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## North Korean Arms Lesson

**K**udos to the government of Thailand for doing its part to enforce United Nations sanctions on North Korea. Acting on a tip from the United States, authorities this weekend seized a 35-ton haul of arms and explosives on a plane bound to points unknown from Pyongyang. It's ironic, though, that this sanctions victory comes at the same time the U.S. is busy making new overtures to Pyongyang.

The seizure of the plane's cargo marks the second time in six months that a government has stepped in to enforce June's Security Council Resolution 1874; the

United Arab Emirates seized a cache of weapons from a ship destined for Iran in August. That resolution empowers U.N. members to confiscate North Korean arms exports, though it doesn't require them to do so. In July the U.S. Navy trailed a North Korean ship suspected of carrying illicit arms exports to Burma, though the Korean vessel was eventually allowed to return home without being boarded.

This is an improvement in enforcement, given that before the summer North Korean shipments were seized only once every year or two. But it is still only a fraction of the likely volume of exports.

Kim Jong Il earns about \$1.5 billion a year from arms sales, according to an estimate from the Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis in Washington. The money generally supports Kim's nuclear designs and other military programs. The weapons tend to end up in places like Syria, Burma and Iran. Because it doesn't make seizure mandatory, Resolution 1874 is at best a weak tool with which to fight Kim's arms sales.

Meanwhile, there's the matter of Kim's bad faith. U.S. envoy Stephen Bosworth was in Pyongyang trying to revive negotiations with the regime on the nuclear is-

sue just days before the arms-laden plane took off from that city. This shipment is another reminder of Kim's willingness to flout international rules.

A sensible U.S. policy would reward and encourage other partners for stepping up their sanctions-enforcement, as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton did in praising the Thai government this week. Washington would also do well to recognize this arms shipment for the signal it is about Kim's reliability as a negotiating partner. The question as Mr. Bosworth returns to Washington is how sensible President Obama's North Korea policy will be.

Wednesday, December 16, 2009

# The Tehran-Caracas Axis

## [Global View]

By BRET STEPHENS



Here's one from the Department of We Are The World: Hugo Chávez and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad will address the U.N.'s climate summit in Copenhagen. Say what you will about these two gentlemen—the support for terrorists, the Holocaust denial, the suppression of civil liberties—at least nobody can accuse them of being global warming “deniers.”

On the contrary, the two leaders, who met in Caracas last month for at least the 11th time, have been nothing if not cooperative when it comes to environmentally friendly and carbon-neutral technologies. Bicycles, for instance: In 2005, Chávez directed his government to “follow seriously the project of manufacturing Iranian bicycles in Venezuela.” An Iranian dairy products plant (no doubt ecologically sensitive) also set up shop hard on the Colombian border, in territory controlled by Colombia's terrorist FARC.

Then there was the tractor factory Iran built in Ciudad Bolívar. In January, the Associated Press reported that Turkish authorities had seized 22 containers labeled “tractor parts.” What they contained, according to one Turkish official, “was enough to set up an explosives lab.”

But perhaps the most interesting Iranian venture is a supposed gold mine not far from Angel Falls, in a remote area known as the Roraima Basin. The basin straddles Venezuela's border with neighboring Guyana, where a Canadian company, U308, thinks it has found the “geological look-alike” to Canada's Athabasca Basin. The Athabasca, the company's Web site adds, “is the world's largest resource of uranium.”

In 2006, Chávez publicly mocked suspicions of nuclear cooperation with Iran, saying it “shows they have no limit in their



Ahmadinejad and Chávez: A new document sheds light on this radioactive relationship.

capacity to invent lies.” In September, however, Rodolfo Sanz, Venezuela's minister of basic industries, acknowledged that “Iran is helping us with geophysical aerial probes and geochemical analyses” in its search for uranium.

The official basis for this cooperation seems to be a Nov. 14, 2008 memorandum of understanding signed by the two countries' ministers of science and technology and given to me by a credible foreign intelligence source. “The two parties agreed to cooperate in the field of nuclear technology,” reads the Spanish version of the document, which also makes mention of the “peaceful use of alternative energies.” Days later, the Venezuelan government submitted a paper to the International Atomic Energy Agency on the “Introduction of a Nuclear Power Programme.” (Online readers can see the memorandum for themselves in its Farsi and Spanish versions. One mystery: The Farsi version makes no mention of nuclear cooperation.)

Iran would certainly require large and reliable supplies of uranium if it is going to enrich the nuclear fuel in 10 separate plants—an ambition Ahmadinejad spelled out last month. It would also require an extensive financial and logistical infrastructure net-

work in Venezuela, not to mention unusually good political connections. All this it has in spades.

Consider financing. In January 2008, the Bank of International Development opened its doors for business in Caracas. At the top of its list of its directors, all of whom are Iranian, is one Tahmasb Mazaheri, former governor of the central bank of Iran. As it turns out, the bank is a subsidiary of the Export Development Bank of Iran, which in October 2008 was sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury Department for providing “financial services to Iran's Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics.”

Or consider logistics. For nearly three years, Venezuelan airline Conviasa has been flying an Airbus 340 to Damascus and Tehran. Neither city is a typical Venezuelan tourist destination, to say the least. What goes into the cargo hold of that big plane is an interesting question. Also interesting is that in October 2008 the Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines, also sanctioned by Treasury, announced it had established a direct shipping route to Venezuela.

Finally, there are the political connections. What do Fadi Kaboul, Aref Richany Jimenez, Radwan Sabbagh and Tarek Zaidan El Aissami Maddah have in common? The answer is that they are, respectively, executive director for planning of Venezuelan oil company PdVSA; the president of Venezuela's military-industrial complex; the president of a major state-owned mining concern; and, finally, the minister of interior. Latin Americans of Middle Eastern descent have long played prominent roles in national politics and business. But these are all fingertip positions in what gives the Iranian-Venezuelan relationship its worrying grip.

Forty-seven years ago, Americans woke up to the fact that a distant power could threaten us much closer to home. Perhaps it's time Camelot 2.0 take note that we are now on course for a replay.

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# U.S. Disarmament Is Dangerous for Asia

BY FRANKLIN C. MILLER  
AND ANDREW SHEARER

Talk of nuclear disarmament is making a serious comeback. Just in the past week, President Obama received a Nobel Peace Prize for his work on the issue, and now yet another blue-ribbon commission—this one co-chaired by former foreign ministers of Japan and Australia—has issued a high-profile report calling for disarmament. The goal, of course, is superficially appealing and may even be achievable some day. But the United States, Australia, Japan and America's other Asian allies would be well advised to think twice before embracing the report.

The paper released Tuesday in Tokyo by the International Commission on Nuclear Nonproliferation and Disarmament is repre-

sentative of international antinuke theology. Some of the ideas are useful, such as strengthening the International Atomic Energy Agency as a proliferation watchdog and beefing up safeguards and verification mechanisms. Creating international nuclear fuel banks and shared management of enrichment, reprocessing and spent fuel storage facilities would make nonproliferation sense as well as supporting civil nuclear power in energy-thirsty Asia.

But other suggestions would be dangerous. Capping U.S. and Russian arsenals at 500 warheads is unrealistic given today's world. An unequivocal "no first use" declaration would weaken American deterrence. And the recommendation that the Proliferation Security Initiative, currently a coalition of the willing to interdict nuclear shipments, be folded into the United Nations is a surefire way to neuter a successful tool.

The basic problem is that such efforts ignore the fact that the world is an unfriendly place. And no part of it looks more Hobbesian than Asia, riven with unresolved Cold War tensions, rapid advances in military capabilities and growing competition among rising powers. Some of those governments maintain and deploy nuclear weapons. Others want nuclear weapons, break their treaty commitments not to acquire them and will want them whether the U.S. has nuclear weapons or not. Look no further than North Korea.

This is why a credible U.S. nuclear deterrent is so important.

This is partly a matter of self interest: Washington must prevent a major power from attacking America or seeking to coerce it with a nuclear threat. But it also needs to be mindful of the effects of U.S. nuclear policies on its Asian allies who face real threats—North Korea among the most pressing. The U.S. nuclear arsenal protects allies including Australia, Japan and South Korea, with whom America has treaty commitments. Not only does the U.S. nuclear deterrent shape the

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**America's nuclear deterrent remains the cornerstone of regional stability.**

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behavior of rogue nations such as North Korea toward these allies; the U.S. umbrella also removes the need for countries like Japan to seek nuclear weapons of their own.

Maintaining an effective U.S. nuclear deterrent will become even more important in Asia as China works hard to close the conventional military gap. This should be one of the top priorities of the Obama administration's 2010 Nuclear Posture Review and should guide any response to Tuesday's high-profile report. Deterrence is about holding at risk what potentially hostile governments value. So the U.S. and its allies also must make every effort

to understand the leadership of adversaries or potential enemies—a challenge particularly with respect to secretive authoritarian regimes.

The nuclear deterrent is not the only element of America's commitment to the region, of course. Forward-deployed U.S. forces—in South Korea, Okinawa and Guam—also contribute to security in Asia. So do combined exercises and missile defense systems. But the role of nuclear weapons is unique.

A credible U.S. nuclear deterrent means having an operational force, with capabilities for real operations and an operational plan. Washington also must retain forward-based systems in places where its allies view their presence as vital to their security—even if U.S. defense planners believe central strategic systems can do the job. Washington needs to maintain at least parity in strategic forces with Russia and must never allow those levels to fall to a point where allies believe the Russian or Chinese short-range nuclear arsenals will affect U.S. decision-making in a crisis.

The sages who crafted Tuesday's report paid too little attention to all these realities in the name of a nuclear "peace in our time." In his Nobel Peace Prize speech, President Obama proclaimed—rightly—that the U.S. has helped underwrite global security for more than six decades. He acknowledged that global stability rested on more than international treaties and declarations.

The critical contribution of U.S. nuclear deterrence was left unspoken.

Additional reductions in the U.S. and Russian nuclear arsenals are possible and indeed desirable. But this disarmament game is dangerous. Potential enemies will be deterred, and allies assured, only if America is visibly confident in its nuclear posture. Asia's future stability and prosperity will depend far more on this than on airy dreams of disarmament.

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# North Korea's Four-Party Ploy

BY GORDON G. CHANG

When Barack Obama campaigned for office, he famously said he'd be happy to meet in person with the planet's worst autocrats, such as North Korea's Kim Jong Il. Although he hasn't yet sat down with Chairman Kim, he has taken the United States down a new path of engagement with the Pyongyang regime: On Sunday, South Korea's Yonhap News Agency reported that the U.S. and North Korea have agreed to resume the four-party talks to formally end the Korean War.

Everyone wants peace in North Asia, and a formal end to the Korean War would remove many of the causes of turmoil there. But now may be one of the worst moments to resume the four-party process. By proposing a revival of the troubled negotiations at this time, Pyongyang is up to no good.

The North Koreans suggested the revival of the Korean War talks last week during the visit of U.S. special envoy Stephen Bosworth to Pyongyang. The previous round of negotiations to reach a peace agreement, which would re-

place the 1953 armistice, stalled in 1999 over Pyongyang's objection to the participation of arch-enemy South Korea, which did not sign the 1953 cease-fire.

By raising this now, the North Koreans have managed to switch the topic of multilateral negotiations from disarmament to some-

## Washington is allowing Kim Jong Il to unravel the six-party talks and exclude Japan.

thing else. Mr. Bosworth's original mission in Pyongyang was to restart the stalled six-party talks to "denuclearize" the North—the most important agenda item for the U.S. in North Asia. The North, in violation of its obligations under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, has maintained a covert nuclear weapons program for decades, perhaps since the late 1960s. It has tested nuclear devices twice, in 2006 and in May 2009. The six-party talks, spon-

sored by Beijing, have produced a series of agreements, but they have so far failed to disarm the militant North Korean state.

But now the North Koreans have, in one master stroke, complicated matters by raising an entirely new set of issues. The six-party process, which began in 2003, was difficult enough. The disarmament talks will be even harder to conclude successfully because of the multiplication of issues being discussed in parallel tracks of negotiations.

The North Koreans' proposal for four-party talks also succeeds in starting to unravel the loose coalition the Bush administration stitched together to disarm North Korea. The four-party talks exclude two nations that participate in the six-party process, Russia and Japan. The Russians have never taken the disarmament discussions seriously, remaining apart from the negotiations in all but name.

The Japanese, however, have played a crucial role. In fact, Japan has adopted a sterner approach to North Korea than anyone else in the last three years.

Tokyo's diplomats, for instance, worked hard to make sure Washington did not buckle under Chinese pressure while the U.N. Security Council considered imposing sanctions on the North.

And that is part of the reason why Pyongyang wants the Japanese out of the picture. With Japan gone, the U.S. loses an important negotiating ally. Moreover, the exclusion of two countries from the bargaining table gives North Korea an opportunity to employ its classic tactic: divide the powers it faces. Kim has tried to kill the six-party talks from the beginning because he does not want to confront all his adversaries in the same room.

Yonhap reports that the four-party process will not begin until the six-party one resumes. Yet North Korea will undoubtedly maneuver the two negotiations so that the disarmament talks fall away while the peace-treaty talks proceed. Kim has already made the argument that he cannot give up his weapons until there is a lasting peace on the Korean peninsula. In the months ahead, expect Kim to announce that a for-

mal end to the Korean War is a precondition to a six-party deal.

Another danger is that the four-party talks pave the way for Washington and its allies to provide material assistance, should the talks succeed. But in recent years North Korea has become less amenable to giving up its nukes once it has received international support. And the U.S. should be especially wary of propping up the Pyongyang regime right now: The North Korean economy looks like it is in turmoil, especially after the botched demonetization of paper currency two weeks ago resulted in popular unrest across the country.

By agreeing to the four-party talks, Washington has fallen for an oft-used North Korean ploy. The U.S. has also given up an important advantage by permitting the North Koreans to exclude the Japanese. The prospects for peace in North Asia just got smaller.

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## Iranian Scorecard

In his Inaugural address, President Obama promised the world's dictators—with Iran plainly in mind—that he would “extend a hand if you are willing to unclench your fist.” Here’s a status report on the mullahs’ knuckles:

- *Weapons of mass destruction.* On Wednesday, Iran tested a new version of its Sajjil-2 medium-range ballistic missile, a sophisticated solid-fuel model with a range of 1,200 miles—enough to target parts of Eastern Europe.

Also last week came news that Western intelligence agencies have an undated Farsi-language document that concerns technical aspects of a neutron initiator, which is used to set off nuclear explosions and has no other practical application. The document remains unauthenticated, and Iran denies working on a nuclear weapon. But it squares with accumulating evidence, from the International Atomic Energy

Agency and other sources, that Iran continues to pursue nuclear weapons design and uranium enrichment.

- *Support for terrorists.* Iran also continues to supply Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon with weapons and money, and there’s reason to suspect the help extends to Colombia’s terrorist FARC. Centcom Commander David Petraeus told ABC News Wednesday that Iran “provides a modest level of equipment, explosives and perhaps some funding to the Taliban in western Afghanistan.”

- *Political gestures.* Isolated regimes sometimes signal their desire for better relations through seemingly small gestures: ping-pong tournaments, for instance. Tehran has taken a different tack.

Last Monday, it announced that three American hikers arrested along its border with Iraq in July would be put on trial. The charge? “Suspicious aims.” Christo-

pher Dickey notes in Newsweek that “since [President Mahmoud] Ahmadinejad took over four years ago, some 35 foreign nationals or dual nationals have been imprisoned for use as chump change in one sordid deal or another.”

- *Diplomacy.* In October, the U.S. and its allies offered to enrich Iran’s uranium in facilities outside the country, supposedly for the production of medical isotopes. The idea was that doing so would at least reduce Iran’s growing stockpile of uranium and thus postpone the day when it would have enough to rapidly build a bomb.

Tehran finally came back with a counterproposal earlier this month, in which no uranium would leave Iranian soil. Even Hillary Clinton admits it’s a nonstarter: “I don’t think anyone can doubt that our outreach has produced very little in terms of any kind of positive response from the Iranians,” the Secretary of State told reporters.

Given those remarks, we would have imagined that Mrs. Clinton would take it as good news that on Tuesday the House

voted 412-12 in favor of a new round of unilateral sanctions on Iran. The Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act would forbid any company that does energy business with Iran from having access to U.S. markets.

Instead, Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg earlier this month wrote to Foreign Relations Chairman John Kerry urging that the Senate postpone taking up the House bill. “I am concerned that this legislation, in its current form, might weaken rather than strengthen international unity and support for our efforts,” wrote Mr. Steinberg.

So let’s see: Iran spurns every overture from the U.S. and continues to develop WMD while abusing its neighbors. In response, the Administration, which had set a December deadline for diplomacy, now says it opposes precisely the kind of sanctions it once promised to impose if Iran didn’t come clean, never mind overwhelming bipartisan support in Congress. For an explanation of why Iran’s behavior remains unchanged, look no further.

### The Administration opposes a bipartisan sanctions bill.

## Guantanamo North, and East

President Obama's scramble to close Guantanamo is picking up speed as his arbitrary one-year deadline approaches, with Yemen and Illinois as the latest detainee destinations. Neither decision will enhance U.S. security.

The government of Yemen announced Friday that it will take six detainees, and more could follow if this transfer goes smoothly. Yemenis account for 97 of the 210 men still left at Gitmo, and 34 have been cleared for release. The problem is that Yemen is emerging as one of the world's sanctuaries for al Qaeda, and its government has essentially run a nonaggression pact with the terrorists.

The U.S. says it will closely monitor the transfer, but once the detainees are in Yemen their treatment will be impossible to control. Several former Gitmo detainees from other countries have moved to Yemen to rejoin the global jihad, and one of them, Said Ali al-Shihri, turned up in a January video as al Qaeda's No. 2 man on the Arabian peninsula. Adding to al-Shihri's potential recruitment pool seems a high price to pay for the alleged "global good will" for closing Guantanamo.

Meanwhile, another 100 or so prison-

ers will be transferred to a correctional facility near Thomson, in southern Illinois, which will be retrofitted on the taxpayer dime to federal "supermax" standards. The winters will be colder, but the detainees might not mind because they will also gain access to the protections of the U.S. justice system.

In the wake of the Supreme Court's 2008 decision in *Boumediene v. Bush*, which gave Gitmo detainees the ability to bring habeas corpus claims, the feds have been losing a large percentage of habeas cases. Detainees that win their habeas petitions can no longer legally be held as enemy combatants, and the Administration is obliged to send them to their home country, or some other willing destination, assuming the detainee doesn't mind. In cases where no one wants them or they fear return, such as the Uighurs to China, the detainees can at least still be held at Gitmo while the search is on.

In the event of a habeas defeat in Illinois, however, detainees who win their ha-

beas claims might well end up being released here in the U.S. Under the 1988 Convention against Torture, a detainee can't be returned to his home country if he can make a case that he'd be tortured there. If no country will take him, or the detainee doesn't want to go on torture grounds, then he can no longer be held here in the U.S. and will have to be released.

### Al Qaeda detainees move to Illinois and Yemen.

The Administration insists these non-U.S. citizens won't be allowed to walk American streets, presumably because it would use immigration law to hold them. But that's hardly a legal certainty. Under its 1999 decision in *Zadvydas v. Davis*, the Supreme Court ruled the government couldn't indefinitely detain an alien who was set for removal from the U.S.

Although the Court was careful in *Zadvydas* to note that the law was not tailored to terrorism-related cases that may warrant special consideration, the Supremes did make clear that a law allowing indefinite detention "would raise serious constitutional concerns." The detainees will also have a small army of fancy law-

yers dedicated to challenging their detention and prison treatment.

As for the politics, earlier this year Congress barred spending any money on transferring Gitmo prisoners to the U.S. Congress could lift that rider and appropriate the money, but we can't see too many Democrats being thrilled at taking that kind of vote. California Senator Dianne Feinstein couldn't back away quickly enough from the suggestion of using Alcatraz as the destination prison, and Mr. Obama got no warmer reception from Democrat Michael Bennet about a possible lock-up in Colorado.

Savor the irony. Mr. Obama says he had to close Guantanamo because it offended American values and was a recruiting tool for terrorists. Yet like Dick Cheney, Mr. Obama is now defending indefinite detention and even military tribunals for some of the detainees who will relocate to Thomson. We doubt al Qaeda will stop denouncing the U.S. merely because its comrades have moved to a state-side supermax. This is what happens when a new President rushes to fulfill a reckless campaign promise without a plan, or even much apparent thought.

# Japan's Risky Rapprochement With China

By KELLEY CURRIE

The new Japanese government has wasted no time in "rebalancing" the country's foreign-policy stance toward China, as last week's lavish visit by Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping to Tokyo shows. Warming relations between North Asia's two powers



Yukio Hatoyama

should be good for both, and the region as a whole. But Japan's growing friendship with the authoritarian regime in Beijing has inherent limits that the new government is starting to push up against. Mr. Xi's visit to the Imperial Palace last week was a political coup for China. Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama personally pushed hard for the audience, taking the unprecedented step of overruling the head of the Imperial Household Agency, which initially turned down the request due its short notice. The prime minister gave the Chinese further face at American expense by announcing the postponement of a decision on the Okinawa rebasing while Mr. Xi was still in Japan.

The Xi visit is only the latest in a string of recent outreaches between the two governments. Last month Chinese Defense Minister Liang Guanglie visited Tokyo and

inked an agreement on unprecedented military cooperation between China and Japan, including joint maritime rescue exercises. Japanese Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa called Japan's relationship with China "one of the most important bilateral relations," a surprising characterization given the history between the two Asian powers. There was also the recent extraordinary 640-person delegation to China, led by long-time Democratic Party of Japan China booster Ichiro Ozawa, and Mr. Hatoyama's decision to travel to Beijing immediately after assuming power.

None of this should come as a surprise for U.S. policy makers. Mr. Hatoyama was clear during the campaign he would seek closer relations with China, and both Republican and Democratic administrations in Washington have encouraged improved Sino-Japanese ties. The problem is that the seeming dramatic improvements in Sino-Japanese relations are taking place against a backdrop of shaky U.S.-Japan relations. President Obama's day-trip to Tokyo last month was marked by a public spat over the Okinawa base and an apparent lack of personal connection between Messrs. Obama and Hatoyama. Tokyo's continued efforts to push an East Asian Community that excludes the U.S. have only heightened American concerns.

Washington shares a measure of blame for the drift. The Obama administration's rhetoric has

heavily emphasized the need for American cooperation with China in managing global and regional challenges. Administration officials rarely mention America's vital democratic allies in Asia, and there has been much off-the-record grouching by senior U.S. offi-

## Tokyo's embrace of Beijing could jeopardize Japan's security relationship with the U.S.

cials about the difficulties of working with the Hatoyama foreign policy team. Mr. Obama chose to spend only a day in Japan on his recent visit to Asia, but three in China. Japanese policy makers have taken note: There is concern in Tokyo that the U.S. administration's recent agreement to talk about resolution of hostilities with North Korea—rather than exclusively focus on denuclearization—will lead to a reduction in Japanese influence on dealings with Pyongyang.

There are signs that the Obama administration recognizes there is a problem, and is trying to refocus its Asia policy by paying greater attention to relations with regional partners other than China. Mr. Obama recently concluded a warm and successful state visit with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The U.S. may also soon announce a package of de-

fense sales to Taiwan, and administration officials have been effusive in their praise of South Korean President Lee Myung-bak.

For now, the U.S. can afford to be patient about letting Japan's domestic political calculus work in its favor. But if U.S.-Japan relations continue to deteriorate, Japan could find itself increasingly marginalized in Washington, and Washington's strategic calculus would become more difficult. China is more than willing to step into the breach if relations with Washington cool, as demonstrated by Mr. Xi's politically astute expressions of appreciation for Japanese foreign assistance during his visit last week.

While continuing to support Sino-Japanese rapprochement, the U.S. side needs to keep making its case to officials in the Hatoyama administration, even if they seem uninterested in hearing it. They can do this by focusing on the shared values that underpin the U.S.-Japan alliance, as well as by showing greater appreciation for concrete areas of cooperation, such as Japan's effective development assistance in Afghanistan.

But the real check on Mr. Hatoyama and his DPJ-led government is ultimately his constituents. Japanese voters welcome the economic benefits of engagement with China, but they also recognize the benefits of their alliance with a strong democratic ally. Mr. Xi's audience with Emperor Akihito met with strong public protest, and has given the opposition

Liberal Democratic Party an issue that resonates with voters. Even the delay on the Okinawa basing decision may signal that Mr. Hatoyama feels politically constrained from immediately canceling the 2006 rebasing agreement.

Prime Minister Hatoyama will likely continue his promised efforts to "rebalance" Japanese relations with the U.S. and China, but now that he's actually responsible for governing, Mr. Hatoyama needs to ask himself: Which country would ultimately keep the Japanese people's best interests at heart—democratic America or authoritarian China? If the prime minister answers the latter, then the Japanese public—and the Obama administration—really will need to start worrying.

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# Ayatollah Montazeri

How a conservative cleric became the moral conscience of Iran's reform movement.

## Nader Hashemi

For many Iranians, Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, who died Sunday at the age of 87, was the moral equivalent of Desmond Tutu. Over the past 20 years, he distinguished himself by his persistent, judicious criticism of human rights abuses in the Islamic Republic and his defense of the democratic aspirations of the people of Iran within the framework of an ethical interpretation of Shiite Islam.

Born into a poor family in 1922 in the small town of Najafabad, he emerged as a leading cleric during the oppressive climate that enveloped Iran after the 1953 coup, allying himself with Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini to protest the dictatorship of the shah and Iran's close alliance with the United States and Israel. Ayatollah Montazeri was frequently imprisoned and subjected to torture — trials that increased his prestige and credibility as an opposition leader. He became one of the key theoreticians of the concept of the "rule of the Islamic jurist," which formed the foundation of Iran's post-revolutionary

constitutional order, thus ensuring clerical domination of Iranian politics (a position he would later regret).

As one of the leaders of Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution, he was soon designated as the official successor to Ayatollah Khomeini, a position he held until 1989. During this period of increasing internal repression and a wave of political executions, Ayatollah Montazeri began his uncompromising criticism of the Islamic Republic. As a result, he was removed from his position as Ayatollah Khomeini's heir apparent and all formal ties with the regime were severed. Ayatollah Montazeri retired to his home in the religious city of Qum to resume his teaching and to reflect upon the relationship between religion, ethics and politics.

During this period, Ayatollah Montazeri's thought underwent a reorientation. Human rights and democracy moved to the center of his religious teaching. On many of Iran's most politically charged debates, he intervened in an unprecedented manner that marked a clear contrast with the ideology of Iranian regime. On the question of Iran's persecuted Bahai minority, he called for the granting of full citizenship rights and rejected longstanding views on the punishment for apostasy in Islam.

He apologized for the seizure of the U.S. embassy in 1979, called for the establishment of relations with the United States, and even issued a fatwa on nuclear weapons, encouraging Muslims to "take the lead in banning legally and practically all such weapons for all countries."

In November 1997, a few months after Mohammad Khatami's presidential victory, Ayatollah Montazeri delivered a harshly worded sermon on the birthday of the first Shiite Imam. In this speech, which circulated clandestinely in Iran and abroad, he criticized the authoritarianism of the ruling clerics and encouraged Iran's new reformist president to use his popular mandate to press forward with democratizing the political system. He also criticized the legitimacy of Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei. Retribution was swift: his office and home were attacked by thugs and the cleric was placed under house arrest for the next five years. Yet he continued to issue bold statements of support to Iran's reform movement.

In the aftermath of Iran's discredited presidential elections this year, Ayatollah Montazeri was one of the most outspoken critics of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Ali Khamenei. In the final six

months of his life, he issued a statement of support for the Green Movement and condemned human rights abuses. A regime that "censors the press, obstructs the media, imprisons intellectuals and elected leaders on false allegations or forced confessions," he wrote, "is despicable and has no religious merit."

In a widely reported fatwa on July 11, he called Iran's rulers "usurpers and transgressors" who have lost all legitimacy to rule. This was a historic statement as it explicitly affirmed that all believing Muslims have a moral obligation to oppose the current rulers in Iran and to seek their replacement, albeit through nonviolent means.

Ayatollah Montazeri was feared by Iran's ruling establishment precisely because he undermined their legitimacy. He will join the pantheon of Iranian leaders who struggled against dictatorship. Arguably, his most important legacy is in showing that, when given a choice, one must always follow the dictates of one's conscience over the temptations of political power.

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# The Peoples' Revolt in Iran

The foundation stones of Iran's Islamic Republic were shaken again on Monday, showing that the largest antigovernment movement in its 30 years may be one of the biggest stories of next year as well. Now imagine the possibilities if the Obama Administration began to support Iran's democrats.

The perseverance of the so-called Green Movement is something to behold. Millions of Iranians mobilized against the outcome of June's fraudulent presidential election, and their protests were violently repressed. But the cause has only grown in scope, with the aim of many becoming nothing less than the death of a hated system.

Monday offered a glimpse into the regime's crisis of legitimacy. As in the waning days of the Shah in the late 1970s, Iranians merely need an excuse to show what they think of their rulers. The funeral of a leading Shiite cleric who'd inspired and guided the opposition brought out tens to hundreds of thousands to Iran's religious capital of Qom. Media coverage is severely restricted, but the demonstration's size was impossible to deny.

Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, who died Sunday, was no ordinary religious figure. He stood alongside the leader of the Islamic Revolution, his mentor Ayatollah Khomeini, and he was hand-picked to replace him. But Montazeri broke with the ruling mullahs in the late 1980s, criticizing their violence and re-

pression. And in recent months, he became a spiritual leader to the opposition.

He knew the regime intimately: "A political system based on force, oppression, changing people's votes, killing, closure, arresting and using Stalinist and medieval torture, creating repression, censorship of newspapers, interruption of the means of mass communications, jailing the enlightened and the elite of society for false reasons, and forcing them to make false confessions in jail, is condemned and illegitimate," he wrote.

Ailing at his death, Montazeri leaves behind a legacy Iranian modernizers can build on. Like the Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani in Iraq, he believed that the Shiite clergy should stay out of democratic politics. He also helped shape views on Iran's nuclear program. In October, Montazeri issued a fatwa against developing an Iranian bomb. His statement confirmed the view among Green Movement figures who believe an atomic weapon will only consolidate the regime's hold on power and isolate Iran.

Absent religious legitimacy for the so-called Islamic Republic, the current rulers must rely on blunt means of preservation,



The regime is losing legitimacy.

such as the elite Revolutionary Guards and the Basiji militias. Thus Iran seems to be morphing into a military dictatorship, not unlike the Poland of Wojciech Jaruzelski after the "workers"—the supposed communist vanguard—turned against that regime.

Relying on thugs carries risks. During the summer protests, many protestors were killed, tortured and raped in the regime's jails. Among the dead is the son of a prominent conservative parliamentarian. Supreme leader Ali Khamenei sought to damp public outrage by closing the most notorious prison at Kahrizak, but pressure has continued to build. Reversing months of denials, the government on Saturday acknowledged the abuses, bringing charges against 12 military officials for the murder of three young protestors this summer.

Previously a neutral broker in Iranian politics, Khamenei undermined himself by siding so openly with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad after June's elections. The decision to prosecute, which he would have had to sign off on, may be another miscalculation. A trial could help expose the corruption at the heart of this system.

(Another Polish parallel comes to mind: The 1984 trial of the secret policemen who murdered the pro-Solidarity priest, Father Jerzy Popieluszko, that further hurt that government's credibility.)

Which brings us to President Obama. Throughout this turbulent year in Iran, the White House has been behind the democratic curve. When the demonstrations started, Mr. Obama abdicated his moral authority by refusing to take sides, while pushing ahead with plans to negotiate a grand diplomatic bargain with Mr. Ahmadinejad that trades recognition for suspending the nuclear program.

Mr. Obama has since moved at least to embrace "universal values," and in his Nobel address this month he mentioned the democracy protestors by name. The White House sent condolences on Monday to Montazeri's friends and family, which is what passes for democratic daring in this Administration.

But the White House is also still pleading for talks even as its December deadline passes without any concession from Tehran. Meantime, the Iranian opposition virtually begs Washington not to confer any legitimacy on the regime, and the democracy demonstrators crave American support. Iran's civil society clock may now be ticking faster than its nuclear clock. However hard it may be to achieve, a new regime in Tehran offers the best peaceful way to halt Iran's atomic program. Shouldn't American policy be directed toward realizing that goal?

# Obama, Pakistan and Mullah Omar

No matter how many troops President Obama orders to Afghanistan, victory will also require a surge across the Pakistan border that the Taliban and al Qaeda—but not American GIs—cross easily. The President knows this, but he hasn't made Pakistan's help any easier to obtain by signalling his intention to draw down a mere year after his surge troops arrive in Afghanistan.

Pakistan has slowly expanded its cooperation this year as its public and military have awakened to the threat from their own Islamist militants after a spate of terrorist attacks, including on the military headquarters in Rawalpindi. Long portrayed as noble bearded mountain fighters in Pakistan's press, the Islamists are at last seen as an existential threat to Islamabad and Lahore. And this year the military has pushed the Pakistani Taliban from the Swat Valley and South Waziristan and, in contrast with past offensives, hasn't for now ceded back the ground in a misconceived truce. This is progress.

But so far the generals have refused to take on other Islamists they don't view as a danger and have long cultivated as strategic assets—that is, the Afghan Taliban. This means the Taliban

government in exile in Quetta, the capital of Baluchistan province, and Afghan insurgents loyal to the ailing Jalaluddin Haqqani and his son Siraj based in North Waziristan. The so-called Quetta shura is led by deposed Taliban leader and Osama bin Laden ally, Mullah Omar, who fled in 2001 and now directs the fighting in southern Afghanistan from Quetta. The Haqqani network is the largest insurgent group in eastern Afghanistan.

We're told that Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari, in a private letter to Mr. Obama earlier this month, promised to take the fight to North Waziristan and Baluchistan. Merely to have a Pakistani politician acknowledge the existence of the Quetta shura counts as progress. The Pakistanis are reluctant to arrest their longtime proxies, Haqqani or Omar, but they could at least disrupt their headquarters and make it harder to operate from Pakistan.

As ever, the final decision rests with the Pakistan military led by General Ashfaq Kayani. According to a story in the New York Times, he has resisted the entreaties and told the U.S. that his troops have their hands too full with their own Pakistani Taliban to expand their operations.

The head of the U.S. Central Command, General David Petraeus, and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Mike Mullen visited Pakistan earlier this month to nudge some more. Perhaps they used the opportunity to express U.S. frustration about official Pakistani complicity in the deaths of American troops in Afghanistan. Such messages need to be sent, though the best way is in private.

If Pakistan truly has given up on its old double game of claiming to back America while allowing a Taliban sanctuary within its borders, now would be a good time to show it's serious. If not, the U.S. has leverage with Islamabad through foreign aid, as well as various military options. U.S. drone strikes can be expanded, including for the first time to Baluchistan, and special forces might be deployed across the porous border.

Both carry diplomatic risks. Though drone strikes have killed about two dozen civilians according to one Pakistani government estimate, the country's press loves to exaggerate the toll to embarrass the government and stoke anti-Americanism. The presence of U.S. troops in Pakistan, if publicized, could also undermine a Zardari government that's taken brave risks to help Washington.

This is where Mr. Obama's decision to announce a July 2011 deadline for beginning to withdraw from Afghanistan has been damaging. Various Administration officials have tried to walk back that deadline, but it has played inside Pakistan as further evidence that the Americans will

eventually bug out of the region. Pakistan's military and intelligence services have long hedged their bets by supporting Mullah Omar and the Afghan Taliban in case the U.S. leaves and for fear that India will try to fill any power vacuum in Kabul. Now they have another excuse not to change.

The reality is that the gravest threat to Pakistan comes from Islamic radicals, especially if they are able to survive the U.S. and NATO surge. Their next targets will be Islamabad and Rawalpindi as much as Kabul, London or New York. The U.S. and Pakistan share a common enemy, and Mr. Obama will have to assure the Pakistanis that the American commitment won't end with some arbitrary withdrawal deadline made to appease the U.S. antiwar left.



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# The Terror This Time

**A** U.S. government that has barred the phrase “war on terror” has nonetheless acknowledged that a failed Christmas day bomb attack on an airliner was a terrorist attempt. Can we all now drop the pretense that we stopped fighting a war once Dick Cheney and George W. Bush left the White House?

The attempt by 23-year-old Nigerian Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab follows the alleged murders in Ft. Hood, Texas by Islamist-inspired Major Nidal Hasan in November. Brian Jenkins, who studies terrorism for the Rand Corporation, says there were more terror incidents (12), including thwarted plots, on U.S. soil in 2009 than in any year since 2001. The jihadists don’t seem to like Americans any better because we’re closing down Guantanamo.

This increasing terror tempo makes the Obama Administration’s reflexive impulse to treat terrorists like routine criminal suspects all the more worrisome. It immediately indicted Mr. Abdulmutallab on criminal charges of trying to destroy an aircraft, despite reports that he told officials he had ties to al Qaeda and had picked up his PETN explosive in Yemen. The charges mean the Nigerian can only be interrogated like any other defendant in a criminal case, subject to having a lawyer present and his Miranda rights

read.

Yet he is precisely the kind of illegal enemy combatant who should be interrogated first with the goal of preventing future attacks and learning more about terror networks rather than gaining a single conviction. We now have to hope he co-operates voluntarily.

Janet Napolitano, the secretary of homeland security, told CNN Monday that “one thing I’d like to point out is that the system worked.” Yet the terrorist screening system

seems to have failed in at least two crucial ways: first, in failing to revoke a visa to the U.S. that Mr. Abdulmutallab had obtained last June despite a later warning to U.S. consular officials from his own father that he was becoming radicalized and might have terror network ties; and second, in not adding him to a no-fly list from a lower-level watch list.

The episode is a reminder that the fight against terrorism requires even more interagency cooperation, and Congress should investigate whether such communication was lacking in this case. No one should leap to conclusions about who is responsible for any mistakes, but Ms. Napolitano isn’t reassuring when she utters happy talk that it all “went very smoothly.” The day was saved not because of the antiterror “system” but because the explosive failed to ignite and

because a Dutch passenger and flight attendants acted heroically to subdue the man, put out the fire and detach the explosive.

The lesson here is the same as Flight 93 on 9/11 and shoe-bomber Richard Reid, which is that civilians willing to act in their own self-defense are a crucial part of “homeland security.” The willingness of passengers and crew to identify potential threats seems more useful than more onerous airport screening, which only gives terrorists the satisfaction of knowing they have made air travel even more unbearable. The new rule to keep passengers in their seats in the final hour of some flights seems all too typical of arbitrary rules that inconvenience innocents but not terrorists.

On that score, the settlement reportedly won earlier this year by the so-called flying imams against a U.S. airline for knocking them off a flight in 2006 sends exactly the wrong message. The interests of nonradical Muslims will hardly be served if political correctness allows the next terror attack to succeed.

Mr. Abdulmutallab’s alleged links to Yemen also raise questions about why the Administration is now returning Guantanamo detainees to that unstable Middle East nation. Pentagon officials have raised alarms about Yemen as an emerging al Qaeda sanctuary for at least

a year, and now we may have the first case of a terrorist trained there to strike at U.S. airline or domestic targets. The Yemen government says it is cooperating with the U.S., and the CIA is said to be providing intelligence for some of Aden’s anti-al Qaeda efforts. But at this point the repatriation of Gitmo detainees to Yemen seems dangerous, and recklessly so.

No doubt in the days ahead we’ll learn more about how the young Nigerian became radicalized. Like many of the 9/11 murderers, he came from an affluent family and was highly educated. We know by now that the poverty-causes-terrorism school is false, but this is one more reminder. Authorities will also want to know

how he was recruited—whether in person during a trip to Yemen or other sanctuary, through al Qaeda agents elsewhere, or perhaps via the Internet like Major Hasan. The report that the Nigerian turned more radical only in the last 18 months shows that our antiterror vigilance will have to continue for years, if not decades, to come.

Such vigilance is easier to sustain, and likelier to succeed in deterring attacks, if we understand that we are still fighting a multifront war against the various elements of radical Islam. This time, thanks to luck and bravery, the 278 passengers and crew of Northwest Flight 253 avoided death. We’d rather take the luck out of it.



Janet  
Napolitano

# U.S. missed signs of terror threat

*Investigators say authorities didn't pursue leads on alleged Christmas Day bomber; system hasn't adapted to al Qaeda*

WASHINGTON—U.S. authorities didn't pursue leads that might have brought alleged Christmas Day bomber Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab under further scrutiny, according to congressional investigators and U.S. officials.

By Evan Perez,  
Cam Simpson  
and Stobhan Gorman

The State Department forwarded Mr. Abdulmutallab's name to a basic U.S. terrorist watch list earlier this month, but didn't revoke his visa after Mr. Abdulmutallab's father alerted U.S. officials to his son's potential radicalization. His purchase of a \$2,800 plane ticket with cash also didn't set off alarm bells.

The case highlights a failure of the terrorist watch-list system to adapt to the evolving threat from al Qaeda, said one senior U.S. counterterrorism official. Intelligence reports have said for years that a growing threat comes from al Qaeda sympathizers who may not have a direct connection to its leadership.

U.S. terrorism defenses still rely on data that associate suspects with known al Qaeda operatives, rather than scrutinizing behavior that could indicate terrorist planning, the official said.

The Obama administration has launched a review of its screening, including the series of watch lists designed to prevent potential terrorists from traveling to the U.S. The review likely will include whether to require foreign airlines to report cash purchases of tickets overseas, a Homeland Security official said Monday.

One area of inquiry is whether

the State Department should have revoked Mr. Abdulmutallab's multiple-entry visa after his father on Nov. 19 came to the U.S. Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, and reported that his son might have extremist ties in Yemen. A revocation could have forced Mr. Abdulmutallab to reapply, giving authorities a chance to interview him.

Instead, State Department officials say, the day after the father's visit, the agency put a note in Mr. Abdulmutallab's internal State Department file that would trigger an investigation if the Nigerian applied for a new visa in the future.

## Tiers of watch lists

### Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment about 560,000 names

Information collected from multiple government agencies. Conduct that can place a person on the list includes: gathering information on potential targets for terrorist activity; soliciting funds for, or membership in, a terrorist organization; or providing material support, such as transportation or weapons, for a terrorist organization.

### Terrorist Screening Data Base approximately 400,000 names

Analysts use a 'reasonable suspicion' standard—based on past conduct, current actions, and credible intelligence concerning future conduct—to determine if a person is elevated to this list, the main database on international terrorism within the U.S. government.

### Transportation Security Administration lists

**'Selectee' list:** Approximately 14,000 names. Used to identify people who should receive additional screening such as a physical inspection of the person and a hand-search of the passenger's luggage.

**No-fly list:** Approximately 3,400 names; deemed to be a threat to civil aviation or national security and therefore should be precluded from boarding an aircraft.

Source: U.S. Government Accountability Office

said one U.S. intelligence official. Only if Mr. Abdulmutallab had been elevated to a narrower watch list would he likely have been stopped and questioned.

Another U.S. security flag that should have been triggered, according to airline industry experts, was one designed to discriminate between air travelers who are known customers—who pay with credit cards and whose data match previously used information—and those who are less known, such as those who pay with cash.

On Dec. 16, Mr. Abdulmutallab paid cash in Accra, Ghana, for a reservation, and provided no contact information, according to Nigerian authorities. U.S. systems designed to scrutinize cash-ticket purchases weren't triggered, people briefed on the probe say, so Mr. Abdulmutallab didn't get a secondary screening in Amsterdam.

A Homeland Security official said cash purchases don't have to be reported from overseas because they are common, especially in poor countries.

Mr. Abdulmutallab carried a valid U.S. visa printed into a Nigerian passport equipped with the latest security features, Nigerian authorities said.

The bombing attempt could also prompt scrutiny from U.S. lawmakers of the Air Marshals program, which was beefed up after the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks. According to Rep. Peter King (R., N.Y.), there were no marshals on the Christmas Day flight, nor on the same flight two days later where another passenger disruption occurred.

—Susan Carey contributed  
to this article

the no-fly list, but he should be checked out," the counterterrorism official said.

Embassy personnel sent a report about Mr. Abdulmutallab to intelligence and counterterrorism officials in the U.S., as required by law. That prompted intelligence officials to create a record in the National Counterterrorism Center's TIDE database, a repository of 560,000 individuals that many agencies rely on to create their own, smaller watch lists.

But the data didn't merit further action because they didn't meet the threshold of "reasonable suspicion,"

Although the State Department has the authority to independently revoke a visa, the agency rarely makes such decisions on its own. Instead, it relies on investigations by the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center, the multiagency clearinghouse for terrorism information.

The warning by Mr. Abdulmutallab's father should have been combined with information from airline personnel, such as the suspect's purchase of his ticket with cash and his carrying only a backpack for an international flight. That behavioral profile "doesn't mean he should be on

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# The Tipping Point in Iran

BY ABBAS MILANI

When millions of peaceful demonstrators took to the streets of big Iranian cities in June to protest what was widely assumed to be a stolen election, many in the West wondered whether the movement had the will and vision to sustain itself.

Apologists for the regime in America and in Iran dismissed the democratic protests as the angst of a small minority of Westernized yuppies or discontented academics. Clerics loyal to the regime used the incendiary language of class warfare. They dismissed the opposition as accomplices of the Great Satan and a small minority composed of wealthy urbanites fighting to reverse the gains the poor—*mustazaf*—have made around the country.

Over the past six months the regime has killed dozens of demonstrators, arrested hundreds of activists and forced hundreds of others into exile. It took false comfort in the belief that it had defeated what it self-deludingly claimed had been nothing but an American-concocted velvet revolution.

This weekend's bloody protests during the holiday of Ashura culminate a pattern of persistence and perseverance on the part of the opposition. There can now be little doubt about the movement's staying power.

Western countries dealing with Iran must now recognize that the specter of this democratic movement hovers over every negotiation. Sunday's protests might have even ended the regime's delusions that it can once again cow the population into submission.

In cities big and small, people have continued to engage in large



Iranian protestors hold a boot, a baton and a bulletproof vest allegedly belonging to police during a demonstration on Dec. 27.

and small acts of civil disobedience. In the city of Rafsanjan, demonstrators freed two prisoners about to be hung by the regime. And in Tehran, those unwilling to come into the streets and brave the baton-wielding *basijis* and gun-toting policemen astride motorcycles, go to their rooftops under the cover of the night and shout "Death to the dictator!"

Even the mostly dormant but economically successful Iranian-American diaspora is beginning to show signs of eagerness to help those fighting on the front lines of democracy inside Iran. There are increasing numbers of solidarity demonstrations, efforts to lobby politicians, and aggressive fundraising effort to provide support for Iranians being pressured by the regime.

Those who, for so long, have implicitly apologized for the regime by claiming that the only problem with it is that it is not afforded enough respect by the world, particularly by the U.S.,

must now see the poverty of their argument. The last six months have shown unequivocally that the problem with the Iranian regime is the regime itself.

Much has been written about the fact that Iran's democratic movement today combines the three characteristics of a velvet revolution—nonviolent, nonutopian and populist in nature—with the nimble organizational skills and communication opportunities afforded by the Web. Less discussed has been the significance of the youthfulness and Internet-savvy nature of the Iranian population.

Seventy percent of Iranians are under the age of 30. And in a population of 75 million, 22 million are Internet users. In spite of the nominal leadership of reformists like Medhi Karroubi, Mir Hossein Mousavi and Mohammad Khatami, the real leaders of the movement have been the thousands of groups and individuals who work autonomously, and whose structure repli-

cates the Internet.

Until now, this lack of structure has given the movement its power. But the democratic movement has reached its own hour of reckoning.

As Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and his cohorts come nearer to a crisis, as rifts within the regime deepen in coming weeks, as the regime ratchets up its ruthlessness against the democrats, and as the world, with anxious eyes on the nuclear issue, carefully watches the domestic situation in Iran, the democratic movement must develop a more coherent plan of action and a more disciplined leadership. And the world, particularly the West, must also let the regime know that it will not stand by idly as the people of Iran are brutalized by the regime.

To many in the outside world, the regime's brashness—its willingness to murder peaceful demonstrators in broad daylight and its adventurism in the nuclear arena—have been shocking. But to the people of Iran, who have long suffered the consequences of the regime's political despotism, its ideological sclerosis, and its economic incompetence and corruption, recent events are only egregious manifestations of what they have endured for three decades. It is the slow, sinister grind of this structural violence that has now turned nearly every strata of Iranian society—save those who owe their fortunes to the status quo—into the de facto foe of the regime.

According to Transparency International, Iran is today one of the most corrupt economies in the world. It also has the ignominy of topping the list of all countries in terms of brain drain. Each year, be-

tween 150,000 and 180,000 of the country's best and brightest leave the country. The yearly cost to Iran for this brain drain alone is estimated to be almost equal to the yearly cost of the Iran-Iraq War, according to the World Bank.

Falling oil prices are now forcing the regime to reduce the almost \$100 billion of subsidies it pays to keep quiet a discontent population. The reserves it accumulated when oil prices were \$150 per barrel have long been squandered by Ahmadinejad on hare-brained schemes like carelessly making loans to start businesses that ended up fueling a real-estate bubble, rather than creating jobs.

But this inevitable reduction of subsidies is sure to further reduce the standards of living for the poor and middle classes. This will make the horizon grim for the triumvirate of Revolutionary Guard commanders, Khamenei and Ahmadinejad who now rule Iran.

\* \* \*

A politically discontent population forced to experience an unexpected economic downturn was a key element of the recipe that overthrew the Shah from the Peacock Throne in 1979. Poetic justice that the same sudden change in the country's economic fortune—and even the same use of religious rites and rituals for political purposes that brought the clerics to power 30 years ago—is now coming back to haunt them.

*Mr. Milani is the director of Iranian Studies at Stanford University where he is also a research fellow at the Hoover Institution. His latest book is "Eminent Persians: The Men and Women Who Made Modern Iran, 1941-1979" (Syracuse University Press, 2009).*

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## Al Qaeda's Clear Message

**A**pparently the fellows in al Qaeda took as a personal insult Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano's comment Sunday that their role in the foiled Detroit airliner bombing wasn't clear but would be investigated. Monday, al

**The U.S. has to rethink  
jihad's global terrorist  
recruitment.**

Qaeda's ascendant franchise in the Arabian peninsula saved Secretary Napolitano the trouble of plowing through all the layers of the national-security bureaucracy for an answer.

The terrorist organization put out a pointed statement not only claiming responsibility

but also mocking the U.S.'s ability to stop them. Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, they said, "dealt a huge blow to the myth of American and global intelligence services and showed how fragile its structure is."

What this means is that we have to think more broadly about jihad and the potential recruitment of terrorists anywhere in the world, including inside the United States. America and its European

allies have to revisit the problem of fiery imams using mosques as recruitment depots for airline suicide bombers. The close call in the airspace over Detroit gives "probable cause" new meaning.

Al Qaeda has sent a message to the Obama Administration: You are in a *war*. Someone in the U.S. government needs to say clearly that they now understand the message.

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# The India Climate-Change Calculus

By BRAHMA CHELLANEY

China has been publicly excoriated by U.S. officials and others for opposing a binding climate-change deal at this month's United Nations summit in Copenhagen. But the real loser was India.

By aligning itself with China's negotiating position, India bracketed itself with the world's largest polluting nation. This tack has been months in the works; back in October, New Delhi signed a five-year memo of understanding with Beijing and agreed, among other things, to present a united front in Copenhagen. Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh went so far as to declare there "is no difference" between the two countries' negotiating positions.

Yet there is a huge difference in actual emissions. China is the world's largest polluter, responsible for 24% of global carbon emissions. Most of these emissions are due to China's economic development path, which

has relied heavily on carbon-intensive, manufacturing industries. China's per-capita carbon emissions are four times higher than India's, which boasts the lowest per-capita emissions among all-important developing countries, at 26% of the world's average.

China also doesn't share India's basic approach to curbing global warming. New Delhi wants per-capita emission levels and historic contributions to the build-up of greenhouse gases to form the objective criteria for any global carbon mitigation plan. China, as the world's factory, wants a different formula that discounts carbon intensity linked to export industries.

Nor does India have much in common with other major developing nations, either in its carbon profile or industrial-development levels. For example, in 2007 (the latest figures available) India's per-capita emissions totalled 1.2 tons; South Africa, 9.4; China, 4.8; and Brazil, 2.1, according to the U.S.

Energy Information Administration.

These facts argue for India to align itself with the least developed nations, which have lower emissions profiles. Yet the government of Prime Minister

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**Aligning with China only undermines New Delhi's negotiating position and costs its people dearly.**

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Manmohan Singh entered the Copenhagen negotiations joined at the hip with China, first by agreeing to put up a united front and then by following in Beijing's footsteps to unveil a voluntary plan to slash its carbon intensity by 2020.

The move forced the U.S. to strike a watered-down deal with the developing-world bloc of Brazil, India, South Africa and China—rather than deal directly with the world's largest pol-

luter, China. The deal also committed India to "implement mitigation actions" open to "international consultations and analysis." Rather than focus on providing basic services—like electricity and safe drinking water—to the hundreds of millions of poor Indians who desperately need them, Mr. Singh also pledged to slash India's emissions intensity by 20% "regardless of the outcome" in Copenhagen.

Past experience should have taught India that whenever it has joined hands with China on environmental issues, it has been let down by Beijing's proclivity to jettison principles in the ruthless pursuit of self-interest. Take the 1989 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer: China teamed up with India in the negotiations, only to reverse its stance and agree to abide by the protocol if it were compensated for the compliance costs. India was forced to follow suit.

In Copenhagen, India would

have done better to delink itself from China and the other two leading developing nations and to encourage the world's largest polluters—the U.S. and China—to do a deal.

India not only aligned itself with the wrong group, but also it presented itself inadvertently as a major global polluter by making common cause with China, whose developmental path threatens to unleash a carbon tsunami on the world. After all, had the situation in Copenhagen been reversed—with India's per-capita emissions four times higher than China's, and with India in the line of international fire—would Beijing have helped provide New Delhi diplomatic cover?

*Mr. Chellaney, professor of strategic studies at the Centre for Policy Research in New Delhi, is the author of "On the Frontline of Climate Change: International Security Implications" (Konrad Adenauer Foundation, 2007).*



# Hold the rich nations to their word

**Jeffrey Sachs**

**W**ith days remaining in the Copenhagen climate talks, the rich have finally begun to discuss climate financing for the poor. The negotiating round has gone on for two years with little serious discussion on financing and many other topics, a gaping failure of a process run by and for rich-country politicians who do not like to be bothered with unpleasant details. This will not do. Climate financing needs a formula.

The governing law is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change signed in 1992. It is unambiguous. "The developed country Parties... shall provide new and additional financial resources to meet the agreed full costs incurred by developing country Parties in complying with their obligations" under the treaty. Moreover, "developed country Parties... shall also assist the developing country Parties that are particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change in meeting costs of adaptation to those adverse effects". The treaty emphasises the need for "adequacy and predictability in the flow of funds".

If negotiations were in good faith and properly managed, two years would have been enough to determine the mechanisms for new, additional, adequate and predictable resources to meet the needs of the developing countries. Of course, no such discussions took place. Political leaders of

the developed countries did not speak frankly with their own citizens, nor did they deign to negotiate with the poorer countries. President Barack Obama has not breathed a word to the American people about the financing responsibilities of Americans to the developing countries under long-agreed international law.

Rich-country leaders want to sneak by on minimalist commitments eked out of recalcitrant parliaments back home, not ones consistent with global needs or international obligations. That may be clever politics on an election-to-election basis, but it is wrecking the prospects for a rational approach to global crises.

I know this well from another closely related set of financing commitments, the rich-country pledges on development aid. As recently as September at the Group of 20, rich countries promised again to fulfil a 2005 promise to raise aid to Africa by about \$30bn a year between 2005 and 2010. Yet with three weeks to go until the deadline, the rich world is roughly \$20bn behind. When I inquired in 2005 about the spreadsheet showing how the promise would be fulfilled, I was told that the US government had insisted on "no spreadsheets".

Only a few countries have consistently honoured their financing commitments (notably Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden). The recent "offer" by the European Union of \$100bn a year in climate financing by 2020 is as bankable as Lehman shares. The "proposal", characteristically, had no specifics, no formulas and no accountability.

Copenhagen is the occasion to fix a broken system. We need to end the no-spreadsheet tactic that dominates financial transfers to developing countries. The draft climate text circulated on December 11 has the key phrase, though it is currently stuck in brackets, indicating a lack of agreement among the parties. The phrase is "an assessed scale of contributions".

We need, in short, an assessment formula. Member states of the International Monetary Fund pay assessments based on an agreed quota formula; likewise, the UN requires mem-

ber states to their responsibilities under international law, keeping the rest at home. Mexico, Norway and Switzerland have proposed emissions-based assessments along these lines.

The developed countries currently emit about 15bn tons of carbon dioxide a year from fossil fuel and industrial processes. An assessment of a bit over \$3 a ton, roughly a fifth of the market price of emissions permits, would yield \$50bn a year, a reasonable flow of financing for the next few years. Since China and other major middle-income economies have reached, or are quickly reaching, income levels where they too should agree to pay for the poorer countries, the base for assessments would grow over time to meet growing needs. Of course, today's low-income countries will also graduate from the need for transfers over time, so that this assessment system will phase out in a few decades. Principles for graduation could be established along the lines used at the World Bank.

A greenhouse gas assessment would be a major step forward in rationalising climate financing. A tax on international financial transactions, recently discussed by the Council of Europe, offers a sound base for analogous assessments for development financing. The entire world will gain enormously from the resulting predictability, fairness and follow-through of climate and development financing that we urgently need but have not yet achieved.

*The writer is director of The Earth Institute at Columbia University*

**Copenhagen is the occasion to fix a broken system. We need, in short, an assessment formula for climate financing**

ber states to pay an assessment for its budget. We need clear formulas as well for development and climate financing.

In the case of climate change, a formula stares us in the face. Countries should be assessed according to their greenhouse gas emissions, on the "polluter pays" principle. Not only would this be transparent, proportionate and aligned with proper incentives, but it would also be administratively manageable. Governments will in any event be collecting revenues through carbon taxes and auctions of emissions permits. They would then devote a modest fraction of those rev-

# Dealing with Iran

*United international front and policies that target regime*

New sanctions voted through by the US Congress aimed at preventing – or at least stalling – Iran's nuclear ambitions will eventually empower Barack Obama to prohibit foreign companies that supply Iran with refined petroleum from doing business in America. Dealing with the mercurial mix of breastbeating and paranoia exuded by the Tehran theocrats is a real problem. But, even so, it is not clear this is the best way forward.

The guiding principles in dealing with Iran are: first, forge a phalanx of unity at international level; and second, make sure your policy discriminates between the regime and Iranian citizens – whose tolerance of the Islamic Republic has reached breaking point after last summer's imposed election result and its bloody aftermath. Do the new sanctions pass either test?

Recent history shows that sanctions imposed by the US – with purported extraterritorial reach that can force its allies to rein in their corporations – do not really work. Furthermore, they hugely annoy America's friends. This is not the time for that.

The Iran Libya Sanctions Act (Ilsa) sailed through Congress a decade ago. Yet, its effect was limited. Amid international outcry, not one company ended up sanctioned (due in part to presidential

waivers of the law). In the following decade, about \$30bn in foreign investment was committed to Iran's oil and gas industry. Undeniably, however, Iran got much less than it needed, and had to deal with lesser companies.

The panoply of sanctions against Iran probably means it foregoes roughly a quarter of its potential national output; it needs to invest around \$150bn to upgrade its oil industry in the next decade.

But denying Iran petrol – the target of the US Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act – is a crude response. It is not just scattergun but unilateral and extraterritorial – when the imperatives are international unity, and to widen the growing gap between the regime and the people, not close it. So many Iranians, with such enormous courage, have directed their fury at the heart of this theocracy built more on material than on spiritual interests. It would be a disaster if the regime could deflect that outwards at the external foes it depends on to corral its people.

What is needed are measures such as successful US-initiated sanctions on financial transactions and individuals that target all the players in the regime, and command not just the support of the US and its allies but Russia and China and theirs. And Iranians.

# A plan to eliminate the world's nuclear weapons

**Gareth Evans and  
Yoriko Kawaguchi**

**I**t is sheer dumb luck that since Nagasaki no nuclear weapon has exploded in a major population centre by accident, miscalculation or design. Some 23,000 warheads still exist, nearly half actively deployed, and more than 2,000 on dangerously high alert. Command and control systems are much more susceptible to error than commonly believed, and it is not beyond the capacity of terrorists to buy or build nuclear weapons. Climate change is not the only man-made threat capable of destroying life on this planet as we know it. The prospect of a nuclear catastrophe defies complacency, and maintaining the status quo indefinitely is not an option.

No responsible leader wants to see any new nuclear weapon state emerge, or weapons or material fall into the hands of terrorists. But unless the present nuclear-armed states get a lot more serious about not only non-proliferation and nuclear security but dramatically reducing and ultimately eliminating their own arsenals, they are going to find these risks almost impossible to contain.

The necessary interdependence of non-proliferation and disarmament is a central theme of this week's report of the Australia-Japan sponsored International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, which we co-chair.

The argument, though sometimes caricatured this way, is not that disarmament by itself will guarantee non-proliferation: no determined proliferator is going to be moved by example alone not to follow suit. Rather it is that to achieve almost any effective policy outcome in this area, there has to be serious buy-in – preferably outright support, but at least no opposi-

tion – from a very wide range of countries. Think of sanctions resolutions in the UN Security Council, compliance determinations by the International Atomic Energy Agency, negotiations on the cut-off of fissile material production for weapons purposes in the conference on disarmament in Geneva, or consensus agreements in the non-proliferation treaty (NPT) review conference.

It is no coincidence that agreement indefinitely to extend the NPT in 1995 followed intense downsizing of cold war nuclear stockpiles, that the proliferation reverses of the last decade occurred in the context of overt antagonism to arms control by the Bush-Cheney administration, or that the currently more optimistic outlook for the 2010 NPT review followed President Barack Obama's commitment actively to work for a world without nuclear weapons. When double standards diminish, co-operation increases.

In the period immediately ahead, there are three major contributions that the big nuclear-armed states can make to demonstrate a serious commitment to disarmament.

The first is for the US and Russia – holding between them more than 95 per cent of the world's nuclear warheads – not only rapidly to conclude the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty follow-on presently being negotiated, but to commence a new round of negotiations designed to produce further deep cuts in each side's arsenals.

The second is for all the nuclear weapon states to agree a strong statement on disarmament at next year's NPT review, renewing and extending the commitment they made in 2000 but failed to endorse in 2005.

The third, and perhaps most important of all, is for all the nuclear-armed states to adopt a nuclear doctrine that significantly reduces the role and salience of nuclear weapons in their defence posture. Credible “no first use” commitments are the ideal way-station to abolition, but will take time to achieve.

What would be entirely consistent with President Obama's Prague speech last April, and would give the greatest possible boost to international co-operation, would be for the US to make a genuinely transformational statement in its nuclear posture review scheduled for publication early in the new year. This would declare that the “sole purpose” of nuclear weapons, so long as they exist, should be to deter the use of nuclear weapons by others against oneself or one's allies. Other threats can and should be dealt with by conventional weapons: extended deterrence does not have to mean extended nuclear deterrence.

Washington's allies would have nothing to fear from such a move, and the world as a whole an enormous amount to gain.

*The writers are former foreign ministers of Australia and Japan.*

**The US should declare that the sole purpose of nuclear weapons, so long as they exist, is to deter their use by others**

# A global order swept away in the rapids of history



**Philip Stephens**

Cast around for the figures who shaped the geopolitics of the opening decade of the 21st century and Osama bin Laden and George W. Bush spring to mind. Al Qaeda's terrorist spectacular on September 11 2001 seemed to describe a new epochal challenge to a west grown complacent after the defeat of communism. The US president's response defined first the reach, and then the limits, of American power.

Some might add Vladimir Putin to such a list. I am not so sure. Mr Putin has salvaged Russia's wounded pride. He now plans to win back the presidency. Yet neither high oil prices nor bare-chested machismo have reversed the underlying trajectory of Russian decline.

Eight years after the destruction of New York's twin towers, Afghanistan and Pakistan are still the cockpit of a conflict rooted in fractured states, violent extremism and a wider struggle against modernity. Mr Bin Laden has evaded capture; Barack Obama, Mr Bush's successor, confronts in the war against the Taliban the most dangerous enemy of his presidency. The risk of unconventional weapons falling into the hands of jihadists – think about Pakistan's nuclear stockpile – amplifies western anxieties.

For all that, there have been bigger, more enduring, changes in the global landscape. Seen through the long lens of history, Mr Bin Laden and Mr Bush may turn out to be relatively minor players in an era of tumultuous upheaval. The big clashes of coming decades are more

likely to be between states as ideologies. The prevailing tensions will be between co-operation and competition, rules and anarchy, order and disorder.

The rise of Asia maps the most obvious of the geopolitical shifts. At the turn of the millennium, the talk was of a unipolar world in which US hegemony stretched into an indefinite future. The startling speed of China's rise has confounded all expectations. In a blink of history's eye, the march of power from west to east has become the central, unnerving fact of geopolitical life.

It is not just China. India has made its presence felt, even if many of its political leaders cling to the mindset of a middle-ranking nation. After a century or more as a "coming" power, Brazil may finally be in sight of its destination. South Africa, Mexico, Indonesia and, in the unsettling context of its nuclear ambitions, Iran are among those clamouring for due recognition in the councils of world affairs.

The international financial crisis presented proof that the world has outgrown the multilateral institutions of the second half of the 20th century. Poignantly, the glut of cheap credit that saw global boom turn to bust was born of Asia's determination to break free of the economic tutelage of the west's Washington consensus.

The old powers still get together in the Group of 8, but these gatherings have been eclipsed by those of the more inclusive G20. With the European Union courting geopolitical irrelevance (a test: name the EU's new president and foreign minister), the talk now is about a G2 of the US and China.

Such predictions are premature at best. One of the big lessons of the past decade has been that the world does not travel in straight lines. The Chinese officials I meet are far less secure about their country's

prospects than are western admirers. That said, the deference shown by Mr Obama during his visit to Beijing was a measure of how fast and far the rising nations have travelled. For two centuries the boundaries of global power were drawn by the Atlantic. Now they are being delineated by the Pacific.

There have been unpredictable upheavals also within emerging nations. While economic growth has lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty, rapid advances in communications technology has taken politics to the rural backwoods. Zbigniew Brzezinski, national security adviser to former US president Jimmy Carter, has dubbed this phenomenon the global political awakening.

Autocrats everywhere – including

## The rivalries of the future are as likely to be between rising states as between established and emerging powers

in China – eventually will feel the consequences. Satellite television and the web may one day be seen to have marked the beginning of a journey towards global democracy. In the short-term, the consequences of the awakening may be dangerously destabilising.

It is a mistake to imagine that the flow of power eastwards is a precursor to inevitable conflict between the west and what some have called "the rest". To the contrary, the rivalries of the future are as likely to be between rising states as between established and emerging powers.

Asia bears uncomfortable resemblance to 19th century Europe – a region still to escape the

half-buried rancour of the past, or settle enduring ethnic and border disputes. We must hope that the world has left behind the collisions between great powers that scarred the 20th century. But if the hope proves forlorn, it is easier to imagine a war between China and India than one between the US and China.

There are glimmers of optimism. For all today's insecurities, we live in untypically peaceful times. Fewer people are being killed in wars between or within states than at any time since 1945.

A year into his presidency, Mr Obama is criticised for failing to defuse some of the most dangerous challenges – Iran's nuclear programme, the Arab-Israeli conflict and Russia expansionism. The truth is that many of the problems can, at best, only be contained.

Mr Obama has grasped an essential truth about the emerging multipolar world. If the US is to remain the essential guarantor of global security – and there is no alternative – US power must be embedded in new multilateral coalitions. By understanding the limits of America's reach, the president may yet succeed in sustaining it.

The Copenhagen summit is sure to disappoint, but the seriousness of the climate talks marks recognition of mutual interdependence. When China's leaders talk about effective global governance, there is another flicker of hope.

The choice now is between a world in which powerful states are held in check by co-operative multilateralism; or one that is riven by the clash of narrow nationalisms. During the present decade everything changed. The next will be described by whether the great powers – old and rising – prove themselves masters or victims of a new global order.

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# Beijing finds fine words for its old enemy



**David Pilling**

Xi Jinping, the man widely tipped to succeed Hu Jintao as China's president in 2012, dropped in on Japan's emperor this week. Though such visits are normally arranged months in advance, Beijing gave just a couple of days' notice, the equivalent in imperial-etiquette terms of loudly banging on your neighbour's door at 3am asking to borrow a cup of sugar.

A request by Yukio Hatoyama, Japan's freshly installed prime minister, that an audience be granted even at such short notice, was criticised by some in Japan, particularly on the right. They saw in it a willingness by the new left-of-centre government to kowtow to Beijing. Even the normally discreet head of the Imperial Household Agency, the stern and secretive body that controls the royal schedule, objected publicly that the emperor should not be used as a diplomatic tool.

These minor ructions obscured the more important fact: that the meeting took place at all. Mr Xi did not bow (cf Barack Obama). But he did coo, in no doubt entirely off-the-cuff remarks: "I hope my visit will contribute to the development of friendly co-operation between the two countries and boost friendship between the two peoples."

You only need to cast your mind a few years back to realise how remarkable has been the change in tone. Throughout the nearly six years of Junichiro Koizumi's premiership, ending in 2006, the two countries were far more likely to be hurling diplomatic mud than trading scripted niceties. Mr Koizumi's penchant for visiting Yasukuni shrine, a Japanese war memorial vilified by Beijing, meant he was effectively banned from setting foot on Chinese soil. Relations entered dangerous territory in 2005 when Japan's (aborted) endeavour to secure itself a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council sparked three weeks of anti-Japanese demonstrations in which Japanese commercial and diplomatic interests were attacked the length and breadth of China.

Those mass protests may have been enough to convince Beijing that its anti-Japanese card – useful for

fostering nationalist sentiment in the years after Tiananmen – had been overplayed. Certainly, the Communist party leadership went out of its way to hold out an olive branch to Shinzo Abe, who followed Mr Koizumi into office, even though he was more overtly nationalist than his predecessor. The two countries' promise to build a mutually beneficial relationship uncorked a torrent of diplomatic froth, including

## Many Chinese want to eat sushi and teppanyaki steaks, to travel in bullet trains and to emulate Japanese fashions

meticulously choreographed visits to Tokyo by both Mr Hu and Wen Jiabao, China's premier.

Remarkably, this detente – weaved with fine words rather than built with concrete actions – has held, and even flourished. Contrast that with the sorry state of the other important relationships in the region. China and India have become locked in an increasingly nasty dispute over territory and geopolitical influence. Even Japan and the US, normally

the best buddies in the Pacific, have fallen out over alliance-related issues, specifically Mr Hatoyama's reluctance to endorse a decade-old plan to relocate a US marine base on the island of Okinawa.

By comparison, Sino-Japanese relations have rarely been better. That is primarily because Beijing wishes it to be so. But why? Part of the reason is that China's campaign to persuade the world that its rise is non-threatening is served by warmer ties with Japan. China also – and whisper it quietly – admires some aspects of Japan's postwar development, from which it still has much to learn. Take the environment. Four decades ago Japan's air and rivers were almost as poisonous as those of China today. Since then it has marshalled public policy and technological solutions to become one of the world's cleanest and most energy-efficient economies. Beijing would like to know how.

Even at a popular level – where the relationship has been soured by very real enmity – Japan is surprisingly influential. Though we think of Chinese aspiring to American lifestyles, much of their aspirations are actually directed towards Japan. Many Chinese want to eat sushi and teppanyaki steaks,

to travel in bullet trains – now being rolled out across China – and to emulate Japanese fashions.

Japan, too, has much to gain from China, which has for several years been its biggest trading partner. China has everything a high-cost, technologically advanced, mature economy needs: a vast, cheap workforce and a large and expanding consumer market. Why would the two countries not try to get along?

Indeed, it is a stated policy aim of Mr Hatoyama's government to draw even closer to China as part of its strategy to embed itself more solidly in its Asian context. Yet it may be too early to declare one of the most prickly relationships in Asia permanently de-thorned. When it comes to substantive issues – such as a long-running attempt to settle a demarcation dispute over disputed underwater gas reserves – little tangible progress has been made. Fine words can go only so far in healing historical scars. There may also still come a time when being nasty to Tokyo becomes more useful to Beijing than being nice. If the Communist party ever wants to distract attention from domestic problems, it could yet be tempted to play the anti-Japanese card again.

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# Dismal outcome at Copenhagen fiasco

*To repair the process, understand what went wrong*

An empty deal would be worse than no deal at all, said the White House before Mr Obama travelled to the Copenhagen summit. As the meeting ended, Barack Obama was calling the Copenhagen accord – the emptiest deal one could imagine, short of a fist fight – an “important breakthrough”. Mr Obama’s credibility at home and abroad is one casualty of this farcical outcome.

The agreement cobbled together by the US, China, India, Brazil and South Africa is merely an expression of aims. It recognises the scientific case for keeping the rise in global temperatures to 2°C. It calls on developed countries to provide \$100bn a year in support of poor nations’ efforts by 2020, but without saying who pays what to whom. It appears to commit none of the signatories to anything.

Many developing countries were bitter about this result. Europe may wonder why it has been air-brushed out of the picture. The meeting as a whole could not bring itself to endorse this vacuous proclamation. It took note of it.

One wonders how a conference to conclude two years of detailed negotiations, building on more than a decade of previous talks, could have collapsed into such a shambles. It is as though no preparatory work had been done. Consensus on the most basic issues was lacking. Were countries there to negotiate binding limits on emissions or not? Nobody seemed to know.

From the start, the disarray was total. In this, at least, the attention to detail was impressive. The organisers invited more people to the event than could be accommodated, and were puzzled when they arrived. Delegates queued in the freezing cold for hours, a scene

that summed it all up. The organisers had planned a celebration of a grand new global pact – but the party was a disaster and they forgot to bring the agreement.

Governments need to understand, even if they cannot say so, that Copenhagen was worse than useless. If you draw the world’s attention to an event of this kind, you have to deliver, otherwise the political impetus is lost. To declare what everybody knows to be a failure a success is feeble, and makes matters worse. Loss of momentum is now the danger. In future, governments must observe the golden rule of international co-operation: agree first, arrange celebrations and photo opportunities later.

Aside from that, what does Copenhagen reveal about the obstacles to progress – and how can these best be overcome?

Climate change requires global co-operation, to be sure, because the global stock of greenhouse gases is the driver. Collective action is essential. The free-rider problem is obvious and has to be addressed. But the maximalist approach to this, a global treaty with binding caps on emissions, is going to be extraordinarily difficult to achieve.

Even if the will were there enforcing the caps would be a problem, as the Kyoto protocol amply attests. If the maximalist model can be revived in time for next December’s scheduled conference in Mexico, well and good: the key thing, though, is that progress should not be held hostage to it. The need is for greater pragmatism and flexibility.

The US and China can take the lead. In Copenhagen, friction between the two was evident, with the US calling for independent verification of emissions reductions,

and China resisting infringements of its sovereignty. In fact the two countries are not so far apart: the

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**To declare this a success is feeble. Loss of momentum is now the main danger**

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US Congress is as jealous of national sovereignty, and as wary of international obligations, as China. Both countries should lead by example, with unilateral low-cost carbon-abatement policies already announced or under consideration: cap and trade in the US, measures to reduce carbon intensity in China. The international framework need not insist on lock-step agreement. Above all, it should not obstruct policies that push the right way.

In the long run, broad parity of effort is necessary, but this can be gauged in a variety of ways. Monitoring the effective price of carbon is a less demanding basis of co-operation than binding quantitative limits set decades in advance. The international framework should stretch to accommodate this softer mode of co-ordination. Generous aid to developing countries for greenhouse gas abatement is warranted, but should be negotiated separately. Again, the need is to unpack the problem into manageable pieces.

Copenhagen has shown the limits to the current approach. Reviving international co-operation is of paramount importance. This can best be done by asking less of it.

# The familiar road to failure in Afghanistan

Rodric Braithwaite

On Christmas day 1979, 30 years ago, Soviet forces poured into Afghanistan. Two days later Soviet special forces killed President Hafizullah Amin in his Kabul palace. The Russians imposed their puppet, Babrak Karmal, in his place. Led by Jimmy Carter, the US president, and Margaret Thatcher, the UK prime minister, the world united against this latest example of cynical and ruthless Soviet imperial aggression against a small neighbour. Financial, economic and military assistance to the growing insurgency flooded in from Pakistan, China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, the US and Britain. Nine years later, on February 15 1989, the Soviets withdrew, a superpower humiliated by a rag-tag army of pious peasant fighters armed by US congressman Charlie Wilson with the Stinger missiles that drove the Soviet battle helicopters out of the sky.

Thus the myth. The reality was more complicated. A good place to start is 1919, when an Afghan army invaded India. The British rapidly defeated them, but in the subsequent peace negotiations they abandoned the 80-year-old monopoly of Afghan foreign policy for which they had successfully fought in the 19th century.

Freed from British tutelage, the Afghans promptly recognised the infant Soviet Union. The Russians had a major, indeed a "legitimate", interest in close links with a country strategically situated on their southern border, a potential source of instability, drugs, Islamic fundamentalism and American intrigue. They were happy to work with whoever was currently in power in Kabul. They trained Afghan officers and engineers and built many large projects including a national highway, a strategic road tunnel through the mountains, one of the largest agricultural projects in Asia and the Polytechnic Institute in Kabul.

By the 1970s they had also developed a close but unhappy relationship with the Afghan Communist party, which was fatally split between moderates led by Karmal and extremists led by Nur Mohammed Taraki and Amin. In a bloody coup, to which the Russians were probably not a party, the Communists overthrew President Mohammed Daud in April 1978. The extremists then won the factional fight. They believed that the methods

pioneered by Stalin could transform Afghanistan into a secular "socialist" country in a matter of years, and began to imprison and execute their opponents in large numbers.

Opposition rapidly spread throughout the country. In March 1978 insurgents, joined by the local garrison, took over the provincial capital of Herat. Stories unbacked by evidence say that up to 100 Soviet advisers and their families were slaughtered.

The Kabul government panicked and appealed to Moscow to send troops. Moscow refused and Aleksei Kosygin, Soviet prime minister, told Taraki: "We believe it would be a fatal mistake to commit ground troops. If our troops went in, the situation in your country would not improve. On the contrary, it would get worse. Our troops would have to struggle not only with an external aggressor, but with a significant part of your own people." His words were prophetic.

The insurgency went on growing. The Russians continued to turn down repeated Afghan requests for troops. But the Soviet general staff did do some contingency planning, and sent detachments of special forces and paratroopers into Kabul and the air base at Bagram as a precaution.

In the autumn things deteriorated much further. Amin murdered Taraki, took over the country, stepped up the arrests and executions and began to talk to the Americans. So far, the Russians' attempts to influence the course of Afghan politics had been completely ineffective. Now they feared that the place would slip away from them entirely. They decided something must be done. The KGB made some ineffectual attempts to assassinate Amin. But the military option began to seem unavoidable.

The Russians' objectives were modest. They wanted to stabilise the Afghan government, secure the roads and the main towns, train up the Afghan army and police and then leave. At that point an argument opened up in Moscow. The politicians agreed with the KGB that a force of 30,000-40,000 should be sufficient. The military wanted something much more substantial: they had after all sent some half a million soldiers to invade Czechoslovakia in 1968. The force that finally went into Afghanistan consisted initially of about 80,000 troops. Ironically, Amin believed until the very end that the Russians were coming in response to his repeated requests, and he sent a senior staff officer to the Soviet

**The Russians never got over a basic weakness: they could take territory, but they never had enough troops to hold it**

frontier to smooth their passage.

The 40th Army, as it was called, was inadequate. It was put together in a hurry and, though it grew to about 100,000 men, it was always too small: the military later came to believe that they would have needed 32 divisions to subdue Afghanistan and close its border with Pakistan. It was designed to fight on the North German plain, and so was neither equipped nor trained to face an insurgency. The Russian soldiers did eventually learn to fight effectively in the mountains and in what they (and the British soldiers who followed them) called the "green zone", the lethal tangle of booby-trapped irrigation ditches, vineyards and narrow village streets of the cultivated valleys. But it took time. They lost a lot of people in the process. And they killed a great many

Afghans in a war as brutal as the American war in Vietnam.

Two-thirds of the soldiers were engaged in defence: garrisoning the towns, searching villages, manning guard posts along the roads. The aggressive fighting was done by special forces, paratroopers and reconnaissance troops, supported and transported by armoured vehicles and helicopters.

Despite their losses, the Russians won most of their fights. They kept the main roads open, something we cannot always do today. They broke mujahideen attempts to besiege cities. They mounted large operations, mustering up to 12,000 troops, to suppress mujahideen bases and formations. They put together an Afghan army, armed with heavy weapons, which often fought well enough, despite the distressing tendency of Afghan officers to change sides and of soldiers to return to their villages when the going got rough.

But the Russians never got over their basic weakness: they could take the territory, but they never had enough troops to hold it. As one Russian critic put it, they had tactics but no strategy.

From the beginning there were critical voices both inside and outside government. The criticism grew as the bodies began to come home in their zinc coffins. People complained bitterly that the war was pointless and shameful, and that their sons were dying in vain. In 1983 the government began to look for an exit strategy. Soon after Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985 - well before the first Stinger was fired - he told the Afghans that the Soviet troops would pull out in a year or 18 months.

That was easier said than done. The Russians needed to save face, to leave a friendly regime behind them, to say that their young men had not died in vain. The mujahideen wanted victory, the Pakistanis wanted to install their allies in Kabul and the Americans wanted to go on making the Russians bleed in revenge for Vietnam. But after two years of bitter negotiation, the Russians achieved much of what they needed. Their new man, Mohammed Najibullah, remained in control in Kabul and after nine unsatisfactory years the 40th Army withdrew in good order. Some 15,000 Soviet soldiers had died, and perhaps as many as 1.5m Afghans.

Najibullah lasted two more years. Then President Boris Yeltsin's new government in Moscow cut off supplies of food, fuel, and weapons and, like the British puppets of the 19th century, he was overthrown and eventually killed. After a vicious civil war, it was left to the Taliban to restore order.

The lessons of history are never clear, and it is risky to predict the future. The British and the Russians won their wars but failed to impose their chosen leaders and systems of government on the Afghans. The western coalition already has as many troops in Afghanistan as the Russians did, and smarter military technology. But neither the British prime minister nor the generals have explained to us convincingly why we should succeed where the Russians and the British failed, or why fighting in Afghanistan will prevent home-grown fanatics from planting bombs in British cities. Tactics without strategy indeed.

*Sir Rodric Braithwaite was British ambassador to Moscow, 1988-92. His book *Afgantsy: The Russians in Afghanistan 1979-1989* is to be published by Profile Books in March 2011*

# We should change tack on climate after Copenhagen

**Bjørn Lomborg**

After 12 days of protests, posturing and seemingly endless palaver, the elephantine gathering that was the Copenhagen climate summit has laboured mightily and brought forth... a mouse. As vague as it is toothless, the accord on curbing greenhouse gas emissions that emerged from the Bella Centre this weekend imposes no real obligations, sets no binding emissions targets and requires no specific actions by anyone.

So should we be disappointed? Well, actually, no. It is not that man-made global warming isn't real or that we don't need to take meaningful action to combat it. It is and we do.

Nonetheless, the dismal outcome of the 15th United Nations Climate Change Conference should make us hopeful. Why? Because its failure may be just the wake-up call the world has needed – the splash of cold water that may finally get us to face the facts about what works and what does not work to cure climate change.

For 17 years now, ever since the Rio "Earth Summit" back in 1992, the effort to combat global warming has

been dominated by a single idea – the notion that the only solution is to drastically cut carbon emissions. Anyone incautious enough to suggest that there might be more effective ways of controlling climate change, or that it is simply not politically or economically feasible to try to force a world that gets 80 per cent of its energy from carbon-emitting fossil fuels to suddenly change its ways, was dismissed as a crackpot or, worse, a secret global-warming denier. The fact that the Rio-Kyoto-Copenhagen approach to global warming was clearly getting us nowhere was apparently one of those inconvenient truths that people prefer to ignore.

Well, call me a cock-eyed optimist, but Copenhagen's failure strikes me as being too abject to ignore. For all of President Barack Obama's talk of an "unprecedented breakthrough", all the world leaders really did was try to paper over their differences with a three-page communiqué that basically asks us to cross our fingers and hope for the best. They would have done better to have acknowledged their impotence and gone home empty-handed. Never has the fundamental bankruptcy of the carbon-cutting strategy seemed more obvious.

So I am hopeful that political lead-

ers may finally be ready to face the truth about global warming – namely, that if we are serious about wanting to solve it, we need to adopt a new approach. Promising to cut carbon emissions may make us feel virtuous, but that is all it does. If we actually want to cool down the planet, we need policies that are technologically smarter, politically more feasible and economically more efficient.

The stark lesson of Copenhagen is that the world is neither willing nor able to go cold turkey when it comes to ending its addiction to fossil fuels. The problem, particularly for China, India, and the rest of the developing world, is that there simply are not any affordable alternatives.

Keep in mind that global energy demand is expected to double by 2050. What this means is that if we want to reduce (if not actually eliminate) our use of fossil fuels without totally crippling the world economy, we are going to have to increase our reliance on green energy technologies by several orders of magnitude.

In a paper for the Copenhagen Consensus Centre in July 2009, Isabel Galiana and Professor Chris Green of McGill University examined the state of non-carbon based energy today – including nuclear, wind, solar and

geothermal energy – and came to some disconcerting conclusions. Based on present rates of progress, they found that, taken together, alternative energy sources could, if hugely scaled up, get us less than halfway towards a path of stable carbon emissions by 2050, and only a fraction of the way towards stabilisation by 2100. The technology will simply not be ready in terms of scalability or stability. In many cases, the most basic

## The talks' dismal failure may finally get us to face the facts about what works and what does not to cure climate change

research and development is still required. We are not even close to getting the needed technological revolution started.

The Copenhagen accord attempts to deal with this reality by offering a vague promise that developed nations will eventually contribute as much as \$100bn a year to help poor countries cope with climate change. If this money were to be spent on helping

developing countries adapt to climate change, the pledge might make sense, since it would be likely to make a real and immediate difference in people's quality of life. But that is not where the money is supposed to go. The text of the agreement specifies that most if not all of the funds are to be spent "in the context of meaningful mitigation." In other words, the money would be used to subsidise carbon cuts, a pointless exercise that would do nothing to ameliorate current miseries – and at best might reduce temperatures slightly a century from now.

But what if we put these funds to better use? What if, instead of condemning billions of people around the world to continued poverty by trying to make carbon-emitting fuels more expensive, we devoted ourselves to making green energy cheaper? As solutions go, it is quicker, more efficient and far less painful.

Right now, solar panels cost so much that only well-heeled, well-meaning westerners can afford to install them. But if we could make them or other green energy technologies cheaper than fossil fuels over the next 20 to 40 years – and there is no reason to think that we cannot – we would not have to force (or subsidise) anyone to stop burning carbon-emit-

ting fuels. Everyone, including the Chinese and the Indians, would shift to the cheaper and cleaner alternatives – solving global warming.

So how do we get to this happy place? We need to increase spending on green-energy R&D by a factor of 50. For 0.2 per cent of global gross domestic product, or \$100bn a year, we could bring about the technological breakthroughs it will take to make green energy cheaper and fuel our carbon-free future. For both developed and developing world governments, it would be a lot more politically palatable than carbon cuts.

The millions of concerned people around the world who put their hopes in Copenhagen may have been bitterly disappointed by the paltry outcome. But the summit's failure could be a blessing in disguise. For the last 17 years, we have been putting the cart before the horse, pretending we could cut carbon emissions now and solve the technology problem later. Perhaps now, as they limp home from Copenhagen, our leaders will recognise the deep flaws in their current approach and chart a smarter course.

*The writer is director of the Copenhagen Consensus Centre and author of Cool It and The Skeptical Environmentalist*



# The need for peace in the Holy Land

*A battle over land could become a war of religion*

The world is heartily sick of listening to talk of the – always dashed – hopes for peace in the Middle East: the tantalising prospect that Israelis and Palestinians might find a way to share the Holy Land, that sliver of land over which emotionally overwrought conflict seems for ever to have been with us.

Are there not so many more, and more urgent tasks for statesmen to resolve, such as how to avoid another great recession, prevent climate change and advance nuclear disarmament? Even inside the broader Middle East region – the arc of crisis – are there not more pressing challenges?

Jihadis swagger across the overlapping arena of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and it is far from evident the US and Nato have found a formula to deal with them. Iran is in ferment after last summer's stolen election and the brutal suppression of the opposition that followed. Tehran's theocrats and their Revolutionary Guard partners are kicking shut the door to engagement opened by Barack Obama, trying to create a state of siege to justify their monopoly of power and resources. There is a real risk of a slide to war, especially if Israel were to carry out its threats to bomb Iranian nuclear facilities.

Largely off radar, Yemen is imploding. This is not so much because it has become a haven for al-Qaeda; or because of a nagging insurgency in the north by heterodox Shia. The real danger is a war sparked by disgruntled southern tribal federations seceding – sucking Iranians, Saudis and others into what could become a mini-Congo in the Arabian peninsula.

And then there is Turkey: a more political drama but one in which there is so much to play for, for the region and the west. The graceless way France and Germany are rebuffing Ankara's entry to the European Union is pushing Turkey eastwards. Paradoxically, the neo-Islamist government of Recep Tayyip Erdogan seems able to pull eastern Turkey westwards,

while Europeanised Turks are turning away from Europe. Yet, if the EU ceased contemplating its navel and saw Turkey's recent diplomatic successes in the Middle East as a strategic asset rather than evidence of a split personality, that would change the attitudes of metropolitan Turks.

Against this crowded backdrop, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict may seem a local irritant, the "integrity of their quarrel" – as Churchill said of Northern Ireland – irreducible. A tide of recent commentary has suggested that the obdurate Israelis and divided Palestinians should now be left to their own devices. Mr Obama, like every US president before him, has failed to get them to agree on anything.

Yet it is, at best, disingenuous to pretend that two parties with such massively disproportionate power, resources and diplomatic and financial support could ever reach a deal on their own. The Palestinians are under Israeli occupation and the land on which they hope eventually to build their state is daily being eaten away.

Any possibility of dividing the Holy Land into two states – with 78 per cent of historic Palestine for Israelis and 22 per cent (the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem) for the Palestinians – will soon evaporate, if it has not already.

Quite apart from denying justice to the Palestinians, as one population outgrew the other, that would put paid to Israel as a democratic Jewish state. This would condemn Arab and Jew to live in a binational entity, denied recognition in the region and the world.

Mr Obama seems to understand this is no mere regional conflict. Resolving it could put relations between the US and the west, and the Arab and Muslim worlds on a new footing. But what everyone needs to understand is that if this conflict ceases to be about land – a halfway equitable division of holy land – then it risks becoming a new war of religion. This is not just another squabble.

# The decade the world tilted east

**Niall Ferguson**

I am trying to remember now where it was, and when it was, that it hit me. Was it during my first walk along the Bund in Shanghai in 2005? Was it amid the smog and dust of Chongqing, listening to a local Communist party official describe a vast mound of rubble as the future financial centre of south-west China? That was last year, and somehow it impressed me more than all the synchronised razzamatazz of the Olympic opening ceremony in Beijing. Or was it at Carnegie Hall only last month, as I sat mesmerised by the music of Angel Lam, the dazzlingly gifted young Chinese composer who personifies the Orientalisation of classical music? I think maybe it was only then that I really got the point about this decade, just as it was drawing to a close: that we are living through the end of 500 years of western ascendancy.

"Western Ascendancy": that was the grandiose title of the course I taught at Harvard this past term. The subtitle was even more bombastic: "Mainsprings of Global Power". The question I wanted to pose was not especially original, but increasingly it seems to be the most interesting question a historian of the modern era can address. Just why, beginning in around 1500, did the less populous and apparently backward west of the Eurasian landmass come to dominate the rest of the world, including the more populous and more sophisticated societies of eastern Eurasia?

My subsidiary question was this: If we can come up with a good explanation for the West's past ascendancy, can we then offer a prognosis for its future?

Put differently, are we living through the end of the domination of the world by the civilisation that arose in western Europe in the wake of the Renaissance and Reformation – the civilisation that, propelled by the scientific revolution and the Enlightenment, spread across the Atlantic and as far as the Antipodes, finally reaching its apogee in the age of industry and empire?

The very fact that I wanted to pose those questions to my students says something about the past 10 years. I first began to teach in the US because an eminent benefactor of New York University's Stern school of business, Wall Street veteran Henry Kaufman,

had asked me why someone interested in the history of money and power did not come to where the money and power actually were. And where else could that be but downtown Manhattan?

As the new millennium dawned, the New York Stock Exchange was self-evidently the nodal point of a vast global economic network that was American in design and largely American in ownership.

The dotcom boom was ending, to be sure, and a nasty little recession ensured that the Democrats lost the White House just as their pledge to pay off the national debt began to seem almost plausible.

But within just eight months of becoming President, George W. Bush was confronted by an event that emphatically underlined the centrality of Manhattan to the western-dominated world. The destruction of the World Trade Center by al-Qaeda terrorists paid New York a hideous compliment: for anyone serious about challenging the American global order, this was target number one.

The subsequent events were exhilarating. The Taliban overthrown in Afghanistan. An "axis of evil" branded ripe for "regime change". Saddam Hussein ousted in Iraq. The Toxic Texan riding high in the polls, on track for re-election. The US economy bouncing back thanks to tax cuts. "Old Europe" – not to mention liberal America – fuming impotently.

If Napoleon had been, in Hegel's phrase, 'the Zeitgeist on horseback', then Arnold Schwarzenegger, the action-hero turned governor of California, was the Zeitgeist behind the wheel of a Hummer. Fascinated, I found myself focusing on empire, in particular the lessons of Britain's empire for America's.

As I reflected on the rise, and probable fall, of America's empire, it became clear to me that there were three fatal deficits at the heart of American power: a manpower deficit (not enough boots on the ground in Iraq), an attention deficit (not enough public enthusiasm for long-term occupations of conquered countries) and above all a financial deficit (not enough savings relative to investment and not enough taxation relative to public expenditure).

Back in 2004 I warned that the US had imperceptibly come to rely on east Asian capital to stabilise its unbalanced current and fiscal accounts. The decline and fall of America's undeclared empire might

## **Arnold Schwarzenegger, the action-hero turned governor of California, was the Zeitgeist behind the wheel of a Hummer**

therefore be due not to terrorists at the gates nor to the rogue regimes that sponsor them, but to a fiscal crisis at home.

The realisation that the yawning US current account deficit was increasingly being financed by Asian central banks, with the Chinese moving into pole position, was, for me at least, the eureka moment of the decade.

When, in late 2006, Moritz Schularick and I coined the word "Chimerica" to describe what we saw as the dangerously unsustainable relationship between parsimonious China and profligate America, we had identified one of the keys to the coming global financial crisis.

The illusion of American hyperpulsance was shattered not once but twice in the past decade. Nemesis came first in the backstreets of Sadr City and the valleys of Helmand, which revealed not only the limits of American military might but also, more importantly, the naivety of neo-conservative visions of a democratic wave in the greater Middle East. And it struck a second time with the escalation of the subprime crisis of 2007 into the credit crunch of 2008 and finally the "great recession" of 2009. After the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers, the sham verities of the "Washington Consensus" and the "Great Moderation" were consigned forever to oblivion.

And what remained? By the end of the decade the western world could only look admiringly at the speed with which the Chinese government had responded to the breathtaking collapse in exports caused by the US credit crunch, a collapse which might have been expected to devastate Asia.

While the developed world teetered on the verge of a second Great Depression, China suffered little more than a minor growth slow-down, thanks to a highly effective government stimulus programme and massive credit expansion.

It would of course be ingenuous to assume that the next decade will not bring problems for China, too. Running a society of 1.3bn people with the kind of authoritarian planned capitalism hitherto associated with the city-state Singapore (population 4.5m) is fraught with difficulties. But the fact remains that Asia's latest and biggest industrial revolution scarcely paused to draw breath during the 2007-09 financial crisis.

And what a revolution! Compare a tenfold growth of gross domestic product in the space of 26 years with a fourfold increase in the space of 70. The former has been China's achievement between 1978 and 2004; the latter was Britain's between 1830 and 1900. Or consider the fact that US GDP was more than eight times that of China's at the beginning of this decade. Now it is barely four times larger – and if the projections from Jim O'Neill, Goldman Sachs' chief economist, prove to be correct, China will overtake America as soon as 2027: in less than two decades.

What gave the west the edge over the east over the past 500 years? My answer is six "killer apps": the capitalist enterprise, the scientific method, a legal and political system based on private property rights and individual freedom, traditional imperialism, the consumer society and what Weber probably misnamed the "Protestant" ethic of work and capital accumulation as ends in themselves.

Some of those things (numbers one and two) China has clearly replicated. Others it may be in the process of adopting with some "Confucian" modifications (imperialism, consumption and the work ethic). Only number three – the Western way of law and politics – shows little sign of emerging in the one-party state that is the People's Republic.

But does China need dear old democracy to achieve enduring prosperity?

The next decade may well answer that question. Then again, it may take another 500 years to be certain that there really is a viable alternative to western ascendancy.

*The writer is Laurence A Tisch Professor of History at Harvard University, author of *The Ascent of Money* and a contributing editor of the FT*

## Decade of disruption: the new world order

## China's naval force

## Pacific contest grows over rule of waves

By Geoff Dyer in Beijing

The latest issue of *Orbis*, a foreign policy journal in the US, carries an article with the alarming title: "How the United States Lost the Naval War of 2015."

In the piece, James Kraska, a former adviser to the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, describes an imaginary future battle in which China outguns the American navy in the East China Sea.

"History shows how the maritime balance of power can shift suddenly, rearranging [the] global order," he writes. "The political fallout from the disaster ended 75 years of US dominance in the Pacific Ocean and cemented China's position as the Asian hegemon."

Defence literature is full of fantasies about imminent battles, and China has always attracted this sort of attention. But for all that, the article does illustrate one of the most important and least observed points about China's dramatic rise, as well as raising a key question about the coming decade.

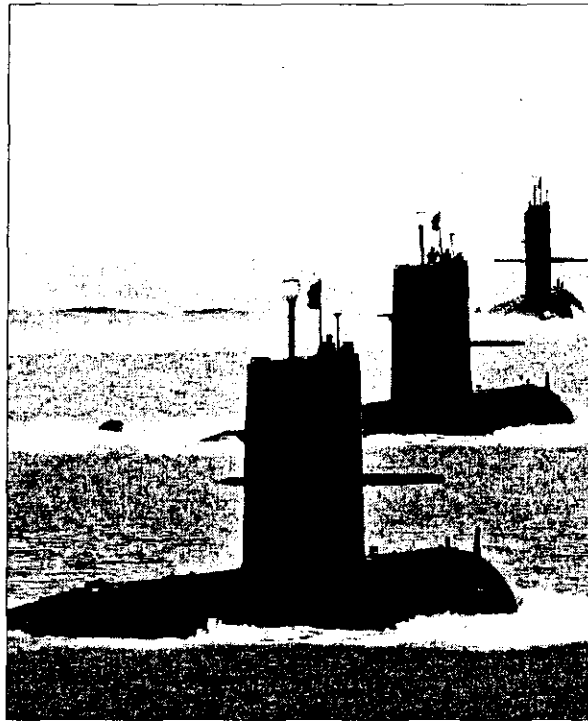
During the past 10 years, China has embarked on a rapid modernisation of its armed forces – with the navy at the forefront of its expansion drive. During the

next decade, Chinese leaders will start to make important decisions about the country's navy. These will provide an insight into what sort of global power China hopes to become and whether it really intends to present a challenge to US military dominance.

"In the next three to five years, Chinese Communist party elites probably will make the decisions determining the direction of naval power projection for the next two to three decades," says Cortez Cooper, an analyst at the US-based Rand Corporation think-tank.

A significant part of Beijing's naval modernisation has been aimed at the traditional military priority of Taiwan, improving China's "sea denial" operations, potentially to prevent the US from getting involved in any conflict over the island. US analysts have highlighted the anti-ship ballistic missiles that China is developing, as well as the fleet of silent diesel submarines, both of which could substantially increase the nation's ability to deter US involvement.

However, during the past decade, Beijing has also outlined an important shift in naval strategy well beyond the Taiwan issue. In



Rising power: Chinese submarines join in war games Reuters

2004, President Hu Jintao gave a speech outlining a series of "historical missions" for the armed services, which placed great emphasis on the idea of defending China's expanding national interests. A few months earlier, he talked about the country's "Malacca dilemma", point-

ing out that as much as 70 per cent of China's imported energy came through the narrow sea lane between Indonesia and Malaysia. The clear implication of these speeches is that China needs expanded naval power to help protect its rapidly expanding economic interests.

Plenty of signs are evident that Beijing has been expanding its naval footprint. Skirmishes this year with US vessels in the South China Sea have been taken in some quarters as a sign that China is taking a more confrontational approach to defending its perceived interests in that area. Moreover, Beijing's investments in port facilities in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Burma have raised fears – especially in India – that China is seeking to develop a series of naval bases in the Indian Ocean.

Some analysts express caution against overstating China's naval prowess. Even sending a small group of ships to take part in anti-piracy operations off the east coast of Africa this year proved to be a large logistical challenge for the Chinese navy.

"China lacks many of the capabilities to project power abroad," says David Shambaugh, a China specialist at George Washington University in the US.

Yet several big Chinese decisions are looming that could shift the debate – most notably over whether to invest heavily in aircraft carriers that would allow China to project naval power far beyond its territorial waters. Beijing has

made no secret of its plan to build an aircraft carrier. The big question is whether it invests in one or two vessels that would expand its reach in Asia, or in a much larger fleet of carrier groups that could take on a global role and potentially rival the US navy.

How this debate will play out in Beijing remains unclear. There are voices saying that Chinese economic development will be hampered if the country does not invest heavily in naval power.

Others believe, however, that given the huge social challenges facing the country, which has vast numbers of people not far out of poverty, building a large carrier fleet is an unnecessary burden.

"The focus of our foreign policy will be in assisting development, not in signing up to expensive new commitments," says Shi Yinhong, an international relations professor at People's University in Beijing.

Or as another Chinese academic, who asked not to be named, says of protecting seaborne trade: "Why should we spend billions of dollars paying for something that is already being paid for?" Largely paid for, he did not need to mention, by the US.

# Iran protests turn into open rebellion

*Sanctions should carefully target Iranians' oppressors*

Iran has relapsed into political turmoil, highlighting the resilience of the opposition that erupted after the clerical regime stole last June's presidential election. Six months on, what began as an attempt to reform the Islamic Republic is turning into a rebellion against the theocrats – now revealed as little more than a fig-leaf cloaking an emerging military dictatorship. A showdown looks inevitable.

The trigger for this upsurge was the funeral of Grand Ayatollah Hossein-Ali Montazeri, who came to embody some of the higher Shia clergy's unease that the brutality of the regime and its vested interests were dragging Islam through the political dirt. He virulently opposed the electoral imposition of the fundamentalist President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Untouchable in life, and now entered into the Shia canon with its cult of martyrdom, he is in death an even deadlier enemy of the regime. Tehran's rulers will be mourning the coincidence of his passing with the emotive festival of Ashura, commemorating the seventh century defeat and death of the Imam Hussein, grandson of the Prophet Mohammed and prince of martyrs in the Shia creed. The funeral and the festival offered a stage for the regime's opponents to evade the ban on protests; they are but part of a packed calendar of normally orchestrated official rallies that will continue to serve as rallying points for the opposition.

Predictably, the regime has reacted by rounding up reformist politicians and threatening to start executing some for "making war on God". The political utility of such an approach evaporated when Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader, cast his lot with Mr Ahmadinejad, losing his faded aura as a religious leader above the fray and becoming a mere faction chief. The two leaders together look like a front for the Revolutionary Guards, who led the crackdown and seem determined to defend both their power and vast network of business interests.

It is, furthermore, far from clear that rounding up allies of Mir-Hossein Mousavi, the presumed winner of last June's election, and

former President Mohammad Khatami will have much effect on the protests. Their aim was to reform the regime, not overthrow it. But the suppression of reformism has spawned a protean mass movement – held together by mobile phones and web links – that has escaped the control of the reformists and turned into open rebellion, marching to the cry of "Death to the Dictators". While it is no match for the Revolutionary Guards and their paramilitaries, reports that policemen have been refusing to shoot protesters suggest turmoil within the regime – reminiscent of the cracks in the cohesion of the Shah's autocracy leading up to the 1979 revolution.

The Obama administration's attempt to engage Tehran, not just to curb its nuclear ambitions but to reach a broader bargain bring-

## **The theocrats are revealed as a fig-leaf cloaking an emerging military dictatorship**

ing the country out of isolation, has also unsettled the regime. At this moment of political ferment, and with the expiry of today's deadline on the international offer to upgrade Iran's stock of enriched uranium into medical isotopes, the last thing the international community should do is wheel on blunderbuss sanctions that repair the regime's cohesion and force Iranians to close ranks around it.

US President Barack Obama's response has been well calibrated, stating that the US "stands with those who seek their universal rights", while his officials prepare sanctions aimed at those who are denying those rights; mainly in the Revolutionary Guards, and the front companies that funnel their wealth. Outside powers cannot lift the yoke of dictatorship off the back of the Iranian people; only the Iranians can do that. But what the US and Europe can do, in a decisive way others may follow, is target those who are the target of this courageous new rebellion.

# www.jihad.com



**Thomas L.  
Friedman**

Let's not fool ourselves. Whatever threat the real Afghanistan poses to U.S. national security, the "Virtual Afghanistan" now poses just as big a threat. The Virtual Afghanistan is the network of hundreds of jihadist Web sites that inspire, train, educate and recruit young Muslims to engage in jihad against America and the West. Whatever surge we Americans do in the real Afghanistan has no chance of being a self-sustaining success, unless there is a parallel surge — by Arab and Muslim political and religious leaders — against those who promote violent jihadism on the ground in Muslim lands and online in the Virtual Afghanistan.

Last week, five men from northern Virginia were arrested in Pakistan, where they went, they told Pakistani police, to join the jihad against U.S. troops in Afghanistan. They first made contact with two extremist organizations in Pakistan by e-mail in August. As *The Washington Post* reported on Sunday: "Online recruiting has exponentially increased, with Facebook, YouTube and the increasing sophistication of people online; a high-ranking Department of Homeland Security official said. ... 'Increasingly, recruiters are taking less prominent roles in mosques and community centers because places like that are under scrutiny. So what these guys are doing is turning to the

Internet,' said Evan Kohlmann, a senior analyst with the U.S.-based NEFA Foundation, a private group that monitors extremist Web sites."

The Obama team is fond of citing how many "allies" we have in the Afghan coalition. Sorry, but we don't need more NATO allies to kill more Taliban and Al Qaeda. We need more Arab and Muslim allies to kill their extremist ideas, which, thanks to the Virtual Afghanistan, are now being spread farther than before.

Only Arabs and Muslims can fight the war of ideas within Islam. We had a civil war in America because we had a lot of people who believed bad things — namely that you could enslave people because of the color of their skin. We defeated those ideas and the individuals and institutions that propagated them, and we did it with such ferocity that five generations later some of their offspring still have not forgiven the North.

Islam needs the same civil war. It has a violent minority that believes bad things: that it is O.K. to not only murder non-Muslims — "infidels," who do not submit to Muslim authority — but to murder Muslims as well who will not accept the most rigid Muslim lifestyle.

What is really scary is that this violent, jihadist minority seems to enjoy the most "legitimacy" in the Muslim world today. Few leaders dare to speak out against them in public. Secular Arab leaders wink at these groups, telling them: "We'll arrest if you do it to us, but if you leave us alone and do it elsewhere, no problem." How many fatwas — religious edicts — have been issued by the leading bodies of Islam against Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda? Very few. Where was the outrage last week when, on the very day that Iraq's Parliament agreed on a formula to hold free and fair multiparty elections — unprecedented in Iraq's modern history — five explosions set off by suicide bombers hit min-

istries, a university and Baghdad's Institute of Fine Arts, killing at least 127 people and wounding more than 400?

Not only was there no meaningful condemnation emerging from the Muslim world — which was primarily focused on resisting Switzerland's ban on new mosque minarets — there was barely a peep coming out of Washington. President Obama expressed no public outrage. It is time he did.

"What Muslims were talking about last week were the minarets of Switzerland, not the killings of people in Iraq or Pakistan," noted Mamoun Fandy, a Middle East expert at the International Institute of Strategic Studies in London. "People look for red herrings when they don't want to look inward, when they don't want to summon the moral courage to produce the counter-fatwa that would say: Stabilizing Iraq is an Islamic duty and bringing peace to Afghanistan is part of the survival of the Islamic umma," or community.

So please tell me, how are we supposed to help build something decent in Afghanistan and Pakistan when jihadists murder other Muslims by the dozens and no one really calls them out?

A corrosive mind-set has taken hold since 9/11. It says that Arabs and Muslims are only objects, never responsible for anything in their world, and we Americans are the only subjects, responsible for everything that happens in their world. We infantilize them.

Arab and Muslims are not just objects. They are subjects. They aspire to, are able to and must be challenged to take responsibility for their world. If we want a peaceful, tolerant region more than they do, they will hold our coats while we fight, and they will hold their tongues against their worst extremists. They will lose, and we will lose — here and there, in the real Afghanistan and in the Virtual Afghanistan.

# Netanyahu's high-wire act

## ISRAEL I

The Israeli prime minister is on a very risky path. If it's for real, he deserves encouragement and support.

## Uri Dromi

**JERUSALEM** In the summer of 1987, thousands of Jerusalemites gathered above the local cinema to watch Philippe Petit, the famous high-wire artist, walk on a rope across the Ben Hinom Wadi to Mount Zion.

This was just few months before the first Intifada, but the excited crowd that gathered there on a sunny day had no clue of the lava ready to erupt below. Their eyes were glued onto the brave Frenchman and they held their breath for an agonizingly long time until he finally touched the safe ground on the other side.

This memory comes to mind when I watch Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu maneuvering through strong political winds and balancing between conflicting pressures with such artistry that Petit sometimes seems to pale in comparison.

Indeed, the elasticity Mr. Netanyahu has been displaying recently is awesome. The man who has written a book on why a Palestinian state was a mortal threat to Israel ("A Place Among the Nations") eventually spoke the unspeakable when in his speech at Bar Ilan University last June 14 he agreed to a Palestinian state.

The same man — who has written

another book advocating never to negotiate with terrorists — is now about to strike a deal with Hamas on the release of an Israeli prisoner, Corporal Gilad Shalit, in return for close to 1,000 prisoners, including some who have committed or masterminded acts of terror.

Mr. Netanyahu has also announced a 10-month freeze on settlements, when I still have vivid memories of him leading the most vehement rallies in 1995 against the Rabin government, which viewed the settlements as a liability rather than an asset.

**Netanyahu is taking all Israelis with him as he steps onto the rope leading from Israel's past to its future.**

The Israeli prime minister has also had to waltz to the tune of an impatient Obama administration while at the same time maintaining a level of independence worthy of a leader of a sovereign state.

I'm not saying this to suggest that Mr. Netanyahu doesn't have a spine. Menachem Begin came to power in 1977 on the ticket of Greater Israel but nonetheless gave all of Sinai back to Egypt in return for peace. Yitzhak Rabin, who had sworn never to speak with the P.L.O., signed a tract with that organization. Ariel Sharon, once the greatest supporter of the settlements, pulled out of Gaza. And Ehud

Olmert, another right-winger turned pragmatist, discussed with Mahmoud Abbas the division of Jerusalem. True leaders, at historic crossroads, should be able to rise above their previous dispositions.

So as we all watch the performance of Mr. Netanyahu today, the question is whether this is for real. Is Mr. Netanyahu set on walking the full length of the rope, or is he just trying to buy time?

Someone — I'm not sure whether it was Petit himself or another high-wire acrobat — once revealed the secret of this dangerous exercise. Explaining how he makes the crossing, he said, and I quote from vague memory: "You always have to focus on your destination. Once you look back, thinking about where you've started, you're finished. You're going to fall."

Exactly. Going back, or even hanging there in the middle of the rope, hoping that by some miracle everything will be resolved, is not an option for Benjamin Netanyahu.

If the people in Jerusalem in 1987 didn't know that the Intifada was coming, today we know better: This place is moving slowly but surely toward a binational state, where the Arabs, due to sheer demographic trends, will become the majority.

In that case, Israel will either lose its Jewish identity or become an apartheid

state. Mr. Netanyahu can't go down in history as the Israeli leader who could have changed this course of events but failed to do so.

Analogy has its limits. Petit, before his stunt at Mount Zion, walked in 1974 on a rope between the Twin Towers of Manhattan. The real show there, alas, came much later, in 2001, when the forces of evil chose those same towers to display their deadly act.

So with Mr. Netanyahu. What is happening now in front of our eyes is not an artistic performance. Risky as that may be, if the acrobatics fail, the acrobat alone pays the price.

Mr. Netanyahu, on the other hand, is taking all Israelis with him when he steps onto the rope leading from Israel's past to its future.

Many Israelis are reluctant to follow. It is not unthinkable that a few of them are even praying for Mr. Netanyahu's fall.

Remember, Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated for less than what Mr. Netanyahu is willing to give the Palestinians today. Therefore, at this crucial moment, our prime minister needs our vocal encouragement and support.

Go, Bibi, go.

*URI DROMI, the director of the Mishkenot Shaananim cultural and conference center in Jerusalem, was the spokesman for the Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres governments from 1992 to 1996.*

# When will it be our time?

## ISRAEL II

The time for a two-state solution is running out as the West dithers and settlements expand.

## Mustafa Barghouti

**RAMALLAH, WEST BANK** I have lived my entire adult life under occupation, with Israelis holding ultimate control over my movement and daily life.

When young Israeli police officers force me to sit on the cold ground and soldiers beat me during a peaceful protest, I smolder. No human being should be compelled to sit on the ground while exercising rights taken for granted throughout the West.

It is with deepening concern that I recognize the Obama administration is not yet capable of standing up to Israel and the pro-Israel lobby. Our dream of freedom is being crushed under the weight of immovable and constantly expanding Israeli settlements.

Days ago, the State Department spokesman, Ian Kelly, managed only to term such illegal building "dismaying." The Israeli foreign minister, Avigdor Lieberman, stands up and walks out on the U.S. envoy, George Mitchell, every time the American envoy mentions East Jerusalem.

And Javier Solana, just prior to completing his stint as European Union foreign policy chief, claimed Palestinian moves toward statehood "have to be done with time, with calm, in an appropriate moment." He adds: "I don't think

today is the moment to talk about that."

When, precisely, is a good time for Palestinian freedom? I call on Mr. Solana's replacement, Catherine Ashton, to take concrete actions to press for Palestinian freedom rather than postpone it.

If Israel insists on hewing to antiquated notions of determining the date of another people's freedom then it is incumbent on Palestinians to organize ourselves and highlight the moral repugnance of such an outlook.

Through decades of occupation and dispossession, 90 percent of the Palestinian struggle has been nonviolent, with the vast majority of Palestinians supporting this method of struggle. Today, growing numbers of Palestinians are participating in organized non-violent resistance.

In the face of European and American inaction, it is crucial that we continue to revive our culture of collective activism by vigorously and nonviolently resisting Israel's domination over us.

These are actions that every man, woman and child can take. The nonviolent movement is being built in the villages of Jayyous, Bilin and Naalin where Israel's segregation wall threatens to erase productive village life.

President Obama, perhaps unwittingly, encouraged this effort when he called for Palestinian nonviolence in his Cairo speech. "Palestinians," he said, "must abandon violence. ... For centuries, black people in America

suffered... the humiliation of segregation. But it was not violence that won full and equal rights. It was a peaceful and determined insistence upon the ideals at the center of America's founding."

Yet without public American complaint, the Israeli military has killed and injured many nonviolent Palestinians during Obama's 10 months in office, most notably Bassem Abu Rahme who was killed in April by an Israeli high-velocity teargas canister. American citizen Tristan Anderson was criti-

**Through decades of occupation and dispossession, 90 percent of the Palestinian struggle has been nonviolent.**

cally injured by the Israeli Army in March by a similar projectile and remains in a deep coma. Both men were protesting illegal Israeli land seizures and Israel's wall. Hundreds more are unknown to the outside world.

A new generation of Palestinian leaders is attempting to speak to the world in the language of a nonviolent campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions, precisely as Martin Luther King Jr. and thousands of African-Americans did with the Montgomery bus boycott in the mid-1950s.

We are equally right to use the tactic to advance our rights. The same world that rejects all use of Palestinian violence, even clear self-defense, surely

ought not begrudge us the nonviolence employed by men such as King and Gandhi.

Western lethargy means the clock may run out on the two-state solution. If so, the fault will rest with the failure to halt Israeli settlement activity. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's declaration that settlement construction will continue in East Jerusalem, with government buildings in the West Bank and on thousands of West Bank housing units already under development makes a mockery of the term "freeze."

We Palestinians are completely accustomed to — and unwilling to accept — such caveats from Mr. Netanyahu.

The demise of the two-state solution will only lead to a new struggle for equal rights, within one state. Israel, which tragically favors supremacy rather than integration with its Palestinian neighbors, will have brought the new struggle on itself by relentlessly pushing the settlement enterprise. No one can say it was not warned.

Eventually, we will be free in our own country, either within the two-state solution or in a new integrated state.

There comes a time when people cannot take injustice any more, and this time has come to Palestine.

**DR. MUSTAFA BARGHOUTI** is secretary general of the Palestinian National Initiative and a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council.



# The inertia option



**Roger Cohen**

GLOBALIST

**NEW YORK** I hope Iran policy makers in Washington and Europe are reading histories of that world-changing year, 1989. I hope so because the time has come to do nothing in Iran.

As Timothy Garton Ash has written of the year Europe was freed, "For the decisive nine months, from the beginning of Poland's roundtable talks in February to the fall of the Wall in November, the United States' contribution lay mainly in what it did not do."

That inaction reflected the first President Bush's caution and calculations. Its effect was to deprive hardliners in Moscow of an American scapegoat for Eastern European agitation and allow revolutionary events to run their course.

The main difference between Moscow 1989 and Tehran 2009 is that the Islamic Republic is still ready to open fire. The main similarities are obvious: tired ideologies; regimes and societies

**The political clock has outpaced the nuclear clock in Iran. New sanctions would be a mistake.**

Marching in opposite directions; and spreading dissent both within the power apparatus and among the opposition.

Yes, the Islamic Republic has not arrived at a Gorbachevian renunciation of force. It is

not yet open to compromise, despite calls for moderation from prominent clerics and now, it seems, from some senior army officers. It is still, in the words of the opposition leader Mir Hussein Moussavi, sending its Revolutionary Guards and Basiji militia to chase "shadows in the street."

I don't know how long this situation can endure. Anyone who claims to be able to tell the Iranian future is lying. But it seems clear that the "political clock" has now outpaced the "nuclear clock."

Iran has been messing around with a nuclear program for some four decades. Pakistan went from zero to a bomb in about a quarter that time. Setting aside the still debatable objective of this Iranian endeavor (nuclear ambiguity or an actual device?), it's not in the midst of the current political turmoil that Tehran is going to break out of its back-and-forth tinkering. Inertia is always strong in Iran's many-headed system. Right now it's stronger than ever — hence the risible, blustery confusion over a possible deal to export Iran's low-enriched uranium.

All this says — nay, screams — to me: Do nothing. It is President Barack Obama's outreach that has unsettled a

regime that found American axis-of-evil rhetoric easy to exploit. After struggling, Obama has also found his sweet spot in combining that détente with quiet support for universal rights. Note the feminine possessive pronoun in this line from his Nobel speech: "Somewhere today, in this world, a young protester awaits the brutality of her government but has the courage to march on." I saw those bloodied women marching in Tehran in June and will never forget them.

Their cause would be best upheld by stopping the march toward "crippling" sanctions on Iran. The recent House passage of the Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act, which would sanction foreign companies that sell refined petroleum to Iran, is ominous. Rep. Howard Berman, who introduced the bill, is dead wrong when he says that it would empower the Obama administration's Iran policy. It would in fact undermine that policy.

So would sanctions action from the so-called "P5+1" — the United States, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany. When I'm asked where the "stick" is in Iran, my response is the stick is Iranian society — the bubbling reformist pressure now rising up from Iran's highly educated youth and brave women.

It would be a tragedy were Obama to weaken them. Sanctions now would do just that. Nobody would welcome them more than a regime able once more to refer to the "arrogant power" trying to bring proud Iran to its knees. The Revolutionary Guards, who control the sophisticated channels for circumventing existing sanctions, would benefit. China and Russia would pay little more than lip service.

As Elizabeth Shakman Hurd of Northwestern University has written, "the United States is empowering the dissenters with its silence."

Sanctions represent tired binary thinking on Iran, the old West-versus-barbarism paradigm prevalent since political Islam triumphed in the revolution of 1979 as a religious backlash against Western-imposed modernity. The Iranian reality, as I've argued since the start of this year, is more complex. A leading cry today of the protesters in Iran is "God is great" — hardly a secular call to arms. These reformists are looking in their great majority for some elusive middle way combining faith and democracy.

The West must not respond with the sledgehammer of sanctions whose message is "our way or the highway." Rather it must understand at last the subtle politics of Iran by borrowing an Iranian lesson: inertia.

When the Berlin Wall came down two decades ago, Francis Fukuyama famously predicted "the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government." In Iran now, many of the forces of 1989 are present, but the reformists' quest is not for something "Western." It is more for an idea of 1979, an indigenous non-secular and non-theocratic pluralist polity.

Obama, himself of hybrid identity, must show his understanding of this historic urge by doing nothing. That will allow the Iranian political clock to tick faster still.

# Time to face realities on North Korea

Pyongyang's interest is to stall the negotiations for as long as possible.

Henry A. Kissinger

The American special representative for North Korea, Stephen Bosworth, returned from Pyongyang after unusually benign conversations.

The North Korean government affirmed "the need to resume" six-party talks (U.S., North Korea, South Korea, China, Russia and Japan) on the nuclear disarmament of the Korean peninsula. However, it added the proviso that the United States and Korea "needed to cooperate to narrow the remaining differences" before it would rejoin the six-power diplomatic framework, from which it had walked out a year ago while abandoning all the undertakings it had made during those talks.

In other words, Pyongyang seeks separate negotiations with the United States while keeping the other parties out of the diplomatic process, at least for a while.

North Korea's agenda links its denuclearization to the completion of a Korean peace treaty, a Northeast Asia security system, normalization of relations with the United States and removal of any threat against it — presumably from whatever source.

This is not an agenda lending itself to rapid resolution. A negotiation over a peace treaty, for example, would surely involve a controversy over the presence of U.S. forces in South Korea. The North Korean approach seems, above all, designed to gain time and to split the five other parties.

It is time to face realities. We are now in the 15th year in which America has sought to end North Korea's nuclear program through negotiations. These have

been conducted in both two-party and six-party forums. The result has been the same, whatever the framework.

In the course of these talks, Pyongyang has mothballed its nuclear facilities twice. Each time it ended the moratorium unilaterally. Twice it has tested nuclear explosions and long-range missiles during recesses of negotiations.

If this pattern persists, diplomacy will turn into a means of legitimizing proliferation rather than arresting it. And the pattern risks spreading to other regions, such as the negotiations on Iran.

When the Obama administration took office, Pyongyang refused a visit by Mr. Bosworth and rejected a hint of direct contact with the U.S. secretary of state. Only after completing its most recent

**We are now in the 15th year in which America has sought to end North Korea's nuclear program through negotiations.**

series of tests did Pyongyang move toward negotiations — but only with Washington. If there is no penalty for intransigence, deadlocks become the mechanisms for filling the time needed for further technological progress. Why should Pyongyang alter its conduct when, within weeks of the end of a test series, an American special representative appears in Pyongyang to explore the prospects of new negotiations?

At a minimum, before any formal talks take place, North Korea should be required to return matters to where they were when it broke off talks, specifically, mothballing its plutonium production.

Pyongyang argues that its security concerns must be met first, that the principal threat to its security comes from America, and that it therefore

must gain special assurances from Washington before entering actual negotiations. But what bilateral assurances could possibly serve this purpose? Only a Northeast Asia security system could come close to creating an appropriate framework, and this requires the six-party forum.

Nor is Pyongyang so naïve as to believe it could achieve security by threatening a nuclear strike at the United States. Far more likely, North Korea seeks recognition as a nuclear power so that it can intimidate South Korea and Japan. It can also gain support by assisting weapons programs, as it has in Pakistan, and in Syria.

North Korea seems so on automatic pilot that even while Mr. Bosworth was in Pyongyang, a plane loaded with missile parts was dispatched to South Asia where it was intercepted in Bangkok. Pyongyang, in its more exuberant moments, may even see itself in a position to play off Beijing and Washington against each other.

Pyongyang knows that each of the other participants in the six-party talks has every interest in bringing the nuclear weapons threat to a rapid conclusion, while Pyongyang's own interest is to stall the negotiations for as long as possible.

This is why bilateral U.S. talks with Pyongyang tend to undermine the unity of the remaining four. South Korea will resent peace talks in which North Korea is a party in a bilateral forum that excludes Seoul. It also strengthens Pyongyang's attempt to present itself as the genuine representative of Korean nationalism. Japan will not delegate its concerns regarding its citizens abducted by North Korea as forced labor to train North Korean intelligence personnel.

The position of China is more complex. It has strongly condemned Pyongyang's nuclear testing. But it is more sensitive than its partners to the danger of destabilizing the political structure of North Korea. Great respect must be paid to Chinese views on a matter so close to its borders and directly affecting its interests. But in the end, a face-saving gesture for Pyongyang will be meaningful only as a brief transition to the six-power forum.

On North Korea and earlier on Iran, the protracted process of opening negotiations runs the risk of becoming a palliative for substance. The test, however, is substantive progress on the key issue: the elimination of a nuclear weapons capability in North Korea.

In view of the continuing technological progress in Pyongyang, which claims to have added a nuclear enrichment facility to its plutonium program, time is of the essence.

The catalogue for reciprocal security and economic assurances is well-established, and the United States should make its contribution to it — short of accepting a definition of itself as a special threat.

In the end, the greatest risk to Pyongyang is not foreign aggression but internal collapse caused by its excessive ambitions. No special reconnaissance is needed about Pyongyang's intentions when the six-party forum exists where they can be displayed. The famous dictum of Napoleon is apposite: "If you want to take Vienna, take Vienna."

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TRIBUNE MEDIA SERVICES

# Mind over martyr

Saudi Arabia claims that it has 'rehabilitated' more than 4,000 terrorists. But the Saudis have shared little information about the program.

Jessica Stern

Is it possible to de-radicalize terrorists and their potential recruits?

Saudi Arabia, a pioneer in terrorism prevention and rehabilitation, claims that it is. According to the Saudi government, since 2004, more than 4,000 militants have gone through its rehabilitation programs, and the graduates have been reintegrated into mainstream society much more successfully than ordinary criminals.

The U.S. government has even implemented deradicalization programs at U.S. detention facilities in Iraq — modeled, in large measure, on the Saudi program — and is also trying to arrange for Yemeni detainees at Guantanamo to be "rehabilitated" in Saudi Arabia.

Yet so far, the Saudis have shared very little information about their program's successes and failures.

Terrorism spreads, in part, through bad ideas. The most dangerous and seductive bad idea spreading around the globe today is a distorted interpretation of Islam, which asserts that killing innocents is a way to worship God.

Part of the solution must come from within Islam and from Islamic scholars, who can refute this interpretation with arguments based in theology. The Saudi government and Saudi NGOs are also beginning to play an important role in the effort to counter terrorist ideology, but bad ideas only take root in fertile soil. Terrorists prey on vulnerable populations. Failed states, such as Yemen and Somalia, are ideal recruiting grounds.

Any rehabilitation or terrorism prevention effort must be based on a clear understanding of what drives individuals to terrorism in the first place. When scholars ask terrorists how they came into their line of work, their reasons are as varied as those for which others choose more traditional professions.

Terrorist movements arise in reaction to an injustice, real or imagined, that they feel must be corrected. But ideology is not the only — or even the central — reason that individuals choose a career of terrorism. Market conditions, social networks, group dynamics, and individual preferences are equally as important.

A terrorist's motivations for remaining in, or leaving, his "job" change over time. De-radicalization programs need to take account — and advantage — of these variations and shifts in motivation.

Young people are sometimes attracted to terrorist movements through social connections, music, fashion or lifestyle and only later come to understand the groups' violent ideologies and goals.

Then there is economics. For some, jihad is just a job. Poorer people in countries with high levels of unemployment are more vulnerable to recruitment.

For such individuals, job training and career counseling may be the best de-radicalization strategy — or at least a strategy as important as religious re-education. For example, job training and education became an important part of the effort to "rehabilitate" insurgents who were picked up in the surge in Iraq.

Psychology also matters. One element worth examining in particular is the potential impact of sexual abuse on radicalization. Much has been written about the role of radical madrassas in creating terrorists. Outside of the Pakistani press, however, little note is made of the routine rape of boys at such schools. Also troubling is the rape of boys by warlords, the Afghan National Army, or the police in Afghanistan.

Such abuses are commonplace on Thursdays, also known as "man-loving day," because Friday prayers are considered to absolve sinners of all wrongdoing. To be successful, de-radicalization and terrorism prevention programs must take into account the impact of humiliation, not because terrorists deserve our sympathy — they do not — but because humiliation appears to be a major risk factor for radicalism.

Some of the Saudi program's main features, and thus its results, may be difficult to replicate elsewhere. The project is extremely expensive; it is constantly being updated, based on input from the staff and participants. Its prevention program includes dialogue on the Internet with individuals known to visit terrorist Web sites.

The rehabilitation program includes psychological counseling, vocational training, art therapy, sports, and religious re-education. It also includes helping the "rehabilitated" terrorists find jobs and even wives. There is a post-release program as well, which holds family members responsible for the activities of the former terrorist, and involves intensive surveillance.

Saudi Arabia, infamous not only for producing Osama bin Laden, but also for its financial support of terrorism and religious schools that preach intolerance, has commenced a national campaign against extremism that would seem to be a model for the world.

Through a combination of both "hard" and "soft" measures, Al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia has been more or less eradicated, at least for now. The results of Saudi Arabia's efforts may have implications not only for counter-radicalization programs around the globe, but also for preventing gang violence.

To assess the impact, however, the Saudis need to make their data available to outside observers. At this point, it is not possible to reject the hypothesis that surveillance — on the ground and on the Internet, or finding terrorists wives, are the only variables that count.

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TRIBUNE MEDIA SERVICES

## If no means no, what's next on Iran?



John  
Vinocur

### POLITICUS

**LONDON** A little less than a month ago, one of the officials developing the allies' strategy to halt Iran's drive to make a nuclear weapon described their governments' discomfort about soon having to move beyond attempts to engage the mullahs.

The diplomat's remarks, quoted in a European newspaper, hardly created a stir, perhaps because they reflect an obvious truth: months of outstretched Western hands have brought nothing in return from Tehran.

"Sometimes one might perhaps have to accept the answer's no when the answer's no," the official said, according to the press account.

"If the purpose is to take out Iran's known enrichment-related facilities, I think Israel can do that."

"But we don't want to acknowledge that the answer's no, because we are afraid of the consequences."

That's a hard-edged but reasonable judgment, because the consequences for the

United States and its allies demand new levels of resolve that are not without danger.

The consequences also require a tone of confrontation involving tougher sanctions and, considering the sanctions' high potential for failure, follow-up efforts to contain and deter Iran as it moves closer to a nuclear weapon.

That new approach might be widened over weeks and months to come to include more direct support for the opposition to the mullahs on Tehran's streets, and open considera-

tion (or private threats) of a military option.

Until now, compared with Afghanistan, these issues have been far from center-stage among the allies' international security concerns.

But their discussion can't be avoided when the West's end-of-year deadline passes for Iran to have said yes to the International Atomic Energy Agency's best offer: a proposal to have its low enriched uranium exported for enrichment in quantities that would limit, for a time, the Iranian capacity to make a bomb.

As an issue, Afghanistan is now politically circumscribed by new troop reinforcements and a fairly specific time frame for their success that leaves an evaluation until at least the end of 2010.

Concern over Iran, however, is in an accelerating mode without any positive endgame in sight.

Allied intelligence agencies are now weighing the authenticity of suspected Iranian documents, apparently dating from 2007, that describe a four-year plan to test a neutron initiator, a device that creates a nuclear bomb's explosion.

The plan's validation could represent conclusive proof that Iranian denials it is building nukes are false.

On Friday, Iran coupled an announcement that it will begin using more efficient centrifuges in 2011 to enrich uranium — suggesting a speed-up of its efforts to obtain fissile material for nuclear weapons — with a statement by Vice President Ali Akbar that possible new U.N. Security Council resolutions "won't stop us in any field, including the nuclear."

Clearly, convincing the Iranians that a Western response will not be just gesticulation is a difficult perspective.

And it's made particularly complex by the fact that Israel will use its own set of tripwires to determine when it considers the mullahs' nuclear program has become an intolerable existential threat.

Last week, I asked Mark Fitzpatrick, senior fellow for nonproliferation at the International Institute for Strategic Studies here, and a former State Department expert on nuclear issues, about where he saw the difficulties converging next year.

He said sanctions by the United States and European Union affecting Iran's imports of gasoline (the mullahs have oil, but small refining capacities) could be enacted, but he doubted their effectiveness in stopping the Iranian drive towards nukes.

If that is the case, Mr. Fitzpatrick has said "threatening military force" may be the way forward. He told me, "Iran has to know it's a real possibility."

This was in the context of circumstances in 2010 that appear particularly sensitive. Mr. Fitzpatrick said if Israel's obvious red-lines were known to Iran — Iranian expulsion of U.N. nuclear inspectors from its territory or its renunciation the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, for example — the nature of other tripwires that could unleash an attack were deliberately kept unclear by the Israelis.

He believes Iran's stockpile of low enriched uranium, which he now estimated as sufficient for one and a half bombs when enriched, "will be the equivalent of three or four sometime next year."

"When is too much too much?" for the Israelis, he asked. Or, if Iran intends to stop its enrichment and possible weapons work in building a nuke at a so-called breakout level, is that "so close that the Israelis can't wait?"

Mr. Fitzpatrick is no advocate of an Israeli or American military strike on Iran. But if Israel would attack, he said, "I think Israel's capacity is not insignificant. If the purpose is to take out Iran's known enrichment-related facilities, I think Israel can do that."

A good (and unhappy) guess is that by this time next year, we'll be wondering when that's going to happen.

If Mr. Fitzpatrick's doubts about new sanctions' inconclusive bite are correct, that pretty much guarantees United States and its European friends entering a contain-and-deter-Iran mode.

But can Iran be deterred?

Probably yes when it comes to actually dropping a bomb. On the other hand, unless the United States makes very clear it won't stand for Iran producing or having the capacity to produce a nuke, the most likely Iranian response to deterrent noises will be stitching up a shroud of ambiguity to obscure its at-the-edge-of-production capabilities.

That would provide the credulous in the West a safe place to avoid a hard decision; and, if America goes along too, effectively turn the matter over to the Israelis.

Mr. Fitzpatrick had a good phrase for describing this approach. He said it would leave things "to the only country with the will" to make up its mind.

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# There's only one way to stop

Alan J. Kuperman

President Obama should not lament but sigh in relief that Iran has rejected his nuclear deal, which was ill conceived from the start. Under the deal, which was formally offered through the United Nations, Iran was to surrender some 2,600 pounds of lightly enriched uranium (some three-quarters of its known stockpile) to Russia, and the next year get back a supply of uranium fuel sufficient to run its Tehran research reactor for three decades. The proposal did not require Iran to halt its enrichment program, despite several United Nations Security Council resolutions demanding such a moratorium.

Iran was thus to be rewarded with much-coveted reactor fuel despite violating international law. Within a year, or sooner in light of its expanding enrichment program, Iran would almost certainly have replenished and augmented its stockpile of enriched uranium, nullifying any ostensible nonproliferation benefit of the deal.

Moreover, by providing reactor fuel, the plan would have fostered proliferation in two ways. First, Iran could have continued operating its research reactor, which has helped train Iranian scientists in weapons techniques like plutonium separation. (Yes, as Iran likes to point out, the reactor also produces medical isotopes. But those can be purchased commercially from abroad, as most countries do, including the United States.) Absent the deal, Iran's reactor will likely run out of fuel within two years, and only a half-dozen countries are able to supply fresh fuel for it. This creates significant international leverage over Iran, which should be used to compel it to halt its enrichment program.

In addition, the vast surplus of higher-enriched fuel Iran was to get under the deal would have permitted some to be diverted to its bomb program. Indeed, many experts believe that the

uranium in foreign-provided fuel would be easier to enrich to weapons grade because Iran's uranium contains impurities. Obama administration officials had claimed that delivering uranium in the form of fabricated fuel would prevent further enrichment for weapons, but this is false. Separating uranium from fuel elements so that it can be enriched further is a straightforward engineering task requiring at most a few weeks.

Thus, had the deal gone through, Iran could have benefited from a head start toward making weapons-grade 90 percent-enriched uranium (meaning that 90 percent of its makeup is the fissile isotope U-235) by starting with purified 20 percent-enriched uranium rather than its own weaker, contaminated stuff.

This raises a question: if the deal would have aided Iran's bomb program, why did the United States propose it, and Iran reject it? The main explanation on both sides is domestic politics. President Obama wanted to blunt Republican criticism that his multilateral approach was failing to stem Iran's nuclear program. The deal would have permitted him to claim, for a year or so, that he had defused the crisis by depriving Iran of sufficient enriched uranium to start a crash program to build one bomb.

But in reality no one ever expected Iran to do that, because such a headlong sprint is the one step most likely to provoke an international military response that could cripple the bomb program before it reaches fruition. Iran is far more likely to engage in "salami slicing" — a series of violations each too small to provoke retaliation, but that together will give it a nuclear arsenal. For example, while Iran permits international inspections at its declared enrichment plant at Natanz, it ignores United Nations demands that it close the plant, where it gains the expertise needed to produce weapons-grade uranium at other secret facilities like the nascent one recently uncovered near Qum.

In sum, the proposal would not have averted proliferation in the short run, because that risk always was low, but instead would have fostered it in the long run — a classic example of domestic politics undermining national security.

Tehran's rejection of the deal was likewise propelled by domestic politics — including last June's fraudulent elections and longstanding fears of Western manipulation. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad initially embraced the deal because he realized it aided Iran's bomb program. But his domestic political opponents, whom he has tried to label as foreign agents, turned the tables by accusing him of surrendering Iran's patrimony to the West.

Under such domestic pressure, Mr. Ahmadinejad reneged. But Iran still wants reactor fuel, so he threatened to enrich uranium domestically to the 20 percent level. This is a bluff, because even if Iran could further enrich its impure uranium, it lacks the capacity to fabricate that uranium into fuel elements. His real aim is to compel the international community into providing the fuel without requiring Iran to surrender most of the enriched uranium it has on hand.

Indeed, Iran's foreign minister has now proposed just that: offering to exchange a mere quarter of Iran's enriched uranium for an immediate 10-year supply of fuel for the research reactor. This would let Iran run the reactor, retain the bulk of its enriched uranium and continue to enrich more — a bargain unacceptable even to the Obama administration.

Tehran's rejection of the original proposal is revealing. It shows that Iran, for domestic political reasons, cannot make even temporary concessions on its bomb program, regardless of incentives or sanctions. Since peaceful carrots and sticks cannot work, and an invasion would be foolhardy, the United States faces a stark choice: military air strikes against Iran's nuclear facilities or acquiescence to Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons.

The risks of acquiescence are obvious. Iran supplies Islamist terrorist groups in violation of international embargoes. Even President Ahmadinejad's domestic opponents support this weapons traffic. If Iran acquired a nuclear arsenal, the risks would simply be too great that it could become a neighborhood bully or provide terrorists with the ultimate weapon, an atomic bomb.

As for knocking out its nuclear plants, admittedly, aerial bombing might not work. Some Iranian facilities are buried too deeply to destroy from the air. There may also be sites that American intelligence is unaware of. And military action could backfire in various ways, including by undermining Iran's political opposition, accelerating the bomb program or provoking retaliation against American forces and allies in the region.

But history suggests that military strikes could work. Israel's 1981 attack on the nearly finished Osirak reactor

prevented Iraq's rapid acquisition of a plutonium-based nuclear weapon and compelled it to pursue a more gradual, uranium-based bomb program. A decade later, the Gulf war uncovered and enabled the destruction of that uranium initiative, which finally deterred Saddam Hussein from further pursuit of nuclear weapons (a fact that eluded American intelligence until after the 2003 invasion). Analogously, Iran's atomic sites might need to be bombed more than once to persuade Tehran to abandon its pursuit of nuclear weapons.

As for the risk of military strikes undermining Iran's opposition, history suggests that the effect would be temporary. For example, NATO's 1999 air campaign against Yugoslavia briefly bolstered support for President Slobodan Milosevic, but a democratic opposition ousted him the next year.

Yes, Iran could retaliate by aiding America's opponents in Iraq and Afghanistan, but it does that anyway. Iran's leaders are discouraged from taking more aggressive action against United States forces — and should continue to be — by the fear of provoking a stronger American counter-escalation. If nothing else, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have shown that the United States military can oust regimes in weeks if it wants to.

Incentives and sanctions will not work, but air strikes could degrade and deter Iran's bomb program at relatively little cost or risk, and therefore are worth a try. They should be precision attacks, aimed only at nuclear facilities, to remind Iran of the many other valuable sites that could be bombed if it were foolish enough to retaliate.

The final question is, who should launch the air strikes? Israel has shown an eagerness to do so if Iran does not stop enriching uranium, and some hawks in Washington favor letting Israel do the dirty work to avoid fueling anti-Americanism in the Islamic world.

But there are three compelling reasons that the United States itself should carry out the bombings. First, the Pentagon's weapons are better than Israel's at destroying buried facilities. Second, unlike Israel's relatively small air force, the United States military can discourage Iranian retaliation by threatening to expand the bombing campaign. (Yes, Israel could implicitly threaten nuclear counter-retaliation, but Iran might not perceive that as credible.) Finally, because the American military has global reach, air strikes against Iran would be a strong warning to other would-be proliferators.

Negotiation to prevent nuclear proliferation is always preferable to military action. But in the face of failed diplomacy, eschewing force is tantamount to appeasement. We have reached the point where air strikes are the only plausible option with any prospect of preventing Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons. Postponing military action merely provides Iran a window to expand, disperse and harden its nuclear facilities against attack. The sooner the United States takes action, the better.

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# Tehran's biggest fear

Separatist Kurds, Arabs and Azeris pose the greatest threat to the Persian elite.

**Selig S. Harrison**

The biggest threat to the ruling ayatollahs and generals in multi-ethnic Iran does not come from the embattled democratic opposition movement struggling to reform the Islamic Republic. It comes from increasingly aggressive separatist groups in Kurdish, Baluch, Azeri and Arab ethnic minority regions that collectively make up some 44 percent of Persian-dominated Iran's population.

Working together, the democratic reform movement and the ethnic insurgents could seriously undermine the republic. But the reform movement, like most of the clerical, military and business establishment, is dominated by an entrenched Persian elite and has so far refused to support minority demands.

What the minorities want is greatly increased economic development spending in the non-Persian regions, a bigger share of the profits from oil and other natural resources in their areas, the unfettered use of non-Persian languages in education and politics and freedom from religious persecution. Some minority leaders believe these goals can be achieved through regional autonomy under the existing Constitution, but most of them want to reconstitute Iran as a loose confederation or to declare independence.

Should the United States give money and weapons aid to the ethnic insurgents?

During the Bush administration, a debate raged between White House advocates of "regime change" in Tehran, who favored large-scale covert action to break up the country, and State Department moderates who argued that all-out support of the minorities would complicate negotiations on a nuclear deal with the dominant Persians.

The result was a compromise: limited covert action carried out by proxy, in the case of the Baluch, through Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate or, I.S.I., and in the case of the Kurds by the C.I.A. in cooperation with Israel's Mossad. My knowledge of the I.S.I.'s role is based on first-hand Pakistani sources, including Baluch leaders. Evidence of the C.I.A. role in providing weapons aid and training to Pejak, the principal Kurdish rebel group in Iran, has been spelled out by three U.S. journalists, Jon Lee Anderson and Seymour Hersh of the New Yorker and Borzou Daragahi of the Los Angeles Times, who have interviewed a variety of Pejak leaders.

Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, speaking in the Kurdish city of Bijar, charged on May 12 that the Obama administration had not reversed the Bush policy. "Unfortunately, money, arms and organization are being used by the Americans directly across our western borders in order to fight the Islamic Republic's system," he declared. "The Americans are busy making a conspiracy."

Mossad has long-standing contacts with Kurdish groups in Iran and Iraq established when the United States and Israel wanted to destabilize the Kurd-

ish areas of Saddam Hussein's Iraq. But now the United States wants a united Iraq in which Kurds, Shiites and Sunnis cooperate. Iran, too, wants a united Iraq because it fears cooperation among its own Kurds and those in Iraq and Turkey to create an independent Kurdistan. So aiding Pejak would hamper future Iran-U.S. cooperation in Baghdad in addition to complicating the nuclear negotiations.

Both the Baluch and the Kurds are Sunni Muslims. They are fighting vi-

**Should the U.S. give money and weapons to help the ethnic insurgents in Iran?**

cious Shiite religious repression in addition to cultural and economic discrimination. By contrast, the biggest of the minorities, the Turkic-speaking Azeris, are Shiites, and Ayatollah Khamenei himself is an Azeri. His selection as the supreme leader was in part a gesture to the Azeris designed to cement their allegiance to Iran and to blunt a covert campaign by ethnic kinsmen in adjacent Azerbaijan to annex them. The Azeris in Iran are better off economically than the other minorities but feel that the Persians look down on them. Prolonged rioting erupted for days after a Tehran newspaper published a cartoon in May 2006, depicting an Azeri-speaking cockroach.

The Arabs in the southwestern province of Khuzestan, who are also Shiites, pose the most dangerous potential separatist threat to Tehran because the province produces 80 percent of

Iran's crude oil revenue. So far the divided Arab separatist factions have not created a militia but they periodically raid government security installations, bomb oil production facilities and broadcast propaganda in Arabic on satellite TV channels from shifting locations outside Iran.

The most serious military clashes between the Revolutionary Guards and separatist groups have come on the Kurdish border, where Iran repeatedly bombarded Pejak hideouts in September 2007, and in Baluchistan, where the Guards frequently suffers heavy casualties in clashes with militias of the Jundallah movement operating out of camps just across the border in the Baluch areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Compared to the massive protests in the streets of Tehran and Qum, the uncoordinated harassment of the regime by ethnic insurgents may seem like a sideshow. But if the ethnic insurgents could unite and if the democratic opposition could forge a united front with the minorities, the prospects for reforming or toppling the Islamic Republic, now dismal, would brighten.

For the present, the Obama administration should tread with the utmost care in dealing with this sensitive issue, guided by a recognition that support for separatism and engagement with the present regime are completely incompatible.

*SELIG S. HARRISON is director of the Asia program at the Center for International Policy and author of "In Afghanistan's Shadow."*

# After eight years, terrorists still fly

U.S. officials should make long overdue changes in their anti-terrorism strategies.

Clark Kent Ervin

**WASHINGTON** The Christmas Day attempt to destroy an airplane landing in Detroit underscores the sad reality that terrorism is a constant danger to the United States. Let us hope that policy-makers will take this opportunity to make some overdue changes in their strategies for preventing attacks.

They can start by "rationalizing" various government databases. It is disturbing that someone who is thought to have connections to terrorism serious enough to warrant being placed on a government watch list is still not put on the smaller "no-fly" list of people who are banned from airplanes.

How did this come to pass? The no-fly list is reserved for those who are thought to pose a threat to airplanes. Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the man charged with the would-be Christmas Day bombing, was on the watch list because his own father had warned American officials about his son's increasing radicalism. But an Obama administration official said "there was insufficient derogatory information available" to merit Mr. Abdulmutallab's inclusion on the list.

Given Al Qaeda's known obsession with attacking America's aviation system and its tendency to go after the same target repeatedly, anyone on a terrorism watch list should automatically be placed on the no-fly list. To those who fear that doing so would tip off an unsuspecting terrorist that we are watching him, I say it is far better to do that than to risk an attack. At least, people known to be, or suspected of being, tied to terrorism should automatic-

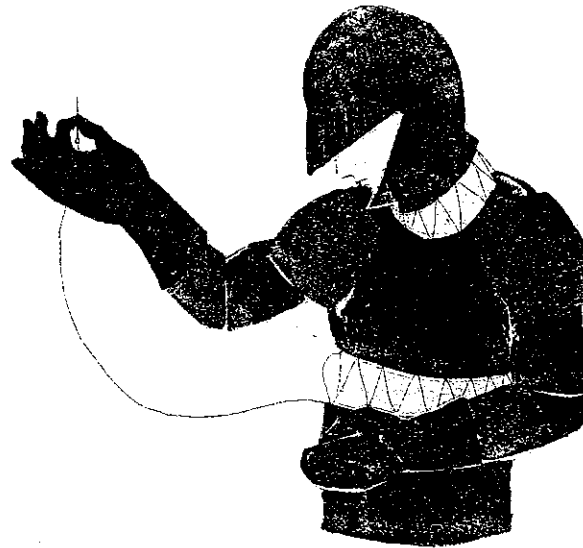
ally be placed on the so-called selectee list, so that they are subject to especially thorough airport screening.

Then there is the matter of Mr. Abdulmutallab's visa. Citizens of most countries need a visa to visit the United States. To get one in the post-9/11 world, an applicant must go to an American embassy or consulate to be interviewed by a consular officer and have his fingers scanned and his photo taken. His name is run through various databases to determine whether he is a known or suspected terrorist or criminal.

In June 2008, when the U.S. Embassy in London granted Mr. Abdulmutallab a

two-year visa, according to officials, there was nothing to indicate that he had any terrorism ties. So far, so good. But after his father reported him to the American Embassy in Abuja, Nigeria, this autumn, shouldn't his visa have been revoked? And shouldn't aviation officials have been told to be on the lookout for him, should he attempt to board a plane bound for the United States?

Databases and visas aren't the only areas of weakness: There is also a need for better passenger screening. Apparently, even as law-abiding citizens are routinely delayed for carrying bottled water or too much toothpaste, Mr. Ab-



JUSTIN RENTERIA

dulmutallab was able to go through security with a highly explosive powder mixture that he had taped to his leg.

More than eight years after 9/11, most airport checkpoints are still equipped only with metal detectors. Millimeter-wave machines and other body-scanning devices that can spot suspicious items hidden underneath clothing have not yet been deployed in great numbers. And the Transportation Security Administration recently scrapped for performance problems "puffer" machines meant to detect traces of explosives on passengers. The agency must redouble its efforts to develop alternative screening technology, because explosives (including the liquid kind) remain terrorists' weapon of choice.

Perhaps the biggest lesson for airline security from the recent incident is that we Americans must overcome our tendency to be reactive. We always seem to be at least one step behind the terrorists. They find one security gap — carrying explosives onto a plane in their shoes, for instance — and we close that one, and then wait for them to exploit another. Why not identify all the vulnerabilities and then address each one before terrorists strike again?

Since the authorities have to succeed 100 percent of the time, and terrorists only once, the odds are overwhelmingly against the authorities. But they'll be more likely to defy fate if they go beyond reflexive defense and play offense for a change.

*CLARK KENT ERVIN, who was the inspector general of the State Department from 2001 to 2003 and of the Department of Homeland Security from 2003 to 2004, is the director of the Aspen Institute's homeland security program.*

## Terrorists often drawn from elite



**Richard  
Bernstein**

### LETTER FROM AMERICA

**NEW YORK** That Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, fated to go down in history as the failed underwear bomber, comes from a prominent and prosperous family in Nigeria invites comparison with Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan, the U.S. Army psychiatrist who is accused of killing 13 fellow soldiers at Fort Hood, Texas, in November.

Both men came from middle- or upper-class families, went to good schools and would seem to have had much better prospects than to destroy numerous lives, as well as their own, in acts of terrorist mayhem.

Both men seem to illustrate the observation made by historians of violent political extremists from Robespierre

Many of the radicals who have planned to attack the United States have middle- to upper-class roots.

to Pol Pot: that they tend more often to be intellectuals with a grievance, a concept, and a thirst for power than the desperate and wretched of the earth on whose behalf they usually claim to have acted.

The way recent Islamic terrorists embody this notion is quite striking. Mr. Abdulmutallab, who is accused of trying to set off a bomb on a flight from Amsterdam to Detroit on Christmas Day, didn't come from the sprawling, desperate slums of Lagos but from the upper crust of Nigerian society. He went to the elite British School of Lomé, Togo, and to University College London, where he graduated with honors in 2008.

Then, apparently because of a false statement on his application to continue his studies in London, the British authorities did not renew his visa. He was accepted for a master's degree program in Dubai, but he told his family that he wanted to go to Yemen to study Shariah, or Islamic law.

Those recruited as suicide bombers are supposedly poor and without prospects. Many are, yet most of the Islamic radicals who have attacked the United States or have tried to in the last decade come, like Mr. Abdulmutallab, from the elite of their countries. Osama bin Laden himself came from fabulous wealth in Saudi Arabia; his chief deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri, was — like the Latin American revolutionary Che Guevara — a medical doctor from a distinguished family.

Though not from the same elite social class as Mr. bin Laden or Mr. Zawahiri, the operational leaders of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States were uniformly from upwardly striving middle-class families. Mohammed Atta, the lead hijacker, studied architecture and engineering in Cairo. His father was a successful lawyer who had the connections to get his son a spot at the Technical University of Hamburg, which is where he seems to have volunteered for the jihadist cause.

Another of the 2001 attacks' operational leaders, Ziad Jarrah, came from Lebanon, where his father was a senior government official in the social security administration and his mother a schoolteacher. His family sent him not to a Muslim school but to a private, Christian school in Beirut, because they were more interested in helping him to get ahead than in furthering his religious affiliation.

Whether Major Hasan, accused in the Fort Hood killings, could be a classical Islamic terrorist is a matter of dispute. What is clear is that he was an upper-middle-class Muslim influenced by radical Middle East preachers. His parents, Palestinian immigrants, operated an upscale restaurant in Virginia. Major Hasan got a degree in biochemistry from Virginia Tech, went to medical school at the expense of the U.S. Army and did his residency in psychiatry at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

The one exception to this pattern is the person who otherwise most resembles Mr. Abdulmutallab. This is Richard C. Reid, the shoe-bomber whose attempt to blow up an airliner in 2001 was, like Mr. Abdulmutallab's,

foiled by what would seem to be a combination of incompetence and quick action by fellow passengers.

Mr. Reid, the son of a Jamaican father and an English mother, grew up on the margins of British society and turned early to petty street crime and drugs. He became a Muslim in prison, and, after he was released, fell under the influence of radical Muslim preachers like Abu Hamzi al-Masri, who was convicted in Britain in 2006 for soliciting murder and racial hatred.

Though their origins are very different, Mr. Reid and Mr. Abdulmutallab ended up on strikingly similar paths, finding meaning in Islamic practice and then traveling to Qaeda-infested regions: Mr. Reid to Afghanistan when Osama bin Laden ran training camps there, and Mr. Abdulmutallab to Yemen, which is now deemed by U.S. intelligence to be a major center of Qaeda recruitment and training.

Mr. Reid admitted to U.S. investigators that he had technical help in making his bomb, and it seems unlikely that the 23-year-old Mr. Abdulmutallab would have had the technical expertise or the access to the bomb material without similar help.

That so many jihadist combatants are from middle-class backgrounds doesn't mean that the grinding poverty of many Islamic countries — and its contrast with the badly distributed wealth of some of those same societies — plays no role in fueling Muslim anger and desperation. Clearly it does.

But it's also a measure of that anger and desperation — and of the superheated, paranoid cult that sees the United States as the Great Satan — that it is so often young men with good prospects who are willing to sacrifice themselves to strike a blow for what has become their cause.

It's a good thing that the two most recent attempts to blow up airplanes were amateurishly bungled. This could, as some commentators have said, indicate that Al Qaeda itself is much less fearsome than we generally believe. But other would-be martyrs could be learning from the mistakes of Mr. Reid and Mr. Abdulmutallab and engage in more effective attacks in the future.

In this sense, ABC News reported Monday on what may be the most worrisome aspect of the Abdulmutallab case. He is said to have told F.B.I. investigators that there are many more like him being trained in Yemen — and they are ready to attack.

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# A bad decade

Rami G. Khouri

**BEIRUT** This week will see the close of one of the most dramatic decades in recent history, and much of the action — mostly for worse — has taken place in the Middle East.

A journalist colleague from Europe asked me the other day whether I agreed that nothing much had changed in the Middle East since 2001 — because the region continues to be dominated by autocratic and dictatorial leaders and the rippling tensions of the Arab-Israeli conflict persist.

I disagreed, suggesting that the events of Sept. 11, 2001 and their aftermath had brought about significant changes in the region, mostly negative ones.

The most important single policy change has been the normalization of foreign military powers entering the region and attacking at will under the guise of responding to the 9/11 terror attack against the United States.

American and British armies lead the way in Iraq and Afghanistan. The militarization and globalization of local tensions in Palestine, Lebanon, Somalia and Yemen in recent years reflect the latest phase of this process.

Parallel to Anglo-American militarization of the region has been deep Western acquiescence to Israel's aggressive and deadly policies toward Palestinians and other Arabs. The two savage wars Israel launched against Lebanon and Gaza in 2006 and 2008 are central episodes in the new regional landscape of the past decade, which now includes Israel's continuing siege of Gaza.

Western militarization in our region also translates into broad support for local autocrats and security-minded regimes that run roughshod over their

people's rights. This hardening of Arab security regimes and political dictatorships responds to short-term foreign aims, but betrays the hollowness of the Western (and occasional Arab) rhetoric about promoting democracy and human rights in the Middle East.

This American-led militarization of Middle Eastern policy reflects a deeper problem, which is the broad inability of the United States and other Western powers to develop a coherent policy toward the scourge of terrorism.

As the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan now show, anti-American sentiments have increased among many people in those lands where American troops have attacked and stayed for years. The terrorism problem is also bigger today than it was in 2000, and more difficult to defeat, due to the proliferation and localization of terror groups that are often inspired by Al Qaeda types but also motivated by the presence of foreign armies.

The natural military resistance against invading armies spills over to aggravate political threats to the integrity and stability in some countries, where the legitimacy and efficacy of the central state may not resonate deeply with all citizens.

Many Middle Eastern countries are much more polarized than they were 10 years ago, as tough security-minded governments tend to concentrate their controls on smaller areas of the country. The cumulative integrity and stability of Middle Eastern countries are less impressive now than they were a decade ago.

A third major change in the past decade has been the expanding influence of Iran throughout the region, which was accelerated by the Anglo-American destruction of Iraq's Baathist regime. Iran's penetration of the Arab world has made it a major player in the region, and has helped shape a new regional cold

war that has sharply divided the Middle East into two ideological camps that occasionally battle each other militarily — either directly (Lebanon, Palestine) or through proxies (Yemen, Somalia, Iraq).

A fourth important development has been large-scale popular and political resistance to American-led policies that often include Israel and conservative Arab regimes. The massive use of U.S. military power and political arm-twisting has triggered a meaningful response by once docile Arab, Iranian and Turkish populations that reject being victims of foreign militarism and neocolonialism. Islamist groups like Hamas and Hezbollah tend to lead such forces, but others are also involved. This resistance helps define the regional cold war. It has also triggered counter-resistance against it from many quarters of society that do not relish an Islamist, Iranian or Syrian-led Arab world — resulting, for example, in the Saad Hariri-led election victory in Lebanon last summer.

The fifth significant new factor in our region is the expansion of Turkish influence, which is mostly a positive development. Government policies and public opinion in Turkey both reflect key trends in the Arab world, including rejecting American and Israeli policies when these are seen to be inappropriate for Turkish national interests.

Our region has changed significantly in the past decade, mostly for the worse. This is a good time to reflect on the causes of our deterioration, so that we and our leaders do not collectively act like buffoons and simply perpetuate the mistakes that have defined our inauspicious start of this third millennium.

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AGENCE GLOBAL

# Change Iran at the top

The supreme leader's office has become unsustainable as the Green movement spreads.



**Roger Cohen**

GLOBALIST

It has come to this: The Islamic Republic of Iran killing the sons and daughters of the revolution during Ashura, adding martyrdom to martyrdom at one of the holiest moments in the Shiite calendar.

Nothing could better symbolize Iran's 30-year-old regime at the limit of its contradictions. A supreme leader imagined as the Prophet's representative on earth — Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's central revolutionary idea — now heads a militarized coterie bent, in the name of money and power, on the bludgeoning of the Iranian people. A false theocracy confronts a society that has seen through it.

The emperor has no clothes. Still, let us give this theocracy credit. It has brought high levels of education to a broad swathe of Iranians, including the women it has repressed. In a Middle East of static authoritarianism, it has dabbled at times in liberalization and representative governance. It has never quite been able to extinguish from its conscience Khomeini's rallying of the masses against the shah with calls for freedom.

The result, three decades on from the revolution, is precisely this untenable mix of a leadership invoking transplantation from heaven as it faces, with force of arms and the fanaticism of militias, a youthful society far more sophisticated than the death-to-the-West slogans still unfurled.

Nowhere else today in the Middle East does anything resembling the people power of Iran's Green move-

ment exist. This is at once a tribute to the revolution and the death knell of an ossified post-revolutionary order.

Something has to give, someone has to yield. If the Islamic Republic is incapable of honoring both words in its self-description — that of a religious and representative society — it must give way to an Iranian Republic.

The former course, of reform rather than overthrow, would be less tumultuous and so, I suspect, more attractive to a people weary of tumult and flanked by mayhem in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Yes, something has to give. Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, whose death this month carried heavy symbolism in a land where symbols are potent, intuited the revolution's unsustainable tensions two decades ago. It was then that the cleric once designated as Khomeini's successor lambasted an earlier round of bloody repression and then that he began to criticize the office of the supreme leader.

Montazeri had been instrumental in 1979 in the creation of the system of Guardianship of the Jurist, or velayat-e faqih, placing a leader interpreting God's word atop circumscribed republican institutions. But he later apologized for his role in the establishment of the position and argued that he had conceived of it as exercising moral rather than executive authority.

His anger came to a head after the June 12 election, hijacked by the supreme leader, Ali Khamenei. Montazeri then declared: "Such elections results were declared that no wise person in their right mind could believe, results that based on credible evidence and witnesses had been altered extensively." He lambasted what he called "astounding violence against defenseless men and women."

I witnessed that violence — a putsch in the spurious name of God's will grotesquely portrayed by Khamenei as a glorious democratic moment — and it was clear at once that Iran's leadership had taken a fatal turn. It had shunned the pluralistic evolution of the Islamic order in favor of a lockdown by the

moneyed cadres of the New Right, personified by the Revolutionary Guards with their cozy contracts and pathological fears of looming counter-revolutions of the velvet variety.

You can do many things to the Iranian people but you insult their intelligence at your peril. The astonishing taboo-breaking cry of "Death to Khamenei" echoing from the rooftops of Tehran signaled a watershed.

It is time to rethink the supreme leader's office in the name of the compromise between religious faith and representative governance that the Iranian people have sought for more than a century. It is time for Iran to look West to the holy Shiite cities in Iraq, Najaf and Karbala,

places from which Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani exercises precisely the kind of moral authority and suasion — without direct executive authority — that Montazeri favored for Iran.

If the Guardianship of the Jurist can be rethought through compromise the Islamic Republic can move forward. If not, I cannot see the current unrest abating.

The Green movement is a loose coalition of divergent aims — much like the revolutionary alliance of 1979 — but is united in its demand for an end to the status quo.

A commander-in-chief transplanted from heaven is not what the Iranian people want, not after June 12; a moral guide, rooted in the ethics and religion of Persia, a guarantor of the country's independence, may well be. It is time for a Persian Sistani.

The sons and daughters of disappointed revolutionaries do not seek renewed bloodshed. They seek peaceful change that will give meaning to the word "republic." Khamenei, bowing to superior learning, in the best tradition of Shiism, should listen to the wisdom of Iran's late turbulent priest.

Iran would thereby preserve its inde-

pendence, the proudest achievement of the revolution, while better reflecting the will of its people, who overwhelmingly favor normalized relations with the United States.

It is time to retire the stale slogans of a bygone era. It is time for Iran to follow China's example of 1972 in adapting to survive. Perhaps Khomeini, like Mao in Deng Xiaoping's famous formula, was 70 percent right — and some brave Iranian leader could say that. He would thereby open the way for one of the Middle East's most hopeful societies to move forward.

Speaking of tired slogans, it is also time for the United States — and especially Congress — to set aside formulaic thinking on Iran. Shiite Iran is not America's enemy; Sunni Al Qaeda is, whether in Yemen, Nigeria or Pakistan. New sanctions against Tehran would only throw a lifeline to Khamenei and further enrich the Revolutionary Guards. President Obama's outreach is still the smartest approach to Iran, a nation whose political clock has now trumped its erratic, wavering nuclear clock.

Back in February, I wrote: "The Islamic Republic has not birthed a totalitarian state; all sorts of opinions are heard. But it has created a society whose ultimate bond is fear. Disappearance into some unmarked room is always possible." That was too much for the Iran-as-Nazi-incarnation-of-evil school, who cast me as an appeaser.

I also wrote that, "The irony of the Islamic Revolution is that it has created a very secular society within the framework of clerical rule. The shah enacted progressive laws for women unready for them. Now the opposite is true: Progressive women face confining jurisprudence. At some point something must give."

With the birth of the Green movement, and in the spirit of Montazeri, something has given. The further, critical "giving" has to come in the supreme leader's office, where the 30 percent error of 1979 has entrenched itself and so denied Iran the governance and society its vibrant population deserves.

# Realistic view on war and peace

In the October announcement of its decision to bestow the 2009 Nobel Peace Prize on U.S. President Barack Obama, the Norwegian Nobel Committee attached special importance to his "vision of and work for a world without nuclear weapons." The committee also praised the U.S. president by stating: "Only very rarely has a person to the same extent as Obama captured the world's attention and given its people hope for a better future."

But the prevailing political circumstances seem to have forced Mr. Obama to put more stress on realism in international politics than on ideals and hope. In his acceptance speech, entitled "A Just and Lasting Peace," given in Oslo Dec. 10, he acknowledged that occasions arise when use of military force becomes necessary to realize peace.

Clearly aware of criticism, especially in the United States, that he cannot claim any concrete achievements of a global scale, Mr. Obama was humble in the opening part of his speech. He said, "I am at the beginning, and not the end, of my labors on the world stage."

A Gallup poll taken a week after the Norwegian committee's announcement found that 34 percent thought that Mr. Obama deserved the prize, while 61 percent did not. The results of a CNN/Opinion Research Corp. survey released Dec. 9 showed that only 19 percent of respondents thought Mr. Obama deserved the prize now, with 35 percent regarding it likely that he will eventually accomplish enough to deserve it, and more than 40 percent believing that he will never deserve the prize.

Mr. Obama also admitted that "my accomplishments are slight" when compared with people like Albert Schweitzer (the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize winner), Martin Luther King Jr. (the 1964 winner of the prize), George Marshall (former U.S. Secretary of State known for the Marshall Plan for European reconstruction after World War II) and Nelson Mandela (the 1993 recipient of the prize).

The acceptance ceremony came nine days after Mr. Obama announced that he will send 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan, and the fact that his administration is waging war in Iraq and Afghanistan clearly weighed on his mind. He acknowledged that "perhaps the most profound issue surrounding my receipt of this prize is the fact that I am the Commander-in-Chief of the military of a nation in the midst of two wars."

Calling attention to threats to peace, especially terrorism, and expounding on the concept of "just war," Mr. Obama

displayed a realistic outlook: "We will not eradicate violent conflict in our lifetimes. There will be times when nations — acting individually or in concert — will find the use of force not only necessary but morally justified. . . . So yes, the instruments of war do have a role to play in preserving the peace."

This remark can be taken as an effort to solicit understanding of his decision to step up U.S. war efforts in Afghanistan. He also said, "To say that force may sometimes be necessary is not a call to cynicism — it is a recognition of history, the imperfections of man and the limits of reason."

One should feel relieved to hear Mr. Obama say that "no matter how justified, war promises human tragedy. . . . War itself is never glorious, and we must never trumpet it as such." Any national leader who uses military force, including Mr. Obama himself, should be called on to ask themselves whether their actions are consistent with this insight.

Referring to the non-violence of men like Dr. King and Indian nationalist and spiritual leader Mohandas Gandhi, Mr. Obama said that "the love they preached — their fundamental faith in human progress — that must be the North Star that guides us on our journey," adding that if we lose that faith, "we lose our sense of possibility. We lose our moral compass."

Yet Mr. Obama said that the world should "stand together as one" to deal with nations that break rules and laws, that "our urgent example is the effort to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and to seek a world without them," and that upholding the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty regime is a "centerpiece of my foreign policy." One cannot doubt his seriousness.

No doubt, behind such statements is a realistic calculation that stricter international controls on nuclear weapons and their eventual disappearance from the face of Earth would enhance the security of the U.S., through the reduced risk of being attacked by a nuclear-armed enemy nation or organization. But the same benefits extend to the entire world.

Conspicuously, Mr. Obama failed to mention the moral dictate that no nation nor group should ever use nuclear weapons, which cause devastating and long-continuing damage to human life. Still, the world must not lose momentum toward reaching the goal of nuclear arms reduction and nuclear disarmament, which Mr. Obama helped to promote with his speech in Prague in April. Now is the time for Mr. Obama and other leaders to act in earnest and take concrete steps towards eradicating the peril of nuclear weapons.

# Renewed dialogue welcome, but talks alone won't win peace

Harsh V. Pant  
London

Speculation has been building up on the Subcontinent that dialogue between India and Pakistan is about to restart. Last month Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh declared in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir that if Pakistan showed "sincerity and good faith," India "will not be found wanting in its response."

Appealing to the government of Pakistan, Singh said "the hand of friendship that we have extended should be carried forward. This is in the interest of people of India and Pakistan."

Singh stressed that terrorists "want permanent enmity to prevail between the two countries," but avoided mention of both the Mumbai terror attacks of November 2008 and the continuing militancy in Kashmir. Later, at a press conference, Singh clarified that New Delhi's demand that Islamabad put terror groups under "effective control" was "not a precondition" for resumption of India-Pakistan talks, but a "practical" way forward because "we are a democracy and if day in and day out terrorist attacks continue to take precious lives of our citizens, we cannot create a *mahaul* (atmosphere) for meaningful negotiations."

After the Mumbai terror attacks, India suspended dialogue with Pakistan, asking it to first dismantle the terrorist infrastructure in its territory. Though India still remains dissatisfied with Pakistan's efforts to bring to justice all the perpetrators of the assault on Mumbai, there is growing pressure on New Delhi to renew the diplomatic relationship.

The United States has asked India to talk with Pakistan. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton was in Pakistan last month, working to assuage concerns within a nuclear-armed state consumed by doubts about the value of its alliance with the U.S. and resentful of ever-growing American demands. The U.S. is also struggling to reassure Pakistan about the conditions imposed on a new American aid package of \$7.5 billion over five years, which the Pakistani military has denounced as being designed to interfere in the country's internal affairs. The perception in Islamabad is that the U.S. places greater value on its ties with India, and so is reluctant to push India to address Pakistan's concerns.

## Military and intelligence services have little incentive to moderate their behavior as continuing conflict assures their pre-eminent position in society.

Within India itself, voices calling for dialogue with Pakistan are also growing, especially as it is unclear whether the "no talks" policy is working. Diplomatic pressure from India forced Pakistan to concede that the perpetrators of the Mumbai attacks had come from its territory and agree, in principle, to prosecute them. The U.S. has also continued to demand that Pakistan bring all those involved to justice. Though Pakistan continues to drag its feet on actual prosecution of the main culprits, its acknowledgment of the trouble emanating from within its borders is viewed by many in India as a starting point for future negotiations.

India realizes that there are clear limits to its "no talks" policy, given that such a stance does not lessen the conflict or address potential hostility from across the border.

Pakistan itself has been quite keen on restarting talks. Reportedly it is contemplating appointing former Foreign Secretary Riaz Mohammad Khan as its special envoy on Indian affairs.

Yet it would be a folly to view these trends with any great degree of expectation. The state of Pakistan is under siege, with the nation reeling under a relentless wave of terror strikes, primarily targeted at security forces, police and government officials. The civilian government of Asaf Ali Zardari has lost all credibility and the military is once again ascendant.

The Pakistani armed forces have historically viewed themselves as guardians of the nation's identity, and their need to view India as an adversary has long been a constant in Pakistan's politics and foreign policy. Significant sections of Pakistani military and intelligence services continue to see themselves as being in a permanent state of conflict with India. They have little incentive to moderate their behavior as continuing conflict assures their pre-eminent position in Pakistani society. At a time when

Pakistan's Islamic identity is under siege because of its cooperation with the U.S. on the war on terror, the need to define itself in opposition to India grows even stronger.

Considering the uncertainty of U.S. plans in Afghanistan, and the strong sentiment in Pakistan that India is creating trouble in the restive province of Baluchistan and tribal areas, it is highly unlikely that the army would abandon the militant groups that it has relied on to fight as proxies in Afghanistan, and in Kashmir against India.

The ability of Pakistan's political establishment to keep terrorist groups from wreaking havoc in India is crucial to the peace process. It is doubtful how much control the civilian government in Islamabad can exert, given that various terrorist outfits have vowed to continue their jihad in Kashmir. These outfits, Frankenstein's monsters that Pakistan created to further its strategic goals, have now turned against the state and threaten to devour any future attempts at Indo-Pak reconciliation. There is little evidence of any significant effort on Pakistan's part to dismantle terrorist's infrastructure such as communications networks, launching pads and training camps on its eastern border.

While the Indian prime minister's statements may seem like a significant move toward restarting the dialogue process, and though international opinion is gravitating toward that happening, the reality on the ground makes one rather pessimistic about such chances. Pakistan is facing multiple challenges and the dialogue process *per se* might be an inadequate means of meeting them. India and the world would do well to take that into account as yet another tryst begins in the so-called "peace process."

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# Victory, one Afghan village at a time

Doug Stanton  
Washington  
THE WASHINGTON POST

In fall 2001, about three dozen U.S. Army Special Forces soldiers landed in northern Afghanistan and, with the help of a handful of CIA officers, quickly routed a Taliban army whose estimated size ranged from 25,000 to 50,000 fighters. Allied with Afghan fighters, this incredibly small number of first-in soldiers achieved in about eight weeks what the Pentagon had thought would take two years. For the first time in U.S. history, Special Forces were deployed as the lead element in a war.

And then, just as quickly, the Americans went home, pulled away to fight in Iraq in 2003. The Taliban soldiers filled the emerging power vacuum, and you pretty much know the rest of the story: Gen. Stanley McChrystal's dire August report on deteriorating conditions in Afghanistan, and President Barack Obama's decision to add 30,000 additional American troops — needed, the president said, because "the Taliban has gained momentum."

Obama's stated purposes — to disrupt, dismantle and ultimately defeat al-Qaida, and to train an Afghan army and police force capable of providing for the nation's security — are sensible and even noble. Accomplishing them will go a ways toward creating a more stable country. But it may prove a mistaken effort to replicate an Iraq-like approach in a situation that is vastly different.

In Afghanistan, we are not facing a broad insurgency with popular grassroots support. Estimates of Taliban strength run anywhere from 10,000 to 25,000 fighters, and only a small portion of the Afghan population supports them.

All the "graveyard of empires" metaphors aside, it's no secret that Afghans excel at repelling occupiers, and dropping 30,000 new troops into the country is a sure way of being perceived as an occupying force. Instead, Obama could steal a page from the original approach to the Afghan war — the Special Forces approach — which recognizes that an insurgency is a social problem. The debate over what to do in Afghanistan, then, is really a debate about locating the centers of gravity in that country — those people,

places and power brokers who must be influenced to make social change.

I was hoping Obama would opt for a plan that did not solely resemble a conventional counterinsurgency strategy, like McChrystal's, with its traditional aims to "clear, hold and build" ground and undertake the complicated task of nation-building. While this strategy has worked in degrees in Iraq, it was preceded by a more nuanced, complex strategy of working with and through local Iraqis, principally in Anbar province. There, men such as retired Army Special Forces Master Sgt. Andy Marchal, who had fought in Afghanistan in 2001 with the first team to enter the country, instigated social change and tamped down violence by creating jobs and working with tribesmen who had decided to stop fighting alongside al-Qaida.

"As soon as I saw that the main problem in the village was unemployment — at one point it was at 70 percent — I knew I wouldn't even have to pick up my gun," he recently told me. "I simply had to create more jobs than al-Qaida was creating and get those guys to work in this new economy. After that, the hard-core fighters left behind would start fighting each other, and sure enough, that's what happened."

Marchal did this with a small group of Special Forces soldiers, maybe numbering no more than two dozen.

This model works tribe by tribe and village by village. It considers violence, unemployment and unrest as part of the same cloth. Special Forces soldiers may arm and train militias to defend themselves, as well as help build water systems and provide jobs and medical care. It can be slower, nuanced work, and it relies on building rapport with citizens, which is why Special Forces soldiers receive language training and believe awareness of local customs and mores is critical. Think of soldiers engaged in such efforts as Peace Corps members — only they can shoot back.

This model can be far less bloody and far less costly than deploying tens of thousands of conventional army troops, and there are signs that a "tribal-centric" approach is gaining traction with some strategists. One signal is the buzz created by an informal paper called "Tribe by Tribe," by Special Forces Maj. Jim Gant. "When we gain the

respect of one tribe," Gant writes, "there will be a domino effect throughout the region and beyond. One tribe will eventually become 25 or even 50 tribes."

Another encouraging sign is a dynamic new effort called the Community Defense Initiative. Afghan citizens and militias not sympathetic to the Taliban are receiving assistance from teams of Special Forces soldiers to defend their villages from Taliban attack. The initiative resembles what Special Forces soldiers did during the fighting in 2001, when they united various ethnic groups and fought together against the Taliban.

This approach, one senior defense official says, proceeds from the assumption that peace and stability are created from the ground up, not from the national government down, and that each valley and tribe may require a unique solution. One advantage to this approach is that it does not rely on a weak and so-far ineffectual government in Kabul for support, which, the defense official said, would be like "hitching our wagon to a crippled horse."

It's not too late to consider wider adoption of the tribal approach. The debate about what to do in Afghanistan has often seemed a simple, binary discussion: all in, or all out. Do we flood the zone with thousands of troops and risk appearing to be imperialist occupiers? Or do we take a light-footprint approach, as in 2001, avoiding the "occupier" label but risking a longer march with the Afghans toward a peaceful society? As Obama pointed out in his speech, there is no simple right and wrong. But some answers are better than others.

One better answer is to revisit the lessons from the Special Forces campaign just after Sept. 11, 2001. This may not be easy. The conventional army, one Special Forces officer told me, was uncomfortable with the decentralized nature of the war effort in 2001 and with how cheap it was. He recounted how he was once stopped by a senior officer from the conventional U.S. Army who told him, "You must be proud of what you did in Afghanistan." The Special Forces officer said he was. "Good," he was told, "because you'll never get the chance to do it again."

Doug Stanton is the author of "Horse Soldiers: The Extraordinary Story of a Band of U.S. Soldiers Who Rode to Victory in Afghanistan."

# U.S. shouldn't go it alone

David B. Rivkin Jr. and Lee A. Casey  
Washington  
LOS ANGELES TIMES

To help justify commitments to dramatically cut U.S. fossil fuel use, Obama administration officials have contended that our national security is at stake. The president argued in his Nobel Peace Prize speech in Oslo that vast changes in the Earth's climate triggered by global warming will lead to widespread economic and social dislocation, instability and more wars. In the hope that setting a good example will spur other nations into similar action, he will announce in Copenhagen a U.S. goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions to 83 percent below 2005 levels by 2050. But foreign policy isn't accomplished by acting unilaterally and hoping others follow.

The U.S. alone — or even the developed world as a whole — cannot stabilize, much less reduce, global carbon-dioxide concentrations. On this point, there is universal agreement. Indeed, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Lisa Jackson told the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee recently that "U.S. action alone will not impact world CO<sub>2</sub> levels."

U.S. leadership may well be necessary, but America's moral example in reducing its carbon output will have little effect on the developing world, where uncontrolled carbon emissions are growing the fastest.

The biggest carbon emitters among developing nations — Brazil, China, India and Russia — already have made clear that although they are prepared to improve the energy efficiencies of their economies (thereby reducing the carbon intensity per unit of GNP), they have no interest in capping their carbon emissions. Given the genuine economic hardship that would result from abandoning the Industrial Age's carbon-based economies, it is doubtful that even our European allies will follow U.S. President Barack Obama's lead. Indeed, many of them already have failed to meet past emission reduction obligations.

This is hardly surprising. In the George W. Bush years, proponents of unilateral U.S. carbon reductions obscured these enduring geopolitical realities by contending that Bush's refusal to accept mandatory limits on U.S. carbon emissions was preventing global progress. However, the results of all climate-change-related international

conferences held on Obama's watch make clear the problem was not Bush. Any solution must include the major developing economies, and their opposition to mandatory emission limitations actually has grown since the Obama administration began talking about dramatic unilateral U.S. actions setting an example.

The problem is as basic as human nature. The U.S. cannot obtain the developing world's participation in painful economic sacrifices without leverage, which it won't have if it already has committed to reducing its own emissions for the next 40-plus years regardless of what other countries do. The Obama administration is consigning the U.S. to the worst of all possible bargaining positions. If climate change is to be treated as a serious foreign policy concern, lessons should be drawn from other diplomatic contexts in which such unilateral action has proved a resounding failure.

This has been especially true in the area of international trade, where the fundamental principle of reciprocity reigns supreme. No country eliminates its trade barriers without reciprocal and meaningful concessions from trading partners. The United States has advocated free-trade policies for decades, but it also has spent considerable effort and diplomatic capital in creating both global and regional trade regimes — the World Trade Organization and the North American Free Trade Agreement — based on the acceptance and implementation of trade policies by other members. These detailed and comprehensive mutual agreements are, of course, backed by appropriate verification and compliance mechanisms.

The same is true of arms control. All of the major arms limitation agreements of the past 50 years were founded on the reciprocity principle. This applied to every conceivable aspect of controlling the development, manufacture and deployment of weapons systems, whether involving ships, tanks, infantry forces or nuclear missiles, whether offensive or defensive. This principle also governed agreements that limited the permissible types of military activities. Carefully negotiated undertakings that detailed how all parties were to proceed — backed by robust verification mechanisms — invariably proved the only fruitful approach.

These general negotiating principles were reflected with particular clarity in nuclear arms control endeavors, which have long been the centerpiece of U.S. foreign and defense policy. Both Democratic and Republican presidents understood that unilateral disarmament was a bad option because it would leave the U.S. with nothing to trade for the Soviet concessions. Modern history is replete with instances of governments holding on to weapons systems they did not really want so they could be traded away at the opportune moment.

Finally, perhaps the most telling example of unilateral environmental U.S. action failing to achieve a desired foreign policy result is the long and difficult battle to address stratospheric ozone depletion. Initially, the U.S. led the way with unilateral cuts in ozone-depleting substances, and got nowhere. Our decreases, in fact, were matched by increases from other countries. Genuine ozone layer protection was achieved only after both developed and developing nations agreed to controls as part of the Montreal Protocol in 1987.

There is a further problem. Unilateral U.S. emission reductions would be a massive subsidy to carbon-intensive imports from developing countries, which would be cheaper than the products of carbon-constrained economies. Because developing countries would be loath to relinquish this advantage, and because some of them believe they are fated to replace the U.S. in world leadership, America's unilateral sacrifice would make it more difficult to obtain their commitment to carbon controls.

Unilateral action may well be the right option in cases in which the U.S. itself, given sufficient commitment and will, can achieve a particular goal. In the case of global climate change, however, the U.S. can do nothing that is in the least effective without the agreement and participation of all of the other major carbon-emitting economies, including Europe, India and China. Until all are on board, unilateral cuts simply will make the American people poorer, with no benefit to anyone but our foreign competitors.

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# The Afghan war isn't 'just'



WILLIAM  
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Paris

When they heard U.S. President Barack Obama's Nobel Peace Prize speech, a shiver of astonishment went through conservative circles in the United States that this man, whom they identify as a prototypical liberal, should have mentioned the existence of evil. I would imagine this is because it has become an easy assumption that liberals blame society for evil, and regard the word itself as an outmoded term used only by people such as President George W. Bush and his Christian Right supporters.

Yet they also knew that Obama is a Christian — his relations with the Christian preacher who converted him to religion were a major subject of news and comment during the presidential primary campaign in 2008. It's hard to become a Christian without hearing something about sinners and evil.

George W. Bush's religious statements constantly reflected a conviction that good is identified with the U.S. and evil with its enemies. His final speech to the nation said: "America must maintain our moral clarity. I have often spoken to you about good and evil. This has made some uncomfortable. But good and evil are present in the world and between the two there can be no compromise."

True enough in principle, but there is in this a trace of something any good

Christian should be aware of, the parable of the Pharisee and the poor man. The poor man took his place in the back of the synagogue, said to God that he was a sinner, and asked forgiveness. The Pharisee placed himself in the front row and reminded God of all the good things he had done, and his rich gifts to the temple, saying that he thanked God that he was not like other men.

Both Obama and Bush were saying in different ways that we Americans are good and Taliban or jihadists are bad. But the reason we are good is that we are we, and are justified in punishing them because they are they. But the practicalities of the matter are a little different. Americans are the avengers of the fact that the Taliban before 2001 gave hospitality to Osama bin Laden and his people, who had been driven out of the Sudan by American demands on the Sudan government.

The Taliban government in Afghanistan had no grievances against the U.S. until Washington attacked Afghanistan in 2001 because the Taliban were observing what they considered their code of honor, to give hospitality and protection. Today they are trying to seize back control of their country from the rival Tajik people (of the old Northern Alliance), to whom the U.S. in 2002 had awarded Afghanistan, in return for their help in taking it away from the Taliban.

Obama doesn't like the Taliban because they oppress women and attack American invaders. I don't know what the theologians would make of justice in all this, but it strikes me as a huge, mutually culturally ignorant, self-righteous, fanatically nationalist, and ideological clash of societies, instead of any war between good and evil.

David Brooks of The New York Times

has written on Obama's having revived the thought of the great modern Christian realist Reinhold Niebuhr, who rescued the American Protestant church in the 1930s to 1950s from the confusions produced by the coexistence of the Biblical counsels of pacifism ("turn the other cheek") and the exigencies of fighting aggressive totalitarian movements ("take up your sword").

The contemporary error is much simpler. It is that of the proud Pharisee. We Americans wage "just wars" because we are good and righteous people who therefore have the right to use our overwhelming armies, its bombers, rockets, drones and mines, to strike and awe people, invade their countries, whom we know to be bad because they use insurrection, conspiracy and terrorism to resist us, and continue religious practices that displease us.

The problems of just war are not new. In the Western Christian tradition they go back to the theologians Aquinas and Suarez. They said that to be just, a war's cause must be to vindicate an undoubted and internationally recognized crime; all peaceful means (negotiations) must have been tried in vain; the good to be done must clearly outweigh the evil that will be done by the war; there must be reasonable hope that in the end justice can be achieved for both sides; the means are licit (weapons must be limited and legitimate); and international law must be observed. By these criteria, I don't see any just wars anywhere these days.

*William Pfaff is a Paris-based veteran political analyst and columnist for the International Herald Tribune.*

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# Yes, America breeds terrorists

Nick Cohen  
London  
THE OBSERVER

Once a suicide bomber has killed himself and everyone unlucky enough to be in his vicinity, ideologues rush to claim him like rival firms of undertakers fighting over a corpse. If he has posted a video raging about the Iraq war then George W. Bush, Tony Blair and the neocons are the "root cause" of the mass murder. If his university teachers had stood back while Islamists radicalized the campus, then liberals who cannot tell their friends from their enemies are to blame.

Not until I read the New York Times recently, however, did I learn that jihadism could be explained away as a jolly jape. Pakistani police, who must cope with the equivalent of a 7/7 London massacre virtually every week, had arrested five American citizens, who came from Washington and its Virginia suburbs. The Pakistanis claimed that they had exchanged e-mails written in code for months with a recruiter for the Pakistani Taliban, and were heading for an al-Qaida stronghold. The suspects left behind a video, which Washington police said had jihadist overtones and which a local Muslim leader described as a "disturbing farewell statement."

Surveying the evidence, the New York Times wondered, "whether the men acted on a lark or were recruited as part of a larger militant outfit." Everyone is innocent until proven guilty, of course, but "a lark?" Maybe Billy Bunter has taken over the newspaper's foreign desk. More probably, American journalists still believe that radical Islam is an ideology that cannot infect their fellow citizens. If so, they are not alone in their delusion.

After Major Nidal Malik Hasan shot dead 13 people at the Fort Hood base in Texas, the FBI revealed that it had intercepted his e-mails to Anwar al-Awlaki, a notorious preacher who proselytizes for war, most notably via video links to British mosques and campuses. American conservatives cited the authorities' failure to arrest Hasan as an example of the lethal consequences of a multiculturalism that uses accusations of racism or Islamophobia to stop law

enforcement. But it is likely that the FBI was blinded by the belief that an American could not be a jihadist and thought Hasan was simply conducting research.

The notion that the ideological forces that swirl round the rest of the globe do not sweep America has always produced congratulation or anguish. Writing in 1851, Friedrich Engels grumbled that the "rapid and rapidly growing prosperity of the country" seduced American workers away from their duty to agitate for revolution.

Other left wingers were as despondent. According to socialist theory, Americans ought to have developed a distinct class consciousness, but the strong trade unions and socialist or labor parties of Europe and Canada never repeated their success in the United States. There were no monarchs, bishops and nobles to react against and everyone except the slaves believed in elements of the egalitarian promise of the American dream.

Pride in American exceptionalism ran through Obama's Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech. "In many countries, there is a deep ambivalence about military action today," he told his doubtless deeply ambivalent Norwegian audience. "At times, this is joined by a reflexive suspicion of America." He would take no notice of it.

"Make no mistake: Evil does exist in the world. A nonviolent movement could not have halted Hitler's armies. Negotiations cannot convince al-Qaida's leaders to lay down their arms." Obama drew a map of a pacifist Europe, unwilling to face reality, and a tough-minded but idealist America ready to defend civilization with "the blood of our citizens and the strength of our arms."

Nowhere has American satisfaction with its uniqueness been more noticeable than in the applause it awards itself for its treatment of immigrants. Articles contrasting the success of the U.S. in integrating Muslims against the failures of Britain have been a regular feature of the American press. Liberals emphasized that immigrants who wanted to leave their old identities behind were helped by a constitution and bill of rights that accepted them as equal citizens.

Conservatives claimed that immigrants could not sit resentfully at home living on

welfare payments and developing sectarian grievances, as they could in corrupt Europe, but had to find jobs that inevitably brought them into contact with Americans from other cultures.

"In the United Kingdom, 81 percent of Muslims consider themselves Muslims first, British second. In the United States, only 47 percent consider themselves Muslim first," wrote an author for Slate magazine in 2007, who once again emphasized the chances for immigrants to get on in life as a main reason why the homegrown bomb plots that had so worried MI5 (the British security service) had rarely troubled the FBI.

I am not arguing that the contrasts are all wrong. Shamefully for us, an illiterate immigrant to America knows that somewhere there is a constitution that guarantees his right to speak and think freely, while the cleverest immigrant to Britain cannot work out the principles that govern his new country.

But I doubt if my American colleagues will remain complacent for long. The number of indictments for homegrown terrorism has grown rapidly in 2009. It is not just the murders in Texas and arrests in Pakistan. In Chicago, prosecutors have charged a suspect with showing his respect for freedom of expression by plotting an attack on a Danish newspaper and in other states suspects face accusations of plotting to bomb shopping malls and skyscrapers.

Depressingly, Americans seem to be as bad as the British are at recognizing the differences between Islam and Islamism. They can no longer, however, get away with pretending that Islamism is an un-American disease. Trying to explain the rise of religious hatreds and identity politics, Obama said in Oslo that "given the dizzying pace of globalization, and the cultural leveling of modernity, it should come as no surprise that people fear the loss of what they cherish about their particular identities," which was true enough in a platitudinous way.

I wonder if he yet understands that Americans are not exempt from the manias of our time and that his formerly special country is not looking so exceptional anymore.



# As Ahmadinejad shrieks at the West

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran says the government over which he presides is "ten times" stronger than it was a year ago. Therefore, Ahmadinejad announced Tuesday, the Islamic Republic will defy the Obama administration's yearend deadline for accepting a United Nations-drafted proposal to trade Iran's enriched uranium stockpile for less dangerous nuclear fuel.

Iran is "not afraid" of the sanctions that the United States and its allies may have in store, Ahmadinejad boasted, adding: "If Iran wanted to make a bomb, we would be brave enough to tell you."

Yet Ahmadinejad may protest too much. Judging by one measure of regime strength — popular support — the dictatorship of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, which Ahmadinejad serves, is as weak as ever, if not weaker.

Ahmadinejad delivered his outburst after hundreds of thousands of regime opponents filled the city of Qom to mourn the death of Ayatollah Ali Montazeri, a founder of the Islamic Republic who had more recently turned into a dissenter.

The huge, nonviolent crowds, and their

chants ("Dictator, this is your last message: The people of Iran are rising!"), proved that there is still plenty of life in the popular movement that Khamenei and his Revolutionary Guards provoked by engineering Ahmadinejad's fraudulent re-election in June. Given the horrific extent of the repression against that movement, its continued energy is nothing short of inspiring.

Montazeri's adoption as a martyr to that movement may also show that its goals go beyond the democratization of Iranian society. To be sure, Montazeri, who was slated to succeed revolutionary leader Ayatollah Khomeini until the two fell out over Montazeri's opposition to repression, is best known for his efforts to reconcile Shiite Islam and democracy. In recent years he had called for relaxing the "guardianship of the clergy" over Iranian political life. He had spoken in favor of equal rights for Iran's persecuted Bahais, a religious minority.

But Montazeri had also linked the democratization of Iran to its peaceful coexistence with the West. Before his death, he apologized for the 1979 Iranian seizure of the U.S. Embassy in Tehran

and — undoubtedly most irritating to Khamenei — opposed the regime's nuclear ambitions. "In light of the scope of death and destruction they bring," Montazeri wrote, "and in light of the fact that such weapons cannot be used solely against an army of aggression but will invariably sacrifice the lives of innocent people, even if these innocent lives are those of future generations, nuclear weapons are not permitted according to reason or Shariah (Islamic law)."

We would not underestimate the fact that a figure such as this can bring forth multitudes — even in death — while Ahmadinejad is reduced to unleashing his militia and shrieking at the West. The most momentous international event of 2009 was the uprising in Iran, and though the regime's collapse is not imminent, it is hardly unthinkable.

President Barack Obama is prudent to pursue a diplomatic solution to Iran's nuclear ambitions. But in doing so, he must not diminish the prospect that Iran's people might ultimately deliver both themselves and the world from the menace.

The Washington Post (Dec. 23)

# Tension simmers in Iran



WILLIAM  
PFAFF

## Paris

The immense crowd of protesters that accompanied the funeral of the politically dissident Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, and the even larger protest expected Sunday, identify either a pre-revolutionary situation in Iran, or that condition which the French call "*fin de regime*" — political decadence suggesting that the end may be near, but might also be very bad.

Sunday (Dec. 27) is the major religious holiday known as Ashura, as well as the seventh day following the Ayatollah Montazeri's death — an important occasion in the Shiite mourning ritual.

Ashura marks the martyrdom in 680 of one of most important figures in the development of shiism, Husayn Ibn Ali, grandson of the Prophet Muhammad and regarded as an enemy of injustice, tyranny and oppression. The coincidence of memorials is decidedly inconvenient for the present unjust, tyrannical and oppressive rulers of Iran.

The popular protest that began last June against vote-count manipulation in the contested re-election of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and against the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei who supports him, are continuing despite killings, beatings, arrests and more or less arbitrary imprisonments of demonstrators and their leaders.

The events resemble those that led up to the revolution that compelled the shah to flee Iran in 1979 and were followed by

the creation of the Islamic Republic.

That was the end of the shah's monarchy, which, for all of its film-set decor and his ambition to become President Richard Nixon's American "Middle Eastern gendarme," was produced by a military coup d'etat in 1921 by his grandfather, an army officer.

The leader of the coup made himself prime minister of the regime — under dual Russian and British military occupation — which was ended by the new leader. He deposed the about-to-become-redundant shah of the Qajar dynasty (who had himself been put on his throne as a child by a military coup) and proclaimed himself Reza Shah Pahlavi, founding the new, if short-lived, Pia because of his inclination toward Germany.

His son was placed on the throne, and kept there after World War II, against parliamentary protest, by a CIA-MI6 coup. He carried out land reform and gave women the vote in national elections. In 1971 he celebrated the 2,500th anniversary of the Persian Empire of Cyrus the Great with a huge party at Persepolis, with chiefs of state and international society invited. (The Queen of England was indisposed, but not Prince Philip).

His dynasty was terminated in 1979 by popular demand for Islamic rule by the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who for the previous 15 years had lived in a Paris suburb, smuggling pamphlets, sermons and tape recordings back into Iran.

The past of modern Iran is thus a succession of foreign occupations and interventions, dynastic changes and coups d'etat, religious enthusiasms and reforms, contrary but sometimes convergent revolutionary and religious ambitions, and enduring enmity for old enemies; some in the crowds of protesters in Tehran recently denouncing President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

denounced the British empire and America as well.

Meanwhile, Israel wants Iranian nuclear sites bombed. Nobody in American government will "take anything off the table" in threatening Iran. Certainly nobody will leave Iran alone, and everyone affects to tremble at the threat of Ahmadinejad's suicide-bomb. That is what it would be, since it would have no active use other than to make Israelis and Americans fear Iran.

Possibly, with a mistake in timing, we could one day see Israelis and Americans bombing democratic demonstrators in Iran.

Among the important forces in Iran's population today are a generation of war veterans (of the Iran-Iraq war, 1980-88, in which a million Iranians died); an army of 325,000 men, two-thirds conscripts, whose command and cadres have recent experience in a desperate war; the veteran Revolutionary Guards (radical Iran-Iraq war volunteers who feel their time to be repaid for their sacrifices has come, if not passed); and the Basij — which the Guard controls — a "popular mobilization army," potentially a million strong, active in repressing this year's demonstrations.

The population has an overwhelmingly young profile. The university generation is "wired" and in touch with the world. Popular aspirations, as far as one can make them out, are anti-regime but not anti-religious.

Finally, perhaps the most significant military factor in Iran's situation today is that there currently are 134,000 U.S. soldiers still in Iraq, whom Iran would quite likely attack if Israel (or the United States) bombed Iranian nuclear sites.

Visit William Pfaff's Web site at  
[www.williampfaff.com](http://www.williampfaff.com).

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# Al-Qaida returns to Yemen with growing, potent threat

## ANALYSIS

San'a/Washington

THE WASHINGTON POST, AFP-JIJI

The al-Qaida branch linked to the attempt to blow up a Detroit-bound Northwest Airlines flight has for the past year escalated efforts to exploit Yemen's instability and carve out a leadership role among terrorist groups, say Yemeni and Western officials, terrorism analysts and tribal leaders.

U.S. authorities say Umar Farouk Abdulmuttalab, the Nigerian suspect who tried to ignite explosive chemicals with a syringe sewn into his underwear, may have been equipped and trained by an al-Qaida bomb maker in Yemen. He allegedly made that claim to FBI agents after his arrest.

If true, it would represent a significant increase in the activities of al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and the emergence of a major new threat to the United States, the Middle East and the Horn of Africa.

Further highlighting the growing significance of Yemen in the fight against terrorism, The New York Times said Sunday that the U.S. had already opened a third, largely covert, front against the al-Qaida terror network there.

Citing an unnamed former top CIA official, the newspaper said that the Central Intelligence Agency sent a number of field operatives with counterterrorism experience to Yemen a year ago. At the same time, some of the most secretive special operations commandos have begun training Yemeni security forces in counterterrorism tactics, the report said.

The Pentagon will be spending more than \$70 million over the next 18 months, and using teams of special forces, to train and equip Yemeni military, Interior Ministry and coast guard forces, more than doubling previous military aid levels, the paper noted.

"Al-Qaida started in Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula, but it was raised and nurtured in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq and other places. Now it is

clear that it is coming back to its roots and growing in Yemen," said Saeed Obaid, a Yemeni terrorism expert. "Yemen has become the place to best understand al-Qaida and its ambitions today."

The branch, which is known as AQAP, is still a work in progress, officials and analysts said. It is led by a new generation of Yemeni and Saudi militants keen on trans-

## 'Yemen has become the place to best understand al-Qaida and its ambitions today.'

YEMENI TERRORISM EXPERT SAEED OBAID

forming Yemen into a launchpad for jihad against the United States, its Arab allies and Israel.

They have used Yemen's vast stretches of ungoverned, rugged terrain, loose-knit tribal structures and codes, widespread sympathy for al-Qaida, and animosity toward American policies to lure new recruits and set up training bases.

The group has yet to notch up a catastrophic attack against the United States and its allies, suggesting the organization is still too weak to operate effectively outside Yemen. Yet despite operative failures and setbacks, it has shown a resilience and ability to quickly regroup and cause havoc inside the country.

The branch appears to be trying to fill a void left by al-Qaida's central body, led by Osama bin Laden, which has been weakened by military assaults in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Although the branch mostly operates independently, AQAP leader Nasir al-Wuhayshi, who once served as bin Laden's personal secretary, is believed to have strong contacts with the al-Qaida head, analysts say.

The Yemeni government, under heavy U.S. pressure and with significant U.S. assistance, has intensified its efforts to crack down on the al-Qaida branch. In the past 10 days, it has launched aerial and ground raids that Yemeni

officials claim have killed more than 50 militants.

Yemen's weak central government is struggling with a civil war in the north, a secessionist movement in the south and a crumbling economy. U.S. officials are concerned that Yemen, the poorest country in the Middle East, could become as volatile as Afghanistan or Pakistan.

The attempt to down the

airliner came less than 24 hours after Yemeni forces, backed by the United States, carried out an airstrike on a meeting of suspected al-Qaida leaders in Shabwa, a southern province.

U.S. and Yemeni officials say both Wuhayshi and his deputy, Said al-Shihri, a Saudi national and former detainee at the U.S. facility at Guantanamo Bay, were at the meeting, along with Anwar al-Awlaki, the radical Yemeni American cleric linked to the gunman charged with killing 13 people at the Fort Hood military base Nov. 5. The fates of the three men are still unknown.

Yemen, where bin Laden's father was born, has long been an exporter of jihadists. Thousands of Yemenis have fought in Afghanistan and Iraq; many returned to Yemen. In 2000, al-Qaida militants rammed the USS Cole with an explosives-packed speedboat off the southern city of Aden, killing 17 American sailors.

The current AQAP generation has its roots in a February 2006 jailbreak of 23 prisoners from a maximum-security prison in San'a. U.S. and Yemeni officials said the prisoners were aided by Yemeni intelligence officials sympathetic to al-Qaida. The escapees included Wuhayshi and several high-profile operatives behind the Cole bombings.

Hailing from a wealthy family, Wuhayshi, who is believed to be in his early 30s and to have fought alongside bin Laden in Afghanistan, soon began to rebuild the branch.

Until a year ago, the branch mostly targeted tourists, missionaries, oil installations and other soft targets in Yemen. In November 2008, heavily armed al-Qaida gunmen at-

tacked the U.S. Embassy, detonating a car bomb that left 16 dead, including six of the assailants. The embassy attack, analysts and officials said, was believed to be a direct order from bin Laden.

Two months later, the Yemeni and Saudi Arabian branches of al-Qaida merged to create AQAP.

Today, the branch has about 100 core operatives, most in their 20s and 30s. But it has countless sympathizers and immense tribal support in southern and eastern provinces, said Abdulalah Hider Shaea, a Yemeni journalist with close ties to al-Qaida.

Shaea, who interviewed Wuhayshi in an al-Qaida hideout earlier this year, said he saw several Muslims with Australian, German and French citizenships.

In a report to Parliament last week, Deputy Prime Minister for Defense and Security Rashad al-Alimi said militants killed in a Dec. 17 airstrike included Yemenis, Saudis, Pakistanis and Egyptians. U.S. officials have said that some militants are leaving Pakistan and Afghanistan to fight in Yemen.

Since the merger, AQAP has improved its abilities to spread its message. It has an online magazine called Sada al-Malahim (The Echo of Epic Battles), and regularly beams videos and communiques to Web sites and jihadist forums. On Oct. 29, AQAP published an article in its online magazine saying "that whoever wants to carry out jihad with us," the group would "guide him in the appropriate way to kill."

The group has launched only five attacks this year, compared with 22 in 2008, Western diplomats said. But the targets have been higher-profile.

In August, the branch dispatched a Saudi suicide bomber with explosives hidden on or in his body who slipped past airport security checkpoints and nearly killed Saudi Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, the head of the kingdom's counterterrorism operations. The bomber, according to some reports, used the same chemical explosives as Abdulmuttalab.

# Iran the challenge in 2010



DAVID  
HOWELL

London

Of all the pressure points on the international scene in 2010 the Iran problem looks the most dangerous. Iran could come to an explosive boiling point in the coming months, sending shock waves through the global system.

True, there is nothing very new about Iran's sinister involvement with almost every Middle Eastern issue, and with Central Asian affairs as well. Iranian arms and money continue to feed Hezbollah and threaten Lebanon; they feed Hamas and prolong the Israel-Palestine agony; they promote Shiite violence in Iraq and there are even reports that Iranian military support is going to the Taliban.

But it is Iran's seemingly unstoppable path toward nuclear weapons, and the rest of the world's reaction to this prospect, that could overshadow these activities. All the signs are of a steep change in the world mood toward Tehran and the mullahs. So far it has been a pattern of halfhearted sanctions, promoted chiefly by Washington and ignored or actively evaded by many other companies and governments, both in Europe and elsewhere, especially in the energy-related sectors.

But now all that could alter in a far sharper direction, for the following reasons. First, the Obama strategy of diplomacy and engagement, with a hand held out to Iran, has hit a brick wall. With the clear rejection of Western compromise proposals for refueling the Tehran Research Reactor, and with the International Atomic Energy Authority admitting that it can do no more to find common ground, the yearend deadline for a constructive Iranian response has now been reached.

Second, a whole new range of Iranian uranium enrichment facilities has been revealed, together with an advanced and enlarged centrifuge system — all key steps on the route to nuclear weaponry.

Third, Iran has recently tested its Sejil-2 missiles, which can carry nuclear warheads up to 2,000 km.

Fourth, Russia, having been for a long while laid back about Iran's nuclear program, and in fact actively assisting it at civil nuclear level, now at last is getting worried at what its near neighbor might do. Even China shows readiness to discuss the Iran issue and might consider reviewing its present sanction-undermining trade with Iran, not least its trade in armaments.

Fifth, with Russia and China, who are the keys, showing a more robust and cooperative attitude, the U.N. Security Council can begin to take a serious interest, and move on from weak and wrist-slapping sanctions to a more coordinated and more targeted squeeze on Iran.

Sixth, without much stronger action the fear is that Israel might well do something desperate and strike at Iran direct. Admittedly there are limits to what Israel can do without active American cooperation, but when a nation feels the threat to its very existence growing by the hour desperate moves can occur.

All this is leading the United States Congress to propose much tougher measures against Iran, extending sanctions further into the finance and energy sectors, and embracing credit guarantee agencies and other vital links in the Iranian economic system.

It is also leading EU governments to tighten up their controls on trade and investment with and in Iran. Pressure can also be expected to mount on countries such as Turkey, India and Malaysia to think again about big oil and gas deals they have been planning with Iran, whose energy resources remain enormous, despite hopeless management and poorly planned development. Japan, too, may need to sever its links more clearly.

This is a grim and dangerous scene, full of explosive potential. If mishandled it

could lead to still more Islamic unity, driven by violence and hatred toward everything Western and still more Middle East instability and chaos.

There is one chink of light, which could now be getting rapidly larger. Within Iran itself the divisions are growing. Police state methods are being extended, opposition leaders being arrested, political assassinations arranged and show trials staged. The mullahs are unhappy with the erratic President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the streets are filling increasingly frequently with angry demonstrators — on the latest violent occasion at the funeral of the deeply respected Grand Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, a critic of the regime's extremism.

Such movements have been crushed in the past, and could be again. But this time the unrest seems to go deeper and extend beyond the major cities. Religious and ethnic movements are clearly coming together against state repression.

The protests are far from being pro-Western. Iranians remain united in their wish for a more balanced world in which their ancient and proud nation regains the full respect and influence they believe merits. But an internal power shift could at least bring clearer thinking in Tehran about Iran's true long term interests, and about the wisdom of making the whole world its enemies. If so, that would suggest patience on the part of the international community, letting events broadly take their course and possibly using sanctions only in the most surgical way possible to curb Iran's more outrageous and covert pro-terrorist activities.

In a world growing impatient and frightened of Iranian excesses and belligerence this will require truly heroic degrees of global leadership in all the major capitals and at the United Nations.

Let us pray that in 2010 it is forthcoming.

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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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# A decade of Western losses and Asian gains



GWYNNE  
DYER

London

Decades don't usually have the courtesy to begin and end on the right year. The social and cultural revolution that Western countries think of when they talk of the "60s" only got under way in 1962-63, and didn't end until the Middle East war and oil embargo of 1973-74.

But this one has been quite neat: the "Noughties" began with the Islamist terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001, and they ended with a global financial meltdown in the past year.

The Noughties is just a recent journalistic invention to make it easier to write end-of-the-decade articles like this. The term was launched several times in the last 10 years, but it never took off. Just as well, really, because it sounds a bit frivolous — whereas this was actually a decade when the tectonic plates moved into a new pattern.

Never mind the terrorism. About half a billion people died during the past decade, and fewer than 50,000 of them were victims of terrorism — say, one in every 10,000 deaths. At least 40,000 of those 50,000 victims of terrorism lived in India, Pakistan or Iraq, and fewer than 4,000 lived in the West. You can hardly make that a defining quality of the decade.

The terrorist threat to the West was minor, but the West's hugely disproportionate and ill-considered response was a key factor in the great shift that defines the decade. The "War on Terror," the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq and all the rest, did not deter a

Muslim Nigerian student from trying to blow up an airliner over Detroit last Saturday. It motivated him to do so. But it also accelerated the rise of Asia and the relative decline of the West.

That shift was happening anyway. When China and India, with 40 percent of the world's population between them, are growing economically three to four times as fast as the major Western countries, it's only a matter of time until they catch up with the older industrial economies.

Back in 2003, however, the researchers at Goldman Sachs predicted that the Chinese economy would surpass that of the U.S. by the mid-2040s. By the middle of this year, they were predicting that it would happen in the mid-2020s — and this year, for the first time, China built more cars than the U.S. That acceleration is in large part a consequence of the huge diversion of Western attention and resources that was caused by the "War on Terror."

Prestige is a quality that cannot be measured or quantified, but a reputation for competence in the use of power is a great asset in international affairs. After the centuries-old European empires wasted their wealth and the lives of tens of millions of their citizens in two "world wars" in only 30 years, their empires just melted away. Nobody was in awe of them any more, and they lacked the resources to hold onto their overseas possessions by force.

Something similar has happened over the past decade to the U.S. Unwinnable wars fought for the wrong reasons always hurt a great power's reputation, and wars fought amid needless tax cuts, burgeoning deficits and financial anarchy are even more damaging if the country's power depends heavily on a global financial empire.

The U.S. spent the past decade cutting its own throat financially, ending with the near-death experience of the 2008-2009

financial meltdown. The Europeans made all the same mistakes, only more timidly, and the Japanese sat the decade out on the sidelines, mired in a seemingly endless recession. The old order is passing, the dollar is on its way out as the only global currency, and the real power is shifting to mainland Asia.

Or is it? There are two trends that could slow or even stop this shift. They seemed quite distant at the start of the decade, but now they look very big and frightening. One is peak oil; the other is global warming.

In Europe, North America and Japan, energy consumption is growing slowly or not at all, and it is relatively cheap and easy to reduce dependence on imported oil. Just the fuel efficiency standards already mandated by the Obama administration could reduce American oil imports by half by 2020. Whereas Chinese and Indian dependence on imported oil is soaring. So is their use of coal.

That's unfortunate, because for purely geographical reasons these countries are far more vulnerable to high temperatures than the older industrial nations. At even a 2-degree-C higher average global temperature, they face floods, droughts and storms on a massive scale, probably accompanied by a steep fall in food production. That sort of thing could abort even the Chinese and Indian economic miracles.

So we're back in the old world where the future is uncertain. Of course. What else did you expect? We can only observe the trends, and try to remember that they are always contingent. But at the moment, it looks like the decade when the West finally lost its domination over the world's economy.

*Gwynne Dyer is a London-based independent journalist whose articles are published in 45 countries.*

# Iran's turning point?

One way or another, Sunday's Ashura holiday in Iran probably will be a turning point in the struggle between an extremist regime and an increasingly radical opposition.

At least eight people were killed when hundreds of thousands of Iranians turned out in cities across the country to face police and militia forces, who fired into some crowds and in turn were attacked and in some cases overwhelmed by the protesters.

These were the largest demonstrations in six months, and they provoked another escalation of repression: The nephew of one opposition leader, Mir Hossein Mousavi, was murdered Sunday, and 10 more senior opposition figures were arrested Monday.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei clearly is betting he can defeat the opposition Green Movement with brute force.

In the past week, security forces have attacked peaceful mourners at the funeral of dissident Ayatollah Ali Montazeri and violated the tradition of restraint associated with the Ashura holiday. The predominant chant in the streets, meanwhile, has shifted to "death to Khamenei" or "death to the dictator." More street protests can be expected

when the movement's new martyr, Ali Habibi Mousavi Khamene, is commemorated.

In short, Iran's political crisis now looks like a battle to the death between the regime and its opposition. No one on either side in Tehran is talking about compromise. Nor does it seem likely that there will be a sustained respite from domestic turmoil until one side triumphs.

That in turn means that, more than ever, the Obama administration and other Western governments must tailor their policies toward Iran to reflect the centrality of the Green Movement's fight for freedom.

While diplomatic contact with the regime need not be broken off entirely, by now it should be obvious that it cannot produce significant results — and might serve to shore up a tottering dictatorship.

President Barack Obama shifted U.S. policy partway in the right direction when, during his Nobel Prize speech this month, he departed from his prepared text to say that "it is the responsibility of all free people and free nations to make clear that" the Iranian protesters "have us on their side."

Obama went further Monday with an admirably strong statement that condemned "the violent and unjust

suppression of innocent Iranian citizens" and called for "the immediate release of all who have been unjustly detained."

There is, however, more that could be done to help the Green Movement. Russia and non-Western nations should be pressed to join in condemning the regime's violence. Sanctions aimed at the Revolutionary Guard and its extensive business and financial network should be accelerated; action must not be delayed by months of haggling at the U.N. Security Council.

More should be done, now, to facilitate Iranian use of the Internet for uncensored communication. The State Department continues to drag its feet on using money appropriated by Congress to fund firewall-busting operations and to deny support to groups with a proven record of success, like the Global Internet Freedom Consortium.

The administration has worried excessively that open U.S. support might damage the Green Movement. Now President Obama has publicly taken sides, and the battle inside Iran has reached a critical juncture.

It's time for the United States to do whatever it can, in public and covertly, to help those Iranians fighting for freedom.

**The Washington Post (Dec. 29)**

## **Philippine politician wounded in another attack**

- Published: 30/12/2009 at 03:52 PM
- Online news: [Asia](#)

A candidate in upcoming Philippine elections was shot and wounded, police said Wednesday, in yet another targeted attack on a politician in the volatile Southeast Asian nation. Councillor Wilbert Suanco Origenes, who is running for vice-mayor in Taganaan town, is in a critical condition after a gunman entered his house and shot him in the chest in front of his horrified family on Tuesday, police said. The unknown gunman then got on a motorcycle, where an accomplice was waiting, and drove away, said regional police head Chief Superintendent Lino De Guzman Calingasan.

Police are investigating if the attack was politically motivated, but other reasons such as business conflicts or a personal grudge could not be ruled out, said Calingasan. Origenes is a candidate of the opposition Nationalista Party in Taganaan town in Surigao del Norte province the southern Philippines. It was the second attack this week on a member of the NP, whose leader Manny Villar is running for president in the national elections to be held in May next year. NP spokesman Gilbert Remulla said he was "shocked and appalled by the assassination attempt on another candidate of our party".

"Only politics can be behind the motive of the shooting," he said, although he did not blame any group for the attack. On Monday, a local NP politician was killed and six other people wounded when hooded gunmen opened fire on a convoy carrying about 50 people, most of them party candidates and supporters, in the northern province of Ilocos Norte. "It is regrettable that these senseless acts of violence and impunity are setting the tone of the elections to come," Remulla said. The Philippines, which emerged out of dictatorship in the mid 1980s, has a long history of political violence, with dozens of politicians killed every election season.

The worst of such incidents occurred barely a month ago, when 57 people were massacred in the southern province of Maguindanao. A son of the then-Maguindanao governor has been charged with murder over the killings, which authorities alleged he organised to prevent a rival politician from challenging him for a provincial post in next year's elections. President Gloria Arroyo's government has vowed to try to stem the violence ahead of the May elections, when positions from local councils to the nation's presidency will be contested.

Economics

TRADE

## **Section 1.01 Alongkorn proposes creating closer links with Malaysia**

- Published: 21/12/2009 at 12:00 AM
- Newspaper section: Business

Deputy Commerce Minister Alongkorn Ponlaboot has floated an idea of developing a new economic "verandah" by forging closer ties between Thailand's five southern provinces and Malaysia's five states. Thai government officials will meet with Malaysian counterparts to discuss a new economic partnership in June next year, said Mr Alongkorn after his three-day visit to Malaysia and three southernmost provinces ending Friday.

Businesspeople, investors, members of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Thai Industries and tourism-related associations will also be invited to participate in the meeting. The initiative covers Thailand's five southern provinces of Narathiwat, Pattani, Yala, Satun and Songkhla. The five Malaysian states are Perlis, Kedah, Perak, Kelantan and Penang. The partnership between the 10 territories would mainly cover trade, investment, tourism and halal food, said Mr Alongkorn.

The government pledges to offer investment promotion measures and tax incentives to firms willing to participate in the scheme. The Commerce Ministry plans to provide soft loans worth about 25 billion baht with an interest rate as low as 1.5% a year to support the project, said Mr Alongkorn.

"I believe the new economic verandah under which co-operation would cover the border areas of the two countries would help promote investment and tourism. This will play a key role in upgrading the income of the local people and create jobs, particularly in the three restive southern provinces," said Mr Alongkorn. "This would help address the lingering violence in the South."

Last year, border trade between Thailand and Malaysia topped 410.1 billion baht, a rise of 22.4%. This represented 62% of total border trade, which was valued at 814.04 billion baht last year.



Opinion

EDITORIAL

## **Section 1.01 Rethink this arms buildup**

- Published: 21/12/2009 at 12:00 AM
- Newspaper section: [News](#)

Vietnam has made a new and huge purchase of weapons from its old Russian friends, and it seems more likely to increase regional tension and restart an arms race than to promote peace. The secrecy of the deal is at least equally unfortunate. News of the purchase of submarines and advanced fighter jets leaked out of Europe, and even then authorities in Hanoi simply kept mum. This is the first significant arms purchase within the region since Vietnam joined Asean. Hanoi has a lot of explaining to do.

Press reports last week from Russia said the major arms purchase totalled some US\$2 billion (70 billion baht), and was finalised during a visit to Moscow by Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung. Mr Dung confirmed in an offhand remark at a press conference he had agreed to purchase weapons, but gave no details. Sources in Moscow indicate he made a major buy. It is worrying because the squadron of SU30 fighter jets he bought is highly advanced compared with other regional air forces.

It is more troubling, however, that the purchase includes six new Kilo-class submarines. This provides a weapon to the Vietnamese navy that is not available to Hanoi's partners in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Thai authorities, over the past two decades, have consistently rejected requests from the Royal Thai Navy and military headquarters for submarines. Experts almost unanimously agree that the boats are not particularly useful for patrolling or for protecting the generally shallow waters of the country's coastline, and the same can be said for Vietnam.

The only apparent reason Vietnam intends to add submarines to its naval arsenal is because it intends to step up its claims for disputed offshore shoals and small island groups. Vietnam contests sovereignty of several such uninhabited regions, most notably the Paracels group off its eastern coast, and the Spratly Islands, in Asean waters.

China, of course, also claims the Paracels and Spratlys. It has submarines, and so does another claimant, Taiwan. This was, presumably, the deciding factor in Mr Dung's decision to write a huge cheque to the arms vendors in Moscow to deliver one modern

and newly built submarine a year to his navy. It is, however, a startling and at least partly recidivist decision. It is certain to have far-reaching consequences, few of them positive.

The Vietnam government's decision to build up its air and sea forces indicate two possibilities. The first is that Hanoi is growing nervous about possible aggression in the disputed offshore areas. That would be bad news for its neighbours as well. Or, Vietnam itself intends to initiate action, and become more aggressive about staking its claims. That would be unacceptable.

Vietnam joined Asean in 1995, after more than a decade of deadly confrontation with the group - including military incursion of Thailand - after its 1977 invasion of Cambodia. In those 14 past years, Vietnam has been an extraordinarily good neighbour, especially considering its previous military conflicts and political run-ins. Its conduct has done much to cool the concern of Asean partners who also claim the Spratly Islands. There are many, including Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and the Philippines, in addition to China and Taiwan.

Vietnam should rethink its plans to initiate an arms race in the Asean region. Otherwise, it must give full details of its arms purchases to the public, and explain its reasoning. The leadership of Asean, starting with Secretary-General Surin Pitsuwan, must directly engage Hanoi over this serious arms escalation. Economically and politically, there seems no good reason for Vietnam to start a new programme of military re-armament.

# The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

## ASEAN rights body: A chance or burden?

Mario Masaya , Bandung | Mon, 12/21/2009 3:14 PM | Opinion

As we celebrate Human Rights Day on Dec. 12, 2009, it is important to note Indonesia's efforts to promote the ASEAN Human Rights Body.

Notwithstanding the ASEAN charter becoming a legally binding framework for ASEAN states, people have criticized the ASEAN Charter's ability to deal with human rights problems in the ASEAN region.

In October 2009 in Pattaya, the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting came up with no significant improvements to this charter. As a result, the effectiveness of the ASEAN Human Rights Commission is still doubtful. Indonesia has become a front runner on this matter, considering its proposal for the commission to be the authority on human rights inspections and individual access for freedom of expression within the ASEAN forum.

Unfortunately, the format of these proposals is still far from Indonesia's expectations. Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa stated in Pattaya that "We should move step by step.

"Eventhough we have been the leader in this process since the beginning, as a leader we sometimes have to make sure our progress meets the speed of other countries in this transformation.

"It is useless if we are in front, but no one follows us." It seems Indonesia's wish for an enhancement of human rights in the region is far from becoming a reality.

This statement is very interesting, taking into account that other ASEAN member states are not as concerned about human rights problems as Indonesia.

Look at Malaysia; a country which still has discriminatory laws and treats indigenous and non-indigenous people differently. On top of that, Myanmar remains at the center of attention on human rights violations in the ASEAN region.

The so-called "constructive engagement" in ASEAN cannot be effectively carried out to deal with the long unresolved Aung San Suu Kyi problem. As a result, international trust in ASEAN's efforts to resolve her problem is decreasing.

Despite of the lack willingness of ASEAN countries in promoting the Human Rights body, it is necessary to note that there is one thing we should not forget. Do we, Indonesia, really have enough guts to do so?

We can be proud that we are regarded as the most advanced democracy in the region. With several relatively peaceful elections in Indonesia, international praise for Indonesia's democracy has been enormous.

Nevertheless, the pride of being a leader in promoting the human rights body should be followed up with domestic achievements in dealing with human rights issues. In this case, there may be a chance for Indonesia to show off our human rights record, or frankly speaking, a chance to be ashamed of ourselves.

Considering domestic achievements in dealing with human rights enhancement, we should bear in mind there has still been no serious action taken by the current elected government. Indonesia is still an "insomnia" state.

The records of important human rights violations in Indonesia have not decreased even an inch. Indonesia is moving to forget the tragedy of 1965, May 1998, and the most recent extraordinary human rights calamity, the 2004 Munir assassination.

As a pro-human rights country, it is important to bear in mind that Indonesian people should and will not forget these tragedies. While I have not lost hope in the current government, I still doubt whether the "old" human rights problems which have been here for decades can be resolved because of a lack of actors and facts today.

It is crucial for all parts of society to keep pressuring the government to take domestic human rights problems seriously. The media, as a pillar of Indonesia's democracy, has the most vital role in this.

The role of young people in creating awareness is no less important than the media. Young people are agents of change and will become the next decision makers in this country.

Therefore, young people should remember that these problems have significant effects on the well-being of Indonesian democracy. If the current generation characterizes Indonesia as in a state of "insomnia", they should not let this negative characteristic embrace the mindset of all Indonesians.

Young people can do much to bring about the changes we need today, but inaction is inexorable. The idealism of youth should help them bravely defend less powerful people.

It should be noted that we should resolve our domestic human rights problems first before asking others to follow.

This annual human rights day could be the perfect opportunity for us to show the world we have not forgotten our poor human rights record, but are serious in dealing with domestic human rights problems.

Otherwise, the ASEAN Human Rights Commission will only become a burden for us. Thus, when the government can it has made an effort, it will be much easier for our Foreign Minister to realize his wish: to be a true leader in human rights for the ASEAN bloc.

*The writer is an international relations student at Parahyangan Catholic University. He is a finalist in Indonesia's ASEAN Young Ambassador competition.*

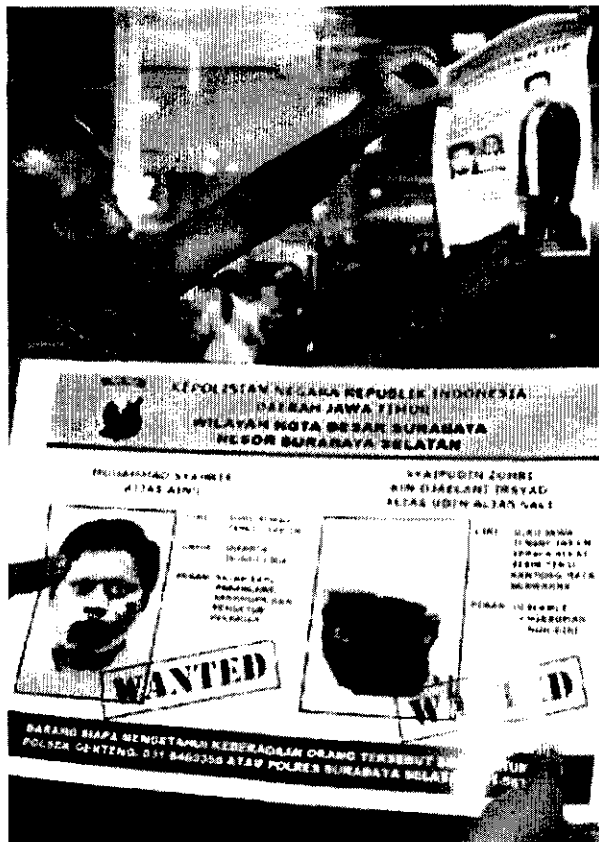
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# The Jakarta Post

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## Terrorism will still threaten the nation

Noor Huda Ismail , Jakarta | Mon, 12/21/2009 11:03 AM | Review & Outlook



ANTARA/Eric Ireng

Unfortunately, in 2010 we will still have to deal with the problem of transnational terror, including at least one violent faction of Jamaah Islamiyah (JI) and various splinter groups. In this respect, we must also recognize how the phenomenon of radicalization works. We need to constantly ask ourselves: are our actions going to result in the removal of one terrorist and the creation of ten more?

What can we do to attack the drivers of radicalization, so that the violent faction of JI and its splinter groups will be faced with a shrinking pool of potential recruits.

In the absence of major, ongoing communal conflicts in places like Ambon in Maluku and Poso in Central Sulawesi, it is unlikely that militant groups will be able to mobilize the masses. However, they will still be able to galvanize enough of a fringe element in our society, encouraging them to take to violence and to pose a continuing and powerful threat.

The involvement of Soni Jayadi, Fajar, and Afham, two students and a graduate from the renowned UIN (Islamic State University) Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta as couriers for Syaefudin Zuhri's terrorist group serve as a good example of the militants' ability to keep going.

Their involvement proves that universities as intellectual forums cannot guarantee an absence of or protection from the dissemination of radical-extreme ideology. UIN is well-known as a liberal Islamic university that provides no space for radical-extreme groups. Soni Jayadi, Fajar, and Afham were known as active members of UIN's Islamic propagation group (LDK). Such groups exist in UIN, in universities all over Jakarta and in virtually every university in Indonesia.

In Palembang, South Sumatra, one terrorist, Sugiarto, had also been a student at the State Institute Islamic Teaching institution in (IAIN) Palembang. One group in particular was better known as "Jamaah Palembang", led by Abdurahman Taib, an activist from the Anti-Proselytizing Movement Forum (Fakta). This group was responsible for the murder of Dago Simamora, a teacher at SMAN (Public High School) 11, Palembang.

Dago became a target for assassination by the group because he had allegedly banned female Islam students from wearing their hijabs (veils). Sugiarto, a student of IAIN Palembang in the 7th semester of his Arabic Language Studies major, was involved in the murder. He also assembled bombs intended to be used in the group's acts of terror in several cities in Sumatra.

The above facts should not lead us to the rushed or ill-judged conclusion that every Islamic student organization is radical-extreme, fundamentalist, or harbors terrorist aims. That is far from the case.

But these occurrences do indicate signs that radicalization is taking place and has taken root in university campuses. Having understood, this, the most important question to pose is "how do we get from the propagation of Islam on university campuses to involvement in terrorism?"

Another important aspect in understanding the process of radicalization is the implications of the funerals of named terrorists such as Bagus Budi Pranato (a.k.a Urwah). His funeral was attended by at least 500 supporters from Kudus, Jakarta, Pekalongan and Solo. They come in buses, cars, and on motorcycles. The police warned them sternly not to put up any posters or conduct sermons. However, some of Urwah's hard-core supporters from Solo repeatedly screamed "Allahu Akbar" (God is Great) and the funeral was closed to journalists.

The funeral provided an opportunity for jihadists, who came from many different cities, to cement friendships. Such friendships have proved strategic in the process of radicalization. A classic example of this can be seen in the case of Ma'had Ali at the Universitas Islam An Nur in Solo, Central Java.

At this school there were two students who had grown to be very close friends: Gempur Budi Angkoro a.k.a Jabir who died during a counter-terror raid in Wonosobo in 2005, and Bagus Budi Pranoto himself, who died together with Noordin M. Top in a more recent raid by the police counter-terror unit, Detachment 88 following the 17 July hotel bombings in Jakarta.

Their friendship was founded on a common understanding of jihad. They supported each other and were continuously involved in learning about and practicing jihad. The nature of their friendship means that jihad was the most prominent topic of their conversations.

In addition, each supported the other's jihadi activities. Interestingly, these two friends did not gain their knowledge of jihad from their religious teachers.

Their thoughts on jihad were mostly shaped by the numerous books and jihad websites that they read and shared between them.

Therefore, as 2010 approaches and throughout this new year and the next, the role and prospects of the new counter-terrorism coordinating agency, Muslim leaders and Detachment 88 and ordinary citizens must confront the political, social and economic conditions that the militant groups' exploit for their own ends, as they work to win over new recruits and funders. We must also work to understand the psychology of those whose tacit support enables the militants to carry their plans forward.

The writer, the executive director of an international institute for peace building, with a master's degree in international security at St. Andrews University, Scotland.

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# The Jakarta Post

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## Solidarity 'key issue among divided Muslims'

Ridwan Max Sijabat , The Jakarta Post , Jakarta | Mon, 12/21/2009 3:02 PM | Headlines

Islamic leaders urge fragmented Muslim communities to pursue unity and solidarity to settle internal conflicts, and that majority tyranny over minorities must end to achieve tolerance and harmony.

"Solidarity and unity are actually key solutions to the major problems fragmented Muslim communities are facing. These two international values have long disappeared due to spreading sectarianism and fanaticism," chairman of Indonesia's largest Islamic organization Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Hasyim Muzadi, said at the opening of the International Conference of Islamic Scholars.

Saturday's meeting was held jointly by NU and the International Forum for Islamic Scholars with more 100 intellectuals attending from Iran, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Iraq, Palestine, Jordan, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore and Indonesia.

Hasyim said about 60 percent of problems among Muslims reflected internal conflicts and this dialog was expected to provide a good example for Muslims to transcend the boundaries of these internal conflicts.

"The world's Muslim community has been fragmented because of the emergence of internal factions \*each\* with their own claims as the truest one. In Iraq, Lebanon and Pakistan, this has provided the main reasons to kill one another," he said.

He argued that part of the Muslim community was trapped in internal conflicts and this was not a reaction to the global economic crisis.

Hasyim said Muslims in Indonesia had mostly adopted Sunni beliefs, while Muslims in Iraq mostly adopted Syiah theology.

"Although the ideologies are different, we are now sitting together for extensive dialogue to achieve a common vision," he said.

Meanwhile, Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal and Security Affairs, Djoko Suyanto, said the government welcomed this initiative for mutual understanding among Muslims.

"Islam is a big religion. Muslims make twenty-five percent of the world's population. The large number affects many decisions in the world," Djoko said in his opening speech.

He also predicted that Muslims would account for 30 percent of the world's population by 2025.



The secretary-general of the World Forum for Proximity of Islamic School of Thought in Iran, Ayatollah Muhammad Ali Taskhiri, said Islamic factions had common reasons to pursue a mutual acceptance and recognition, as the Prophet Muhammad had urged that Islam was a logical religion, encouraging freedom of expression and dialogue.

"This conference is important for the pursuit of peace. It gives an important and strategic significance to the reality of the world's Muslim community because it features delegates from countries playing roles in determining the development of Islam in the world," he said.

Islamic scholar Sri Mulyati said that as part of an effort at promoting unity in diversity, everybody should practice tolerance at all levels.

"Tolerance should be a political and legal requirement," she said.

Said Agil Siradj, argued that current disputes among Muslims, either within the country and overseas, had been triggered by political differences, not religious differences.

"We have to fight against ignorance, which has become Islam's largest enemy," he said.

He looked up to the Prophet Muhammad, who had managed earlier to create civilized nations. (nia)

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**Source URL:** <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/12/21/solidarity-key-issue-among-divided-muslims039.html>

# The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

## RI makes progress on thorny issues

Lilian Budianto , The Jakarta Post , Jakarta | Tue, 12/29/2009 9:27 AM | World



Diplomatic matters: US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (left) meets Indonesia's Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa during the APEC Summit in Singapore recently. Courtesy of the Indonesian Embassy, Singapore

The year 2009 has seen Jakarta successfully clinch a deal with Singapore regarding maritime borders, establish closer relations with Washington, and negotiate an agreement with Kuala Lumpur over migrant workers.

But at the same time it also encountered the serious problem of boat people from Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Afghanistan and Iraq, who have made Indonesia a transit point on their journey to Australia.

After four years of negotiations, Indonesia and Singapore signed in March a maritime boundary agreement, in a deal that saw Singapore renounce its reclaimed shoreline as the basis for determining the border. The deal ended bilateral tensions that had worsened over fears that Singapore's reclamation, which had already drawn protests from environmentalists, might threaten Indonesia's border.

At the center of the controversy was the dredging of an estimated 300 million cubic meters of sand from the seabed around Nipah Island, and exported to Singapore, that risked the outlying Indonesian territory sinking below sea level during high tides, in a disappearance that would have redrawn Indonesia's maritime border.

The resolution of the nagging border issue is one of the successes that may elevate the political clout of Indonesia, which shares borders with 10 countries in the region. Jakarta is still engaged in negotiations with Malaysia over the maritime area of Ambalat off eastern Borneo. The diplomatic saga with Malaysia almost resulted in skirmishes earlier this year, and could prove detrimental for Jakarta in winning public support after a range of issues — from the loss of Sipadan and Ligitan islands to misplaced cultural heritage claims and migrant worker abuse — soured its already testy relations with Kuala Lumpur.

Indonesia suspended the sending of migrant workers to Malaysia as of June this year after a string of abuse cases, saying it would only be resumed if Malaysia agreed to adopt several measures Jakarta had proposed. Kuala Lumpur has agreed to allow migrant workers to keep their own passports and have one day off a week, but Jakarta says it will only lift the moratorium once a deal has been reached on minimum wages and costs to send the workers over.

Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa has hinted the agreement is only a partial solution to a wider problem that starts domestically with poor government control over the eligibility and competence of migrant workers to go abroad. He cited human trafficking as a threat that would continue to jeopardize migrant workers. Without an integrated effort between the relevant agencies at home, the Foreign

Ministry will be left high and dry abroad in dealing with the migrant workers' plight.

The ministry, under new head Marty, has made the improvement of migrant workers' conditions one of its 100-day programs. It began by bringing home hundreds of illegal and troubled migrant workers from the Middle East, Singapore and Hong Kong. Also included in the 100-day programs is the strengthening of the ASEAN human rights body.

The world's third-largest democracy has paved the way for democracy and human rights to make inroads in Southeast Asia through the regional organization ASEAN, which has only recently established its own rights commission, and which critics say lacks a real protection mandate.

Although admitting the rights commission has been watered down into a campaigning body to compromise with other ASEAN members with little rights and democracy enforcement, Jakarta has vowed to infuse more power into the commission in five years' time, when its periodic review rolls around. And bucking the slide in the rights body, Jakarta is the only country that has appointed a rights activist as its representative to the ASEAN Inter-governmental Commission of Human Rights.

Jakarta's democracy, rights and moderate Islamic credentials have helped ease relations with the United States, marked by the visit of US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to Jakarta in February and the implementation of a comprehensive bilateral partnership. Indonesia has been touted as an example of Islam and democracy coexisting successfully.

The United States has also drawn closer to ASEAN by acceding to its Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, and launched the first ASEAN-US Summit in Singapore this year. Marty met with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on the sidelines of the summit.

At a time when Indonesia is enjoying a thaw in relations with the lone remaining superpower, its relations with Australia are on rocky ground over the issues of boat people and the Balibo Five.

Indonesia has come under media scrutiny over its recent decision to hold 78 Sri Lankan boat people who were picked up by an Australian vessel in international waters on their way to Australia. The Foreign Ministry denied rumors of an unannounced payment from Canberra to Jakarta for the decision. Jakarta said it took into account the risk of the country becoming a dumping ground for unwanted immigrants, stressing the latest move to detain the Sri Lankans here was purely for humanitarian reasons, as they had been picked up within Indonesia's search and rescue zone.

The decision by Australia to reinvestigate the deaths of five Australia-based journalists in 1975 in then East Timor has also sparked new tensions with Indonesia at a time when Jakarta said its relations with Canberra were at a high. The case of the Balibo Five was considered closed by Jakarta, which said the ill-fated journalists were killed in crossfire prior to the Indonesian military's invasion of East Timor.

Rifts in relations with close neighbors such as Malaysia, Singapore, Australia and Timor Leste are inevitable, given the high degree of mutual interaction, but Jakarta has also tried to maintain high-level contact with these countries through some of its own initiatives, such as the Bali Democracy Forum, where leaders can hash out the issues of the day.

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# The Jakarta Post

Published on The Jakarta Post (<http://www.thejakartapost.com>)

## ASEAN+3's \$120b swap deal put in place

The Jakarta Post , Jakarta | Tue, 12/29/2009 8:30 AM | Headlines

Finance Ministers and central bank governors from ASEAN+3 nations have officially signed an agreement to set up a US\$120 billion currency swap fund under the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization (CMIM).

Finance Ministry spokesman Harry Z. Soeratin said in a statement that the signing of the agreement was a follow-up to the preliminary deal by 10 Southeast Asian nations plus China, Japan and South Korea during the ASEAN+3 finance ministers' meeting in Bali, in May.

The ministers then agreed to promote the CMIM to establish a regional financial arrangement to enhance the existing international facilities.

"The CMIM scheme will definitely strengthen economic capacity in the region in order to face a more challenging global economy in the future," Harry said.

The scheme offers emergency balance support via bilateral swap arrangements (BSAs) for any member country hit by extreme devaluation and capital flight.

"This will address short-term liquidity difficulties in the region and supplement the existing international financial arrangements," Harry said.

Under this agreement, any of the 13 countries has the right to swap its currency for US dollars up to a certain amount, starting effectively next year.

"The maximum amount of funds that can be swapped by a country is the fund it has contributed multiplied by a purchasing multiple number set for the particular nation," Harry explained.

For example, Japan, which contributes the most to the CMIM with \$38.4 billion or 32 percent of the total funds, gets a 0.5 purchasing multiple.

That means Japan can swap its yen up to only \$19.2 billion.

Indonesia, with \$4.77 billion of contribution to the CMIM (3.97 percent), gets a purchasing multiple of 2.5, meaning that Indonesia can swap rupiah up to \$11.93 billion.

Japan, China and South Korea control 80 percent of the pooled funds while the remaining 20 percent are contributed by ASEAN countries.

Five ASEAN nations — Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines — each contribute \$4.77 billion or 3.97 percent. Vietnam pools \$1 billion (0.83 percent),

Cambodia \$120 million (0.1 percent), Myanmar \$60 million (0.05 percent), Brunei and the Lao PDR. \$30 million (0.02 percent) each.

Apart from this regional swap agreement, Indonesia already signed arrangements with Japan for bilateral currency swap up to 1.5 trillion yen (\$16.39 billion) in June.

Indonesia signed a similar arrangement with China in March amounting to \$15 billion. (bbs)

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## Opinion

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### EDITORIAL

#### Asean Charter: Still a work in progress

Published on December 16, 2009

#### **One year on, the regional grouping's members have not lived up to the values of the landmark document**

With over half the Asean members still not fully respecting the freedom of expression and all forms of liberties of their own citizens, it would be deceitful to assess the Asean Charter positively and comprehensively over the past year.

In the beginning, the Asean bureaucrats thought (obviously mistakenly) that with the Charter in force, concerned authorities, including the Asean leaders, would adhere to a rules-based agenda and become more cooperative in their common endeavours.

After all, the promulgation of the Charter was a step forward from the kind of volunteerism that marked the grouping's cooperation efforts over the past four decades. Therefore, they thought that with the Charter, Asean as a group would move forward and occupy centre stage in every regional undertaking. That has proved not to be over the past year.

When Indonesia proposed the drafting of the Asean charter in 2002, Jakarta was thinking of a different Asean - not in its current toothless form. Indonesia was the first country to bring out its dirty laundry (East Timor and Aceh) and wash it in public for all to see, instead of sweeping it under the carpet and pretending that nothing happened, as Asean members love to do.

It was courageous act that no other Asean member dared to join in. Jakarta thought it could spark off a chain reaction and make Asean more dynamic, open and politically engaged. Again, that did not happen. It is clear that most Asean members still want to protect their governments' rights instead of people's rights.

On the contrary, almost all the Asean members became more conservative and inward looking. They feared that their governments could be exposed, and that this would subsequently lead to administration downfalls and loss of popularity. In the case of Indonesia, however, it has had the opposite effect in strengthening the democratisation process and increasing public participation in national and Asean affairs.

To be fair, the Charter has rejuvenated Asean to a certain degree, especially among and with the dialogue partners, who have extensive ties with the grouping. At least 30 countries have already appointed ambassadors to Asean. Soon these will be transformed into permanent missions to Asean.

With increased diplomatic discourse and scrutiny from outside, Asean cannot rest on its own perceived laurels and laud its own centrality. Asean has to make sure that it has sufficient and worthwhile values and activities for its members and partners to engage in. Asean has to earn its desired leading role, and it can only be done through action, not by talking.

Sad but true, the quagmire in Burma continues to haunt Asean and its Charter. So far, the Burmese junta has not taken the Charter as seriously as other members have done. For instance, both Thailand and Indonesia have displayed leadership in the selection of their members of the Asean Inter-governmental Commission on Human Rights. The processes in both countries were carried out independently and transparently.

It was fortunate that Thailand was the first chair of the new Charter-era Asean. Bangkok worked diligently to bring the best values to the Charter. But the Asean members as a whole have yet to prove that the Charter can be successful.

However, kudos must be given to the Thai government, as it wanted to bring about quickly the Charter's aspirations such as people-centred communities as well as the promotion and protection of human rights.

Certainly, the postponement of the Pattaya Asean summit in April and domestic political disturbances were nightmare scenarios and affected on the overall ability of the Asean chair. Granted these difficulties, Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva has done an excellent job in carrying out his duty on behalf of Asean and making the Charter appear more respectable in the eyes of the international community.

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## Opinion

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### EDITORIAL

#### **Weapons link to terrorists is a far-fetched idea**

Published on December 18, 2009

#### **The Thai military is playing a dangerous game by blaming southern insurgents for an impounded arms cache**

Be careful what you wish for, you just might get it - so the old saying goes. Here's another one: Military intelligence - a contradiction in terms, especially when one is talking about the Thai military.

As expected, some higher-ups in the Royal Thai Army have been making noises about how the recent seizure of North Korean weapons will put Thailand in an unfavourable light, grouping us with international terrorists. They have also linked the seizure to the ongoing insurgency in the deep South, where daily murders have claimed nearly 4,000 lives, most of whom are ethnic Malays.

Officially, the government will say that the problem in the deep South is a domestic one - meaning, others should stay out.

In order to divert attention from its questionable tactics, the Thai military has been painting the Malay Muslim insurgents as a bunch of fanatics who have been taught a distorted history of the Patani region and have embraced a false teaching of Islam. Why else would they take up arms against the state, these men reason.

What is worrisome is that this campaign of distortion makes no difference between "nationalist" movements, as in the case of the Malay-speaking South, and jihadist groups like Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and al-Qaeda.

It is one thing to try to garner public sympathy, but it is outright selfish and dangerous to distort information to achieve this end, especially if such an act prolongs the problem. Sadly, the military doesn't understand that extrajudicial killings, even if carried out by some paramilitary groups, will push more young men towards insurgency.

One wonders why the desperate desire to be liked? Can't they see that the entire country is behind them. Over and over again, the people of this country have overlooked the atrocities committed by state officials against the Malay Muslim minority, as seen in the Kru Se and Tak Bai massacres, not to mention report after

report of abuse, torture and abductions by security officials. Sad but true, an indifferent society works in the military's favour. It appears that the military is trying to justify its enormous budget for the trouble-plagued South, thus the need to keep the public on its side.

But then again, this is Thailand. If there is an opportunity to skim from the top, our officials will have no qualms about it, regardless of the security of the region or the border. Moreover, fighting a tough battle doesn't justify a stupid information war, much less abuse.

The insurgency in the Malay-speaking South has always taken on nationalistic overtones. Generations of separatists have come and gone, but the grievances remain more or less the same.

Thailand's top brass is playing a dangerous game by trying to link the insurgents down South to the global jihadists.

There were also suggestions that the arrest of al-Qaeda's Southeast Asia chief, Riduan Isamuddin, also known as Hambali, was the reason for the ongoing in violence in the deep South. But if these terrorists were going to hit back at Thailand for taking down their chief, wouldn't hitting high-profile targets - as opposed to roadside bombings and point-blank shooting of security officials and government agents - be more sensible in the insurgents' mind?

If the Thai military wants to carry out an information war, perhaps it needs to go back and read its intelligence handbooks and polish its skills. A kid with half a brain can see that the current scheme is not fooling anybody. It's easier to blame Islamic fanaticism for the problem in the deep South. But, be careful of what you wish for, you might just get it. Just think, what would the military say if these international jihadists actually came to Thailand and began to knock on doors.

We are pretty certain that they won't be going down to the three provinces to shoot at teachers' security details or sitting in wooded areas waiting to ambush a military vehicle passing by.

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## Opinion

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### Missing the signposts in the restive Thai south

Published on December 22, 2009

**The assertions may have been unsubstantiated, at least publicly, but foreign intelligence officers and diplomats in Bangkok during the 1980s held some common views on the separatist insurgency that had flared again then in southern Thailand.**

There is foreign funding, they would say over a meal at some discreet restaurant. Saudi money.

I found this confusing, as I couldn't understand what motive the Saudi Arabian government might have had. It took some years before it became clear that it was not the government they were referring to, but private Saudi-based charities promoting an extremist religious agenda.

Young Muslims are being radicalised in the madrasahs, they would explain. Several pious Islamic countries and private institutions were providing promising young people from southern Thailand, as they were doing elsewhere, with scholarships to study their faith in Islamic religious schools overseas. Most benefited, but some emerged with a hardened ideology that they sought to spread in Thailand, and a few among the latter were further inspired to take up arms.

These aspiring insurgents were being trained and armed by Libya, they said. Tripoli has a secular perspective, but was actively supporting a number of revolutionary movements at that time. In the 1970s and 1980s, this agenda included shipping arms to the Provisional Irish Republican Army.

Finally, they argued, there is a connection to sympathisers in Malaysia.

Regular uprisings have characterised southern Thailand - centred on the provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat - since it was annexed by Bangkok more than 200 years ago. The root causes are varied but the central issue ultimately involves a lack of empowerment for the region's population, the majority being ethnic Malay and Muslim.

The unrest evident in the 1980s eventually fell to a simmer before coming to a boil

again in 2004. And this underscores the salient feature of every long-term conflict: They invariably ebb and flow in intensity.

The Brussels-based International Crisis Group (ICG), in a report issued on December 8, notes the current trend: "Military sweeps from July 2007 curtailed violence in the south ... While the number of attacks so far in 2009 is still below the peak since the insurgency restarted in 2004, the trend is upward," it states. "The insurgency has proved resistant to military suppression."

The Thai armed forces appear to disagree, convinced they can achieve a military solution. This view is doubtless heartened by Sri Lanka's victory earlier this year over the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

But the LTTE was a highly centralised group under a charismatic leader, with a conventional military force that could fight set-piece battles. The southern Thai insurgents, by contrast, seem organisationally diffuse and use guerrilla tactics under shadowy chiefs whose linkages remain unclear.

This suggests that the military can suppress the rebellion but not defeat it so long as the root causes remain un-addressed. As before, it would simply return to a simmer until it boils over again.

The political turmoil besetting Bangkok means that the military continues to direct Thailand's southern strategy. The ICG notes that the government of Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva has vowed to reclaim the leading role, so far with little success, and has launched some new initiatives.

These include a massive development programme approved in April, worth US\$1.86 billion over four years. Its implementation has been problematic and its rationale is flawed, presuming that the insurgency is driven at its core by economic issues rather than political grievances.

Mr Abhisit has meanwhile publicly dismissed negotiating with the militants for fear of bolstering their legitimacy, reflecting a policy in place since 2004. His government has nevertheless pursued several tracks of unofficial dialogue through third-party facilitators, none of which has proven productive, as the insurgency's leadership remains fractious.

For outsiders, the path towards a sustainable solution is clear: Some suitable level of local autonomy providing southerners with a voice over issues they view as critical.


The ICG report supports this view: "Governance reform has proved to be a crucial component in successful negotiations in several 'separatist' conflicts," it states, adding: "Without widespread popular support, which is unlikely outside of the South, it would be political suicide for the Abhisit government to take any action that might be seen as promoting autonomy."

Even if the Abhisit government supported negotiating some form of political autonomy for southern Thailand, which is far from clear, every other component of the country's ruling elite is steadfastly opposed to any such solution.

"This taboo," observes the ICG, "has deterred efforts to explore new governance arrangements that could help end the conflict."

It is a discouraging truth.

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## Regional

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### China ready to enhance relations with Cambodia as US fumes

Published on December 22, 2009

**Phnom Penh - Visiting Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping on Monday talked of enhanced relations with Cambodia, days after the Phnom Penh government expelled 20 Uighur asylum seekers sparking outrage among human rights groups and the US government.**

In talks with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, Xi said China was willing to enhance cooperation with Cambodia in various fields and push bilateral relations to a higher level so as to bring more benefits to the two peoples, officials said.

For its part, Cambodia was willing to enhance all-round cooperation with China, Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister Sok An said.

Phnom Penh demonstrated that willingness to oblige Beijing when it deported 20 Uighur asylum seekers back to China on Saturday night, the eve of Xi's arrival.

The deportation outraged the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, human rights groups and the US embassy in Phnom Penh.

"On December 19, the Royal Government of Cambodia, at the request of China, forcibly removed a group of 20 Uighur asylum seekers back to China in apparent violation of Cambodia's international obligations," the US embassy said in a statement released in Phnom Penh.

It expressed concerns for the welfare of the Uighurs, whom the UNHCR fears could face torture in their homeland.

"The United States strongly opposed Cambodia's involuntary return of these asylum seekers before their claims have been heard. This incident will affect Cambodia's relationship with the US and its international standing," said the US statement.

The Cambodian government has claimed the 20 Uighurs had entered the country illegally and thus must be deported.


"There was nothing wrong with the deportation of 20 Uighurs from Cambodia back to

China," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Kuy Kong.

"Cambodia was only implementing the migration law of 1994," he added, refusing to comment on the US embassy statement.

During his three-day visit in Cambodia, Chinese Vice President Xi is scheduled to sign agreements on 14 different projects with Cambodia including for the restoration of Takeo temple and provide a loan of 50 million yuan for a road construction project.

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## Regional

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### Burmese Supreme Court accepts Aung San Suu Kyi appeal case

Published on December 22, 2009

**Rangoon - Burma's Supreme Court on Monday accepted opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi's appeal against a recent 18-month house detention sentence that would make it impossible for the democracy icon to participate in next year's planned election.**

"My client Daw (Madame) Aung San Suu Kyi is not guilty," Nyan Win, one of Suu Kyi's attorneys, said before he entered the court.

On August 11, a special court set up in Rangoon's Insein Prison found Suu Kyi, 64, guilty of violating the terms of her house arrest and sentenced her to three years in prison with labour. The sentence was quickly commuted to 18 months under house detention by Burma's military supremo, Senior General Than Shwe.

Suu Kyi's lawyers challenged the sentence at Yangon's Rangoon Court, where the verdict was upheld, and on November 13 registered the appeal at the Supreme Court.

Her defence team told the Supreme Court Monday that Suu Kyi had been found guilty of a violation under the 1974 constitution, which had been revoked by a referendum last year when a new charter was put in place, lead lawyer Kyi Win said.

The Nobel Peace Prize winner was found guilty of allowing American John Yettaw to swim to her house on Yangon's Inya Lake in May, an act that was ruled a breach of her terms of imprisonment.

Many analysts said Yettaw's bizarre, uninvited swim to warn Suu Kyi of an assassination attempt he dreamed about was an unexpected gift to the ruling generals because her previous period of detention was about to expire.


Her latest sentence should keep her out of circulation next year when the military plans to hold the first general election since 1990.

Yettaw, 53, was sentenced to seven years in jail but was soon allowed to leave the country.



The United States and many Western countries have warned the junta that if the upcoming election is to be seen as credible, Suu Kyi and the country's other political prisoners should be released beforehand.

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## Politics

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### **BIG TEST FOR SAUDI TIES Dec 29 holds key to reviving bilateral relations**

Published on December 26, 2009

**Security at the Saudi Arabian Embassy remains as tight as when the famously aggressive Mohammed Said Khoja was charg  d'affaires many years back. The mood is what has changed, albeit just a little.**

As the strained Thai-Saudi relations are reaching another critical juncture, current chief envoy Nabil H Ashri is quietly and cautiously optimistic.

His mind is already focused on this coming Tuesday, when Thai prosecutors are scheduled to decide whether to take up the case against five serving and former Thai policemen implicated in the disappearance of a Saudi Arabian businessman in 1990.

In an exclusive interview with The Nation yesterday, the charg  d'affaires was hoping for the best - although he can be forgiven for fearing the worst.

"The two countries have been missing each other," he said. "What happens on December 29 hopefully can be a big step forward [in normalisation efforts]."

His embassy on Thursday issued a statement expressing great optimism and complimenting the Abhisit Vejjajiva government for its efforts to solve the cases that have left bilateral ties at almost a standstill for nearly two decades.

"The prime minister's directives to the respective agencies to speed up investigations in the pending cases further demonstrate the Thai government's sincere desire to restore the friendly and warm relations between the two kingdoms and carry out justice," the statement said.

The message in itself marked a positive, diplomatic step unseen for a long time.

The cases brought Thai labour exports to the Middle Eastern country to a sudden stop, drained Saudi investment from Thailand and disrupted the lucrative cash flow brought in by Saudi tourists. The Saudis, meanwhile, have also felt a great impact from the strained relations and are eager to see things improved, said the charg  d'affaires.

He said that although the December 29 decision involved only the case of missing businessman Mohammad al-Ruwaili, Saudi Arabia would certainly take a "positive" development as a big breakthrough.

Although it had been understood that Saudi Arabia placed equal importance on the three major cases, the envoy indicated that Thailand could expect a tangible diplomatic response from his country to a significant development in the al-Ruwaili affair.

The al-Ruwaili case's statute of limitations ends early next year (20 years after the crime), making the prosecutors' decision next week all the more crucial.

A Department of Special Investigation (DSI) source confirmed that the Saudi authorities, who met a Thai investigation team in Riyadh in October, seemed to feel "strongly" about the al-Ruwaili case as it was a crime committed against their citizen allegedly by Thai police.

Among the five police suspects facing charges is Provincial Police Region 5 commissioner Pol Lt-General Somkid Boonthanom, who reported to the DSI recently to be officially charged.

The other two cases are the infamous Saudi jewellery embezzlement scandal and the killing of three Saudi diplomats in Bangkok, who were murdered in 1990 just before al-Ruwaili went missing.

Ashri has been seeking cooperation from every Thai prime minister, foreign minister and justice minister since coming to Thailand more than three years ago. Unlike outspoken and aggressive Khoja, he has been pursuing polite but firm diplomacy behind the scenes.

He praised the Abhisit administration for giving priority to the bilateral problems, although he expressed sympathy for Abhisit's predecessors who were preoccupied with local political conflicts.

"We have seen the most positive progress in this government, although we will have to wait and see what happens four days from now," he said.

The embassy's statement said he had been "personally assured that solving the cases is on the highest priority list of the current administration". It underlined the Saudi government's wish to see the Thai government go all the way, no matter how complicated and sensitive the cases are in the domestic context.


"The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia reiterates that the two kingdoms share common goals, values and views on regional and international issues, and looks forward to improving and solidifying diplomatic, trade and cooperation relations with the Kingdom of Thailand. A number of international and regional forums, such as the Asia

Cooperation Dialogue and Asia Middle East Dialogue, and finally the recently formalised GCC-Asean Dialogue, have increased the much-needed interaction between Saudi and Thai officials.

"Although bilateral trade has improved in recent years, the pending Saudi cases have caused great damage and loss to bilateral trade and investment. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia remains as one of the world's top 10 most competitive and stable economies, and top 20 destinations for investment," the statement said.

In the Thai-Saudi diplomatic context, it was almost a love letter. The envoy can only hope that the next statement in the wake of the prosecutors' decision can maintain the tone. It is only four days away, but it will be a very long and anxious wait.

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## Opinion

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### EDITORIAL

#### No room for complacency with security

Published on December 30, 2009

#### **In the wake of the attempted bombing of an aircraft over the US last week, airports worldwide need to review security procedures**

International airline passengers thought it was safe to travel again, but then came the news last week that a young Nigerian, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, had tried unsuccessfully to blow up a plane en route from Amsterdam to Detroit, Michigan. The Christmas Day drama quickly heightened fears once more. Obviously, the attacker planned to cause maximum damage and kill all 285 passengers and crew on board. By attempting to detonate the explosive device as the plane came into land, he also hoped that the debris would also cause casualties around the airport and its surrounding areas. It was fortunate that fellow passengers and the cabin crew did a heroic job in preventing him from carrying out his suicidal mission. But how about next time?

After nearly eight years on the run, al-Qaeda is back with rigour and apparently with new ideas and plans to wage war against the West. Indeed, the al-Qaeda network has been able to relocate to new hideouts such as Yemen and other places less well known to the world. In the case of Abdulmutallab, he was trained in Yemen after a long residential period in London. Even a background of a good education and family did not stop him from joining al-Qaeda.

Some of al-Qaeda's new recruits harbour personal grudges due to bad experiences in Western environments and societies, and this has compelled them to join the terrorist group. The Nigerian was a case in point. Indeed, dozens of educated youngsters have been apprehended in Britain in recent months due to suspicious activities.


The fact that Abdulmutallab was able to pass through all security checks at airports at home and in Europe, even though he was carrying explosive powder and devices, begs many questions. Further investigations must be rigorous.

What is the real situation at security checkpoints around the world? Of course, al-Qaeda is going after Westerners, especially Americans. But nobody doubted the security level at Schiphol Airport in Amsterdam, which has one of the highest security standards in Europe.

All countries must cooperate to ensure that would-be terrorists are not able to carry out their plots. For al-Qaeda, any airport that is careless or has shortcomings in its security procedures, can easily be exploited. In this case, it seemed that the attacker knew exactly the best way to hide the explosive components. Some reports said he hid the powder in his anus, which would be difficult to detect in normal airport security checks. This is, of course, a popular method used by drug traffickers all over the world for decades. Each year, hundreds of Nigerians and people of other nationalities are caught by Thai and regional airport authorities trying to smuggle heroin or cocaine in this fashion. If this is the future operating method of al-Qaeda, it poses a serious threat. Airport authorities will have to be extra vigilant in their security checks because any passenger intent on a suicide-bomb mission could board a plane at an airport with lax security and then transfer to a flight destined for any airport, Western or otherwise.

Security reviews at all airports, big or small, are important. Al-Qaeda operatives will stop at nothing. Prior to September 11, 2001, Thailand was considered a rendezvous haven for terrorists and regional militants. Recent changes at Suvarnabhumi Airport, which have reduced double security checks to a single check, need to be looked at again. More time and patience is needed to guarantee safety in the air for all passengers. This latest incident indicates that al-Qaeda will do everything it can to inflict damage in any circumstance. Timely cooperation and the exchange of security intelligence are prerequisites for efficient preventative measures to counter terrorist acts such as Abdulmuttallab's.

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## National

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### Two soldiers killed in South bomb blast

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**A roadside bomb killed two soldiers in the deep South yesterday, as authorities boosted security ahead of the New Year and the sixth anniversary of an insurgency in the region, police said.**

The blast ripped through a truck carrying five rangers as they patrolled a route used by teachers in restive Pattani province, one of three troubled Muslimmajority provinces near the Malaysian border.

Two soldiers died at the scene and three others were seriously wounded. Police said the bomb contained around 15 kilograms of explosives and was detonated remotely using a mobile telephone.

The government's special Cabinet dedicated to the separatist insurgency held a meeting yesterday amid fears Islamist militants may mount attacks over the New Year.

"All concerned security officials have stepped up measures during the New Year holiday," Army chief General Anupong Paochinda told reporters after the meeting in Bangkok.

Anupong also defended a new government scheme to register motorcycles and cars with barcodes in the South, after some owners found their recently tagged vehicles had been vandalised.

"Vehicles are crucial in mounting many attacks, so we want to effectively control vehicles in the area. The only group that does not agree with the scheme is the militants," he said.

More than 4,000 people have been killed and thousands more wounded since the current insurgency erupted in January 2004, when militants raided a southern Army base, killing four soldiers.

Tensions had bubbled under the surface, with occasional flareups, since predominantly Buddhist Thailand annexed the former MalayMuslim sultanate in 1902.