

# The NATIONAL STRATEGY FORUM REVIEW

An Online National Security Journal Published by the National Strategy Forum

## *The U.S. Image Abroad: Assessing Brand America*

*Spring 2010 Volume 19, Issue 2*

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# *Section 1: Transmitting*

## **Publisher's Note**

The primary U.S. national objective should be to provide personal safety, security, and prosperity for its citizens. This includes continuing economic security, preservation of the American ethos, and protection from foreign and domestic acts of violence.

Isolation is no longer possible because of global connectivity. Important elements of this connectivity include international trade; energy dependence; electronic instantaneous communication; the potential for mass migration of people and disease; and the threat array of nuclear weapons, inter-continental ballistic missiles, cyber threats, and acts of terrorism.

The U.S. must continue its leadership role if it wishes to achieve its personal safety and security objective. In the contemporary global context, the U.S. must attempt to make the world as safe and stable as possible. This can be explained to domestic and foreign audiences in two ways. First, self-survival is a virtually universal instinct and it is true of both societies and individuals. Second, the American humanitarian and altruistic impulse benefits everyone: the U.S., its neighboring states, and the international community. Pursuing national interests does not always need to come at the expense of international cooperation.

The key imperative should be: "Keep the world safe and stable."

America's world leadership is based on its power and the recognition by other states that without well-conceived and well implemented U.S. leadership, there will be no stable world order, varying degrees of chaos, and all states will suffer.

U.S. leadership depends on its resources of power, including its economic prosperity, diplomacy, capability to project military force, and political will. For the moment, the U.S. economy is in relative decline, in large part because of its massive projected future debt burden which creates apprehension among its creditors. Curing America's economic problem should be a first priority.

The U.S. transmits but it is not always an effective listener. Other states perceive U.S. policy through the prism of U.S. arrogance, which distorts what American foreign policy is and should

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53 West Jackson Blvd.  
Suite 1202  
Chicago, IL 60604  
312-697-1286

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be. This can be improved greatly by listening and understanding the objectives of other states and incorporating them into U.S. objectives to the extent possible. The result could be an effective complementary strategy.

The world order will change dramatically in the coming decade, including the rise of China and India as major powers. The U.S. should welcome them to world leadership, and also encourage greater leadership roles for Europe, Japan, and South America.

This issue of the *National Strategy Forum Review* examines the messages that the U.S. transmits and the ways in which these messages are received by other countries. We have asked authors in both the U.S. and abroad to discuss perceptions of this country and U.S. effectiveness in conveying messages about our foreign policy goals and actions. Unfortunately, the messages that the U.S. hopes to convey are sometimes garbled, leading to misunderstandings and unintended consequences.

## **Rebranding America?**

**By Robert R. Reilly**

*Robert R. Reilly is a former director of the Voice of America and a board member of the Middle East Media Research Institute. His forthcoming book (May 2010) is "The Closing of the Muslim Mind" (ISI Books).*

So you would like to rebrand America, would you? We are misunderstood throughout the world, and this rebranding will help win the "war of ideas" in the Muslim world, right? Okay, first try this thought experiment. Read the following statement and then guess who said it.

"This great America: What is its worth in the scale of human values? And what does it add to the moral account of humanity? And, by journey's end, what will its contribution be? I fear that a balance may not exist between America's material greatness and the quality of its people. And I fear that the wheel of life will have turned and the book of time will have closed and America will have added nothing, or next to nothing, to the account of morals that distinguishes man from object, and indeed, mankind from animals."

Is this Billy Graham speaking? Solzhenitsyn? The Pope? When I was recently lecturing to a group of mid-career American officers, one of them guessed it was Winston Churchill. Wrong – on all counts. The answer is Sayyid Qutb, the chief Egyptian ideologue of the radical Islamist movement that seeks our destruction. In Arabic, *qutb* means the pole around which the world revolves on its axis. The entire Islamist world revolves around the thinking of this man, who was hanged by Nasser in 1966, but whose thought has spread from the Philippines and Indonesia to

Morocco. You can be sure to find his writings at the foundation of any radical Muslim group today, including al-Qaeda.

The value of Qutb's quote is that it so clearly illustrates the *moral* judgment on America that is behind the Islamist movement. This is such an important point that it deserves a few examples of more recent provenance.

One member of the team that carried out the first attack on the World Trade Center in 1993, Mahmoud Abouhalima had this to say in an interview: "The soul, the soul of religion, that is what is missing." The 17 years he had lived in the West, Abouhalima said, "is a fair amount of time to understand what the hell is going on in the United States and in Europe about secularism or people, you know, who have no religion. I lived in their life, but they didn't live my life, so they will never understand the way I live or the way I think." Abouhalima compared a life without religion to a pen without ink. "An ink pen, a pen worth \$2000, gold and everything in it, it's useless if there's no ink in it. That's the thing that gives life, the life in this pen . . . the soul. The soul, the religion, you know, that's the thing that's revived the whole life. Secularism has none, they have none, you have none."

More recently, we have this statement made on *Al-Nas* TV (Lebanon) on February 16, 2010 from a show featuring Egyptian children preaching about Jerusalem: "The West has industry, tourism, and sights that tempt us, but it is devoid of faith. The West is still a graveyard for principles." ([http://www.memritv.org/clip\\_transcript/en/2429.htm](http://www.memritv.org/clip_transcript/en/2429.htm))

Statements like these are easy to find and appear almost daily in the Muslim media. Notice that none of the critiques above addresses any *policy* problems. Those who insist that America's public diplomacy nightmare in the Middle East is only due to its policies mistake the fundamentally moral nature of the attack. In fact, there is no policy the U.S. could change in the Middle East that would reverse this moral condemnation, including the abandonment of Israel. When Qutb wrote his statement in "The America I Have Seen" in the early 1950s, Israel was not the major issue it is today nor were we seen as the sponsors of the autocracies in the region.

Why, then, have we ended up in this situation? Most of us do not see ourselves as immoral and materialistic; why do others? Why has America itself become the problem?

As long ago as 1952, Lebanese philosopher and one of the authors of the UN Declaration of Human Rights Charles Malik gave this answer: "The West did not offer the highest good of its positive tradition, but the false gods of modern Western civilization: nationalism, materialism, Communism." Around the same time, Palestinian Arab Fayez A. Sayegh blamed the West for not having presented its true values – he listed Plato, Aquinas, Shakespeare, Goethe, and Dostoyevsky, which "represent the authentic character of the West . . . more boldly and persuasively . . ." Since the West failed in this way, he said, the Arabs also failed to make a distinction between an imperialist and economically exploitative West and the "authentic West." Consequently, they rejected the chance the West offered for their improvement and progress,

thereby courting "spiritual stagnation." Professor Harry Jaffa expresses what has been wrong with the U.S. approach to the Middle East in another way. He says that we are "telling others to accept the forms of our own political institutions, without any reference to the principles or convictions that give rise to those institutions."

If Malik and Sayegh were right and the United States (as the chief representative of Western civilization) has failed to present its true self, that problem has only gotten worse with the spread of American pop culture through globalization. Instead of using public diplomacy and its powerful broadcasting tools, like the Voice of America (VOA), to counter the impression of America that pop culture creates, the United States has chosen to reinforce this impression by officially embracing it. Thus, in 2003, the Broadcasting Board of Governors shut down the 12-hours of daily programs in VOA's Arabic service to the Middle East and substituted Radio Sawa, which concentrates on pop music, to include Jay Lo, Eminem, and Britney Spears. How do we hope to be taken seriously when this is seen as our response to 9/11?

Many Muslims see globalization (particularly of the media), and the pop culture of "anything goes" that it carries with it, as an aggressive attempt to destroy the moral basis of their society, which is why they react so strongly against it. Since the whole purpose of Islam is the construction of a virtuous society, such a danger to it is easily seen as an attack on Islam itself. We must understand that the thing Muslims loathe most is not Christianity or Judaism, but unbelief. As Egyptian Jesuit Samir Khalil Samir has written, "Muslims are not offended by religious symbols, but by secularized culture, by the fact that God and the values that they associate with God are absent from this (Western) civilization."

In many Muslim minds, democracy has become equated with unbelief. In fact, this is a message we have inadvertently helped to spread. Therefore, the promotion of democracy is seen as the most dangerous challenge to their faith.

To attack Islam is to assault the source of meaning in Muslims' lives. As many Muslims have clearly demonstrated, they would rather die than live without this meaning. When you have nothing to lose but the meaning of your life, you will fight with everything you have. The recognition of evil naturally leads to efforts to overcome it – to remove it or destroy it. Since it is we who are seen as evil, we have been targeted for destruction. We can say that those who see us this way have a false moral calculus, but can we convince *them* of that? Not by playing music.

In other words, if you are going to rebrand America, the first thing you had better do is address the moral critique of the United States as a godless, secular society immersed in materialism. Just when the moral basis of American life may be eroding, it is precisely this basis that we most need to present to the Muslim world if we are to defuse the contempt and anger our popular culture provokes.

With this in mind, there should be a version of the Hippocratic Oath required of all practitioners of public diplomacy – "first, do no harm." As it is, we are haplessly inciting the very thing we

are fighting. All U.S. public diplomacy programs need to be reviewed with this in mind. If we want to win the “war of ideas,” only those programs that are in some way engaged in providing a *moral* defense of the United States and its principles should be continued and increased. We used to be able to do this in the Cold War, and do it very well. If we are no longer able to, we had best remain silent.

## **Section 2: Listening**

### **Conditions Needed For India-Pakistan Rapprochement**

**By Air Marshal (Retd) B. D. Jayal**

*Air Marshal Jayal was commissioned as a fighter pilot in the Indian Air Force in 1955. His operational career included command of a fighter squadron, command of a frontline fighter base and prototype and experimental flight testing. He held the posts of Deputy Chief of the Air Staff in Air HQ, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Air Command head quartered in Shillong and Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief South Western Air Command headquartered in Jodhpur. He is a graduate of the Empire Test Pilots’ School in Farnborough, UK and National Defense College in Delhi. He retired from the IAF in 1993. He continues to take active interest in national security issues and is a regular contributor to national newspapers and professional journals on security related issues. Presently, he is Honorary Chairman of the Governing Council of Raphael, Ryder Cheshire International Centre for the Relief of Suffering, a charitable organization.*

The act of geographically dividing a people on an untested "two nation theory," ignoring a shared multi-cultural heritage dating back centuries, was bound to have consequences beyond anything that political scientists could have imagined. This cataclysmic event resulted in the creation of a country based on religion, with two halves separated by thousands of kilometers, mass trans-border migration of the population, division of families, untold bloodshed, and the poignant division of militaries that shared a common military history and tradition. Not surprisingly, the aftermath of this painful experiment in human history continues to haunt India–Pakistan relations and now threatens regions well beyond.

As estranged neighbors, the two have fought three wars plus the Kargil conflict, of which one war resulted in the birth of Bangladesh and the burial of the original misguided theory. Today, both are nuclear weapon states, and while India remains the largest democracy in the world, Pakistan’s experiment with democracy remains patchy.

Over the decades, Pakistan has helped further U.S. interests as a bulwark against communism during the Cold War, break the ice with China, reverse the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and now fight the al Qaeda and Taliban both in Afghanistan and within its borders. For this, Pakistan has extracted a heavy price. It continues to receive generous military and economic aid, its military dictatorships were condoned and promoted, its nuclear proliferation activities studiously ignored, and its waging of a proxy war against India in Kashmir glossed over as a freedom struggle.

But the Pakistan state also paid a heavy price. Its polity and democratic institutions decayed, its military and intelligence agencies became politicized, and the seeds of religious fundamentalism were sown to breed a new generation brought up on hatred and jihad towards non-believers in general and India in particular.

Buoyed by the apparent indifference of the U.S. and its allies, the Pakistan military – the ultimate arbiter of power within the country – ventured into uncharted territory by promoting terrorism as an instrument of state policy to bleed India "through a thousand cuts" and to establish strategic depth in Afghanistan through the creation of the Taliban and other terrorist organizations. Ironically, the inspiration for this hydra-headed monster was the mujahideen fighters (erstwhile creatures of U.S. and Pakistan intelligence agencies to thwart the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan), who have now mushroomed into various terrorist outfits spanning the region. Today, distinctions between these different outfits and the good and bad Taliban are meaningless, as all are fused ideologically and operationally. Now when terrorist rhetoric speaks of destroying the "Crusader-Zionist-Hindu-alliance," the chickens are coming home to roost!

It is too late to hope that India and Pakistan can reverse their estranged relationship, as the U.S. pretends to believe. Governments on either side are now hostage to their respective constituencies and are the problem rather than the solution. Pakistan is hostage to the "two nation theory" and believes in a solution through terror. The nation is not reconciled to an India with a huge Muslim population as its equal or peer, or even the more influential Indian Muslim population in the eyes of much of the world, in view of its avowed secularism. Elected Indian governments, hampered by coalition constraints and sensitive to third party involvement, are seen as being too soft on Pakistan-inspired terror and too pliable to U.S. pressures. The U.S. and others that watched, and at times even encouraged, the militarizing of Pakistan's polity and its flirting with terror hope that the issues can be resolved bilaterally, even as they plan hasty exit strategies from Afghanistan, giving the Pakistan military and its terrorist creations cause to celebrate!

It was 9/11 that brought the realization to the international community that events in the distant Indian sub-continent had adverse implications for the entire world. Today, Pakistan faces an existential threat and is concerned that it may be heading towards a failed nuclear state. Were this to happen, security would be imperiled not just on the subcontinent, but also across the globe. It behooves not only India and Pakistan but also the entire international community to

coordinate international action to snuff out the ever-growing monster of terrorism originating in Pakistan and the Af-Pak region. Once this cancer is eliminated, India and Pakistan can focus attention on bilateral issues and respective development priorities.

Mutual understanding and trust is the first key to any future endeavor amongst the dominant players – namely the U.S., India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. This is easier said than done in an international environment where perceived short term national interests override international ones. But mindsets across the international diplomatic and security landscape need to take the changed reality into consideration. Conventional conflicts are being replaced by sub-national and terrorist induced ones. We are faced with an ideological war that is of mind over matter, where smart weapons are pitted against human bombs and where the battle front is our backyard. When civilized societies begin to live under the shadow of terror, there is need to revisit conventional notions of national interests, international diplomacy, security strategy and tactics. This is a challenge to democracies across the globe.

Notwithstanding its very long and close military ties with Pakistan and being its principal financier, the U.S. must reflect on why it is not trusted by a majority of Pakistani people. While warming relations with India are a relatively recent phenomenon, the U.S. has always enjoyed genuine goodwill amongst its people. Yet Indian public opinion remains guarded about U.S. involvement as a third party interlocutor in India–Pakistan relations because the U.S. has pampered a wayward Pakistan military for decades. If U.S. policymakers see a constructive role for themselves in the region, then they would need to be cognizant of these sub-continental sentiments and their historical roots.

If the international community is endangered by terrorism originating from Pakistan and the Af-Pak region, then it is for the U.S. and its allies, India and Pakistan to sit together as interested parties and begin a dialogue towards building mutual understanding and trust shorn of parochialism. This first step could become a stepping stone towards starving international terrorism of its oxygen, stabilizing the Af-Pak region, ushering a rapprochement between India and Pakistan, and furthering international peace and nuclear disarmament goals. Along the way, India and Pakistan can address their bilateral issues in a manner befitting democracies. If this notion seems utopian and impractical, then the trailer of alternatives is already unfolding before our eyes and the worst is yet to come.

Popular perception amongst the international community for continuing poor relations between India and Pakistan, and one strongly advocated by Pakistan, is that once the issue of Kashmir is resolved to their satisfaction all will be well. This would reduce a complex and multi-dimensional relationship borne out of a turbulent history to a uni-dimensional territorial issue. This misunderstanding that has failed to result in any substantive improvement in the India-Pakistan relationship.

Today, international cricket matches between the two countries take on the dimension of a sporting war. Cricketers are idolized irrespective of the country they represent. Cricket is

literally worshipped by millions on the sub-continent and is as good a barometer of the sentiment between the two peoples as arts, literature, cinema, theatre, media and indeed across the entire societal space. Cricket provides a sentiment with mutual admiration and respect across national frontiers and an unfulfilled desire to share and build on this deep cultural heritage. Experts in international relations often miss this complex and emotive mindset unique to the sub-continent.

Ideally, one should have added the two militaries to this list of positives, as they enjoy a common history and lineage. Not doing so is deliberate, because with passing years, politics, religion, commerce, terrorist leanings, and a pathological hatred for India have penetrated the psyche of the Pakistan military. The Pakistan military needs India as an “enemy” to feed its hold on unfettered power over its own people – including its elected governments. Indeed, bringing the Pakistan military back into this equation is a prerequisite if goodwill and rapprochement are to stand a chance.

Recall that both the Pakistan and Indian militaries are borne out of the Royal Indian Armed Forces of colonial India and are inheritors of the finest that the military traditions have to offer. Even their division was achieved with discipline, unlike the civilian bloodshed that followed partition of India. Military traditions that evolved out of sacrifice and glory do not lend themselves to easy erosion. A crucial link for rapprochement between the two countries is for the two militaries to once again look upon each other as defenders of their respective democracies in the finest tradition of militaries and to develop a healthy professional relationship. It is only the U.S., with its long-standing alliance and influence with the Pakistan military, that can nudge this institution into becoming a professional military, thereby severing its umbilical cord with international terrorism and hatred of India.

Waiting to be unshackled by the above keys of mutual understanding, trust and professionalizing the Pakistan military is the "people to people" relationship. This relationship is a natural relationship that has remained a victim of sub-continental politics and one which, when unleashed, will progressively wipe clean a painful chapter of history and replace it with the deeper cultural and common heritage that spans many generations. Just as the artificial division of a common heritage has created multiple fault lines too difficult to be resolved by diplomatic or military means, so also the solutions must be for this "people to people" relationship to unfold in its own native breadth, pace, and style. Neither governments nor the international community should attempt to drive the process and none must expect instantaneous results.

From times immemorial, trade and commerce have seen people, goods, and services move across the South Asian sub-continent to Afghanistan and Iran, promoting commerce and bringing people, cultures, and faiths of different regions closer to each other. The Grand Trunk road, known to European travelers of the 17<sup>th</sup> century as the "Long Walk," spanned the sub-continent from present-day Bangladesh to Afghanistan and is a living memorial to this past. A beneficial corollary to any thaw in relations will be the reopening of this historical trade and commerce relationship. Entrepreneurs and business interests on both sides know only too well the route's potential and how best to exploit it. They need to be left to their own genius to unleash it.

Even as this experiment at building trust, friendship, and military professionalism continues, democratic governments on both sides must become facilitators and guarantors of the process. From these will emerge indigenous ideas and solutions to bilateral issues like Kashmir or render them irrelevant. It is solutions thrown up from within democratic governments that will have a chance of permanency. Even as this process is unfolding, vested interests will create obstacles. Two neighboring democracies, aware of the painful past and now trusting of each other, can best manage this fallout bilaterally.

Being the most powerful democracy with access to India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, and being a co-victim of terror and one that shares some responsibility to where Pakistan and Afghanistan stand today, the U.S. is best suited to play a leadership role in helping wipe out the source of regional and international terrorism. This calls for determination and open diplomatic engagement with the affected states.

Recent events, however, are cause for concern. Being a directly affected party, India was neither invited to the Istanbul summit on Afghanistan nor were its views considered at the London conference. With an exit timeframe in place, President Obama co-opted China as a partner in stabilizing South Asia in his joint statement with the Chinese President. Clearly, history is repeating itself, but with one exception: the Middle Kingdom is now ready to play its own version of the Great Game. Indian policy makers would do well to read the signals and plan strategies to defend what in the future may be a lonely outpost for democracy in a deeply troubled region – from which will leave no shores untouched!

## **The American Image in Russia**

**By Alexander A. Belkin**

*Alexander A. Belkin is Deputy Executive Director of the non-governmental Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, Moscow.*

*Good bye, America, oh,  
Where I've never been.*

...

*I've grown out  
Of your battered jeans.  
We've been taught so long  
To adore your forbidden fruits.*

*Good bye, America, oh,  
Where I'll never be.  
Will I ever hear a song,  
To remember forever?*

These words of the iconic 1985 hit by “Nautilus Pompilius,” a popular Russian rock group, became a hymn of the informal pro-Western movements of the *perestroika* period. At the same time, the attitude of the elder generation of the Soviet people toward the United States, deliberately or subconsciously, was driven by Nikita Khrushchev’s slogan “to catch up and outdo America!”

Russians young and old were projecting their future rather than comparing it to their imaginary vision of America that was formed mainly by old-fashioned American novels and Hollywood movies that flooded the Soviet Union on video cassettes in the late 1980s. Very few Russians visited the United States at that time, and even fewer seriously researched and understood life and politics in America.

With the end of the confrontation, Russia’s dismantlement of its Cold War machinery, and the great reduction in bilateral tensions, the image of the United States in Russian minds became a function of their expectations for improvement of their living standards, on the one hand, and of Russia’s international standing, on the other.

Unrealistic expectations of a new ‘Marshall Plan for Russia’ (“America had spent billions of dollars in the Cold War, it would surely not spare on helping a friendly new Russia!”) and of a strategic alliance with the United States predictably gave way to disenchantment and irritation. Internationally, despite the good personal relations between Boris Yeltsin and Bill Clinton, Russia was treated at best as a junior partner, and not good enough to join the North Atlantic Alliance – the Western Cold War construct that was enlarging and enclosing Russia.

Domestically, Russians were angered by the role of the Harvard economic advisers to the Kremlin who, they believed, influenced a robber-baron style of privatization of Russia’s economic wealth that fabulously enriched a few and left masses in poverty. Another group of American experts – this time in public relations – helped Boris Yeltsin stay in power during the 1996 presidential race, which he had almost lost. That experience taught the Russian political class how to manipulate the mass media and elections.

Yet another blow to America’s moral leadership of the democratic West was inflicted by a deafening silence from the White House in October 1993 when President Yeltsin violently suppressed his opposition, dispersing the parliament and setting the building afire with artillery shells.

The U.S.-led NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 put an end to the Russians’ hopes of a mutually prosperous future with an American-led West. For the first time after the end of the Cold War, the two nations were on the brink of an armed conflict.

For a period of time after September 11, it appeared that the sincere sympathy from the Russians for the attacked people of America could develop into a new kind of relationship. The two nations managed to avoid a crisis over the U.S. abrogation of the 1972 ABM Treaty. More than

that, Russia closed down two Soviet-era military bases in Cuba and Vietnam, supported the fight against al Qaeda in Afghanistan, and was steadily improving overall relations with the West.

But the Iraq adventure put an end to that rapprochement. Furthermore, support by Washington for the “color revolutions” in Georgia and Ukraine not only irritated Moscow but also added to Russian suspicions that the American government was encouraging leaders in the former Soviet Republics who conducted the most Russophobic policies, like Mikhail Saakashvili of Georgia and Viktor Yushchenko of Ukraine, rather than the critics of the authoritarian regime in the Kremlin. The August 2008 war in Georgia brought Russian-American relations and the American image in Russia to the lowest point to since the post-Cold War. Similar to the events in April 1999, when NATO bombed Yugoslavia, in August 2008, even truly democratically-oriented Russians, who criticized authoritarian setbacks and democratic deficits at home, supported the Russian government’s reaction to the Georgian armed violence against friendly people.

The aggregate result of public-opinion polls conducted by the independent Levada Center in Russia during the last two decades shows the evolution of Russian attitudes toward the United States:

#### **What is your attitude toward the United States of America?<sup>1</sup>**

	May '90	Nov '91	Aug '92	Apr '93	Mar '95	Mar '97	Dec '98	Nov '99	Jul '00	Nov '01	Nov '02	Nov '03	Nov '04	Nov '05	Nov '06	Nov '07	Nov '08	Nov '09	Jan '10
Very good / good	73	80	73	71	65	72	67	54	69	68	61	59	66	63	56	54	31	54	54
Bad / very bad	7	6	7	7	13	18	23	31	23	22	29	33	29	30	32	35	55	28	31
No opinion	20	14	20	22	22	10	10	15	8	10	10	9	5	7	12	11	15	17	15

Despite the problems discussed above (and unlike in a considerable part of the ruling elite), there is no widespread anti-Americanism in Russian public opinion. Russians do not care about U.S. domestic policies and are concerned only about American involvement in Russia’s historical neighboring states. Russians don’t trust the politicians in Washington, D.C. any more than they do in Moscow.

Russians understand that their country is far less relevant to the United States than was the late Soviet Union, and are not surprised that America is less actively engaged with Russia. Still, they don’t want America to exploit Russia’s comparative weakness, as it has been doing during the twenty post-Soviet years.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.levada.ru/press/2010022602.html>

By not doing further harm, the United States could improve its image and win back Russian friendly feelings. But to do so, America badly needs the advice of knowledgeable Russia scholars of the caliber of George Kennan.

Below is some practical policy advice for improving relations.

First, in February 2010, the U.S. Intelligence Community published its Annual Threat Assessment, which concluded that some Eurasian governments, including Russia, are now so intertwined with international organized crime groups that the two are almost synonymous—a situation called “state capture.” If American intelligence services really know who the corrupt Russian politicians are, as we suspect they do, Washington could greatly increase U.S. popularity among everyday Russians by publishing the criminals’ names and the numbers of their Western bank accounts where they’ve stashed their ill-gotten gains. We will be happy to take it from there.

The second suggestion is as easy to offer as it is hard to follow: the United States should stop 'Americanizing' the world – and Russia in particular. That means that "political correctness" principles should govern the U.S. foreign policy and practice as much as it commands its domestic life. The U.S. has to acknowledge the right of other people to determine their own destinies, which may or may not be what Americans would choose.

Some two and a half centuries ago, Benjamin Franklin coined a motto which is still appropriate and applicable today: “Mind your own business.” At one or another period of history, Germany, Italy, France, Great Britain, Japan were all enemies of Russia. Today these countries enjoy a public perception of being fair partners of Russia rather than adversaries. It is hard to find anti-German or anti-French feelings in Russia – probably because they do 'mind their own business' and offer equal and mutually beneficial cooperation to Russians.

Third, the United States should apply its image concerns not to current generations of Russians, but mainly to the future ones, those who are high-school and college students today. Young Russians would not be as susceptible to anti-American propaganda if they had personal knowledge of the country, its political and judicial systems, business ethics, public life, diversified culture and habits, *etc.* To this end they must leave/study/work in the U.S. Are Americans ready to invest a mere percentage of the sums wasted for the Cold War into bringing Russian youth to America? Newly rich Russians and their offspring could afford it themselves, but Russia’s future will be decided by thousands of ordinary Russians. Currently, only 10 million or so Russians (out of 145 million) had foreign passports to travel abroad. A majority of them used their passports for vacationing in Turkey, Egypt, or Southeast Asia, or doing business with Europe. Relatively few visited the United States with a scholarly interest.

Overall, however, Russian analysts remain skeptical about the degree to which these suggestions for improving relations will be followed. So as the previous "To Do" list may be too ambitious, here is a "To Do" and a "Not To Do" option: learn the lessons of the lost opportunities and

dashed hopes of the 1990s, and try not to do more harm. The April 2010 signing of a nuclear arms limitation treaty in Prague by U.S. President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev shows that positive steps can be taken, and one hopes that this can continue.

## **Tunisian Perceptions of U.S. Foreign Policy: Conclusions of an Annual Survey of Tunisian Elites**

**By Peter J. Schraeder**

*Peter J. Schraeder is a Professor in the Department of Political Science at Loyola University Chicago. He has lived, worked, and lectured in twenty-nine countries in all regions of the African continent, and is the author or editor of ten books.*

This article draws on a survey of elite Tunisian attitudes toward U.S. foreign policy that the author conducts in Tunisia every January since spending the 2002-03 academic year as a Fulbright scholar with the Faculty of Law and Political Science at the University of Tunis. Tunisia serves as a fascinating case study for understanding the public opinion, public diplomacy, and foreign policy challenges confronted by U.S. policymakers in the Middle East and North Africa. Historically perceived in Washington as a moderate, pro-West ally in the Arab world, and more recently as a valuable partner in the global war on terrorism, Tunisia has been courted by both the Bush and the Obama administrations. In 2004, for example, Tunisian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali (1987-present) was granted a highly coveted head-of-state visit to Washington as a reward for his close cooperation with U.S. counter-terrorism efforts in North Africa.

These close and strengthening ties notwithstanding, survey results demonstrate deep concerns among the Tunisian elite with various aspects of U.S. foreign policy. Survey results also indicate that the recent decline in U.S. prestige, most notably in the Arab and wider Islamic worlds, is neither inevitable nor irreversible, but dependent on a rethinking of the U.S. foreign policy approach to the region. Several points are in order.

First, the survey data demonstrate that the Tunisian elite have a sophisticated historical understanding of U.S. foreign policy. They maintain positive impressions (an average rating of 46 percent positive throughout the survey period) of U.S. foreign policy during the World War II era (1935-45), most notably the North African military campaigns that have as their reminder the 2,841 U.S. military personnel buried at the North Africa American Cemetery and Memorial in Carthage (a suburb of Tunis, the capital of Tunisia). They remember even more fondly (an average rating of 56 percent positive throughout the survey period) Washington's support for independence movements throughout North Africa, beginning with Libyan independence in 1951 and ending with Algerian independence in 1962. However, the Tunisian elite are much more

critical of U.S. foreign policy in recent years (see Table 1). In January 2003 (the first year of the survey), 67 percent responded negatively to the question – “What is your impression of U.S. foreign policy in general?” – with this figure rising to an astounding 92 percent negative beginning in January 2004.

These figures coincided with negative Tunisian impressions of the Bush administration, which never achieved more than a 19 percent positive rating throughout the survey period. Although the Obama administration, which achieved a 67 percent positive rating in January 2009 and a 65 percent positive rating in January 2010, appeared poised to reset U.S. relations with the Arab world, Tunisians clearly differentiate between Obama “the man” and his administration’s foreign policy. By January 2010, the one-year anniversary of Obama’s inauguration, 90 percent of Tunisians held a negative impression of U.S. foreign policy in general.

The classic factor driving America’s negative standing in Tunisia and the wider Arab and Islamic worlds – which is borne out by the survey data – is U.S. foreign policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict, and more specifically Washington’s approach to the Arab-Israeli peace process and the creation of an independent Palestine. The Tunisian elite were highly critical of what they perceived as the Bush administration’s unwillingness to pursue a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict more aggressively, as witnessed by an astounding 98 percent negative rating for this dimension of Bush administration foreign policy in January 2003. It is striking that the Obama administration similarly received a 90 percent negative rating for its approach to the Arab-Israeli conflict in January 2010, despite President Obama’s declaration that he would make the pursuit of Middle East peace an administration priority, as well as his much-heralded June 2009 speech in Cairo, Egypt, on Islam and the U.S. relationship with the Islamic world. Follow-up discussions with survey respondents revealed that although Tunisians welcomed and appreciated the positive tone of Obama’s Cairo speech, they believed that little if anything concrete in promoting the Arab-Israeli peace process had resulted from the speech during the remainder of 2009.

A second and more recent factor driving America’s negative standing in Tunisia and the wider Arab and Islamic worlds – which is also borne out by the survey data – involves U.S. military interventions in the Middle East. Elite Tunisian impressions of U.S. military intervention in Iraq have remained extremely negative (above 90 percent) throughout the survey period, with the launching of this intervention in March 2003 serving as the single explanation (confirmed in follow-up interviews) for the dramatic rise in overall negative impressions of U.S. foreign policy from 67 percent negative in January 2003 (just prior to the beginning of the war) to 92 percent negative in January 2004 and remaining above 90 percent for the remainder of the Bush years. Only one of twelve U.S. military interventions included in the survey – the U.S. military effort during World War II – has achieved a consistently high positive rating (average of 49 percent positive throughout the survey period). According to follow-up interviews, Tunisians underscore the “legitimacy” and “selflessness” of U.S. military intervention in World War II, whether in the Asian, European, or North African military theaters, and how this legacy starkly contrasts with what is perceived as an “illegitimate” and “self-interested” contemporary U.S. military

intervention in Iraq. Although President Obama is credited with undertaking the beginning of the end of U.S. military intervention in Iraq, he is nonetheless criticized in elite Tunisian circles for expanding U.S. military intervention in Afghanistan. Only 5 percent of Tunisians as of January 2010 viewed U.S. military intervention in Afghanistan positively, as opposed to 95 percent who perceived it in negative terms, with this latter figure representing a significant increase from a 77 percent negative rating in January 2009. Tunisians now recognize Afghanistan as “Obama’s war” (as opposed to Iraq which is almost always referred to as “Bush’s war”) and are increasingly prone to characterize U.S. military involvement there as “illegitimate” and “self-interested.”

A third conclusion of the survey, which is typical of results found in other countries and regions of the world, is that Tunisians clearly differentiate between U.S. “governmental” policies and U.S. “society,” typically maintaining more positive images toward the latter (see Table 2). Positive impressions exceeding 75 percent are evident every year of the survey as concerns two important “goods” of American society: learning American English and studying at an American university. Several additional sets of American societal goods, such as separation of church and state, internet, literature, television, films, sports, music, and art, also typically achieved positive impressions of 50 percent or higher during the period of the survey.

In short, Tunisians still respect and admire many elements of U.S. society, despite their often strong distaste for specific U.S. foreign policies toward the Middle East and North Africa. As concerns the latter, public diplomacy and cultural exchange programs will fail to move Tunisian public opinion in a more positive direction in the absence of significant changes in policy, most notably an end to U.S. military intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan and the demonstration of concrete steps that contribute to a durable Arab-Israeli peace and most importantly an independent Palestinian state. The problem is not that Tunisians are unaware of or misunderstand U.S. foreign policy initiatives in their region, but that they disagree fundamentally with those policies.

**Table 1: Tunisian Impressions of U.S. Foreign Policy**

RATING	POSITIVE					NEUTRAL					NEGATIVE					TOTAL (100%)
	03	04	08	09	10	03	04	08	09	10	03	04	08	09	10	
U.S. Foreign Policy (in general)	19	8	5	5	5	15	0	0	25	5	67	92	95	70	90	
Bush Administration (2001-2009)	19	7	9	-	-	13	0	5	-	-	68	93	86	-	-	
Obama Administration (2009-Present)	-	-	-	67	65	-	-	-	24	15	-	-	-	10	20	
War in Afghanistan (2002- present)	13	7	18	19	5	6	7	5	5	0	81	86	77	77	95	
War in Iraq (2003-present)	4	7	9	5	0	0	0	0	5	0	96	93	91	90	100	
Arab-Israeli Conflict	0	0	9	5	0	2	0	5	5	10	98	100	86	90	90	

**Table 2: Tunisian Impressions of U.S. Society**

RATING	POSITIVE					NEUTRAL					NEGATIVE					TOTAL (100%)
	03	04	08	09	10	03	04	08	09	10	03	04	08	09	10	
Democratic System	51	23	36	55	40	15	23	23	15	20	34	54	41	30	40	
Liberal Economic Model	62	43	32	70	60	17	21	32	5	30	21	36	36	25	10	
Separation Church/State	60	64	77	85	90	32	29	18	10	10	8	7	5	5	0	
Department of Homeland Security	43	21	14	50	25	32	29	36	20	45	25	50	50	30	30	
Immigration Policy	19	7	18	25	25	11	7	9	10	5	70	86	73	65	70	
American Language	83	92	77	85	95	13	7	18	10	5	4	0	5	5	0	
University System	83	92	82	95	100	15	7	14	5	0	2	0	5	0	0	
Internet	66	79	45	85	85	26	21	41	15	10	8	0	14	0	5	
Literature	56	29	64	70	55	38	43	32	30	45	6	29	5	0	0	
Television	47	36	50	75	70	28	7	27	15	25	25	57	23	10	5	
Films	67	92	82	90	95	17	0	9	5	5	16	8	29	5	0	
Sports	78	50	59	50	60	22	43	27	25	35	0	7	14	25	5	
Music	65	64	64	90	85	29	21	27	5	15	6	14	9	5	0	
Art	63	21	59	85	80	29	64	36	15	20	8	14	5	0	0	

## **Mexican Perceptions of the United States: Interests, Preferences, and Realities**

**By Jorge A. Schiavon \***

*Jorge Schiavon is Professor of International Relations and Chair, Department of International Studies, Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE) in Mexico City.*

Mexico is geographically and economically in North America (more than two thirds of the country's trade and financial flows take place within this region), but historically, geopolitically and culturally, it has more in common with Latin America. In the last two decades, and with the enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, Mexicans are confronting a dilemma in defining whether their country is North American or Latin American, or whether Mexico could somehow be part of both regions. There seems to be a perception that the relationship with the United States has gone as far as it can go. This belief may be attributed to the stagnation in the regional integration process, the concentration on security issues, and the dramatic decline in affinity and trust in the United States during the second George W. Bush administration.

Mexicans have ambivalent feelings towards the United States, and the level of affinity for the U.S. has decreased dramatically in the course of the last years. On a scale of 0 to 100, where 100 represents a very favorable opinion, 50 means neutrality, and 0 is a very unfavorable opinion, in 2008 Mexicans had the highest level of affinity for Canada (public 71 points; leaders 84). Mexican's affinity for the United States dropped 12 points and 6 positions compared with the level in 2006. The change in favorable opinion toward the United States since 2004 is remarkable. The United States was tied with Japan for first place with an average rating of 68 in 2004. In 2006, Canada was in first place (75 points) and the United States was second (74 points). By 2008, the United States has dropped to seventh place (62 points). This can be a consequence of the negative perception in Mexico of the hegemonic foreign policy of the Bush administrations.

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\* This article summarizes the central findings on Mexican perceptions on the United States found in Guadalupe González González, Ferran Martínez i Coma, and Jorge A. Schiavon, *Mexico, the Americas and the world. Foreign policy: Public and leader opinion 2008*, Mexico City, CIDE-DEI, 2008, 89 pp. *Mexico, the Americas and the World* is a research project of the Department of International Studies of CIDE that analyzes Mexican public and leader opinions on foreign policy and foreign affairs. The project is an on-going biennial survey (2004, 2006, 2008, and to be conducted in 2010) designed to measure Mexicans' opinions, attitudes, perceptions and values regarding the world and Mexico's role in international affairs. The survey is a representative sample of the adult Mexican population and of a segment of leaders in Mexico. The complete dataset, in SPSS format, survey questionnaires and top-line results for the 69 subject and 18 socio-demographic questions are publicly available in English and Spanish free of charge at <http://mexicoyel mundo.cide.edu>. Jorge Schiavon is reachable by email at: [jorge.schiavon@cide.edu](mailto:jorge.schiavon@cide.edu).

In qualitative terms, the United States is the only country that an overwhelming majority of Mexicans consider a *partner* and not a *friend*—all Latin American and European countries are perceived as *friends*. In 2008, the option of *partners* (51%) was much more common than *friends* (28%) for the public. Leaders are more emphatic in labeling the relationship as *partners*: 78% consider the two countries to be *partners* and 13% say the countries are *friends*.

In 2006, most Mexicans thought that being neighbors of the United States was more of an advantage for the country (public 52%, leaders 85%) than a problem (39% and 13% respectively). Skepticism increased in 2008, with slightly more people seeing it as a problem than an advantage (46% against 45%, while identification as a problem climbed from 13% to 26% among the leaders). Mexicans in the North are more likely to say that proximity to the United States is an advantage (64%), while Mexicans in the South (47%) and in the Center (51%) are more likely to consider it a problem.

In 2008, fewer Mexicans (45%) than in 2006 (54%) agreed strongly or somewhat *that Mexico and the United States should form a single country, if this meant an improvement in their standard of living*. The survey also asked part of the respondents the same question, leaving out the condition of an improvement in their standard of living. In this case, even fewer Mexicans (36%) would agree with the union.

The Mexico-United States relationship is imbued with a distrust that has increased substantially in recent years among both the public and leaders. Distrust of the United States rose from 43% in 2004, to 53% in 2006, and to 61% in 2008 among the public. Such distrust increased from 41% in 2006 to 64% in 2008 among leaders. Regional differences in distrust of the United States are noteworthy. The further away from the northern border, the higher the degree of distrust: 45% of Mexicans in the North distrust the United States, while 62% of Mexicans in the Center and 72% in the South feel the same way. Distrust is highest among centre-left party (PRD) supporters; centre party (PRI) and centre-right party PAN (31% and 20%) supporters are less likely than PRD's (65%) to distrust the United States.

Even if distrust should make cooperation between Mexico and the United States problematic, Mexicans are very pragmatic and know that their country has to cooperate with the United States to solve joint problems. On a scale from 0 to 10 (where 0 means working alone and 10 implies working closely with the United States), Mexicans, on average, believe there should be a level of cooperation with the United States of 6; leaders rate the level of cooperation one point higher, with an average of 7.

Mexicans' nationalism takes on new forms when they face issues that have a direct impact on their security. Close to half of the population (49%) and 33% of leaders are willing to allow U.S. agents to participate with Mexican agents in securing Mexico's airports, ports and borders in order to fight drug-trafficking, while 58% of the public and 76% of leaders approve of Mexican criminals being extradited to the United States to be tried for crimes committed in that country. With the same pragmatism mediating their nationalist distrust of the United States, 55% of the

public and 70% of leaders support receiving financial aid from the United States to fight drug-trafficking and organized crime.

However, energy is an issue for which Mexicans leave no space for pragmatic negotiation with the United States. A large majority of the public (67%) would be against an agreement between Mexico and the United States to allow U.S. investment in Mexico's oil sector. Leaders are more divided, with 39% in favor and 49% against. The recurrent regional gap between the North on one hand and the Center and South on the other is noteworthy: in 2008, disagreement to permit U.S. investment in the energy sector was 55% in the North, compared to 70% in the Center and 71% in the South of the country.

In sum, in the course of the last years, Mexicans have lost interest in their relations with the United States: pessimism and distrust predominate, particularly concerning the accomplishments of NAFTA and the possibilities of a more in-depth integration with the United States. However, with the election of President Barack Obama, America's image in Mexico has improved considerably. This will have a positive impact in increasing affinity and trust in the United States, especially if the Obama administration provides targeted aid to cooperate in the fight against drug-trafficking and organized crime (Merida Initiative), works in transmitting diplomatic messages clearly and seeking consensus decisions (message and action have to match, and unilateral actions need to be avoided), and invests in building bilateral and regional relationships (Mexico-U.S. Binational Commission and North American Leaders' Summit).

## **Three Years Together:** **The New U.S.-Mexico Security Relationship**

**By Iñigo Guevara**

*Iñigo Guevara is currently a CONACYT fellow at Georgetown University's Security Studies Program (SSP). He is a consultant on Mexican national security affairs and Latin American defense issues.*

Over the past three years, the U.S.-Mexico relationship has been dominated by the security agenda. Common security has replaced border dynamics such as migration and trade that used to be the key issues between our countries. This is a positive step in our relationship as it embodies a new thinking that takes into account our common future. There is a sense of co-responsibility that can be characterized as historic. However, it is still at a very fragile initial stage and it is very vulnerable to misinterpretations and misunderstandings.

2010 will mark the third, and so far last, programmed year of the Mérida Initiative, a *sui generis*

assistance agreement that has governed the U.S.-Mexico security agenda. With an unavoidable comparison with Plan Colombia, the Mérida Initiative has at times been referred to as Plan Mexico. Although their main objective is similar in that they both seek to strengthen institutions, their respective means differentiate them substantially. The Mérida Initiative has been crafted as a multi-dimensional security program with a regional perspective. What has materialized from it is difficult to explain, as we are only now experiencing the effects of its implementation.

The program began with an equipment-heavy phase, which was definitively slow to execute. This was a sensitive issue as past anti-narcotic equipment transfers have had mixed outcomes. As an example, the 1996 transfer of four C-26 surveillance aircraft was a success and they continue to be used to this day, but the transfer of 73 Huey helicopters was a complete disaster and disrupted U.S.-Mexico military cooperation over the next decade.<sup>2</sup> This meant that any equipment included in this “fresh start” would have to be factory new. Production of the helicopters was delayed due to bureaucratic entanglements in letters of offer and acceptance, and start work orders with the manufacturers. Similarly, the Spanish-built CN-235 Persuader maritime surveillance aircraft required the selection and installation of mission equipment from a variety of sources.

The fact that neither the Bell 412 nor the CN-235 Persuaders are operated by the U.S. military<sup>3</sup> further complicated this. The U.S. could have prevented the imminent critique of “too few, too late” through the immediate transfer of similar active duty U.S. equipment,<sup>4</sup> on an interim-loan basis, signaling an immediate concern to increase Mexico’s air mobility and detection capabilities.

Equipment becomes both significant and symbolic, because when a program relies heavily on intangibles<sup>5</sup>, we need to have something tangible to show for it at the end. This is not to imply that the eight helicopters and four fixed-wing aircraft are not appreciated; they will be very useful. The main strength of Mérida comes from obtaining “connectivity” between our agencies in what is being labeled as an “intermestic” (International-domestic) approach. In this regard, Mexico requires a culture of security and this is where U.S. experience can shorten the learning curve.

Screening, vetting, as well as passive and active counter-intelligence techniques developed during the Cold War are invaluable, as our current operational environment is not unlike the Cold War spy-vs.-spy era the U.S. experienced. Another big area for cooperation is financial intelligence, something that may lead us into a re-engineering of our financial sector.

Both of these, as well as judicial system reform, take a long time to take shape, in some cases

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<sup>2</sup> The helicopters required substantial refurbishment, and after one crashed killing its crew they were labelled as junk by Mexican officials and returned to the U.S.

<sup>3</sup> The U.S. Coast Guard operates a version of the CN-235 known as the HC-144 Ocean Sentry, with a different mission suite.

<sup>4</sup> Such as Blackhawk transport helicopters and P-3 Orion maritime Patrol aircraft.

<sup>5</sup> Train the trainer, rule of law programs, institution building courses, intelligence and counter intelligence software, vetting processes, etc.

decades. It is important that the foundations for long-term cooperation are established through multi-year programs in order for them to survive new administrations on both sides of the border.

### **Looking beyond Mérida**

In his talk on “Beyond Mérida” at Georgetown in early February, the U.S. Ambassador to Mexico, Carlos Pascual, clearly articulated the “Four Pillars” of U.S. security cooperation with Mexico, that are intended to (1) disrupt the operational capacity of organized crime; (2) support Mexico’s capacity to sustain rule of law, especially by reforming the police and judicial system; (3) improve organization and management of the shared border to better deal with commercial and security requirements; and (4) build strong and resilient communities.<sup>6</sup>

However, I couldn’t help but notice the very brief mention of reducing drug demand. Truth be told, there is actually little to be said. Rehabilitation is only successful in approximately 13% of the cases. Prevention may be the best tool, but the efficacy of that too is sketchy. The U.S. illegal drug market is composed of some 114 million Americans that have consumed drugs at some time in their lives (that is 1 out of 2 Americans ages 15 to 74) and about 20 million that are current consumers.<sup>7</sup> Legalization is very difficult to achieve politically. Increased criminalization also seems out of the question, as the U.S. justice and penal system would be operationally incapable to process and jail tens of millions of consumers. One alternative would be to freeze drug consumers’ financial assets and tax them for rehabilitation programs until that 13% expands. That could reduce the flow of cash that funds our common enemies.

By analyzing the Four Pillar Strategy and the U.S. FY 2011 funding allocations for Mérida, it is apparent that U.S. diplomacy is taking a step back in its engagement with the Mexican military and focusing on supporting Mexican federal, state, and municipal law enforcement agencies as well as organized society. This can become a positive issue if military diplomacy is allowed to take its own, parallel course. Given the institution’s credibility and legitimacy in Mexican society, specifically on the war on drugs, ignoring them could be detrimental to our relationship.

I make a point of mentioning the word "war" because there is, in my mind, no other way to describe the level of violence that these military and law enforcement operations are producing. There are some conceptual similarities between this and the Global War on Terrorism, in that both wars feature states fighting non-state actors. Let's be clear that there is not an insurgency developing.

The Mexican and U.S. armed forces, which share little in common, either in roles or missions, are finding positive avenues for cooperation, that is...they are finding their connectivity. The humanitarian assistance role is one where the Mexican military has pioneered and has enough experience that it can take a leadership role in the relationship, something important when

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<sup>6</sup> Bailey, John, Merida 2.0, *Reforma* newspaper, February 28, 2010 p.12.

<sup>7</sup> Numbers from the article "EUA se propone a mitigar la demanda de drogas ilegales, Agora, " published by NORTHCOM , Vol.3 No.1, 2010, p. 40.

addressing each other as equals. American humility in accepting this should be noted.

The Mexican Navy, together with the U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Navy, also has a maturing relationship through what has been called coincidental operations. These could develop into joint patrols. In this sense, the U.S.-Canadian “Shiprider” program could prove an interesting concept to explore both to foster cooperation and confidence building as well as augment operational capabilities.

There is one point I would like to stress: floating the notion that Mexico is on the verge of becoming a failed state is both ignorant and irresponsible. It undermines our credibility and directly affects our much needed foreign direct investments. Although a military’s need to plan for *worst-case scenarios* is understandable, releasing a document such as the 2008 Joint Operational Environment Report<sup>8</sup> for open publication is a blunder from a diplomatic perspective.

Although the U.S. Government has taken public responsibility for its share of the blame (that of drug consumption), the message has not substantially been absorbed by American society. This is an area worth focusing on. Most Americans still view the raging violence in Mexico as a purely Mexican problem, one that has snowballed from its inability to build an adequate police force, fight corruption, address poverty, unemployment, underdevelopment and so on. The question I still get asked after conferences and presentations is: “*So, are you going to be able to solve your drug problems?*” My answer is almost automatic: “*Are you going to be able to solve yours?*”

The Mérida Initiative is important as it marks, hopefully, a new era in North American security. We begin this as *partners* and there is a clear path that will take us to become *responsible partners*. I am optimistic and believe that we can eventually be called *allies*.

## **The Cuban Revolution After Fifty Years**

**By Neal Creighton**

*Neal Creighton is a retired Army Major General in the U.S. Army. For 14 years after he left active duty, he served as President and CEO of the McCormick Tribune Foundation in Chicago.*

In the summer of 2009, signs all over the colonial city of Havana, Cuba, proclaimed 50 years of continued Revolutionary Government. However, Havana, outside of the billboards, now reflects

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<sup>8</sup> In it, Mexico is identified as a state likely to experience a rapid and sudden collapse.

little of the feverish anti-US attitude of the early years following Fidel Castro's 1961 pact with our Cold War enemies led by the late Soviet Union.

When I last visited Cuba in 1998, the country was still being run by cronies of the Castro brothers who had come down from the rugged interior of the country to oust Fulgencio Batista, the nation's long-term dictator. Havana, as well as the countryside, was well adorned with signs proclaiming the benefits brought on by the new revolutionary government. When no billboards were available to paint, Castro's supporters simply plastered their message on sides of buildings or along roadside fences. And, when you met with any of the government functionaries, they invariably proclaimed enthusiast support of the Cuban communist regime and condemnation for the attitude and actions of the U.S. government, particularly the embargo on trade. We even met for over five hours with a vigorous Fidel Castro, who demonstrated his stamina by the length of his answers to questions we had.

From July 22-25 of 2009, I returned to Cuba as a member of a U.S. delegation that went to Havana to meet with Cuban officials to exchange ideas on how to protect citizens and property from the ravages of natural disasters, with an emphasis on hurricanes. More specifically, our trip was planned to lay the groundwork for follow-on conferences that would explore ideas and improvements both nations could make to their own internal plans to deal with what appears to be a growing threat of severe hurricanes in the Gulf Region.

Our delegation was headed by retired U.S. Army Lieutenant General Russel Honoré, who commanded the Hurricane Katrina Task Force that restored order out of the chaos created by the 2005 storm that severely damaged New Orleans and much of the surrounding Gulf Coast region. The organizer of the U.S. delegation's trip to the Cuban capital city was Dr. Wayne Smith, who served as the U.S. Chief of Mission in Cuba during the Carter Administration. A third member was Stewart Simonson who served as Assistant Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services during the Katrina recovery period. The other delegates were mostly individuals who are currently employed at the State or local level in Louisiana.

In the days the group spent in Havana, we met with a varied set of Cuban organizations involved with natural disaster planning. These included sessions at the headquarters of Civil Defense, a military organization that oversees Cuba's disaster management; the General Docente Enrique Cabrera Hospital, a medical facility that trains Cuba's Disaster Brigades; the Caribbean Medical Association, which coordinates medical support throughout the nation's 14 provinces; the National Weather Forecast Center; the Latin American School of Medicine, opened by Castro in 1999 with the purpose of training doctors to work in remote areas of the Western Hemisphere; and the Havana Province Committee of Defense & Revolution, an organization originally formed to combat "enemies of the State," but which in recent years has focused almost exclusively on protecting lives of its citizens and family and area resources.

What we learned from these sessions was that Cuba has been forced by its geographical location to make the threat of hurricanes' destructive power a very high national priority. The island

nation has endured 98 hurricanes since it began recording them in 1900. In response, they now have a centralized organization controlled at the national level by Civil Defense authorities in Havana, supported by each province and city government and by citizen-manned Committees of Defense & Revolution. They annually have periods of preparation where citizens review their own family plans in case of hurricanes. This includes evacuation preparation as well as inspection of each individual residence to identify possible vulnerability to high winds and flooding. And, participation by all citizens in these exercises is mandatory, with fines being imposed on anyone who chooses not to participate. Cuban authorities point to these measures as being principally responsible for their nation being able to withstand five hurricanes in 2008 with only a total of seven fatalities.

Another area of concentration of Cuba's government, closely related to measures to protect its population from natural disasters, is the emphasis on medical care. While most Americans are aware that the Cuban government provides free medical care to all its citizens, they probably do not know the extent to which the Castro Government has gone to use medical resources as an instrument of foreign policy. In the middle 1990s, after enduring the failed attempts to use military intervention in Latin America and Africa, Castro switched to a foreign policy that featured medical intervention rather than military force. He started by training and organizing what he called "Disaster Brigades," organizations of doctors, nurses, and various specialists, that could be deployed for extended periods of time not only within Cuba, but also to other parts of the world that needed medical help after a natural disaster struck. Over the years he has expanded the effort, deploying his good-will brigades to countries located in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. The Cuban government even offered to send a brigade to the United States to provide medical care for the victims of Hurricane Katrina. (The U.S. Government rejected the offer, explained by General Honoré: "I had all the medical help I needed. Besides, most of the residents had evacuated and the doctors I had were not kept busy.") In 1999, Castro also opened The Latin American School of Medicine with 1933 students attending from Cuba and other countries in Latin America. Students had to agree that, after graduating, they would return to their country of origin to practice in isolated or poverty-stricken areas. Today the school can accommodate up to 10,000 students at one time, counting those studying in their home countries. Among the student body are more than 100 students from the United States.

One of the more interesting meetings we had was with the Vice Minister of the Foreign Office, Dagoberto Rodriguez Barrera. He spoke with us on the wider subject of US-Cuban relations. Rodriguez was critical of the U.S. embargo of his country but tried to make a case for the re-establishment of normal relations between the two nations, emphasizing that such a step was in the best interest of each. He pointed out that Cuba could be helpful, not only in the area of natural disasters, but also in the fight against both terrorism and illegal drugs. Further, he contended that the U.S. is a natural market for Cuba. He stated that Cuba would enter into discussions of renewed diplomatic relations without any pre-conditions but that the United States could be helpful by releasing the five Cubans now held in U.S. prisons after being convicted of espionage and by ceasing broadcast operations of Radio Marti that seek to encourage opposition to the current government.

In the other discussions we had with Cubans at all levels, there was almost a complete absence of things political. Many of the formal briefings began with a quote from Fidel Castro but after that, our hosts hardly ever mentioned either him, his brother Raul or the Communist Party. Nor did they bring forth the topic of the future of the U.S. base at Guantanamo. No one even mentioned the five Cubans convicted of espionage in U.S. jails despite the fact that their pictures are plastered throughout the city. They were, indeed, a different generation of Cubans from those who ruled the country in the years after the 1959 revolution. They were obviously much more professional and far less ideological than the old revolutionaries I encountered in 1998.

We returned to Miami optimistic that we had laid the successful groundwork for future conferences, a small breakthrough in the process of helping to restore normal relations with that island nation eventually. However, one cannot help but question if this process toward normal relations between Cuba and the United States is really something that the current Obama Administration should endeavor to accomplish as a matter of priority. For most of the fifty years of the Castro regime, the principal U.S. objective was to end or neutralize the alliance between Cuba and the Soviet Union and thereby end the possibility of the Russians using the island as a base for nuclear attack on the continental United States. Now, that possibility does not exist. Cuba is not a military threat to the United States. Thus, the principal advantages the United States would accrue by ending its diplomatic boycott would be increased trade for the ports along our southern coast and perhaps some sharing of intelligence on drug and terrorist activity in the Caribbean. The downside of pushing for relations with Cuba for the Obama administration would be the reaction of the somewhat large and influential Cuban exile groups, principally in the States of Florida, New Jersey, Louisiana and Texas.

Today, the original exiles driven from their native island by the Revolutionary Government and having their properties seized and relatives persecuted are passing from the scene, but new generations of their offspring remain bitter. These newer generations have, in many cases, prospered and have considerable resources to use in opposing normal relations with the Castros' Cuba. In their fifty years of "revolutionary" government, the Castro brothers have made many enemies, both foreign and domestic, and the issue of ending the U.S. boycott of Cuba is not on the front burner of our neighbors' agenda in Latin America today. Fidel, in his mid-eighties and not in good health, is still a presence. Raul, now 78 and occupying the President's position, appears to be consolidating his own power base. Along with all the other challenges leading up to the presidential elections in 2012, establishing normal relations with Cuba would confront Obama with just another vocal and influential new opposition group. Thus, as long as either one of the Castro brothers is alive and in a position of influence, the re-establishment of normal U.S.-Cuban relations is unlikely.

When I was in Havana in 1998, I asked an official at the U.S. Interests Section if Fidel Castro's family had a history of long life. He replied that Castro's father died at age 92 and his mother at age 87. If his information is accurate, change in Cuba might still be a decade or so away!

## **"Showing Up" is Good, but is it Good Enough?**

**By Eduardo Lachica**

*Eduardo Lachica is a former reporter for The Wall Street Journal Asia.*

The United States has found a practical way of elevating its diplomatic game in Asia—and that's just by being there when invited. By declaring that "the United States is back in Asia," Secretary of State Hillary Clinton took a thinly-disguised partisan dig at the Bush administration for skipping too many high-level East Asian meetings and signaled a return to active, face-to-face engagement with the leaders of the region. The failure of the U.S. to participate at those functions "demonstrates a lack of respect and willingness to engage," Mrs. Clinton declared during her remarks on regional architecture in Honolulu last January. "That is why I made it very clear upon becoming Secretary of State that the United States would show up. I don't know if half of life is showing up but I think half of diplomacy is showing up."

Secretary Clinton has been true to her word. She has made four separate trips to Asia, starting with one to Japan and Indonesia on her very first as secretary of state and including another with President Obama to represent the U.S. at the Asia Pacific Economic Forum in Singapore. She was on her way on a fifth trip last January, stopping over in Honolulu to deliver that speech, when she had to return to Washington to help organize the huge U.S. relief effort for earthquake-devastated Haiti.

The Clinton initiatives appear to be paying off, at least in Southeast Asia where this level of U.S. engagement has been most missing. At a Washington event, with former Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte at his side, Philippine Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo heaped praise on the Obama administration for injecting a "fresh impetus" and "dynamism" in the bilateral relationship. The Philippines has had a great deal of attention from the United States. President Gloria Arroyo was invited to the White House for a talk with President Obama. Manila got a morale-boosting visit from Defense Secretary Robert Gates in the midst of its campaign against the terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group. Mrs. Clinton herself was around, too, at a time of desperate need, handing out funds to replace new schoolhouses washed away by two killer typhoons.

President Obama's visit to his childhood hometown of Jakarta, with First Lady Michelle and their two daughters in tow, already has the makings of a hit – the ultimate example of this personalized, celebrity-driven style of public diplomacy. The Pew Research Center attributes the recent surge in America's standing in Indonesia to President Obama's popularity. Long before he was elected, the charismatic, Harvard-trained lawyer was the clear favorite of Indonesia's political elites. "Obama is closer to Indonesian hearts," the noted Indonesian critic Jusuf Wanandi wrote. "At last there could be a U.S. president that has the experience, the nuance and flexibility in his mind and in his heart to be able to appreciate Indonesia, a diverse country which is still struggling to create a healthy and mature democracy in the biggest Muslim country...on earth."

What many in the Bush administration dismissively thought to be mere ASEAN “talk shops” are to the Obama team an opportunity to “socialize” in the intimate way Asian diplomats are most comfortable with. Former Indonesian foreign minister Hassan Wirajuda called this kind of dialogue “*musyawarah* or consultation in search of *mufakat* or consensus.” Democrats, going back to Bill Clinton and his secretary of state Madeleine Albright, have been more invested than Republicans in meeting and conferencing as a way of resolving international disputes. It’s in their genes. Heeding Harvard professor Joseph Nye, Jr.’s advice, the Clinton administration put its trust in American “soft power” to help influence international opinion. The Obama administration has the same game plan. President Obama and Mrs. Clinton have genuine celebrity power, which makes them even more effective in dealing with Asian publics. On her first trip to Jakarta Mrs. Clinton met gaggles of wide-eyed fans wherever she appeared. In Bangkok she bantered with her hosts and drew appreciative laughter from her audience, performing as much as a glamorous talk show guest as a diplomat.

The ultimate test of public diplomacy, though, is how far it can help the U.S. attain its foreign-policy goals. It may not be entirely fair to judge the Bush administration’s record entirely on the basis of its serial absenteeism at Southeast Asian fora. To the Bush administration, the most important diplomatic commodity was time. This administration did not have enough of it to send the president and his secretary of state on multi-day trips to Southeast Asia with two wars raging in the Greater Middle East. His communicative skills were a standard joke, so it is understandable why he entrusted much of the burden of public diplomacy to others. The Iraq war had plunged America’s standing among Asia’s Muslim communities so low that chatting up ASEAN leaders alone wouldn’t make it lovable again.

The Bush administration, however, was good at signaling its resolution in waging a campaign against terrorism. The fact that these countries were themselves victims of this mortal peril made them willing listeners. The administration used quiet diplomacy to establish a semi-permanent U.S. military presence in southern Philippines; it also quietly restored military assistance to Indonesia that the previous Democratic administration had cut off out of human rights concerns. Ralph Cossa, the president of the Honolulu-based Pacific Forum CSIS, judges that, as far as results are concerned, the Bush administration has “left Asia in pretty good shape.”

The Obama administration still has its work cut out for it. For years to come, the U.S. will have China to deal with as an increasingly powerful rival for the friendship and convictions of Asian publics. Charm alone won’t win the diplomatic wars. Nor, with China throwing around billions of dollars to build airports and dams for its Asian friends, can the U.S. compete just in terms of economic assistance. A story is going around about how one Indonesian cabinet officer declined to take part in a televised signing of a U.S. economic assistance program because the amount involved *only* \$10 million – a pittance compared to the country’s development needs.

The U.S. has to use “smart power” to convince Asians that the U.S. is not only back, but, as Mrs. Clinton made clear, “there to stay.” It has to make a more sustained effort at public diplomacy, using all the tools at hand. These include programs to bring more Asian students and professionals for study in the U.S., such as Fulbright fellowships for the arts and social sciences,

Humphrey fellowships for engineers and the hard sciences. Gone from the region is the sprawling U.S. Information Service (USIS) infrastructure that helped deliver America's message during the Vietnam war. In place of the defunct USIS libraries are "American corners" – stacks of selected books and reading materials—in local universities which are less vulnerable targets for demonstrators and bomb-throwers.

The good news is that the State Department is adapting well to the media revolution. In Kuala Lumpur, Ambassador James R. Keith keeps in touch with Malaysian citizens through a personal blog on his embassy's website. An internet-delivered eJournal has replaced the hard-copy magazines that USIS used to distribute around the region. Budget constraints need not handicap U.S. assistance if projects are creatively packaged. A good example is how the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention and the Armed Forces Research Institute of Medical Sciences work with Thai authorities to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and other diseases under the banner of "health diplomacy." Only time will tell what the results will be of the intensified United States engagement with Asia, but the signs are hopeful.

## **A View From Pakistan**

**By Peer Muhammad**

*Peer Muhammad is a journalist from Pakistan.*

The relationship between Pakistan and the United States seems to be at a critical juncture as the two nations are at a decisive moment to defeat or be defeated at the hands of their the common enemy – terrorism/militancy.

The bilateral ties between Pakistan and the United States date back to the creation of Pakistan itself in 1947. But visible ups and downs in the relations have persisted over time due to clashes of interests or reasons other than that.

The present relationship between the two strategically important countries is significant in the sense that both are battling a common enemy – militants in the shape of the Taliban, al-Qaeda, or other kinds of terrorist outfits. Presently, both the countries have further strengthened relations in a variety of fields ranging from strategic to socio-economic sectors.

Despite all these joint ventures, there is still a high degree of misunderstanding and a lack of trust between the governments and between the people of the two states.

Washington thinks that Pakistan's leading spy agency, the ISI, is not sincere in rooting out the Taliban and wants to keep them as its strategic asset. In that context, the U.S. has many concerns about allegedly presence of the Quetta Shura and Haqqani networks, believed to be operating

across the border against the interest of the United States. The United States also believes that Pakistan's military shows leniency towards certain militant groups in its broader strategic perspective.

On the other hand, the Pakistani people and the government are unhappy with the U.S. because of some of its foreign policies. One of Islamabad's serious concerns is the America's strategic ties with Pakistan's traditional rival, India, as well as the increasing involvement of India's chief spy agency, RAW, in Afghanistan, which Pakistan believes is working against its interests. At the same time, there is also a grave concern within Pakistan about the drone attacks in the tribal areas of Pakistan. The people cite a number of reasons for opposing the drone attacks, despite successful operations against some of the major targets. In addition to the violation of Pakistan's border sanctity, such attacks cause collateral damage and create sympathies with the militants due to increasing civilian casualties.

Even then, the majority of Pakistanis are against the militants, hold little sympathy for the militant leaders, and want to eliminate them from the region. Nevertheless, Pakistanis also strongly blame Washington for being a mastermind behind the creation of the Mujahideen (who later evolved into the Taliban), for using the Mujahideen to achieve American strategic objectives in Afghanistan against the USSR in the 1980s, and for leaving Afghanistan without establishing any strategy to handle this menace. Consequently, the militants flourished there and became a threat to the world in general and Pakistan in particular.

Moreover, Pakistan's powerful military, a key stakeholder in the decision making process, also has some reservations about some of the United States's policies. In particular, Pakistan's military feels uneasy over certain clauses in the Kerry-Lugar bill pertaining to the Pakistan military. The military not only wants maximum financial and strategic support from the U.S., but also to handle all the security related challenges within its own jurisdiction and without interference from the Pentagon. There is no doubt that Pakistan's army is capable and efficient enough to cope with any situation if it has the requisite resources. Crushing the militants in Swat and in the South Waziristan could be cited as successful examples of the Pakistan military's professionalism.

However, the dominant opinion of political and strategic experts in Pakistan is that extremism and terrorism is a common enemy of the two countries which they both want to eliminate. The major hurdle in achieving this joint goal is the trust deficit between the two countries.

The conclusion could be that allocation of huge resources in the war against terrorism cannot yield fruit without bridging the gulf in their trust.

## Section 3: NSF Insider Views

### China: Rising Noise, Sharper Focus

By Frank Schell

*Frank Schell serves on the Dean's International Council of the Harris School of Public Policy Studies, University of Chicago, where he is a guest lecturer, and on the editorial board of the National Strategy Forum. A business strategy consultant and former international banking executive involved with trade and investment, he was posted in north India in the U.S. Peace Corps.*

While there appears to be a collage of ideological and policy conflicts between China and the United States, it would be useful to ponder just how much of this angst is actually new.

Arms sales to Taiwan, receptions for the exiled Dalai Lama, concern over human rights, a command and control economy that favors local interests and protocols, Internet censorship and hackings, allegations of currency manipulation, warnings to the United States about fiscal recklessness, disagreement over perceived climate change, differences over intellectual property rights, opposition to sanctions against Iran and support for Iran's ballistic missile manufacturing capability, and the rise of a blue water navy in the Pacific are examples of those divisive issues between China and the U.S. These differences have for the most part been continuing for many years, but in some cases the intensity appears to be increasing. Because the noise level is now higher, it is especially critical to maintain a well-focused sense of U.S. priorities.

Against this array of conflicts, it is very difficult to envision a more important relationship than that of the world's first and second largest economies, based on purchasing power parity. Were it not for the United States and its vast consumer economy, China would not have lifted hundreds of millions from poverty to the middle class, in a country which in January the *Telegraph* estimated had 350 million Internet users. Further, and thanks in large part to the U.S., with its export driven development model China has become the world's largest exporter, with exports now more than twice those of Japan (*CIA World Fact Book* 2009 estimate). Its factories are kept in business by the U.S., allowing China to achieve a miraculous economic transformation since the late 1970s.

With foreign currency denominated assets estimated at \$2.5 trillion, China is indeed America's banker – with almost \$900 billion of U.S. Treasury securities, plus other U.S. dollar currency holdings and investments. China's appetite for U.S. Treasury instruments keeps our cost of debt capital low and supports a high standard of living through the use of debt – which, as we have

seen in the global economic meltdown, has been badly abused. It is hard to imagine in modern history when two nations have been so addicted to each other.

The most recently announced \$6.4 billion weapons sale of helicopters, telecommunications gear and Patriot air defense systems to Taiwan is not a game changer in strategic terms – Taiwan has been a U.S. client state for decades. And President Obama's recent meeting at the White House with the Dalai Lama is part of a presidential tradition going back nearly twenty years – human rights in China's repressive culture have been an issue of disappointment and contention for some time, embracing more than suppression of dissident Uighurs in western China. To attract foreign investment, for many years China has permitted moderate foreign control but has issued decrees preventing too much concentration of influence. However, of increasing concern should be the climate in China for foreign companies, as reported by the *Wall Street Journal*: A recent survey taken by the American Chamber of Commerce in China states that 38% of over two hundred U.S. companies questioned now believe that they are not welcome in the Chinese market – and that they feel disadvantaged, particularly in state sector procurements.

Of further note, hacking activity believed to emanate from China has been a serious concern for the U.S. government and private sector a number of years. However, the more recent travails of the iconic Google enterprise, which charges extreme local censoring and hacking into accounts of Chinese dissidents, are demonstrating just how authoritarian China can be when it wants to suppress dissidents and those who criticize its ways. Fearful that Google is an instrument of U.S. foreign policy with the ability to destabilize, it is doubtful that the Chinese will yield. At this writing, Google has rerouted its China searches to Hong Kong.

As for currency manipulation, the real issue, as explained recently in the *Wall Street Journal* editorial pages, is not the rate at which the Yuan is pegged to the U.S. dollar by the Chinese government, but rather the lack of external convertibility of that currency, which is not freely tradable in private markets to establish its value. While there is a very understandable populist cry to revalue the Yuan to create U.S. jobs, the World Bank's chief economist, Justin Lin, has pointed out in the same newspaper that from 2005 to 2008, the Yuan appreciated 21%, but the U.S. current account deficit actually increased in that period. Continuing, Mr. Lin said that China contributes to only one-third of the total U.S. trade deficit – and it is well-known that much of this is derived from U.S. companies that now manufacture in China for export to the U.S.

Long term, the trade and treasury deficits of the U.S. must be moderated to avoid future imbalances, asset bubbles, and concentrations that imperil a stable economic order. And China will have to do its part to balance what has been an export led economy with one that favors more local consumption, with liberalization of its currency policy to establish free market value.

China's opposition to Iran sanctions is less understandable. As a principal supplier of oil, a world commodity market that is fungible, Iran can be gradually replaced as the source of an estimated 15% of China's imports of oil and gas. The Uighurs of western China, while Muslims,

are Sunni with limited affinity for Iran's Shi'ites with more cultural linkages to central Asia. To China, however, there is value in a situation that makes the U.S. uncomfortable.

As a rising global power, China's dedication to building a modern navy is yet another issue of concern. While experts would argue that it is presently no match for the U.S. going head to head, this does not address the intimidation value of its navy in the region, as well as reported efforts to develop an anti-ship medium-range ballistic missile with a speed of Mach ten for potential use against Carrier Strike Groups, as reported by the U.S. Naval Institute a year ago.

U.S. priorities with China must embrace nuclear non-proliferation, a stable world economic and investment order, and avoidance of game changing military technology, if possible. The U.S. cannot engage with China on all issues of difference at once, and timing is important. When the U.S. needs China to reform its currency policy, and more immediately endorse sanctions for Iran, it is not wise to contemporaneously announce arms sales to Taiwan and host the Dalai Lama in Washington; those legitimate and traditional opportunities can always wait.

There is no short term fix. And China may well be overplaying its hand by alienating U.S. multinationals and Google, an enterprise that enjoys broad global admiration, ranking fourth among the *Fortune* top fifty most admired companies in the world, with a youthful, entrepreneurial image in a country with a young technology savvy population.

We should be cognizant that China, when it wants to, still considers itself a developing country. While it has achieved economic superpower status in a couple of generations, per capita GDP, one accepted measure of national wealth, is yet another story. China undoubtedly has an opportunity to assert itself now that the Soviet Union is defunct and American power is diluted by a weakened financial system and two protracted wars. We should be prepared for these challenges – from a country that is a trading partner, global competitor, and potential adversary.

While we are going to have to live with a lot of noise and divisiveness, we should avoid distractions, with unrelenting focus on defining and ordering priorities and appropriate future tradeoffs.

## **National Security Strategy:** **Common Sense and Critical Thinking**

**By Richard E. Friedman**

*Richard E. Friedman is President and Chair of the National Strategy Forum and Publisher of the National Strategy Forum Review.*

## Common sense

**“These are the times that try men’s souls.”** The brief pamphlet titled *Common Sense*, written by Thomas Paine, was first published in 1776. It challenged the authority of the British government and the royal monarchy over the American colonies. Paine said of King George, “He may accomplish by craft and subtlety [subtlety], in the long, what he cannot do by force and violence in the short one.”

Paine argued that, given the choice between reconciliation or independence, it was in America’s interest to be separated from Britain. He then stated, “In the following pages, I offer nothing more than simple facts, plain argument, and common sense.”

This brief pamphlet was pivotal in stiffening the resolve of the Colonists and their leaders to declare independence. It succeeded because it resulted in the American people understanding the issues and the arguments involved. It conflated the elements of strategy, critical thinking, and common sense which are the subjects of this article.

## What is Common Sense?

Common sense is a way of thinking about the personal, social, and physical world. It is not a set of beliefs, it is a way of thinking. It is an array of insights gained over time, derived from successful or unsuccessful encounters with difficult situations. It is a tool that extracts meaning from a large volume of information, some of which is contradictory.

Cognition and language are innate and commonly possessed by everyone. Cognition is applied at a basic level in one’s everyday life: “Don’t touch a hot stove because the consequence is that you will burn your hand.” To understand a typical event one relies on learned repetitions and predisposition. Occasionally, disruptions occur which cause one to shed predispositions, adjust behavior, and set a new course.

In the context of national security, when life is good, interest in political affairs is low – why bother, if there is no crisis? However, when confronted with threatening situations, people tend to explore the circumstances that affect them. Common sense suggests that people make better judgments when things are calm, which affords them a leisurely opportunity to analyze the facts at hand. We seek contemporary information hoping for normalcy so that we can rely on what is familiar. People must be convinced that there is a real crisis before they are motivated to modify their predispositions and behavior.

## Thinking

We have a hard-wired ability that enables us to learn, to understand, and to solve problems. Our cognitive intelligence works best when it is tasked to identify a specific problem or class of

problems. The prerequisite for problem solving is knowledge of our immediate world, and knowledge of the constituent parts of the problem to be solved. A disconnect occurs when national security policymakers ignore their personal problem-solving capability (common sense) and fail to use it to address national security problems.

The process requires understanding the constituent parts of the problem and assembling them into a structure of beliefs derived from favorable outcomes of past experiences. In the national security arena, other societies and people have different systems of beliefs than our own. To achieve a favorable result, the U.S. must understand and adapt its reasoning, in part, to the judgments and thought processes of others – the essence of a complementary strategy.

When knowledge is available, we must understand the relationship of the constituent parts of a problem, many of which are conflicting. When this is achieved, we “understand a problem.” We classify data, large and small, and compress this into constituent parts of a problem. In effect, we create a scaffold or structure adapted to a situation.

Human intelligence works best when it is tasked to identify a specific problem or class of problems. Knowledge of the world and the constituent parts of a problem are needed before the task or problem solving can begin.

Common sense is most valuable when it is applied as the ultimate test of policies and decisions derived from strategy and critical thinking. For example, could a decision result in ludicrous consequences? If so, it would be important to take a final look at the process. A retrospective look at crisis decisions gone afoul suggests that penultimate decisions – actions about to be taken but rejected – could have resulted in disastrous consequences.

### **Common Sense Applied to National Security**

The president and his national security advisors are policy makers and crisis decision makers. Although common sense, apart from intellect, is innate, the degree to which it is developed varies widely. Some American presidents were regarded as having average intelligence, but they succeeded partly because of their first-class common sense.

A national security policy maker or decision maker brings to the table a knowledge structure which is based on his or her pre-government experience. Government policy making and decision making are formed largely by the realities of on-the-job training. Policy makers must rely heavily on analogizing incomplete and contradictory information. The analogy process consists of perceiving similarities of past and present situations, and understanding that the characteristics that led to either successful or unsuccessful outcomes in past situations can be applied to the present situation.

National security situations occur when the response time is short; where decisions must be taken with a minimum amount of deliberation (at its extreme, four or five minutes to respond to a

purported missile attack against the U.S.); when the situation is ambiguous; when the information is incomplete and conflicting; and when the consequences of the decision involve a high degree of material and/or political risk.

Thinking "outside the box" is important for critical thinking to flourish. Most elements of national security are well-understood and are "inside the box." However, their connectivity to other elements is frequently overlooked. Most components of national security issues are connected to several other issues. For example, little attention was paid to the element of "affordability" during times of economic prosperity. Resources were regarded as infinite. Now, there is a need to weigh the cost of warfighting in Afghanistan and the expenditures required to fight al Qaeda in Yemen, Somalia, and Mauritania. The result of critical analysis could be re-prioritization and re-allocation of finite resources.

### **Confidence Men**

The confidence man – the con artist – was the subject of the last books written by Herman Melville, Mark Twain, and Thomas Mann. Each of these books expressed a common dark view of the world where the con man could manipulate good people. A con man uses his target's gullibility. Gullibility is a manifestation of the failure to think critically about propositions. Of course, there is no free lunch, but we continue to hope that lunch could be free.

Gullibility and the absence of critical thinking operate in both our personal lives and in the arena of national security. W.C. Fields, the misanthropic film star of the 1930s and 40s, advised, "Never give a sucker an even break." Contemporary history demonstrates numerous examples of the absence of applied critical thinking.

### **Critical Thinking and National Security**

Regarding the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan, one argument is built on the major premise that "The Afghan Taliban are a threat to the U.S. homeland." The minor premises that follow support the major premise: "The Afghan Taliban may join forces with the Pakistan Taliban, or the Pakistan Taliban may join forces with the Afghan Taliban." A second minor premise: "The combined Af-Pak Taliban will destabilize the Afghan government." A third minor premise: "The combined Af-Pak Taliban could result in Pakistan's nuclear weapons being controlled by al Qaeda or the Taliban." The conclusion: "To protect the U.S. homeland, the Afghan Taliban must be defeated; this would prevent Pakistan from being destabilized; an unstable Pakistan government might be unable to prevent its nuclear weapons from being controlled by al Qaeda or the Taliban."

Critical analysis of an argument begins with the analysis of the minor premises – assumptions that may be only partially accurate or true. Recall that one of the minor premises for the U.S. invasion of Iraq was the belief of policymakers that Iraq was close to achieving nuclear weapons capability. The Afghan Taliban inclusion in the argument stated above is the nexus between the

minor premises and the conclusion – an inference based on eight years of observing the Afghan Taliban. There can be several actionable conclusions, including: to suppress the Taliban rather than defeating them, and to prevent Af-Pak Taliban linkage.

Ideally, the minor premises are based on facts and evidence that, in turn, are based on gathering and analyzing relevant information. However, there is usually a factor of uncertainty. Minor premises are often based on assumptions. If an assumption is unwarranted, the actual causation for reaction will be different than what is presumed. The Afghan Taliban and their objectives may be different than those of the Pakistan Taliban. For example, the Afghan Taliban's objective is to force the U.S. "infidels" to leave Afghanistan, but the Pakistan Taliban's objective is not identical. Assumptions are often based on facts that are uncertain, resulting in a weak causal linkage between the minor premises and the conclusion.

An assumption may be fallacious, weak, or erroneous, because a general rule is applied to a unique situation: "the Afghans defeated the Russian invasion because the U.S. provided weaponry to the Afghans which enabled them to shoot down Russian helicopters." However, the Taliban did not exist during the Russian invasion. The *post hoc* complexity is that when something happens before, it suggests that it will happen again: the Afghans defeated the Russians and they are capable of defeating the U.S. Thus, the U.S. must substantially increase its military presence much more than the Russians did and prevent Iran from supplying weapons to the Afghan Taliban, or withdraw. *Post hoc* thinking is frequently misleading because the comparable situations are different.

The distinction between deductive reasoning and inductive reasoning is critical. Policy makers tend to use deductive reasoning because it tends to simplify a complex situation and introduces a high degree of certainty. The premises are portrayed as being true and sufficient to support a conclusion. There are no missing pieces; it is a mathematically closed set. We are familiar with the navigation term "dead reckoning." It is portrayed on navigation charts as "ded."reckoning – deductive reasoning. The exact location expressed as latitude and longitude of New York is certain. To go to San Francisco from New York, what is needed is a compass setting of 175 degrees west using ded. reckoning.

Inductive reasoning is the better practice to be applied to national security situations. It may provide partial support for reaching a conclusion, but it is not sufficient to totally support a conclusion, which may be a probability, but never can be absolutely certain. Inductive reasoning tends to create temporary impasse and "dithering" which can be resolved by the application of critical thinking.

Strategy is both a discipline and a profession. However, at the highest level, the president and presidential advisors are probably not qualified strategists, and they are not ready for policy or crisis decision making in the national security arena when they take office. They are highly qualified politicians and political strategists, but this skill does not necessarily carry over into

national security strategy. Thus, policy and decisions are usually made with a large component of domestic political considerations and consequences in mind.

Military training exercises frequently use a "Red Team" – troops that are assigned to portray the enemy. However, high-level policymakers and decision makers are not usually receptive to views that conflict with their own. They are the skunks at the picnic. Typically, policy making, decision making, and crisis management employ similar techniques. The national security "Red Team" relies on an array of semantics, logic, inductive reasoning, and collaboration among disparate units, and is employed in the private sector as well as the political.

The first cousin of critical thinking is synthesis, which is useful in several ways because it simplifies antagonistic arguments and counter-arguments. It is useful because in the political arena both sides, representing thesis and antithesis, must try to synthesize – grudgingly on both sides – a decision to be reached. The goal is to "get on with it." This is the art of compromise, which is the bedrock of messy American democracy. Both sides adhere to their respective positions, but agree to give up elements of their principles to avoid impasse. Synthesis and compromise suggest a middle ground that is applicable and suitable for political situations. However, in the national security arena, the Taliban, al Qaeda, and other antagonists yet to emerge are neither democratic nor civil, and they have a different ethos than Americans. For them, outcome is effected only after a shootout results in the last man standing.

### **Examples of Non-Critical Thinking**

The application of critical thinking and common sense could have avoided disastrous consequences in the following cases:

- The Wilsonian doctrine that shaped the post-WWI Versailles Treaty Conference: WWI was supposed to be the war that ended all wars.
- The U.S. stock market craze of the period 1925-29, when investors believed that they were rich because they assumed their highly leveraged investments in stock market shares would remain high indefinitely. The unforeseen consequence was the October 1929 Crash and subsequent Great Economic Depression.
- The rise of Adolf Hitler, who conned a generation of gullible Germans into believing that Jews were responsible for Germany's economic depression.
- Joseph Stalin, who conned American idealists and Western liberals into believing that totalitarianism in the cause of a perfect society – Communism – was acceptable.
- The rise of Benito Mussolini, who made Italy's trains run on time, but who led the country into a disastrous alliance with Nazi Germany.
- U.K. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, who in 1939 believed that appeasing Hitler would result in "peace in our time."
- Stalin's belief that a Friendship Pact with Hitler would prevent a Nazi German invasion of the USSR.

- The December 7, 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, premised on the belief that crippling the U.S. Pacific Fleet would result in the Japanese winning the war in the Pacific.
- USSR President Khrushchev's belief that the U.S. public and government would be indifferent to Russian nuclear-tipped missiles in Cuba in 1962.
- The policy and belief of the U.S. government that every American should own his or her own home, without due regard for whether a new homeowner could afford to pay a home mortgage.

The errors embedded in these examples are based on aspirations, unwarranted assumptions, fallacious premises, and failure to anticipate consequences. Whether the application of critical thinking to these examples could have prevented the commission of error is an open question, but it is worthy of speculation about critical thinking.

Even in instances of excellent and intellectually adroit leadership, governments can be wrong and entire societies can be wrecked with consequences. Societal groupthink can be avoided if there is an unrelenting desire to challenge prevailing premises and to seek non-confirming opinions, constructed through rigor and common sense, without assuming away the possibility of unintended consequences.

### **Glossary of Critical Thinking Terms**

The words that are used in discussion, debate, and argumentation are sometimes misunderstood and frequently misused. This is a barrier to critical thinking. The following glossary of terms may be useful as they are applied to the examples of non-critical thinking in the section above.

*Argument*: a statement of a point of view and the evidence that supports it in a way that is intended to persuade others; a line of reasoning; assertion of claims or declarations accompanied by supporting data.

*Aspiration*: a hoped-for result that is subjective, rather than based on objective reality.

*Assertion*: a forceful statement of belief that may be used to intimidate non-believers.

*Assumption*: ideas that are taken for granted and assumed that others share the same assumptions; they are usually implied, rather than expressed. Unwarranted assumptions prevent thinking about useful questions and exploring the consequences that flow from assumptions. Assumptions are made when there is doubt, when it cannot be said with certainty that a fact is correct. There is a need to probe for the unstated assumption.

*Attitude*: a belief expressed indirectly. It is a filter that categorizes others and their arguments as being favorable or unfavorable; it can be a barrier to civil discussion.

*Belief*: a firmly held position that something is true or real; and that if your belief differs from mine, you and your belief are wrong.

*Bias*: a personal perspective based on one's life experience; the bias of others prevents them from reaching sound judgments and conclusions; "my bias is appropriate."

*Cascade of error*: if a fundamental premise is erroneous, this error becomes the foundation for subsequent errors.

*Civility*: recognition that people who have opposing views are not evil and that their arguments may have merit.

*Connectivity*: recognition that situations are usually complex and that the facts, principles, and concepts of one situation are connected to other issues and disciplines.

*Error*: persistence in one's opinions, rather than self-education when inconsistent facts are presented; opinions that are argued without being tested.

*Evidence*: reliable information that supports an opinion.

*Experts*: people who offer opinions that are useful, but may be frequently wrong.

*Fact*: an event that is amply documented and affirmed; when it is highly likely that an element is true and can be empirically tested; facts are frequently judgmental. Witnesses to the same events frequently give vastly different versions of the same event.

*Gullibility*: the failure to think critically about a proposition.

*Ideology*: personal convictions that are unmovable; the counter-convictions of others are offensive.

*Incredibility*: as practiced by con men, it is a repetition of a false fact, or withholding of a fact that is known to be true.

*Judgment*: the ability to make considered decisions that will result in favorable conclusions.

*Logic*: a set of rules used to determine whether an argument is sound or unsound; in its most rigorous form it is based on mathematical formulae.

*Manipulation*: as practiced by con men, it is based on dishonest reporting of facts that are either nonexistent or known to be false.

*Opinion*: statements of belief that are not universally true.

*Premise*: an assumption upon which reasoning proceeds to reach a conclusion.

*Post Hoc*: an error in logic – that something which occurred earlier in time will repeat itself.

*Reasoning*: the process of forming conclusions, judgments, or inferences from premises or facts.

- *Deductive Reasoning*: a process in which conclusions drawn from a set of premises contain no more information than the premises; based on assumed certainty.
- *Inductive Reasoning*: the truth of the conclusion is verifiable in terms of future experience; certainty is attainable only if all possible instances have been examined.

*Selective perception*: focus on what is pleasant and supports our opinion.

*Simplification*: making a situation simpler by focusing on its most important elements. It can also be a tool for inaccurately or dishonestly summarizing a complex situation. There are no shortcuts.

*Thinking*: a conscious, controlled activity that can be improved by training and intellectual exercise.

*Truth*: the accurate representation of objective reality.