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A Balanced Strategy

Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age

By Robert M. Gates

The defining principle of the Pentagon's new National Defense Strategy is balance. The United States cannot expect to eliminate national security risks through higher defense budgets, to do everything and buy everything. The Department of Defense must set priorities and consider inescapable tradeoffs and opportunity costs. The strategy strives for balance in three areas: between trying to prevail in current conflicts and preparing for other contingencies, between institutionalizing capabilities such as counterinsurgency and foreign military assistance and maintaining the United States' existing conventional and strategic technological edge against other military forces, and between retaining those cultural traits that have made the U.S. armed forces successful and shedding those that hamper their ability to do what needs to be done.

UNCONVENTIONAL THINKING

The United States' ability to deal with future threats will depend on its performance in current conflicts. To be blunt, to fail -- or to be seen to fail -- in either Iraq or Afghanistan would be a disastrous blow to U.S. credibility, both among friends and allies and among potential adversaries. In Iraq, the number of U.S. combat units there will decline over time -- as it was going to do no matter who was elected president in November. Still, there will continue to be some kind of U.S. advisory and counterterrorism effort in Iraq for years to come. In Afghanistan, as President George W. Bush announced last September, U.S. troop levels are rising, with the likelihood of more increases in the year ahead. Given its terrain, poverty, neighborhood, and tragic history, Afghanistan in many ways poses an even more complex and difficult long-term challenge than Iraq -- one that, despite a large international effort, will require a significant U.S. military and economic commitment for some time.

It would be irresponsible not to think about and prepare for the future, and the overwhelming majority of people in the Pentagon, the services, and the defense industry do just that. But we must not be so preoccupied with preparing for future conventional and strategic conflicts that we neglect to provide all the capabilities necessary to fight and win conflicts such as those the United States is in today. Support for conventional modernization programs is deeply embedded in the Defense Department's budget, in its bureaucracy, in the defense industry, and in Congress. My fundamental concern is that there is not commensurate institutional support -- including in the Pentagon -- for the capabilities needed to win today's wars and some of their likely successors.

What is dubbed the war on terror is, in grim reality, a prolonged, worldwide irregular campaign -- a struggle between the forces of violent extremism and those of moderation. Direct military force will continue to play a role in the long-term effort against terrorists and other extremists. But over the long term, the United States cannot kill or capture its way to victory. Where possible, what the military calls kinetic operations should be subordinated to measures aimed at promoting better governance, economic programs that spur development, and efforts to address the grievances among the discontented, from whom the terrorists recruit. It will take the patient accumulation of quiet successes over a long time to discredit and defeat extremist movements and their ideologies.

The United States is unlikely to repeat another Iraq or Afghanistan -- that is, forced regime change followed by nation building under fire -- anytime soon. But that does not mean it may not face similar challenges in a variety of locales. Where possible, U.S. strategy is to employ indirect approaches -- primarily through building the capacity of partner governments and their security forces -- to prevent festering problems from turning into crises that require costly and controversial direct military intervention. In this kind of effort, the capabilities of the United States' allies and partners may be as important as its own, and building their capacity is arguably as important as, if not more so than, the fighting the United States does itself.

The recent past vividly demonstrated the consequences of failing to address adequately the dangers posed by insurgencies and failing states. Terrorist networks can find sanctuary within the borders of a weak nation and strength within the chaos of social breakdown. A nuclear-armed state could collapse into chaos and criminality. The most likely catastrophic threats to the U.S. homeland -- for example, that of a U.S. city being poisoned or reduced to rubble by a terrorist attack -- are more likely to emanate from failing states than from aggressor states.

The kinds of capabilities needed to deal with these scenarios cannot be considered exotic distractions or temporary diversions. The United States does not have the luxury of opting out because these scenarios do not conform to preferred notions of the American way of war. Furthermore, even the biggest of wars will require "small wars" capabilities. Ever since General Winfield Scott led his army into Mexico in the 1840s, nearly every major deployment of U.S. forces has led to a longer subsequent military presence to maintain stability. Whether in the midst of or in the aftermath of any major conflict, the requirement for the U.S. military to maintain security, provide aid and comfort, begin reconstruction, and prop up local governments and public services will not go away.

The military and civilian elements of the United States' national security apparatus have responded unevenly and have grown increasingly out of balance. The problem is not will; it is capacity. In many ways, the country's national security capabilities are still coping with the consequences of the 1990s, when, with the complicity of both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue, key instruments of U.S. power abroad were reduced or allowed to wither on the bureaucratic vine. The State Department froze the hiring of new Foreign Service officers. The U.S. Agency for International Development dropped from a high of having 15,000 permanent staff members during the Vietnam War to having less than 3,000 today. And then there was the U.S. Information Agency, whose directors once included the likes of Edward R. Murrow. It was split into pieces and folded into a corner of the State Department. Since 9/11, and through the efforts first of Secretary of State Colin Powell and now of Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, the State Department has made a comeback. Foreign Service officers are being hired again, and foreign affairs spending has about doubled since President Bush took office.

Yet even with a better-funded State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development, future military commanders will not be able to rid themselves of the tasks of maintaining security and stability. To truly achieve victory as Clausewitz defined it -- to attain a political objective -- the United States needs a military whose ability to kick down the door is matched by its ability to clean up the mess and even rebuild the house afterward.

Given these realities, the military has made some impressive strides in recent years. Special operations have received steep increases in funding and personnel. The air force has created a new air advisory program and a new career track for unmanned aerial operations. The navy has set up a new expeditionary combat command and brought back its riverine units. New counterinsurgency and army operations manuals, plus a new maritime strategy, have incorporated the lessons of recent years in service doctrine. "Train and equip" programs allow for quicker improvements in the security capacity of partner nations. And various initiatives are under way that will better integrate and coordinate U.S. military efforts with civilian agencies as well as engage the expertise of the private sector, including nongovernmental organizations and academia.

CONVENTIONAL THREATS IN PERSPECTIVE

Even as its military hones and institutionalizes new and unconventional skills, the United States still has to contend with the security challenges posed by the military forces of other countries. The images of Russian tanks rolling into Georgia last August were a reminder that nation-states and their militaries do still matter. Both Russia and China have increased their defense spending and modernization programs to include air defense and fighter capabilities that in some cases approach the United States' own. In addition, there is the potentially toxic mix of rogue nations, terrorist groups, and nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons. North Korea has built several bombs, and Iran seeks to join the nuclear club.

What all these potential adversaries -- from terrorist cells to rogue nations to rising powers -- have in common is that they have learned that it is unwise to confront the United States directly on conventional military terms. The United States cannot take its current dominance for granted and needs to invest in the programs, platforms, and personnel that will ensure that dominance's persistence.

But it is also important to keep some perspective. As much as the U.S. Navy has shrunk since the end of the Cold War, for example, in terms of tonnage, its battle fleet is still larger than the next 13 navies combined -- and 11 of those 13 navies are U.S. allies or partners. Russian tanks and artillery may have crushed Georgia's tiny military. But before the United States begins rearming for another Cold War, it must remember that what is driving Russia is a desire to exorcise past humiliation and dominate its "near abroad" -- not an ideologically driven campaign to dominate the globe. As someone who used to prepare estimates of Soviet military strength for several presidents, I can say that Russia's conventional military, although vastly improved since its nadir in the late 1990s, remains a

shadow of its Soviet predecessor. And adverse demographic trends in Russia will likely keep those conventional forces in check.

All told, the 2008 National Defense Strategy concludes that although U.S. predominance in conventional warfare is not unchallenged, it is sustainable for the medium term given current trends. It is true that the United States would be hard-pressed to fight a major conventional ground war elsewhere on short notice, but as I have asked before, where on earth would we do that? U.S. air and sea forces have ample untapped striking power should the need arise to deter or punish aggression -- whether on the Korean Peninsula, in the Persian Gulf, or across the Taiwan Strait. So although current strategy knowingly assumes some additional risk in this area, that risk is a prudent and manageable one.

Other nations may be unwilling to challenge the United States fighter to fighter, ship to ship, tank to tank. But they are developing the disruptive means to blunt the impact of U.S. power, narrow the United States' military options, and deny the U.S. military freedom of movement and action.

In the case of China, Beijing's investments in cyberwarfare, antisatellite warfare, antiaircraft and antiship weaponry, submarines, and ballistic missiles could threaten the United States' primary means to project its power and help its allies in the Pacific: bases, air and sea assets, and the networks that support them. This will put a premium on the United States' ability to strike from over the horizon and employ missile defenses and will require shifts from short-range to longer-range systems, such as the next-generation bomber.

And even though the days of hair-trigger superpower confrontation are over, as long as other nations possess the bomb and the means to deliver it, the United States must maintain a credible strategic deterrent. Toward this end, the Department of Defense and the air force have taken firm steps to return excellence and accountability to nuclear stewardship. Congress needs to do its part by funding the Reliable Replacement Warhead Program -- for safety, for security, and for a more reliable deterrent.

When thinking about the range of threats, it is common to divide the "high end" from the "low end," the conventional from the irregular, armored divisions on one side, guerrillas toting AK-47s on the other. In reality, as the political scientist Colin Gray has noted, the categories of warfare are blurring and no longer fit into neat, tidy boxes. One can expect to see more tools and tactics of destruction -- from the sophisticated to the simple -- being employed simultaneously in hybrid and more complex forms of warfare.

Russia's relatively crude -- although brutally effective -- conventional offensive in Georgia was augmented with a sophisticated cyberattack and a well-coordinated propaganda campaign. The United States saw a different combination of tools during the invasion of Iraq, when Saddam Hussein dispatched his swarming Fedayeen paramilitary fighters along with the T-72 tanks of the Republican Guard.

Conversely, militias, insurgent groups, other nonstate actors, and developing-world militaries are increasingly acquiring more technology, lethality, and sophistication -- as illustrated by the losses and propaganda victory that Hezbollah was able to inflict on Israel in 2006. Hezbollah's restocked arsenal of rockets and missiles now dwarfs the inventory of many nation-states. Furthermore, Chinese and Russian arms sales are putting advanced capabilities, both offensive and defensive, in the hands of more countries and groups. As the defense scholar Frank Hoffman has noted, these hybrid scenarios combine "the lethality of state conflict with the fanatical and protracted fervor of irregular warfare," what another defense scholar, Michael Evans, has described as "wars . . . in which Microsoft coexists with machetes and stealth technology is met by suicide bombers."

Just as one can expect a blended high-low mix of adversaries and types of conflict, so, too, should the United States seek a better balance in the portfolio of capabilities it has -- the types of units fielded, the weapons bought, the training done.

When it comes to procurement, for the better part of five decades, the trend has gone toward lower numbers as technology gains have made each system more capable. In recent years, these platforms have grown ever more baroque, have become ever more costly, are taking longer to build, and are being fielded in ever-dwindling quantities. Given that resources are not unlimited, the dynamic of exchanging numbers for capability is perhaps reaching a point of diminishing returns. A given ship or aircraft, no matter how capable or well equipped, can be in only one place at one time.

For decades, meanwhile, the prevailing view has been that weapons and units designed for the so-called high end could also be used for the low end. And to some extent that has been true: Strategic bombers designed to obliterate cities have been used as close air support for riflemen on horseback. M-1 tanks originally designed to plug the Fulda Gap during a Soviet attack on Western Europe routed Iraqi insurgents in Fallujah and Najaf. Billion-dollar ships are employed to track pirates and deliver humanitarian aid. And the U.S. Army is spinning out parts of the Future Combat Systems program, as they move from the drawing board to reality, so that they can be available and usable for troops in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Nevertheless, given the types of situations the United States is likely to face -- and given, for example, the struggles to field up-armored Humvees, Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicles (MRAPs), and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) programs in Iraq -- the time has come to consider whether the specialized, often relatively low-tech equipment well suited for stability and counterinsurgency missions is also needed. It is time to think hard about how to institutionalize the procurement of such capabilities and get them fielded quickly. Why was it necessary to go outside the normal bureaucratic process to develop technologies to counter improvised explosive devices, to build MRAPs, and to quickly expand the United States' ISR capability? In short, why was it necessary to bypass existing institutions and procedures to get the capabilities needed to protect U.S. troops and fight ongoing wars?

The Department of Defense's conventional modernization programs seek a 99 percent solution over a period of years. Stability and counterinsurgency missions require 75 percent solutions over a period of months. The challenge is whether these two different paradigms can be made to coexist in the U.S. military's mindset and bureaucracy.

The Defense Department has to consider whether in situations in which the United States has total air dominance, it makes sense to employ lower-cost, lower-tech aircraft that can be employed in large quantities and used by U.S. partners. This is already happening now in the field with Task Force ODIN in Iraq, which has mated advanced sensors with turboprop aircraft to produce a massive increase in the amount of surveillance and reconnaissance coverage. The issue then becomes how to build this kind of innovative thinking and flexibility into the rigid procurement processes at home. The key is to make sure that the strategy and risk assessment drive the procurement, rather than the other way around.

SUSTAINING THE INSTITUTION

The ability to fight and adapt to a diverse range of conflicts, sometimes simultaneously, fits squarely within the long history and the finest traditions of the American practice of arms. In the Revolutionary War, tight formations drilled by Baron Friedrich von Steuben fought redcoats in the North while guerrillas led by Francis Marion harassed them in the South. During the 1920s and 1930s, the Marine Corps conducted what would now be called stability operations in the Caribbean, wrote the Small Wars Manual, and at the same time developed the amphibious landing techniques that would help liberate Europe and the Pacific in the following decade. And consider General John "Black Jack" Pershing: before commanding the American Expeditionary Forces in Europe in World War I, Pershing led a platoon of Sioux scouts, rode with buffalo soldiers up San Juan Hill, won the respect of the Moro in the Philippines, and chased Pancho Villa in Mexico.

In Iraq, an army that was basically a smaller version of the United States' Cold War force over time became an effective instrument of counterinsurgency. But that transition came at a frightful human, financial, and political cost. For every heroic and resourceful innovation by troops and commanders on the battlefield, there was some institutional shortcoming at the Pentagon they had to overcome. There have to be institutional changes so that the next set of colonels, captains, and sergeants will not have to be quite so heroic or quite so resourceful.

One of the enduring issues the military struggles with is whether personnel and promotions systems designed to reward the command of American troops will be able to reflect the importance of advising, training, and equipping foreign troops -- something still not considered a career-enhancing path for the best and brightest officers. Another is whether formations and units organized, trained, and equipped to destroy enemies can be adapted well enough and fast enough to dissuade or co-opt them -- or, more significant, to build the capacity of local security forces to do the dissuading and destroying.

As secretary of defense, I have repeatedly made the argument in favor of institutionalizing counterinsurgency skills and the ability to conduct stability and support operations. I have done so not because I fail to appreciate the importance of maintaining the United States' current advantage in conventional war fighting but rather because conventional and strategic force modernization programs are already strongly supported in the services, in Congress, and by the defense industry. The base budget for fiscal year 2009, for example, contains more than $180 billion for procurement, research, and development, the overwhelming preponderance of which is for conventional systems.

Apart from the Special Forces community and some dissident colonels, however, for decades there has been no strong, deeply rooted constituency inside the Pentagon or elsewhere for institutionalizing the capabilities necessary to wage asymmetric or irregular conflict -- and to quickly meet the ever-changing needs of forces engaged in these conflicts.

Think of where U.S. forces have been sent and have been engaged over the last 40-plus years: Vietnam, Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Horn of Africa, and more. In fact, the first Gulf War stands alone in over two generations of constant military engagement as a more or less traditional conventional conflict from beginning to end. As General Charles Krulak, then the Marine Corps commandant, predicted a decade ago, instead of the beloved "Son of Desert Storm," Western militaries are confronted with the unwanted "Stepchild of Chechnya."

There is no doubt in my mind that conventional modernization programs will continue to have, and deserve, strong institutional and congressional support. I just want to make sure that the capabilities needed for the complex conflicts the United States is actually in and most likely to face in the foreseeable future also have strong and sustained institutional support over the long term. And I want to see a defense establishment that can make and implement decisions quickly in support of those on the battlefield.

In the end, the military capabilities needed cannot be separated from the cultural traits and the reward structure of the institutions the United States has: the signals sent by what gets funded, who gets promoted, what is taught in the academies and staff colleges, and how personnel are trained.

Thirty-six years ago, my old CIA colleague Robert Komer, who led the pacification campaign in Vietnam, published his classic study of organizational behavior, Bureaucracy Does Its Thing. Looking at the performance of the U.S. national security apparatus during the conflict in Vietnam, both military and civilian, he identified a number of tendencies that prevented institutions from adapting long after problems had been identified and solutions proposed: a reluctance to change preferred ways of functioning, the attempt to run a war with a peacetime management structure and peacetime practices, a belief that the current set of problems either was an aberration or would soon be over, and the tendency for problems that did not fit organizations' inherited structures and preferences to fall through the cracks.

I mention this study not to relitigate that war or slight the enormous strides the institutional military has made in recent years but simply as a reminder that these tendencies are always present in any large, hierarchical organization and that everyone must consistently strive to overcome them.

I have learned many things in my 42 years of service in the national security arena. Two of the most important are an appreciation of limits and a sense of humility. The United States is the strongest and greatest nation on earth, but there are still limits on what it can do. The power and global reach of its military have been an indispensable contributor to world peace and must remain so. But not every outrage, every act of aggression, or every crisis can or should elicit a U.S. military response.

We should be modest about what military force can accomplish and what technology can accomplish. The advances in precision, sensor, information, and satellite technologies have led to extraordinary gains in what the U.S. military can do. The Taliban were dispatched within three months; Saddam's regime was toppled in three weeks. A button can be pushed in Nevada, and seconds later a pickup truck will explode in Mosul. A bomb dropped from the sky can destroy a targeted house while leaving the one next to it intact.

But no one should ever neglect the psychological, cultural, political, and human dimensions of warfare. War is inevitably tragic, inefficient, and uncertain, and it is important to be skeptical of systems analyses, computer models, game theories, or doctrines that suggest otherwise. We should look askance at idealistic, triumphalist, or

ethnocentric notions of future conflict that aspire to transcend the immutable principles and ugly realities of war, that imagine it is possible to cow, shock, or awe an enemy into submission, instead of tracking enemies down hilltop by hilltop, house by house, block by bloody block. As General William Tecumseh Sherman said, "Every attempt to make war easy and safe will result in humiliation and disaster."

Repeatedly over the last century, Americans averted their eyes in the belief that events in remote places around the world need not engage the United States. How could the assassination of an Austrian archduke in the unknown Bosnia and Herzegovina affect Americans, or the annexation of a little patch of ground called Sudetenland, or a French defeat in a place called Dien Bien Phu, or the return of an obscure cleric to Tehran, or the radicalization of a Saudi construction tycoon's son?

In world affairs, "what seems to work best," the historian Donald Kagan wrote in his book On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace, ". . . is the possession by those states who wish to preserve the peace of the preponderant power and of the will to accept the burdens and responsibilities required to achieve that purpose." I believe the United States' National Defense Strategy provides a balanced approach to meeting those responsibilities and preserving the United States' freedom, prosperity, and security in the years ahead.

http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20090101faessay88103/robert-m-gates/a-balanced-strategy.html?mode=print

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USA TODAY

Nuclear Weapons Decision Awaits Obama

By Peter Eisler, USA TODAY
8 December 2008

OAK RIDGE, Tenn. — One of the most important national security decisions facing President-elect Barack Obama will unfold in this remote valley of aging factories, where workers enriched uranium for the first atomic bomb of World War II.

The site is a linchpin in a hotly contested Bush administration plan to build the first new U.S. warheads since the end of the Cold War. Following Congress' demand that decisions on new warheads be deferred until an assessment of U.S. nuclear weapons needs is finished next year, the issue is set to come to a head early in Obama's presidency.

The outcome will determine whether Oak Ridge focuses on maintaining existing warheads and storing uranium from weapons pulled out of a shrinking arsenal — or whether it becomes a cornerstone in a new production enterprise. The implications go far beyond Oak Ridge and the seven other research and manufacturing compounds nationwide that make up the U.S. nuclear weapons production complex.

"This is not just a decision about the future of U.S. nuclear weapons, but about how the United States will address the challenges of … nuclear terrorism, nuclear proliferation and our entire 21st-century nuclear strategy," says Clark Murdock, a senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

"These challenges have been maturing for some time, and the Obama administration is going to have to deal with them," adds Murdock, a former staffer for the Pentagon and Congress.

During the campaign, Obama said that he seeks "a world without nuclear weapons," but he also said that the nation must "always maintain a strong (nuclear) deterrent as long as nuclear weapons exist."

Among other things, Obama has promised to strengthen non-proliferation programs, reach disarmament deals with Russia and bolster sanctions against North Korea, Iran and other states with rogue nuclear programs. He has vowed to seek a verifiable global ban on production of nuclear weapons material — and to "stop the development of new nuclear weapons."

Obama's statements offer no definitive stance on the Bush plan to build a new breed of warheads. His transition office declined to elaborate further.

Those on both sides of the issue say his comments leave room for him to support their positions.

Debating deterrence

The Bush plan focuses on producing a "Reliable Replacement Warhead," or RRW, which the administration touts as a better, more durable substitute for warheads in the U.S. stockpile. The new warhead would have features to ensure it could not be detonated if stolen by terrorists or other foes.

The warhead "is about the future credibility of our nuclear deterrent," Defense Secretary Robert Gates said in an October speech.

Great Britain, France, Russia and China are modernizing their nuclear arsenals, Gates said, and the United States must follow suit. As a signer of the nuclear test ban treaty, the United States cannot detonate its nuclear weapons to see whether age has weakened them. That means, he said, that sharp cuts in U.S. warheads required by disarmament treaties raise questions about the power of remaining weapons.

"There is no way we can maintain a credible deterrent and reduce the number of weapons in our stockpile without either resorting to testing …or pursuing a modernization program," Gates said.

Gates' comments, made before he agreed to stay on as Defense secretary for Obama, don't necessarily reflect the new administration's views.

Congress is skeptical. After providing money previously for warhead research, it refused this year to pay for further development. Lawmakers cited recent studies that found no immediate threat that the aging of warheads and other critical weapons components has significantly eroded their capabilities.

Members of both parties said it would be wrong to embark on a major, multibillion-dollar program to produce a new warhead without determining what sort of nuclear weapons the nation will need in future years, how many will be required and how they will be used. So Congress required the independent review that's due next year.

"We have to make certain that our nuclear deterrent is reliable … but the decision (on new production) has to be made in the context of all the national security issues we face, including non-proliferation," says Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., head of a Senate appropriations subcommittee that controls nuclear weapons spending.

Building the warhead could affect Obama's goal of getting other nations to curb nuclear programs, he says. "It's our responsibility to be a leader in trying to, first, stop the spread of nuclear weapons, and second, in reducing the number of nuclear weapons on the planet."

Indeed, any move on warhead production will come in the context of several other big, international decisions Obama will face on nuclear weapons policy during his first term. Among them: whether to extend or renegotiate the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with Russia, which expires at the end of 2009, and whether to push for ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, which the United States complies with voluntarily.

Obama's challenge

Obama has signaled he will give great weight to the implications that resuming warhead production might have on his non-proliferation agenda.

In an article in the July/August issue of *Foreign Affairs*, then-candidate Obama wrote of "de-emphasizing" the role of nuclear weapons worldwide and said "America must not rush to produce a new generation of nuclear warheads." More recently, he chose former Georgia senator Sam Nunn, an ardent advocate of reducing global nuclear weapons inventories, to advise his transition team.

The question of whether to adopt the Bush administration's plans "will be one of the most momentous (nuclear policy) decisions since the end of the Cold War … and Obama has spoken in support of moving toward a nuclear weapons-free world," says Susan Gordon, president of the Alliance for Nuclear Accountability, a coalition of nuclear watchdog groups.

The new warhead has more capabilities than current warheads, she adds, and would "move us further down this road of a world of nuclear haves and have-nots."

Advocates of the new warhead say it can help Obama's agenda to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons.

"This isn't about building new weapons — exotic bunker busters or suitcase bombs — but reliable, more secure and less costly weapons," says Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M. The warhead "would allow deeper cuts in our nuclear stockpile" because remaining weapons would be more dependable.

"If you believe nuclear weapons are still relevant, RRW is a good thing. If you believe they should go away, it's a great thing," says Robert Smolen, deputy administrator of the National Nuclear Security Administration, which runs the weapons complex.

Some lawmakers who will review any decision Obama makes aren't ready to back that argument.

"My fear is, for all our talk and our actions (on non-proliferation), the international perception will be that we simply want to proceed with a new weapon," says Rep. Pete Visclosky, D-Ind., who chairs a House panel that oversees the weapons complex.

Obama's challenge is working with Congress to set a weapons policy that is consistent with U.S. security needs and broader goals of limiting nuclear weapons, he adds. "It's not just a burden, it's a fundamental opportunity."

http://www.usatoday.com/news/military/2008-12-08-obamanuke_N.htm

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The Wall Street Journal
December 9, 2008

Pirates, Terrorism and Failed States

Max Boot

It's time to get serious about bringing order to places like Somalia and Pakistan's tribal areas.

Ever since the end of the Cold War, there has been much chatter about the problem of failed states. Now we are seeing some of the terrible consequences of state failure on the periphery of the broader Middle East. In Pakistan, terrorist groups such as the Taliban, al Qaeda, and Lashkar-e-Taiba have established themselves as a state within a state. They have virtual free reign in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and a lesser but still substantial amount of leeway in the Northwest Frontier and other provinces. That makes it all too easy for them to launch attacks such as those that killed more than 170 people in Mumbai. Or other attacks that kill NATO soldiers in Afghanistan. Across the Indian Ocean, pirates are terrorizing passing ships. The International Maritime Bureau reports that 92 ships have been attacked and 36 hijacked this year off the coast of Somalia and Yemen. At least 14 ships and 260 crew members are being held hostage. A passenger liner with more than 1,000 people aboard barely avoided being the pirates' latest prize. Vessels that were not so lucky include a Saudi oil tanker carrying two million barrels of crude oil and a Ukrainian freighter loaded with tanks and other weapons.

The predations of pirates and terrorists -- two species of international outlaws -- have caused much handwringing and a so-far unsuccessful search for solutions. The United Nations has authorized warships to enter Somalia's territorial waters and use "all necessary force" against the pirates. A number of states, including the U.S., have sent their own naval vessels to help, but their numbers are grossly inadequate to safeguard thousands of miles of water. The increasingly bold desperados are venturing farther and farther from shore in search of ever more lucrative prizes.

The response in Pakistan has been just as limited and just as ineffective. India, the U.S., Afghanistan and other concerned states have spent years begging Islamabad to crack down on terrorists. These pleas have been backed up by offers of aid and threats if inaction continues. Neither has done much good. The Pakistani army appears either unwilling or unable -- maybe both -- to take effective action against powerful jihadist groups that have longstanding links with its own Inter-Services Intelligence agency. In desperation, the U.S. has resorted to picking off individual terrorists with unmanned aerial vehicles. This tactic works and should be continued, but it is no more than a band-aid on a gaping wound.

The essential problem in both Somalia and Pakistan is a failure of governance. The question is: What if anything can outside powers do to bring the rule of law to these troubled lands? In the 19th century, the answer was simple:

European imperialists would plant their flag and impose their laws at gunpoint. The territory that now comprises Pakistan was not entirely peaceful when it was under British rule. Nor was Somalia under Italian and British sovereignty. But they were considerably better off than they are today -- not only from the standpoint of Western countries but also from the standpoint of their own citizens. You might think that such imperialism is simply unacceptable today. But you would be only partially right. There have been a number of instances in recent years of imperialism-in-all-but-name. Bosnia and Kosovo -- still wards of NATO and the European Union -- are prominent examples of how successful such interventions can be in the right circumstances.

The real difficulty with emulating these examples is not a lack of legitimacy. That can always be conferred by the United Nations or some other multilateral organization. Harder to overcome is a lack of will. Ragtag guerrillas have proven dismayingly successful in driving out or neutering international peacekeeping forces. Think of American and French troops blown up in Beirut in 1983, or the "Black Hawk Down" incident in Somalia in 1993. Too often, when outside states do agree to send troops, they are so fearful of casualties that they impose rules of engagement that preclude meaningful action. Think of the ineffectiveness of African Union peacekeepers dealing with genocide in Darfur today or of U.N. peacekeepers dealing with genocide in Rwanda in 1994. Even the world's mightiest military alliance is not immune from these problems. Witness the problems NATO has encountered in trying to get member states to live up to their commitments in Afghanistan.

If NATO won't do enough to win the war in Afghanistan, its highest priority, there is scant chance that it will commit troops to police Pakistan's tribal areas or Somalia's coast. And if NATO members won't act, who will? That difficulty renders moot ideas such as the one just put forward by foreign-policy theorist Robert Kagan: "Have the international community declare that parts of Pakistan have become ungovernable and a menace to international security. Establish an international force to work with the Pakistanis to root out terrorist camps in Kashmir as well as in the tribal areas." It is a tragedy that such proposals have no chance of being acted upon until some truly great tragedy occurs. If we suffer another 9/11 or worse and the culprits can be traced to Pakistan, then the U.S. and its allies would summon the wherewithal to act. But not until then.

Given that dismal reality, it makes sense to think of second-best alternatives. In the case of the Somali pirates, creative solutions can include using air and naval power to hit the bases from which they operate, and employing Blackwater and other mercenaries to add their protective efforts to those of the world's navies. In Pakistan that means continuing air strikes and providing assistance to tribal militias which have their own grievances against jihadist interlopers. In both places, the U.S. should be doing what it can, in cooperation with allies and multilateral organizations, to bolster central authority. But we should not fool ourselves into thinking that any of these measures has much chance of success. Until we are willing to place more ungoverned spaces under international administration, evils such as piracy and terrorism will continue to flourish.

Mr. Boot is a senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and author, most recently, of "War Made New: Technology, Warfare, and the Course of History, 1500 to Today"(Gotham, 2006).

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122869822798786931.html#printMode

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New York Times
December 9, 2008

Mumbai Terrorists Relied on New Technology for Attacks

By JEREMY KAHN

MUMBAI, India — The terrorists who struck this city last month stunned authorities not only with their use of sophisticated weaponry but also with their comfort with modern technology.

The terrorists navigated across the Arabian Sea to Mumbai from Karachi, Pakistan, with the help of a global positioning system handset. While under way, they communicated using a satellite phone with those in Pakistan

believed to have coordinated the attacks. They recognized their targets and knew the most direct routes to reach them in part because they had studied satellite photos from Google Earth.

And, perhaps most significantly, throughout the three-day siege at two luxury hotels and a Jewish center, the Pakistani-based handlers communicated with the attackers using Internet phones that complicate efforts to trace and intercept calls.

Those handlers, who were apparently watching the attacks unfold live on television, were able to inform the attackers of the movement of security forces from news accounts and provide the gunmen with instructions and encouragement, authorities said.

Hasan Gafoor, Mumbai's police commissioner, said Monday that as once complicated technologies — including global positioning systems and satellite phones — have become simpler to operate, terrorists, like everyone else, have become adept at using them. "Well, whether terrorists or common criminals, they do try to be a step ahead in terms of technology," he said.

Indian security forces surrounding the buildings were able to monitor the terrorists' outgoing calls by intercepting their cellphone signals. But Indian police officials said those directing the attacks, who are believed to be from Lashkar-e-Taiba, a militant group based in Pakistan, were using a Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phone service, which has complicated efforts to determine their whereabouts and identities.

VoIP services, in which conversations are carried over the Internet as opposed to conventional phone lines or cellphone towers, are increasingly popular with people looking to save money on long distance and international calls. Many such services, like Skype and Vonage, allow a user to call another VoIP-enabled device anywhere in the world free of charge, or to call a standard telephone or cellphone at a deeply discounted rate.

But the same services are also increasingly popular with criminals and terrorists, a trend that worries some law enforcement and intelligence agencies. "It's a concern," said one Indian security official, who spoke anonymously because the investigation was continuing. "It's not something we have seen before."

In mid-October, a draft United States Army intelligence report highlighted the growing interest of Islamic militants in using VoIP, noting recent news reports of Taliban insurgents using Skype to communicate. The unclassified report, which examined discussions of emerging technologies on jihadi Web sites, was obtained by the Federation of American Scientists, a Washington-based nonprofit group that monitors the impact of science on national security.

VoIP calls pose an array of difficulties for intelligence and law enforcement services, according to communications experts. "It means the phone-tapping techniques that work for old traditional interception don't work," said Matt Blaze, a professor and computer security expert at the University of Pennsylvania.

An agency using conventional tracing techniques to track a call from a land line or cellphone to a VoIP subscriber would be able to get only as far as the switching station that converts the voice call into Internet data, communications experts said. The switch, usually owned and operated by the company providing the VoIP service, could be located thousands of miles from the subscriber.

The subscriber's phone number would also likely reveal no information about his location. For instance, someone in New York could dial a local phone number but actually be connected via the Internet to a person in Thailand.

In Mumbai, authorities have declined to disclose the names of the VoIP companies whose services the Lashkar-e-Taiba handlers used, but reports in Indian news media have said the calls have been traced to companies in New

Jersey and Austria. Yet investigators have said they are convinced that the handlers who directed the attacks were actually sitting somewhere in Pakistan during the calls.

One senior Lashkar-e-Taiba leader who American officials believe may have played a key role in planning the Mumbai attacks is Zarrar Shah. Mr. Shah, known to be a specialist in communications technology, may have been aware of the difficulties in tracing VoIP.

To determine the location of a VoIP caller, an investigating agency has to access a database kept by the service provider. The database logs the unique numerical identifier, known as an Internet Protocol (I.P.) address, of whatever device the subscriber was using to connect to the Internet. This could be a computer equipped with a microphone, a special VoIP phone, or even a cellphone with software that routes calls over the Internet using wireless connections as opposed to cellular signals.

It would then take additional electronic sleuthing to determine where the device was located. The customer's identity could be obtained from the service provider as well, but might prove fraudulent, experts said.

Getting the I.P. address and then determining its location can take days longer than a standard phone trace, particularly if service providers involved are in a foreign country.

"Ultimately, we can trace them," said Mr. Gafoor, referring to VoIP calls. "It takes a little longer, but we will trace them."

Washington is assisting the Indian authorities in obtaining this information, according to another Indian police official who also spoke anonymously because of the continuing investigation.

Further complicating this task is the fact that I.P. addresses change frequently and are less tied to a specific location than phone numbers.

Computer experts said that while these challenges were formidable, none were insurmountable. And they cautioned that security services and police forces might be disingenuous when they complain about terrorists' use of new technologies, including VoIP.

The experts said that VoIP calls left a far richer data trail for investigators to mine than someone calling from an old-fashioned pay phone. Mr. Blaze, the computer security expert at the University of Pennsylvania, also noted that 15 years ago the Mumbai attackers would probably not have had the capacity to make calls to their handlers during the course of their attacks, depriving investigators of vital clues to their identities. "As one door closes — traditional wire line tapping — all these other doors have opened," Mr. Blaze said.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/09/world/asia/09mumbai.html?ref=asia

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Wall street Journal
DECEMBER 9, 2008

Pakistan Detains Two Lashkar Leaders, Faces Pressure to Deal with Jamaat

By MATTHEW ROSENBERG and ZAHID HUSSAIN in Islamabad and ERIC BELLMAN in Mumbai

ISLAMABAD -- Pakistan arrested two senior leaders of the Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist group and 10 other people, in a move aimed at satisfying U.S. and Indian demands that the Pakistani government clamp down on the group suspected of being behind the Mumbai terror attacks.

Shiv Sena activists burn an effigy representing Pakistan sponsored terrorism during a protest in the northern Indian city of Amritsar.

Lashkar has operated openly in Pakistan despite being banned six years ago. Diplomats and analysts said the raid was a good first step but also a relatively easy one.

The bigger test is what Pakistan does about Lashkar's parent organization, Jamaat-ud-Dawa. It also is banned but retains a high public profile, running schools, doing relief work and raising millions of dollars a year through a fund-raising network that appeals to everyone from Pakistani farmers to Persian Gulf sheiks.

New Delhi is taking a wait-and-see approach. "Once we have the details, we'll assess them," an Indian official said. Tensions between Pakistan and India have escalated since the attacks in Mumbai late last month left 171 dead. In Washington, Sean McCormack, U.S. State Department spokesman, said: "I think what we're seeing are some positive steps" by Pakistan.

Sunday night's raid targeted Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, one of Lashkar's founders, who is believed to be the group's current operational commander, directing attacks in Kashmir and other parts of India, Chechnya and Iraq, said a senior Pakistani official.

Mr. Lakhvi, who operates under several aliases, is from the Okara district in Pakistan's central province of Punjab where the sole militant captured during the attack on Mumbai, Mohammed Ajmal Kasab, has said his home village is located. Mr. Kasab has told Indian police Mr. Lakhvi led the indoctrination of the 10 attackers who struck Mumbai.

New Delhi accuses Mr. Lakhvi of masterminding a 2002 attack on a military base in Old Delhi's historic Red Fort and the 2006 bombings of Mumbai's commuter rail network, which killed 187 people.

Mr. Lakhvi was arrested during the raid on a well-known Lashkar compound about five kilometers outside Muzaffarabad, the main city in Pakistan's part of Kashmir, another official said. There was a brief exchange of gunfire between soldiers and militants during the raid, which also netted Zarar Shah, another top operational commander, and an additional 10 people, the official said.

Top Pakistani civilian and military leaders met in Islamabad after the raid to review the situation. Another senior official said the crackdown against Lashkar could be expanded to other areas and eventually include Jamaat.

Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, believed to be Lashkar's operational commander, was arrested in Sunday's raid.

Founded in 1990, Lashkar was fashioned by Pakistan's powerful Inter-Services Intelligence agency into one of the most potent Islamic insurgent groups fighting Indian rule in Kashmir, a predominately Muslim Himalayan region that lies at the center of the six-decade rivalry between India and Pakistan. Some experts say the group is a proxy of the ISI, although India and the U.S. have said they don't believe Pakistan's government was involved in the Mumbai attack.

Sunday's raid is evidence that Pakistan's powerful military is in agreement with President Asif Ali Zardari's government on the need to move against the group, at least to a degree. But experts say it is already stretched thin, fighting the Taliban and al Qaeda along the western border with Afghanistan and guarding the eastern border with India.

A serious crackdown on Lashkar and Jamaat would mean "effectively opening up a third front," said Shuja Nawaz, an expert on Pakistan who works with the Atlantic Council, a Washington think tank.

—Eric Bellman in Mumbai contributed to this article.

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122872488782087733.html?mod=googlenews_wsj

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The Times
December 9, 2008

'Mastermind of Mumbai' is Arrested in Raid on Kashmir Militant Camp

ZAHID HUSSAIN IN ISLAMABAD AND JEREMY PAGE IN DELHI

Pakistani security forces have arrested the alleged mastermind of last month's Mumbai attacks in a raid on a training camp used by the militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), government officials revealed yesterday.

A Pakistani official told *The Times* that among the eight militants arrested in the raid was Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi, LeT's operations chief, whom Indian officials have accused of organising the Mumbai attack.

The raid last night near Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, was Islamabad's first attempt to respond to mounting pressure from India and the United States to take action against LeT after the Mumbai strike. Also arrested was Zarar Shah, another senior LeT leader and communications expert being investigated by India and the United States for his suspected role in Mumbai, according to the same government official.

The raid came only three days after Condoleezza Rice, the US Secretary of State, met Asif Ali Zardari, Pakistan's President, in Islamabad and won an assurance that he would take “strong action” against those behind the Mumbai atrocity.

However, the arrests are unlikely to satisfy either Delhi or Washington unless Islamabad follows up by prosecuting those held and taking further action against other militant groups linked to attacks on Indian soil.

“We've seen before how Pakistan will arrest some militants, keep them for a couple of months and then release them when the world's not paying attention,” said B. Raman, a former head of the Pakistan desk at the Research and Analysis Wing (India's MI6). “It must not be allowed to do that this time. They have to prosecute these people and dismantle the whole terrorist infrastructure,” he told *The Times*.

He named the three other Pakistani militant groups that should be targeted as Harkat-ul-Mujahidin, Harkat-ul-Jihad-al Islami and Jaish-e-Mohammed. Pakistani officials did not say what would happen to the eight arrested militants, but Mr Zardari turned down India's request for Pakistan to extradite twenty terror suspects last week, and has offered to try them in Pakistan instead.

Pakistani security officials refused to confirm or deny the raid publicly or the arrests of the activists from LeT, which is thought to have close links to the nation's powerful Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI).

Government officials, speaking off the record, said that Pakistani troops raided a large compound belonging to Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD), the parent organisation of LeT, about three miles outside Muzaffarabad. Residents said that they saw army helicopters taking part in the raid and heard gunfire and explosions.

The compound has been known for years as a training camp for LeT, which was founded in 1989 with the help of the ISI to fight Indian rule in the disputed region of Kashmir.

LeT was banned in Pakistan in 2002 after its militants attacked the Indian Parliament, prompting India and Pakistan to mass troops on their common border and almost sparking a fourth war between the nuclear-armed neighbours.

However, security analysts and officials say the group has continued to operate freely, and has even grown in popularity and strength, under the banner of JuD, which is led by LeT's founder, Hafiz Mohammed Saeed.

Mr Saeed, who has denied any part in the Mumbai attacks, condemned the raid on his organisation's compound. “The Government has shown signs of weakness by targeting Kashmiri organisations,” he said. “India wants to crush the independence movement of Kashmir using the Mumbai attacks as a pretext.”

Lakhvi, the alleged mastermind of the Mumbai attack, was also a founder of LeT and has worked under several aliases as the group's supreme operational commander. US officials say that he has directed the group's operations in Kashmir, Chechnya, Bosnia and South-East Asia.

Also known as Abdullah Azam, he comes from Okara district in Pakistan's central province of Punjab, which is where Ajmal Amir Kasab, the only militant captured in the Mumbai attacks, was born and raised. Indian investigators say that Kasab has identified Lakhvi as one of his LeT contacts and admitted undergoing training at militant camps in Pakistan, including one near Muzaffarabad.

Yesterday Pakistani government and military leaders met in Islamabad to discuss the security situation. “Pakistan rejects terrorism in all forms and manifestations, and recognises that action against terrorism is integral to its core interests,” the Government said in a statement after the meeting.

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article5309961.ece

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guardian.co.uk

Mumbai Attacks: We'll Treat Militants as Murderers, says Pakistan President

Asif Ali Zardari says accusing his country of complicity in India attacks complicates effort to stamp out extremism

Mark Tran
guardian.co.uk, Tuesday December 9 2008

Reconciliation and rapprochement between India and Pakistan is the best response to terrorism, the Pakistani president said today as he insisted he would treat militants as "criminals, terrorists and murderers".

But even as Asif Ali Zardari sought to salve Indian anger after the Mumbai attacks, Pakistan's foreign minister insisted militants arrested by Pakistan would be tried on Pakistani soil.

"Those who are Pakistani, there is no question of handing them over to India," the foreign minister, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, said in Multan city, in the central Punjab province.

"And if any allegations are proved against them, Pakistan has its own laws, Pakistan has its own courts and its own regulations and action will be taken against them within these regulations."

Pakistani troops raided a training camp run by the banned Lashkar-e-Taiba group on Sunday. It was Islamabad's first response to Indian and American pressure to crack down on militants with alleged links to those who carried out the Mumbai attacks that killed nearly 200 people.

"As was demonstrated in Sunday's raids, which resulted in the arrest of militants, Pakistan will take action against the non-state actors found within our territory, treating them as criminals, terrorists and murderers," Zardari said in an opinion piece in the New York Times.

Zardari did not name the location of the raids or who had been arrested, but according to local reports, 12 members of the banned group, including Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi - accused by Delhi as being one of the planners of the carnage in India's financial centre - were arrested in the raid in the hills above Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan-controlled Kashmir. A helicopter gunship hovered overhead and gunfire was heard.

Pakistan's military said it had begun "intelligence-led" operations against banned groups such as Lashkar. India has accused Lashkar, which was created in the 1980s by Pakistan's intelligence agencies to act as a proxy fighting force in Indian Kashmir, of being behind the Mumbai attacks.

In his article, Zardari sought to distance the Pakistani government from militant groups based in Pakistan. "Not only are the terrorists not linked to the government of Pakistan in any way, we are their targets and we continue to be their victims," he said.

It is unclear whether India, which wants Pakistan to hand over 20 suspects, will be satisfied with Pakistan's actions. Many Indians believe that the Pakistani president, whose wife Benazir Bhutto was assassinated by terrorists, is sincere in wanting to crack down on militants, but suspect that Pakistan's powerful security establishment still backs them.

Ties between India and Pakistan, which have fought three wars since 1947, have been improving in recent years. Zardari is keen on better ties, but the Mumbai attacks have sharpened tensions between Islamabad and Delhi.

"We understand the domestic political considerations in India in the aftermath of Mumbai," Zardari said. "Nevertheless, accusations of complicity on Pakistan's part only complicate the already complex situation."

http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/dec/09/pakistan-india-zardari-lashkar

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Tuesday, December 9, 2008

Report: Taliban's Influence Again Spreading Fast

Jason Motlagh (Contact)
BAGRAM AIR BASE, Afghanistan

Taliban militants now have a fixed presence in nearly three-quarters of Afghanistan, a sharp increase from last year, according to an international policy think tank.

The report by the International Council on Security and Development calls for a revamped NATO security strategy to stem an insurgency it says has made alarming inroads in much of the southern, western and northeastern provinces of the country, as well as in the capital, Kabul.

Overall, Taliban presence increased to 72 percent, an 18 percent jump compared with 2007, the report said. The think tank report added that militants now have "de facto control" of much of the south.

NATO rejected the report´s credibility, saying the assertion was "simply not true." While acknowledging heavy insurgent activity in the south and east, NATO said that levels of violence have increased in proportion with more aggressive military operations and the greater number of coalition troops, which has climbed from 37,000 to 52,000.

Those figures will climb soon, with as many as 20,000 additional U.S. troops set to be deployed over the next 12 to 18 months.

An Army brigade expected to arrive next month will largely be based on the southern side of the capital, the New York Times reported over the weekend, reflecting serious concerns about Kabul's vulnerability.

The Taliban's fugitive leader, Mullah Omar, in a message posted on a Web site Sunday, said the planned increase in U.S. troops in Afghanistan will give his fighters incentive to kill and maim more Americans than ever, the Associated Press reported.

"The current armed clashes, which now number into tens, will spiral up to hundreds of armed clashes. Your current casualties of hundreds will jack up to thousand casualties of dead and injured," said Mullah Omar, who is believed to be sheltered by fiercely conservative tribesman on the Afghan-Pakistan border.

The think tank report sought to highlight Taliban gains in and around Kabul, where a wave of shootings, suicide attacks, kidnappings and other criminal activities have occurred in recent months. A map of the city accompanying the report showed the area occupied by the U.S. Embassy, NATO headquarters and the Afghan presidential palace as one of "high Taliban/criminal activity."

Three of the four main highways into the capital are also under threat from the Taliban, the report said, part of a gathering effort to choke Kabul off from the rest of the country.

"Taliban are closing a noose around Kabul, and there is a real danger that the Taliban will simply overrun Afghanistan under the noses of NATO," said Paul Burton, the director of policy for the research organization.

The report was released a day after more than 160 U.S. and NATO vehicles were torched by militants outside Peshawar, Pakistan, the biggest attack to date on a vital military supply line.

The study relied on a combination of reported attacks and local perceptions of Taliban strength in its determinations. One or more insurgent attacks per week in a given province qualified the area as a "permanent Taliban presence."

NATO said this gauge was highly misleading, noting that most instances were hit-and-run attacks rather than direct confrontations, which have declined.

Formerly know as the Senlis Council, the think tank has earned a reputation for harsh criticism of NATO security and counternarcotics policies.

Following the same methodology as the one used in the report, NATO estimated that 74 percent of insurgent-related incidents are taking place in only 10 percent of the districts, composing only 6 percent of the population.

By NATO´s count, insurgent activity in Kabul is actually down 48 percent this year.

NATO has conceded, however, that the Taliban has impaired freedom of movement "to reasonable effect" on key inbound roads.

http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/dec/09/report-talibans-influence-again-spreading-fast/print/

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Clerical Terror

The Roots of Jihad in India.

Philip Jenkins, The New Republic Published: Wednesday, December 24, 2008

If we needed reminding, the carnage in Mumbai proved yet again that South Asia is home to some of the world's deadliest Islamist terrorists. Usually missing from press coverage, though, is any sense of the origin of these movements, which are often assumed to be tied to the grievances of the Arab Middle East and the fate of Jerusalem.

That is a misconception. Historically, the roots of radical Islam belong at least as much in South Asia as in the Middle East. And one individual, wholly unfamiliar to most Westerners, played an indispensable role in founding and shaping that movement. When modern radicals call for sharia law, when they demand an Islamic state active in every sphere of life, when they urge a revolutionary jihad against the infidel world, they are drawing on the ideas of a India-born cleric called Maulana Mawdudi.

Modern Islamism traces its origins to three men born in the opening years of the twentieth century. Two of them are well known in the West: Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini and Egypt's Sayyid Qutb. Both, however, owed an immense intellectual debt to the third man, Syed Abul Ala Mawdudi, known by the honorific "Maulana," which means master. Until his death in 1979, Mawdudi was the critical link between the various theaters of transnational activism, between the Muslim Brotherhood and the Iranian Revolution, between Kashmir and Western Europe. Mawdudi's thinking was South Asian in origin and character, as was the international Islamist movement he inspired--a movement whose flowering we are still watching today.

Mawdudi was born in what is now the state of Maharashtra, in a British-ruled India littered with monuments of a collapsed Muslim power. It was a world marked by the humiliating political failure of the Islamic regimes, the same failure that so influenced Qutb and Khomeini as well. In India, restive under what they saw as infidel domination, Muslims struggled to find a role in a nationalist movement in which Hindus massively outnumbered them. Making matters more difficult for religious Muslims, even the available forms of modernization and anti-imperialism were Western and radically secular as well. As a young journalist in the 1920s, Mawdudi plunged into Western literature and political thought, but he borrowed heavily from these traditions in order to modernize Islamic ideology.

Mawdudi's ideas have become such familiar commonplaces of the Islamist worldview that we can scarcely appreciate how radically innovative they were. His guiding assumption was a totalistic view of Islam: Everything in the universe was God's creation, so Muslims could freely use modern technology and organization--but only to build a visionary new Islamic order. Where Mawdudi broke from his contemporaries was in his utter rejection of all historic Islamic models as unworthy of Islam's First Age: He condemned virtually every achievement of Islamic politics and culture as jahiliyya, ignorance, the word normally used to describe the pagan darkness that prevailed in Arabia before Muhammad's time. Muslims who resisted the call were part of a new jahiliyya and could legitimately become the targets of jihad.

This total rejection of the past shaped Mawdudi's views of the Islamic state, which he believed should be founded on iqamat-i-deen, "the establishment of religion." In this theocratic vision, society and the state would be subject entirely to Islamic law, sharia, which comprehended every aspect of human life and behavior. Mawdudi claimed that such a state would be a theo-democracy, in which elected officials would rule under clerical guidance. Yet it is difficult to understand his model as anything but totalitarian. As everything was subject to God, there could be no personal or private life that was not subject to law. Even he seemed to understand that. "Considered from this aspect," he wrote, "the Islamic State bears a kind of resemblance to the Fascist and Communist states."

Not surprisingly, Mawdudi preached an absolute confrontation between the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds. His Islamic state would free itself from all non- Muslim influences and would wage jihad against the whole non-Muslim world. In fairness, he makes it clear that he is talking about a spiritual rather than a military campaign, but his language easily lends itself to violent interpretations.

Mawdudi's strategic genius lay in integrating traditional and modern forms of authority. Like so many of the pioneers in Islamist movements, his roots lay in the Sufi tradition, which united personal mysticism with military prowess. Critically for modern developments, Sufis organized in close-knit and secretive fraternities pledged absolutely to a spiritual teacher--a structure that proved ideal for clandestine organization and resistance. The tradition, under Mawdudi's leadership, segued naturally into Leninist ideas about the revolutionary party with its faithful cadres.

In 1941, Mawdudi incorporated these ideas into Pakistan's Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), which he envisaged as a vanguard political party in the Leninist mold. In revolutionary style, JI also developed its network of associated organizations and fronts, including unions and student groups, with branches in India, Kashmir, and Bangladesh. Mawdudi headed the group until his retirement in 1972.

Although he remained based in Pakistan, Mawdudi was a principal founder of what became a global revolutionary cause. Early in his career, he found faithful pupils in Egypt, where in 1928 Hassan Al Banna founded the Ikhwan, the Muslim Brotherhood. At least by the early 1940s, Al Banna was reading Mawdudi. So was Sayyid Qutb, an Ikhwan alumnus who built on Mawdudi's stark picture of a civilizational clash between Islam and its enemies. Qutb borrowed and expanded Mawdudi's concept of jahiliyya, and he loved the heroic image of the Islamist party as revolutionary vanguard.

By the 1970s, Mawdudi's ideas--particularly his writings on jihad--were appearing freely in the works of Islamic radicals in Egypt, Palestine, and elsewhere. The more time Arab radicals spent in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the more assuredly they would be exposed to JI and to Mawdudi's thought. His ideas influenced Abdullah Azzam, the Palestinian militant who served as a mentor to the young Osama bin Laden during the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan. South Asian communities overseas, including significant numbers in Britain, were hugely influenced by Mawdudi's work. Remarkably, Mawdudi's impact also extended to Shia Iran, where Ayatollah Khomeini reputedly met Mawdudi as early as 1963 and later translated the Master's works into Farsi. To the present day, Iran's revolutionary rhetoric often draws on his themes.

But it was on the subcontinent itself that Mawdudi had his greatest impact. Ever since the new nation of Pakistan was created in 1947, JI has campaigned to institutionalize Islamic values in every part of Pakistani society. The party initially met strong resistance, and Mawdudi was jailed four times and even survived a death sentence. But Islamization spread rapidly from the 1970s onward. Pakistan institutionalized Islamic views of banking and interest, clamped down on alcohol, and passed a new blasphemy law. Gender issues were a major battlefield, as JI struggled against enhanced women's rights and contraception. JI supported Pakistan's loathsome Hudood Ordinance of 1979,

which made it virtually impossible to prosecute rapists while allowing the woman who reports a rape to be charged with fornication.

JI's success extended beyond elections and legislation. Jamaatis infiltrated Pakistan's military and intelligence establishments, which, by the 1970s, were rife with hard-line Islamist views. These agencies, especially the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), became the main conduit for Saudi money and influence, a link that became all the stronger during the Afghan war. In Kashmir, too, JI cooperated closely with ISI and sponsored its own mujahedin militia. JI is certainly not the only player in the revolutionary Islamist world, and, over the past decade, it has been supplanted by other, still more extreme groups. But without the framework provided by Mawdudi and JI, the other movements would never have developed as they did.

The neglect of Mawdudi's influence is a sad comment on Western knowledge about Islam and its history, but it also has worrying policy consequences. If modern Islamism is seen as an outgrowth of Middle Eastern conflicts and grievances, then those seeking a solution put a premium on resolving the Israel- Palestinian conflict. But we can just as plausibly see Islamist extremism as the product of a wholly different region and culture that has minimal investment in Palestinian issues. Nor would this particular kind of anti-Westernism just fade away even if the Palestine issue were ever settled.

The continuing danger of Islamist radicalism in Pakistan is all the more alarming given that nation's volatile strategic position. As a U.S. congressional report released this month noted, "Were one to map terrorism and weapons of mass destruction today, all roads would intersect in Pakistan." If Mawdudi's heirs are not to see his vision realized, our incoming administration needs to take Pakistan very seriously. At a minimum, it should spend at least as much time seeking a settlement in Kashmir as in Palestine.
Philip Jenkins is the author of The Lost History of Christianity.

http://www.tnr.com/story_print.html?id=f1dba11c-0b2d-4e10-b2fc-2416a7fb2f7b

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December 9, 2008 --

MUMBAI'S LESSONS FOR NEW YORK

By JONATHAN FOREMAN
MUMBAI

IF you were a clever terrorist and wanted to paralyze Man hattan in the way that Mum bai was paralyzed last month, you wouldn't send a boatload of men armed with assault rifles into the city.

That strategy just wouldn't work, no matter how highly trained the terrorists were. (And, having witnessed the battles between the Mumbai terrorists and Indian security forces, I can assure the reader that these terrorists were thoroughly prepared.)

The NYPD has begun extra training in the wake of Mumbai - but a fight against such gunmen is precisely the terrorist scenario for which New York has been overwhelmingly prepared ever since 9/11. Hence the heavily armed cops in body armor in Grand Central and Penn Stations and in other potential targets, like Times Square.

If terrorist gunmen came up against even ordinary New York street cops, they'd be unlikely to survive long.

It was very different in Mumbai. Here, in the main train station, the 30 to 50 armed police on duty all ran away, allowing two calm terrorists to stroll through the station and mow people down at will.

The excuse made for them here is that the cops were mostly armed only with old-fashioned bolt-action rifles - the Lee Enfield .303 of WWII fame. But, surely, if only 10 cops had engaged the two strolling killers from different angles they would have prevailed and saved many lives.

As Sebastian D'Souza (the photographer who snapped a now world-famous shot of one of the killers in the station) said to me bitterly, the terrorists were "sitting ducks."

The problem wasn't the cops' weaponry; it was their attitude and lack of training. Many police here buy their place on the force or get in through political connections. Policing is famously remunerative work, thanks to the opportunities for extortion.

There was much more courage and public spirit to be seen in the Indian Special Forces that took on the terrorists over the following days (and in the hotel staff that saved many lives).

However, even the vaunted Black Cat commandos of India's National Security Guard were outclassed by the terrorists and broke every rule of combat 101 against terrorists and hostage takers.

There was no real security cordon around the hotels. Terrorists could easily have escaped the building by pretending to be hostages or slipped out and down a side street.

Moreover, when the commandos entered the Taj, they had no plans of the building, even though the owner and general manager were part of the crowd of onlookers outside. No command post was set up at the site, and it was never clear which agency was in charge of rescue operations.

And the final battle at the Taj - involving scores of commandos against a single wounded man - took place in a part of the hotel that the security forces had controlled on the first day of the crisis.

On the other hand, I'm not sure how Manhattan would or could deal with the kind of terrorist attacks that Mumbai - and other Indian cities - have previously suffered.

There is an enviable resilience here. On July 11, 2006, Islamist terrorists set off seven bombs in Mumbai commuter trains, killing more than 200 people. The very next day, the trains were running and packed with workers.

The cities of Bangalore, Jaipur and New Delhi have all been hit with synchronized multiple bomb blasts this year, but all have recovered with impressive speed.

Picture an attack involving multiple, simultaneous bombs in Manhattan, killing innocents in busy stores, restaurants and subway stations. The city could well be shut down and paralyzed for weeks, perhaps months, its economy on life support.

That is the real danger we should fear and try to guard against - not pairs of fanatics with Kalashnikovs trying to repeat Mumbai's 11/26 in Manhattan.

Jonathan Foreman is deputy editor of Standpoint, a UK-based monthly cultural and political magazine.

http://www.nypost.com/seven/12092008/postopinion/opedcolumnists/mumbais_lessons_for_new_york_143329.htm

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December 9, 2008

THOMSON: After Mumbai, What Next?

John Thomson

COMMENTARY:

There is no downplaying the dangerous significance of the attacks by Muslim fanatics on multiple major targets in Mumbai, formerly and still known as Bombay. Moreover, there is no denying the terrorists' strategic and tactical brilliance. And it is impossible to exaggerate, much less predict, the impact of the violence on India, the region and the world. Far more than the tragic death and maiming of more than 500 persons occurred: The stage has been set for multifaceted mischief in India, South Asia and beyond.

With several terrorists connected to the Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist group and the Pakistan army's powerful, extremist-infiltrated Inter-Services Intelligence agency [ISI], a strong reaction from India is virtually certain.

Respected French journalist Bernard-Henri Levy's revelation of A.Q. Khan, former head of Pakistan's nuclear development program, has maintained close relations with Lashkar-e-Taiba makes a pacific response virtually impossible. Mr. Khan, who sold nuclear secrets to Iran, North Korea and very probably al Qaeda, is hospitalized in Karachi, but otherwise free.
All this is precisely in keeping with the terrorist strategy. In short, whatever New Delhi's reaction, it comes at a terrible time for the government in Islamabad.

Washington, New Delhi and a host of other capitals have watched with growing concern as Pakistan has become the latest, greatest threat to regional - and world - stability. Pakistan's economy, on the upswing for eight years, has been in decline since early 2007, creating major popular discontent. Simultaneously, Muslim fanatics have sharply increased car bombings and assassinations - including the murder of the country's most popular politician, former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. The government is at or near its weakest point since the country was established in 1947.

Nevertheless, for its very political survival, the Indian government must take strong measures, with impossible-to-predict multiple negative consequences. Among them:
-- Additional lethal incidents launched by Muslim as well as Hindu fanatics. The Mumbai mayhem was so well planned, it is entirely possible others will be launched. Indian authorities have been remarkably successful in keeping the Hindu majority from reacting to recurring and increasing Muslim violence throughout the country, but the murder and wounding of more than 500 people, mostly Indians, could be the tipping point.
-- Follow-on terrorism in major centers including New Delhi, Bangalore, Calcutta, and the hotly disputed Jammu and Kashmir region. Relentless Muslim extremist assaults, principally on Indian government facilities in Kashmir over the years, have triggered three wars between the countries.
-- Outbreak of war, escalating to the use of nuclear weapons, which both countries have had in growing abundance since 1998.
-- Redeployment of Pakistani forces from the anarchic North-West Frontier Province [NWFP] bordering on Afghanistan, to defend the Indian border, just when the Obama administration could be stepping up efforts to break the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan. Major Pakistani military elements long resisted moving against the Afghani Taliban, nurtured for more than 20 years by the army's ISI, who have major safe haven bases in the NWFP. A major troop movement could be the perfect excuse to, among other things, impede a fresh U.S. offensive in Afghanistan.
-- Collapse of the already weak Pakistani civilian government, with radicals gaining control of some or all of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, estimated at between 55 and 100 weapons. Owing to sharply divided loyalties between moderate and extremist officers, the country's strongest institution - the military - could be unable to control the political situation and the once-secure nuclear weapons sites.
The above represents a partial list of possible negative ramifications arising from five terror-filled days in Mumbai. India's commercial and financial capital, home to the world's largest stock exchange and some 13 million souls, has been seriously shaken, as has the entire country. More films are made in Mumbai's famed Bollywood than anywhere in the world, and the impact on this major industry could be significant. Long one of India's leading tourism centers, the mayhem involving its two most famous hotels cannot be attractive to future travelers.
After nearly a decade of dynamic growth, will investor confidence collapse and exacerbate India's already declining economy? Will consumers, having sharply cut back spending as inflation spiked in recent months, keep an even tighter hold on their funds?
Years of terrorist attacks have had an incalculably large impact on every level of Indian society. Muslim extremists have attacked across the length and breadth of India - a few include New Delhi, the capital; Mumbai, the commercial/financial center; Bangalore the high-tech hub; Varanasi, a major Hindu religious pilgrim destination; Jaipur, a popular tourist venue.

It is difficult to imagine continued restraint, especially if the government does not take strong defensive and retributive action. Will a significant number of nearly 1 billion Hindus turn on the 150 million Muslim minority (the world's third-largest Muslim community after Indonesia and Pakistan)?
The recent attack by Pakistan's Army against Lashkar-e-taiba could help mitigate India's response. But some things are certain.
Unless India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and his weak coalition government take strong steps, the opposition will be strengthened and very probably win national parliament (Lok Sabha) elections, due before May 2009. Led by the militant BJP party, a victorious opposition would very possibly be far more aggressive than the current government.
Strong action by the Singh administration would undoubtedly provoke a major conflict between the countries, and prove an especially difficult decision for the prime minister. who has worked diligently during his term to strengthen relations with Pakistan. During a meeting at his official residence, Mr. Singh told me his proudest political accomplishments were liberalizing the Indian economy as finance minister in the early 1990s, and the progressive normalizing of Pakistani relations as prime minister.
Unfortunately, there is more. Iran has shown itself to be very interested in South Asian political developments, and the country has worked especially hard to radicalize the 20 percent Shi'ite minority in Pakistan. Iranian-backed Hezbollah militants have trained hundreds of Pakistani and Indian Muslims. Moreover, it is not unreasonable to assume nuclear-hungry mullahs in Tehran would be delighted to gain access to Pakistan's weaponry.
What next after Bombay's bombs? Impossible to say, but one thing is sure: Life on the Indian Subcontinent will be far from peaceful for some time to come.
John R. Thomson, a longtime resident of Asia, is a frequent visitor to the Indian Subcontinent.

http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/dec/09/after-mumbai-what-next/print/

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The Times (UK)
December 9, 2008

Google Earth Accused of Aiding Terrorists

Rhys Blakely in Mumbai

An Indian Court has been called to ban Google Earth amid suggestions the online satellite imaging was used to help plan the terror attacks that killed more than 170 people in Mumbai last month.

A petition entered at the Bombay High Court alleges that the Google Earth service, "aids terrorists in plotting attacks." Advocate Amit Karkhanis has urged the court to direct Google to blur images of sensitive areas in the country until the case is decided.

There are indications that the gunmen who stormed Mumbai on November 26, and the people trained them, were technically literate. The group appears to have used complex GPS systems to navigate their way to Mumbai by sea. They communicated by satellite phone, used mobile phones with several different SIM cards, and may have monitored events as the siege unfolded via handheld Blackberry web browsers.

Police in Mumbai have said the terrorists familiarised themselves with the streets of Mumbai's financial capital using satellite images, according to the sole gunman to be captured alive. The commandos who stormed the Taj Mahal Palace hotel in Mumbai said the militants had made a beeline for the building's CCTV control room.

The legal petition also follows unconfirmed reports that Faheem Ahmed Ansari, a suspected militant who was arrested in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh in February, said he was shown maps of Indian locations on Google Earth by members of Lashkar-e-Taiber, the Pakistan-based terrorist faction that Indian officials are convinced was behind the Mumbai attacks.

Ansari was carrying a fake Pakistani passport and a list and maps of nine targets in southern Mumbai, including the Taj Mahal hotel and other sites attacked last month, a senior police officer told The Times.

Security agencies have called for the wealth of data available on Google Earth to be limited for several years amid fears the freely available application may prove invaluable for militants planning terrorist attacks.

In 2005, the operators of Australia's nuclear reactor at Lucas Heights called on the internet giant to censor images of the plant, warning that the images could be used by terrorists.

Earlier, the satellite photographs of the installation would have been available only to a handful of government agencies and NASA, they said.

In the same year, it was reported that Google omitted to blur the roof of the White House in Washington when it updated the images available on Google Earth – something it had done previously.

South Korea and Thailand also complained after the layout of air bases was revealed.

The Mumbai terrorists concentrated their attacks in south Mumbai, a popular tourist location. However, the plea filed with the Bombay High Court claims that Google Earth includes "absolutely no control to prevent misuse or limit access" to details of nearby sensitive locations, such as the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre.

The complaint comes just weeks after India said it would launch its own version of Google Earth.

The project, dubbed Bhuvan (Sanskrit for Earth), is being developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro), which is based in Bangalore, the Silicon Valley of the subcontinent.

It comes as India redoubles its efforts to reap profits from its 45-year-old space programme, long criticised as a drain on a country where 700 million people live on USD2 a day or less.

Bhuvan will use a network of satellites to create a high-resolution, birds-eye view of India – and later, possibly, the rest of the world – that will be accessible at no cost online and will compete with Google.

Isro officials say Bhuvan will provide images of far greater resolution than are currently available online – particularly of the subcontinent, a region where large areas remain virtually unmapped.

The agency intends to refresh its images every year – a feature that would give it an edge over its biggest rival and help keep track of the frenetic pace at which India's cities are growing.

About 2.5 million people used Google Earth in the UK last month, according to Neilsen, the web analysts, making it the web's seventh most popular application behind tools such as Apple's iTunes (fourth with 5.7 million users) and Windows Live Messenger (first with 14.8 million).

http://technology.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/tech_and_web/the_web/article5311241.ece

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Los Angeles Times

Head of Nuclear Watchdog Calls Efforts Against Iran 'A Failure'

Mohamed ElBaradei urges dialogue between the West and Tehran. He says Obama has given him 'lots of hope.'

By Borzou Daragahi

December 6, 2008

Reporting from Vienna — The chief of the world's nuclear weapons watchdog organization considers five years of U.S. and international efforts to rein in Iran's nuclear ambitions a failure, as Tehran moves ever closer to obtaining the means to develop weapons of mass destruction.

The United Nations Security Council has imposed three sets of sanctions to try to get Iran to halt uranium enrichment and other activities, while the United States and Europe have offered economic and security incentives. Yet Iran continues acquiring nuclear technology and stockpiling sensitive material.

"We haven't really moved one inch toward addressing the issues," said Mohamed ElBaradei, director-general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, or IAEA. "I think so far the policy has been a failure."

The 66-year-old Egyptian diplomat and 2005 Nobel Peace Prize laureate also urged world leaders to address broader unease about security, poverty and perceived injustice rather than zero in on narrow security concerns, such as nuclear weapons.

"Now, I am talking more and more about poverty, HIV/AIDS" and other matters, he told The Times this week during a rare one-on-one interview at the agency's headquarters in Vienna. The nuclear issue "is the tip of the iceberg."

Still, atomic energy remains the focus of his U.N.-related agency and ElBaradei said he felt optimistic about an eventual U.S.-led settlement between Tehran and the West.

He said U.S. President-elect Barack Obama gave him "lots of hope" after he inserted a proposal to abolish all nuclear weapons in the Democratic Party platform and advocated opening diplomatic dialogue with rivals.

"He is ready to talk to his adversaries, enemies, if you like, including Iran, also [North] Korea," he said, adding that the Bush administration was reluctant to do so. "To continue to pound the table and say, 'I am not going to talk to you,' and act in a sort of a very condescending way -- that exaggerates problems."

During 11 years as head of the agency, ElBaradei has sparred frequently with the Bush administration, which sought unsuccessfully to deny him a third term in 2005. That move was the result of the bitter dispute he had with Washington over its insistence that Iraq had a nuclear program. Its nonexistence vindicated him and earned him and his agency the Nobel.

Still, some Western diplomats accuse his agency of not being tough enough on the nuclear ambitions of countries such as Iran, Syria and North Korea.

Others criticize him for veering off his mandate by offering the West unsolicited diplomatic advice and political commentary instead of focusing on the agency's core activities: monitoring and inspecting member states' nuclear programs and reporting back to its governing board.

Experts say he's walked a tightrope of criticism from both Iran and U.S. allies such as Israel.

"From a Western perspective, he's been too quick to give the benefit of the doubt to Iran and shade his reports sometimes in ways that sometimes downplayed Iran's violations and lack of cooperation," said Mark Fitzpatrick, an arms control expert at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London.

But ElBaradei has received accolades for getting Iraq right, insisting that it had no nuclear program even in the face of U.S. criticism.

"When he's done well is when he's led an agency of technical experts," Fitzpatrick said. "When he's done poorly is when he's exceeded the technical requirements of the job and taken on a larger political aura. He's been criticized for trying to cast himself in a mediator role."

During the interview, ElBaradei, who is scheduled to retire in about a year, shed his severe public persona, punctuating freewheeling comments about weapons proliferation, world peace and contemporary politics with laughter. He sat surrounded by his collection of African art while wearing a gray pinstriped suit and a bright orange Salvatore Ferragamo tie.

He spoke of possibly living in southern France, where he recently purchased a home.

"It's nice to try something else," he said. "All I know is, I think I would like to continue to do public service."

A New York University law student and professor during the 1970s and '80s, he closely follows American foreign policy debates. He cited recent opinion pieces in U.S. newspapers, and said he hoped those advocating engagement with Iran and other alleged nuclear scofflaws such as Syria and North Korea would prevail over those arguing for containment and isolation.

Iran is one of the incoming Obama administration's main foreign policy puzzles. Not only has it refused to stop producing enriched uranium, which can be used to build a bomb as well as fuel a power plant, but Tehran has also consistently sidestepped questions about evidence suggesting it was operating a secret weapons program until at least 2003.

In retrospect, the sanctions may have led to "more hardening of the position of Iran," ElBaradei said. "Many Iranians who even dislike the regime [are] gathering around the regime because they feel that country is under siege."

One hope of a diplomatic solution, he said, was for the U.S. and Iran to meet to begin talking, not just about nuclear technology but also about grievances that stretch from the 1950s, when the U.S. helped overthrow a democratically elected government, to the present, when Iranian and American surrogates vie for supremacy in several Middle East battlegrounds.

ElBaradei argued for a "grand bargain" between the West and Iran that recognizes Tehran's role in the region and gives it "the power, the prestige, the influence" it craves.

As an Egyptian who has spent the bulk of his tenure as IAEA chief grappling with the nuclear ambitions of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Libya, he has had a unique understanding of the "psychoses" of Middle Easterners, he said.

"I am able to communicate to them in their own language," he said. "I understand some of their myths, like the conspiracy theories, like a sense of being victims."

He brushed aside the argument of some U.S. analysts who describe Iran as a messianic state determined to obtain nuclear weapons to launch a war against its archnemesis, Israel.

"When I go to Iran I see . . . that there are all different shades and colors in Iran, from atheist to religious zealots," he said. "So Iran is no different than any other country. I mean, they are connected with the rest of the world."

ElBaradei contended that the best route to avoiding the spread of nuclear weapons is building international trust.

"The system should not be based on, 'I am powerful militarily,' " he said. "The system should be based on, 'What contribution do I make to world civilization?' "

Daragahi is a Times staff writer.

http://www.latimes.com/news/printedition/asection/la-fg-elbaradei6-2008dec06,0,5538520,full.story

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Chicago Tribune

West is Urged to Accept Iran's Nuclear Program

By Borzou Daragahi
Tribune Newspapers
December 9, 2008

PARIS — A report released Monday by a respected arms-control expert urges the West to change course by accepting features of Iran's nuclear program and focusing on discouraging the country from building an atomic bomb.

Mark Fitzpatrick, director of the non-proliferation program at the London-based Institute for International Strategic Studies, predicts in a 100-page report that Iran will produce enough fissile low-enriched uranium and obtain the expertise next year to build a bomb.

But unless Iran were to boot out international inspectors and begin to further refine its stockpile—moves the nation insists it won't make—all won't be lost, he says.

"During 2009, Iran will probably reach the point at which it has produced the amount of low-enriched uranium needed to make a nuclear bomb," writes Fitzpatrick, who served for 26 years in the U.S. State Department. "But being able to enrich uranium is not the same as having a nuclear weapon."

On Sunday, President-elect Barack Obama said he would pursue a "carrot-and-stick" policy of incentives and sanctions to prevent Iran from building a bomb. Iran insists it is pursuing nuclear technology for civilian energy purposes.

On Monday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Hassan Qashqavi insisted Iran would continue to enrich uranium and rejected Obama's approach. "The world should accept our nuclear rights, and we in return give all guarantees that we will not deviate toward a nuclear bomb," he said.

Fitzpatrick's report represents a growing shift in the assessments by international arms-control experts away from getting Iran to stop processing and enriching uranium toward preventing it from "breaking out" of existing non-proliferation systems and producing weapons.

Los Angeles Times

http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/chi-iran-nukesdec09,0,6219352.story

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Gulf Daily News (Voice of Bahrain)

Iran Rejects Obama's New Policy

Tuesday, 9 December 2008

TEHRAN: Iran yesterday rejected a proposal by US President-elect Barack Obama that a carrot and stick policy of economic incentives and tighter sanctions might persuade the Iranian government to change its behaviour.
Obama also said in an interview with NBC's Meet the Press that the US should ratchet up direct diplomacy as a way to induce Iran to alter course on its controversial nuclear programme and cease support for militant groups like Hamas and Hizbollah.
The Iranian government has also expressed interest in more direct talks with the US but has consistently refused to alter its nuclear programme as a precondition. It has also rejected past offers of economic incentives by the international community to scale back its nuclear activities, a sentiment echoed by Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman, Hasan Qashqavi.
"The carrot and stick policy has no benefit," Qashqavi said.
"It is unacceptable and failed."
Hope
But Obama expressed hope that the international community could develop a set of incentives that would persuade Iran to alter its nuclear programme, which the US and many of its allies suspect is cover for weapons development but Tehran says is focused on power generation.
"You know, in terms of carrots, I think that we can provide economic incentives that would be helpful to a country that, despite being a net oil producer, is under enormous strain, huge inflation, a lot of unemployment problems there," said Obama.
Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was elected in 2005 after promising to improve economic conditions for the country's poor. But the hardline president has since been criticised by both conservatives and reformists for his mismanagement of the economy.
Obama said the US should step up diplomatic efforts with nations like China and Russia that do business with Iran to convince them to tighten the three round of UN sanctions levied against the country for failing to suspend uranium enrichment - a process that can produce fissile material for a nuclear weapon or fuel for a reactor.

http://www.gulf-daily-news.com/Story.asp?Article=237243&Sn=WORL&IssueID=31264

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New York Times
December 9, 2008

Iran Urges Obama to Change Approach

By NAZILA FATHI

TEHRAN — Iran said Monday that it would not abandon its nuclear program and urged President-elect Barack Obama to change America's "carrot-and-stick policy" toward Iran, the official IRNA news agency reported.
Hassan Ghashghavi, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, said that Iran, which has repeatedly refused to suspend its enrichment of uranium, would not change its nuclear policy. He added that Iran expected Mr. Obama to stick to his campaign promise to change the previous administration's policy.
The comments came a day after the television broadcast of an interview in which Mr. Obama he said he would continue offering incentives to encourage Iran to cease enriching uranium but would seek to tighten economic sanctions on the country if it did not.

Enriched uranium is used as fuel in nuclear power plants; Iran maintains that energy production is the goal of its nuclear program. But more intensely enriched uranium can fuel a nuclear bomb; the West fears Iran is surreptitiously working toward such a weapon.

"What Mr. Obama said is the same old carrot-and-stick approach," Mr. Ghashghavi said, speaking at a regular weekly news conference. "He must be able to change this policy based on his slogan of 'change.' " Mr. Ghashghavi said that the carrot-and-stick approach was "a failed policy" and that Iran expected Mr. Obama to change the "confrontational policy to one based on interaction."

"They have to recognize our legal rights, and we are willing to engage in an interaction to resolve their concerns," he said. "We need to engage in progress and development."

In the interview broadcast Sunday, on the NBC News program "Meet the Press," Mr. Obama said: "In terms of carrots, we can provide the economic incentives that would be helpful to a country that despite being a net oil producer is under enormous strain, huge inflation, a lot of employment problems."
Referring to the possibility of tightening economic sanctions, he said, "But we also have to focus on the sticks."

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/09/world/middleeast/09iran.html?ref=middleeast

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