

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Pakistan's Sacrifice Toward Afghan Peace

In regard to Chris Patten's broadside against Pakistan and its military ("What Ails Afghanistan," editorial page, May 11): Afghanistan's security problems are internal, not external, and arise from religious extremism, warlordism, narcotics trade and local rivalries. The Taliban originated from and continue to be based in Afghanistan. Failure to address the country's complex security challenges cannot be externalized.

Peace in Afghanistan is in Pakistan's vital interests, since it will enable it to achieve the objective of serving as a trade and transit hub for Central Asia, China and South Asia and beyond. After the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan, hundreds of Taliban and members of al Qaeda did flee to Pakistan. We have captured more than 600 al Qaeda operatives, deployed more than 80,000 troops to stop infiltration, or exfiltration, conducted over 80 military anti-terrorist operations in our tribal areas, and have sacrificed 600 of our soldiers, far more than the combined losses of international forces in Afghanistan. Of course, success of such operation often depends on timely information-sharing from Afghanistan and an adequate military presence there.

The assertion that Pakistan's military is in

"cahoots" with the militants is absurd. These militants have tried thrice to assassinate President Musharraf. The Jehadi organizations banned by this government thrived during the 10-year rule of the so-called "moderate" parties. The strongest opponents of the government are those very same religious parties in whose favor the 2002 elections are alleged to have been rigged. These elections were held under international observation and adjudged to be free and fair, and thus a strong component of the government's parliamentary party is from members of the so-called moderate parties not the religious extremists.

When President Musharraf assumed power seven years ago, Pakistan had been nearly bankrupted by the leaders of the "moderate" parties, who, incidentally, actively supported the Taliban and other Jehadi groups. Today, Pakistan's economy is growing at a rate second only to China, trade and investment are booming, elected representatives govern at the local, provincial and national level, women and minorities have been politically empowered, and a promising peace process is under way with India.

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Galileo's Dangers

You report a closing of trans-Atlantic policy gaps in relations with China ("EU, U.S. policy on China converges on key issues," May 4) without mentioning the crucial satellite-navigation issue. The European Union's determination to go ahead with its Galileo system in direct competition with America's Global Positioning System—while allowing the Chinese to take a 20% stake in Galileo—has the potential to destabilize future arms production. It also threatens the maintenance of peace.

Galileo is a hugely ambitious attempt by the EU to rival the U.S. as a full-fledged space power with its own ring of satellites. Why else duplicate GPS, which is freely available by courtesy of the U.S.?

Galileo has already cost EU taxpayers 600 million euros. Yet Brussels has no legal right to set up its own space program. That depended on ratification of the failed EU constitution, as did the EU's defense agency. Such niceties are being ignored, of course, because the EU wants its own satellites as part of any future EU military operations. It is not prepared to wait.

Since all future battlefield weapons will be navigated by satellite, many European companies now see a continuing, lucrative market as China rearms using EU technology. Meanwhile, the U.S., with its commitment to Japan, Taiwan and Southeast Asia, will be wary of any nation complicit in rearming China with state-of-the-art weapons. It must plan accordingly.

Galileo ratchets up the risk of future aggression between the U.S. and China. It also makes it more likely that the Americans will eventually encrypt their free-to-all GPS. At that point, the EU will doubtless introduce substantial charges for the use of Galileo, having already increased tensions between East and West.

Galileo is a dangerous development. It will inevitably add new stresses to trans-Atlantic relations.

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Global View / By Bret Stephens

An Iraqi Optimist's Tale

Nasreen Siddeek-Barwari was just 13 when she entered the Fedhelia women's prison in east Baghdad. It was October 1981, and Saddam Hussein's campaign against the Kurds would soon kick into high gear. Her father, a former Iraqi military officer, was arrested after years of harassment by the secret police; one of his sons was known to be active in the Kurdish resistance up north. She, a younger brother and her mother were placed that same day in a cell with about 40 other women and children.

"It was a mix of Arabs, communists, Christians, Islamists, mainly Kurds," she recalls. "The cell was so packed we didn't have room to sleep. We were from different places politically but we were all suffering for the same reason: We were different from the regime."

"I became old then," adds the still-young Ms. Siddeek-Barwari, who last week resigned as Iraq's minister for municipalities and public works after serving nearly three years under three governments. She has survived two assassination attempts (not everyone in her retinue was so lucky) and struggled, with mixed results, to reform her hidebound ministry. As she tells her story in fluent English, one begins to understand how this woman—whose personal elegance belies a hard-bitten life—can describe herself as a "realistic optimist" about her country.

Six months into their indefinite prison term, the family was ordered into a sealed bus, driven through the night and deposited in the desert. "We were so afraid they would just dump us into an open grave," she says. Instead, they found themselves reunited with her father, albeit in a prison camp. Six months later they were released.

By the time the Gulf War came, Ms. Siddeek-Barwari was enrolled in Baghdad University, working toward a degree in architectural engineering. Though the U.S. bombardment was terrifying, it was, she says, also cause for joy: "That was the moment for regime change. Saddam was so weak. The international community was united. The Iraqi people were not so damaged." Besides, "I had faith the U.S. wouldn't target people."

Her confidence in America proved well-founded in the second matter, but not in the first. She went north as the Kurdish peshmerga launched a revolt against Saddam, and then walked three days straight to Turkey after the revolt was defeated. After two frigid months in a tent camp for refugees, she decided—courageously, given her political profile—to return to Baghdad to complete the degree. Three months later she was back in Kurdistan.

The next 12 years were spent working for regional and international agencies, with two years off to get a master's from Harvard. She organized the return of a half million refugees from Turkey and Iran and the reconstruction of 3,000 of the 4,000 villages destroyed by Saddam. It was excellent training. "We faced the same challenges in Kurdistan that Iraq faces today: a broken infrastructure, an administrative vacuum, security threats from Saddam, neighboring countries and the PKK [a Kurdish terrorist group]."

In April 2003, she watched from Irbil as Iraqis pulled down Saddam's statue in Baghdad's Firdos square. "That was a very happy moment." But the looting that followed did more than just property damage: "It showed the Americans were not in control," she says. The perception was both lasting and fatal.

Joining the Governing Council that September, Ms. Siddeek-Barwari witnessed American mistakes at first hand. She describes Paul Bremer as an outstanding details man who "knew everything about wa-

ter, electricity and oil." But he was remarkably ignorant about Iraq, had zero communications skills and was peremptory in his personal dealings. Still worse was the staff of the Coalition Provisional Authority. "The CPA did not invest in empowering Iraqi politicians, in training them," she says. "They took over everything. Culturally, that was unacceptable to Iraqis."

Overbearing Americans weren't Ms. Siddeek-Barwari's only problem. At her ministry, which she largely inherited from the old regime, the use of computers was "unheard of," employees were "lazy," and there was little institutional capacity to think, plan and act. But the main challenge, she says, "was to reorient the ministry from one that served the regime to one that served the people."

She also complains that of the \$4.2 billion promised in 2003 by the U.S. for the sanitation sector, only \$1.2 billion has been delivered, a third of which must go to overhead.

The result: 75% of Iraq's garbage goes uncollected, and while water coverage is improving, 33% of Iraqis still don't have access to a water line. Her pleas for more funding are usually met with polite rebuffs from her U.S. counterparts: "Well, it's our decision," they say.

Then there is security. "I believe in getting closer to a problem," she says of her management style. But that's hard to do when it means risking her life and the lives of her entourage. The Iraqi Army is now better able to deal with the insurgency, which she also sees weakening since elections earlier this year installed a fully representative government. But ordinary crime and sectarian violence has exploded, and Baghdad today is less safe than it was a year ago.

Will the new government of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki do better than its predecessor? "We have to stop thinking that one person will solve Iraq's problems," she says. The country will soon embark on a review process to settle remaining differences over the constitution approved last year. "The Sunnis need to understand that federalism is not a threat to them," adding that if the review process fails, "I cannot see where the country will go."

Still, the disappointments following Iraq's liberation have not overwhelmed Ms. Siddeek-Barwari. "We still have an opportunity," she says, observing that she has survived prison, the false dawn of the Gulf War, a refugee camp, Kurdistan's travails, Saddam's terror and the concentrated attention of the insurgency. And as she tells her tale—hardly the most shocking to emerge from Iraq in recent years—it becomes clear how she can face each day. She was born to a country of survivors. And they have already survived worse.

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Helping Nepal

Hugo Restall's May 12 editorial-page article, "Nepal's Honeymoon," while providing keen insights in the political machinations taking place in Nepal, fails to note that there can be no lasting peace until there is a social and economic transformation of the country that improves literacy, provides job opportunities for Nepal's young people, redistributes wealth and breaks up the power of the oligarchy.

Such a transformation could be achieved through developing the country's vast hydro-power resources. At present, Nepal only has the capacity to generate around 600 megawatts of power a year, or half the output of a large nuclear reactor—and only 20% of its population have access to electricity. But hydroelectric power is estimated to be capable of generating in excess of 80,000 megawatts of electricity a year. That could create huge revenues, especially from exporting power to meet the booming demand in nearby India and Bangladesh, to be put into education, job creation, health, housing and roads and ending the endemic poverty that has led to the spread of the Maoist insurgency.

The Nepalese government already has plans to expand hydroelectric power so that it can provide electricity to 60% of the nation by 2027, and export 22,500 megawatts of power a year. But it has no funds to implement them, and has delayed passing both a new Electricity Act and the legislation to create the Nepal Electricity Regulatory Commission, both of which are essential to attract greater private investment in the power sector. The international community can help, first by putting pressure on Nepal's new government to quickly pass both bills and secondly by providing aid to help Nepal develop its energy sector.

As ambitious as Nepal's plans are, the only way to undermine support for the Maoist insurgency is to accelerate energy reform further—since it is in areas without electricity that the Maoists have their strongest support.

If Nepal is to join the family of nations that provides a decent living for all of its citizens it is time to develop this nation's vast hydroelectric potential.

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CORRECTION

Yesterday's editorial-page article, "Set China's Farmers Free," incorrectly referred to Michigan University researchers who participated in a study on the effects of China's Rural Land Contracting Law. The researchers were, in fact, from Michigan State University.