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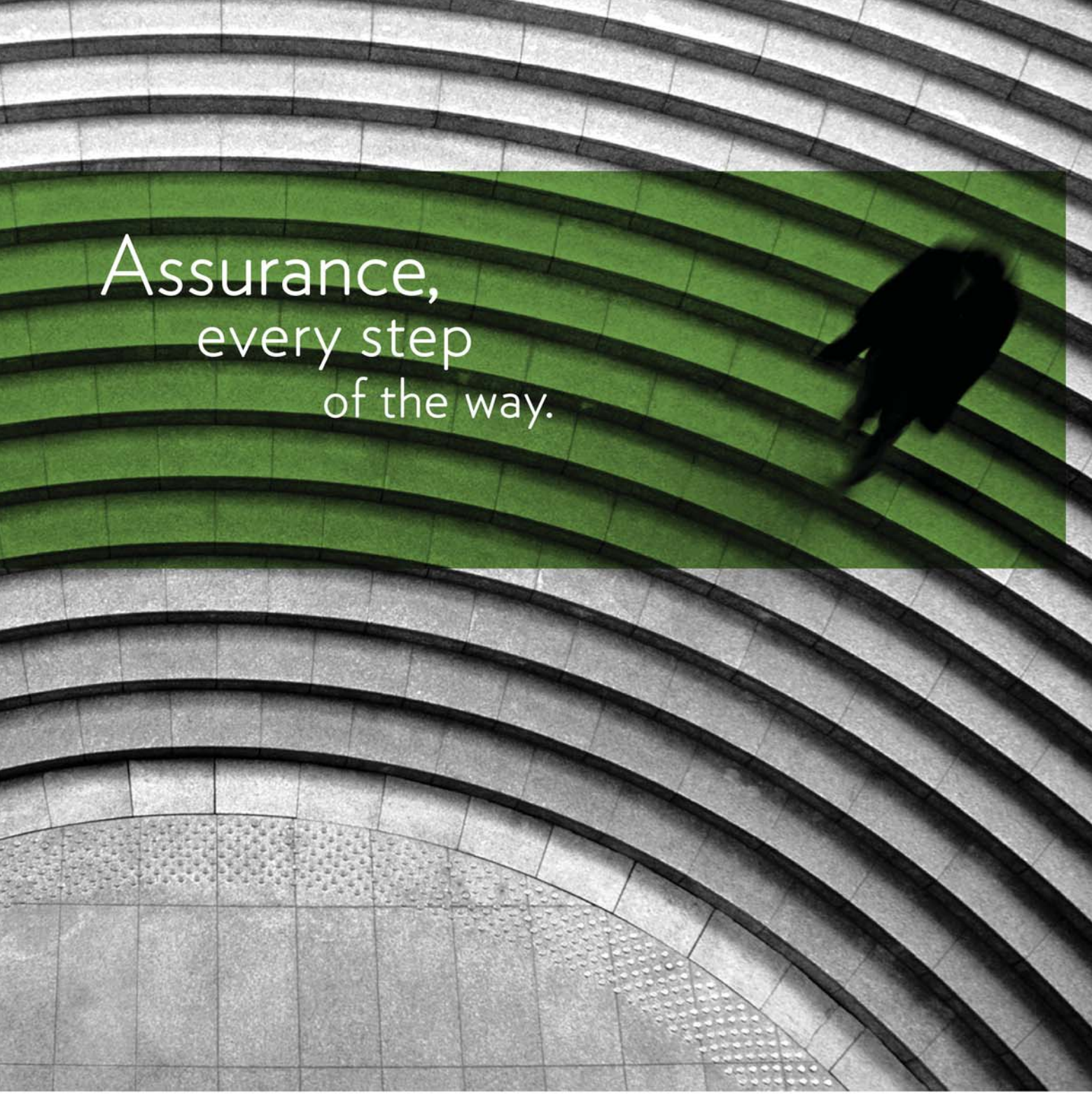

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FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

CONTENTS

April 2008 Volume 85, No. 4

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FOCUS ON
Political Islam

FEATURE

AFSA NEWS

FOREIGN SERVICE JOURNAL

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President's Views

Win One for Diplomacy

By John K. Naland

Given Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's well-known enthusiasm for football, it seems fitting to describe her four-year tenure as having entered its fourth quarter. After the three previous quarters of disappointing yardage in terms of securing resources for diplomacy, her final budget request represents a last-minute pass far down the field. If successful, her pending budget request would noticeably advance the ball in terms of funding for the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development.

But for this long-pass attempt to succeed, it needs to be caught by Congress, which has the constitutional responsibility for appropriating funds to conduct diplomacy and development assistance. An accumulating stack of independent blue-ribbon panel reports and comments by concerned third parties such as Secretary of Defense Robert Gates all reflect the fact that over the past several years, Congress has dropped the ball on providing our diplomats and development professionals with the resources they need to do their jobs.

Of course, it has long been noted that, unlike the armed forces, diplomacy lacks a domestic constituency pushing for funding for its activities. Nevertheless, there are many lawmakers who do care deeply about the civilian component of U.S. international engagement. Simply because it is the right thing to do, they focus on issues such as Darfur, overseas HIV/AIDS relief, or the Middle East peace process. Unfortunately, such concern is often not accompanied by interest in adequately funding the diplomatic platform upon which foreign policy is implemented.

After funding most, but not all, of Secretary of State Colin Powell's "Diplomatic Readiness Initiative" between 2002 and 2004, Congress turned down all subsequent requests for new positions, except those earmarked for consular affairs and diplomatic security. Between Sec. Powell's last year and Sec. Rice's Fiscal Year 2008 budget request, Congress turned down requests to add a total of 709 new positions (almost all for Foreign Service personnel). These refusals came despite sharply increasing staffing needs in Iraq, Afghanistan and other emerging priority areas.

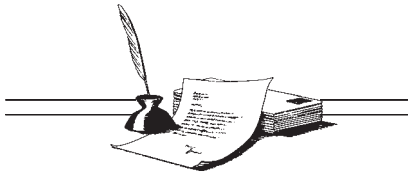
Congress has an opportunity to make up for lost time by fully funding the pending FY 2009 budget request, which seeks to add 1,076 new positions at State and 300 at USAID (again, almost all for Foreign Service personnel). Obviously, AFSA urges support by those lawmakers who have traditionally favored funding for diplomacy and development assistance. But we also urge past critics of State and USAID to take a close look at this budget request.

To them, I say: If you believe that America needs more diplomats who are fluent in key foreign languages such as Arabic and Chinese, there are 300 such training positions requested. If you agree that Foreign Service members would be strengthened by receiving advanced training alongside military colleagues at institutions such as the National War College, the budget request designates 75 positions for that purpose. If you think that an organized and well-trained group of civilians should be available to deploy on short notice to overseas crisis spots to help stabilize the situation, so the uniformed military does not have to bear that burden alone, there are 351 such positions requested. And if you believe that USAID needs to strengthen its capacity to develop and carry out programs that bring prosperity to developing countries, this budget will create 300 positions to do just that.

Now is the time to address these urgent staffing needs. The next president, whoever he or she is, will undoubtedly want a strong diplomatic corps to work hand-in-hand with our nation's strong military. Yet, if the current Congress were to miss this opportunity, it would be 2010 before the first diplomatic reinforcements could finish their initial training. Waiting two more years for reinforcements is too long. It would reduce the new president's flexibility in crafting foreign policy, and continue to place undue burdens on the uniformed military to carry out tasks for which they are ill-suited.

Thus, AFSA urges Congress to act this year. Let's win one for diplomacy! ■

John K. Naland is the president of the American Foreign Service Association.



LETTERS

Who Needs Rest?

I'd like to share my letter to the Government Accountability Office in response to the new ban on business-class travel:

"I just read the GAO report, which says: 'The Federal Travel Regulation states that a rest period en route or upon arrival would invalidate the need for premium-class travel. Our interview with General Services Administration officials further confirmed that if a flight arrived at its destination (either on the outbound or return) by the evening, at such a time that the traveler was provided a reasonable opportunity to get a night of rest, the traveler had a rest stop on arrival and should not be entitled to premium-class travel for that particular itinerary.'

"At the moment, I live and work in Madagascar, the fourth-largest island in the world, lying off the southeast coast of Africa. I would invite you to come and visit us. It is incredibly poor, but the people are friendly and the scenery is spectacular. However, I do need to warn you that for your return to Washington, the very shortest route available takes 24 hours and 48 minutes. It leaves our lovely capital at 1:30 a.m. and arrives at Washington's Dulles Airport at 6:18 p.m., having crossed eight time zones.

"That should not be a problem for you; unlike me, I expect you would be able to go home for a restful night's sleep. (I would have to check into a hotel.) Next morning, bright and early, you would report for work and that 'overnight rest period' will have meant that — despite the 25 hours of travel — you will not have traveled in business class. I only hope that on the first day back nobody asks you to make any important decisions because — trust me on this — you will be far from your normal alert and productive self!

"This is the flaw in your report from my perspective. It is easy to quantify the taxpayer dollars spent to pay for our travel (and, by the way, I completely agree these should be spent wisely and frugally). However, you make no attempt to quantify what is more difficult to measure — lowered productivity, damaged morale, impaired decision-making. Believe me, no matter how short or long the trip, I want the negotiating team going to face off against the North Koreans to address their nuclear capabilities traveling in premium class! I expect, when you think about it, you will probably agree."

George N. Sibley
Deputy Chief of Mission
Embassy Antananarivo

We Did Not Abandon Afghanistan

The December article by Thomas Eighmy, "Remembering USAID's Role in Afghanistan, 1985-1994," touched a sore point with me. I was the USAID representative for Afghanistan in 1992, operating from Embassy Islamabad, with two satellite offices: one in Peshawar and one in Quetta.

Over the years it has become legend that the U.S. government turned its back on Afghanistan as soon as the Soviets withdrew in the late 1980s. That simply is not true.

As Eighmy (who was an outstanding officer on the O/AID/REP staff) points out, the USAID program for Afghanistan grew to a level of about $250 million. I no longer remember the exact totals, but my recollection is that the program was still a robust $100 million or so in 1992, with a total U.S. Foreign Service staff of about 18 officers and scores of Afghan and Pakistani employees between the main office in the embassy and the two satellite offices, not to mention the many NGOs and contractors who assisted us in carrying out the programs. That level of commitment was still going several years after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Eighmy correctly reminds us that in April 1992, four U.S. government officials were prepared to fly to Kabul to reopen the U.S. embassy. They included Peter Tomsen, who would have become the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan, an administrative officer, a diplomatic security officer and me. Had the circumstances allowed, we would have flown into Kabul that April or May and, I am convinced, a robust USAID program operated from within Afghanistan would have followed quickly. At the time, there was talk of spending over $200 million to start a new program.

But we were unable to make that flight, because a deal that had been brokered with the United Nations to make Kabul a kind of "international city" was suddenly broken by the various factions of the mujahedeen that had moved into the city and begun tearing it apart.

It was not the U.S. that abandoned Afghanistan at that point; it was the actions of the Afghans themselves that caused that outcome. In fact, even after that period a USAID cross-border program continued, until that became too difficult to carry out due to political and security issues within Afghanistan.

The statement that the United States turned its back on Afghanistan once the Soviets were out of the way is simply historically inaccurate, as well as extremely unfair to the many people who continued to assist Afghanistan in those days.

Dr. Frederick E. Machmer Jr.
FSO, retired
Mount Vernon, Va.

Exhaustion and the FS

Your January issue on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder brought to mind a similar issue that has never been addressed. When I first entered the Foreign Service, I spent a few minutes at the main entrance looking at the list of names on the AFSA Memorial Plaques. To my surprise, one poor soul is listed as having died from exhaustion. I thought, "What am I getting myself into?"

Much as I loved this career, after a number of years at it, I found myself deeply exhausted. Dealing with hostile or difficult governments, terrorism and transitions between posts are the most draining challenges. When you are at post, you are literally on call 24 hours a day, and much of your unpaid "personal" time is spent on the phone dealing with problems, in the office trying to catch up, or showing visitors around town, attending embassy or diplomatic events, entertaining or helping others entertain.

I have just retired, and it has taken six months — along with bouts of sleeping 12 hours a day — to regain my normal energy level. In my opinion, like teaching, this career is one that needs to give its employees a sabbatical at least every 10 years.

Pat Perrin
FSO, retired
Santa Fe, N.M.

Mid-Level Hiring

This is in response to several recent letters urging the State Department to

institute a mid-level hiring program. The writers ask for a rationale from those opposed to making that change.

First, a clarification: some who have written in favor of mid-level hiring seem to equate that policy with an exemption from visa-line work. But the two are not the same. I suspect few people who would object to beginning their Foreign Service careers by working on a visa line as entry-level officers would want to do the same work as mid-level employees.

There are plenty of talented, experienced professionals who happily dive into a Foreign Service career knowing that their grade will be entry-level. Our top performers routinely begin their diplomatic careers handling the requests of the everyday, regular people who come to us seeking visas.

In addition, consular work is an excellent education and a useful introduction to the Service. If you doubt it, go to the nearest career FSO ambassador's office and ask about his or her early years in the Service.

Or think of it this way. You would not suggest someone wishing to become a physician skip his first year of medical school because he's got experience as an investment banker, would you? So why suggest people do without the strong foundation of diplomatic skills that a few years as an entry-level officer can help build? Whatever your cone may be, entry-level work is a great education in your chosen profession. It is not a pointless detour.

Second, the only people who feel that consular work is beneath them are dilettantes. We don't need that kind of officer. If the mere idea of doing entry-level work for a few years keeps some people from applying for Foreign Service commissions, then an important screening function has been served.

Third, good employers promote from within when possible. Not doing so, when there are already well-qualified employees who could be expected to excel at a higher pay grade, would be a morale-destroying policy.

If I am wrong in my reasoning, that opens up numerous interesting possibilities for me personally. If mid-level hiring truly benefits an organization, then perhaps by the time I retire from the Foreign Service our nation's military will realize the error of its current ways and begin commissioning officers at mid-level ranks.

Just as certain "acquaintances and schoolmates" with no experience in the Foreign Service feel they'd make excellent mid-level FSOs from day one, I fancy I'd make a fine commanding officer of an aircraft carrier, a mid-level job (O-6 in military terms, roughly equivalent to FS-1) in the Navy.

Of course, I shouldn't have to start with the responsibilities of a newly commissioned ensign, because that would "merely perpetuate the flawed mentality that only years of service bring competence and success," to quote one letter-writer. Sure, I'd have to learn to drive a big boat and stuff like that, but I'm a quick study; I've watched several episodes of "Love Boat," so it shouldn't take long. I would just hope there would always be a lot of people around me who actually have years of experience in the running of a carrier, people of proven competence, so they'll be able to tell me what I should do and how I should do it if I'm ever stuck.

William E. Shea
FSO
Consulate Matamoros

An Apology Owed to Leahy

In sniffing (I use the term deliberately) that Don Leahy had "only one previous Foreign Service posting," and was "the very opposite of a bon vivant," Carman Cunningham totally dismissed the record of a dedicated, effective Foreign Service veteran in her January letter. Mr. Leahy actually served in at least three posts — Moscow in the 1950s at the height of the Cold War, Kinshasa in the 1960s and another in Latin America — before his arrival in Santa Isabel (now Malabo) in 1971, where his life was ended violently and too soon at the hands of his principal officer.

Ms. Cunningham owes the Leahy family an apology.

Wayne Hoshal
FSO, retired
Grand Rapids, Minn.

Interagency Cooperation Month

The December issue focusing on country team management was especially timely in this day of multiple agencies and uncoordinated marching orders, including the key question of chief-of-mission authority.

When I was a Foreign Service officer in the 1980s, in order to mitigate jealousies and turf battles overseas, I found it instructive to make myself available to the different groups and sections in order to show a genuine interest in their work and to invite their personnel to my office through an open-door policy. I'll admit many seemed shocked by this surprisingly novel approach, but I believe it paid dividends.

Often at mission meetings, one agency would take advantage of the occasion to gratuitously criticize another. I remember one such incident where the visa section was targeted. After the accuser had finished, as was his custom, the chief of mission asked if there were any comments. I was the only one to raise a hand, and asked the critical party if he had any experience in visa work. Hardly surprising, the answer was "Why, no!"

His agency and the visa section being in the same building, I suggested he and his staff spend some time there. This seemed to be something they'd never considered.

Much earlier, during President Kennedy's final year, I had been the junior officer on several country desks. I was tasked with rounding up a number of different agency signatures for a miniscule defense package for a small country in time for its first anniversary of independence. There was one holdout, so the jeep we eventually provided had the mount but no 50-caliber machine gun. Well, you can't satisfy everybody!

Because of this experience, and noting the number of special events on the calendar such as Secretary's Day and the various History Months, I developed the idea of Interagency Cooperation Month. It got a lot of laughs then and still does today, 45 years later.

Louis V. Riggio
FSO, retired
Hollywood, Fla.

Fool Me Twice

The article on Ambassador Loy Henderson in the February *Journal* includes the point that the Soviets were able to have him removed from the Division of European Affairs in 1943 on the grounds that he was anti-Soviet and an impediment to the wartime alliance. Interestingly enough, I believe the Soviets were able to pull that trick again in 1979 when Ambassador to the U.S. Anatoliy Dobrynin was able to convince Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and President Jimmy Carter that Ambassador Malcolm Toon — who, like Amb. Henderson, was a cold-eyed realist as far as the USSR was concerned — was an "impediment to detente."

I was in the Bureau of European Affairs at the time and recall the continuing Soviet campaign against Amb. Toon, who was replaced in 1979 by former IBM CEO Thomas Watson Jr. Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.

Thomas Niles
FSO, retired
Scarsdale, N.Y. ■

Send your letter to the editor to: journal@afsa.org. Note that all submissions are subject to editing for style, format and length.

CYBERNOTES

Iran Diplomacy: A New Opening?

United Nations Association of the USA President William Luers, UNA-USA Chairman of the Board Thomas R. Pickering and MIT international security expert Jim Walsh have released a proposal urging the administration to begin direct talks with Iran on what is arguably the single most important issue in the relationship: Tehran's nuclear activities.

The authors are among a group of former diplomats and regional experts who have been meeting privately with a group of Iranian academics and policy advisers for the past five years. Both Luers and Pickering are retired FSOs and former ambassadors.

Their recommendation, "A Solution for the U.S.-Iran Nuclear Standoff," was published in the March 20 *New York Review of Books* (**www.nybooks.com/articles/21112**).

Two events prompted the initiative: the December 2007 National Intelligence Estimate for Iran, which concluded that Tehran had halted development of nuclear weapons in 2003; and the positive results from ongoing talks to reduce the number of improvised explosive devices and foreign fighters coming from or through Iran into Iraq.

The authors believe that the Iranian government would now seriously consider a proposal for direct talks with the U.S. on issues beyond Iraq. One reason is Iran's 2009 presidential election. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad may choose to try to boost his ratings through another confrontation with the U.S., but this tactic is already proving counterproductive. Another option would be to negotiate directly with the U.S. to resolve the nuclear impasse.

Luers, Pickering and Walsh make a detailed case for the proposal to turn Tehran's enrichment activities into a multilateral program involving, for example, France and Germany. In exchange, Iran would jointly own and operate an enrichment facility without facing international sanctions.

The proposal promptly received a ringing endorsement from Senator Chuck Hagel, R-Neb. "This article presents a powerful case for a clear, strategic change in U.S. policy on Iran to pursue direct, unconditional and, ultimately, comprehensive talks with the government of Iran," Hagel stated.

"Today, our policy is failing to change the facts on the ground — Iran's nuclear program, including its uranium enrichment program, continues essentially unchecked."

America must recruit and train a new generation of Foreign Service professionals with new expectations of what life as a diplomat will be. We see glimpses of this in many places today: in the jungles of Colombia, where our diplomats are helping old guerrilla fighters become new democratic citizens; in the towns of the West Bank, where our diplomats are supporting Palestinian efforts to build the democratic institutions of a decent and free future state; in Zimbabwe, where our diplomats are taking up the just and peaceful cause of a tyrannized people. These men and women are not managing problems; they are working with partners to solve problems.

— Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, speaking at Georgetown University, Feb. 12, *www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2008/02/100703.htm*

The Battle for Cyberspace

The role of the Internet in national and international affairs — and what, if anything, Washington should do about it — was the topic of two events in February.

The potential for "cyberactivism" in the Middle East to produce needed reform was discussed by Iraqi, Iranian and American bloggers at the American Enterprise Institute on Feb. 4 (**www.aei.org/events/eventID.1650,filter.all/transcript.asp**).

According to Mohammed Ali, a civil society activist who launched his *Iraq the Model* blog in 2003, the first Web logs in the area sprang up in Iraq following the U.S. invasion. Now, he says, some 100,000 blogs and dozens of forums in the Arab world involve several million people. That is significant considering that of a total Arab population of 300 million, only 30 million have access to the Internet.

The bloggers are trailblazers in openly discussing sensitive political, religious and social issues and in form-

ing alliances throughout the region. But as Arash Sigarchi, an Iranian blogger who has been jailed for defying government censorship laws, emphasizes, they are also increasingly under attack from authoritarian governments as well as fundamentalists.

Tony Badran, a research fellow at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies and a blogger on Syria and Lebanon, points out that these regimes have been able to use the media and blogs as tools for disinformation. "What the blogosphere has become on a certain level is basically an information warfare theater," Badran says.

That was an agenda item at the Feb. 19-21 Worldwide Security Conference in Brussels, hosted by the EastWest Institute (**www.ewi.info/**) and co-sponsored by the World Customs Organization and the Japanese Foreign Ministry in its capacity as the current chair of the Group of Eight.

"We will lose the battle for cyberspace with terrorist and violent extremists if owners of large TV, film and Internet companies do not step up soon," says Greg Austin, director of EWI's Global Security Program.

"Mass media coverage of people who speak out against violent extremism has been significantly less visible than coverage that deliberately or unwittingly promotes it," states J. Rami Mroz, author of an EWI policy paper on the use and abuse of cyberspace, "Countering Violent Extremism: Videopower and Cyberspace" (**www.ewi.info/pdf/Videopower.pdf**).

"Cyberspace and associated video formats are ultimately a neutral vehicle for the rapid transfer of ideas, beliefs and agendas. Forces of moderation, integration and education can also use these same media to promote peace, security and prosperity — and thereby to counter the extremists promoting violence," notes Mroz.

His paper offers a series of recommendations on how government and civil society can work together to do so, including the need to distinguish sharply between strategies used to suppress Web-based aspects of actual terrorist operations and those used to counter generalized extremist propaganda.

The EWI, which calls itself a "think-and-do tank," is promoting an International Action Platform to counter violent extremism online.

Kosovo: A Risky Gambit

Kosovo's Feb. 17 declaration of independence has once again opened the Pandora's box of ethnic rivalry and animosity in the Balkans. As inevitable as it appears to have been (see our coverage in the November 2007 edition of Cybernotes), the move is a gamble: it could be, as backers such as the U.S. and European Union insist, the last step needed to finally resolve the dissolution of Yugoslavia and settle the region for investment and growth.

Or, some fear, it may spur new rounds of ethnic nationalism that further fragment the tiny new state and rip into neighboring Bosnia and Macedonia, and perhaps beyond, as well.

Serbia has made clear that it will never recognize the independence of Kosovo, which Serbs have historically viewed as their cultural and religious heartland. Although Belgrade has ruled out any new armed intervention, the 120,000-strong Serbian population there rejects independence and may yet insist on joining Serbia. And, in the worst-case scenario, the move could ignite Albanian nationalism and stir ethnic conflict across the region.

On Feb. 27, incoming Russian President Dmitry Medvedev warned that Kosovo's independence could set Europe "ablaze." Moscow condemned the move and its recognition by the U.S. and major European powers, saying it violates international law and threatens to destroy the existing system governing international rela-

Site of the Month: www.uscenterforcitizendiplomacy.org

Headquartered in Des Moines, Iowa, the *U.S. Center for Citizen Diplomacy* promotes opportunities for all Americans to be "citizen diplomats" and affirms the indispensable value of citizen involvement in international relations.

The center, the only organization of its kind in the nation, was launched in 2006 by a coalition of 120 organizations, many involved in international exchange programs. Ambassador John K. Menzies, a retired FSO who is now dean of the John C. Whitehead School of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations at Seton Hall University, is the center's honorary board chairman.

At a time when we need to dramatically increase our capacity to reach out to the rest of the world to foster common interests and values, the organization's Web site declares, the United States spends just one-tenth of 1 percent of its budget on foreign affairs, and only 1 percent of that on the single most important facet of U.S. foreign policy — citizen diplomacy.

The center is dedicated to reversing this "pattern of neglect." It does this by acting as a clearinghouse for the thousands of programs that offer opportunities for citizen diplomacy and helping citizens of any age locate the program or activity best suited to them. The center's user-friendly Web site also offers information on education and training programs, seminars and workshops related to diplomacy, as well as such useful advice as "Ten Things You Can Do To Support Diplomacy."

50 Years Ago…

Six months ago outer space belonged to science fiction. Then overnight Sputnik I transformed fantasy into reality. … For the immediate future, man's penetration into the near regions of outer space has created new problems and challenges for U.S. foreign policy. These problems will grow and multiply and will repeatedly challenge us anew.

— Editorial: Venturing into Outer Space, *FSJ*, April 1958.

tions. Medvedev added that the decision could encourage a rise in organized crime and drug trafficking across Europe, which would threaten Russia and other nations. And he promised that Moscow would continue to back Serbia, pointing out that a new natural-gas pipeline would make Serbia a key hub for Russia's energy supplies to Europe.

Within five days of the unilateral declaration of independence, two dozen countries recognized Kosovo. China joined Russia in opposing the move, but most other states are proceeding cautiously, awaiting developments at the U.N.

Jordan, the first Arab country to support NATO's military operations against Serbia in 1999, is one of them. In fact, as of mid-March, no Arab country had formally recognized Kosovo; and in Africa, only Senegal had extended recognition. Both Japan and India were temporizing.

Though the E.U. remains divided on recognition — at this writing six countries, led by Spain and Cyprus, were dragging their feet for fear of inspiring their own separatist movements — the Brussels bureaucracy is fully geared up to send a 2,000-strong police and judicial mission to join some 17,000 NATO troops on peacekeeping duty there.

Peter Feith, the Dutch diplomat chosen by the E.U. as its special envoy, is already on the scene. Feith will head the Western-backed supervisory office ensuring safeguards for ethnic minorities in the new nation, including the 120,000 Serbs in northern Kosovo who overwhelmingly reject independence from Serbia.

He will also assume the mantle of international civilian representative once the U.S. and leading E.U. countries are able to persuade U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to cede responsibilities even without the consent of Russia, Serbia's ally on the Security Council.

The U.N. protectorate administration, in place since 1999, has already ruled too long, damping the initiative of an entrepreneurial-minded population, Feith told the Feb. 27 *Financial Times*. In anticipation of the handover, the *FT* reports, E.U. officials have set a donor conference for June to jumpstart the economically crippled state with $1.5 billion in aid for the first two years. With a 45-percent rate of unemployment, however, a quick fix is unlikely.

Anticipating the Kosovo independence declaration, the Council on Foreign Relations' Center for Preventive Action hosted a panel in mid-December on how to manage the consequences, which provides a useful context for understanding events as they are unfolding today. The transcript of that discussion and links to a wealth of additional background materials are available at **www.cfr.org/publication/15086/independence_for_kosovo.html**. ■

This edition of Cybernotes was compiled by Senior Editor Susan Brady Maitra.

SPEAKING OUT

Needed: A Foreign Service Agenda

BY ALPHONSE F. LA PORTA

The fallout from the recent debate about possible directed assignments to Iraq and other conflict zones is continuing and serious. For the American public, and certainly Congress, the staffing debate plunged the Service into disrepute not experienced since Sen. Joseph McCarthy's "witch hunts" in the 1950s.

This view is shared by many retired and active-duty colleagues who, since the onset of hostilities in Afghanistan and, more importantly, Iraq, have privately criticized State's political leaders and management officials for not putting the department on a "war footing" to respond to the inevitable and growing demands.

AFSA has two responsibilities in such a climate. As the employees' representative, it must protect the interests of the Foreign Service, which extend far beyond the involuntary assignments controversy. And as a professional organization, it must inform and lead the Foreign Service in the national interest.

Thus, AFSA should be more pointed in disassociating itself from any sentiment indicating that the Foreign Service is disloyal to the administration, or that its members are unwilling to serve in conflict areas or other high-risk situations. As part of that campaign, AFSA should also exercise leadership to educate Foreign Service personnel concerning their responsibility to serve anywhere, anytime.

In the larger public debate about Foreign Service staffing, AFSA and its members should not neglect one of the major factors, if not *the* major one, contributing to the current problem: the hollowing out of the Service during the 1990s. As former Foreign Service Director General Edward "Skip" Gnehm has described very eloquently on National Public Radio, the Foreign Service is still paying the price for those draconian reductions, which quickly led to extraordinary personnel and budget reductions, combined with accelerated time-in-class retirements throughout the 1990s and into the new century.

AFSA should pursue a comprehensive agenda to reorient State's management and to obtain critical budgetary and other support.

The elimination of the U.S. Information Agency and associated decimation of public diplomacy capabilities, and the ongoing stripping-away of USAID expertise, have accelerated this march toward debilitation of the foreign affairs agencies.

It is not enough to say that personnel at all levels and in all specialties must rise to the challenges of the post-conflict situations and compensate for the under-resourcing of the Foreign Service. Bear in mind also that the concept, sponsored by the Defense Department, to create a single "National Security Officer" corps would subsume the Foreign Service as we know it.

There is also a duty, as reflected in the statements of U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Ryan Crocker, for the Foreign Service to provide the *right* people, as well as sufficient numbers of them, to perform the tasks deemed necessary by our chiefs of mission, both in crisis and non-crisis areas. This is not a matter of politics, choice or opinion polls: the Foreign Service has a duty to respond.

Planning for the Future

To help recover from the public relations crisis, as well as deal with future assignment demands, AFSA should present a comprehensive agenda, in concert with the Foreign Affairs Council and other organizations, to reorient State's management and to obtain critical budgetary and other support within the Bush administration and on Capitol Hill. Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates has provided major rhetorical support for revitalizing the Foreign Service, but much more needs to be said and done by the department's top leaders. I don't hear a lot of speaking out to opinionmakers and the American public.

It is time for AFSA to mount a concerted effort to correct past defi-

ciencies and to properly equip the department for the future. Such measures should include:

1. Fiscal Year 2009 Budget. AFSA should do all it can to mobilize congressional and public support for the full budget request, and should continue to be active in the new effort by the American Academy of Diplomacy to formulate an alternative budget based on demonstrable and optimal needs.

2. Meeting Priority Needs. An overstretched U.S. military increasingly has had to resort to stop-loss policies to meet priority needs. While the Foreign Service may not be able to extend tours involuntarily, there are other steps it can take to address the growing need for a larger Senior Foreign Service:

- End the premature retirements of SFS officers, including recent chiefs of mission, who — if not needed in crisis areas — could free up other officers for critical assignments;
- Postpone time-in-class retirements for officers with needed skills in order to close the people-to-positions gap;
- Recruit retirees and other officers who have left the Service to fill high-priority positions — and not just by calling for volunteers, but by scouring databases to identify candidates and entice them back with attractive financial and benefits packages;
- Remove pay caps and other restrictions on hiring annuitants as AFSA, to its credit, has already advocated;
- Expedite contract hiring of experts with civilian skills not readily found in other U.S. agencies; and
- Raise the mandatory retirement age from 65 to 70 through legislation in order to increase the "bench strength" in the FS-1, -0 and senior ranks. (Otherwise, critical positions will be filled by military officers.)

3. Family Support. AFSA, AAFSW, AFSPA and the Cox Foundation, along with other organizations, should formulate concrete proposals for the department to assist "left behind" families. Volunteers could organize support groups to provide legal assistance, financial advice and counseling for families under stress. Banks and credit unions could be urged to work with separated families in financial difficulty or that have special needs like college tuition assistance. Assistance should also be enlisted from the Red Cross, government labor unions and AARP. The department must institutionalize these efforts, as the military does, by providing funds and support to family relief initiatives.

The Foreign Service has a duty to provide the right people, as well as sufficient numbers of them, to perform the mission.

4. Training. Many suggestions have been made for re-establishing the Vietnam-era integrated training center. The Foreign Service Institute has responded piecemeal to the recent challenges, and only when pressed. AFSA and allied organizations should redouble efforts to consolidate and upgrade professional, language and conflict-area training across the board. As contemplated in State's Fiscal Year 2009 budget request, the "training float" must be restored and enlarged.

5. Active Public Relations. AFSA should step up efforts to use its "silver bullets" — former department officials and others whose names remain well known — to write op-eds, letters and other commentaries. A few have done so, but more top-drawer friends of the Foreign Service should participate. AFSA should also vigorously promote the recommendations of the Center for Strategic and International Studies' Embassy of the Future project and the "Smart Power" Commission as a means of promoting responsible discussion and solutions.

Although costly, a public relations firm should be engaged (not unlike those used by defense contractors and other labor unions) to publicize facts about the Foreign Service, its personnel and financial resource predicament, and to highlight the dedicated service of our officers in high-risk areas. Members of Congress should be lobbied in their home states, in addition to Washington, by retirees, businesses and other organizations friendly to the Foreign Service.

A last but important word: Rhetoric is often as important as substance in convincing the Congress and the American people that the Foreign Service and AFSA are loyal supporters of the nation's interests. We must combine substance and rhetoric, turning away from complaining and defensiveness, to again make the Foreign Service a respected national security partner. ■

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POLITICAL ISLAM: A PRIMER FOR THE PERPLEXED

Illustration by Ben Fishman. Images courtesy of iStockphoto.com.

WASHINGTON POLICYMAKERS SHOULD ALWAYS BEAR IN MIND THAT POLITICAL ISLAM MAY BE OUR ENEMY OR OUR FRIEND, DEPENDING ON THE CONTEXT.

BY ALLEN KEISWETTER

Whatever the results of the presidential campaign, new policymakers will take their places in Washington in January. There is no doubt that the Middle East will loom large on the horizon as the new administration seeks to implement its ideas about countering terrorism, promoting democracy and developing an international consensus to support U.S. policies.

All this will require a more sophisticated understanding of political Islam than the heat of campaign debates allows.

What Is Political Islam?

Let's begin with the basics. Islam is a religion and political Islam, sometimes called Islamism, is the application of those religious ideas in the political arena.

Among the world's 1.3 billion Muslims, there is wide cultural and political diversity. Islam is a dominant motif in the political mosaic of most Muslim countries, but it is not the only pattern. Ethnic and tribal values, colonial experience and economic endowments also weigh strongly, both on the importance of Islam and its nature.

Practice varies greatly. In Morocco, the king hosts an annual liturgical music festival during which American gospel singers have inspired thousands of young Moroccans to shout "I love Jesus." But in Saudi Arabia, the murawwah (pre-Islamic code of manly virtues) shapes a strict Wahhabi interpretation. And in Indonesia, pancasila merges the five pillars of Islam into a civic code emphasizing tolerance, diversity and acceptance. So the first lesson from the primer is that political Islam is idiosyncratic, making generalizations problematic.

Furthermore, globalization has blended Islam and the West. Islam in the West is commonplace, including a growing Muslim population with increasing numbers of mosques and halal markets (stores selling food permissible under Islamic law). Similarly, the West has penetrated deeply even into the cradle of Islam itself. Indicative is the Golden Arches barometer: McDonald's serves halal hamburgers not only at its three franchises in the holy city of Mecca, but also at locations in Michigan and London.

Who Are the Islamists?

Practitioners of political Islam can be broadly classified into three groups: quietists, activists and jihadists. Whereas the first two emphasize that jihad is an inner struggle to submit one's self to God's will (jihad of self, the hand and the tongue), jihadists stress external or military struggle (jihad of the sword).

Although there are no reliable statistics, the preponderant group, encompassing three-quarters or more of all Muslims, is the quietists, who generally believe that God can take care of Himself, thank you. While Islam permeates their lives, only occasionally do they feel compelled to act politically for religious reasons, usually when they believe there has been an affront to Islam or interference with the practice of their faith. A well-known quietist is the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani in Iraq.

While all Muslims take inspiration from the Quranic injunction to promote virtue and prevent vice, activists go beyond just setting a good example in society to political action and leadership. In Saudi Arabia, the religious police (mutawaa) enforce prayer times and dress codes and confront anyone who offends their strict Wahhabi interpretation of Islam. Activists are the leaders of Islamist political parties and movements. Mawlana al-Mawdudi founded the first modern version in India in 1941 with the aim of establishing an Islamic state. In the contemporary context, the leaders of the Shiite religious parties who head the Iraqi government are examples.

The jihadists are activists who believe in the use of violence. Their origins go back to the Kharjites, who in 661 assassinated the Caliph Ali, who they believed had betrayed God's will because he had allowed his son Hasan to negotiate away his caliphate. Prominent jihadists today include Sunni terrorists such as the al-Qaida leaders. They take inspiration from Ibn Taymiyya, a 14th-century cleric who elevated violent jihad (lesser jihad) over the internal struggle for righteousness (greater jihad).

They also take inspiration from Hasan Banna and his disciple Sayed Qutb. Banna formed the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in the 1920s to oppose Britain's de facto rule and provide social services that the government was failing to deliver. The local groups evolved into secret cells for violent action for political ends in the 1940s. Qutb's contribution was largely doctrinal: after attending college in Greeley, Colo., he returned to Egypt to brand the West as jahilliyya, the Arabic name for the sinful, unenlightened times before Mohammad. Among the Shia, the Hizbollah leaders and Iraqi firebrand Moqtada al-Sadr draw on a populist tradition of using Shiite religious organizational structures and rites to seek revenge.

All Islamists seek to ensure that civil law is at least consistent with Shariah, or Islamic law. Shariah consists of God's revelations to Mohammad recorded in the Quran, as well as Mohammad's sayings and example (hadith), consensus among the Muslim community (ijmaa) and interpretation by religious scholars (ijtihad). Separating the jihadists from the others politically, however, are their the-

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ories of abrogation. In the jihadists' view, the "sword" verses, drawn from Mohammad's revelations when he was fighting the Meccans, abrogate the "peace" verses that suffuse much of the rest of the 114 chapters (suras) of the Quran.

Sunnis, Shia and Sufis

All Muslims believe in the five pillars of Islam. These include: the profession of faith (shahadah) that there is only one God and Mohammad is his messenger, praying (salah) five times a day, fasting (sawm) during the holy month of Ramadan, giving charity (zakat) and pilgrimage (hajj) to Mecca. Beyond that, there is considerable diversity among the three major sects: Sunnis, Shia and Sufis.

Sunnis, constituting about 90 percent of Muslims, have no overarching hierarchy. The most prestigious religious leaders (ulema) in Mecca and at al-Azhar in Cairo have only the power of moral suasion over the followers of the four schools of Sunni Islam: the Hanafi, the largest and most liberal school of the Ottomans; the Hanbali, the strictest school, which includes the Salafis, such as the Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia and Qatar, who want to emulate the piety of Mohammad and his 7th-century companions; and the Maliki (largely in West Africa) and the Shafai (largely in Southeast Asia), both distinguished by their incorporation of local elements.

Thus, there are few theological impediments to Osama bin Laden's proclaiming himself an imam, or religious leader, despite his lack of religious credentials.

A bit of 12th-century Sunni intellectual history is relevant here. Nine hundred years ago al-Ghazali, a Baghdadi religious scholar, indicted Greek philosophy in a book called the *Incoherence of the Philosophers*, arguing that revelation trumps reason in religion. Averroes, who lived in Cordoba, attempted to rebut that view in writings called *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*, arguing that God gave man reason and that it should be applied to religion as well. In essence, al-Ghazali's side won the protracted debate. The consequent stultification of Sunni orthodoxy is called the Closing of the Great Gates of Ijtihad (interpretation).

The good news is that globalization has flung those gates wide open to interpretation. Competing with the jihadist vision of a return to 7th-century Islamic purity are vibrant interpretations stressing the faith's compatibility with political and economic modernity. Leading the way are many Muslims familiar with the West, such as Tariq Ramadan in Switzerland and Rashid Ghanoushi in Tunisia.

In contrast to the diffuse organization of the Sunnis, the Shia (also known as Shiites) are much more structured. This is a result of the fact that their imam went into hiding (occlusion) back in the 9th century. To fill the gap, a hierarchical system of ayatollahs developed that assigns rank by scholarship and size of discipleship. Every young Shia has to choose his spiritual leader at puberty. The ayatollahs offer spiritual and political leadership and provide welfare benefits and assistance in pilgrimages to the shrines at Najaf and Kerbala. Thus, the Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini had the authority to create a new theocratic form of governance called valeyet e faqhi, and the current Grand Ayatollah Sistani's quietist views count strongly not only in Iraq but among his followers worldwide.

The essential doctrinal difference between Sunnis and Shia is over the succession to the Prophet Mohammad. While Sunnis believe the successor (caliph) to Mohammad should be selected by the faithful, the Shia believe in descent by bloodline through Mohammad's cousin Ali and his son Hussein. Rites and pageants marking the killing of Hussein by Sunnis at the battle of Kerbala in 680 easily become politicized. Similarly, the Shia tradition of commemorating a death 40 days after a person has died (arbayeen) can cascade into waves of violence as deaths on one occasion produce more deaths 40 days later. This cycle figured significantly in the overthrow of Mohammad Reza Shah in Iran in 1978 and 1979.

The Shia and Sunnis have a long history of animosity. Theologically, the Shia blame Sunnis for killing Hussein and usurping God-ordained authority, while the Sunnis see Shiites as idolaters who venerate Ali, Hussein and other figures in defiance of God's commandment to worship Him alone. These differences are further exacerbated by longstanding ethnic rivalries, particularly the one between Arabs and Persians. Shia frequently have a sense of victimhood stemming from their history of domination by the Sunni, their minority status in many countries and their comparatively lower economic position generally.

Sufis are mystics who believe that they can experience God directly through meditation, dancing, music or other rites. Most are Sunni but adherents include Shia, as well. Politically, they are quietists or activists and generally open to the ideas of others as long as the tenets of Islam are respected. An example is the movement led by Fethullah Gulen, a Turkish Sunni mystic who now lives in

the United States. Venerating the 13th-century poet Rumi, the Gulen movement promotes interfaith and intercultural understanding, and operates 700 schools in Turkey and elsewhere as alternatives to the Wahhabi madrasas. Iraqi Kurdish leaders Jalal Talibani and Massoud Barzani are both Sufis, but they belong to different turuq, or brotherhoods.

Why Do Muslims Rebel?

A recent statistical study documented a trend of rising political violence in Muslim-dominated countries since the 1990s. However, religion has been only an exacerbating factor; separatism, it turns out, leads the list of causes. Mohammad Hafiz, an academic at the University of Missouri in Kansas City, hypothesizes that Muslims rebel not as a result of disproportionately great grievances but for lack of redress of the grievances they do have due to institutional exclusion and repression. In their frustration, they find justification for rebellion in Islam's jihadist tradition, and mosques provide them access to resources, a mobilizing venue and a degree of sanctuary.

One of the contributing factors is the mindset of many Muslims, who see themselves as under siege. Historian R. Stephen Humphreys describes Arabs in particular as caught "between memory and desire" — the memory of the glorious past when Muslim civilization was the world's most advanced and the desire to escape from the unsatisfactory present when their interests are disrespected internationally, they are disproportionately poor and uneducated and they are frequently badly governed. The U.N. Development Program's *Arab Human Development Reports* call many governments "black holes" in which nothing moves and from which nothing escapes.

Against this historical backdrop, there are other psychological, political and economic factors at play. The psychiatrist Marc Sageman, who has analyzed the personalities of more than a hundred convicted Muslim terrorists from their court records, concludes that jihadists are not mentally ill but show patterns of ghettoization and alienation. Michael Mazaar, a political scientist at the National

War College, sees the Muslim extremists as suffering from ennui and rootlessness because of globalization, not unlike the conditions that fueled the growth of Nazism in Europe after World War I. For his part, Alan Richards, an economist at the Army War College, notes that economic and social conditions such as urbanization, poverty and illiteracy produce disaffected youth living in ungoverned spaces from which jihadists can recruit.

Answers as to why Muslims rebel are complex, vary according to place and circumstances and are far from being well understood. Rather than being unique, however, the reasons are a subset of the explanations for why any society's members rebel, developed by Ted Robert Gurr, Jack Goldstone and others. These factors include grievances caused by relative deprivation, an identified cause of the deprivation, alienated masses available for political mobilization and an alternative leadership that gives hope for success.

Islam and the West

The West plays a large role in political Islam, as both friend and foe. As the noted scholar Bernard Lewis recounts, the defeat of the Ottomans at the Second Siege of Vienna in 1683 launched a profound internal debate among Muslims as to "what went wrong" to account for this catastrophe at the hands of infidels. Attempts to figure out why the Muslim world lags behind the West, at least in terms of economic and technological development, continue more than three centuries later.

The "determinist" reply that nothing went wrong — what has happened is God's will, and thus nothing is to be done — lost out long ago to answers favoring action:

- The revivalists say the Muslim community has been insufficiently obedient to God's will, and what is to be done is to return to greater piety;
- The reformers believe that the Muslim world has failed to keep up with the West technologically, so the answer is to adopt its technology while preserving the tenets of Islam; and
- The secularists view Islam as intrinsically dated and assert that its practice should be marginalized in order to pursue modernization.

Iran since 1979 and Afghanistan under the Taliban are examples of the first perspective; Egypt and most of the Arab Gulf states represent the second; and Turkey and Bourguiba's Tunisia reflect the third.

For policymakers, it is important to understand that the matter is not settled. The debate continues both internationally and internally, even within each of these prototypical countries, and the categorization above provides a framework to analyze developments.

Still the question remains: Why has the West excelled economically while the Muslim world has been in decline for centuries? How can you explain the fact that the 57 countries making up the Organization of the Islamic Conference have an aggregate gross domestic product equivalent to that of Germany, even taking into account the oil boom? The answer is not Islam's communitarian nature; after all, Mohammad was a trader and the bias is, if anything, toward free markets. Nor is it because of the prohibition of payment of interest (riba), which in any case has not been widely applied historically.

Economic historian Timur Kuran argues that the answer is the dimming of intellectual curiosity with the closing of the Great Gates of Ijtihad. In order to preserve the orthodoxy, people over centuries have falsified their "preference curves;" that is, they have concealed their true beliefs in public discourse "lest they be accused of harboring animosity to Islam." The result has been the failure to accommodate changes, especially in the educational system: there are only 1,500 universities in OIC countries, compared to nearly 6,000 in the U.S. alone.

Islam, Democracy and Human Rights

Just as Christianity was used to justify the divine right of kings, Islam is used to justify nondemocratic rule; after all, Mohammad held both supreme temporal and religious power when he created the first Muslim community in Medina in 622. But ideas that provide a strong basis for democracy are also deeply embedded in Islam. The concept of a consultative council, or majlas asshura, goes back to the selection of the first caliphs; and the concept of consensus, or ijmaa, implies free debate.

In short, Islam does not preclude or preordain either democracy or authoritarianism, but provides scope for various forms of government that meet the Quran's requirements for fairness and justice and the equality of all Muslims before God.

The Islamic concept of human rights differs from what Humphreys calls the establishment of the individual as "a final criterion value" that has occurred, as he notes, "in a few highly exotic societies, like the modern United States." The Islamic default settings are male and Muslim.

Women in Islam. The default setting in regard to

men and women is not without nuance, however. Islamic feminism, for example, ranges from the stark beliefs of Muslim female suicide bombers — an increasingly common phenomenon — to the liberal ideas of Amina Wadud, who recently led Friday prayers before a mixed male and female congregation in New Jersey. She argues that the universal truths of the Quran have to be separated from Mohammad's cultural circumstances; in fact, equality of believers before God gives equal rights to men and women in their daily lives.

In essence, the argument is whether the Quranic injunctions about the role of women were set for all time in the early days of Islam or whether Mohammad's example of ending female infanticide and generally improving the plight of women should be emulated today.

From the beginning of Islam women have played important roles. Mohammad's wife Khadija was his first convert. His youngest wife Aisha, one of several he married after Khadija's death, led an army in the Battle of the Camel in 656. And his daughter Fatima inspired the Shia Fatimid dynasty, which covered North Africa, Egypt and the Levant for two centuries. Many of the strictures affecting women most severely stem not from the Quran but from interpretations formulated by the major schools of Islam in the 9th century.

In short, the treatment of women within the Muslim world has varied according to time and place. Age hierarchies have also cut across sexual patterns, with older women commanding great authority even over younger men. Women have led political parties and governments in many Muslim countries, such as Turkey, Pakistan and Indonesia.

Religious Tolerance and Justice. The default position favoring Muslims still recognizes Christians and Jews as "people of the book;" i.e., those who, like Muslims, accept the Bible as divinely inspired. This status provides scope for tolerance and acceptance, so practice varies; extremist Wahhabis brook no other faiths, while the Sufi Gulen movement emphasizes religious tolerance.

Overall, the cultural heritage of Muslim countries

shapes human rights practices as much or more than Quranic injunctions. This is particularly true because many of these states are shame societies, where immoral conduct disgraces the entire community and must be avenged publicly — frequently by the offender's family as illustrated by honor killings of women. By contrast, most Western countries are guilt societies, where immoral conduct is a personal matter, with the individual being held solely responsible to the state for his or her conduct.

Systems of justice in Muslim countries are also amalgams of Shariah, Western influences and cultural heritage. Islamic law usually influences family and criminal matters, with business issues governed by grievance law. Still, there are some stark differences. While the Western legal tradition emphasizes open trials with a jury of one's peers and legal representation, the Shariah-based code of Saudi Arabia seeks justice from a different perspective. No circumstantial evidence is permitted, only eyewitnesses and confessions. In the absence of the required number of witnesses, it is the duty of the judge to ascertain the truth from the defendant. Open trials, juries and legal representation hinder that process.

Generally, human rights are treated as a communitarian concept in Islam. Individuals have the right to expect justice and fairness from God and the Muslim community (umma) as a whole, but do not intrinsically possess inalienable rights.

A "Clash of Globalizations"?

The 9/11 attacks gave new prominence to political scientist Samuel Huntington's warnings of a developing clash of civilizations. But there are several things wrong with Huntington's thesis. First is his notion that clashes are the predominant feature of relations between Islam and non-Islamic societies. Such a view ignores the routine cooperation that underwrites the mutual undertakings supporting the world's political, military, energy, financial, commercial and economic agendas.

Second, his level of generalization is too broad to have analytical importance for policymakers. Both the West and Islam encompass such diversity that using the idea of a conflict of civilizations as a primary analytical tool is simply not useful — and is actually harmful. Both within Islam and between the Muslim world and the West, clashes occur, but few are unmitigated.

What about a "civilization of clashes," the latest recasting of the debate, as a term to describe Islam? Jonathan Fox's study of religious conflicts between 1945 and 2000 finds that the significant contrast in levels of internal strife is not between Islam and Christianity but between these two and all others; he credits their elevated levels of violence to their claims of exclusivity.

Perhaps the most useful way to proceed is to interpret conflicts as a clash of globalizations. Ideological conflicts are inevitable; but as this process produces an even greater blending of cultures, they are not necessarily intractable or non-negotiable. In this regard, it is worth recalling that the Constitution of Medina that Mohammad promulgated in 622 offered a framework for peacefully settling disputes among Jews, Christians and other groups, as part of its outline of governance for the newly founded Muslim community.

First Steps

With that in mind, the incoming administration should take as its premise that political Islam may be our enemy or our friend, depending on the context. To react appropriately to each situation, both the diversity within Islam and the multiplicity of U.S. interest should be borne in mind. Thus, our attitude toward Hamas, which advocates violence, should differ from our attitude toward the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, which has evolved from the days of Banna and Qutb and now renounces violence.

That suggests a second maxim: put a premium on regional expertise. As the *U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* observes: "What makes intelligence analysis for COIN so distinct and challenging is the amount of information that must be gathered and understood. ... Commanders and their staffs must expend at least as much effort understanding the people they are supporting as the enemy. Identifying the real problem is the essence of the operational design process."

Finally, there is scope for action. Both the Zogby and Gallup polls document a great decline in respect for the United States in the Islamic world. But they also indicate that Muslims generally object to our policies, not our values. What they want is respect for their religion and what they fear is political domination and occupation. Ironically, the strongest support for democracy is found among the radicalized rather than the moderates.

Thus, the first order of business for the new administration should be a reassessment of the premises of policy. The second should be the education of the American people about the diversity of Islam. ■

ENGAGING MODERATE MUSLIMS: RISKS AND REWARDS

WORKING WITH POLITICALLY MODERATE MUSLIM LEADERS AND INSTITUTIONS HAS BEEN PART OF USAID'S MISSION IN THE EUROPE AND EURASIA REGION SINCE 2001.

BY DAVID A. ATWOOD

The United States risks losing one of the most important struggles of the 21st century: the war of ideas between politically moderate Muslims and radical, violent jihadists over Islam's role in the world. Though this is primarily an internal struggle, U.S. decisions can make a difference.

While the terms "moderate," "conservative," "fundamentalist," "radical," "jihadist" and "Islamist " are used in many different ways, it is useful to keep in mind that people from varying faith backgrounds who are conservative in their expressions of religious belief can simultaneously be politically moderate in accepting democratic pluralism, secular government and the imperative to resolve disagreements peacefully. Thus, many "fundamentalists" who believe in the fundamental and sometimes literal statements from their holy scriptures are both nonviolent and politically moderate.

The experience of USAID's Europe and Eurasia Bureau is instructive in this regard. Following the end of communism, millions of people explored their religious identity and beliefs for the first time. Widespread missionary activity — including Saudi Wahhabi and Iranian Shia influences — accompanied this spiritual awakening. Thirteen of the 19 countries in the region receiving USAID assistance have significant or majority Muslim populations; 10 of those have experienced wars in which ethnic and religious identity played a central part. Some young Muslims have been drawn into violence and terrorism. In short, the region faces the problem of violent Muslim radicalization seen elsewhere in the world.

Engaging politically moderate Muslim leaders and institutions has been part of USAID programs in the E&E region since 2001. This article sets out four aspects of making such engagement more effective.

Dialogue, Understanding and Sympathy

The E&E Bureau's leadership and staff have engaged in a broad array of respectful dialogues with politically

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moderate, often religiously conservative leaders and institutions in the region. This was not a public diplomacy effort in the sense of telling our story to the "target audience," but informal listening and dialogue, based on an acceptance, even appreciation, of the role that conservative Muslim religious piety plays or can play in the societies of the region.

These informal, unstructured and sometimes even unplanned exchanges of views generated significant, unanticipated good will, even in cases of previous hostility toward the U.S. In contrast to Samuel Huntington's warnings of an impending "clash of civilizations," such initiatives are in line with the "dialogue of civilizations" called for by figures as varied as Akbar Ahmed, Pakistan's former high commissioner to Britain who now holds the Ibn Khaldum Chair of Islamic Studies at American University, and Mohammed Khatami, the former president of Iran.

Respectful dialogue with religiously conservative communities is not the norm in the foreign affairs, think-tank and intelligence communities because, in general, we aren't inclined to acknowledge the value of conservative but peaceful expressions of faith as normal, admirable or enriching. Here in America, for example, can we understand and sympathize with positions of religiously conservative Muslims, Christians, Jews or other Americans regarding religious schooling, headcovering, abortion, sexuality, or belief in the truth of their scriptures even when we disagree with those positions? Are we upset about, rather than respectful of, family members or colleagues whose religious beliefs or practices set them apart? Without a sympathetic and engaged understanding of religiously conservative faith at home, we are poorly equipped to engage with politically moderate Muslims in the larger world.

Such an engagement is crucial for truly understanding situations where conservative faith can turn into — or be manipulated by our enemies into — support for terrorist activity. Without understanding what draws people to faith, we can't understand, for example, why a young Muslim in Uzbekistan would want to join a radical organization like Hizb-u-Tahrir (HT — the "Party of Liberation"). HT is a secretive group that claims a peaceful approach but appears to have a radical political agenda. With few outlets for legitimate economic or spiritual aspirations, a young man might be drawn to HT not for its political agenda, but rather for being one of the very few spiritual and ostensibly incorruptible groups in that society who are trying to live purely and seek God's truth. Yet much current analysis sees HT only as a manipulative group with a radical, possibly terrorist political agenda. This analysis misunderstands or ignores the aspirations for spiritual growth and purity that motivate young people in a repressive, corrupt society that is hostile to Muslim piety.

Misunderstanding or dismissing pious expressions of conservative religious faith leads to other flawed analyses and policy prescriptions heard far too often in embassy team meetings and Washington briefings. These analyses assume that religion — particularly Islam — is the problem; if only we could minimize its influence, we could win the war of ideas. I highlight the pernicious implications of this approach below:

Muslim NGOs. There is some concern within the security community about the growth of Muslim nongovernmental organizations, based on the expectation that some groups may become sources of terrorist finance. But this concern overlooks the role of civil society — including religious NGOs and other organizations — as inherently moderating and stabilizing, even if a few individual NGOs do have a volatile agenda. Indeed, one of the greatest successes of U.S. foreign aid in the post-communist world has been in opening up space for an expanding and deepening civil society.

Our security concern should be directed to states that limit the activities of NGOs as a way to clamp down on civil society. By limiting the peaceful expression of people's ideas, complaints and aspirations (religious and secular alike), such governments drive citizens toward violent ways to express themselves. In Uzbekistan, for example, some of the recruitment of young people into HT is precisely the result of having no other way to voice their concerns and aspirations. Conversely, USAID's long engagement with Muslim organizations in Indonesia has certainly helped some of them play a stabilizing and moderating role there.

The financing of terrorist groups and the existence of radical NGOs that espouse violence are real concerns, of course. But the answer is not to wish away civil society and its essential stabilizing role. Instead, we should spend significantly more attention and resources to help NGOs, including Muslim-affiliated ones, expand in ways that promote transparency in finance and clarity of vision and purpose.

The Turkish Model. Another suggestion often heard is that we should encourage or acquiesce in the adoption of the Turkish model of managing Islam in countries with significant Muslim populations, a model shared by Russia,

Egypt and other countries. These states manage religious expression to ensure that it does not go beyond the bounds of what the state deems acceptable.

This approach makes sense if religion is seen as a problem. But if religiously motivated terrorism — not religion itself — is the problem, this approach is flawed because it gives power to the state to close mosques or disqualify imams disliked by the state, encouraging abuse on the part of authorities that leads to the radicalization of some Muslims. For example, when politically moderate yet popular mosques or preachers are suppressed in Baku (or Cairo, for that matter), such actions close off avenues for constructive religious expression. Some may turn toward more radical, secretive — even violent — avenues.

People from varying faith backgrounds can be conservative in their expressions of religious belief, yet politically moderate.

Mosques. It is also possible to hear influential embassy officers state, without being challenged, that our goal should be to "keep young men out of the mosques" — a goal that would undermine any credible or effective engagement with moderate Muslims.

A Professional Specialization

Over the years, USAID has engaged and strengthened politically moderate Muslim leaders and institutions through a range of programs and activities. Much of the agency's success derives from the ability of USAID staff, grantees and contractors to develop dialogue, programs and trust at the regional, sectoral and community levels. The examples below are drawn largely from the E&E region:

• Working with madrassas to introduce or improve the teaching of secular subjects like information technology and English (Indonesia in the 1990s), improve teaching methods and introduce civic education (Central Asia);

• Facilitating local religious leaders' introduction to, and relationships with, local NGOs funded by USAID that are working in social or economic activities benefiting their communities (Bangladesh and Central Asia);

• Sending imams and other religious leaders on exchange programs to visit Muslim leaders in the U.S. to learn how religious leaders and institutions function in a secular democracy (Central Asia);

• Promoting and funding community infrastructure activities — as well as national-level interfaith dialogue — in post-conflict multiethnic environments that require different communities to work together to achieve common goals;

• Training current or rising leaders from different ethnic and religious communities together in rebuilding their societies after the Balkan wars of the 1990s;

• Using the statutory requirement to review environmental and community impacts of all projects as a means to engage in dialogue with, and personally recognize, Muslim leaders and participants involved in USAID projects; and

• Rebuilding historic mosques that have been damaged in wars or conflicts while engaging the leaders of those institutions in broader dialogue regarding religion and the state.

Many of these activities strengthen the role of women. One program has introduced citizen rights into the curriculum of madrassas, teaching young women not only what their rights are, but how to respond if police harass them for their conservative dress. Being taught in an interactive style, these young women are empowered by responding, questioning and thinking through their answers rather than learning by listening and rote. Other programs help women at the extreme end of misfortune by repatriating or sheltering those who have been trafficked into prostitution or other forced labor. Leadership training has strengthened the skills of Kosovar Muslim professional women who had been denied training and education during the difficult 1990s. Family planning and reproductive health programs in Albania and Azerbaijan are introducing modern methods of contraception, thereby expanding women's choices. This is reducing women's reliance on abortion, which was the family planning method of choice under communism.

USAID can engage in such activities even where public opinion about America is unfavorable. One of our country's strengths remains people-to-people relationships. Local people appreciate USAID staff, grantees and contractors who genuinely seek such relationships within the context of development projects. In addition, people all over the world, including many Muslims, appreciate USAID's knowledge, methods and approaches to prob-

lem-solving, despite their current suspicion of American motives and concerns about U.S. foreign policy. When we help Muslim leaders and institutions in a respectful, effective way to solve their communities' organizational, teaching, health or other problems, they appreciate such support in the same way that non-Muslims around the world do.

Engagement with politically moderate Muslims does* not *increase the risk of terrorist attack.

Finally, despite current trends toward State-USAID integration, there are advantages to maintaining some separation between the two entities. Carried out at several removes from the chancery, these programs are managed by USAID, but often implemented by local NGOs, while the face-to-face contact is with private Americans or with local staff.

One challenge to expanding or sustaining these activities is that, unlike areas such as agriculture, economic policy or HIV/AIDS, they are not seen within USAID or the Foreign Service as a professional specialty. Usually, when a major new set of issues arises, the agency engages in a range of pilot activities over a period of two to three years, evaluates them, catalogs best practices, creates a personnel cadre to carry those best practices to USAID missions overseas, identifies a bureaucratic home in a Washington bureau, and develops a sense of unified mission and common practice within that group of personnel. But despite some early, informal efforts, this has yet to occur with Muslim engagement activities.

There are other challenges to such work, of course, including funding, confusion about how and where it is legal for the U.S. government to work with religious institutions, and the inflexibility of the new "Foreign Assistance Framework" into which all aid projects must fit. A major challenge, discussed below, is managing the risks involved in working with various Muslim organizations.

Taking Manageable Risks

Former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld issued a challenge in his October 2003 "long, hard slog" memo: to prevent recruitment of new generations of Muslim terrorists faster than the U.S. can kill or capture the current ones. Nearly five years later, Washington still has not responded to this challenge coherently and effectively.

Instead, separate policy areas managed in isolation preclude a strategic approach. Counter terrorism, public diplomacy, and the promotion of democracy and Muslim engagement each have separate interagency decision processes. When these activities intersect or bump up against each other, there is no coherent process for making judgments and weighing risks to ensure optimum outcomes. Yet policies could be adjusted — without increasing the risk of terrorist attack — in ways that expand U.S. engagement and strengthen politically moderate Muslims and Islamic organizations. Such adjustments will be difficult and complex, requiring an effective dialogue with Congress, but they must be made to better position the U.S. to win the war of ideas that undergirds the war on terror.

Here it is important to explicitly state my argument: It is in the United States' interest to engage a diverse range of politically moderate Muslim individuals and organizations, including some who are theologically conservative, and strengthen them in their commitment to democratic values and political moderation and thereby in their role in the war of ideas raging within the Islamic faith. Not everyone agrees. There are some in the U.S. security and counterterrorism communities who believe that engaging or strengthening Muslim NGOs or leaders conflicts with the goal of preventing another 9/11. Others assert that it is necessary to stop all NGO contributions or activities in sensitive areas (e.g., the West Bank and Gaza) because that is the only way to cut off terrorist finance.

These are serious, not frivolous, concerns; and it is important to respond to them with facts and clarity, recognizing that current security measures have paid priceless dividends in preventing terrorist incidents on U.S. soil for six years. However, the fact remains: engagement with politically moderate Muslims does *not* increase the risk of terrorist attack. For one thing, the kind of relationships that USAID and its grantees and contractors have with Muslim NGOs (as is the case with other local groups) cannot be used in pursuit of a terrorist agenda. USAID support consists almost entirely of training in management, leadership or certain technical fields (for example, health, education and micro-lending) or of small grants for specific activities.

In addition, the USAID inspector general and the agency's audit programs are among the most competent in the U.S. government (for good reason, given the financial-

ly vulnerable and often corrupt environments in which the agency operates). USAID has a proven track record in preventing the misappropriation or theft of U.S. dollars, even among small-grant programs, and of rectifying the rare instances of recipient malfeasance. Accordingly, it is entirely feasible to expand this kind of engagement without increasing the risk of facilitating terrorist attacks against the U.S.

Current counterterrorism approaches that focus exclusively on protecting against the catastrophic short-term risk of terrorist attacks, infiltration by violent Muslim extremists and terrorist financing may be foreclosing multiple opportunities for engagement and dialogue with politically moderate Muslims and Islamic organizations. In fact, expanding such outreach could actually help "drain the swamp" of violent extremism by encouraging credible, nonviolent Muslim voices and institutions. Passing up such opportunities itself exacerbates the risk identified by Rumsfeld and others.

A truly effective risk management strategy — encompassing the intersection of counterterrorism, public diplomacy, and support for civil society and Muslim NGOs — would make informed judgments about these risks. The failure to craft such a strategy has left USAID (both in the E&E region and more broadly) and State with neither the resources nor the political backing to take actions that would more effectively engage and strengthen a diverse range of voices of political moderation in the Muslim world.

The withdrawal of a 2004 visa for Tariq Ramadan to teach in America is a case in point. Ramadan is a highly influential European Muslim intellectual whose work has tried to identify a constructive role for Muslims in European societies. He was barred from accepting a distinguished professorship at Notre Dame's Krok Institute for International Peace Studies because he had contributed to a group supporting Hamas — *before* it was designated a terrorist organization. This decision sent the world a clear signal about the low value that the U.S. puts on the work of a legitimate Islamic scholar trying to identify a role for Muslims in modern, secular society. And it

is an example of the kind of failure that probably happens frequently without making the headlines.

It is vital to focus on the benefits of engagement with politically moderate Muslims; otherwise, our current counterterrorism lens will screen out many opportunities.

It is vital to focus on the benefits of engagement with politically moderate Muslims.

Toward a Sensible Policy

If expanding dialogue to help anchor and deepen political moderation among a wider range of Muslim groups is a legitimate policy goal, then at least two sets of actions should be the subject of an interagency process. Due to its sensitivity, this process must involve Congress. The first set of actions involves the federal guidelines for NGOs working overseas. The second involves the use of U.S. counterterrorism databases. Such an interagency policy process would likely identify other actions beyond these two, discussed below.

Treasury and USAID's guidelines and reporting requirements for NGOs merit rethinking. Currently the U.S. Treasury voluntary guidelines, the USAID partner-vetting system and similar reporting requirements are focused solely on minimizing the risk that any NGO engaged overseas could be linked, even distantly, with a group or individual involved in terrorism or terrorist finance. Yet as with any system, trying to reduce risks to as close to zero as possible has significant downsides. The costs of these guidelines — in money, time, paperwork and (perhaps most important) fear of reporting personal information that may be shared with U.S. and foreign intelligence services — are borne by the NGOs, their members, participants and officers. And they ensure a reduction in the numbers of politically moderate groups willing to partner and engage with the United States.

Attention also must be paid to improving the National Counterterrorism Center database, which relies on multiple sources of varying quality and reliability. Every false positive has the potential to prevent various U.S. organs from engaging with influential, politically moderate Muslim individuals and NGOs and expanding their influence. Given the premium quite rightly put on avoiding an attack on U.S. soil, it is likely that many of the systems feeding data into the NCTC are biased toward false positives. The challenge for the interagency community is not to reduce those but to decide how to manage the fact that we have a system that indeed *needs* to be biased toward false positives.

What would a more sensible risk management strategy look like? Reporting requirements could be redesigned in cooperation with NGO representatives in ways to encourage more, instead of less, engagement with Muslim NGOs. These guidelines could, for example, stipulate differing levels of scrutiny for different-size grants or different kinds of activities. At the NCTC, it might involve creating a position for a "Muslim engagement ombudsman," whose job would be to weigh risks and benefits of partnering with people or institutions when a federal agency vets a name with the database.

This official, who would work in a classified and necessarily nontransparent environment, would be the "go to" person if a proposed partner's name came up. In such a situation, the ombudsman would make an informed strategic judgment about whether or not the activity should go ahead, after taking into account the quality of the NCTC information and the expected benefits to the U.S. of the proposed activity or partnership. The post or USAID mission — given the nature of NCTC information — would usually not see the rationale for the decision, but would know that an informed judgment, taking account all the factors, had been made. Currently, there is no interagency dialogue to consider such solutions.

In summary, USAID has laid the groundwork for engaging and strengthening politically moderate Muslims — some of whom may be theologically conservative — within a wide range of dialogue and programs. We should build on this experience. But taking it to a level where it would have significantly broader impact will require several changes: increasing our understanding and appreciation of religious and spiritual aspirations among politically moderate Muslims; institutionalizing Muslim engagement work as a recognized career-enhancer; and rethinking risk management approaches in national counterterrorism strategy to encourage work with the broadest range of politically moderate Muslim groups. This latter change requires creating a new strategic interagency process, as well as initiating dialogue with Congress about risk management and expanded engagement with Muslim NGOs. ■

CLIMBING THE GREASED POLE: TURKEY'S ISLAMIC DEMOCRACY

RELIGION HAS BEEN PART OF THE BATTLEGROUND OF POLITICS IN TURKEY FOR DECADES, BUT THE STRUGGLE OVER THE ISSUE HAS RECENTLY TAKEN A NEW FORM.

BY GEORGE S. HARRIS

The Turks have been wrestling with their identity and the place of Islam in public life since Mustafa Kemal Ataturk founded the new state in 1923. The architect of replacing the worn-out Ottoman Empire with an energetic new republic, he pointed Turkey firmly toward the West.

For Ataturk, Islam represented the dead hand of the past. By enshrining secularism in the Constitution, he sought to make sure that Islamic practice would not stand in the way of Turkey's modernization. During his lifetime he resolutely prevented the construction of any new mosques in the capital, Ankara. And all Islamic religious officials were, and continue to be, supervised and paid by the Turkish government. In his zeal to make Turkey a developed nation, Ataturk even investigated the possibility that Protestantism's work ethic, following the teachings of Max Weber, might energize the Turks to progress more rapidly, as it had done in Western Europe.

Since Ataturk's day, however, the pull of religion has made itself felt ever more strongly in Turkey. Over time, the secularism of the nation's civilian elite became diluted as new recruits from the periphery who increasingly took pride in their Islamic identity joined their ranks. By the 1990s, civilian politicians seeking to use religious appeal to succeed in politics were even able to form a ruling coalition.

The military establishment, by contrast, remained fiercely committed to Ataturk's secularism, a divide that has increasingly set the generals apart from the civilian politicians. The military took power directly twice, in 1960 and 1980, and its veiled threats brought down a civilian government for appearing to exploit Islam for political purposes as recently as 1997. It also encouraged Turks to demonstrate in defense of secularism in 2007.

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In addition to numerous articles on Turkey, he has written several books, including Troubled Alliance: Turkish-American Problems in Historical Perspective, 1945-1971 *(1972) and* The Communists and the Kadro Movement: Shaping Ideology in Ataturk's Turkey *(2002).*

But while the generals remain a potent factor in political calculations in Turkey to this day, they are constrained in exercising power by their recognition that ruling by fiat would generate strong domestic resistance. A military coup would also powerfully disrupt the country's course toward membership in the European Union, a relationship that they strongly desire. Hence, instead of taking action on their own, these days they merely invite the civilian politicians by indirection (proclaiming that their views are so well known that they do not have to be repeated) to oppose what the military leaders consider violations of secularism.

Among other things, the AK Party appears to stand for greater scope for the practice of Islam.

While the senior generals seem united in their view of Islam, the civilian camp is not. Cosmopolitan European influences dominate in the major cities and in the developed coastal part of Turkey that has long been a favorite tourist destination, with its beaches where topless bathers do not heed Islamic strictures on public display. Yet in the poorer sections of the large cities, migrants from the villages observe traditional dress and customs, with the mosque playing an increasing role. And even in Ankara, Ataturk's stricture against building new religious edifices has fallen away; Friday prayers in scores of new mosques are attended by many tens of thousands.

Central Turkey, including such cities as Konya, Kayseri and Gaziantep, is home to the "Anatolian tigers," emerging economic powerhouses based on clothing manufacture, construction and other industries. Their owners are associated with the modernizing movement led by Islamic scholar Fethullah Gulen, who seeks to adapt Mohammad's teachings to the current day and stresses contemporary education and the harmony of the three Abrahamic religions. This well-funded, moderate religious current, with its many high schools, forms the backbone of support for the ruling Justice and Development Party (generally known by its Turkish initials, AK).

Finally, the eastern region of Anatolia is populated both by highly conservative Sunni Kurds and secular-minded Alevi Turks and Kurds. The latter groups tend to shun mosques and, quite unlike the Shiite Iranians next door, back secular parties — particularly those who claim descent from Ataturk's own political organization.

Religion has been part of the battleground of politics in Turkey for decades. But recently the struggle over religious issues has taken a new form, especially after the victory of the brand-new AK Party in the 2002 parliamentary elections. This party is led by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, a former popular mayor of Istanbul who had been jailed in 1998 for referring to minarets as "bayonets of the faithful." Among other things, the party appeared to stand for greater scope for the practice of Islam.

Because of the vagaries of the Turkish election system, the AK Party took just over 60 percent of the seats in Parliament, even though it only received about a third of the total vote in 2002. That result came about because nearly half the ballots cast nationwide were discarded, having been marked for the 16 secular parties that did not exceed the required 10 percent of the national vote needed by any individual party to elect deputies. Thus, the AK's victory was not a majority movement in favor of a religiously oriented party.

Moreover, polling shows that much of its support reflected disappointment with decades of rule by secular parties, which were seen as guilty of corruption and unable to provide effective government. The new party seemed especially attractive because Erdogan, as mayor of Istanbul, had run the largest city in Turkey efficiently and honestly.

Slow but Steady Wins the Race?

The party's leaders clearly understand that much of their support comes from devotees of good government, so until recently they have moved quite slowly along a religious course. In fact, on the eve of the 2007 elections they purged a third of their deputies for appearing too conservative. Such tactics, and Turkey's unusually strong economic performance under its stewardship, appeared responsible for increasing the AK Party's share of the national vote from 34 percent to 47 percent.

Recent polling data provide additional insights into why the party has moved only slowly to change secular laws. When asked their opinion of Shariah (Islamic religious law), some 21 percent of Turks say they favor its adoption in place of the present secular codes. But when pollsters went on to ask whether a man should be per-

mitted to have more than one wife at at time, as Shariah would allow, only 6 to 7 percent agree. And when asked whether hands should be cut off for stealing or adulterers should be stoned — punishments Islamic law mandates — only 1 percent of Turks support such extreme measures. Clearly, many Turks either do not really understand what adopting Shariah would mean or believe they would be able to tailor its requirements to the Turkish environment.

The Headscarf Controversy

Turkish women have enjoyed equal rights with men before the law since Ataturk's day. To replace Islamic law, he introduced Western legal codes that have remained in force ever since. But he did not stop with merely changing the rules of the game. He saw to it that women exercised the right to vote and were elected to political office. Under his encouragement women entered the National Assembly, became judges, and served as university professors as early as the 1930s. Yet it took until the mid-1990s for a woman, Tansu Ciller, to become a party leader and prime minister. Moreover, while urban women have generally taken advantage of their secular opportunities, many rural women remain bound in tradition.

At present all major parties nominate women to run as deputies; and even the religiously oriented AK Party saw the number of its female candidates elected to Parliament in the last election rise to 26, double the total five years earlier. Today, roughly a tenth of Parliament is made up of women.

But while the political fortunes of women thus far in Turkey might suggest that they are gaining in rights, there is a strong current of concern in feminist circles that, in fact, the pressures on women to conform to traditional Islamic practices are rising. One of the main foci of this concern is the headscarf issue (known as a "turban" in Turkey), which secular Turkish women often consider the nose of the camel under the tent. They worry that the entire beast will eventually force its way in, and that all women will be forced to conform to Islamic practices.

Thus, the course of the headscarf controversy is an important measure of how the religion issue is evolving in Turkey. The headscarf was a new form of Islamic observance when it was introduced in Turkey in the 1980s. At the end of that decade, a law was passed forbidding women to demonstrate attachment to Islam by wearing a head covering that conceals all their hair in university and government buildings.

The course of the headscarf controversy is an important measure of how the religion issue is evolving in Turkey.

Indeed, in a somewhat sensational incident after the 2002 elections, one female member of the newly elected AK Party's parliamentary delegation attempted to wear a headscarf to the swearing-in ceremony at the National Assembly. She was physically prevented from taking her seat. Yet although AK Party leaders gave the impression during the 2002 elections that they would end or at least relax the ban, they took no action during their first term in office.

Then, in April 2007, the time came for the election of a new president. Abdullah Gul, the head of an observant Muslim family, was going to stand for the position. In an attempt to head off his election, the military leaders engineered large street demonstrations in Ankara and Istanbul in favor of secularism. Then, during the National Assembly's voting process, the Turkish Constitutional Court ruled that the necessary quorum was not present to permit the presidential vote to continue. The main complaint against Gul was the fact that his wife, Hayrunisa, always wears an Islamic-style headscarf. But after the July 2007 national elections returned the AK Party to power with an even larger majority, a quorum was secured and Gul was successfully elected president. The generals, their bluff called, took no action.

Although the headscarf ban is dear to the military establishment and to many Turks, the AK leaders then proceeded to lift it, with support from the Nationalist Movement Party, an ultra-nationalist organization, which got the third-largest number of votes in the last election. This returned the situation to where it was 20 years ago, when women's hair was permitted to be covered, but veils and burkas were not allowed. Polls show that there is not much support for allowing such veiling in Turkey today. But again, the move to permit the headscarf is stirring up opposition, ensuring that the issue will remain a live one in Turkish politics.

Tellingly, the Turkish first lady has been very careful to be discreet and not lead the challenge to secularist practice, however. Meanwhile, the top generals have seemingly repaired relations with the AK Party over this matter. Whether those two developments constitute a tradeoff, explicit or implicit, or are merely coincidental, it appears that there has been a significant diminution in the power, if not the inclination, of the military establishment to involve itself in politics.

This may be because any flexing of political muscle by the generals would impede Ankara's already shaky bid to join the European Union. E.U. membership is something both secularists and proponents of Islam wish would happen, although for different reasons. The devotees of Islam see membership as a guarantee of freedom of religious activity and assurance against military intervention. However, given the reluctance of the Europeans to see Turkey with its large Muslim population enter, membership is not likely to come about in the next decade, and some doubt it will ever take place.

The Kurdish Conundrum

A major test for the AK Party government is whether its Islamic appeal for unity can prove stronger than the separatist current within the Kurdish community, particularly in the traditionalist eastern part of the country, and thus overcome the divisiveness that has troubled Turkey in recent decades.

By the end of the 1970s, a small radical Kurdish terrorist organization, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (known by its Turkish initials as the PKK), began to foment violence against the regime. Led by Abdullah Ocalan, it operated outside the tribal structure and espoused the cause of broader independence for Kurds in eastern Turkey. After Ocalan's capture in 1999, he called for an end to ethnic violence. Accordingly, there seemed a chance that the PKK would turn into a political party and use the electoral system to seek greater political rights, rather than pursue outright independence.

Unfortunately, that course has not been followed, and in the past few years Kurdish violence has resumed. The danger exists that a tit-for-tat mentality could arise where

PKK strikes would trigger disproportunate military reactions, which would, in turn, feed a culture of violence without end.

But on the level of the political parties, a certain degree of optimism reigns. The 2007 elections showed the AK Party winning just over 50 percent of the vote in the east, reflecting a possible decrease in separatist sentiment among the Kurdish population. The rest of the Kurdish vote was split.

Significantly, the PKK has not retained the support it used to enjoy because other Kurdish organizations are increasingly popular. Supporters of Nakshibendi dervish organizations and ultra-conservative outfits, including Kurdish Hezbollah (which translates as "The Party of God"), have gained ground. These other groupings of Kurds are critical of violent incidents fomented by the PKK that have caused collateral damage, such as the recent bombing in Diyarbekir, the largest Kurdish city in eastern Turkey, in which Kurdish students, rather than the targeted Turkish military, were killed.

A Model for Others

Given all this, what can the United States do to help bolster Turkey's Western orientation, and is there any way to help it become a model for other Islamic regimes? To take the second question first, Turkey is not well positioned to serve as a beacon for other Islamic nations. Its Arab neighbors still nourish a feeling of reserve produced by the maladministration of the Ottomans and a conviction that modern Turkey has become too subservient to the West. These states are not encouraged to copy the Turkish experience when they see the many hoops Ankara has had to jump through to join the European Union. Nor does American support improve their inclination to follow in Turkey's wake.

In the past, among the Arabs only Tunisia's Habib Bourguiba was known as an admirer of Ataturk who sought in any way to emulate the Turkish Republic. But the current leaders of Tunisia lack his standing, should they seek to copy Turkey's system. In another part of the Muslim world, the Pakistani generals have looked to the

Turkish military establishment and its role in politics to justify their efforts to monopolize power. But they have not sought inspiration from Turkey to create a moderate Islamic democracy.

Recently, Turkish-American relations have been volatile and stressed, reflecting Ankara's anger with President George W. Bush for risking the destabilization of the Middle East through the invasion of Iraq, as well as U.S. failure to move against PKK sanctuaries in northern Iraq. To alleviate these strains, and reinforce Turkey's Western orientation, the Bush administration should:

• Broker serious cooperation with the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq against PKK bases there;

• Encourage more foreign investment in Turkey by American multinational corporations;

• Step up the education of Congress on the harm to U.S. interests from resolutions alleging genocide against the Armenians by the Ottoman Empire; and

• Continue America's strong support of Turkish entry to the European Union. Our focus should be on persuading opponents, particularly French President Nicolas Sarkozy, not to block further negotiations looking to eventual Turkish accession. At the same time, we should encourage the Turks to meet all E.U. human rights criteria.

How far will the AK Party go in shading Ataturk's concept of secularism? For the moment, at least, it is likely to rest on its laurels. Its leaders, after all, are moderates and lack any interest in restructuring Turkish democracy in basic ways. Hence, if the military maintains its disapproving but distant posture, as appears quite likely, the government will probably be able to accommodate the recent changes, which it can sell as expanding freedoms.

The party's popularity will in significant measure continue to be built on its fostering of economic success. Its challenge will be to show that unlike all previous Turkish regimes, this one can keep advancing for more than two election cycles without sinking into corruption or losing momentum. Islamic practice itself will thus probably not be the determinant of the regime's ultimate staying power. Good governance will. ■

A TRADITION OF TOLERANCE IN INDONESIA OFFERS HOPE

WITH THE LARGEST MUSLIM POPULATION IN THE WORLD, INDONESIA HAS THE POTENTIAL TO HELP DEFINE ISLAM AS MODERATE AND PROGRESSIVE.

BY KYAI HAJI ABDURRAHMAN WAHID AND C. HOLLAND TAYLOR

The world's total Muslim population exceeds 1.3 billion people, of whom approximately 300 million live in Arabic-speaking countries, which are at the heart of the radical Islamist movement. Islam's center of gravity, however, lies not in Mecca or Cairo, but much farther east. Nearly twice as many Muslims live in Indonesia, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh as in the entire Arab world. Thus the "struggle for the soul of Islam" must inevitably be fought and won not only in the Arab heartland, but on its periphery as well — a fact which offers a unique, little-known opportunity for those wishing to promote moderate and progressive interpretations of Islam. Non-Arab Muslim populations have the power to help define Islam, and to discredit Wahhabism as a heretical fringe movement financed by oil-rich extremists.

Western scholars, journalists and diplomats have long admired Indonesia for having the most liberal and tolerant version of Islam practiced anywhere on earth. However, this tradition of tolerance has come under threat in recent years as radical groups have expanded their influence. The country has endured terrorist bombings, the forced closure or burning of many churches, and a prolonged religious war in its eastern provinces from 1999 to 2002 that took the lives of thousands, Christians and Muslims alike.

Without minimizing the enormous human suffering caused by such events, and their devastating impact on Indonesia's economy, extremist ideology represents a far greater threat than bombs to the country's traditions of pluralism and tolerance. These are embodied in its constitution and state ideology of pancasila, which guarantee freedom of worship and reject the notion of a so-called "Islamic state."

Tradition of Tolerance

Situated on Islam's eastern periphery, Indonesia's long and venerable tradition of religious tolerance is not the result of accident, but rather of precise historic circumstances that offer valuable lessons for us in the struggle against religious extremism and terror today.

The 16th century was a time of great upheaval and bloodshed on the Indonesian island of Java, as newly

Kyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid was president of Indonesia from 1999 to 2001. Prior to that he headed Nahdlatul Ulama, the world's largest Muslim organization.

C. Holland Taylor is chairman and chief executive of the LibForAll Foundation (www.libforall.org), a nonprofit organization he co-founded with Pres. Wahid, which works to reduce religious extremism and discredit the use of terrorism.

Muslim city-states along its northern coast destroyed local Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms and extended their power to the interior. Flush with victory, militant adherents of the new religion — many of Arab or Chinese descent — sought to eradicate the island's ancient cultural heritage, using religion to justify their quest for economic and political power. Opposing them were indigenous Javanese — led by Islamic saints and political figures such as Sunan Kalijogo — who sought continuity and a common ground between religions, based on the precepts of tolerance and mysticism.

For nearly a hundred years, the opposing forces contended for the soul of Java — and, ultimately, for that of Islam — in a war whose decisive engagements occurred not only on the field of battle, but in the hearts and minds of countless individuals scattered across the lush, tropical landscape. It was a conflict between extremists and Sufi (mystically inclined) Muslims. In the end, the Sufis' profound spiritual ideology — popularized among the masses by storytellers and musicians — played a role even more vital than that of economics or pure military force in defeating religious extremism in Java.

As a result, a new dynasty arose, founded on the principle of "the throne for the people," which established religious tolerance as the rule of law and guaranteed freedom of conscience to all Javanese — long before similar ideas took root in the West. Its founder was a Javanese Sufi Muslim and disciple of Sunan Kalijogo named Senopati ing Alogo. The basis of his victory was the popular appeal of Senopati's message of freedom, justice and profound inner spirituality, in contrast to the fanaticism and tyranny of his opponents.

This rich historical and cultural tradition became the inspiration for the LibForAll Foundation, which the authors established in the wake of the 9/11 attacks and the 2002 Bali bombing to help foster international peace and security. Its mission is to encourage the growth of peaceful, tolerant and free societies — built upon a foundation of civil and economic liberty and the rule of law — in order to reduce religious extremism and discredit the use of terror worldwide. Our goal is to help ensure the global triumph of a pluralistic and tolerant understanding of Islam, at peace with itself and the modern world.

LibForAll plans and executes its programs in cooperation with like-minded Muslim leaders in the fields of religion, education, popular culture, government, business and the media, and is systematically building a global counter-extremism network that unites top Muslim opinion leaders in each of these fields. The name we gave this network, Rahmatan lil Alamin, is inspired by the Quran's vision of Islam as a blessing (rahmat) for all creation (alamin).

The Battle for Hearts and Minds

Since General I Mangku Pastika led an elite team of police who cracked the first Bali bombing case and brought the perpetrators to justice, the Indonesian police have aggressively pursued terrorist members of Jemaah Islamiyah, while maintaining respect for human rights and the rule of law. Often described as the "Southeast Asian affiliate of al-Qaida," JI's ability to launch terrorist attacks appears to have been severely degraded. However, the ideology of religious hatred that inspired Imam Samudra, Amrozi and other Bali bombers to commit, and actually revel in, their crimes continues to spread unabated.

The era of reform ushered in by Suharto's fall in 1998 has not only inspired a strong democratic movement, a free press and calls for an end to corruption, but also provided an opportunity for extremist Muslim groups to openly pursue their agenda in a decentralized public sphere that is no longer subject to repressive control by an authoritarian government. Violent and nonviolent groups alike, ranging from the Front for the Defense of Islam, Majelis Mujahaddin Indonesia, Laskar Jihad and Komite Persiapan Penegakan Syariat Islam, to Hizb ut-Tahrir and Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (the Justice and Prosperity Party), have mobilized to transform Indonesia into an Islamic state ruled by their interpretation of Shariah. They have even sought to enter the political arena, cloaked in the mantle of Islam and accusing their opponents of being heretical Muslims, infidels or worse.

Two of the most active radical movements in Indonesia today are Hizb ut-Tahrir — which seeks to establish a global caliphate — and the Justice and Prosperity Party (known as PKS), an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood. In August 2007, Hizb ut-Tahrir demonstrated its rising strength by organizing an "International Caliphate Conference," at which nearly 100,000 Indonesians packed Jakarta's Bung Karno Stadium to cheer calls for the establishment of Shariah and a global caliphate.

The PKS started from ground zero in 1998, but in August 2007 it won 40 percent of the vote for Jakarta's governorship, while Indonesia's other major political parties combined were scarcely able to assemble the majori-

ty necessary to prevent this extremist political party from ruling the nation's capital. A top PKS figure currently serves as head of the Indonesian legislature, and the party also controls two key ministries in the national government — including the Department of Agriculture, with thousands of field offices scattered throughout every district of Indonesia — enabling it to spread its tentacles nationwide.

Fortunately, the largest Muslim organization in the world — the Nahdlatul Ulama — has been more difficult for extremist groups to penetrate.

Key to the success of the PKS, Hizb ut-Tahrir and other extremist groups has been their enormous organizing power, backed by financial resources. The PKS, in particular, has been adept at utilizing Islamic education circles (tarbiyah) to infiltrate mosques, campuses, workplaces, the bureaucracy and even mass organizations such as the Muhammadiyah, the world's second-largest Muslim organization, with 30 million members. Both the PKS and HT operate at a grassroots level, expanding their networks — and mobilizing new cadres — mosque by mosque, campus by campus, and even neighborhood by neighborhood, in the case of PKS. They have substituted a highly politicized and radical understanding of Islam for Indonesian society's traditionally tolerant and pluralistic worldview.

Fortunately, the largest Muslim organization in the world — the Nahdlatul Ulama, with 40 million members — has been more difficult for extremist groups to penetrate, due to its traditional, Sufi orientation. Yet even it is facing the steady infiltration of its mosques and institutions, some of which are being turned into extremist outposts and used to distance local populations from the NU itself.

The PKS, Hizb ut-Tahrir and other radical groups view the Muhammadiyah and NU as key targets, because these two mass organizations have long been pillars of support for Indonesia's constitution, embracing pancasila and rejecting calls for an Islamic state. Established in 1912, the Muhammadiyah is a modernist Muslim organization whose membership is concentrated primarily in urban areas. The Nahdlatul Ulama, in contrast, has its roots in the Indonesian countryside, and represents traditional and Sufi Islam. Should either group fall into the hands of extremists, Indonesia's future as a moderate state — home to the world's largest Muslim population and democracy — would be in severe jeopardy.

The Moderates Fight Back

This is not a distant or idle threat. PKS and Hizb ut-Tahrir cadres dominated public forums at the July 2005 Muhammadiyah Congress held in Malang, East Java, where they joined with opportunists in persuading Muhammadiyah members to "purify" the organization's Central Board of "liberal and pluralistic" influences. The extremists' confidence and overreach were such that during the following 18 months, Dr. Abdul Munir Mulkhan (the group's vice secretary from 2000 to 2005) and key allies felt compelled to mobilize the new Muhammadiyah Central Board to decisively reject the PKS. They issued a formal decree calling for elimination of such outside influences for the sake of the organization's survival.

Key points of the decree include the following:

- All Muhammadiyah branches, institutions and charitable businesses must free themselves from outside influences (i.e., Tarbiyah/Muslim Brotherhood and the PKS);
- Muhammadiyah members and leaders are forbidden to use the organization's institutions, facilities or resources to conduct non-Muhammadiyah programs or activities, especially those with a political agenda acting in the guise of religion;
- Members are forbidden to involve the organization in politics or use its symbols for political purposes;
- All media outlets owned by Muhammadiyah are ordered to promote its principles and values only; and
- Leaders at every level of the organization are instructed to clean up their ranks, adopt policies and institute programs that will strengthen and consolidate the organization in accordance with its fundamental principles and mission, including opposition to the establishment of Indonesia as an Islamic state.

Such positive developments should not elicit a sense of complacency, however. It is one thing to issue a decree, and another to ensure its implementation throughout an organization as large, diverse and open as the Muhammadiyah has become, with nearly 10,000 schools, 187 colleges and universities, and 250 hospitals spread throughout Indonesia. While a number of district- and province-

level leaders have sought to implement the decree, many others fear that its implementation would cause a decisive break in the Muhammadiyah — splitting the world's second-largest Muslim organization into competing camps. Meanwhile, radicals continue to work full time to assume complete control of the board of the Muhammadiyah in 2010, bolstered by the fact that Hizb ut-Tahrir and the PKS continue to grow in strength and numbers.

The Muhammadiyah decree may serve as an inspiration and help point the way forward for those who seek to promote a pluralistic and tolerant understanding of Islam. The decree clearly demonstrates that radical attempts to engage in a successful "long march" through the institutions of society are not guaranteed success — especially if opposed by courageous and influential members of that society, willing to defend the moral and spiritual values that lie at the heart of every religion, including Islam.

The past year has witnessed similar developments in the Nahdlatul Ulama, which issued decrees stating that there is no theological requirement for Muslims to establish a caliphate or reject democracy (a direct rebuttal of Hizb ut-Tahrir); condemning the spread of extremist foreign ideology; and instructing members "to safeguard their heritage, so that the NU's own houses of worship are not turned against it and used to attack the NU and the Republic [of Indonesia]."

A Broader Struggle

Of course, the struggle between radical and moderate Islam that we see playing out in Indonesia today is only part of a much broader, global struggle for the soul of Islam, which pits well-organized and heavily financed radicals against moderate Muslims, who have few sources of encouragement and support.

Few political movements have ever had the ideological vitality, or virulence, to filter across national borders, recruit millions of new adherents and subvert the loyalties of a nation's citizens. Communism was dangerous precisely because it had such power, augmented by the financial support of a resource-rich nation (the Soviet Union)

hijacked by that same ideology. The appeal of Islamism to potential adherents is every bit as great today as was that of Marxist theory in the last century. Its slogan, "Islam is the solution," promises a similar utopian future — if not in this world, then certainly the next. And, as communist revolutionaries in the past depended on the USSR, the Islamist movement relies heavily upon the enormous financial and ideological support provided from oil-rich Saudi Arabia and its neighboring states — or, in the case of Shiite Islamism, by Iran.

In considering the scope of religious extremism in the Islamic world, it appears that perhaps 10 to 15 percent of the world's Muslims currently share the militant Islamist views that underlie Osama bin Laden's radical vision — which translates into 130 million to 200 million people worldwide. Yet, with the exception of the Pakistani al-Mawdudi, most leading ideologues of Islamic fundamentalism are Arab writers and, to this day, most radical Muslim leaders in countries as diverse as Tanzania and Indonesia are of Arab descent. Wahhabi proselytizers are feverishly seeking to graft their intolerant version of Islam onto local, native cultures throughout the Muslim world. The results can be seen from Indonesia to Pakistan and Nigeria, where local Muslims — radicalized by Wahhabi money and influence — commit the most brutal acts, slaughtering thousands in the name of religion, including local Christians, Western tourists and even fellow Muslims who do not share their radical views.

It is imperative that we reverse the dynamics of this vicious cycle of radicalization, and instead create a virtuous cycle of counter-extremism throughout the Muslim world. The Rahmatan lil Alamin Network enables the LibForAll Foundation to conduct programs that reach far beyond Indonesia. For example, in February 2007 — when Western media and governments were condemning Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's Holocaust-denial conference in Tehran and bemoaning the lack of a similar response in the Muslim world — LibForAll quickly organized an historic religious summit in Bali, where participants rejected the evils of Holocaust denial and

affirmed religious tolerance as "a blessing for all creation." Executed in partnership with the Simon Wiesenthal Center, the summit showcased Indonesia's ability to play a unique and constructive role in promoting tolerance between religions, and discrediting the ideology of hatred.

Another example of LibForAll's unique approach has been its work with Muslim rock star Ahmad Dhani, who has generated years of saturation media coverage for anti-extremism messages. He has released two best-selling albums and numerous songs that have risen to the top of the charts in Indonesia and on MTV Asia, including a "Musical Fatwa" against religious hatred and terrorism. LibForAll is now aiming to replicate this success worldwide with pop stars in every significant cultural, linguistic and commercial music market in the Islamic world.

The many and diverse Indonesian leaders associated with the foundation are not content to help stem the tide of radical Islam at home, as evidenced by the landmark visit to Israel and Palestine in December 2007 by a LibForAll peace delegation. Prominent NU and Muhammadiyah clerics established links with moderates there to promote mutual understanding and respect as the basis for a lasting peace.

In the words of renowned Muslim cleric Kyai Haji A. Mustofa Bisri, "It's not possible to extinguish fire with fire. It takes water." We cannot extinguish hatred by resorting to hatred. Rather, it requires the courage and humility to approach "the other" in a spirit of divine love and compassion.

With its traditions of religious pluralism and tolerance, Indonesia and its civil society are ideally positioned to serve as mediators, helping to remove the poison of religious hatred that has long afflicted the Middle East. By integrating its rich spiritual traditions with the best of modern practices, Indonesian Islam can serve as a model for Islamic civilization worldwide and help inspire a similar renaissance of Islamic spirituality and tolerance in other parts of our troubled world. ■

FSJ's Guide to Extended-Stay Housing

Go to www.afsa.org: On the header CLICK on Marketplace, CLICK on Extended-Stay Housing (with Foreign Service Clause information)

Property & Web Address	Telephone	Location	Amenities[1]	Housekeeping	FS Clause	Ad Page
Accommodations 4 U www.accommodations4U.net	(843) 238-2490	DC, MD, VA, Nationwide	CC, FC, HSI, SP, TC	Daily/ Weekly	Yes	45
AKA www.stay-aka.com	(202) 904-2500 (866) 567-6264	DC	CC, CB+, FC, HSI, RD	Weekly	Yes	IFC[2]
Arlington Residence Court Hotel www.arlingtoncourthotel.com	(703) 524-4000	VA	BC, CB, CC, HSI	Yes	Yes	27
Attache Property Management www.attacheproperty.com	(202) 787-1885	DC, VA	Varies	Optional	Yes	34
Capitol Hill Stay www.capitolhillstay.com	(202) 544-4419	DC, VA	HSI, FC, RD, WD	Yes	Yes	40
Corporate Apartment Specialists, Inc. www.corporateapartments.com	(703) 979-2830 (800) 914-2802	DC, MD, VA	BC, CC, CS, FC, HSI, PG, RD, SP, WD	Optional	Yes	38
Executive Lodging Alternatives None	(703) 354-4070	VA	HSI	Optional	Yes	7
Georgetown Suites www.georgetownsuites.com	(202) 298-7800	DC	CC, FC, HSI	Daily	Yes	33
Marriott Executay www.executay.com	(301) 212-9660	DC, MD, VA, Nationwide	Varies	Biweekly	Yes	34
Pied-à-Terre Properties www.piedaterredc.com	(202) 462 0200	DC	Varies	Optional	Yes	40
Remington www.remington-dc.com	(202) 223-4512 (800) 225-3847	DC	FC, HSI, WD	Weekly	No	31
State Plaza Hotel www.stateplaza.com	(202) 861-8200 (800) 424-2859	DC	HSI	Daily	Yes	9
SuiteAmerica www.suiteamerica.com	(703) 461-1932 (877) 827-8433	MD, VA	Varies	Weekly	Yes	7
Virginian Suites www.virginiansuites.com	(703) 842-0910	VA	CC, FC, HSI, SP, WD	Daily	No	50

(1) BC–business center, CB–continental breakfast, CC–conference center, CS–concierge service, DC–day care, FC–fitness center, HSI–High Speed Internet, PG–playground, RD–roof deck, SP–pool, TC–tennis courts, WD–washer/dryer (2) IFC–inside front cover

While in long-term training at the National Foreign Affairs Training Center, you may claim up to 100 percent of daily per diem for the first 60 days. This amount is reduced to 50 percent from day 61 to day 120, and to 25 percent thereafter. The reduction applies to both the lodging and the meals & incidental expenses portions of per diem. The General Services Administration has determined that per diem for the D.C. area will change seasonally. While M&IE remains $64 throughout the year, the lodging portion is $201 from Jan. 1 to June 30 (total $265), $154 from July 1 to Aug. 31 (total $218), and $201 from Sept. 1 to Dec. 31 (total $265).

— James Yorke, AFSA Labor Management Specialist

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42

FSJ's Guide to Extended-Stay Housing

Go to www.afsa.org: On the header CLICK on Marketplace, CLICK on Extended-Stay Housing (with Foreign Service Clause information)

Property & E-mail Address	Accepts Pets	Minimum Stay	Number of Bedrooms	Style[1]	Distance to State	Ad Page
Accommodations 4 U vicki@accommodations4u.net	Yes	1 Day	Studio, 1, 2 Bedroom	GS, HR, LR	Varies	10
AKA sfoster@stayaka.com	No	7 Days	1, 2 Bedroom	HR	8 Blocks	IFC[2]
Arlington Residence Court Hotel chris.benner@snbhotels.com	Yes	1 Day	Efficiency, 1, 2, 3 Bedroom	HR	2 Miles	27
Attache Property Management info@attacheproperty.com	Optional	30 Days	Varies	Varies	Varies	34
Capitol Hill Stay bstansberry@att.net	Yes	30 Days	Varies	Varies	Varies	40
Corporate Apartment Specialists, Inc. sales@corporateapartments.com	Yes	30 Days	Studio, 1, 2, 3 Bedroom	GS, HR, TH	Varies	38
Executive Lodging Alternatives finder5@ix.netcom.com	Yes	30 Days	1, 2, 3, 4 Bedroom	GS, HR, TH	3-5 Miles	7
Georgetown Suites reservations@georgetownsuites.com	No	1 Day	1, 2 Bedroom	LR	10 Blocks	33
Marriott Executay anthony.lbarra@marriott.com	Varies	30 Days	Studio, 1, 2 Bedroom	Varies	Varies	34
Pied-à-Terre Properties lmartin@piedaterredc.com	Varies	60 Days	Studio,1, 2, 2+Den Bedroom,	GS, HR, LR, TH	1 Mile	40
Remington reservations@remington-dc.com	Yes, Deposit	1 Day	1 Bedroom	HR	2 Blocks	31
State Plaza Hotel spresagents@rbpropertiesinc.com	No	1 Day	1 Bedroom	HR	Across street	9
SuiteAmerica ben@suiteamerica.com	Limited	3 Days	1, 2, 3 Bedroom	LR, HR	1.5 Miles	7
Virginian Suites dos@virginainsuites.com	Yes, Deposit	1 Day	Efficiency, 1 Bedroom	HR	1.5 Miles	50

(1) GS–garden style, HR–high rise, LR–low rise, TH–townhomes (2) IFC–inside front cover

While in long-term training at the National Foreign Affairs Training Center, you may claim up to 100 percent of daily per diem for the first 60 days. This amount is reduced to 50 percent from day 61 to day 120, and to 25 percent thereafter. The reduction applies to both the lodging and the meals & incidental expenses portions of per diem. The General Services Administration has determined that per diem for the D.C. area will change seasonally. While M&IE remains $64 throughout the year, the lodging portion is $201 from Jan. 1 to June 30 (total $265), $154 from July 1 to Aug. 31 (total $218), and $201 from Sept. 1 to Dec. 31 (total $265).

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 41

Heart of Darkness

Alfred Erdos' son breaks the family silence to shed light on the tragic events of Aug. 31, 1971, in Equatorial Guinea.

By Chris Erdos

Editor's Note: A feature article in our October 2007 issue, "A Foreign Service Murder," by Len Shurtleff, reviewed the tragic events of Aug. 31, 1971, the day administrative officer Donald Leahy was killed in Santa Isabel, Equatorial Guinea. Chargé d'affaires Alfred Erdos was subsequently found guilty of voluntary manslaughter in a jury trial in Virginia and sentenced to the maximum 10-year term. His appeal was denied by the Fourth Circuit in Richmond. Erdos was released on parole in late 1976, after about three years in prison, and died of a heart attack in California in 1983.

The subject of Len Shurtleff's article, "A Foreign Service Murder," is my late father, Alfred Erdos, and the circumstances of his terrible story. Mr. Shurtleff makes many valuable observations. However, his article contains certain errors and omissions regarding the facts of the case. Moreover, there are some particulars of the story that Mr. Shurtleff does not, indeed could not, know. Finally, there are rumors and speculation surrounding the episode, which, sadly, have not dissipated. For these reasons, I feel obliged to break the family's silence on this matter and offer what information I have.

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My father was born in 1924 to Hungarian immigrants in New York City. It was a Catholic household, and Father felt his religion very deeply. After World War II broke out, he volunteered for the army as soon as he turned 18. The Army sent him to Europe. However, due to a bureaucratic error, his war papers were lost in Washington; army command did not "know" that he was there. He followed the army throughout the Ardennes campaign, wondering why his orders to go to the front never came.

Chris Erdos is the son of the late Alfred Erdos.

Father received an honorable discharge in 1946. He had acquired a taste for travel, and returned to Europe briefly before enrolling in college on the G.I. Bill. After graduating from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, he decided to serve his country once more, and applied to the Department of State. After passing the lengthy exams, he became a Foreign Service officer in 1952. He pursued graduate studies in diplomacy at The Johns Hopkins University before being assigned abroad.

During this period, Father met a woman with whom he began a relationship. However, she was not an American. The State Department did not allow FSOs to marry non-citizens at that time. In addition, she was not Catholic. They stayed together for many years; but ultimately, their relationship ended when he met my mother. My parents married in 1968; it was his first marriage, her second. I was born shortly after, the first child for both.

Father was anxious about his career. In the diplomatic corps, he was not always the most popular person at post. His military years had given him an appreciation for order, discipline and, above all, adherence to the rules. He gained a reputation as a tough, sometimes intimidating supervisor, a by-the-book perfectionist who also demanded perfection from others. He was frankly resented by some FSOs who were more accustomed to the hail-fellow-well-met Foreign

Service culture of that era. But he always did his job, and his superiors loved him. His fitness reports were uniformly outstanding; he had ascended as high as he could without becoming an ambassador.

However, in the up-or-out Foreign Service, unless he was promoted — soon — he would be forced out. He had been told that the only problem was finding an open ambassadorship. Unfortunately, political considerations and cronyism often influenced those appointments. He was facing the prospect of having to start over again professionally — an older man, and now with a young family.

In early 1971, he was summoned by higher-ups at the Department of State. They wanted to talk to him about a possible assignment. Father had served at the embassy in Niger. Was he familiar with Equatorial Guinea? What did he know about its government? In particular, the questioners kept coming back to a word that appeared repeatedly on Father's fitness reports: "solid."

The men finally came to the point. A position had opened up in Equatorial Guinea. The title was chargé d'affaires. The position reported to the American ambassador in Yaoundé, who was also accredited to Equatorial Guinea. It was a small post; in fact, there would only be one other American, an administrative officer. There would be no Marines, just the two FSOs and three Foreign Service Nationals.

It would be a short tour, but the place was "challenging." American tourists were advised not to go there. The dictator, President Francisco Macias Nguema, had led the country to its recent independence from Spain. The USSR, China and North Korea were active there. Macias resented Spain and the Western powers. In particular, he was hostile toward the United States.

Three years before, a delegation of U.S. congressmen and their aides had visited the country under the auspices of the Red Cross. Macias had thrown them in prison without explanation; there was no U.S. diplomatic presence at that time. (The president eventually released the delegation.) In 1969, the U.S. had evacuated its nationals from the country, under threat of a coup. But shortly afterward, the Department of State established an embassy, albeit over the objections of State's country director. Pres. Macias refused to meet with the U.S. ambassador from Yaoundé, calling him an assassin.

Less than a year previously, the government had seized Spain's embassy and residence without warning; the Spanish diplomats managed to flee the country safely. The regime quickly reversed itself, however, and Madrid eventually returned its diplomats to Santa Isabel. Nevertheless, a precedent had been set: the regime did not respect, or perhaps simply did not understand, diplomatic sovereignty.

The internal dynamics of Equatorial Guinea were similar to of those North Korea. Citizens were forbidden to talk to foreigners, including diplomats. Even diplomats were forbidden to talk to any citizen or government official, with the sole exception of the chief of protocol at the Foreign Ministry, who was 20 years old. The secret police regularly entered diplomatic residences during receptions to make lists of the guests.

The State Department men had a proposition. If Father was prepared to serve as chargé, it would be with a de facto understanding that he would receive an ambassadorial post before his up-or-out time ended. Was he interested?

Father answered in the affirmative. He then received briefings.

Equatorial Guinea was a small country on the western coast of Africa with a large volcanic outpost in its territorial waters called Fernando Po, a beautiful, primordial jungle island about the size of Maryland. The dictator had established the nation's capital, Santa Isabel, there.

The country's main source of revenue was cocoa. But the U.S. government was not interested in the cocoa but rather in Fernando Po's deep-water ports, which had military potential. The Soviets were aggressively expanding their influence in Africa at the time. They had evidently approached Macias about a naval base. Father was instructed to find out more about that, and to try to improve relations between Equatorial Guinea and the United States.

My parents arrived in Santa Isabel on April 15, 1971. They moved into the residence, which was across the street from the main jail. The atmosphere in the city was tense.

Pres. Macias regularly issued diatribes on the radio and in newspapers against Spain, blasting the Spanish government as criminals and worse. Government thugs routinely harassed the Spanish expatriates in the country; they beat one so badly in 1971 that the man suffered permanent brain damage.

It was commonly known that Macias had personally murdered his foreign minister and beaten a political opponent to death in the palace. Many other unfortunates had met a similar fate. Usually the wives and children of his victims were also killed, sometimes in gruesome public spectacles; more often than not, their tribal villages were wiped out, also.

On one occasion, Macias announced that foreign assassins were hiding in trees in the capital, waiting to kill him. They would not succeed, he added, because he was immortal. Nonetheless, the residents of Santa Isabel awoke one morning to find the trees along a main boulevard cut down. In his addresses to the nation,

Macias gave himself various names, including "God," and commanded his citizens to worship him.

Shortly after my parents arrived, a *New York Times* correspondent somehow managed to enter the country. Upon leaving, he published a feature article attacking the regime. The story quoted "a member of the small diplomatic corps that maintains a nervous vigil here," who spoke of the frightening disappearances that were all too common.

The president was apoplectic. American diplomats and their families were suddenly forbidden to travel outside of the capital. When my mother or father left the residence or the embassy, men in suits followed them.

Macias and the state media started to excoriate the United States daily. It was not so much communist or ideological rants as hysteria. America was assigned responsibility for every ill imaginable, and many that were not. The government began sending pages of anti-American gobbledygook over the official wire to Washington, pages without grammar, punctuation or paragraph breaks.

I was 2 years old at the time and fell victim to the tumbo fly, a parasite that lays its eggs on wet laundry put out to dry. When the eggs come into contact with skin, they work their way in and the larvae begin to grow. I cried nonstop, and Mother dug the worms out of my flesh. Santa Isabel had a hospital in name only. There was only one doctor on the entire island, if he could be found. Weeks earlier, the Nigerian chargé's son had become sick, and died within hours. The boy had been my age.

My father soon had yet another reason to worry. A French diplomat's son, not much older than me, had pointed a toy bow and arrow at a policeman. The policeman seized the child on the spot, and took him away. The French government intervened, and the police finally returned the little boy to his hysterical parents. Father commanded Mother to never, ever let me out of sight, even around the house.

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At the beginning of August, little more than three months after our arrival, the regime began a massive wave of arrests throughout the island. Observers believed that Macias was wiping out the last vestiges of opposition to his rule. The police brought the prisoners to the main jail, across the street from the residence. Trucks and buses deposited the prisoners after dark, and the screams of the victims being tortured kept my parents awake. In the mornings, Father and Mother saw dead bodies being carried out. It

continued day and night, without letup. My parents could not sleep, and Father, in particular, began suffering from sleep deprivation.

One morning, African men in suits entered the embassy. They stood silently in the chancery, looking around. Father arrived, and asked if he could help them. The men ignored him, looked around some more, and left without a word. The next day, one of the embassy's three African employees failed to show up for work. The other two disappeared during the following two days. Their relatives called my father, begging him to do something. The FSNs had been arrested.

Two more nationals worked at the chargé's residence, a cook and a chauffeur. They were also arrested. The police took the cook, a woman whom my parents considered a friend as well as an employee, across the street to the courtyard in front of the prison. They removed her clothes and staked her to the ground, in full view of the residence. They then proceeded to strip the skin from her body. The woman screamed for two days before she finally died.

Father repeatedly sent cables to Washington, asking for help. The responses from State were equivocal. He lodged protests with the 20-year-old chief of protocol, who did not respond at all. The U.S. ambassador in Yaoundé was on home leave; Father was on his own.

His hands began to shake so badly that he, a smoker, could not light his own cigarettes. Macias announced that the nation was facing imminent invasion by an "imperialist power" and its "white mercenaries." They were trying to kill him, he said, but he would kill them.

Father started behaving oddly. He began sending cables to Washington, at the highest encryption level, warning of communist conspiracies and the danger to the United States.

One morning shortly after the arrests of the staff, a policeman was posted at the door of the embassy. He refused to speak to my father, or to anyone else. The next day, he arrested a messenger from the Ghanaian Embassy who was attempting to deliver a personal note to Father from their chargé. The policeman guarded the embassy door every day after that. The number of visitors dropped.

~

It was all too much. Father became progressively more paranoid, and suffered a mental breakdown. He took the life of Don Leahy, the administrative officer. Following this tragic act, he decided that the American diplomats who were trying to evacuate him from the country were communist agents. He refused to leave.

During the impasse, the Nigerian ambassador, with whom he was acquainted, invited Father, Mother and me to the Nigerian residence. The three of us remained in the ambassador's living room for three days, without a change of clothes. The ambassador patiently stayed up with my father day and night, trying to calm him down, as Father spoke unendingly of plots. I will always be grateful to this man, whom I never saw again.

Immediately after the incident, the government of Equatorial Guinea accused Father of "gun-running." The regime seized the U.S. embassy.

Father was finally persuaded that he needed to return to America. But at the airport, he balked; the plane was really a Soviet plane, he said, with the hammer and sickle painted over. After many reassurances, he boarded. Macias allowed the American diplomats to evacuate him. The president also relinquished to them the body of Don Leahy, which the regime had kept for three days.

Upon landing in Washington D.C., Father was immediately admitted to the psychiatric ward at George Washington University Hospital. All the doctors who examined him agreed: he had experienced a "psychotic episode" as a direct result of the conditions on Fernando Po.

The trial took place in March 1972 at the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia. It was known then, and is still known, as the "rocket docket." Judge Oren R. Lewis was of the old school. He declared before the jury that psychology was "nonsense," and expedited matters by curtailing the testimony of defense psychiatrists. The doctors produced by the district attorney to rebut Father's insanity defense admitted that they had never examined the defendant. Depositions from foreign witnesses, such as the Nigerian ambassador, were

not admitted into evidence.

"Equatorial Guinea is not on trial," Judge Lewis said, "and will not be." He accordingly refused to permit any information about the country or its madness to be introduced. Temporary insanity usually implies certain inciting conditions; however, my father's jury heard about none.

Ultimately, the jury rendered a verdict of manslaughter. My father's lawyer was Aubrey M. Daniel III, who had previously found fame as the My Lai Massacre prosecutor and later became a partner at an elite Washington law firm. Daniel told me many years later that he considered my father's conviction and subsequent denial of appeal to be the "single worst" miscarriage of justice he had ever witnessed.

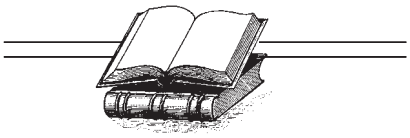
~

The horrors of Equatorial Guinea during the 1970s have often been compared to those committed by the regime of Pol Pot. At some point, Pres. Macias began setting up crosses and crucifying people. He did it along the airport road, so that diplomats and foreigners would see. Firing squads executed masses of victims at the newly constructed "Freedom Stadium," while playing American music over the loudspeakers. When the natives on Fernando Po began fleeing, Macias ordered every boat on the island burned. Many who depended on fishing for their sustenance starved to death.

Between one-third and one-half of the country's population either fled or were killed during Macias' tenure. He was finally overthrown by a relative in 1979. Oil was discovered offshore, and contracts with American petroleum companies followed. The country that was once called the "Auschwitz of Africa" soon became known as the "Kuwait of Africa."

After Father's evacuation, the embassy was closed. It was reopened briefly in 1981, only to close again in 1995 when a host government official insulted an American diplomat. In 2003 it was opened once more. Today, the country is very friendly toward the United States.

My parents separated soon after the trial. In prison, Father went through extensive psychological therapy and counseling. After several years, he applied for parole and the board, considering his record of service and positive psychological evaluations, granted it. He retired quietly to San Diego, where he attended church regularly and spent time with a small circle of friends. He met a lady, and they were planning to marry, but he died of a heart attack before it happened. I remember her. She was very nice. ■



BOOKS

The Four Poverty Traps

The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It
Paul Collier, Oxford University Press, 2007, $28.00, hardcover, 205 pages.

REVIEWED BY LADD CONNELL

Development has long been a key goal for U.S foreign policy; the question has been how to do it. Why do the standard policy prescriptions seem to work in some instances and not in others? What can we do for those that are failing? Paul Collier, author of *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It*, has come up with convincing explanations and answers.

An economics professor at Oxford University and a former World Bank economist, Collier has spent much of his life working on the problem of why some countries are developing and others are not. He finds that the failing states — some 50 countries with roughly a billion people — are stuck in one or more of the following four poverty traps: conflict (usually civil war), dependence on natural resource exports, landlocked borders (made worse by bad neighbors), and poor governance (particularly in a small country).

Mindful of the high development costs of wars, Collier promotes an activist approach to conflict prevention.

The conflict trap seems obvious, but Collier quantifies the damage: a typical civil war lasts seven years and costs a country 15 percent of its gross domestic product. And once they have been through such a war, countries are twice as likely to have another. Indeed, this is overwhelmingly the common characteristic of the poorest nations: nearly three-quarters of the people in the bottom billion have recently been through, or are still in the midst of, a civil war.

Collier provides insightful analysis of the other traps as well, but even more useful is his analysis of what to do about them. Unlike other prominent development economists like Jeffrey Sachs, who claims that adding $75 billion a year in aid flows will solve all development problems, or William Easterly, who asserts that foreign assistance is worthless and often counterproductive, Collier takes a more nuanced approach. He recognizes that aid may fail, but says this is worth the risk in failing states.

At the same time, he warns that post-conflict aid is often "too little, too soon." Countries are not able to absorb the assistance in the immediate aftermath of conflict, but need help to be sustained for a decade or more as they work to rebuild infrastructure and institutions. Collier also recommends that donors support incipient reforms in resource-rich and badly governed countries (with governance conditionality) and improve transport links for the landlocked.

Collier offers similarly detailed advice for the other development tools. While trade has been great for developing Asian economies that have specialized in labor-intensive manufactures, the resource needs of those economies and the competition from them (e.g., China) make it more difficult for the bottom-billion countries to follow the same route. Accordingly, he advocates trade preferences (zero tariffs) for those nations so they can, at least, get on the bottom rung of the manufactured exports bandwagon.

To support private investment, Collier urges the adoption of laws that provide for international arbitration of disputes and international investment insurance. He also praises international charters, akin to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (which sets a global standard for companies to publish what they pay and for governments to disclose what they receive), across the full range of governance activities.

Perhaps his most controversial recommendations relate to military intervention. Given the high development

One common characteristic of the world's poorest 50 countries is that nearly three-quarters of their population are in, or have recently been through, a civil war.

costs of conflict (he puts them at $100 billion per conflict), Collier promotes an activist approach to conflict prevention. He correctly notes the human costs of failure to intervene (e.g., the 1994 genocide in Rwanda), and observes that successful intervention need not be hugely expensive: a small, capable force with freedom of action can establish and maintain peace, as the U.K. achieved in Sierra Leone in May 2000, bolstering the Nigerian-led United Nations force. But he acknowledges that countries other than the U.S., Britain and France need to assume a greater share of this burden.

While his prescriptions may not in all cases be politically achievable, Collier has written a persuasive book that deserves policymakers' attention. It certainly got mine. ■

Ladd Connell, an FSO since 1986, covers development policy issues in the Office of Development Finance. The views expressed herein are those of the author only and do not necessarily represent those of the Department of State.

AFSA NEWS

American Foreign Service Association • April 2008

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

FS Members Urge War Zone Tax Exemption

AFSA representatives met on Jan. 17 with Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., chairman of the powerful House Ways and Means Committee. They hand-delivered a letter signed by 110 Foreign Service members serving in Iraq urging Congress to act on H.R. 1974, which would lift the tax burden placed on civilians serving in combat zones.

Pictured left to right: AFSA Legislative Director Ian Houston, AFSA President John Naland, House Ways and Means Committee Chairman Charles Rangel, D-N.Y., AFSA State VP Steve Kashkett and State Governing Board Representative Daphne Titus.

The letter to Chairman Rangel reads, in part:

"We are 110 Foreign Service and Civil Service civilian employees of the Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development who are all voluntarily serving in Iraq, writing to urge your support for H.R. 1974, the Federal Employee Combat Zone Parity Act.

"We believe that United States civilians working in combat zones deserve tax benefits similar to those

Continued on page 54

ANNUAL HOMECOMING FOR RETIREES MAY 2

Join AFSA for Foreign Affairs Day

AFSA welcomes all State Department retirees to the annual homecoming event, Foreign Affairs Day, on May 2. Deputy Secretary John D. Negroponte will deliver the keynote address.

The AFSA Memorial Plaque ceremony takes place during Foreign Affairs Day to honor those Foreign Service personnel who have lost their lives while serving their country abroad. Two names will be added this year: Steven Thomas Stefani, a Foreign Agricultural Service employee killed in Afghanistan on Oct. 4, 2007; and John M. Granville, a USAID FSO killed in a terrorist attack in Khartoum on Jan. 1, 2008. The ceremony will be held at the site of the Memorial Plaques in the State Department C Street lobby.

Foreign Affairs Day invitations were mailed out in late February. If you did not receive one, please e-mail the following information to foreignaffairsday@state.gov: last name, first name, retirement date, Civil or Foreign Service, street address and e-mail address.

All State Department retirees are cordially invited to a reception hosted by AFSA from 3 to 5 p.m. at the F Street Bistro in the State Plaza Hotel, 2117 E Street NW, across from the department. Please stop by to reconnect with colleagues and catch up on the latest Foreign Service news. ❑

In This Issue:

NO MORE BUSINESS-CLASS TRAVEL

AFSA Regrets New Travel Restrictions

BY SHAWN DORMAN

Since 2002, business-class travel had been authorized for permanent change-of-station travel that exceeded 14 hours. On Jan. 25, the State Department announced to employees that the Office of Management and Budget's governmentwide directive restricting premium-class travel applied to the Foreign Service and would be implemented immediately.

Following the announcement, AFSA received hundreds of e-mails from the membership taking issue with the new travel policy. Both State management and AFSA have expressed regret about the new restrictions, but the reality is that compliance is mandatory and applies to all agencies. State management tells AFSA that the

Continued on page 59

AFSA NEWSBRIEFS

Security Training Now Offered for Members of Household

On Feb. 25, the director general's office informed AFSA that Members of Household would now be welcome in security courses on the same footing as Eligible Family Members. AFSA has been pressing the State Department for years to take this first step toward fairer treatment of Members of Household — a step that makes complete sense from a security point of view. AFSA is pleased that the change has been made, but believes many other policies still need to change in order to provide more equal treatment for MOHs.

Details were given in a Feb. 25 unclassified cable from Director General Harry K. Thomas Jr., "A Reminder on the Importance of Security Training" (State 18852). Here's what it says about the MOH policy: "We believe that you can take an active, positive step toward enhancing your own personal security by ensuring that you, your family members, and all those who form a part of your usual household (i.e., Members of Household) enroll in training — and then practice good personal security. We are extending access to security training to MOHs in the firm belief that they can be at risk because of their association with us and, as residents of our households and participants in the embassy community, can positively contribute to our collective safety."

AFSA applauds this important step and will continue to push for more benefits for Members of Household.

The *Journal* Is a Little Greener

Several months ago, the *Foreign Service Journal* stopped shipping the magazine to individual subscribers in "polybags," thus reducing the use of environmentally unfriendly plastic. The plastic wrap will still be used occasionally, for issues that include special add-ons or inserts.

Staff Changes at AFSA

AFSA bid farewell to Accounting Assistant Jon Reed in January as he heads to New York City to pursue his lifelong dream to be a comic book artist. His new career got a boost when he won first prize in the Comic Book Idol 3 competition, a popular comic book art contest.

By winning this talent search contest, hosted by www.comicbookresources.com, Reed got an all-expense-paid trip to the 2008 New York City Comicon, where Comic Book Idol host and comic book writer J. Torres helped him network and meet industry leaders. Reed also received assignments from IDW Publishing, Oni Press and Image Comics for winning the contest. AFSA wishes Jon the very best on his exciting path.

Moving into the accounting assistant position is former Member Services Representative Cory Nishi. The new member services representative is Michael Laiacona. He was raised on Long Island and has two degrees from George Mason University, a B.A. in communications and a B.A. in music. His previous job was with WGMU Radio as a producer. He is one of the hosts for a weekly sports talk radio show called Sportsbreak, which can be heard on WGMU Radio at www.wgmuradio.com.

Correction

The March story, "An Inside View of the FS Grievance Board," listed several former chairs of the board, but the list was incomplete. We would like to acknowledge the distinguished service of the three other former chairs: William E. Simkin, Alexander B. Porter and Arthur Stark.

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In Defense of "Traditional" Diplomacy

All the talk within the Foreign Service these days seems to be about "transformational diplomacy" and "post-conflict stabilization" work. The unique role that U.S. diplomats have courageously taken on in the Iraq and Afghanistan war zones, under extremely difficult and unprecedented circumstances, has undoubtedly driven much of this interest in a new definition for diplomacy.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's Feb. 11 speech at Georgetown and her recent budget presentations to Congress have focused on the changing nature of diplomacy, the need to expand the number of State Department advisers assigned to military units, and the creation of a Civilian Response Corps — an "expeditionary group" of diplomats who can be deployed on short notice to assist countries undergoing conflict. The Secretary's vision for the role of these civilian "first responder" diplomats extends beyond global hot spots, however. At Georgetown, she explained that they could be "deployed in times of peace, to strengthen weak states and prevent their collapse in the future."

This is a tall order for the U.S. Foreign Service — or for the diplomatic corps of any country — and it represents a dramatic change in what we do. Tackling these lofty goals and transforming foreign countries will require a vastly larger, fully funded, and differently trained Foreign Service that is given far greater resources than we currently have at our disposal in order to carry out "stabilization" operations. We applaud the Secretary for urging Congress to authorize 1,100 new positions for State and to approve significant increases in the State budget. Regrettably, this initiative comes during the final year of her tenure, and its prospects for passage by Congress are uncertain.

Both Sec. Rice and Defense Secretary Robert Gates deserve credit for acknowledging publicly in recent months that our government has neglected the needs of the diplomatic component of our foreign affairs for too long, and that the large chasm separating wildly disproportionate spending on military operations from the pittance devoted to diplomatic activities is unacceptable. Sec. Gates is absolutely right to declare that "soft power" is as important as military might in projecting American influence around the world — and to admit that there is something wrong when DOD spends more on health care for its employees than the entire State operating budget, and the Pentagon has more lawyers than the United States has diplomats.

But in the rush to embrace this new vision of transformational diplomacy, let us not forget that "traditional" diplomacy will always remain the central focus of the work performed by the U.S. Foreign Service in the vast majority of our 260 embassies and consulates. Regardless of the high-profile conflicts in places like Iraq, Afghanistan and Sudan, we will still have important bilateral relationships to manage with more than 200 established governments around the world. Keeping these ties strong requires our diplomats to continue addressing disputes between governments, regional tensions, democratization and reform, human and civil rights, free trade and other aspects of basic foreign policy.

Sec. Gates is absolutely right to declare that "soft power" is as important as military might in projecting American influence around the world.

In addition, we will always have complex multilateral issues to deal with all over the world, including global climate change, drug trafficking, refugees and HIV/AIDS prevention. We must continue to devote enormous energies and personnel to scrutinizing those foreign nationals who want visas to enter the United States and looking after the needs of tens of millions of American citizens who live and travel overseas. We will still have stacks of congressionally mandated reports to prepare and high-level U.S. government delegations to manage. And we will still have the enormous challenge of explaining U.S. foreign policy to overseas audiences and winning them over to our point of view.

These tasks will continue to require most of the attention of the U.S. Foreign Service, regardless of how much effort we begin to devote to "post-conflict stabilization" in a relatively small number of hotspots. And we cannot accomplish them with budget-strapped embassies and consulates that routinely suffer 20- to 30-percent staffing gaps.

Traditional diplomacy will remain the backbone of our work and the key to our success in an often hostile world. We should be careful not to frame the debate over funding solely in terms of transformational activities in conflict zones. ❑

Legislative Update • Continued from page 51

provided to the military. The federal government relies on civilian volunteers to fill the positions needed for reconstruction assignments and other tasks in areas such as Afghanistan and Iraq. The sacrifice of a long-term separation from one's family and friends in serving our country abroad is not limited to the military. Members of the Foreign Service living and working in combat zones are exposed to unique dangers and potentially life-threatening situations.

"The tax benefit would be a significant gesture to American civilians who show great courage while serving in combat zones, and it will provide a greater incentive for recruiting volunteers for those positions. …

"H.R. 1974 was introduced by Rep. Wolf on April 19 and was referred to the Ways and Means Committee, where it is still pending. The bill has wide and growing support, with 27 bipartisan co-sponsors. … Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your long history of support for the Foreign Service and for your consideration of our concerns."

AFSA also raised the pay modernization issue with Chairman Rangel, and he has offered to try to be helpful. The congressman established the Charles B. Rangel International Affairs Fellowship Program in 2002 to help increase diversity within the Foreign Service. The program attracts and supports outstanding young people who have an interest in pursuing a Foreign Service career.

AFSA Testifies on the Hill

On Jan. 23, AFSA President John Naland joined retired career ambassadors Thomas Pickering and Marc Grossman in testifying before the Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. The topic was "Fortress America Abroad: Effective Diplomacy and the Future of U.S. Embassies." Naland's remarks focused on the human element of diplomacy. He stressed the need to fund diplomacy and development assistance and to end chronic understaffing and underinvestment in professional development. He also highlighted the need to end the overseas pay gap. Naland's testimony can be found at www.afsa.org/congress/012308testimony.cfm.

Hope for Pay Modernization?

AFSA had a very encouraging meeting with Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, R-Fla., on Jan. 16 in her Washington, D.C. office. Rep. Ros-Lehtinen is the senior ranking Republican member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and a key player on the pay modernization question.

From left: AFSA Legislative Director Ian Houston, AFSA USAID Vice President Francisco Zamora, AFSA President John Naland, Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, R-Fla., and former AFSA President Dennis Hays.

The Budget: Good News, But Not This Year

First, the bad news. Congress was so late in passing the Fiscal Year 2008 budget that agencies are just now finalizing their spending plans. The FY-08 State Department operating budget is bleak. The White House's original funding request for diplomatic and consular programs failed to adequately cover such expenses as foreign currency exchange losses and governmentwide annual salary increases.

Then Congress took that inadequate budget request and cut $200 million from it. As a result, not only will State be unable to create any of the 254 new Foreign Service positions that it requested, but it will not be able to fund existing operations at current levels (excluding Embassy Baghdad, which is funded primarily by supplemental appropriations). The inadequate FY-08 budget follows disappointing FY 2006 and FY 2007 allocations that also failed to fund requested staffing increases (outside of consular and diplomatic security). In view of the ever-expanding demands being placed on U.S. diplomacy, this endangers U.S. national security. Additional FY 2008 funding for State operations might be available via an Iraq supplemental appropriation, but that is far from certain.

There is some good news, though, on prospects for FY 2009. The president's budget request, presented to Congress on Feb. 4, calls for substantial increases in State and USAID staffing. The State Department's requested increase is for approximately 1,000 positions and the USAID increase is for 350 positions. AFSA understands that these increases came only after personal lobbying by Secretary Rice.

Significantly, the budget also requests funding for Foreign Service compensation reform to close the overseas pay gap. Of course, getting those requests into the president's budget is only the first step. Persuading Congress to appropriate the funds will be impossible without determined personal lobbying by the Secretary and Deputy Secretary John Negroponte. AFSA looks forward to supporting Secretary Rice in her efforts to gain support for the budget request. ❑

KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH RETIREES IN FLORIDA AND TEXAS

ASFA President Meets with Retirees and Presents Award

BY TOM SWITZER, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS

AFSA President John Naland recently met with members of the Foreign Service Retiree Association of Florida in Sarasota, as well as with retirees in Austin and Houston, Texas.

At a statewide retiree luncheon in Sarasota on Jan. 26, attended by some 180 retirees, Naland highlighted the extreme challenges currently facing the Foreign Service in Iraq as well as other issues affecting U.S. diplomacy. He also presented AFSA's prestigious Retiree Service Award to outgoing Florida Retiree Association Director Paul Byrnes, who has skillfully guided and enhanced the association over the past decade.

Naland also sat for interviews, along with incoming Florida Retiree Association Director Ambassador Kenneth Hill, on current global perspectives on U.S. diplomacy. These were carried on a leading regional radio talk show as well as by the *Sarasota Times*.

John Naland presents AFSA's Retiree Service Award to Paul Byrnes, who is seen here with his wife, Hope.

On Feb. 7, Naland engaged in a lively luncheon discussion with some 40 retirees in Austin, hosted by Austin Retiree Association Director Florita Sheppard-Samario. The discussion focused on a range of resource and discuss other challenges affecting the Foreign Service. Naland also presented a lecture for undergraduates at the Strauss Center of the University of Texas on the subject of "The Militarization of U.S. Diplomacy," stressing the recent comments by Defense Secretary Gates calling for increased resources for U.S. diplomacy.

The following day, Naland addressed the full gamut of issues affecting U.S. diplomacy at a luncheon in Houston hosted by Retiree Association Director William Cunningham, and attended by nearly a dozen retired and active-duty Foreign Service officers. Naland then visited an undergraduate class at St. Thomas University and spoke about Foreign Service careers and related issues.

AFSA is grateful to these retiree association directors for affording Pres. Naland the opportunity to have discussions with retirees and local opinionmakers on a host of Foreign Service-related issues, as well as for their tireless efforts in promoting and sustaining the activities of their associations. Naland looks forward to meeting with retirees in other regions of the country during the year ahead. ❑

HONORING THE STUDY OF HARD LANGUAGES

AFSA Announces Sinclaire Language Award Winners

BY BARBARA BERGER, PROFESSIONAL ISSUES COORDINATOR

Proficiency in foreign languages is one of the most valuable skills in today's Foreign Service. AFSA's Sinclaire Language Awards program honors language students for outstanding accomplishments in the study of "hard" languages and their associated cultures.

Candidates are nominated by the language-training supervisors at the National Foreign Affairs Training Center's School of Languages or by the instructors at designated field schools. They are selected by a committee composed of volunteer AFSA members, including one from the Governing Board who serves as chairman, and the AFSA coordinator for professional issues. Each winner receives a check for $1,000 from the Matilda W. Sinclaire Endowment and a certificate of recognition.

In an unusual move, the committee decided to award one of this year's recipients, Drew Schufletowski, an additional $500 in recognition of his extraordinary accomplishment. He is the only foreign-language student of Polish to achieve outstanding success while enrolled solely as an online student for three semesters. During his testing, Schufletowski received a score of 4 in speaking and a 4 in reading (on a 1-to-5 scale). And he achieved this while working full-time with the U.S. mission to the U.N. in New York.

AFSA received a record number of nominations in 2007, referring a total of 21 to the committee. The languages included Chinese, Japanese, Dari, Farsi, Hungarian, Polish, Lithuanian and Ukrainian.

AFSA congratulates the 16 winners of this year's Sinclaire Language Awards and commends the School of Language Studies for its dedication in preparing students of hard languages for the intense challenges of modern diplomacy.

This year's winners are:

Kelly Adams-Smith	Bulgarian
Mark Thornburg	Chinese-Mandarin
Eric Barboriak	Chinese-Mandarin
Bulkin Carleton	Dari
Ethan Chorin	Farsi
Jeffrey Hovenier	Greek
Carol Kalin	Greek
Berenice Mariscal	Greek
Robert Mearkle	Hungarian
Edward Kwok Hee Dong	Japanese
Jean E. Akers	Khmer
Rona Rathod	Lithuanian
Worth Anderson	Polish
Drew Schufletowski	Polish
Christine P. Jackson	Tagalog
Viktor Karabin	Ukrainian ❑

V.P. VOICE: **RETIREE** ■ BY ROBERT "BILL" FARRAND AND RETIREE AFFAIRS COORDINATOR BONNIE BROWN

Needed: A Commitment to First-Class Retiree Services

Recently, the State Department's Office of the Inspector General released a sensitive but unclassified report that included a frank appraisal of the Office of Retirement. It notes that HR/RET has long been known for poor and inconsistent customer service due to a number of factors, including an inadequate, outdated IT capability and longstanding weaknesses in office staffing, organization and operations. According to the OIG, these weaknesses include inadequate or lack of staff training, supervision and accountability; lack of standard operating procedures and business practices; and workload management and performance problems. These weaknesses are aggravated by an increasing workload and chronic vacancies.

The IG pointed out that, with the support of the director general, the HR/RET director was addressing these problems with the addition of positions (in particular, deputy, supervisory and support system personnel) and the introduction of a structured training program, standard operating procedures and a case-tracking system. The report recommended that the planned RET reforms and improvements be implemented and progress reports be provided to customers and management.

In its key judgments, the report concluded that if these efforts fail to produce results, the department should assess the feasibility of transferring the function to a shared services center, whether inside or outside the department. The IG commented that outsourcing need not mean eliminating retirement services from the State Department; a scaled-down office could remain, as is likely needed, to provide in-person counseling and other services, such as assisting with the most complicated cases. Finally, the report recommended that the department determine whether it is advantageous to revisit the possibility of drawing funds from the Foreign Service Retirement Trust Fund to pay for these functions, such as developing and maintaining a new IT system, and to seek reimbursement, if due, from other agencies for HR/RET services.

The problems in HR/RET have persisted despite efforts by its directors and, more recently, new consumer and supervisory personnel, and the development of the "R-Net" online retiree information service. What has been lacking is a department commitment to first-class retirement services and the willingness to make the essential management decisions and provide the necessary level of resources and support to make this happen. The 20-year failure to institute an IT system for annuity calculations speaks for itself. Retiree counselors continue to perform many annuity calculations by hand, a state of affairs that invites human error and staff demoralization.

Transferring HR/RET functions to another entity would simply shift the problem. If the office were moved to Charleston, access to services would become even more remote for retirees. If the Office of Personnel Management — which administers the Civil Service retirement systems and a wide variety of other systems — were to take over our retiree functions, there could be a temptation for Congress to conclude that there is no need for a separate Foreign Service Retirement System.

The distinctions between the Foreign Service and Civil Service could be obscured despite very real practical differences. The most significant is the use of different formulas to calculate annuities for Civil Service employees, who may work until age 65, and for Foreign Service employees, who are subject to an up-or-out promotion system.

Outsourcing to a private company would be even more problematic. How could the department ensure that such a firm had the expertise and experience to administer our complicated Foreign Service retirement systems and do so with the appropriate level of concern for, and willingness to deal with, annuitants?

The suggestion that the department ask Congress to permit it to use the Foreign Service Retirement Fund to pay administrative and operating costs for retiree services should also be considered with caution. At present, those costs are funded by the department's diplomatic and consular affairs account. As a practical matter — and in all likelihood — OMB would reduce the department's budget by any amount taken from the fund. While there would be few objections to a proposal to use the fund in a well-defined and transparent way to fund real improvements in retiree services, there would rightly be concern about diminishing trust funds simply to defray routine department costs.

Using trust funds to meet HR/RET expenses raises another issue, as well: that is, identifying the costs of different administrative services. Fund assets can only be expended for the administration of the Foreign Service pension systems and not for other functions of the department, such as FEHB, FEGLI and Civil Service counseling. If functions are combined, then costs would have to be apportioned appropriately, as is done by OPM, which receives revenue from the FEGLI and FEHB Funds.

Improving retiree services isn't rocket science. It is simply good management. But it would require the department to commit wholeheartedly to providing first-class retiree services and to providing the considerable support and resources for HR/RET to do the job. This should be a transparent process, one in which the department formulates a well-designed plan for making systemic improvements to its procedures, personnel, organization and technical capacity, and explains what resources and funds will be made available for these purposes. ❑

V.P. VOICE: **FCS** ■ BY DON BUSINGER

FCS Working Conditions "Worsening"

As FCS lurches toward the close of the 2008 bid and assignment cycle and the level of nail-biting rises, your AFSA VP and representative briefed FCS management on highlights of our most recent member survey:

Asked "How would you judge current U.S. Commercial Service morale?" only 2 percent of respondents thought it was excellent. A majority — 57 percent — thought it was fair or poor. The survey results show that many factors weigh on morale, including:

• Lack of comparability or locality pay for FS-1s and below overseas;

• An assignment process that was highly delayed this time and had very questionable features appearing to flout long-established rules (the subject of an institutional grievance filed by AFSA in December 2007);

• Lack of adequate resources (personnel and budget) to do our jobs, even as we see bigger Foreign Service agencies like State and USAID request Fiscal Year 2009 increases of between 15 and 30 percent, while commercial diplomacy and export promotion get short shrift; and

• In some cases, less than excellent support and service in headquarters from the offices we depend on (such as OFSHR, CDAS and OPD) for personnel operations, assignments, consultations and training.

In fact, a full two-thirds — 67 percent — of the 120 FCS officers who participated in the survey believe that overall conditions of work for the Foreign Service are worsening, judging from responses to the following question: At the present time, do you believe that the overall conditions of work for the professional Foreign Service are improving, worsening, or remaining the same?

	Number of Responses	Percentage of Respondents
Improving	10	8
Worsening	80	67
Remaining the same	30	25
Total	120	100

The jury is still out on domestic assignments, the seven-year rule, the 15-year rule and other pending issues, as we have discussed in previous columns and AFSAnets. Discussions with management on our spring 2006 midterm proposal drag on with little concrete progress to report and continued divisions within management on these issues.

Both Stephen Anderson and I are moving on in a few months, both of us to "Old Europe" — he to Dublin and I to Switzerland.

We'll keep you posted on progress finding successors out there for back here in D.C. ❑

BPA WORLDWIDE COMPLETES *FSJ* AUDIT

Journal Circulation Tops 15,000

BY ED MILTENBERGER, CIRCULATION MANAGER

The *Foreign Service Journal* was recently audited for membership by BPA Worldwide, a firm whose media audits track circulation based on business/distribution, demographics and geographic coverage for some 2,500 media outlets.

BPA determined that the total number of subscribers to the *Journal* is 15,106. Sixty percent of them are active-duty employees of the five U.S. foreign affairs agencies, both generalists and specialists. The remaining subscribers are Foreign Service retirees, Civil Service employees and members of the public, libraries, universities and other institutions, as well as members of Congress and senior foreign affairs officials.

"I am delighted to see the *Foreign Service Journal* cross the 15,000-circulation mark for the first time," says AFSA President John Naland, "and to do so with certification by the prestigious BPA Worldwide circulation auditing firm. This independent verification of the higher circulation level will help the *Journal* attract more advertisers, providing readers with more information on goods and services of particular interest to them. It will also increase the revenues that help finance publication of the *Journal*."

In addition, the audit report will be listed in Standard Rate and Data Service. SRDS connects buyers and sellers of media by offering comprehensive coverage of traditional media as well as today's alternative marketing opportunities.

"We are pleased that the *Foreign Service Journal* has successfully completed the circulation audit and is now a member of BPA Worldwide," says BPA Worldwide's president and CEO, Glenn Hanson. "We applaud the association for providing current and prospective advertisers with the solid assurance of an independent circulation audit conducted according to our world-respected, uncompromising standards. With a BPA audit, media buyers can be confident that circulation claims are accurate, and that they have the verified data that they need to assess a publication's effectiveness in serving its market."

"Our firm commitment to our members, readers and advertisers, reflected in the *FSJ*'s strong growth, will be enhanced by our membership in BPA," says AFSA Executive Director John Mamone. ❑

AFSA NEWS BRIEFS

Thanks for Supporting the Legal Defense Fund

AFSA is delighted to report strong member support for the new Legal Defense Fund recently set up to provide financial assistance to members for legal cases involving issues of significant institutional importance to the Foreign Service. In response to a fall mailing to all members, AFSA has received over $17,000 so far in contributions from approximately 275 donors. AFSA thanks all who have contributed so generously to the fund.

In October 2007, the AFSA Governing Board named the fund after Richard C. Scissors, a retired Foreign Service officer and beloved AFSA colleague who passed away in September. (See the Appreciation in the December *Foreign Service Journal*, p. 51.)

Those who wish to make a donation should send a check made out to "Richard C. Scissors Legal Defense Fund at AFSA" to: Richard C. Scissors Legal Defense Fund, American Foreign Service Association, P.O. Box 98026, Washington DC 20090-8026. At present, contributions are not tax deductible. AFSA is exploring the possibility of obtaining 501(c)(3) status from the IRS in the future, and will keep you advised of our progress.

Thanks for your support for this important initiative.

Opportunities for Foreign Service Youth

2008 Foreign Service High School and Middle School Young Diplomat's Essay Contest

The Foreign Service Youth Foundation and Diplomatic Auto Sales sponsor the Young Diplomat's Essay Contest for high school and middle school Foreign Service youth. For the high schoolers, first prize is $1,000 and second prize is $500. For middle schoolers, first prize is $250 and second prize is $100. The 2008 essay contest topic for the high schoolers is: analyze and explain what challenges will face the U.S. Foreign Service in the 21st century, in 750 to 1,000 words. Middle schoolers are asked to explain, in 500 to 750 words, "What current international issue would you feel compelled to address if you were a U.S. diplomat? What do you think should be done and why?" The deadline for receipt of essays is April 15. For full rules, guidelines and entry form, please visit www.fsyf.org or e-mail fsyf@fsyf.org.

State Department Federal Credit Union and Foreign Service Youth Foundation Youth Art Contest

The FSYF and the SDFCU announce the opening of the Worldwide Foreign Service Youth Art contest. This year's theme is: My Life, My World, My Dreams. All Foreign Service youth in age groups 5 to 8, 9 to 12 and 13 to 18 are eligible. First-place winners in each age group receive $500; second place, $250; and honorary mention, $100. The deadline is April 30. For full details and entry form, visit www.fsyf.org or e-mail: fsyf@fsyf.org.

2008 Foreign Service Youth Newsletters

Foreign Service high school and middle school students write and publish two quarterly worldwide newsletters. The 2008 winter editions are available online at www.fsyf.org/newsletter/newsletters.html. Foreign Service kids are invited to submit articles for the spring 2008 edition. Paid opportunities available for overseas teen correspondents. For more information or to submit an article, e-mail: newsletter@fsyf.org.

2008 Clements International Community Service Award

FSYF calls for nominations for the Clements International Foreign Service Youth Award for Community Service. The Clements Award honors Foreign Service youth in grades 7 through 12 who have demonstrated outstanding volunteer efforts overseas, either in community service or in service to their peers, while facing the challenges of growing up in an internationally mobile family. The two first-place winners will receive a certificate of recognition and a $1,500 savings bond. All award winners will be invited to the Youth Awards Ceremony at the Department of State. Please visit www.fsyf.org for a nomination form or contact the Family Liaison Office.

Seeking Board Members for the FSYF

If you would like to support Foreign Service families, the Board of Directors of the Foreign Service Youth Foundation is an ideal way for dynamic, busy people to fit community service into their schedules. The Foreign Service Youth Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization run by a volunteer board of directors. The board collaborates with the executive director to provide leadership and governance to the FSYF. The foundation seeks to maintain a skillful and diverse board: Foreign Service employees, former FS youth, retirees and Civil Service employees living in the Washington, D.C., area are all invited to apply to serve. Experience with nonprofit board leadership is preferred but not required. Please consider this networking opportunity to join your Foreign Service colleagues in a rewarding and meaningful project.

A full job description and board application is available at www.fsyf.org (click on board information), or contact Executive Director Melanie Newhouse at fsyf@fsyf.org or (301) 404-6655. Various positions are also available within the organization.

Travel • Continued from page 51

decision is a budgetary imperative, and there is little room to maneuver.

AFSA officials, aware that the change is a "morale buster," share the frustration expressed by the membership. AFSA has met with Under Secretary for Management Patrick Kennedy, key people in the director general's office and other senior officials to argue for a reconsideration, to no avail.

The decision to restrict premium-class travel is the product of two negative Government Accountability Office reports on State's spending on business-class travel and an OMB directive to all federal departments and agencies. AFSA has made the arguments raised by the membership: that the Foreign Service is different from most other parts of the U.S. government in that FS business trips are not short jaunts to Chicago or New York, but rather 22-hour, multiple-leg flights to Ulaanbaatar, Abuja or Mumbai, often with a spouse and a few kids in tow. Or they are long, stressful journeys to dangerous postings such as Iraq or Afghanistan.

AFSA has also argued that there is a disparity with certain other U.S. government agencies that seem to have more generous rules. Unfortunately, while AFSA can protest, there is no legal or statutory recourse to stop the policy change.

Considering the public beating that the image of the Foreign Service has taken in the media in recent months, this is a bad time for AFSA to be seen arguing for business-class travel. Neither the public nor Congress would view the argument sympathetically, regardless of its validity. In addition, AFSA has been advised by friends on the Hill that the prospects for success on overseas comparability pay are improving, but could be diminished by too much perceived whining about business-class travel.

Nonetheless, AFSA has raised strong objections with department management — and did so well before the decision was finalized — and is still urging the department to use whatever flexibility may be possible to find other ways to deal with the budget crunch rather than further squeezing Foreign Service members at the most remote posts.

JOSH

AFSA was heartened by the Feb. 21 message sent out by Under Secretary Kennedy, not because it offered any real hope for rejection of the new policy, but because it gave a candid and straightforward assessment of the issue. His remarks are worth noting:

"I have heard from a number of employees and from AFSA about the changes that we made recently to our regulations governing business-class travel in response to governmentwide regulatory amendments. The policy we had in place was one that nearly everyone in the department liked and understood. Understandably, the changes that we recently made in response to the governmentwide policy shift are not so popular.

"I know that some of you may have already experienced the personal impact of the change, and many more of you will undoubtedly do so during the upcoming summer transfer season or as you move to another post of assignment later in your career. This was not a change that we sought nor one that we could avoid making. ….

"I sympathize with the concerns that so many of you have expressed and so many others have probably felt. I know that this decision will make it more difficult and less comfortable for employees and families to travel to and from distant posts. In my 35 years with the department, I have visited dozens of posts and know first-hand how distant so many of our posts are from Washington and home and how challenging it can be to travel to them. While our preference would have been to continue the policy we had in place, that was not an option.

"I have made it clear in my conversations with OMB and other agencies that I expect these changes to be applied consistently across the executive branch. We will remain vigilant to make sure that all agencies adhere to the new directive as thoroughly as we do. At the same time, given the reality of the change, I call on all COMs, DCMs, management officers and section chiefs to do your best to ease the inconvenience and discomfort of long trips by working with employees to schedule rest stops en route and rest on arrival as appropriate and as authorized in the regulations." ❑

AAFSW RECOGNIZES OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS

Call for Nominations for the SOSA Awards

BY CATHY SALVATERRA, AAFSW SOSA CHAIR

Volunteerism is alive and well in the Foreign Service. Many members of the FS community are devoting countless hours helping improve the quality of life of those in need. The Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide recognizes volunteer efforts specifically performed overseas through the annual Secretary of State Award for Outstanding Volunteerism Abroad (known as the SOSA Awards).

AAFSW established the SOSA Awards 18 years ago with the direct encouragement and support of then-Secretary of State James A. Baker III and Mrs. Baker. SOSA recognizes volunteer efforts at posts overseas in one or more of the following areas: 1) exceptional service to the mission community; 2) outstanding activities directed toward the host country; and 3) exceptional service in emergencies.

In 2007, AAFSW received a total of 24 nominations from posts around the globe. Each year, one recipient is selected to represent each regional bureau. Award winners receive a check for $2,500, a certificate signed by the Secretary of State and a pin commemorating the December AAFSW awards ceremony. The announcement cable soliciting nominations for the 2008 SOSA Awards will go out this month.

Donations to fund SOSA over the years have come from former Secretaries of State and the AAFSW membership. In 2005, Ambassador Steven Green of the Green Family Foundation generously bequeathed an annual contribution of $10,000 to help fund the awards. The Green Foundation serves as a voice for social action, and the 2007 SOSA recipients are extraordinary examples of agents of change.

The 2007 SOSA Winners

• During his two-year tour in Cotonou, 2007 SOSA winner Neill Krost devoted countless hours to the welfare of 250 children at the Abomey orphanage, located four hours from the capital. He brought together the entire diplomatic and expatriate communities for the first annual Christmas benefit drive. Krost was also successful in persuading the town mayor to provide electricity and water for the facility and in securing funding for new construction. To sustain and expand these efforts, he also developed a business plan for the orphanage, created a Web site and raised an additional $20,000 to fund future improvements.

MICHAEL GROSS

2007 SOSA winners with Deputy Secretary John Negroponte. From left: Dennis Nice, Maria Regina Pontes, Alison Padget, Karen Sabatine (mother of Paul Sabatine, who could not be present), the Deputy Secretary and Neill Krost.

• Alison Padget, a first-tour family member living in Beijing, is a volunteer nutrition program coordinator for the United Foundation for Chinese Orphans. She has dedicated her skills and expertise to improving the lives of the children of the Jiaozuo City orphanage who face severe health issues. Padget oversees the ordering, transport and preparation of infant formula and trains the staff in sanitary techniques. To finance corrective surgeries, she secured $55,000 in grant monies from a pharmaceutical company.

• As two-term chairman of the school board of the American International School of Zagreb, Dennis Nice was the catalyst for the identification of a new school facility. Drawing on his strong leadership skills, Nice formed a multicultural team of architects, engineers, investors and lawyers to tackle the challenges of a viable school plan. As board chairman, he led a successful search for a new school director, established a financial aid policy and paid off a facilities improvement loan two years in advance.

• USAID Program Officer Paul Sabatine devoted his volunteer efforts furthering the education of street children and the employment of destitute women in Dhaka. During his tenure as board chair of Eglal's ABC School for street children, Sabatine spearheaded major renovations to the school building. His creative implementation of a monthly family subsistence plan catapulted school attendance from 70 to 92 percent. Sabatine also volunteered to manage and promote sales of handicrafts by a cooperative of marginalized women, thereby tripling their income.

• Maria Regina Barros Pontes created a business venture in the rural community of Los Amadores, 20 miles outside of Managua. In 2006, she began making weekly visits to teach a group of women how to make baskets out of newspaper. At the same time, she cultivated contacts in Managua with galleries and craft fairs where the women could sell their wares. Barros Pontes also convinced the mayor of the community to create a space in the public market for sale of the handicrafts and to provide a site where the women have established their headquarters.

The 2007 SOSA winners attended the AAFSW annual awards ceremony on Dec. 4, 2007, in the Benjamin Franklin Reception Room at the State Department. Deputy Secretary John D. Negroponte presented the awards. In accepting them, each recipient spoke about the power of volunteer work. The winners carried a message of hope and commitment. Theirs was a message of deeds, not words, epitomizing grass-roots diplomacy at its best.

More details about the awards program are posted on the AAFSW Web site at www.aafsw.org/aafsw/awards/2007_wrapup.htm ❑

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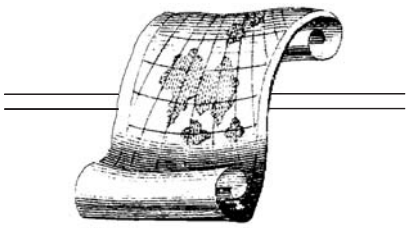

REFLECTIONS

Easter in Bombay

BY VICTORIA HESS

Take New York City after a long garbage strike, add feral dogs and ravens to assure that the garbage is thoroughly scattered, and then consider the fact that a third of the people in Bombay (now Mumbai) had no access to toilets.

This was the city I moved to in 1993, with my diplomat husband and two young sons, and this was where the Easter egg hunt I planned for the consulate community took place in 1994.

In spite of the filth around us, I loved Bombay. We lived in a run-down building atop Malabar Hill, not far from the Hanging Gardens, where wealthy residents strolled in the early morning among the formal plantings. A mile away was the consulate general, the site for the hunt. I walked the streets endlessly, taking in the local color of the street barbers, snack vendors, holy men, elephants and produce baskets.

Sometimes, we would walk down Malabar Hill, along a small stream where men bathed — partially dressed — and women scrubbed saris and salwar kameezes (pant suits), then up a hillside staircase to a slum. There the tiny hovels were built side by side along narrow pathways with open sewers. Yet these were far better dwellings than millions had in the streets of Bombay. They were permanent, built of mud and brick instead of bamboo and cloth. And there were communal water faucets and toilets.

I would walk through this neighborhood with one son on my back and

The Easter egg hunters had stiff and unexpected competition.

the other hand-in-hand, and we would greet and nod at all the women and children, sharing our mutual pleasure at the unexpected.

Continuing on toward the consulate general, I would pass the Towers of Silence, where the Parsis, who do not believe in polluting the earth, air or water with interment or cremation, put out the bodies of their dead to be disposed of naturally. Non-Parsis were not permitted to enter the area, but when I visited a friend whose high-rise building overlooked the site, we could see, from 16 stories up, bodies laid out for the scavenging birds. Daily, we saw the dark shapes circling over the Towers.

The consulate general was a grand, colonial-era building built by the Maharaja of Wankaner. A high wall ringed the compound, cutting off the view of the ocean in back but enclosing a sizable lawn, gardens, tennis courts and playground. It looked like the perfect setting for an Easter egg hunt.

To prepare, I had collected hundreds of eggs from parents, some boiled and brightly dyed, others made of plastic and filled with goodies. On Easter Sunday, some parents and I arrived early to hide the eggs. The children, ranging from toddlers to sixth-graders, waited impatiently outside the front of the building. Little did they know of the stiff competition they would face.

As soon as we started hiding the eggs, ravens and gulls began to dive-bomb the garden, and I had the feeling I was trapped in a scene from the Hitchcock film, "The Birds." These soaring garbage pickers saw the colorful eggs and decided it was suppertime. The plastic ones survived the onslaught, but the real ones were quickly reduced to fragments of white and yellow, with shards of colored shell scattered throughout the yard.

With horror, I realized that the ravens who were feasting on our Easter eggs that morning had probably eaten their last meal at the Towers. Screaming and chasing birds as we went, we worked fast to hide the rest of the eggs. Guarding our corner of the garden from the winged onslaught, we had the children conclude the hunt as quickly as possible, before the birds could finish it for them.

After it was all over, and the children were safely checking their goodies, I reclaimed all the plastic eggs. I left them in a basket in the Community Liaison Office, with an explanation about what to expect next year. ■

Victoria Hess was married to a Foreign Service officer for 15 years, during which time she served in six countries (Iraq, Germany, India, Pakistan, Zimbabwe and the U.S.) and lived in 13 homes. Victoria now lives in Jackson Hole, Wyo., with her sons.

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