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# Arroyo says she will run for Congress

*President's move could spawn a bid to make the Philippines a parliamentary democracy with her as prime minister*

BY JAMES HOOKWAY

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo on Monday revealed plans to run for the Philippines' Congress in 2010—a move that could shake up the country's political landscape ahead of national elections due next year.

She is barred by term limits from seeking re-election as president in May's vote. Mrs. Arroyo's decision to seek a seat in the country's legislature is reviving speculation that her influential Lakas Kampi CMD Party wants to transform the Philippines into a parliamentary democracy—a change that, if enacted, could allow her to return to power as a prime minister of this important U.S. ally.

Mrs. Arroyo, 62 years old, has advocated constitutional change to allow for a parliamentary system for several years. She argues that such a setup would be more responsive to the needs of voters and the economy than the current presidential-style system, which she says is prone to military coups and popular upheavals.

In January 2001, Mrs. Arroyo herself came to power amid huge public protests. Her predecessor, former President Joseph Estrada, was effectively ousted when the armed forces turned against him following the collapse of an impeachment complaint against him in the country's Senate.

Although there is already strong momentum for constitutional change in the country's House of Representatives, political analysts say it could take years to redraft the Philippines' constitution to allow a parliamentary form of government because of opposition in the Senate and strong public suspicion of the proposal.

A sociology professor at the University of the Philippines, Randy David, briefly planned to run for Congress in a district in Pampanga province, where Mrs. Arroyo has been expected to run. But he dropped out Monday, saying that Mrs. Arroyo was aiming to be installed eventually as prime minister.

Mrs. Arroyo sidestepped the allegation Monday in an interview with local radio station DZRB, saying "that situation is so hypothetical I won't even bother to speculate about it."

Instead, Mrs. Arroyo said she had realized she just wasn't ready to give up political office. "As you know, people from my province of Pampanga have asked me to stay in public service, so, after much soul-searching, I have decided to respond affirmatively to their call," she said.

Mrs. Arroyo is the first Philippine president to run for the House of Representatives, and initial indications suggest her congressional campaign could be as divisive as her presidency.

After being sworn in after Mr. Estrada's ouster, Mrs. Arroyo survived four impeachment attempts and a number of attempted coups. In 2004, she was re-elected president amid allegations of electoral fraud—she denies any wrongdoing—only to find herself consistently rated the least popular president since late dictator Ferdinand Marcos, who was thrown from power in 1986.

Still, Mrs. Arroyo has won some admirers for her economic policies—especially for efforts to push up tax collections in 2005 while the country teetered on the verge of fiscal crisis. Political analysts say she is an important supporter of the U.S. in Southeast Asia.

During her presidency, U.S. soldiers have traveled to the Philippines to provide surveillance for and train Filipino soldiers tasked with hunting down members of the al Qaeda-backed Abu Sayyaf terrorist group. The success of the joint mission—the Abu Sayyaf group has seen its numbers dwindle to just a few hundred from over 2,000—has encouraged peace talks with other Muslim separatist groups in the southern Philippines and limited the scope for other terrorist organizations to operate in the region.

In recent days, however, Mrs. Arroyo has come under stiff criticism for her government's policies of arming local clan leaders to contain Muslim insurgents in the southern Philippines. The flak follows a clan rivalry that allegedly led to last week's massacre of 57 people there.

The main suspect—a mayor named Andal Ampatuan Jr.—is detained in Manila. No charges have been placed against him and he has denied involvement in the killings.

Tuesday, December 1, 2009

# Is President Obama Abandoning Taiwan?

By PARRIS H. CHANG

Before President Obama's recent trip to China, Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou asserted that "current Taiwan-U.S. ties are better than any time in the past 60 years and mutual trust between the two countries has been completely restored," referring to ruptures with the previous government in Taipei. After Mr. Obama's trip, the U.S.-Taiwan relationship is still far from friendly.

In a speech in Tokyo, President Obama emphasized that the U.S. would not seek to contain China, but did not mention Taiwan at all. In his meetings with Chinese leaders, Mr. Obama avoided the issue of China's building military threat. His administration hasn't announced any arms sales to Taiwan since taking office in January, either.

More fundamentally, the U.S. and China issued a joint statement which included the phrase: "China emphasized that the Taiwan issue concerns China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and expressed the hope that the United States will honor its relevant commitments and appreciate and support the Chinese side's position on this issue."

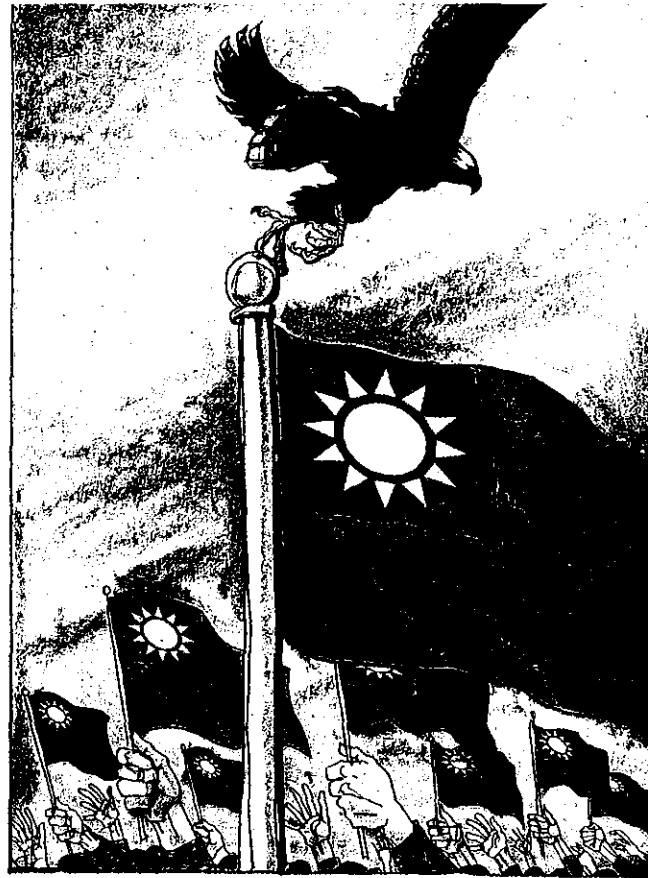
This statement leans toward giving Beijing what it has sought for decades but has tried in vain—until now—to achieve: to get Washington to accept China's claim of sovereignty over Taiwan. In July 1982, American Institute of Taiwan Director James Lilley delivered "Six Reassurances" on behalf of then-President Ronald Reagan, which stated that "the U.S. had not altered its position regarding Taiwan's sovereignty, meaning the U.S. does not recog-

nize China's claim of sovereignty over Taiwan."

In July 1998, the Chinese coaxed then President Bill Clinton, who was visiting China, to state a policy of so-called "Three Nos" regarding Taiwan, that includes "no independent Taiwan," "no two Chinas or one Taiwan, one China," and "no Taiwan membership in intergovernmental international organizations." The third "no" is a serious and outright violation of the Taiwan Relations Act, a U.S. law which states: "Nothing in this Act may be construed as a basis for supporting the exclusion or expulsion of Taiwan from . . . any international organization."

President Obama's predecessor, George W. Bush, took a much more pro-Taiwan stance. When Mr. Bush visited China the first time in February 2002, there were no surprises from his talks with Chinese leaders, nor was there any joint statement. Prior to his arrival at Beijing, President Bush made a speech to Japan's Diet and said: "America will remember our commitment to the people on Taiwan." He also pledged "to do whatever it takes to help Taiwan defend itself." Three months before he left office, he approved a \$6.5 billion package of arms sales to Taiwan.

The Obama team seems to understand that its message may upset Taiwan. After Mr. Obama's trip, the chairman of the American Institute in Taiwan, Raymond Burghardt, was dispatched to Taipei, where he met President Ma, Legislative Yuan Speaker Wang Jin-pyng, and the opposition Democratic Progressive Party Chairwoman Tsai Ing-wen. Mr. Burghardt told them that U.S.-Taiwan policy remains unchanged, including Washington's stance on the island's sovereignty and de-



fense needs. But few leaders seemed to buy this message and local media roundly criticized the visit.

Now is not the time to repeat Mr. Clinton's mistakes. It is morally and politically wrong for the U.S. to oppose the right of Taiwan, a democratic and open society of 23 million people, to determine its

own future. President Obama may be leaning in that direction by not supporting an independent Taiwan and backing China's opposition to Taiwan independence. Beijing has long tried to isolate Taiwan in the international community, lock the island into the framework of a "one China" policy, pave the way for Taiwan's eventual unification

with China, and most importantly, seek Washington's support for its maneuvers.

The Obama-Hu statement "welcomes the peaceful development of relations across the Taiwan Strait and looks forward to efforts by both sides to increase dialogues and interactions in economic, political, and other fields, and develop more positive and stable cross-Strait relations." There is no reason for Washington to believe that Taiwan's unification with Communist China is desirable or inevitable. The three U.S.-China communiques and other joint statements do not commit Washington to Taiwan's unification—and democratic changes in Taiwan have precluded it. The U.S.-Taiwan relationship is valuable in its own right and should not be subordinated to or merely a function of the U.S.-China relations.

To remove any doubts and reassure Taiwan, President Obama should reiterate the commitment of his administration to the Taiwan Relations Act and Reagan's "Six Reassurances." Moreover, to honor the U.S. pledge on security support to Taiwan, the Obama administration should soon make self-defense weapons available to Taiwan. Only then will the U.S.-Taiwan relationship truly be restored.

David G. Klein

*Mr. Chang, professor emeritus of political science at Penn State University, is the CEO of the Taiwan Institute of Political, Economic and Strategic Studies and former deputy secretary general of Taiwan's National Security Council. He has also served as a legislator for the Democratic Progressive Party.*

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Tuesday, December 1, 2009

## 500,000 Iranian Centrifuges

Mohamed ElBaradei capped his contentious and ultimately failed 12-year stint as head of the International Atomic Energy Agency yesterday, having spent many years enabling Iran's nuclear bids only to condemn them in his final days in office. Mr. ElBaradei combined his rebuke of Iran with his familiar calls for more negotiation, but we'll take his belated realism about Iran as his tacit admission that Dick Cheney and John Bolton have been right all along. Let's hope the education of the Obama Administration doesn't take as long.

As if to underscore the point, Sunday the Iranian government ordered up 10 additional uranium enrichment plants on the scale of its already operational facility in Natanz, which has a planned capac-

ity of 54,000 centrifuges. That could mean an eventual total of more than 500,000 centrifuges, or enough to enrich about 160 bombs worth of uranium each year. Whether it can ever do that is an open question, but it does give a sense of the scale of the regime's ambitions.

The decision is also a reminder of how unchastened Iran has been by President Obama's revelation in September that Iran had been building a secret 3,000 centrifuge facility near the city of Qom. The IAEA's governing board finally got around on Friday to rebuking Iran for that deception, a vote the Administration trumpeted because both Russia and China voted with the United States. But perhaps only within the Obama Administration can a symbolic gesture by the IAEA be considered a diplomatic triumph.

"Time is running out for Iran to address the international community's growing concerns about its nuclear program," White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said Sunday, but the West has said this many times before. Earlier this year, Mr. Obama said Iran had a deadline of September.

The regime scoffed at Mr. Obama after he delivered a conciliating message for the Persian New Year in March, scoffed again after he mildly criticized its post-election crackdown and killing spree in June (following days of silence), and scoffed a third time by rejecting the West's offer to enrich Iran's uranium for it. Yet the Administration insists the enrichment

deal is still Iran's for the taking. "A few years ago [the West] said we had to completely stop all our nuclear activities," Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said in October. "Now look where we are today."



Mohamed  
ElBaradei

Those are the words of a man who believes he has Mr. Obama's number. And until the President, his advisers and the Europeans realize that only punitive sanctions or military strikes will force it to reconsider its nuclear ambitions, an emboldened Islamic Republic will continue to march confidently toward a bomb over the wreckage of Mohamed ElBaradei's—and Barack Obama's—best intentions.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.  
Wednesday, December 2, 2009

# The Afghan Solution

By PERVEZ MUSHARRAF

My recent trip to United States has been an enriching experience, during which I had a very healthy discourse with the American public and an opportunity to understand their concerns about the war in Afghanistan. One question I was asked almost everywhere I went was, "How can we stop losing?" The answer simply is a political surge, in conjunction with the additional troops requested by General Stanley McChrystal. Quitting is not an option.

A military solution alone cannot guarantee success. Militaries can only win sometimes, and at best, create an environment for the political process to work. At the end of the day, it is civilians, not soldiers, who have to take charge of their country.

After decades of civil war and anarchy, the Taliban established control over 95% of Afghanistan in 1996. Unfortunately, the Taliban imposed their strict interpretation of Islam on the country. Nevertheless, I proposed to recognize the Taliban regime, in the hope of transforming them from within. Had my strategy been enacted, we might have persuaded the Taliban to deny a safe haven to al Qaeda, and avoided the tragic 9/11 attacks.

Another golden opportunity to rescue the Afghan people emerged after the United Nations' sanctioned international military operation launched after 9/11. Having liberated Afghanistan from the tyranny of al Qaeda and Taliban,

the U.S. had the unequivocal support of the majority of Afghans at that time. The establishment of a truly representative national government which gave proportional representation to all ethnic groups—including the majority Pashtuns—would have brought peace to Afghanistan and ousted al Qaeda once and for all. Unfortunately this did not happen.

The political instability and ethnic imbalance in Afghanistan after 9/11 marginalized the majority Pashtuns and pushed them into the Taliban fold, even though they were not ideological supporters of the Taliban. The blunder of inducting 80,000 troops of Tajiks into the Afghan national army further alienated the Pashtuns.

Meanwhile, Pakistan forcefully tackled the influx of al Qaeda into our tribal areas, capturing over 600 al Qaeda and Afghan Taliban leaders, some of them of very high value. We established 1,000 border checkpoints and even offered to mine or fence off the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, but this never came to pass. The Afghan government, led by Hamid Karzai, had no writ outside of Kabul, and the insufficient ground troops of the NATO and ISAF forces allowed the Taliban to regroup. The 2004 invasion of Iraq shifted the focus and also contributed to the Taliban gaining ground in Afghanistan.

Al Qaeda terrorists who fled from Afghanistan came to Pakistan and settled initially in South Waziristan. Through successful intelli-



The military can only do so much.

gence and law-enforcement operations, we eliminated al Qaeda from our cities and destroyed their command, communication and propaganda centers in South Waziristan. They however fled to the adjoining North Waziristan, Bajur and Swat regions.

From 2004 onwards, we witnessed a gradual shift in the terrorist center of gravity. The Taliban started to re-emerge in Afghanistan and gradually gained a dominant role. They developed ties with the Taliban in Pakistan's tribal areas, especially in North and South Waziristan. With a grand strategy to destabilize the whole region, the Taliban and al Qaeda established links with extremists in Pakistani society on the one hand, and with Muslim fundamentalists in India on the other. They pose a grave threat to South Asia and peace in the world.

We now have to deal with a com-

plex situation. Casualties suffered by our soldiers in the line of duty will not go wasted only if we are able to fully secure our next generations from the menace of terrorism. The exit strategy from Afghanistan must not and cannot be time related. It has to ask, "What effect do we want to create on the ground?" We must eliminate al Qaeda, dominate the Taliban militarily and establish a representative, legitimate government in Afghanistan.

The military must ensure that we deal with the insurgents from a position of strength. The remaining al-Qaeda elements, whose numbers have dwindled, must be totally eliminated. The Taliban have to be dominated militarily. We must strengthen border-control measures with all possible means to isolate the militants on the Afghanistan and Pakistan sides.

The Pakistan military must continue to act strongly. Operationally,

we must raise substantially more forces from within the tribal groups and equip them with more tanks and guns. On the Afghan side, the U.S. and ISAF troops must be reinforced. All of this must be done in combination with raising additional Afghan National Army troops, with significant Pashtun representation. Exploiting tribal divisions, we should also raise local militias.

On the political front, we need an invigorated dialogue with all groups in Afghanistan, including the Taliban. Afghanistan for centuries has been governed loosely through a social covenant between all the ethnic groups, under a sovereign king. This structure is needed again to bring peace and harmony. We have to reach out to Pashtun tribes and other who do not ideologically align themselves with the Taliban or al Qaeda. I have always said that "all Taliban are Pashtun, but all Pashtuns are not Taliban." Pakistan and Saudi Arabia can play pivotal roles in facilitating this outreach.

Pakistan and Afghanistan were shortsightedly abandoned to their fate by the West in 1989, in spite of the fact that they were the ones who won a victory for the free world against the Soviet Union. This abandonment led to a sense of betrayal amongst the people of the region. For the sake of regional and world peace, let us not repeat the same mistake.

*Mr. Musharraf is the former President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.*

# The Afghan Escalation

One of the media's least accurate tropes is that, with the President's speech Tuesday night, Afghanistan is now "Obama's war." No, it isn't. Nations go to war, not merely Administrations, and President Obama's commitment of 30,000 more troops to that Southwest Asian theater is a national investment in blood and treasure on behalf of vital U.S. security interests.

We support Mr. Obama's decision, and this national effort, notwithstanding our concerns about the determination of the President and his party to see it through. Now that he's committed, so is the country, and one of our abiding principles is that nations should never start (much less escalate) wars they don't intend to win.

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The heart of the augmented strategy will be the deployment of some 30,000 additional troops, on top of the 21,000 more that have arrived this year. They'll be deployed in what capable and creative Generals Stanley McChrystal and David Petraeus have described as a counterinsurgency strategy akin to the successful Iraq surge of 2007, albeit with important differences.

As in Iraq, the goal will be as much political as military: Strike and degrade the resurgent Taliban, while also protecting more of the Afghan population as a way to win their cooperation and allegiance for the Afghan government.

The Taliban aren't popular in most of the country, but they are feared. One lesson from Iraq and other counterinsurgencies is that terrorists lose their base of popular support once the public believes the government can protect them. And once protected, the public begins to provide intelligence that can assist counterterrorism efforts against the Taliban and

al Qaeda. As Mr. Obama rightly stressed Tuesday night, the Afghan surge should also reassure Pakistan that the U.S. won't be a fickle ally in its campaign against al Qaeda and radical Islamists.

Another lesson from Iraq is that a counterinsurgency can show rapid results when done right. And on this score, we're pleased to see Mr. Obama accelerate the troop deployment so all 30,000 will be in country by next summer. If we're going to surge, better to do it quickly and show both the Afghan and American people early evidence of success.

A proper counterinsurgency also needs enough manpower, however, and here there is cause for concern. Mr. Obama's hand-picked commander, General McChrystal, requested at least 40,000 troops and will have to settle for less. The Administration is pitching for as many as 10,000 more NATO troops, but this is probably wishful thinking. The Europeans may love Mr. Obama, but they don't want to fight with him any more than they did with George W. Bush.

The lower force level means there will be no more than two or three additional combat brigades, compared to five additional in the Iraq surge. Fewer combat troops, in turn, mean that General McChrystal may have to make hard choices about where to deploy—between, say, the Taliban strongholds in southern Helmand and Kandahar provinces, the scene of the heaviest fighting, or pushing back against Taliban sallies in the previously calm north.

Also worrisome is Mr. Obama's decision to scale back plans for training and

equipping Afghan security forces. General McChrystal and his staff thought the U.S. and its allies could stand up a force of 400,000, or twice the current target. The Administration vetoed him. Retention problems and cost factored into the decision.

One official noted the country lacked enough "qualified and literate" recruits. But

the Afghan Army, currently at 90,000, counts as a major success in the post-Taliban era. If the Administration wants an early exit from Afghanistan, then building up the military seems essential to leaving behind a country that can protect its own people.

The President's strangest note Tuesday night was his insistence on an "exit" strategy that has the U.S. beginning to turn security over to Afghans in as soon as 18 months. Since July 2011 is only a year after the surge forces will have been fully deployed, the timeline seems arbitrary and overtly political.

Mr. Obama said his purpose is to show Afghan President Hamid Karzai that the U.S. commitment isn't "open-ended," as if that wasn't already obvious. Its real purpose may be to reassure Democrats on Capitol Hill who hear shouts of "Vietnam" at every liberal fund-raiser. Whatever its intent, the focus on withdrawal so soon after escalation sends a message of doubt to the very Afghans the surge is supposed to reassure, while encouraging the Taliban to wait us out.

The President's emphasis on an early

exit underscores our larger concern about his own war diffidence. When Mr. Obama announced his initial troop surge in March, he gave a single speech and dropped the subject. That won't do this time—not with half of his own party already doubting the surge and demanding a new, economically damaging "surtax" to pay for it. The Democratic left's assault on Mr. Bush and later on Hillary Clinton helped Mr. Obama win the Presidency, but now he must rebut that same anti-antiterror left if he wants to succeed.

As for Republicans, some will be tempted to do to Mr. Obama what he did to Mr. Bush and oppose a war that is increasingly unpopular. We hope they do not. Whatever their doubts about Mr. Obama as a Commander-in-Chief, they should let Democrats be the defeatists. If the strategy succeeds, Republicans will get credit for helping in the national interest; and if it fails, the public will feel comfortable turning to them for national security leadership.

Mr. Obama could also help himself with Republicans on the war if he governed with less partisanship on domestic policy. Tuesday night's attempt to once again blame the Bush Administration for every Afghan setback hardly sends a bipartisan message.

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Above all, as a war President, Mr. Obama will have to spend more of his own political capital persuading the American public that the Afghan campaign is worth the price. One speech at storied West Point isn't enough. The President needs his own political surge.



Barack Obama

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Thursday, December 3, 2009

# Emissions Cuts Would Cost India Dearly

By SHIKHA DALMIA

In the pre-iTunes, pre-MTV age, there was usually a multiyear lag before hit songs in the West reached India. Now India is experiencing a similar time-lag on global warming. Just when fresh doubts about the issue are emerging in the West, India is flirting with the idea of hopping on the global-warming bandwagon at the Copenhagen climate-change summit next week.

**The poor can't afford a big tax on energy usage, or a return to the License Raj of times past.**

This is in large part a misguided attempt to bolster India's political standing in the world. In an October letter to the prime minister conveniently leaked to the press, Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh expressed concern that India's intransigence on the issue was making it a pariah among developed countries, jeopardizing its bid for permanent membership at the United Nations Security Council. He counseled that India delink itself from the Group of 77 developing nations resisting forced emission cuts without compensation, and instead make common cause with the Group of 20 rich countries pushing for

climate action.

Mr. Ramesh's letter is a significant change of tune, given he made headlines this summer when he bluntly told Secretary of State Hillary Clinton that India was simply in no position to accept binding emissions cuts. It is widely regarded as a trial balloon by the government of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and has triggered a maelstrom of protest in parliament, forcing Mr. Ramesh to pledge not to accept legally binding emissions cuts. But the government is nevertheless trying to change India's current domestic global-warming policy more dramatically than it is letting on to better align it with global demands.

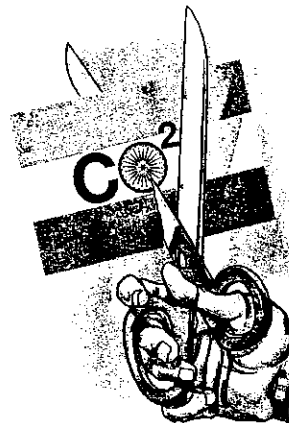
The current policy, called Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions, in some ways is a declaration of India's independence on climate change. It essentially tells the world that India will undertake mitigation efforts if and when it is in its self-interest. The proposed new policy, dubbed Nationally Accountable Mitigation Outcomes, is something completely different. It would commit India to developing a mitigation plan right away. The plan would be enforced by domestic law but Mr. Ramesh—tellingly—wants to submit the emissions reports generated for international scrutiny every two years. This could well become a prelude to India eventually joining a global emissions regime.

Even worse, the new regime

would unleash Byzantine new regulations on the country, from new energy efficiency standards in building codes to new fuel economy standards for vehicles. India would have to obtain 20% of its energy from renewable sources—wind, solar and small hydroelectric power—compared to 8% now. Given that these sources are typically far more expensive than fossil fuels, this would mean putting Indians, 40% of whom don't even have access to electricity, on an even stricter energy diet. The increased expense will put homes, air conditioning and cars out of reach of more Indians—all of which will make them, especially the poor, less able to withstand floods, heat waves and other dire effects of global warming should they ever materialize.

The resulting emission cuts won't even make a dent in global temperatures. India's per capita energy consumption is 15 times less than America's and half of China's—the two biggest polluters. To be sure, President Obama is poised to pledge to cut U.S. carbon emissions 80% below 2005 by 2050 at Copenhagen. But it's an empty promise because there is little to zero chance that he will be able to get Congress to go along. China too announced plans—modest by all accounts—to curb its emissions. So India will certainly face pressure at the conference to act, despite the fact that bigger polluters won't.

But as a developing country,



India can least afford to give up its right to consume as much energy as is necessary to deliver all Indians a living standard comparable to the one that rich countries take for granted. There is every reason to believe that the new License Raj will damage India's economy every bit as much as the old one in the preliberalization days, when India's growth rate remained stuck at around 2%. This would be unfortunate at any time, but especially now, when the West itself is in the middle of a huge rethinking on this issue.

Front and center is the ClimateGate scandal that's erupting in Britain. Leaked emails out of the climate research center of Britain's University of East Anglia, unveiled last week, suggest scientists manipulated data, destroyed

inconvenient evidence and tried to suppress opposing views. The scandal is prompting calls for a full-blown government inquiry into the science of global warming in both Britain and America. Cap-and-trade regimes in Washington and Canberra have stalled, and no one expects a climate deal of any substance at next week's Copenhagen meeting.

Meanwhile, global-warming fatigue is setting in everywhere. An October poll by Pew Center Research found that only 57% of Americans think there is solid evidence that the earth is getting warmer, down from 71% in April 2008. Only 36% now believe that the warming is caused by humans, compared to 47% in April 2008. Nor is America unique. The number of people rating climate change as the major issue they worry about has dropped to fourth place behind global economic stability in the last year, according to the HSBC Climate Confidence Monitor, a polling operation established by the bank and leading environmental outfits.

In the long run, India will gain more international respect if it remains focused on growing its economy instead of reshackling its people under a new, green License Raj. That's the real climate-change calculation Mr. Singh should be worrying about.

*Ms. Dalmia is a senior analyst at Reason Foundation and a Forbes columnist.*

## Mrs. Arroyo and Martial Lawlessness

Memories in the Philippines are still raw from the extended period of martial law under strongman Ferdinand Marcos in the 1970s and '80s. So the decision by current President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to declare martial law for the first time since then is no small step. She's taking a very big risk both for the country and for her own political future.

Mrs. Arroyo's move to impose military rule in parts of southern Maguindanao Province was prompted by the worst single act of political violence in the country's recent history. A band of thugs allegedly massacred 57 people on November 23 in a convoy on their way to submit candidacy papers on behalf of Ismael Mangudadatu, who is running for governor. The chief suspects, according to police and media reports, are members of the powerful Ampatuan clan; patriarch Andal Sr. is the incumbent governor and his son Andal Jr. is running for the post. Police yesterday released a list of 161 suspects connected to the clan and charged five, including Andal Sr., with rebellion. Andal Jr. has turned himself in. The family denies involvement.

Whatever the short-term virtues of Mrs. Arroyo's martial-law declaration—and those are debatable—this case has exposed endemic rot in Philippine governance that martial law will not fix. The biggest problem is the extent to which Philippine politics is dominated by a relative handful of families. Making matters worse, a weak central government in Manila has for years outsourced



Police officers survey an arms cache unearthed Dec. 6

various law-and-order functions to powerful clans.

The Ampatuans are a case in point: They have long benefited from their cozy relationships with national leaders. Andal Sr. got his start in local politics during the Marcos-era period of martial law. Successive administrations tolerated powerful clans as a check on various communist and Islamic separatist movements. Over the years these clans have built up private armies. They have also built up patronage networks that typically extend throughout the local civilian governments, police and judiciary. They effectively function as a law unto themselves.

November's massacre shows the costs of allowing this kind of system to persist. If Mrs. Arroyo were serious about restoring order to the region, she would focus on beefing up the normal police and military presence in the area while disbanding the private militias that exist across the country. Defenders say the martial-law declaration will facilitate such a process, but that claim deserves skepticism. Authorities have used their powers to conduct warrantless searches and arrests to root out several large Ampatuan arms caches over the past week.

But so far there's little sign of any broader movement to disarm clans. In-

deed, Mrs. Arroyo has prized her own ties to such families, especially the Ampatuans. They have a demonstrated ability to deliver votes in Mrs. Arroyo's 2004 re-election run and 2007 congressional races where the region swung heavily for her favored candidates. In a step widely perceived as a reward for such loyalty, Mrs. Arroyo in 2006 legalized private militias that previously had existed in a legal gray zone.

Meanwhile, declaring martial law is a questionable way to go about restoring law and order. An investigation, albeit reportedly a flawed one, was already underway after Mrs. Arroyo declared an emergency in the immediate aftermath of the massacre. Critics say the legal authority to declare martial law isn't clear-cut—the situation in Maguindanao may not meet either of the two possible constitutional conditions. And given the serious rights violations that came with martial law under Marcos, Filipinos are understandably concerned now, even though so far the military is by all accounts not abusing its powers.

The problems on display here are not new, even if the November massacre is a particularly flagrant example. But writing off the Philippines now would be a mistake. The province of Maguindanao shares an island with areas where the U.S. military is helping Philippine forces fight the al Qaeda-linked Abu Sayyaf Group. A lot is at stake there. That's why it's so important to understand that martial law is not only controversial—it's only a band-aid.



# China's New Security State

BY WILLY LAM

As 2009 draws to a close, China's leaders should be breathing a sigh of relief that a tense year of major anniversaries, including the 20-year anniversary of the Tiananmen massacre, is ending. But instead of rolling back the draconian security measures put in place to guard these special dates, Beijing is busy hashing new plans for a larger, more powerful, more invasive national security apparatus.

On December 2, senior state-security personnel met in Tianjin to fine-tune a new nationwide antisubversion network to help safeguard the Chinese Communist Party's ruling status. Official media says the network is aimed at fighting "the redoubled threats of separatism, infiltration and subversion" and stopping the leakage of state secrets.

It's no coincidence that this is happening now: The authorities anticipate more challenges to the regime from disaffected peasants and workers, and "anti-Beijing" elements in Xinjiang and Tibet, following the deployment earlier this year of extra troops of the paramilitary People's Armed Police to promote socio-political stability in those areas. State-security specialists also want to seal China off from the "subversive" ideas of the West. And preparation for the all-important Party Congress in 2012 will begin in earnest in the spring. President Hu Jintao, who wants to promote dozens of his protégés at the Congress, is keen to show

the party's 76 million members that he is in firm control of the nation.

In the words of State Security Minister Geng Huichang, the new effort aims to "win the 'people's warfare' in safeguarding national security and ensuring socio-political stability under new conditions." Big and medium-sized cities are setting up state security "leading groups" which will be headed by municipal Party secretaries. These leading groups set

## The Communist Party tries to hold on to power by expanding its antisubversion network.

the agenda for police and security departments, and ensure that enough vigilantes and voluntary informants can be recruited from the populace. They can also ask other government units to contribute funds and resources to help maintain overall stability.

Smaller cities and county-level administrations are also setting up new big-brother units to ensure stability, called Offices to Maintain Social Stability and to Rectify Law and Order. In rich coastal cities, such outfits are being set up in every district and major street. According to a government circular, these groups are charged with ferreting out "anti-CCP elements" and "snuffing all destabilizing forces in the bud." The circular called upon

these offices to "get a firm grip on the activities of hostile forces within and outside China," specifically fingering foreign NGOs and religious organizations as potential sources of subversion and sabotage.

The social stability offices also have a mandate to "prevent hostile elements from fomenting chaos by inflaming hot-button issues" in Chinese society. They are empowered to coordinate the efforts of the police, state-security agents, and People's Armed Police officers to combat "anti-government forces"—and to recruit vigilantes and voluntary informants within their jurisdiction.

The "leading groups" and social-stability offices are only the latest additions to a labyrinthine state-security apparatus that employs several million full-time police and spies, and many more part-time informants. Since mid-2008, municipalities nationwide are being asked to emulate Beijing's security measures during the Olympics, when the city mobilized more than 1.5 million vigilantes and informants to safeguard security. Moreover, police and state-security agents in increasing numbers of cities are conducting regular training and operations in conjunction with private security staff employed by factories and universities.

According to Public Security Minister Meng Jianzhu, Beijing's goal is to construct a *fangkong* ("prevention-and-control") grid that is "multi-dimensional, all-weather, and foolproof." Writing in the December 1 issue of the Party

theoretical journal Seeking Truth, Mr. Meng refers to several layers of anti-infiltration and antisubversion networks: Those based in streets and communities; internal security and anti-sabotage units in every government office, college and commercial firm; CCTV and surveillance grids especially in big cities; coordination networks among security-related units in each province and region; and Internet-policing facilities. Parts of this plan are already in place; for instance, two million surveillance cameras are being installed in the prosperous Pearl River Delta to target ordinary criminals, dissidents, foreign spies as well as members of underground religious groups.

Mr. Meng issues dire warnings about the subversive nature of China's fast-developing information superhighways. "The Internet has become a major vehicle through which anti-China forces are perpetrating their work of infiltration and sabotage," he noted. On a provincial tour last month, Mr. Meng called upon police officers to boost cooperation with high-tech companies. So it's little surprise that Internet police units in provincial and municipal public security departments have since mid-2009 received more funding and resources to erect firewalls and to track down "subversive" Web sites.

The government appears to be devoting vast resources to all of these stabilization efforts, although Beijing never publishes its state-security budgets. Aggressive recruitment of college

graduates—particularly those who are conversant in IT and foreign languages—by the social-stability offices testifies to the fact that the Communist Party has earmarked unprecedented resources to keeping itself in power.

These efforts are already bearing fruit in the form of increased arrests and harassment of dissidents, including activists like Liu Xiaobo, who was charged with subversion yesterday for his role in promulgating Charter 08. Late last month, Huang Qi, a Chengdu-based activist, was given a three-year jail term for "illegally holding state secrets." His "crime," according to human-rights watchdogs, was helping families whose children died during the earthquake in Sichuan Province in May last year. The politicization of the judiciary also continues to be exacerbated.

The Hu leadership seems confident that the reinforced control apparatus will substantially reduce the more than 100,000 cases of "mass incidents" estimated to have hit China this year. In the short term, security forces may succeed in halting the "infiltration" of Western values. But ultimately redoubled repression will only drive the forces of discontent underground—and render Mr. Hu's goal of a "harmonious society" illusory.

*Mr. Lam is professor of China Studies at Akita International University, Japan, and adjunct professor of History at Chinese University of Hong Kong.*

# Pressure put on Arroyo to end terror

*New hostage-taking of 57 after martial law is declared points to need for volatile south to be tamed before May elections*

BY JAMES HOOKWAY

Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo is under pressure to find new ways of pacifying the anarchic southern Philippines after last month's massacre of 57 people there.

But the options—including strengthening court systems and improving rule of law in the region—could take months, if not years. If progress isn't made before next May's national and local elections, analysts warn, the Philippines could see more of the clan-driven conflicts that led to the extraordinary eruption of violence on Nov. 23.

If the efforts fail, it could leave the southern region—already a hotbed for Communist insurgencies and al Qaeda-linked terrorists—even more volatile than it is today.

Another kidnapping on Thursday underscored the area's volatility. Local officials said a bandit gang seeking immunity from prosecution took 75 hostages, including elementary-school students and teachers a few hundred kilometers from the Nov. 23 massacre site. The Associated Press reported that 18 hostages, including all the children, were later released, leaving 57 people still held as officials negotiate their freedom.

For decades, successive Philippine governments—including Mrs. Arroyo's—have armed local clan leaders and their militias to contain Muslim and Communist terrorists as well as powerful political chieftains. Now, Mrs. Arroyo's government is attempt-



Demonstrators on Thursday condemn with mock coffins last month's election-related massacre in Maguindanao province.

ing to undo some of the damage. She declared martial law last week in Maguindanao province where the Nov. 23 killings took place, to enable the military to hunt down suspected militia members and to unearth arms caches known to be hidden on the property of local politicians believed to be behind the murders.

Prosecutors have filed multiple murder charges against a local mayor, Andal Ampatuan Jr., for alleg-

edly leading the massacre of 30 journalists and his rivals in the Mangudadatu family. His father, former governor Andal Ampatuan Sr., and other clan members, have been arrested and charged with rebellion. The family maintains their innocence.

Although opposition politicians have argued martial law is an overreaction, supporters of Ms. Arroyo's tactics, such as the influential Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philip-

pines, suggest it offers the quickest way to start rebuilding a civil society in a region long steeped in blood.

One critical task will be to shore up the southern Philippines' judicial system, which analysts say had been intimidated by local clans in recent years. In the days after the massacre, investigators complain that local magistrates didn't show up for work, delaying the issue of arrest and search warrants.

"They were afraid of reprisals from the clans," one investigator says. The Philippines' Department of Justice petitioned the Supreme Court to allow it to transfer the massacre trials to Manila out of fears it would be impossible to conduct an impartial trial in the region.

Maguindanao's entire 1,000-person police force also was removed because of concerns about its allegiance to the Ampatuan clan, which has had a lock-hold on the province since 2001. They were replaced by officers and soldiers sent in from other parts of the country, including some who have experience in dealing with Muslim terrorists. While their background may make them less susceptible to intimidation from local militias, it could take time for them to become familiar with the region, complicating the pacification process.

Another key concern is whether authorities can lay the framework for free and fair elections by the time polls are due in May. Soldiers have reported uncovering voter-identification papers and ballots from the properties of the Ampatuan family, deepening suspicions that the family was involved in electoral fraud.

Political analysts say the prospect of a lengthy trial for Andal Ampatuan Jr. and his relatives could help preparations for free elections by undermining their ability to reconsolidate their hold on Maguindanao in the event that members of the family are acquitted.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Monday, December 14, 2009

## The Next Step for the Philippines

**T**hat the Philippines survived President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo's one-week flirtation with martial law relatively unscathed is a victory for the still-young democracy. Now Manila needs to buckle down to fixing the problems plaguing the southern part of the country.

Mrs. Arroyo rescinded late Saturday her imposition of martial law in parts of southern Maguindanao province. The original declaration was prompted by the election-related massacre of 57 people allegedly at the hands of the powerful Ampatuan clan that effectively runs the area. Since then, authorities say they

have unearthed large weapons caches. Some leaders of the Ampatuan family were charged with rebellion; they have denied any involvement in the massacre.

The public outcry that forced Mrs. Arroyo to backtrack on martial law is instructive. The president stirred bad memories of military rule under Ferdinand Marcos in the 1970s and '80s. Filipinos demonstrated that they don't want to go down that road again, even if it's presented as a matter of sacrificing liberty for security's sake. Heavy criticism from all corners of society left Mrs. Arroyo with little choice but to backtrack.

That's a victory for civil rights, but the

Philippines is still far from solving its democratic and law-and-order problems—and the November massacre is only part of it. This weekend also saw a hostage crisis, an abduction and an Islamist militant attack on a jail, all in the southern region where Manila struggles to exert control.

A central problem is Manila's long practice of cultivating close ties with local clans like the Ampatuans as a counterweight to Islamist and communist insurgents. In a 2006 decree, Mrs. Arroyo even legalized the private armies these families maintain. Last month's massacre was just the most flagrant example of the

culture of impunity this policy breeds.

Mrs. Arroyo can start to put the country back on track by vigorously prosecuting the perpetrators of the November massacre despite her own close political ties to the Ampatuans. She could revoke the 2006 decree. And Manila can give military and police the training and funding they need to fight insurgents effectively without recourse to local warlords.

Filipinos have little faith in Mrs. Arroyo to take such bold steps, but at least her term expires next year. Filipinos showed last week they still want a functional democracy. Mrs. Arroyo's successor can try to give them one if she won't.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Monday, December 14, 2009

# The Disarmament President

President Obama gave a gracious speech Thursday accepting his Nobel Peace Prize, starting with the humble note that he has yet to earn it. If his Oslo hosts expected a woolly-headed address about peace in our time, they also didn't get it. He stated clearly that sometimes war is necessary to defend the peaceable and to serve justice and liberty. He even hit the George W. Bush note that "evil does exist in the world."

Congratulations, Mr. President.

On the other hand, Mr. Obama also didn't disappoint the Norwegians, who in giving the award had cited his "work for a world without nuclear weapons." He repeated his commitment to that cause, starting with his effort to rework the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty of 1991 that expired December 5. So it's worth checking in to see how his disarmament vision is faring in the rougher world of rogues and national interest. The answer is not so well.

The Administration decided that rather than negotiate an extension of the existing Start treaty, a whole new arrangement to limit warheads and delivery systems should be crafted. In July, the U.S. and Russia signed a "framework agreement" to reduce stockpiles by as much as a third. Alas, the Administration

was so focused on the numbers that it neglected the stickier details—such as verification, and whether the current Start regime would stay in place if negotiations dragged on.

Though the far weaker party, the Russians have figured out their leverage over an Administration eager to show any progress. Pushing that advantage, Russia has already secured lower ceilings on nuclear weapons and delivery vehicles, scaled back verification, and pocketed other strategic concessions.

Let's take those in order. The U.S. looks likely to agree to cut the number of permitted delivery vehicles, such as missiles, long-range bombers and submarines, by half, to 800 or less. This is to Russia's advantage, which as of last spring had 814—and not all of them in working condition. Many of America's 1,198 nuclear delivery vehicles—from B-2 bombers to ICBMs—are being fitted with conventional weapons. The ceilings in a new Start would likely make no distinction between bomb types. If the goal is to move away from nukes, why limit the military's capacity to deploy conventional weapons?

As for verification, with fewer allowable warheads, Ronald Reagan's "trust but verify" maxim applies more than ever. Yet Russia wants to reduce oversight, and it specifically told the U.S. that continuous monitoring at the Votkinsk Machine Building Plant would end once Start expired. The Russians are building new RS-24 mobile nuclear missiles at

Votkinsk. According to one Russian general, the RS-24 will by 2016 constitute four-fifths of its ICBM forces. Without monitoring, the U.S. won't know for sure how many of these mis-

siles the Russians make and where they are deployed.

While Russia invests in new warheads and missiles, the Obama Administration has yet to lay out its own plans for updating the U.S. nuclear arsenal. Even staunch proponents of arms control concede that to be able to reduce the quantity of U.S. arms, we have to improve the quality. The Senate should ask why the White House isn't.

The Russians also refused to discuss their huge advantage in tactical weapons, and the Administration said OK. After the July "framework agreement," Russia

signalled that U.S. plans to deploy missile defenses in Poland and the Czech Republic stood in the way of a final deal. Mr. Obama obliged, informing the Poles and Czechs of his reduced defenses late on the day before the sixth round of Start talks in Geneva. The announcement pleased the Russians, though it still hasn't got Washington a deal. Stay tuned for more concessions as U.S. negotiators try to get it before the year's end.

Meanwhile, the world's rogues continue to pursue nuclear weapons, and Mr. Obama said Thursday that "it is incumbent upon all of us to insist that nations like Iran and North Korea do not game the system." He added that "we must develop alternatives to violence that are tough enough to change behavior." But all the President has to show for a year of courting these regimes is their refusal even to consider giving up either their weapons (North Korea) or their growing capacity to make them (Iran).

The French, for one, see this danger plainly and want the U.S. to press harder on Tehran. But on these hard cases, the Administration can't muster the same sense of urgency it is bringing to the cause of an unnecessary arms control pact with Russia. Mr. Obama is right that he still has to earn that Nobel.

Obama's boffo Oslo speech versus the real nuclear world.

# Naked Copenhagen

BY RICHARD MULLER

Imagine a "dream" agreement emerging from Copenhagen this week: The U.S. agrees to cut greenhouse emissions 80% by 2050, as President Barack Obama has been promising. The other developed countries promise to cut emissions by 60%. China promises to reduce its CO<sub>2</sub> intensity by 70%

**Temperature is increasingly at the mercy of the developing world.**

in 2040. Emerging economies promise that in 2040, when their wealth per capita has grown to half that of the U.S., they will cut emissions by 80% over the following 40 years. And all parties make good on their pledges.

Environmental success, right? Wrong. Even if the goals are all met, emissions will continue rising to nearly four times the current level. Total atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> will rise to near 700 parts per million by 2080 (the current level is 385), and—if the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) models are right—global temperature will rise about six degrees Fahrenheit at mid latitudes.

The reason is that most future carbon emissions will not come from the currently industrialized world, but from the emerging economies, especially China. And China, which currently emits 30% more CO<sub>2</sub> per year than the U.S., has not promised to cut actual

emissions. It and other developing nations have promised only to cut their carbon "intensity," a technical term meaning emissions per unit of GDP.

China claims it is already cutting CO<sub>2</sub> intensity by 4% a year as part of its five-year plan. President Hu Jintao has hinted that at Copenhagen China will offer to continue such reductions. By 2040, that will add up to a 70% reduction in intensity.

Sounds good, but here's the catch: With 10% annual growth in China's economy, a 4% cut in intensity is actually a 6% annual increase in emissions. India and other developing countries have similar CO<sub>2</sub> growth. That 6% yearly increase is what is shown in the nearby chart.

True, China's CO<sub>2</sub> per capita is only a quarter of the U.S. emissions rate. But warming doesn't come from emissions per capita, it comes from total emissions.

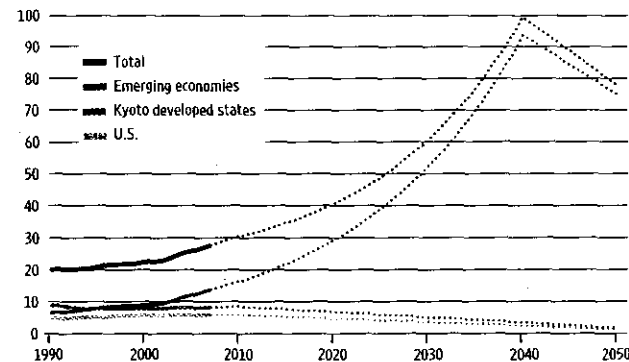
China's carbon intensity is now five times that of the U.S.; it is extremely carbon inefficient. By the time the Chinese cut emissions intensity by 45%, its yearly total will be over twice that of the U.S. And in the proposed Copenhagen dream scenario, by 2025 China's emissions will actually surpass those of the U.S. per capita.

If the issue is rising emissions in the next several decades, the bottom line is simple: The developed world is rapidly becoming irrelevant.

Every 10% cut in the U.S. is negated by one year of China's growth. By 2040 China could be the most economically dominant nation on earth. The West might be able to cajole it, but won't be able to impose sanctions on

## The West's Carbon Emissions Are Irrelevant

Growth in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, in billions of tons per year following Copenhagen agreement



Assumptions: Cuts of 80% by U.S. and a 60% cut by Kyoto developed states by 2050; a 4% per year cut in carbon intensity until 2040 by China; Chinese economy grows at 10%; other emerging economies grow at 6%; and emerging economies begin 80% cut in 2040.

Source: Data from 1990-2007, IEA. Data from 2008-2050, Muller & Associates

China. Temperature will be at the mercy of the newly powerful economies.

Moreover, an expensive effort to reduce Western emissions sets a worthless example. Only emissions cuts that provide measurable economic benefit to the developing nations will be adopted by them. If the 80% U.S. emissions cut winds up hurting the U.S. economy, it guarantees China will never follow our example.

Cheap green energy is not going to be easy. Coal is dirt cheap, and China has been installing a new gigawatt coal plant each week—enough to supply five completely new cities the size of New York every year.

Technological change can help a great deal. For now carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) from coal combustion is unproven, but

so is cheap solar. I expect we can make CCS work. Perhaps the West can subsidize CCS in China or pay to make its plants CCS ready. A dollar spent in China can reduce CO<sub>2</sub> much more than a dollar spent in the U.S.

There is another alternative: luck. Here's how it could help. Scientists are aware of a phenomenon that would counter the greenhouse effect: warmth evaporates water; water creates clouds; clouds reflect sunlight. A small cloud increase would significantly reduce predicted warming. The IPCC gives such cloud feedback only a 10% chance. My estimate is 30%. Clouds may already be kicking in, responsible for the negligible global warming of the past 12 years. Maybe, but we don't know. That's why we need luck.

Perhaps we could geoengineer a solution: Squirt a few million tons of sulfur dioxide into the stratosphere to reflect sunlight, emulating the 1991 Mt. Pinatubo eruption. We'll certainly get pretty sunsets. Or we could foam up the oceans to increase reflectivity. Many people find such ideas scarier than warming because of the threat of unintended consequences.

Another option is that we could learn to live with global warming. Despite claims to the contrary, storms aren't increasing. The rate of hurricanes hitting the U.S. coast has been constant for a century, and the number of damaging tornadoes has been going down. Will Happer, a former director of research for the Department of Energy, argues that additional CO<sub>2</sub> may have helped the agricultural revolution. And chilly Berkeley might be nicer with a few degrees warming.

But the bottom line is that 80% cuts in U.S. emissions will have only a tiny benefit. The bulk of our effort is best directed at helping the emerging economies conserve energy and move rapidly toward efficient solar, wind and nuclear power. Developing cheap carbon capture and sequestration is also a priority. Above all, we need to recognize that make-the-West-bear-the-burden Copenhagen proposals are meaningless.

*Mr. Muller is professor of physics at the University of California, Berkeley, and author of "Physics for Future Presidents" (Norton, 2008). References and a spreadsheet with the numbers for the chart are at [www.mullerandassociates.com](http://www.mullerandassociates.com).*

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# Obama Gives Britain the Cold Shoulder

BY CON COUGHLIN

Britain is the only European country President Barack Obama can really count on to respond positively to his plea for NATO to provide extra forces for Afghanistan. So why is it, then, that the Obama administration can barely conceal its disdain for a nation that, by its deeds, time and again proves itself to be America's staunchest and most reliable ally?

Shortly before Mr. Obama's Afghan policy speech at West Point earlier this month, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced Britain was sending another 500 troops to that beleaguered country, bringing the total number of British troops to around 10,000. Yet the president never mentioned Britain's support—even though, unlike most other European countries, British soldiers are prepared to undertake combat operations, and have incurred significant casualties in so doing.

While NATO officials trumpeted the fact that they had secured an additional 7,000 troops

from a variety of NATO and other states to support Mr. Obama's surge strategy, there has been only silence from France and Germany. For domestic political reasons, both French President Nicolas Sarkozy and German Chancellor Angela Merkel are reluctant to increase their military contributions.

## Ideology and history explain the new U.S. disregard.

This makes Britain the most important European contributor to Mr. Obama's war against the Taliban, in which British soldiers are fighting alongside U.S. Marines in southern Afghanistan. Add to this the close and long-established intelligence-sharing operation that exists between the two countries, which has prevented a number of major terrorist atrocities, and it is easy to un-

derstand why the bond between America and Britain has long been the cornerstone of the trans-Atlantic alliance.

That is not how the Obama administration sees it.

Before he became president it was said that Mr. Obama harbored a deep grudge against Britain for its colonialist past. It is alleged that his paternal grandfather, Hussein Onyango Obama, was tortured by the British during the Mau Mau rebellion in Kenya in the 1950s, when it was controlled by Britain. In his autobiographical book "The Audacity of Hope," Mr. Obama unflatteringly compares the British Empire to South Africa's apartheid regime and the former Soviet Union.

Soon after his inauguration, he sent back to the U.K. a bust of Sir Winston Churchill that had been loaned to President George W. Bush after the 9/11 attacks. The sculpture had enjoyed pride of place in the Oval Office.

There is also an important ideological reason that Britain's leading policy makers find them-

selves increasingly shunned by the U.S. Key foreign-policy advisers to Mr. Obama are keen advocates of a federal Europe, one in which the European Commission based in Brussels is the main center of power and influence, rather than the individual capitals, such as London, Paris and Berlin. In this context, Britain's dogged attachment to a "special relationship" with America is regarded as an embarrassing relic of a previous era.

Michèle Flournoy, the U.S. undersecretary of defense for policy, is a leading supporter of an integrated European defense policy, which was anathema to the Bush administration because it would challenge the future of NATO. Philip H. Gordon, the State Department's assistant secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs, is another committed Europhile.

Before taking office Mr. Gordon wrote that America should "support the European project" and warned that Britain's historic resistance to closer European integration could seriously damage

London's standing in Washington. "Fully in Europe, Britain has every chance to remain America's preferred and privileged partner," he said. "Marginalized from the EU [European Union], Britain could find itself less influential in Washington as well."

Yet in recent years, whenever the EU has been faced with a major international crisis, whether in the Balkans or the Middle East, the major European powers have tended to put their national interests first. This was graphically illustrated in Bosnia and during the build up to the Iraq war. And in Afghanistan, Europe divides between those who are prepared to fight, such as Britain, and those that are not, such as France and Germany.

For this reason alone, Mr. Obama and his advisers may regret their disregard for their most important battlefield ally in Afghanistan.

*Mr. Coughlin is executive foreign editor of London's Daily Telegraph.*

# Iran is playing a dangerous game

*Tehran's theocrats prefer bluster to detente with the west*

Iran's announcement of plans to build 10 new uranium enrichment plants is a typical example of the breast-beating bluster that characterises the Tehran theocrats. It manages simultaneously to be unreal – and very dangerous.

First, the unreality. Despite its best attempts to outwit the United Nations nuclear watchdog, Iran appears to have one uranium enrichment plant at Natanz – working at well below its potential capacity after eight years – and the previously undeclared facility being prepared in the mountains near Qom, currently little more than a hole in the ground. Its sole nuclear energy reactors are still under construction at Bushehr.

If, as Tehran constantly protests, its intentions are purely peaceful, it plainly does not need to go to the vast expense of constructing 10 new enrichment facilities – if, indeed, it can. To put this in context, the US, the world's largest producer of nuclear energy with 104 reactors, gets by with two enrichment facilities, as does France, with 59 nuclear reactors.

But the danger of this latest Iranian provocation is clear enough. Tehran is close to frittering away the best opportunity to end the 30-year stand-off between Iran and the west – and is making an armed conflict daily more likely.

Under a tentative deal reached in Geneva in October, Iran would ship abroad the bulk of its known stock of low-enriched uranium for reprocessing into higher grade medical isotopes for cancer treatment. Russia would enrich the uranium to greater purity, then send it to France to be packaged up for a research reactor in Tehran.

That would have opened the door to a "grand bargain", combining the nuclear dossier with ways of alleviating Tehran's legitimate security concerns, and the equally valid worries of its neighbours.

A Tehran regime weakened by internal dissent and confrontation with a mushrooming opposition is slamming that door in order to create a state of siege. The UN Security Council needs to confront this – without making it easier for the mullahs to corral their people. Otherwise, the likelihood of an Israeli attack on Iran will grow alongside Tehran's boastful belligerence.

The Obama administration, rightly, is keeping the Geneva option on the table. It should spell out it envisages this as part of a larger deal to bring Iran in from the cold. But, with the support of Russia, the Council must prepare new sanctions carefully targeted at the regime – which should be forced to explain to Iranians why it finds detente so threatening.

# A nuclear deal with Iran is still within reach

**Clifford Kupchan**

**R**elations between the US and Iran are approaching a death spiral. Tehran is defiantly pursuing its nuclear programme, recently announcing its intention to build 10 new enrichment facilities. Many US policymakers are growing sceptical about the prospects for diplomacy and pushing for new sanctions.

Right now, this would be a serious mistake; new sanctions would poison talks in which Iran's fractured government might yet reach a "yes". Instead, the Obama administration should move quickly to make a broad proposal on Iran's nuclear programme and leapfrog the interim deal over which negotiations are now stuck.

Diplomacy is focused on a proposal that Iran export most of its low-enriched uranium (LEU), which can be used either to generate civilian power or to make a nuclear bomb. If Iran agreed, the arrangement would build confidence and buy time. But Tehran has refused to give a clear response. This idea has consumed diplomacy for over two months. It is now time to move on.

The heart of the issue is whether Iran will agree to a deal on the long-term shape of its nuclear programme. To address this head-on, Washington's offer should have two primary elements. First, Iran would have to agree to a very intrusive inspection regime, including snap inspection of all suspect sites. Tehran must assuage concerns that it possesses a network of secret facilities.

Second, Iran must agree to long-term constraints – for perhaps five years – on the amount of LEU it can stockpile. Israelis, who have not ruled out military strikes, are particularly concerned that Tehran will divert its LEU for military purposes, a concern

shared by the west. Smaller amounts of LEU in Iran will ease fears. Any plan to build new enrichment plants, a goal that is probably far beyond Iran's technological ability in any case, would have to be shelved. If Iran accepted these terms, it would receive the robust array of incentives currently on offer – help with its civilian nuclear programme, trade benefits and a role in regional security.

The US should not ask that Iran suspend uranium enrichment. Tehran will refuse and the demand will kill talks. Washington should also refrain from seeking new UN sanctions until its proposal is aired. This broader approach should guide US policy for several months, but not longer. Washington must guard against Iran's time-worn strategy of talking and stalling while continuing to develop its nuclear programme.

So far, Iran has shown little willingness to compromise. But there is a chance Tehran's key decision-makers and constituencies could come around. On the proposal to export LEU, Iran's ultimate decider – Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei – appeared initially to support the arrangement but then wavered. Leading conservatives attacked the offer, arguing that the west could not be trusted, as did opposition leader Mir-Hossein Moussavi. Mr Khamenei, sensing a political debacle, backed off.

That dynamic could change. First, Mr Khamenei would have to state firmly and publicly that he supports a deal – and in so doing put an end to elite debate. Second, the regime would have to prepare the Iranian elite and public for a change in nuclear policy. Third, the main pillar of the regime – the Revolutionary Guard – would at least have to acquiesce in the deal.

None of this will happen immediately. Mr Khamenei was weakened by the post-election protests and seems to have no stomach for corralling Tehran's elite. The Guard remains very hardline on the nuclear programme. But in coming months, Mr Khamenei could decide the regime needs both the legitimacy and improved international economic relations that a deal would bring. The Guard would follow his lead – and their myriad new business interests could also lead them to seek a more benign international environment.

Some observers argue that a nuclear deal would sell out the protest movement by legitimising the regime. They are mistaken. Iranian society is plagued by many fractures, which will play out regardless of US policy. Over the longer term, a detente would mean more exposure for Iranians to American ideas.

It is not too late for diplomacy. The Obama administration should jump past interim arrangements and smoke out Iran's bottom line.

*The writer is a research director at Eurasia Group and a former state department official*

**So far, Tehran has shown little willingness to compromise. But its key decision-makers could come around**



FINANCIAL TIMES THURSDAY DECEMBER 3 2009

# Obama doubles his Afghanistan bet

*A challenge to the Taliban, to Karzai and to Pakistan*

Barack Obama has bowed to his generals and launched his "surge" of 30,000 more troops into Afghanistan. Along with the 21,000 reinforcements he sent earlier this year, the US president has doubled his bet. And what a gamble it is.

He is laying down a challenge to the Taliban and yet, mindful of slumping support at home, he announced that US forces would start to withdraw in July 2011 – a tight frame within which to turn around a war his commanders say the insurgents are now winning.

The drawdown timetable is in part to remind President Hamid Karzai he needs to start raising his game now. Yet there is no hiding that the US and Nato's partner in this fight is a corrupt and illegitimate government, with no functioning institutions, that controls less than a third of the country and spends less than half the budgeted allocations for development.

The extra troops will not be enough to pursue a full-blown counter-insurgency. Some will train and embed with Afghan forces. Yet the plan implies the allies can now create functioning Afghan units three times faster than a programme that has so far largely failed: the national army can operate independently in only one of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, the heavily policed capital, Kabul.

The analogy with (largely urban) Iraq, moreover, is misleading. The Iraq surge was but one factor in improving one element of that equation: security – critical, but not decisive, as the present political turmoil is demonstrating.

The political elements in the politico-military equation in Afghanistan will also be decisive.

Only improved governance and the delivery of basic services, security and justice will persuade insurgent sympathisers and waverers to back the government. That means devolving power to provincial level, holding the main towns and roads, and hiving off the more biddable insurgents, with a mixture of money, jobs and resolve. This is a Pashtun insurgency and it will not wane until Pashtuns are recruited into the army and police.

The strategy must also convince Pakistan's military to stop using jihadis as proxies. Otherwise, Pakistan will pursue what it perceives as its national interest: hunting jihadis that threaten Islamabad, certainly, while also succouring insurgents who can threaten India.

Mr Obama is staking his presidency on his ability to control all these dangerously moving parts. For the credibility of the west, the stability of the region, and the good of ordinary Afghans, we must hope that he can get it right.

# Anwar remains upbeat despite setback over sex charges

## Malaysian politics

Opposition leader says the case is part of a conspiracy to undermine his supporters, writes Kevin Brown

Anwar Ibrahim, the Malaysian opposition leader facing a criminal trial for sodomy, says the government has miscalculated if it thinks that jailing him will keep it in power at the next election.

Mr Anwar faces his second trial for sodomy in January following the High Court's rejection of an attempt to have the charges struck out on the grounds that medical evidence showed them to be false and that the prosecution was biased.

The court's decision is a setback for Mr Anwar, a former deputy prime minister and finance minister, who spent six years in prison on similar charges before Malaysia's Federal Court overturned his conviction in 2004.

However, in an interview with the Financial Times Mr Anwar said the fresh charges were part of a conspiracy by the Barisan Nasional (National Front) government to undermine the three-party Pakatan Rakyat (People's Alliance) coalition, which made spectacular gains at the last general election in 2008.

"I am resigned to the fact that I am dealing with this oppressive system and I must be prepared for the

worst," Mr Anwar said in his office in Malaysia's federal parliament building in Kuala Lumpur.

"It is not the courts, it is [the government]," he said. "Their political masters will instruct them that I be convicted. Then they have to be prepared for the grand battle; I am not taking it hands down. I will do what it takes; we will see."

Mr Anwar said the Alliance leaders had agreed a strategy for running the coalition if an election - due by 2013 - is called while he is in prison. "I am optimistic that my incarceration would not necessarily put them in a sure victory; I think probably to the contrary," he said.

Malaysia, a multi-racial state of 28m people, has been in political turmoil since the unexpected election result, which opened the possibility of a transfer of power between competing parties for the first time since independence from the UK in 1957.

The National Front, a 13-party coalition of mainly regional and race-based parties, won 140 of the 222 seats, but for the first time lost its two-thirds majority in parliament, which had allowed it to change the constitution.

Its three main components - the United Malays National Organisation, the Malaysian Chinese Association and the Malaysian Indian Congress - have been rocked by leadership disputes. Umno dumped Abdullah Badawi, its election-winning leader, in favour of Najib Razak, his deputy, in April last year.

Mr Najib has sought to stabilise the coalition, ordering Umno's Chinese ally to resolve its festering leadership dispute and signalling to the MIC that the National Front might encourage other Indian-based parties if it fails to revitalise itself.

He has campaigned effectively against Mr Anwar, whose successive political careers have drawn accusations of inconsistency and opportunism.

The prime minister has also sought to re-engage minority voters through

'[The courts'] political masters will instruct them that I be convicted'

Anwar Ibrahim, Malaysian opposition leader

economic reforms intended to dilute discrimination in favour of ethnic Malays, who make up about 53 per cent of the population.

However, tensions have continued to flare, with Muslim protesters publicly trampling on a cow's head, sacred to Hindus, and a government minister claiming that Indian demonstrators wrapped an Umno flag around a severed pig's head, regarded by Muslims as unclean.

The three-party opposition coalition also has troubles, though, with few ideological links between its three parties - Mr Anwar's multi-ethnic Parti Keadilan Rakyat (People's Justice party), the mainly ethnic Chinese Democratic Action party and the Islamist Parti Islam Semalaysia (PAS).

Some PAS leaders favour an alternative alliance with Umno, which would bring the two mainly Malay Muslim parties together, while others have clashed with DAP leaders over issues such as the sale of alcohol - especially in the four of Malaysia's 13 states where the opposition parties are in power.

The Alliance hopes to resolve these issues at a convention on December 19.

# Why Obama does not want a multipolar world order

**Zaki Laidi**

As recently as five years ago, it was not possible to talk seriously about the international system without the premise of an American superpower wielding the power of life and death over the planet.

Today, the simplification works the other way round. It has become common currency that the US is in decline and President Barack Obama represents an America that gladly accepts we live in a multipolar world.

Yet, at the very least, this hypothesis is debatable. If the world is multipolar, it is very imperfectly so, and American diplomacy aims to keep things this way.

Power is currently expressed in terms of three assets: material wealth, without which nothing is technically possible (the collapse of the Soviet Union is a case in point); strategic power, which implies the capacity to project force to one's periphery and beyond; and, finally, what might be called the power instinct – that is, the will to weigh in on world affairs. This last can be through one's ideas, capabilities or attractiveness.

The evolution in power relations is most palpable on the material front, even if, contrary to general wisdom, the shift in power from the west to Asia has been a relatively slow process. There are now four great economic centres of power: the US, Europe, China and Japan. They are very distantly followed by India, Brazil and Russia. However, it is impor-

tant to note that Russia's gross domestic product, for instance, accounts for only 1 per cent of global GDP, compared to a 22 per cent share for the US. This is a long way from economic multipolarity, which would require that the power of various centres should be roughly equivalent.

On the strategic front, the imbalance is even more striking: there is one military superpower that surpasses all the others by far (the US); a rising power (China); a power that lives on its past and can only main-

**It would be a mistake to underestimate American influence, after having grossly overestimated it for so long**

tain its rank by dint of its energy resources (Russia); and a plethora of middle-sized actors whose projection capacity remains very weak.

There is no evidence whatsoever of movement towards strategic multipolarity; aside from China, which has the will and the means, and Russia, which has the will but not necessarily the means, no credible aspiring global power has emerged. Brazil and India are certainly becoming stronger militarily. Their strategic ambitions will, nonetheless, remain regional for the foreseeable future. Furthermore, China's ascendance might reinforce Japan's strategic dependence on the US, notwithstanding any short-term rifts in Japanese-American relations.

The same paradigm applies to Europe with regard to the Russian challenge. Europe is the only region in the world that refuses to increase military expenditure, as if Europeans had once and for all decided to outsource defence to the US. The Lisbon treaty will change nothing on this front. Attempts to create a European defence industry have met roadblocks that attest to the countless weaknesses of Europe's putative power.

Turning to power instinct, while many countries undoubtedly have it, not many have the means to match their ambitions. Russia has an important military arsenal. But power does not simply equate with show of force. It also has to do with attraction. Russia is characterised by its absence of attractiveness to almost everyone in the world, save the regimes that have had a brush with the west.

Meanwhile, Europe runs up against the fact that it is not a state. The only influence it commands is a normative one, a capacity to shape the world through the diffusion of norms in global regulation – finance, environment, food security, and so on. This is far from negligible, but cannot make up for the lack of strategic power.

In any case, it is clear why the US does not embrace the rhetoric of a multipolar world that would place it on an equal footing with other important world actors. There is no reason for Washington to accept such a reconfiguration of the global order when it continues to hold an appreciable advantage over other countries in all three areas. It makes sense that the Obama administration prefers to speak in terms of partnerships rather

than multipolarity.

The US does understand that it can no longer dominate the world as it pleases, and that the gap that separates it from the rest has shrunk. As a result, the US needs the rest of the world to maintain its pre-eminence, not to dissolve it. The objective is to select privileged partners for international action, to better maintain leadership in all domains.

The world currently shares three global agendas: the strategic agenda that continues to be massively dominated by the US, the economic agenda, which is more widely distributed, and the climate agenda, where the US is clearly on the defensive.

The Obama administration is attempting to stay at the heart of the game by making room for others while preventing the rise either of a coalition that might force its hand on a particular issue, as recently demonstrated by the Singapore climate change declaration, or of a challenger that might take its place (China).

Of course, the structure of the international system is in perpetual evolution and America's willpower alone will not suffice to freeze the game. It would be a mistake, however, to underestimate American influence, after having grossly overestimated it for so long. An even greater mistake would be to conclude that the US has abandoned its bid to remain master of the game, for all the charm of Mr Obama.

*The writer is research director of the Centre for European Studies at Sciences Po. His latest book is "La Norme sans la Force"*

# Israel must unpick its ethnic myth

Tony Judt

What exactly is "Zionism"? Its core claim was always that Jews represent a common and single people; that their millennia-long dispersion and suffering has done nothing to diminish their distinctive, collective attributes; and that the only way they can live freely as Jews – in the same way that, say, Swedes live freely as Swedes – is to dwell in a Jewish state.

Thus religion ceased in Zionist eyes to be the primary measure of Jewish identity. In the course of the late-19th century, as more and more young Jews were legally or culturally emancipated from the world of the ghetto or the *shtetl*, Zionism began to look to an influential minority like the only alternative to persecution, assimilation or cultural dilution. Paradoxically then, as religious separatism and practice began to retreat, a secular version of it was actively promoted.

I can certainly confirm, from personal experience, that anti-religious sentiment – often of an intensity that I found discomfiting – was widespread in left-leaning Israeli circles of the 1960s. Religion, I was informed, was for the *haredim* and the "crazies" of Jerusalem's Mea Sharim quarter. "We" are modern and rational and "western", it was explained to me by my Zionist teachers. But what they did not say was that the Israel they wished me to join was therefore grounded, and could only be grounded, in an ethnically rigid view of Jews and Jewishness.

The story went like this. Jews, until the destruction of the Second Temple (in the First century), had been farmers in what is now Israel/Palestine. They had then been forced yet again into exile by the Romans and wandered the earth: homeless, rootless and outcast. Now at last "they" were "returning" and would once again farm the soil of their ancestors.

It is this narrative that the historian Shlomo Sand seeks to deconstruct in his controversial book *The Invention of the Jewish People*. His contribution, critics assert, is at best redundant. For the last century, specialists have been perfectly familiar with the sources he cites and the arguments he makes. From a purely scholarly perspective, I have no quarrel with this. Even I, dependent for the most part on second-hand information about the earlier millennia of Jewish history, can see that Prof Sand – for example in his emphasis upon the conversions and ethnic mixing that characterise the Jews in earlier times – is telling us nothing we do not already know.

The question is, who are "we"? Certainly in the US, the overwhelming majority of Jews (and perhaps non-Jews) have absolutely no acquaintance with the story Prof Sand tells. They will never have heard of most of his protagonists, but they are all too approvingly familiar with the caricatured version of Jewish history that he is seeking to discredit. If Prof Sand's popularising work does nothing more than provoke reflection and further reading among such a constituency, it will have been worthwhile.

But there is more to it than that. While there were other justifications for the state of Israel, and still are – it was not by chance that David Ben-Gurion sought, planned and choreographed the trial of Adolf Eichmann – it is clear that Prof Sand has undermined the conventional case for a Jewish state. Once we agree, in short, that Israel's uniquely "Jewish" quality is an imagined or elective affinity, how are we to proceed?

Prof Sand is himself an Israeli and the idea that his country has no "raison d'être" would be abhorrent to him. Rightly so. States exist or they do not. Egypt or Slovakia are not justified in international law by virtue of some theory of deep "Egyptianness" or "Slovakness". Such states are recognised as international actors, with rights and status, simply by virtue of their existence and their capacity to maintain and protect themselves.

So Israel's survival does not rest on the credibility of the story it tells about its ethnic origins. If we accept this, we can begin to understand that the country's insistence upon its exclusive claim upon Jewish identity is a significant handicap. In the first place, such an insistence reduces all non-Jewish Israeli citizens and residents to second-class status. This would be true even if the distinction were purely formal. But of course it is not: being a Muslim or a Christian – or even a Jew who does not meet the increasingly rigid specification for "Jewishness" in today's Israel – carries a price.

Implicit in Prof Sand's book is the conclusion that Israel would do better to identify itself and learn to think of itself as... Israel. The perverse insistence upon identifying a universal Jewishness with one small piece of territory is dysfunctional in many ways. It is the single most important factor accounting for the failure to

solve the Israel-Palestine imbroglio. It is bad for Israel and, I would suggest, bad for Jews elsewhere who are identified with its actions.

So what is to be done? Prof Sand certainly does not tell us – and in his defence we should acknowledge that the problem may be intractable. I suspect that he favours a one-state solution: if only because it is the logical upshot of his arguments. I, too, would favour such an outcome – if I were not so sure that both sides would oppose it vigorously and with force. A two-state solution might still be the best compromise, even though it would leave Israel intact in its ethno-delusions. But it is hard to be optimistic about the prospects for such a resolution, in the light of the developments of the past two years.

My own inclination, then, would be to focus elsewhere. If the Jews of Europe and North America took their distance from Israel (as many have begun to do), the assertion that Israel was "their" state would take on an absurd air. Over time, even Washington might come to see the futility of attaching American foreign policy to the delusions of one small Middle Eastern state. This, I believe, is the best thing that could possibly happen to Israel itself. It would be obliged to acknowledge its limits. It would have to make other friends, preferably among its neighbours.

We could thus hope, in time, to establish a natural distinction between people who happen to be Jews but are citizens of other countries; and people who are Israeli citizens and happen to be Jews. This could prove very helpful. There are many precedents: the Greek, Armenian, Ukrainian and Irish diasporas have all played an unhealthy role in perpetuating ethnic exclusivism and nationalist prejudice in the countries of their forebears. The civil war in Northern Ireland came to an end in part because an American president instructed the Irish emigrant community in the US to stop sending arms and cash to the Provisional IRA. If American Jews stopped associating their fate with Israel and used their charitable cheques for better purposes, something similar might happen in the Middle East.

*The writer is University Professor at New York University and director of the Remarque Institute*

# Rewrite Iraq, but learn the lesson of history



**Philip Stephens**

Britain's Iraq inquiry is destined to disappoint. Its chairman Sir John Chilcott declares no-one is on trial at his committee's investigation of Britain's role in the toppling of Saddam Hussein. Sad to say, the admonition misses the point. Tony Blair has already been tried, convicted and sentenced in the court of media opinion.

Anything but official affirmation from the inquiry that a mendacious prime minister tricked the nation into an illegal invasion at the bidding of his war-crazed chum George W. Bush will be judged, alongside earlier independent reports into the war, as an Establishment "whitewash".

The mood has been summed up by the reaction to the inquiry's opening sessions. Anything that seemed to make the case against Mr Blair

grabbed a headline. Everything else was ignored. The tone was captured by the commentator who observed scornfully that Sir John seemed set on writing a report that was "detailed, nuanced and balanced".

Mr Blair's reputation must be shredded sufficiently to ensure the eternal condemnation of history. His portrait must be hung in the gallery of shame alongside Anthony Eden, author of that earlier debacle in the desert. Eden really lied about Suez.

Unfortunately, this verdict has already encountered obstacles. The senior officials who have so far given evidence have often been less than fulsome in their support of Mr Blair's handling of the war. Many of them had misgivings at the time, though none sufficient to resign. Hindsight seems to have hardened a view that the prime minister fell prey to both his unshakeable self-righteousness and his eagerness to stay on side with the Americans.

Yet the same officials insist that Mr Blair did not wilfully lie about the imagined weapons of mass destruction. Sure, the intelligence was patchy and sporadic. No, they would not have employed the same language. Yet they were as shocked

as the then prime minister when the invading forces did not turn up chemical and biological weapons.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock, at the time Britain's ambassador to the United Nations and anything but a hawk, has testified that the international community shared this surprise. In all the heated debate in the Security Council before the war none of Sir Jeremy's counterparts – including the French and Russian ambassadors

**If Iraq tells us anything it is that Britain's willingness to fight alongside the US can never be unconditional**

– argued Saddam had no WMD.

The hitherto accepted narrative that Mr Blair signed up unconditionally to war a year before the invasion has also taken some knocks. He does seem to have told Mr Bush at the president's Crawford ranch that he was willing to back regime change. But, according to the testimony of Sir David Manning,

Mr Blair's top foreign policy adviser, this was always a contingent pledge. Throughout 2002 and into 2003, the policy objective was rather to disarm Saddam. As one senior military figure told the inquiry, there was no "stitched up deal" to go to war. The UN process to which Mr Blair sought to bind Mr Bush was not a feint.

I offer such observations not to change anyone's mind. It is too late for that. It seems pretty evident that Mr Blair exaggerated the threat. He was impatient of advice from lawyers and military advisers. I would be surprised if the inquiry does not criticise him for bending the evidence to his conviction – a charge, in case of war, graver than it sounds. Whatever the argument for war – and there was one – Mr Blair was too careless of the consequences.

That said, the inquiry has also heard how Jacques Chirac's French government had previously colluded to wreck the alternative strategy of containing Iraq. Mr Chirac claimed the moral high ground only after he had safeguarded France's commercial interests. This was a story that was always going to have an unhappy ending.

The pity is that some of the

broader lessons are likely to be lost to the rancour. How was it, for example, that a military timetable itself held hostage to the weather (it is too hot to fight during the Iraqi summer) could be allowed to shape the diplomacy at the UN? Have we learnt nothing since 1914?

How was it that politicians and officials in London could ignore the absence of a credible postwar plan? Should Britain have committed forces once it was clear that Donald Rumsfeld's Pentagon intended to occupy Iraq on a hunch that the Americans would be welcome?

Behind such tactical questions lie Britain's strategic choices. I count myself among those who think that Britain still has more to gain than to lose from its security relationship with Washington. But if Iraq tells us anything it is that Britain's willingness to fight alongside the US can never be unconditional. Nor must the relationship be exclusive. The US happily admits that its foreign policy is the pursuit of its national interest. Britain's national interest cannot always be defined as a willingness to follow on behind.

[philip.stephens@ft.com](mailto:philip.stephens@ft.com)

## Blasts hit leaders' Thai visit

Two premiers go to troubled provinces

By Ian MacKinnon  
in Bangkok

A series of bomb blasts wounded 14 soldiers and police officers yesterday as the Malaysian and Thai prime ministers staged a historic joint visit to Thailand's insurgency-plagued southern provinces.

Five bombs exploded just ahead of their arrival in military helicopters in the Thai border town of Bukit Ta. They were to open the renamed Thai-Malay Friendship Bridge over the Sunai Kulok river to Malaysia.

The violence amid tight

security for the trip to the mainly Muslim provinces bordering Malaysia underscored the depth of the problem Bangkok faces.

Both Abhisit Vejjajiva, the Thai premier, and Najib Razak, his Malaysian counterpart, had been showing a united front ahead of the journey south, where more than five years of violence has claimed at least 3,900 lives in the provinces of Narathiwat, Yala and Patani.

The blasts wounded four soldiers, two marines, five police officers and three local defence volunteers as they tried to remove booby-trapped banners bearing separatist slogans.

The two leaders acknowledged the troubled prov-

inces were a sovereign part of predominantly Buddhist Thailand and would remain so, rejecting independence or autonomy for the poor region that is rich in rubber plantations.

"We will not support [independence] at all," the prime minister of mainly Muslim Malaysia told *The Nation* newspaper. "It will lead to the break up of a country. That's not a good thing for Thailand and the region, or for Malaysia."

Both leaders accepted that some form of "decentralisation" of power to the provinces – as opposed to autonomy – might provide a solution to the violence within the Thai constitution.

# Israel's revealing fury towards EU

*International opinion is shifting on the Middle East*

The foreign ministers of the European Union last week updated their policy – such as it is – on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It was an unexceptionable document, but no one would guess that from the furore that accompanied the debate leading to its issue.

Leaked to Israel by a leading member state a week ahead of the ministerial meeting, the initial draft of the current Swedish presidency of the EU called for the establishment of a Palestinian state on the occupied West Bank and Gaza, with east Jerusalem as its capital. Israel mobilised its diplomatic tanks, amid cries in the local press that the Europeans were trying to divide Jerusalem.

After serial Israeli *démarches*, the EU adopted a modified version. But this merely moved the essence of its position – that it does not recognise Israel's annexation of Arab east Jerusalem or, indeed, any border changes brought about by the 1967 Arab-Israeli war – from paragraph one to paragraph eight.

Israel's government professed to be satisfied with this retreat from "extremism", and the EU's decision to recognise its "partial and temporary settlement freeze as a first step in the right direction". It was hard to know what the fuss was about – except that it falls into a recognisable pattern.

Israel, especially under the hard-line nationalist government of Benjamin Netanyahu, has begun to overreact almost systematically to the perceptible erosion of international support for its irredentist claims on the West Bank. Barack Obama's statement in June, saying the US did not recognise the legitimacy of the Jewish settlements on Palestinian land, was a landmark.

The Netanyahu government's ferocious condemnation of the UN-commissioned Goldstone report, looking into possible war crimes on both sides during last winter's Gaza war, was another.

More particularly, Israel's European friends, such as Germany, the Netherlands and the UK, did not rush to condemn the Swedish initiative, or to anathematise Judge Goldstone. Washington was silent on the EU policy paper, seeing it as a helpful nudge towards the two-states solution it seeks.

The increased and brutal frequency of war in this volatile region has shifted international opinion, reminding Israel it is not above the law. Israel can no longer dictate the terms of debate.

That is all to the good – provided it results in a diplomatic push towards where Israel's long-term security really lies: the creation of a viable and independent Palestinian state before it is too late.

# Europe's route to a new Jerusalem

Chris Patten

Chris Patten

**A**ccenture's advertisement featuring Tiger Woods, which declares brightly that "It's what you do next that counts", should have as much resonance for EU foreign ministers as for the unfortunate golfer. Last week, thanks to the energetic chairmanship of Sweden's Carl Bildt, these ministers agreed a comprehensive statement of policy on Palestine and Israel. It was not quite as good as it should have been. Acting seemingly on instruction from Israel's foreign ministry, Italy, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Romania fought to dilute the original text. But what survived was still pretty good.

The ministers called for the urgent resumption of negotiations, within an agreed time-frame, for a comprehensive peace for Israel and Palestine.

They recommitted themselves to an independent Palestinian state whose borders, including those of Jerusalem, should go back to the pre-1967 borders unless otherwise agreed. They promised to develop their relationship with the Palestinian authority and to help implement its plan for building state institutions.

In addition they argued that Jerusalem should emerge from negotiations as the capital of both Israel and Palestine, that the fragmentation of Palestine between Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem should be avoided, that Palestinian elections should be held, and, of course, that Israeli settlement activity should end.

Does it end there? After so much puffing and panting to get this far, the ministers could be excused for thinking they can rest on their spades for a while. But the words from Brussels should be regarded as the beginning of diplomatic activity, not the end. Europe needs to move quickly to do two things.

First, the statement should be the basis not only for the EU's relations with Israel and Palestine but also for its work with international partners in trying to promote a settlement. Sensible Europeans accept that the US, the precise terms of whose engagement have become increasingly unclear in the months since President Barack Obama's pellucid Cairo address, has the lead role in trying to mobilise activity leading to a settlement. But that does not mean Europeans should fail to tell the US where they stand. Baroness Ashton, the new high representative for Europe's common foreign and security policy,

should encourage Washington to support the EU statement or make clear where there are differences of opinion. In particular, the importance of setting a time frame for progress should be underlined. Lady Ashton will presumably now be the EU's sole representative in the "quartet" (which used to have three EU members) – the organisation joining the US, UN, Russia and the EU in support of a peace process. The latest statement should provide Europe's agenda at future meetings of this lacklustre body.

Second, Europe can play a particularly valuable role in preventing the splintering of Palestine and in establishing a functioning Palestinian authority, ready to morph into the government of a future state. Europe should help prepare the Palestinian elections next year and monitor them. We should state clearly that Europeans will accept the results provided the process is fair. Our preference should be the emergence of a government of national unity. We should go further and say explicitly that we will

## Is the EU's role in the region to be paymaster for intransigence and the use of disproportionate force?

deal with and support such a government, if it unequivocally supports a cease-fire and keeps to past commitments (it is a pity that Israel has not done so). Moreover we should encourage such a government to negotiate a settlement with Israel and undertake to put the results of any agreement to all Palestinians in a referendum, abiding by the result.

Beyond this, the EU should continue to work with Norway and others in building state institutions in Palestine and providing humanitarian assistance to Palestinians whose lives have been blighted by Israel's blockade and other policies. But we should be clear that this cannot be an open-

ended commitment to pay the costs of Israel's occupation of Palestine. At present, international donors meet most of the bill for the consequences of occupation that should be met under the Geneva convention by Israel. Over the last year, the cost to the EU and its members has risen to about €1bn.

How long can donors justify this expenditure? If Israel continues, as its prime minister says it will, to build settlements, making an agreement on a viable Palestinian state all but impossible, should the international community simply shrug its shoulders and write more cheques? The money that I spent in Palestine on behalf of European voters and taxpayers over five years as a European commissioner has drained away into the blood-soaked sand. Many projects funded by European taxpayers have been reduced to rubble by the Israeli Defence Forces. Is Europe's role in the region to be the paymaster for intransigence and the use of disproportionate force?

Europe's statement dwelt at some length on Jerusalem, whose annexation by Israel has never been accepted by EU governments. This emphasis plainly owed much to the concern felt in European capitals as a result of consular reports from Jerusalem on the harassment of the Arab population there. European governments should ask their consuls-general in Jerusalem to report to EU foreign ministers regularly, and should publish a summary of these reports rather than have them leaked selectively (as has happened) to Israeli newspapers.

This agenda for Europe, based on what has just been agreed, could help (to borrow from Woods' vocabulary) to get negotiations back on to the fairway. The present stand-off between Israel and the Palestinians is not the basis for a sustainable peace. Drift and despair are not options.

*Lord Patten is co-chair of the International Crisis Group and a former European commissioner for external affairs*



## Pushing for force on Iran



**John  
Vinocur**

### POLITICUS

**NEW YORK** The place was a small auditorium on Manhattan's Upper East Side, and three panelists were on stage to discuss the topic of "what now for the United States and Iran?"

Charles S. Robb, a former Democratic senator and former member of a presidential advisory board on foreign intelligence, summed up the evening's tone: "We want to support what would seem to be a more hawkish approach as a viable alternative to an approach that hasn't worked."

Sure, it is important to the Atlantic Alliance that the United States demonstrate that it is interested in diplomacy, added Daniel R. Coats, a former Republican senator and ambassador to Germany.

"But sanctions as a next step, and sanctions working?" he asked — then answered, "That's a stretch. And that's why we want to leverage the sanctions."

How? Through the consideration of U.S. military action.

"We have the capacity, and Iran is vulnerable," insisted Charles F. Wald, a retired U.S. Air Force general who served as deputy commander of the U.S. European Command. "It's totally false that we cannot attack Iran's nuclear sites."

The three men were the authors of a report on Iran for the Bipartisan Policy Center released in September and titled "Meeting the Challenge: Time Is Running Out." Their appearance in New York last week, in light of Iran's rejection of diplomatic attempts to halt its drive toward nuclear weapons, was an update on their call for President Barack Obama to show that the use of force is "a feasible option of last resort."

The undertaking is hardly a Gen. Buck Turgidson/Dr. Strangelove operation. The Bipartisan Policy Center was founded by the former Senate majority leaders Howard H. Baker Jr., Tom Daschle, Robert J. Dole and George J. Mitchell with the intent to create discussion and position-taking across party lines.

Although American policy continues to state that all options remain open to the president to stop Iran from producing an atomic weapon, discussion of the possible use of military means is surrounded by deep tension and awkwardness.

At an international conference on security issues sponsored by the German Marshall Fund of the United States two weeks ago, Ruprecht Polenz, chairman of the foreign relations commission of the German Bundestag, was asked whether Chancellor Angela Merkel's statement defining Iranian production of a nuclear weapon as "unacceptable" meant, in effect, that "this must not stand."

His response was remarkably direct. Germany, Mr. Polenz said, would not be involved in military action.

This is while new sanctions, probably the next turn in efforts to bring pressure on Iran, encounter continued indications of their limited potential for success.

Last week, German press reports said a decision by Daimler to stop delivery of vehicles with three axles to Iran resulted in their immediate replacement with similar vehicles by Volvo, the Swedish carmaker.

Exactly what is credible and what might work in blocking Iran was at the heart of the panel discussion here. "One of the big problems is the believability of our using force," Mr. Wald said. "Iran just doesn't believe it."

The retired general, who was air commander during the initial stages of Operation Enduring Freedom, the official U.S. government name for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, said he did not think there was any current consideration of American strikes on Iran.

Still, he stressed: "If we do it, we can succeed. The worst-case scenario is Iran getting the bomb."

Many more than one than one strike would be needed, and operations could carry on for weeks or months, Mr. Wald said, explaining that the United States had the capacity to carry out much more extensive attacks than Israel.

And the results and ramifications of such U.S. strikes? "Better than a pinprick," Mr. Wald said in a reference to the limited possibilities of Israeli missions. He also noted that "the U.S. will be blamed anyway and take the blow-back."

Mr. Robb said he thought that "Iran's response would be by proxy — Hezbollah, Hamas," while Mr. Wald described "the region having to get ready for a lot of happenings." At the same time, he said, Israel has reconstituted its ground forces and could handle sustained rocket attacks.

But suppose, in the end, you didn't believe in the wisdom of an attack, or just considered that the United States, with its engagements in Afghanistan and Iraq, couldn't handle it?

Mr. Wald was dismissive, saying, "If you believe Iran is manageable with nukes, then O.K."

With that remark, Mr. Wald appeared to hold tight to the position stated by Mr. Obama that an Iran with the capacity to produce a nuclear weapon was "unacceptable" to the United States (whatever other countries' mollifying interpretation of the word may be).

In fact, a more likely response than a U.S. assault, assuming the eventual failure of sanctions to make the Iranians bend, might be an American mix of containment (cynics' definition: we'll live with a nuclear Iran) and deterrence (military muscle flexing outside an attack mode).

To that, add direct support for regime change in Iran — although the opposition leaders who would be counted on to alter Tehran's nuclear policy have actually supported the mullahs' refusal to export their low enriched uranium for conversion, theoretically limited to medical use.

All the same, the three men from the Bipartisan Policy Center, through Mr. Coats, emphasized their literal reading of the president's will to stop Iran's nuclear drive.

Back on the campaign trail in 2008, when Afghanistan was becoming the Democratic candidate's right and winnable war, and American voters were guessing (favorably) about the future president's toughness, Mr. Obama stated unequivocally:

"We will use all elements of American power to pressure Iran. I will do everything in my power to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. Everything in my power. Everything."

E-MAIL [pagetwo@iht.com](mailto:pagetwo@iht.com)

OTHER VIEWS

## SECRET JAPAN-U.S. PACTS

The investigation ordered by Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada into the alleged secret pacts between Japan and the United States is entering its final stages. The results will be released in mid-January. The ministry's team has discovered documents that substantiate the existence of a secret pact allowing the U.S. to carry nuclear weapons into Japanese territory without prior consultation. The pact was agreed upon when the Japan-U.S. security treaty was revised.

The existence of this pact was already an open secret, revealed in testimony by former U.S. government officials and declassified U.S. documents. Yet successive Liberal Democratic Party governments and Foreign Ministry bureaucrats denied its existence. Their lies have now been demolished. The documents show there was a secret understanding that entry of U.S. vessels carrying nuclear weapons into Japanese ports or passing through Japanese territorial waters do not constitute "bringing in" nuclear weapons into Japan, which would require prior consultation. Since the Foreign Ministry has not yet released its findings, we still do not know specific details of this pact.

The matter strikes at the core of the nation's democracy, for it is about how the government deceived the public for such a long time. The Japan-U.S. security treaty marks its 50th anniversary next year, and the two governments are preparing to discuss ways to deepen their alliance. In order to realize what the foreign minister calls a "diplomacy based on the public's understanding and trust," we urge the government to release its information as soon as possible. Moreover, we ask the expert panel set up by the foreign minister to analyze the historical background of why and how the pacts came into being.

It is not commendable diplomacy for a democratic country to agree on a secret pact that cannot be revealed to the public. Even if there were extenuating circumstances making the pact necessary at the time, records should be released as soon as possible, and be exposed to the judgment of history.

If the government officially admits the existence of the secret pacts, it is bound to put under the spotlight the government's three nonnuclear principles — nuclear weapons shall not be possessed, made nor enter Japan. Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama promised at the United Nations in September that Japan will uphold the three principles. That judgment was realistic and appropriate. We hope the past 50 years will be reviewed with clear and penetrating eyes.

EXCERPTED FROM THE ASAHI SHIMBUN OF NOV. 28

# Clear, hold and duct tape



**David Brooks**

In late 2006, Gen. David Petraeus and Gen. James F. Amos released a brilliant book with a thrilling title. It was called the "Army/Marine Corps Field Manual 3-24." In its quiet way, this book helped overturn conventional wisdom on modern warfare and gave leaders a new way to see the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

It's a mistake to think you can succeed in conflicts like these by defeating the enemy in battle, the manual said. Instead, these wars are better seen as political arguments for the loyalty of the population. Get villagers to work with you by offering them security. Provide services by building courts and schools. Over the long term, transfer authority to legitimate local governments.

This approach, called COIN, has reshaped military thinking, starting with the junior officers who developed it and then spreading simultaneously up and down the chain of command.

When President Obama conducted his first Afghanistan strategic review last winter, he too gravitated toward the COIN mentality, appointing Gen. Stanley McChrystal, one of the chief architects of COIN, to run the war effort there.

This fall, General McChrystal came back with his own report, and made two key recommendations. First, the U.S. should deliver a sharp blow, to regain the initiative and reverse the Taliban's momentum. Second, he wrote, "Suc-

cess demands a comprehensive counterinsurgency (COIN) campaign."

But over the past few months, senior members of the Obama administration have lost some of their enthusiasm for COIN. It may be a good approach in the abstract, they say, but there are problems with applying it in this context.

First, they say, COIN is phenomenally expensive. It consists of doing a lot of things at once — from increasing troop levels to nation-building — and doing them over a long period of time. America no longer has that kind of money, and Americans won't accept a new 10-year commitment having

**Obama appears to have improved some of his options for dealing with Afghanistan.**

already been there for eight. Second, it may be possible to clear and hold territory, but it is looking less likely that we will be able to transfer it to any legitimate Afghan authority. The Karzai government is like an organized crime ring. The governing talent is thin. Plans to build a 400,000-man Afghan security force are unrealistic.

Third, they continue, the population in Afghanistan is too dispersed for COIN to work properly. There would be a few bubbles of security, where allied troops are massed, but then vast sanctuaries for the insurgents.

Fourth, COIN is too Afghan-centric and not enough Pakistan-centric. The real threats to U.S. interests are along the Afghan-Pakistani border or involve the destabilization of the Pakistani government. The COIN approach does little to directly address that.

The administration seems to have spent the past few months trying to pare back the COIN strategy and adjust it to real world constraints. As it has done so, there has been less talk in the

informed policy community about paving the way for a new, transformed Afghanistan. There has been more talk of finding cheap ways to arrange the current pieces of Afghanistan into a contraption that will stay together and allow us to go home.

What's emerging appears to be something less than a comprehensive COIN strategy but more than a mere counter-terrorism strategy — shooting at terrorists with drones. It is a hybrid approach. It's not the troop levels that matter. What matters is how this war will be fought.

Some very smart people say that the administration's direction is already fatally flawed. There is no such thing as effective COIN-lite, they argue. All the pieces of a comprehensive strategy have to be done patiently and together because success depends on the way they magnify one another.

These experts may be right. But none of us get to have our first choice on this matter. President Obama faces such a devilishly complex set of constraints that the policy he announces will be partially unsatisfying to every American and to every member of his administration. The fights inside have been so brutal that there have been accusations that the Defense and State Departments have withheld documents from the president to bias his thinking.

Nonetheless, my impression is that Obama has negotiated these constraints in a serious manner, and improved some of his options — for example, by accelerating troop deployments. He has not been enthusiastic about expanding the U.S. role in Afghanistan, but he has not evaded his responsibility as commander in chief, and he's taking brave political risks.

It may not be the complete COIN strategy, which offers the best chance of success. But it may be the best strategy under the circumstances.

## AFGHANISTAN SPEECH

Obama's speech was a good start, but he needs to say how he will pay for the war and how he will decide when to get out.

Americans have reason to be pessimistic, if not despairing, about the war in Afghanistan. After eight years of fighting, more than 1,500 American and allied lives lost and more than 200 billion taxpayer dollars spent, the Afghan government is barely legitimate and barely hanging on in the face of an increasingly powerful Taliban insurgency.

In his speech Tuesday night, President Obama showed considerable political courage by addressing that pessimism and despair head-on. He explained why the United States cannot walk away from the war and outlined an ambitious and high-risk strategy for driving back the Taliban and bolstering the Afghan government so American and allied troops can eventually go home.

For far too long — mostly, but not only, under President George W. Bush — Afghanistan policy has had little direction and no accountability. Mr. Obama started to address those problems in his speech at West Point, although people need to hear more about how he intends to pay for the war and how he will decide when Afghanistan is able to stand on its own.

The president's prolonged and leak-ridden policy review had fanned doubts here and abroad about Mr. Obama's commitment. He showed no reluctance on Tuesday night. He said he decided to send more troops because he is "convinced that our security is at stake in Afghanistan and Pakistan," which he called "the epicenter of the violent extremism practiced by Al Qaeda." He warned that new attacks were being plotted in the region, and raised the terrifying prospect of an unchecked Al Qaeda taking over a nuclear-armed Pakistan.

Mr. Obama's decision to send an additional 30,000 troops and ask NATO allies for several thousand more is unlikely to end the political debate. Republicans are certain to point out that it is still short of the 40,000 requested by the top field commander, Gen. Stanley McChrystal, and object to the president's pledge of a quick drawdown. Many Democrats and the president's own vice president had opposed any escalation.

At this late date, we don't know if even 100,000 American troops plus 40,000 from NATO will be enough to turn the war around. But we are sure that continuing President Bush's strategy of fighting on the cheap (in January 2008, the start of Mr. Bush's last year in office and more than six years after the war began, there were only 27,000 American troops in Afghanistan) is a guarantee of defeat.

Mr. Obama said he expected to be able to start drawing down American forces in July 2011. But he made no promise about when all American combat troops would be gone, saying only that the decision would be based on conditions on the ground. Overall, we found the president's arguments persuasive.

The Afghan people have no love for the Taliban's medieval ideas and brutality, but the Karzai government's failure to provide basic services or security has led many to conclude that they have no choice but to submit. Driving the Taliban back swiftly and decisively from key cities and regions should help change that calculation. Coupled with an offer of negotiations, it may also peel away less committed fighters.

There is no point in doing that unless there is a minimally credible Afghan government to "hold" those areas. There is no chance of that unless Mr. Karzai ends the corruption and appoints competent officials. One of Mr. Obama's biggest challenges is figuring out how to goad him into doing that, without further damaging the Afghan leader's legitimacy, or driving him even deeper into his circle of unsavory cronies and warlords. In his speech Mr. Obama sought to put Mr. Karzai on notice, but more gently than we would have. "The days of providing a blank check are over," he said, vowing that his government "will be clear about what we expect from those who receive our assistance."

Mr. Obama faced a similar balancing act with Pakistan. He forcefully argued that Pakistan's survival also depends on defeating Al Qaeda and the Taliban. It will take a lot more cajoling and pressure to finally persuade Islamabad to stop hedging its bets and fully take on the extremists.

For years President Bush sought to disguise the true cost of the Afghan and Iraq wars. So it was a relief to hear the president put a credible price tag on his escalation — he said it is likely to cost an additional \$30 billion next year — and promise to work with Congress to pay for it.

We don't know whether Mr. Obama will be able to meet his July 2011 deadline to start drawing down forces. For that to happen, there will have to be a lot more success at training Afghan forces and improving the government's effectiveness. Still, setting a deadline, so long as it is not set in stone, is a sound idea. Mr. Karzai needs to know that America's commitment is not open-ended. Mr. Obama's generals and diplomats also need to know that their work will be closely monitored. Otherwise, Mr. Obama will be hard pressed to keep his promise that this war will not go on forever.

*For a fuller version of this editorial, go to [nytimes.com/opinion](http://nytimes.com/opinion)*

# This I believe

I cannot agree with President Obama's decision to escalate in Afghanistan.



**Thomas L. Friedman**

Let me start with the bottom line and then tell you how I got there: I can't agree with President Obama's decision to escalate in Afghanistan. I'd prefer a minimalist approach, working with tribal leaders the way we did to overthrow the Taliban regime in the first place. Given our need for nation-building at home right now, I am ready to live with a little less security and a little-less-perfect Afghanistan.

I recognize that there are legitimate arguments on the other side. At a lunch on Tuesday for opinion writers, the president lucidly argued that opting for a surge now to help Afghans rebuild their army and state into something decent — to win the allegiance of the Afghan people — offered the only hope of creating an "inflection point," a game changer, to bring long-term stability to that region. May it be so.

What makes me wary about this plan is how many moving parts there are — Afghans, Pakistanis and NATO allies all have to behave forever differently for

this to work.

But here is the broader context in which I assess all this: My own foreign policy thinking since 9/11 has been based on four pillars:

1. The Warren Buffett principle: Everything I've ever gotten in life is largely due to the fact that I was born in this country, America, at this time with these opportunities for its citizens. It is the primary obligation of our generation to turn over a similar America to our kids.

2. Many big bad things happen in the world without America, but not a lot of big good things. If we become weak and enfeebled by economic decline and debt, as we slowly are, America may not be able to play its historic stabilizing role in the world. If you didn't like a world of too-strong-America, you will really not like a world of too-weak-America — where China, Russia and Iran set more of the rules.

3. The context within which people live their lives shapes everything — from their political outlook to their religious one. The reason there are so many frustrated and angry people in the Arab-Muslim world, lashing out first at their own governments and secondarily at us — and volunteering for "martyrdom" — is because of the context within which they live their lives.

That was best summarized by the U.N.'s Arab Human Development reports as a context dominated by three deficits: a deficit of freedom, a deficit of education and a deficit of women's em-

powerment. The reason India, with the world's second-largest population of Muslims, has a thriving Muslim minority (albeit with grievances, but with no prisoners in Guantánamo Bay) is because of the context of pluralism and democracy it has built at home.

4. One of the main reasons the Arab-Muslim world has been so resistant to internally driven political reform is because vast oil reserves allow its re-

**To make Afghanistan part of the 'war on terrorism' is not crazy. It's too expensive**

gimes to become permanently ensconced in power, by just capturing the oil tap, and then using the money to fund vast security and intelligence networks that quash any popular movement. Look at Iran.

Hence, post-9/11 I advocated that our politicians find sufficient courage to hike gasoline taxes and seriously commit ourselves to developing alternatives to oil. Economists agree that this would ultimately bring down the global price, and slowly deprive these regimes of the sole funding source that allows them to maintain their authoritarian societies. People do not change when we tell them they should; they change when their context tells them they must.

To me, the most important reason for the Iraq war was never weapons of mass destruction. It was to see if we could partner with Iraqis to help them build something that does not exist in the modern Arab world: a state, a con-

text, where the constituent communities — Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds — write their own social contract for how to live together without an iron fist from above. Iraq has proved staggeringly expensive and hugely painful.

The mistakes we made should humble anyone about nation-building in Afghanistan. It does me.

Still, the Iraq war may give birth to something important — if Iraqis can find that self-sustaining formula to live together.

Alas, that is still in doubt. If they can, the model would have a huge impact on the Arab world. Baghdad is a great Arab capital. If Iraqis fail, it's religious strife, economic decline and authoritarianism as far as the eye can see — the witch's brew that spawns terrorists.

Iraq was about "the war on terrorism." The Afghanistan invasion, for me, was about the "war on terrorists." To me, it was about getting bin Laden and depriving Al Qaeda of a sanctuary — period. I never thought we could make Afghanistan into Norway — and even if we did, it would not resonate beyond its borders the way Iraq might.

To now make Afghanistan part of the "war on terrorism" — i.e., another nation-building project — is not crazy. It is just too expensive, when balanced against our needs for nation-building in America, so that we will have the strength to play our broader global role. Hence, my desire to keep our presence in Afghanistan limited. That is what I believe. That is why I believe it.

# Stretching out an ugly struggle

## AFGHAN SURGE I

There are no good choices. Obama has only kicked the can down the road.

**Graham E. Fuller**

Many decades ago as a fledgling C.I.A. officer in the field, I was naively convinced that if the facts were reported back to Washington correctly, everything else would take care of itself in policymaking. The first loss of innocence comes with the harsh recognition that "all politics are local" and that overseas realities bear only a partial relationship to foreign-policy formulation back home.

So in looking at President Obama's new policy directions for Afghanistan, what goes down in Washington politics far outweighs analyses of local conditions.

I had hoped that Obama would level with the American people that the war in Afghanistan is not being won, indeed is not winnable within any practicable framework. But such an admission — however accurate — would sign the political death warrant of a president to be portrayed as having snatched defeat out of the jaws of "victory."

The "objective" situation in Afghanistan remains a mess. Senior commanders acknowledge that we are not now winning hearts and minds in Afghanistan; indeed, we never can, and certainly not at gunpoint. Most Pashtuns will never accept a U.S. plan for Afghanistan's future. The non-Pashtuns — Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, etc. — naturally welcome any outside support in what is a virtual civil war.

America has inadvertently ended up choosing sides in this war. U.S. forces

are perceived by large numbers of Afghans as an occupying army inflicting large civilian casualties. The struggle has now metastasized into Pakistan — with even higher stakes.

Obama's policies would seem an unsatisfying compromise among contending arguments. Thirty thousand more troops are less than called for and will not turn the tide; arguably they present more American targets for attack.

They will heighten traditional xenophobia against foreigners traipsing through Pashtun villages and homes. It is a fool's errand to persuade the locals in Pashtun territory that the Taliban are the enemy and the U.S. is their friend. Whatever mixed feelings Pashtuns have toward the Taliban, they know the Taliban will be among them long after Washington tires with this mission.

The strategy of the Bush era envisioned Afghanistan as a vital imperial outpost in a post-Soviet dream world. That world vision is gone — except to a few Washington diehards who haven't grasped the new emerging global architectures of power, economics, prestige and influence.

The Taliban will inevitably figure significantly in the governance of almost any future Afghanistan, like it or not. Future Taliban leaders, once rid of foreign occupation, will have little incentive to support global jihadist schemes — they never really have by choice. The Taliban inherited Osama bin Laden as a poison pill from the past when they came to power in 1996 and have learned a bitter lesson about what it means to lend state support to a prominent terrorist group.

The Taliban with a voice in power will

have every incentive to welcome foreign money and expertise into the country, including the Pashtun regions — as long as it is not part of a Western strategic package.

An austere Islamic regime is not the ideal outcome for Afghanistan, but it is by far the most realistic. To reverse ground realities and achieve a markedly different outcome is not in the cards and will pose Obama with the same dilemma next year.

Meanwhile, Pakistan will never be willing or able to solve Washington's Afghanistan dilemma. Pakistan's own stability has been brought to the brink by U.S. demands that it solve America's self-created problem in Afghanistan. Pakistan will eventually be forced to resolve Afghanistan itself — but only after the U.S. has gone, and only by making a pact with Taliban forces both inside Afghanistan and in Pakistan itself.

Washington will not accept that for now, but it will be forced to fairly soon. Maybe the Pakistanis can root out bin Laden, but meanwhile, Al Qaeda has extended its autonomous franchises around the world, and terrorists can train and plan almost anywhere in the world; they do not need Afghanistan.

By now, as in so many other elements of the Global War on Terror, the U.S. has become more part of the problem than part of the solution. We are sending troops to defend troops that themselves constitute an affront to Afghan nationalism. Only expeditious American withdrawal from Afghanistan will prevent exacerbation of the problem.

Afghans must themselves face the complex mechanics of internal struggle

and reconciliation. They have done so over long periods of their history. The ultimate outcome is of greater strategic consequence to Pakistan, Russia, China, Iran, India and others in the region than to the United States.

Europe and Canada have lost all stomach for this mission that is now promoted primarily in terms of "saving NATO" for future (and obsolescent) "out of area" struggles in a world in which Western strategic preferences can no longer predominate.

In a counterbalance to the mini-surge, Obama wisely establishes a date for genuine withdrawal in 2011. The surge may just be worth it if it enables Obama to put the U.S. military and Kabul on notice that time is quickly running out to demonstrate genuine political and military progress.

So the ugly struggle continues with little prospect for genuine improvement. There are no good choices. Obama has only kicked the can down the road.

Only with immense luck will his real goal — creation of the minimally acceptable terms for an American withdrawal — come into sight, providing a tiny fig leaf to mask what will essentially constitute a strategic American failure that was inherent nearly from the beginning in America's global military response to the challenge of 9/11.

**GRAHAM E. FULLER** is a former C.I.A. station chief in Kabul and a former vice-chairman of the C.I.A.'s National Intelligence Council. He is author of numerous books on the Middle East, including "The Future of Political Islam."

GLOBAL VIEWPOINT / TRIBUNE MEDIA SERVICES

# Then there's Pakistan and the Pashtun

**AFGHAN  
SURGE II**  
The Pash-  
tun-Pakistan  
axis can  
undercut  
Obama's  
agenda.

**Olivier Roy**

**FLORENCE** President Obama is betting that sending 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan will rapidly change the balance of power in the field, erode local support for the Taliban, give breathing space to the Kabul government to clean up its act, allow humanitarian aid and development to reach the countryside and possibly bring some war-weary Taliban to the negotiating table. Al Qaeda would thus be deprived of any sanctuary, and the U.S. mission there would be accomplished.

In essence, the president announced a short-term military surge in Afghanistan to lay the ground for implementing a long-term political agenda — one first put in place by the Bush administration in 2002 — that focuses on good governance, fighting corruption, training a professional police and promoting economic and social development.

Since the political project has failed over the last eight years, the logic goes, only military action can revive the conditions for it. So everything depends on a military progress in counterinsurgency.

It is true that, at a time when the Taliban are on the move and the Kabul government embodies more than ever a failed state, nothing can be done without a military surge. The Taliban smell victory and have no interest in negotiating. The only alternative is to leave or to escalate the fighting.

The idea seems to be to use tactics

that worked in northern Iraq: playing traditional tribal leaders against extremists, offering them incentives and hoping that the large strata of the population who don't share the radicals' agenda will turn against them.

In this perspective, the corrupt and distrusted Kabul government is more a liability than an asset, which means that the American and NATO troops would have to be politically involved at the local levels instead of handing over the keys to Kabul once the field has been cleared.

For such a policy to work, the Taliban insurrection must be correctly understood and Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan must be at least neutralized.

The Taliban insurrection is both an ethnic and a social movement. The Taliban embody both a Pashtun irredentism and a shift in the traditional tribal system. The insurgency is limited to Pashtun-populated areas; in Pakistan, too, the "liberated Islamic areas" are all Pashtun. Non-Pashtun Islamic militants choose other ways to act.

The issue of Pashtun frustration at being shut out of power has not been ignored by the Western powers. They supported the dismantling of the ethnically non-Pashtun Northern Alliance forces that took Kabul in November 2001 — a rather easy task after the assassination of their charismatic leader Ahmed Shah Massoud.

But now the non-Pashtuns in Afghanistan have no more military means to protect themselves from a Taliban comeback, and they cannot rely on an Afghan National Army. Thus the quandary is how to placate the Pashtuns

without weakening further the other ethnic groups whose fears of a Taliban comeback make them the best allies of the NATO troops.

President Hamid Karzai was appointed largely because he embodied a traditional Pashtun identity. He appointed Pashtun governors and has played on Pashtun traditions. Yet this has been to no avail because the tribal aristocracy he represents has lost its roots in the tribal areas.

In northern Iraq, traditional tribal leaders happily answered Gen. David Petraeus' opening toward them to get rid of the threat of non-Iraqi Al Qaeda fighters who ignored or even tried to suppress them. But in Afghanistan as well as in Pakistan, traditional leaders of this kind have almost disappeared. They have been replaced by a new elite of young madrassa-educated Taliban, more connected to Pakistan and the Gulf than to the West.

What of the role of Pakistan? If they find a shelter in Pakistan, the Taliban could easily escape the brunt of the two coming years of a military surge. They can expect that the U.S. will be unable to bolster a counter power in the Afghan tribal belt or strengthen the Kabul government. So they just have to wait.

Pressure on Pakistan will yield very little — the arrest or the killing of some Taliban leaders or Al Qaeda cadres.

Until, now the Pakistan Army has used both Taliban and Islamist militants as a proxy tool of its regional policy of "strategic depth" vis-à-vis India. It still wants a Pashtun Islamist government in Kabul.

This complex and dangerous cooperation between the army and the Taliban was based on a deal: The Taliban, Afghan or Pakistani, might push their agenda in Afghanistan or in the north-west territories in Pakistan, but should not contest the leadership of the Pakistan Army. Islamabad is off-limits.

The Taliban broke this deal when they made a foray from their Swat stronghold through Buner in the direction of Islamabad. The army had no choice than to counterattack. But the objective of the Pakistan Army is not to destroy the Taliban. It is to bring them back into the fold after a red line has been crossed.

As long as the Pakistan Army does not consider its campaign against the Taliban as a matter of life and death for itself, it will not help in any serious way with the American and NATO agenda in Afghanistan. Pakistan has been fighting through proxies in Afghanistan for more than 30 years. It can wait for American and NATO troops to leave the region.

As far as I can see, only finding a way to alleviate Pashtun frustration in Afghanistan and getting Pakistan to give up its decades-old policy of supporting Islamists in power there will change anything fundamental. Unless a broader and more coherent policy is defined that includes these elements, 30,000 additional U.S. troops plus more from NATO are not going to make a difference.

*OLIVIER ROY is a research director at the French National Center for Scientific Research and the author of "Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah."*

GLOBAL VIEWPOINT / TRIBUNE MEDIA SERVICES

# Take the war to Pakistan

## AFGHANISTAN CONT'D I

The U.S. and Pakistan must target the Taliban in Baluchistan Province.

**Seth G. Jones**

**KABUL, AFGHANISTAN** President Obama's decision on a timetable for withdrawal of American troops only makes official what everyone here has known for a while: the clock is ticking in Afghanistan. The Taliban have long recognized this, and many captured militants have reminded their interrogators that "you have the watches, but we have the time."

As we quicken the pace, the top American commander here, Gen. Stanley McChrystal, has repeatedly noted that there are many issues to focus on: building more competent Afghan Army and police forces, adopting more effective anticorruption measures and reintegrating "moderate" Taliban and other insurgent fighters into Afghan society and politics.

But perhaps the most difficult issue is largely outside of General McChrystal's control (and got short shrift in President Obama's speech at West Point):

undermining the Taliban's sanctuary in Pakistan. Thus far, there has been no substantive action taken against the Taliban leadership in Baluchistan Province, south of the Pashtun-dominated areas of Afghanistan. This is the same mistake the Soviets made in the 1980s, when they failed to act against the seven major mujahideen groups headquartered in Pakistan.

This sanctuary is critical because the Afghan war is organized and run out of Baluchistan. Virtually all significant meetings of the Taliban take place there, and many of the group's senior leaders are based there.

"The Taliban sanctuary in Baluchistan is catastrophic for us," a Marine told me on a recent trip to Afghanistan's Helmand Province, across the border from Baluchistan. "Local Taliban fighters get strategic and operational guidance from across the border, as well as supplies and technical components for their improvised explosive devices."

The Taliban in Pakistan have an organizational structure divided into functional committees — a media committee, a military committee, a finance

committee responsible for acquiring and managing funds, and so forth.

The Taliban's inner shura, or governing council, exerts authority over lower-level Taliban fighters. It is composed of the supreme Taliban leader, Mullah Muhammad Omar; his principal deputy, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar; his military commander, Abdullah Zakir; and roughly a dozen other key leaders. Many Taliban leaders have moved their families to Baluchistan, and their children attend Pakistani schools.

Mullah Baradar is particularly important because he runs many of the shuras involving senior Taliban commanders, virtually all of which are in Pakistan. "Omar is reclusive and unpolished, and has preferred to confide in a small number of trusted advisers rather than address larger groups," one Taliban figure recently said to me.

Yet Pakistan and the United States have failed to target them systematically. Pakistani Army and Frontier Corps forces have conducted operations in Pakistan's tribal areas to the north, and the U.S. has conducted many drone strikes there. But relatively little has

been done in Baluchistan. The U.S. and Pakistan must target Taliban leaders in Baluchistan. There are several ways to do it, and none requires military forces.

The first is to conduct raids to capture Taliban leaders in Baluchistan. Most Taliban are in or near Baluchi cities like Quetta. These should be police and intelligence operations, much like American-Pakistani efforts to capture Khalid Shaikh Mohammed and other Qaeda operatives after 9/11. The second is to hit Taliban leaders with drone strikes, as the United States and Pakistan have done so effectively in the tribal areas.

The cost of failing to act in Baluchistan will be enormous. As one Russian diplomat who served in the Soviet Army in Afghanistan recently told me: "You are running out of time. You must balance counterinsurgency efforts in Afghanistan by targeting the leadership nodes in Pakistan. Don't make the same mistake we did."

**SETH G. JONES**, the author of *"In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan,"* is a civilian adviser to the American military.



# America's timeline, and the Taliban's

Max Hastings

**LONDON** It is hard to be optimistic about the outcome of President Obama's troop "surge" in Afghanistan. The additional forces sound large in headlines, but shrink small in the mountains.

The commitment is intended as an earnest indication of America's will. But neither the number of troops nor the timeline that mandates a drawdown in less than two years is likely to impress the Taliban, who think in decades, or for that matter the Afghan people.

Most decision-makers on both sides of the Atlantic now privately believe we are in the business of managing failure, and that is how the surge looks. The president allowed himself to be convinced that a refusal to reinforce NATO's mission in Afghanistan would fatally weaken the resolve of Pakistan in resisting Islamic militancy.

Meanwhile at home, refusal to meet the American generals' demands threatened to brand him as the man who lost the Afghan war. Thus the surge lies in the realm of politics, not warfare.

As the president said, the usual comparisons with Vietnam are mistaken. Today's U.S. Army and Marine Corps are skilled counterinsurgency fighters. Their commanders, especially Gen. Stanley McChrystal, the top commander in Afghanistan, are officers of the highest gifts. Combat and casualties are on a much smaller scale than in Southeast Asia four decades ago.

The critical fact, however, is that military operations are meaningless unless in support of a sustainable political system. One Indochina parallel seems valid: that war was lost chiefly because America's Vietnamese allies were unviable.

If we lose in Afghanistan, it will not be because American soldiers are defeated, but because "our" Afghans — the regime of Hamid Karzai — cannot deliver to the people honest policing, acceptable administration and visible quality of life improvements. I'm hardly the first to say this. Yet the yawning hole in Mr. Obama's speech at West Point, and in American policy, is the absence of a credible Afghan domestic and regional strategy.

It would be hard to overstate the cultural chasm separating Afghans from their foreign allies and expatriate re-

## AFGHANISTAN CONT'D II

If we lose in Afghanistan, it will be because President Karzai's regime cannot deliver.

turnees. Scarcely a single Western soldier speaks their languages. In the entire country there are only a few hundred competent administrators, and most of them are corrupt. Last year, I met an Afghan minister who had spent more than half his young life as an exile. He spoke and acted like a Californian. To Pashtun tribesmen, he must seem like a Martian.

"Democracy has been a disaster for our country," an Afghan businessman once told me, in tones of withering scorn. Like most of his kind, he may live in Kabul, but he has one eye on the airport.

In Pakistan, there is great uncertainty about the impact of the surge. The West's purpose is not to remake Afghanistan, an impossible task, but to promote regional stability and encourage the Pakistanis in their struggle against militants.

The strategic importance of these objectives is not in doubt. The question is whether they are attainable, and whether an increased troop commitment in Afghanistan will do much to advance them. The Islamabad government sincerely, even passionately, wants the United States and its allies to continue their Afghan campaign. But among Pakistan's vast population, the West is much more unpopular — indeed, hated — than it was in 2006 or, for that matter, 2001. There is a danger that the surge will intensify that popular alienation, further fueling Islamic extremism and thus terrorism.

Little progress can be made toward regional stability without reducing tensions between Pakistan and India. India's dalliance with the Afghan government, which has been given hundreds of millions of dollars in Indian aid, has increased the deep paranoia of the Pakistani Army and intelligence service. The status quo will only lead powerful elements of Pakistan's security forces to continue to support Islamic militants as proxies against India.

Few responsible participants in the Afghan drama, even the most pessimistic, urge a precipitate withdrawal. We are too deeply committed for that. What

seems important is to recognize that politics and diplomacy are the fundamentals, though they cannot progress unless security improves. Even the most limited stabilization program will founder unless all the regional powers, including Iran, become parties to it. It is difficult to imagine that the Karzai administration can raise its game sufficiently to gain a popular mandate strong enough to stop the Taliban.

President Obama said on Tuesday, "Unlike Vietnam, we are not facing a broad-based popular insurgency." Yes, the Taliban command limited support, and have relatively few hard-core fighters. But many Afghans, especially Pashtuns, unite in dislike both for the Western "occupiers" and the Kabul regime.

Progress depends, as General McChrystal seems to recognize, on reaching accommodations with the tribes from the bottom up, not the top down. The smartest surge will be one of cash payments to local leaders. You can buy a lot of Afghans for a small fraction of the cost of deploying a Marine company.

Perhaps the greatest problem for Western policymakers is that Taliban leaders watch CNN and Al Jazeera. They know that the British public has turned against the war, probably irrevocably, and that American opinion is deeply divided. They believe they have more patience than us, and they may be right.

The president's troop surge was perhaps politically inescapable. But any chance of salvaging a minimally acceptable outcome hinges not on what American and allied soldiers can do on the battlefield, but on putting together a coherent political strategy. Mr. Obama's speech represented a gesture to his generals rather than a convincing path to success in Afghanistan.

MAX HASTINGS is a former editor of *The Daily Telegraph* and the author of the forthcoming "Winston's War."

# May it all come true



**Thomas L. Friedman**

President Obama certainly showed leadership mettle in going against his own party's base and ordering a troop surge into Afghanistan. He is going to have to be even more tough-minded, though, to make sure his policy is properly executed.

I've already explained why I oppose this escalation. But since the decision has been made — and I do not want my country to fail or the Obama presidency to sink in Afghanistan — here are some thoughts on how to reduce the chances that this ends badly. Let's start by recalling an insight that President John F. Kennedy shared in a Sept. 2, 1963, interview with Walter Cronkite:

Cronkite: "Mr. President, the only hot war we've got running at the moment is, of course, the one in Vietnam, and we have our difficulties there."

Kennedy: "I don't think that unless a greater effort is made by the [Vietnamese] government to win popular support that the war can be won out there. In the final analysis, it is their war. They are the ones who have to win it or lose it. We can help them; we can give them equipment; we can send our men out there as advisers. But they have to win it, the people of Vietnam, against the Communists. We are prepared to continue to assist them, but I don't think that the war can be won unless the people support the effort and, in my opinion, in the last two months,

the [Vietnamese] government has gotten out of touch with the people...."

Cronkite: "Do you think this government still has time to regain the support of the people?"

Kennedy: "I do. With changes in policy and perhaps with personnel I think it can. If it doesn't make those changes, the chances of winning it would not be very good."

What J.F.K. understood, what L.B.J. lost sight of, and what B.H.O. can't forget, is that in the end it's not about how many troops we Americans send or deadlines we set. It is all about our Afghan partners. Afghanistan has gone into a tailspin largely because President Hamid Karzai's government became dysfunctional and massively corrupt — focused more on extracting revenues for private gain than on governing. That is why too many Afghans who cheered Karzai's arrival in 2001 have now welcomed Taliban security and justice.

"In 2001, most Afghan people looked to the United States not only as a potential mentor but as a model for successful democracy," Pashtoon Atif, a former aid worker from Kandahar, recently wrote in *The Los Angeles Times*. "What we got instead was a free-for-all in which our leaders profited outrageously and unapologetically from a wealth of foreign aid coupled with a dearth of regulations."

Therefore, our primary goal has to be to build — with Karzai — an Afghan government that is "decent enough" to earn the loyalty of the Afghan people, so a critical mass of them will feel "ownership" of it and therefore be ready to fight to protect it. Because only then will there be a "self-sustaining" Afghan Army and state so we can begin to get out by the president's July 2011 deadline — without leaving behind a bloodbath.

Focus on those key words: "decent enough," "ownership" and "self-sustaining." Without minimally decent government, Afghans will not take own-

ership. If they don't take ownership, they won't fight for it. And if they won't fight for it on their own, whatever progress we make will not be self-sustaining. It will just collapse when we leave.

But here is what worries me: The president's spokesman, Robert Gibbs, said flatly: "This can't be nation-building." And the president told a columnists' lunch on Tuesday that he wants to avoid "mission creep" that takes on "nation-building in Afghanistan."

I am sorry: This is only nation-building. You can't train an Afghan Army and police force to replace our troops if you have no basic state they feel is worth fighting for. But that will require a transformation by Karzai, starting with the dismissal of his most corrupt aides and installing officials Afghans can trust.

This surge also depends, the president indicated, on Pakistan ending its obsession with India. That obsession has led Pakistan to support the Taliban to control Afghanistan as part of its "strategic depth" vis-à-vis India. Pakistan fights the Taliban who attack it, but nurtures the Taliban who want to control Afghanistan. So we now need this fragile Pakistan to stop looking for strategic depth against India in Afghanistan and to start building strategic depth at home, by reviving its economy and school system and preventing jihadists from taking over there.

That is why Mr. Obama is going to have to make sure, every day, that Karzai doesn't weasel out of reform or Pakistan wiggle out of shutting down Taliban sanctuaries or the allies wimp out on helping us. To put it succinctly: This only has a chance to work if Karzai becomes a new man, if Pakistan becomes a new country and if we actually succeed at something the president says we won't be doing at all: nation-building in Afghanistan. Yikes!

For America's sake, may it all come true.

# Afghanistan on Main Street



**Roger Cohen**

## GLOBALIST

**NEW YORK** The most important line in President Obama's Afghan speech was not about Afpak policy (so named by the White House) but about the U.S. domestic situation: "Our troop commitment in Afghanistan cannot be open-ended — because the nation that I am most interested in building is our own."

As military strategy for winning a war the speech made little sense. You don't need to be von Clausewitz to know that the commitment of 30,000 troops combined with the establishment of proximate date for the start of their withdrawal is not going to break the will of an enemy or destroy its center of gravity.

But as a political statement and as an acknowledgment of the limits of American power after the first decade of the 21st century, the speech was adroit.

Saying troop drawdown will begin in July 2011, without saying at what rate or to what extent, is not a bad way to pressure President Hamid Karzai to get with the program while leaving needed U.S. options open for averting the worst in an area with an estimated 80 to 100 Pakistani nuclear warheads.

Those warheads and the virulence of anti-Western political Islam in "Afpakistan" mean U.S. wagons will not be pulling out completely for a long time. Exit ramps are really easing ramps and political signals. As Defense Secretary Robert Gates said after the speech, "We must not repeat the mistake of 1989 and turn our backs on these folks."

But nor can America turn its back on

itself.

It cannot forever languish in a la-la land where the great global security underwriter and the great global debtor never encounter each other, dishing out billions for far-flung fights with one hand and condemning the next generation of Americans with the other. The Jekyll-and-Hyde years have to end.

The Taliban may never go away but they do sleep. Debt doesn't.

So, as the delirious decade draws to a close — a period in which America was upended by 9/11 and close to one trillion dollars was spent on the Afghan and Iraq wars — the realism of Obama is welcome. It takes getting used to — idealism propelled him after all. The three presidential C's (cool, controlled, cerebral) can get to people; they've gotten to me at times. Still, Obama is right; America needs a heavy dose of nation-building that's incompatible with ever escalating military commitments.

The United States is buried in debt, personal and collective, after a decade in which median incomes for the average working stiff fell, and more Americans dropped below the poverty line, and the number of Americans without health insurance rose. Unemployment is above French levels without French welfare. Enough said.

A lot of Americans are worried sick. The friendly loan packagers who were doling out money like risk no longer existed have taken real exit ramps — they've vanished.

Leading by example has to mean something. If the U.S. government doesn't care what it spends, citizens aren't going to either — and the dollar's plunge will become irreversible. Just look at the record of the bomb-and-shop years since 2001.

Polonius had some good advice for Laertes in Hamlet:

*Neither a borrower nor a lender be  
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,  
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.*

*This above all: to thine own self be true...*

Or, as Proverbs 22:7 puts it in the Bible: "The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender."

Everything from the nation's relationship with China to Americans' buying decisions in this holiday season is being affected by that venerable precept. President Obama cannot be impervious to it.

He especially cannot be impervious to it because the great bailout that has unfolded on his watch has salvaged Wall Street and its bonuses while doing little for Main Street and jobs. Paying for mistakes has been inequitably divided. The derivatives crowd is still golfing; the rivets crowd is wondering what happened to manufacturing. Obama's "truth to himself" demands that he do better.

That begins with risk-is-shared health care reform. It involves re-learning husbandry. It's going to take innovation, education and long-term thinking. And it's going to demand trade-offs.

In acknowledging these trade-offs, and putting the world on notice about America's future capacity as global security underwriter, Obama turned an Afghan speech into perhaps the most important domestic pronouncement of his presidency.

There are some things I want to correct and clear up about a column on Nov. 13, "Of fruit flies and drones." I suggested that research being done on fruit flies at the California Institute of Technology was done for military purposes. It is not. The research does receive military funding, but the director of the laboratory, Michael H. Dickinson, is a zoologist who studies insect neurobiology and neither he nor his lab contribute directly to the development of robots, drones or weapons. I did not speak to Professor Dickinson. A source I identified as a graduate student is in fact a former graduate student who works part-time as a technician in the lab. Finally, biomechanics refers to the application of mechanical principles to living organisms — not the application of living organisms to mechanisms.

## PAKISTAN AND THE WAR

Pakistan's leaders must be persuaded that this is not just America's war, but that it is central to their survival.

President Obama has articulated a reasonably comprehensive strategy for Afghanistan, but there is no chance of defeating the Taliban and Al Qaeda unless Pakistan's leaders stop temporizing (and in some cases collaborating) and get fully into the fight. That means Mr. Obama must demand more, while finding ways to bolster the country's weak civilian leadership and soothe anti-American furies. In a world of difficult strategic and diplomatic challenges, this may well be Mr. Obama's toughest.

In his speech last week, Mr. Obama laid down a marker for Islamabad, declaring "we cannot tolerate a safe haven for terrorists whose location is known and whose intentions are clear." In private, administration officials have been even more explicit, warning Pakistani leaders that if they don't act the U.S. will, including more attacks by unmanned aircraft.

Such strikes have killed several top extremists, but the program is hugely unpopular in Pakistan and Mr. Obama must be judicious about expanding it. That means three things: extremely careful targeting, no civilian casualties or as few as possible, and no publicity. Drones won't be enough. Pakistan's civilian and military leaders must finally be persuaded that this is not just America's war, it is central to their survival.

In recent months, the Pakistan Army has gone after Taliban fighters in the Swat Valley and Waziristan. Yet the army leadership is refusing to strike at the heart of the Taliban command in Baluchistan Province. In part, they are hesitating because of legitimate fears of retaliation. But there are also many Pakistani officials — and not just in the intelligence services — who continue to see the Taliban as an ally and long-term proxy to limit India's influence in Afghanistan.

To change that thinking, Mr. Obama will first have to persuade Pakistanis that the United States is in it for the long haul. The president sent conflicting messages in his speech, promising Pakistan a long-term partnership but also suggesting that there will be a quick drawdown of American troops in Afghanistan. Mr. Obama privately has promised Pakistani military and civilian leaders what one aide described as a partnership of "unlimited potential" in which Washington would consider any proposal Islamabad puts on the table. Congress has already authorized a \$7.5 billion aid package, over five years, for schools, hospitals and other nonmilitary projects. But this won't mean anything if it does not follow through and actually finance the program.

Presuming security needs can be met, President Obama should visit Pakistan so he can tell Pakistanis directly that their fears of abandonment — or domination — are unfounded. Mr. Obama also must keep nudging India and Pakistan to improve relations. That may be the best hope for freeing up resources and mind-sets in Pakistan for the fight against the extremists.

Mr. Obama told a small group of journalists at a White House lunch last week that reducing tensions between the two nuclear rivals, though enormously difficult, is "as important as anything to the long-term stability of the region." He is right.

# Obama needs a 'Plan B'

## AFGHANISTAN

The U.S. should prepare for talks with the Taliban should the surge fails, as it well might.

**Anatol Lieven  
Maleeha Lodhi**

The key question to ask about President Obama's military surge in Afghanistan is, "Where is Plan B?"

In other words, if the extra troops do not reverse the Taliban momentum and the Afghan governance structure and army cannot take over from the United States in the next few years, what then?

Equally importantly, how does Obama hope to prevent increased U.S. pressure on Pakistan from further destabilizing that country and risking a much greater disaster for the region and the world?

The record of the past suggests that the surge is likely to fail. The additional forces are still not sufficient to win in a country as large as Afghanistan. The Taliban may well be put on the defensive, but given their support in the Pashtun areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan, they are very unlikely to be crippled.

As for the U.S. state-building project, this has failed so comprehensively under President Hamid Karzai in the past eight years that it is difficult to see how it can miraculously reform itself over the next 18 months.

Washington's aim to build the Afghan National Army to the point where it is able to hold some towns against the Taliban confronts formidable obstacles: illiteracy, lack of professionalism and above all the underrepresentation of Pashtuns, all of which prevents it from becoming a genuinely national force.

Compared to the Soviet Union, the West is laboring under a crushing disadvantage in this regard. The Soviets inherited the core of the old royal Afghan Army, which had always been a Pashtun-dominated force. The West has tried to build a new force on the basis of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance, which is overwhelmingly non-Pashtun.

With continued outside support, the force may be able to defend non-Pashtun areas against the Taliban in the future, but this is not sustainable. Even more questionable is whether it will be able to operate successfully in the Pashtun areas where the Taliban is based.

Given these odds against military success, it is essential that the U.S. plan incorporate a political strategy aimed at Afghan national reconciliation — and that plan should involve negotiations with the Taliban. The goal would have to be a settlement that allows the Taliban local power in the Pashtun areas in return for the exclusion of Al Qaeda.

Mr. Obama's surge does not rule out

the simultaneous pursuit of a negotiated settlement. Bringing military pressure to bear in an effort to soften the enemy's negotiating stance is a well rehearsed tactic.

For this to work, three things are essential.

First, there has to be a simultaneous political strategy. Otherwise, Washington will simply end up emulating the Israeli model of endless, futile campaigns to force a unilateral and unachievable political settlement. So far the Obama administration has given no indication of what its alternative strategy might be.

This also undermines the second essential factor, of time. Historically, all negotiations to end such conflicts have taken very long — Northern Ireland being a classic example. If Mr. Obama and his generals think that they will ultimately need to talk to the Taliban, they actually need to start doing that now, or at least seeking ways of starting.

The last precondition of a successful strategy is not to take military action that makes negotiations impossible. This means holding ground but not ramping up militarily. It is contradictory to seek talks with Taliban leaders while seeking at the same time to kill them.

Instead of considering this political approach to underpin the military effort, the U.S. is stepping up pressure on Paki-

stan, which is already struggling with the bloody militant fallout of previously flawed U.S. policies in Afghanistan. The U.S. should recognize that only Pakistan can bring the Taliban to the table once Washington decides to negotiate.

Pressure on Pakistan to act against the Afghan Taliban will not just overstretch the Pakistan Army, undercut its own operations against militants and open a new front for a beleaguered state, but will permanently close the door on a negotiated end to the Afghan conflict.

Most especially, an expansion of drone missile attacks to Baluchistan is fraught with danger. It would further inflame public sentiment, alienate the Pakistani security establishment and probably shatter the Pakistan-U.S. relationship.

It would also destroy any possibility of a negotiated end to the Afghan war. All that Mr. Obama would then be left with would be a losing gamble on military victory in Afghanistan in the face of a shortening time frame, lengthening odds and a dangerously destabilized Pakistan.

**ANATOL LIEVEN** is a professor in the War Studies Department at King's College London and a senior fellow of the New America Foundation. **MALEEHA LODHI** is a senior fellow of the Woodrow Wilson Center and a former Pakistani ambassador to Washington and London.

# Rethinking the Pacific



**Philip  
Bowring**

**HONG KONG** It is natural for America's attention to be focused on the cost in blood and money of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. But a more permanent security issue is the U.S. presence in the Western Pacific, where America provides a security umbrella under which Japan, South Korea and others have prospered. Access to U.S. markets has been a part of this arrangement, playing a key role in China's rise.

Given America's budgetary problems, massive trade deficits and unemployment problems will it be long before the U.S. public begins to question policies, entrenched since the 1950s, of providing both military security and market access for this region?

Can the United States afford keeping 50,000 service personnel in Japan and another 28,000 in Korea? Can South Korea not defend itself, at least against conventional attack, from an impoverished North? For how long will Japan be allowed to hide behind a U.S. nuclear shield while proclaiming its opposition to nuclear weapons? Should the United States take risks to defend Taiwan, which shows scant interest in spending on its own defense?

For how long will America tolerate the hypocrisy of nations that feel free to trash the U.S. publicly while covertly aiding U.S. military presence? For how long will the United States put up with its free trade ideals being exploited by a mercantilist China? When will U.S. voters decide that local employment matters more than U.S. corporate profits?

These questions not only have to be asked as the U.S. faces what will probably be a prolonged period of adjustment to overspending on the military and on imports. They are beginning to be asked, at least implicitly, in East Asia.

Note the recent words of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew on a visit to the United States: "The 21st century will be a contest for supremacy in the Pacific because that's where the growth will be. If you do not hold your ground in the Pacific you cannot be a world leader."

Mr. Lee's concern that the United States might retreat set off sharp criticism from Chinese commentators who see the U.S. presence as the main obstacle to China's regional hegemony. In the past, Mr. Lee has emphasized the need for good relations with China. Now he apparently sees a need for a regional balance that only the U.S. can provide.

In Japan much is made of the new government's efforts to be seen as independent of Washington, which include a show of sympathy to Okinawa's problems in hosting the U.S. military. Yet China's arms build-up has emphasized that a nuclear Japan is the only viable alternative to the U.S. As a result, far from rejecting Washington, Tokyo has quietly been pressing it not to retire Tomahawk nuclear missiles. Referring to the Tomahawk, the Congressional Commission on

Strategic Posture recently noted: "One particularly important ally has argued to the commission privately that the credibility of the U.S. extended deterrence depends on the specific capability to hold a variety of targets at risk in a way that is either visible or stealthy as circumstances warrant."

Asia must face the fact that U.S. priorities have shifted, its self-confidence and fiscal capacity have been eroded. A newly published biography of the former Malaysian prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad, relates how, back in the 1980s and 1990s when Mahathir was renowned for his attacks on the U.S., he was secretly giving the U.S. access to many facilities and encouraging joint military exercises. Washington felt secure enough to tolerate Mahathir's abuse in return for cooperation.

To this day, Malaysia likes to say nice things about China but keep its U.S. military links. Yet the U.S. outlook may be changing. Should allies not only refrain from verbal abuse but actively support the U.S.? Should they pay toward the cost of the security the U.S. provides?

The questions are not asked openly but they are implicit in the need for the U.S. to adjust its strategic goals in line with its trade and budgetary capacity. East Asia recognizes that the days of economic expansion based on exports to the U.S. are over and that greater regional cooperation is needed to compensate. But achieving that is difficult. The argument that the U.S. itself has benefited immensely from its relationship with the world's fastest expanding region may carry intellectual weight. But political weight in a U.S. beset by deficits and unemployment is another matter.

# How to mend fences with Pakistan

Asif Ali Zardari

**ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN** Now that President Obama has recommitted the United States to stand with Pakistan and Afghanistan in our common fight against terrorism, extremism and fanaticism, it would be useful for Americans and Pakistanis to consider what has brought us to this point — and what the conflict's true endgame must be.

Despite the noise created by an often hyperactive press in Pakistan (an essential and preferable alternative to the censorship that prevailed during my country's military dictatorships), and the doubts expressed in America, Pakistan's democratically elected government is unambiguously on the right path toward establishing a moderate and modern nation.

Prime Minister Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani and I are working closely with our national assembly and our military and intelligence agencies to defeat the Taliban insurgency and the Qaeda-backed campaign of terrorism. Simultaneously, we are pursuing policies that will re-establish Pakistan as a vibrant economic market and finally address the long-neglected weaknesses in our education, health, agriculture and energy sectors. This isn't just rhetoric — it is an active policy with new budget priorities and a reoriented national mindset.

Over the last weeks I have moved forcefully to re-establish the traditional powers of the presidency as defined in the parliamentary model on which our Constitution is based. Our Constitution was distorted and perverted by military dictators who usurped the legal powers of Parliament. In accordance with the manifesto of the Pakistan Peoples Party, I am working toward strengthening the separation of powers of the presidency from those of the prime minister.

Recently, I voluntarily handed back the chairmanship of the National Command Authority that exercises control over Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. Contrary to some of the commentary on the subject, this is not a sign of weakness, but rather a demonstration of the vitality of Pakistani democracy.

As President Obama has noted, Pakistan's military has courageously ex-

ecuted important actions in the Swat Valley and South Waziristan against terrorists who threaten all of us. Pakistan has paid an

undercuts the fight against extremism.

enormous price in blood and treasure. But this is a price we are willing to pay.

Every day across our land, cowards distort our religion of peace, Islam, by slaughtering innocent people. Three thousand civilians, including my wife, Benazir Bhutto, and 2,000 soldiers and police officers have been killed in the last eight years. Just last week 40 people died in a mosque while at Friday prayers, including 10 children. This is our war as well as America's.

Yet in both countries there is deep suspicion toward the other. Many Americans still wonder, despite our sacrifices, if Pakistan is doing all it can to fight terrorism. Some resent what they believe is an absence of gratitude in Pakistan for American aid. But consider the history as seen by Pakistanis.

Twice in recent history America abandoned its democratic values to support dictators and manipulate and exploit us. In the 1980s, the United States supported Gen. Muhammad Zia ul-Haq's iron rule against the Pakistani people while using Pakistan as a surrogate in the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan. That decade turned our peaceful nation into a "Kalashnikov and heroin" society — a nation defined by guns and drugs.

In its fight against the Soviets, the United States, as a matter of policy, supported the most radical elements within the mujahedeen, who would later become the Taliban and Al Qaeda. When the Soviets were defeated and left in 1989, the United States abandoned Pakistan and created a vacuum in Afghanistan, resulting in the current horror.

And then after 9/11, the United States closed its eyes to the abuses of the dictatorship of President Pervez Musharraf, providing support to the regime while doing little to help with social needs or encourage the restoration of democracy. For Pakistanis, it is a bitter memory.

Public mistrust of the United States also stems from regional issues, specifically policies concerning India. I know it is the conventional wisdom in Washington that my nation is obsessed with India. But even to those of us who are striving toward accommodation and peace, the long history and the unresolved situation in Kashmir give Pakistanis reason to be concerned about our neighbor to the east. Just as the Israeli-Palestinian dispute cannot be resolved without accommodating the Palestinian people, there cannot be permanent regional peace in South Asia without addressing Kashmir.

The recent upset in Pakistan over the Kerry-Lugar legislation, which President Obama signed into law and which requires the secretary of state to report to Congress on military and civil progress in Pakistan, shows how sensitive many here are to what they see as unfair treatment by the United States. It would be helpful if the United States, at some point, would scrutinize India in a similar fashion and acknowledge that it has from time to time played a destabilizing role in the region.

The perceived rhetorical one-sidedness of American policy often fuels the conspiracy theories that abound here — theories that blame the West for all of our ills. Pakistan's elected democratic leadership is itself a victim of some of these conspiracy theories, but our American partners must understand their origins and work with us to turn public opinion around.

Although we certainly appreciate America's \$7.5 billion pledge over the next five years for nonmilitary projects in Pakistan, this long-term commitment must be complemented by short-term policies that demonstrate American neutrality and willingness to help India and Pakistan overcome their mutual distrust. It could start by stepping up its efforts to mediate the Kashmir dispute.

In recent days, I have thought often of something my wife, Benazir, wrote in the days before her death: "It is so much easier to blame others for our problems than to accept responsibility ourselves." Benazir added that conspiracy theories and "toxic rhetoric" were "an opiate that keeps Muslims angry against external enemies and allows them to pay little attention to the internal causes of intellectual and economic decline."

The free world stands with President Obama in the effort to defeat the extremism that threatens us all. Pakistanis are on the frontlines in this battle.

But we need help. We need the support of our allies in war but also to help build a new Pakistan that promises a meaningful future to our children. We are not looking for — and indeed reject — dependency. We don't need or want (nor would we accept) foreign troops to defeat the insurgency, and we seek trade more than aid from you in the future.

It is an economically viable and socially robust democratic Pakistan that will be the most effective long-term weapon against terrorism, extremism and fanaticism. This is the necessary endgame. And this is how history will judge victory.

ASIF ALI ZARDARI is the president of Pakistan.

The United States' inconsistent foreign policy with Pakistan

# Can America meet the deadline to get out?

Three experts comment on Obama's announcement that troop withdrawals from Afghanistan will begin in 18 months.

## Advantage: Taliban

Ahmed Rashid

**LAHORE, PAKISTAN** While President Obama deliberated three months before releasing his new Afghan surge strategy, his decision actually muddled the waters as far as American credibility in Afghanistan and Pakistan is concerned, and created misapprehensions in Europe.

Many NATO allies were thunderstruck at the deadline announcement. The British, who have the second-largest contingent in Afghanistan, have said their 10,000-troop presence in Helmand Province will not be affected by any timeline. Senior administration officials have spent the last week in Europe and in Afghanistan and Pakistan rowing back on what the president said, insisting that the plan is flexible.

In the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, most people are of two minds. They would like the Americans to leave soon, but don't want to lose their front-line

status in the war on terrorism, which brings vast amounts of American aid. Despite widespread anti-Americanism on the streets, the ruling elites are nervous about being dumped by America, as they were in 1989 after the Soviets withdrew.

Much of the confusion was the fault of President Obama himself. He should have devoted far more time in his West Point speech to thoroughly explaining the 18-month timeline. It seems almost as though his speechwriters got no input from the Afghan experts working for Richard Holbrooke, the American envoy here, who could have told them how poorly it would play in the region.

On the battlefield, there is no doubt that extra troops deployed in the east and south of Afghanistan will help in retaking areas now held by the Taliban. But the fear is that the Taliban will melt into the north and west of the country, where NATO troops operate under caveats that limit their ability to go on the offensive. Meanwhile, President Hamid Karzai has contradicted the Obama plan by saying that the Afghan army and police will not be ready for five years.

Nor has President Obama outlined exactly what the civilian surge hopes to achieve. He has ruled out nation-building, but that is precisely what Afghanis-

tan needs. Most important is building a functional Afghan economy with permanent jobs in place of the temporary positions provided by the present donor-driven development projects.

Pakistan remains the biggest problem. While President Asif Ali Zardari has said all the things Washington wants to hear, there is no agreement as yet from the Pakistan military to go after the Afghan Taliban strongholds in Baluchistan and the North-West Frontier Provinces. The Pakistan military is unlikely to act unless there is a parallel movement by the Americans to defuse Indo-Pakistani tensions over Kashmir, and unless India is more willing to reduce its forces on Pakistan's eastern border.

We can understand the president's serious domestic constraints — the economy, health care and Congressional elections next year. But this is all the more reason to make sure that the United States and NATO can deliver success in the next 18 months and get all the nations in this region to back their efforts. All this could have been done without an arbitrary timeline.

**AHMED RASHID** is the author of *"Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia"* and *"Descent Into Chaos."*



# To beat Al Qaeda, look to the East

The key in the Afghan-Pakistani area, as in Southeast Asia, is to know and use local customs and networks.

Scott Atran

**PARIS** In testimony last week before Congress, the American ambassador to Afghanistan, Karl Eikenberry, insisted that President Obama's revised war strategy will "build support for the Afghan government," while Gen. Stanley McChrystal, the top American commander there, vowed that it will "absolutely" succeed in disrupting and degrading the Taliban.

Confidence is important, but we also have to recognize that the decision to commit 30,000 more troops to a counterinsurgency effort against a good segment of the Afghan population, with the focus on converting a deeply unpopular and corrupt regime into a unified, centralized state for the first time in that country's history, is far from a slam dunk.

In the worst case, the surge may push General McChrystal's "core goal of defeating Al Qaeda" further away.

Al Qaeda is already on the ropes globally, with ever-dwindling financial and popular support, and a drastically diminished ability to work with other extremists worldwide, much less command them in major operations. Its lethal agents are being systematically hunted down, while those Muslims whose souls it seeks to save are increasingly revolted by its methods.

Unfortunately, this weakening viral movement may have a new lease on life in Afghanistan and Pakistan because we are pushing the Taliban into its arms. By overestimating the threat from Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, we are making it a greater threat to Pakistan and the world.

Afghanistan and the tribal areas of Pakistan are unlike Iraq, the ancient birthplace of central government, or 1960s Vietnam, where a strong state was backing the Communist insurgents. Afghanistan and Pakistan must be dealt with on their own terms.

We're winning against Al Qaeda and its kin in places where antiterrorism efforts are local and built on an understanding that the ties binding terrorist networks today are more cultural and familial than political. Consider recent events in Southeast Asia.

IN September, Indonesian security forces killed Noordin Muhammad Top, then on the F.B.I.'s most-wanted terrorist list. Implicated in the region's worst suicide bombings — including the JW Marriott and Ritz-Carlton bombings in Jakarta last July 17 — Noordin Top headed a splinter group of the extremist religious organization Jemaah Islamiyah (he called it Al Qaeda for the Malaysian Archipelago).

Research by my colleagues and me, supported by the National Science Foundation and the U.S. Defense Department, reveals three critical factors in such groups inspired by Al Qaeda, all of which local security forces implicitly grasp but American counterintelligence workers seem to underestimate.

What binds these groups together?

First is friendship forged through fighting: The Indonesian volunteers who fought the Soviet Union in Afghanistan styled themselves the Afghan Alumni, and many kept in contact when they returned home after the war.

The second is school ties and discipleship: Many leading operatives in Southeast Asia come from a handful of religious schools affiliated with Jemaah Islamiyah. Out of some 30,000 religious schools in Indonesia, only about 50 have a deadly legacy of producing violent extremists.

Third is family ties: As anyone who has watched the opening scene from "The Godfather" knows, weddings can be terrific opportunities for networking and plotting.

Understanding these three aspects of terrorist networking has given law enforcement a leg up on the jihadists.

Gen. Tito Karnavian, the leader of the strike team that tracked down Noordin Top, told me that "knowledge of the interconnected networks of Afghan Alumni, kinship and marriage groups was very crucial to uncovering the inner circle of Noordin."

Consider Noordin Top's third marriage, which cemented ties to key suspects in the lead-up to the recent hotel bombings.

His father-in-law, who founded a Jemaah Islamiyah-related boarding school, stashed explosives in his garden with the aid of another teacher at the school. Using electronic intercepts and tracing family, school and alumni ties, police officers found the cache in late June 2009. That discovery may have prompted Noordin Top to initiate the hotel attacks ahead of a planned simultaneous attack on the residence of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

In addition, an Afghan Alumni and nephew of Noordin Top's father-in-law was being pursued by the police for his role in a failed plot to blow up a tourist cafe on Sumatra.

Unfortunately, Noordin Top struck the hotels before the Indonesian police could penetrate the entire network, in part because another family group was still operating under the police radar.

This group included a florist who smuggled the bombs into the hotels and a man whose eventual arrest led to discovery of the plot against the president. Both terrorists were married to sisters of a Yemeni-trained imam who recruited the hotel suicide bombers, and of another brother who had infiltrated Indonesia's national airline.

Had the police pulled harder on the pieces of social yarn they had in hand, they might have unraveled the hotel plot earlier. Still, their work thwarted attacks planned for the future, including that on the president.

Similarly, security officials in the Philippines have combined intelligence from American and Australian sources with similar tracking efforts to crack down on their terrorist networks, and as a result most extremist groups are either seeking reconciliation with the government — including the deadly

Moro Islamic Liberation Front on the island of Mindanao — or have devolved into kidnapping-and-extortions gangs with no ideological focus.

The separatist Abu Sayyaf Group, once the most feared force in the region, now has no overall spiritual or military leaders, few weapons and only a hundred or so fighters.

SO, how does this relate to a strategy against Al Qaeda in the West and in Afghanistan and Pakistan?

Al Qaeda's main focus is harming the United States and Europe, but there lives with Western-style aid programs, only continues a long history of foreign involvement and failure.

Reading a thousand years of Arab and Muslim history would show little in the way of patterns that would have helped to predict 9/11, but our predicament in Afghanistan rhymes with the past like a limerick.

A key factor helping the Taliban is the moral outrage of the Pashtun tribes against those who deny them autonomy, including a right to bear arms to defend their tribal code, known as

Pashtunwali.

**We need to bring a perspective to Afghanistan and Pakistan that is smart about cultures, customs and connections.**

Its sacred tenets include protecting women's purity (namus), the right to personal revenge (badal), the sanctity of the guest (melmastia) and sanctuary (nanawateh). Among all Pashtun tribes, inheritance, wealth, social prestige and political status accrue through the father's line.

This social structure means that there can be no suspicion that the male pedigree (often traceable in lineages spanning centuries) is "corrupted" by doubtful paternity. Thus, revenge for sexual misbehavior (rape, adultery, abduction) warrants killing seven members of the offending group and often the "offending" woman. Yet hospitality trumps vengeance: If a group accepts a guest, all must honor him, even if prior hasn't been a successful attack in these places directly commanded by Osama bin Laden and company since 9/11.

The American invasion of Afghanistan devastated Al Qaeda's core of top personnel and its training camps. In a recent briefing to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Marc Sageman, a former C.I.A. case officer, said that recent history "refutes claims by some heads of the intelligence community that all Islamist plots in the West can be traced back to the Afghan-Pakistani border."

The real threat is homegrown youths who gain inspiration from Osama bin Laden but little else beyond an occasional self-financed spell at a degraded

Qaeda-linked training facility.

**It wouldn't be surprising if the Taliban were to sever ties to bin Laden if he**

The 2003 invasion of Iraq encouraged many of these local plots, including the train bombings in Madrid in 2004 and

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became a bigger headache than America.

coming to fruition by stepping up coordination and tracking links among local extremists, their friends and friends of friends, while also improving relations with young Muslim immigrants through community outreach. Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Turkey have taken similar steps.

Now we need to bring this perspective to Afghanistan and Pakistan — one that is smart about cultures, customs and connections.

The present policy of focusing on troop strength and drones, and trying to win over people by improving their grounds justify revenge. That's one reason American offers of millions for betraying Osama bin Laden fail.

Afghan hill societies have withstood centuries of would-be conquests by keeping order with Pashtunwali in the absence of central authority. When seemingly intractable conflicts arise, rival parties convene councils, or jirgas, of elders and third parties to seek solutions through consensus.

After 9/11, the Taliban leader, Mullah Omar, assembled a council of clerics to judge his claim that Mr. bin Laden was the country's guest and could not be surrendered. The clerics countered that because a guest should not cause his host problems, Mr. bin Laden should leave. But instead of keeping pressure on the Taliban to resolve the issue in ways they could live with, the United States ridiculed their deliberation and bombed them into a closer alliance with Al Qaeda. Pakistani Pashtuns then offered to help out their Afghan brethren.

American-sponsored "reconciliation" efforts between the Afghan government and the Taliban may be fatally flawed if they include demands that Pashtun hill tribes give up their arms and support a constitution that values Western-inspired rights and judicial institutions over traditions that have sustained the tribes against all enemies.

THE secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, and the special envoy to the region, Richard Holbrooke, suggest that victory in Afghanistan is possible if the Taliban who pursue self-interest rather than ideology can be co-opted with material incentives. But as the veteran war reporter Jason Burke of The Observer of London told me: "Today, the logical thing for the Pashtun conservatives is to stop fighting and get rich through narcotics or Western aid, the latter being much lower risk. But many won't sell out."

London in 2005.

In their after-maths, European law and security forces stopped plots from

Why? In part because outsiders who ignore local group dynamics tend to ride roughshod over values they don't grasp. My research with colleagues on group conflict in India, Indonesia, Iran, Morocco, Pakistan and the Palestinian territories found that helping to improve lives materially does little to reduce support for violence, and can even increase it if people feel such help compromises their most cherished values.

The original alliance between the Taliban and Al Qaeda was largely one of convenience between a poverty-stricken national movement and a transnational cause that brought it material help. American pressure on Pakistan to attack the Taliban and Al Qaeda in their sanctuary gave birth to the Pakistani Taliban, who forged their own ties to Al Qaeda to fight the Pakistani state.

While some Taliban groups use the rhetoric of global jihad to inspire ranks or enlist foreign fighters, the Pakistani Taliban show no inclination to go after Western interests abroad. Their attacks, which have included at least three assaults near nuclear facilities, warrant concerted action — but in Pakistan, not in Afghanistan. As Mr. Sage-man, the former C.I.A. officer, puts it: "There's no Qaeda in Afghanistan and no Afghans in Qaeda."

Pakistan has long preferred a policy of "respect for the independence and sentiment of the tribes" that was advised in 1908 by Lord Curzon, the British viceroy of India who established the North-West Frontier Province as a buffer zone to "conciliate and contain" the Pashtun hill tribes. In 1948, Pakistan's founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, removed all troops from brigade level up in Waziristan and other tribal areas in a plan aptly called Operation Curzon.

The problem today is that Al Qaeda is prodding the Pakistani Taliban to hit state institutions in the hopes of provoking a full-scale invasion of the tribal areas by the Pakistani Army; the idea is that such an assault would rally the tribes to Al Qaeda's cause and threaten the state. The United States has been pushing for exactly that sort of potentially disastrous action by Islamabad.

But holding to Curzon's line may still be Pakistan's best bet. The key in the Afghan-Pakistani area, as in Southeast Asia, is to use local customs and networks to our advantage. Of course, counterterrorism measures are only as effective as local governments that execute them. Afghanistan's government is corrupt, unpopular and inept.

Besides, there's really no Taliban central authority to talk to. To be Taliban today means little more than to be a Pashtun tribesman who believes that his fundamental beliefs and customary way of life are threatened. Although most Taliban claim loyalty to Afghanistan's Mullah Omar, this allegiance varies greatly. Many Pakistani Taliban leaders — including Baitullah Mehsud, who was killed by an American drone in August, and his successor, Hakimullah Mehsud — rejected Mullah Omar's call to forgo suicide bombings against Pakistani civilians.

In fact, it is the United States that holds today's Taliban together. Without us, their deeply divided coalition could well fragment. Taliban resurgence depends on support from those notoriously unruly hill tribes in Pakistan's border regions, who are unsympathetic to the original Taliban program of homogenizing tribal custom and politics under one rule.

It wouldn't be surprising if the Taliban were to sever ties to Mr. bin Laden if he became a bigger headache to them than America. Al Qaeda may have close relations to the network of Jalaluddin Haqqani, an Afghan Taliban leader living in Pakistan, and the Shabi Khel branch of the Mehsud tribe in Waziristan, but it isn't wildly popular with many other Taliban factions and forces.

Unlike Al Qaeda, the Taliban are interested in their homeland, not ours. Things are different now than before 9/11. The Taliban know how costly Osama bin Laden's friendship can be. There's a good chance that enough factions in the loose Taliban coalition would opt to disinvite their troublesome guest if we forget about trying to subdue them or hold their territory.

This would unwind the Taliban coalition into a lot of straggling, loosely networked groups that could be eliminated or contained using the lessons learned in Indonesia and elsewhere. This means tracking down family and tribal networks, gaining a better understanding of family ties and intervening only when we see actions by Taliban and other groups to aid Al Qaeda or act outside their region.

To defeat violent extremism in Afghanistan, less may be more — just as it has been elsewhere in Asia.

SCOTT ATRAN, an anthropologist at the National Center for Scientific Research in Paris, John Jay College and the University of Michigan, is the author of the forthcoming "Listen to the Devil."

## NATO AND AFGHANISTAN

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European countries must join America in what is, emphatically, a common fight in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is not and should not be just the United States' fight. Al Qaeda has used its sanctuaries in Afghanistan and Pakistan to plot and launch attacks on European cities. We welcome the news that some of America's 42 military partners in Afghanistan plan to send more troops. Still, NATO's announcement that an additional 7,000 troops will be going falls short of what is needed, and has too many casualty-limiting caveats attached. That isn't good for Afghanistan or NATO, which has never fully shouldered the burden of this mission. And it is unfair to the American people, who are being asked to make disproportionate sacrifices for what is, emphatically, a common fight.

When more closely parsed, the NATO numbers look even less impressive. Almost 2,000 will come from countries outside the alliance (including Australia, South Korea, Sweden and aspiring NATO members, Georgia, Ukraine, Macedonia and Montenegro). And more than half of the new NATO troops will come from just three member states: Britain, whose force will go up to 10,000; Italy, which will go to roughly 4,000; and Poland, which will total 2,800. So far, neither France, which has 3,750 troops there, nor Germany, with roughly 4,300, has agreed to send any additional troops.

Meanwhile, the Netherlands, with roughly 2,200, will withdraw its forces in the course of 2010; Canada, with 2,800, will be leaving by 2011. That means as American troop levels rise from 68,000 to 98,000 by next summer, allied troop levels are not likely to go much higher than the present 38,000.

Immediately after 9/11 there was a spontaneous outpouring of European support for the U.S. and offers of NATO assistance in Afghanistan. The Bush administration arrogantly spurned that offer, and then proceeded to alienate European opinion with its disastrous war in Iraq. Trans-Atlantic cooperation on Afghanistan still has not recovered.

The challenge for President Obama and European leaders is to overcome that unhappy recent history before it does more damage to the war effort in Afghanistan and to the NATO alliance. Germany's chancellor, Angela Merkel, and France's president, Nicolas Sarkozy, have repeatedly stated that their countries have a stake in the future of Afghanistan and the future of NATO. But both are wary of pushing their voters too far, too fast.

Democratically elected leaders cannot ignore public skepticism, but they should not surrender to it when they know better. There is a lot Europe can do in addition to sending more troops. Afghanistan also needs more skilled civilian advisers, and it urgently needs help reconstructing its national police force (a job Germany fumbled.)

President Obama is right to insist that the allies do more. Now Europe's leaders need to demand more of themselves.

# Green and prosperous

## COPENHAGEN

Delegates to the climate change conference should take a look at how Denmark does it.

### Philip Warburg

When President Obama joins the Copenhagen climate summit Friday, he will very likely sidestep congressional inaction on new energy legislation, committing the United States to a 17 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020.

On his return, Denmark's vibrant economy and leadership in the battle against climate change should inspire him as he coaxes a recalcitrant Congress to adopt meaningful new measures to combat global warming.

Denmark awoke to the perils of foreign oil dependence when the 1973 Arab embargo delivered a body blow to its energy security. Oil — virtually all of it imported — met a staggering 90 percent of the country's energy needs at the time. Denmark's political leadership responded by setting the nation on a path toward energy independence, with dramatic and lasting results.

New homes in Denmark today are twice as energy-efficient as their pre-embargo counterparts. Waste heat from local power plants is used to heat Denmark's houses and offices, boosting

the energy efficiency of those plants from 40 to 90 percent.

And with taxes on new cars and motor fuel among the highest in Europe, alternatives to automobile travel have flourished. In Copenhagen, a third of commuters travel by bike, their trips made safe and convenient by an extensive network of well-marked bike lanes.

All this energy-saving doesn't seem to interfere with Danish productivity. To the contrary: Danes use less than half as much energy per capita as the average

**In Copenhagen, a third of commuters go to work by bike on a network of safe bike lanes.**

American, yet their gross national income per capita surpasses our own by a resounding 24 percent.

One area where Danes have truly excelled is in their pioneering commitment to wind energy. Starting in 1979, the Danish Parliament voted to underwrite 30 percent of the initial cost of wind farms.

A decade later these upfront subsidies were dropped, but the country continued to boost the technology by guaranteeing a subsidized rate for wind-generated electricity while mandating that utilities incorporate wind into their portfolios.

Today Denmark draws 20 percent of

its electricity from wind energy, and the country's wind industry employs about 26,000 people — nearly 1 percent of the workforce.

Politicians across the political spectrum share pride in Denmark's wind energy. Per Jorgensen, a parliamentarian with the Conservative People's Party, trumpets his party's advocacy for government-subsidized wind energy. Along with local jobs, he notes wind technology's contribution to Danish exports — 7.2 percent of the total in 2008.

Parliament member Anne Grete Holmsgaard of the Socialist People's Party agrees. She cites her party's target of freeing Denmark from fossil fuels for electric power by 2035, and from fossil fuels for all uses by 2050.

Policy analysts and utility executives join Danish politicians in expecting wind to provide fully half of the country's electricity within a decade or two. To reach this goal, a country whose Vikings once ventured seaward to plunder foreign lands now looks to its surrounding seas — the North Sea and the Baltic — as the next energy frontier. Already the world's front-runner in per capita offshore wind power, Denmark is now commissioning new offshore projects at a breathtaking pace.

To ride out the inevitable fluctuations

in wind-generated electricity, Denmark relies on a nimble Northern European power market, with grid interconnections extending throughout Scandinavia and down into Germany. When turbines are spinning out more power than Danish consumers need, electricity is marketed abroad. When winds are low, power from abroad — including Norway's superabundant hydroelectricity — flows in to meet local demand.

The Danes are also coming up with ways to balance out their electricity needs at home. The country's largest power company, state-owned Dong Energy, is developing a nationwide network of plug-in electric cars in collaboration with a Silicon Valley startup, Better Place. Cars in this network, to be introduced as early as 2011, will emit no pollutants on the road and will tap into clean, wind-generated power to recharge during low-demand nighttime hours when the winds continue to blow.

Denmark's thriving economy and energy entrepreneurship should give the U.S. Congress hope as it charts America's energy future. The 21st century's energy opportunities are just too good to miss.

**PHILIP WARBURG**, an environmental lawyer, is writing a book about wind energy.

# East Asian Community primer



SHINJI  
FUKUKAWA

Since taking office, Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama has attached importance to East Asia policy and has proposed, in Japan and abroad, his vision for creating an East Asian Community (EAC).

The idea of promoting regional cooperation in Asia dates back to the Pacific Rim cooperation initiative advanced in 1979 by then Prime Minister Masayoshi Ohira, which resulted in the inauguration of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum in 1989. After the Cold War ended, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) shifted its priority to bolstering regional economic cooperation, and then the East Asia Summit was launched. In 2005, discussions began on ways to create an EAC.

An ASEAN leader once told me, "Japan could not become the leader of Asia as Japan is a homogeneous society. It would be difficult for it to understand Asia's diversity in ethnicity, religion, language, customs and habits." If it wants to push for an EAC, Japan must seriously study bilateral relations, deepen exchanges and become a true friend.

Perhaps because Japan's relevant efforts appear inadequate, Hatoyama's EAC concept is not warmly received in Asia. Former Prime Minister Ohira maneuvered to encourage ASEAN and other relevant countries to take the lead in working out the framework for creating APEC by taking the sentiments of Asian people into consideration. This is a good lesson for today's Japan to learn.

East Asia accounts for about 25 percent of the world's GDP, and that figure is expected to reach 40 percent in 2030. East Asia has potential to be the driving force that helps the world out of recession, so it is strongly hoped that regional integration will succeed and benefit global growth.

To achieve this goal, those involved must specify the substance of their plans for cooperation and the process of implementation:

- *First, the philosophical and ideological basis for regional cooperation should be made clear.*

Asia is diverse in terms of ethnicity, religion, language, lifestyle and culture, but in its diversity there is commonality, such as respect for others' values, deep

consideration for trustful relations, hard work and diligence, and coexistence with nature. I strongly hope that the Japanese will push forward regional integration based on human values by stepping up efforts to respect other Asians' sense of values and promote mutual trust.

- *Second, clear policies should be worked out to give full play to the growth potential of the Asian economy.*

To vitalize the regional economy, expansion of free trade is the key policy. Reform of industrial structures, enhancement of technological capabilities, consolidation of infrastructures, improvement of energy and environmental bases, stabilization of financial and currency markets, protection of intellectual properties and development of human resources are also to be tackled. Furthermore, balancing the economy and the environment is important.

Needed for this purpose are measures to: improve market structure, technological systems and corporate management; enhance social awareness of environmental problems; and make contributions to the establishment of a post-Kyoto Protocol framework to fight global warming.

In East Asia, various projects are now being studied for wide-area infrastructure such as the Mekong-India industrial corridor and transportation network. As these plans are indispensable for vitalizing the region, it is necessary to take them forward by using the Asian Development Bank and other related tools.

- *Third, policies should be adopted with the aim of ensuring peace and political and social stability in the region while envisioning the future of the region.*

The European Union has taken many years to achieve integration because of its long-range aim to realize political stability in Europe. Similarly, Japan should sincerely reflect on its history and at the same time try hard to ferment trust in Asia. It should work towards setting up a framework to help denuclearize North Korea and eliminate other unstable factors while attending to human security through efforts at disaster prevention, infectious disease control and poverty reduction.

- *Fourth, it is necessary to act in a flexible and practical manner.*

In Asia, there are multitiered cooperative relationships such as ASEAN plus Three or Six, the ASEAN Regional Forum, APEC and various bilateral free trade agreements (FTAs). It is desirable for these forms of regional integration to operate cohesively and flexibly, from a position of sharing common values.

The problem is how to deal with the

United States. While playing a major role in the security of this region, the U.S. is oriented toward free trade and has close economic relations with Asia. It is also a major player in APEC.

Prime Minister Hatoyama initially seemed reluctant about U.S. participation in Asia's regional integration, but changed his attitude about the time President Barack Obama visited Japan. Mr. Hatoyama started emphasizing the pivotal role of the Japan-U.S. partnership.

In my view, U.S. participation should be sought on the idea of making the Pacific "a peaceful and vibrant ocean." At least by concluding its FTA with the U.S., Japan should play a bridging role between the U.S. and Asia.

- *Fifth, the proposed framework of cooperation needs to be worked out in phased and multilayered ways.*

If all of East Asia suddenly becomes involved in talks, the negotiations may get complicated and stagnate. Since Japan, China and South Korea have already been pushing individually for FTAs with ASEAN, and as these three countries jointly represent about 70 percent of East Asia's GDP, it would be realistic for the three to first create an FTA among themselves. They could then integrate such an FTA with their bilateral FTAs with ASEAN. During this process, it would be desirable to consider a cooperative framework with the U.S.

East Asian nations hope for stable relations between Japan and China, the No. 2 and No. 3 economies in the world. Recently, summit-level exchanges have been taking place frequently between the two countries, offering a good opportunity to foster mutually beneficial strategic relations. If Sino-Japanese cooperation deepens, it will greatly contribute to improving the circumstances for regional integration.

In Japan, some merely call for stronger solidarity with Asia in an attempt to revitalize the Japanese economy. However, such an attitude could not gain favor with Asian people. I hope Japan will step up the process of formulating a framework for regional integration in East Asia in a humble manner, and in the interests of Asia.

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*Shinji Fukukawa, formerly vice minister of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (now the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry) and president of Dentsu Research Institute, is currently chairman of the Machine Industry Memorial Foundation.*

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At least 10 to testify clan leader led gunmen

# Philippine scion charged in killing

Manila

AP

Philippine prosecutors charged the heir of a powerful clan with murder Tuesday in the massacre of 57 people, more than half of them journalists or their staff who were accompanying the family and supporters of an election candidate.

At least 10 witnesses will testify they saw Andal Ampatuan Jr. leading the gunmen, including police officers, who blocked his rival's election caravan moments before the Nov. 23 massacre, said prosecutor Al Calica.

Hours later, troops found the bullet-riddled and hacked bodies near the highway sprawled in the grass and hastily buried in three mass graves using a backhoe and three vehicles.

Ampatuan turned himself in last week and denied the charges.

He is the scion of a clan allied with President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo that has ruled impoverished Maguindanao Province unopposed for years. His father, the family's patriarch, and six other family members also are considered suspects but have not been charged.

Prosecutors initially filed 25 murder charges against Ampatuan in southern Cotabato city, whose regional trial court is nearest to the massacre site in Ampatuan township.

The five prosecutors handling the murder case carried two boxes of evidence and affidavits from witnesses from Manila to Cotabato city aboard two air force helicopters. They are expected to ask the court to try the case in Manila for security reasons.

"The evidence is strong," Calica said, adding that at least 10 witnesses provided written testimonies linking Ampatuan to the killings.

He said three of them were

in the convoy carrying journalists and the wife, two sisters, an aunt and several supporters of Ampatuan's rival, Vice Mayor Esmael Mangudadatu of Maguindanao's Buluan township.

Mangudadatu had sent his relatives to file his candidacy papers for the governorship. Mangudadatu said Ampatuan had threatened to chop him to pieces if he attempted to challenge the Ampatuan family's ironclad control over the province. So, Mangudadatu sent female family members in the belief they would not be harmed.

Quoting the three witnesses, Calica said they managed to turn their cars from the tail end of the convoy and escaped after shots were fired and the gunmen hurriedly took control of the vans and sport utility vehicles in the caravan.

Police cars were parked along the road as the gunmen led the victims in their vehicles to a remote hilltop where they were butchered, Calica said.

Police said earlier they took into custody six officers, including the Maguindanao provincial police chief and his deputy. Two inspectors among them were allegedly seen during the massacre with Ampatuan, said Erickson Velasquez, head of the criminal investigation division.

Prosecutors said the killings were carefully planned and that more charges will follow. At least one witness alleged that the Ampatuan clan had gathered in the patriarch's mansion in the provincial capital of Shariff Aguak days before to plan the killings, said chief state prosecutor Jovencito Zuno.

The graves were dug in advance and a backhoe positioned to bury the bodies, prosecutors said.

The Ampatuans denied any responsibility in the killings in a rare news conference in Shariff Aguak on Sunday.

# Commonwealth reaches out



DAVID  
HOWELL

London

Every two years the heads of government of the 50-plus states of which the Commonwealth consists, embracing almost a third of the planet's entire population and several of its most dynamic economies, meet to discuss issues of common concern.

Nothing unusual about that except that this year, at the recent gathering in Trinidad (called CHOGM for short), there was a significant difference.

The familiar features were certainly there, with Queen Elizabeth arriving as titular head of the Commonwealth to preside at the ceremonies and quite a lot of internal wrangling about past, future and misbehaving members — notably Zimbabwe and whether it should now be invited back into membership. This was bound to be a difficult debate as long as the dreadful President Robert Mugabe still clings to office.

But the big difference is that this time the Commonwealth heads of government were looking outward and seeking to give the Commonwealth network a clear and useful place in the overall global agenda. They invited French President Nicolas Sarkozy and U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki Moon to address them and mingle with the membership.

This new widening of the Commonwealth's embrace is thoroughly to be welcomed. It means that the Commonwealth is raising its game and developing a presence as a significant platform in the new global architecture. This expansion is all the more remarkable when one considers that the two most notable new invitees to the meeting this year represented, in a sense, organizations directly rivaling the resurgent Commonwealth system.

France has long attempted to match

the Commonwealth with its own union of former member states of the French colonial empire and former French-speaking dependencies, La Francophonie in exact emulation of the Commonwealth Games.

As for the United Nations organization, this lays proud claim to be the policing authority of the world and the chief forum of global ideas and ideals. Yet its failures have been many, the democratic values of many of its members are in question and its structure is out of date. The Commonwealth, providing a far more intimate and direct pattern of contact between rich and poor nations, large and small ones, is in many ways a standing rebuke to U.N. ineffectiveness and a reminder that a better global platform, a truer league of democracies and free states, is badly needed.

Of course there are those who dismiss the Commonwealth as a nothing more than a nostalgic "old guys" club, or talking shop, of ex-British colonies and possessions, without the teeth to achieve anything very useful and bound only by a common language (English) and a love of cricket.

But such views entirely miss the point. It is precisely the "soft power" qualities of the Commonwealth network that give it such relevance and resilience in the 21st century. Together with the spread of numerous subgovernmental, informal and voluntary linkages between Commonwealth countries it creates a vast web of common understanding, common values and mutual trust that offers the ideal ambience in which different types of democracy can flourish, investment can prosper and common global initiatives develop.

It is no surprise that several new countries, not all of them English-speaking, are lining up to become Commonwealth members. In fact Rwanda, once French-speaking but now English-speaking, formally joined on Nov. 29, raising the number of Commonwealth members to 54.

In everything from joint action on climate change (a key theme at the Trinidad gathering) to cooperation in peacekeeping and human rights

safeguards, the existence of a firm Commonwealth initiative means more and has more practical chance of delivering results than many a lofty (and often empty) U.N. resolution.

The denigrators and skeptics miss an even more fundamental point. The Commonwealth momentum comes from the bottom up, from the individual member states joining willingly together. For those who still cling to the old ideas of great power blocs and clashing spheres of influence, this grass roots-driven network of peoples, stretching across all continents and most faiths, must seem very puzzling.

For example, a prominent Financial Times columnist was only recently asserting that we are being pushed back into an era of "unsentimental Great Power politics," in which, so the implication goes, only nations bundled and strapped together by their political masters, will have the mass and weight required to make their mark.

No analysis could be more wrongheaded. The yearning for a titanic superpower bloc, which many people mistakenly want the European Union to become one, is a major error of our times. The future belongs not to giant blocs and blueprints but to networks of independent states, gathering together out of local preference and choice in common tasks and constructions — exactly on the model which the Commonwealth is becoming.

The only disappointment at Trinidad has been that another of the world's great democracies, namely Japan, did not have a high-profile presence. Japanese leaders at local government level have shown a strong interest in the Commonwealth's Local Government Forum, one of many such subgovernmental bodies with global relevance. It would have been good to see Japan represented at national level as well, to share experiences and develop new initiatives with the Commonwealth network and 54 heads of government. That should be put right next time they meet.

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*David Howell is a former British Cabinet minister and former chairman of the Commons Foreign Affairs Committee. He is now a member of the House of Lords.*

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# Time for Obama to get real on Afghanistan

Colbert I. King  
Washington

THE WASHINGTON POST

The selection of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point for U.S. President Barack Obama's announcement of his new Afghanistan war strategy is media manipulation worthy of Michael Deaver, the legendary image protector of Ronald Reagan. What better setting than an audience of military cadets to project Obama as the reluctant warrior and commander in chief who, because of circumstances not of his making, is forced to commit the nation's finest to a war not of his choosing?

Makes for a great visual, too.

It's also a good way for Obama to get his war message across to national security think-tankers who have been banging their spoons for escalation, to Republicans who demand that he give the generals what they want, and to conservatives who say he is a ditherer, not a doer.

Tuesday night's event should go down well with the cadets. But what about the millions of Americans across the country who will be tuned in?

Many will be older and grayer than the cadets, and they are past the point of being impressed by dramatic photo ops and symbolic poses. They don't want orchestration; they want answers.

That's certain to be true of jobless viewers. The nation's unemployment rate is at 10.2 percent, a 26-year high. These people will be waiting to hear Obama explain how adding to the \$10 billion monthly price tag for Iraq and Afghanistan will help them find work. African American men, 17.1 percent

of whom are unemployed, want a word from Obama on this.

The White House has said that every increase of 1,000 troops will cost \$1 billion. So if the administration sends 34,000 more troops to Afghanistan, as rumored, that's an additional \$34 billion.

"Where's it going to come from, Mr. President?" the unemployed and their families will want to know. Obama needs to address that question. This country has an accumulated debt of \$12 trillion that is forecast to rise to \$21 trillion in 10 years.

Picturesque events that help shape Obama's image as commander in chief can take him only so far. He needs to come down to eye level and explain his Afghanistan strategy to the people who must pay for this war: the salary and wage earners who struggle to buy food and pay their bills.

Yes, the administration will float bonds to bring in the cash to buy munitions, but that debt belongs to the American people, not to the White House.

The people all across our country — not just Washington's political, military and media intelligentsia — deserve a plausible explanation.

True, most of the folks who will watch on Tuesday are not schooled in military strategy and tactics. They aren't likely to have the erudition of civilian and military experts who toss around such terms as "asymmetric warfare" and "conventional force strategy."

But they heard the president tell Chinese students in Shanghai early last month that "the greatest threat to the United States' security are the terrorist networks like al-Qaida." And they are asking, "If that's so, why is Obama

choosing Afghanistan as the place to declare America all-in?" Or to, as the president put it, "finish the job"?

They know that al-Qaida is an international terrorist organization out to destroy the U.S. The Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, the bombing of the World Trade Center, and the bombings of American embassies and the USS Cole all speak to that. They also know that al-Qaida is waging global jihad, launching plots in Europe.

They want to know whether denying al-Qaida a base in Afghanistan will secure America against attacks. That is what Obama, after weeks of study, seems to think. But what happens if, in the face of an U.S. escalation in Afghanistan, al-Qaida moves its terrorist network to Pakistan or beyond? Will U.S. forces follow?

Washington's intelligentsia may know the answer. The rest of the country should know, too. Obama is accountable to the men and women who hired him, not to his war council, Washington think tanks or editorial pages.

And that gets us to a fear that is growing among some of the president's most ardent supporters: that Obama, the fresh, think-outside-the-box leader brimming with energy and new ideas, has entered the White House and gone native.

Suspicion is spreading that Obama has lost some of the character that made him special; that he has taken on the ways of this town, thinking in conventional terms dictated by a brain trust and self-serving, entrenched Washington interests that make this city go 'round.

That development, if true, would be as disastrous to the Obama presidency as a military miscalculation.



# Dialogue necessary with Iran

Maziar Bahari  
Washington  
THE WASHINGTON POST

Since I was released from Tehran's Evin Prison in October, the questions have come again and again: Can we still talk to these people? Should the Obama administration engage in dialogue with Iran? What should the West do in nuclear negotiations? After being jailed, interrogated and beaten by the Revolutionary Guards for 118 days for reporting honestly on the disputed June 12 presidential elections, I am often expected to oppose any dialogue. But the West still needs Iran and should continue talking to it.

Inside Evin, I was forced to confess that I was part of an insidious Western media conspiracy to overthrow the regime. I was forced to apologize to Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei. I was released as suddenly as I was arrested, without explanation. But my interrogator told me to send a message to the world: "We are a superpower. America's power is waning, and we will soon overtake them. Now that Americans have started this war against us, we will not let them rest in peace."

He paused, perhaps realizing that he sounded defensive. I was a jailed journalist wearing a blindfold, not some sort of spy. (I'm not even American.) He changed the subject to "soft" war, a term Tehran uses to refer to an imaginary war that it says is promoted by the media against the "holy government of the Islamic Republic." "We will answer their attacks with all our might," he said.

The Revolutionary Guards are a schizophrenic bunch, plagued by both deep insecurities and a superiority complex. They have ambitions to take over the government and expand their business empire in Iran. At the same time, they are terrified of individuals and groups that question their grip on power. The Guards are the real power base of Khamenei. They are the main supporters of his claim to be Allah's representative on Earth. One of the most serious charges against me was insulting Khamenei. In a private e-mail I had wondered whether Khamenei has been blinded by power and had lost touch with his people, and if that

was why he was answering people's peaceful demands with brute force. That was enough for my interrogator to kick and punch me for days and to threaten me with execution.

In Iran's triangle of power — the Guards, Khamenei and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad — the Guards are becoming stronger than the president and the supreme leader. Some Guards are devoted to Khamenei for religious reasons, but many of them use his status as a religious leader to legitimize their own actions. They also use Ahmadinejad, a former Guard, to increase their political power. The Guards have arms and money. They are the biggest industrial contractors in Iran. They have front companies all over the region and in the West and are involved in smuggling goods into and out of Iran. They answer only to Khamenei.

So can the West, especially the United States, have a dialogue with these people? Yes. Because there is no other choice. The West has to negotiate with Iran on the nuclear program and the stability of Iraq and Afghanistan. Not talking to Tehran doesn't work: The hostile rhetoric and actions of the Bush administration against even the reformist government of Mohammad Khatami helped the hardliners to consolidate power. Only by engaging, even with a more radical regime, can the West force Tehran to measure the costs and benefits of dealing with the outside world.

I don't know exactly why I was released, but I can guess. Over four months, my friends and colleagues at Newsweek and elsewhere waged a massive public and private campaign for my release. Around the time that Iran was sitting down in Geneva to discuss the nuclear program, my conditions inside Evin started to improve. One Iranian official told me later that I had "become more of a liability than an asset in jail." At least some elements of the regime still make such rational calculations.

So what should the U.S. do? First, a nuclear Iran should not be tolerated. Although I believe that Iran will not start attacking other countries the day after it builds the bomb, having the bomb will embolden the Guards to intensify their repression inside the country and regional expansion. The American

government should use all of its resources, including President Barack Obama's charm, to persuade allies, especially China and Russia, to work with it to put in place smart sanctions that solely target Iran's nuclear program and do not affect ordinary Iranians.

At the same time the West has to separate the nuclear negotiations from talks about Iraq and Afghanistan. Tehran understands that insecurity in those countries is damaging to itself as well as to the U.S. Iran would love to make its help conditional on a grand bargain with the West that would guarantee the security and survival of the regime and preserve its nuclear program. But the better course would be to use cooperation on those two countries as a confidence-building measure in negotiations.

The common perception among my American friends used to be: "If Americans support a certain faction in Iran, it would be easier for the regime to persecute them." That might have been true once. But Iran has entered a new phase. Opposition activists from all walks of life have been accused of being agents of the West. I was accused of working for the CIA simply because I wrote for an American magazine. The *rumor du jour* in Iran is that Obama and the Guards are reaching a deal to normalize relations, in exchange for which America will ignore human rights abuses in Iran. Hence, the opposition movement's slogan "Obama, either with them or with us." The U.S. has acted against the interests of the Iranian people in the past. Repeating that mistake for tactical gains would be the biggest mistake of the Obama administration.

As for the Iranian people, the more immediate victims of the brutal regime, we have to think long-term. Our anger should be sublimated into something more positive. We have been brutalized to think of the world in black and white. Seeing the shades of gray can be our strongest weapon against those who would jail, beat and torture us.

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Maziar Bahari, a Canadian filmmaker and reporter for Newsweek, was released from Evin Prison on Oct. 17.

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# A 'lack of confidence' in Iran

**E**nough is enough. That seems to be the message in last week's resolution by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which voiced serious concerns about Iran's nuclear activities and demanded that Tehran halt operations at a hitherto secret nuclear facility. That rebuke is a sign that patience is running out, but hopes of reining in Iran's ambitions demand more than strongly worded resolutions: The world must be ready to punish Iran for continued defiance of its wishes.

Suspensions have long swirled around Iran's nuclear program. It has been difficult to explain the rationale behind development of a nuclear energy program by the holder of the world's second-largest oil and natural gas reserves. Questions mounted as it became clear that Tehran was not being truthful about the scope of that program. Only when exposed by the IAEA, the world's nuclear watchdog, has the regime acknowledged the existence of secret facilities, even though it is supposed to disclose such sites when the decision to begin construction of them is made.

The most recent controversy surrounds a uranium enrichment facility that is being built in Fordo, near the city of Qom. The plant was only revealed to the IAEA in September, even though Tehran says construction began in 2007, in a response to the threat of an attack on another nuclear facility. Satellite imagery casts doubt over that claim, showing construction in fact began seven years ago. Moreover, the plant is located on a military base, underscoring concerns about the murky relationship between civilian nuclear energy companies and the military. Finally, the facility is going to house only some 3,000 centrifuges (the devices that create enriched uranium), a number too small to have any use for nuclear power generation but sufficient to create enough material to make one or two nuclear weapons a year.

Iran's obfuscations prompted the IAEA to issue a report in August saying that it had lost confidence in Tehran's statement and "gives rise to questions about whether there were any other nuclear facilities in Iran which had not been declared." That may sound weak, but for a diplomatic document, it is a virtual blast. Last week, the 35-member IAEA Board of Governors passed a resolution with the support of 25 members, demanding that Iran halt activity at Fordo and expressed "serious concern" about potential military aspects of its nuclear program.

The Iranian response was predictable. The government said the vote undermined Iranian confidence in dealing with the West. Several officials warned the rebuke could prompt Iran to

withdraw from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, as did North Korea, which would effectively end oversight of Iran's nuclear program. On Sunday, the Tehran government appeared to up the ante by approving a plan to build 10 new uranium enrichment facilities.

The bluster and brinkmanship confirm fears that Iran is not serious about the Western offer a few months ago, whereby Tehran would send much of its low-enriched uranium abroad in return for reactor-grade fuel that could not be turned into a nuclear weapon. That deal would go a long way to diminishing concerns about Iranian intentions, but since it was tabled, Iran has waffled, sending mixed messages, fueling fears that it is only stalling for time. Indeed, since the August report was issued, the number of centrifuges installed in the main — at least, the main known — enrichment facility in Natanz has grown by 5 percent and its stockpile of low-enriched uranium has increased from 1,500 kg to 1,700 kg. It certainly looks like Iran is preparing a nuclear breakout.

That fear triggered the IAEA resolution. Significantly, among the 25 members voting for it were Russia and China, which have been reluctant to take a hard line against Tehran. Both are key trading partners of Iran; Russia has played a critical role in helping Tehran develop its nuclear program. Sanctions can change Iranian behavior only if Russia and China are on board. Their support for the resolution is important, but it does not ensure that they will back sanctions if negotiations continue to stall.

Iranian assurances are insufficient guarantees that its intentions are benign. The pattern of deception and stonewalling looks too much like a strategy than indifference to IAEA obligations. The next step is critical since one of two things is likely to occur if Iran remains on its current path: Either it will acquire a nuclear capability or some nation (most likely Israel) will take unilateral military action to ensure that that does not happen. Neither is desirable. The first is likely to trigger a nuclear cascade as other regional countries follow suit — Saudi Arabia, Egypt or Turkey are the probable candidates. The second would inflame sentiment throughout the Middle East — and would only be a temporary setback for Iran.

The only workable option is a negotiated settlement. That is only going to happen if Iran is convinced that the pursuit of a nuclear program will incur significant damage to its economy and its status. That means other governments must speak with one voice to Tehran and demand it comply with IAEA obligations or face serious consequences. At the same time, they must offer Iran something substantive in return. Time is running out.

# Deflated Arab hopes for Obama

Jackson Diehl  
Washington  
THE WASHINGTON POST

It's been nearly six months since U.S. President Barack Obama stirred hearts and raised hopes across much of the Arab world with his much-promoted Cairo address. Many came away from it expecting a new and more vigorous U.S. attempt to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Others hoped for more American sympathy and support for liberal reform in countries where free expression, women's rights and democratic elections are blocked by entrenched autocracies.

The peace-process bubble burst two months ago at the United Nations, when Obama's poorly executed attempt to launch final-settlement talks between Israelis and Palestinians collapsed. Arabs who were led by Obama's rhetoric to believe that the United States would force Israel to make unprecedented unilateral concessions — like a complete end to all construction in Jerusalem — were bitterly disappointed.

But they are not the only victims of post-Cairo letdown. Arab reformers, who for most of this decade have been trying to break down the barriers to social and political modernization in the Middle East, have also begun to conclude that the Obama administration is more likely to harm than to help them.

"All Arab countries are craving change — and many of us believed Obama was a tool for change," says Aseel al-Awadhi, a Kuwaiti member of Parliament. "Now we are losing that hope."

Awadhi, one of four women elected to Kuwait's parliament this year, is part of a movement that the Bush administration loudly promoted and sporadically attempted to help — though the effort steadily waned during George W. Bush's second term. The Obama administration,

in contrast, often speaks as if it does not recognize the existence of an Arab reform movement. Bush's frequently articulated argument that political and social liberalization offer the best antidote to Islamic extremism appears absent from this administration's thinking.

"People in Jordan are beginning to understand that the United States will not play the same role as under the old administration on democracy," said Musa Maaytah, Jordan's minister of political development — who, like Awadhi, visited Washington recently for a conference sponsored by the National Endowment for Democracy. "People think that the U.S. has many issues that for it are a priority, and they prefer to have stability in these countries more than democracy."

For the reformers, a big signal came recently in a speech Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton delivered in Marrakech, Morocco. Clinton was attending a session of the Forum for the Future, a body the Bush administration established at the height of its pro-reform campaign. The idea was to foster a dialogue between Western and Arab countries about political and social reform that would resemble the Helsinki process between the West and the Soviet bloc during the 1970s.

Clinton began her speech by referring to Obama's call in Cairo for "a new beginning between the United States and Muslim communities around the world." She then said that after consulting with "local communities" the administration had "focused on three broad areas where we believe U.S. support can make a difference."

These turned out to be "entrepreneurship," "advancing science and technology" and education. As if citing the also-rans, Clinton added that "women's empowerment" was "a related

priority" and that "the United States is committed to a comprehensive peace in the Middle East." The word "democracy" appeared nowhere in the speech, and there was no reference at all to the Arabs who are fighting to create independent newspapers, political parties or human rights organizations.

Saad Eddin Ibrahim, an Egyptian who is one of the best-known Arab reformers, was part of a group who met Clinton after the speech. He told me that he tried to point out to her that "the next two years are crucial" for determining the political direction of the Middle East, in part because Egypt is approaching a major transition. Parliamentary elections are scheduled in 10 months, and their results will determine whether a presidential election scheduled for 2011 will be genuinely democratic. Hosni Mubarak, Egypt's 82-year-old ruler, is under pressure to retire; if he allows it, a truly competitive race to succeed him could pit his son Gamal against diplomatic heavyweights such as former Foreign Minister Amr Moussa and Mohamed ElBaradei, the outgoing head of the International Atomic Energy Agency — not to mention Ayman Nour, who was imprisoned for three years after challenging Mubarak in 2005.

Clinton, said Ibrahim, replied that democracy promotion had always been a centerpiece of U.S. diplomacy and that the Obama administration would not give it up — "but that they have a lot of other things on their plate." For Arab liberals, the translation is easy, if painful: Regardless of what the president may have said in Cairo, Obama's vision for the Middle East doesn't include "a new beginning" in the old political order.

Jackson Diehl is deputy editorial page editor for The Washington Post

# Realizing an assertive post-American Europe

Jeremy Shapiro and Nick Witney  
Paris

As U.S. President Barack Obama arrives in Sweden to collect his Nobel Prize, the celebrations expose an awful truth: Europe's admiration for its ideal of an American president is not reciprocated. Obama seems to bear Europeans no ill will. But he has quickly learned to view them with the attitude that they find hardest to endure — indifference.

We are entering a post-American world — the world beyond America's brief moment of global domination. Obama's administration understands this, and has responded with what it calls a "multipartner strategy." Whether it is the Chinese for the global economy, or Russia for nuclear disarmament, the United States will now work with whomever can help it get the results it wants — thus ensuring that it remains the "indispensable nation."

No rejection or exclusion of Europeans is intended. Americans understand that Europe, as the other major repository of democratic legitimacy, wealth and military power, has great potential as a partner. Obama spelled this out during his first trip to Europe as president, at the NATO summit in April. But if Europe fails to respond, Obama will look elsewhere for the partners he needs, unconstrained by anxious European invocations of "special relationships" or "the Atlantic community of values."

Obama's approach is self-avowedly pragmatic. His observation that the U.S.-China relationship will shape the 21st century was not a statement of preference, but an acknowledgment of reality. This is a rude shock for Europe. The late 20th century worked so well for Europeans. In exchange for political solidarity, the U.S. protected them and gave them the role of junior associates in running the world.

Attitudes formed in such congenial circumstances die hard. Thus, 20 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia spends only half what Europeans do on defense — yet Europe still clings to the notion that its security depends on American protection. In the same spirit,

Europeans resolutely refuse to accept that the U.S. might legitimately have different geopolitical interests — so that when US policies diverge from their own, Europeans assume that the Americans simply got it wrong, and that they clearly need Europe's wise advice to set them straight.

Such a mind-set naturally puts a huge premium on close and harmonious trans-Atlantic relations, to the point that, for Europeans, closeness and harmony become the objective itself, without reference to what ends they might serve. Europeans, in short, fetishize the trans-Atlantic relationship.

In relation to Russia and China, the European Union's member states generally recognize that a more united European stance, however difficult to achieve in practice, would be desirable. But there is no such recognition in relation to the U.S. On the contrary, European elites seem to feel that "ganging up" on the U.S. would be improper.

So, for most European states, trans-Atlantic relations are primarily about NATO and their bilateral links with the U.S. After all, it is not just the British who believe themselves to have a "special relationship"; most of the EU's member states like to believe that they have a particular "in" with America that gives them a special influence.

Accordingly, national rather than collective approaches to the U.S. predominate, based largely on strategies of ingratiation — each European state tries to present itself as more useful, or at least more sympathetic, than its European competitors.

From America's perspective, this can often be advantageous. If Europeans want to be divided and ruled, the U.S. is happy to oblige. America can take its time deciding on a new strategy in Afghanistan without considering European views, despite the presence of more than 30,000 European troops in the country. Similarly, it suits the U.S. that Europe should remain on the sidelines of the Israel-Palestine conflict while paying €1 billion a year to finance the stalemate.

Yet, despite these advantages, America is irked by the constant

European clamor for access and attention. Such neediness would be easier to bear if it were accompanied by a greater readiness to take real action. All these Europeans can talk a good game, but few are ready to get their hands dirty. Seen from Washington, Europe's attention-seeking and responsibility-shirking behavior appears infantile.

If only Europeans could learn to address America with one voice. There is no shortage of ideas about how to encourage this through new processes and forums for U.S.-EU strategic dialogue. But the problem is one of political psychology, not institutional arrangements. It can be addressed only when Europeans take stock of the way the world is changing, decide that allowing others to determine the future world order is less than optimal, and develop the attitudes and behaviors of a post-American Europe.

This requires a Europe that knows its own mind, so that it can approach the U.S. — and the rest of the world — with a clearer eye and a harder head. The EU's member states will have to learn to discuss the big geopolitical issues — starting with their own security — as Europeans, within the EU. They will not always agree among themselves. When they do, they will stand a better chance of asserting their own interests — and acting as a more committed and influential partner on the many international issues where European and American interests coincide.

The U.S. would, in fact, prefer such a Europe. But so low are American expectations that they scarcely care. Post-American Europeans need to shake off their habitual deference and complacency toward the U.S. — or reconcile themselves to deserved American indifference.

*Jeremy Shapiro is research director of the Center of the United States and Europe at the Brookings Institution. Nick Witney, former chief executive of the European Defense Agency, is a senior policy fellow with the European Council on Foreign Relations.*  
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# Obama continues shameful land mine policy

Jody Williams  
Los Angeles  
LOS ANGELES TIMES

Last week, State Department spokesman Ian Kelly revealed that President Barack Obama would follow in President George W. Bush's footsteps and not sign the international land mine ban treaty. Many of us had hoped he would embrace President Bill Clinton's pledge that the U.S. would join.

The 1997 treaty was a landmark accomplishment. For the first time, a group of governments and civil institutions joined together to ban a conventional weapon that had been used by virtually every fighting force for decades.

Today, 156 nations are party to the treaty—including Afghanistan, Australia, Indonesia, Japan, all of Europe except Finland (Poland has signed but not yet ratified), all of sub-Saharan Africa except Somalia, almost half of the countries in the Middle East and North Africa (including Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait and Algeria), and the entire Western Hemisphere, except for the United States and Cuba.

Kelly's startling revelation came during a briefing in advance of this week's treaty review conference in Cartagena, Colombia. As he explained: "This administration undertook a policy review, and we decided our land mine policy remains in effect."

A leader of my organization, the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, called another State Department official after the disclosure looking for more information. Could it really be true that the U.S. would remain outside one of the most inclusive and comprehensive treaties put together in the past 50 years? The official confirmed that the review was over and that the Bush policy would prevail.

The next day, after a firestorm of protest, Kelly backtracked, saying a review was "still under way." This weak attempt at damage control is hardly credible and has been discounted even by land mine ban champion Sen. Patrick J. Leahy, a Vermont Democrat. The best hope now is that the outcry is loud enough that the administration will revisit the issue and conduct an open and meaningful review of existing policy. But the possibility of policy change remains highly uncertain.

So why won't the U.S. be joining so many of its allies in renouncing land mines?

"We... determined that we would not be able to meet our national defense needs nor our security commitments to our friends and allies if we sign this convention," Kelly said in the briefing.

This is absurd. And given the hush-hush nature of a review excluding almost everyone involved in the land mine issue, the real reasons remain unclear. Surely the administration has no intention of defending the homeland with antipersonnel land mines? All of its major allies—including the 27 other NATO members—have signed the treaty. It remains unclear, then, which commitments to which friends and allies Kelly refers to.

Perhaps South Korea? The Clinton argument for not signing the treaty immediately was that land mines are heavily used in the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea. As we pointed out then, however, and as remains true, land mines are not effective weapons of deterrence, particularly in the case of an outright attack on South Korea by the North. Even if they were, the land mines in the DMZ are South Korean, not American, and therefore would be unaffected by Obama's joining the Mine Ban Treaty.

Obama's position on land mines calls into question his expressed views on multilateralism, respect for international

humanitarian law and disarmament. How can he, with credibility, lead the world to nuclear disarmament when his own country won't give up even land mines?

When a colleague called after Kelly's briefing to give me the news about the continuation of our shameful land mine policy, half of me couldn't believe it—but the other half wasn't surprised at all.

I voted for Obama. I wanted to believe that his soaring rhetoric might actually be turned into a revival for the U.S. on issues of multilateralism, international humanitarian law and, of course, human rights. At the moment, I'm disillusioned.

This administration has seemed all too willing to put aside human rights in the service of political expediency. Its response to Iran's postelection crackdown on nonviolent protest was wishy-washy; its response to the illegal Honduran coup has been weak, ineffective and disregarded a huge spike in human rights violations there. Then there was Obama's decision not to meet with the Dalai Lama to avoid upsetting Chinese leaders before his recent visit there.

If human rights are of so little importance to the president and his administration, why would they worry about international humanitarian law? Is that the unspoken reasoning behind land mine policy? Or is it reluctance to ruffle military feathers?

A shrinking number of countries—including China, Russia, India and Pakistan—have not joined the land mine ban treaty. When will the U.S. join the rest of the world in banning these insidious weapons of terror that have caused so much heartbreak and devastation?

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*Jody Williams was the founding coordinator of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, for which she was awarded, along with the organization, the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997.*

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# Afghan war won't end well



GEORGE WILL

Washington

A traveler asks a farmer how to get to a particular village. The farmer replies, "If I were you, I wouldn't start from here." Barack Obama, who asked to be president, nevertheless deserves sympathy for having to start where America is in Afghanistan.

But after 11 months of graceless disparagements of the 43rd president, the 44th acts as though he is the first president whose predecessor bequeathed a problematic world. And Obama's second new Afghanistan policy in less than nine months strikingly resembles his predecessor's plan for Iraq, which was: As Iraq's security forces stand up, U.S. forces will stand down.

Having vowed to "finish the job," Obama revealed Tuesday that he thinks the job in Afghanistan is to get out of Afghanistan. This is an unserious policy.

Obama's surge will bring to 51,000 his Afghanistan escalation since March. Supposedly this will buy time for Afghan forces to become adequate. But it is not intended to buy much time: Although the war is in its 98th month, Obama's "Mission Accomplished" banner will be unfurled 19 months from now — when Afghanistan's security forces supposedly will be self-sufficient. He must know this will not happen.

In a spate of mid-November interviews — while participating in the president's protracted rethinking of policy — Secretary of State Hillary Clinton described America's Afghanistan goal(s) somewhat differently. They are "to defeat al-Qaida and its extremist allies" because "al-Qaida and the other extremists are part of a syndicate of terror, with al-Qaida still being an inspiration, a funder, a trainer, an equipper and director of a lot of what goes on." And: "We want to do everything we can to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaida." And: "We want to get the people who attacked us." And: "We want to get al-Qaida." And: "We are in Afghanistan because we cannot permit the return of a staging platform for terrorists."



But al-Qaida fighters in Afghanistan do not number in the tens of thousands, or even thousands. Or perhaps even hundreds. Although "the people who attacked us" were al-Qaida, the threat that justifies today's escalation is, Clinton says, a "syndicate of terror" of which al-Qaida is just an important part. But is Afghanistan central to the syndicate?

President George W. Bush waged preventive war in Iraq regarding (nonexistent) weapons of mass destruction. Obama is waging preventive war in Afghanistan to prevent it from again becoming "a staging platform for terrorists," which Somalia, Yemen or other sovereignty near-vacuum also could become. To prevent the "staging platform" scenario, U.S. forces might have to be engaged in Afghanistan for decades before its government can prevent that by itself.

Before Tuesday, the administration had said (via White House spokesman Robert Gibbs) that U.S. forces will not be there "another eight or nine years." Tuesday the Taliban heard a distant U.S. trumpet sounding withdrawal beginning in 19 months. Also hearing it were Afghans who must decide whether to bet their lives on the Americans, who will begin striking their tents in July 2011, or on the Taliban, who are not going home, because they are at home.

Many Democrats, who think the \$787 billion stimulus was too small and want another one (but by another name), are flinching from the \$30 billion one-year cost

of the Afghan surge. Considering that the GM and GMAC bailouts (\$63 billion) are five times bigger than Afghanistan's gross domestic product (\$12 billion), Democrats seem to be selective worriers about deficits. Of course, their real worry is how to wriggle out of their endorsement of the "necessary" war in Afghanistan, which was a merely tactical endorsement intended to disparage the "war of choice" in Iraq.

The president's party will not support his new policy, his budget will not accommodate it, our overstretched and worn-down military will be hard-pressed to execute it, and Americans' patience will not be commensurate with Afghanistan's limitless demands for it. This will not end well.

A case can be made for a serious, meaning larger and more protracted, surge. A better case can be made for a radically reduced investment of resources and prestige in that forlorn country. Obama has not made a convincing case for his tentative surgelet.

George Orwell said the quickest way to end a war is to lose it. But Obama's halfhearted embrace of a half-baked nonstrategy — briefly fainting toward the Taliban (or al-Qaida, or a "syndicate of terror") while lunging for the exit ramp — makes a protracted loss probable.

George Will's e-mail address is  
georgewill@washpost.com.

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# The Swiss and Iranian agents of provocation



GWYNNE  
DYER

London

There are only four minarets in Switzerland: one for every hundred thousand Muslims in the country. Swiss Muslims keep a low profile, so as not to excite the numerous people in the country who hate and fear them. But since those people are numerous, a political party can prosper by demanding a referendum on whether further minarets should be banned in Switzerland. With luck, that will provoke protests and demonstrations by Muslims.

There is only one nuclear power station under construction in Iran, at Bushehr, and none that is operational. The fuel for the Bushehr reactor will be supplied by Russia, under a contract that was signed long ago. So when the Iranian government orders 10 new uranium enrichment plants for reactors that have not even been designed yet, you may safely assume that it is trying to provoke an attack on Iran.

"Provocation" is no longer a fashionable word, but the tactic it describes has never been more popular. The 9/11 attacks on the United States, for example, were meant to provoke the U.S. into invading Afghanistan.

During the late 1970s and the 1980s, Osama bin Laden watched Washington lure the Soviet Union into invading Afghanistan and cripple it in a long guerrilla war. (Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Jimmy Carter's national security adviser in 1977-80, still boasts about it in his after-dinner speeches.) Bin Laden fought in that war, supported by American money and weapons. With 9/11, he planned to do the same to the

Americans themselves.

Even those officials in Washington who understood bin Laden's strategy could not avoid falling into the trap, because American public opinion demanded a prompt military response to the outrage. What makes provocation so effective is that it often works even when your opponent knows what you are up to. He has to act to retain credibility with his own political clientele.

So let us consider the Swiss People's Party (SVP), which sponsored the referendum on Nov. 28 that banned the construction of new minarets in the country. The SVP has become the largest party in the Swiss Parliament by playing on popular fears that immigrants are taking over the country. About 20 percent of the Swiss population are foreign residents, attracted there by the country's prosperity, but only five percent — some 400,000 people — are Muslims.

Muslims have nevertheless become the main target of the SVP's anti-immigrant propaganda, because they inspire more fear than the others. During the referendum, the SVP plastered every flat surface in the country with a poster showing a Swiss flag covered with six black minarets (which looked remarkably like missiles), with a black-clad Muslim woman in full *niqab* gazing on the scene. Religion, weapons, and an oppressed woman who was probably going to produce lots of Muslim babies — it had it all.

The SVP won 29 percent of the votes in the last election in 2007, which is embarrassing enough for the Swiss. In this referendum, it got 57 percent of the votes, so it has clearly found the right button to press. Its ultimate goal, however, is to provoke Switzerland's Muslims into protesting publicly against its policies. If they can be lured into doing that, the backlash among the Swiss could give the SVP complete dominance in the next election.

The next election is probably what is

driving policy in Iran, too. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the conservative clerical faction with which he is allied lost most of their political credibility during the rigged elections and the subsequent street protests last spring. They have stabilized the situation by killing dozens of protesters in the streets and jailing and torturing hundreds of others, but that is only a temporary solution.

The only thing that could rebuild popular support for the present government is a foreign attack on Iran. That can only come from the U.S. and/or Israel, and what would motivate them to do such a thing? Well, Iran could announce its was going to build 10 new uranium enrichment plants.

Think about it. Why would Iran announce such a thing in advance? Hitherto, it has always kept what it is doing in the nuclear domain secret as long as possible. Besides, it simply lacks the resources to build 10 uranium enrichment plants at the same time, or even five. Moreover, it knows that this announcement will panic those Israelis and Americans who obsess about Iranian nuclear weapons. So what's the point?

The point of the provocation is to get the Americans and/or the Israelis to attack Iran. The country is too big for them to invade, so the attacks would just be airstrikes. Whatever they destroyed could be repaired after they stop — and they would stop. Iran can shut the Persian Gulf to all tanker traffic by using sea-skimming missiles, and the world cannot do without Gulf oil for more than a few weeks.

If the U.S. or Israel attacks Iran, Ahmadinejad and the clerics will be in power for another 10 years. That's worth putting up with a few bombs for. The decision has been made in Tehran. Now Washington has to decide if it is going to fall for the provocation.

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*Gwynne Dyer is an independent journalist whose articles are published in 45 countries.*

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# India lags behind security threat

Harsh V. Pant  
London

SPECIAL TO THE JAPAN TIMES

It's been a year since Pakistan-based militants struck the Indian financial capital of Mumbai, killing 163 people and creating panic among the city's populace. The attacks drew comparisons with the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks in the United States.

Indian public outrage accompanied the expectation that the "26/11" (Nov. 26, 2008) attacks would force the government to address its systemic shortcomings in security. Yet, a year later, little seems to have changed. The country seems as unprepared for handling similar situations as ever.

The fact that there hasn't been another major attack over the past year has little to do with greater governmental efficiency and preparedness and more to do with Pakistan's having become a target of extremists, against whom the U.S. has pushed Pakistan's security forces to launch major offensives.

Although the sheer scale, scope and audacity of the Mumbai attacks put them in a different category from earlier terrorist incidents in India, it would be a mistake to suggest that they were India's 9/11. To do so would skip over issues that have allowed such horrific attacks to take place. After all, the Indian Parliament itself, symbol of India's sovereignty, was attacked in 2001, and India's response was as ineffective then as it was after 26/11.

So, it is no surprise that public frustration has grown since India's prime minister boldly declared a year back that India would "go after these individuals and organizations and make sure that every perpetrator, organizer and supporter of terror, whatever his affiliation or religion may be, pays a heavy price." The government has nothing substantive to show toward this end.

The Indian response has involved issuing statements and dossiers demanding that terrorists be apprehended. India had hoped that pressure from the international community, especially the U.S., would persuade Pakistan to address India's concerns. But it took Pakistan a year just to charge the terror masterminds of Lashkar-e-Taiba with planning and helping to execute the 26/11 attacks.

The realization is dawning in India that the strategic end-state that India seeks is rather different from what the U.S. and the rest of the West is seeking. For the U.S., the priority is to prevent an India-Pakistan conflagration that hinders the war effort in Afghanistan.

India is, therefore, being asked to take Pakistan's security concerns into account. Against domestic pressure, India is being asked to start talking with the Pakistani government. Though the Indian government has made some moves toward reviving the Indo-Pak peace process, there is no public appetite for engagement with Pakistan unless Pakistan dismantles the

terror infrastructure in its territory directed at India.

Meanwhile, Indian internal security sector reforms have not gone anywhere. The appalling state of India's internal security apparatus became evident in how Indian agencies confronted the Mumbai massacre. As terrorists wreaked havoc for three days, Indian security forces struggled to get a handle on the situation. Apart from the usual tinkering with institutional and legal frameworks, the Indian government has not made any attempt toward a systemic overhaul.

As the report on the Mumbai attacks has not been made public, whatever debate there has been has occurred in a vacuum. India's ability to prevent attacks through intelligence-gathering and better policing remains questionable at best. Police forces remain underfunded and suffer from a lack of training.

The Indian government's "antiterror" stance has repeatedly been shown ineffective. Not only have terrorists continued to attack India at regular intervals with impunity — not a single major terrorist case has been solved over the past few years — but at a time when India needs effective institutional capacity to fight ever-more sophisticated terror networks, Indian police and intelligence services are demoralized. The blatant communalizing of the process by which security forces were forced to call off searches and interrogations for fear of offending this or that community has made them risk-averse.

Still, the large number of security personnel who die year after year fighting extremists demonstrate the efforts being made by India's security forces. But the Indian government's inability and/or unwillingness to face up to the security threat and counter it could end up making these sacrifices meaningless.

Today the legitimacy of the Indian state is being questioned not only by groups on the margins of Indian society and polity but also by mainstream political parties. As long as India's response to terrorism is characterized by a shameless appeal along religious lines — with political parties trying to consolidate their vote banks instead of coming together to fight the menace — India will continue to be viewed as a soft target by its adversaries and Indians will continue to fight terrorists in their streets.

It's only a matter of time before there's another attack in an Indian neighborhood. No government can make India immune from terror attacks. What it can do is better prepare the country to handle 26/11-like crises more effectively in the future. So far, few signs suggest that the Indian government has risen to this challenge.

Harsh V. Pant teaches at King's College London and is presently a visiting professor at IIM-Bangalore.



# Inside Thailand's hidden separatist war

Duncan McCargo  
Leeds England

Thailand's former prime minister, Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, recently ignited a furor when he proposed that the separatist campaign in his country's Muslim-majority southern provinces might be solved politically, with a form of self-rule. Thailand's ruling Democrat Party immediately called Chavalit's remarks "traitorous."

But recent developments surrounding Afghanistan's elections have highlighted the shortcomings of using military force alone to resolve a civil war. This precedent offers a lesson for Thailand and other countries facing intractable insurgencies. As Aristotle put it, "politics is the master science in the realm of action."

In June 2006, I sat in a village in southern Thailand's Yala province with several ordinary-looking young men who had taken part in extraordinary events. They had joined the militants who had attacked a dozen security checkpoints across three southern provinces on April 28, 2004.

Armed mainly with machetes and kitchen knives, 106 attackers perished that day, 32 of them inside Pattani's historic Krue-Ze mosque, where they had taken refuge. Five members of the Thai security forces were also killed.

None of the youths I talked to could give any clear explanation for their actions, except to say that an Islamic schoolteacher known as Ustadz So had recruited them into a shadowy militant movement. Ustadz So had taught them that Thai rule over this historically Malay region was illegitimate, that Thai officials were cruel and heartless, and that the time had come for the Muslim population to rise up and expel the Buddhist infidels.

According to counterinsurgency expert

David Kilcullen, the violence in Thailand's deep South — which has now claimed more than 3,500 lives — was some of the most intense in the world between 2004 and 2007, "second only to Iraq and Afghanistan during this period."

Yet, despite such alarming levels of bloodshed, the insurgency has been under-reported and under-researched, barely registering on the international community's radar screen, largely because the conflict cannot be reduced to a sound bite-friendly narrative of identifiable bad guys and good guys.

First, the militant movement itself has no name, operating in a highly decentralized manner through small local cells that operate relatively independently — what might be described as self-managed violence franchises. Thai political expert Chaiwat Satha-Anand has called the movement a "network without a core." The lack of a defined enemy makes reporting on and understanding the conflict difficult.

Second, outcomes are not predictable. On April 28, 2004, the insurgents' primary targets were Buddhist members of the security forces, but most of those who died were Malay Muslims. The would-be perpetrators also became the primary victims. Some victims have been killed extra-judicially. The one group not targeted has been Westerners. Reporting such a messy story is a challenge; most Western news editors have preferred to highlight Iraq and Afghanistan.

A third factor is that the violence has become a marginal issue even within Thailand. The breaking news teams returned to Bangkok long ago, where a military coup, ongoing mass protests and other big political stories have kept them busy ever since. And, because the violence tends to come in dribs and drabs — rarely since 2004 has any one day's casualties

reached double figures — the South has never risen back up the news agenda.

Many Thai military and police officials now privately admit that the insurgency cannot be defeated through security measures. After a dip in the number of incidents during late 2007 and 2008, violence once again increased in 2009. The military's belief that Malay Muslims could be re-educated and re-socialized into a Thai identity has proved untenable.

The same goes for earlier hardline rhetoric about rooting out the militants and destroying their organization.

The current government under Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva misses the point with rhetoric about creating peace simply through promoting justice, or by funding large-scale socioeconomic development projects.

Malay Muslims in Thailand's southern provinces are demanding their own political space. Few of them seriously believe that a tiny separate Pattani state, wedged between Thailand and Malaysia, would be viable.

What many are seeking is some form of special status within Thailand, enabling them to pursue their own cultural and religious traditions without interference from Bangkok.

Until the Thai government grasps this simple point, young men like those I met in Yala will still be recruited into militant activity. As Chavalit Yongchaiyudh understands, the southern Thai conflict is a political problem in need of a political solution — just like Afghanistan.

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*Duncan McCargo is professor of Southeast Asian politics at the University of Leeds and author of "Tearing Apart the Land: Islam and Legitimacy in Southern Thailand."*  
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# A hint of hedging on Afghanistan



GWYNNE  
DYER

London

It couldn't have taken three months to write the speech that President Barack Obama gave at West Point last week (Dec. 1), but clearly much thought went into his decision to send 30,000 more American troops to Afghanistan. Some aspects of his strategy even suggest that he understands how little is really at stake there for the United States.

This is despite the fact that his speech is full of assertions that al-Qaida needs Afghanistan as a base. That is a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature of terrorist operations, but it permeates American thinking on the subject. Even if Obama knows better himself, he cannot hope to disabuse his fellow Americans of that delusion in the time available.

Instead, he goes along with it, even saying that Afghanistan and Pakistan are "the epicenter of the violent extremism practiced by al-Qaida . . . . Since 9/11, al-Qaida's havens have been the source of attacks against London and Amman and Bali." Even if he knows this for the utter nonsense it is, he cannot say so publicly.

Al-Qaida doesn't run training camps anymore; it leaves that to the various local groups that spring up and try to follow its example both in the Muslim world and in the West. The template for Islamist terrorism is now available everywhere, so al-Qaida no longer needs a specific territorial base. For the purpose of planning actual terrorist attacks, it never did.

Terrorist operations don't require "bases"; they need a couple of hotel rooms or a safe house somewhere. The operational planning for the 9/11 attacks was done in Germany and the U.S. The London attacks were planned in Yorkshire, the Amman attack probably in Syria, and the Bali attacks in Jakarta.

If the Taliban conquered all of Afghanistan and then invited al-Qaida to set up camps there — neither of which is a necessary consequence of an American withdrawal — what additional advantages would al-Qaida enjoy?

Well, it could then fly its people in and out through Kabul in addition to using Karachi and Lahore, but they'd face even stiffer security checks at the far end of the flight. It hardly seems worth it.

The leaders of al-Qaida would certainly like to see the Taliban regain power in Kabul, since it was al-Qaida's 9/11 attacks on the U.S., specifically intended to provoke a U.S. invasion of Afghanistan,



that brought the Taliban regime down in the first place. But al-Qaida takes no part in the Taliban's war in Afghanistan: It is strictly an Afghan operation.

Even if Obama does not believe the Washington orthodoxy, which insists that who controls Afghanistan is a question of great importance to American security, his short-term strategy must respect that orthodoxy. Hence the "surge." But the speed with which that surge is to be followed by an American withdrawal suggests that he may really know better.

July 2011 is not a long time away: All the Taliban leaders have to do is wait 18 months and then collect their winnings. If they are intelligent and pragmatic men — which they are — they may even let the foreign forces make some apparent progress in the meantime, so that the security situation looks promising when the time comes to start pulling the U.S. troops out.

In fact, the Taliban might not even try to collect their winnings right away after the foreigners leave. There's no point in risking a backlash in the U.S. that might bring the American troops back.

This is actually how the Vietnam war ended. The U.S. went through a major exercise in "Vietnamization" in the early 1970s, and the last American combat troops left South Vietnam in 1973. At that point, the security situation in the south seemed fairly good — and the North Vietnamese politely waited until 1975 to collect their winnings.

In doing so, they granted Henry Kissinger, national security adviser to President Richard Nixon, the "decent interval" he had requested. A "decent

interval," that is, between the departure of the American troops and the victory of the forces that they had been fighting, so that it did not look too much like an American defeat. In practical political terms, that is also the best outcome that Barack Obama can now hope for in Afghanistan.

If that is Obama's real strategy, then he can take consolation in the fact that nothing bad happened to American interests after the North Vietnamese victory in 1975. Nothing bad is likely to happen to American interests in the event of a Taliban victory, either. Nor is a Taliban victory even a foregone conclusion after an American withdrawal, since they would still have to overcome all the other ethnic forces in the country.

The biggest risk Obama runs with this strategy is that it gives al-Qaida a motive to launch new attacks against the U.S. The Taliban want the U.S. troops out of Afghanistan, but al-Qaida wants them to be stuck there indefinitely, taking casualties and killing Muslims. It's unlikely that al-Qaida can just order a terrorist attack in the U.S., but if it looks like the U.S. troops are really going home, then it may well try.

On the other hand, maybe all this analysis is too clever by half. Maybe Obama just thinks he can win the war in Afghanistan in the next 18 months. In that case, his presidency is doomed.

Gwynne Dyer is a London-based independent journalist whose articles are published in 45 countries.

# At last, an Afghan strategy

After months of deliberation, U.S. President Barack Obama has announced his plans for Afghanistan. As anticipated, Mr. Obama decided to send an additional 30,000 troops to the embattled country over the next few months. And as expected, that decision has not satisfied anyone. His supporters want U.S. forces out of Afghanistan; his critics condemn his deadline for withdrawal of those forces, arguing it will only embolden America's enemies. Both criticisms are wrong, but they underscore the precariousness of Mr. Obama's position: This announcement is only the beginning of a long and arduous process, one in which success will in many ways depend on the support the president gets from his own citizens.

During the 2008 presidential campaign, Mr. Obama called the Afghan conflict "a war of necessity," a sharp contrast to Iraq, which he termed "a war of choice." Yet, as the United States drew down forces in Iraq and strengthened its commitment to Afghanistan, it was not clear what U.S. strategy was: What threat did Afghanistan pose to the U.S., how could it be countered, and how would the world know when the war was won — or lost?

After months of intense debate within his administration over those questions — "dithering," said his critics; a long-overdue assessment, said his supporters — Mr. Obama provided his answers in a speech to West Point cadets on the night of Dec. 1. Calling al-Qaida a "cancer" on a region that "is the epicenter of violent extremism," he concluded that "the security of the United States and the safety of the American people were at stake in Afghanistan." He outlined three goals: denying al-Qaida a safe haven; reversing the Taliban's momentum and denying it the ability to overthrow the government in Kabul; and strengthening the capacity of Afghanistan's security forces and government so that they can take lead responsibility for their country's future.

To achieve those goals, Mr. Obama will dispatch an additional 30,000 troops to Afghanistan, starting almost immediately. Embracing the strategy laid out by Gen. Stanley McChrystal, head of allied forces in Afghanistan, the troops will be used to clear insurgents from strongholds and then secure and protect the country's main population centers. While Special Forces will maintain pressure on al-Qaida and their supporters, focus will shift to economic development and promoting reconciliation among Afghan factions, including moderate members of the Taliban.

Ultimately, success will depend on the government of Afghan President Hamid Karzai winning the allegiance of the majority of his people. That will be tough. Mr. Karzai won a second term

in an election widely viewed as tainted; his government is considered corrupt and ineffectual. If those flaws are not fixed, most Afghans will welcome the return of the Taliban if that promises stability and security in their daily lives.

It was the need to focus Mr. Karzai's attention that obliged Mr. Obama to say that the U.S. commitment to Afghanistan was not open-ended. As the U.S. president explained, "the days of providing a blank check are over." As one step, the U.S. will now provide more money to local officials rather than work through the central government. That may help stop some of the corruption, but it is not clear how Mr. Obama will assess Mr. Karzai's progress. He stated that withdrawal will depend on "conditions on the ground," but absent better defined standards, his leverage may vanish.

The most difficult task will be building capacity among the Afghan police and army. Without that, "clearing" insurgents will be a futile assignment. The challenges are manifold. There are only about 90,000 Afghan soldiers and some 93,000 Afghan police officers, numbers far too small for a country of 30 million people. The U.S. wants to grow those numbers to about 240,000 soldiers and 160,000 police officers.

It will take more than increased numbers to make a difference. If the troops cannot or will not fight and the police cannot administer justice or are corrupt, then there will be no progress. Japan can help make a difference by offering training and support to the police force.

Winning the support of the Afghan people is key; maintaining the support of the U.S. public, along with those of other nations, is also critical. Americans remain deeply divided about the need to stay in Afghanistan, an understandable concern with some 100,000 U.S. troops committed to the country — 140,000 when all international forces are included — and the cost of the U.S. commitment likely to grow an additional \$30 billion in the first year.

Worryingly for Mr. Obama, the loudest dissent comes from his political base. His supporters want all U.S. troops out, and soon; that view is shared by many allies. Yet, Mr. Obama remains resolute. He warned the American people that "none of this will be easy. . . . The struggle against violent extremism will not be finished quickly. . . . It will be an enduring test of our free society, and our leadership in the world." He is right, but it will take far more than one speech to win over the doubters. The months ahead are going to be a severe test of his political commitment and instincts, as well as those of his nation. This strategy can prevail, but it will take determination, assistance and a dexterity that the U.S. has demonstrated in the past — often as a last resort.

# Afghan war debate freezes out majority view



TED RALL

Los Angeles

According to White House insiders, Barack Obama considered three choices for digging our way deeper into the "graveyard of empires": Gen. Stanley McChrystal, commander of the occupation forces, asked for 40,000 additional soldiers. Defense Secretary Robert Gates wanted 30,000 more. Other generals wanted to send 20,000 more.

Obama, reports U.S. state-controlled media, has chosen the "middle option" — 30,000 more troops, bringing the total American occupation force to 98,000.

Obama is many things: cool, calm and collected. What he is not is unpredictable. Give the man a middle course, a happy median and a compromise to choose from, and he'll split the difference every time. "Hope?" "Change?" Awesome campaign slogans. The posters will make handsome collectibles.

The weirdest aspect of this Afghan spin game is that everyone is buying into it. Most American voters, after all, are against the war in Afghanistan entirely — 52 percent say the war isn't worth fighting, according to the latest ABC News-Washington Post poll, while 44 percent say it is.

Objectively, therefore, the "middle ground" is immediate withdrawal. (I don't know what's to the left of that. Retroactive withdrawal? We'd need Superman to do his flying around the world superfast thing for that, though, and I hear he got laid off last year.)

The real "middle ground" sure as hell isn't Obama's prescription: 30,000 more troops and completely out by 2017, by which time he won't be president anymore, and maybe the U.S. will be just a memory, so he's writing a check he won't have to cash.

What a joke! When you ask a bunch of generals and the secretary of defense for advice about a war, the results are predetermined: more bang bang, more soldiers, more planes, more bombs, more coffins.

The amazing part is how far we've

traveled down the path toward all war, all the time: Obama didn't even have to pretend to consider pulling out of Afghanistan. He didn't even have to appoint a token peacenik to his Cabinet. He didn't even have to talk to one.

Which perfectly mirrors the media. You could read newspaper after newspaper, listen to hour after hour of radio and watch day after day of television news, and never once be exposed to the opinion that the Afghanistan war sucks and should be ended yesterday.

"I've seen the public opinion polls saying that a majority of Americans don't support the [Afghanistan war] effort at all," Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said Aug. 26. "I say, good. Let's have that debate, let's have that discussion." Nice sentiment. Very "small-d" democratic. And if you support the war, it's essential — no society can win a war without strong support on the home front.

But we haven't had any debate whatsoever, as notes Steve Rendell. "Rather than airing a full range of voices on the war, prominent media have downplayed proponents of withdrawal in favor of a debate that reflects the narrow range of elite, inside-Washington opinion," Rendell reports in *Extra!*, the magazine of the media watchdog group Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting.

Fareed Zakaria, a Washington Post columnist whose prognostications have consistently proven wrong since, well, always, encapsulated the corporate media's blackout of antiwar opinions in his Sept. 14 column. He began: "It is time to get real about Afghanistan. Withdrawal is not a serious option."

Which is exactly what they used to say about Vietnam. Until we withdrew. And guess what? Nothing happened. Southeast Asia didn't turn communist. The dominoes didn't fall. Nowadays, even ex-"sky pirate" Sen. John McCain receives a warm welcome when he visits Hanoi.

Of course, withdrawal is a serious option. It's the only sane one.

The nation's two leading newspapers set the tone for the lack of debate in Washington. "In the Washington Post," found a FAIR study of Op-Ed pages during the first 10 months of 2009, "prowar columns outnumbered antiwar columns by more than 10 to 1: Of 67 Post columns on U.S. military policy in Afghanistan, 61

supported a continued war, while just six expressed antiwar views."

It's the same story — or lack of story — a six-hour drive up I-95. "Of the New York Times' 43 columns on the Afghanistan War, 36 supported the war and only seven opposed it — five times as many columns to war supporters as to opponents. Of the paper's prowar columns, 14 favored some form of escalation, while 22 argued for pursuing the war differently."

There was only one major exception to the "bring 'em on" din. Times columnist Bob Herbert, said the report, is "by far the loudest antiwar voice in the study period, and the author of the majority of the Times' seven antiwar columns."

Alas, as it was in George Orwell's *Oceania* — where the "resistance" was a figment of the ruling Party's imagination — so it is in our own Ministry of Truth-run publications. Even though Herbert's Dec. 1 column opposed Obama's escalation, he parroted the official state media line that Afghanistan had once been, in pundit parlance, the "right war at the right time."

"There was every reason for American forces to invade Afghanistan in the immediate aftermath of September 11, 2001," he wrote. "But that war was botched by the Bush crowd, and Barack Obama does not have a magic wand now to make it all better."

Actually, there was no reason whatsoever for the U.S. to invade Afghanistan after 9/11: On 9/11 Osama bin Laden was in Pakistan. He has been there ever since. There were only two al-Qaida training camps in Afghanistan on 9/11. Both had been closed. There were, and remain, hundreds of camps in Pakistan. There were very few al-Qaida members in Afghanistan on 9/11 — by some estimates, fewer than two dozen. All were low-level. The big fish and the big numbers were and remain in — you guessed it — Pakistan.

This information has been known by experts on South and Central Asia, all of whom — not coincidentally — oppose the U.S. war against Afghanistan. But none of them have ever been invited to the nation's Op-Ed pages... much less a meeting with the president.

*Ted Rall is the author of the graphic travelogue "To Afghanistan and Back" and the book "Silk Road to Ruin: Is Central Asia the New Middle East?" His Web site is tedrall.com.*

# Asia's new strategic partners



BRAHMA  
CHELLANEY

New Delhi

The recently concluded India-Australia security agreement has come at a time when tectonic power shifts are challenging Asian strategic stability. Asia has come a long way since the emergence of two Koreas, two Chinas, two Vietnams and a partitioned India. It has risen dramatically as the world's main creditor and economic locomotive. The ongoing global power shifts indeed are primarily linked to Asia's phenomenal economic rise.

Even so, Asia faces major challenges, as underscored by festering territorial and maritime disputes, sharpening resource competition, fast-rising military expenditures, increasingly fervent nationalism and the spread of transnational terrorism and other negative cross-border trends.

In that light, an expanding constellation of Asian countries linked by strategic cooperation and sharing common interests can help foster power stability and build institutionalized cooperation. A close India-Australia strategic relationship indeed is a critical link in this picture, given the common security interests in several spheres that bind the two democracies.

Unfortunately, the Indo-Australian relationship hasn't gone too well ever since Kevin Rudd two years ago became the free world's first Mandarin-speaking head of government. Among his first actions, he pulled the plug on the nascent India-Japan-Australia-U.S. "Quadrilateral Initiative" and reversed his predecessor's decision to export uranium ore to India. For reasons unrelated, the growth in Indo-Australian educational and defense ties also came under pressure, even as India remained Australia's fastest-growing merchandise export market.

Rudd's India visit last month has helped to put the bilateral relationship on an even keel and, more importantly, to elevate it to a strategic partnership. The new security agreement will help add concrete strategic content to the relationship.

Underlining the significance of their new accord, India and Australia have agreed to "policy coordination" on Asian affairs and long-term international issues, and to work together in Asian initiatives like the East Asia Summit and ASEAN Regional Forum. Toward that end, they will institute regular defense-policy talks, including consultations between their national

security advisers, and set up a joint working group on counterterrorism. They also have agreed to cooperate on maritime and aviation security and participate in military exercises and other service-to-service exchanges.

Like the October 2008 Indo-Japanese security accord and the June 2005 Indo-U.S. defense agreement, the India-Australia declaration is a "framework" understanding that is to be followed by an action plan with specific steps. In fact, all these three bilateral accords call for advancing security cooperation in wide areas that extend from sea-lane security and defense collaboration to disaster management and counterterrorism.

The Indo-Japanese security agreement, signed when Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Tokyo last, was modeled on the March 2007 Australia-Japan defense accord. Now, the India-Australia accord follows that lead. Its structure and even a large part of its content mirror that of the Japan-Australia and Japan-India declarations.

Actually, all three — the Japan-Australia, Japan-India and Australia-India agreements — are in the form of a joint declaration on security cooperation. And all three, while recognizing a common commitment to democracy, freedom, human rights and the rule of law, obligate their signatories to work together to build not just bilateral defense cooperation, but also security in Asia. They are designed as agreements to enhance mutual security between equals. By contrast, the U.S.-India defense agreement, with its emphasis on arms sales, force interoperability and intelligence sharing — elements not found in Australia-Japan, India-Japan and India-Australia accords — is aimed more at undergirding U.S. interests.

Paradoxically, Rudd, having nixed the Quadrilateral Initiative, has come full circle implicitly by plugging the only missing link in that quad — an Australia-India security agreement. With the Indo-Australian accord, quadrilateral strategic cooperation among the four major democracies in the Asia-Pacific region — Australia, India, Japan and the U.S. — is set to take off without the aid of an institutional mechanism like the Quadrilateral Initiative.

Such cooperation, of course, is intended to be in a bilateral framework. But the bilateral cooperation inexorably will help lay the foundation for greater cooperation and coordination at trilateral and quadrilateral levels among these four powers.

Australia, Japan and the United States already are engaged in institutionalized trilateral strategic dialogue, while India, Japan and the U.S. have held naval maneuvers since 2007, the last time being in April-May this year off the Okinawa coast. In addition, the quad members jointly staged major naval-war games in

## Australia's own recent defense white paper, by unveiling the country's biggest military buildup since World War II, serves as a reminder that there is no substitute to building adequate national deterrent capabilities, even for a country under the U.S. security umbrella.

the Bay of Bengal in September 2007, roping in Singapore, too. Indeed, the coordination established among the Indian, Japanese, Australian and U.S. militaries in rescue operations following the December 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami has helped promote closer cooperation among them on disaster relief.

Make no mistake: The U.S. has actively encouraged Indian defense cooperation with Australia and Japan, which are tied to the U.S. by security treaty — the ANZUS treaty in the case of Australia and a 1951 treaty with Japan that was revised in 1960.

Closer Indian defense ties with key Asia-Pacific members of America's hub-and-spoke global alliance system, in fact, are a natural corollary to the U.S.-India strategic tieup, which seeks to institute a "soft" alliance without treaty obligations, but with complex arrangements extending from the defense-framework accord and nuclear deal in mid-2005 to the recent End-Use Monitoring Agreement. As part of this tieup, India placed arms-purchase orders with the U.S. worth \$3.5 billion just last year.

But while the U.S. has treaty commitments to defend Australia and Japan, its reciprocal security obligations to an emerging de facto ally like India are unclear. It also is doubtful whether security accords of the Japan-Australia, Australia-India and Japan-India type translate into tangible gains for the parties' national defense against visible threats, even though they do aid their diplomacy and are likely to contribute to Asian power stability.

Australia's own recent defense white paper, by unveiling the country's biggest military buildup since World War II, serves as a reminder that there is no substitute to building adequate national deterrent capabilities, even for a country under the U.S. security umbrella. Japan, for its part, is likely to move to a more independent security posture in the years ahead, even though a muscular Chinese approach has prompted Tokyo in this decade to strengthen its military alliance with the U.S.

More broadly, Rudd's government — through its record of being hyper-responsive to Chinese concerns, including on the Quadrilateral Initiative — has taken the lead for the U.S. in certain spheres. Just as Canberra has sought to balance its ties with Tokyo and Beijing, as well as with New Delhi and Beijing, the Obama administration now is following in those footsteps. Indeed, the new catchphrase coined by the Obama administration on China, "strategic

reassurance," signals an American intent to be more accommodative of Chinese ambitions.

Or take another example: China's resurrection of its long-dormant claim to India's northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh. Just as Australia has publicly chartered a course of neutrality on the Arunachal issue — to the delight of Beijing, which aims to leave an international question mark hanging over the legitimacy of India's control over that large Himalayan territory — U.S. policy is doing likewise, albeit quietly. Indeed, the Obama administration has signaled its intent to abandon elements in its ties with New Delhi that could rile China, including a joint military drill in Arunachal and any further Indo-U.S. naval maneuvers involving Japan or more parties like Australia.

In New Delhi, Rudd underscored both the promise and limitations of the new Australia-India strategic partnership. While lauding the new security agreement, he contended disingenuously that his continued refusal to sell India uranium was "not targeted at any individual country," although India is the only country affected by his policy. Worse still, he proffered a specious justification — India's nonmembership in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). That treaty has no explicit or implicit injunction against civil nuclear cooperation with a nonsignatory. Rather, it enjoins its parties to positively facilitate "the fullest possible exchange of equipment, materials and scientific and technological information for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy," so long as safeguards are in place.

Any restriction is not in the NPT but in the revised 1992 rules of the 45-nation Nuclear Suppliers Group that, paradoxically, were changed with Australian support last year to exempt India.

Eventually, Canberra will come round to selling India uranium. After all, how can Canberra continue to justify selling uranium to authoritarian China but banning such exports to democratic India, even though the latter has accepted what the former will not brook — stringent, internationally verifiable safeguards against diversion of imported uranium to weapons use? Canberra will not be able to plow a lonely furrow on India indefinitely.

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*Brahma Chellaney is professor of strategic studies at the Center for Policy Research in New Delhi and the author of "Asian Juggernaut: The Rise of China, India and Japan."*

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# On the wrong path in Afghanistan

Andrew J. Bacevich  
Boston  
LOS ANGELES TIMES

Which is the greater folly: to fancy that war offers an easy solution to vexing problems, or, knowing otherwise, to opt for war anyway?

In the wake of 9/11, American statecraft emphasized the first approach: President George W. Bush embarked on a "global war" to eliminate violent jihadism. President Barack Obama now seems intent on pursuing the second approach: Through military escalation in Afghanistan, he seeks to "finish the job" that Bush began there, then all but abandoned.

Through war, Bush set out to transform the greater Middle East. Despite immense expenditures of blood and treasure, that effort failed. In choosing Obama rather than John McCain to succeed Bush, the American people acknowledged that failure as definitive. Obama's election was to mark a new beginning, an opportunity to "reset" America's approach to the world.

The president's chosen course of action for Afghanistan suggests he may well squander that opportunity. Rather than renouncing Bush's legacy, Obama apparently aims to salvage something of value. In Afghanistan, he will expend yet more blood and more treasure hoping to attenuate or at least paper over the wreckage left by the Bush era.

However improbable, Obama thereby finds himself following in the footsteps of President Richard Nixon. Running for the White House in 1968, Nixon promised to end the Vietnam War. Once elected, he balked at doing so. Obsessed with projecting an image of toughness and resolve — U.S. credibility was supposedly on the line — Nixon chose to extend and even to expand that war. Apart from driving up the costs that Americans were called on to pay, this accomplished nothing.

If knowing when to cut your losses qualifies as a hallmark of statesmanship, Nixon flunked. Vietnam proved irredeemable.

Obama's prospects of redeeming Afghanistan appear hardly more promising. Achieving even a semblance of success, however modestly defined, will require an Afghan government that gets its

act together, larger and more competent Afghan security forces, thousands of additional reinforcements from allies already heading toward the exits, patience from economically distressed Americans as the administration shovels hundreds of billions of dollars toward Central Asia, and even greater patience from U.S. troops shouldering the burdens of seemingly perpetual war. Above all, success will require convincing Afghans that the tens of thousands of heavily armed strangers in their midst represent Western beneficence rather than foreign occupation.

The president seems to appreciate the odds. The reluctance with which he contemplates the transformation of Afghanistan into "Obama's war" is palpable. Gone are the days of White House gunslingers barking "Bring 'em on" and of officials in tailored suits and bright ties vowing to do whatever it takes. The president has made clear his interest in "offramps" and "exit strategies."

So if the most powerful man in the world wants out, why doesn't he simply get out? For someone who vows to change the way Washington works, Afghanistan seemingly offers a made-to-order opportunity to make good on that promise. Why is Obama muffing the chance?

What Afghanistan tells us is that rather than changing Washington, Obama has become its captive. He has succumbed to the twin illusions that have taken the political class by storm in recent months. The first illusion, reflecting a self-serving interpretation of the origins of 9/11, is that events in Afghanistan are crucial to the safety and well-being of the American people. The second illusion, the product of a self-serving interpretation of the Iraq War, is that the U.S. possesses the wisdom and wherewithal to guide Afghanistan out of darkness and into the light.

According to the first illusion, 9/11 occurred because Americans ignored Afghanistan. By implication, fixing the place is essential to preventing the recurrence of terrorist attacks on the United States. In Washington, the appeal of this explanation is twofold. It distracts attention from the manifest incompetence of the government agencies that failed on 9/11, while also making it unnecessary to consider how U.S. policy toward the Middle East during the several preceding decades contributed to the emergence of violent

anti-Western jihadism.

According to the second illusion, the war in Iraq is ending in a great American victory. Forget the fact that the arguments advanced to justify the invasion of March 2003 have all turned out to be bogus: no Iraqi weapons of mass destruction found; no substantive links between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaida established; no tide of democratic change triggered across the Islamic world. Ignore the persistence of daily violence in Iraq even today.

The "surge" engineered by Army Gen. David Petraeus in Iraq enables proponents of that war to change the subject and to argue that the counterinsurgency techniques employed in Iraq can produce similar results in Afghanistan — disregarding the fact that the two places bear about as much resemblance to each other as North Dakota does to Southern California.

So the war launched as a prequel to Iraq now becomes its sequel, with little of substance learned in the interim. To double down in Afghanistan is to ignore the unmistakable lesson of Bush's thoroughly discredited "global war on terror": Sending U.S. troops to fight interminable wars in distant countries does more to inflame than to extinguish the resentments giving rise to violent anti-Western jihadism.

There's always a temptation when heading in the wrong direction on the wrong highway to press on a bit farther. Perhaps down the road some shortcut will appear: Grandma's house this way. Yet as any navigationally challenged father who has ever taken his family on a road trip will tell you, to give in to that temptation is to err. When lost, take the first offramp that presents itself and turn around. That Obama — by all accounts a thoughtful and conscientious father — seems unable to grasp this basic rule is disturbing.

Under the guise of cleaning up Bush's mess, Obama has chosen to continue Bush's policies. No doubt pulling the plug on an ill-advised enterprise involves risk and uncertainty. It also entails acknowledging mistakes. It requires courage. Yet without these things, talk of change will remain so much hot air.

Andrew J. Bacevich is professor of history and international relations at Boston University.

# Pakistan may face new jihad via Internet

## ANALYSIS

Islamabad  
REUTERS, AP

The detention in Pakistan of Americans seeking to contact militants and join holy war through the Internet suggests the country may need more than security crackdowns to contain threats from an insurgency.

The five men, students in their 20s from northern Virginia, were detained this week in the city of Sargodha in Punjab Province, about 200 km southeast of Islamabad, security officials said.

The suspects are being investigated for possible links to a Pakistan-based group suspected of carrying out high-profile attacks and with links to the Taliban and al-Qaida. Laptops, cell phones and maps of Pakistani cities were seized from them.

Regional police chief Javed Islam said Friday the men have yet to be charged with any crime but they will "most probably" be deported. He declined to say how long police can hold them before they are charged.

"It's a very difficult job to dis-

mantle such networks which operate through the Internet. Their mode of communication was the Internet and e-mail. All five and their contacts were using the same password and just putting their messages in draft and weren't sending them," said a Pakistani security official.

"It's very difficult to detect them. If the FBI could not detect these types of messages, how can we? It's not an easy job."

The possibility of having to track down militant networks on the Internet could not have come at a worse time for Pakistan. It is already struggling against militants who seem to carry out bombings at will, killing hundreds since October and raising questions over the stability of the nuclear-armed country.

Islamabad also faces mounting pressure from Washington to root out militants that cross the border to attack U.S.-led troops in Afghanistan.

Radicalization starts thousands of kilometers away from the strategic region. Some security officials say the Americans had intended to go fight in Afghanistan.

Two were of Pakistani origin. Officials said one of the Americans was of Egyptian origin, one of Yemeni origin and another of Eritrean origin, illustrating how the Internet can spread militant networks across continents, undetected.

If young men are leaning toward leaving behind the West to seek jihad, the Internet of-

**'It's very difficult to detect them. If the FBI could not detect these types of messages, how can we? It's not an easy job.'**

PAKISTANI SECURITY OFFICIAL

fers a variety of videos, made by some of the world's deadliest militant groups, to help them decide.

Cost-free indoctrination by the Taliban and al-Qaida is readily available on sites such as YouTube, which one official said was used by the Americans to try and contact militants.

Videos romanticize what could be a violent future.

Militants jump through fire rings, climb obstacles and open fire with assault rifles to train for "martyrdom." Video clips often lead to images of aircraft crashing into the World Trade Center. Militants will smile in the face of death, viewers are told.

The suspects are being investigated for links with the banned Jaish-e-Mohammad group. Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad has links with al-Qaida and the Taliban.

It was suspected of involvement in attacks including the murder of U.S. journalist Daniel Pearl in 2002 and an assassination attempt on former Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf.

Ahmed Rashid, author of a book on Pakistan called "Descent Into Chaos" and an expert on the Taliban, said the case of the Americans points to a "huge new development as far as terrorism is concerned."

"Obviously al-Qaida, these groups, have determined that it's too dangerous for American citizens to attack America. They will be discovered too

soon. So it's much easier that they come out here and use their bodies here," he said.

Pervez Hoodbhoy, a Pakistani nuclear physics professor and writer on social and political issues, has seen the fury that drives men to take up violent causes during his meetings with members of the Pakistani community in the United States.

He says clamping down on militant networks on the Internet could be impossible for any government. But Hoodbhoy emphasized that Pakistan's policy of trying to modernize religious schools, some of which are seen as breeding grounds for extremism, may make the job more difficult.

"The government put these computers and Internet into the madrassas as part of its reform package. The hope was that this would modernize the madrassas," said Hoodbhoy, who has been called a traitor by militants on the Internet and received death threats.

"In fact, it has given them means of networking with jihadist groups across the world."



# The price of being top dog



WILLIAM  
PFAFF

Paris

The New York Times columnist Roger Cohen recently described the United States as both "the great global security underwriter" and the "great global debtor," and congratulating President Barack Obama's first of December speech as suggesting that the U.S. couldn't go on indefinitely being both, and that it was time to back off a bit.

"The nation I am most interested in building is our own," the president said, and both Roger Cohen and this writer say hooray! But can it happen?

It would be popular in the U.S.. Most surveys on America's two current wars and on foreign policy generally, find majority support for staying at home and minding America's own business. Especially now, when it has become no longer possible to treat the national deficit as if it doesn't matter, and when the president has just ordered another "surge" of troops to the Afghanistan war.

Obama says the surge will start flowing back our way in mid-2011, but I should think most Americans suspect that it will be more like a trickle, and go on until long after July 2011 — not to mention

those who come home in a box, or to a lifetime of disability.

Why, if the electorate is less than enthusiastic about providing global underwriting, and would like to see others provide their own insurance, does Washington persist in its role? So far as I can see it is that the political leadership of the country is not really ready to give it up. It's fun, and it's profitable to American business, to be top dog.

Even the president mixes his cautions about how this can't go on forever with warnings that our "credibility" is at stake in Afghanistan, as are "the security of our allies, and the common security of the world."

All this is at stake according to whether we can catch Osama bin Laden and al-Qaida? We've had nine years now to catch them, but Robert Gates, America's secretary of defense, told a national television audience last Sunday — five days after the president's speech — that "it has been years" since American intelligence had a good idea of the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden.

Why then are another 30,000 American troops, and by midyear 2011 as many as 100,000 more, going to be sent to look for him in Afghanistan?

Is Washington playing games with the electorate? Those troops are being sent in the hope that the new/old "clear and hold" program of the new commanders responsible for America's Central and South Asian wars will be able to "clear" the Taliban from the Afghan-Pakistan border regions and prevent them from

causing the near-term collapse of the governments of those two countries.

As for "holding" them away from the sensitive zones, if it is possible at all it would take us beyond the extreme limit of Gen. Stanley McChrystal's scenario for full success, which if my memory serves me was 50 years.

The real plan, I presume, is that U.S. forces and the Afghan authorities will find a way to deal with the security situation in a way that recognizes that the real reason for the insecurity and fighting is that the U.S. in 2001 drove the Pashtun Taliban out of a region of the country that belongs to them. They want it back.

Washington installed a national government mainly of Tajiks, ethnic rivals of the Pashtun. The Tajiks largely composed the Northern Alliance, with which the United States allied itself to overturn the Taliban government in 2001. President Hamid Karzai is a Pashtun tribal leader, but also Washington's man.

Or he was until the voting scandals that discredited the recent national election. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton is said to have given Karzai a good talking to, and promises that he will now be an honest president.

One suspects this will not be enough. Washington is still determined to be the great security underwriter, and Barack Obama is going to pay a price for this.

Visit William Pfaff's Web site at

[www.williampfaff.com](http://www.williampfaff.com).

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SOUTH

## Cooperation with KL sought

- Published: 2/12/2009 at 12:00 AM
- Newspaper section: News

The government is planning closer cooperation and greater intelligence sharing with Malaysia in a bid to curb the insurgency in the restive far South. It also wants to prevent international terrorists from gaining a foothold in the southern provinces and using it to strengthen their network throughout Southeast Asia. The planned cooperation will be discussed by Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva and his Malaysian counterpart when Najib Razak visits Thailand on Dec 8-9.

The two are scheduled to visit some of the Muslim-dominated provinces in the far South while Mr Najib is here, said acting government spokesman Panitan Wattanayagorn. Mr Panitan said Malaysia was aware of the possible infiltration in the region of suspected terrorist groups from the Middle East and Africa. The involvement of these external players would further complicate the problems in the far South which have claimed more than 4,000 lives since January 2004.

Foreign groups have started trying to internationalise the insurgency by claiming Thailand uses heavy-handed tactics against the Muslim population, he said. Thai security forces have been regularly criticised by international human rights organisations over their actions in the far South, such as the alleged torture of suspected insurgents. Meanwhile, the Internal Security Act was invoked in Songkhla's Chana, Na Thawi, Saba Yoi and Thepha districts yesterday, replacing martial law. But officials did not enforce Section 21 of the act which grants amnesty to wrongdoers.

The government wants people who have joined or supported insurgency groups to first surrender to authorities this month, Joint Security Command chief Kasikorn Kirisri said. Any pardons or amnesty would be discussed later, he said. A source in the 4th Army said security forces feared the use of Section 21 could affect ongoing criminal cases, especially in Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat, so Deputy Prime Minister Suthep Thaugsuban had delayed its implementation.

In Pattani's Sai Buri district, Pol Lt Pradit Putprapa, 45, was injured late on Monday night when he was attacked by suspected insurgents, police said. In Narathiwat's Yi-ngo district, villager Sapaeing Hayimasa, 21, was seriously wounded at about 6am yesterday in a drive-by shooting, police said.

Economics

RENEWABLE ENERGY

## Thailand pursuing global role

- Published: 2/12/2009 at 12:00 AM
- Newspaper section: Business

Thailand is aiming to be ratified as a member of the International Renewable Energy Agency (Irena) in a bid to have a greater role in global green energy, says Energy Minister Wannarat Channukul. The cabinet approved Thailand's application for Irena membership yesterday, subject to parliamentary approval. Irena, which is considered the "Opec of renewable energy", was initiated by the German government in Bonn in 2007 and had its first meeting in January this year. Its current members include Denmark, Spain, Sweden, the Maldives, the United Arab Emirates and Kenya.

"Thailand is among 138 countries that intend to become members of Irena. We expect to get approval from parliament within the first quarter of next year," Mr Wannarat said. Being part of Irena would benefit the country in terms of information exchange of renewable energies that could help develop local green technology, he added. The ministry signed a memorandum of understanding with the Japan-based New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization (NEDO) to develop a pilot project for new air-conditioning technology that reduces power consumption by 30% compared to conventional models.

A new 30,000-square-metre building of the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand will become the first testing centre with a cooler galley. The agency also asked the Finance Ministry to waive the 5% import tariff for equipment worth 50 million baht, he added. "NEDO has had this technology for many years but the agency has not conducted testing in a tropical country. Once the project proves commercially viable in Thailand, we might be able to cut power consumption more than we expected," he said. To foster faster development of energy-saving programmes, the ministry has earmarked a budget of 3.3 billion baht to replace all lighting systems at state agencies countrywide with energy-saving bulbs.

A total of 800 state-owned buildings with old lighting systems will receive energy-efficient T5 lightbulbs. "We can't wait until agencies volunteer to do these things because it takes years to get the budget allocation. The programme should be subsidised by the Energy Conservation Fund," he said. Replacement is expected next year.

SOUTH

## **Chavalit's Pattani City idea scorned**

- Published: 3/12/2009 at 12:00 AM
- Newspaper section: [News](#)

Puea Thai Party chairman Chavalit Yongchaiyudh's proposal to set up a specially administered Pattani City will not end the unrest in the lower South, a seminar has been told. Democrat MP for Songkhla Nippon Boonyamaneer yesterday said he disagreed with Gen Chavalit's idea because the structure and model of the proposed local administration body were unclear. Without more details of the proposal or any indication of how the Pattani City model would be an improvement on the existing local administrative bodies, he did not believe it would work.

"If Gen Chavalit says it will be another local administrative organisation, the question is what problems hinder the existing bodies from bringing an end to the violence successfully," he said. "Wouldn't it be better to identify those problems and try to resolve them instead of pushing for a rather fanciful idea like the Pattani City?" One major setback was that about 190 billion baht had been spent on security from 2004 to 2009, leaving little left for development projects, he said.

The far South's security and development budgets should be separated. The Southern Border Provinces Administration Centre and the Internal Security Operations Command should be made into separate autonomous bodies under the prime minister's direct supervision, he said. Lt Gen Nanthadet Meksaewat, a former head of a national task force working to ensure security in the South, said the Pattani City idea could not work as it was floated simply for the sake of its political impact.

No matter what model the Pattani City followed, he said, it would not bring about three things that were now missing but were crucial to resolving the southern violence: dignity, justice and security. Abdulloh Abru, an Islamic studies lecturer, said many southerners seemed to like the name Pattani City but most had no idea what it would be like. Gen Chavalit said he did not need to clarify the Pattani City idea because the local people understood it and would push for it to happen.

## Militants kill family in Thai south: police

- Published: 4/12/2009 at 02:04 PM
- Online news: [Asia](#)

Suspected Islamist insurgents shot dead a family of three in Thailand's Muslim-majority south, while a bomb attack wounded two other people in the restive region, police said Friday. Armed men travelling in a pick-up truck broke into a house in Pattani province late Thursday, where they shot the victims execution-style as they ate dinner, said police.

The victims were a 46-year-old father, a 45-year-old mother and their 17-year-old son. Separately, a small motorcycle bomb exploded in a food market in Pattani on Friday morning, slightly wounding two people.

More than 4,000 people have been killed and thousands more wounded since a separatist insurgency erupted in Thailand's southernmost provinces bordering Malaysia in January 2004. Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak is set to visit the restive region when he comes to Thailand next week, accompanied by his Thai counterpart Abhisit Vejjajiva.

Tensions have simmered in the mainly Muslim region -- formerly an autonomous Malay Muslim sultanate -- since it was annexed in 1902 by Buddhist-majority Thailand.

Breakingnews

## Malaysian PM visits Thailand

- Published: 7/12/2009 at 11:35 AM
- Online news: [Breakingnews](#)

Malaysia's Prime Minister Najib Razak, accompanied by his wife Rosmah Mansor, started a three-day official visit to Thailand on Monday, his first visit since he took office in April.

Mr Najib and Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva will co-chair the fourth annual bilateral consultation at Government House on Tuesday. The meeting will follow up on different areas of cooperation.

Both leaders will attend the ceremony to rename the Second Bridge across the Golok river in Narathiwat province as the Friendship Bridge. The bridge links the southern border province and Malaysia's Kelantan state. The two countries plan to construct another bridge connecting Thailand's Tak Bai and Malaysia's Pengkalan Kubur.

The two prime ministers are expected to discuss ways to end the continuing violence in the far South that has claimed more than 3,500 lives since early 2004.

In October, Mr Najib suggested the Thai government consider granting some form of autonomy to the restive southern provinces, but Mr Abhisit responded that he did not support the idea and that southern unrest was Thailand's internal affair.

Malaysia is Thailand's largest fourth trading partner with a total trade value of US\$19.6 billion in 2008. Malaysians top the list of foreign tourist arrivals in Thailand. About 1.8 Malaysian tourists visited the country last year.

## **PM Meets Malaysian counterpart**

- Published: 8/12/2009 at 02:26 PM
- Online news: [Breakingnews](#)

Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva has met with his Malaysian counterpart Najib Razak at Government House to discuss bilateral cooperation and strengthen ties between the two countries, acting government spokesman Panithan Wattanayakorn said on Tuesday afternoon.

Mr Razak was welcomed by the premier, cabinet ministers and high ranking government officials and had inspected the guard of honour. The Malaysian leader is on a three-day official visit to Thailand at the invitation of the Thai government.

The two leaders were to hold a bilateral talk and will after the meeting jointly hold a press conference at Government House's Santi Maitri Building.

Mr Abhisit and his wife will tonight host a dinner party in honour to the Malaysian prime minister and his wife at the Santi Maitri Building.

According to Mr Panithan, the Thai and Malaysian prime ministers will tomorrow travel to Narathiwat to preside over the function to change the name of the second bridge over the Kolok River to the "friendship bridge".

The bridge links between Ban Buketa in Waeng district to Malaysia's Kelantan state.

They will also witness the signing ceremony of an agreement on the management, the maintenance and the use of the new Friendship bridge.

After that the two leaders will visit a sufficiency economy village in the southernmost province and the production of "One Tambon, One Product" (OTOP) of the local community.

Stringent security measures have been implemented in Muang and Waeng district including intensive ground and air patrols to ensure safety of the two prime ministers.

Opinion » Opinion

EDITORIAL

## Frosty outlook for Denmark

- Published: 7/12/2009 at 12:00 AM
- Newspaper section: News

Two weeks of climate talks begin this evening, Thailand time, in Denmark. Once called "the last chance" to make a deal on global warming, the Copenhagen conference has vastly scaled back its ambitions. There seems little chance, if any, that the United Nations can push members to make an international, legally binding agreement to replace the expiring Kyoto Protocol and begin serious cuts of carbon emissions.



There is actually more reason to be optimistic than discouraged. It is clear, however, that the heads of government flying into Copenhagen are still playing almost exclusively to their domestic politics than to any concern about the Earth.

It still is unclear to many why such huge conferences are even necessary. If the UN, heads of government and activists were truly concerned about the environment, they would set an example by meeting via the internet and conference telephone calls. According to the United Nations, the entire nation of Thailand, in the next two months,



will produce a similar carbon footprint to the 12-day Copenhagen meeting all by itself - some 40,000 tonnes of carbon. And Thailand is in the top 10 per cent of world polluters.

A second diversion for the conference is the sudden revelation of "climategate". Emails stolen or hacked from scientists studying and figuring global warming indicates disturbing attempts to silence critics and perhaps even to doctor evidence. Climategate is being used by doubters and deniers of global warming as evidence that the science behind many reports of warming is false. That is unclear at best, but the issue will surface at Copenhagen and slow attempts to take the proper steps to conserve energy, find alternative energy sources and reduce man-made carbon emissions.

The two most prominent figures at Copenhagen are likely to be presidents Barack Obama and Hu Jintao of the US and China. Their countries are the world's two biggest polluters, and Mr Obama and Mr Hu agreed last month when they met in Singapore that they could not sign on to any replacement for the Kyoto Protocol. Mr Obama has clearly defaulted on his campaign promises to move US politicians towards a cap-and-trade law and a world treaty to fight global warming. He is to make a speech and promise that the US will reduce carbon emissions by a paltry 17%, but even this is a promise he cannot enforce.

Mr Hu's speech will reportedly commit China to slow its increase in carbon emissions, but the country that only recently became the world's biggest polluter clearly has no intention of cutting its economic development, even if the future of the world is at stake. The big issue in Copenhagen, then, is likely to be the attempt to produce a system where richer countries pay poorer ones to work to cut back their emissions. This is a major step in the right direction, although far from an acceptable treaty.

Such an agreement will focus world leaders and their citizens on the steps that must be taken next year to replace the Kyoto Protocol with an enforceable international law to cut emissions. Germany and Brazil will take the lead at Copenhagen. They want a timetable to produce a replacement for Kyoto, and a commitment to touch on all major aspects of climate change. The new target will reportedly be 2015 for a proper international agreement. If Copenhagen can take that small step, it can be judged a minor success.

Opinion

GLOBAL ECONOMY

## **A superpower's diplomacy of deference**

- Published: 8/12/2009 at 12:00 AM
- Newspaper section: News

GLOBAL REBALANCING AFTER THE GREAT RECESSION: PART II

A change in US policy from brash unilateralism to polite engagement: President Barack Obama bows deeply as he greets Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko of Japan on Nov 14, 2009.

### **The 'dollar trap' hypothesis...and implications**

There could be three reasons why such a scenario (the gradually weakened dollar) can in fact occur in the coming years. First, Asian central banks continue to accumulate US dollars because they want to sell their exports. Second, new dollars must be bought at the margin to prevent dollar depreciation which will devastate the value of existing dollar holdings which is massive. Third, the United States is too big to fail. That is, a sharp drop in the value of the dollar (causing US interest rates to spike) could trigger a US economic downturn and a global recession.

An interesting op-ed in the Wall Street Journal on Dec 2, 2009 by Joel Harris noted that most analysts have argued that China is caught in a "dollar trap". China now holds over US\$2 trillion in reserves while many Asian and Middle East central banks each hold over \$100 billion in foreign reserves. Arguably, countries which together probably hold in excess of \$4 trillion in reserves may be caught in such a "dollar trap".

However, Mr Harris pointed out that Opec countries faced similar situations in the 1970s. In that instance, they used their dollar power to influence US policy rather than passively accept their fate of accumulating their increasingly devalued dollars.

Public discussions to replace the dollar with other currencies in certain trades, the use of other currencies to replace the dollar in pricing oil and other key commodities, and even asking for a study to find a new reserve currency to replace the dollar, are ways in which countries could try to force discipline into US policy. Mr Harris argued that "there was little doubt that Opec's dollar diplomacy contributed to the Carter administration's policy shift on inflation, including the defence of the dollar in August 1978 and ultimately the appointment of inflation hawk Paul Volcker as Federal Reserve Chairman in 1979".

Some of us who are older remember the fall out from Paul Volcker's interest rate hikes to break the back of double-digit inflation. After US interest rates peaked at 20% in 1980, one of the sharpest and longest global recessions soon followed. For Thailand, we eventually had to devalue the baht in 1984.

### The price the US must pay

The price that the United States will have to pay this time could be just as high. Recall that 20 years ago the fall of the Berlin Wall marked the beginning of the end of the communist bloc. At that time, it seemed clear that America had emerged as the world's only remaining super power. But the data below tells a different story just 20 years later. (See table).

Today, the US remains the largest country in the world in terms of GDP - its military and technological might is unquestioned.

However, China is catching up fast. Its nominal GDP has grown nearly 10 times in 20 years and will likely catch up with Japan next year.

Japan, by contrast, has not fared as well during the same period. Its population has barely changed but its fast-ageing population has diminished its labour force. As such, Japan's GDP failed to grow in real terms during the past 20 years.

|          | International Reserves<br>(US\$ bn) |         |      | Nominal GDP<br>(US\$ bn) |       |        | Population<br>(Persons mn) |       |      |
|----------|-------------------------------------|---------|------|--------------------------|-------|--------|----------------------------|-------|------|
|          | China                               | Japan   | US   | China                    | Japan | US     | China                      | Japan | US   |
| 1989     | 6                                   | 85      | 75   | 451                      | 2,973 | 5,482  | 1,127                      | 123   | 247  |
| 2009     | 2,273                               | 1,053   | 134  | 4,758                    | 5,049 | 14,266 | 1,334                      | 128   | 307  |
| % Change | 40,847.7                            | 1,139.9 | 80.0 | 954.2                    | 69.8  | 160.2  | 18.4                       | 3.7   | 24.2 |

Source: IMF, CEIC

POSTgraphics

But what is intriguing is the escalation in the international reserves of China and Japan from almost nothing in 1989 to \$3.3 trillion today. If reserves of other Asian and Middle East central banks are included, the amount of reserves accumulated could easily exceed \$4 trillion. While perhaps only 60% of these are held in US dollars, they still represent considerable power to purchase US assets, that is, \$2.4 trillion would amount to 18% of the total amount of goods and services that the US produces in a year.

Moreover, the US will borrow more while China, Japan and others will accumulate many more dollars in the coming years. This clearly means that the US' status as a superpower and its well-being will be eroded in several ways because of its economic and financial dependence.

First, the value of the dollar and US interest rates will be affected by the willingness (or reluctance) of trading partners to accumulate more dollars.

Second, trading partners will increasingly own more of US financial assets which should eventually allow them to obtain US technology and hard assets as well as skills and expertise to enhance their own to catch up with that of the US.

Third, the American people will have to eventually forego future output to pay back the country's foreign creditors.

### **From cowboy to kowtow**

The Financial Times (Nov 20, 2009) noted the irony that US President Obama was receiving a private tour of the Forbidden City in Beijing on his milestone trip to Asia while the residents of the Czech Republic were celebrating the 20th anniversary of the student protest that started the Velvet Revolution which eventually brought down communism and ushered in an era of unparalleled US dominance.

Twenty years later when President Obama visited Asia, American policy changed from "George W Bush's brash unilateralism to Mr Obama's polite engagement... a move from cowboy to kowtow".

The article then went on to discuss how America understood that it has long since recognised China as an equal or near equal global partner. America will look to shape China's global role to supplement its own while China will be weary of America's paternalism (preaching that human rights, democracy, free markets must be upheld). It will also still be suspicious and fear that Washington still wants to contain China's rise through its relationships with Japan, South Korea and India.

Given these sensitivities, the challenge for the leaders of America and China is to establish an "interpersonal chemistry". This, according to FT, the leaders failed to do in Beijing in November and almost all of their exchanges were scripted rather than spontaneous.

However, India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was able to "happily interact with the US President without a posse of officials by his side". Still, the US had to "pay" for the visit to Beijing by offering Prime Minister Singh a full state visit to Washington the following week even though diplomatic protocol would normally dictate that Mr Singh be welcomed as a head of government rather than a head of state.

Finally, the FT noted that, to the annoyance of the White House, the US media have focused on Mr Obama's "diplomacy of deference" during his nine-day tour of Asia - including the now notorious deep bow he gave to the Emperor of Japan.

That bow seemed to strike a chord. In a span of only 20 years, a world that began with unparalleled US dominance became one in which the US President was seen bowing to the leaders of Asia.

Looking ahead over the next 20 years, with Asia's willingness to be America's major creditor being a key condition for its sustained recovery, US leaders may have to become even more adept in the "diplomacy of deference".

- ***Supavud Saicheua is managing director of Phatra Securities Plc. This article concludes the two-part series on Global Rebalancing after the Great Recession.***

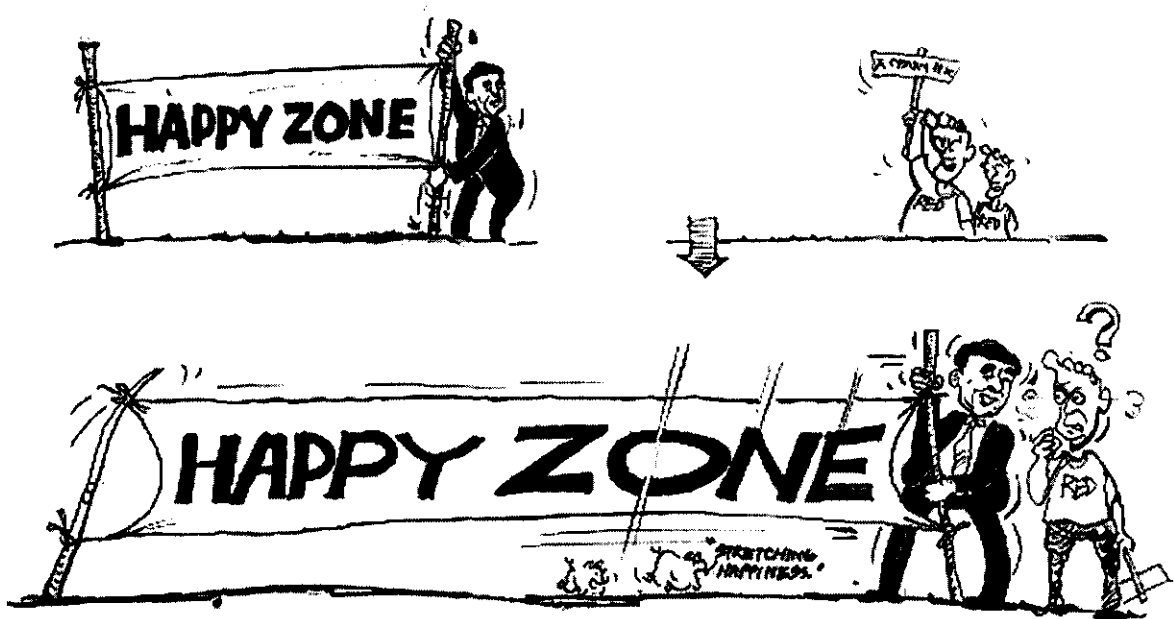
## Opinion

### EDITORIAL

## Still looking for resolution

- Published: 9/12/2009 at 12:00 AM
- Newspaper section: News

The uprising in the South has gone on for nearly six years and shows few signs of abating. Since the regional insurrection burst back into violence on Jan 4, 2004, it has become one of the most murderous conflicts in the world, barring only the international wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.



Some 4,000 people have been killed, many of them in the most brutal manner imaginable. Successive governments have promised to pacify, to negotiate and to bring justice to the deep South. All have failed.

Today, Malaysia's Prime Minister Najib Razak begins a tour of the embattled region. Mr Razak and his country have a legitimate interest in the region, not only because Malay Muslims form the majority in most villages and towns, but more importantly because the conflict is on Malaysia's doorstep, and occasionally has crossed the threshold.

In previous battles by separatist forces, particularly during the 1980s, Malaysia was often viewed with suspicion, and it appeared that elements of the Malaysian army and even the government were viewed as being sympathetic and possibly helpful to the rebels.

Today, Malaysia is clearly a partner of the Thai government in seeking a solution to the terrible violence in the South. Mr Najib has taken largely a neutral position on the problem. But he also has not been shy in offering his solution. He has come down on the side of offering southern residents of Narathiwat, Yala, Pattani and Songkhla provinces a form of autonomy and self-government for their region. "Autonomy" has unfortunately become a nasty word, completely rejected by the Royal Thai Army which has kept tight control of military and paramilitary forces.

The International Crisis Group, which has been a leading voice in stimulating debate over the South, has issued a new and strong call for a political solution to the murderous division in the deep South. "The government needs to think seriously about new governance structures for the South," recommends the report. But there are serious problems with this stance as well.

The ICG is correct in stating that "The problem is lack of political will." But that is not the main problem. The fact is that if Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva decided tomorrow to try to bargain a peace with the southern insurgents, he would have no one to face at the negotiating table. The opposition in the deep South is a network, not a group. It has no name, no known leaders. The calls for negotiations thus face a major problem from the start. Mr Najib and Mr Abhisit, who invited him to observe the problems first-hand, are helpless to change this reality.

The ICG and other government critics are correct that Mr Abhisit and the army need to back down from their hard stance and explore the possibility of political change in the deep South. The region has a unique racial and religious make-up, and also has legitimate complaints against the central government. Like his predecessors, Mr Abhisit has made promises, but taken no action on establishing justice in the region.

There is strong resentment against the government and army for unjustified arrests, torture and even deaths. Major abuses including the shocking Tak Bai incident, where 84 young Muslim men died while in army hands, have not been resolved. The South is the most pressing threat to national security, and deserves more serious attention. Mr Najib will have useful observations that the government and army should carefully consider.

## Opinion

### SOUTHERN STRIFE

## **Army having failed, give political solutions a chance**

- Published: 9/12/2009 at 12:00 AM
- Newspaper section: News

Thailand needs to shed its taboos and think the unthinkable if it wants to find political solutions to end the six-year-long southern insurgency that has claimed more than 3,900 lives. The distinct ethnic and religious character of the predominantly Malay-Muslim South needs to be acknowledged and new ways explored to enhance dialogue and better address their grievances. Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva pledged upon taking office to shift southern policies away from the heavy hand of the security forces and provide a lighter civilian touch. Nearly a year later, little has changed in the government's approach.

The incidence of violence dropped last year, but is now intensifying. The military's cordon-and-search operations begun in July 2007 were only a temporary fix. Recent attacks are more brutal, with some victims shot, beheaded and burned. Insurgents' bombs have increased in size and their techniques more advanced. Insurgents are using radio transceivers to trigger bombs to avoid electronic jammers, making it more difficult to prevent bombings. The government's reliance on the military to cement its own power has hindered its political will to make policy shifts in the South. It fears antagonising the top brass, whose support it needs to suppress the "red-shirt" followers of ousted leader Thaksin Shinawatra.

The army has opposed the lifting of the emergency decree and martial law concurrently in place in Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat provinces, arguing that both laws are necessary for its counter-insurgency operations. There have been some compromises, with martial law lifted in the four districts of Songkhla, where violence is low, and the Internal Security Act in force in its place. While apparently more lenient, implementation of the ISA has created new concerns. Human rights advocates fear that its Section 21, which allows legal charges to be dropped in return for "training", would amount to "administrative detention" with insufficient procedural safeguards that could lead to forced confessions.

It is also questionable whether indoctrination in Thai nationalism would change the minds of militants driven by ethno-nationalist ideology. The military also opposes the government's plan to enact a law to allow the civilian-led Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre - in charge of the "hearts and minds" operation - to be independent of the military-controlled Internal Security Operations Command (Isoc). A watered down



version is currently before Parliament, but ongoing political turmoil in Bangkok might mean the House could be dissolved before this bill can be passed.

Despite the government's pledges, justice still eludes the residents of the conflict-wracked southernmost provinces. No security forces involved in past abuses, including the notorious atrocities committed in Krue Se and Tak Bai, have faced criminal prosecution. There have been no arrests of the perpetrators from the June 8 Al-Furqan mosque attack that killed 10 Muslims and injured 12 others. Police investigations suggest that Buddhists, possibly including some state-sponsored militias, carried out the attack in retaliation for previous killings of their fellow Buddhists. The slaughter raises a concern that arming civilians has deepened communal tensions and exacerbated the conflict.

Throwing more money at the problem will not work, either. Without effective oversight the huge budgets could create "an industry of insecurity" and contribute to the inertia because some officials profit from projects. Increased corruption only erodes the government's legitimacy and would be exploited by the militants. Poverty is not driving this conflict, so using economic stimulus to address the political grievances of insurgents does not tackle its root cause. Policy for the South should be driven by hope rather than fear and the publicly declared stance of "no negotiations" should be reversed. Peace talks have proven effective in ending violence in many separatist conflicts without leading to secession. In recent years, "secret dialogues" between Thai governments and those claiming to represent insurgents have taken place without result. The lack of sustained and serious commitment to a peace process has stalled these confidential processes.

Reform of governance structures is often part of proposals in a negotiation process. Various alternatives should be explored and special administrative arrangements should not be perceived as a threat to the unitary state. When the government shows its serious commitment to talk, the militant representatives would then need to demonstrate their control of fighters on the ground. After six years of military strategy that has not stemmed the violence, it is time to give political solutions a chance.

- ***Rungrawee Chalermripinyorat is an analyst with the International Crisis Group, which recently published "Southern Thailand: Moving Towards Political Solutions?", a report now available at .***

## ASIA'S LEFT-WING GROUPS

### Dialogue key to ending leftist violence in Asia

- Published: 11/12/2009 at 12:00 AM
- Newspaper section: News

Virtually unseen and certainly unexpected, a new threat is emerging in Asia, and it is not growing on the back of extremist religious dogma. Rather, the newest non-state armed groups battling governments in the name of justice and freedom draw on what was once thought to be a dead ideology: Marxism. Across large areas of India, Nepal, parts of Burma, and for many decades in the Philippines, hard-line, left-wing ideology has been adopted by non-state armed groups as a binding principle of armed struggle.

In Sri Lanka, it is reported that one possible successor to the Tamil Tigers is a left-leaning People's Liberation Army. There is growing evidence of left-wing activity in Bangladesh and Bhutan. There is also a strong left-wing current humming through other popular opposition groups, such as the Red Shirt movement in Thailand that was built around support for ousted premier Thaksin Shinawatra, but which is led and inspired by intellectuals who cut their ideological teeth in the Thai Communist Party of the 1970s.

Could it be that two decades after the fall of the Soviet empire and the declaration in the West of the "End of History", that history is about to bite back? The major battlefield for these violent left-wing groups is paradoxically in the world's largest democracy, India. Collectively known as the Naxalites, after Naxalbari village in West Bengal where the first armed action of the movement took place in 1967, these groups now have an estimated 10,000 to 20,000 fighters and are active in 20 of India's 28 states. The writ of the Naxalites is said to run through a "red corridor" of contiguous territory cutting across the heart of India.

Described as the single largest security threat to India by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, more than 2,600 people have been killed in Naxalite-related violence over the past three years. Linkages between these disparate, violent leftist movements are evident and developing. The Nepali Communist Party that has successfully transformed from a Maoist insurgency into an elected government, had links with the Naxalites in India during their period of armed struggle in Nepal.

In turn, the Naxalite movement may be providing active support to insurgent groups in India's problematic northeast region bordering China and Burma. The good news is that whilst many governments baulk at engaging with Islamic extremist groups considered beyond the pale because of their ideological justification of violent acts that target innocent civilians, many of these left wing groups have specific, clearly enunciated

political demands that often stem from obvious social and economic divides. They resemble old fashioned liberation movements or peasant uprisings. This suggests dialogue and negotiation as an effective tool for ending violence. The bad news is that most governments, and some of the left-wing movements, remain stubbornly opposed to dialogue. While plans are being drawn up for a major anti-Naxalite security operation, the government of India has expressed its willingness to enter into dialogue. The Naxalites in turn offered a cease-fire if the government dropped the pre-condition that they lay down arms.

But the commitment to dialogue by both parties is not clear. The scale of violence has put pressure on the government to be seen as reacting forcefully. Naxalite strategic doctrine, meanwhile, looks on dialogue as a tactical tool and not as an instrument to end conflict. Nevertheless, the option of dialogue must be seriously explored. India has a long history of leaving the door open for talks when dealing with non-state armed actors. In Kashmir and across the northeast, India has discreetly always talked to such groups. Moreover, unlike other insurgencies on the borders of India, the Naxalite problem is at its very core and needs to be solved and not just managed.

In the experience of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, which has convened dialogue with parties in armed conflict across Asia and Africa for the past decade, resolving any conflict necessitates the initiation of dialogue, almost always in conditions which initially will not be conducive or promising. More broadly, governments need to recognise that armed violence against the state won't disappear when Osama bin Laden is one day captured and al-Qaeda defeated. For millions of disenfranchised people across Asia, whether they are facing ethnic or economic marginalisation, it would appear that Marxist ideas of popular struggle still have enormous appeal.

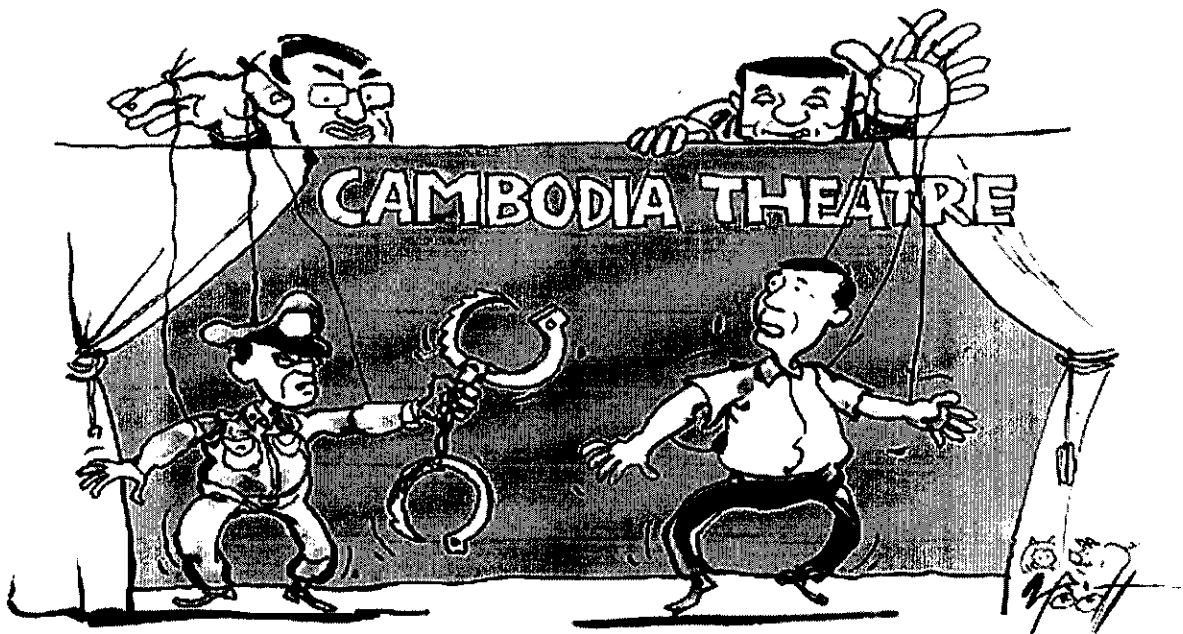
It would be a shame indeed, if all the effort expended on defeating terrorism this past decade is not related back to the basic root of the problem, which is that when people run out of peaceful ways to see their grievances redressed, they will take up arms. Rather than becoming obsessed with cultural and religious divides - and in the process reinforcing them - the best way to deal with the problem is to engage in a dialogue to bring about an end to violence, whatever the root cause or driving ideology.

Michael Vatikiotis is Asia Regional Director of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.

## EDITORIAL From North Korea, with contempt

- Published: 15/12/2009 at 12:00 AM
- Newspaper section: News

Once again North Korea has been caught intentionally thumbing its nose at the world and - intentionally or not - abusing Thailand to do so. The seizure of 35 tonnes of arms at Don Mueang Airport on Saturday was a fresh insight into the serial deceptions of the corrupt Pyongyang regime.



Investigations will continue for some time, but initial reports indicate that the aircraft smuggling the arms from North Korea was actually scheduled to make a refuelling stop in Thailand. This means that North Korea has once again set up Thailand as a dupe for its own double-dealing with the world.

The Ilyushin Il-76 aircraft reportedly was seen loading up with arms in North Korea by a US satellite. Authorities plotted the plane's flight plan and Thai police, military and customs agents were on hand to give a harsh greeting to the five European crewmen and their illicit cargo. Police claim the foreigners clearly knew what they were doing, because they made false statements on what the aircraft was carrying - a serious breach of international law. The five crew members, however, insisted they didn't know the "goods" they transported were war weapons. Military officers found roughly 35 tonnes of arms in the plane's hold. The cargo included missiles, rocket-propelled grenades and

other lethal weapons. The plane's final destination is not yet clear, but the next refuelling stop was to have been in Sri Lanka.

What this means to North Korea and its relations is clear enough. Pyongyang and the Kim Jong-Il regime have no respect for the rule of international law. The United Nations has unanimously forbidden North Korea to sell arms overseas. Like other attempts to encourage Mr Kim to join the ranks of civilised countries, this injunction has simply been ignored by North Korea.

The UN, the United States and Thailand should all work even harder to keep a cap on North Korea's arms smuggling. Pyongyang is not the biggest arms dealer in the world, or even in Asia. But it is the region's biggest scofflaw, prepared to deal its arms, including weapons of mass destruction, to the highest bidder. There is no indication, for example, that the weapons seized at Don Mueang on Saturday were bound for a government. North Korea is clearly willing to deal with any buyer, so long as it receives the money.

It is past time that Thailand reviewed its own relations with North Korea. One of the first nations to reach out a hand of friendship to Pyongyang, Thailand has been repeatedly victimised by the taciturn Pyongyang regime.

Among other unfriendly actions, North Korea has used Thailand as an unwitting staging point for a huge shipment of illicit drugs, and for international kidnapping on Thai soil. Pyongyang used Thai territory and an unwitting Thai trading partner to try to smuggle equipment used to make nuclear weapons. North Korea refuses to account for a Thai woman its agents kidnapped from Macau. This partial list of serial offences against Thailand should also include multiple cases of Pyongyang's refusing to pay legitimate trade debts on government-to-government food deals.

Thailand opened diplomatic relations with North Korea in May 1975, one of the first non-communist countries even to recognise the Pyongyang regime. In 2000, Thailand led North Korea into the Asean Regional Forum, a favour that North Korea has frequently paid back by boycotting the group. The arms smuggling case proves again that Pyongyang has no intention of joining the rest of the world in civilised interaction. There must be consequences for this fresh, unfriendly act.

EDITORIAL

## Models of government for deep South

- Published: 17/12/2009 at 12:00 AM
- Newspaper section: News

It comes as no surprise that General Chavalit Yong-chaiyudh's proposal for a Nakhon Pattani (Pattani City) - a model for a local administrative body to govern the three Muslim-predominant southernmost provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat - has been given the cold shoulder by the Democrat-led government. The Democrats suspect the idea to be just a political game of the opposition Puea Thai Party to curry favour among Muslims in the deep South. The Democrats have asked why the same idea was not raised when the retired general was in the cabinet of former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra.



In fact, the idea is not new. In an address delivered in Pattani province in May this year, Gen Chavalit indirectly mentioned this when he referred to the history of the Sultanate of Pattani, saying it was the educational, religious and academic centre of the region a few centuries ago. "What's wrong if the past glory of the forefathers is to be restored?" he asked the audience, which responded with resounding applause.

Besides the Democrats who view Gen Chavalit's move with deep suspicion, there are other nationalist elements in Thai society who also suspect that the retired general and current chairman of Puea Thai Party, could be advocating a separation of the far South

from the Kingdom of Thailand. This has been denied by the general himself, who maintains that his Nakhon Pattani model would come under the Thai Constitution and Thai laws.

Contrary to the government's cold response and the scepticism in some quarters to the idea, the mood in the violence-prone region is completely different. The response there is overwhelming and the idea has touched off widespread debate within academic circles and among civil society networks as well as people who are desperate for change, in the hope that it may offer a solution to the seemingly endless violence.

During a Dec 10 seminar at Prince of Songkla University's Pattani campus, a blueprint for a new model of local administration for the far South was raised for discussion. The proposed model which was endorsed by 23 non-governmental organisations in the region, seeks to replace all the existing local administrative bodies, namely the provincial administration organisations and tambon administrative organisations, and install three city administrative bodies, one each for the three southernmost provinces.

Meanwhile, another far more ambitious model is also being mooted. It envisages the merger of the three southernmost provinces, plus four districts of Songkhla, into one single entity under the Greater Pattani City administrative body. On top of that, public hearings are to be held to gauge the opinions of locals about various proposed models of a Nakhon Pattani administration.

Meanwhile, the government appears to have its own plans for the far South. Four laws related to decentralisation and concerning local administrative bodies are to be amended, enabling them to function with greater flexibility and transparency. Moreover, PM Abhisit Vejjajiva has spoken briefly of a special administrative model for the region, and about transforming it into tourism and economic cities.

With such unusual enthusiasm and expectations for change, the locals may not be content with whatever is being offered by the government. They want their voices heard and responded to. And, this time around, the government had better be more open-minded and receptive to divergent if not opposite views, if it hopes to win hearts and minds.

# The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

## The Philippine politics: Guns, goons, gold and the war on terror

David Gorman , Singapore | Tue, 12/01/2009 9:48 AM | Opinion

The brutal slaying of almost 60 unarmed civilians, including women, children and journalists in Mindanao, Southern Philippines in the last week of November, is a stark reminder that violence is endemic to this troubled region and that Islamic extremism isn't the only cause.

In a planned operation, the victims were systematically executed by one clan's henchman bent on sending a message to a rival clan competing against it in local elections. Sadly, while the scale of the brutality may have been unprecedented, the killings were not unpredictable.

Despite the country's vibrant democratic system, across the Philippines most provincial political leaders employ licensed armed individuals for protection and in some cases intimidation of their rivals. It's said that to win an election in the Philippines, one needs the three 'G's: guns, goons and gold.

In Mindanao, however, levels of armed violence have reached an intolerable level. For decades, the national government has tolerated, legitimized, or in some cases even supported through the provision of arms and legal cover, efforts by indigenous clans to arm themselves in Mindanao.

National politicians tolerated or supported armed civilian militias so long as the clans were able to secure votes in their favor come national elections.

While the creation of armed civilian militias in Mindanao was often done under the guise of assisting in the War on Terror, combating separatists or serving as "force multipliers", in reality these armed groups, which now number in the thousands, were more often than not employed against rival clans.

Without a question most violence in Mindanao is caused by clan violence rather by terrorists or separatists.

Unfortunately, the system has been allowed to flourish so widely that it is has now become nearly impossible for anyone to reasonably compete for political power without the support of an armed group.

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Too often focused on the war on the terror it has overlooked the fact that violent clan politics is the principle contributor



to poverty, marginalization and insecurity.  
”

The unarmed convoy of the Mangudadatu clan slaughtered in late November attests to that. Sadly, those that try to change the system often find themselves without support and drawn back into politics by the gun.

In 2007, the Provincial Council of Sulu passed a resolution disbanding private armed groups and banning the carrying of firearms.

The measure was hailed locally and internationally and the Sulu Governor made it his personal mission to implement it. The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue which has been working in Sulu since 2005 lent its support by establishing a multi-stakeholder project known as the Armed Violence Reduction Initiative.

Unfortunately this laudable initiative was undermined by a series of high profile kidnappings, an assassination attempt on the Governor by a rival clan and stepped up attacks by the terrorist listed Abu Sayyaf.

Despite pleas and protests by civil society groups and even some in the ranks of the military and the police, the national government authorized the creation of an 1,800 strong armed group known euphemistically as a Civilian Volunteer Organization.

Everyone knows, however, that this is the Governor's personal army. Not surprisingly, his chief rival in the upcoming gubernatorial elections, has also sought legalization of a 1,400 strong armed force.

The local police and the military are often unable to prevent their creation as political gain trumps law and order.

As the Philippines approaches one its more important national elections in recent memory, presidential candidates, all of whom are calling for “change” and have condemned the massacre, need to convey precisely how they plan to ensure this level of violence does not occur again.

This will involve some tough choices. For starters the candidates should pledge the following:

Launch an inquiry not just into the massacre but into the role, value, lines of command and unaccountability of all armed groups outside of the police and the military.

Suspend the operations and licenses of all armed groups currently supported by the military, the police and the local government until the elections are complete.

Develop a longer term plan for the eventual phasing out of private armed groups complemented by the development and improvement of the regular armed forces and the police.

Enforce the current election gun ban and suspend all candidates whose supporters violate it. Without question, the real cause of insecurity, underdevelopment and fodder for terrorists and criminals in Mindanao has been the system of violent clan rule that has been tolerated and supported for too long in the interests of political expediency.

The real question now is, who is the dog and who is the tail. Can the national government in fact reign in some of these groups? Will the culprits be brought to trial, convicted, sentenced and serve out their terms? Nonetheless, perhaps most disappointing is the international community's own failure.

Too often focused on the war on the terror it has overlooked the fact that violent clan politics is the principle contributor to the cycle of poverty, marginalization, and insecurity that has created a breeding ground for Islamic extremists and separatists.

It has also failed to support the efforts of those political clans or even members of some notoriously violent political clans who have tried to move beyond the politics of guns, goons and gold.

*The writer is Philippines representative of the Centre For Humanitarian Dialogue, Singapore.*

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# The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

## RI's nuclear future will require addressing the waste problem

Mark Fitzpatrick , , London | Tue, 12/01/2009 1:25 PM | Opinion

Until recently, Indonesia was expected to be the first country in Southeast Asia to generate electricity from nuclear power. With three nuclear research reactors in operation, a range of other nuclear-science facilities and a cadre of trained scientists and engineers, Indonesia has more nuclear-science expertise than any other member of ASEAN.

Local opposition in the Muria Peninsula has resulted in delays to the timetable that would have seen a nuclear power plant operating by 2016-2017. Thus, Vietnam, whose one-party state allows for less dissent, will almost certainly leapfrog Indonesia in introducing nuclear power.

But harnessing the atom is not an international competition. Indonesia's open and pluralistic society will likely ensure that when nuclear power is introduced - and I believe that it is a matter of when and not if - full attention will be given to seismic risks and potential terrorist threats as well as to the need for instilling a strong and enduring safety culture. An early November trip to Jakarta reinforced my optimism.

Given Jakarta's non-proliferation leadership, the dangers of non-peaceful use are much less of a cause for concern here than they are in some other nuclear-aspirant countries.

The nation's commitment to non-proliferation was further enhanced when Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda stated during his June visit to Washington that if the US ratified the CTBT, Indonesia would immediately follow suit. One wonders, though, why Indonesia cannot go ahead on its own, rather than waiting for others.

In any case, nuclear energy cannot be misused for nuclear weapons without either uranium enrichment or plutonium reprocessing, neither of which is necessary for countries that seek only to produce nuclear power. Indonesia has shown no concerted interest in these technologies. Using foreign fuel-cycle services to procure fuel and dispose of the by-product will be far less costly, in both economic and political terms, and will shorten the timeframe for bringing nuclear power on line.

There are other nuclear dangers, however, including how to safely dispose of spent fuel, a problem no country has yet to permanently solve. Countries newly entering the nuclear market may be more willing to depend entirely on foreign supply of enriched fuel if they also could rely on foreign disposition of their spent fuel.

Long-term storage of conditioned nuclear waste in an international repository would be the best solution, if the significant political hurdles in the way of creating such a repository

could be overcome. Such a repository could also be used to dispose of long-lived radioactive wastes from research reactors and other nuclear applications.

Advantages of a multinational repository include economy of scale, collective savings, nonproliferation and security and the prospect for technology sharing. Finding a host country that is both suitable and willing is the greatest challenge. None to date have volunteered.

One alternative is to create a partnership to develop regional multinational waste-disposal facilities. By banding together on a waste-management solution, countries could minimize the costs and optimize nonproliferation, safety and security objectives.

Regional partners, who need not commit at the outset to hosting a multinational repository, should first explore the possibility of shared facilities, examining the legal, economic and technical issues, including transportation requirements.

They should then establish a set of technically based common criteria for excluding unsuitable areas within their respective countries. Only then should communities in non-excluded areas be invited to express interest on a voluntary, non-committal basis. This approach is being pursued in Europe

Until the political and technical challenges of building permanent international fuel repositories can be overcome, the countries that produce nuclear power and its unwanted by-products will have to rely on temporary storage of the spent fuel. About 40-50 years - the planned operating lifetime of many reactors - is an appropriate initial timeframe for interim storage facilities, but dry-cask storage is deemed safe for as long as 100 years.

During this time, it is possible that the technology may evolve in ways that make recycling of the recoverable plutonium in the spent fuel practical and free of proliferation risks. All options are thus kept open and the spent fuel is saved for its use as a future energy source.

Down the road, the successful introduction of an extra-national fuel-cycle facility serving Southeast Asia would potentially have benefits far beyond the regional benefits of spent-fuel management and nonproliferation of sensitive technologies.

It could create a useful model for emulation elsewhere and bring closer to realization outgoing IAEA Director-General ElBaradei's vision of making all sensitive nuclear facilities international, and thus bring closer as well the vision of a stable nuclear-weapons-free world in which no one country has an exclusive latent weapons break-out capability.

*The writer is director of the Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Program at the London-based International Institute for Strategic Studies and editor of the recently published IISS strategic dossier on Preventing Nuclear Dangers in Southeast Asia and Australasia.*

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# The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

## Ahmadinejad: Iran will enrich uranium even more

Associated Press , Tehran | Wed, 12/02/2009 10:02 PM | World

Iran said Wednesday it would produce whatever nuclear fuel it needed on its own, the latest indication it was rejecting a UN-backed deal aimed at reining in Tehran's nuclear program over fears it is geared to produce weapons.

President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said Iran will enrich its uranium to an even higher level on its own, after expressing frustration over the ongoing negotiations over the UN deal to exchange its low-enriched uranium for more highly enriched fuel rods.

The speech before a crowd of thousands in the central city of Isfahan is Ahmadinejad's latest defiance of international concerns over his nuclear program and follows promises to increase Iran's uranium enriching capacity 10-fold and a refusal to negotiate further.

The president announced Sunday that the country would build 10 more enrichment facilities, despite the widespread belief that Iran simply does not have the resources to match its boasts.

Iran currently has one operating enrichment facility that has churned out around 3,300 pounds (1,500 kilograms) of 3.5 percent enriched uranium over the past years, but the country needs fuel enriched to 20 percent to power a medical research reactor.

"I declare here that with the grace of God, the Iranian nation will produce 20 percent (enriched uranium) and anything it needs itself," Ahmadinejad told a cheering crowd of thousands in the central city Isfahan.

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# The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

## Philippines arrests clan chief, declares emergency

Associated Press , General Santos, Philippines | Sat, 12/05/2009 7:10 PM | World

The Philippine president imposed martial law Saturday on a southern province and security forces detained the patriarch of a powerful clan and three of his sons, accusing them of massacring 57 people and fomenting a rebellion.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo was accused of overreacting by invoking emergency powers in response to the country's worst incident of political violence. It was the first time martial law has been declared in the country since the late dictator Ferdinand Marcos imposed it more than three decades ago.

The head of the clan, Andal Ampatuan Sr. - a former governor - and at least six other family members who have ruled impoverished Maguindanao province unopposed for years, are the main suspects in the Nov. 23 attack on a rival's convoy. Some 30 journalists were among the dead. The family has denied involvement.

The Ampatuans, notorious for running a large private army, have previously been allied with Arroyo, who received crucial votes from the volatile southern region during 2004 elections. Arroyo's ruling party expelled the clan after the massacre.

The martial law proclamation allows troops to make arrests without court warrants and to restore order, Arroyo's top Cabinet member, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, announced on national television early Saturday.

The last Philippine leader to declare martial law was Marcos, whose nationwide declaration in 1972 paved the way for his one-man rule that ended with his ouster in 1986.

Under the post-Marcos constitution, Arroyo can enforce martial law for 60 days, unless Congress revokes or extends it.

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# The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

## Key issues in a nutshell

Sun, 12/06/2009 2:45 PM | Current Issues

Fitrian Ardiansyah, program director of climate and energy at WWF-Indonesia, will be in Copenhagen for the UN Climate Change Conference this week. The Jakarta Post's Tifa Asrianti talked to him about some important environmental issues.

- The Copenhagen meeting is the 15th meeting on carbon emissions since the Kyoto Protocol was signed in 1997. The Protocol itself was the first international commitment to controlling emissions in which developed countries were asked to cut 5 percent, between 2008 and 2012, off carbon emission figures recorded in 1990.
- The countries signing the Protocol are, among others, European Union state members, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and Canada. The United States has yet to involve itself in the Protocol. The developed countries got the first round of cuts because their advanced industrial activities have contributed more to emissions than the developing ones.
- According to expert analysis, the 5 percent emission cut is not enough, as the world needs to cut between 25 and 40 percent from the total emissions recorded in 1990. This is what negotiations have been about, from the Bali meeting to Copenhagen.
- The developing countries can also contribute by cutting emissions, but it is only voluntary, not obligatory, and is recorded as a Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA). President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has expressed a commitment to cut emissions by up to 26 percent from "business as usual" (BAU) levels by 2020.
- The 26 percent that President Yudhoyono mentioned was calculated from the ability of two sectors to reduce emissions: energy efficiency as well as forestry and land use.
- One hectare of forest loss can result in 200-300 tons of carbon emissions per year. Therefore, if Indonesia loses one million hectares of forest per year, the amount of carbon released will be between 200-300 million tons of carbon, a significant amount for the whole planet.
- As for energy efficiency, the government got the figure from the number of barrels of oil being used to fuel power plants.
- If we turn our air conditioners down from 18 degrees Celsius to 24 degrees, it can cut electricity costs and cut emissions. Switching to biofuel and revamping public transportation also help cut emissions.

- Triwik Kurniasari

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# The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

## Letter: Swiss people don't hate Muslims

Mon, 12/07/2009 12:35 PM | Reader's Forum

The Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa is correct to call last Sunday's vote in Switzerland discriminatory against Muslims. I myself belong to the 42.5 percent of Swiss people who voted against this new paragraph in our constitution.

How was such an unexpected vote possible in a country where only 5 percent are Muslims, most of them very moderate or not even religious and fully accepting of our pluralistic society?

How could so many people follow two political parties, the big Swiss People's Party (populist, anti-immigration) and the very small Helvetic Democratic Party (anti-immigration, anti-gay and anti-liberal)?

There was a lot of frustration among the Swiss with the Muslims outside Switzerland: sharia law in Iran (death penalty for gays) and Indonesia (stoning to death for adultery in Aceh), or forced marriage and killing to protect the "honor" of the family in Turkey, the burning down of Christian churches in Pakistan and Indonesia. Some people are simply afraid that sooner or later some elements of sharia law could be included in our legal system.

The vote was also used by many citizens to slap the government for its immigration policy, for its soft handling of the Libyan dispute and for just everything they are disappointed with. And now? The sign is very clear: We expect everyone in Switzerland to accept our law (e.g. the equality of men and women), regardless of religion or nationality. But clearly the dialogue between the majority Christians and the Muslims, especially with the moderate and integrated among them, is difficult to restart now. Clearly the new paragraph in our constitution is a shame, but to say Swiss people hate Muslims is utter nonsense.

Edi Rey  
Switzerland

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# The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

## White House still lacks solid intel on bin Laden

The Associated Press , Kabul | Mon, 12/07/2009 7:47 AM | World

Osama bin Laden may be slipping back and forth from Pakistan to Afghanistan. Or the U.S. might not have a clue, more than eight years after the al-Qaida leader masterminded the terrorist attacks on America.

Given a chance Sunday to clear away some of the mystery surrounding the whereabouts of the world's most wanted terrorist, Obama administration officials seemed to add to it with what appeared to be conflicting assessments.

President Barack Obama's national security adviser, James Jones, said bin Laden, believed hiding mainly in a rugged area of western Pakistan, may be periodically slipping back into Afghanistan. But Obama's Pentagon chief, Robert Gates, said the U.S. has lacked good intelligence on bin Laden for a long time - "I think it has been years" - and did not confirm that he'd slipped into Afghanistan.

The failed hunt for bin Laden has been one of the signature frustrations of the global war on terrorism that former President George W. Bush launched after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. The main explanation given by both the Bush and Obama administrations for not getting bin Laden is that they simply don't know where he is.

"If we did, we'd go get him," Gates said.

Jones, a retired Marine general, stressed the urgency of targeting bin Laden, and spoke of a renewed campaign to capture or kill him. Bin Laden had been sheltered in Afghanistan by Taliban allies while plotting the Sept. 11 attacks. When U.S. forces ousted the Taliban in late 2001, bin Laden fled into Pakistan from his mountain redoubt.

Asked on CNN's "State of the Union" whether the administration has reliable intelligence on bin Laden's whereabouts, Jones replied, "The best estimate is that he is somewhere in North Waziristan, sometimes on the Pakistani side of the border, sometimes on the Afghan side of the border." He did not comment on the intelligence behind that estimate, nor did he cite a time period or describe more specifically bin Laden's apparent border crossings.

Gates told ABC's "This Week" that "we don't know for a fact where Osama bin Laden is," although he agreed that his likely location is North Waziristan.

That's part of the loosely governed Federally Administered Tribal Areas of northwest Pakistan where the border with Afghanistan is largely unrecognized and unmarked. There is little Pakistani government or military control in this remote region, and militants affiliated with al-Qaida can move freely across the frontier into Afghanistan.

The U.S. has targeted North Waziristan and other areas on the Pakistan side of the border with drone-launched missile strikes, killing substantial numbers of militants as well as Pakistani civilians. The Pakistani army has undertaken an offensive against Taliban militants in South Waziristan but it has not expanded the effort into North Waziristan.

Obama administration officials have often asserted, as did the Bush administration, that they believe bin Laden is being sheltered on the Pakistani side of the border, along with other senior al-Qaida leaders. But Jones broke new ground by saying publicly that the al-Qaida chief may have slipped back into Afghanistan.

Republican Sen. John McCain made a somewhat similar, if less specific, remark Sunday about bin Laden's movements. He told NBC's "Meet the Press" that knowledgeable people have told him that bin Laden "moves back and forth."

McCain did not elaborate, except to say that although bin Laden is not currently able to establish bases for training and equipping terrorists who would attack the United States, "I think it's important to get him."

Two Afghan provinces in the country's northeast held particular attraction for bin Laden in the 1990s: Kunar and

Nuristan. The towering mountains there hid bin Laden training camps that date back to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s. A longtime bin Laden ally, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, holds sway in the area. U.S. troops have targeted Hekmatyar's security chief, Kashmir Khan, in Kunar.

During his years in Afghanistan as a guest of the Taliban, bin Laden operated mainly in the southern region around Kandahar.

Gates said he does not blame a lack of Pakistani cooperation for the absence of intelligence on bin Laden.

"No, I think it's because if, as we suspect, he is in North Waziristan, it is an area that the Pakistani government has not had a presence in, in quite some time," Gates said, adding that although the Pakistani government has its own priorities, any pressure it brings on the Taliban is helpful because it is in league with al-Qaida.

During a visit to Pakistan in late October, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton caused a stir by chiding Pakistani officials for failing to press the hunt for al-Qaida inside their borders. She said she found it "hard to believe" that no one in Islamabad knows where the al-Qaida leaders are hiding and couldn't get them "if they really wanted to."

Gates said he could not confirm recent news reports that bin Laden had been seen in Afghanistan earlier this year. BBC News reported last week that a Taliban detainee in Pakistan claimed to have met in January or February with an unidentified associate who said he had seen bin Laden just days earlier in Afghanistan, possibly in Ghazni province.

A recent Senate report said bin Laden was unquestionably within reach of U.S. troops in the mountains of Tora Bora in eastern Afghanistan only three months after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, when American military leaders made the crucial decision not to pursue him with massive force.

The report asserted that bin Laden's escape at his most vulnerable in December 2001 laid the foundation for today's reinvigorated Afghan insurgency and inflamed the internal strife now endangering Pakistan. Staff members for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee's Democratic majority prepared the report at the request of the chairman, Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts.

Tommy Franks, the retired Army general who ran the initial war effort in Afghanistan and chief of U.S. Central Command, wrote in his book, "American Soldier," in 2004 that he was confident in late 2001 that al-Qaida could not escape the Afghan forces leading the battle around Tora Bora, supported by heavy air strikes from American warplanes.

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# The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

## RI to lobby Asian nations to fight graft, terrorism

Yuli Tri Suwarni , The Jakarta Post , Bandung | Tue, 12/08/2009 9:23 AM | National

Indonesia is to lobby the Asian Parliamentary Assembly (APA) to fight terrorism and respond to climate change in its fourth meeting to be opened by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono today.

Chairperson of the Committee for Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation Hidayat Nur Wahid said here on Monday that the Indonesian delegation would raise the terrorism, corruption and climate change issues during the four-day meeting and fight for their inclusion in the Bandung Resolution to result from the meeting.

He said Indonesia would raise climate change issues because the meeting was of strategic significance in terms of its historical location in Bandung and its timing on the eve of the UN Summit on Climate Change in Copenhagen.

"We are now following a number of conferences on sustainability. After the APA, the UN Summit on Climate Change will be held in Copenhagen with the hope that APA parliaments will contribute by proposing sustainable policies in their respective countries," he said.

He said the meeting would also be held simultaneously with International Anticorruption Day with the hope that its observance would raise awareness of corruption and that delegations would support the continued fight against corruption.

"Corruption is a crucial issue the Indonesian Parliament has to follow up due to the emergency situation [on this issue] at home," he said.

He said further that Indonesia would also lobby Asian parliaments to continue support for the fight against terrorism which was still a looming threat in Asian countries, including Indonesia.

"Indonesia is a victim of terrorism and therefore the fight against terrorism must continue," he said.

Asked on security problems that might have led 13 countries not to send delegations to the meeting, Hidayat said 13 Asian countries, including the Philippines and Thailand, had yet to confirm their delegation's attendance at the meeting, but their absence had nothing to do with the spreading rumors on a massive protest in the observance of Anticorruption Day on Wednesday.

He said the political and social background to the observance of Anticorruption Day would show Indonesia's level of maturity in a developing democracy. "We altogether do not want the democracy to turn into 'democracy'," he said.

Liber Silitonga, a member of the meeting's organizing committee, said that only 26 of 39 member countries had confirmed their attendance to the meeting and three others — Cyprus, Thailand and the Philippines, had confirmed their absence from the meeting.

"So far, 10 other member countries have yet to confirm whether they will send their delegations to the meeting," he said.

He added 192 delegates from 26 member countries have already arrived in the venue at the Museum of the Asian-African Conference.

The 10 countries which had yet to confirm their attendance include Iraq, Jordan, Kiribaty, Kuwait, Mongolia, Nepal, Sri

Lanka, the United Arab Emirates and Uzbekistan.

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# The Jakarta Post

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## Yudhoyono envisions Asia that makes a difference

The Jakarta Post , Jakarta | Tue, 12/08/2009 2:28 PM | World

President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono called on Asian countries to promote soft power by promoting cooperation and tolerance for the sake of peace and prosperity in the continent.

Yudhoyono said he envisioned Asia as the center of the world's economic growth, and the momentum and opportunities were already in place to make the dream come true.

"If we can turn the 21st century into an era of soft power, we will create an Asia that makes a difference," Yudhoyono said when opening the fourth Asian Parliamentary Assembly conference in Bandung on Tuesday.

Yudhoyono said Asia as the future economic power in the world had been evident in the way the continent played its part in solving the ongoing global economic crisis.

"We have become part of the solution to various problems which are interconnected locally, nationally, regionally and globally," he said.

In the wake of interdependency, national interests among countries are not only connected with each other, but also necessitate cooperation and partnership, Yudhoyono added.

The conference is attended by 174 representatives of national parliaments in 26 countries, plus delegations from four observing countries and three Asian parliamentary organizations.

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# The Jakarta Post

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## Key instigator of violent rally sentenced to eight years

Apriadi Gunawan , The Jakarta Post , Medan | Tue, 12/08/2009 12:24 PM | Headlines

The Medan District Court on Monday sentenced a former North Sumatra legislator to eight years in jail for masterminding a rally that led to the death of provincial legislative council speaker Abdul Aziz Angkat.

The sentence given to Chandra Panggabean was more lenient than the 12 years prosecutors demanded.

Presiding judge Kusnoto said that based on legal facts, Chandra was proven guilty of inciting the crowd and urging them to catch and kill Aziz. He also had forced Aziz to sign a recommendation to form the Tapanuli province.

However, Kusnoto said the panel of judges did not find evidence on the plans allegedly made by Chandra to kill Aziz, as indicted.

"The defendant did not plan the murder but he was proven to have directed the words \*catch \*him\* and kill \*him\*" at legislative speaker Aziz, which later resulted in the crowd hitting Aziz, which led to his death," said Kusnoto, reading out the ruling.

Kusnoto described that on Feb. 3, 2009, defendant Chandra brought hundreds of his supporters to the North Sumatra legislative building demanding the establishment of the Tapanuli province. The crowd later headed to the plenary session hall in waves when councilors were holding a plenary session on a draft provincial ordinance. After they were able to enter the hall, they threatened the whole of the council not to leave the room.

Kusnoto said the crowd later acted brutally and vandalized facilities inside the plenary hall while carrying a mock coffin which they placed on Aziz's desk. Sensing that his life was in danger Aziz left his seat and headed to the VIP room to hold a meeting with faction leaders.

Kusnoto said, Chandra, along with other defendants, Datumira Simanjuntak and Jhon Haidel, who had been sentenced earlier to seven and 10 years each, went to the VIP room to press Aziz to immediately sign the recommendation to form Tapanuli province. Kusnoto said Aziz, at one point said he was the council speaker and not a company head who could simply sign at will and later left the room.

"Chandra subsequently ordered the crowd to catch and kill Aziz and they immediately tugged and hit Aziz until he finally passed out," said Kusnoto, adding Chandra's act had led to Aziz's death.

In response to the ruling the defendants' lawyer said they would appeal.

Public prosecutor A. Tahar said his office was very disappointed with the lenient sentence handed down to Chandra. He said the verdict did not reflect a sense of justice toward Aziz's family.

Aziz's son, Agung Wibowo Angkat, said he was disappointed with the court ruling because Chandra, the key organizer of the violent rally in which his father was killed, was only sentenced to eight years.

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# The Jakarta Post

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## Philippines, Muslim rebels resume peace talks

The Associated Press , Kuala Lumpur | Tue, 12/08/2009 9:35 AM | World

The Philippine government and a Muslim separatist group Tuesday resumed peace talks that collapsed 16 months ago, restoring formal efforts to end a decades-long rebellion that has claimed at least 120,000 lives.

Negotiators from both sides met at a Kuala Lumpur hotel for the Malaysian-brokered talks, but they were not expected to issue any information until the talks conclude Wednesday, according to a Malaysian official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to make public statements.

The Moro Islamic Liberation Front has been fighting for Muslim self-rule for decades in Mindanao, the southern homeland of minority Muslims in the largely Roman Catholic Philippines. It is the biggest of at least four Muslim rebel groups that have waged a bloody rebellion in the volatile south.

The Moro rebels are present in most southern provinces, including Maguindanao, where a powerful southern clan allied with the Philippine government is suspected in the Nov. 23 massacre of 57 people traveling in an election convoy.

One of the arrested family members, Andal Ampatuan Jr., blamed the Moro rebels for the killings, but rebel spokesman Eid Kabalu and Justice Secretary Agnes Devanadera denied the guerrillas were involved.

The government has deployed thousands of troops to disarm some 2,400 gunmen loyal to the Ampatuans, and Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno said he had asked the Moro rebels for help in blocking the gunmen's escape routes - a rare cooperation between the two sides.

Negotiations with the rebels had fallen apart in August last year when the Philippine Supreme Court declared unconstitutional a preliminary accord on an expanded Muslim autonomous region.

A rampage by three rebel commanders upset by the stalled deal sparked months of clashes. The fighting - which killed hundreds and displaced as many as 750,000 people - eased in July, and both sides agreed in September to resume talks.

Negotiators said last week the main agenda of the latest talks is the revival of an International Monitoring Team of cease-fire observers, which includes troops from Libya and Brunei.

The two sides are also expected to renew an agreement in which the rebels have committed to help government forces interdict kidnap gangs active in the southern Philippines.

Displaced civilians have borne the brunt of the rebellion, which has killed at least 120,000 people since the 1970s. About 120,000 civilians displaced in the latest fighting are still in evacuation centers, fearful of returning home.

In an informal meeting in September, negotiators agreed to set up an International Contact Group, or ICG, to help the two sides "maintain a level of comfort that restores mutual trust" and ensure compliance in any future agreement.

The ICG will initially be composed of Britain, Japan and Turkey plus several international non-governmental groups involved in promoting peace and development in conflict-affected areas.

British and Japanese diplomats were present at the hotel where the talks started Tuesday, but they also did not speak to the media.

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# The Jakarta Post

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## Developing a anti-terrorism curriculum

Suratno , Jakarta | Thu, 12/10/2009 12:38 PM | Opinion

Last month the country's largest Muslim organization Nahdlatul Ulama organized an international seminar on anti-terrorism. One of its agendas is to develop an anti-terrorism curriculum in religious education. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) is not the only institution is developing an anti-terrorism curriculum and its application.

Several related parties such as the National Education Ministry, the Religious Affairs Ministry, the Defense Ministry and civil society organizations also have similar concerns. But they have been able to formulate a suitable curriculum, especially regarding its content, method and teaching and learning process application.

Before developing a curriculum, it is important to consider terrorist ideology characteristics. In general, there are at least four characteristics.

First is rigidity, the manifestation of Islamic practices with a strict understanding. Most terrorists reject facts that show the flexibility of Islamic practices applied to Islam in different specified contexts.

Second is literalism. Most terrorists understand the Koran and the hadith in the literal sense.

Third is generalization. Most terrorists see the world in a simplified manner, mainly dividing human into two Muslims and infidel, without considering the world's circumstances.

Fourth is the pathway to absolutism and rejection, where most terrorists see their own opinion as the ultimate truth, in the name of God, and therefore tend to reject the opinions of others.

Considering the above four characteristics of terrorist ideology, I want to make some notes for developing an anti-terrorism curriculum in religious education. I will apply Brenda Watson's explanations about orientation, method and content of education curriculum as shown in her book, *Education* (1987). The notes are based on big mistakes within orientations, methods and contents of our current religious education, while at the same time provide alternatives to solve those problems.

First, it often is that religious education faces disorientation. Instead of the education process, it changes the orientation to the process of indoctrination. In religious education that changes its orientation from education to indoctrination, students are not encouraged to practice maturity, tolerance, creativity and rational and critical thought. There is no opportunity for students to question their teachers. Students more likely enforced to understand teachings in a dogmatic sense and believe information is absolute. This kind of teaching process creates fertile soil for the embryo of radicalism and terrorism.



Second, the religious education syllabus is more concentrated on the normative aspects of religious teaching than other aspects such as spiritual growth, moral education, character development and social attitude. Using Watson's concept, religious education should value these aspects by applying at least the three central education methods: experience, imagination and thinking.

Experience is a basic element to build self-awareness and tolerance among students. Religious education should help students to understand the meaning and implications of experiencing certain religious rituals. It is hoped students understand there should be a balance between ritual and social piety.

Imagination is needed to help students have a wider and broader sense of their environment. In term of religious subjects, imagination can be a medium to exercise empathy, putting oneself in another person's mould.

Critical thinking is a way for students to learn to be rational and critical. Applied to religious education, it may help students to think rationally and critically, not dogmatically and literally. They will learn to challenge their religious teaching if they learn information that contradicts the context they live in.

Third, often religious education scholars only know about their religion. They do not want to enrich their knowledge about other religions for themselves and students. Consequently, teachers mostly teach religious education with a narrow perspective. It is rare that teachers teach comparative religions and explain more about other religions and their common platform.

Also, it is rare that religious education teachers, for example, take students to other places of worship such as churches, temples and synagogues to promote interfaith dialogue or volunteering involving cooperation between students from different religions. In my opinion, this is an effective way to build student's perspective of religious plurality and enhance inclusiveness and tolerance.

Fourth, that is also no less important in religious education. To measure the success of a religious education-based anti-terrorism curriculum, it cannot only assess the level of students' memorization of and attitude to the words of God in the holy text.

*The writer is a lecturer at the Department of Philosophy & Religion, Paramadina University, Jakarta, and is currently a PhD student at Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany.*

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# The Jakarta Post

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## North Korea says it understands need for nuclear talks

The Associated Press , Seoul | Fri, 12/11/2009 9:16 AM | World

North Korea said Friday that it understands the need to resume the stalled international talks on ending its nuclear programs, and that it agrees to work with the United States to row unspecified "remaining differences."

The statement from North Korea's Foreign Ministry was the first reaction from the communist nation to three days of high-level talks with President Barack Obama's special envoy. Upon returning from North Korea on Thursday, envoy Stephen Bosworth made similar remarks in Seoul that the two sides reached common understandings on the need to restart the nuclear talks.

The North said in the statement that this week's meetings with the U.S. "deepened mutual understandings, narrowed differences in their respective views and identified not a small number of things in common."

"A series of mutual understandings were also reached on the need to resume" the nuclear talks and to implement a 2005 disarmament pact, the North said in a statement, carried by the official Korean Central News Agency.

The two sides "agreed to continue to cooperate to narrow remaining differences," it said.

It did not elaborate what those remaining differences are.

In Washington, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton told reporters that for a "preliminary meeting, it was quite positive."

State Department spokesman P.J. Crowley urged the North to make a firm commitment to return to the negotiating table.

"They have to make the fundamental decision, and we did not leave the meeting today believing that they had crossed the threshold that we want to see them cross," he told reporters. "We want to see them come back to the six-party process."

North Korea - believed capable of building at least a half-dozen atomic bombs - had been negotiating since 2003 with the U.S., China, Japan, Russia and South Korea on dismantling its nuclear program in exchange for much-needed aid and other concessions.

North Korea ditched the talks earlier this year in anger over the international criticism of its ambitions to develop rocket technology that could be used one day to send a long-range

missile hurling across the Pacific.

Weeks later, the regime conducted a nuclear test, test-fired a series of ballistic missiles and threatened to restart its nuclear reactor. The defiance earned widespread condemnation and tighter U.N. sanctions. Pyongyang called it a U.S.-North Korea issue, and demanded bilateral talks.

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# The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

## Euphoria ends, reality bites Malaysia's opposition

The Associated Press , Kuala Lumpur | Sun, 12/13/2009 10:25 AM | World

After Malaysia's opposition made unprecedented gains in elections last year, its leader boldly claimed he would topple the coalition that has run the country for five decades within months.

Today he faces sodomy charges, his People's Alliance is riven by internal feuding and the long-ruling National Front has regained some of its footing. When the three-party opposition gathers for a convention this Saturday, one of its challenges will be to convince the public that the alliance is not falling apart.

"It's an uphill climb for the opposition. I think the reality is making itself felt," said Ooi Kee Beng, a senior fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore and a close follower of Malaysian politics. "We should have expected that the People's Alliance could not take on the National Front and win that easily."

The National Front has enjoyed uninterrupted rule since Malaysia gained independence in 1957. But voters dealt it a setback in March 2008 elections amid charges of corruption, nepotism and public sector inefficiency.

The opposition won more than one-third of the seats in Parliament for the first time and took control of five of Malaysia's 13 states. Its success raised speculation that Malaysia's democracy would evolve into a truly competitive one.

But a shaken National Front picked a new leader, Prime Minister Najib Razak, who has begun to address voter concerns, particularly on race issues, since taking over in April. Meanwhile, the opposition is increasingly plagued by infighting and ideological differences.

"I think people are slowly losing hope," said Josh Hong, an online political columnist and activist. "People are beginning to see the opposition may not be really strong and vibrant enough to take over the government. It is always something like one step forward, two steps back."

What has changed, according to Hong, is that the National Front can never again take its dominance for granted. "People have begun to have a clearer picture - at least we should have proper checks and balances," he said.

The opposition is being hurt by a loss of focus and lack of a clear strategy, said Ibrahim Suffian, head of the Merdeka Center, an independent research firm.

A recent Merdeka poll found that barely one third of Malaysians consider the People's Alliance a viable substitute for the National Front. Nearly half of the 850 respondents were unconvinced of the opposition's ability to rule. The margin of error was 3 percent.

The problems stem largely from policy differences among the three parties: the conservative Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party, which caters to the country's Malay Muslim majority; the secular, left-leaning Democratic Action Party, whose members are mostly from the ethnic Chinese and Indian minorities; and the multiracial People's Justice Party, which is considered the bridge between the two other partners.

In one high-profile dispute, a lawmaker from the Islamic party proposed curtailing the sale of alcohol in parts of Selangor, an opposition-controlled state, sparking outrage from other members of the coalition. In Kedah, another state under opposition rule, officials battled over plans to demolish a pig slaughterhouse. Muslims consider pigs unclean, but the slaughterhouse is a major source of employment for local Chinese.

Dzulkifli Ahmad, a senior Islamic party official, blamed overzealous colleagues for creating trouble.

Another question mark is the future of the charismatic opposition leader, Anwar Ibrahim.

Anwar, who is credited with bringing the parties together last year, is scheduled to go on trial in January for allegedly sodomizing a male aide.

He says the charges are a government conspiracy to discredit him. He faced similar charges in a late 1990s case that also appeared to many to be politically motivated.

Despite the setbacks, the opposition has many staunch supporters who remain patient.

"They are just hitting bumps here and there, which is normal," said Ivan Ho, a 48-year-old technology instructor. "So we should not be disillusioned."

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# The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

## NATO, Afghan forces kill 5 militants

The Associated Press , Kabul | Sun, 12/13/2009 11:34 AM | World

Afghan and international troops killed five militants Sunday in a strike on a Taliban operative involved in bomb-making in eastern Laghman province, the military coalition said.

The troops were targeting a compound in Alingar district where their sources reported militant activity, the coalition said in a statement.

As the forces approached the area, several militants threatened them with guns. The NATO and Afghan forces shot at the insurgents, killing five, the coalition said. They searched the compound and detained one other militant.

NATO said the Taliban operative they were targeting was responsible for several bomb attacks in the area. The statement did not say if he was killed or captured.

President Barack Obama has ordered 30,000 reinforcements to Afghanistan to try to turn back the Taliban, who have taken de facto control of parts of the east and south and are increasingly launching attacks throughout the country.

There is, however, widespread concern that the military cannot prevail without fundamental improvements in the Afghan government, and President Hamid Karzai has promised a crackdown on graft and bribery in the wake of massive international criticism of corruption in his administration.

The deputy mayor of Kabul was arrested Saturday for alleged misuse of authority. Wahibuddin Sadat was taken into custody at the capital's airport when he returned from Mecca, Saudi Arabia, according to Deputy Attorney General Fazel Ahmad Faqiryar. He said the deputy mayor was accused of misuse of authority but did not elaborate.

The arrest comes five days after an Afghan court convicted the capital's mayor, Abdul Ahad Sahebi, of awarding a contract without competition and sentenced him to four years in jail. He was also ordered to repay more than \$16,000 involved in the contract.

Sahebi has appealed and is refusing government orders to give up his post.

International pressure is mounting to clean up the government, which barely functions outside Kabul, following a fraud-marred presidential election last August. Karzai was proclaimed the winner last month after his last remaining challenger dropped out of a planned runoff, saying the ballot would not be fair.

Public outrage over corruption and bad governance is considered one of the main reasons for the rise of the Taliban, who were ousted from power in the U.S.-led invasion of 2001.

NATO, Afghan forces kill 5 militants

# The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

## Malaysian cops detain Thai trio with home-made bombs

The Jakarta Post , Jakarta | Tue, 12/15/2009 11:09 AM | World

Malaysian police have detained three Thai men allegedly responsible for producing home-made bombs believed to be supplied to militant groups in southern Thailand, a news report said Tuesday.

The men had been renting the home Kampung Repek in Pasir Mas in the northeastern Kelantan state for the past year, and worked as fishermen during the day, The Star daily said.

During Monday's raid, police reportedly discovered home-made bombs and chemical fertilizers in the home.

The report quoted sources as saying authorities believe the trio were part of an underground group operating in the state, supplying bombs to insurgents from southern Thailand.

Police confirmed that arrests had been made, but declined to comment further on the report.

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# The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

## Officials: World power meeting on Iran

The Associated Press , Vienna | Tue, 12/15/2009 7:07 AM | World

An upcoming meeting by five world powers on trying to curb Iran's nuclear program has been canceled at China's request, senior officials from three of the countries involved said Monday.

One of the officials said China cited scheduling problems in asking for the cancellation, and the five now plan to talk by conference call. That call was tentatively set for Dec. 22.

The official said China seemed to have genuine problems in attending the meeting in Brussels or outside the Copenhagen climate summit and did not appear to be seeking to delay it. Still, the development was a setback in efforts to present a unified front on Iran in the face of continued Iranian defiance on its nuclear program.

Because it relies on Iran for gas and oil, China is the weakest link in international attempts to punish the country for defying a U.N. Security Council demand that it stop enriching uranium, a process that can make both nuclear fuel and the fissile core of warheads.

The world powers also have to worry about an increasingly edgy Israel. The Jewish state sees an Islamic Republic with such weapons as an existential threat - and has repeatedly indicated it is ready to hit Iran militarily.

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak urged the world to agree to tough new penalties while again suggesting that military strikes remained an option.

"There is a need for tough sanctions," Barak told reporters in Vienna during an official visit. "Something that is well and coherently coordinated to include the Americans, the EU, the Chinese, the Russians, the Indians."

At the same time, he said, "we recommend to all players not to remove any options from the table," just as "we do not remove it."

In Washington, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton acknowledged that U.S. administration's nearly yearlong effort to engage Iran has fallen short and new sanctions are needed to press Tehran to provide more information about its suspect nuclear program.

Clinton's pessimistic remarks come as an end-of-year deadline, set by President Barack Obama, looms for the Iranians to prove that their nuclear intentions are peaceful.

She said the administration has offered Iran a chance to participate in meaningful discussions about its nuclear activities and intentions or face fresh penalties for defiance in line with the dual-track, carrot-and-stick approach.



That dual effort, though, has "produced very little," she said, adding that "additional pressure is going to be called for" to get results.

During seven years of failed international diplomacy, Iran has moved closer to being able to make nuclear arms, even while insisting that its atomic program is meant solely to generate energy.

Its thousands of centrifuges have produced enough enriched uranium to make two nuclear weapons - even though it maintains the stockpile will only be used for nuclear fuel and not for weapons-grade material.

It has only recently - and belatedly - revealed that it is building a second enrichment site and is stonewalling an International Atomic Energy Agency probe of allegations that it had experimented with making nuclear weapons.

Iran threatened this month to expand its enrichment program tenfold, while rejecting an IAEA-brokered plan to supply fuel for its research reactor if Iran exports most of its enriched stockpile - a move that would strip it of its warhead material.

The U.S., France and Britain - the three Western permanent U.N. Security Council members - are trying to persuade Russia and China to back new and tough Security Council sanctions on Iran as early as the start of next year, should other diplomatic options fail.

But Russia in recent days has moved away from suggesting it would support such a move. And recent statements from Chinese officials indicate that Beijing has not changed its traditional opposition to new sanctions.

While Russia and China signed on to three previous sets of U.N. sanctions against Iran, they also forced their Western Security Council partners to water them down substantially.

China's balancing act on Iran reflects its global strategy of trying to insert itself into the U.S.-led world order, working with Washington when it can - and opposing U.S. policies when they conflict with its own.

The White House has said Iran has until the end of the month to accept that IAEA-brokered proposal for a swap of most of its enriched stockpile for research reactor fuel, and Barak suggested that Israel was willing to give the U.S. more - but not indefinite - time in mixing outreach toward Iran with the threat of further sanctions.

"There should be a time limit for all these attempts to block them through sanctions," he told reporters, warning that an Iran armed with nuclear weapons "will clearly ... initiate a nuclear competition."

"Think of Egypt, or Turkey or Saudi Arabia," he said. "They can hardly afford not being nuclear if Iran turns ... nuclear."

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## Opinion

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### EDITORIAL

#### **Closer US-India ties good news for the world**

Published on December 1, 2009

#### **Economic and security cooperation should increase with the new global view of each nation's leadership**

When the world's two largest democracies held amicable talks recently, it provided the world with a sense of ease. It is not that the two countries, comprising more than 1 billion people, will go on and promote democracy around the world. Rather, it is their renewed dialogue and acceptance that despite their common democratic values, they can also have different views and ideas of their own foreign policies and places in the world.

Indeed, it has taken India and the US nearly five decades to realise that such heavyweight democracies can work together to promote global security and prosperity. A stronger US-India friendship provides a foundation for such ideals. After all, democracies do go to war.

It took an extraordinary effort on the part of the two countries' leaders to reach this juncture and build on their existing confidence. Certainly, the previous US administration should be credited for paving the way for the drastic improvement of US-India ties by supporting India's peaceful use of nuclear energy - an issue that had previously divided Washington and New Delhi. The current political situation has enabled the two countries to move closer and work as strategic partners as never before. This is not a zero-sum game, which many political pundits have suggested. It is indeed a win-win formula.

US-India ties are no longer dependent on Washington's relations with Beijing and Islamabad, New Delhi's two greatest rivals. In the past, the US was wary of any initiative that might upset the balance of power in the region. However, these days there is an emerging sense of realism and pragmatism in the conduct of foreign relations at the international level, and that the efforts of every nation, big or small, should be utilised and consolidated.

The world is increasingly becoming more inter-linked, and this should be used as a way to bridge the differences between ideologies and political cultures. Now, every

country must chip in to help resolve transnational issues such as climate change, terrorism and pandemics. In this sense, the Obama administration has done well in demonstrating its sensitivity.

Both the US and India are at the forefront in the fight against global terrorism. They are both victims of acts of horror. They can join forces to help quell regional and international violence. As nuclear powers, they can also ensure that the spread of weapons of mass destruction can be prevented through their common pledge of the peaceful use of nuclear power.

India, after decades of shunning the global limelight, has a new sense of confidence, especially in its outward looking foreign policy. In his second term, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has provided decent and able leadership. His gentle and soft-spoken manner has won admiration and respect from within the country itself and in the international community. India has a rich store of assets that it can showcase to the world. In recent times, the Indian diaspora has come to the fore. Long regarded as unwelcome in certain countries, they have worked hard and have succeeded in the US and other Western nations. Their wealth and experience will further advance India's path towards modernisation.

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## Opinion

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### THAI TALK

#### Politicians fight verbal war; soldiers talk peace

Published on December 3, 2009

**So, this Thai-Cambodian spat is really between the two prime ministers over an ex-premier from this side of the border, after all.**

If the two countries' defence ministers bent over backwards last week in their Pattaya pow-wow, it was because both governments probably realised that neither can afford a full-blown confrontation that involves both political and military clashes.

Still, it's a unique sort of dispute. Politicians raise the political temperature, diplomats exchange heated rhetorical barbs, espionage charges fly, but soldiers talk peace and even suggest that they would somehow convince their respective political leaders to find a peaceful solution.

That was obviously Cambodian Premier Hun Sen's shrewd strategy from the outset. He was gunning for political leverage when he resorted to the provocative act of naming Thaksin Shinawatra as his economic adviser. He knew a political face-off was inevitable. But he also knew that it would be too risky a ploy to also engage Thailand militarily.

He wanted to make sure that a fire he started could be doused out at a time of his choosing. A limited diplomatic brouhaha was all Hun Sen was seeking.

The goal was clear: he could use Thaksin as a tool to boost his bargaining chip with the Abhisit government over the Preah Vihear Temple dispute. And in the process, Hun Sen also hoped to improve his regional and international standing - to prove to the whole region that he could take on any neighbouring leader and get away with it. At the same time, he also stands to boost his popularity by triggering a nationalistic surge in his own country.

But that doesn't mean it's not a big gamble when the leader of a country stakes his whole nation's well-being and interests against a neighbour in the name of helping a "friend". It's a huge risk indeed for a leader to engage another country in a potentially destabilising political brawl and then declare it "a personal matter" between him and his counterpart.

This state of affairs could take place only in a country where political checks and

balances are not really in a healthy condition, and where any serious challenge from the opposition or civil society is almost non-existent.

Yet, while the diplomatic war of words continues unabated, the top brass from both sides sipped wine, sang songs and issued declarations about peace and reconciliation.

While Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya said there would be no negotiations with the Cambodian government until Hun Sen removes Thaksin from the advisory role, Defence Minister General Prawit Wongsuwan and his Cambodian counter General Teah Banh staged a joint press conference to confirm that their relationship had never been more cordial.

The four-point joint statement issued after the General Border Committee meeting last week read more like a confirmation of a diplomatic *dtente* than a message from two generals whose political bosses were still at loggerheads in a political tit for tat.

"The two sides confirm that our armed forces will perform our respective duties in a peaceful manner to resolve the border issues through coordination at every level, to create understanding and avoid any possible conflicts," said the joint declaration. The statement added that soldiers on both sides would facilitate local residents on the border in continuing to engage in trade and tourism as conveniently as has always been the case.

To me, the most interesting part of the statement was the direct reference to the armed forces of both nations - that they would "maintain good relations between the countries and peoples based on international law and mutual, sincere and equitable understanding".

Those words should have been uttered by political leaders who now appear to have been isolated by their respective military leaders. The top brass, as well as the general public, appears to be disillusioned with self-serving politicians.

Don't be fooled by appearances, though. When all is said and done, the generals, I suspect, are simply following a carefully scripted political drama.

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## Breakingnews

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### Deep South must be on the table at upcoming summit: PULO

Published on December 4, 2009

A long standing separatist group on Friday urged the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Najib Razak not to overlook the plight of the Malays in the southernmost provinces of Thailand during his three-day visit next week.


In a statement, Kasturi Mahkota, the foreign affair chief the Patani United Liberation Organisation (Pulo), said he hopes Najib will not swayed by the Bangkok government to the point of ignoring the plight of the ethnic Malays in Thailand's deep South.

"PULO hopes Malaysian PM Datok Seri Najib visit to the Patani region is not only giving the advantages and solely aligned to RTG untill forgot to defense the Patani Malays," Kasturi said.

Moreover, said Kasturi, it is hope that the summit will "generate a more conducive atmosphere for continuing dialogue between the Royal Thai government(RTG) and the Patani Malay Movement."

The Nation

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## Opinion

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### EDITORIAL

#### Obama gambles on a surge in Afghanistan. Will it work?

Published on December 4, 2009

##### **Success in defeating the Taleban lies in winning the hearts and minds of the Afghan people**

After nearly a year, the Obama administration has come up with a strategy for war-torn Afghanistan that the US and its coalition forces believe can end the eight-year conflict. By deploying a further 30,000 troops, the US is hoping to strengthen its security commitment to Afghanistan and persuade other countries to follow suit. Within 18 months, the US hopes its forces can break the insurgents' hideouts and networks and win the hearts and minds of the people.

Ultimately, Afghan security forces will have to take on more responsibility as the international forces begin to pull out in 2011. US President Barack Obama delivered his strategy with confidence, but what happens from now on will depend on the ground forces and the involvement of the Afghan people. It has been said that the coalition is not being out-fought but out-governed. Indeed, the idea to win hearts and minds is one of the key components behind the troop surge.

So far, major population centres like Kandahar have been neglected as troops are sent into remote hills and mountains to hunt down Taleban insurgents. The frontline battle continues, but a significant number of troops and resources will be shifted towards providing the Afghan people with the goods and services that they are entitled to as citizens. Besides trying to win the people over, the new strategy also makes room for compromise with those Taleban who are willing to put down their arms.

But all the troops in the world won't solve the conflict if the people of Afghanistan continue to question the legitimacy of the government in Kabul. In short, President Hamid Karzai will have to do more in terms of reconciling the differences within his country.

The Obama administration has strongly refuted any comparison between Afghanistan and the Vietnam War. One of the reasons given is that this is a 43-nation coalition of troops fighting to reduce the fertile ground that breeds terrorist organisations like al-Qaeda.

What has not been acknowledged is that the Karzai government is as corrupt as that of the former South Vietnam.

The Afghan people have not yet benefited from this international-backed government. In fact, they have become frustrated, and many are attracted to the Taleban militants.

More troops will, in the beginning, increase confidence and put the insurgents on the defensive. But that will not last long because the Taleban know the terrain and blend in well with the local people and environment. More international troops inside the country could turn the Afghan people against the coalition.

The US has no option now but to dispatch more troops and hope that other Nato allies will also increase their numbers. But major countries like Canada, the UK and others are reluctant to add more to the fighting force because of growing opposition on the home front.

Fortunately, Obama is still popular and he is willing to put his reputation on the line.

Obviously, the success of the allied forces in Afghanistan will also depend on cooperation from Pakistan. Of late, Islamabad has been doing much to root out extremists who help the al-Qaeda and the Taleban. The US and Pakistan are increasingly working together - instead of blaming each other for lacking sincerity, as has happened in the past. Pakistan has shown that it has the capacity to inflict serious blows on terrorists in remote areas.

To win the war in Afghanistan, the first priority is to ensure that local people do not turn against the coalition. But Nato has yet to deliver much-needed security for ordinary people, and the government has failed to improve their standard of living.

If the Afghan people can stay neutral, the international forces can win this war. But time is running out. If the 18-month time frame does not deliver the envisaged objectives, then the internal situation could get worse and terrorists could seize further territorial control of swathes of the population.

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## Opinion

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### EDITORIAL

#### **Najib may have some answers to deep South problems**

Published on December 6, 2009

#### **Abhisit can learn from how Malaysia treats its ethnic minorities**

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak is coming to Thailand at a time when ties between the countries are cordial and friendly. This is a big change from a few years back when bilateral ties were at one of their all-time lows.

The Thaksin Shinawatra government's all-or-nothing attitude towards the Malay-speaking South had rubbed many people the wrong way, including the Malaysian government.

Relations hit rock bottom when Thaksin threatened to walk out of the Asean Summit in Vientiane in November 2004 if Malaysia, or anybody else, raised the Tak Bai massacre, an incident that ended in the deaths of 78 Malay-Muslims while in the custody of security officers.

Relations hit another nadir when 131 Muslims fled their village in Narathiwat, citing harassment from security forces, and took refuge in Malaysia. Thaksin was embarrassed by the fact that a UN refugee agency got involved and interviewed the displaced people.

The same culture of impunity continues today, as seen with the government's foot-dragging in bringing to justice some of the high-profile cases involving security officials. These include the beating to death of Imam Yapa Kaseng and the massacre of 10 Malay-Muslims praying at a Narathiwat mosque this past June, reportedly by a pro-government death squad. In both cases, police implicated Thai soldiers and a former paramilitary ranger.

Unfortunately, the Thai authorities don't seem to understand that beating an imam to death or torturing suspects will only create more insurgents.

Relations between Thailand and Malaysia improved significantly during the Surayud Chulanont administration. Surayud publicly praised Kuala Lumpur for helping to facilitate some of the meetings with members of the long-standing Patani Malay separatist groups. It was the start of a secret peace process that took a backseat during the administrations of Samak Sundaravej and Somchai Wongsawat.

Now, with Abhisit Vejjajiva at the helm, the process is back on track but continues to be out of the public spotlight. Bangkok is also exploring a possible role for Malaysia.

But meaningful progress cannot come about until the Abhisit administration goes beyond the normal rhetoric about how development, coupled with political participation at the local level, will eventually win over the Malays of Patani. Good intentions do not make a policy and blaming Thaksin's heavy-handed approach will get you nowhere.

It has been consistently pointed out that this new generation of insurgents was in the making well before Thaksin came to power in 2001.

No matter how many good and clean officials are sent to this contested region, or how many Patani Malays squabble over chicken feed disguised as development budgets for local governments, the predominant lens through which the Malays in the South view the Thais is that theirs is an occupied territory.

Like it or not, there are plenty of Malay-Muslims in the deep South who embrace a different set of historical-cultural narratives - one that questions the legitimacy of the Thai state and sees the authorities and security forces as colonial masters. It is this very narrative that keeps alive the separatist spirit not only among the local people but the militants as well.

Perhaps Abhisit should take up Najib's advice and seriously explore the idea of autonomy, whether in terms of structural reform or in the form of greater cultural space.

In essence, Abhisit needs to acknowledge that the Malays of Patani have a history of their own, are proud of their institutions and can peacefully coexist with the Thai state, but on their own terms.

In other words, their Thai citizenship shouldn't have to come at the expense of their identity or their place in the greater Malay world.

No one is saying Malaysia has all the answers. But perhaps if Abhisit can look at how our southern neighbour deals with the issues of race and ethnicity - how the Indians and the Chinese negotiate their social, political and cultural space with the ethnic Malays - he might just pick up a thing or two.

## Opinion

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### Malaysian PM's visit to show up lack of deep South action

Published on December 7, 2009

**MALAYSIAN PRIME MINISTER Najib Razak's visit to Thailand this week, specifically to the Malay-speaking South, is significant in more ways than one.**

In some ways, the timing is awfully bad for Thailand, not so much because of the internal political bickering between the red and yellow shirts. It's because the administration is at a loss as to what to do about the conflict in the deep South, a topic that is certain to be high on the agenda when the two leaders meet in Bangkok prior to making a joint visit to the restive region.

While publicly acknowledging that the insurgency is Thailand's internal problem, Najib will be taking note as to what direction Thailand will take to change the course of the conflict and bring it under control. Judging from Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva's recent repeated rhetoric - how development and more political participation at the local level could solve the problem - the Malaysian leader is likely to be disappointed because of the lack of progress. The confidence-building measure with the southern Muslims has also taken its toll on the government's secret peace process with separatist groups.

The idea of talking to the enemy, at least in a more systematic and strategic fashion, was floated by then prime minister Surayud Chulanont. Just before leaving office, Surayud met personally with representatives from the Patani United Liberation Organisation during a brief stopover in Bahrain in 2007. Malaysian authorities helped with the arrangements.

Kuala Lumpur wanted to "mediate" the process but Bangkok did not see the Malaysian government as an honest broker and the best they could do was to "facilitate" the process.

The following administrations of the late Samak Sundaravej and Somchai Wongsawat were too bogged down with the street protests and did not give the peace process due attention.

Abhisit, meanwhile, is trying to pick up the pieces from where Surayud left off. A new

National Security Council chief who supports the idea of establishing a peace process was appointed and a team of trusted associates was set up to meet with members of the longstanding separatist groups, commonly referred to as the old guard.

The idea was to get the old guard to broker a peace deal with the new generation of insurgents on the ground.

This might be a long shot, but it was the only channel they had to the militants who don't seem to be that enthusiastic about the idea of talking in the first place.

"The way they see it, they are winning," said one exiled leader in reference to the younger generation of militants on the ground, locally known as the juwae, or fighters in the local Malay dialect.

According to sources inside the government and the exiled community of separatists, Abhisit's initiative was gaining some traction. The old guard, namely Pulo and Barisan Revolusi Nasional, succeeded in getting the new generation to give the process the time of day.

But before the process could gain serious momentum, a massacre in Narathiwat's district of Joh I Rong jolted the whole process.

A former Buddhist ranger identified by police as Suthirak Kongsuwan led a five-man team with assault rifles and a shotgun to mow down a mosque full of Muslims who were right in the middle of evening prayers. They killed 11 people and wounded 12.

Photographs of the five suspects have surfaced and circulated around the region, putting the top brass and government in an extremely awkward position.

Officials in the region said this information was leaked to pressure the government into arresting these men, who many believe were the product of "security outsourcing", a fancy name for a death squad working for local military units.

Immediately after the June 8 massacre, the juwae, as well as some of the hard-liners in the exiled community, said they would not endorse the peace process until the massacre is resolved.

Political insiders said Abhisit has not been able to move on the promise of bringing justice to the Ai Bayae mosque massacre because of stiff resistance from security forces.

"People with half a brain understand that this is holding up the peace process," said Human Rights Watch's Sunai Phasuk.

"Failure to prosecute those murderers reaffirms longstanding grievances in the Muslim community that Bangkok isn't committed to give them justice or treat them as

equals."

Among the supporters of the peace process, there is an acknowledgement that the Malaysians have done their part and the ball is now in Thailand's court. Kuala Lumpur authorities suggested to the Patani Malay exiled community to formulate a common position and then work with the Thais on this peace process.

Thailand is going to have to respond because the mandate for the peace process came from Bangkok in the first place.

But judging from the activities of the military on the ground, meeting the Malaysians halfway will not be easy.

For one thing, they just don't like the idea of talking to the enemy; they think their military might, coupled with development money, can solve the problem, a number of Thai security officials have said.

Furthermore, spin doctors from the Fourth Army Area overseeing the deep South has been distorting facts by shifting the blame for the massacre on the juwae.

The names of known suspected insurgents allegedly linked to other high-profile incidents, such as the guns, grenade and car-bomb attacks in Sungai Kolok on October 6, were made to appear that they were involved in the Ai Bayae massacre.

"Apparently, the military does not want to see this peace process get off the ground, thus the foot-dragging in the investigation, not to mention the effort to distort the facts," Sunai said.

According to Sunai, no one seems to understand the significance of Najib's visit to the Malay-speaking South.

If anything, his presence amounts to telling the ethnic Malays in the deep South that they need to come to terms with their Thai citizenship and reconcile their differences with the Thais.

Abhisit, on the other hand, can reciprocate by telling the Malays in Patani that their Thai citizenship will not come at the expense of their identity or their place in the Malay world.

Acknowledging that the people in the deep South embrace a different set of historical narratives may be welcomed by the Malays in Thailand's deep South.

But for the juwae on the ground, it may be a case of too little and too late. The stakes appear to be higher now, especially after the mosque massacre.

## Regional

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### Malaysian prime minister visits Thailand to boost ties

Published on December 7, 2009

**Bangkok - Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak arrived in Thailand Monday on an official three-day visit during which he and Thai PM Abhisit Vejjajiva will visit deep south provinces on the Thai-Malaysia border.**

On Tuesday, Razak and Abhisit are due to co-chair bilateral consultations in Bangkok on various areas of cooperation.

Both leaders are to travel to Narathiwat province on Wednesday to attend a ceremony to rename a bridge across the Golok river as the "Friendship Bridge."

The two premiers are expected to discuss ways of ending a long festering conflict in Thailand's three southernmost provinces - Narathiwat, Pattani and Yala - which has claimed more than 3,500 lives over the past six years.

About 80 per cent of the region's 2 million people are Muslims, with closer cultural, linguistic and historical ties to neighbouring Malaysia than to predominantly Buddhist Thailand.

Although the region, which centuries ago was the independent Islamic sultanate of Pattani, was conquered by Bangkok about 200 years ago, it has never wholly submitted to Thai rule.

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## Opinion

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### REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

#### Australian PM Kevin Rudd on an Asean charm offensive

Published on December 7, 2009

**THE NIGHT BEFORE the Asia Pacific: A Community for the 21st Century Conference started, the delegates from Asean held an informal 30-minute caucus at a Sydney hotel to review their positions on the Australian plan to create a new community in the region.**

They went quickly over their three common positions - the continuity of Asean centrality, no new structure whatsoever and any new effort on regional architecture must not be detrimental to the grouping. All delegates agreed.

They were the same positions that the [current Asean chair, Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, had taken during the panel discussion last month at the Apec CEO Summit in Singapore along with Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd. But Abhisit went further in stating that no [single formula is better than another, as each has its own unique characteristics. Asean is linked to all existing frameworks, he added, but it must remain open to new ideas as they can strengthen the existing institution to better cope with the challenges of the 21st century.

Although the Asean delegates attended the two-day conference in such a spirit, nonetheless their anxieties ran extremely high as they did not know what Rudd really wanted. Without prior consultations with Asean, he proposed the idea to form an Asia-Pacific community last June. For the past 18 months, it has generated lots of debate - both for and against - in the region, which has seldom gone through such intense brain-storming and consultative sessions on such a topic.

Rudd said his special envoy, Ambassador Richard Woolcott, had done much of the footwork: 21 countries, 85 days and discussions with more than 300 people including more than 10 ministers and eight heads of state or heads of government. Albeit parts of Woolcott's findings reaffirmed the grouping's positions, scepticism still reigns among the Asean bureaucrats who have a "seeing is believing" attitude.

Essentially it was the-Asean-comes-first thrust that the Asean delegates wanted to hear anyway. They know all the challenges outlined by Rudd whether they are political, security or economic in nature.

Otherwise, they contended the grouping would not have been able to survive for the past 42 years overcoming all sorts of crises.

At the end of the discussion, everybody agreed the conference was good and candid and the dialogue should continue in the future. Participants, who were officials and non-officials, known collectively as 1.5 track, based in the Asia-Pacific were divided into two groups - the first belonged to Asean and its supporters including China, believe in an incremental and evolutionary approach while the other group, mainly the non-Asean countries, is more proactive. That much was clear.

Somehow, the Asean delegates made up over half of overseas delegates continued to wonder what Australia has in mind in proposing such a mega-idea for the region, which is so diverse and accounts for three-quarters of the global economic world and nearly 60 percent of the world's population. Questions and views from Asean delegates had one pattern - they did not believe that a new regional organisation was needed at the moment to face future challenges. Despite their shortcomings, existing institutions, especially the Asean Regional Forum (ARF), Asean plus three, East Asia Summit (EAS) including Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec), are capable of handling and coping with both regional and global issues.

In his opening speech, Rudd was succinct in taking these stances, reiterating the importance of Asean centrality and its success. He also stressed that there would not be any supra-national decision-making structure. Rudd's remarks immediately drew sighs of relief from the Asean delegates. His idea does not need an additional institution.

Having said that, Rudd set out three trial balloons using some features of the architecture that the region already has - Apec, EAS and the ARF. First, he suggested that Apec could evolve over time to include a more defined security mandate. If that is the case, India must be admitted.

Another evolving body, EAS, could expand and develop to take a broader role. The third option was to bring Apec and EAS back-to-back together which, as Rudd put it, would bring with it the benefit of a single leaders' meeting or cluster of meetings. Wide ranges of regional bodies and issues discussed - be it economic, political and security - could be fused together. In his view, the 27-member security-oriented ARF is too big to transform into a leaders' meeting.

Obviously, Rudd's Australia is eager to fulfil what he calls "activist middle-power diplomacy." Rudd has played an active role in the G-20 summit, making sure it is a platform to discuss global financial problems. | His enthusiasm over climate change is another barometer of how Australia wanted to be perceived globally.

While the Asean members unanimously welcome closer economic integration with Australia, they still have divergent views regarding its political and security role. While they looked back and appreciated past achievements from Down Under, they are not



willing to jump on the bandwagon with Canberra at this propitious moment. His predecessors from the same party, Bob Hawke or Paul Keating, left legacies of goodwill and strong relations with the region because they had evolved over time into mutual respect and trust - allowing the two leaders to do things in the region that seemed impossible at first.


Judging from the popularity he enjoys inside his country, Rudd is going to stay in power for many years to come. He will have sufficient time to generate mutual confidence and better understanding of his ideal and Australia's agenda for the rest of region.

In this respect, former prime minister John Howard failed, although he had almost a decade to do so.

At the dinner reception at Kirribilli House on Saturday night, Rudd had already started on that journey. He was at his best on the charm offensive, rendering a personal touch with the stories of his family and Australia as his country's best foods and wines were served to visiting delegates.

In coming years, Rudd's litmus test will be two-fold. First, he must show his perseverance that he is going for long-term substance not the symbolism he is often accused of. And, finally he must instil a new perception in the region that Australia is an Asian country and champions its causes - not playing second fiddle for anybody else.

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## Regional

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### Eastern Burma: the Darfur of SE Asia

Published on December 8, 2009

#### **Refugees in the border camps have passed another milestone as the long-running crisis in Burma drags on.**

Thailand has been hit by the negative impacts from wars and civil strife in neighbouring countries for years, and that pattern shows no sign of ending anytime soon.

Waves of refugees arrived following the end of the war in Vietnam in 1975 and the advent of communist governments there and in Laos and Cambodia. The situation worsened when hundreds of thousands of Cambodians poured over the eastern border in 1979 after the Vietnamese army swept the horrific Khmer Rouge regime from power in Phnom Penh.

The humanitarian crisis that suddenly swamped Sa Kaew province dragged on for over a decade before a peace settlement in Paris opened the door for Cambodian refugees to return home in the early 90s as a UN peacekeeping force arrived to oversee a much-touted election.

In the midst of that high-profile saga, a much smaller influx of refugees crossed into northern Thailand from eastern Burma. About 10,000 mainly ethnic Karen fled into Tak province after clashes in their home state in 1984.

Members of a committee of international groups supporting Indochinese refugees agreed to go to Mae Sot to help deal with the Burmese influx. Few thought the problem would last. However, massive rallies against the Ne Win dictatorship in Rangoon in 1988 led to a bloody crackdown and an even more brutal military regime, whose methods have slowly transformed eastern Burma - if not the entire country - into another humanitarian tragedy.

The scale of the trauma flared in the mid-90s when the junta reinforced its military campaign against ethnic armies on its eastern frontier. The fall of Manerplaw and other rebel bases in early 1995 was followed by vast forced relocations of villages and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people.

Thailand saw a huge influx of refugees. In 1994, there were 80,000 refugees in 30 small camps. But the massive and ruthless relocation of villagers in Karen state - who faced summary execution, forced labour and portering (often through minefields) - spurred a continued exodus to Thailand.

Cross-border raids on some camps - seen as harbouring rebel fighters - forced Thai authorities to consolidate the camps in areas less vulnerable to attack. By mid-1997 there were 115,000 refugees in nine camps and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was invited to provide protection services (as Thailand has never signed the UN Convention on Refugees).

The gradual militarisation and takeover of ethnic territory - and the serious risks and difficulty in reaching areas targeted for suppression by the Tatmadaw (Burmese Army) has meant the crisis in eastern Burma has

been little reported by both the Thai and international media.

But the chaos and brutality persists. The Thailand Burma Border Consortium (TBBC), the biggest of about 20 NGOs providing services to refugees in border camps, run by the Ministry of Interior and refugee committees, has been monitoring the crisis zone for years. It says more than 3,500 villages and hiding sites in eastern Burma have been destroyed or forcibly relocated since 1996, including 120 communities between August 2008 and July 2009.

"The scale of displaced villages is comparable to Darfur and has been recognised as the strongest single indicator of crimes against humanity in eastern Burma. At least 75,000 people were forced to leave their homes this past year, and more than half a million remain internally displaced," it said in a recent statement.

"The highest rates of recent displacement were reported in northern Karen areas and southern Shan State. Almost 60,000 Karen are hiding in the mountains of Kyaukgyi, Thandaung and Papun townships, and a third of these fled from artillery attacks or the threat of Burmese Army patrols during the past year.

"Similarly, nearly 20,000 civilians from 30 Shan villages were forcibly relocated by the Burmese Army in retaliation for Shan State Army-South (SSA-S) operations in Laikha, Mong Kung and Keh Si townships."

The relentless repression and deliberate targeting of civilians - under the notorious "Four Cuts" policy to cut off food, funds, information and support to the rebels - has reached a point where eastern Burma is now seen as Southeast Asia's "new Killing Fields".

Calls for Burma's top generals to be dragged before an international court for crimes against humanity have grown louder and more frequent in recent years.

But while former heads of Khmer Rouge face trial in Phnom Penh, the junta is happily ensconced in its new capital Napyidaw, buttressed by billions from its gas pipeline to Thailand and unburdened by ties with China and Asean, both of which adhere to policies of non-interference.

All of Burma's neighbours have suffered an influx of refugees, particularly ethnic groups oppressed by the Tatmadaw's violence. Thailand, at least, has wealthy allies, such as the US, Europe, Australia and Canada, who help care for the refugees.

Some 16 foreign governments plus international aid groups support TBBC - a small, efficient outfit that manages nine camps from Kanchanaburi right up to Mae Hong Son. It provides food and shelter to about 150,000 refugees, an operation that cost about Bt1.2 billion (US\$35 million) last year.

Over the past five years more than 50,000 refugees have been resettled abroad, mainly in the US, but a similar number has flooded in to replace them. The Interior Ministry is interviewing these recent arrivals to determine if they are genuine refugees or opportunists seeking a new life in the West.

TBBC executive director Jack Dunford has the daunting task of getting funds from international donors, who have been calling for Thailand to allow the refugees to work and be more self-reliant. Moves are slowly being made in that direction with the help of UNHCR and IOM.

TBBC has faced tough times in recent years, with the price of rice soaring in 2008 and a push by some donors to give more aid directly into Burma, which receives little humanitarian assistance because of the onerous restrictions it places on aid groups.


Small rises in three uncontrollable factors - exchange rates, the price of rice and refugee numbers - "can suddenly add millions" to their costs, but there is also huge international goodwill.

"It is remarkable that we've been able to do what we've done for 25 years and that is thanks to the incredible support we've had," Dunford said.

The Englishman said, after a quarter of a century, he and his colleagues have much to be proud of.

"We have never in 25 years failed to give the refugees a full food basket, whereas all over the world refugees are getting partial rations."

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## Breakingnews

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### Southern violence greets Abhisit and Najib

Published on December 9, 2009

Narathiwat - The Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva and his Malaysian counterpart, Najib Razak, arrived in the southernmost province of Narathiwat to rename a bridge on their common border amid a fury of bomb attacks in the restive region where nearly 4,000 people have died since January 2004.

The two leaders arrived by a helicopter in Waeng district to commemorate the Thai-Malay Friendship Bridge over the Sunai Kulok River, a natural boundary that cuts through a Malay-speaking region where many people on both sides are relatives.

The visit was billed as a model of how the two neighbouring countries, in spite of security challenge along their common border, can cooperate.

The trip was part of Najib's three-day official visit to the country, his first as Malaysia's prime minister.

Thousands of security forces and bomb squads were dispatched to provide security for the delegations but militants on the ground took, as well as other disturbances, greeted the visit with bomb attacks in other parts of this violence-wracked region.

The Nation

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## Breakingnews

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### 2 soldiers injured in Narathiwat bomb attack

Published on December 9, 2009

Narathiwat - Two Navy officers were injured by a bomb trap when they tried to remove a cloth banner which says the Patani State is part of Malaysia.

The attack happened just hours before the Thai and Malaysian prime ministers visited this southern border province to preside over the ceremony to change the name of a bridge to Thai-Malaysian Friendship bridge.

The explosion occurred at a spot on the Pattani-Narathiwat road in Yango village in Tambon Lubo Busah in Yignor district at 8:30 am.

Chief Petty Officer 1st Class Kiartikorn Chuaythong and Chief Petty Officer 1st Class Rerngsak Tosamlee were injured on both legs by bomb shrapnel.

The two and 13 other officers of the Narathiwat 32 Taskforce rushed to the scene when informed that the banner was hoisted there.

The two accidentally hit a sling tied up to the bomb detonator when they tried to remove the banner.

The Nation

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## Opinion

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### EDITOR'S PICK

#### Malaysia willing to help down South, but will not interfere

Published on December 12, 2009

**During Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak's recent historic visit to Thailand, he and his Thai counterpart Abhisit Vejjajiva sat down with Nation Multimedia Group's editor-in-chief, Suthichai Yoon, to talk about regional affairs.**

The interview will be aired on Channel 9's World Beat show on Tuesday. Here are some excerpts:

**SUTHICHAJ: What is your main message for Thailand?**

**NAJIB:** Malaysia is a partner. We are not only a neighbour. We want to partner with Thailand in terms of the added challenge of security, economy, development, economic integration, how we face global challenges, world trade ... we have to have a common position. That's why it's important for us to understand each other and to decide not only on a common agenda but a common way forward.

**PM Abhisit, don't you find that the Malaysian PM going down South constitutes an interference in our domestic affairs?**

**ABHISIT:** When I first suggested the idea, he very quickly agreed. I think it's important as neighbours that we understand each other and I think nothing beats seeing it first hand ... what we are trying to do, what the conditions are. I think Malaysia has been very supportive of the way we work on the southern border provinces and with this first-hand experience, we hope it will make the further contribution that Prime Minister Najib has kindly offered us even more efficient and well-targeted.

**The suspicion used to be that people who created trouble fled to the other side and they were well taken care of and they came back whenever they wanted. Is that suspicion gone?**

**ABHISIT:** Well, you said there are suspicions and we have discussed this issue. Malaysia has clearly stated that she has been cooperating with us all along in terms of sharing intelligence, not supporting any kind of violence ... I'm very pleased and

appreciate Prime Minister Najib's comments made on several occasions that he has been very supportive of what we are trying to do.

**NAJIB:** We had an incident with the 131 people [who fled to Malaysia from Thailand]. We wanted them to return right away but if we had a hidden agenda, we would keep them in Malaysia. We would not tell you that they are in Malaysia. But we are very transparent. We got an assurance from the Thai government that it was safe to go back.

### **But what about the militants?**

**ABHISIT:** Those people are going to move around. But we have a good understanding of what has to be done. I believe we will establish a very good standard operating procedure, not just at the policy level but at the operation level.

But they have sympathisers on the other side who would hide them.

**NAJIB:** Yes, sure. But you can't avoid that. That's one of the reasons why you must solve this dual citizenship problem, because quite a few of these people have a dual citizenship. So when we resolve this problem once and for all, it would be a lot easier for us to track and monitor the movement of people.

### **What is the estimated number?**

**NAJIB:** I heard several estimates, probably 20,000 to 30,000 ... but I am willing to be corrected.

**ABHISIT:** A lot of people go back and forth because they are seeking economic opportunities.

### **You mentioned autonomy. Are you on the same page?**

**NAJIB:** I don't want to go into this debate. Autonomy is quite sensitive to some people in Thailand. We are comfortable with the terminology, but what is more appropriate in the Thai context would be decentralisation. It's a form of autonomy - decentralisation. If the Thais are more comfortable with decentralisation, so be it. This is a Thai domestic issue and we must respect that. There cannot be a template. What happened in southern Philippines may not be the same modality as here because the dynamics are different. But we will be cooperating with the Thai government based on how they want to play it, how they want to move forward.

**ABHISIT:** The ultimate aim is that you respond to people's needs. The people of the southern provinces have specific needs tailored to their way of life, their beliefs, their culture and that's what we aim to do. They have their own local authorities ... locally elected. They have the Southern Border Provinces Administrative Centre, which is going to be upgraded with a new legislation. They also have specific needs ...



economic zone, the yawi language, application of Islamic laws. These are the kind of things that make up what it takes to respond to local needs. And we are open to ideas within the Constitution.

**You [Najib] have been involved in facilitating [peace] talks in Aceh and in the southern Philippines. You have gone through all this before. If Thailand comes to you and asks what is a good model, then you should be able to elaborate.**

**NAJIB:** We can tell the Thai government of a different model that we have employed in other parts. But there is no template because the internal dynamics will be different in every country.

**Are you willing to negotiate these models?**

**ABHISIT:** Anything within the Constitution is fine. I think the Constitution already has very good provisions to make sure that everybody, wherever they live, whatever their culture, beliefs, can have their needs responded to.

**Separate state?**

**ABHISIT:** I don't think that constitutes autonomy or decentralisation.

**NAJIB:** It has to be within the context of the Thai Constitution. There shouldn't be any talks about secession or a separate state. That's totally out of the question. We would not support it at all. It will lead to the breaking up of a country. That is not a good thing for Thailand or for the region.

**ABHISIT:** I sincerely don't believe it's good for the people.

**The time will come when you sit down with people on the other side to consider the proposals they put forward. How far are you willing to sit down and talk? Do you see yourself as an honest broker, Malaysia?**

**NAJIB:** No. Unless, of course it is deemed necessary for us ... we consider it a domestic Thai issue. The Thai government should be able to gauge, as Prime Minister Abhisit said, the needs and aspirations of the people and respond accordingly. As I said, we will play according to how the Thai government feels it should be done.

**Would you ask Malaysia to facilitate the process?**

**ABHISIT:** What we have already discussed is the issue of communication. And again let me emphasise that the most important dialogue or talks must be with local people. And there are things the Thai government wants to do. It is a change or a shift from past practices. But it might not be filtering down as well as it should, perhaps. And maybe there is a perception of that not happening among our friends,

neighbours, partners and also the international community, governments or NGOs. I think that, as partners, we would like that Malaysia helps facilitate communication with all who are concerned about what it is the government is doing.

**The militants are local people, the people who throw bombs. Are you going to talk to them?**

**ABHISIT:** Why should their voices be louder than the ones who are not practising violence. After all we have to cater to the needs of the ordinary people. And I'm sure the ordinary local people want peace, they don't want violence and if they have specific needs then we should listen to them. And why should people who practise violence object to that?

**They said they have reasons to be violent and they said violence would stop if the Thai government gives them justice, gives them fair treatment.**

**ABHISIT:** Well I say I'm here to give them justice even if they do not practise violence. In fact, it would be easier for us to make sure that there is justice and development if there is no violence.

**Prime Minister Najib, there are the old guards abroad - the Pulo [Patani United Liberation Organisation], the BRN [Barasi Revolusi Nasional] - and then there is the younger generation of militants, more idealistic, ready to sacrifice their lives for an independent, separate state or a new identity. Can Malaysia bridge the gap between the old guards and the new militants in southern Thailand?**

**NAJIB:** I think first of all what we need to do is manage the polarity by concentrating on the vast majority. I think the extremists can only survive if they have the support of the people. If you deprive them of the oxygen, meaning the people are not with them, then it's easier for us to handle the extremists. We concentrate on the vast majority of the people and the vast majority of the people want peace, they want to live in harmony with the Buddhists, they want economic development, they want a better future. They want some of the aspiration, with respect to language, with respect to Islamic education, with respect to some of the Sharia law, and so forth. If you can provide that, the vast majority will be with you.

**So should we just ignore the Pulo, the BRN?**

**ABHISIT:** I say my job is to respond to the needs of the people. We have been engaged with them. The economic plans we are putting in is not just about economy. It's about engaging people and getting them to participate in this sort of bottom-up process. Everybody who is in the provinces can participate. Nobody is ignored.

**But the local people are complaining about incidents. One particular incident was the June massacre in a mosque in Narathiwat where 10 to 11**

**people were killed and they said justice is not being done.**

**ABHISIT:** Well we take it very seriously and if you recall, just after the incident, the government did not deflect this problem and blame it as the work of separatists.

We identified and issued arrest warrants ... and I believe the local people agree that they were very likely the people who caused the incident. And we are trying now to make sure that we can arrest the persons. So clearly there has been a change. It's not something that we've swept under the carpet. This is not something we can be accused of - trying to distract and some how distort the facts. We are facing up to the facts and we are trying our best to make sure the law can be enforced.

**The pictures of the suspects have been on the Internet?**

**ABHISIT:** Well, we have tried to make sure that we get those persons.

**The peace process. How do you envision it happening?**

**ABHISIT:** If we can push ahead on the agenda of development and justice, and steadily remove the special power that we have. And certainly, while we are employing the special law, we will have already improved the system whereby we can deal with complaints about possible abuse. By continuing to build trust and confidence, I think a more meaningful dialogue with the people in general would allow us to find a solution that would be long lasting.

**Meanwhile violence continues. You have been in office for a year and it has not let up.**

**ABHISIT:** I don't think you could have expected the violence to let up so quickly. The economic plans have been implemented for only two to three months. We need more time to prove our sincerity, our determination. This policy requires time, patience and the people will keep watching to test the policy. We are very well aware of that. I don't think its fair to judge. Certainly the number of incidents have reduced, but not at a pace we are satisfied with. We have to continue to move ahead.

**How do you [Najib] see the peace process?**

**NAJIB:** Depends how you define it. This is a journey and it could be a roller coaster, there will be ups and downs. But that doesn't mean that if there is a spate of violence, your policy is unsuccessful. You have to stay the course. You have to gain the trust and confidence, and of course, this terminology of winning hearts and minds of the people. It's a long process. It takes time. It took us 40 years to defeat the communists. But we stayed the course. We hope the problem in the South will not take as long.

**People claiming to be representatives of the PULO, the BRN, are going**

**through some Malaysian officials and holding secret talks with Thai officials. In fact, Prime Minister Surayud [Chulanont], before he left office in 2007, met some Pulo representatives in Bahrain through the good offices of Malaysia. Prime minister Surayud thanked prime minister Abdullah Badawi at the time. Will you be willing to do that for Prime Minister Abhisit? Somewhere, somehow, secret talks that I wouldn't know about?**

**NAJIB:** If there are going to be secret talks, I would not be talking to you about it.

**ABHISIT:** There has always been a question about which groups are behind this. Unlike many cases in the world where there is violence and someone claims responsibility... we don't have that here. So you are talking about something completely different.

**You are not interested in checking if these groups are for real? You are not interested at all?**

**ABHISIT:** That's the direct responsibility of the intelligence. And they do that. And of course, I have to get them to report to me.

**Some of the military, including the Army chief [General Anupong Paochinda], their stance is that you don't talk to the enemy. Are you being influenced by the military mentality of "no, we are not going to sit down with..."?**

**ABHISIT:** This is a domestic problem. It has a number of dimensions, political ones, yes. But there are also legal implications. You can't oversimplify the issue. All I can say is that when this government came in, we ran on a platform where we wanted to put the people first and we say we wanted to respond to the locals' needs and we are working on that.

**Do you [Najib] think he [Abhisit] is being stubborn not ruling out any possibility of not talking to anyone at all?**

**NAJIB:** I don't want to make any judgement because as I said, it's not fair. He has to solve the problem; he has to live with the problem. It is a Thai problem. But as long as there is a positive movement, the situation will be getting better and better, over time, of course. It cannot be overnight. We believe there is no silver bullet. I think one has to stay the course and believe in what one is doing. What you need to do is to win the trust of people. As you pursue policies like lifting the socio-economic status, you fulfil their aspirations to develop their own identity, you respect their needs in terms of faith, their culture and language and allow them to participate in some of the decision-making process, then I think over a period of time people will realise that this is the best thing for them. It's not violence, it's not killing, it's not exploding bombs but it is pursuing something for the betterment of their community,

for the best interest of the Muslims in the South.

**PM Abhisit, what do you think the militants are trying to achieve?**

**ABHISIT:** It's not easy to put yourself in the mind of the extremists. But we recognise the combinations. There are people naturally who have extremist beliefs and that's not confined to southern Thailand. Secondly, there may be some information or ideological training that gets into that mode. But the third component is that there mustn't be incidents, injustice and abuses that feed into the first two factors. We are anxious to remove this third factor. I don't pretend that we have eliminated all the conditions. We still receive complaints about abuses and I will address those issues.

**What's the estimated figure of the militants? I heard 10,000 and commanders said they have identified 9,000 of them.**

**ABHISIT:** There's quite a range of estimates. It's not a small number. But it doesn't mean it cannot be managed or reduced.

**Is that a serious number?**

**NAJIB:** If you have militants in that sort of range then, of course, it is a serious threat for any nation, not just Thailand.

**Do you think the local problem will not expand into a regional insurgent movement?**

**ABHISIT:** We are well aware that there may be outside groups looking for an opening.

**ABHISIT: JI or Jihadist movements?**

**NAJIB:** So far I think it's still localised. There is not really a connection with any form of terrorist movements but we cannot allow the problem to go on unattended.

**Because it could come to that point?**

**ABHISIT:** Anything could happen. We don't want to leave that possibility. We want to close that door once and for all.

## Opinion

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### EDITORIAL

### Thailand should just accept that South is different

Published on December 12, 2009

#### **Only way to bring the violent struggle to an end would be to listen to and acknowledge the Malays of Patani**

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak came to Thailand with a clear message: the Malay-speaking region in the country's southernmost provinces was an integral part of the Kingdom.

While respecting Thailand's territorial integrity, Najib also reminded the government that the region had different characteristics that would need special attention. Historical grievances and aspirations of the Malays of Patani must be addressed if the conflicts are to end, he warned.

However, perhaps as a move to show that he is a good sport, Najib backed away from the "autonomy" idea, and instead endorsed Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva's "decentralisation" approach.

Amid the spate of bomb attacks against security forces, the two leaders were reminded that where they go from here will not be easy, because behind these bombings was the message: what's acceptable to the two countries may not necessarily be acceptable to the Patani Malays or the separatist movements.

Nevertheless, the cordial atmosphere was an indication that the two countries had moved beyond recent history when Thaksin Shinawatra's arrogance brought bilateral relations to its knee.

Today, that kind of microphone diplomacy is not applied, but that doesn't mean it won't happen again. Thailand's culture of impunity in the restive region could very well have forced Malaysia and other Muslim countries to break their silence.

Apparently, some ill-intentioned people in the restive region don't like the fact that the two countries are moving closer. Posters and banners saying, "Patani is a part of Malaysia" were scattered all over the region, while local residents think some ultra-Thai nationalists looking to distort the significance of the visit might have been behind the incidents.

As pointed out by Senator Warawit Baru, a respected academic from the region, the insurgents don't relate to Malaysia as a nation-state, instead they feel distanced from the Thai state.

It's an open secret that hardliners think Abhisit is giving away too much political capital by allowing Kuala Lumpur to move closer to what they deem as domestic problems. In their mind, a good insurgent is a dead insurgent, so when things such as the banners surfaced, these hardliners in the security community came to mind.

In fact, if one were to go deep enough into the back roads of this restive region, one would see "Patani Merdeka" written all over the place. It means "Free Patani" - free from Thailand and free from Malaysia.

Locals said they were reminded of last year's hoax when a group of ethnic Malays, in fake moustaches and beards, declared an end to insurgency. They called themselves the "Southern Thai Muslims". People with half a brain can figure out who wrote the script. Never in the history of this restive region have the militants called themselves "Southern Thai".

The deep South is undergoing an ethno-nationalistic dispute, one that challenges the Thai state's legitimacy there. Resolving this would require a great deal of sophistication and sensitivity because it centres on national pride, history and the dignity of all the affected parties.

Unfortunately, we never hear the words "human dignity" coming out of either leader's mouth. All we heard were the usual sound bites of how development would cure all. If the past six years are any indication, the billions of baht spent have not really won the state that many hearts. This is not because a big chunk of it is being skimmed off the top, but because handouts do not mean empowerment. They do nothing to enhance one's sense of ownership.

Bangkok will have to let go of its "I know better" attitude and give the Patani Malays enough political space to talk about their grievances, resentments and aspirations.

We may not like the fact that the Thai-Patani history is full of blood, but acknowledging history for what it is can help all sides come to terms with the past and move forward as a united country. Surely the two leaders understand how disturbing an ethno-nationalist struggle can be. After all, they both studied in Britain.

Sadly though, both Abhisit and Najib have been unable to go beyond their narrow mindset of a nation-state. Patani should not be reduced to a footnote in Thailand's nationhood. It has its own myths, legends and tales that are not related to Thailand's history. And if this point is not taken into consideration, any political model, a development scheme or a peace process put forward is doomed to fail.

## Opinion

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### REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

#### Asean charter is one year old

Published on December 14, 2009

**THE ASEAN CHARTER is a year old this week. The most important imprint on Asean members is and will remain that Asean is a rule-based organisation. Each article of the charter, which was agreed and signed on by the Asean leaders, must be respected and implemented in full without any condition or prejudice. Failure of any member to comply with the charter will be reprimanded. At the moment, this has not yet happened.**

Despite this deficiency, Asean has gained more respect from the international community. Activities related to Asean in the international arenas in the past year pointed to growing recognition of the grouping's contribution, especially its expansive role in certain global issues, in particular in managing the financial and economic crisis.

Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, as the Asean chair, and Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono have done much to boost the Asean role in the G-20 Summit in London and Pittsburgh. Both have consistently advocated the presence of an Asean chair at future G-20 summits. Obviously, to gain a permanent seat at the premier global forum, Asean has to work harder in integrating its three pillars and demonstrate its resiliency.

After the charter came into force last December, the Asean centrality has become a new diplomatic buzzword at all Asean-related activities. At the first leaders' meeting in Singapore in mid-November, between the leaders of Asean and the US, President Barack Obama was first to endorse the Asean centrality in the overall scheme of things in Southeast Asia. Some Asean members even had an unrealistic expectation that the US should have recognised Asean's centrality in a broader Asian context. That was why Obama did not express US support for the Asean chair's participation at the G-20 summit in the joint press statement. To attain that objective, according to Abhisit, Asean must not take its leading role for granted. The Thai leader reiterated that Asean has to earn it.

Another barometer of Asean's increasing diplomatic clout is the high number of missions in Jakarta of ambassadors attached to Asean. Now there are 30 ambassadors to Asean and most are concurrently envoys to Indonesia. Both the US



and China have said they would set up a permanent mission in Jakarta during the first half of next year. Japan and South Korea have similar plans.

Other tangible progressions were the establishment of the long-awaited Asean Intergovernmental Commission for Human Rights (AICHR) and the Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR). Only two (Thailand and Indonesia) of the 10-members of AICHR were selected openly and transparently. The rest were government-picked names. In months to come, AICHR will certainly demonstrate if the commission is intended to be a toothless organisation, as many critics have claimed, or gradually transform itself into a worthwhile forum to protect and promote human rights in Asean.

According to the Asean Charter, each member shall appoint a permanent representative to Asean with the rank of ambassador based in Jakarta.

The permanent representatives will collectively constitute the CPR. The tasks include supporting the work of the Asean Community Councils, coordinating with national secretariats and other Asean sectorial ministerial bodies.

Also in the pipeline will be new dispute settlement mechanisms under Article 25, which will involve the Asean Coordinating Council, as well as possible arbitration if and when there is mutual consent among the disputing parties. By the end of December, the Asean high-level expert group will wrap up its work on dispute settlement. In the near future, the dispute settlement mechanism will be succinct in stating that any dispute related to the charter would be dealt with in effective ways.

Another new mechanism, which is expected to be established in the first half of next year, is the Asean Commission for the Promotion and Protection of Rights of Women and Children (ACDC), which was part of the Vientiane Action Plan. Each member shall appoint two national representatives - one from the women's side and another from the children's side of government.

One of the biggest disappointments in the past year was the failure of Asean's engagement with the civil society organisations (CSO) based in the region. The idea of interface between the Asean leaders and CSO representatives at the 14th and 15th Asean summits was to build up trust and start a long standing process of dialogue.


Apparently, the Thai chair was too ambitious in attempting to institutionalise the interface. As such, in the process it has underestimated the deep mistrust existing among some Asean leaders vis-a-vis each other and their own CSOs.

All concerned parties have learned very much to their regret that bringing people at the top to converse with the people at the grass roots level would require better preparations and longer processes of dialogue and consultation. At the recent symposium on stakeholders' involvement in regional organisations hosted by the Asean Secretariat in Jakarta, representatives from Asean and CSO sat down again in

an informal setting trying to find out what went wrong in the past year and discussing new ways to re-engage each other.

Unmistakably, the future interface between the Asean leaders and SCO will be shelved for the time being. To find the right mix related to mechanisms and process as well as common issues would take time. This issue will be the grouping's biggest challenge that all stakeholders - both at the top and bottom - have to work together in bringing the people-oriented community into fruition.

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## National

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### Malaysian cops detain Thai trio with home-made bombs

Published on December 15, 2009

**Malaysian police have detained three Thai men allegedly responsible for producing home-made bombs believed to be supplied to militant groups in southern Thailand, a news report said Tuesday.**

The trio had been renting the home in the northeastern Kelantan state for the past year, and worked as fishermen during the day, the Star daily said.

During Monday's raid, police reportedly discovered home-made bombs and chemical fertilisers in the home.


The report quoted sources as saying authorities believe the trio were part of an underground group operating in the state, supplying bombs to insurgents from southern Thailand.

Police confirmed that arrests had been made, but declined to comment further on the report.

Thailand's three southernmost provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat have been the site of almost daily violence amid a festering conflict which has claimed more than 3,500 lives over the past six years.

Malaysia, which shares similar religious and ethnic ties with Thailand's southern provinces, has repeatedly denied harbouring any Muslim insurgents in its northern states and has pledged to do all it can to find a solution to the violence.

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