



Institute of Strategic and International Studies (ISIS) Malaysia

**NEWSCLIPPINGS AND ARTICLES
ON
POLITICAL CONFLICT**

November 16 - 30, 2009

**INFORMATION SERVICES DIVISION
ISIS MALAYSIA**

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2009

U.S. to press China on key issues

Halfway through Asian tour, Obama confronts the limits of engagement and personal charm

BY JONATHAN WEISMAN

SHANGHAI — President Barack Obama arrived here Sunday night to press China on issues from climate change to economic restructuring, amid rising concerns that his first swing through Asia as president will yield more disappointment than progress on trade, human rights, national security and environmental concerns.

A flurry of actions over the

weekend raised more questions than they resolved on a broad swath of issues confronting both sides of the Pacific.

On Sunday, leaders of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum dropped efforts to reach a binding international climate-change agreement in Copenhagen next month, settling instead for what they called a political framework for future negotiations. Mr. Obama became the

The APEC Summit

- U.S. signals shift on Asian-Pacific tradePage 4
- China hits back at U.S. over weak dollarPage 4

first president to meet with the entire Association of Southeast Asian Nations, including the military junta of Myanmar, and White House officials say he personally demanded the country's leaders

release political prisoners, including opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi. But Mr. Obama failed to secure any mention of political prisoners in an Asean communique.

The U.S. and Russia now appear unlikely to complete a nuclear-arms-reduction accord by Dec. 5, when the current Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty expires. Mr. Obama met for closed-door consultations with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, but Na-

tional Security Council Russia specialist Michael McFaul said major issues remain, and the two countries are working out a "bridging agreement" to extend previous arms ratification rules.

On trade, the U.S. president committed this weekend to "re-engage" the Trans Pacific Partnership, a fledgling free-trade alliance with smaller countries in the region. But a presidential shift

Please turn to page 29

A superpower stirs

600 years after bringing home its armada, will China once again stride the world's stage?

By Andrew Browne in Beijing

THE wooden treasure ships commanded by Admiral Cheng-ho, a Chinese Ming dynasty eunuch, were among the largest vessels ever built, nautical monsters that by some accounts carried nine masts.

Bigger by far than the ships of Christopher Columbus that set out decades later for the New World, they were the flagships of an armada that ventured as far as the east coast of Africa on seven naval expeditions. The first embarked in 1405 bearing some 30,000 men; the seventh in 1430.

Then the expeditions suddenly stopped. Cheng-ho's adventures had helped to ruin Ming finances. The emperors put a halt to sea trade and closed the shipbuilding industry; China looked inward for the next four centuries. The expeditions to the "Western Seas" were a glorious aberration.

Now, at the dawn of the 21st century, the world is looking to China to assume an unfamiliar role of global leadership. At a time when American prestige is fading, China's status is rising.

U.S. President Barack Obama arrived in China late Sunday night seeking help on everything from climate change to North Korea's nuclear threat. At meetings of the Group of 20 nations, China's opinions are urgently sought on issues such as banking reform and executive pay. Persuading China to take a lead will be a challenge.

History has done little to prepare this country for the kind of leadership that an anxious international community seems so ready to thrust on it.

Unlike the U.S., China doesn't aspire to remake the world: Its longstanding mantra is "nonintervention" in the internal affairs of other countries. Even under Chairman Mao's reign, China never sought world domination, like the former Soviet Union—although it stirred up revolution in other parts of Asia and beyond. Now that China has largely discarded socialism, it's hard to find a definition for what remains of its ideology, values and world view.

Recently, at a dinner in a Beijing restaurant of a group of young Chinese professionals—several of them Communist Party members—somebody raised a question that should have been simple to answer. Can anybody list the "Three Represents?" The reference was to the political theory of former President Jiang Zemin, which has been written into the state constitution and is taught in schools. Not a single hand went up. Could anybody name two? Nobody. One? With difficulty.

A hard-nosed pragmatism is generally considered to be China's guiding principle at home and abroad: whatever produces growth in gross domestic product.

Admiration from new corners

China's aloofness from the world was interrupted when the West came knocking. In 1793, Lord Macartney was dispatched to China by Britain's King George III to open the country to trade. He arrived with presents meant to dazzle the court of the Qianlong emperor—mechanical clocks, chronometers, telescopes and mathematical instruments. The 600 packages required 200 horses and 3,000 porters to transport.

"There is nothing we lack," the emperor famously told the royal emissary. "We have never set much store on strange and ingenious objects." The British forced open the doors to trade with gunboats; an enfeebled China was carved up by Western powers in what China calls its "century of humiliation."

It's easy to forget, driving by Beijing's Olympics-inspired landmarks—the Birds Nest Stadium, the Water Cube, the colossal CCTV Tower—that until quite recently China had closeted itself again.

For most of the first 30 years of Communist rule in China, which started in 1949, it was hard and often outright impossible to get a

visa. Businessmen were granted access once a year for the Canton Trade Fair. In neighboring Hong Kong, tourist buses would deliver groups of camera-toting Americans and Japanese to the border to catch a glimpse of "Red China" on the other side. The rare Chinese official who ventured to the West was a curiosity, much like North Koreans today.

China was in turmoil. To divine what was going on inside the country, foreign intelligence decamped in Hong Kong to monitor local radio stations.

Deng Xiaoping put an end to Chairman Mao's era of murderous seclusion—its endless class struggles and man-made disasters, including the world's worst famine—with his "Open Door" reforms in 1978.

The decision to open the country to foreign trade and investment, initially through Special Economic Zones along the coast, set China on its path of supercharged economic growth. China is shortly expected to overtake Japan as the world's second-largest economy.

China's achievements have provided a beacon for much of the developing world: its success in lifting 300 million people out of poverty; its fight against disease and illiteracy; its embrace of technology that has put Chinese astronauts in space. All this, while allowing an unprecedented flowering of personal freedoms.

Now, as the global economy emerges shakily from the worst recession since World War II, China is attracting admiration from new corners.

While the Western world hurtled toward the financial abyss, China was moving ahead cautiously. It has emerged from the crisis with an economy growing powerfully. Its banks are unpolluted by toxic assets; hardly a ripple disturbs its vast pools of national savings. This year, property markets in Beijing and Shanghai are sizzling.

There are hopes, too, that China will use its new strategic heft—and its apparently deft touch—to help resolve the most pressing security issues of the times. Zbigniew Brzezinski, the U.S. national security adviser under Jimmy Carter, proposed a drastically slimmer G20—a G2, the U.S. and China—to deal with the nuclear threat posed by Iran and North Korea; the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; India-Pakistan tensions; climate change.

When he arrives in Beijing, Mr. Obama will be clutching a geopolitical "to-do" list that looks quite similar. America's broad goal has been to persuade China to assume the global responsibilities that go with its growing economic influence in a way that strengthens, rather than threatens, existing international arrangements. China, urged former U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick, should become a "responsible stakeholder."

Yet China's official commitment to a "harmonious world" is often at odds with an assertive America fighting two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. More often than not, it has meant that China has been a reluctant follower not a leader. Critics say that China's record in the world's trouble spots, from North Korea to Iraq and Darfur, suggests that it defines its responsibilities in ways that enhance its economic interests.

On North Korea, China has been heading diplomatic efforts to try to rein in Pyongyang's nuclear program. But it is hesitant to threaten the flow of Chinese oil and food that keeps the regime alive. Skeptics in the U.S. say that China holds back because it fears a collapse of North Korea that would not only unleash a flood of refugees across its border but also place U.S. forces face-to-face with its own.

Similar tensions between China's economic interests and international obligations play out in Africa, where Chinese companies are investing massively in energy and raw materials to fuel China's growth. The "no-strings" investments from Nigeria to Ethiopia fly in the face of Western efforts to link invest-

ment with improvements in human rights and the environment. In Sudan, China has sent peacekeepers to the war-torn region of Darfur, while bolstering the government by buying oil and selling arms.

Iran may provide the biggest test to date of China's willingness to lead. Washington and its European allies see China's role as critical in the effort to pressure Tehran over its nuclear program. So far, China has resisted tougher sanctions against a country that is its second-largest oil supplier after Saudi Arabia.

China's leaders wrap their great power aspirations in modesty. They point out that China is still a poor developing country, with one tenth of the per capita GDP of the U.S.

Yet China is rapidly modernizing its military forces. Every schoolchild in China knows the story of the Dowager Empress who used funds earmarked for the navy to build stone boats at the Summer Palace in Beijing. The story has become a metaphor for national weakness, and a call to arms.

A military parade last month to mark the 60th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China sent a powerful message to China's 1.3 billion people. The intercontinental ballistic missiles that rumbled down Beijing's Avenue of Eternal Peace, and the tanker planes that lumbered overhead, signaled that China not only was at last a strong country, but also could project power beyond its shores.

Model of governance

These days, China's appetite for "ingenious objects" from the West knows no bounds. It has 650 million mobile phones; it has passed America as the world's largest auto market.

No emerging nation on earth has seized the opportunities of global trade more enthusiastically than China. Its decision to join the World Trade Organization in 2001 launched its economy into a new orbit. Surpluses from foreign trade—particularly with the U.S.—have helped China rack up more than \$2 trillion in foreign-exchange reserves.

So what does China want to do with the enhanced status that it craves, and which the world seems equally anxious to concede to China?

Some two-and-a-half millennia ago, the Chinese philosopher Laozi wrote: "Governing a large country is like frying a small fish." The advice was aimed at the scholar-officials that ran China—a Mandarin class that became a model of governance for the ancient world. The light touch has never been a hallmark of Communist rule, or of its statecraft. That matters greatly in a world in which influence and legitimacy derive more than ever from the attractiveness of a country's governing ideals.

Last month, the Frankfurt Book Fair offered the world a glimpse into the internal workings of the Chinese state, and a case study on the limitations of China's "soft power" and its ability to lead.

China was invited to the fair as the guest of honor. The Chinese government had invested millions of dollars in the event, lining up some 2,000 Chinese writers, publishers and artists to attend. All went well until organizers invited two Chinese dissidents to a pre-fair symposium titled "China and the World—Perception and Reality." Furious Chinese officials threatened to boycott the event and backed down only when organizers withdrew the invitations.

"We did not come to be instructed about democracy," Mei Zhaocong, China's former ambassador to Germany, icily declared.

"Two principles also apply to the Frankfurt Book Fair," said a German foreign ministry spokeswoman. "Guests are treated like guests, and art without freedom is inconceivable."

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2009

How Obama Can Shape Asia's Rise

By Chung Min Lee

Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, President Barack Obama's Asia tour will conclude this week with a visit to South Korea—the world's last Cold War frontier. Even as he ponders critical next steps in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, the president in Asia faces a region on the cusp of fundamental change. More so than any of Mr. Obama's predecessors, how his administration chooses to help shape Asia's rise throughout the first quarter of the 21st century is going to have a critical impact on America's own future as a superpower.

For the first time in world history, three major regions—North America, continental Europe and East Asia—are sharing the world stage. This is possible in no small part because the U.S. engineered the post-World War II pacification and reconstruction of Germany and Japan. Indeed, the eventual formation of the European Union and Asia's rise over the past half century would have been impossible without two critical ingredients: America's security umbrella and the opening of its markets to European and Asian goods. Having created this tripolar world, the U.S. and especially President Obama now need to focus on three core issues to shape the world for the next half century.

First, the world's and Asia's long-term prosperity and stability depend increasingly on China's role as a viable stakeholder. This will depend in turn on the nature of China's engagement with the U.S. and the strategically consequential powers of Asia such as Japan, India, Indonesia, South Korea and Australia. China has replaced the U.S. as the biggest trading part-

ner for many of Asia's leading economies. It also is growing more assertive of its territorial claims, for instance with the Spratly and Paracel islands in the South China Sea, and Beijing is more willing to send its navy further afield.

No Asian country is entirely comfortable with an increasingly powerful China. The region's advanced market economies and rapidly emerging powers such as India, Indonesia and Vietnam are wary of an overbearing China. The U.S. can play a useful role as a counterbalance even as it expands cooperation with China. Despite China's trading importance, the U.S. has in Asia what China does not: direct security ties with the region's key players and five decades of political trust. President Obama should seek ways to strengthen, rather than weaken, America's linkages with its Pacific allies.

This will involve a combination of strengthening America's existing Asian alliances; expanding freedom and democracy across the region by stressing the importance of human rights and ensuring the inclusion of democratization as a key agenda in the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations and other regional forums; and multipronged engagement with China commensurate with its growing influence but also aimed at advancing its social and political responsibilities at home and abroad. If NATO played a critical role in sustaining global prosperity and stability during the Cold War, America's Asian allies are going to play an equally significant role in the years to come.

Second, from a U.S. as well as a regional

perspective, one of the most important bilateral relationships in East Asia is the Korean-Japanese partnership. Next year will mark the 100th anniversary of Korea's colonization by Japan. Significant historical disputes exist but it's time to move forward. South Korean President Lee Myung-bak has refused to exploit sporadic tensions in the Korean-Japanese relationship

for political purposes and has expended political capital to ensure a closer partnership across the political, economic and even security sectors. As an expression of his commitment to fundamentally resetting his ties with Korea, Japa-

nese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama chose Seoul as his first foreign destination last month.

Maintaining a robust U.S.-Japan alliance is crucial to buttressing stronger ties between Korea and Japan since the U.S. serves as a common security denominator for Seoul and Tokyo. The Korean-Japanese relationship was traditionally the weakest link in the U.S.-Japan-Korea triangle but that's no longer the case. As President Obama reconfigures strategic linkages with Prime Minister Hatoyama, he should bear in mind the powerful synergy that flows from this critical and comprehensive trilateral democratic partnership.

Third, Mr. Obama needs to address the situation on the Korean peninsula, which stands at a historical tipping point. The North Korean nuclear threat continues to dominate the security agenda but far greater change lies over the horizon—the day when all Koreans on both sides of the 38th parallel can live in freedom. Manag-

ing such a transition on the peninsula is going to entail the closest of coordination between Korea and the U.S. and robust confidence building with all of its neighbors, but especially with China. Mr. Obama and Mr. Lee should begin a concerted dialogue on a range of possible outcomes on the peninsula but also share their visions and strategies for a unified Korea with key regional players.

All these steps will be challenging for all sides, as the dynamic between America and Korea shows. Seoul is playing a greater role in the Group of 20 economic summits and will host the 2010 meeting, redeploying forces to Afghanistan, and increasing overseas development assistance. But to play a constructive part in the future alliance with the U.S., Seoul has to support more fully democratic institutions in Asia by providing concrete financial and diplomatic assistance, and must step up economic reforms at home to boost its prosperity. As for Washington, continuing to delay the passage of the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement for myopic political interests will only elevate unnecessary tensions.

When U.S. President-elect Dwight Eisenhower visited Korea in the midst of war in 1952, he could never have imagined how America's alliances would transform the face of Asia and Korea. As President Obama travels through Asia, one of the leading barometers of America's continuing influence over the next two to three decades surely resides in how he chooses to manage America's Asian alliances.

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

Engaging
Japan and
Korea is key.

OPEC ramps up pumping ability

BY SPENCER SWARTZ

LONDON—Energy forecasters increasingly predict slowing growth in global oil demand in the years ahead, but some OPEC nations are heading in the opposite direction and ramping up their capacity to pump oil.

Qatar, for example, is set to raise its oil-production capacity early next year from an existing field known as Al Shaheen. The more than \$6 billion expansion project brightens the revenue prospects of the Mideast state but highlights a bigger problem brewing for its partners in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

After keeping a tight tether on supply in recent years by cautiously investing, the 12-nation cartel finds it-

self battling an untimely convergence of lackluster consumption that magnifies its own rising supply capacity—which may in turn reignite old battles between members over market share and ultimately push oil prices lower.

OPEC output capacity is expected to increase around one million barrels a day in 2010 as projects enter service in Angola, Iraq, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, according to Bill Faren-Price, energy director at Medley Global Advisors.

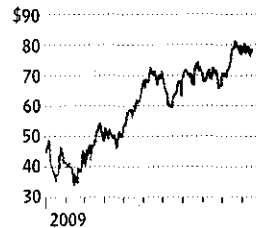
“Significant challenges face OPEC next year,” Mr. Faren-Price says. “It will struggle to integrate a wave of new OPEC production capacity that vastly exceeds world demand for its crude.” Many of the projects started development well before the recession.

Projects like Al Shaheen

Crude-oil futures

Daily settlement price on the continuous front-month contract

11 a.m. in NY: \$78.70 a barrel, down 20 cents



Source: Thomson Reuters via WSJ Market Data Group

may swell OPEC's nominal spare production capacity, a measure of its overall capability to bring barrels to consum-

ers, to roughly 7.5 million barrels a day. That would leave OPEC capacity up about 15% from 2008 at almost a 10-year high, depending on how much oil the group is actually producing.

Operated by Denmark's AP Moller-Maersk, the offshore Al Shaheen field started producing crude in the early 1990s and could almost double in capacity to over 500,000 barrels a day, says Qatar oil minister Abdullah Bin Hamad Al-Attiyah. “The expansion is coming along as expected,” he said, dismissing concern about depressed demand.

Mr. Al-Attiyah and other OPEC officials say China, India and other parts of Asia will remain OPEC's fastest-growing markets. OPEC exports to

Please turn to page 8

Wednesday, November 18, 2009

Some OPEC members ramp up capacity

Continued from first page
Asia, not including Japan, grew by 22% in 2000-08, according to OPEC data. By comparison, shipments to North America, mainly the U.S., were flat in that period.

Prices, meanwhile, have risen about 77% this year to \$79 a barrel, thanks in part to a weak U.S. dollar that is encouraging investors to buy higher-yielding oil futures contracts, and on big OPEC production cuts this year. Those cuts are likely to be kept in place at the group's final meeting of the year scheduled for Dec. 22 in Angola, OPEC officials say.

But problems seem set to mount. In the near term, a persistent glut in crude inventory this year is expected to carry into 2010. Meanwhile, the long-term outlook is softening. The International Energy Agency, a Paris-based energy adviser to industrialized nations, last week sharply downgraded its world demand forecast to 2015 to 88 million barrels a day, just three million barrels a day more than today, due to fallout from the recession and energy efficiency efforts.

Yet, OPEC is cranking up its ability to produce oil—and that could extend the current supply glut. "With these expected capacity additions, mediocre economic performance and weak demand, we currently foresee [OPEC] spare capacity to remain above five million barrels a day beyond 2015," said one senior Gulf OPEC official.

Among the most aggressive has been Angola, which has doubled its production capacity—from a low base—since 2004, to about 2.1 million barrels a day. Most of the output from its 100,000-barrel-a-day Tombua-Landana offshore project

will start in 2010. Chevron Corp. is developing the \$3.8 billion project.

"We have new projects that will start in coming years. We will want a higher quota at some point," an Angolan oil ministry official said.

At the same time, Saudi Arabia is completing one of its biggest oil-drilling programs, boosting the kingdom's total oil output capacity to 12.5 million barrels a day by early next year, up about a net 1.5 million barrels a day versus a few years ago.

Then there are big capacity increases coming in Iraq and Nigeria, two OPEC producers riven with security problems in recent years that have sharply cut oil output. Now, they may be getting their petroleum sectors back on their feet with new projects and the resurrection of dormant facilities.

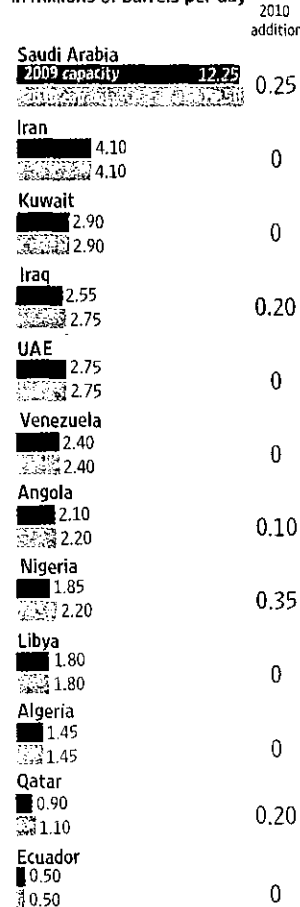
BP PLC and other companies that recently signed drilling contracts with the Iraqi government requiring them to deliver quick results will "rehabilitate" existing oil fields, which may elevate Iraq's crude output next year by 300,000 barrels a day to a total of 2.8 million barrels a day.

David Kirsch, director of market intelligence at PFC Energy, thinks Iraq's total capacity could top four million barrels a day by 2015 if political and security problems don't get in the way. Even on that conservative assumption, such output would make it hard for OPEC "to manage markets over the medium term," Mr. Kirsch said.

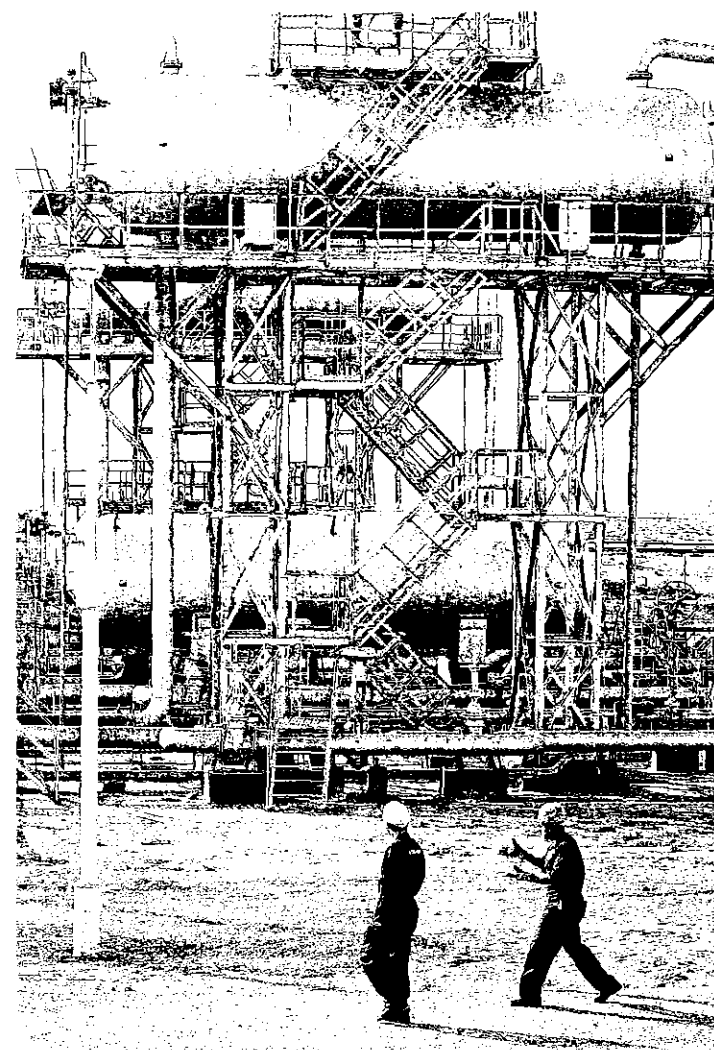
In Nigeria, a government amnesty that offered thousands of militants money to stop destroying oil infrastructure may yet fall apart—but so far has held up the past few months. That has allowed Nigeria to export more crude and more barrels could hit the market soon.

Pumping up

Some OPEC members are increasing their oil output capacity, in millions of barrels per day



Source: Medley Global Advisors



Iraqi workers walk in front of a refinery in the South Rumaila oilfield in Basra, Iraq.

Nuclear agency warns of more Iran plants

BY JAY SOLOMON
AND DAVID CRAWFORD

WASHINGTON—The United Nations atomic watchdog said Iran could be constructing a number of covert nuclear installations in addition to a secret uranium-enrichment facility the Obama administration disclosed in late September.

The International Atomic Energy Agency also said in a quarterly report released Monday that Iranian officials have told the U.N. that Tehran plans to begin operating the previously unknown nuclear-fuel facility outside the holy city of Qom by 2011.

The IAEA report is the last to be released under departing Director General Mohamed ElBaradei. U.S. officials have long criticized the Egyptian for deflecting Washington's criticism of Iran in official reports. Diplomats said Monday that the latest report was notable for its sharp tone.

On Tuesday, Iranian nuclear envoy Ali Asghar Soltanieh denied the U.N. inspectors' tour turned up evidence Tehran is seeking nuclear weapons, the Associated Press said. It quoted him saying on Iranian television that the IAEA report "showed that there was no deviation in Iran's peaceful nuclear program."

U.S. and European officials believe the Qom site is designed to process Iran's low-enriched uranium into weapons-grade material. The IAEA said in its new report that Tehran has produced 1.76 tons of low-en-

riched uranium, enough to produce one or two atomic devices if enriched further.

In the report, the IAEA urged Iran to provide more information on the Qom plant, as well as greater access to Iranian scientists and documents. Without that access, the agency added, the international community can't be certain Tehran isn't developing a much larger clandestine nuclear infrastructure for military applications.

"The agency has indicated [to Iran] that its declaration of the new facility reduces the level of confidence in the absence of other facilities," the IAEA report said. "[It] gives rise to questions about whether there were any other nuclear facilities not declared."

Iran told U.N. investigators who visited the Qom facility last month that it began construction in 2007. But the IAEA said in its report that technical analysis and satellite imagery suggested Tehran actually started working on the plant in 2002.

The IAEA's disclosure Monday places added pressure on the Obama administration's efforts to use diplomacy to constrain Iran's nuclear ambitions. President Barack Obama has given Iran until year-end to show a commitment to negotiations or face expansive new economic sanctions.

Last month, the U.S. and other global powers presented Iran an offer to better manage Tehran's stock-

pile of nuclear fuel. The deal calls for Iran to ship roughly 70% of its low-enriched uranium to Russia and France for reprocessing into fuel rods for Tehran's medical-research reactor. The White House believes the transfer of the nuclear fuel to international custody would prevent Iran from producing nuclear weapons in the near term, while buying time for diplomacy.

In recent weeks, however, Iran has started to step back from its initial commitment to the nuclear-fuel deal. Tehran has said it won't agree to shipping out its low-enriched uranium in one batch. U.S. officials said that without a single-batch transfer of Iran's fuel, the deal loses its merits, and they stressed that Washington won't renegotiate its offer.

"Now is the time for Iran to signal that it wants to be a responsible member of the international community," U.S. State Department spokesman Ian Kelly said Monday. "We will continue to press Iran...to meet its international nuclear obligations."

Iran has said its nuclear program is focused wholly on peaceful ends. On Sunday, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Western pressure only makes Iran more determined to advance its nuclear capabilities.

"Cooperation with Iran in the nuclear field is in the interests of Westerners. Their opposition will make Iran more powerful and advanced," he said in a statement posted on the presidential Web site.

Mr. Obama is using his first trip to Asia as president to try to gain Russian and Chinese support for new financial sanctions against Iran in case diplomacy fails. Both Moscow and Beijing have voiced reluctance to back new coercive measures against Tehran. Both nations have deep energy and security ties to Iran.

On Monday, however, Moscow suggested that it might be more supportive of U.S. policy.

Russia's energy minister told state media that a Russian-designed nuclear reactor being constructed in Iran wouldn't be operational this year. Russian officials cited technical issues, but U.S. officials say they believe the announcement may be an effort to pressure Iran because Russia built the reactor and has committed to supply fuel.

The IAEA's Mr. ElBaradei leaves his post at the end of the month and will be succeeded by Japan's Yukiya Amano, who has suggested he will play a less political role than his predecessor and focus more on technical aspects of preventing nuclear proliferation. Some U.S. officials say the IAEA could take a harder line on Iran and Syria in coming years under Mr. Amano's stewardship.

The IAEA on Monday also said Syria continues to defy U.N. requests for greater cooperation into a probe of Damascus's alleged nuclear activities. The U.S. charges Syria with secretly building a nuclear reactor with the support of

North Korea. The Israeli air force destroyed the site in late 2007.

The IAEA has specifically been seeking President Bashar Assad's help in tracing uranium particles that U.N. investigators found last year at the bombed site. Syria denies it was secretly building the reactor. But IAEA officials said the uranium isn't from Syria's declared stock, nor is it likely to have come from Israeli munitions, as Damascus claims.

The IAEA also is seeking clarity from Syria on traces of fissile material that agency investigators found during an inspection of Damascus's research reactor. "Essentially, no progress has been made since the last report to clarify any of the outstanding issues," said the IAEA's report.

The U.S. and some Western governments have discussed in recent months the merits of pushing the IAEA to conduct a "special inspection" of Damascus's alleged nuclear infrastructure. If such an inspection was approved by the IAEA's board, Syria would either have to comply or potentially face U.N. sanctions.

Syria is Iran's closest strategic ally and the two nations cooperate closely in arming and funding militant groups fighting Israel, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Palestinian territories. Some Western diplomats said there have been concerns that Tehran was aiding Damascus's nuclear pursuits, though the IAEA hasn't disclosed any evidence of this.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Wednesday, November 18, 2009

Free-Trade Greenshoots

By Chad P. Bown

For those who worry about a return of the Great Depression's high tariffs and trade wars, the last several months have been troubling. Figures from the World Bank's Global Antidumping Database released last month show that industry requests for trade barriers globally are up 30% this year to date compared to the same period last year. Yet along with this latest bad news come some trade-policy greenshoots that suggest the global economy may still stay on a pro-trade path.

The recent U.S. government decision against a request to impose new trade barriers on imports from Argentina of aluminum pistons used in diesel engines is one cause for optimism. In January, an Ohio-based piston plant filed a petition with the U.S. Commerce Department alleging that Argentina unfairly subsidizes production of the pistons and that these subsidies were hurting the company. Late last month, the U.S. International Trade Commission ruled that, while the firm may have hit

hard times, its injury was not caused by subsidized imports.

This case is significant because during a recession on the current scale, it is easy for domestic industries to convincingly demonstrate the "injury" needed for trade remedies like antidumping, countervailing duties or safe-

There are signs that governments are resisting the temptation to impose protectionist measures.

guards under World Trade Organization rules. But WTO rules also require that this injury has to be caused by dumped, subsidized or surging imports and not by something else—like a run-up in energy prices, changing consumer preferences, company mismanagement or limited access to credit. If government officials carefully assess the link between imports and injury, then perhaps the wave of protectionism that many feared will not materialize after all.

Other data suggest governments may be saying "no" to protectionism more today than during earlier stages of the crisis. Between April and September this year, only 54% of completed trade-remedy investigations world-wide resulted in governments imposing new trade barriers, compared to almost 90% from July 2008 to March this year. While governments have imposed 21% more new import barriers to date in 2009 relative to the same period in 2008, these data suggest that things could have been worse. A trend toward more careful assessment of petitions is important because globally a backlog of more than 200 (and counting) of these trade cases still awaits rulings.

China's two recent decisions to use the WTO to formally question new trade barriers imposed on its exporters during the crisis present a second cause for optimism. China initiated the first case in July to confront new European antidumping tariffs on its exports of steel fasteners, and it started the second case in September in response to the U.S. tariffs on low-

end Chinese tires. This is a positive development because the WTO is explicitly designed to give countries a venue in which to challenge protectionism short of imposing tit-for-tat retaliation. That is why the dispute resolution process has become so popular since the WTO was created in 1995: This month the WTO marked the initiation of its 400th dispute.

This use of the WTO does not constitute a trade war. Between 1995 and 2008, WTO member countries formally initiated disputes to challenge legally an average of 15 of these types of newly imposed barriers per year. During more normal trading times before the crisis, a country that resorted to WTO dispute settlement was not interpreted as instigating a trade war. It should not be perceived as doing so now.

Perhaps the only worrying aspect to the newly initiated WTO disputes is that there are only two of them. Turning these antiprotectionist greenshoots into a vibrant global recovery may require that exporters from the U.S., Europe, India and Brazil—all of which, like

China, have faced new trade barriers that other countries' governments have imposed during the crisis—take the cue from Beijing and also convince their governments to use the WTO to protect their rights vis-à-vis foreign markets.

The staggering increase in industry requests for new trade barriers last year and this year does not need to result in the imposition of actual trade barriers going forward. The solution will be two-fold: Governments around the world must weigh these requests for protection as judiciously as the U.S. did in the Argentine piston case, separating out the effects of unfair trade from the effects of the broader downturn. And all countries need to follow China's lead in finding productive ways, such as WTO litigation, to help pull down barriers.

Mr. Bown, a senior economist and trade specialist in the World Bank's Development Economics Research Group, is the author of "Self-Enforcing Trade: Developing Countries and WTO Dispute Settlement" (Brookings Institution Press, 2009).

China faces pressure to lift yuan

Obama, Hu set outline of interests

BY JONATHAN WEISMAN
AND IAN JOHNSON

BEIJING—U.S. President Barack Obama secured a far-ranging framework for cooperation with China on Tuesday—one that paradoxically was announced as frictions appeared to increase over human rights and economic policy.

For Mr. Obama, the visit's results were mixed. Aides say

he views China as the U.S.'s most vital partner in tackling the globe's most intractable issues. The U.S. and China consume more energy and emit more greenhouse gases than any other countries. China's position on the United Nations Security Council and location on the border with North Korea make it indispensable to resolving nuclear standoffs in Iran and on the Korean peninsula. And China's status as Washington's biggest creditor and the world's engine of economic recovery has linked the two nations' economies inextricably.

With so much at stake, Sino-U.S. relations have never been closer or more important.

Please turn to page 24

China grapples with pressure on currency control

Continued from first page
economic management may find it politically difficult to yield to demands on the currency.

On the other hand, China's economy has recovered faster than most. Its de facto peg to a falling U.S. dollar—meaning the yuan has weakened sharply against other currencies—is generating complaints from European and Asian competitors that China has an unfair advantage. And some economists worry the extra juice to the economy from the cheap yuan, in addition to huge government stimulus, risk new bubbles in real estate and stocks.

"You have to balance your needs in the short term with the long term," Mr. Strauss-Kahn said. Keeping the currency down may help exports in the short term, he argued, but it imposes other costs. For instance, an undervalued currency encourages companies to invest in ways that may not be viable once the currency rises. "If you have wrong prices, you make wrong decisions, especially concerning investment in the long run," he said.

"It's now time for China, having accumulated a lot of advantages from an undervalued currency, to look more forward to investment and to long-term stability," Mr. Strauss-Kahn added. A stronger currency also would boost the purchasing power of Chinese households, he said, which would support the government's drive to make economic growth less dependent on exports.

Chinese officials frequently counter that big swings in the exchange rate can harm companies and disrupt the economy, which is a particular concern at a time when confidence is fragile. They sometimes contrast the stability of the yuan's exchange rate—which makes it easier for firms to plan ahead—with the wild swings in the dollar's value

"China keeping a basically stable exchange-rate policy is, in reality, good for the global economic recovery," Yao Jian, spokesman for China's Ministry of Commerce, told reporters Monday. "If the request is to strengthen other currencies, while allowing the dollar to keep weakening, that's not very fair."

Chinese officials aren't totally closed to arguments for a stronger yuan. In a statement many interpreted as a gesture to the growing concerns about the currency, the People's Bank of China last week said exchange-rate policy would take into account "changes in international capital flows and the trends of major currencies."

Still, many private analysts don't think a move on the yuan is imminent. Authorities may feel freer to shift once exports are growing again and inflation has turned positive—changes that could come early next year. In coming months, China will have to tell other members of the Group of 20 economies how it plans to boost consumer spending.

Although China's government publicly has grown more confident about the strength of its recovery, growth still remains heavily dependent on government stimulus programs. "China needs the U.S. economy to recover strongly and renew its import growth. Otherwise, China will have a tough time sustaining its recovery," said Eswar Prasad, an economist at Cornell University.

That is one of the key reasons China is reluctant to lift its currency now. World Bank chief economist Justin Yifu Lin, a former Chinese government adviser, has argued that if a stronger yuan snuffs out a recovery in China's export sector, it could weaken China's entire economy and have negative consequences for global growth.

China and the American Jobs Machine

BY ROBERT B. REICH

President Barack Obama says he wants to “rebalance” the economic relationship between China and the U.S. as part of his plan to restart the American jobs machine. “We cannot go back,” he said in September, “to an era where the Chinese . . . just are selling everything to us, we’re taking out a bunch of credit-card debt or home equity loans, but we’re not selling anything to them.” He hopes that hundreds of millions of Chinese consumers will make up for the inability of American consumers to return to debt-binge spending.

This is wishful thinking. True, the Chinese market is huge and growing fast. By 2009, China was second only to the U.S. in computer sales, with a larger proportion of first-time buyers. It already had more cell-phone users. And excluding SUVs, last year Chinese consumers bought as many cars as Americans (as recently as 2006, Americans bought twice as many).

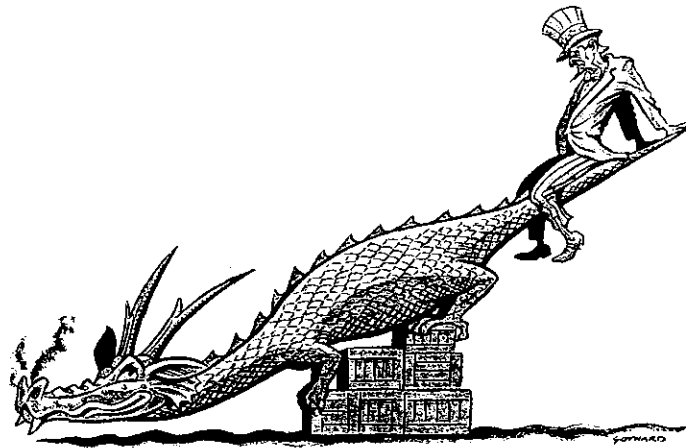
Even as the U.S. government was bailing out General Motors and Chrysler, the two firms’ sales in China were soaring; GM’s sales there are almost 50% higher this year than last. Proctor & Gamble is so well-established in China that many Chinese think its products (such as green-tea-flavored Crest toothpaste) are Chinese brands. If the Chinese economy continues to grow at or near its current rate and the benefits of that growth trickle down to 1.3 billion Chinese consumers, the country would become the largest shopping bazaar in the history of the world. They’ll be driving over a billion cars and will be the world’s biggest purchasers of household electronics, clothing, appliances and almost everything else produced on the planet.

But in fact China is heading in the opposite direction of “rebalancing.” Its productive capacity keeps soaring, but Chinese consumers are taking home a shrinking proportion of the total economy. Last year, personal consumption in China amounted to only 35% of the Chinese economy; 10 years ago consumption was almost 50%. Capital investment, by contrast, rose to 44% from 35% over the decade.

China’s capital spending is on the way to exceeding that of the U.S., but its consumer spending is barely a sixth as large. Chinese companies are plowing their rising profits back into more productive capacity—additional factories, more equipment, new technologies. China’s massive \$600 billion stimulus package has been directed at further enlarging China’s productive capacity rather than consumption. So where will this productive capacity go if not to Chinese consumers? Net exports to other nations, especially the U.S. and Europe.

Many explanations have been offered for the parsimony of Chinese consumers. Social safety-nets are still inadequate, so Chinese families have to cover the costs of health care, education and retirement. Young Chinese men outnumber young Chinese women by a wide margin, so households with sons have to accumulate and save enough assets to compete in the marriage market. Chinese society is aging quickly because the government has kept a tight lid on population growth for three decades, with the result that households are supporting lots of elderly dependents.

But the larger explanation for Chinese frugality is that the nation is oriented to production, not consumption. China wants to become the world’s pre-eminent producer nation. It also wants to take



the lead in the production of advanced technologies. The U.S. would like to retain the lead, but our economy is oriented to consumption rather than production.

Deep down inside the cerebral cortex of our national consciousness we assume that the basic purpose of an economy is to provide more opportunities to consume. We grudgingly support government efforts to rebuild our infrastructure. We want our companies to invest in new equipment and technologies but also want them to pay generous dividends. We approve of government investments in basic research and development, but mainly for the purpose of making the nation more secure through advanced military technologies. (We regard spillovers to the private sector as incidental.)

China’s industrial and technological policy is unapologetically direct. It especially wants America’s know-how, and the best way to capture knowhow is to get it firsthand. So China continues to condition many sales by U.S. and foreign companies on production in China—often in joint ventures with Chinese companies.

American firms are now helping China build a “smart” infrastructure, tackle pollution with clean technologies, develop a new generation of photovoltaics and wind turbines, find new applications for nanotechnologies, and build commercial jets and jet engines. GM recently announced it was planning to make a new subcompact in China designed and developed primarily by the Pan-Asia Technical Automotive Center, a joint venture between GM and SAIC Motor in Shanghai. General Electric is producing wind turbine components in China. Earlier this month, Massachusetts-based Evergreen Solar announced it will be moving its solar panel production to China.

The Chinese government also wants to create more jobs in China, and it will continue to rely on exports. Each year, tens of millions of poor Chinese pour into large cities from the countryside in pursuit of better-paying work. If they don’t find it, China risks riots and other upheaval. Massive disorder is one of the greatest risks facing China’s governing

elite. That elite would much rather create export jobs, even at the cost of subsidizing foreign buyers, than allow the yuan to rise and thereby risk job shortages at home.

To this extent, China’s export policy is really a social policy, designed to maintain order. Despite the Obama administration’s entreaties, China will continue to peg the yuan to the dollar—when the dollar drops, selling yuan in the foreign-exchange market and adding to its pile of foreign assets in order to maintain the yuan’s fixed relation to the dollar. This is costly to China, of course, but for the purposes of industrial and social policy, China figures the cost is worth it.

* * *

Both America and China are capable of producing far more than their own consumers are capable of buying. In the U.S., the root of the problem is a growing share of total income going to the richest Americans, leaving the middle class with relatively less purchasing power unless they go deep into debt. Inequality is also widening in China, but the problem there is a declining share of the fruits of economic growth going to average Chinese and an increasing share going to capital investment.

Both societies are threatened by the disconnect between production and consumption. In China, the threat is civil unrest. In the U.S., it’s a prolonged jobs and earnings recession that, when combined with widening inequality, could create political backlash.

Mr. Reich, professor of public policy at the University of California, Berkeley and former secretary of labor under President Clinton, is the author of “Supercapitalism: The Transformation of Business, Democracy, and Everyday Life” (Alfred A. Knopf, 2007).

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Thursday, November 19, 2009

Philippines' budget gap widens to record and is likely to worsen

BY CRIS LARANO
AND RHEA SANDIQUE-CARLOS

MANILA—The Philippines' budget deficit widened to a record 266.1 billion pesos (\$5.71 billion) in the 10 months to October, and is projected to worsen before year-end without any significant revenue boost from privatization.

Finance officials said the market is unlikely to punish the Philippines for the fiscal blowout. It could force the government to again tap the international debt market.

"The market feedback is that even a 300-billion-peso deficit, equivalent to 3.8% of [gross domestic product], is acceptable given the current domestic and global environment," said Finance Secretary Margarito Teves.

Mr. Teves said the "likely scenario" for the full-year deficit is 280 billion pesos, and 300 billion pesos is the "worst case." He added that the government is hoping to sell its 24% stake in San Miguel Corp., which could reverse the budget deficit. The sale of the stake in the food and bev-

erage conglomerate is expected to generate 50 billion pesos, an amount not in the planned budget.

Even with the wider deficit, National Treasurer Roberto Tan said the government doesn't have to resort to additional borrowing because it raised \$1 billion in a global bond issue in October.

In October alone, the budget gap was 28.5 billion pesos, amid lower revenues and increased spending due to the global economic downturn. In October 2008, the deficit was nine billion pesos, while the

shortfall in the first 10 months of last year was 48.3 billion pesos.

Finance Undersecretary Gil Beltran said a 280 billion peso budget gap for the year takes into account the planned sale of the 103-hectare Food Terminal Inc., an agroindustrial commercial complex, for about 13 billion pesos.

A failure to sell the asset would raise the projected budget gap beyond 280 billion pesos.

Revenue in October was 92.6 billion pesos, bringing collection in the first 10 months of the year to 925.4

billion pesos compared with 927.6 billion pesos a year earlier.

Bureau of Internal Revenue Assistant Commissioner Nelson Aspe said lower revenue in the period was due mainly to a reduction in the corporate income tax, as well as other tax relief measures provided by the government, which resulted in a revenue loss of around 28 billion pesos.

Lower remittances of local businesses to their parent companies abroad also exerted pressure on government revenue.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.
Friday - Sunday, November 20 - 22, 2009

Iran's nuclear deal with West is imperiled

Foreign minister says Tehran won't send any of its uranium out of the country, battering Obama's bid to end standoff

BY CHIP CUMMINS
AND JAY SOLOMON

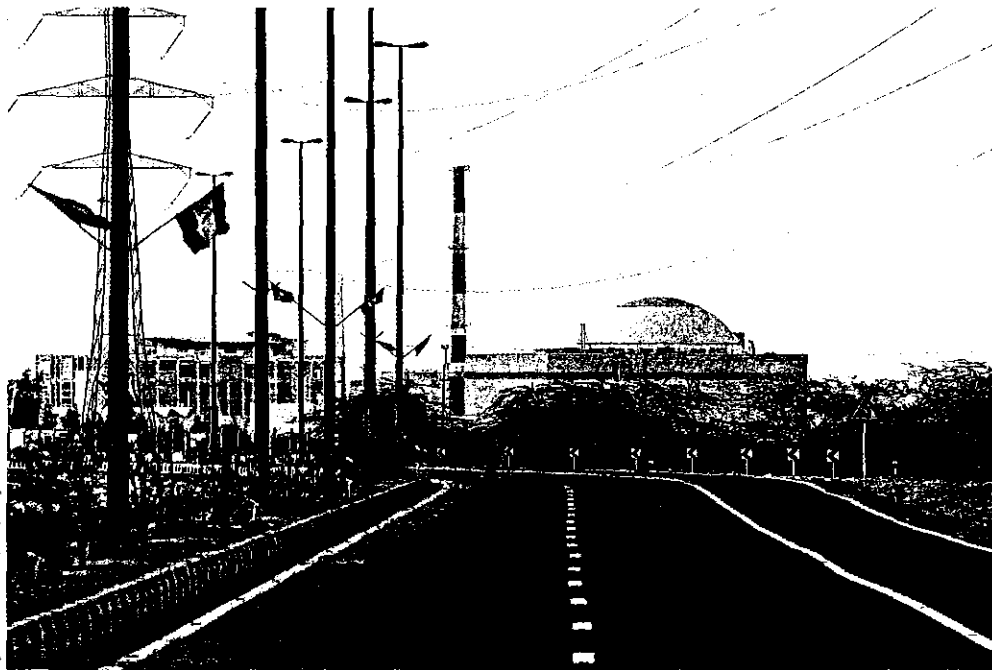
Iran's foreign minister appeared to renege on a pact that the U.S. had hoped would curtail the Islamic Republic's ability to build a nuclear bomb, dealing a blow to the Obama administration's efforts to try to resolve the West's standoff with Tehran.

Iranian Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki said Wednesday in Tehran that Iran wouldn't send any of its uranium out of the country, as envisioned in a deal struck Oct. 1 between Iranian negotiators and counterparts from the U.S., France, Russia and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

Two United Nations Security Council diplomats said they view the deal as essentially dead, but expect council members to wait until the end of the year before pushing for fresh sanctions against Iran.

There is growing concern among Washington's European and Middle East allies that with the deal potentially evaporating, the White House's engagement policy toward Tehran is adrift. Mr. Obama has set a year-end deadline for Iran to respond to his overtures, but Western diplomats said there remains little confidence that China or Russia will agree to coercive action.

The U.S. has yet to significantly push its own allies to begin taking steps against Iran, arguing that Iran



Russia has pressed ahead with building a nuclear plant in Bushehr, 1,200 kilometers south of Tehran, despite Western concerns about Iran's nuclear program. Now, Iran appears to have reneged on a deal to send its uranium out of the country.

should be given more time. "We're headed towards crunch time on Iran in the next few months," said a Middle East diplomat involved in Iran diplomacy.

The uranium-enrichment deal was at first seen as a potential breakthrough in the Obama administration's diplomatic outreach to Iran. Washington has so far indicated it is

willing to wait out discussions, but Western officials have said they aren't willing to offer significant alternatives to the pact. The White House now views next week's meeting of the

IAEA's Board of Governors as a key moment to assess the way forward.

U.S. officials said the administration is walking a delicate diplomatic path. They acknowledge Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad appears to be using negotiations to limit U.N. pressure while working to legitimize his government domestically.

The White House wants to support moderate opposition forces inside Iran that have challenged the leadership since June elections that were widely viewed as rigged. At the same time, Washington wants to negotiate with the government, to have any hope of curtailing its nuclear activities through diplomacy.

The officials said Mr. Obama remains committed to ratcheting up pressure early next year, and that Washington is cobbling together a coalition of allies to punish Tehran even if Beijing and Moscow balk. The U.S. has also been talking with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates about how to utilize oil sales to pressure Tehran. "Our patience is limited. The president has made clear that at the end of the year we'll be able to decide" if Iran is serious, said Robert Einhorn, the U.S. State Department's top official on nonproliferation, last week. "April 2010 is too late."

U.S. and Western officials have publicly said they are awaiting a formal response by Tehran at the IAEA in Vienna before deciding how to proceed. Privately, U.S. and Western officials express much more pessimism.

President Obama Didn't Impress Asia

BY JOHN BOLTON

Barack Obama's first visit to Asia since his inauguration was one of the most disappointing trips by any U.S. president to the region in decades, especially given media-generated expectations that "Obamamania" would make it yet another triumphal progression. It was a journey of startlingly few concrete accomplishments, demonstrable proof that neither personal popularity nor media defer-

China and others know exactly how to take advantage of a 'post-American' President.

ence really means much in the hard world of international affairs.

The contrast between Asia's reception for Obama and Europe's is significant. Although considered a global phenomenon, Obamamania's real center is Europe. There, Mr. Obama reigns as a "post-American" president, a multilateralist carbon copy of a European social democrat. Asians operate under no such illusions, notwithstanding the "Oba-Mao" T shirts briefly on sale in China. Whatever Mr. Obama's allure in Europe, Asian leaders want to know what he means for peace and security in their region. On that score,

opinion poll ratings mean little.

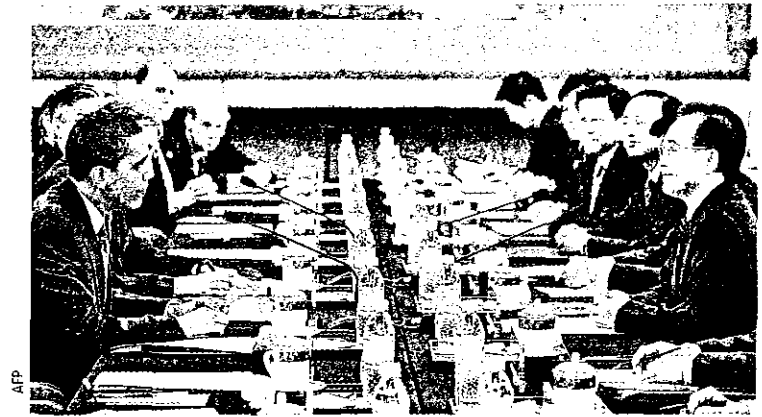
What the president lacked in popular adulation, however, he more than made up for in self-adulation. In Asia, he labeled himself "America's first Pacific president," ignoring over a century of contrary evidence. The Pacific has been important to America since the Empress of China became the first trading ship from the newly independent country to reach the Far East in 1784. Theodore Roosevelt created a new Pacific country (Panama) and started construction on the Panama Canal to ensure that America's navy could move rapidly from its traditional Atlantic bases to meet Pacific challenges. William Howard Taft did not merely live on Pacific islands as a boy, like Obama, but actually governed several thousand of them as Governor-General of the Philippines in 1901-1903. Dwight Eisenhower served in Manila from 1935 to 1939, and five other presidents wore their country's uniform in the Pacific theater during World War II—two of whom, John F. Kennedy and George H.W. Bush, very nearly perished in the effort.

But it was on matters of substance where Mr. Obama's trip truly was a disappointment. On economics, the president displayed the Democratic Party's ambivalence toward free trade, even in an economic downturn, motivated by fear of labor-union opposition. On environmental and cli-

mate change issues, China, entirely predictably, reaffirmed its refusal to agree to carbon-emission limitations, and Mr. Obama had to concede in Singapore that the entire effort to craft a binding, post-Kyoto international agreement in Copenhagen had come to a complete halt.

On U.S. national security, Mr. Obama came away from Beijing empty-handed in his efforts to constrain both the Iranian and North Korean nuclear weapons programs, meaning that instability in the Middle East and East Asia will surely grow. In Japan, Mr. Obama discussed contentious issues like U.S. forces based on Okinawa, but did not seem in his public comments to understand what he and the new Japanese government had agreed to. Ironically, his warmest reception, despite his free-trade ambivalence, was in South Korea, where President Lee Myung-bak has reversed a decade-long pattern by taking a harder line on North Korea than Washington.

Overall, President Obama surely suffered his worst setbacks in Beijing, on trade and economics, on climate change, and on security issues. CNN analyst David Gergen, no conservative himself, compared Mr. Obama's China meetings to Kennedy's disastrous 1961 encounter with Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev in Vienna, a clear indicator of how poorly the Obama visit was seen at home.



Not quite seeing eye to eye: Barack Obama meets with Premier Wen Jiabao in Beijing.

The perception that Mr. Obama is weak has already begun to emerge even in Europe, for example with French President Nicholas Sarkozy, and if it emerges in Asia as well, Obama and the U.S. will suffer gravely.

Many media analysts attributed the lack of significant agreements in Beijing to the "rising China, declining America" hypothesis, which suits their ideological proclivities. But any objective analysis would show that it was much more Mr. Obama's submissiveness and much less a new Chinese assertiveness that made the difference. Mr. Obama simply seems unable or unwilling to defend U.S. interests strongly and effectively, either because he feels them unworthy of defense, or because he

is untroubled by their diminution.

Of course, most Americans believe they elect presidents who will vigorously represent their global interests, rather than electing Platonic guardians who defend them only when they comport with his grander vision of a just world. Foreign leaders, whether friends or adversaries, expect the same. If, by contrast, Mr. Obama continues to behave as a "post-American" president, China and others will know exactly how to take advantage of him.

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

Putting Indo-U.S. Ties Back on Track

BY WALTER LADWIG
AND ANIT MUKHERJEE

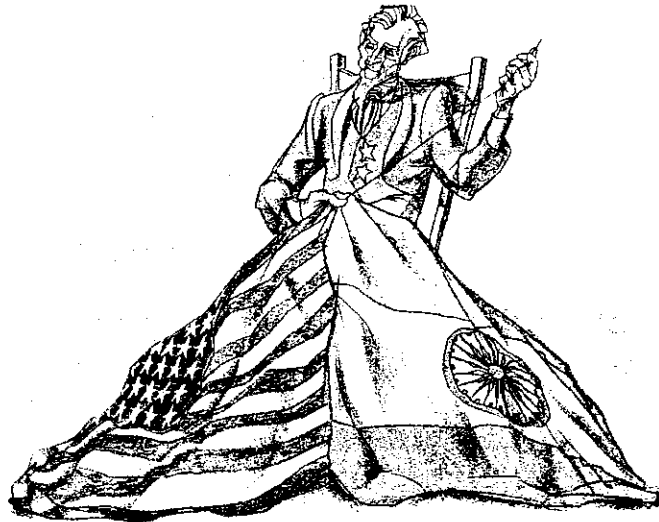
Since taking office, President Obama has made a point of emphasizing the range of challenges he inherited from his predecessor. Yet the president is squandering one positive inheritance: a robust strategic relationship between India and the United States. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's official state visit to the U.S. this week presents an opportunity to get things back on track.

India is a diverse and secular democratic state that, despite its imperfections, is politically stable and offers a model for other developing countries. Like China, India started shedding its socialist economic shackles and is now growing at a rapid clip. Since it shares many key security concerns with the U.S.—such as the spread of Islamist fundamentalism, preventing the return of the Taliban in Afghanistan, stabilizing Pakistan and preventing the domination of Asia by a resurgent China—India has the potential to become America's most important partner in Asia. Yet, after nine years of rapidly improving ties, there are tangible fears in New Delhi about America's commitment to that partnership.

Washington's intense focus on Afghanistan and Pakistan has provoked worries in New Delhi that the Obama administration is once again linking its relations with India and Pakistan. This risks undoing one of the more successful policies of the Bush administration, which instead dealt with each nation on its own merits. Of course, Washington would be ill-advised to execute an "Af-Pak" strategy

without considering India's role: It is the fourth-largest donor to Afghan reconstruction efforts and is viewed as a friendly power by many Afghans. India could also play a central role in any effort to stabilize Pakistan by, among other measures, strengthening the civilian government vis-à-vis its recalcitrant military. Accordingly, India's current dialogue with the separatists in Kashmir, resumed after three years, is a step in the right direction. But making the U.S. relationship with India contingent on progress in Pakistan is problematic because it fails to sufficiently account for America's different interests in the two countries. Historically this policy has held the India-U.S. relationship hostage to events beyond India's borders that New Delhi cannot control.

The Obama administration's approach to Asia has also left New Delhi wondering if Washington still seeks India's emergence as a world leader. In 2005, a senior member of the Bush administration set a policy goal of "help[ing] India become a major world power in the 21st century." Although officials in Washington and New Delhi would never admit it, shared concerns about China played a key role in driving the upswing in Indo-U.S. relations under the previous U.S. administration. In contrast, Mr. Obama's statement in July during Chinese Vice Premier Wang Qishan's visit to Washington that "the relationship between the United States and China will shape the 21st century" has fueled Indian suspicions that Washington seeks a "G-2" arrangement with Beijing as the new arbiter of global af-



David G. Klein

fairs. These fears have only been compounded by last week's U.S.-China joint statement that acknowledged a role for China in India-Pakistan bilateral relations. This strongly suggests that India is now viewed as merely a player in its immediate neighborhood rather than a future power in Asia.

To ease New Delhi's concerns and put the relationship back on track, the Obama administration first needs to clarify where India fits into both its Asia policy and its broader vision of the world. A statement supporting India's bid for a seat on the United Nations Security Council would send a reassuring signal to New Delhi.

Second, India's status as a strategic priority needs to be translated into concrete policy guidance for the Pentagon, State Department and Commerce Department bureaucracies that manage the

day-to-day aspects of the relationship. Much of what was achieved during the previous administration was due to the personal attention paid to the issue by Mr. Bush and other senior members of his administration. Absent that guidance, parts of the U.S. government seem adrift. For instance, cooperation in defense research, co-development and production has been anemic—hindered by mechanical application of U.S. export control laws that fails to reflect the priority of strategic partnership. Mr. Obama could re-assert presidential leadership by issuing a national security directive that would lay out a consistent stance toward India that would guide agencies in forging economic, technological, strategic and social ties with India.

Finally, on the first anniversary of the November 26 Mumbai attacks, the Obama administration should send an unequivocal mes-

sage on terrorism by supporting India's demand that Pakistan bring the perpetrators of this crime to justice. Islamabad's delay in prosecuting the alleged plotters of these attacks has not only held up the peace process between the two nations but has also prolonged India's national trauma. The attempted compartmentalization of terror groups on the part of U.S. and Pakistan—by differentiating between Pakistani and Afghan Taliban, or between sectarian and Kashmir-focused militants—needs to stop. The U.S. and India must present a united front against all these groups and their benefactors.

When it comes to relations with New Delhi, Mr. Obama's drive to distinguish his approach from that of the Bush administration risks squandering one of the major foreign policy developments of the past decade. Despite some differences, partnership between India and the U.S. has the potential to shape global affairs in many positive ways. It is important to continue the momentum imparted to this relationship by making real gains and helping those in India who advocate for closer bilateral ties. Otherwise the next few years in Indo-U.S. ties will be best defined as a stylistic White House photo-op—lacking in substance and completely irrelevant.

Mr. Ladwig is a doctoral candidate in international relations at Merton College, University of Oxford. Mr. Mukherjee is a doctoral candidate in international relations at the School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University.

Speaking of Pakistan

By C. CHRISTINE FAIR

Pakistan is likely to loom large in the meetings between President Obama and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh this week. Partly that's because Thursday is the first anniversary of the

The U.S. and India must take steps to deepen their cooperation against South Asian terrorism.

Mumbai hotel attacks that claimed 173 lives, including four Americans—attacks perpetrated by terrorist groups based in Pakistan. More broadly, there is a growing realization that Washington and New Delhi have many common security interests in Pakistan, which is a key country both to U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and to the fight against Islamist terrorism.

So amid the fanfare of the Obama administration's first state visit, both sides will quietly focus on how they can best protect each other from the terrorist threats emanating from Pakistan. Americans are now more aware than ever of the threats India faces. Before the "11/26" assault, few

Americans had ever heard of Lashkar-e-Taiba, a Pakistan-based terrorist group operating largely, but not exclusively, in India. Though the attack was not India's deadliest—that was the 1993 attack on Mumbai's stock exchange—it changed the world's understanding of terrorism in India as real-time television footage streamed into American and European living rooms. It catalyzed discussions in Washington and Delhi about Lashkar-e-Taiba and the danger that group and its fellow travelers pose not just to India but to other countries.

India and the U.S. share a common vision of a stable, democratic, civilian-controlled Pakistan at peace with itself and its neighbors. But they have often disagreed on how best to achieve this end. It is unlikely that Mr. Singh's visit will yield an immediate consensus, but will likely continue to focus on law enforcement and counterintelligence cooperation.

Since 9/11, Delhi has watched warily as Washington enlisted Pakistan's help against al Qaeda by providing conventional military assistance and other allurements such as aid for Pakistan's participation on the war on terrorism. In total Pakistan has received more than \$15 billion since 9/11. Washington had applied only

episodic pressure on Pakistan to shut down militants operating in and against India and the disputed border region of Kashmir. Washington has wanted to encourage Pakistan to fight those militants that it can and will fight, even if Islamabad opposes actions against groups like Lashkar and the Afghan Taliban. And Washington needs Pakistan's support to fight the war in Afghanistan. Washington used to see Lashkar and the other "Kashmiri groups" as India's problem, caring about these militant outfits only if they directly threatened U.S. interests. The United States and India have for too long been fighting their own, parallel wars on terror.

The 11/26 attack has changed regional and international dynamics, ultimately to Pakistan's disadvantage. First, Pakistan's inaction toward Lashkar and its front organization Jamaat-ul-Dawa puts to rest any doubt about Pakistan's commitment to retaining the organization as a strategic reserve to do the state's bidding in the region. Pakistan's failure to take meaningful action against Lashkar came to the fore in April 2009 when the organization, with the tacit assent of the government, provided high-visibility assistance to Pakistanis displaced by military action in Swat. It is now obvious, despite Islamabad's recent efforts

to pursue the Pakistan Taliban and the sanctuaries it provides to al Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban, that the Pakistan government is part of the problem of international terrorism.

Second, whereas Lashkar was previously a "niche specialty" for counterterrorism experts within the U.S. government, now nearly every policy, law-enforcement, intelligence and military agency has dedicated resources to protect the U.S., its friends and its assets from Lashkar. The Mumbai attack lent increased urgency to deepening U.S.-India cooperation centered on joint law enforcement and counterterrorism concerns. While less "sexy" than military-to-military engagements, this kind of Indo-U.S. cooperation is vital to securing both nations against future terrorist threats.

Third, the proximity of Lashkar to Pakistan's intelligence and security services, along with continued revelations about those services' assistance to the Afghan Taliban, remind the U.S. and others that the Pakistan government continues to fight a selective war on terror, preserving those militant groups that serve the state's foreign policy goals. This has forced many analysts and policy makers to acknowledge that Pakistan is unlikely ever to abandon terrorism as a tool of foreign pol-

icy even while domestic terrorists tear at the fabric of the state.

India has taken important steps under the leadership of Home Minister Palaniappan Chidambaram, who is keen to make sweeping changes in India's domestic security arrangements. He wants to learn from India's past mistakes and from other countries, including the U.S. This is an opportunity for Washington and Delhi to explore ways to deepen intelligence sharing, to continue developing contacts between local and federal law enforcement agencies, expand government and non-governmental engagement on the nature of the terrorist threat and best practices to counter it, and to deepen the focus on maritime security cooperation to limit the maritime opportunities for a variety of illegal actors.

Mr. Singh's visit reminds us all that while India and the U.S. have come a long way since 2000, there is much work to be done in jointly securing the safety of their citizens from groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba. Whether both states will rally to the challenge remains to be seen.

Ms. Fair is an assistant professor in the security studies program at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University.

Wednesday, November 25, 2009

The Carter Ricochet Effect

BY BRET STEPHENS



An idealistic president takes office promising an era of American moral renewal at home and abroad.

The effort includes a focus on diplomacy and peace-making, an aversion to the use of force, the selling out of old allies. The result is that within a couple of years the U.S. is more suspected, detested and enfeebled than ever.

No, we're not talking about Barack Obama. But since the current administration took office offering roughly the same prescriptions as Jimmy Carter did, it's worth recalling how that worked out.

How it worked out became inescapably apparent 30 years ago this month. On Nov. 20, 1979, Sunni religious fanatics led by a dark-eyed charismatic Saudi named Juhayman bin Seif al Uteybi seized Mecca's Grand Mosque, Islam's holiest site. After a two week siege distinguished mainly by its incompetence, Saudi forces were able to recapture the mosque at a cost of several hundred lives.

By any objective account—the very best of which was offered by Wall Street Journal reporter Yaroslav Trofimov in his 2007 book “The Siege of Mecca”—the battle at the Grand Mosque was a purely Sunni affair pitting a fundamentalist Islamic regime against ultra-fundamentalist renegades. Yet throughout the Muslim world, the Carter administration was viewed as the main culprit. U.S. diplomatic missions in Bangladesh, India, Turkey and Libya were assaulted; in Pakistan, the embassy was burned to the ground. How could that happen to a country whose president was so intent on making his policies as inoffensive as possible?

The answer was, precisely, that Mr. Carter had set out to make America as inoffensive as possible. Two weeks before Juhayman seized the Grand Mosque, Iranian radicals seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, taking 66 Americans hostage. They did so after Mr. Carter had refused to bail out the Shah, as the Eisenhower administration had in 1953, and after Andrew Young, Mr. Carter's U.N. ambassador, had described the Ayatollah Khomeini as “somewhat of a saint.”

They also did so after Mr. Carter



Happy days no more: Jimmy Carter and the Shah of Iran.

had scored his one diplomatic coup by brokering a peace deal between Egypt and Israel. Today, the consensus view of the Obama administration is that solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would ease tensions throughout the region. But worthy though it was in its own right, peace between Egypt and Israel was also a fillip for Sunni and Shiite radicals alike from Tehran to Damascus to Beirut to Gaza. Whatever else the Middle East has been since the signing of the Camp David Accords, it has not been a more peaceful place.

Nor has it been any less inclined to hate the U.S., no matter whether the president is a peace-loving Democrat or a war-mongering Republican. “Everywhere, there was the same explanation,” Mr. Trofimov writes in his account of the attack on the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad. “American institutions, declared a student leader in Lahore, had to be burned down because ‘the Holy Kaaba had been occupied by Americans and the Jews.’”

On the other hand, among Muslims inclined to favor the U.S., the Carter administration's instincts for knee-jerk conciliation and panicky withdrawals only had the effect of alienating them from their ostensible protector. Coming as it did so soon after Khomeini's rise to power and the revolutionary fervors which it unleashed, the siege of Mecca carried the real risk of undermining pro-American regimes throughout the region. Yet American embassies were repeatedly instructed not to use their Marines to defend against intruders, as well as to pull their personnel from the country.

“The move didn't go unnoticed among Muslim radicals,” notes Mr. Trofimov. “A chain of events unleashed by the takeover in Mecca had put America on the run from the lands of Islam. America's foes drew a conclusion that Osama bin Laden would often repeat: when hit hard, America flees, ‘dragging its tail in failure, defeat, and ruin, caring for nothing.’” It is no accident, too, that the Soviet Union chose to invade Afghanistan the following month, as it observed a vacillating president who would not defend what previously were thought to be inviolable U.S. strategic interests.

Today, President Obama likes to bemoan the “mess” he inherited overseas, the finger pointed squarely at President Bush. But the real mess he inherited comes straight out of 1979, the serial debacles of which define American challenges in the Middle East just as surely as the triumphs of 1989 define our opportunities in Europe. True, the furies that were unleashed that year in Mecca, Tehran and elsewhere in the Muslim world were not of America's making. But absence of guilt is no excuse for innocence of policy.

Pretty soon, Mr. Obama will have his own Meccas and Tehrans to deal with, perhaps in Jerusalem and Cairo. He would do well to cast a backward glance at the tenure of his fellow Nobel peace laureate, as an object lesson in how even the purest of motives can lead to the most disastrous results.

Write to bstephens@wsj.com

Thursday, November 26, 2009

The Price of Poor Governance in the Philippines

BY BRETT M. DECKER

The Philippines' next election is not until May, but already the electoral death toll is rising. On Monday, at least 46 were killed in Maguindanao province on the Muslim-dominated island of Mindanao. The government in Manila declared a state of emergency on Tuesday and deployed 1,000 troops to the traditionally rebellious southern island. This volatile situation could deteriorate quickly.

Monday's pre-election massacre is a symptom of far bigger problems, especially in the south.

This week's massacre was the worst instance of political murder in Philippine history. Most elections in the archipelago are marred by violence between the clans of various candidates, but this was much earlier than usual because the official election season has only just begun. The window for individuals to file for candidacy opened last week. At this point, nobody knows who is facing whom at the polls. Even if a clan wanted to eliminate an opponent, one can only speculate who will be in the eventual field for any one race. Trouble doesn't usually start until the filing period ends and candidates are announced. This year, that happens on Dec. 1.

Surprisingly, the clan targeted in Monday's massacre does not have a reputation for involvement in provincial dynastic wars. The convoy that was wiped out in-

cluded journalists and supporters and family members of Ismael Mangudadatu, vice mayor of a nearby township. Mr. Mangudadatu dared to challenge Andal Ampatuan, the current governor of Maguindanao. Like many wealthy families in the Philippines, Mr. Ampatuan maintains a private army. According to media reports, Monday's atrocity allegedly was conducted by a mixture of his supporters and some local policemen. The provincial police chief was arrested by national authorities on Wednesday. He has not been charged with any crime yet, nor has he made any public statement.

Although unique in its intensity, this week's attack was an example of the Muslim-on-Muslim violence that has plagued the nation's southern islands for decades. In a throwback to a more barbaric age, many of the victims were beheaded and had limbs hacked off. The mass murder appears to have been premeditated, as a mass grave allegedly was dug by the attack party in advance of the assault, according to the Philippine National Police. The whole country is holding its breath waiting for the other shoe to drop. In a culture that emphasizes honor and revenge in cases like this, the worry now is that other more violent clans will join the fray on one side or the other as scores are settled, leading to a wider conflagration.

There is serious potential for escalation of the violence in Mindanao outside of clan warfare, too. The presence of such a large contingent of troops from the national army can be a destabilizing factor as much as a pacifying one. More than 100,000 have been killed in the decades-long civil war in the southern islands, which



A nation in shock: A Filipino woman looks on

has left a lot of bad blood between the Muslim minority and the majority Christian armed forces. Conflicts between local villagers and national soldiers are common.

The chaos is a reflection of the sad state of Philippine civil society in the waning months of Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's presidency. As national focus has shifted toward the fight over who will succeed her next spring, the lame-duck incumbent is having an increasingly difficult time maintaining her authority. Making matters worse, her response to the attack so far has consisted of vague statements that the perpetrators will be brought to justice, peace will be restored and private militias will be disarmed. It's not yet clear how she intends to do any of those things, especially concerning the militias.

But no matter how Manila moves to settle this crisis, the ad-

ministration will lose influence in the troubled region because both factions in the hostility are supporters of the president. The danger is that Islamist militias could step into the local power vacuum.

It's not clear that the eventual winner of the May vote will be much better. None of the leading candidates for president has a law-and-order background. There is, though, a possibility that continued erosion of safety in the streets could propel a dark-horse candidate to the top of the pack. One beneficiary would be former Defense Secretary Gilberto "Gibo" C. Teodoro, Jr., who resigned from the cabinet last week to run for president and subsequently was named as the standard bearer for Mrs. Arroyo's Lakas party.

Meanwhile, there is the matter of foreign, and especially American, involvement in the region—in particular in Mindanao, the location of this week's massacre.

American troops act as an independent force in the southern islands. Deployed to the south in February 2002 in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, U.S. Special Forces have helped whittle down the forces of the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group while minimizing the impact of the military footprint in Islamic areas. American troops have won goodwill with Philippine Muslims by building roads, bridges, wells and other infrastructure, while also preventing Philippine troops from engaging in violent reprisals after Moro raids.

One danger to the region is that this force could be scaled back under political pressure from Manila. The 1998 Visiting Forces Agreement, under which U.S. troops are allowed on Philippine soil for defensive purposes, is under attack by leftist politicians in the Philippines. The most prominent of these is vice presidential candidate Sen. Loren Legarda, who has a decent chance of winning that post. If the eight-year U.S. presence in the Philippines were removed or downsized, greater instability in Muslim Mindanao would ensue immediately.

The Philippines is Asia's oldest but most troubled democracy. This week's massacre is a graphic reminder of how unstable the country's governance can be, and it will ultimately be up to Manila to decide the time has come to get the problem under control. The world has just seen the high costs of delay.

Mr. Decker is opinion editor at the Washington Times and author of "Global Filipino" (Regnery, 2008).

Nuclear-power plans advance in Vietnam

BY VU TRONG KHANH
AND PATRICK BARTA

HANOI—Vietnam's National Assembly approved a resolution to build two nuclear-power plants, signaling Vietnam's desire to become Asia's next nuclear-energy supplier.

The move doesn't amount to a final approval. Officials still must work out details—including the plants' exact location—before they obtain a final greenlight from Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung. Timing for that step remains unclear.

But the move underscores the government's determination to move ahead with the country's first nuclear projects despite concerns among some residents and outside analysts that Southeast Asian nations aren't yet ready to handle the cost and complexity of nuclear-power facilities. The two plants are expected to cost 200 trillion Vietnamese dong (\$11.3 billion), the government said—a hefty price at a time when Vietnam just devalued its currency and faces rising debt payments.

Several other countries in the region, including Indonesia and Thailand, have signaled interest in building nuclear-power plants to remedy growing shortfalls in electricity supply, and to wean the region from its reliance on dirty-burning coal.

But analysts are questioning whether Southeast Asia—comprised of densely populated countries with relatively low per capita incomes and in some cases unstable governments—has sufficient regulatory capacity to monitor sites and ensure their safety.

The region is prone to natural disasters because of its location along geologic fault lines and the number of typhoons that batter the area. Regional leaders are fearful of accidents or difficulties in storing waste that could cause problems in neighboring countries.

Southeast Asian leaders "should start thinking about the consequences" of multiple countries pursuing nuclear energy, says Rodolfo Severino, a researcher at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore. "If we wait until these things are on the drawing boards already, it may be too late." He says leaders should consider establishing a Southeast Asia-wide treaty to govern nuclear-power projects.

Attempts to reach Vietnamese officials to comment on its regulatory oversight of the projects were unsuccessful.

Past efforts to develop nuclear power in Southeast Asia have failed. The Philippines, for instance, built a \$2 billion, 620-megawatt nuclear power plant in 1984 in Bataan province north of Manila, but never used the facility—located in a seismically active area—amid concerns about safety and allegations of corruption in the construction. The busted project saddled the government with hefty interest payments for years to come.

Vietnam will try to build the two plants, each with a capacity of 2,000 megawatts, somewhere in the southern province of Ninh Thuan, said Vuong Huu Tan, director of the Vietnam Nuclear Energy Institute.

Harmony edged aside in leaders' frank talks

US and China

There was little meeting of minds between the heads of state, write Edward Luce and Geoff Dyer

It took Barack Obama 30 minutes yesterday to whizz through the Forbidden City in Beijing following what was characterised as a candid three-hour discussion between the US president and Hu Jintao, his Chinese counterpart. At the end of his chilly tour Mr Obama exited through the Gate of Continuous Harmony.

He will doubtless be treated to the customary barrage of disharmony by conservative critics back home about having soft-pedalled in public on the human rights criticisms that normally arise during a US presidential visit. But US officials insist that, in private, Mr Obama had "pulled no punches". Jeff Bader, the president's senior Asia adviser, said Mr Obama gave Mr Hu the most frank talk on human rights he had heard in his 30 years of dealing with US-China relations.

At their joint appearance in the Great Hall of the People following their meeting, both leaders gave the impression that there had been sharp disagreements on a wide range of issues – in addition to Tibet, which Mr Obama finally raised, having hitherto gingerly sidestepped the troubled province.

Reading from separate statements, Mr Hu emphasised the need to "oppose and reject protectionism in all its manifestations", which was code for having brushed off US complaints about China's large trade surpluses. Mr Obama referred to the need to move beyond the dollar-renminbi peg, which the Americans see as a form of Chinese mercantilism – again, signalling there had been little progress.

"I underlined to President Obama that, given our differences in national conditions, it is only normal that our two sides may disagree on some issues," said Mr Hu, his hands firmly grasping the lectern. "What is important is to respect and accommodate each other's core interests and major concerns."

It may take months, even years, to judge whether Mr Obama's approach of friendly strategic engagement with China will bear fruit in the form of more substantive Chinese assistance in helping America tackle what one US official called the "global headline issues", such as climate change, nuclear weapons proliferation and economic imbalances.

Both countries eschew the term "G2", for fear of offending other players. But in practice yesterday's long joint statement, which covered everything from clean energy to space technology, marked the attempted launch of a G2 global steering committee between the world's largest democracy and largest autocracy.

"There are really only two countries in the world that can solve certain issues," said Jon Huntsman, the US ambassador to China and former Republican governor of Utah, whose fluent command of Chinese has already gone down well with his hosts. "So the meetings really have been aimed at co-ordinating like never before on the key global issues... There wasn't a single issue that was left out."

Much like the long statements that the US and Soviet Union produced during their rare bouts of detente, however, a great deal of continuing disharmony could be read between the lines. In addition to the lack of progress on China's dollar link, the two sides evidently failed to reach common ground on the bulk of Mr Obama's agenda.

These included Afghanistan, which Beijing sees as a pointless war and which Mr Obama is about to intensify with a new surge of troops, and Iran, where the US leader promised "consequences" should Tehran fail to comply with international demands but on which Mr Hu was largely silent.

"China wants to see more dialogue on the Iran issue," said Jin Canrong, of Renmin University. "We need more time to see if this approach is going to work."

Both sides put a brave face on climate change. But announcements of a series of new clean energy initiatives, from carbon capture research to a project on electric cars, could not paper over the fact that both leaders had sharply downgraded prospects of a big deal on climate change in Copenhagen next month.

In concluding remarks, Mr Obama said: "The US welcomes China's efforts in playing a greater role on the world stage – a role in which a growing economy is joined by growing responsibilities." It remains to be seen whether Beijing genuinely agrees with the second half of that statement.

Martin Wolf, Page 11
New world alliance, Page 11

Brinkmanship in the Middle East

US should pre-empt a Palestinian UDI with its own plan

In despair at the receding chances of getting their own state, and bitterly disappointed at Barack Obama's failure to force the issue with Israel, Palestinian leaders are toying with the idea of a unilateral declaration of independence – proclaiming a state on the land Israel conquered in the 1967 six day war.

The government of Benjamin Netanyahu, for its part, is threatening to respond to any Palestinian UDI by annexing the land it has occupied in the West Bank and Arab east Jerusalem, and maybe more. Presumably, this is not where Mr Obama intended to take peace negotiations once he sought to revive them six months ago.

The Palestinians are understandably at the end of their tether. President Mahmoud Abbas has nothing to show for his efforts to seek a negotiated and peaceful end to the conflict except an accelerated colonisation of Palestinian land. He says he is withdrawing from politics at the next elections.

The UDI plan could, indeed, be a last throw of the dice to galvanise diplomatic support behind the Palestinians at the United Nations. It is, nevertheless, not the way to go.

Tactical manoeuvres in a region so mired in mistrust – and led by brinksmen rather than statesmen – are always in danger of escaping the grip of would-be tacticians.

The Obama administration has, on the face of it, mishandled its attempt to jump-start peace talks. After demanding a total freeze in Israeli settlement-building, it has not only allowed Mr Netanyahu simply to say No; secretary of state Hillary Clinton has judged Mr Netanyahu's cosmetic gestures on settlements to be "unprecedented".

And yet, we still do not have clinching evidence that it is Mr Obama who has blinked first.

He can still retrieve this situation by publishing a blueprint of a two-states solution and a Palestinian homeland on most of the West Bank and Gaza, with east Jerusalem as its capital, and placing it before the UN Security Council. The outlines are well-known: the (Bill) Clinton parameters of December 2000, the Taba agreements of 2000-01, and the Arab League peace plan of 2002.

Israel is highly dependent on US support in the Security Council. Of the 82 vetoes exercised by the US in the council since 1972, 29 have been to shield Israel from condemnation for its actions in the occupied territories, and 11 times for its actions in Lebanon. In each of these 40 votes the US stood alone. Israelis set great store by that support and have a record of turning on leaders who jeopardise it. Mr Obama presumably knows that.

Why Saudi Arabia should rethink its Yemen strategy



Roula Khalaf

It was a distinctly un-Saudi affair. The traditionally cautious kingdom, careful to the point where its diplomatic initiatives must be guaranteed to succeed before they are even launched, found itself militarily thrown into the internal conflict in neighbouring Yemen.

In the past two weeks Saudi warplanes have bombed border positions of Houthi rebels battling the Yemeni government. It marks the sixth round of on-and-off fighting that has erupted since 2004.

The Saudis have every reason to be fed up with Yemen, a lawless country of 23m people on the tip of the Arabian Peninsula beset by deep poverty and dysfunctional politics that regularly exports its troubles.

Governments far beyond Yemen's borders should also be alarmed at the deteriorating security in a country that has long been a breeding ground for the religious extremists of al-Qaeda.

The rebellion of the Houthis, members of the Zaydi Shia sect that is, however, closer in its practices to a branch of Sunni Islam than to mainstream Shia Islam, is just one of a series of economic and political problems facing the government, including a secessionist movement in the south (north and south Yemen were only united in 1990) and the persistent al-Qaeda presence.

With population growth among the highest in the world and resources dwindling – Yemen is running out of water as well as oil – it is reasonable to predict worsening instability. Yemen is not Afghanistan or

Somalia, but there are real fears among western officials that it is on its way to becoming a failed and regionally destabilising state. Over the past year, Yemen's accumulating mess has looked threatening for Saudi Arabia: the merger of the Yemeni and Saudi branches of al-Qaeda has provided a new base for Saudi fanatics chased away from the kingdom by a security crackdown.

How the Saudis, supporters and generous financial backers to the government, became embroiled in a conflict with complex historic, religious and social roots depends on whose version you believe. The Saudis say they have been trying to clean up a long, porous border and push the Houthis away after a rebel infiltration killed a Saudi border guard. The Houthis tell us, through their website, that the Saudis have been in this war for a while, allowing Yemeni troops to use their territory to encircle the rebels.

There is, however, a potentially more dangerous dimension to this conflict. The Saudis see the Houthis as a tool in the hands of Iran as the Islamic Republic attempts to widen its influence in the region. In official circles, the conflict in Yemen is portrayed as a struggle between a Shia sect and a Sunni-dominated government, not unlike the internal political fight in Lebanon, where Saudi Arabia has long backed a Sunni-led coalition and Iran the Hizbollah-led opposition.

No doubt it seemed an opportune time to stand up to Iran as the regime has looked vulnerable since the rigging of the June presidential election and its violent aftermath. (If you read the Saudi press at that time you would think the Iranian regime had in fact collapsed.)

The Saudis and Iranians – the Gulf's two major powers – have been battling it out through their media for months. Iran has accused Riyadh of involvement in the disappearance

of a nuclear scientist and has been enraged by the Saudi move to fingerprint Iranians travelling to Mecca to perform the Haj pilgrimage.

The Saudi bombing of Houthi positions is adding fuel to the fire. This week, Iran's joint chief of staff Hassan Firouzabadi called Saudi attacks "state terrorism" and Saudi Arabia's grand mufti Sheikh Abdulaziz al-Sheikh accused Iran of "collusion in sin and aggression". A group of Saudi clerics lambasted Iran for allegedly "financing and arming" agents to spread Shia Islam across Sunni lands.

The irony is that no one outside the Middle East believes that Iran has much to do with the Houthis. Officials in the west argue that although Iran sympathises with the rebels, there is no evidence of

Governments far beyond Yemen's borders should be alarmed at the deteriorating security in the country

military or financial support.

Maybe these outsiders are talking nonsense. But maybe Saudi Arabia is allowing its resentment of Iran to cloud its judgment over Yemen. The Houthi rebellion is, above all, a reflection of social, religious and political grievances by a group that feels marginalised and considers that the state has succumbed to radical Sunni Salafi ideology. The Houthis are not moderate – their commander says their "cultural" platform is based on the slogans of "God is Great, Death to America and Death to Israel". But in an interview with a Lebanese newspaper, he also says that the rebels want an end to discrimination and government military action and not, as is often

assumed, the reimposition of a Zaydi state (an imamate that ruled the capital Sana'a until a coup in 1962).

The even greater irony in this conflict is that Saudi involvement is certain to aggravate the grievances and possibly prolong the fighting. The rising destruction, casualties and displacement of the population have fed the rebellion, widening its territorial scope and winning the rebels thousands of new recruits.

"The ultimate travesty is there is no way to militarily solve the problem – you need a humanitarian ceasefire and mediation," says Christopher Boucek, an associate at the Carnegie Endowment's Middle East programme. If stability is the aim in Yemen, then, as Bernard Haykel, a professor of Near Eastern studies at Princeton University, argues, Saudi Arabia needs a policy that is neither "throwing money" at the problem nor military intervention.

Back in May, a few months before the latest round of fighting, a sensible report by the International Crisis Group recommended that Yemen use its traditional instruments of co-option and social and religious tolerance to create a more inclusive state, reducing sectarian discrimination and bringing in the Houthis. It called on Gulf states and western governments to exercise their leverage and the promise of reconstruction aid to nudge the government and the rebels towards compromise.

By the Middle East's standards of violence, the Yemen conflict is a small war – and so can be easily ignored. But as the ICG warned: "In duration and intensity, destruction, casualties, sectarian stigmatisation and regional dimension, [it] stands apart from other violent episodes in Yemen. It will need more than run-of-the-mill domestic and international efforts to end it."

roula.khalaf@ft.com

Europe is risking irrelevance as the world moves on

Tony Barber

In international politics there are four or five leopards, snakes of various kinds, a handful of monkeys, and ants all over the jungle floor. The European Union seems intent on sticking out from the crowd – a genial, hydra-headed monster.

The appointments on Thursday night of Herman Van Rompuy, Belgium's prime minister, as the EU's first full-time president, and of Britain's Baroness Catherine Ashton as its foreign policy chief, leave the EU's global role and image in the hands of two personalities with next to no experience of high-level international affairs. They are choices which appear to contradict the arguments that EU leaders have made for years about the importance of projecting Europe's collective influence more effectively around the world.

In the case of Lady Ashton, it was a last-minute choice prompted by considerations of political balance within the 27-nation EU. Until 5pm Brussels

time on Thursday, she had no idea she would be picked. She was awarded the job primarily because the UK needed a payback for sacrificing the presidential ambitions of Tony Blair, the former prime minister, and because she won approval from Europe's socialist parties, which had demanded the foreign policy post for a member of their political family.

None of this means that Mr Van Rompuy and Lady Ashton lack talent. As Angela Merkel, Germany's chancellor, remarked: "I am one of those people who believe that characters can grow into jobs."

Ms Merkel is a good example – a Lutheran pastor's daughter who spent her formative years in obscurity in communist East Germany and now governs Europe's biggest country.

But the appointments suggest Europe is not adapting fast enough to profound changes in the international order that are remorselessly eroding its influence. Europe is not blind to the problem – far from it. When José Manuel Barroso, European Commission president, presented his policy guidelines in September for the next

Commission, he had this to say:

"For Europe, this is a moment of truth. Europe has to answer a decisive question. Do we want to lead, shaping globalisation on the basis of our values and our interests – or will we leave the initiative to others and accept an outcome shaped by them? The alternatives are clear. A stark choice has to be made. Either Europeans accept to face this challenge together – or else we slide towards irrelevance."

The European historical diagnosis goes as follows. Between 1500 and 1900 a rising Europe dominated the world, with Spain, Britain and France acquiring large overseas empires.

The two world wars destroyed Europe's supremacy, splitting it between a US-led west and a Soviet-controlled east. The wars exposed the lethal potential of European nationalism and paved the way for the experiment in pooling sovereignty represented by the European Union.

In 1989, the collapse of communism provided an unmissable opportunity to bury Europe's divisions forever. But now globalisation is pushing the

world into an age of unsentimental Great Power politics, in which Europe must get its act together to avoid being pushed to the sidelines by Brazil, China, India, Russia, the US and so on.

The EU's remedy is the Lisbon treaty, a set of reforms intended to strengthen its cohesion and upgrade its global influence. Among the

The appointments suggest the EU is not adapting fast enough to profound changes that are eroding its influence

treaty's main features are the creation of the full-time presidency, to replace the increasingly ineffective system of six-month rotating presidencies shared among the EU's member-states, and the appointment of a foreign policy supremo with stronger powers than those enjoyed by Javier Solana, the post's occupant since 1999.

As discussions of these arrangements proceeded, it became clear most governments preferred a low-profile, consensus-building chairman as president rather than a forceful, policy-setting chief executive. This preference has now been expressed in the choice of Mr Van Rompuy instead of Mr Blair.

But it hardly seems possible that Mr Van Rompuy will parley on equal terms with the likes of Barack Obama and Hu Jintao, the US and Chinese presidents. Not only is his experience too limited, not only are the frames of reference for his job too narrowly drawn, but also he will have to share the stage with Mr Barroso and Lady Ashton.

As for Lady Ashton, she will in principle be in a more powerful position. She will control a multi-billion euro budget and a staff of several thousand people across the world. According to the Lisbon treaty, she will "conduct the Union's common foreign and security policy".

But with her job comes the title of Commission vice president. In this sense, there will be occasions on

which she will defer to Mr Barroso. Furthermore, the Lisbon treaty's job description conceals the fact that foreign policy will remain a matter for unanimity among the 27 governments.

In an organisation as addicted as the EU to compromise, bargaining and sophisticated balances of power, it is never easy to pick winners and losers after an event such as Thursday night's summit.

Some will pinpoint Mr Barroso as the most powerful of the EU's new trio of leaders. Some will advise not to underestimate Lady Ashton and the institutional weight behind her.

But perhaps the real winners are the EU's governments and the cross-national, centre-right and centre-left political party groups that dominate the European parliament. National leaders have elected to pick two new EU-level office-holders who will not overshadow them. Their choices were heavily influenced by the demands of the party groups.

The rest of the world is unlikely to miss the message.

tony.barber@ft.com

Clinton has to work on her relationship with Obama

GLOBAL INSIGHT



**Daniel Dombey
in Washington**

It sounds like a story with a happy ending. Eighteen months ago Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama were at each other's throats as they battled for the White House. Then, after Mr Obama's inspired selection of his old rival for the top US foreign policy post, the two turned into a team, with Mrs Clinton becoming the most formidable asset of the administration.

There is only one catch to the tale. There is no guarantee that it will finish on an upbeat note.

Mrs Clinton and Mr Obama are now deluged by foreign policy problems and the secretary of state has to contend with an overbearing White House and her own tendency to voice inconvenient truths.

That said, things have gone more smoothly than anyone would have imagined after the two Democrats' bad-tempered primary fight.

Not too long ago Mrs Clinton was seen as a divisive figure whom many Americans simply could not stand. Today, her tough, indefatigable style and ability to master a brief have made her popular and highly rated. In a poll this week, 67 per cent of Americans said Mrs Clinton was qualified to be president, even as she was treated to an adoring profile in *Vogue* magazine.

No wonder she was in Afghanistan this week, sent by Mr Obama to put pressure on Hamid Karzai as he begins his second term as president.

And yet the mere word "Afghanistan" highlights the challenges that the Clinton-Obama partnership has to confront. It is also far from the only foreign policy problem that gives the impression of overwhelming the administration.

Washington's push for Arab-Israeli peace talks seems to be back at square one. And a deal with Iran, described by some diplomats as a sign that Mr Obama's signature policy of "engagement" was finally paying off, has effectively collapsed.

So with such a formidable team in place, why isn't US foreign policy faring better?

One complicating factor is Mrs Clinton's penchant for gaffes. She outraged Arabs last month when she labelled an Israeli offer to stop building some settlements as "unprecedented" – even though she had vigorously demanded all such building work cease. That came just after Mrs Clinton said in Pakistan she found it hard to believe no one in the country's government knew where al-Qaeda leaders were hiding – during a visit to bolster relations with Islamabad.

She has made similarly blunt statements on many of her frequent foreign trips – and while her style often appears bracing in comparison with her ultra-cautious predecessor, Condoleezza Rice, there is a downside. Diplomacy often consists of allowing

yourself as much wiggle room as possible and being frank in private. And as one diplomat recently observed: "With Condi, if she said something you knew it was policy: with Hillary, you're not so sure." Although she brings political assets that few previous secretaries of state have had, Mrs Clinton is still a relative beginner at the job.

But that is not the full picture. Many problems with the administration's message – including its inconsistent policy on Israel-Palestine – can be traced back to the White House, which under Rahm Emanuel, chief of staff, keeps a firm grip on

Whether their team of rivals can work smoothly will help decide how the story ends

foreign policy. Some ex-diplomats say they have never seen power so centralised.

Mrs Clinton's own deputy, Jim Steinberg, is widely perceived as a White House enforcer, who polices even relatively minor policy statements. That often leaves state department spokesmen mouthing near meaningless talking points even as Mrs Clinton leaves message discipline by the wayside.

The relationship with Mr Obama is even more important. Perhaps the most successful secretary of state of the past 20 years was James Baker, who was the closest to the president he served, George H. W. Bush. A bond between president and the secretary of state helps when it comes to executing foreign policy. While Mrs Clinton's relationship with Mr Obama is cordial, one would be hard-pressed to call them buddies.

The conclusion to the Clinton-Obama story hasn't been written.

Whether their team of rivals can work as a smoothly functioning machine will help decide how the story ends.

Put space at the heart of US-India relations

Karl Inderfurth and Raja Mohan

President Obama will receive Prime Minister Manmohan Singh tomorrow for the first official state visit of his administration, a visit befitting India's emergence as a major global actor. It also signals America's commitment to a strong partnership.

For more than a decade, the US-India relationship has been deepening. This visit provides the chance to focus on a big idea that could lift relations to a higher orbit – literally.

Mr Obama and Mr Singh should unveil a long-term bilateral initiative to work together to secure the threatened common spaces of our planet – our global commons – including the seas, atmosphere, outer space and the digital domain. The two leaders should underscore this by launching a major venture in outer space.

The Obama administration and Singh government are both in their first year of tenure and have the political capital to push through a major advance. A similar moment in July 2005 led to the launch of a challenging civil nuclear initiative and its passage against great odds in both capitals.

Today, the conventional wisdom is that the two leaders will not match the scale of the nuclear bargain and should limit themselves to consolidating recent gains. We disagree. They should aim higher and focus on strategic co-operation in outer space. They can bring lasting benefits to national space programmes and lay out the framework for an international code of conduct in outer space.

Besides influencing a range of international issues, from energy security to global warming, space co-operation could define a new template for the

management of the global commons. As Washington looks for new partners in the management of the global commons, India is a natural choice.

After the end of the Soviet Union, the US has had no real peers in outer space. Today as the US reviews its civilian and military space objectives amid shrinking resources, there is a broad consensus within the space community that Washington needs enduring partnerships, both bilateral and multilateral, in outer space.

What does Delhi bring to the table? As a rising space power with real and potential technical skills, India can help the US pursue more ambitious goals in outer space and at a lower cost. India's contribution to advances in outer space are impressive, such as the discovery of water molecules on the surface of the moon by its lunar explorer, Chandrayaan-1. The US partnered with India on this mission, with two Nasa payloads on board.

Four broad areas of bilateral space co-operation present themselves. First, advanced launch technologies. The greatest limitation on space-ventures is the cost of launching objects into space. The two countries should partner in basic scientific research, such as advanced materials and combustion science that could enable a new generation of spacecraft, while avoiding the proliferation of dangerous ballistic missile capabilities.

Second, lunar exploration and beyond. With interest in both countries for exploring the moon and its resources, the US and India should exploit synergies between their moon programmes and consult on an ambitious human exploration of the moon and inter-planetary space. Lunar resources could be used to lower the costs of sustaining human and robotic outposts beyond the earth.

Third, climate change. The two countries should use the massive American and growing Indian space assets for earth observation to provide comprehensive and credible assessments of climate change.

Fourth, space governance. The US and India should work to forge a consensus on limiting space debris, improving "space situational awareness" for avoiding hazards, and ensuring unhindered operation of the space assets of all nations. Creating a new voluntary code of conduct in outer space could mark the start of an effort to bring order to the global commons.

An Obama-Singh space initiative could become the defining feature of an expansive US-India collaboration, especially in science and technology. It could also create the basis for securing our global commons and offer incentives to other major powers to join this vital undertaking.

After the end of the Soviet Union, the US has had no real peers in outer space – India can help it pursue its goals

Karl Inderfurth is a professor at George Washington University and a former assistant secretary of state for south Asia affairs, 1997-2001. Raja Mohan is Henry Kissinger chair in foreign policy at the Library of Congress and a contributing editor of The Indian Express, New Delhi

Obama still has leverage over Israel

David Gardner

Has Barack Obama made a hash of his Middle East peace diplomacy? That seems to be the verdict of international commentators and – more to the point – of Palestinian leaders in despair at ever getting their own state and an Israeli government exulting that it made the US president blink first.

Yet, it is worth stepping outside the hothouse for a minute to examine whether it is that simple: whether Mr Obama will be content to see his ambitious strategy of reconciliation with the Arab and Muslim worlds held hostage by the obdurate obstruction of the government of Benjamin Netanyahu.

In his rapturously received speech at Cairo University in June, President Obama started a new conversation in and about the Middle East. Publicly restating what he had just said privately in Washington to Mr Netanyahu, whose rightwing coalition refuses to rein in colonisation of Palestinian land or push a two-state solution, Mr Obama made the ultra-parsed statement that “the United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements”. When he told Israel that “part of being a good friend is being honest”, the country’s political elites got an inkling that decades of double-talk on the conflict with the Palestinians were over. When he added that “just as Israel’s right to exist cannot be denied, neither can Palestine’s”, any remaining doubts were surely dissipated. Weren’t they?

His implicit comparison of the “intolerable” situation of the Palestinians under Israeli “occupation” with the struggles of African slaves in America and South African black people under apartheid surely signalled to the irredentist right in Israel and their allies in Washington that they were dealing with someone who means business. This was language seldom heard from an American leader. Yet in the subsequent test of wills over US demands for a total freeze on settlement-building it does look as if Mr Obama has backed down.

On the face of it, he has bungled his attempt to jump-start peace talks.

Mr Netanyahu continues boastfully to expand the settlements, and yet Hillary Clinton, secretary of state, greets his few cosmetic gestures as “unprecedented”. Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinian president who has made the resumption of talks conditional on a settlement freeze, has been publicly humiliated.

Overwhelmingly the weaker party in the conflict, he let himself be forced by the Obama administration into a public handshake with Mr Netanyahu, and bowed to pressure to delay discussion of Judge Richard Goldstone’s United Nations report – dismissed as “morally twisted” by Mr Netanyahu – on last winter’s Israeli assault on Gaza. With nothing to show for his principled attempt to get a negotiated end to the occupation of the West Bank and Arab east Jerusalem, Mr Abbas says he is withdrawing from politics. If so, he will be succeeded by more radical and uncompromising leaders.

Washington has also failed to marshal its Arab allies into making

We should examine whether Obama will let reconciliation with Arabs and Muslims be held hostage by Netanyahu

confidence-building concessions to Israel. Without any substantive gesture by Israel, which has spurned the comprehensive peace offer first made by the Arab League in 2002, that was practically inevitable.

The Arabs believe that in 1992-96, at the height of the peace process, Israel got a peace dividend, without ending the occupation. Diplomatic recognition of Israel doubled, from 85 to 161 countries, leading to doubled exports and a six-fold increase in foreign investment, while per capita income in the occupied territories fell by 37 per cent and the number of settlers increased by 50 per cent.

The settlers now number close to

half a million Israelis, including those in east Jerusalem. The system of segregated “bypass” roads, some 600 military checkpoints in an area the size of Lincolnshire or Delaware, and the “separation” barrier that cuts deep into the West Bank, foreclose on any practical possibility of a self-governing Palestinian state.

It may be that this archipelago of Bantustans means the dream of disentangling the Holy Land into two states is over. But there is no other viable option – for the Israelis or the Palestinians. The alternative is to sleep-walk into a bi-national entity that would undermine the foundations of a democratic Jewish state, with the Palestinians’ quest for equal rights taking on the appearance of the fight against apartheid in South Africa. Will Mr Obama simply let this happen?

He clearly sees it as in Israel’s long-term security interest and the US national interest to reach a fair settlement of the Palestinian conflict. He also sees how the problems of the region have become interlinked – especially since the invasion of Iraq enhanced Iranian influence and sank America’s reputation deeper into the mire – and how an Israel-Palestine deal could start to reverse that. But as US president he holds some cards.

Israelis have a record of turning against leaders who place the vital US alliance in jeopardy: Menachem Begin learnt this, Yitzhak Shamir learnt this and so, to a limited extent, did Mr Netanyahu, when he was voted out of office in 1999.

Vital to that alliance is US support in the UN Security Council, where it has cast 29 vetoes to shield Israel from condemnation for its actions in the occupied territories. Imagine the signal the US would send were it even to abstain. Or, better still, if the US and its allies took a blueprint for a two-state solution – the outlines of which have long been clear – to the council and voted it through. This game is not over yet.

david.gardner@ft.com

Philippine carnage

Time Arroyo stood up to powerbrokers and private armies

The Philippines is often said to have one of the most democratic systems in Asia. If so, God help the rest of the region. This week, as the country gears up for elections next May, it was jolted by one of the worst incidents of political murder in its history. At least 46 people were butchered as a group tried to register the candidacy of a challenger to the long-time incumbent in Maguindanao province. At least a dozen of the dead were journalists in what Reporters Without Borders said was the worst single atrocity of its kind against members of the profession. The dead are also believed to have included the candidate's wife and sister.

Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, president, has ordered a state of emergency in the troubled southern island of Mindanao. She will have to do much more than that if the Philippines' political system is to emerge with even a shred of integrity. First, she must order a full investigation into who was responsible for this week's atrocity and ensure that they are brought to trial and punished by the legal authorities, whatever their political connections. Anything short of that risks unleashing a dangerous cycle of revenge killings.

Second, her government must seize on public revulsion at this mass execution to bring to heel the

private armies which are all too common in local politics. Power-brokers in Manila have turned a blind eye to violence of the worst kind, particularly if the perpetrators can bring in votes. That has stoked the accurate perception that Philippine democracy is less about the popular will and more about carving up spoils among the ruling oligarchy. Strenuous efforts must be made to exert national authority in every region, to confiscate illegal arms and to ensure that the rule of law holds good, without exception. That task is made more difficult because provincial violence is overlaid by the problem of secessionist rebellions with which successive governments have failed to grapple. But that is no excuse to duck it.

Finally, Ms Arroyo should devote the last months of her presidency - which has been dogged by allegations of corruption and political shenanigans - to ensure that next May's elections are free and fair. The fact that many of those running for high office - including Ferdinand Marcos Junior and Benigno "Noynoy" Aquino III - are names from the country's political hall of fame does not bode particularly well. But Ms Arroyo's government is guardian of a democracy of sorts, badly flawed though it is. It needs to start acting like it.

Manila declares state of emergency as tensions rise over poll killings

At least 46 dead in southern province

Residents fear clans will take revenge

By Roel Landig in Manila

The killing of at least 46 people in the southern Philippine province of Maguindanao on Monday could herald a surge in political violence as powerful clans exact revenge on each other while stepping up the fight for next year's elections, local residents and analysts warned yesterday.

Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, the Philippine president, declared a state of emergency in three areas in the south of the country yesterday following the worst case of election-related violence in the country's recent history.

The authorities have so far recovered 46 corpses from a "mass grave" believed to contain the bodies of the victims, according to the ABS-CBN television station.

The military presence in Cotabato city, one of the areas covered by emergency rule and the nearest urban centre to the site of the killings, more than doubled and security forces tried to restrict mobility to prevent members and supporters of two of Mindanao's most powerful clans from attacking each other.

Many of the people killed on Monday were relatives and supporters of Ismael Mangudadatu, a town vice-mayor who was planning to challenge Andal Ampatuan, the province's powerful and long-standing governor, in next year's polls. The dead

included Mr Mangudadatu's wife and sister, as well as a dozen journalists.

Mr Mangudadatu claimed that Ampatuan family members and supporters had been implicated in the deaths by survivors. The Ampatuans promised to co-operate with government investigators, Jesus Dureza, the president's adviser on the southern Philippines, told ABS-CBN.

A power blackout engulfed Cotabato city in darkness early yesterday evening, according to local reports, adding to tensions in the mainly Christian community, which is surrounded by Muslim-majority provinces.

"People here are going home earlier than usual for fear of being caught in the crossfire in case members of the [Ampatuan and Mangudadatu] clans chance on each other," said a Catholic priest in the city.

The priest, who asked not to be named, said many city residents feared the eruption of *rido* – or revenge killings – between members of the two extended families, who used to be political allies but are now vying for leadership of Maguindanao province in next year's polls.

"Many of those killed were women, including the wife of vice-mayor Mangudadatu, making the situation particularly prone to *rido*," said the priest.

One political analyst said the killings in Maguindanao could portend an upsurge in violence ahead of the May 2010 polls as conflicts broke out and intensified among local leaders who used to work together under Mrs Arroyo's ruling Lakas-Kampi party.

Gilberto Teodoro, the ruling party's nominee for

'People here are going home earlier than usual for fear of being caught in the crossfire'

president, is doing poorly in opinion polls, with only 4 per cent of potential votes, compared with more than 50 per cent for Benigno Aquino, son of the late president, Corazon Aquino.

"The Ampatuans and Mangudadatus are both political allies of President Arroyo, and the outbreak of violence means she is no longer able to mediate over the allocation of political posts," said Ramon Casiple, executive director of the Institute for Political and Electoral Reforms, an advocacy group.

He said similar conflicts could erupt not only in Mindanao but elsewhere as Mrs Arroyo and the ruling party were seen as "lame ducks" that could no longer deliver central government resources beyond next year's polls.

As well as Cotabato city, the state of emergency covers Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat provinces, where members of the Ampatuan and Mangudadatu clans hold posts. Cerge Remonde, the government press secretary, said the declaration of the state of emergency aimed to "prevent and suppress the occurrence of other incidents of lawless violence".

Editorial Comment, Page 8

Obama's damaging silence on Israeli expansion

Max Hastings

In so far as western electorates heed foreign affairs, their attention is currently fixed on Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran. There is a widespread reluctance to think about Israel and the Palestinians, because the problem is seen as wearisome and intractable.

This is rash. At our peril do we ignore the strength of Muslim sentiment. A decade ago, Palestine scarcely featured in the consciousness of Pakistanis, Egyptians or Iranians, even if it inspired the rhetoric of their leaders. But now the issue has become a defining symbol, a litmus test of the west's willingness to offer justice to Muslims and of its perceived double standards on international conduct.

A senior Jordanian politician warns: "Peace with Israel is today very unpopular with our people." This is why there is such alarm in the region following US secretary of state Hillary Clinton's apparently indulgent remarks this month about Israeli settlement building on the West Bank.

Barack Obama's election, and his spring speech in Cairo, sent Muslim hopes soaring in a way not seen since the days of Jimmy Carter – admittedly an unfortunate precedent. By contrast, it is now widely feared that this US administration, like so many before it, will disappoint expectations.

A phrase is being widely used among Middle East pundits: "Time is running out for the two-state solution." Israeli stubbornness is assisted by the fact that there is no credible Palestinian negotiating partner. The leadership is riven, with Mahmoud Abbas ready to stand down as president of the Palestinian Authority, while Hamas and Hizbollah pursue their own courses beyond diplomacy.

No Palestinian politician is willing and able to deliver peace in return for

any offer Israel might freely make. Israel is therefore set to continue expansion on the West Bank – unless Mr Obama deploys his full authority against Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister.

Mr Netanyahu and his colleagues saw Mr Obama from the outset as more dangerous to their ambitions than any predecessor. In consequence, they have laboured hard and not unsuccessfully to rally the American friends of Israel against him.

The administration, facing so many other difficulties including Afghanistan, climate change and health reform, now begins to realise that a showdown with the Israeli government will require domestic political capital, which may be unaffordable.

Some American observers are as bemused as the Muslim world by the president's failure to follow up on early rhetoric in support of a Palestinian state. They point out that a range of low-key options exist – for instance, cooling the intimate day-to-day US-Israel defence relationship, as a warning to the Netanyahu government. Washington has made no such move.

A distinguished Muslim academic says: "There still seems no appreciation in Washington of the cost and requirements of establishing a new relationship with the Muslim world." Bluntly, any acceptable deal for the Palestinians requires the US to quarrel with Israel.

Few people doubt the president's personal understanding of, and sympathy for, the Palestinian predicament. He is, however, only one man amid the vast Washington political and security machine. The latter, especially, is focused on the requirements of the long war on terror.

Israel, especially under the Netanyahu government, defines the nation's future in terms of its military superiority. Implicitly, if not explicitly, the nation conducts policy as if a state of war is indefinitely acceptable.

This may be ill-judged, given the long-term demographic problems it faces. Hundreds of thousands of younger Israelis vote with their feet, choosing to live abroad.

But, for the immediate future, the Israeli government is content that it holds a formidable political and military hand against Mr Obama as well as its Arab foes.

Many Muslims fear Israeli expansionism on the West Bank and especially in Jerusalem is no longer reversible, short of war. It would be quite mistaken to suppose this reconciles them to a new reality. On the contrary, it is fomenting an anger with huge potential consequences.

America and its allies will be painfully disabused if they suppose that any stable relationship with Muslim societies is attainable if it acknowledges permanent Israeli hegemony over the most sensitive areas of the West Bank.

The writer is an FT contributing editor

Many Muslims fear Israeli encroachment into the West Bank and especially in Jerusalem is no longer reversible, short of war

Arroyo calls on army to restore order in south

President acts in wake of 57 killings

Local military chiefs sent back to Manila

By Roel Landingin in Cotabato City

The Philippine president yesterday sought to restore order in a southern province reeling from a political attack that left 57 people dead by giving unprecedented powers to the local government secretary to replace civilian leaders with military and police officers.

Gloria Macapagal Arroyo also relieved from duty two local military commanders with direct responsibilities for the southern Philippine region where the political massacre took place.

The pair were told to return to Manila to face investigation over their actions related to the killings, according to Col Romeo Brawner, an armed forces spokesman.

The announcement came a day after Manila took into custody Andal Ampatuan Jr, the son of a powerful local ruler in the volatile Maguindanao province, on suspicion of involvement in what is the country's highest political death toll in years.

Mrs Arroyo's order, which followed the declaration of a state of emergency in three areas in the troubled southern island of Mindanao earlier this week, allowed Ronaldo Puno, the local government chief, to appoint military officers temporarily to head government units, said Cerge Remonde, the government press secretary.

"If it is necessary to put military commanders as OICs [officers in charge], then we will put military commanders [in charge]," Mr Remonde said.

Many residents in Cotabato City, the nearest to the attack, expect the moves to undermine the political and military pillars propping up the influential Ampatuan family and their allies.

The twin announcements underscore the pressure on Mrs Arroyo to demonstrate stronger action against the suspected perpetrators of the killings, which have caused local and international outrage.

The military has taken over government buildings in towns controlled by members of the Ampatuan family and disarmed close to 400 militia members loyal to the clan.

But it now appears that the family and their supporters retained control of the high-powered weapons that city residents see their security escorts carrying whenever members of the family come to town.

"It's laughable when you

compare the old weapons that were confiscated by the military as shown in TV news with the modern, shining weapons their bodyguards carry around in the city," said one resident.

Col Jonathan Ponce, a military spokesman in Cotabato city, said: "What we have got so far are the M14 and M16 rifles that we also gave to the special civilian auxiliary forces that the province organised to help the army fight the Milf [Moro Islamic Liberation Front]."

"It's up to the national police to get back the other so-called high-powered weapons that may still be with them."

Maguindanao, which is considered an Ampatuan fiefdom, is one of the biggest provinces in the autonomous Muslim region, which is also headed by Zaldy Ampatuan, a brother of the arrested suspect.

Mr Puno said the investigation into the Maguindanao killings was complex because many elected officials, including police and military officers assigned in the area, were being implicated in the crime.

"Normally, we would let the [autonomous region] governor do this but since he is the brother [of the suspect], there may be a problem here," he said in an ABS-CBN television interview.

Similarly, Col Brawner told reporters the removal of the two military commanders was designed "to pave the way for an impartial and transparent investigation into the issue following some complaints that they failed to provide security".



Macapagal Arroyo: pressed to take stronger action

Afghanistan is Obama's biggest test



Clive Crook

Even more than healthcare, the war in Afghanistan will decide whether Barack Obama succeeds or fails. Tomorrow night, in a speech at the West Point military academy broadcast across the country, Mr Obama will lay out his plans.

Mr Obama already owns this "necessary" war, as he has called it, contrasting this battle with his predecessor's supposedly needless war in Iraq. But Tuesday's speech will expunge the last particle of doubt on that score. He is expected to commit upwards of 30,000 more US troops to the mission.

Added to the 21,000 extra soldiers he has already assigned, plus support forces, this increase would roughly treble the Bush administration's commitment. Last week, again to mark the contrast with the previous administration, Mr Obama promised to "finish the job". Muscular talk, and making the announcement at West Point underscores it. If health reform goes wrong, there will be others to blame. If this war goes wrong, it will be all his fault. It is Mr Obama's biggest bet by far.

Committing extra forces is the best that can be done in an excruciating situation. At the moment the US and its allies are losing. It is that simple. Mr Obama's options are essentially to pull out altogether, conceding defeat in his necessary war; maintain roughly the existing commitment, but define success way down, narrowing the mission to arm's length harassment of the enemy; or provide the resources his military commanders say are needed to make a success of counter-insurgency, while building up Afghanistan's own security forces. It seems he will do the last, or close enough to it to avoid accusations of splitting the difference.

The lines between these options are blurry, to be sure. One could argue endlessly - indeed, the administration has been arguing endlessly - about what counter-insurgency means. Even this trebling of US forces will be too small a commitment to smother the Taliban. The number of troops is less important than what they will be

asked to do. The administration will still have to ensure that its augmented forces are not over-stretched, as they have been for the past eight years.

That will mean ceding control of some areas to the enemy, and coming to terms - that is, bribing - some tribal leaders who could go either way. The best outcome under the counter-insurgency route will still be very messy.

Then why try? For the two reasons the administration advanced in the spring, when it announced the previous, inadequate, escalation. A failure to secure Afghanistan creates a zone in which al-Qaeda can recover and flourish. And defeat in Afghanistan will most likely strengthen the Taliban in Pakistan, posing an even worse threat to the west. Here is a third reason. The US and its allies owe the main victims of this calamity - ordinary Afghans - our best efforts to rebuild their country. We are calling on them to take sides. We cannot succeed unless they do so, at great personal risk. That creates an obligation.

None of these arguments is decisive. A point may come when the US is doing more harm than good, or when the Afghans themselves want us out. The case for gradual withdrawal, starting now, is not obviously wrong. This is not a necessary war. It is a war of choice, and a finely balanced choice at that. This makes Mr Obama's political difficulty acute.

Parallels between Afghanistan and Vietnam are impossible to ignore. The most pressing is that the US loses wars like this at home. A bigger effort in Afghanistan can be sustained only as long as the country supports it. The slimmed plurality of voters favours sending extra troops. As with Vietnam, most Americans are unsure why their sons and daughters are dying in Afghanistan. The administration's

unduly protracted debate over what to do has sent the message that it too is unsure. Shallow support for the war suggests that one spectacular Taliban strike might flip the balance of opinion - and, with or without extra forces, the US would then be back on the path to defeat.

It gets worse. Mr Obama's own party opposes the policy he seems to have chosen. Last week leading Democrats called for a war tax to cover the cost of the country's expanding commitments. Not exactly helpful: but they are right that operations in Afghanistan are enormously costly, in financial as well as human terms. The administration says it costs \$1m a year for every extra soldier. An additional 35,000 troops would cost \$35bn a year - enough to buy a lot of health reform.

For his narrow margin of support on extra forces Mr Obama relies on Republicans, with whom he has fallen out bitterly on every aspect of domestic policy. The president's approval rating continues to slide. The mid-term elections are in sight, and Democrats are anxious. They have reason to be.

In short, the test for Mr Obama could hardly be more demanding. Having made his decision, he must get the country behind it, without making promises he cannot keep or sending messages that encourage the enemy. Pledging to "finish the job" within a fixed period and then pull out - the obvious way to sugar the pill of escalation - would do both.

Since taking office, Mr Obama has been a less effective leader than many of his admirers, myself included, had hoped. On many issues, he has simply chosen not to try. On Afghanistan, standing aside is not an option. We will see what kind of president he is.

clive.crook@gmail.com

President, in Japan, vows more involvement in Asia

TOKYO

BY HELENE COOPER
AND MARTIN FACKLER

The United States is not threatened by a rising China, President Barack Obama said, but will seek to strengthen its ties with Beijing even as it maintains close ties with traditional allies like Japan.

In a wide-ranging speech on his first trip to Asia as president, Mr. Obama drew on his own background to reassure the people of the fast-growing continent that even as the United States seemed preoccupied with conflicts in the Middle East and other regions, it was increasingly "a nation of the Pacific."

"I know there are many who question how the United States perceives China's emergence," Mr. Obama said Saturday at Suntory Hall in Tokyo. But he added, "In an interconnected world, power does not need to be a zero-sum game, and nations need not fear the success of another."

Mr. Obama previewed many of the themes that will shadow him during his weeklong trip, with scheduled stops in Singapore, Shanghai, Beijing and Seoul.

He called on North Korea to return to talks over its nuclear weapons program or face even greater isolation; he urged the military government in Myanmar to release the leader of the country's beleaguered democracy movement, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi (although he mispronounced her name); and he pledged to "never waver in speaking for the fundamental values that we hold dear."

But at every turn of his address, Mr. Obama projected an America trying to break from the past. On Myanmar, for example, he pledged that he would "be the first American leader to meet with all 10 Asean leaders." Mr. Obama was at the table in Singapore on Sunday with the leaders of Myanmar and the other countries that make up the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

And while Mr. Obama spoke at length about human rights, he never connected the pursuit of such rights specifically to China and Tibet. Instead, Mr. Obama,

clearly seeking to avoid alienating Beijing on the eve of his inaugural visit to China, struck broader themes, saying that "supporting human rights provides lasting security that cannot be purchased any other way."

As he has on many of his trips abroad, Mr. Obama painted a picture of an America willing to learn from its mistakes. In particular, he said, the United States and Asia must grow out of the relationship of American consumerism and Asian reliance on the United States as an export market, a cycle he called imbalanced.

"One of the important lessons this recession has taught us is the limits of depending primarily on American consumers and Asian exports to drive growth," he said. "We have now reached one of those rare inflection

"Power does not need to be a zero-sum game, and nations need not fear the success of another."

points in history where we have the opportunity to take a different path."

Mr. Obama seemed to speak to the new Japanese government's efforts to build a tighter Asian economic sphere, and he used his own history to deliver the message: Don't exclude the United States.

"My own life is part of that story," he said. "I am an American president who was born in Hawaii and lived in Indonesia as a boy. My sister Maya was born in Jakarta and later married a Chinese-Canadian. My mother spent nearly a decade working in the villages of Southeast Asia, helping women buy a sewing machine or an education that might give them a foothold in the world economy."

"So," he added, "the Pacific Rim has helped shape my view of the world." He even spoke of his first trip to Japan as a boy — "As a child, I was more focused on the matcha ice cream," he said.

That drew laughs from the audience, which gave him a standing ovation both before and after his speech.

Japan-U.S. relations: Let there be discord

Nassrine Azimi

HIROSHIMA In February 1960, one month after its signature in Washington, the U.S.-Japan treaty of mutual cooperation and security was submitted to the Japanese Parliament for ratification. It unleashed a storm of unprecedented furor across Japan.

Massive and at times violent demonstrations erupted in major cities. Fights broke out in the lower house of Parliament, where police had to intervene to arrest opposition members.

A planned visit by then U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower was cancelled. Finally, even though the treaty was ratified (by default) in June, it cost then Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, the man most Japanese saw as its main architect, his job.

All this is to say how surprising it is to see, as the 50th anniversary of the pact approaches, American policy-makers and commentators so rattled by voices in Japan questioning the treaty — and more specifically its burden on Okinawa.

The worry-mongers tend to ignore not only the treaty's historical significance, but also the cataclysmic changes that have occurred in Japan since the elections in August.

They err mostly, however, by considering the treaty as the only link between the two Pacific rim partners, overlooking the range and depth of a far more complex friendship binding Tokyo and Washington.

First the treaty itself: For the United States it is but one among similar important bilateral security alliances. For Japan, however, it has deep psychological and moral ramifications, touching upon a myriad of issues, from national pride and self-esteem to a collective sense of guilt towards Okinawa.

As long as Japan remains under America's protective umbrella — what historian John Dower calls its "subordinate independence" — it shall be hard pressed to exercise on the international stage a leadership role fully commensurate with its economical status or peace credentials, even in the nuclear arena, despite its moral authority as the only atomic-bombed nation in history.

The Japanese may ultimately con-

clude that their security pact with the United States is indeed in their own best strategic interest, or at least unavoidable for the time being. But the new government is right to want a national conversation around the alliance's full implications.

Harried and impatient visits, like the one offered last month by U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates — whose demeanor resembled more an irritated parent than an ally or friend — not only enforce the caricature of Americans as culturally insensitive but also deeply wound Japan's sense of fair play. The Japanese rightly felt that the Americans would never tolerate such a disdain for the imperatives of their own domestic politics.

Second, the new political landscape in Japan: America has yet to grasp just how essential a change has occurred in Japan. For the first time in decades, ordinary Japanese seem genuinely proud of their political leadership.

Except for a brief spell under Junichiro Koizumi — admired maybe more for his personal integrity than for any lasting accomplishments — until recently Japanese were all but resigned

to deplorable politicians wheeling and dealing behind closed doors.

True, the new government of Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama may also stumble along the way. But for now

The U.S.-Japanese friendship is fully able to handle occasional disruption.

people are relishing a new era and breed of politician — qualified, articulate and frequently young — able and willing to address the real problems facing this nation, leaving no sacred cows untouched. Swept into power with a huge popular mandate for change, it would be irresponsible, to say the least, for Hatoyama not to question the security alliance with the United States.

Most importantly, however, the grumblings in Washington tend to underestimate the depth and strength of a friendship that binds one of the world's youngest to one of its oldest nations.

Few countries could have emerged from a bloody war, the atomic holocausts in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and a long, humiliating occupation to retain such genuine bonds with their former

enemy and victor.

Nowhere am I reminded of this sentiment more strongly than here in Hiroshima, where the motto "forgive but not forget" is the underlying spirit animating the citizens' campaign for nuclear disarmament.

One is hard-pressed to ever hear, at least openly, any hatred for the Americans. Two years ago the remarkable mayor of Hiroshima, M.I.T.-educated Tadatosh Akiba, went so far as to nominate an American to head the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation, an entity that spearheads the city's peace initiatives.

Finally, it is naïve to assume that all this is a one-way road, for America too is dependent, in more subtle ways, on Japan for its security concerns.

At a time when it is shedding blood and money in Iraq and Afghanistan, America needs Japan more than any of its European allies. Japan's modest, cautious diplomacy does not sufficiently highlight the admiration and trust it enjoys in the Middle East and generally in the larger Muslim world.

I have observed again and again, through hundreds of young Afghan professionals I have worked with, the re-

spect with which they regard Japan as a nation that rose from its ashes, as a country of culture and tradition that has succeeded in a globalized world, and, just as significantly, as a country without a religious attitude or agenda. It is rare to hear such sentiments offered with regard to Washington.

The relationship forged by the United States and Japan since Commodore Perry sailed into Tokyo Bay in 1853 is indeed complex. It has been sustained not just by security concerns or an economical agenda, but by shared values, pains, joys, memories and interests spanning education, culture, science and, of course, baseball. It is a resilient, multifaceted friendship, fully able to handle occasional discord.

Japan has been a nation of peace and democracy for the last 64 years, and the United States rightly deserves some credit for this. The best it can now do is to wait, courteously, for the Japanese to contemplate the next century fully on their own terms.

NASSRINE AZIMI is senior adviser at the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).

U.S. and Russia voice worries over Iran

SINGAPORE

Obama and Medvedev meet, signaling sanctions may be ahead for Tehran

BY HELENE COOPER

President Barack Obama and President Dimitri A. Medvedev of Russia expressed dissatisfaction Sunday with Iran's response to a nuclear offer made by world powers, raising the prospect that sanctions may be the next step in the West's ongoing efforts to rein in Tehran's nuclear ambitions.

The two men, meeting during an Asia-Pacific summit conference in Singapore, also made progress in efforts to negotiate a replacement for a key arms control treaty between the United States and Russia that is set to expire in December, U.S. administration officials said.

While White House officials acknowledged Sunday that a new pact to replace the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, or Start, would not be ratified soon, they

said they expected to reach a "bridge" agreement that would preserve the status quo until a new treaty is approved.

Earlier, on Sunday morning, Mr. Obama and other world leaders decided to put off the difficult task of reaching a climate change agreement at a global conference scheduled for next month, deciding instead to make it the mission of the Copenhagen conference to reach a less specific, "politically binding" agreement that would punt the most difficult issues into the future.

The Sunday afternoon discussion with Mr. Medvedev was the fifth such meeting for Mr. Obama since he took office vowing to repair America's relationship with Russia, and U.S. officials expressed satisfaction Sunday with their progress so far.

"I have found, as always, President Medvedev frank, constructive and thoughtful," Mr. Obama said after the meeting. "The reset button has worked," he added, alluding to the administration's early promise to "reset" the bilateral relationship after several years of bickering over a variety of is-



SAUL LOEB/AFP

President Dmitri A. Medvedev on Sunday.

sues from missile defense to Kosovo.

With the Start pact set to expire soon, the Obama administration is searching for ways to have weapons inspectors remain in Russia to keep American eyes on the world's second most formidable nuclear arsenal. In the absence of a treaty or a legally binding "bridge" authority, U.S. inspectors would be forced to leave Russia when the treaty expires. Likewise, Russian inspectors would have to leave the United States.

Under Start provisions, both nations are allowed a maximum of 30 inspectors to monitor each other's compliance with
OBAMA, PAGE 4

On sidelines of Asia summit, unease mounts over Iran

OBAMA, FROM PAGE 1
the treaty.

On Iran, administration officials said, Mr. Obama and Mr. Medvedev discussed a timetable for imposing sanctions if Tehran and the West do not soon agree on a proposal in which Iran would send its enriched uranium out of the country, either for either temporary safekeeping or reprocessing into fuel rods.

"Unfortunately, so far at least, Iran appears to have been unable to say yes to what everyone acknowledges is a creative and constructive approach," said Mr. Obama, sitting next to Mr. Medvedev. "We are running out of time with respect to that approach."

Mr. Medvedev also alluded to running out of patience. He said that while a dialogue with Iran was continuing, "we are not completely happy about its pace. If something does not work, there are other means to move the process further."

Robert Gibbs, the White House spokesman, said the United States had set an internal deadline of the end of the year.

The talks between Mr. Obama and Mr. Medvedev occurred on the sidelines of two major regional economic summit meetings in Singapore, during Mr. Obama's first trip to Asia as president. He has taken to referring to himself as "America's first Pacific president," a

phrase he first used during a speech Saturday morning in Tokyo.

Mr. Obama is seeking on this trip to ensure that U.S. ties to the Asia-Pacific region remain firmly cemented, despite disparities in economic growth and the rising influence of China.

On Sunday he became the first American president to meet with Myanmar's military leaders when he attended a summit meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, also being held in Singapore. Mr. Obama, who has made his willingness to engage with adversaries one of his foreign policy hallmarks, sat four places away from Gen. Thein Sein, the prime minister of Myanmar, formerly known as Burma.

After the meeting, Asean issued a joint statement that broadly mentioned human rights.

Generally, statements out of meetings that involve many countries — like Asean and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation group — rarely make news or carry much weight, in part because these organizations operate by consensus, with every country signing off on every line of the final statements. Because Myanmar is a member of Asean, there was little chance that the group's joint statement would call for the release of the pro-democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi or other political pris-

oners in Myanmar.

Similarly, the communiqué issued after the APEC meeting in Singapore was a study in a lack of commitment. For instance, the leaders agreed that they "will continue to explore building blocks towards a possible Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific in the future," a statement with so many caveats and such hedging that trade experts said not to expect anything concrete for decades.

The APEC leaders also "endorsed the Pittsburgh G-20 principles" and agreed to work toward "more balanced growth that is less prone to destabilizing booms and busts." That refers to the pledge made by the world's 20 leading economies in Pittsburgh in September to re-think their economic policies in a coordinated effort to reduce the immense imbalances between export-dominated countries like China and Japan and debt-laden countries like the United States, which has long been the world's most willing consumer.

But since the majority of members of APEC are in the G-20 anyway, endorsing those principles does not break much new ground.

At a hastily arranged breakfast on Sunday on the APEC sidelines, the leaders — including Lars Loekke Rasmussen, the prime minister of Den-

mark and the chairman of the climate conference, who flew to Singapore just for the meeting — agreed that in order to salvage Copenhagen they would have to push back the chance to reach a fully binding legal agreement, possibly to a second summit meeting in Mexico City.

The agreement on Sunday codifies what negotiators had already accepted as all but inevitable: Representatives of the 192 nations in the talks would not resolve the outstanding issues in time. The gulf between rich and poor countries, and even among the wealthiest nations, was just too wide. Among the chief barriers to a comprehensive deal in Copenhagen was the U.S. Congress's inability to enact climate and energy legislation that sets binding targets on greenhouse gases in the United States. Without such a commitment, other nations have been loath to make their own pledges.

OBAMA IN CHINA

The president needs to encourage China to play a stronger international role — and curb some of its darker instincts.

ECONOMY, SECURITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Ever since Richard Nixon opened the door in 1972, all presidents have faced a balancing act with China. For President Obama, who arrived in China on Sunday, the challenge is even tougher. He needs Beijing's help on a host of extremely difficult problems, including stabilizing the global financial system, curbing global warming, prying away North Korea's nuclear weapons, and ensuring that Iran doesn't get to build any.

To do that he needs to encourage China to play an even stronger international role — but also curb some of its darker instincts, including its mistreatment of its own citizens, its less than savory relationships with countries like Sudan and its tendency to bully its neighbors.

Mr. Obama has already acknowledged China's growing clout when he made the G-20 instead of the G-8 the main forum for global economic issues. We hope that will pay off in more responsible behavior from Beijing.

Still, Mr. Obama has his work cut out for him. While the two countries have enacted huge stimulus packages, profound tensions remain over China's exchange-rate policy.

On the security side, China joined other major powers in imposing tougher nuclear-related sanctions on North Korea. But it is still Pyongyang's main economic benefactor and has shown a willingness to exploit loopholes in the sanctions. Beijing also evinces concern about Iran's nuclear program. But it seems more concerned about its own voracious energy needs, and Iran's ability to satisfy them. Mr. Obama will have to work harder to persuade China of the need for tough U.N. sanctions to curb the nuclear appetites of Tehran and Pyongyang.

China has close ties with Pakistan. We hope Mr. Obama will urge President Hu Jintao to provide more economic assistance for Islamabad and press its leaders to keep fighting the Taliban insurgency. While China-Taiwan relations are improving, Mr. Obama should still press Beijing to remove hundreds of missiles it has aimed at the island.

Some activists worry that the Obama administration has been too muted in its criticism of China's abysmal human rights. But trying a less confrontational approach, for a while, isn't unreasonable. China's success as a modern superpower is not guaranteed. Job shortages and worker malcontent pose a huge challenge, as do separatists in Tibet and Xinjiang.

Mr. Obama needs to find a way to subtly remind his hosts of those vulnerabilities — and the fact that they are better dealt with through more political openness rather than repression.

A Mideast truce



Roger Cohen

GLOBALIST

NEW YORK I've grown so pessimistic about Israel-Palestine that I find myself agreeing with Israel's hard-line foreign minister, Avigdor Lieberman: "Anyone who says that within the next few years an agreement can be reached ending the conflict simply doesn't understand the situation and spreads delusions."

That's the lesson of early Obama. The president tried to rekindle peace talks by confronting Israel on settlements, coaxing Palestinians to resume negotiations, and reaching out to the Muslim world. The effort has failed.

It has alienated Israel, where Obama is unpopular, and brought the president of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, close to resignation. It's time to think again.

What's gone wrong? There have been tactical mistakes, including a clumsy U.S. wobble toward accepting Israeli "restraint" on settlements rather than cessation. But the deeper error was strategic: Obama's assumption that he could resume where Clinton left off in 2000 and pursue the land-for-peace idea at the heart of the two-state solution.

This approach ignored the deep scars inflicted in the past decade: the killing of 992 Israelis and 3,399 Palestinians between the outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000 and 2006; the Israeli Army's harsh reoccupation of most of the West Bank; Hamas' violent rise to power in Gaza and the accompanying resurgence of annihilationist ideology; the spectacular spread of Jewish settlements in the West Bank; and the Israeli construction

of over 250 miles of a separation barrier that has protected Israel from suicide bombers even as it has shattered Palestinian lives, grabbed land and become, in the words of Michael Sfard, an Israeli lawyer, "an integral part of the West Bank settlement plan."

These are not small developments. They have changed the physical appearance of the Middle East. More important, they have transformed the psychologies of the protagonists. Israelis have walled themselves off from Palestinians. They are less interested than ever in a deal with people they hardly see.

As Ron Nachman, the founder of the sprawling Ariel settlement, comments in René Backmann's superb new book, "A Wall in Palestine," the wave of Palestinian suicide attacks before work on the barrier began in mid-2002 meant that: "Israelis wanted separation. They did not want to be mixed with the Arabs. They didn't even want to see

Obama should forget peace. It's unattainable. The wounds of the past decade are too deep.

them. This may be seen as racist, but that's how it is."

And that's about where we are.

With Palestinians saying, "Not one inch further will we cede." The myriad humiliations of the looping barrier, which divides Palestinians

from one another as well as from Israel, have cemented this "Nyet."

On the surface, Obama's decision to tackle settlements first was logical enough. Nothing has riled Palestinians as much as the continued flow of Israeli settlers into East Jerusalem and the West Bank. Both Oslo (1995) and the Road Map (2003) called for settlements to stop, but the number of settlers has risen steadily to over 450,000.

The president was categorical in his Cairo speech: "The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements."

Nor do I. But facts are hard — and Obama has tried to ignore them. The history briefly outlined above makes clear that the right-wing government

of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu won't deviate from the pattern of settlement growth established since 1967.

Indeed, Backmann's book (from which the Sfard quote is also taken), demonstrates a relentless continuity of Israeli purpose, now cemented by a fence whose aim was in fact double: to stop terrorists but also "to protect the settlements, to give them room to develop."

That is why, even at 250 miles, the barrier (projected to stretch over 400 miles) is already much longer than the 1967 border or Green Line: It burrows into the West Bank to place major settlements on the Israeli side, effectively annexing over 12 percent of the land.

The United States condoned the construction of this settlement-reinforcing barrier. It cannot be unmade — not for the foreseeable future. Peace and walls do not go together. But a truce and walls just may. And that, I must reluctantly conclude, is the best that can be hoped for.

Obama, who has his Nobel already, should ratchet expectations downward. Stop talking about peace. Banish the word. Start talking about détente. That's what Lieberman wants; that's what Hamas says it wants; that's the end point of Netanyahu's evasions.

It's not what Abbas wants but he's powerless. Shlomo Avineri, a political scientist, told me, "A nonviolent status quo is far from satisfactory but it's not bad. Cyprus is not bad."

I recall my friend Shlomo dreaming of peace. That's over. The last decade destroyed the last illusions: hence the fence. The courageous have departed the Middle East. A peace of the brave must yield to a truce of the mediocre — at best.

At least until Intifada-traumatized Israeli psychology shifts. I agree with the Israeli author David Grossman when he writes: "We have dozens of atomic bombs, tanks and planes. We confront people possessing none of these arms. And yet, in our minds, we remain victims. This inability to perceive ourselves in relation to others is our principal weakness."

A carefully scripted visit

Obama had good talks with Chinese leaders, but none with Chinese people.

David Shambaugh

BEIJING The joint statement released by President Obama and his Chinese hosts was impressive and detailed, outlining multiple areas of bilateral, regional and global cooperation.

But the advance struggles over Mr. Obama's schedule indicated continuing Chinese discomfort with letting a charismatic American president speak freely and interact publicly with ordinary Chinese.

At one level, the president experienced the typical Chinese welcome tactics of conversations in comfortable chairs with tea, visits to the Forbidden City and Great Wall, multicourse banquets in the Great Hall of the People, photo-ops with Chinese leaders and U.S. flags flying in Tiananmen Square.

But the two sides tussled for weeks in the run-up to the trip over every detail of Mr. Obama's itinerary. Public appearances by the president were notably missing from the schedule.

Some things were left (intentionally) unclear until the last minute, such as whether Mr. Obama's "town hall meeting" with "future leaders" in Shanghai would be broadcast live. The session, at which Mr. Obama discussed subjects such as human rights and freedom of the Internet, was thoroughly censored on Chinese television and the Internet.

In Beijing, the planned joint press conference became a "joint press meeting" at the last second, with no questions permitted from the press corps.

No public or spontaneous encounters with the Chinese public were scheduled for Mr. Obama — not even a speech at a university or think tank. Nor were there any meetings with resident Americans, who were excluded from

social functions.

Much of the president's schedule was consumed by lengthy tourist trips to the Forbidden City and Great Wall (six hours total), time that could have been spent visiting a Chinese military base or science laboratory, meeting with NGOs or the Chinese public, giving a public speech or similar activities.

While such activities were circumscribed, the two sides negotiated an impressive list of agreements and goals, which were listed in the joint statement under five broad categories: bilateral cooperation; building and deepening strategic trust; economic cooperation and global recovery; regional and global challenges; climate change, energy and environment.

In many of these, to be sure, the statement simply repackaged existing

points of agreement or areas of cooperation. This was the case in the areas of global economic recovery, trade, Taiwan, legal exchanges, product safety and human rights.

But there were also many new areas of agreement, including a host of clean energy initiatives and an accord to combat climate change; cooperation in law enforcement, intelligence and counterterrorism; science and technology sharing, including possible joint outer space exploration; significantly increasing youth and student exchanges (increasing American students in China fivefold); expanded civil aviation flights; joint research in public health; cooperation in high-speed rail; and a new agriculture accord.

The two sides also addressed the sensitive area of building strategic trust,

saying they "share a responsibility" to cooperate on regional and global security challenges. China specifically said it welcomes the United States's contribution to peace, stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region, evidently seeking to reassure those who fear that China is seeking to push the U.S. out of the region.

For his part, Mr. Obama assured the Chinese that the United States does not seek to contain China and welcomes China's emergence in the international community.

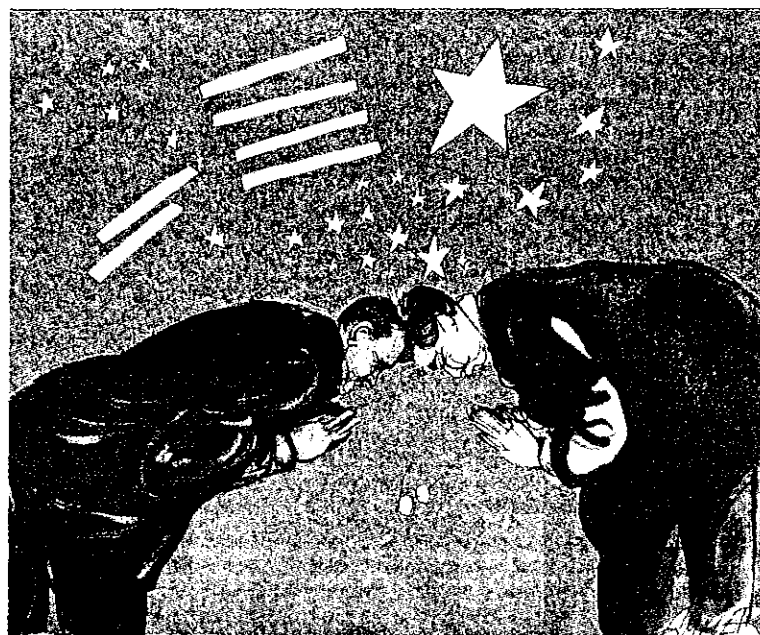
In the security arena, the two sides reaffirmed a 1998 agreement not to target each other with nuclear weapons, and agreed to an expanded agenda of high-level military exchanges. They also agreed to enhance cooperation on nonproliferation. Opposition to the North Korean and Iranian nuclear programs was reiterated.

China also has to be pleased by U.S. statements concerning Taiwan and Tibet, as President Obama expressed U.S. respect for China's "sovereignty and territorial integrity."

The president did, however, mention the Taiwan Relations Act in the Great Hall press meeting, thus obliquely confirming the intention to continue weapons sales to the island, while at the same time praising the recent progress in cross-strait ties.

On balance, despite the Chinese government's strict control of the president's public access, judging by the impressive list of intended cooperation, Mr. Obama's maiden voyage into the Middle Kingdom must be considered a marked step forward in Sino-American relations.

DAVID SHAMBAUGH is a visiting senior Fulbright scholar at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, on leave from George Washington University and the Brookings Institution.



WOLFGANG AMMER

America's conflicting destinies

**OBAMA
IN ASIA II**

The U.S. wants to be closer to Asia, but it is hobbled by its position in the Islamic world.

Kishore Mahbubani

SINGAPORE President Barack Obama's departure for his first trip to Asia as president was delayed by a day to allow him to attend the memorial service for victims of the Fort Hood massacre. The delay symbolized well

the tension between America's two destinies.

The United States would like to link more closely with the Asia-Pacific century that it has sparked. Yet it is constantly held back by its tragic involvement with the Islamic world.

The biggest strategic mistake America made in the 20th century was to interweave the destiny of 300 million Americans with the fate of 1.3 billion Muslims.

It did this in several ways. First, it created and stoked an army of jihadists to fight the Soviet Union in Afghanistan and then, after the Cold War ended, thoughtlessly walked away from its creation. Second, it backtracked from a sensitive and balanced policy on the Israel-Palestine dispute — which had paved the way for Camp David (1978), Madrid (1991) and the Oslo Accords (1993) — for an unbalanced, partisan position that angered and humiliated many Muslims.

Of course we can read the tragic and senseless killings at Fort Hood as the deranged act of one man. But it would be intellectually dishonest not to acknowledge that some of the anger he expressed reflects a larger anger in the Islamic world.

Indeed, many of the tragedies that America has experienced in recent decades reflect America's troubled entanglement with the Islamic world — Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. None of these troubles were predestined; they are the result of geopolitical hubris and incompetence.

By contrast, the biggest strategic gift that America has made to the world is to spark the rise of Asia by generously sharing its wisdom and best practices with millions of Asians. It is dangerous to oversimplify history, but some crude facts are undeniable. If the American

dream had not been discovered and created, and Europe had continued to dominate world history, Asian societies may not have awoken from centuries of slumber so quickly and smoothly. American generosity saved Asia.

Even now, each year about 90,000 young Indians and 80,000 young Chinese study in American universities. Is it any wonder that China and India are re-emerging as the world's largest economies? And is it any wonder that the best practices they are using for their dynamic new corporations are taken from lessons provided by American universities? This is one reason why when businessmen from both sides of the Pacific meet they speak a common language: American.

This is why it was truly regrettable that President Obama's trip to Fort Hood caused him to miss a whole day of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit. More than a thousand chief executives from across the region had come to hear him speak. He could have spurred them on to achieve greater heights in building stronger trans-Pacific links. Yet, once again, a tragedy linked to West Asia prevented closer American involvement with East Asia.

It is vital to emphasize that this is not the first time this has happened. Countless secretaries of state have cut short or canceled meetings with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations because of events related to the Middle East.

President George W. Bush should have been the first American president to attend a summit meeting with the Asean leaders in May 2007, but this meeting was canceled in favor of a 24-hour photo opportunity in Baghdad. Instead, the honor of being the first U.S. president to hold a summit meeting with Asean fell to Mr. Obama.

Asean can play an extremely important role in reducing American tensions between its two conflicting destinies. There are more Muslims in the Asean region than in all the Arab world. Because the three predominantly Muslim countries in Asean — Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia — have linked their destinies to the dynamic Pacific region, their future prospects are much brighter.

The country where President Obama is the most popular is the world's most populous Islamic country, Indonesia, where his status is akin to that of a rock star. It was regrettable that he could not find time to visit Indonesia during this trip. A mere 24 hour stopover in Jakarta would have demonstrated that deeper entanglement across the Pacific promises a happier destiny for America.

The time has come for American strategic thinkers to stop functioning on auto-pilot, retaining policy prescriptions and practices from the past. The president's schedule should reflect investment in the future.

President Obama did make some bold commitments to the region. In Tokyo, he promised that "the United States will also be engaging with the Trans-Pacific Partnership countries with the goal of shaping a regional agreement that will have broad-based membership and the high standards worthy of a 21st century trade agreement." And if the United States delivers on this commitment to build a stronger partnership, it will show that it is moving toward investing in the future and not being hobbled by its past.

KISHORE MAHBUBANI is dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore and the author of "The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power to the East."



ELLEN WEINSTEIN

OBAMA'S TASK

The president needs to explain the aim of the war in Afghanistan, its costs and his definition of success.

There is no doubt that the prospects for success in Afghanistan are so bleak right now because former President George W. Bush failed for seven long years to invest the necessary troops, resources or attention to the war. But it is now President Obama's war, and the American people are waiting for him to explain his goals and his strategy.

Mr. Obama was right to conduct a systematic review of his options. But the political reality is that the longer Mr. Obama waits, the more indecisive he seems and the more constrained his options appear. As the debate among his advisers has dragged on, many Americans are asking whether the conflict is necessary or already a lost cause. Democratic leaders are among the loudest questioners.

It has become a cliché in Washington that there are only bad choices in Afghanistan. But it seems clear that this is not the time for a precipitous withdrawal, nor can the United States cling to the status quo. To move forward, Mr. Obama needs to explain the stakes for the United States, the likely cost in lives and treasure and his definition of success.

America's allies also need to hear why their troops should continue to risk their lives. There is no chance in Afghanistan unless President Hamid Karzai separates himself from his corrupt associates and Pakistan's leaders step up their fight against the Taliban and other extremists.

Mr. Obama said on Wednesday that he would soon provide "a lot of clarity" on his Afghanistan strategy. These are some of the things the world needs to hear.

What are the stakes? We agreed with the president in August when he described Afghanistan as a war of necessity. He warned that if the insurgency were left unchecked it "will mean an even larger safe haven from which Al Qaeda would plot to kill more Americans. So this is not only a war worth fighting. This is fundamental to the defense of our people."

Since then, some of his top advisers have raised doubts about the urgency of the war. Vice President Joseph Biden has argued that attacking extremists could be better accomplished with Predator strikes and special operations raids. Other officials argue that the Taliban might be open to a deal that barred Al Qaeda from its territory.

Mr. Obama needs to say whether he still considers fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan to be central to U.S. security. Does he still believe a Taliban victory would mean a "larger safe haven" for Al Qaeda? And how does he see the relationship between the Afghan war and efforts to hold off extremists in a nuclear-armed Pakistan? If the Taliban were to win in Afghanistan, would they be less or more likely to threaten Pakistan?

In March, Mr. Obama warned that, for Afghans, a "return to Taliban rule would condemn their country to brutal governance, international isolation, a paralyzed economy and the denial of basic human rights." We need to hear whether he still believes Americans have a duty to stop that.

What is the aim of the war? In March, President Obama said his goal was to "disrupt, dismantle and defeat Al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future." He also argued that bullets and bombs would not be enough to drive the Taliban back. In Afghanistan, U.S. forces and a surge of civilian advisers must "advance security, opportunity and justice" for the Afghan people.

If Mr. Obama no longer believes that a counterinsurgency is necessary or feasible, or if he wants to set less-ambitious goals, then the American people need to hear why he changed his mind and how he intends to move forward.

Mr. Obama will also have to address his vice president's proposal. We are skeptical that a war against Al Qaeda can be fought from a distance.

Are there credible partners? There is almost no chance of holding off the Taliban (or plotting an eventual American withdrawal) without a minimally credible Afghan government and security forces. Mr. Obama must make clear to both Mr. Karzai and the American people the sweeping changes required to build a credible Afghan government.

What will it cost? The human cost will continue to rise if the number of forces rises. Mr. Obama should also acknowledge the cost in military readiness and the stress of repeated deployments on troops and their families. On the financial side, the Pentagon has already spent more than \$150 billion on the war. While estimates are difficult, analysts say that for every 10,000 additional troops deployed, the annual cost will rise by at least another \$10 billion. Americans need to hear how those costs will be met.

Is there a way out? Finally, Mr. Obama promised to outline an "endgame." Given Afghanistan's desperate state, we are skeptical that he can lay out a firm timetable for withdrawal. But there are certainly benchmarks that he can offer. There must be a way to measure progress or failure. Americans need to know the war will not go on forever.

A fuller version of this editorial can be found at www.nytimes.com/opinion.

OBAMA'S CHINA TRIP

Obama promised more cooperative leadership in world affairs, but he must also be willing to stand up to Beijing.

President Obama has faced a fair amount of criticism for his China trip. He was too deferential; he didn't speak out enough on human rights; he failed to press Beijing firmly on revaluing its currency; he achieved no concrete results. The trip wasn't all that we had hoped it would be, but some of the complaints are premature.

The trip was a template for rising American anxieties about the rising Asian power. President Obama went into his meetings with President Hu Jintao with a weaker hand than most recent American leaders — and it showed. He is still trying to restore the country's moral authority and a battered economy dependent on Chinese lending. Yet the United States needs China's cooperation on important and difficult problems, including stabilizing the global financial system, curbing global warming, persuading North Korea to give up its nuclear program and preventing Iran from building any nuclear weapons.

On the positive side, the two leaders hinted in a joint statement that there may have been enough agreement on climate change to give momentum to the Copenhagen negotiations. An American government source said there also may have been some unannounced progress on North Korea.

But publicly, Mr. Obama pulled his punches on China's exchange rate, saying only that Beijing had promised previously to move toward a more market-oriented rate over time. Despite its indebtedness, the United States has the world's largest economy; Mr. Obama should have nudged Beijing to move faster. We hope he did so privately.

We were especially disappointed that China made no discernible move to join with the United States and other major powers in threatening tougher sanctions if Iran fails to make progress on curbing its nuclear weapons program. President Obama should have made clear in his private talks that the United States and Europe will act anyway if Beijing and Moscow block United Nations Security Council action.

It was also dispiriting that Mr. Obama agreed to allow China to limit his public appearances so markedly. Questions were not permitted at the so-called press conference with Mr. Hu, and his town hall meeting with future Chinese leaders in Shanghai not only had a Potemkin air, it was not even broadcast live in China.

President Obama was elected in part because he promised a more cooperative and pragmatic leadership in world affairs. We support that. The measure of the success of his approach won't be known for months, and we hope it bears fruit. But the American president must always be willing to stand up to Beijing in defense of core American interests and values.

In Philippine south, a waiting game for peace

DATU PIANG, PHILIPPINES

300,000 refugees of separatist conflict yearn for resolution

BY NORIMITSU ONISHI

For most refugees here, the long-running conflict between the Philippine government and Muslim separatists in the southern Philippines has become such a part of their lives's rhythms that they've lost track of how often fighting has displaced them.

What is certain is that this evacuation's duration — well over a year — has been the longest by far.

"In the past, we were evacuated for a few days, or 15 days, or two months at most," said Danny Abas, 30, a rice farmer who has been staying since August 2008 at a refugee camp established on the grounds of this town's main elementary school.

Along with his parents and four children — his wife was working temporarily as a maid in Oman — Mr. Abas lives under the school library building, in a crawl space covered with plastic sheets and crammed with cooking utensils. "We want to go back," he said, sitting in

a hammock hanging from underneath the building's floor. "We want to work."

Although peace talks are under way, it is unclear when the 300,000 refugees like Mr. Abas will be able to go home. Most fled their villages in August 2008 after the breakdown of a peace agreement between the government and the secessionist group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, led to widespread fighting in Mindanao, the southern island that is home to most Philippine Muslims.

Both sides are respecting a cease-fire that has been in place since July. But no progress has been made on the intractable problems that doomed the last agreement and are at the root of the cur-

rent four-decade-old rebellion.

American troops have been carrying out military missions and development projects here since 2002. Having already provided \$1.6 billion in military and economic aid to the Philippines since 2002, much of it geared to Mindanao, the United States recently renewed the deployment of an elite 600-troop counterinsurgency force that operates in Mindanao alongside Philippine armed forces.

The conflict between the government and the Moro front has further complicated the activities of the American force, whose mission is to root out Abu

PHILIPPINES, PAGE 4

In Philippine south, waiting for peace

PHILIPPINES, FROM PAGE 1

Sayyaf, an Islamist group with historic ties to Al Qaeda. Though the Moro front and Abu Sayyaf are two different organizations, they often share areas of operations and, sometimes, fighters.

Despite improvements in security, swaths of Mindanao remain tense under the threat of random violence. In Cotabato, the closest city to this town, a series of explosions, some planted outside two Roman Catholic churches, killed a dozen bystanders in July. Kidnapping for ransom remains a lucrative enough business that a large banner in the center of the city read: "Stop Kidnapping."

After the collapse of the peace agreement last year, factions led by three rebel leaders broke an existing cease-fire by carrying out attacks on predominantly Christian towns in Mindanao. Government forces pursued the three leaders here in areas believed to be harboring them. At its peak, the fighting forced some 750,000 Muslims and Christians to flee from their homes.

The number of refugees later stabilized at 300,000 — with about 60 percent

staying in camps and 40 percent with relatives in towns, according to the United Nations' World Food Program, which has been distributing food to camps in Mindanao.

The fighting was not as widespread or intense as in previous phases of the conflict. But concentrated in the areas held by the three leaders, it made it impossible for refugees to go home and complicated relief efforts.

"There was a lot of movement among people trying to go back home and finding out it wasn't secure enough, then fleeing again maybe to a different place," said Stephen Anderson, the World Food Program's director in the Philippines. "We found a very, very high degree of mobility which created extra challenges in terms of planning and providing support."

In what is sometimes described as the world's oldest separatist movement, Muslims here, called Moro, have been fighting for autonomy since Spain colonized the Philippines five centuries ago and brought Roman Catholicism with them. They later fought against the United States, which replaced Spain as the colonial power, and the Philippine

government, which urged Christians to settle in Mindanao after World War II.

"We don't believe we are Filipinos — that's the essential problem," said Kim Bagundang 33, the leader of the Liguasan Youth Association, a private organization that helps refugees and is named after the vast, fertile marsh that surrounds this town. "The struggle of the Moro people has been going on for 500 years now. So this problem can't be solved in our time."

Last year, the government addressed the separatists' key issue by recognizing the "ancestral domain" of Muslim areas in Mindanao, a status that would have given more power to already semi-autonomous regions. But after protests by Catholics here, the Supreme Court declared the agreement unconstitutional.

The Moro front has insisted that "ancestral domain" be included in any agreement, making constitutional reform a prerequisite to a final agreement.

In an interview in Cotabato, Eid Kabalu, a spokesman for the front, said the recognition of "ancestral domain" is the only way to protect Mindanao Muslims who are now outnumbered be-

cause of past Christian settlement.

"We have become a minority already in our own homeland," he said.

Mr. Kabalu added that the areas around Datu Piang were now safe for the refugees to return home — an assessment that was not shared by those inside the camps.

At the elementary school here, Pampai Karon, 45, said none of the 300 families from her village — located just a few kilometers outside town — had felt safe to return.

"We want assurances from both sides that it's safe to go back," said Ms. Karon, whom the camp had selected as its spokeswoman.

A woman living with her family under the school principal's office, Baichan Butuan, 40, said she hoped both sides would resume negotiations soon. The family had dug a narrow channel in the ground to prevent rainwater from reaching their sleeping area. But the stench from the stagnant water overpowered the cooking fumes drifting in from a nearby open fire.

"We're fed up with our situation here," she said.

Obama loses a round

CHINA I

In the propaganda skirmish, Beijing outmaneuvered the U.S. president at nearly every turn.

Ying Chan

HONG KONG While the jury is still out on what President Obama's China visit has achieved for the long term, the president has most decidedly lost the war of symbolism in his first close encounter with China.

In status-conscious China, symbolism and protocol play a role that is larger than life. U.S. diplomatic blunders could reinforce Beijing's mindset that blatant information control works, and that a rising China can trump universal values of open, accountable government.

During Mr. Obama's visit, the Chinese outmaneuvered the Americans in all public events, from the disastrous town hall meeting in Shanghai to the stunted press conference in Beijing. In characteristic manner, the Chinese tried to shut out the public, while the U.S. unwittingly cooperated.

The final image of President Obama in China that circulated around the world is telling: A lone man walking up the steep slope of the Great Wall. The picture is in stark contrast to those of other U.S. presidents who had their photographs taken at the Great Wall surrounded by flag-waving children or admiring citizens. Maybe Mr. Obama wanted a quiet moment for himself before returning home. But a president's first visit to the wall is a ritual that needs to be prop-

erly framed. Mr. Obama could have waited until the next visit, when he could bring the first lady and the children. Instead, he went ahead by himself to pay tribute to China's ancient culture. In return, the Chinese offered nothing, no popular receptions, not even the companionship of a senior Chinese leader.

The trouble for the U.S. started at the town hall meeting two days earlier — a more scripted event than those organized with students for earlier U.S. presidents. There was no real dialogue, as a programmed audience, most of them Communist League Youth members, asked coached questions.



GRAFF IN DAGBLADET (NORWAY). CWS

The Chinese also rejected the U.S. request for live national coverage and defaulted on a promise to live-stream the meeting at Xinhua.net, the online version of China's state-owned news agency. Mr. Obama scored a point when he managed to address the issue of Internet freedom after the U.S. ambassador, Jon Huntsman, fielded him the question from a Chinese netizen submitted online.

Meanwhile, Chinese officials garnered from the meeting generous quotes from Mr. Obama affirming China's achievements and America's expressions of good will, which were turned into glowing headlines for the Chinese media. In this round of the propaganda skirmish, the U.S. scored one point while China reaped a handful.

Mr. Obama was similarly shut out from addressing the public in Beijing. At the Beijing press conference, President Hu Jintao and President Obama read prepared statements and would not take questions from reporters. "This was an historic meeting between the two leaders, and journalists should have had the opportunity to ask questions, to probe beyond the statements," protested Scott McDonald, the president of China's Foreign Correspondents Club, but to no avail.

In a final dash to break through the information blockade, the Obama team offered an exclusive interview to Southern Weekend, China's most feisty newspaper, based in Guangzhou. Once again,

journalists' questions were programmed and the paper censored. In protest, the paper prominently displayed vast white spaces on the first and second page of the edition that carried the interview. Propaganda officials are investigating this act of defiance.

Only the Obama team knows for sure how they allowed themselves to be outmaneuvered. Unwittingly, the U.S. helped to produce a package of faux public events.

Pundits argued that the visitors were not supposed to impose the "American way" on China and that America needs to respect Chinese practices. The argument is both patronizing and condescending. Increasingly, the Chinese public has been clamoring for greater official transparency and accountability, while the Chinese government has been making progress on these fronts. No one in his right mind would ask Mr. Obama to lecture Beijing on human rights. But the Chinese public deserves better accounting, no less than Americans citizens.

To their credit, U.S. officials did try to get their message out online. But it was the Chinese bloggers who were most active in challenging official information control. They at least fought the good fight with growing confidence, a fight the Americans seem unable to wage effectively.

YING CHAN is director of the Journalism and Media Studies Center at The University of Hong Kong.

More dead found in Philippine massacre

MANILA

Emergency rule declared
as toll in pre-election
killing spree rises to 46

BY CARLOS H. CONDE

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo of the Philippines put two provinces in the troubled south under emergency rule Tuesday following the abduction and slaughter of dozens of people at the start of the country's perennially violent election season.

On Tuesday, the authorities said they had discovered 22 more bodies, bringing the confirmed deaths so far to 46, out of the nearly 50 people who were abducted by armed men on Monday.

The declaration of a state of emergency in the contiguous provinces of Maguindanao and Sultan Kudarat and the city of Cotabato is intended to stop the possible escalation of violence in a region notorious for its long-running

political and clan feuds, officials said. Mrs. Arroyo's order gives the military and the police wider discretion in arresting and detaining individuals as well as putting up checkpoints and conducting searches.

"There is an urgent need to prevent and suppress the occurrence of several other incidents of lawless violence," said Cerge Remonde, Mrs. Arroyo's press secretary. On Tuesday, the military sent in two more battalions to the three areas as well as more equipment, including helicopters.

Leila de Lima, chairwoman of the Commission on Human Rights, warned on Tuesday of "an outbreak of even more violence and savagery" if no "swift intervention" is done.

During the emergency rule, the military and the police will disarm residents who carry unlicensed firearms, according to Jesus Dureza, Mrs. Arroyo's adviser on Mindanao who proposed the rule. Unlicensed firearms are a huge problem in Mindanao and elsewhere in the Philippines during elections because they are being used by criminal

syndicates and the private armies of political warlords. These firearms usually increase in number during election season, according to the police.

The massacre, Mr. Dureza said in Mindanao on Tuesday, "has put this issue up front. The government has to do what is necessary," he said, referring to the firearms.

The move puts the Arroyo administration in a possible collision course with a political family in Maguindanao, the Ampatuans, who are considered the closest political allies of the president in that part of the southern Philippines.

Esmael Mangudadatu, the vice mayor of Buluan town in Maguindanao whose family is a bitter political enemy of the Ampatuans, said on national television that there were survivors who, according to Mr. Mangudadatu, pointed to supporters of the current Maguindanao governor, Andal Ampatuan, as the perpetrators.

"No effort will be spared" to bring the perpetrators to justice, Mrs. Arroyo said in a cabinet meeting on Tuesday.

Mr. Mangudadatu said that about 100

armed men had abducted the group — his wife, Genalyn, other female relatives, lawyers, supporters and at least a dozen journalists — who were on their way to the local election office Monday to file candidacy papers on Mr. Mangudadatu's behalf. He said Monday that he sent the relatives to do the chore thinking they would come to no harm.

The Ampatuans, who have not made any public statement since the incident, and the Mangudadatus are just two of the hundreds of political dynasties all over the Philippines who struggle for control of their provinces during elections. Mr. Mangudadatu alleged that he was being attacked by the Ampatuans because he decided to challenge the governorship of Maguindanao from Andal Ampatuan, the patriarch of the clan that has dominated politics in the province for decades.

The massacre has been denounced all over the world, especially because of the number of journalists killed. "Never in the history of journalism have the news media suffered such a heavy loss of life in one day," Reporters Without Borders said Monday.

Details emerge in Philippines

SALMAN, PHILIPPINES

Death toll rises to 57
in attack police describe
as very well planned

BY CARLOS H. CONDE

The death toll in the Philippine election massacre rose to 57 on Wednesday, the authorities said, as more bodies were found on a grassy hilltop in this village outside the town of Ampatuan.

The remains were found not far from mass graves where 46 bodies had been recovered as of Tuesday. The killings Monday, of a group that included relatives of a gubernatorial candidate and 18 journalists, are now considered the worst election-related violence in the country's history.

Using a backhoe, the authorities on Wednesday unearthed two vehicles they said had been crushed and torn apart by a bulldozer found on the site, which the police said belonged to the government of Maguindanao Province here, on the southern island of Mindanao. Relatives of some of the victims have accused backers of the province's governor, Andal Ampatuan Sr., of being behind the slaughter.

One of the crumpled vehicles belonged to UNTV, a Philippine television network whose crew members were among the journalists killed. Pages of blood-smeared newspapers floated through the wind near the recovery site Wednesday, some sticking to the grass. Victims' belongings were scattered on the ground — sandals, a purse, a wristwatch, a shawl, a coin purse, press cards.

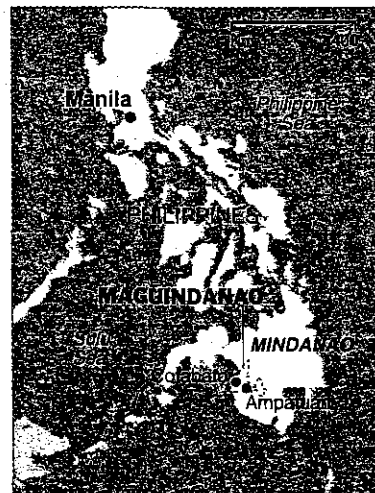
"They planned this very well," said a police superintendent, Felicisimo Khu, who was overseeing the retrieval operations Wednesday. He said that the victims had been shot at point-blank range; that the men had been separated from the women; that the vehicles had been buried on one side of the hill, the victims on the other. According to Mr. Khu, the victims were stopped along the highway in Ampatuan town and driven toward the hilltop through a rough dirt road.

The victims included the wife and other female relatives of Esmael Mangudadatu, vice mayor of Buluan, a town in Maguindanao. Mr. Mangudadatu's family is a rival to the Ampatuan family, which has dominated politics in



ROLEX DELA PENA/EUROPEAN PRESSPHOTO AGENCY

Philippine police officers watching as more bodies were found Wednesday near Ampatuan.



Maguindanao for decades. Accompanied by the journalists, the Mangudadatu backers had been on their way to file candidacy papers for him in the gubernatorial election.

Mr. Mangudadatu has said on national television that survivors of the killings had implicated supporters of Governor Ampatuan. As of Wednesday the governor had made no public statement about the killings.

Zaldy Ampatuan, a son of the gov-

ernor, was quoted Tuesday by The Philippine Star as saying, "We need to give the Philippine national police ample time to finish its investigation on this incident. Meantime, we need to avoid speculations. We have to listen to reason, not to emotions."

There are hundreds of political dynasties throughout the Philippines, and with the clans' power and income riding on elections, political violence is common.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo on Tuesday declared a state of emergency in Maguindanao, which is about 900 kilometers, or 560 miles, south of Manila, in the contiguous province of Sultan Kudarat, and in the city of Cotabato. The measure gives the police and army the authority to apprehend and detain those suspected in the slaughter.

The Ampatuans are the closest political allies of Mrs. Arroyo in Mindanao, and she has already been criticized over the investigation.

"It appears that the government is handling the Ampatuans of Maguindanao with kid gloves," said Teodoro Casiño, a congressman and critic of the president. "Lesser mortals would have been arrested and disarmed by now, especially under a state of emergency."

Balance of terror

TERROR II

In the southern Philippines, clan rivalries are the real source of terror.

Orlando de Guzman

The savagery in which at least 57 people were massacred this week in the southern Philippines, is beyond imagination. The victims were in a convoy on their way to deliver election candidacy papers for a rival of the Ampatuan clan in Maguindanao Province when they were shot, mutilated and hastily buried.

But while the scale of the killings was shocking, the fact of clan vendettas, alas, was not, as I witnessed last year when I arrived on Tulayan Island with a dozen heavily armed policemen.

Tulayan is just 1.5 square kilometers in area, covered in coconut trees and surrounded by the turquoise waters of the Sulu Sea. The police were charged with disarming two warring clans: the Buclao family, who'd taken the island's rocky high ground, and the Kharfaisas, who were bunkered around the island's only boat landing. Between the two clan encampments lay a no-man's land where bloodlines determined whether

you were friend or foe.

The Buclaos were digging trenches and foxholes while their snipers with high caliber rifles peered through their scopes at Kharfaisas and their allies down below. Further down the hill, Buclao men brandished .50 caliber machine guns and grenade launchers.

Kharfaisa's men were equally armed, and had sandbagged their homes. Given the island's size, the two families were near enough that one could hear them yelling obscenities at each other. At night, they lobbed grenades.

The two families were fighting over who would be village head on Tulayan Island. Elections there had to be postponed twice because of the potential for violence, and when they were held, fraud allegations came from either side. When I arrived, three people had already been killed, the island's only school was closed and no one dared go fishing.

It was clear that the policemen who took me there were outgunned and outnumbered. Extended family from both clans had come from other islands to give reinforcement. The small family war had spread to two of Sulu's most

powerful men, Provincial Governor Abdusakur Tan and Congressman Munir Arbison, bitter political rivals who were happy to loan ammunition and firearms to their friend's enemies. Politicians had to rely on guns, Governor Tan told me, "to keep the balance of terror."

The southern Philippines is better known internationally as the home of the Abu Sayyaf terrorist group. American military advisers have been helping Filipino troops route Abu Sayyaf. But the strategy overlooks a more immediate danger many ordinary people in Mindanao face: violence and insecurity from power-hungry clan warlords who occupy positions in village, municipal and provincial governments.

At every level, patronage is secured through pork barrel, political favors, and — in the southern Philippines especially — firearms. "The more guns you have, the more respect you get," was how a local official in Sulu Province put it. This state of lawlessness has been conveniently ignored, if not encouraged, by the national government.

Clan affiliation determines who gets

what political office and who gets what government proceeds. This system is what passes for governance in many rural areas in the Philippines. The lack of any true rule of law has led to a mini arms race between rival clan leaders, each one protected by armed militias known politely as "Civilian Volunteer Organizations," or CVOs.

President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo signed a law in July 2006 allowing CVOs to legally carry firearms. She also leaned heavily on the clan leader Andal Ampatuan of Maguindanao Province to secure her votes in the last presidential elections, amid allegations of fraud.

The Ampatuans, who enjoy the government's and the military's backing because of their anti-separatist stance, are known to have several hundred armed militiamen under their control.

In an age when global jihad ideology is seen as a major threat to stability, it might help to understand first how local clan loyalties can override everything else, including the rule of law.

ORLANDO DE GUZMAN is a Filipino journalist and documentary filmmaker.

Remember Mumbai

TERROR I

The first anniversary of the Mumbai attacks is a reminder that terrorism remains a real threat.

John Reid

The first anniversary this week of the Mumbai atrocities serves as a timely reminder of the real and present threat from terrorism and its global nature.

Over the three days of attacks from Nov. 26 to 29 last year, it is estimated that more than 170 civilians and security personnel were murdered, including some 28 foreign nationals from 10 countries.

Mumbai thus joined the Bali attacks in 2002, the Istanbul bombings in 2003, the Beslan and Madrid attacks in 2004 and the London bombings in 2005 in the growing list of major terrorist atrocities since 9/11, 2001.

Twelve months after Mumbai, it is clear that the terrorist threat will remain extremely serious globally for years to come. This is not, as some critics of Britain's foreign and defense policies assert, primarily because of the "excesses" of Western policy since 9/11, especially in Iraq. This critique is a major misjudgment.

Indeed, according to the U.S. government's Counterterrorism Center, approximately three quarters of the almost 11,800 terrorist incidents that took place across the world in 2008 (the latest full year for which data is available) took place outside the Iraqi theater.

Attacks in Africa, for instance, partic-

ularly in Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, rose markedly last year, accounting for some 2,200 fatalities. These are countries and areas where little or no connection to Iraq can be rationally claimed.

Similarly, in terms of chronology, the terrorism threat was serious well before 9/11 and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq — one only has to recall the attempted 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center in New York by Islamic militants.

The plan to knock the North Tower onto the South Tower, bringing both down, was masterminded by Ramzi Yousef, whose uncle, Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, was, according to the 9/11 Commission, "the principal architect" of the 2001 attacks in New York and Washington. The first attempted attack in Britain also preceded both Afghanistan and Iraq.

The terrorism threat should therefore be viewed as a symptom of the broader world that came into being in 1990 with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Several features of the system mark it out from the Cold War era, when international terrorism was much less of a threat.

First, the current system is far less stable because strategic relationships between major nuclear powers are no longer necessarily the primary determinants of international order. Unlike the U.S.-Soviet bipolarity, there is now no

core relationship between potential enemies (such as Al Qaeda and the United States) founded upon strategic equivalence, which promotes this stability.

Second, the post-Cold War system is much more difficult to regulate. To be sure, the state system continues to be managed to a greater or lesser degree through processes of international law, treaties, agreements, trade and diplomacy. However, non-state actors such as jihadi terrorists, who pose a potent threat to the system's balance, are very hard to regulate, manage or institutionalize. Unlike what happened in Ireland, for example, negotiations do not (and probably cannot) take place with groups such as Al Qaeda.

Third, the relative certainty that existed about foreign and national security policies during the Cold War, which stemmed from assumptions of rationality underpinning the risks and rewards of those policies, has been disrupted by jihadist terrorism.

Moreover, probably for the first time in history, both of the orthodox elements of threat — intention and capability — are now almost completely unconstrained. Jihadist terrorists embrace a willingness to kill millions, and, as a result of scientific and technological globalization, they now have the potential capacity to do so.

This assessment underpins my belief that global terrorism will continue to be a major menace for years to come. It also

is central to my conviction that nations must respond by seeking to embed resilience within and across their societies. To do this, we will need to deliver solutions that allow us to keep up with — and even be one step ahead of — our adversaries and their methods.

The Mumbai terrorists, for instance, are reported to have used Global Positioning Systems, Blackberries and Google Earth during various phases of their operation. The fact that this does not seem remarkable underlines how rapid technological change has become.

Ironically, while today's threats are "new," what we are looking for is a recall of the innovative drive of the past. Just as people like the computing pioneers Alan Turing and Tommy Flowers, and institutions such as Bletchley Park, spurred on by the imperative of national survival, were vital in Britain's technological battles to defeat its enemies in World War II, so must we now pool our skills and expertise in our battles against contemporary threats.

A common threat demands a common response. The goal must be nothing less than ensuring that government, business, academia and wider society can not only cope with, but flourish in the times in which we live.

JOHN REID, a former British secretary of defense and home secretary, is chairman of the Institute for Security and Resilience Studies at University College, London.

IRAN CRACKS DOWN

The Iranian regime is showing its true colors. The time has come to push for much tougher sanctions.

Iran's fraudulently elected president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, will clearly stop at nothing to stifle legitimate dissent and hold on to his illegitimate power. The most recent horror is the sharp rise in executions since the June presidential elections.

As The New York Times has reported, many of those capital sentences have been carried out on people charged with criminal, rather than political offenses. But human rights groups and Iranian political experts believe that the rising numbers are meant to frighten anyone who might criticize or openly oppose the government.

Mr. Ahmadinejad's main patron, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and their bully boys in the Basij militias and the paramilitary Revolutionary Guards have also opened an ideological re-education campaign designed to reimpose the austere religious fundamentalism of the Islamic Republic's early years. The government is establishing 6,000 Basij militia centers in elementary schools. A company with ties to the Revolutionary Guards has taken control of the national telecommunications monopoly, giving these ideological enforcers even more power to monitor and restrict land-line telephone service, cellphones and Internet services. As if that were not enough, a new government agency has been set up to monitor the Internet.

Washington has condemned this assault on all traces of reform-minded opposition and free expression. It has sensibly done so in measured tones, not wanting to give Mr. Ahmadinejad another excuse to claim that his opponents are agents of the West, and specifically the United States. Predictably, he has done so anyway.

We believe that the Obama administration was right to reach out to Iran in an effort to curb its nuclear ambitions. But we also believe that there have to be limits to that forthcomingness, and time is running out. After initially agreeing to send much of its current stockpile of low-enriched uranium abroad for conversion into nuclear reactor fuel, Tehran is now backing away. As long as the centrifuges are spinning, Iran can be expected to drag this on. Mr. Obama has set a deadline of the end of this year for diplomatic progress on the nuclear issue. He should keep to that.

If Iran continues to repudiate the exchange deal — which reduces Iran's available supply of potential bomb fuel and buys time for further diplomacy — the United States must line up other members of the United Nations Security Council, including Russia and China, for much tougher sanctions.

There is no military solution here. But Iran's repressive leaders cannot be allowed to threaten the rest of the world with a nuclear weapon.

Iranians in exile



Roger Cohen

GLOBALIST

TORONTO There is a Persian saying that goes, "Your coming is in your hands, but your leaving is in the hands of God."

Shortly before I left Iran on June 24, there was a late-night knock at the door of my hotel room. Alright, I thought, this is it.

By then I was one of the few Western journalists left in Tehran after a savage post-election clampdown and I had been working for more than a week despite the revocation of my press pass.

As I moved, heart thumping, toward the door, I imagined being dragged blindfolded into the hell of Evin prison, built by the shah for the brutalizing of his political prisoners, used for the same purpose by the Islamic Republic.

"Laundry, sir. We forgot these."

A hotel employee was holding a couple of shirts. I thanked him, tossed them on a sofa, and breathed out: Fear the worst but never bow to it.

I looked down at the lights of Tehran, cradled in its mountainous amphitheater. In 1936, the shah's father had banned the veil in a furious Atatürk-like push for Westernization. In 1979, the Islamic Republic had re-imposed the hijab on all women. Now, in 2009, a reformist movement trying to chart a middle course — a non-theocratic but also non-secular path — had been bloodied before my eyes. Iran's tragedy overwhelmed me.

A few days later, I did leave and

found my parting in the hands not of God but of the Revolutionary Guards at Imam Khomeini International Airport. The stubble-faced ghouls duly toyed with me, leaving me humiliated, before letting me go.

The last people I saw were Nazila Fathi, long the wonderful New York Times local correspondent in Tehran, her husband Babak Pasha, and their children, Shayan, 5, and Tina, 3. Through 12 tumultuous post-electoral days Nazila was at my side as we were chased and tear-gassed. She never lost her composure.

By then her apartment — seen in paranoid regime eyes as a center for fomenting "velvet revolutions" and "soft overthrows" — was under constant surveillance. Evin, or worse, beckoned.

On July 1, a week after me, Nazila and her family left with a suitcase for a long-planned vacation in Canada. Five months later, they have been unable to return. They have followed millions of Iranians — an immense pool of lost talent — into exile. Dual Canadian and Iranian citizens, they have settled for now in Toronto.

That is why I came here. My debt to Nazila is immense.

She calls me — that bright, sing-song voice — and tells me there's been a murder at the entrance to her Toronto apartment building. I start laughing. But it's true. Canada has put on a little Iran show for us.

On Nazila's table are Iranian pistachios — a taste of the forbidden. She turns on the TV and there, on "60 Minutes," is another Canadian-Iranian journalist, Maziar Bahari, who was seized in June and held in Evin prison for 118 days. We see images, filmed by Bahari, of the Basiji shooting into the crowd on June 15 and a slain man falling. Nazila and I were 100 yards from the scene.

I shudder. Bahari, a Newsweek correspondent, tells his story (as he does also in the current Newsweek) with a fine lucidity: the slapping, the lashing and

death threats, the accusations that he was a velvet revolution "mastermind."

When Bahari watches himself making a forced "confession" — that the media did give "moral support for the people who took part in those illegal gatherings" — his remorse is almost too much to bear. When you're "broken under pressure," he remarks, it's hard to "gather your pieces."

Nazila and I give each other a there-but-for-the-grace-of-God look. There are hundreds like Bahari. Iran since June 12 has veered into a paranoid bunker. President Barack Obama has been too weak on human rights abuses in Iran.

To say "the world continues to bear witness" to the "powerful calls for justice" of Iranians, as he did on Nov. 3, is not good enough. He needs to express the outrage of the United States of America.

Sure, Iran sees Evin as the mirror image of Guantánamo. But undoing that U.S. aberration was central to Obama's message. Speaking out against the abuse of Iranian political prisoners must be equally so. Obama should continue to seek engagement — it's the only way forward — while denouncing the outrages.

His bedside reading should be Haleh Esfandiari's brilliant, shattering book "My Prison, My Home," in which the Wilson Center scholar recounts her own 2007 Evin nightmare.

Hillary Clinton did mention Bahari. That, the Newsweek man says, is the "best thing that can happen to any prisoner, that you know someone cares about you." Obama has not made it clear enough, name by name, that he cares.

"Fathi" — the name of his beloved, lost, longed-for grandfather — is the word little Shayan has scrawled on his bedroom walls.

Iran is betraying its aching children. There is a middle path, Shiite and democratic, of which Nazila and Babak and countless others could be part. Their country has been hijacked. The waste is immeasurable — and unnecessary.

America vs. The Narrative



Thomas L. Friedman

What should we make of Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan, who apparently killed 13 innocent people at Fort Hood?

Here's my take: Major Hasan may have been mentally unbalanced — I assume anyone who shoots up innocent people is. But the more you read about his support for Muslim suicide bombers, about how he showed up at a public-health seminar with a Power-Point presentation titled "Why the War on Terror Is a War on Islam," and about his contacts with Anwar al-Awlaki, a Yemeni cleric famous for using the Web to support jihadist violence against America — the more it seems that Major Hasan was just another angry jihadist spurred to action by "The Narrative."

What is scary is that even though he was born, raised and educated in America, The Narrative still got to him.

The Narrative is the cocktail of half-truths, propaganda and outright lies about America that have taken hold in the Arab-Muslim world since 9/11. Propagated by jihadist Web sites, mosque preachers, Arab intellectuals, satellite news stations and books — and tacitly endorsed by some Arab regimes — this narrative posits that America has declared war on Islam, as part of a grand "American-Crusader-Zionist conspiracy" to keep Muslims down.

Yes, after two decades in which U.S. foreign policy has been largely dedicated to rescuing Muslims or trying to help free them from tyranny — in Bosnia, Darfur, Kuwait, Somalia, Lebanon, Kurdistan, post-earthquake Pakistan,

post-tsunami Indonesia, Iraq and Afghanistan — a narrative that says America is dedicated to keeping Muslims down is thriving.

Although most of the Muslims being killed today are being killed by jihadist suicide bombers in Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan and Indonesia, you'd never know it from listening to their world. The dominant narrative there is that 9/11 was a kind of fraud: America's unprovoked onslaught on Islam is the real story, and the Muslims are the real victims — of U.S. perfidy.

Have no doubt: We punched a fist into the Arab/Muslim world after 9/11, partly to send a message of deterrence, but primarily to destroy two tyrannical regimes — the Taliban and the Baathists — and to work with Afghans and Iraqis to build a different kind of politics. In the process, we did some stupid and bad things. But for every Abu Ghraib, our soldiers and diplomats perpetrated a million acts of kindness aimed at giving Arabs and Muslims a better chance to succeed with modernity and to elect their own leaders.

The Narrative was concocted by jihadists to obscure that.

It's working. As a Jordanian-born counterterrorism expert, who asked to remain anonymous, said to me: "This narrative is now omnipresent in Arab and Muslim communities in the region and in migrant communities around the world. These communities are bombarded with this narrative in huge doses and on a daily basis. [It says] the West, and right now mostly the U.S. and Israel, is single-handedly and completely responsible for all the grievances of the Arab and the Muslim worlds. Ironically, the vast majority of the media outlets targeting these communities are Arab-government owned — mostly from the Gulf."

This narrative suits Arab governments. It allows them to deflect onto America all of their people's grievances over why their countries are falling behind. And it suits Al Qaeda, which

doesn't need much organization anymore — just push out The Narrative over the Web and satellite TV, let it heat up humiliated, frustrated or socially alienated Muslim males, and one or two

Why a cocktail of half-truths and outright lies about America have taken hold in the Arab-Muslim world since 9/11.

will open fire on their own. See: Major Hasan.

"Liberal Arabs like me are as angry as a terrorist and as determined to change the status quo," said my Jordanian friend. The only difference "is that while we choose education, knowledge and success to bring about change, a terrorist, having bought

into the narrative, has a sense of powerlessness and helplessness, which are inculcated in us from childhood, that lead him to believe that there is only one way, and that is violence."

What to do? Many Arab Muslims know that what ails their societies is more than the West, and that The Narrative is just an escape from looking honestly at themselves. But none of their leaders dare or care to open that discussion. In his Cairo speech last June, President Obama effectively built a connection with the Muslim mainstream. Maybe he could spark the debate by asking that same audience this question:

"Whenever something like Fort Hood happens you say, 'This is not Islam.' I believe that. But you keep telling us what Islam isn't. You need to tell us what it is and show us how its positive interpretations are being promoted in your schools and mosques. If this is not Islam, then why is it that a million Muslims will pour into the streets to protest Danish cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad, but not one will take to the streets to protest Muslim suicide bombers who blow up other Muslims, real people, created in the image of God? You need to explain that to us — and to yourselves."

Enlarging NATO, expanding confusion

Mary Elise Sarotte

BERLIN Twenty years ago, dictatorships across Central and Eastern Europe toppled. During this season of remembering, the focus has rightly been on celebration of the new freedoms gained by the inhabitants of those countries: to speak freely, to travel, to vote and to choose their own national futures and alliances.

Yet the legacy of 1989 has difficult aspects as well, mostly centering on the origins and legitimacy of later NATO expansion to former East German and Warsaw Pact territory. Acknowledgment of them by the United States could greatly improve U.S.-Russian relations.

Moscow has long asserted that it allowed Germany to unify only in return for a pledge from Washington never to expand the Atlantic alliance.

Former advisers to Presidents George H. W. Bush, Bill Clinton and George W. Bush have transcended partisan differences in dismissing the Rus-

sian claim. An internal State Department review during the Clinton era concluded that no legally binding prohibition on NATO enlargement emerged from the era of German unification.

Since then, however, it has become possible to reconstruct what happened from first-hand evidence. Former Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany released the papers of his office, which inspired the former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev to publish many of his own. A number of other leaders and institutions also opened files in advance of the 20th anniversary of the fall of the wall: the George H. W. Bush Presidential Library, Secretary of State James Baker, the German Foreign Ministry and the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office among them.

There are many twists and turns, but the story as we now understand it is as follows:

The crucial month was February 1990. It had become apparent that the Cold War order in Europe had collapsed. Some kind of new order needed to be established quickly. Bonn and Washington had agreed that it should center on the rapid unification of Germany.

Both countries also wanted to head off alternative visions to NATO's continued primacy that were proposed by Mr. Gorbachev, who sought new European institutions from the Atlantic to the Urals, and by former Warsaw Pact dissidents-turned-rulers, who wanted a demilitarized Central and Eastern Europe to serve as a neutral bridge between East and West. Those plans would have diminished the leading role of the United States in Europe, whereas perpetuating the Atlantic alliance would maintain it.

The biggest obstacle was, of course, the Soviet Union. Despite economic hardship at home, the Soviets maintained 380,000 troops in East Germany and still held legal rights of occupation emanating from the unconditional German surrender in 1945. Bonn and Washington thus wanted Moscow to remove its troops and to renounce its claims, without forcing NATO troops out as part of the bargain. What would Mr. Gorbachev demand in return?

To learn the answer, Mr. Baker and Mr. Kohl journeyed to Moscow within a day of each other. On Feb. 9, 1990, Mr. Baker asked Mr. Gorbachev, "Would you prefer to see a unified Germany outside of NATO, independent and with

no U.S. forces or would you prefer a unified Germany to be tied to NATO, with assurances that NATO's jurisdiction would not shift one inch eastward from its present position?" Mr. Gorbachev, according to Mr. Baker, answered that "any extension of the zone of NATO would be unacceptable."

Their meeting ended without any final deals made. Mr. Baker left behind a secret letter, detailing what he had said, for Mr. Kohl in Moscow.

While Mr. Baker was in Moscow, though, members of the National Security Council back in Washington were worrying about his comment that NATO would not move eastward. To undo the damage they felt Mr. Baker had caused, they drafted a letter that President Bush sent to Mr. Kohl later that day.

The presidential letter included language that differed in a subtle but significant way from the language offered by the secretary of state. Instead of a pledge about NATO's borders, Mr. Bush suggested that East German territory be given a "special military status" within NATO. What that status would consist of was to be negotiated later, but the core assumption was clear. NATO would grow and former East German areas would have a special status within the alliance as it did so.

A foreign leader can see daylight between a president and his secretary of state from the other side of the world, and Mr. Kohl did not have to look that far. So whose language did Mr. Kohl echo in his own talks with Mr. Gorbachev the next day, Feb. 10 — the president's or the secretary's?

Mr. Kohl chose to echo Mr. Baker, not Mr. Bush. The chancellor assured Mr. Gorbachev, as Mr. Baker had done, that "naturally NATO could not expand its territory" into East Germany. The documents available do not record Mr. Kohl using the presidential phrase — "special military status" — that the National Security Council had rushed over to him. Mr. Kohl's foreign minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, visiting the Kremlin as well, assured his Soviet counterpart, Eduard Shevardnadze, that "for us, it stands firm: NATO will not expand itself to the East."

Crucially, the Gorbachev-Kohl meeting ended with a deal. After listening to Mr. Kohl, Mr. Gorbachev agreed that Germany could unify internally. Mr. Kohl and his aides publicized this major

concession immediately at a press conference. Then they returned home to begin merging the two Germans.

In essentially settling for a gentleman's agreement, Mr. Gorbachev missed some important pitfalls and then failed to do anything about them.

First, Mr. Kohl spoke for West Germany, not for the United States or for NATO. Second, the Soviet leader got nothing about the trans-Atlantic alliance in writing. Third, Mr. Gorbachev did not criticize Mr. Kohl publicly when he and Mr. Bush later agreed to offer only a special military status to the former East Germany instead of a pledge that NATO wouldn't expand. Finally, he did not catch subtle signals that, by early 1990, speculative discussion in the West about NATO's future involved the inclusion of Eastern Europe as well. Mr. Gorbachev later complained to Mr. Kohl that he felt he had fallen into a trap.

Did the United States betray Russia at the dawn of the post-Cold War era?

The short answer is no. Nothing legally binding emerged from the negotiations over German unification. In fact, in September 1990, an embattled Mr. Gorbachev signed accords that allowed NATO to extend itself over the former East Germany in exchange for financial assistance from Bonn to Moscow.

A longer answer, however, shows that there were mixed messages and diplomatic ambiguities. By acknowledging that there might be some substance to Russian grievances, the Obama administration would strengthen relations with Moscow.

Given that NATO enlargement has already taken place (and efforts for further expansion are stalled), little would be lost with such an acknowledgment but much could be gained.

Certainly, Western attempts to manage everything from Iran's nuclear program to European energy supplies during the coming winter would be a great deal easier with Russia's cooperation.

A commemoration of the events of 20 years ago that included both celebration and candor would increase the likelihood of such cooperation.

MARY ELISE SAROTTE, a professor of international relations at the University of Southern California and a fellow of the American Academy in Berlin, is the author of "1989: The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe."

Asia benefited most from fall of Berlin Wall

Brahma Chellaney
New Delhi

By marking the Cold War's end and the looming collapse of the Soviet Union, the fall of the Berlin Wall 20 years ago transformed global geopolitics. But no continent benefited more than Asia, whose dramatic economic rise since 1989 has occurred at a speed and scale without parallel in world history.

For Asia, the most important consequence of the fall of the Berlin Wall was that the collapse of communism produced a shift from the primacy of military power to economic power in shaping the international order.

If not for the Cold War's end, the West would not have let China off the hook over the Tiananmen Square killings in 1989. Instead, the West adopted a pragmatic approach, shunning trade sanctions and helping to integrate China into the global economy and international institutions through the liberalizing influence of foreign investment and trade.

Had the United States and its allies pursued an approach centered on punitive sanctions, the result would have been a less prosperous, less open, and potentially destabilizing China.

Indeed, China's phenomenal economic success — illustrated by its world-beating trade surplus, world's largest foreign-currency reserves, and highest steel production — owes a lot to the West's decision not to sustain trade sanctions after the Tiananmen Square massacre. Having become the world's biggest exporter, China is now set to displace Japan as the world's second-largest economy.

India's rise as an economic giant is also linked to the post-1989 events. India was heavily involved in barter trade with the Soviet Union and its communist allies in Eastern Europe. When the East Bloc

unraveled, India had to start paying for imports in hard cash. That rapidly depleted its modest foreign-exchange reserves, triggering a severe financial crisis in 1991, which in turn compelled India to embark on radical economic reforms.

More broadly, the emblematic defeat of Marxism in 1989 allowed Asian countries, including China and India, to pursue capitalist policies overtly. Although China's economic renaissance had already begun under Deng Xiaoping, the Chinese Communist Party, after 1989, was able publicly to subordinate ideology to wealth creation. That example, in turn, had a constructive influence on surviving communist parties in Asia and beyond.

The Soviet Union's sudden collapse was a strategic boon to Asia, eliminating a menacing empire and opening the way for China rapidly to pursue its interests globally. Russia's decline in the 1990s became China's gain.

For India, the end of the Cold War triggered a foreign-policy crisis by eliminating the country's most reliable partner, the Soviet Union. As with its 1991 financial crisis, India was able to emerge with a revamped foreign policy — one that abandoned the country's quixotic traditions and embraced greater realism and pragmatism. Post-Cold War India began pursuing mutually beneficial strategic partnerships with other key players in Asia and the wider world. The new "global strategic partnership" with the U.S. — a defining feature of this decade — was made possible by the post-1989 shifts in Indian policy thinking.

Of course, not all post-1989 developments were positive. The phenomenon of failing states, which has affected Asian security the most, is a direct consequence of the Cold War's end. When the Cold War raged, one bloc or the other propped up weak states. When the Soviet Union disappeared, the U.S. abandoned that game.

As a result, dysfunctional or failing states suddenly emerged in the 1990s, constituting a threat to regional and international security by becoming home to transnational pirates (Somalia) or transnational terrorists (Pakistan and Afghanistan), or by their defiance of global norms (North Korea and Iran). Asia has suffered more casualties from the rise of international terrorism than any other region.

Moreover, two decades after the Berlin Wall fell, the spread of democracy has stalled. Between 1988 and 1990, as the Cold War was winding down, prodemocracy protests erupted far from Eastern Europe, overturning dictatorships in countries as different as Indonesia, South Korea, Taiwan and Chile. After the Soviet disintegration, even Russia emerged as a credible candidate for democratic reform.

Not all the prodemocracy movements succeeded. The subsequent "color revolutions" in places like Ukraine only instilled greater caution among the surviving authoritarian regimes, prompting them to implement measures to counter foreign-inspired democratization initiatives.

Aside from the retreat of democracy in Russia, China — now the world's oldest autocracy — is demonstrating that when authoritarianism is entrenched, a marketplace of goods and services can stymie the marketplace of political ideas. Twenty years after communism's fall, authoritarian capitalism has emerged as the leading challenger to the spread of democratic values.

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

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

Obama's Vietnam syndrome

Jonathan Schell
New Haven

There can be no military resolution to the war in Afghanistan, only a political one. Writing that sentence almost makes me faint with boredom. As U.S. President Barack Obama ponders what to do about the war, who wants to repeat a point that's been made thousands of times? Is there anyone on Earth who does not know that a guerrilla war cannot be won without winning the "hearts and minds" of the people? The American public has known this since its defeat in Vietnam.

Americans are accustomed to thinking that their country's bitter experience in Vietnam taught certain lessons that became cautionary principles. But historical documents recently made available reveal something much stranger. Most of those lessons were in fact known — though not publicly admitted — before the United States escalated the war in Vietnam.

That difference is important. If the Vietnam disaster was launched in full awareness of the "lessons," why should those lessons be any more effective this time? It would seem that some other lessons are needed.

Why did President Lyndon Johnson's administration steer the U.S. into a war that looked like a lost cause even to its own officials? One possible explanation is that Johnson was thoroughly frightened by America's right wing. Urged by Sen. Mike Mansfield to withdraw from Vietnam, he replied that he did not want another "China in Vietnam."

His national security adviser, McGeorge Bundy, fueled Johnson's fears. In a memo of 1964, he wrote that "the political damage to Truman and Acheson from the fall of China arose because most Americans came to believe that we could and should have done more than we did to prevent it. This is exactly what would happen now if we should be seen to be the first to quit in Saigon." In another memo, Bundy argued that neutrality would be viewed by "all anticommunist Vietnamese" as a "betrayal," thus angering a U.S. domestic constituency powerful enough "to lose us an election."

Did Johnson's advisers push the country into a disastrous war in order to win an election — or, to be more exact, to avoid losing one? Johnson, Bundy, and the others of course believed the "domino" theory, which says that one country "falling" to communism would cause others to fall. But that theory meshed with suspicious ease with the perceived domestic political need for the president to appear "tough" — to avoid appearing "less of a hawk than your more respectable opponents," as Bundy later put it.

What is uncanny about the current debate about Afghanistan is the degree to which it displays continuity with the Vietnam debates, and the Obama administration knows it.

To most Americans, Vietnam taught one big lesson: "Don't do it again!" But, to the U.S. military, Vietnam taught a host of little lessons, adding up to "Do it better!"

Indeed, the military has in effect militarized the arguments of the peace movement of the 1960s. If hearts and minds are the key, be nice to local people. If civilian casualties are a problem, cut them to a minimum. If corruption is losing the client government support, "pressure" it to be honest, as Obama did in recent comments following Afghan President Hamid Karzai's fraud-ridden re-election.

The domestic political lessons of Vietnam have also been transmitted down to the present. George McGovern, the Democratic presidential candidate in 1972, proposed to end the war, which by then was unpopular, yet lost the election in a landslide. That electoral loss seemed to confirm Johnson's earlier fears: those who pull out of wars lose elections. That lesson instilled in the Democratic Party a bone-deep fear of "McGovernism" that continues to this day.

There is unmistakable continuity between Joseph McCarthy's attacks on President Harry Truman's administration for "losing" China — and for supposed "appeasement" and even "treason" — and former Bush administration members Dick Cheney and Karl Rove's refrains assailing Obama for opposing the Iraq war, not to mention Republic vice presidential

candidate Sarah Palin's charge during the election campaign that Obama had been "palling around with terrorists."

It is no secret that Obama's support for the war in Afghanistan, which he has called "necessary for the defense of our people," served as protection against charges of weakness over his policy of withdrawing from Iraq. So the politics of the Vietnam dilemma has been handed down to Obama virtually intact. Now as then, the issue is whether the U.S. is able to fail in a war without becoming unhinged.

Does the American body politic have a reverse gear? Does it know how to cut losses? Is it capable of learning from experience? Or must it plunge over every cliff that it approaches?

At the heart of these questions is another: must liberals and moderates always bow down before the crazy right over national security? What is the source of this rightwing veto over presidents, congressmen and public opinion? Whoever can answer these questions will have discovered one of the keys to a half-century of American history — and the forces that, even now, bear down on Obama over Afghanistan.

Recently, Obama paid a nighttime visit to Dover Air Force base to view the return of the remains of 16 soldiers killed in Afghanistan. The event was minutely choreographed. Obama saluted in slow motion, in unison with four uniformed soldiers, then walked in step with them past the van that had just received the remains from the cargo plane that had brought them home.

No one spoke. Had Obama become caught in the military's somber spell? Or was his presence a silent public vow, as he makes his decisions, to keep his mind fixed on matters of life and death, rather than on the next election?

Obama's actions in Afghanistan will provide the answer.

Jonathan Schell is a fellow at The Nation Institute and teaches a course on the nuclear dilemma at Yale University. He is the author of "The Seventh Decade: The New Shape of Nuclear Danger."

© 2009 Project Syndicate

Fuel deal could help Ahmadinejad's standing

Nuclear accord offers Iranian leader a lifeline

ANALYSIS

Tehran
REUTERS

Despite his hardline image, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad appears to favor a U.N.-drafted nuclear fuel proposal as a way to shore up his own power and legitimacy five months after his disputed re-election.

But he faces stiff opposition from rivals in Iran's political and clerical elite who would hate to see the abrasive leader reap the credit for a breakthrough with the West.

"The president wants the deal to be sealed. He has redoubled efforts to defuse the nuclear dispute with the West," said a senior Iranian official, who asked not to be named. "He thinks the deal is in line with Iran's interests."

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has proposed that Iran ship most of its low-enriched uranium abroad to be processed and returned for use in a medical research reactor in Tehran — thus calming international fears that the Islamic republic is seeking nuclear weapons, a charge it denies.

U.S. President Barack Obama and European leaders have said they are losing patience with Iran, which has not officially answered the Western-backed proposal it accepted in principle on Oct. 1. Tehran says it wants amendments and more talks.

Iran could face harsher international sanctions or even Israeli military action if it fails to restore trust in its nuclear goals, which it says are confined to power generation.

The IAEA, the United Nations nuclear watchdog, said in a report Monday that Iran's belated revelation of a new uranium enrichment site may mean it is hiding further nuclear activity.

Ahmadinejad, whose credibility was bruised by weeks of turmoil after a June 12 election his foes said was rigged, apparently hopes to turn nuclear diplomacy to his advantage, even if it means softening his hitherto combative stance.

"Ahmadinejad is ultimately cautious. He seeks to alleviate the crisis with the West to strengthen his position in Iran and abroad," said Iranian political analyst Hashem Sedaghati.

The stakes are high for a president under fire not only from conservatives in Parliament but also from his moderate election opponents, who had criticized him for antagonizing the world, but who now accuse him of selling out Iran's nuclear interests.

Parliament speaker Ali Larijani, a former nuclear negotiator and an influential conservative, has called the proposed nuclear compromise an insult — a sentiment that appeals to supporters of the clerical establishment and cannot be contradicted easily.

"Larijani and other so-called conservatives are saying: 'Why do we have to give up our uranium? What is the good experience we had with Russia and France to give them our uranium?'" said Iran analyst Mahjoob Zweiri at Jordan University's Center for Strategic Studies, highlighting the internal debate in Iran.

Public opinion also remains broadly supportive of Larijani, spurred on by local media, which focus on the West's perceived unfair treatment of Iran's nuclear program.

However, analysts say dissenting voices may emerge if more sanctions are imposed on Iran or military strikes loom.

"Ahmadinejad knows that antagonizing world powers when Iran is in internal crisis and may face fresh sanctions would not serve the country's interests," said Sedaghati.

The president, like other senior officials, vigorously supports Iran's right to build a nuclear industry. But his unwillingness to compromise in the past has led to three sets of sanctions being imposed by the U.N. Security Council.

A senior Western diplomat in the gulf said Ahmadinejad was keen to "climb into bed with the West" by sealing a nuclear deal, but faced "rhetorical red lines" making it difficult for him to overcome opposition from jealous domestic rivals.

Drawing out North Korea

John Delury
Seoul

Negotiations over the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula look set to resume. Sadly, they are unlikely to end soon. Talk of a "grand bargain" remains just that — talk.

Trust between North Korea and the United States, South Korea and Japan is almost nonexistent. While all leaders — including North Korea's Kim Jong Il — remain committed to denuclearization in public, none appears ready to risk much in terms of domestic politics to achieve it.

So the best the world can currently hope for is revived dialogue, an agreement to freeze the North's Yongbyon nuclear plant, and perhaps a moratorium on further missile and nuclear tests.

To speed the process, a new long-term strategy aimed at the underlying factors at work in North Korea — and in relations with its rulers — is needed. Simply put, the U.S. and other powers need to pursue constructive economic engagement with North Korea to help the regime achieve "strength and prosperity" through economic transition and integration with the global economy.

Constructive economic engagement will benefit ordinary North Koreans, who have suffered as much as any people on Earth since the Cold War's end. The root cause of North Korea's economic difficulties is its isolation from the forces of globalization, from which East Asia in particular has profited.

In the late 1990s, as China and Vietnam were posting rapid GDP growth, North Korea was ravaged by one of the worst famines in modern history. Today, North Korea is a de-industrializing, near-subsistent economy. The best hope for most North Koreans is the subterranean market economy that fills the gaps in the state's planned economy and public distribution system. Trade with China is keeping those market forces supplied with goods and business opportunities across the border.

Rather than pressure China to shut down the cross-border flow of fuel and food in order to "teach Pyongyang a lesson," the U.S. and its allies must find ways to support North Korea's economic integration with the region.

More effective than freezing accounts and barring travel by officials with ties to the missile and nuclear programs would be to work with North Korea's younger technocrats, banking and financial

officials, and economic advisers to improve their expertise in managing North Korea's economic transition.

Of course, economic engagement will not solve the nuclear conundrum in the short term. Nothing will. The Korean Peninsula will most likely achieve "complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization" only when North Korea is already moving in the direction of economic growth and integration.

North Korea's regime will require demonstrable evidence that a secure, prosperous, nonnuclear development model is available to it before it abandons its nuclear program. So, as nuclear talks proceed, the U.S. and its partners should

We should think of North Korea's economic transition process as a prerequisite for full denuclearization rather than as the result of quid pro quo.

help North Korea lay the foundations for a new political economy based on international commerce, investment and cooperation, as an alternative to the current model predicated on a hostile security environment.

We should think of North Korea's economic transition process as a prerequisite for full denuclearization, rather than simply holding out the promise of a big assistance package as a quid pro quo.

Of course, some of the big-ticket items in an economic engagement policy will remain contingent on progress in security arrangements and peninsular denuclearization. But North Korea and the international community can already take some substantive steps.

These include opening diplomatic and official channels in order to improve mutual understanding and the general climate for exchanges; promoting U.S.-North Korea economic dialogues and workshops; encouraging U.S. universities, research institutes, and nongovernmental organizations with expertise in economic transition and development to initiate and develop contacts with North Korean counterparts; and permitting the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank to increase North Korean participation, with the ultimate goal of membership.

During the recent visit of a high-level

North Korean delegation to the U.S., there were encouraging signals that its rulers would welcome increased economic contacts, including with international financial institutions.

Moreover, North Korea is actively courting foreign investment. The United Nations Development Program recently reopened its office in Pyongyang, another positive sign of the regime's readiness to work toward common development goals.

Of course, new sources of growth in North Korea could threaten vested interests, leading to institutional rivalries, factional tension or a conservative backlash. And the regime will not want the process of economic opening to get too far ahead of security agreements and political normalization. After all, the main lesson that North Korean leaders take from China's success is that security (Mao Zedong's rapprochement with the U.S.) precedes economic transition (Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening policy).

Constructive economic engagement will be a tough sell outside North Korea. In the U.S., North Korea is seen mostly through the prism of nuclear nonproliferation, and the new administration is wary of being tricked into giving its rulers anything without getting fissile material in return.

In South Korea, President Lee Myung Bak's political base wants to roll back, not reinvigorate, the Sunshine Policy, and there is a widespread (though by no means universal) weariness with engagement.

In Japan, fear of North Korea's nuclear threat and anger over the abduction of Japanese citizens generates powerful political pressure against engagement. China is the one place that quietly implements a constructive economic engagement approach.

Instead of pressing Beijing to cut off North Korea, the U.S. and its allies should further develop their own efforts to draw North Korea out of its insularity.

John Delury is associate director of the Asia Society's Center on U.S.-China Relations and teaches at Columbia University. He is also director of the Asia Society/University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation's task force report "North Korea Inside Out: The Case for Economic Engagement."

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

Breaking the Pyongyang pattern

US. President Barack Obama and South Korean President Lee Myung Bak reaffirmed in Seoul on Thursday that they will seek a "definite and comprehensive resolution" to the North Korean nuclear issue. Mr. Obama urged the North to return to the six-party nuclear talks, adding that he will send special representative for North Korea policy Stephen Bosworth to the country on Dec. 8.

In early October, North Korean leader Kim Jong Il, meeting with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao in Pyongyang, expressed his country's "readiness" for multilateral talks, including the six-party talks, "depending on the outcome" of bilateral talks with the United States. North Korea withdrew from the six-party talks last April to protest a U.N. Security Council resolution condemning its long-range rocket launch the same month. North Korea then detonated a nuclear device in May.

Mr. Bosworth's visit to the North will mark Washington's first bilateral talks with Pyongyang under the Obama administration. It is hoped that his meeting with North Korean officials will help to

resuscitate the six-party talks. Utmost care should be taken so that North Korea does not use the meeting as a means of causing divisions among the five other parties — the U.S., China, Japan, South Korea and Russia — and of getting benefits through improved ties with the U.S., and possibly with South Korea, without making clear concessions on the nuclear issue.

It is encouraging that Mr. Obama is clearly aware of North Korea's modus operandi in the nuclear negotiations. He said, "We (Mr. Obama and Mr. Lee) want to break the pattern that existed in the past, in which North Korea behaves in a provocative fashion, and then returns to talks for a while and then leaves the talks seeking further concessions."

Mr. Obama supported Mr. Lee's "grand bargain" proposal to provide large-scale economic assistance and security guarantees to North Korea in return for complete nuclear dismantlement. But concrete details of the proposal have yet to emerge. Close coordination among the countries concerned will be indispensable to making it work.

Obama's low-key approach was right

Barack Obama's maiden visit to China may have seemed disappointing after the buzz and hype that preceded it. No major agreements were struck, pledges were modest and contentious issues avoided. The U.S. president, for all his charisma and eloquent words, did not mesmerize the nation; instead, he was confronted by leaders able to say "no" to the world's only superpower. Nonetheless, that disputes were avoided and a promise made to work closer was a good outcome.

Previous U.S. presidential visits have been markedly different. They came with the U.S. economy and currency strong. Chinese leaders were less sure of their position in the world. Obama's predecessors were not shy about standing before counterparts and lecturing them about trade imbalances, perceived currency manipulation and human rights. Times have changed; in the interests of forging closer ties, the United States must now treat China gingerly.

China is, after all, on the threshold of overtaking Japan as the world's second-largest economy. It is rapidly moving into a prominent political position on the international stage. The U.S. leader may represent change to many people around the world, but China — and the

ruling Communist Party — is not willing to be talked down to. Obama's adoption of a policy of thoughtful listening and quiet discussion is the right approach.

The two nations remain far apart on fundamental issues, among them trade, human rights, Tibet, Taiwan, military-to-military exchanges and intellectual property. The sticking points have been broached to varying degrees over the past two decades with each high-level encounter — without their being any substantial shift. Over the same period, the economic interdependence of the two economies has changed dramatically. Like it or not, each needs the other to grow.

There are signs of a mutual willingness to cooperate in the five-point statement issued after President Hu Jintao and Obama met Tuesday. They agreed to pay attention to each other's strategic concerns and work as partners on economic issues, climate change and preventing Iran's nuclear proliferation. A deal on increased military dialogue was welcome, as was a pledge to resolve trade disputes through the World Trade Organization.

China's rise is causing unease, especially in Washington. Some have hoped that American influence and a

globalized world would bring about greater certainty through democratic reforms. Yet, economic enmeshment with the U.S., exposure to Western values, the Internet, increased trade and foreign investment have not prompted any loosening of the party's hold on power. It is clear that change will come not from outside the country, but from within.

The Chinese have gained much freedom over the past three decades. How much of this is down to trade and cultural influence is unclear. Doubts aside, it is in all our interests that the U.S. maintain sound ties with China and do its utmost to build on them. It is agreements like that announced by Obama at his town-hall meeting in Shanghai last Monday — the exchange of thousands of students — that will contribute to empowering Chinese to push for reform.

Global well-being depends on good relations between China and the U.S. A severe rift in relations would have profound implications for the world's economy. We should not pin huge hopes on a single visit by a new American leader who has an affinity for China. Obama's decision to opt for a nonconfrontational approach is the right strategy.

South China Morning Post (Nov. 20)

Gunmen kill 21 in Philippines

Hostage slaughter linked to provincial election

Manila
REUTERS

Gunmen abducted and killed at least 21 people in the southern Philippines on Monday, apparently to prevent a woman filing her husband's nomination to run for provincial governor in elections next year, the military said.

Lt. Col. Romeo Brawner said the bodies of 13 women and eight men were found in the area where about 30 people were taken hostage.

"We believe more bodies are buried," Brawner said. "Unfortunately the killing happened before our troops got there."

Some of the victims were beheaded, and bodies mutilated, local officials said.

Military officials said the dead included Genalyn Ti-amzon-Mangudadatu, who was on the way to file the nomination of her husband to contest the governorship of Maguindanao province against Datu Andal Ampatuan, the head of a powerful local family.

She was accompanied by two lawyers, several members of her family and some local journalists.

The southern Philippines is riven by fierce clan rivalries, including one between the Mangudadatus and the Ampatuans. Many politicians and elected officials in the region maintain well-equipped private armies.

Ampatuan has been elected governor of Maguindanao three times previously, always unopposed, although he resigned from the post earlier this year, apparently to circumvent term limits on elected officials.

Of the 22 mayors in his province, most are sons, grandsons or other relatives.

Two of his sons have been killed in violence linked to clan wars.

In a 2007 interview, Ampatuan said people did not run against him or his family members in elections because they had little chance of winning.

"It's because of popular support," he said. "Because I am so loved by the constituencies of the municipalities, they ask me to have my sons as representatives."

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo has called him a valuable ally in the past. In the 2004 presidential elections, Arroyo won most of the votes in Maguindanao. In one town, her rivals did not get even a single vote.

On Monday, her office vowed quick action against the killers.

"We are shocked and in total outrage," Gabriel Claudio, the president's political adviser, said in a statement. "Justice will be served and the perpetrators punished — whoever they are."

Earlier, military officials had said about 100 armed men, several of them in police uniform, had stopped the Mangudadatu convoy at a police checkpoint on a highway and taken the victims to a remote mountainous area.

The election process for the May 2010 national polls began last week with the filing of candidacies for more than 17,800 national and local positions.

The actual campaign period begins in February for candidates running for president, vice president and 12 seats in the upper house of Congress. For those seeking local positions and nearly 300 seats in the lower house of Congress, campaigning starts in late March. Polling is scheduled to take place on May 10.

Where goes Palestine as Abbas withdraws?

Daoud Kuttab
Ramallah West Bank

A political leader's decision not to seek re-election usually triggers fervent discussion about potential heirs. Yet, President Mahmoud Abbas' withdrawal from the Jan. 24 presidential election has produced nothing of the kind in Palestine — not because of a reluctance to mention possible successors, but because the presidency of the Palestinian Authority has become irrelevant.

Abbas' withdrawal comes at a time when Palestinian frustration with the political process has rendered suspect the entire rationale behind the PA, established in the mid-1990s, following the Oslo Accords.

The main component of the PLO's agreement with Israel was a five-year interim period during which negotiations were expected to lead to an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel.

Sixteen years later, it has become clear that the Israelis have made no effort to come to terms with Palestinian national aspirations — and that no effective effort has been made to convince them. The number of illegal Jewish settlers in Palestinian areas has doubled, leaving Palestinians increasingly convinced that negotiations are a waste of time.

Many recall the preferred strategy of former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir: "I would have conducted negotiations on autonomy for 10 years, and in the meantime we would have reached a half-million people in the West Bank."

Initially, the five-year interim agreement called for the election of a Palestinian Legislative Council and an executive leader whom the Israelis wanted to call a "chairman," spurning the word "president." Because Arabic makes no distinction between chairman and president, the Israelis accepted use of the Arabic word in the official English text.

Palestinian refugees in exile and other Palestinians of the diaspora were not

allowed to vote. East Jerusalem Palestinians could vote only at the post office or at booths outside the city limits.

Abbas' withdrawal merely confirms the obvious. Another such election in the near future, including the one set for January, is unlikely to occur, mainly owing to the continuing rift between the PLO and Hamas, which controls Gaza.

Hamas participated in the 2006 legislative elections, which followed Israel's military withdrawal from Gaza. But for years Hamas and other radical Palestinian groups have rejected the Oslo process, on the grounds that free elections under Israeli occupation would be absurd. Hamas has the power to stymie the vote and has indicated that it would do so.

Moreover, Abbas has not given up his positions as head of the PLO and leader of its biggest faction, Fatah, which remains in control in the West Bank. Abbas cannot resign from his post for the foreseeable future, lest the Hamas-backed speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council take over. At the same time, no PLO official is likely to seek the presidency without Abbas' approval, which he will withhold until a new mechanism for ending the occupation is found.

The PLO will likely gain much from Abbas' decision, because it de-emphasizes the status of the PA president and raises the profile of his post as chairman of the PLO's executive committee. That shift, in turn, clears the way for a generational change in leadership — and, more importantly, a transition to post-Oslo politics.

The PLO's old guard — men like Yasser Arafat and Abbas, who led the liberation organization from exile and returned home with the Oslo Accords — dominated the Palestinian political landscape up to now. After they depart the scene, Palestinian leaders who were born under occupation and spent time in Israeli prisons will most likely fill the vacuum.

The most prominent such figure is Marwan Barghouti, leader of the student

movement at Birzeit University in the 1980s and one of the main organizers of the First Intifada, resulting in his deportation by Israel in the late 1980s. In 2002, he was arrested and sentenced to a long prison term on charges that he led the Second Intifada (begun two years earlier) and ordered some military attacks.

Despite being imprisoned, Barghouti was recently elected to Fatah's central council, and a number of others who spent time in Israeli prisons will join him. One is Jibril Rajoub, imprisoned for 19 years and deported in the First Intifada, only to return to lead one of the security services after the PA was established. Another is Mahmoud Dahlan, also an ex-prisoner and former security official, although the loss of Gaza to Hamas, for which many Palestinians hold him partly responsible, has dimmed his leadership prospects.

Finally, there is Nasser al-Qudwa, the former PLO representative at the United Nations. Qudwa is a dark-horse candidate to succeed Abbas — a possible compromise figure who has never been directly involved in security or military activities. For many Palestinians, Qudwa, a soft-spoken, multilingual nationalist (and Arafat's nephew), presents an acceptable face for Palestine locally and internationally.

The coming months will reveal whether we are witnessing the dawn of the post-Oslo era in Palestinian politics, and whether a new leader, with new supporters, will be required to revive the Palestinian cause.

Whoever emerges on top will have to present an effective strategy to end four decades of military occupation and bring about a truly independent state that a majority of Palestinians can embrace.

*Daoud Kuttab is an award-winning Palestinian journalist and former professor of journalism at Princeton University.
© 2009 Project Syndicate.
(www.project-syndicate.org)*

The road to 'no nukes' runs through Tehran

Gary Schmitt
Washington
LOS ANGELES TIMES

Arguably the two most important foreign policy speeches given by Barack Obama since becoming U.S. president are his June address in Cairo and September's speech before the U.N. General Assembly. The speech in Egypt was intended to reset relations with the Muslim world, and the U.N. address set out his vision for a world free of nuclear weapons.

But as laudable as the sentiments expressed in both addresses may be, unless his administration is definitively successful in stopping Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, the result will be an administration faced with abandoning the policy hopes raised in one or both speeches.

Certainly, the failure to stop the Islamic Republic from developing nuclear weapons is the most obvious obstacle to the president's nuclear disarmament vision. If Iran is able to acquire nuclear weapons, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and possibly even Turkey would be hard-pressed not to follow suit in an effort to maintain their presumptive positions of leadership within the Muslim world.

And should those states head in that direction, there is no guarantee that a cascading proliferation effect would not take hold in other states in the Persian Gulf and Mediterranean basin. If the newfound interest of Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Algeria in exercising their right to the "peaceful" use of nuclear technology is any indication, we might already be headed down that road.

Moreover, for many of these states,

and most assuredly Egypt and Saudi Arabia, "stopping" Iran means more than just reaching an agreement whereby the Iranian government forswears obtaining nuclear weapons. Success in this instance cannot leave Iran with a "break-out option" — in which civilian nuclear infrastructure and fuel could be used to produce bombs rapidly.

Iran's neighbors are not going to feel secure if all that stands between them and a nuclear-armed Iran is a few months' time.

At the moment, the administration's prospects for stopping and reversing Iran's nuclear program seem dim. If Las Vegas were laying odds, the betting line certainly would be in Iran's favor, with the oddsmakers having already seen this game played out with North Korea.

Rather than marching toward a disarmed Iran and global nuclear zero, then, there are reasons to believe that the Obama administration instead will face the challenge of deterring and containing a nuclear-armed Islamic Republic, while simultaneously preventing the complete collapse of the nuclear nonproliferation regime. Each would require the United States to take an active role, bullying Iran's fearful neighbors not to pursue their own weapons and drawing them into an American security umbrella that itself would necessitate considerable interference in regional affairs.

Already there are reports that the administration has begun to think about and plan for a containment strategy vis-a-vis Iran. But such a strategy comes with a cost. Given the aggressive character of the Iranian leadership and its willingness to use all the tools of statecraft at its disposal with neighbors and

surrogates in the region, a simple, line-in-the-sand kind of containment probably would not be sufficient. To truly prevent Iran from using its new nuclear arsenal as a screen behind which it could safely assert its ideological and regional ambitions, the U.S. would have to increase its leadership role in the Middle East.

The U.S. would be even more concerned with the policies of the states in the region. Would their leaders take our defense pledges seriously? Or would they instead attempt to play the U.S. off Iran, and vice versa? What kind of economic, military and intelligence assistance would each country need from Washington to help carry out the policy? And what demands would the U.S. public and members of Congress, in turn, make in exchange for that assistance?

Whatever the merits of containment, the one thing that is almost certain is that the policy brings with it a need to exercise the kind of hectoring, quasi-hegemonic role that Washington once held over allies during the Cold War. And if containment does require a heavier U.S. hand, what then of Obama's vision for a new relationship with the Muslim world?

In Cairo and at the United Nations, Obama laid out bold ambitions for the world and a new profile for American leadership. The road to realize those ambitions, however, runs directly through Tehran. Getting Iran right is, of course, important in its own right. But solving the Iranian nuclear issue is no less important to the president's larger vision.

Gary Schmitt is director of the program on advanced strategic studies at the American Enterprise Institute.

G-2 aside, U.S. and China are hardly on equal footing



WILLIAM
PFAFF

Paris

I have never understood the widely touted idea or assumption of China-U.S. equality or partnership or joint rule of the world or superpower-partnership that dominated the press coverage of U.S. President Barack Obama's trip to Asia. In what ways do any of these descriptions really fit the situation?

Soviet Russia and the United States could reasonably be spoken of as the two superpowers because they provided the dynamic ideological core of the Cold War, the two fundamental and indispensable antagonists — or so it seemed in the beginning, back in the 1950s and 1960s. But even then there was more hyperbole than substance in the description, although the two sides perhaps did not think so, since both were gratified with being one of the two greats of this world.

In the China-America case, there is Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao's modest final statement that China remains a developing country, far from ready to strike a partnership with the U.S. The Chinese nation has indeed awakened, a moment when Napoleon warned that "the world would be sorry." But, under the regime of Chairman Mao Zedong and

his colleagues, it was mainly the awakened Chinese themselves and their neighbors who were given cause to be sorry.

The agitation about China's supposed challenge to the U.S. comes mainly from Americans and American-influenced commentators, and from Asians within the Chinese orbit, and their measure is that of scale and statistical potential, which are not really the decisive measures of world influence.

Population is the criterion mainly cited, and China is expected to have a population in 2010 of 1.365 billion. The same estimation for the U.S. in 2010 is 315 million — a difference of a billion people. Population is an advantage when it is made up of active, qualified and productive people.

When this is not so, as in China, the people have to be fed and organized, and an enormous effort made to keep the nation in order, the population controllable by the government — a challenge that invited the disorders and passages of hysterical politics of the late Maoist years, and haunt the present government.

While China is developing its military power and has the largest army on Earth, it is difficult to see the utility of this army other than as an instrument of intimidation of important regional enemies, which China lacks. There are the Korean and Taiwan flash points, and disputes over historical frontier boundaries, but there is also a history of Pacific accommodation. Its military is irrelevant to the U.S., except for the small

Chinese nuclear deterrent force

The U.S. is dynamic and belligerent, with an expansive ideology. This is why the Chinese treat Washington with great circumspection. As recently as 1952, U.S. Gen. Douglas MacArthur was advocating nuclear attack on the Chinese mainland to "win" the Korean war, and in 1963, when the Pentagon was successfully pressing President Lyndon Johnson to commit combat troops to the Vietnam War, some officers recommended nuclear attack on North Vietnam — presumed at the time to be an instrument of Chinese Communist aggression. The American military record over the years since the Vietnam truce, and particularly since 9/11, is an intimidating one.

Even if the U.S. were in much more formidable economic and social condition than it is today, it would not be a society prudently to provoke. China finances the American trade deficit and is heavily invested in American dollars and assets, but this is as much a matter of weakness as of strength.

China's economy still relies on Western outsourcing and Western technology in order to claim a front-rank role of world economic influence, and relies on the confidence of Washington. It is diversifying its assets, a prudent move, but with Washington continues to walk a line.

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

© 2009 Tribune Media Services International

U.S. must 'lose' for Afghans to win

Gerard Russell
Kabul
LOS ANGELES TIMES

Afghan President Hamid Karzai's inauguration Thursday was a somber affair. Gray storm clouds are slowly replacing blue skies, and the sour tang of charcoal smoke hangs in the air. The mood among the internationals here is similarly gloomy. So many conversations end with the scratching of heads, with the tacit admission that no idea that has come forward has been big enough to reverse the Afghan government's steady loss of control.

This is not because of the flawed elections or the ghastly killing of foreigners. That's all bad, but it's not doomsday. Nearly two years ago, I heard the distant rumbles, like thunder, of the attack on the Serena Hotel in Kabul, which killed seven people. The Afghan government's legitimacy was being questioned then, too, and urgent reforms demanded — without practical result. Two elections had already happened and were marred by fraud. We have been here before and survived.

No, what is depressing about the situation in Afghanistan is not that it has suddenly gotten much worse but that it steadily fails to get better. By the time U.S. forces left Vietnam, the South Vietnamese Army had at least proved itself capable of holding ground against its enemy, albeit with massive U.S. air support. In Afghanistan, by contrast, district after district in the country's troubled south is falling, in effect, under Taliban control. Meanwhile, in the Western nations with troops here, public support for the war is waning.

Would 40,000 additional troops turn this around? They would buy time, provided the time is well used. But the real currency of counterinsurgency is not military strength but durability. A person will be more eager to be friends with a neighbor who will still be around in 20 years to repay any favor or

grudge. The Taliban offers this. The U.S. does not. The Afghan government might.

The struggle in Afghanistan is all about Afghans sizing each other up; foreigners are mainly bystanders.

Until an equilibrium of power has been reached among Afghans that is generally unchallenged, pulling out foreign troops would precipitate a civil war. It would be a tawdry and self-defeating end to the intervention in Afghanistan. Yet, for as long as foreign troops are dominating the conflict with the Taliban, and for as long as the U.S. is seen as the final arbiter of Afghan politics, an equilibrium of power cannot be reached.

The U.S. presence is the Afghan government's safety net, protecting it from the need to take responsibility for the fight against the Taliban. Until Karzai's government sees its survival at stake, it will not play its best game.

So let's fail in Afghanistan. Fail in the right way now, and the Afghans will have a chance of succeeding.

The right kind of failure could look like this: The U.S. has fought hard to expand its coalition in Afghanistan, to include nations even if they bring only a half-dozen soldiers and at least as many policy differences. Lose this battle. Shrink the coalition to a manageable size.

The coalition has fought to extend the Afghan government's writ to every part of Afghanistan. In doing so, it has put its soldiers in static bases and had them patrol Afghan cities and towns. They are vulnerable, with little room to maneuver. Large parts of the country remain outside the government's writ anyway; it has done little to follow up military successes.

So lose this battle, too. By the end of 2010, withdraw forces to impregnable bases from which they can back up Afghan forces in cases of extreme need. Then there will be an end to the perception that Afghans now have: This is a war waged by foreigners in Afghanistan.

Yes, the Afghan forces will suffer. But they will anyway, one day, because foreign forces will not stay forever. Their chances are better now than they will be once the Taliban has irrevocably established itself in even more locations, and when U.S. patience is thinner than now.

We must also lose the fight to give the Afghans a better government than they have had. It is simply not ours to win. Our views of what makes a good minister are not always right by any means. But, even more important, when a government is seen to be imposed by foreign influence, its failures can be blamed on foreigners. Let every pretense be stripped away. Let the failures of the Afghan government be clearly its failures, and let its successes be just as clearly its own. Expose that government, in other words, to the laws of natural selection. It must adapt or die.

Foreign governments may advise. They may set certain conditions for their aid money, which should be simple and apolitical — an anti-corruption commission, for example. And once they no longer have ownership of the Afghan government, they will be able to enforce those conditions more effectively.

But the Afghan government must be in the lead, clearly in charge, free to make its own political decisions and to learn its own lessons. And that is what the Afghan people must see.

In the long run, rather than the U.S. putting in more troops, it might have a greater effect by putting them out of harm's way. And it might succeed best by failing first.

Gerard Russell, a fellow at the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, has worked in Afghanistan since 2007, most recently as senior adviser to former U.N. official Peter Galbraith.

U.S.-China relations shifting



FRANK
CHING

Hong Kong

Observers analyzing the visit of U.S. President Barack Obama to China, not unnaturally, looked for signs of a shift in the world balance of power — and they found them.

For one thing, the American leader was noticeably respectful of his Chinese hosts and did not attempt to lecture them, at least not in public and probably not in private as well.

And the Chinese side finally got what it had wanted for 30 years — being treated as an equal by the United States.

Of course, the shift in the balance of power does not mean that China is going to replace the U.S. as a global hegemon. It does mean, however, that China will play a much bigger role in world affairs.

During the Bush administration, Beijing was told that it had to learn to be a responsible stakeholder. Now, it is learning that it has to pay a price for a bigger voice in world affairs — the assumption of additional responsibilities. Power and responsibility go together.

A joint statement issued by the two countries shows the extent to which they now share a common world view. They reviewed global issues from the Middle East to South Asia, from the global economic recovery to climate change.

Each acknowledged the right, indeed the responsibility, of the other to deal with global issues. "The two sides noted that, at a time when the international

environment is undergoing complex and profound changes, the U.S. and China share a responsibility to cooperatively address regional and global security challenges," they said.

In the joint statement, the U.S. "welcomes a strong, prosperous and successful China that plays a greater role in world affairs," addressing China's concerns of American attempts to frustrate its rise.

On its part, China declared that it "welcomes the U.S. as an Asia-Pacific nation that contributes to peace, stability and prosperity in the region," thus ameliorating American fears that a rising China would attempt to squeeze it out of the region.

In this emerging world order, both the U.S. and China will have to make adjustments. Washington, known for its predilections for unilateralism, will have to pay greater heed to the interests of China and other countries.

And China will have to play a global leadership role to which it is unaccustomed.

The late leader Deng Xiaoping warned his successors to keep a low profile and never take the lead, and China largely hewed to this course over the last two decades. But as the country has grown to become the world's third-largest economy — soon to become the second-largest after overtaking Japan — it will have to come to terms with an unaccustomed new role.

In this new role, it will be difficult for China to be a follower in the international community, going along with majority views. Indeed, China will have to moderate its oft-stated policy of noninterference in other countries' internal affairs.

This is implied in the joint statement, where the two countries agree that they

"share increasingly important common responsibilities of major issues concerning global stability and prosperity" and agree to "work together to tackle challenges, and promote world peace, security and prosperity."

America's and China's interests are now so intertwined that each acknowledges the right of the other to be involved in its economic affairs since what one country does will affect the other.

Thus, to reassure China that its investments are safe, the U.S. promised to "take measures to increase national saving as a share of GDP and promote sustainable noninflationary growth" and return the "federal budget deficit to a sustainable path and pursuing measures to encourage private saving."

And China promised to "continue to implement the policies to adjust economic structure, raise household incomes, expand domestic demand to increase contribution of consumption to GDP growth and reform its social security system."

So what we have now is a framework for a bilateral relationship in which each sees the other as a partner.

What remains now is to build political trust, which is clearly still lacking. While both countries say they are committed to building a positive, cooperative and comprehensive relationship in the 21st century, old problems such as Taiwan, Tibet and human rights are as intractable as ever while new problems are bound to emerge.

It will not be easy for this new partnership to work. But if it doesn't, then the outlook for the resolution of world issues in the 21st century will be bleak.

Frank Ching is a journalist and commentator based in Hong Kong.

THE JAPAN TIMES FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2009

The big loser in the Mideast

There are reports of a deal to exchange hundreds of Palestinian prisoners for captured Israeli Sgt. Gilad Shalit. This is welcome news because the Islamic militant group Hamas has held the 23-year-old soldier as a pawn, virtually incommunicado, since his capture on the Gaza Strip border in June 2006.

Shalit's release would be a boon for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, leader of a country with obligatory military service that identifies with the soldier's plight and his family's pain. Similarly, among Palestinians, Hamas would benefit from being seen as a liberator of prisoners from Israeli jails.

Unless there is also something in the agreement for Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, however, the moderate West Bank administrator will once again seem the loser.

Abbas, 74, has been growing politically

weaker in recent months, undercut by Israel and the Obama administration, as well as by Hamas. Efforts to reconcile his Fatah faction with Hamas have stalled, and elections scheduled for January had to be postponed because Hamas refuses to allow them to take place in Gaza, the territory under its control. Peace negotiations that broke down during last winter's Gaza war have not resumed, largely because the U.S. failed to persuade Netanyahu to freeze Israeli settlement construction on lands captured in the 1967 war. Instead, Israel approved 900 new units in East Jerusalem. The Obama administration also undermined Abbas' credibility with Palestinians by pressing him to withdraw support for a United Nations report accusing Israel of violating international law during the Gaza war.

The Palestinian Authority owes its existence to the 1993 Oslo peace process,

and Palestinian support for the authority rises and falls with its perceived ability to negotiate the creation of a Palestinian state. When negotiations seem hopeless, Palestinians view the authority as a partner to the Israeli occupation rather than an answer to it.

Frustrated, Abbas has threatened to resign and floated the idea of seeking U.N. Security Council support for a declaration of a Palestinian state without Israel's consent. That no one seems to be making a play for the job if Abbas leaves is one sign of just how weakened the presidency is.

It's hard to see how Israel would benefit from losing its most reliable Palestinian partner, or how prospects for peace would be improved without Abbas. Hamas, perhaps emboldened by a prisoner release, among other things, most likely would fill the political void.

Los Angeles Times (Nov. 25)

9/11 trials a victory for justice

The administration of U.S. President Barack Obama has announced that it will prosecute the alleged mastermind of the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks on the United States, and four accused conspirators, in a New York City courtroom. That decision has triggered a firestorm in the United States, with critics complaining that the move is a mistake that will undermine the war against terror.

The critics are wrong: A public trial is a key step in the U.S. effort to regain the moral high ground in this fight.

Khalid Sheikh Mohammed has reportedly confessed to being the mastermind behind the 9/11 attacks. He was captured in Pakistan several years ago and spirited away to "black" or secret detention facilities where he was waterboarded, an "enhanced interrogation technique" that is alleged to have yielded his confession. He has since been held at the Guantanamo Bay detention facility, awaiting trial, along with other high-value detainees.

Cognizant of the extraordinary damage that was being done to the U.S. image, Mr. Obama pledged during the 2008 presidential campaign to close the Guantanamo Bay facility, but progress had been stalled by the inability to answer a very simple question: What would the U.S. do with the detainees? It could not release alleged terrorists committed to a war against the U.S. Washington had to find a host government that would take them or it had to devise a legal procedure that would allow it to hold trials. Both were problematic: Many governments were unwilling to accept the detainees, and the circumstances of the arrest and (mis)treatment of the suspects made it difficult if not impossible to hold trials, or use the evidence against them in a court of law.

After a year of study, U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder concluded that the obstacles to trials in the U.S. were not insurmountable and authorized the transfer of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and four of his alleged co-conspirators to the U.S. to stand trial, in a federal courtroom blocks away from where the World Trade Center once stood. Five other detainees would be prosecuted before a military commission.

The decision enraged conservatives. They argue that holding the trials in the U.S. would create new targets for terrorists. They assert that the trials would provide the suspects with opportunities to make their cases to a global audience, in effect, giving them a propaganda victory. They also claim that these people do not deserve civilian trials, that the case against them cannot be made in court or that it would disclose secret

information and further endanger U.S. security. Worse, there is the fear that they might be acquitted and would, at the end of the trial, go free in the U.S.

Those arguments make no sense. There have been several high-profile trials of terrorists in the U.S. — including in New York City — and there have been no attacks to free them. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg welcomed the decision, saying: "It is fitting that 9/11 suspects face justice near the World Trade Center site where so many New Yorkers were murdered."

There would be no platform that the defendants could use to espouse their views. Federal trials are not televised; a transcript would be released after each day's hearing. In announcing his decision, Mr. Holder expressed confidence that the evidence against the men could be used in court and that guilty verdicts would be reached. (He said he would instruct prosecutors to seek death sentences for all the defendants.) And in the unlikely case that anyone is acquitted, the legal authority to detain a suspect will continue, and there are other charges that can be leveled against them. No accused terrorist will be released to walk the streets of New York.

The most powerful argument for the trials is that holding them will end an ugly blot on the U.S. image. A country that has championed justice and human rights has been on the defensive for five years, with its leadership insisting that the war against al-Qaida and its supporters requires the suspension of civil liberties and of protections under the law. U.S. readiness to embrace extraordinary measures has given the terrorists a huge propaganda victory, undermining the moral authority of the U.S. and the legitimacy of its actions.

There is no reason to live in fear of justice. The U.S. legal system has proven capable of handling high-profile trials without compromising the sensitive intelligence that is often a key part of the prosecution's case. Dozens of terrorists have been tried and convicted in the U.S. Many of them reside in U.S. prisons today — and will for the rest of their lives. Similar processes have been held here in Japan, as well as England, Indonesia and India.

Holding public trials is a victory for democracy and the rule of law. It reminds us of what the real stakes are. The failure to trust the procedures that democratic countries have developed to govern their societies is a concession to enemies. Democratic countries must not abandon their most cherished and fundamental principles, neither for legal expediency nor out of fear.

THE JAPAN TIMES SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2009

Reaffirming U.S.-India ties

U.S. President Barack Obama on Tuesday ceremoniously received Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh as the first guest of the nation since the Obama administration began. The two leaders produced a joint statement in which they “reaffirmed the global strategic partnership” between their two nations.

The United States apparently sought to assuage India’s fear that the Obama administration is cooler toward it than the Bush administration was, in light of moves to strengthen ties with China such as Mr. Obama’s recent four-day visit to that country.

Although India is not a party to the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, the Bush administration in 2007 signed an accord to provide India with civilian nuclear fuel and technology. The U.S. and India are still sorting out rules for implementing the accord.

As if to highlight the fact that the U.S. and China do not necessarily share democratic values, the two leaders noted in their joint statement that “the shared values cherished by their peoples and espoused by their founders — democracy,

pluralism, tolerance, openness, and respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights — are acquiring an increasingly greater prominence in building a more peaceful, prosperous, inclusive, secure and sustainable world.”

They agreed to cooperate in seeking a world without nuclear weapons, fighting global warming and countering terrorism. They also agreed to “launch the U.S.-India Financial and Economic Partnership to strengthen engagement on economic, financial and investment-related issues.”

The bilateral consultation mechanism will start next year. For its part, the U.S. will likely try to secure a strong foothold in the growing Indian market by using the mechanism as leverage. India’s nuclear power generation market is estimated to be worth \$150 billion.

Cool economic calculations aside, it appears that the U.S. — regardless of its ties with Pakistan, India’s rival — views expanded cooperation with India as indispensable as it tries to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan.

IAEA censure raises ante against Tehran

ANALYSIS

Washington

THE WASHINGTON POST, REUTERS

The resounding censure of Iran on Friday by the board of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog, signals the start of a potentially more confrontational phase in America's dealings with the Islamic republic, including the prospect of strengthened U.S.-led efforts to cut off Iran's economic links to the world.

Iran will face a "package of consequences" if it does not soon become a "willing partner" in talks on its nuclear ambitions, a senior U.S. official warned. "We hope Iran takes note of that clear message."

The 35-nation board approved by 25 to 3 a resolution rebuking Iran for its defiance of U.N. resolutions that de-

mand a halt to uranium enrichment and other activities that allegedly are aimed at developing nuclear weapons.

The declaration is particularly critical of Iran's secret construction of a second enrichment plant inside mountain bunkers near Qom, southwest of Tehran.

The resolution, which was supported by China and Russia, two longtime skeptics of taking a hard line against Iran, said Tehran's failure to notify the IAEA of the project was a "breach of its obligation" under U.N. treaties.

The resolution will be referred to the U.N. Security Council, which has the authority to enact sanctions against the country. During the Bush administration, China and Russia worked in the Security Council to soften sanctions against Iran.

British Foreign Secretary David Miliband said on Friday

that Iran can't divide the international community and will inevitably face more sanctions if it defies the world over its nuclear program.

The resolution "should send a very clear warning to Iran that it is not going to be able to divide the international community," Miliband said at a Commonwealth summit in Trinidad and Tobago. "Iran needs to understand the strength of feeling that has gone into the vote today."

Iranian officials called the IAEA resolution "a historic mistake" and threatened to curtail its cooperation with the agency. Tehran has said the nuclear program is intended only to produce electricity.

In devising additional means of pressuring Iran, U.S. officials are focused on making it difficult for Iranian companies to ship goods. They are thus targeting insurance and reinsurance companies that underwrite the risk of such transactions, especially businesses that help support Iran's military elite. Such measures would build on an approach initiated by the Bush administration and

by three sets of existing U.N. sanctions against Iran.

"Nothing that we contemplate or that we would consider is aimed at causing greater harm for the Iranian people, who have suffered enough," the U.S. official said.

When President Barack Obama took office, he said that he would seek to engage Iran. Since then, he has reached out in speeches, letters and a video message to the Iranian people.

Administration officials emphasized that they are not ending engagement and they have not withdrawn any proposals. But there is a palpable sense of disappointment within the administration that Iran has not responded more affirmatively.

Ray Takeyh, a Council on Foreign Relations scholar who until recently was a senior adviser on Iran policy in the State Department, said that "there is a certain degree of impatience in American diplomacy. We have elevated Iran to a level of extreme danger, which it is not, and created a crisis atmosphere, which is unwise." When President Richard Nixon first reached out to China, it took that country a year and half to respond positively, he noted.

"The Iranians may come back in March with a counterproposal," he said. "No deal ever dies in Tehran. The Iranians never say yes or no."

Mr. Obama's bow to the future

American diplomacy is never without controversy, but who would have imagined that the standard protocol of a bow to the Japanese Emperor from U.S. President Barack Obama would have caused such a fuss?

Apparently, many rightwing critics in America complained that Mr. Obama bowed too low to the Emperor. Those America-centric conservatives took Mr. Obama's bow as a signal of America's weakness. Japan and most of the rest of the world saw that bow for what it was — a sincere gesture of respect and a step toward healthier relations.

Those who know Japanese culture even a little would not interpret this type of bow as subservience, much less as any indication of America's low status on the world stage. In Japan, bowing is as natural as taking off one's shoes when entering a home, though with more profound meanings. The conservative American critics of Mr. Obama would surely have found fault no matter how deep he bowed.

The arrival of a U.S. president who is aware of the importance of symbolic meanings and diplomatic gestures comes as a relief to most countries after the Bush administration's scarcity of interaction on any but its own terms.

As Mr. Obama well knows, a bow could have many different meanings within Japanese culture. It can be an everyday greeting, a simple thanks or a deep apology. Mr. Obama's bow carried less of these meanings than it did a sense of engagement. Stepping into another country's cultural complexities shows strength of character and self-assurance. Unlike the "cowboy diplomacy" of the former Bush administration, Mr. Obama clearly recognizes cultural realities.

Mr. Obama was not deferring to "a foreign potentate," as conservative critics see it. Instead, the simple gesture of a bow was a fitting way to show respect for Japanese culture, in particular, and awareness of how other cultures work, in general.

This visit to the Asia-Pacific region brings fresh hope that America will interact with its allies and adversaries without belligerence and one-sidedness. Approaching foreign countries with respect is an essential step toward building relations based on enlightened self-interest, a key component of Mr. Obama's diplomatic approach.

In Japan, as in most countries, respect is an essential precondition to greater communication and deeper understanding. After a calm, reasonable and culturally astute

gesture of respect has been offered, real negotiations can begin. The bow may have been Japanese, but the attitude behind it would be welcome in any country.

In fact, Mr. Obama's gesture was not delivered as smoothly as are most of his speeches, which have become popular English-language study materials in Japan. Shaking hands at the same time as bowing nearly 45 degrees combines East and West in an uneasy single gesture. Usually, when East meets West, a bow precedes a handshake, or vice versa, or one is simply dispensed with.

No matter, most Japanese probably would not know the correct way to bow to the Emperor either, and the politeness inherent in his gesture is the key point. Mr. Obama's bow also indicated recognition that Japan is a unique and sovereign country that holds a large proportion of U.S. government bonds.

Another momentous stop on his Asian tour was the world's other massive economy, and another major holder of U.S. bonds — China. Mr. Obama's bow, then, certainly demonstrated a pragmatic element that extends to Asia more broadly. Mr. Obama brought a practical agenda to the tour and a desire to reaffirm connections with Asian governments and Asian economies. The way forward in Asia will only come through sustained and fair-minded negotiations that involve all the region's countries.

The Bush administration's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, undertaken with blind disregard for those cultures' realities, are unlikely to serve as a model for economic revitalization or cultural exchange, much less for spreading democracy. More important than small gestures is the harder work of concrete decisions and sensible actions. Finding common agreements that mutually benefit all countries in the Asian region is now the main focus. Bowing was the easy part.

Lost amid this controversy over the angle of bowing were two Japanese cultural experiences that Mr. Obama recollected from a boyhood trip to Japan: eating "matcha" green tea ice cream and seeing the Great Buddha in Kamakura.

Maybe future generations will be able to build their diplomatic efforts on these kinds of small simple pleasures and powerful spiritual expressions. If so, they won't get tangled in the unproductive obsessions that have for too long kept one country from communicating with another in more nuanced and lasting terms.

Obama's deciding moment



WILLIAM
PFAFF

Paris

The pressure that has been on U.S. President Barack Obama with respect to reinforcement of the war in Afghanistan resembles that placed on President John F. Kennedy to send American combat troops to Vietnam during the 18 months before his assassination.

Kennedy made an early decision that displeased most of his own staff as well as much of the Washington press and political establishment. It was not to send combat forces. He did not waver. The controversy continued, but he was able to contain it by leaving the matter open to debate while doing the strict minimum necessary to appease his aides, nearly all of whom were for sending troops.

He counted on the fact that one of the most effective ways to make a decision is to postpone it until it no longer is relevant. This is what Obama has been able to do until now, while the evolution of political events in Afghanistan and Pakistan has steadily reduced the public pressure on him brought by the Pentagon and a revived and militarized American right.

On Tuesday, when the president is scheduled to speak the country, one will learn his response to the demand for dramatic escalation that has been issued by Gens. David Petraeus and Stanley McCrystal, the Pentagon adviser David Kilcullen, and certain rejuvenated neoconservatives and others from the last administration determined to pursue the "long war" for what they see as permanent American global politico-military domination.

There is a lesson in the past. Before

leaving office, President Dwight Eisenhower warned John F. Kennedy of the pitfalls before him in the entire area of Southeast Asia. Eisenhower recalled that in 1954, when France asked for U.S. intervention in support of the French troops besieged at Dien Bien Phu, he had refused the request because he could not accept without congressional approval and an indication of British support. At one meeting with his staff he had said that "without allies and associates," military intervention would be the act of "an adventurer, like Genghis Kahn."

He also said he had been elected in 1952 to end one war in Asia, in Korea, which might have become a total war with China, at a time when the United States had both allies and a U.N. mandate. To quote a close Eisenhower aide, he "was in no mood to provoke another one in Indochina."

Kennedy sought the advice of another eminent American soldier, Douglas MacArthur.

According to Robert Kennedy's account, MacArthur said it would "be foolish to fight on the Asiatic continent," and that "the future . . . should be determined at the diplomatic table." JFK's aide Kenneth O'Donnell has added that MacArthur told Kennedy that "there was no end to Asia and even if we poured a million American infantry soldiers into that continent, we would still be outnumbered on every side."

Gen. Maxwell Taylor, President Kennedy's military adviser, said that MacArthur "made a hell of an impression on the president," adding that when presented with further proposals from the Pentagon for military intervention, Kennedy would say, "Well, now, you gentlemen, you go back and convince Gen. MacArthur, then I'll be convinced." Taylor said, "None of us undertook the task."

Kennedy remained adamant. He was determined not to send American combat troops to Vietnam. In his first formal meeting on Southeast Asia, in January 1961, he had asked some of the same questions that today have been asked

about reinforcement of the war in "AfPak." If the situation is as serious as it is said to be, Kennedy asked, what good was a policy of training troops and national police who would not be available for many months?

McGeorge Bundy noted in 1961 that Kennedy asked another question that remains pertinent concerning Afghanistan and Pakistan today: "whether the situation was not basically one of politics and morale."

The conclusion of Gordon M. Goldstein's recent book ("Lessons in Disaster"), which makes use of McGeorge Bundy's contemporary papers and his drafts for the collaborative memoir he and Goldstein had begun before Bundy's death in 1996, is that Kennedy's determination at the time of his assassination was to withdraw American advisers from Vietnam.

Bundy had favored intervention. He was one of the winners of the argument — or so it seemed — when he was one of those most influential in convincing the new president, Lyndon Johnson, to go to war in 1964, a war that would continue for another nine years.

Among the papers from that period that Goldstein has used in his book is a memo from Bundy to Johnson on May 4, 1967. This said to the president, "The fact that South Vietnam has not been lost, and is not going to be lost, is a fact of truly massive importance in the history of Asia, the Pacific and the United States."

Looking back at the memo, nearly 30 years after he had written it in triumph, Bundy noted on it, for Goldstein to read and quote, "McGB all wrong."

What was not wrong was that the decision Bundy had urged Johnson to take was indeed a decision of massive importance, as Obama's will be.

Visit William Pfaff's Web site at
www.williampfaff.com.
© 2009 Tribune Media Services

Matichon editorial

- Published: 18/11/2009 at 09:35 AM
- Online news: [Opinion](#)

Asean Secretary-General Surin Pit-suwan's attempt to settle the Thai-Cambodian dispute should elicit a positive response from both countries.

Dr Surin has twice expressed his concern over the escalation of tensions between Cambodia and Thailand, and he has appealed to both countries to exercise maximum restraint.

In his opinion, Asean's foreign ministers could assist the two countries in resolving their dispute amicably and as soon as possible.

Dr Surin's peace-making attempt should not be rejected out of hand. In fact, it should be welcomed by all parties concerned.

The two neighbouring countries have resorted to tit-for-tat actions since the appointment of deposed prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra as an economic adviser to the Cambodian government.

Both sides have also whipped up nationalist sentiment, raising concerns that it may lead to deeper hatred between the two peoples.

As things now stand, it may not be easy to get the two countries to talk to each other.

But Dr Surin has opened the door for negotiation, and it is up to both countries to work towards reconciliation.

Narathiwat border crossings sealed off

- Published: 20/11/2009 at 12:00 AM
- Newspaper section: [News](#)

Border crossings along the Sungai Kolok river in Narathiwat province have been ordered closed in an effort to tighten security and smuggling between Thailand and Malaysia. The closure of all border crossings in the strife-torn southern province yesterday was ordered by Lt Col Sarawut Chaiyasit, commander of Narathiwat Task Force 36. He ordered troops to be on full alert along the border to prevent the smuggling of illicit goods into the country.

In Yala, security has been tightened throughout the province for fear of possible revenge attacks following the killing of six suspected insurgents in nearby Pattani province. Yala Governor Kritsada Boonyarat yesterday called a meeting with more than 200 village volunteers to seek their cooperation to jointly patrol communities with security officers. Mr Kritsada said local residents have teamed up with officials to guard their communities to prevent insurgents or ill-intentioned groups from carrying out violent attacks in Yala's municipal areas.

Yala police chief Pol Maj Gen Sayant Krasaesaen yesterday ordered all police stations in eight districts to be on full alert for possible rebel attacks in retaliation for the deaths of the six suspects. In Pattani, an employee of a local firm was shot dead in a drive-by shooting in Muang district yesterday. Thanakotchakorn Jaiphum, 29, was attacked while riding his motorcycle to pick up one of his children at a child care centre in Muang district. Meanwhile, 4th Army Region Commander Lt Gen Pichet Wisaijorn brushed aside the idea of autonomy for the South, saying the current decentralisation scheme had already given power to locals.

"Talking about allocating power to the local people, we've been doing so for many years. The Tambon Administration Organisation has a bigger budget than the district office and the Provincial Administration Organisation has a bigger chunk than the provincial office, so what more do you need?" Lt Gen Pichet told a forum at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Thailand on Wednesday. Apart from decentralisation, the government had given funds to support ponoh schools and the King had supported the building of some mosques.

"They all have the freedom and liberty to exercise their cultural and religious practices." The southern problem, in my opinion, mainly stems from mistrust and distrust between local people and local government officials and it will take a long while to see the results. But it's already on track," he said. Thailand had seen some success in dousing

the southern fire and the local people knew well the situation had been improving, Lt Gen Pichet affirmed.

Of the two million people in the deep South, there were 8,000-10,000 perpetrators of violence and this number had to be cut via self-sufficiency philosophy development projects, he said. He conceded the figure was quite large because many wrongdoers were relatives of locals and took refuge in villages.

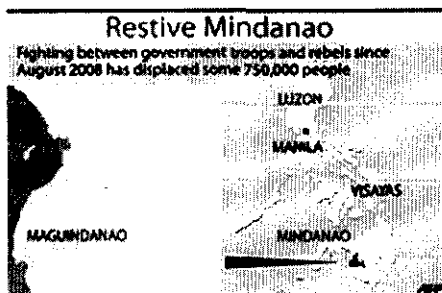
The 4th Army chief defended the state-sponsored distribution of guns in the far South, seen by critics as part of the cause of the non-stop violence. "This [distribution of guns] is for self-defence, and weapons used in incidents are different from the shotguns used by officials," he said.

21 killed in Philippines massacre, including 12 journalists

- Published: 24/11/2009 at 12:17 AM
- Online news: [Asia](#)

Manila - At least 21 people were murdered in the southern Philippines on Monday in a massacre that the military and relatives of the victims said was likely linked to a political rivalry. Supporters of a prominent local politician in Maguindanao province and local journalists were among those murdered, with some of them beheaded and mutilated, the military and relatives said. Armed forces spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Romeo Brawner said the bodies of 21 people had been recovered, 13 of whom were women, and that the death toll was likely to rise.

"We believe more bodies are buried in the ground and we are trying to recover them," Brawner said in an interview with the ABS-CBN television network.



Much of the southern violence is part of a Muslim rebellion in the South, but Monday's massacre appeared to be part of a family feud. The murders occurred after gunmen linked to Maguindanao governor Andal Ampatuan abducted members of a rival political clan and the local reporters who had been travelling in a convoy on Monday morning, according to Brawner. The leader of the rival political clan that was attacked, Esmael Mangudadatu, had been meaning to nominate for the governorship of the mainly Muslim Maguindanao province for next year's elections.

He was not in the group of about 40 people that was abducted, apparently after he had received warnings from Ampatuan's people not to register in the polls. But Mangudadatu's wife was in the group and had been intending to lodge his nomination for him. The Mangudadatu family is known to have a long-running feud with the Ampatuans, who police say are known to control their own private army.

Mangudadatu said his wife was among those killed and that many of the victims had been mutilated. "Their private parts were showing, their heads were crushed, they were mutilated," he told ABS-CBN, as he blamed the Ampatuan clan for the killings. Before the bodies were recovered, Brawner confirmed gunman linked to Ampatuan had abducted the group. Although he would not say afterwards that the Ampatuan clan was responsible for the killings, he said it was a strong suspect.

"Right now that's the angle we're looking at. The abduction of the Mangudadato family members by the elements of the Ampatuans is due to a political feud," Brawner said. Revenge killings and clashes among rival political clans are common in Maguindanao and other parts of the strife-torn southern Mindanao island, where unlicensed firearms proliferate and a Muslim insurgency has waged for decades. The Philippines is also regarded as one of the most dangerous places in the world for journalists.

However, the scale of Monday's slaughter sent immediate shock waves through the country. "This is a gruesome massacre of civilians unequalled in recent history," said Jess Dureza, President Gloria Arroyo's adviser on Mindanao island. "There must be a total stop to this senseless violence. I strongly recommend that a state of emergency be imposed in the area and everyone be disarmed. Anything less will not work."

Arroyo's office later released a statement saying no effort would be spared to bring justice to the victims. "Civilised society has no place for this kind of violence," the statement said. Amid reports from media groups that as many as 12 of the victims may have been journalists, the National Press Club of the Philippines also expressed outrage. "We are condemning this brutal incident. We have this culture of impunity in Mindanao that needs to change," club president Benny Antiporda said.

Before the reports of the massacre, Brawner said the leader of the militiamen who staged the kidnapping was one of Ampatuan's sons. Esmael Mangudadatu's brother, Khdadafeh, also said Ampatuan had warned Esmael not to register for the elections. "His son, Andal Ampatuan Jr, is supposed to run for governor and he had already made an earlier announcement that we would be killed if (Esmael) filed the candidacy for governor," Khdadafeh told AFP.

Indian PM pitches for growing US ties

- Published: 24/11/2009 at 02:03 AM
- Online news: [Asia](#)

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on Monday appealed for wide-ranging cooperation with the United States on areas such as climate change and defense as he started a high-profile state visit. President Barack Obama invited Singh on the first full-fledged state visit since he entered the White House in January, a sign of the rapidly warming ties between the world's two largest democracies.

Singh was due to head Tuesday to the White House for the pomp of a state visit, including a red-carpet welcome on the South Lawn and a black-tie dinner that is one of Washington's most coveted invitations. As US and Indian flags flew across Pennsylvania Avenue connecting the White House and the Capitol, Singh started his visit by meeting with business leaders -- who he said were crucial to building the two countries' ties.

"A strategic relationship that is not underpinned by a strong economic relationship is unlikely to prosper," Singh told a luncheon of the US Chamber of Commerce and the US-India Business Council. "I invite you to stay engaged as we transform India from a low-income country into a vibrant market of over a billion people with steadily growing purchasing power," Singh said. US and Indian officials marked his visit by signing a largely symbolic memorandum on expanding investment.

Singh said he would sign accords with Obama on cooperating in specific areas including on developing clean energy. Despite warming political relations, India and the United States have been at sharp odds on climate change ahead of next month's high-stakes Copenhagen summit with each country seeking further commitments by the other. Singh called for investment in areas that were long taboo -- the nuclear sector and defense.

Under the previous George W. Bush administration, the United States signed a landmark agreement to end India's isolation on civilian nuclear markets despite New Delhi's refusal to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Obama has pledged to move ahead on the nuclear accord, even though some members of his Democratic Party had initially opposed it. "The nuclear agreement was a landmark in Indo-US relations," Singh said. "We are currently finalizing the details that will make the agreement fully operational."

Singh, an Oxford-educated economist, spearheaded India's market reforms in the 1990s which ended decades of state management. Singh, who led his Congress Party to a triumphant re-election earlier this year, promised that he would expand reforms. In his previous government, Singh relied on support from communists who opposed key privatization initiatives. "I can assure that we will continue down this road. We might do it gradually and in a manner which builds a consensus on economic and social change, but I assure you we will persevere," Singh said.

While Singh's focus on his first day was on business, he was expected to talk with Obama on the US leader's key foreign priority -- Afghanistan. Obama was due to meet with top US brass late Monday as he finalizes a decision on whether to reinforce the 68,000 US troops who will be stationed in Afghanistan by year-end. Singh has appealed for the United States to stay committed in Afghanistan, warning the country could face civil war if foreign forces suddenly leave. The Indian prime minister has also questioned the commitment of rival Pakistan in Afghanistan, saying Islamabad's main interest was controlling its northern neighbor.

The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

War against terrorism in Southeast Asia

Rommel C. Banlaoi , , Jakarta | Wed, 11/18/2009 1:12 PM | Opinion

Through serious counterterrorism measures, governments in Southeast Asia have successfully weakened the physical infrastructure of terrorism in the region.

The Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), two major terrorist groups in Southeast Asia, are heavily factionalized and are severely damaged with the death, arrest and neutralization of their key leaders.

Though JI was able to mount the Jakarta bombing in July 2009 while the ASG continues to bomb churches in the Southern Philippines and engages in kidnap-for-ransom activities, security authorities in Southeast Asia have dealt a number of stern blows against the JI and the ASG.

The Mantiqi structure of JI has been dismantled while the original organizational set-up of the ASG has been disrupted.

Some members and key leaders of JI and ASG are currently in jail while others have disengaged or have undergone rehabilitation.

However, there is no reason to be complacent as surviving elements of JI and ASG are still planning future attacks.

Remaining leaders are still engaged in vigorous recruitment activities to lure younger Muslims to join their cause through open and discreet ideological indoctrination as well as vigorous material inducement.

While the threat of terrorism in Southeast Asia has subsided, it has not totally disappeared because there are remnants who are still committed to wreak havoc.

Succeeding leaders of JI and ASG also take advantage of the vulnerability and gullibility of young populations in the countryside in their attempt to find new recruits and replenish lost members.

While police and military operations against terrorist groups in the region have diminished the threat of terrorism, there is a larger challenge to address the underlying conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.

This requires more than military solutions. It needs political, economic and social interventions that governments alone can not accomplish.

In Southeast Asia, countering terrorism has always been mistakenly viewed as the sole responsibility of the government.

The "whole-of-government" approach in counterterrorism now common in the region indicates this government-centered view.

But there is now a growing recognition that civil society organizations (CSOs) have an essential role in counterterrorism, particularly in addressing the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.

While the "whole-of-government" approach is important for the government to fulfill its mandated task in providing peace and order for its citizens, the complexity of problems facing society today requires all stakeholders to take part in the solution.

In short, there is a need for the "whole-of-nation" approach that recognizes the vital role of CSOs in addressing the problem of terrorism.

CSOs in Southeast Asia have been involved in a variety of activities that have tremendous bearing in preventing and combating terrorism in the region.

These CSOs are pursuing pertinent projects that aim to reduce poverty, protect the environment, promote human rights and the rule of law, uphold democratization, pursue good governance, and advocate against the harsh impact of globalization.

Though CSOs in Southeast Asia are not directly involved in counterterrorism operations of their governments, CSOs indirectly contribute to the implementation of Global Counterterrorism Strategy of the United Nations, particularly in addressing the underlying conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.

CSOs in Southeast Asia started to proliferate in the 1980s to promote democratization, uphold human rights and advocate for sustainable development.

CSOs grew bigger in the late 1990s, particularly in the aftermath of the 1997 Asian financial crisis, to rally against the neo-liberal model of economic development in Southeast Asia.

At present, CSOs in Southeast Asia have formed regional coalitions and networks, which led to the transnationalization of their programs and activities.

There are three types of CSOs in Southeast Asia: community-based CSOs, nationally-oriented CSOs and regionally-oriented CSOs. These three types of CSOs have complex web of linkages and interrelationships as they work together on a variety of converging issues to synergize their efforts.

Based on various sources of current estimates, there are at least 5,000 nationally registered CSOs in Singapore, 15,000 in Malaysia, 20,000 in Thailand, 70,000 in Indonesia and 80,000 in the Philippines.

The number of regionally-oriented CSOs in Southeast Asia is not yet determined but based on the register of ASEAN affiliated-CSOs, there are 58 regionally-oriented CSOs carrying a wide-range of activities from bankers association, sports club, musicians groups and other professional associations.

In the area of counterterrorism in Southeast Asia, there is a great deal of effort to harmonize state and civil society efforts. Because of existing state-civil society tensions in most Southeast Asian countries, CSOs have become important critics of state-led counterterrorism activities.

CSOs in Southeast Asia are playing the role of "watchdogs" to check the excesses of states in countering terrorism in the region.

At the same time, some CSOs are in the government's "watch lists" for having been suspected of providing legal cover or protection for some personalities accused of crimes associated with terrorism.

This article is published in conjunction with the international workshop on terrorism which will be held by Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation in Jakarta on Nov. 18 - 19, 2009. The writer is the executive director of the Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism Research (PIPVTR), a nongovernment academic research organization in the Philippines engaged in policy development.

Copyright © 2008 The Jakarta Post - PT Bina Media Tenggara. All Rights Reserved.

Source URL: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/11/18/war-against-terrorism-southeast-asia.html>

The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

The UN and civil society's role in countering terrorism

Abdul Wahid Maktub and Alistair Millar , , Jakarta | Wed, 11/18/2009 1:13 PM | Opinion

Terrorism is a real threat and states must address it robustly and effectively, but civil society also has important roles to play particularly in raising awareness of the threat, addressing underlying conditions that breed terrorism, and ensuring respect for human rights.

It is therefore regrettable that some governments have denied these groups the political space, freedom, and information needed to engage effectively.

In some instances, "counterterrorism" has even been used as a pretense to crack down on civil society and to justify restrictions on freedom of association, speech, and assembly. Civil society organizations, for their part, have played a critical role in encouraging governments to calibrate their responses to terrorism to be effective against those who mean harm without eroding human rights and the rule of law.

In 2006, with that challenge in mind, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously agreed to a Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy that outlines a holistic approach to countering terrorism, which requires the collective effort of an array of stakeholders, including civil society, to implement.

Although commonly associated primarily with nongovernmental organizations and charities, civil society consists of a range of voluntary associations including political parties, trade unions and professional bodies, private foundations, educational and research institutions and think tanks, religious, faith based, and community based organizations, and women's, human rights, social and environmental groups.

The UN Strategy provides a framework and the opportunity for the broad spectrum of civil society in Southeast Asia to engage on counterterrorism-related issues - issues from which they have too often been excluded or on which they have been reluctant to engage - as well as the opportunity to further their own different objectives.

The Strategy is unprecedented among UN documents on counterterrorism in the role it ascribes civil society in countering terrorism, but also because it marked the first time that all UN member states agreed on a common approach to dealing with the threat.

As a unanimously agreed upon UN framework, the Strategy, therefore provides a powerful tool with which civil society in Southeast Asia can remind states of their obligations to

combat terrorism, respect human rights, and address conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism.

The Strategy also effectively broadened the notion of "counterterrorism" to include not only tougher law enforcement and other security measures, but also measures to address what it calls "conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism," which include, among other things, prolonged unresolved conflicts, lack of rule of law, violations of human rights, and social, economic, and political marginalization.

Given the often unproductive emphasis that has been placed on 'hard' security approaches to combating terrorism to date, the Strategy offers an opportunity to recalibrate those efforts and develop more balanced and hopefully more effective responses that involve civil society and seek to address these underlying conditions.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), in 2007, adopted its own Convention on Counter Terrorism that was later elaborated on in an ASEAN Comprehensive Plan of Action on Counter Terrorism both of which integrate many elements of the UN Strategy.

Together with the recent move away from the rhetoric of the "war on terror", the adoption of the UN Strategy (and the ASEAN counterterrorism framework) provides an opportunity for civil society in Southeast Asia to highlight its important contributions to furthering human security and to assert itself on a range of security related-issues which are too often considered the exclusive domain of states.

To realize the Strategy's potential and ensure that its implementation reflects Southeast Asian perspectives, civil society groups across Southeast Asia will need to embrace it and work to implement it along side governments and intergovernmental bodies.

Combating and preventing terrorism should be the responsibility of all sectors of society, not only of governments. A vibrant civil society can play a strategic role in protecting local communities, countering extremist ideologies, and dealing with political violence. Civil society gives a voice to different social groups and causes, which provides a channel of expression for marginalized groups and can promote a culture of tolerance and pluralism.

Civil society, and religious organizations in particular, can help promote dialogue, tolerance and understanding among civilizations, cultures, peoples, and religions. Civil society groups have important roles to play in activism, education, research, oversight, capacity building, and in ensuring that counterterrorism measures respect human rights and the rule of law. They can also help generate awareness of a range of Strategy-related issues and help build and maintain support for efforts to counter terrorism.

These activities have significant intrinsic benefits in their own right and need not be identified with "counterterrorism," but there needs to be a greater recognition and understanding within governments, the UN system, and civil society itself of the unique contribution that civil society makes with regard to long term efforts to address terrorism.

Governments and the United Nations need to better understand that a strong, independent, and lively civil society is in itself is an essential ingredient not only for democratic

governance and sustainable development, but also for countering and preventing terrorism over the long term.

This article is published in conjunction with the international workshop on terrorism which will be held by Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation in Jakarta on Nov. 18 - 19, 2009. Alistair Millar is co-director of the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation in Washington, DC. Abdul Wahid Maktub is chairperson of committee for this workshop, and former Indonesian ambassador to Qatar (2003-2007).

Copyright © 2008 The Jakarta Post - PT Bina Media Tenggara. All Rights Reserved.

Source URL: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/11/18/the-un-and-civil-society039s-role-countering-terrorism.html>

The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

CSOs need role in counter-terrorism

Adianto P. Simamora , The Jakarta Post , Jakarta | Thu, 11/19/2009 1:08 PM |
Headlines

Southeast Asian governments need to give more freedom to civil society organizations (CSOs) to prevent terror acts in the region, a workshop heard Wednesday.

It said that CSOs could play an active role to help governments raise public awareness about terrorism and to ensure that counterterrorism efforts respect human rights.

"Unfortunately in some parts of the world, including the Southeast Asia region, there are countries that do not allow civil societies to act freely by restricting their funds or limiting activities," codirector of the US-based Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation, Alistair Miller, said.

"If you let civil societies do their work, sometimes by criticizing the governments that monitor human rights, better governance to prevent terrorism is encouraged."

Dozens of CSOs from Southeast Asia gathered for a two-day workshop on "Raising awareness of UN global counterterrorism strategies among civil society groups in Southeast Asia" in Jakarta on Wednesday.

The workshop was jointly organized by the country's largest Muslim organization Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation.

Miller said CSOs could promote dialogue and greater tolerance among civilians and religions, and were effective ways to address and combat terrorism.

He said that since 2001, many of the world's governments, including several countries in Southeast Asia, had developed counterterrorism strategies that had a negative impact on innocent civilians and undermined human rights.

"We still focus on multilateral military strategies to address and prevent terrorist acts," he said.

Nahdlatul Ulama chairman Hasyim Muzadi said the Indonesian government needed to improve its education system to avert extremist action.

"Extremism is the opposite of the meaning of Islam," he said.

He said the NU had implemented an education system in Islamic boarding schools on the

basis of a balance between fiqh (Islamic formal law), da'wah (guidance) and tasawuf, promoting ethics and human rights.

"The NU currently has 11,000 Islamic boarding schools but none are involved with terrorism," he said.

Director general of ASEAN at the Foreign Ministry Djauhari Oratmangun said CSOs played a crucial role, including in the rehabilitation process of terrorist-attack victims, to further combat terrorism.

"Indonesia actively involves CSOs to combat terrorism. We listen to their input to battle it," he said.

He said that because terrorist threats exist, CSOs should work hard to communicate about terrorism with locals in remote areas that the government could not reach.

He said that in terms of ASEAN, CSO's human rights commissions were behind ASEAN.

"The CSOs can campaign for the establishment of a human rights commission in the region. We are on the right track now to combat the terrorism," he said.

Copyright © 2008 The Jakarta Post - PT Bina Media Tenggara. All Rights Reserved.

Source URL: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/11/19/csos-need-role-counterterrorism.html>

The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

ASEAN and the Cambodia-Thailand row

Huala Adolf , Bandung | Thu, 11/19/2009 1:09 PM | Opinion

The row between Cambodia and Thailand has been worsening recently. The decision of the Cambodia government to appoint former Thai leader Thaksin Shinawatra as its personal and economic advisor appears to be a clear case of interfering in Thai internal affairs.

The situation between the two countries is rather sensitive. Besides this row, the border dispute between the two countries is still fragile, while the long dispute over Preah Vihear Temple is still in limbo.

ASEAN has, for some time, been paying closer attention to the relationship between these countries. The recent call from ASEAN to both countries to end the row over the appointment of Thaksin has been met with reluctance from both countries. Given the scope of the dispute, this row is a test case for ASEAN.

ASEAN was set up to handle tension, disputes and conflicts in the region. Any conflict that emerges between or among members is solved by way of musyawarah mufakat, or negotiation and mutually agreed settlements, the terms recognized by all ASEAN leaders.

This step involves respecting the integrity and independence of each member country and strongly upholding the principle of non interference.

Over time, the way disputes have been resolved has gradually improved. This improvement, however, still reflects the spirit of musyawarah mufakat.

The present row is not only sensitive, but also somewhat political. The situation is heavily colored and is also exacerbated by other disputes, in particular the ongoing border dispute.

Since the row is political, it is therefore necessary to see whether the dispute settlement mechanism available under ASEAN is appropriate.

The use of legal mechanism, through negotiation or diplomacy, is therefore the best possible solution.

The regional conflicts taking place in most parts of the world have been successfully resolved by negotiation between concerned parties. The Latin American crisis in 2008 is an important example of the successful settlement of regional disputes.

The dispute between Columbia and Ecuador was negotiated in a summit hosted by the Dominican Republic.

What ASEAN could do to resolve the current dispute could be to not only call on the parties to end the conflict, but provide a concrete resolution, such as providing support or facilitating a meeting or summit between the two parties.

ASEAN's efforts, of course, will not succeed without the good faith of the parties and their genuine intention to end the crisis. Thailand on the other should refrain from using force or the threat of using force. On the other hand, Cambodia should take into account the sensitivity of the "Thaksin Shinawatra" issue in the eyes of the Thai people.

The writer is the lecturer in international law at the University of Padjadjaran's School of Law in Bandung.

Copyright © 2008 The Jakarta Post - PT Bina Media Tenggara. All Rights Reserved.

Source URL: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/11/19/asean-and-cambodiathailand-row.html>

The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

Confronting the threat of uncivil society in SE Asia

Tan See Seng , Jakarta | Thu, 11/19/2009 1:09 PM | Opinion

One of the most pressing concerns for civil society in Southeast Asia today is the contraction of democratic space in state-society relations. This contraction has come about as a direct consequence not only of the effects of contemporary terrorism on civil society, but equally of efforts by regional governments at addressing terrorism and the conditions that enable it. The pressures stem from at least two fronts.

From the bottom-up, the region has been experiencing a growing politicization - a "deprivatization" if you will - of religious faith in general and of religious extremism in particular. In a sense, this rejuvenated link between piety and politics is a logical outgrowth of the broader trend of democratization that has taken hold, in varying degrees, in the region as a whole.

As predominantly postcolonial societies long defined by an enforced social conservatism and political authoritarianism in their formative years, recent periods of democratic transition have spawned a proliferation of voices and movements, including faith-based ones, in various domestic societies in the region.

While few if any would deny religion its rightful place at the table of civil society, concern has arisen over the indubitable link between religiously-inspired ideas of violent extremism and acts of extremist violence.

From the top-down, Southeast Asian governments have done either of two things, or both. On one hand, secular states have taken their natural circumspection of civil society a couple of steps further by upping their surveillance of particular religious communities, deploying internal security laws in the pursuit and capture of miscreants, and, as in the shootout that killed Noordin M. Top in Solo, Central Java, the application of "kinetic" approaches (that is, paramilitary force and tactics) to combating terrorism.

Such measures have their place in any comprehensive counterterrorism strategy, although instances of their gross misappropriation abound in the region, as was the case of the mail-fisted policy of former Thai premier, Thaksin Shinawatra, toward the Malay-Muslim provinces of southern Thailand.

On the other hand, in majority Muslim states, religious organs of the state have contributed occasionally to fomenting religious anger. As controversies such as the case involving Danish cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad have shown, religious elements both

official and nonofficial have joined in the politics of "scapegoating" against Western targets, fairly or otherwise.

This has in no small measure added to their populations' distrust of and hostility toward the West. Furthermore, the imperative of winning the Muslim vote has led some governments to "out-Islamize" their political opposition and to prove their religious credentials through upping the ante in religious discourse, vigorous enforcement of religious laws and codes, and the like.

Thanks to such vicious brinkmanship from below and above, civil society in Southeast Asia is at best a tenuous and ambivalent space whose existence cannot be taken for granted. As a consequence of the growth of religious narratives and practices that celebrate extremist dispositions at the expense of alternatives, and the equally draconian statist measures adopted in response, an already narrow democratic space has become narrower, considerably and alarmingly so.

Nevertheless, any hope that Southeast Asian civil society will, sooner than later, become active participants in counterterrorism, not least in the ways envisaged by the strategy, is premature at this stage. Despite the inroads made by civil society in countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines, it is clear that Southeast Asian governments as a whole remain skeptical toward the former.

At the recent ASEAN Summit in Cha-am, Thailand, for example, it was apparent that most regional governments are, generally speaking, still loath to dealing with civil society elements - even as the summit host, Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, reminded his fellow leaders of their collective pledge, made at the 2003 summit, to build a "people-centered" ASEAN Community.

But as this discussion has implied, the challenge for civil society in Southeast Asia today is not just about negotiating an "autonomous realm of everyday life" apart from the state, not least when the state continues to play a vital role in the social and economic life of some Southeast Asian countries.

It equally has to do with the accommodation of protest counter-cultures with their at times radical alternatives, as well as the transformation of toxic narratives and practices that render society uncivil. Nor can civil society be about delimiting a secular space apart from religious influences, certainly not so for a region where the great religions of the world continue to thrive, more often for good than ill.

Well beyond just the specific requirements of counterterrorism, civil society must necessarily be a civilizing process which, as the Jewish-German sociologist Norbert Elias has put it, aims to remove violence from everyday life. Without this, no society can truly be civil, no matter its democratic credentials.

This article is published in conjunction with the international workshop on terrorism which will be held by Nahdlatul Ulama and the Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation in Jakarta on Nov. 18-19, 2009.

The writer is head of research at the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies (IDSS), an

element of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS) in Singapore. The views expressed here are his alone and do not reflect the views of the IDSS and/or RSIS.

Copyright © 2008 The Jakarta Post - PT Bina Media Tenggara. All Rights Reserved.

Source URL: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/11/19/confronting-threat-uncivil-society-se-asia.html>

The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

Counterterrorism efforts call for govt, civil society to team up

Adianto P. Simamora , The Jakarta Post , Jakarta | Fri, 11/20/2009 11:24 AM |
Headlines

Civil society groups in Southeast Asia should strengthen their local and regional networks and address conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, a workshop recommended Thursday.

It said that civil society organizations (CSOs) also needed to ensure respect for human rights and the rule of law as the fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism.

To effectively prevent terrorism, it said, governments of Southeast Asia also needed to introduce political systems and policies that supported human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

“Governments should adopt policies that are just and non-discriminative in nature, such as policies on economic development that can eradicate poverty and support social cohesion,” the international workshop said in its press release.

“Law enforcement measures should be further strengthened against violent radicals and terrorism.”

The two-day workshop, which concluded on Thursday, was jointly organized by Indonesia’s largest Muslim organization Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and the US-based Center on Global Counterterrorism Cooperation, with more than 30 participants from Southeast Asia.

Executive director for the Institute for International Peace Building, Noor Huda Ismail, said efforts to prevent terrorism were still fragile because the government walked alone in dealing with extremist groups.

“There is an ongoing perception among ‘jihadists’ the government is secular and this creates resistance. For these fundamentalists, accepting government aid means watering-down their faith,” he said.

He said that jihadists believed their acts of terror were justified as they believe that Jihad is about retaliating against the enemies of Islam.

He said that CSOs could establish contacts and build mutual trust with hard-liners through

critical discussion.

“We need a focus group discussion that can function as a forum for dialogue between the government and CSOs to exchange experiences in combating terrorism,” he said.

“But I see that involving CSOs is still rhetoric.”

Noor said governments and CSOs should avoid using Western terms such as deradicalization when approaching any radical groups.

Executive director of the Bangkok-based Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development, Cecile Gaa, questioned the seriousness of governments involving human rights defenders in the fight against terrorism.

“Most human rights defenders are suspected of supporting terrorists, especially in the case of the Philippines,” she said.

He said authorities often used counterterrorism laws to fight for human rights defenders who criticized the government.

“For me, it is important to ask how counterterrorism strategies introduced by the UN will impact upon the human rights of people on the ground,” she said.

Copyright © 2008 The Jakarta Post - PT Bina Media Tenggara. All Rights Reserved.

Source URL: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/11/20/counterterrorism-efforts-call-govt-civil-society-team.html>

The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

Country 'still faces threat' from new terror cells

Adianto P. Simamora , The Jakarta Post , Jakarta | Fri, 11/20/2009 9:51 AM | National

The National Police say the possibility of terrorist attacks in the country remains high, citing the mushrooming of new terror cells in the wake of July's hotel bombings in Jakarta.

Brig. Gen. Usman Nasution, head of the police's Detachment 88 counterterrorism unit, said Thursday many suspected terrorists still at large were believed to have set up new cells.

"These operatives in the new cells are just waiting for an outbreak of religious or sectarian conflict to launch their terror attacks," he said on the sidelines of an international workshop on counterterrorism.

"They will take whatever chance they get to launch an attack."

Asked whether fresh attacks were imminent in the short term, Usman said, "Yes, they can launch them soon because many expert bomb makers remain at large.

"Many of the terrorists are preparing themselves."

He added the police had no idea where these new cells were.

"We found out about most of them, like the cell established by Syafrudin Zuhri, only after we question arrested suspects," he said.

He claimed these terrorist cells, whether long-established or new, all had the same aim of creating an Islamic state encompassing much of the archipelago.

Since 2000, the police have arrested 455 suspected terrorist militants, 352 of whom have since been convicted and jailed, while 12 are awaiting trial.

Of those who served time, 204 have been released.

Police shot dead the country's most wanted terror suspect, Noordin M. Top, in a raid in Surakarta, Central Java, in September.

Usman said the slaying of key militants, including Noordin, could encourage other terrorists to return to the country.

Noordin was the prime suspect behind the July 17 bombings of the JW Marriott and Ritz-

Carlton hotels in Kuningan, South Jakarta, which killed seven people and injured 55 others.

He was also widely believed to be responsible for the 2002 Bali nightclub bombings that killed 202 people, most of them foreign tourists.

Two other suspects in those bombings, Umar Patek and Dulmatin, are believed to have fled to the Philippines, but Usman was confident they would attempt to return to Indonesia.

"They still have family here," he explained.

Members of Noordin's network and their followers enjoy strong grassroots support across Java, including in parts of Serang in Banten province, Kuningan and Cirebon in West Java. Cilacap, Wonosobo, Temanggung and Surakarta in Central Java, Lamongan, Malang and Pasuruan in East Java, and Yogyakarta, where residents have offered them shelter.

Usman said ongoing religious and sectarian strife in places such as Ambon and Papua could be the fodder for more terrorist attacks.

"They will use these conflicts to launch attacks," he said.

He added the police were still investigating a possible link between al-Qaeda and militant groups in Indonesia, following the arrests in August of a Saudi national and the owner of an Indonesian radical website and magazine.

The 2002 Bali and 2003 Marriott bombings were both funded by al-Qaeda, Usman added.

Copyright © 2008 The Jakarta Post - PT Bina Media Tenggara. All Rights Reserved.

Source URL: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/11/20/country-%E2%80%98still-faces-threat%E2%80%99-new-terror-cells.html>

The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

The attempts to boost military territorial function

Usman Hamid , Jakarta | Sat, 11/21/2009 12:13 PM | Opinion

The newly sworn in Army Chief Lt. Gen. George Toisutta said that the Indonesian Military (TNI) is to set up two new military commands in West Kalimantan and West Papua provinces in an apparent bid to revitalize its much-criticized territorial function.

"Territorial commands are important for the Army to maintain the country's sovereignty and to prevent any infiltration by foreign enemies," he said.

We certainly have not forgotten to appreciate the achievements of TNI's reform. However, having more territorial command shows a paradigmatic problem in formulating policies of state defense. In this respect there are critical notes on the Defense White Paper that can affect the direction of the TNI organizational transformation towards a more professional and modern TNI.

The decision for having new territorial commands should be decided by civilian authority on the basis of strategic defense review. One significant change of TNI reform was the power relations between the TNI, the President and the Defense Ministry. Prior to the reform, the TNI had exclusive autonomy to decide on the deployment of force also on strategic planning, operation, budgeting and personnel management.

Now the TNI is required to submit to the authority of the President in matters of the mobilization of force, while in the matter of defense policy strategies, as well as administrative support, the TNI is under the Defense Ministry.

Defense White Paper 2003 emphasizes the new professional paradigm of the TNI entering the 21st century. However, it still contained the old paradigm that the threats perceived were more domestic, and that sovereignty was still seen from the perspective of homeland security.

The ambiguity of the definitions on the perceived threats were misinterpreted in the operational level, resulting in the consideration of pro-democracy groups, stretching from students, NGOs, to community and political organizations as domestic threats to the country's sovereignty.

For civil society, the reform is meant to eliminate the domination of the land-based Army within the TNI. The security paradigm that is based on territorial security directly preserves the domination of the territorial command.

The defense strategy outlined in the White Paper also has not accommodated the development of the joint forces of the other two branches, and at the same time neglected the reality that Indonesia is an archipelagic country with a expansive shoreline, and large bodies of water that needs to be protected by strengthening the supporting zones based on aerial and marine powers.

Indonesian Defense White Paper 2008 is relatively more extensive compared to the 2003 one; however some issues still need further deepening.

The 2008 White Paper deals with the analysis of the Indonesian environmental safety, the nature and perception of threats, the concept of national defense, the strategic policy of the state defense administration, state defense development plan and the projections of budget requirements.

The old view towards political democratization had resulted in the vagueness of the formulation of the nature of threats to national defense. The 2008 Defense White Paper stated that "the domestic political dynamics that developed since the reform era has led to an increasingly uncertain condition".

This stability problem is viewed to be due to the lack of preparation, the lack of understanding and immaturity of the civilian population in applying the values of democracy. It also stated that "political accessibility gave way to a freedom that is heading towards unlimited freedom" (MoD: 2008: 23).

Viewing the political dynamics as leading to "uncertain conditions" surely is an oversimplification. This is the old paradigm of stability. During Soeharto's 32-year ruling, in the name of stability, the entire political access was eliminated. And also in the name of stability, military groups were permitted to enter the socio-political, socio-economical, socio-religious, and other non-defense realms.

The word "stability" failed to provide human security, creating an atmosphere of fear and has eradicated civil rights. This view of "uncertainty" in the political dynamics has to be evaluated. If the uncertainty said is due to the divisions of power among the legislature, judicial and executive branches, then this is normal democracy. Uncertainty can also be referred to the rise of opposition powers and a critical civil society.

Freedom that is viewed as leading to "unlimited freedom" is also unfounded. Because we have the legal instruments to provide reasonable boundaries to freedom. There are the criminal code and other related laws in regulating public order and safety, public health and morals, as well as the protection of other people.

The 2008 Defense White Paper also regards the regional autonomy and the strengthening of local identities as being "counter-productive to the national principle of Bhineka Tunggal Ika (unity in diversity)." The issue of putra daerah (indigenous people), traditional rights and indigenous land rights (hak ulayat) as the consequence of decentralization is yet to be viewed as normal.

Indonesia has ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which protects local identities and values, including the right to cultivate traditional lands

and indigenous lands (tanah ulayat). The strengthening of local identity cannot be viewed as a threat which requires the presence the state instrument of violence such as the TNI.

The strengthening of this local identity must be viewed as a corrective effort to authoritarianism that prevents local identity and entity and at the same time fights for equal access to political and economical resource among citizens. Or at least as an expression of dissatisfaction to correct the centralized system of power. These expressions are legitimate in democracy.

If the view does not change, then this would endanger future processes of decentralization of power and authority between the central and regional government.

President SBY asserts that it is impossible for us to turn back the hands of time, that we are now at the point of no return. Under the Soeharto regime, centralized power brought many problems of injustice, oligarchy and corruption.

Finally, having more territorial command will contribute to the inefficiency of our defense system and posture. The dream of having a trained, well-equipped and well-organized force with good welfare is far from being accomplished.

The writer is coordinator for the Commission for Missing Persons and Victims of Violence (Kontras).

Copyright © 2008 The Jakarta Post - PT Bina Media Tenggara. All Rights Reserved.

Source URL: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/11/21/the-attempts-boost-military-territorial-function.html>

The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

It may not be soon, but we can become an Asian superpower

Hadianto Wirajuda and Diaz Hendropriyono , London | Sun, 11/22/2009 2:39 PM | Opinion

It is a fact that we live in a world surrounded by superpowers. In the Far East, we have China, the third-largest economy and whose economic growth is expected to surpass 10 percent in the fourth quarter of this year.

A little bit further west is the nuclear-armed India, one of the world's largest military forces and among the world's fastest-growing economies. Over to the south, we are the immediate neighbor of Asia's middle power, Australia, considered an advanced economy by the IMF, and whose major cities rank highly on quality-of-life surveys. Above all, we are a world citizen with the US and EU as the only superpowers.

Now, let's reflect internally on our capacity as a world citizen. With what we have, is there a reason for the optimism to see Indonesia as a world superpower?

In his 1996 book *Indonesia's Foreign Policy Under Soeharto*, Suryadinata argues on several factors that underpin Indonesia's international credibility. Writing at the time of the New Order regime, he makes the following points:

First, Indonesia is geographically the largest country in ASEAN. Demographically, Indonesia earns a nod as the world's fourth most populous country, after China, India and the United States.

Second, Indonesia is considered an emerging Asian economy, hence the epithet "Asian tiger". Indonesia's economy grew sustainably at an average 7 percent annually in the 1990s. If not for the Asian financial crisis in 1997/1998, our economic growth, let alone political development, would have been a different story.

Third, Indonesia's military is arguably the strongest in Southeast Asia.

It is for all these reasons that Michael Leifer labeled the republic "regional entitlement".

The Soeharto regime is now part of Indonesian history. We are now in a new league, one that demands economic prosperity on one hand and political freedom on the other; a league that demands leadership as opposed to land mass; and a league that demands coexistence of values in society.

Indonesia's size remains unchanged from what it was during Soeharto's period. It is still the biggest in Southeast Asia and still the world's fourth most populous country. More than 230 million of the 570 million people in ASEAN live in this country. Economically, Indonesia's resistance to the current global economic crisis has made it the only member of the G20 from Southeast Asia.

On the political front, Indonesia is a strong proponent of ASEAN's political development. As we all know, ASEAN's cooperation largely emphasizes the promotion of economic growth, while political integration remains a peripheral agenda. This is not surprising, considering that ASEAN, unlike the EU, consists of different political systems ranging from a military junta to full-fledged democracies. It is of course not an easy effort to promote political freedom in the region, but Indonesia has taken a significant role in raising the issue.

And despite the challenges faced by the government both at home and from the region itself, Indonesia's advocacy of ASEAN political integration remains strong. In this light, it is worth recalling Indonesia's stance from being an opponent of Western democratic values by arguing that they went against Asian values, to being the champion of democracy in the region. A transformation in need is a transformation indeed.

Additionally, Indonesia is the third-largest democracy in the world after India and the United States, and the world's largest Muslim-majority country. It is widely recognized as a place where Islam, modernity and democracy coexist peacefully in society.

Indeed, there are still some challenges that need to be overcome. These include partially horizontal tensions within society and other issues such as terrorism and radicalism.

Corruption also remains a problem in the country. The country's Corruption Perception Index as published by Transparency International puts us on the same level as Libya, Ethiopia and Uganda. Yet with the country's persistent efforts in eradicating corruption, the index has improved by 37 percent since 2002.

Other than that, according to Reporters Without Borders, freedom of expression in Indonesia has actually worsened since 2002, placing it on the same level as Guinea and Mauritania.

However, Indonesia's overall ranking has improved significantly over the past year, from 111th spot to 100th, showing greater guarantees of freedom of expression.

While the poverty and unemployment rates remain high, President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's administration has gradually brought them down over the past five years, to around 14 percent and 9 percent respectively.

In conclusion, referring to all these features, it is certainly not an exaggerated hope to argue that Indonesia has all the potential needed to be recognized as a world superpower.

We believe we have the right ingredients to be considered a super power. It may not be soon, but if we can nurture all the potentials that we embrace, Indonesia can become an Asian superpower, while to add the word "world" before "superpower" to Indonesia's

international stature may still need an extra effort by all Indonesians.

Because a challenge remains: How do we translate these potentials into real power that can compete with China, India, Russia and, most of all, the United States? Indeed, this is a question for all Indonesians who share our optimism that Indonesia can and will be a world superpower.

Hadiano Wirajuda is a PhD candidate at the London School of Economics and Political Science, UK; Diaz Hendropriyono is a PhD candidate at Virginia Tech, US; Both are founders of the Youth Initiative for Indonesia's Democracy and Development (YIDD).

Copyright © 2008 The Jakarta Post - PT Bina Media Tenggara. All Rights Reserved.

Source URL: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/11/22/it-may-not-be-soon-we-can-become-asian-superpower.html>

Opinion

EDITORIAL

Obama's approach to Asia a welcome change

Published on November 16, 2009

The US president has made the right moves so far but the real challenge will be to consolidate

It took the kind of humility expressed by US President Barack Obama to win the hearts and minds of Asian countries. His speech on Asia in Tokyo last week was well-written and gave due emphasis to issues of mutual concern in Asia without upsetting the overall scheme of things.

Sooner or later, time will tell if he is weak or complacent about the issues related to human rights and democratic values. For the time being, there is no barrier, imagined or real, that would prevent the US from moving closer and becoming fully engaged with Asia, especially key players such as China, Japan, Korea and Asean.

Indeed, the Obama presidency comes at a time when there is great transformation within East Asia as a whole and within individual countries.

For instance, both China and Japan have come together like never before. Their leaders came to the sensible understanding a few years back that continued bickering would rob them of a peaceful and prosperous future. Regionwide cooperation would also go nowhere. Instead of driving wedges between the two Asian powers, the US has now placed itself as a go-between to ensure that Sino-Japanese cooperation will continue and last well into the future.

A few years back, nobody would have believed the US would be welcome with such warmth. The Obama administration should be credited for using a softer and non-threatening approach in the region. His speech referring to China was a case in point. Constructive US comments on China's expansive role and its peaceful rise will indeed increase pressure on Beijing's international behaviour. From now on, China has to prove to the international community that a better relationship with the US means the world can be safer and more peaceful. Both countries should also be more cooperative.

Japan's stable relations with China form the main pillar for future cooperation in East Asia. Only through their working together, can other regional activities move on

unhindered. Movements towards a broader free trade area and a new regional architecture have been possible because of the swift improvement of their relationship in past years.

Obama's trip to Singapore and meeting with all 10 Asean leaders was historic and the outcome of their first meeting should be nurtured. It was good that both sides agreed to meet again next year. Obama has lent a personal touch by inviting all Asean leaders to the US next year. The joint statement released after their successful meeting promises busy years, if not in the coming decade, ahead for both partners.

The Burmese crisis used to be the main obstacle in Asean-US relations, but now it seems it could consolidate their friendship. The US has urged Asean to do more about Burma by pressuring the junta to begin a national reconciliation dialogue ahead of next year's election. Obama has generated much goodwill and expectation in Asia. From now on, Washington has to materialise all it has promised both verbally and in writing. Otherwise, it would be a great opportunity lost. Like many good opportunities in life, once lost, it would be difficult to make it happen again.

Privacy Policy © 2006 Nation Multimedia Group : 

November 20, 2009 03:20 pm (Thai local time)
www.nationmultimedia.com

Opinion

REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

US policy on Asia: balanced and pragmatic

Published on November 16, 2009

US President Barack Obama wisely used the Suntory Hall in downtown Tokyo on Saturday to beam his central message to Beijing, some 2103 kilometres away. "No one nation can meet the challenges of the 21st century on its own. We welcome China's appearance on the world stage," declared Obama in his speech on US policy towards Asia.

In two sentences, Obama managed to ensure that China was taken on as a strategic partner, not as a competitor, in the manner of his predecessors; and furthermore, both the US and China would work together on multilateral platforms to advance global peace and prosperity.

Obama reiterated the US does not seek to contain China and the rise of a strong and prosperous China can be a source of strength for the community of nations. In the speech, he also praised China's engagement in the world issues of Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Korean Peninsula - and pledged to deepen strategic and economic dialogue with Beijing and improve communication between the militaries.

In short, the US wants a powerful but cooperative China. By visiting Japan first, Obama emphasised the importance of the six-decade US-Japan security alliance. Striking a balance between US-Japan and US-China relations is not always easy.

Given the new regional dynamics, Obama seemed to pull it off this time with his debut in Asia.

"In an interconnected world, power does not need to be not a zero-sum game. Nations need not fear the success of others. By cultivating spheres of cooperation, not competing in spheres of influence, will lead to progress in the Asia Pacific," he said.

Under Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, Japan is also more confident in asserting its diplomatic clout commensurate with its status as the world's No 2 economic power. He has called for an equal partnership with the US, which Obama responded to well in his speech.

Fortunately, in line with his preference for focusing more on Asia, Hatoyama has

perceived US-China relations as complementary to the US-Japan alliance, not weakening it - a win-win approach. That kind of confidence has appeared only recently as China and Japan come to terms with their past and agree to look forward to future cooperation. The resumption of tripartite meetings including South Korea has already made much progress. Their relations would serve as a foundation for broader economic cooperation and integration with the rest of East Asia.

In this connection, Obama said the US sought broader engagement through East Asia because closer ties and stronger cooperation across the Pacific will benefit all. What was conspicuously absent was any mention of Taiwan and its security relations with the US. In previous presidencies, Taiwan was the highlight of US policy on Asia, especially the Taiwan Act of 1979.

Somehow, this time, Obama chose to zero in on relations with old allies in the Asia region, including the Philippines, South Korea, Japan, Australia and Thailand. What is new has been the Obama administration's attitude towards the US alliance. His willingness to listen and consult more with the alliance has already made huge differences. With his birth in Hawaii and childhood experience in Indonesia, Obama has pronounced himself the first Pacific US president and has made known his preference for Asia. During the Bush administration, the preference was obviously for Europe and Latin America.

"These alliances continue to provide the bedrock of security and stability that has allowed the nations and peoples of this region to pursue opportunity and prosperity," he said, adding that what happens here has a direct effect on our lives at home.

"Our commitment to Asia's security is unshakeable, and it can be seen throughout the region."

For the first time, in a US president's speech, Asean has been given due recognition. "Asean will remain a catalyst for Southeast Asian dialogue, cooperation and security and I look forward to becoming the first American president to meet with all 10 of its leaders."

To prove he meant business, at the first Asean-US Leaders' Meeting yesterday, he endorsed Asean's centrality in the future construction of the region, something which Washington has been reluctant to do. The historic Singapore meeting was a success as the US and Asean leaders agreed to meet again next year. In his Tokyo speech, Obama highlighted two regional issues - Burma and North Korea.

He called on the Burmese junta leaders to take a clear step in releasing all political prisoners including Aung San Suu Kyi and take a path to "true security and prosperity".

He repeated the same message at the meeting with the Asean leaders yesterday. He stressed that existing sanctions will remain until there are concrete steps toward

democratic reform.


As for North Korea, he urged Pyongyang to return to the six-party talks and continue with the denuclearisation programmes.

Obviously, Obama has chosen the bottle half-full approach in his speech, dwelling on common tasks and values that US and Asian countries, particularly China, could build on together. Apart from ignoring Taiwan, he also failed to mention Tibet - the favourite topic of US presidencies. He often stressed that issues related to human rights and democracy could be raised in different forums.

He prefers a balanced and pragmatic approach that will focus more on multilateral undertakings than the unilateral or bilateral ones of the past.

Furthermore, the speech gave the imperatives to sustainable and balanced economic growth as well as myriads of transnational issues, including non-nuclear proliferation and climate change, that require common efforts and cooperation over the usual narrowly defined military objectives and partnerships.

The president has inevitably put his personal stamp on US policy in Asia. He knows intuitively his presidential legacy will lie on this vast region of the world.

Privacy Policy © 2006 Nation Multimedia Group 

November 23, 2009 11:43 am (Thai local time)
www.nationmultimedia.com

Breakingnews

Better access to justice needed in deep South: lawyers

Published on November 17, 2009

A leading human rights organisation on Tuesday welcomed the decision to lift martial law in the four Malay-speaking districts in Songkhla but urged the government to do more in providing access to justice for the local people.

Spokesperson of the Cross Cultural Foundation (CCF), Pornpen khongkachonkiet, said access to justice, not to mention the quality of legal services, in the deep South needs serious examination.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, the Cross Cultural Foundation, along with the Muslim Attorney Centre (Mac), expressed concern over the abuse of human rights stemming from the enforcement of special laws, including martial law and emergency decree.

They urged the court to demand from arresting officers' solid evidence and to review the reasons cited for the request for the warrant.

The Nation

Privacy Policy © 2006 Nation Multimedia Group 

November 20, 2009 03:01 pm (Thai local time)
www.nationmultimedia.com

The Nation

[Print](#) [Cancel](#)

Opinion

Still a long battle ahead in the quest for peace in the South

Published on November 18, 2009

It's been hard enough for Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva to convince the security and intelligence community that Thailand needed to talk to the enemy - but then along came Chavalit Yongchaiyudh with his bright ideas.

After making overtures to Phnom Penh, where he helped make last minute preparations for Thaksin Shinawatra's entry into Cambodia to turn up the heat on Thai government, Chavalit returned home to drop another bomb.

This time it was about the deep South, where the ongoing insurgency has claimed nearly 4,000 lives since January 2004. Chavalit proposed that the Malay-speaking South be made an autonomous region to quell the ongoing violence, to which there seems no end in sight.

"Parliamentary seats in the deep South are up for grabs as the ruling Democrat Party fails to respond to long-standing grievances and needs of Muslim voters," said Sunai Phasuk of Human Rights Watch.

"Chavalit took this opportunity and used his proposal about autonomy and amnesty deals to put himself in the spotlight as the champion of southern Muslims."

Like typical Thai politicians, the Democrats shot down his idea, not because it was bad, but because it came from a man they despised. Even one of the long-standing separatist movements, the Patani United Liberation Organisation (PULO), poured cold water on Chavalit's proposal, saying they don't want to be lured into this mud-slinging between the chairman of the Pheu Thai Party and the Democrats, who lead the coalition government.

Because of his poor track record in national politics, few are willing to give Chavalit the benefit of the doubt. In September 2008, Chavalit boldly announced that the end of the insurgency was in sight. Starting in October that year, there would be a steady decline in insurgent attacks. And by December 5, the violence would come to a complete stop, he predicted. He also used this announcement to poke fun at General Chettha Thanajaro, who made similar claims about the end of the southern insurgency. Chettha quickly became a laughing stock, as the whole thing was billed as

a hoax.

Chavalit stepped down as deputy prime minister in the last administration to accept partial responsibility for the October 7, 2008 clashes in front of Parliament between the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) and the police.

In the eyes of the Abhisit government, Chavalit is trying to sabotage the government's work in the deep South. At stake are the ongoing secret talks between a select handful of representatives from the government and the long-standing Patani Malay separatist groups. The initiative was started in late 2006 by the then interim prime minister Surayud Chulanont. Surayud himself, towards the end of his term, even held a face-to-face meeting with one of the separatist leaders, in Bahrain in late 2007.

The subsequent administrations of Samak Sundaravej and Somchai Wongsawat couldn't find the time, or see the need, to carry on the process. Abhisit, on the other hand, is trying to pick up where Surayud left off.

According to political insiders, the Army chief, General Anupong Paochinda, was not entirely comfortable with the idea of talking to the enemy, but has eventually seen the need for it. The negotiators have decided to stay out of Abhisit's way and allow the secret dialogue to take place.

Representatives from the Thai government who report directly to Abhisit have had several rounds of meeting with members of the separatist groups and others in the exiled Patani Malay community. A number of items have been on the table, include a "peace zone", pardons for certain convicted separatist leaders, some form of autonomy for the deep South, more space for Malay culture, and an official acknowledgement that the three southernmost provinces were once a Malay historical homeland.

Like Surayud, Abhisit's idea is to use the long-standing groups as an access point to the new generation of militants on the ground. But in order to do that, the old guard will have to do more to reduce the trust gap between themselves and the active militants, locally known as *juwae*, or "fighters", in the local Malay dialect. Many have acknowledged that their dialogue does not constitute a shared command.

Security officials opposed to the idea of talking to the insurgents, and in favour of a military solution, say that getting the old guard to talk sense to the new generation is a long shot. But then again, they are also admitting that there is no other way to communicate with these new, more extreme, militants if not through the old guard.


And so for the past few years, the old guard have worked hard to forge unity amongst themselves and solidify their position in order to convince both Thais and the active militants that they can make good on their promises.

And then came June 8, 2008, when a reportedly pro-government death squad massacred 11 people inside a Narathiwat village mosque, and wounded 12 others.

The militants on the ground demanded that the government display sincerity by arresting the perpetrators because, according to sources in the exiled community, the juwae were not responsible. So far, the police have issued the name of one suspect, Suthirak Khongsuwan, a Thai Buddhist who used to be a paramilitary ranger, but nothing more has been said.

"The government took Chavalit's bait by rejecting his proposal, which in fact was not really different from Prime Minister Abhisit's original ideas," said Sunai. "Such knee-jerk reactions have alienated the government from southern Muslims, who are now questioning Prime Minister's Abhisit sincerity about what he promised to be solution for the deep South."

For the time being, the strategy is to use military-run development programmes to win hearts and minds in the local communities in the deep South. The fact that few Muslim villagers have stepped forward to assist the government with this task suggests that the Thai security forces are still fighting an uphill battle. Unfortunately, the summit is nowhere in sight.

Privacy Policy © 2006 Nation Multimedia Group : 

November 23, 2009 11:35 am (Thai local time)
www.nationmultimedia.com

Opinion

EDITORIAL

Ineptitude puts troops in harm's way

Published on November 19, 2009

Shootout in the South this week indicates that Thai security forces are not learning from previous hard lessons

In mid 2004, a group of police officers led a team of reporters during the arrest of a suspected insurgent hiding out at Ban Bana in Pattani's Muang district. They thought it was going to be a simple surrender and that the media would document Thailand's finest at work. But what transpired turned out to be entirely different from the events they had imagined.

The suspect, reportedly a member of Gerekan Mujahideen Islam Patani (GMIP), grabbed his AK47, ran to a nearby house and stood his ground, killing three officers before they could take him down. Two colonels and one sergeant died in the shootout that ended only when reinforcements of police and soldiers arrived.

The incident was echoed on Tuesday in Pattani's Kok Phoe district, when ten security officers thought that six suspected insurgents would come out from their vantage point and surrender. The gunfight lasted for about an hour. All six insurgents fought to the death, and no imam or local village elder could talk them out of it.

Beside the difficulties of fighting against young men who are willing to die for their cause, the Thai security forces have demonstrated that they have not learned much from the past. The fact that the ten officers had gone to Ban Tupah in Kok Phoe district without having a backup team with them, or positioned nearby, illustrates a low level of professionalism on their part.


Many security big wigs in Thailand can talk until the cows come home about security strategy. But when it comes to logistics, they are a bunch of amateurs. Is it because the security planners don't take the insurgency seriously enough? Or is it because the security agencies in this restive region don't know how to coordinate their work.

Response times for reinforcements following roadside bombings or ambushes are all too slow, and too often the security forces don't seem to be working under the same standard operating procedure when moving from place to place. For the insurgents, there is no difference between a joint coordinated patrol or a truck full of soldiers

passing by. If the opportunity for an attack exists, they will take it more often than not. Military top brass say that checkpoints are supposed to be part of a security grid, but in reality these roadblocks do little more than irritate local residents, and perhaps even make a target for insurgents.

It has been said that in an insurgency, government forces are not out-fought but out-governed. In other words, the aim is to win the hearts and minds of local residents. But if the past five years is any indication, the psychological strategy, too, has been an utter failure on the part of the Thai authorities.

Besides coming up with a better standard operating procedure for the troops on the ground, the government also has to think outside of the box for a wider solution to the violence that has so far claimed 4,000 lives.

Privacy Policy © 2006 Nation Multimedia Group 

November 23, 2009 11:39 am (Thai local time)

www.nationmultimedia.com

Opinion

REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

ASEAN: from defiance to accommodation

Published on November 23, 2009

WHAT FORMER ASEAN heavyweight leaders Indonesian President Suharto, Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed had in common was a passionate belief in the regional grouping and a readiness to defend the Asean identity and values. They did it with valour and stood firm against heavy criticism from non-Asean countries. In short: no kowtowing to external demands without a consensus.

During the first three decades, their unyielding leadership and attitude was the mantra guiding Asean from an obscure regional grouping to an international player. The 13-year Cambodian conflict, for instance, allowed Asean to show its mettle and patience. From 1979-1992, Asean diplomats and representatives roamed the world lobbying for votes at the annual UN deliberations and garnering support for their unwavering efforts to drive out foreign military occupation of Cambodia.

Their joint vision of a united Asean that could resist external pressure and meddling was well-known. At its inception, Asean was perceived as a pawn in the global power plays as part of the broader Cold War. The grouping has continued to show it has a mind of its own - sometimes much to the irritation of their Western allies and friends.

Burma's hard-headed approach throughout the 1990s was the bench mark of such resistance. Asean countered Western pressure not to admit the pariah state as an Asean member because of its horrible human rights violations and political oppression. Both Suharto and Mahathir strongly backed Burma's membership in Asean against growing international opposition. Burma subsequently joined Asean in 1997. They argued that as countries in the region, they were better placed to resolve their problems.

The days of Asean's defiance are gone. New body languages and rhetoric have quickly emerged within the region. Obviously, Asean has benefited by riding piggy-back on rising Asia. Several factors have contributed to these dramatic shifts both outside and inside Asean.

Last year's global economic and financial crisis caused by the West has pushed the

role of Asian economies to the forefront in ameliorating the turmoil. The continued growing influence of China and India - both key dialogue partners of Asean - has further strengthened the grouping's international role and position.

Within the regional grouping, the transformation came last December when Asean adopted a charter and transformed itself into a rule-based organisation. Of course, the jury is still out on how effective the organisation can be in years to come as some Asean members have not yet complied with their new obligations and commitments. After 16 years of procrastination, the setting up of the Asean Intergovernment Commission for Human Rights in October indicates the grouping's willingness - in a slow and evolutionary manner - to accept international norms and standards.

At his meeting with Asean leaders two weeks ago in Singapore, US President Barack Obama even endorsed Asean centrality in future attempts to build a new regional architecture. Indeed, Washington's recognition of Asean as a driving force has an overall positive impact on the future US role in Asean and the Asian region as a whole. As a result, a new Asean is emerging that is no longer uptight and defensive.

Watching US-Asean leaders talking about cooperation and coexistence at regional and global levels, one could be optimistic that the grouping has taken a new mode - a willingness for closer cooperation with dialogue partners to resolve common challenges.

Such confidence and trust in Asean has taken more than three decades to evolve. When Asean initiated the dialogue partner system in 1977 it was purely for selfish reasons of augmenting its regional interest through increasing bargaining power, widening marketplace, as well as access to technological know-how and financial assistance.

In the previous two summits in Thailand, Asean as a whole responded and engaged much better with external players. It was more open to new ideas. The members were more willing to listen, as articulated by Prime Minister Abhist Vejjajiva, the Asean chair, to proposals made by Japan and Australia. Unlike past scepticism, Asean is welcoming new approaches that will strengthen its role. In the case of building a regional architecture, Asean is no longer adamantly insisting on the Asean+3 process.


But there is a worrying trend in intra-Asean relations. The Thai-Cambodian dispute, with personalised elements, has already rocked the cradle of Asean's cardinal principle of non-interference and good neighbourliness. Despite the appeal of "maximum restraint" to the conflicting parties and mediation efforts from Asean Secretary General, Dr Surin Pitsuwan, very few Asean members were ready to do so. As Surin put it, the appeal is part of what he described as "effective dynamics" inside Asean as a rule-based organisation.

Singapore Foreign Minister George Yeo wrote to him expressing support while Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Pham Gia Khiem has written

to Cambodian Foreign Minister Hor Namhong calling for restraint.

Asean has a weak spot when it comes to resolving disputes among members. Within the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, Asean has a High Council for such a purpose but none has used it. They prefer international arbitration. Fortunately, no Asean members have gone to war against each other in the past 42 years. For the time being, Thailand and Cambodia have yet to climb down. Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, who was briefed on the situation by Abhisit and Prime Minister Hun Sen in Singapore, has assigned Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa to follow up on the development and determine if Indonesia, on behalf of Asean, can have a role. If the current Thai-Cambodian conflict and boiling nationalism continues unchecked and unresolved, it could lead to large-scale arms clashes that could tarnish Asean at the most pivotal time.

In the near future, Asean leaders must also show it is worthwhile for the dialogue partners to increase their engagements with their headquarters through their permanent offices. The US and China have already decided to open them by early next year. Japan, South Korea, Australia, India, New Zealand and the EU would probably follow suit soon. Other two dozen countries, who already have their ambassadors accredited to Asean, would have to do the same later.

Privacy Policy © 2006 Nation Multimedia Group 

November 23, 2009 11:33 am (Thai local time)
www.nationmultimedia.com

Opinion

EDITORIAL

Retreat signal ensures a temporary peace

Published on November 27, 2009

Whatever the real reason for the red-shirt rally postponement, it will serve Thaksin's purposes for now

It's not the first time that Thaksin Shinawatra has called for postponement or cancellation of a red-shirt rally. And it's not the first time either that the fugitive has suggested an intention to negotiate a truce. This time he cited "inappropriate" timing for his followers to take to the streets. He apparently was referring to the upcoming birthday of HM the King. Or he might be unsure whether it is a good idea to give Thailand fresh political trouble immediately after triggering the country's row with Cambodia.

Whatever his motive, the Abhisit government has been given breathing space and the country can heave a temporary sigh of relief. But as far as Thaksin is concerned, the nation can feel anything but thankful. It is he who, only a few days ago, sent to his supporters what observers saw as a call to arms. "I don't know how longer my supporters can bear it," he wrote, claiming his enemies had demonised everything that he had done.

Even if Thaksin seems more sincere this time, nobody can tell whether his wish to negotiate and postpone the red-shirt rally is merely part of a mood swing. He has been alternating between introspection and belligerence, and the switches come abruptly.

The Thai-Cambodian affair has caused Thaksin a setback. There is no doubt that fresh red-shirt trouble around HM the King's birthday would further weaken whatever his agenda is. Thaksin must know this, and his statement that "Now is not the right time" (for a campaign) is as much about himself as it is about the country.

It may also have something to do with mass mobilisation. Both yellow- and red-shirt activists have seemed to lose momentum lately where street protests are concerned. The initial red-shirt plan to stage a major rally this Saturday had been proclaimed, once again, as the biggest show of force. There were reports that Pheu Thai MPs had been instructed to bring participants from their constituencies to ensure an unprecedented turnout.


"Now is not the right time" could therefore mean that organisers were struggling to get the "right number" of protesters. Since a lacklustre showing would not do the movement any good, perhaps it was better to postpone it to another day. And what's a more graceful way of backtracking than having Thaksin play the man of peace?

Or could it be something simpler - like a game of cat and mouse? Thaksin gave the "retreat" order just hours after the Cabinet agreed to put all of Bangkok under the Internal Security Act, which would have made it hard for protesters to assemble and even harder for them to move around.

Normally, enforcing the ISA would cause uproar, but, when it comes to invoking the ISA, the government has taken full advantage of lingering public anxiety left over from the Songkran violence.

Most scenarios behind any red-shirt retreat point toward mere temporary relief for the Thai public. The one scenario that might give us hope is that Thaksin has become desperate for peace talks. But even then, we could easily be brought back to square one - as long as his main conditions are a royal pardon and the return of his assets, while his opponents remain adamant that he has to serve his jail term first or at least show some real remorse.

Yet talks are always better than war, and the rival camps have simple options: start negotiations to prevent a head-on collision, or do so after the real damage is done.

Privacy Policy © 2006 Nation Multimedia Group 

December 3, 2009 03:00 pm (Thai local time)
www.nationmultimedia.com

The Nation

[Print](#) [Cancel](#)

Opinion

EDITORIAL

Militaries could heal battered bilateral ties

Published on November 29, 2009

The positive tone of the Thai and Cambodian defence ministers hold hopes for normalisation

The General Border Committee meeting ended on Friday on a positive note as the Thai and Cambodian defence ministers agreed to work for peace. Defence Minister Prawit Wongsuwan and his Cambodian counterpart, Tea Banh, said they would use their good offices and the armed forces to create the political space needed to bring about the comfort level for the two sides to move on.

The two governments are currently engaged in one of their bitterest diplomatic disputes in decades after Prime Minister Hun Sen appointed fugitive former premier Thaksin Shinawatra as his economic adviser. The move was nothing less than a slap on Bangkok's face. Hun Sen, naturally, said it was his and his country's business as to who he should appoint. He went on to cut Thailand's judicial system to pieces for charging his good friend with corruption, and taunted the Abhisit Vejjajiva government of being immature and lacking credibility and suggested that it seek legitimacy.

Nevertheless, the two defence ministers spent Friday mapping out guidelines for future cooperation between the armed forces and identified specific programmes to serve as a platform for such cooperation. The soccer game between soldiers from the two countries might well be back on schedule.

It has been pointed out that the Thai Army and their Cambodian counterparts, in spite of experiencing hiccups every now and then, have effectively turned the page and moved on from the turbulent years of the previous decades when Vietnam and Thailand turned Cambodia into a high-stakes game. Everybody had blood on their hands and no one is in the mood to dig up the past, hence the desire to leave the political baggage behind.

But let's not let the cosy feelings in Pattaya blur reality. Tea Banh may be the defence minister but we all know that the buck stops with Hun Sen. If Hun Sen does not want Tea Banh to get cuddly with the Thais, he won't.

Opinion

EDITORIAL

Militaries could heal battered bilateral ties

Published on November 29, 2009

The positive tone of the Thai and Cambodian defence ministers hold hopes for normalisation

The General Border Committee meeting ended on Friday on a positive note as the Thai and Cambodian defence ministers agreed to work for peace. Defence Minister Prawit Wongsuwan and his Cambodian counterpart, Tea Banh, said they would use their good offices and the armed forces to create the political space needed to bring about the comfort level for the two sides to move on.

The two governments are currently engaged in one of their bitterest diplomatic disputes in decades after Prime Minister Hun Sen appointed fugitive former premier Thaksin Shinawatra as his economic adviser. The move was nothing less than a slap on Bangkok's face. Hun Sen, naturally, said it was his and his country's business as to who he should appoint. He went on to cut Thailand's judicial system to pieces for charging his good friend with corruption, and taunted the Abhisit Vejjajiva government of being immature and lacking credibility and suggested that it seek legitimacy.


Nevertheless, the two defence ministers spent Friday mapping out guidelines for future cooperation between the armed forces and identified specific programmes to serve as a platform for such cooperation. The soccer game between soldiers from the two countries might well be back on schedule.

It has been pointed out that the Thai Army and their Cambodian counterparts, in spite of experiencing hiccups every now and then, have effectively turned the page and moved on from the turbulent years of the previous decades when Vietnam and Thailand turned Cambodia into a high-stakes game. Everybody had blood on their hands and no one is in the mood to dig up the past, hence the desire to leave the political baggage behind.

But let's not let the cosy feelings in Pattaya blur reality. Tea Banh may be the defence minister but we all know that the buck stops with Hun Sen. If Hun Sen does not want Tea Banh to get cuddly with the Thais, he won't.

Hun Sen may think he is smart by adopting this two-pronged strategy - a diplomatic spitting contest between the two capitals, but hugs and kisses between the two soldiers. But the problem strongmen with inflated egos have is that they invariably shoot themselves in the foot. And by that time it could be too late, as the damage could be too severe and the situation out of control.

No one can deny that there is a high degree of pretentiousness in diplomacy, as the outcome of the Pattaya General Border Committee meeting has shown. Maybe that is what is needed. Bangkok may have to pretend that its feelings were not bruised as badly as it seemed, while Cambodia could reap the benefits of the political capital sowed by Tea Banh and its armed forces. Who knows? The two countries could be hugging and kissing each other one day.

Privacy Policy © 2006 Nation Multimedia Group 

December 3, 2009 03:14 pm (Thai local time)
www.nationmultimedia.com