

WORLD NEWS AMERICAS

Romney stakes out foreign policy turf

WASHINGTON

BY DAVID E. SANGER

Mitt Romney is intensifying his efforts to draw a sharp contrast with President Barack Obama on national security in the presidential campaign's closing stages, portraying Mr. Obama as having mishandled the tumult in the Arab world and having left the nation exposed to a terrorist attack in Libya.

In a speech on Monday at the Virginia Military Institute, a military college, Mr. Romney declared that "hope is not a strategy" for dealing with the rise of Islamist governments in the Middle East or an Iran that he said was racing toward the capability to build a nuclear weapon.

Mr. Romney essentially argued that he would take the United States back to an earlier era, one that would result, as his foreign policy director, Alex Wong, told reporters on Sunday, in "the restoration of a strategy that served us well for 70 years" by better projecting American strength abroad.

"Our friends and allies across the globe do not want less American leadership," Mr. Romney told hundreds of cadets at the military institute. "They want more."

Yet he has not filled in many details of how he would conduct foreign policy, let alone how he would resolve deep ideological rifts within his own foreign policy team. It is a disparate and politely fractious group of advisers that includes neoconservatives, traditional strong-defense conservatives and a band of self-described "realists" who believe there are limits to U.S. power.

Each group is vying to shape Mr. Romney's views. But some of these advisers, in interviews in which most insisted on anonymity, say they have engaged with him so little on security issues that they

"Our friends and allies across the globe do not want less American leadership. They want more."

are uncertain what camp he would fall into or how he would govern.

"Would he take the lead in bombing Iran if the mullahs were getting too close to a bomb, or just back up the Israelis?" one senior adviser asked last week. "Would he push for peace with the Palestinians, or just live with the status quo? He's left himself a lot of wiggle room."

The Obama campaign, still stinging from the president's lackluster showing in the debate last week, began a frontal assault even before Mr. Romney's speech Monday.

Jennifer Psaki, a campaign spokeswoman, ridiculed Mr. Romney's foreign policy experience and his gaffe-tarnished European trip. "We are not going to be lectured by someone who's been an unmitigated disaster on foreign policy every time he sticks his toe in the foreign policy waters," she said.

While there may be political appeal in a central theme of Mr. Romney's speech — that the Obama era has been marked by "weakness," "passivity" and the abandonment of allies — the specific descriptions of what Mr. Romney would do, on issues like stopping Iran's nuclear program and threatening to cut military aid to difficult allies like Pakistan or Egypt if they veer away from American interests, sound at times quite close to Mr. Obama's approach.

The speech Monday glided past positions Mr. Romney himself took more than a year ago, when he voiced opposition to expanding the intervention in Libya, warning of "mission creep," though within months Colonel Muammar el-Qaddafi was gone. And last spring, Mr. Romney was caught on tape telling donors there was "just no way" a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would work.

On Monday, Mr. Romney called vaguely for support of Libya's "efforts to forge a lasting government" and to

pursue the "terrorists who attacked our consulate in Benghazi and killed Americans." And he said he would "recommit America to the goal of a democratic, prosperous Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security" with Israel. But he did not say what resources he would devote to those tasks.

The shifts, a half dozen of Mr. Romney's advisers said in interviews, partly reflect the fact that the candidate himself has not deeply engaged in these issues until recently. But they also represent continuing divisions.

Still, an "inner circle" of foreign policy advisers has emerged, with Richard S. Williamson, a former official in the administrations of Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, playing a leading role. Other central players include: Mitchell B. Reiss, a former State Department policy official and a veteran of Mr. Romney's 2008 campaign; Jim Talent, the former Missouri senator; Liz Cheney, who served in the State Department and is the daughter of Dick Cheney, George W. Bush's vice president; and Dan Senor, who was spokesman for the American occupation government in Iraq.

The group is overseen by Kerry Healey, who served as lieutenant governor under Mr. Romney in Massachusetts. Less visible are some of the better-known veterans of Republican foreign policy wars in the Bush era.

The faction around John R. Bolton — the neoconservative former ambassador to the United Nations, who has made clear his distaste for working through international organizations — expressed its deep unhappiness when Robert Zoellick was appointed as a strategist for the Romney national security transition team. Mr. Zoellick, the former president of the World Bank, comes from the internationalist wing of the party; Mr. Bolton's allies deride him as moderate to a fault.

Those disputes have been shelved, at least until after the Nov. 6 election, advisers say. For now, Mr. Romney has appeared unconcerned about the widely differing views within his campaign about whether spreading American-style freedoms in the Middle East or simply managing, and limiting, the rise of Islamist governments should be a major goal.

That has led to some embarrassing confusion. Mr. Williamson said in an interview two weeks ago that Mr. Romney favored arming Syrian rebels, then later corrected himself, saying that Mr. Romney favored having Arab neighbors arm them, a position close to Mr. Obama's.

In discussing Syria on Monday, Mr. Romney called for organizing "members of the opposition who share our values" and ensuring "they obtain the arms they need to defeat Assad's tanks, helicopters and fighter jets." But he stopped short of saying he would provide them.

In a television interview two weeks ago, Mr. Romney seemed to forget his position that he would halt Iran from getting a nuclear "capability" — something it would reach long before it had a weapon — and sounded as if he, like the president, would simply stop Iran from gaining a weapon.

In the speech, he returned to the promise to, along with U.S. friends and allies, "prevent them from acquiring a nuclear weapons capability." But he discussed primarily "new sanctions on Iran," at a moment when Mr. Obama has imposed what Republicans from the Bush administration agree are the most severe sanctions in history, bolstered by cyberattacks on Iran's nuclear infrastructure.

Missing from the team are the big Republican establishment names like Henry A. Kissinger, the former secretary of state who helped reopen U.S. relations with China. He has endorsed Mr. Romney, but recently criticized his declaration that he would immediately declare China a currency manipulator. Last week, Mr. Kissinger described both presidential candidates' approach to China as "extremely deplorable."

Brian Knowlton contributed reporting from Washington.



Supporters of Hugo Chávez gathered in Caracas to celebrate after hearing of his re-election victory. If he serves out his new term through 2019, he will have been in power for two decades.

Venezuela renews Chávez's term

CARACAS

BY WILLIAM NEUMAN

President Hugo Chávez, long a fiery foe of Washington, has won re-election, facing down cancer and the strongest electoral challenge of his nearly 14 years in office and gaining a new mandate to deepen his socialist revolution in Venezuela.

Though his margin of victory was much narrower than in past elections, he still won handily on Sunday. With 90 percent of the votes tallied, Mr. Chávez received 54 percent, versus 45 percent for his opponent, Henrique Capriles Radonski, in the national election council said. Fireworks erupted in Caracas after the news, and Chávez supporters celebrated in the streets.

Shortly before 11:30 p.m., Mr. Chávez stepped out onto the balcony of the presidential palace in Caracas and waved to a sea of jubilant supporters. "My words of recognition go out from here to all who voted against us, a recognition for their democratic temperament," he said. A former soldier, he called the election a "perfect battle."

Still, after a spirited campaign, the polarizing Mr. Chávez finds himself governing a changed country. He is an ailing and politically weakened winner facing an emboldened opposition that grew stronger and more confident as

the voting neared, and held out hope that an upset victory was within reach.

Mr. Chávez has said he will move forward even more aggressively to create his version of socialism in Venezuela in a new six-year term, although his pledges have been short on specifics.

His health, though, remains a question mark. He has undergone several rounds of treatment for cancer in the last 15 months but has refused to make public essential details of his illness. If he overcomes the disease and serves out his new term to its end in 2019, he will have been in power for two full decades.

Toward the end of the campaign, facing pressure from Mr. Capriles, Mr.

President Hugo Chávez received 54 percent, versus 45 percent for his opponent, a former mayor and governor.

Chávez pledged to make his government more efficient and to pay more attention to the quality of government programs, like education. He even made appeals for the middle class and the opposition to join in his revolution.

But Mr. Chávez spent much of the year insulting and trying to provoke Mr. Capriles and his followers. And on Sunday, he had to face the fact that the people he taunted as squalid good-for-nothings,

little Yankees and fascists turned out to be nearly half the electorate.

As the opposition's momentum grew, Mr. Chávez's insults seemed to lose their sting. By the end of the campaign, young people in Caracas were wearing colorful T-shirts that said "majunche," or good-for-nothing, Mr. Chávez's favorite taunt.

Mr. Capriles was subdued on Sunday night, congratulating Mr. Chávez and saying he hoped the president would see the result as "the expression today of a country with two visions, and to be president means working to solve the problems of all Venezuelans." He appeared poised to carry on his fight in the elections for state governors in December. "You should all feel proud," he told supporters. "Do not feel defeated."

Michael Shifter, president of the Inter-American Dialogue, a research institute in Washington, called the presidential election "a fundamental turning point." He said Mr. Chávez was "going to have to deal with a very different society than he dealt with in his last term, a society that's awakened and more organized and more confident."

Even so, the opposition is a fragile coalition with a history of infighting, especially after an election defeat.

"The opposition has more power; it feels more support," said Elsi Fernandes, a schoolteacher, who voted for Mr. Capriles on Sunday morning in Catia, a poor neighborhood in Caracas.

"The difference is that we're not going to stay with our arms crossed."

The turnout was more than 80 percent, the highest in decades, the election council said. People stood in line for hours, although the voting appeared in most cases to run smoothly.

Venezuela is mired in problems, including out-of-control violent crime, crumbling roads and bridges, and power blackouts that regularly plague much of the country outside the capital. Oil production, the country's mainstay, has leveled off in recent years, and other exports have not picked up the slack.

Mr. Chávez has trumpeted his programs to help the poor and has pointed to a sharp reduction in the number of people living in poverty. But he has governed during a phenomenal rise in oil prices, which have soared from \$10 in 1998, the year before he took office, to more than \$100 in recent years and the high \$80s now, pouring huge amounts of revenue into Venezuela.

Mr. Capriles, who has served as a legislator, mayor and governor, campaigned almost nonstop, seeking to contrast his energetic style with the reduced schedule of Mr. Chávez, who received a diagnosis of cancer in 2011.

Maria Eugenia Diaz, Jonathan Gilbert, Girish Gupta and Andrew Rosati contributed reporting from Caracas, and Maria Iguarán from Cumaná, Venezuela.

Obama works to gain ground in debates

WASHINGTON

His team pushes hard on the next 3, starting with Biden vs. Ryan

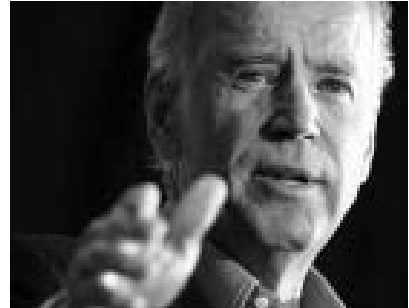
BY PETER BAKER AND TRIP GABRIEL

President Barack Obama's campaign is working feverishly to restore its momentum after a lackluster debate performance last week, an effort that began with a conference call 10 minutes before the debate even ended and led to new advertisements, a rewritten campaign speech, and a carefully timed leak.

Perhaps most important as the president's team struggles to put his campaign back on track is a renewed effort to win the three remaining debates, starting with the face-off on Thursday between Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. and Representative Paul D. Ryan. Mr. Biden began traveling to a Delaware hotel on Sunday for three days of debate camp.

Under the tutelage of David Axelrod, the president's chief strategist, who is personally overseeing the preparations, Mr. Biden will be counseled on how to avoid Mr. Obama's mistakes and even correct them with a more aggressive prosecution of the Republican ticket. Mr. Axelrod's involvement highlights the stakes the Obama campaign places on the debate, and Mr. Biden has been reading "Young Guns," the book co-written by Mr. Ryan, and practicing attack lines that Mr. Obama avoided.

The focus on Mr. Biden comes as the campaign tries to diagnose what went wrong in Denver and what to do about it. Advisers had seen two presidents during practice debates, one who had been listless and passive two nights before and another energetic and aggressive the next night. It turned out the former was the one who showed up in Denver.



Joseph R. Biden Jr., above, has been reading a book co-written by Paul D. Ryan.

He kept looking down and was not using the lines they had practiced assailing Mitt Romney, who kept the president on the defensive and presented a forceful case against his re-election.

For Mr. Obama, it was arguably the lowest point in his campaign for a second term. The campaign's own focus groups and research indicated that he lost. Mr. Obama did not fully realize as he walked off the stage just how badly it had gone, but aides said he resolved to step up his game.

"He doesn't brood — he acts," Mr. Axelrod said. "Whatever the concerns were about yesterday, he wakes up the next day ready to take it on again."

On the conference call convened by aides in Denver and Chicago even as the candidates were still on stage, there was no debate in the Obama campaign about the debate. None of the advisers fooled themselves into thinking it was anything but a disaster. Instead, they scrambled for ways to recover. They resolved to go after Mr. Romney with a post-debate assault on his truthfulness. Ad makers were ordered to work all night to produce an attack ad. And they would seize on Mr. Romney's vow to cut financing for Big Bird, the "Sesame Street" character.

Mr. Obama has been helped by two subsequent events. A labor report on Friday showed that unemployment had

dropped to 7.8 percent from 8.1 percent, still historically high but back down to where it was when he took office. And his campaign privately spread the word that fund-raising had soared, giving him a bankroll for a comeback attempt.

But the debate remains a singular event in the life of the campaign, watched by more than 67 million people — a larger audience than for any of Mr. Obama's 2008 debates, either of his nominating conventions or any of his State of the Union addresses.

The debate on Thursday between Mr. Biden and Mr. Ryan may not draw quite the same audience, but both sides view it as critical and are preparing for a contentious clash. "With Paul Ryan, it's a different dynamic" than when Mr. Biden debated Sarah Palin in 2008, said Jennifer Granholm, a former Michigan governor who played Ms. Palin in debate practice then. The vice president "can go hard on policy."

In rehearsals, Representative Chris Van Hollen, a Maryland Democrat who is playing Mr. Ryan, has mimicked what he considered the Republican's staccato speaking style and penchant for slashing arguments wrapped in a smile. "I expect the vice president to come at me like a cannonball," Mr. Ryan told The Weekly Standard.

Mr. Biden's advisers view Mr. Ryan as a walking encyclopedia of numbers and policy and hope he might get lost in the weeds.

"The key is to be able to cut through the numbers that often don't make sense," said Mr. Van Hollen. Also crucial is helping Mr. Biden tame his own loquacious nature and proclivity for gaffes.

The Obama-Biden team approached the debate knowing the perils. Like other presidents, Mr. Obama's debate preparations were hindered by his day job, his practice sessions often canceled or truncated because of events, advisers said. One session took place just after he addressed a service for the four Americans slain in Libya, leaving him distracted.

BRIEFLY United States



LOS ANGELES

Senator from California calls for gas price investigation

Senator Dianne Feinstein, Democrat of California, has called for a federal investigation into gasoline prices in her state, questioning whether recent increases are related to supply and demand.

Californians are paying an average of \$4.668 a gallon, or just under a euro per liter, the highest price in the country, with many paying more than \$5. For the second time in the last few months, Ms. Feinstein has sent a letter to the Federal Trade Commission asking for an immediate investigation. She also asked in August, when gasoline was, on average, 45 cents cheaper.

Governor Jerry Brown over the weekend ordered state smog regulators to allow winter-blend gas to be sold three weeks early in the state to increase the supply, but experts predict that prices will climb to an average of \$4.85 before coming down. (AP)

PHOENIX, ARIZONA

Mistaken identity suspected in agent-on-agent shooting

A U.S. Border Patrol agent, Nicholas Ivie, who was killed in a shooting in southern Arizona apparently opened fire on two fellow agents thinking they were armed smugglers and was killed when they returned fire, according to the head of the patrol agents' union.

The two sets of agents approached an area where a sensor had been activated early Oct. 2 from different directions and encountered each other in an area of heavy brush, the National Border Patrol Council president, George McCubbin, said Sunday. (AP)

IHT Classifieds

TO PLACE AN AD CALL UK +44 (0)20 7061 3533 France +33 1 41 43 92 06 The Americas +866 459 1121 Asia +601 2697 4088

General

Business & Leisure Travel

1st Business Class Worldwide
Boutique Consolidator - up to 50% off. Special fares for round-the-world, cruises & hotels.
Imperial Travel, Virtuoso Member
1-646-216-8816 www.imptrav.com

To place an ad from Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia Herzegovina

Please contact Mark Rodiqi +377 44 18 61 51 markrodiq@dioklecan.com

Need to place a classified ad?

Contact one of the IHT advertising offices listed below. Most credit cards accepted

IN EUROPE

■ FRANCE
Tel: (33 1) 41 43 92 06
Email: vb Boyle@nytimesglobal.com

■ UNITED KINGDOM
Tel: +44 (0)20 7061 3533
Email: jbutler@nytimesglobal.com

■ AUSTRIA/GERMANY
Tel: +49 (0)69 71 67 79 10
Email: nhoffmann@nytimesglobal.com

■ ITALY
Tel: (33 1) 41 43 92 06
Email: vb Boyle@nytimesglobal.com

■ GREECE/CYPRUS
Tel: 30 211 2121 480
Email: adv-greece@iht.com

■ SCANDINAVIA (Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden)
Tel: +47 55 92 51 92
Email: fgisdahl@mediasales.no

■ SPAIN

AIM, About International Media
C/ Alcalá, 20, ofi. 403, 4ª planta,
28014 Madrid (Spain)
Tel. + 34 91 320 37 70
Email: olga.martinez@aboutim.es

IN ASIA

Tel: +601 2697 4088
Email: iht@drumediapl.com

IN AFRICA

■ NORTH AFRICA
Tel: 1 733 385
Email: cnhanouna@yahoo.com

■ EAST AFRICA (out of UK)
Tel: 207 328 7763
Email: teigrew@hotmail.com