.

Susno said the five foreigners were fugitives running from Singapore government, but did not elaborate what crimes they had committed in their homelands.

“They are currently being detained by the regional police,” Susno said.

The National Police will hand over the suspects to the Foreign Affairs Ministry so their deportation can be arranged, Susno said.

He said Zuhry, the Indonesian citizen, would be the only individual to be charged with terrorism activities in Lampung.

The police believe Zuhry was closely related to fugitive Malaysian terror suspect Noordin M Top. A source at the counterterror detachment said the suspects had been monitored for months before finally being arrested.

Meanwhile, police spokesman Abubakar Nataprawira said the police were still investigating the case and had not come to an official conclusion yet.

Separately, intelligence expert Dino Chrisbon said the scenario was similar to the arrest of Mas Slamet bin Kastari, a member of Jamaah Islamiyah (JI), in Riau in 2003.

JI has been linked with the Bali bombings that killed more than 200 people and injured around 300

others, mostly foreigners, in 2002.

Even though Zuhry was on Singapore's most-wanted list for plotting terrorist attacks in the neighboring island state, the Indonesian government only charged him with breaching immigration regulations due to a false passport in his possession.

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Indonesia needs a post-ASEAN foreign policy

Rizal Sukma , Jakarta | Tue, 06/30/2009 10:51 AM | Headlines

There is nothing more irritating than being ignored. That is what is happening to Indonesia, the so-called largest country in Southeast Asia. Foreign Ministry spokesman Teuku Faizasyah revealed last week the Indonesian government had sent 35 notes of protest to Malaysia over Ambalat since 1980. However, the neighboring country, a fellow ASEAN member, has not stopped maneuvering in the area.

Indonesia has been struggling to convince other fellow ASEAN members on the importance of having a credible ASEAN human rights body, during the ongoing debate on the terms of reference for it. Yet Indonesia's views seem to have fallen on deaf ears.

Previously, Indonesia's views on the ASEAN Charter were also largely ignored, pushing it to compromise to accept the much tamer version of the charter at the end.

Indonesia has always been forced into compromise or into a corner by other members for the sake of ASEAN. On the East Asian Summit (EAS), for example, we compromised to save Malaysia's face. On the ASEAN Security Community (ASC) idea, we compromised by dropping our proposal about the need for an ASEAN peacekeeping force in October 2003.

We are also asked to show restraint when our territory is violated either by Malaysian ships or Thai trawlers. On the contrary, we are often singled out when it comes to our obligations to ASEAN. We are repeatedly accused of harboring terrorists by Singapore. We are also accused of not being serious in addressing the problem of haze.

Whenever Indonesia wants to be more active and assertive, some of our neighbors, even some of our own people, ridicule the idea by arguing that Indonesia should look at the mirror first before it seeks to play a greater and more independent role in Southeast Asia. We are ridiculed by cynics, both within and without Indonesia, that we should put our house in order first. We are told that we should be ashamed of talking about democracy at the regional level because our democracy at home is not perfect. We are told that as a poor country, we should feed our own people first before we express our sympathy for millions of oppressed Myanmar people.

Yet we continue to uphold our commitment to ASEAN, and continue to provide a special place for the association in our foreign policy. We even call it the cornerstone of Indonesia's foreign policy. We put ASEAN solidarity above all other interests. For that, we sometimes have to defend Myanmar at international forums such as the International Labor Organization (ILO) or even the UN Security Council.

We should stand tall and proclaim that enough is enough. It is enough for Indonesia to imprison

itself in the "golden cage" of ASEAN for more than 40 years. We should now declare, "Yes, we are poor in material goods, but we are rich in dignity." We should make it clear to our neighbors that "Yes, our people are still poor economically, but our government values them as human beings by respecting their human rights, guaranteeing their freedom of speech, and protecting their political freedom to choose their own government freely."

As a nation, we should never be ashamed of these facts. We should never allow cynical views from outside, let alone from inside, to prevent us from believing in what we think is right. We should never allow other countries to prevent us from taking our own course. Indeed, as a sovereign nation, we should have the courage to be different from other countries if we have to.

We have no problem in taking different positions from major powers such as the United States on many international issues. It is foolish if we are not brave enough to take a different position from other ASEAN countries, especially on fundamental issues of freedom and human rights.

Indonesia, therefore, needs to begin formulating a post-ASEAN foreign policy. ASEAN should no longer be treated as the only cornerstone of Indonesia's foreign policy. For Indonesia, ASEAN should constitute only one of the available platforms through which we can attain and fulfill our national interests. Some of our foreign policy initiatives - such as the Bali Democracy Forum (BDF), the G20 and strategic partnerships with global and regional major powers - have already shown signs toward that direction.

Yet we should not forget that assertiveness and independence does not mean that we need to resort to force whenever we have problems with our ASEAN neighbors. For Indonesia, ASEAN should continue to be an important forum for managing inter-state relations among Southeast Asian countries through peaceful means.

It is the principal forum for us to ensure good neighborliness in the region. At the end, the stability and security of Southeast Asia is at the core of our strategic interests.

The writer is the executive director of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies.

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National

Return Patani to its glorious past

Published on June 30, 2009

A leading Islamic scholar and Thai social critic on Tuesday called on the government to come up with a comprehensive policy for peace in Thailand's Malay-speaking South and urged the state to help turn the region into the centre of Islamic teaching.

Thailand's leading social critic, Dr. Prawes Wasi and Ismail Lutphi Japakiya, the rector of the Yala Islamic University, said the state to help bring back the region's "glorious past" and reinstate its status as the "cradle of Islamic teachings" for the Southeast Asia.

"The region was once known for its Islamic teaching that attracted scholars and students from various places around the Muslim world," Prawes said.

"We can help restore pride to the local community and for the country. We should not see this effort as coming at the expense of the Thai state," Prawes said.

Lutphi said such effort would be a source of pride for Thai state. He said the role of religion of Islam has long has a special place in everyday life of the local people, many of who have yet to come to terms with various administrative models and governance.

The seminar, organised by Prince of Songkhla University's Deep South Watch (DSW), Chulalongkorn University's Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, and King Prajadhipok Institute (KPI), examined the government policy and activities in the deep South and concluded that the effort has failed to win hearts and minds of the local community.

KPI's director of the Office of Peace and Governance, retired General Ekkachai Srivilas, said the state has to come up with new approaches to solve the conflict. He argued that the enormous amount of budget, resources and manpower have not paid.

DSW's Ayub Khan Pathan, said no solution will successful it it does not take into consideration the historical consciousness and the issue of identity of the Malay Muslims in the region.


Instead of seeing the deep South in the narrow sense of nation-state, we need to acknowledge Patani's place in the Malay-speaking world and the contribution the region has

made to the region.

Ayub said the state has to acknowledge that it is fighting a well organised network of militants and we have failed to win over the support of the local community. Extremely few number of arrest based on information from the public, he said.

Angkhana Neelaphijit accused the National Security Council (NSC) of obstructing initiatives from the international community, namely the UN Development Programme, from working with the local community by sitting on their request.

The outspoken activist also accused the Fourth Army's Internal Security Operation Command (Isoc) of "insulting" the local community by discouraging them from making direct request from foreign and local donors for their development projects.

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