

Date and Time: Saturday, May 4, 2024 2:44:00AM EEST

Job Number: 223498999

Documents (100)

1. [AS OBAMA GIVES TOUGH SPEECH, AUDIENCE IS THINKING: YES, BUT](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

2. [Mayhem in Bangkok](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

3. ['Smart sanctions' key to reining in mullahs](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

4. [Good lord](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

5. [Beware of the nerds](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

6. ['A necessary operation'](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

7. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

8. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

9. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

10. [Number of candidates in elections reaches 270](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

11. [The terror bubble](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

12. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

13. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

14. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

15. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

16. [ELECTIONS AROUND THE WORLD REFLECT POLITICAL CHALLENGES](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

17. [Eat up, National Post tells LTTE hunger strikers](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

18. [Column: Israel - Palestine on campus debate calls for activism that matters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

19. [Dubious poll has dashed hopes for reform in Iran](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

20. [Give Canadians the choice of Al Jazeera TV](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

21. [Sex in speeding car](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

22. [Ripples from Iran crisis reach far and wide](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

23. [We won't be silenced say Iran 's opposition](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

24. [Pakistan : Desperate Taliban deliver death 18 killed in Peshawar, Bannu car blasts](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

25. [Letters](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

26. [Managing anti-Semitism in Germany](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to
Dec 31, 2009

27. [When people criticize Zionism, they mean Jews, said Martin Luther King](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to
Dec 31, 2009

28. [Living with Cheney's poisonous legacy](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to
Dec 31, 2009

29. [World & nation in 60 seconds The nation The world](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to
Dec 31, 2009

30. [Magistrates have a thankless task I read the letter \(March 2\) from Tony Badcock, of Ottery St Mary, which shamed Mrs Alma Harding for acting like a vigilante.](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to
Dec 31, 2009

31. [Magistrates have a thankless task I read the letter \(March 2\) from Tony Badcock, of Ottery St Mary, which shamed Mrs Alma Harding for acting like a vigilante.](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to
Dec 31, 2009

32. [SWILLING BEER, SMOKING DOPE AND LEERING AT PORN, THE OTHER SIDE OF HATE PREACHER
'ANDY' CHOUDARY](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to
Dec 31, 2009

33. [The hijacking of human rights](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to
Dec 31, 2009

34. [Israel is being confronted with the serious charge for killing of civilians MIDEAST: Israeli Soldiers Condemn
War on Gaza](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to
Dec 31, 2009

35. [The people's hero has blood on his hands](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to
Dec 31, 2009

36. [Rising up](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

37. [Questions worth fighting for in fields of Afghanistan](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

38. [World & nation in 60 seconds The world The nation](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

39. [Magistrates have a thankless task I read the letter \(March 2\) from Tony Badcock, of Ottery St Mary, which shamed Mrs Alma Harding for acting like a vigilante.](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

40. [Iran awakens yet again GLOBALIST](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

41. [Showcase: West Into East Lens](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

42. [Obama's Cairo speech having an effect](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

43. [Iran , the Jews and Germany Globalist](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

44. [Worldview: Obama's Cairo speech already having an effect](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

45. [* Saint Sebastian Players concludes its season with "The Real Thing," Tom Stoppa](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

46. [Israel 's 'Waltz with Bashir' misses an Oscar, but scores in Lebanon](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type

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News

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

47. [Iran gives cautious welcome to Barack Obama video message](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

48. [Globetrotters \(and locals\) let loose in Lebanon ; Beirut, once known for civil war and a long history of political instability, is quickly becoming the region's nightlife-loving sin city](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

49. [Parlour games](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

50. [ACROSS MIDEAST, PRAISE AND CRITICISM THE PRESIDENT ASKED LISTENERS IN A REGION ROILED BY HATRED TO TAKE TWO STEPS THAT HAVE LONG BEEN ANATHEMA: FORGETTING THE PAST AND UNDERSTANDING AN OPPOSING VIEW.](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

51. [Imaginary One-on-One With Barack Obama](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type

News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

52. [*Iran 's uncertain path; The protesters in Tehran raise questions about the Iranian government's support*](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**

News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

53. [*Iran , the Jews and Germany Globalist*](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**

News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

54. [*This addiction has me totally Wired*](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**

News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

55. [*\(ADVERTISEMENT\) Peter LINDSAY REPORTS 13 COUNTRIES IN 35 DAYS 'A mind expanding experience'*](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**

News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

56. [*Globe-trotters \(and locals\) let loose in Lebanon ; Beirut, once known for civil war and a long history of political instability, is quickly becoming the region's nightlife-loving sin city*](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:**

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

57. [*Dialogue heals division*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

58. [*Iran , the Jews and Germany*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

59. [*Iran awakens yet again GLOBALIST*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

60. [*Khatami is not the conciliator he claims to be*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

61. [*'I ask for your trust in this time of crisis'. As government sworn in, Netanyahu promises action on Iran and economy, vows to bring Schalit home*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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62. [As Obama offers Muslims 'a new beginning,' Israel gives a wary pledge to play its part. US president, in landmark Cairo speech, hails ties to Israel but says Palestinian plight 'intolerable,' demands 'stop to settlements,' says Iran has right to peaceful nuclear power](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

63. [Riding the holy wind](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

64. [International: The US and Islam: Obama woos Muslim world with call for a new understanding: President urges 'mutual respect' in landmark address, and strongly backs two-state solution to Palestinian conflict](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

65. [LETTERS](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

66. [Gulf friends look to us as Iran flexes its muscles](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

67. [Thousands march in Iran opposition protests](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

68. ['We pray for his release every day' Israelis cling to hope young soldier captured in 2006 by Palestinian militants will be freed](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

69. [Pakistan : 1300 patients treated in Medical Camp](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

70. [The tragedy of the left's discourse on Iran \(Part I\)](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

71. [Buzzers at the ready Parlour games for boys, an angry young man's guide to 2009, and everything you wanted to know about the year's news but were too afraid to ask - Brian Schofield unwraps seasonal fact-filled treats](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

72. [Iran not legitimate state](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

73. [A debate worth noting](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

74. [TRAVEL What I didn't have the guts to tell you as minister Don't be an idiot](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

75. [Syria , in a bet that's paying off, opens up a bit Better ties with Turkey offer range of political and economic rewards](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

76. [Hints of change as old friends get back together Syria takes new direction as it reconnects with a more modern Turkey](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

77. [Battling mistrust in the growing shadow of Iran DIPLOMACY](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

78. [Letters to the Editor](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

79. [Bridging the Gulf International politics The West claims that it wants democracy in the Middle East, but is it ready for the consequences?](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

80. [Warmer Relations With Turkey Kindle Hopes in Syria](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

81. [Will the obama effect crash in Iran ?](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to

82. [*In Iran , a Real Race, and Talk of a Sea Change*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

83. [*As a CIA spy, I saw in Iran what the West cannot ignore We must defend freedom in Iran soon - or deal with nuclear-armed fanatics later.*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

84. [*Pelosi Tells of a Briefing By Officials on Colleague*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

85. [*Iran disqualifies itself from legitimacy*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

86. [*US - Iran thaw could bolster Afghanistan rebuilding efforts*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

87. [*As a CIA spy, I saw in Iran what the West cannot ignore*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

88. [*Israel goes to polls*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

89. [*Will the obama effect crash in Iran ?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

90. [*Inside the Times*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

91. [*Learn how to carry your own baggage*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

92. [*Livni, Netanyahu both claim victory in Israeli election*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

93. [*Iran disqualifies itself from legitimacy*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

94. [*In black & white*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

95. [*Letters*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

96. [*LETTERS TO THE EDITOR*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to Dec 31, 2009

97. [*Obama's Arabian dreams*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to
Dec 31, 2009

98. [*Are you proud to be a leftist?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to
Dec 31, 2009

99. [*Entrapping Netanyahu*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to
Dec 31, 2009

100. [*Egypt and Saudi : change looms Political shifts may be in the offing as ageing Mideast leaders give way to a new guard, writes Jeffrey Fleishman*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Hizbullah" OR "Hezbollah"

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 31, 2009 to
Dec 31, 2009

AS OBAMA GIVES TOUGH SPEECH, AUDIENCE IS THINKING: YES, BUT

St. Petersburg Times (Florida)

June 7, 2009 Sunday

4 State / Suncoast Edition

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Section: NATIONAL; Pg. 10A

Length: 680 words

Byline: SUSAN TAYLOR MARTIN, Times Senior Correspondent

Body

In his speech to the Muslim world last week, President Barack Obama certainly hit many key points: democracy, religious freedom, women's rights, the need to confront violent extremism, and end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

But the president was often circumspect despite his admonition that "we must say openly the things that too often are said only behind closed doors." Here are some of Obama's remarks - and some of the things many in his global audience were probably thinking as he made them:

* * *

Issues of women's equality are by no means simply an issue for Islam.

Yes, but there's probably no country on earth where women have fewer rights than Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Islam. Saudi women can't drive, they can't travel without permission of a male "guardian," they can't play sports in school and not a single woman sits on the 150-member Shura Council, the closest thing Saudi Arabia has to a parliament. (And it's not very close, given that Saudi Arabia is also one of the world's least democratic countries.)

* * *

Islam has a proud tradition of tolerance.

Yes, but wouldn't it be nice if the Saudis, custodians of the holiest sites in Islam, could be a better role model? Their country bans all other religions and, as countless Christian visitors have discovered, even confiscates Bibles and Christmas music at the airport. The terribly intolerant strain of Islam known as Wahhabism - exported to Pakistan and Afghanistan - had its roots in Saudi Arabia.

* * *

It was innovation in Muslim communities that developed the order of algebra, our magnetic compass and tools of navigation, our mastery of pens and printing, our understanding of how disease spreads and how it can be healed.

Yes, but those innovations were centuries ago. In recognizing the top 50 contributions to science and technology in 2008, Scientific American did not list a single noteworthy breakthrough in any of the world's 48 Muslim-majority nations, encompassing more than 1 billion people. One reason for the paucity of innovation: madrassas, or schools, that stifle creative thinking in favor of rote learning.

AS OBAMA GIVES TOUGH SPEECH, AUDIENCE IS THINKING: YES, BUT

* * *

Palestinians must abandon violence. Resistance through violence and killing is wrong and does not succeed.

Yes, but it was continued attacks by Hamas and other radical groups that ultimately convinced Prime Minister Ariel Sharon that Israel could no longer afford to keep its settlers and soldiers in the Gaza Strip. And a year after Israel pulled out of Gaza in 2005, it fought a war with Hezbollah that helped strengthen that group's image in Lebanon and the rest of the Arab world.

* * *

The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements.

Yes, but what can it do about them? For decades, U.S. presidents have criticized the spread of Jewish settlements as impediments to creation of a Palestinian state. But the settlements continue to mushroom - some 250,000 Israelis now live in the West Bank, and the settler population is growing at a rate, 5.6 percent, that far exceeds the Israeli average of 1.8, the New York Times recently reported.

* * *

As reaction to the speech poured in, it was clear that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains one of the world's most contentious issues. Many Israelis accused Obama of making a "moral equivalence" between the Holocaust and the plight of displaced Palestinians. Many Muslims rapped him for not going far enough to condemn Israeli aggression and occupation.

But as Obama said: "The Arab-Israeli conflict should no longer be used to distract the people of Arab nations from other problems." What he meant was: The conflict has been a convenient safety valve for Muslim dictators, who would rather see their citizens protesting against Israel than their own autocratic and oppressive governments.

Of course that's a tough message to deliver when you've just come from Saudi Arabia, where elections have been postponed for the umpteenth time. Or when you're speaking at a university in Egypt, where the same man has been president for 28 years.

Susan Taylor Martin can be reached at susan@sptimes.com

Load-Date: June 8, 2009

Mayhem in Bangkok

The Star (South Africa)

April 14, 2009 Tuesday

e4 Edition

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Section: Pg. 4

Length: 659 words

Body

Thousands of Thai troops fired warning shots and teargas to turn back rampaging anti-government protesters last night, forcing retreating activists into one neighbourhood where a clash with residents left two people dead. The gunbattle came after a full day of clashes between the protesters - who are pressing Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva to resign - and soldiers across Bangkok.

An Irishman brought home to die after being beaten senseless on a street in Sydney, Australia, in August surprised his doctors and his family by coming back from the dead in a Cork hospital on St Patrick's Day, March 17. David Keohane, 29, came out of a coma eight months after sustaining serious head injuries in the attack, reports said yesterday. "He's awake, he's talking, he's recognising everyone," said a friend.

US President Barack Obama shouts encouragement to a little girl in the Annual Easter Egg Roll on the South Lawn at the White House in Washington yesterday.

Peru's Shining Path rebels killed 13 soldiers in an ambush of a military patrol in the remote south-east, Defence Minister Antero Flores Araoz has said. Dynamite and grenades were used in the weekend attack. The assault, one of the deadliest by the once-formidable guerrilla group in the past decade, also left one person missing and two others wounded.

Dozens of heavily armed Maoist rebels stormed a bauxite mine in eastern India and held about 100 mine employees hostage before police regained control of the facility yesterday. At least 11 police officers and four militants died in the nine-hour shootout in the Panchpatmali area of the state of Orissa. The militants were hoping to steal large quantities of explosives used for mining.

The Turkish state-run news agency says police searched a TV station and several branches of a secularist association as part of a widening probe into an alleged coup plot. More than 200 suspects have been detained since 2007 in the case, which highlights a rift between an increasingly powerful class of pious Muslims and secular elites who fear the government wants to impose religion on society.

The Israeli military says an unmanned Palestinian fishing boat has exploded off the Gaza coast in an apparent attempt to hit Israeli naval patrols in the area. There were no casualties. An army spokesman said the Palestinian boat was "a safe distance" from the nearest Israeli vessel when it blew up yesterday about 300m off the northern Gaza coast, near the border with Israel.

Mayhem in Bangkok

China released its first human rights action plan yesterday, pledging to improve the treatment of minorities and do more to prevent detainee torture and address concerns that have sparked international outcries. The two-year plan also promises the communist government will do more to boost the overall living standard of minorities, women, the unemployed and the disabled.

Egypt's attorney general has added espionage to the charges against 49 alleged Hezbollah agents, in addition to plotting to destabilise the country. Abdel-Meguid Mahmoud told Egypt's Mena news agency that the alleged agents, including Lebanese, Palestinian, Egyptian and Sudanese nationals, were spying for a foreign group intending to carry out terrorist attacks in Egypt.

The head of the Mauritanian junta has said he would resign "before the end of the week" to launch his candidacy for presidential elections in June. General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, who took power in an August coup, has to quit before April 22 if he wants to contest the elections. He announced at a radio press conference that he would resign before April 22.

Social networks may blunt people's sense of morality, claim brain scientists. A study published in Proceedings of the US National Academy of Sciences today suggests frequent news updates and instant social interaction are too fast for the "moral compass" of the brain to process. The study found that Facebook and Twitter users could also become "indifferent to human suffering".

Load-Date: April 14, 2009

End of Document

'Smart sanctions' key to reining in mullahs

Scotland on Sunday

June 7, 2009

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Length: 678 words

Byline: Struan Stevenson

Highlight: THIS week, Iran's Supreme Leader will have a chance to "elect" the person he favours to lead the Islamic Republic. For, unlike democratic Europe, Iran is ruled by theocratic dictators and, as such, the polls there are a farce.

Body

The fundamentalist mullahs are brutally suppressing the people of Iran. Thousands are on death row and Iran is recognised as the most prolific executioner of minors, having judicially murdered dozens over the past three years. Last month, it hanged Delara Darabi, a talented young female artist, for an alleged crime that she had denied committing at the age of 17.

Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, more than 120,000 political prisoners have been executed. The regime uses more than 170 forms of physical and psychological torture, including public hangings, stoning to death, amputation of limbs, eye gouging and draining prisoners' blood.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who is Supreme Leader Khamenei's favourite to continue as president, has also ordered a crackdown on universities and women. Nearly a million Iranians were harassed on the street by security forces last year. None the less, Iranian universities have been a hotbed of student activism and protests, and Iranians held 8,000 anti-government rallies last year. Last month, several hundred teachers chanted "death to the dictator" at a Tehran rally in defiance of the regime's feared security apparatus.

Despite the atmosphere of heightened repression, millions of Iranians demand the freedoms offered by the country's parliament-in-exile, the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), and its president-elect Maryam Rajavi, whom I co-chaired the Friends of a Free Iran inter-group with and invited to the European Parliament on several occasions, to act as the voice of those millions yearning for change.

Ahmadinejad had once promised to bring oil revenues to the dinner table of poor Iranians'. He promised to eradicate poverty and tackle unemployment.

In office, he handed lucrative contracts to cronies, including his former colleagues in the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps. Under his watch, the official level of Iran's annual inflation rate reached 29.4 per cent and the price of food items increased on average by two to five times.

Rather than work to solve the people's financial woes, Iran spends billions of dollars annually on its illicit nuclear weapons programme and sends money to terrorist groups, such as Hamas and Hezbollah, to derail the fragile Middle East peace process.

Ever since the NCRI blew the whistle on Iran's nuclear sites at Natanz and Arak in 2002, European leaders have wasted time trying to negotiate with the regime and offering countless incentives.

'Smart sanctions' key to reining in mullahs

European Union officials pinned hope on behaviour change and moderation on the part of the mullahs. But, moderation of Iran's fundamentalist regime is only a mirage. The mullahs ignored countless incentives.

EU leaders have to face the reality that the regime is interested in negotiations only to buy time to press ahead with its nuclear projects. The mild sanctions currently in force are having little effect, not least because the EU continues to remain Iran's biggest trading partner. But time is now running out.

Fortunately, under the Obama administration, the prospects of US military airstrikes are off the table. But, the EU's current policy of appeasing the regime has had the effect of making it more brazen in its unlawful behaviour.

At a time when Iranians are yearning for change, Rajavi says the EU should extend a hand of friendship. Comprehensive, smart sanctions are needed to target the mullahs' economic lifeline. This should be coupled with western support for democratic change by the Iranian people and their organised Resistance.

Hundreds of colleagues at the European Parliament have since declared their support for this "third option", signalling that the people of Europe stand on the side of the millions in Iran who seek freedom. EU leaders should start acting fast.

We should count ourselves lucky that we have a free and fair election process in Europe; it is something of a distant dream in Iran.

For the past five years Struan Stevenson has been co-chair of the Friends of a Free Iran Intergroup in the European Parliament. He is standing for re-election to the parliament

Load-Date: June 6, 2009

End of Document

Good lord

The Jerusalem Post

February 13, 2009 Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 46

Length: 1071 words

Byline: WENDY BLUMFIELD

Highlight: Streetwise. Plumer Square, Haifa. Why was a Haifa square named after a British high commissioner who spent most of his time in Jerusalem?

Body

Without a street map, a visitor to Haifa would never find Plumer Square although it is situated in one of the oldest of downtown neighborhoods. There is no street sign and one could be mistaken in thinking that this square which encloses the Central Railway Station and the Dagon silo is part of Rehov Ha'atzmaut, the main road which runs parallel to the port.

Lord Herbert Charles Onslow Plumer was British high commissioner from 1925 to 1928. For much of his work he was based in Jerusalem, so to get an answer to the question as to why a Haifa square was named for him, I contacted Prof. Yossi Ben-Artzi, rector of the University of Haifa and head of the municipality's committee for the naming of streets.

He explained that Lord Plumer in his short term of office encouraged the development of the railways. With the plans in progress for the building of Haifa Port, Lord Plumer instigated the building of a railway station adjacent to its entrance. The original Haifa (East) station, built in 1905 and the site of the Railway Museum, is a classical stone building typical of the Ottoman architecture. But the new Haifa Central, opened in 1937, set back on this tree-lined square, was an oblong clean-cut Bauhaus structure. Designed as a one-story building, a second level was later added for the administrative offices of Israel Railways.

Two years ago, this station was renamed Hashmona in memory of the eight railway workers who were killed by a **Hizbullah** rocket on July 16, 2006 at the start of the Second Lebanon War.

The area around the railway station was reclaimed from the sea during the construction of the port, and true to Lord Plumer's vision of creating a viable network of public transport, one of Haifa's central bus terminals was also situated in the station square up to as late as the 1960s.

To the southwest of the square a more modern building houses the Dagon silo, a grain elevator 68 meters high and a museum of the history of grain in the Holy Land, its cultivation, handling, storage and distribution from the Neolithic period to the present. The museum, opened in 1955, contains many archeological artifacts donated by Dr. Reuven Hecht, director of the Dagon silo complex.

Downtown Haifa was the scene of great turmoil during the fight for independence and in an attempt at self-defense during the Arab riots prior to and after the UN vote, the Hagana stored arms and ammunition in a hideout under Plumer Square, discovered in a search by the British on February 15, 1948.

Good lord

However, when Lord Plumer started his term of office in 1925, he was deluded by a comparative peace and tranquility. This was due more to the stagnation in Jewish immigration and comparative relief among the Arab population and not a sign of permanent stability in the region.

Although he created the system of municipal elections to test the feasibility of self-government, he was not politically motivated and avoided troublesome issues. He shared London's primary concern that Palestine should not cost it money and welcomed the lull in hostilities in the hope that he could reduce the number of British troops in the area.

After his departure, the simmering tensions surfaced and broke out into the Jerusalem riots of 1929.

A caricature figure of a British field marshal, the original Colonel Blimp, Lord Plumer previously served as governor in Malta. Aged 70 when he became high commissioner in Palestine, he was a short solid man, wore a bowler hat and a blue serge suit, and carried a rolled umbrella. He made many visits to Haifa when the port was being planned, and it would have been hard to miss him with his red face and drooping, white walrus moustache walking along the main thoroughfare of downtown Kingsway, later renamed Rehov Ha'atzmaut.

But his appearance was deceptive for he was a man of vision and a very successful army commander. He was born in Yorkshire in 1857; some sources say Torquay in Devon. After an elite Eton education, he concluded that education was only useful to mold the character. He then went to military college and served in the Sudan and South Africa in the Boer War, led successful campaigns in Italy during World War I, never forgetting the discipline of the British army which stayed with him well past retirement age and his service during the Mandate.

According to Tom Segev in his history of the Mandate, Hakalaniot, translated into English as One Palestine Complete, Lord Plumer was pragmatic and tried to do what he saw as an administrative job with fairness within the limits of his cultural expectations of the native population. He granted land to the Arabs and he envisioned that this would be solely for agricultural use, and for the Jews he initiated industry and public works as a means to reduce unemployment.

Lady Plumer, in contrast to this short solid man in a bowler hat, was tall and thin, always wore huge feathered hats and had a collection of fans. She sounds like a character created by Oscar Wilde, but she was sympathetic to the suffragettes and danced for joy when she heard that Britain had granted the vote to women. Her husband was not impressed and in fact refused to be president of the Palestine scout movement because girls were included. He was a keen cricketer, while his wife played bridge, and he could not understand why Jews spent so much energy and money on education; he thought it better to invest in agriculture and industry.

Although Haifa's municipal leaders have striven for Jewish-Arab coexistence since 1948, the Mandate period was very unstable in the city, with a strong British military presence attempting to keep the peace. Old-timers reminisce about perilous bus rides through the crossfire, riots, attempts to hide ammunition stores. But there were romantic interludes between the young soldiers and the local girls, with dances at the Windsor Hotel just round the corner from Plumer Square, leisure time at the casino and pool at Bat Galim. With ships coming into port and trains taking soldiers and citizens around the country, Haifa was a hub of industry and social life.

The Technion and Reali schools attracted an educated elite to the city long before the birth of the computer and software companies, which boomed from the early '70s. In spite of being on the frontline during the Scud attacks and Second Lebanon War, there is a legacy of that Mandate period, long after Lady Plumer's feathered hats and fans returned to London.

Graphic

Good lord

Photo: Lord Plumer granted land to the Arabs for agricultural use, and for the Jews he initiated industry and public works as a means to reduce unemployment. (Credit: WENDY BLUMFIELD)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

Beware of the nerds

The Jerusalem Post

February 6, 2009 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 12

Length: 1166 words

Byline: JONATHAN ROSENBLUM

Highlight: Think Again

Body

"The older I get the more I see how overrated brains are," an older friend said to me recently. Even in talmudic learning - on its face an intellectual exercise - pure intellectual firepower is an unreliable predictor of long-range achievement. So when I see the The New York Times becoming all hot and bothered by the multiplicity of Ivy League degrees in the new administration, I get nervous.

There are many good reasons for Israelis to be concerned about a shift in American policy toward us. One is the appointment of Harvard professor Samantha Powers, who has called for the stationing of a "mammoth [American] force" here to protect Palestinians from genocide, to a senior position in the National Security Council.

A second is President Barack Obama's Alice in Wonderland portrayal on Al Arabiya of some halcyon era of "respect and partnership" between America and the Muslim world "as recently as 20 or 30 years ago." That period includes the seizure of the American embassy in Teheran, *Hizbullah's* bombing of a US Marine barracks in Beirut, the Lockerbie bombing and a ruinous Arab oil embargo, just for starters. No one begrudges the president a few rhetorical flourishes and outreach toward the Moslem world, as long as we know he doesn't really believe what he is saying.

But of no less concern is the misplaced confidence in their ability to solve all the world's problems of all those high IQ types in the new administration. Nobel Laureate in Economics Robert Lucas declared in 1996 that economists now possess sufficient knowledge and tools to end the threat of another worldwide depression forever - a boast that appears less and less well-founded by the day. The US Congress issued the economic wizards of the Treasury a blank check to free up credit markets, but so far more than \$350 billion have been spent to no effect.

Hints of similar hubris with respect to forging a Arab-Israeli peace are flying fast and furious from Washington. Obama's first phone call was to Mahmoud Abbas, the present or former head of the Palestinian Authority, depending on whom you ask, and one of his first newsworthy acts in office was the appointment of former senator George Mitchell as his special envoy to the region.

The president has pronounced the Palestinian-Israeli conflict "ripe" for resolution, and even allowed on Al Arabiya that "there are Israelis who think that it is important to achieve peace." But wherefore the ripening of hopes? Has there been an end to anti-Israel incitement in the PA media? Some new polls showing a growing Palestinian rejection of terrorism? Has Fatah shown itself capable of running a state?

Beware of the nerds

Someone should send the president the collected news reports of Khaled Abu Toameh on the PA. Abu Toameh told an audience in Philadelphia this week that Americans have no idea with whom they are dealing if they think peace is to be had with either Fatah or Hamas. Peace will only come, he said, when the Palestinians and Israel are forced to deal with one another alone, without the former looking for an outside savior.

The main lessons learned since the last bout of hyperactive American peacemaking, in the dying days of the Clinton administration, are that territorial withdrawals lead to missile fire and only an IDF ground presence can protect against missiles and terrorist attacks.

Mitchell's denial that there is such a thing "as a conflict without end," prior to leaving for the Middle East reflects the same dangerous belief that to every problem there is a solution. The successful peace negotiations in which Mitchell participated in Northern Ireland did not bring about a dramatic shift in attitudes between Catholics and Protestants. Rather those negotiations followed the emergence of a Protestant leader, David Trimble, eager to put aside old hatreds, and a radical shift in attitudes by the leadership of the IRA on the Catholic side.

No such shift of attitudes has taken place among Palestinians, nor has a Palestinian civil society begun to emerge that can underpin a stable, democratic state as our neighbor. As long as the conflict remains one over Israel's legitimacy - i.e., essentially theological in nature - there can be no permanent peace.

But smart technocrats are notoriously thick when it comes to apprehending the force of religion, either for good or bad, because it so rarely plays a role in their own lives. Those who entreat Hamas to recognize Israel's right to exist, for instance, fail to comprehend that they are asking Hamas to dissolve itself and to renounce its fundamental religious belief that all land which was ever under Muslim sovereignty must remain so forever.

A COROLLARY of the smarties' overconfidence in their own problem-solving ability is the tendency to reframe every situation as a technical problem. Thus after the first World Trade Center bombing, the Clinton administration did not awaken to the threat of Islamic terrorism, but rather treated the matter as a simple law enforcement issue of rounding up the relevant miscreants.

New York Times columnist Roger Cohen repeated the mistake last week when he waxed ecstatic about Obama's declaration, albeit sotto voce, of an end to the war on terror. From now on, no more talk of Islamic terrorism, only of defeating particular terrorist organizations. And that, declared Cohen, is "not a war, [but] a strategic challenge."

Dangerous talk of civilizational clash can now be canned, writes Cohen. Apart from a few Muslims who wish to violently destroy America (and who hopefully don't include the Iranian leadership), most Muslims, Cohen declares, "merely dislike, differ from or have been disappointed by America." In other words, they have a series of local grievances, many of which can be healed by ceasing to embrace "an Israel-can-do-no-wrong-policy."

Pattern recognition is one of the key indicators of intelligence, but apparently not when it cuts against the cherished belief that all problems are merely technical in nature. But some patterns cannot be safely ignored - e.g. the unique propensity of Muslims to react to grievances with murderous rage. Or the findings of a UN study written by Muslim scholars of high rates of illiteracy, scant scientific achievement, low democratic indicators and suppression of women in almost every Muslim country and every Arab one.

In the Arab-Israeli context, we continually witness attempts to frame the issues as technical ones, essentially no different than negotiations over a new union contract. Each side is portrayed as seeking a slightly larger slice of the pie, and the general contours of the final solution are said to be known in advance.

That picture, however, is predicated on a false equation of incommensurate items as the subject of trade-offs - e.g. recognition of Israel's right to exist versus settlements. To attempt to impose solutions without first eradicating a culture of Palestinian hatred, which has only intensified since the outset of Oslo, reflects not intelligence but a flight from reality.

Graphic

Photo: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas following his meeting with French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner in Paris on Tuesday. Barack Obama's first phone call as president was to Abbas. (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

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'A necessary operation'

The Jerusalem Post

August 4, 2009 Tuesday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 13

Length: 1192 words

Byline: YAAKOV KATZ

Highlight: In an exclusive interview, Givati Brigade commander Col. Ilan Malka maintains that despite humanitarian groups' allegations of Israeli war crimes in Gaza, his troops did their best to avoid harming innocent civilians

Body

The day after Operation Cast Lead ended in mid-January and amid growing international criticism of the alleged lax rules of engagement during the fighting, the IDF decided to hold a press conference to respond to the accusations.

The venue chosen was a small IDF base located adjacent to the Sde Teiman airstrip just northwest of Beersheba. The officer chosen to give the briefing was Col. Ilan Malka, commander of the Givati Brigade, who had left Gaza the night before after spending two weeks deep inside the Strip commanding dozens of daily operations against Hamas.

Malka, 41, a graduate of the National Defense University in Washington, is part of the new generation of IDF brigade commanders who came of age in the post-Second Lebanon War era.

If during the 2006 war some brigade commanders stayed back in Israel, overseeing the fighting from secure bunkers, during Cast Lead, Malka and his counterparts from the Golani, Paratrooper and 401st brigades were all on the battlefield with their men.

At Sde Teiman, Malka stood before reporters in front of weaponry IDF troops had captured during the operation, including anti-aircraft cannon, Kassam launchers and antitank missiles.

"We did not exaggerate in our use of firepower," Malka maintained. "I will not send 10 soldiers into a house that is suspected of being booby trapped so they can all [be blown] up inside. If Hamas wants to protect the family inside, it shouldn't have booby trapped the home."

Seven months later, numerous international NGO reports accusing Israel of perpetrating war crimes in Gaza have not succeeded in changing Malka's mind about Cast Lead, which he calls a "necessary operation" in an exclusive interview with The Jerusalem Post.

MALKA, THE first commander of Givati to have "been raised" in the brigade - established in 1984 - will soon take up his new post as chief operations officer of Central Command.

"If Hamas had fought with us in open fields and orchards, we would have fought with it there," he says. "But when they fire an RPG at you from inside a house and you then find an IED [improvised explosive device], grenades and machine guns inside, what does this mean?"

'A necessary operation'

But, Malka says, things were not that clear and in a vast majority of engagements, his troops held their fire, at their own risk, to avoid harming innocent civilians.

"The moment we found weaponry in the house, we began sweeping it with selective fire," he said. "You can sweep a house slowly, but then you will lose soldiers. Therefore we took many steps to prevent our soldiers from getting hurt."

Those steps mostly paid off. While 10 soldiers were killed during the two-week ground operation, Malka reveals that initial IDF predictions were that each battalion would lose six or seven.

Hamas, like Hizbullah, knows that Israel's weak point is when fighting in urban centers amidst innocent women and children, he says, referring to cases when mothers were sent to blow themselves up next to troops or children were sent down a street to retrieve a dead terrorist's weapon.

"Hamas tried to bring out our weak side, and that is why it hides behind the civilian population," he says. "The Gaza urban centers are the playing field that it chose and where it believes that it can cause Israel damage internationally and achieve something of a victory."

Under Malka's command, the Givati Brigade penetrated the deepest into Gaza City. In a meticulously planned mission launched two days before the cease-fire went into effect, the brigade's reconnaissance battalion swept into the Tel el-Hawa neighborhood and took over two 15-story buildings in search of Hamas operatives.

The operation put soldiers just 500 meters away from the home of senior Hamas leader Mahmoud a-Zahar and a kilometer from Shifa Hospital, where most of the Hamas leadership, including Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, were believed to be hiding. Forty Palestinian gunmen were reportedly killed during the maneuver, which entailed climbing hundreds of stairs and sweeping dozens of apartments.

According to Arab media reports, following the operation, Hamas decided to fire the commander of its Gaza City Brigade who fought against Malka and Givati. Despite this, Malka has no doubt that, like the IDF, Hamas is also preparing for the next round, which he says could erupt at a moment's notice.

"They are rearming with new weaponry, and they are also studying the way we operated during Cast Lead to be able to stop us next time around," he says. "If this time tanks were sent in first to clear the way for the infantry, they will likely next time try to plant IEDs to stop them."

Malka admits to being surprised by the number of tunnels that Hamas had dug under the streets of Gaza. He says that before the operation he warned his troops to be extra careful when maneuvering throughout Gaza due to intelligence regarding the high threat of kidnappings.

Malka's brigade made headlines in March when the head of the Rabin pre-military academy leaked soldiers' accounts of the operation to the press. Some of the testimonies included accounts of killing Palestinian civilians, permissive rules of engagement and the intentional destruction of property. One account was by an infantry squad commander who told of an incident when a Givati company commander ordered his troops to shoot and kill an elderly Palestinian woman who was walking on a road near the troops.

Following the reports, which made international headlines, the Judge Advocate-General's Office launched an investigation and found that they were based on hearsay without any corroborating evidence.

LAST MONTH, Breaking the Silence issued a damning report of the operation which included testimonies from 26 unnamed soldiers who claimed the IDF used Gazans as human shields, improperly fired incendiary white phosphorous shells over civilian areas and used overwhelming firepower that caused needless deaths and destruction.

Malka says he was not surprised by the reports and was familiar with most of the stories beforehand. "I knew who was there and who gave the approval to open fire," he says. "Nevertheless we decided to look into everything again and discovered that the troops operated according to procedure in all of the cases."

'A necessary operation'

The one incident which took Malka by surprise and which he describes as a "slap in the face" was the arrest of two soldiers from the Givati Brigade for stealing a Palestinian's credit card and using it to withdraw cash from ATMs in Israel. That investigation was launched after Ahmed Rafia, a resident of Gaza City, filed a complaint with the IDF's Gaza Coordination and Liaison Administration regarding the theft. Rafia, whose account is at the Bank of Palestine, told CLA officers that his card was stolen and that NIS 1,600 was withdrawn from ATMs in Israel following the conclusion of the operation.

"These soldiers were weeds that we uprooted from our midst," Malka says, adding that he believes it is important to talk to soldiers before, during and after operations about the importance of military ethics and morals. "Even though when you are in a battle, you have missions, it is still important to maintain ethical rules of engagement."

Graphic

2 photos: GIVATI BRIGADE commander Col. Ilan Malka briefs troops before going into the Gaza Strip as part of Operation Cast Lead. MALKA WORKS with his troops in Gaza. (Credit: IDF)

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Letters

The Jerusalem Post

March 16, 2009 Monday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 1161 words

Byline: Judith Guedalia, Danny Levitt, Mark L. Levinson, Matthias Kuentzel, Emanuel Krasovsky, Monty M. Zion, Lars Nilsson, Bo-Inge Svensson, Claire Ben-Alexander

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

J'accuse

Sir, - I accuse myself for not getting out of my chair in Jerusalem and running to Kiryat Malachi to give Gila Katsav a hug. J'accuse the talking heads on TV and radio for not mentioning her suffering.

J'accuse all the women who went to Kiryat Malachi for not standing up for the most abused woman in that hall - Gila Katsav.

J'accuse the "insulted" titans of the press for not looping their arms through Gila's and helping her leave that room where the fire and brimstone rained over her, running dry rivulets, burning her tearless eyes ("Katsav's 2-hour rant yields no bombshell," March 13).

Last and most importantly: J'accuse this travesty of sound and light for taking even an infinitesimal amount of time and energy away from helping Gilad Schalit come home.

JUDITH GUEDALIA

Jerusalem

That nagging urge

to murder again

Sir, - In "Time to pay Hamas's price" (March 12) Larry Derfner asserted: "We have nothing more to lose." Yet "Half the cabinet ready for Gilad deal" (March 13) noted that "According to Almagor [Terror Victims Association] 180 Israelis have been killed by terrorists released in past prisoner exchanges."

More Israelis will almost certainly be murdered by some of the 1,450 terrorists Hamas wants released in exchange for Gilad Schalit. Is this "nothing more to lose"?

Like every Jewish Israeli, I want Gilad back with his family; and if I was in their position I would be doing exactly the same as they are doing. However, our government has an overriding duty to look after all Israelis. In my opinion, the price being asked is too high.

Letters

I am not against the release of so-called security prisoners to get Gilad back, but they must not include those serving life-terms for murdering our citizens. And that includes Marwan Barghouti.

DANNY LEVITT

Netanya

Out of touch

Sir, - "Should expats vote?" asked your March 15 editorial, and presented a few reservations.

But one problem it left unmentioned arises from the dynamic nature of Israeli politics.

A person who left the country a couple of years ago can find that the ballots now represent parties with new names; and even the old names may not stand for exactly what they used to politically.

How is a citizen off in Kansas City supposed to know the policy differences between Habayit Hayehudi and the National Union - from watching CNN?

Not only is it more difficult overseas to form an intelligent and sensitive opinion about the issues, it is also more difficult to turn that opinion into an intelligent vote.

MARK L. LEVINSON

Herzliya

Ignoring the

earthquake

Sir, - Re "Berlin conference didn't lump Islamophobia with anti-Semitism" (Right of Reply, Yehuda Bauer, March 5):

I am very grateful that Elie Wiesel took a position in The Jerusalem Post on the dispute about the Berlin Center for Anti-Semitism Research. He spoke carefully, in the conditional: "If indeed the Berlin Center downplays the Iranian anti-Semitic threat, it surely is deplorable."

The Berlin Center is an important public institution with an international reputation. It should, especially in Germany, be addressing Iran's anti-Semitic threat energetically, so that politicians and industry understand why the increase in German exports to Iran in 2008 is inexcusable.

In this area, the center has failed. To date, it has not published a single public statement on Iran's anti-Semitic threat. Whenever its director, Prof. Wolfgang Benz, distances himself from Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, he does so in general terms that do not address his anti-Semitism.

To this day, the Iranian threat has not appeared in the center's numerous projects and classes. The terms "Ahmadinejad," "**Hizbullah**" and "Hamas" are not mentioned on the center's home page - as if their policies had nothing to do with the educational work of a "Center for Anti-Semitism Research." This is comparable to a group of earthquake researchers purposely ignoring an impending earthquake.

Does the center intend to change any of this? The answer that Prof. Benz gave to this question when I asked him on December 8, 2008 was not very encouraging: He saw no need for justification nor change.

MATTHIAS KUENTZEL

Hamburg

The writer is author of 'Jihad and Jew-Hatred: Islamism, Nazism and the roots of 9/11' (also published in Hebrew last year by Koren) and on the board of directors of Scholars for Peace in the Middle East.

Letters

Unhelpfully shrill

Sir, - Rabbi Abraham Cooper and Dr. Harold Brackman may be correct and insightful in their analysis of Sweden's attitude toward Jews and Israel ("Sweden's anti-Israel apartheid policy is about more than sport," March 9), but neither the shrill tone of their article nor their interpretation of the circumstances surrounding the recent Davis Cup tennis match between the Israeli and Swedish teams helps their argument.

The match, after all, was not cancelled (as it happened, the Israeli team won); and by banning fans, the Malmo City Council punished the Swedish sportsmen no less than it did the Israelis.

Calling the public safety rationale "nonsense" hardly makes sense - ironically, the writers themselves unintentionally offered proof for why the reasoning was sound: "The few dozen who attacked the police vans for the benefit of media coverage would have tossed the same projectiles had the stadium been packed with tennis fans."

Had these projectiles hit (our) players on the pitch, the consequences would have been disconcerting at best, traumatic or even tragic at worst.

EMANUEL KRASOVSKY

Tel Aviv

Sir, - I have little doubt that the anti-Israel fanatics would have been able to subject our sportsmen to great risk of significant physical harm - and the hurling of projectiles would have forced the abandonment of the match. The actions of the Malmo authorities allowed our players to achieve a great and meritorious victory, and we should be thankful for this, whatever the underlying sentiments.

MONTY M. ZION

Tel Mond

Swedish support

Sir, - I'm a 53-year-old chef in the south of Sweden and I support you all the way in the war against Hamas.

The problem as I see it is that only a fraction of the Swedish population knows the history of Israel, which to the best of my knowledge started around 1896 or something when Jewish organizations started to buy land.

If people here in Sweden, and perhaps in all of Europe, learned a little bit of the history creating the State of Israel, maybe they would think twice times before they support terrorists.

LARS NILSSON

Baystad, Sweden

Sir, - I'm ashamed of the way you and your tennis players have been unjustly treated here in Sweden. I believe and hope that the majority of the Swedish population agree with me.

BO-INGE SVENSSON

Uppsala

Fly and bye

Sir, - As a retired nurse, no longer a taxpayer, my sympathies go to the country's workers, whose hard-earned money is being used to help finance multi-millionaire Rafi Eitan's eight-day "business" trip to London ("Costly farewell trip for outgoing minister," March 10).

I'm glad I'm not contributing to this outrage.

Letters

CLAIRE BEN-ALEXANDER

Kiryat Bialik

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Letters

The Jerusalem Post

September 17, 2009 Thursday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 1171 words

Byline: Kenneth (Kenny) Preiss, Charles Soper, Larry Bigio, M.U. Milunsky, Josef Gilboa, Jeremy I. Pfeffer, Michael Plaskow, Cyril Atkins, Frank Adam, Fanny Myers

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

Sir, - I commend the Goldstone Commission on a job well done ("UN probe alleges Israeli crimes against humanity in Gaza," September 16). Its mandate stated that Israel was guilty of war crimes and that the commission was to find evidence to support that charge. They found anecdotal and uncorroboratable evidence, as required.

I also commend the perspicaciousness of Franz Kafka, whose work of fiction now sees life.

KENNETH (KENNY) PREISS

Ben-Gurion University

Beersheba

Sir, - Your headline played down the damaging bias inherent in the Goldstone panel's report, which includes actual "crimes" and not just "alleged" ones. It is being reported by the BBC as a serious indictment, and no surprise.

CHARLES SOPER

London

Sir, - It is time for the government to issue a serious repudiation of the Goldstone report. It should be presented within a day or two, not weeks or months later, by an English-speaking person who can list and repudiate - not in generalities, which would simply be ignored by the world, but point by point - each slanderous accusation against Israel.

This cannot be left to well-meaning volunteers. While their work is admirable and useful, they simply don't have access to the detailed information needed for a proper repudiation that will be quoted by the BBC.

LARRY BIGIO

Zichron Yaacov

Letters

Sir, - Richard Goldstone is aware of the skepticism with which Israelis view his panel, which includes anti- Israel activist Prof. Christine Chinkin, and the disgustingly biased UN human rights body which dispatched it. So what does this fine judge hope to accomplish in such an atmosphere?

Why he agreed to head this commission is an enigma, but it will enhance his standing with the South African government and the UN.

M.U. MILUNSKY

Netanya

Sir, - The accusation that Israel used "disproportionate force" during Cast Lead is baseless. For the word to have meaning we must define what proportionate force would be - force sufficient to solve the problem without the damage that can be caused by a heavier hand.

A simple example: If I wanted to insert a tack into a wall, a small hammer would suffice. A 10-lb. sledgehammer could damage the wall. However, if I wanted to hammer a stake into the ground, the small hammer would be insufficient and I would need the sledgehammer.

Proportionate force is, simply, enough force to get the job done.

We wanted to stop the missile fire from Gaza. The force we used was insufficient to accomplish this. Had the rocket fire stopped and we had continued to attack, we would then have been guilty of disproportionate force.

Our hammer was too small. We should have used an even bigger sledgehammer and whacked them upside the head with it until the Kassams stopped flying.

Goldstone would have come to the same conclusion.

JOSEF GILBOA

Jaffa

Sir, - Only one question should be asked about Operation Cast Lead: Did it stop the firing of the rockets from Gaza that were terrorizing the men, women and children of Sderot?

The UN-Goldstone commission was set up only because the operation did succeed; the rain of rockets has dried up. Had Israel's military action failed, and were the children of Sderot still living in fear of their lives, there would have been no commission of enquiry.

It is the success of the use of Israel's overwhelming military power against a terrorist entity that ires the leftist intellectuals. Their basic sympathies lie with the radical elements in society and they fear the use of such measures by other legitimate states against the radical/terrorist groups that threaten their security.

The commission's primary concern was that Israel's operation in Gaza not be allowed to become a precedent. Its condemnation of Israel's actions was thus a foregone conclusion.

JEREMY I. PFEFFER

Rehovot

Sir, - If Israel attacks Iran and thousands of Iranians are killed, will there be another Goldstone Commission?

MICHAEL PLASKOW

Netanya

Gilo & Gush Katif

Letters

Sir, - Re "Israeli unhelpfulness in the peace cause" (Letters, September 16): made me wonder where in Jerusalem reader Jody Kohn lives.

At the time of the expulsion of the Jews from Gush Katif, I gave a lady a lift in my car. I had a Hebrew bumper sticker lying about, and she picked it up and asked me what it said. "Jews do not expel Jews," I replied. She retorted: "If I had known you had that sticker in the car, I would not have taken a lift with you."

I then asked her in which part of Jerusalem she lived, and she said French Hill. I told her that French Hill, Ramot, Ramat Eshkol, Gilo etc., were, in the eyes of the world, as much settlements as those in Gush Katif. After a moment's pause she said, "I don't believe you."

It seems many Jews are unaware of the true attitude of the international community to the eternal capital of the Jewish people - and to all Israel's actions, examined under a magnifying glass reserved for Israel alone.

CYRIL ATKINS

Beit Shemesh

No 'big fish'

but nice entree

Sir, - Re "Putting a map on Israel" (September 28): After this splendid piece on Haim Srebro and mapping borders, is it not time to embarrass Syria, Lebanon - and Hizbullah - by proposing that if Syria transferred the Sheba Farms to Lebanon formally by treaty, registered at the UN in the orthodox diplomatic manner, then Israel would have no problem with such a convention (a piffling technicality and not a political argument) and would welcome the easing of the circumstances in which to settle outstanding matters between Israel and Lebanon?

Ready-drafted texts and maps would then be handed simultaneously to the UN, Syria, Lebanon and the US as a challenge to make peace over at least one practical point - and perhaps between Israel and Lebanon, while they're about it.

This might not be "the big fish," but it would be a nice entree for all to start this year's White House festivities.

FRANK ADAM

Prestwich, UK

Our approach

is wrong

Sir, - Further to "That soldier's query" (Letters, September 15) and "Barak takes a tough line" (Editorial, September 4): It is very clear that our whole approach to the kidnapping of soldier Gilad Schalit in June 2006 is, to put it mildly, wrong.

The Geneva Convention lays down that prisoners of war must be visited periodically by an external international agency such as the Red Cross. As far as I am aware, during the three long years of his incarceration, Schalit has not had one such a visit; neither has Ron Arad, now "missing" for nearly a quarter of a century. Nor did Eldad Regev or Ehud Goldwasser, who were both returned dead.

First we must ensure the daily safety of any of our soldiers held captive: past, present and, God forbid, future. We must continually emphasize the sorry fact that not once has any representative of any international agency been able to check on the condition of any of our soldiers held prisoner. When this state of affairs has been corrected, then and only then should the formalities of a prisoner exchange be started.

Letters

If we are successful in this endeavor, the sufferings of Gilad Schalit and the anguish of his family will not have been in vain.

FANNY MYERS, Beit Zayit

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Letters

The Jerusalem Post
May 6, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 1158 words

Byline: Yitzchak Ben-Shmuel, Isidore Solomons, Eric Strayer, Barbara A. Bloom, Stanley Cohen, Judy Prager, Michael D. Hirsch, Sarah Williams

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

Timely reminder

Sir, - Once again, Caroline Glick gives Jerusalem Post readers insights and facts with which to arrive at intelligent conclusions ("A cautionary tale," May 5). In reviewing the sordid details of the AIPAC scandal involving Keith Weissman and Steve Rosen, she recounts how certain anti-Israel bureaucrats in the Bush administration twisted truths to prosecute innocent Israel lobbyists and intimidate many pro-Israel organizations, including AIPAC, into fearful silence.

Her expose is not so much shocking as it is revealing. It reminds many, in case we still need reminders in these days of worldwide Israel bashing, that the scourge of anti-Semitism runs deep; and that the first casualty of that poison is Jewish fear and self-doubt.

YITZCHAK BEN-SHMUEL

Modi'in

Diplomatic doublespeak

Sir, - Making progress in furthering the peace process with the Palestinians a condition of the US's ability to confront Iran in its race for nuclear weapons is a brilliant piece of diplomatic doublespeak by Hillary Clinton and Rahm Emmanuel.

Now the failure of talks with Iran aimed at stopping its acquisition of weapons of mass destruction can be blamed on the intransigent Israelis, as usual ("Peres backs Arab League plan," May 5).

ISIDORE SOLOMONS

Beit Shemesh

Ready to serve

Sir, - As an ex-American paratrooper who participated the day Israel gave Sinai back to Egypt, I am fully behind your country. I'm older now, but prepared, mentally and physically, to serve again for what's to come.

Letters

ERIC STRAYER

Grove City, Ohio

False witness

Sir, - The disturbing "Professor probed after sending email comparing Israel to Nazis" (May 3) compels me to respond.

How absurd that a Jewish professor, William I. Robinson at the University of Santa Barbara, Cal., would make such an obscene comparison. Did the Nazis turn over land to the Jewish people "for the sake of peace" in WWII - as Israel did in Gaza? The nefarious result of that is the Arabs using this land for smuggling weapons and training terrorists. Isn't it the hostile Arabs who should be compared to Nazis?

Their terror groups, Hamas, Hizbullah, Islamic jihad, Al-Qaida and sundry others, have made abundantly clear their intention to eliminate Israel.

Israel's incursion into Gaza in Operation Cast Lead was a defensive, not offensive action to halt the many years of rockets and missiles bombarding innocent civilians daily in their homeland.

For Prof. Robinson to call the investigation against him "a violation of academic freedom" is a gross distortion of that concept. His remarks were slanderous, libelous and a thinly veiled effort to influence his students with his prejudicial views against Israel.

It behooves the professor to study Torah Judaism, which teaches: "Thou shall not bear false witness"... against fellow Jews.

BARBARA A. BLOOM, President

Peace Through Torah Truth, Inc.

Jerusalem/Baltimore

Much further to go

Sir, - Hillel Goldberg attempts to redress the balance of Jewish attitudes to Poland before, during and after WWII, but in doing so errs on the side of providing a universal blanket of forgiveness which sweeps the truth under it ("New Poland," Letters, May 5).

That there were about 4,000,000 Jews in Poland in 1939 of whom most failed to survive the war is not in doubt. That there were examples of bravery and selflessness among their Christian neighbors is also well-known.

What Hillel Goldberg's "blanket" covers is the large numbers of returning Jewish camp survivors who were murdered by their 1939 neighbors, many of whom had moved into their vacated homes and were reluctant to move out.

One prime example lies in a recording of Hirsh Glick's famous Partisan Song, recorded by the Polish Army Orchestra and Chorus in 1945. Many of the Jews who took part in this recording were subsequently murdered by their erstwhile neighbors and were thus obviously unable to oblige the many requests for further performances.

Documentaries have been made recently of families of survivors returning to their Polish homes to enquire about their returned relatives, only to be told that they had been shot and secretly buried so that the grandfathers of the present occupants could retain their new-found homes.

If Jews and Poles alike are to move forward and away from all this, we need, all of us, to address the whole truth of Poland and the Polish people.

Letters

Two thousand years of religious dogma branding us as Christ-killers had its consequences. We need to go a lot further to redress the balance.

STANLEY COHEN

Jerusalem

Stick to your job

Sir, - What gives Shimon Peres the right to offer sovereignty over Christian sites to the Vatican? ("Peres said willing to cede sovereignty over certain Christian holy sites," May 5.)

The president is supposed to be apolitical, and it is not in his purview to hand out chunks of sovereign Israel to anyone, especially the Vatican, which has thousands of Hebrew/Jewish artifacts in its possession and no intention of returning them to the State of Israel.

Do we need another religious argument with various Christian denominations who will want their voices heard in this discussion?

Peres should stick to his job of representing Israel, which he does admirably, and keep his fingers out of these very contentious issues.

JUDY PRAGER

Petah Tikva

Sir, - Instead of giving six Christian sites to the Vatican and receiving nothing in return, why not make it a trade?

In return for these holy places, let the Vatican give back to Israel all the holy objects from the Second Temple secreted away in its vaults.

MICHAEL D. HIRSCH

Kochav Ya'ir

Where's the

(halachic) beef?

Sir, - I am always bemused by knee-jerk reactions such as Ellie Morris's ("Oh, yeah?" Letters, May 5) to Jewish traditions and halachic requirements deemed "non democratic" by those who seek to undermine Halacha in the name of "democratic principles."

Your correspondent overlooks the fact that "democratic" does not mean instant entree for all.

An example: People under 18 are excluded from voting, as are non-citizens; and citizens may vote, but not residents. The same is true of many social benefits - one doesn't qualify for National Insurance if one's status is tourist rather than citizen.

In a democracy, privilege entails responsibility. Being part of a minyan or quorum is a responsibility, which is mandated for men. Your reader no more qualifies halachically to help make up a men's minyan than a 16-year- old qualifies to vote, or a tourist qualifies for state medical benefits.

Where's the beef? Your reader is not precluded from joining a women's minyan, nor from belonging to any of the more progressive and halachic synagogues which are inclusive of women within the framework of Halacha.

If this isn't good enough, she can go join a Reform or Conservative congregation and be part of its minyan.

Letters

That's democracy - she has a choice. But leave me my choices, also. As a lifelong feminist and working mother, I prefer not to be obligated to show up for every minyan.

SARAH WILLIAMS

Jerusalem

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Number of candidates in elections reaches 270

The Daily Star (Lebanon)

April 3, 2009 Friday

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THE DAILY STAR

LEBANON

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Byline: Therese Sfeir

Body

Lebanon's political camps are finalizing their electoral lists ahead of the April 7 deadline imposed by the Interior Ministry, which announced Thursday that the number of candidates has reached 270. Future Movement leader MP Saad Hariri said Thursday that the June parliamentary elections would be "fateful,"

BEIRUT: Lebanon's political camps are finalizing their electoral lists ahead of the April 7 deadline imposed by the Interior Ministry, which announced Thursday that the number of candidates has reached 270.

Future Movement leader MP Saad Hariri said Thursday that the June parliamentary elections would be "fateful," adding that they would reinforce Lebanon's democratic principles.

In a speech delivered during the opening of the 17th Arab Economic Forum in Beirut, Hariri said: "I believe that these elections are fateful, because we, as Lebanese, will stress that democracy is the basis of rule in Lebanon and that the people is the basis of all authorities."

"These elections are also crucial for us, as politicians, because we regularly ask the Lebanese to renew their trust in us, based on a program that seeks to provide the citizens with decent living conditions in a free, sovereign and stable state," the head of the Future Movement added.

Hariri also said that the March 14 forces would soon announce a comprehensive socioeconomic program.

Prime Minister Fouad Siniora stressed on Thursday the need to rise above political bickering and find the means to settle the country's pending issues.

During the inauguration of several development projects in Tripoli, Siniora said: "Lebanon does not have time to waste; stalling and political bickering have led the country to a brink."

Meanwhile, the Interior Ministry issued a statement, saying the total number of candidates up to Thursday reached 270. The ministry added that it received 58 new candidacies on Thursday, including Bechara Merhej for Beirut's third district, Abbas Hachem for Jbeil district, Nadim Gemayel for Beirut's first district, Pierre Achkar for the Metn district, Farid Haikal Khazen for Keserouan, Fares Soueid for Jbeil, Assem Qanso for Baalbek-Hermel, as well as dozens of other candidates.

Number of candidates in elections reaches 270

Sources in the opposition quoted by the Central News Agency (CNA) Thursday said that a meeting would be held between Hizbullah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah and Speaker Nabih Berri on Thursday to discuss the opposition's final electoral lists.

The sources added that the bilateral meeting would be followed by a meeting between Nasrallah, Berri, Aoun and former Interior Minister Suleiman Franjeh to finalize the lists.

But other sources in the opposition quoted by the CNA said that meetings that group different opposition leaders would only be held after the finalization of lists, in order to avoid any disagreements among the participants.

The CNA also said that a meeting would be held soon between former President Amin Gemayel, Hariri, head of the Progressive Socialist Party MP Walid Jumblatt and Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea.

Sources in the majority told the CNA that during a planned election rally on Sunday at BIEL, the Future Movement would only announce its electoral program, but would not tackle the names of its candidates.

Orthodox candidate for Beirut's first district Nayla Tueni said Thursday that "everyone has the right to express their views in the elections, but attacking the martyrs is not acceptable."

Tueni's comments came in response to Free Patriotic Movement leader MP Michel Aoun, who said earlier this week that Nayla's father, late journalist and MP Gibran, had "inconsistent positions."

"Things are very clear now; there are two different political projects and the Lebanese should choose the project they want," Tueni said during a gathering in Achrafieh. "This is a fateful battle, so we must be ready."

Tueni also said that if she won in the elections, she would defend women's right, the detainees in Syrian prisons, as well as other issues.

Also on Thursday, the People's Movement announced its candidates for Beirut's third district, including Ibrahim Halabi, who would run for the Sunni seat, and Najah Wakim for the Orthodox seat.

In a news conference held on Thursday, Wakim said that the 1960 electoral law adopted during the Doha Conference last year increased "confessional and sectarian divisions."

"This has put the country before two possibilities: the opposition winning the majority by a slight margin and forming a national unity cabinet, or the March 14 alliance winning by a slight margin and monopolizing the governing process," Wakim said, adding that in both cases "a crisis will immediately take hold after the elections."

In a separate development, Sidon MP Osama Saad said Thursday that Siniora was "a main partner in the political path that led to a serious deterioration in the Lebanese economic and social situations."

In a radio interview, Saad criticized Siniora's possible candidacy for the June elections, saying that the ruling majority was using "electoral money and confessional provocation to compensate for the weakness of their electoral program."

Saad added that he would submit his candidacy in the coming hours and expressed his confidence in the "loyalty of Sidon citizens."

National Liberal Party leader Dory Chamoun told LBC television on Thursday that he would commit to the March 14 alliance's decision concerning candidate nominations.

He said some Lebanese Forces supporters informed him that they were not satisfied with Lebanese Forces MP George Adwan's performance and that they would not vote for him.

"My problem with George Adwan is that he does not care about those who voted for him in the 2005 elections, but we do not have any personal disagreements," he noted.

Number of candidates in elections reaches 270

He added that Democratic Gathering bloc MP Elie Aoun, George Adwan and himself were the names most likely to be the Maronite candidates in the Chouf district.

Abu Jamra ends boycott of Cabinet sessions

Nafez Qawas

Daily Star correspondent

BEIRUT: The Lebanese Cabinet convened on Thursday at the Grand Serail with 80 items on its agenda. Deputy Prime Minister Issam Abu Jamra, who has been boycotting sessions headed by Prime Minister Fouad Siniora for several weeks, was present at the session.

Addressing the ministers, Siniora praised the security forces for their success in liberating Amin Jihad Khansa, who was kidnapped earlier this week for a \$1.5 million.

He also stressed the importance of cooperation between the Lebanese Army and other security forces.

Siniora called on the ministers to fully implement the articles on the ministerial policy statement before the the current Cabinet's mandate expires in June. He added that electoral campaigns should not influence the government's work.

Finance Minister Mohammed Shatah said he was optimistic that the national budget would be adopted within two weeks.

Interior Minister Ziad Baroud informed the attendees of Khansa's release, adding that investigations were ongoing into the kidnapping of MEA engineer Joseph Sader.

Sader, 50, an official of MEA's IT department, was abducted on February 12 near Beirut Airport, by three unidentified assailants. The ministers were still in session by the time The Daily Star went to press.

Load-Date: May 11, 2009

The terror bubble

The Jerusalem Post

July 24, 2009 Friday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 4

Length: 1115 words

Byline: SAUL SINGER

Highlight: Interesting Times. Smart power can still bring the mullahs down

Body

"We are determined to channel the currents of change toward a world free of violent extremism, nuclear weapons, global warming, poverty and abuses of human rights and, above all, a world in which more people in more places can live up to their God-given potential."

US Secretary of State

Hillary Clinton, July 15

"...the world of terrorists and other violent extremists - of insurgents and IEDs - is with us for the long haul... Iran's going to have the capability to deliver nuclear weapons to the people in their region a lot sooner than they're going to have the capability to deliver them to us."

- US Secretary of Defense

Robert Gates, July 16

The Obama administration is torn between the audacity of hope and the morassity of realism. One moment, the rhetoric soars, the other it tugs rudely down to earth. In truth, every American government aims for that sweet spot between idealism and pragmatism, regardless of the way its rhetoric leans. President Barack Obama's determination to be ABB (anybody but Bush) has swung the pendulum back toward an approach most reminiscent of that of Jimmy Carter. George W. Bush was a "big stick" president; Obama, like Carter, seems more inclined to speak loudly, or softly, and carry a small stick.

It doesn't have to be this way. It's possible to be ABB without becoming Carter, whose failure in foreign policy led to his electoral defeat. The Obama team has even articulated how this can be done. "We need a new mind-set about how America will use its power to safeguard our nation [and] expand shared prosperity," Clinton said last week. The key, she said, was to use "smart power," which she defined previously as using "the full range of tools at our disposal - diplomatic, economic, military, political, legal and cultural - picking the right tool, or combination of tools, for each situation."

Smart power sounds great, but where is it? Where has Obama used the slightest bit of muscle of any kind? In Cairo, he said some things that Arabs are not used to hearing, such as that it's wrong to "shoot rockets at sleeping children or to blow up old women on a bus" and that is "not how moral authority is claimed; that is how it is surrendered." More gently but still breaking new ground, he said that the Arab-Israeli conflict "should no longer be

The terror bubble

used to distract the people of Arab nations from other problems." In addition, Obama increased US troop presence in Afghanistan and dispatched Vice President Joe Biden to Lebanon just before the election there, sending a message that may have helped prevent a Hizbullah victory.

In the main, however, Obama's idea of "smart power" seems to consist of expecting less of friends and foes alike. Or as Clinton put it more positively, "We've also begun to adopt a more flexible and pragmatic posture with our partners... we will not tell our partners to take it or leave it, nor will we insist that they're either with us or against us. In today's world, that's global malpractice."

THE IRONY, of course, is that the one US partner that has not seemed to enjoy such deferential treatment is Israel. It is simply unthinkable that the Obama administration would get into such a public fight with any "partner" as it has with Israel over settlements, down to the level of calling in the Israeli ambassador to protest the building of a hotel in the eastern part of Jerusalem.

This may be an example of "smart power" in means, but it is "dumb power" in effect. It takes a lot to turn off a columnist like Yoel Marcus of Ha'aretz, who could not be more opposed to Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu or more inclined toward the new American president. Yet Marcus writes bitterly that Obama "has spoken about us, but not to us." While Israeli prime ministers - especially Netanyahu - are often blamed for any rift with the US, Obama has taken positions so far outside the Israeli consensus that even the opposition has refused to take his side.

Obama's use of dumb power has had a circle-the-wagons effect here, while gutting the potential effect of any tough talk toward the Arab side. The Arab states know they need to do nothing so long as the pressure is on Israel to deliver. The smart power way would be to take the exact opposite approach: start by concentrating public pressure on the Arab states to move toward Israel. Arab normalization would create much more pressure on the Israeli government to reciprocate than what the US is doing now.

The dire need for smart power, however, lies in the Iranian arena. Clinton sees a world "free of violent extremism" and nuclear weapons; Gates one in which terror is not only with us for the "long haul," but where Iran is "going to have" nuclear weapons, spurring a regional nuclear arms race. It is in Teheran, not in Jerusalem or Ramallah, where the choice between the two futures described by Clinton and Gates will be determined.

MOST PEOPLE would bet on Gates's prediction. Yet the world Clinton describes should not be dismissed as a utopian goal for the indefinite future, but one toward which great strides can and must be made right now.

What needs to be understood is that the constellation of threats that face the world now - primarily the nexus of terrorism and nuclear weapons - is no less of a bubble than the one whose collapse just left the global economy in shambles. Speculative bubbles look solid and endless when you are in them and then disintegrate in the blink of an eye. The world of terror is such a self-reinforcing yet fragile edifice.

The Green Revolution in Iran shows just how fundamentally weak the terrormasters, as Michael Ledeen aptly calls them, are. This week's call by former president Mohammad Khatami for a referendum "suggests a renewed confidence within the opposition movement," says The New York Times. The same newspaper, formerly a bastion of support for dialogue with Iran, now hopes that the G-8 nations "mean it" when they threaten tough sanctions in September if Iran doesn't back down. The mullahs' crackdown, while perhaps superficially succeeding, has set off a wave of internal and external pressure that is just beginning to gather force.

Next week, Gates will arrive here, reportedly to warn against preemptive military action against Iran. The response from Jerusalem should be clear: Better to stop the Iranian regime with your smart power, but the alternative is not a nuclear Iran but Israeli military action. The further message should be that now is not the time to grasp the mullahs' bloodied hand and relegitimize their regime, but to refuse to recognize the Mahmoud Ahmadinejad-led government while offering to embrace any new government that abandons the road of oppression, nukes and terror.

saul@jpost.com

Graphic

Photo: SECRETARY OF STATE Hillary Rodham Clinton addresses students and faculty members at India's Delhi University on Monday. (Credit: AP)

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Letters

The Jerusalem Post

September 15, 2009 Tuesday

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Byline: Avigdor Bonchek, P. Goodley, Toby Willig, Chayim Seiden, Alex Sangha, Kenneth Besig, Travor Davis, Dr. Erwin Pavel, J. Lake

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

Assaf Ramon

Sir - Assaf Ramon's tragic death reminds us that we also have amongst us young men who ask what they can do for their country, and not just egocentric teenagers who ask what the country can do for them as they demand that the defense minister guarantee their safe return from army service.

May individuals like the Ramons multiply in Israel ("A nation grieves," Amir Mizroch, September 14).

AVIGDOR BONCHEK

Jerusalem

That soldier's query

Sir, - Yossi Tanuri's focus in "Will you guarantee my safety?" (September 13) may have missed the deeper issue. That 16-year-old student's question to Defense Minister Ehud Barak could have stemmed from knowledge about the circumstances of Gilad Schalit's kidnapping.

It has been widely reported that there was a major breakdown in standard procedures to avoid such incidents - including statements that intelligence even described the likely scenario. It was all ignored. As well, the student may be presumed to have heard about other breakdowns of security reaching as far as the chief of staff's office.

If he was asking whether he could have confidence that his life would not be potentially wasted by ingrained carelessness, he had every right to ask. That he was asking if, as a soldier, he would be fully protected from risk doesn't seem reasonable.

While Barak's answer was appropriate, he answered as someone who had allowed many to be killed by his late-night flight (or retreat) from Lebanon; as someone who was willing, even anxious, to give virtually all of Israel's heartland to Yasser Arafat. What followed the first action speaks for itself. I suspect the student was cognizant of much of this.

The military needs to be restored to a reputation for responsible, alert readiness. That reputation needs to pervade Israeli society. Then such questions as this student's may become irrelevant.

Letters

P. GOODLEY

Telz Stone

About pressures...

Sir, - The pressures on Israel to sign some sort of agreement are increasing ("Diplomatic efforts intensify to relaunch Israel-Palestinian talks by month's end," September 14).

The freeze on natural growth in the settlements is something no country in the world would accept as it makes for the absolute fact that young people cannot fall in love and get married. The only time such a thing ever took place was in the Greek play Lysistrata, when women withheld affection from men to bring about a change in the national attitude.

Freezing natural growth is population control - something the Israeli nation cannot accept; this must be emphasized continuously by Israeli negotiators. Any lesser stance would seriously damage not only Israel but the very concept of countries providing for their populations.

Israel has survived under the most bleak and horrible circumstances. Freezing natural growth is truly foreboding in its implications for the future.

TOBY WILLIG

Jerusalem

...and attitudes

Sir, - I am puzzled. How can Israeli leaders meet with members of the PLO, a certified terrorist organization that proved its total unreliability by violating the Oslo Accords? Clearly there is no value to Arab signatures on agreements.

On what grounds should Israel freeze construction of homes for Jews in Judea and Samaria, land the Arabs lost to Israel in a war of annihilation? The Arab loss of this territory to Israel was acknowledged by the United Nations in Resolution 242, which granted Israel the right to govern these lands. Arabs should respect Resolution 242.

And how can Israeli leaders allow themselves to meet with Arabs whose schools and mass media continue to inculcate hatred of Jews and of Israel?

All this flurry of diplomatic activity is an attempt by pro-Arab interests to bulldoze Israel. We Jews have had enough of negotiating. Let the Arabs get their house in order before we meet with them again.

CHAYIM SEIDEN

Jerusalem

Sir, - I think it's about time there was peace in the Middle East. I don't see why Israel and the Palestinians don't form a federal country with its capital in Jerusalem. The West Bank, Gaza and Israel can become relatively autonomous provinces or states within this new country, which can be named after something Jews and Palestinians have in common such as "Land of Abraham."

To enhance cooperation, both Jews and Palestinians can be given a veto over all legislation in the new federal parliament, but will have considerable autonomy over most daily affairs in their various provinces.

I feel the Jews and Palestinians need to remember that they are first cousins who share many things in common. It's time for them to get over their differences and start treating each other like children of God since they live in what Christians, Jews, and Muslims consider the holy land.

Letters

ALEX SANGHA

Delta, British Columbia, Canada

Sir, - Everyone talks and acts as if Israel has real influence in the matter of peace talks, when in fact the problem is and always has been Palestinian and Arab stubbornness in demanding that in any peace settlement, Israel must dismantle herself and become a Palestinian state. Minus Israeli Jews, of course.

If the situation wasn't so serious, it would be a comedy, a Middle East version of Much Ado About Nothing.

KENNETH BESIG

Kiryat Arba

The second death of Col. William Higgins

Sir, - Re "Israel goes ballistic" (September 11): I think some clarification should be made regarding the grisly fate of USMC Col. William Higgins, as described by Yaacov Katz.

If my memory serves me correctly, the unfortunate US Marine officer was murdered shortly after his kidnapping in 1989, and his corpse kept in cold storage until some "appropriate" occasion made it useful for Hizbullah to then "execute" him as an act of vengeance.

Our nabbing of the arch-terrorist Sheikh Abdul Karim Obeid apparently sufficed as an excuse. It was estimated that Col. Higgins had been dead for about six months when he was "hanged" by the Arab barbarians who had abducted him.

TREVOR DAVIS

Asseret

The whole tooth, and

nothing but the tooth

Sir, - If the deputy health minister is so concerned about the dental health of the Israeli population, why doesn't he first of all remove the VAT on dental treatment? If the government is unable to subsidize dental treatment, it certainly shouldn't profit from it! ("Litzman wants inclusion of basic dental services for children in health basket," September 10).

The Israel Dental Association is definitely not against government-subsidized dental care; on the contrary. What it is advocating is that the government foot the bill, like in most Western countries, rather than the four health funds overcharging their members and running an insurance scheme, which obviously wouldn't cost the Treasury a shekel.

DR. ERWIN PAVEL (D.D.S. Sweden)

Ra'anana

Pure Hollywood

Sir, - Quite a story: Rabbi becomes insurance salesman, divorces wife for secretary, makes fortune from teaching esoteric mysticism to all, including underdressed pop star, who then becomes humble.

Anyone have the phone number of a Hollywood producer? ("Popular mysticism," September 10.)

J. LAKE , Beersheba

Letters

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Letters

The Jerusalem Post

October 19, 2009 Monday

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Byline: Haim M. Lerner, Hilda Schmerler, Sonia Goldsmith, Jerry Aviram, Herzel Katz, Efraim A. Cohen, Joyce Kahn, Malcolm Mandel

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

'Goldene medine'

Sir, - As a Korean war veteran, I'm once again shocked by Federal authorities putting the loyalty of American Jews to the test. In this case, David Tenenbaum is suspect merely because he has "ties" with Israel and speaks Hebrew.

How frightening. If this attitude continues to develop in America, all American Jews will eventually come under suspicion ("ADL comes to defense of US Army engineer targeted for ties to Israel," October 18).

Though the Jewish experience in America has been outstandingly good, perhaps it's time for many of us to realize that no matter how well-off American Jews are in the "goldene medine," it's still the Diaspora - and think about coming home to Israel.

HAIM M. LERNER

Ganei Tikva

Son of which nation?

Sir, - Thank you, Prof. Gil Troy, for a wonderful rebuttal of J Street's "pro-Israel" advice to Israel and the hypocrisy of which it reeks ("An open letter to Jeremy Ben-Ami," October 18).

Is it just politics, a desperate attempt to justify the choice of US president? Or hubris, leading the young guard of Jewish Americans to force Israel to accede to its positions no matter if they lead to our undoing?

The name may be Ben-Ami, but I question to which "am" or nation he thinks he belongs.

HILDA SCHMERLER

Petah Tikva

Sir, - Thank you, Gil Troy. Your open letter is equally applicable to "Peace Now" and B'Tselem, and to the professors of so many of our children at universities throughout the Western world.

SONIA GOLDSMITH

Letters

Netanya

Sir, - Here is my own open letter to Jeremy Ben-Ami and J Street:

"You claim to love Israel, care about its future, and believe that the 'peaceful and immediate resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can secure Israel's future as the democratic home of the Jewish people.' How can one argue with that?

"But how are you about to achieve it? By undermining and weakening AIPAC and splitting the voice of the American Jewish community to the US administration at such a crucial and sensitive juncture of Israel's relationship with the US and the world?

"Yes, you are entitled to your opinion, but it is naive to believe that meetings and speeches are going to resolve a conflict dating back more than 100 years, a conflict that has erupted in several wars and a multitude of smaller but no less vicious riots and terrorist attacks.

"Of greater concern is your presumptuous belief that you have been anointed for your role by a 'large number' of Jewish Americans. Whatever that number may be, most American Jews are probably unaware of your existence and are not likely to support you. Are you feeling some need to support the Obama administration, or perhaps pursuing your own political agenda unrelated to the fate of Israel and the Jewish people?

"Ultimately, the fate of Israel will be decided by its citizens, who defend Israel by serving in the army, whose children and grandchildren serve and die in defense of the one and only Jewish state, who are at risk of being incinerated by Iranian atom bombs.

"I beseech you, therefore, before embarking on reckless and potentially harmful political adventures, to listen to us, the people of Israel, who speak in many voices, but ultimately with one voice only.

JERRY AVIRAM

Tel Aviv

Goldstone's naivete...

Sir, - It may be hard to believe, but I now feel a little sorry for Judge Goldstone. He was naive and duped by the powers that be, and now whatever he says to water down the findings of his mission or try to be evenhanded, he will be ridiculed and maligned by the Arabs and portrayed as a turncoat Jew-boy who could not be trusted to withstand pressure from the US-Israel lobby.

Chances are he will forever rue the day he took on this assignment ("Answer this, Judge Goldstone," Haviv Rettig Gur, October 18).

HERTZEL KATZ

Ramat Hasharon

...or maybe not

Sir, - Haviv Rettig Gur assumes that Judge Goldstone is "an honest man with noble intentions" and suggests that Goldstone's initial failure to recognize the inherent bias of the UN's Human Rights Council may be the result of "shocking naivete."

But why is Goldstone entitled to this assumption? Why not apply to him the same standard that he applied to Israel in his damning report? Goldstone concluded that Israeli troops intentionally killed Gazan civilians even while he failed to find any confirming government policy. The basis for his conclusion was that "Israeli intelligence has very precise information" and Israeli weapons are extremely accurate. To Goldstone, there was no chance that Gazan deaths were accidental or incidental to permitted military activity.

Letters

The same line of reasoning should be applied to Goldstone himself. He is a world-renowned jurist with years of experience in investigations related to human rights and military operations. Ostensibly, he was chosen to head the commission precisely because of that expertise. It is therefore fair to conclude that he was fully aware of the purpose and likely outcome of the investigation.

Goldstone's "shock" at the unfairness of the UNHRC's resolution is not the result of naivete. It looks a lot more like a transparent attempt to limit his own responsibility for this ongoing farce. Unfortunately, his guilt cannot be erased so easily.

EFRAIM A. COHEN

Netanya

UNHRC's achievements

Sir, - The UN Human Rights Commission was founded just 60 years ago in the presence of Eleanor Roosevelt and other dignitaries, in the hope it would improve and protect human rights worldwide. What has it done? Nearly nothing.

It has ignored the plight of millions of women in Africa and other third world countries who are literally slaves in their societies, and the plight of millions of refugees and oppressed citizens in 190 countries worldwide. It has ignored the fact that only recently, 160 Palestinians were killed by their own people, three times the number Israel killed in the Gaza incursion.

It has done something - it has passed countless resolutions against Israel, ignoring Hamas, Hizbullah and other terror organizations that hide behind civilians in order to attack Israel ("Jewish MKs from across Israel's political spectrum condemn UNHRC endorsement of Goldstone Report," October 18).

JOYCE KAHN

Petah Tikva

BA's rightward swing

Sir, - I was intrigued by your World Bnei Akiva supplement (October 16). I grew up in a small town in England and was not that religious. Nevertheless, after I married and came to Israel, I slowly became more observant and we sent our children to Bnei Akiva. Many of our present friends came from the movement in England, and I must admit to a degree of envy when they reminisce about that period.

I could not help but notice that some of the older pictures in the supplement showed girls wearing pants and even shorts. Our own daughters wore pants only at summer camp, and only under a skirt. And now that our oldest grandson has just started Bnei Akiva, he is totally segregated from the girls.

I find it sad that the movement has moved so far right toward the ultra-Orthodox. Will the trend continue; or will the pendulum swing back again? My instinct tells me the former, but my heart hopes for the latter.

MALCOLM MANDEL

Ra'anana

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Letters

The Jerusalem Post

June 17, 2009 Wednesday

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Byline: David Goshen, Avigdor Bonchek, Carol Clapsaddle, Emanuel Fischer, M. Hagenauer, Peter G. Hill, Paul M. Clements, Jac Friedgut

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

Hijackers' regime

Sir, - The Iranian people, seeking to rid themselves in 1979 of the shah's regime with its massive corruption, did not seek rule by religious Shi'ite ayatollahs commanding Revolutionary Guards. Ayatollah Khomeini and his extremist followers simply "hijacked the revolution."

The US government of the time, having decided that the shah should be replaced, very naively assisted Khomeini in filling the vacuum and the world is paying a heavy price.

It is to be hoped that the Iranian people will now be able to rid themselves of these treacherous rulers who want only to control the whole Muslim world and suppress the West.

The welfare of the Iranian people is of no real concern to the ayatollahs ("Iranian protester slain after huge pro-reform rally," June 16).

DAVID GOSHEN

Kiryat Ono

Check the reality

Sir, - Jeff Barak's "Reality Check" column contained several un-realities ("Netanyahu's lost opportunity," June 15).

"Symbolism is important... Netanyahu's choice of Bar-Ilan University, the flagship of the national-religious educational sector and the institute where Yitzhak Rabin's assassin was educated" carries a disturbing implication.

How about Obama's choice of Cairo, where Anwar Sadat's assassins were educated and then machine-gunned him down? What symbolism does that convey?

Barak said "ensuring that the new Palestinian state will not become an existential threat" will be backed "with the guarantee of international support for Israel's security."

When has "international support for Israel's security" ever actually stood by Israel?

Letters

UN resolution 1701 after Lebanon II was to stop Hizbullah's rearming. Did it?

American, Egyptian and European oversight was to stop arms smuggling into Gaza after Operation Cast Lead. Has it?

In 1967, UN troops in the Sinai desert were to protect Israel from Egyptian aggression. Did they?

"Netanyahu's refusal to negotiate without a list of preconditions will prove costly to Israel in the months to come." Was our non-preconditioned Oslo Agreement not costly in the months and years that came after?

Mr. Barak, check reality once more.

AVIGDOR BONCHEK

Jerusalem

Sir, - Prime Minister Netanyahu made several historical points about our claim to the Land of Israel that needed to be made. He reminded the world that we, the Jews, were the ancient inhabitants here and that the Bible is our deed to the land. However, much of the world does not believe in either of these arguments.

On the whole, however, it does believe in the historicity of the Holocaust. Therefore Netanyahu was most effective in pointing out to President Obama, and the world: "There are those who say that if the Holocaust had not occurred, the State of Israel would never have been established. But I say that if the State of Israel had been established earlier, the Holocaust would not have occurred."

CAROL CLAPSADDLE

Jerusalem

Claims, rights & pride

Sir, - In his analysis of PM Netanyahu's speech, Herb Keinon claimed it was delivered "a month too late" and criticized the hype before the speech as well as the choice of venue.

However, the same speech could not have been delivered any earlier as it was of the utmost importance to correct some of the statements made by President Obama in Cairo.

The importance of Netanyahu stressing that Arabs deliberately killed Jews long before there were any Jewish soldiers; that we were a nation here well over 3,000 years ago; the incessant Arab refusal to accept the partition resolution of 1947 and the subsequent Arab "wars of annihilation" against us - all were in direct response to the Cairo speech.

It is high time we again had a leader of the caliber of Ben-Gurion, Begin and Shamir, who, proud of our heritage, presented our claims and our rights proudly and forcefully. They also knew how to stand up to unfair pressure, from whatever source it came.

Let us hope and pray that our present government and coalition will do us proud and restore some of our lost self-esteem ("A solid speech - delivered a month too late," June 15).

EMANUEL FISCHER

Jerusalem

Sir, - Premier Netanyahu placed the ball where it belongs, in the Palestinian court.

I'm pleased.

M. HAGENAUER

Letters

Jerusalem

Worried about dads

Sir, - I read "Social workers, psychologists to aid religious courts in divorce" (June 15) with much concern for fathers in Israel.

Most of these so-called professionals will be used to decide custody cases. Israel should follow the movement of states like Iowa and Washington State here in the US for a Shared Parenting Law.

If you have two fit parents, both should be enabled to continue to raise their children as close to equal as reasonably possible. The only reason for adding these high- priced social workers and psychologists is to make the divorce situation like the movie Kramer vs. Kramer, pitting one parent against the other in custody situations.

This addition will not streamline any process, in my opinion; but it might steamroll many dads out of kids' lives - as has happened here in the US, where we went from a nation of 9 percent of children raised without a dad in the house to over 28% of kids raised without a dad, all due to US Federal Law changes.

Israel, do not make the same mistake.

Telling in this article was the female-only slant in the statement "...to insist that professionals are appointed on merit and to ensure that women and secular professionals were not discriminated against." This statement should have read "to ensure that both parents and secular professionals are not discriminated against."

PETER G. HILL

Weston, Massachusetts

Sir, - "Expanding the empire," it's called. More hands for the put-upon father to grease, more pockets for him to fill.

Remember, you get what you pay for, and making divorce profitable usually (in all modern countries) means creating more single-mother homes.

PAUL M. CLEMENTS

Dads Against

Divorce Discrimination

Gaffney, South Carolina

Spare me the revelations

Sir, - A decade ago, the Executive Council of the Israel Masorti (Conservative) Movement approved an anti-settlement newspaper ad by a vote of 6-3. Being in the minority, I argued (unsuccessfully) that this was not a Masorti issue but rather an attempt by a small clique to present its personal political views as movement policy (and get in a cheap shot against the highly visible Orthodox among the settlers).

As it happened, our ad was never published due to budgetary considerations (I happened to be the treasurer).

Now, 10 years later, a finite number of leading rabbis of the American Reform Movement have experienced their own revelation, one of Sinaitic proportions, and have in their infinite wisdom called to freeze settlement activity in the "occupied territories" ("American Reform rabbis urge settlement freeze," June 15).

Without going into the hutzpa of it, suffice it to say that such a public statement is no less gratuitous than for an Orthodox leader to suggest that we may soon be saying Kaddish for the Reform and Conservative Movements.

JAC FRIEDGUT, Jerusalem

Letters

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Letters

The Jerusalem Post

October 22, 2009 Thursday

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Byline: Edith Ognall, Zev Chamudot, Abe Krieger, A.I. Goldberg, David Herman, Ron Belzer, Julian Ungar-Sargon, Ruth Rigbi, Dolly Dezsofi-Tiger

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

It takes two

Sir, - In "US spying on Israel's nuke program, new state-sponsored book claims" (December 14, 2008) Barak Ben-Zur, a retired Shin Bet officer, described the effort "as largely benign, given the closeness of defense ties between Israel and Washington." Many of us fail to see that "closeness." If it exists, why is Jonathan Pollard serving a punitive, cruel and inhumane prison sentence in an American prison for giving Israel crucial information illegally withheld by America?

Fast forward to "No more Pollards," your editorial of October 20, 2009. The FBI's arrest of Stewart David Nozette in Washington this week on charges of trying to sell national security secrets to Israel is bad news, even though Israel's position since the 1984 Pollard affair has been that it does not spy on the US.

The Nozette case only reinforces the need to adhere strictly to this promise and, as the Post urges, "not to let anything undermine the special relationship between our two countries." That applies to America, as well: It takes two to make a "special relationship."

EDITH OGNALL

Netanya

It's perplexing

Sir, - Is it not perplexing, and disturbing, that an important West African country like Nigeria was one of the 25 that voted to adopt the Goldstone Report at the UN Human Rights Council? After Greer Fay Cashman's description of Nigerian Ambassador Dada Olisa's high personal regard and genuine warm feelings for Israel and the enhanced economic and cultural relations between our two countries (Grapevine, October 21), the perplexity increases enormously.

It must be borne in mind that the Goldstone Report not only accuses Israel of the grossest of crimes, but obscenely adds that Israel's intent was not based primarily on self-defense but on an interest in inflicting suffering on the Palestinian people. Can such a thing be endorsed by countries that enjoy amicable relations and a modicum of mutual respect with Israel?

Letters

Among the other countries that voted to adopt the Goldstone Report one can find Egypt, Jordan, Turkey and India!

ZEV CHAMUDOT

Petah Tikva

Smiles...

Sir, - Israeli Ambassador Michael Oren is right ("Oren turns down J Street conference invitation," October 21.) Why would any friend of Israel have anything to do with J Street?

J Street smiles at Israel while doing everything possible to stab her in the back. In more rational times, Jews everywhere, but especially in Israel, would shun members of J Street, but these days such people are treated with respect by the Obama administration because they represent a large number of a certain kind of Jew.

At least Hamas and Hizbullah are up front regarding their motivation.

ABE KRIEGER

Highland Park, New Jersey

...and stabs

Sir, - In referring to poet Josh Healey's invitation to the conference and the subsequent cancellation of the event featuring him because of his comparing Israel's actions to the Nazis', J Street's response was that the poet's appearance at the conference "might also be offensive to some conference participants."

It made me wonder to which participants - of this "pro-Israel" conference - such referencing might not be offensive.

A.I. GOLDBERG

Hatzor Haglilit

Year of the Knife

Sir, - I think we should call 2009 Year of the Knife - the year in which the blood of innocent victims watered the earth of the Holy Land; in which vicious murderers painted the cities of Israel red with blood. The latest horror - an entire family put to the knife ("Rishon firefighters receive counseling to cope with memories of Oshrenko tragedy," October 20).

When is this country going to get up off its backside, put an end to the rot and make the land livable and lovable again?

I say bring in the IDF to patrol our cities and make them safe, in close cooperation with the police. And deter would-be killers with the death penalty - a life for a life.

Our media mavens put home-made terror down to booze- drinking youth and an atmosphere of violence. I put it down to an increasingly godless, valueless society intoxicated with arrogance, hedonism and profit-lust.

It is crystal clear to me that if the people of Israel returned sincerely in repentance and contrition to the tenets of their Jewish faith; if they frequented synagogues on the Sabbath instead of nightclubs and practiced respect and caring for their fellow citizens, making it their job to help the elderly, weak and less fortunate, we might see the violence, bullying, godlessness and corruption giving way to the exemplary and proud society which I, like so many other Israeli citizens, aspire to live in.

DAVID HERMAN

Jerusalem

Letters

This isn't child's play

Sir, - Re the October 21 advertisement headlined "Jews do not deport children":

The basic question we should be asking concerning these children of foreign and illegal workers is where we draw the line. Right now, they number 1,200; in another year or two, it could be tens of thousands.

Yes, we have a conscience, but we also have our own problems with our own needy, and our resources are not unlimited.

If we retain these children now, will we be able to say no to future foreign workers and refugees from Africa and Asia, numbering potentially in the millions?

RON BELZER

Petah Tikva

Friday night at Freddy's

Sir, - Freddy Sopher, who died this week in London, was a legend for over 50 years to all those who traveled to, trekked or were stranded in Bombay. Businessmen and tourists all found a home away from home at Freddy's.

A confirmed bachelor and proud Sephardi Jew whose father came from Baghdad earlier in the century, he received a private British school education and joined the family business. But he will be remembered mostly for his Friday evening meals, served to all who showed up without regard to background or religious persuasion. He was tolerant of all and pure giving in character.

Long before Chabad, Freddy's effect on young people could be felt years later when they recalled his hospitality.

He lived across the street from Chabad House and witnessed last year's horrific events of barbarity and cruelty firsthand.

Owing to his failing health, Freddy's family brought him to London last year, where he finally succumbed.

This prince of a man will be sorely missed by all those who sat at his table over the years, and by all those travelers to exotic places. Freddy was Bombay, and vice versa.

JULIAN UNGAR-SARGON

Chicago

The past lives

Sir, - Many thanks to Alexander Zvielli for bringing the past to life in his From Our Archives compilation. It enables older readers to relive historic events, and younger readers to hear voices from the past.

RUTH RIGBI

Israel Association

of University Women

Jerusalem

What price pretty?

Sir, - Re Judy Montagu's "Ugly can be beautiful" (October 21) and Barbie dolls' "chocolate-box prettiness":

Letters

When I compare US and European movies, the American actresses all tend to look like Barbies - so similar, in fact, that it can actually lead to confusion about the plot - while the British and European actresses have character and individuality in their faces and bodies.

Some, like Judy Dench and Maggie Smith, to take just two examples, are a delight to watch even as they age.

DOLLY DEZSOFI-TIGER, Jerusalem

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

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ELECTIONS AROUND THE WORLD REFLECT POLITICAL CHALLENGES

The Santa Fe New Mexican (New Mexico)

June 14, 2009 Sunday

Copyright 2009 The New Mexican

Section: MAIN; Pg. A-7

Length: 751 words

Byline: BILL STEWART

Body

Three recent elections around the world are especially important. The first was to elect a new European parliament; the second was to elect a new parliament in Lebanon; and the third were the elections in Iran. Each election reflects a new and challenging political dynamic.

The elections for a new European parliament showed a sharp shift to the political right. As the turnout in each of the 27 nations voting was almost always below 40 percent, it's difficult to know whether the results show an increasing disaffection with the kind of social democracy promoted by Europe's left or left-of-center governments, or dismay at the economic crisis, which in Europe is as bad as it is in the U.S. As politics in Europe is generally to the left of politics in the U.S., even among European conservative parties, my own guess is people are reacting against the economy as well as a generally disliked European parliament, seen by many as both distant and bossy. There is a distinct increase in Euro-skepticism. The European elections, of course, are not the same thing as the national elections each European country holds to determine their individual governments.

The 38 percent turnout in Great Britain is especially important, as it showed the ruling Labour Party at its lowest ebb in many years. Labour came in third place in the elections, behind the first-place Conservatives and second-place United Kingdom Independence Party, or UKIP. Labour lost Wales for the first time since 1918 in a nationwide election. On the other hand, the Conservative share of the vote showed little change, their gains coming from Labour's startling decline. Both the Labour and Conservative parties denounced the far-right British National Party, which for the first time won two seats in the European parliament. The BNP, led by a Cambridge University-educated former boxer, is generally regarded as racist, anti-immigrant and anti-Europe.

The European elections were held at the same time as county elections in England and Wales, usually regarded as an indication of the government's popular standing. They were also held when an expense-account scandal among parliamentarians showed that many members of parliament have been regularly ripping off the British taxpayers. The country is outraged. Labour lost control of every county in England and Wales (Scottish regional and local elections are held on a different schedule). The results were a disaster, especially for Prime Minister Gordon Brown, the unpopular Scot who cannot control his own cabinet, and thus seems to be in office but out of power, a disastrous combination. Brown must call for a national election by next May, but the betting is his own party will force him from office in order to avoid a complete rout next year. British politics are at an exceptionally low ebb, with the country virtually leaderless.

If the European elections were bad news for the incumbents, the Lebanese elections were good news for the pro-Western government in Beirut. **Hezbollah**, somewhat remarkably, has conceded the election to the March 14

ELECTIONS AROUND THE WORLD REFLECT POLITICAL CHALLENGES

coalition led by Saad Hariri, son of the slain Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. The March 14 coalition is solidly pro-Western, and its victory is a definite setback to the powerful forces backed by Tehran and Damascus.

That brings us to Iran, where nationwide elections were held Friday. The election campaign has been exceptionally energetic, with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad accusing his principal rival Mir Hossein Mousavi of foul play. Although the religious establishment determines who is qualified to be a candidate, the campaign itself has been remarkably open. Ahmadinejad has accused former President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani of backing Mousavi. Rafsanjani is a former two-term president and one of Iran's richest and most powerful men. He was defeated by Ahmadinejad in the last presidential election, and the two men are bitter rivals.

Although ultimate power in Iran lies with its supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khameni, and not with current President Ahmadinejad or his successor, it is Iranian women who will determine the election's outcome as they form a majority of the electorate and are expected to vote in droves.

No matter who wins, Iran's nuclear aims are not expected to change. But if Ahmadinejad is defeated, we may see Iran ready to re-engage with the rest of the world. That can only be a good thing.

Bill Stewart, a former Foreign Service officer and correspondent for Time magazine, lives in Santa Fe.

Graphic

See pdf's for exact rendition, caption, graphics and photographer info.

Load-Date: June 15, 2009

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Eat up, National Post tells LTTE hunger strikers

Sunday Observer (Sri Lanka)

April 19, 2009 Sunday

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Length: 715 words

Dateline: Colombo

Body

Colombo, April 19 -- The following is the full text of an editorial published by Canada's National Post Thursday:

The ongoing Parliament Hill protests and hunger strikes by Tamil Canadians are meant to stir our lawmakers into action against Sri Lanka, whose government is waging a successful military campaign against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), better known as the Tamil Tigers. If anything, however, the protests have had the opposite effect: Just as radical Canadian Muslims attract disgust when they raise the flags of Hezbollah or Hamas, so too do Tamils who fly the flag of the LTTE, a terrorist insurgency that once controlled much of Sri Lanka. What worse, the protesters have flown the LTTE flag alongside the Canadian flag an insult to our own country. As we have written several times before, we are not without sympathy for the cause of the Tamil people, many of whom have been treated as second-class citizens by the Sinhalese-dominated government in Colombo.

Indeed, the Tamils would have had a rightful claim to the world sympathy if the LTTE, which fights for an independent Tamil homeland, hadn't itself adopted such inhumane tactics since its formation in the 1980s. The Tigers perfected the tactic of suicide bombing, deploying explosive-wrapped killers by the dozens even before the practice had caught on in the Arab world. The LTTE has also press-ganged children as young as 10 into military service and, following the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami, they cleared out orphanages for foot soldiers and interdicted relief supplies to feed their adult insurgents and fund terror campaign against the Sri Lankan government. The sight of this group flags flying in Canada is nothing short of revolting. Canada is home to the largest expatriate Tamil community in the world. Despite the Conservative government decision to declare the LTTE a terrorist organization in 2006, many of the most prominent Tamil groups in Canada remain fronts for the Tigers. Much of the money for the LTTE terror campaign has been extorted from Tamil Canadians, who have faced harassment if they show insufficient enthusiasm for the Tigers. Family members back home in Sri Lanka have even been held hostage until Tamils here pay hefty donations. The reason that Tiger supporters seem so desperate now is that, after nearly 17 months of bloody fighting, Sri Lankan troops have the few hundred remaining Tiger fighters pinned down inside a few square kilometres in northeast Sri Lanka including, possibly, the group sociopathic leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran. The only thing preventing Sri Lankan troops from finishing off the Tigers is the presence of thousands of Tamil civilians, whom the Tigers are using as human shields. Like Hamas in Gaza, cowardly LTTE fighters are hiding behind the women and children they claim to be protecting. (In fact, the Tigers are actually killing civilians who try to flee the combat area something even Hamas never did on a large scale during the Gaza combat.) The Tigers goal appears to be saving itself and we would not be surprised if Pirapaharan staged his own massacre of Tamils as a means to discredit Colombo and force a ceasefire that allowed him to escape. The Ottawa protesters and others in Sydney, Australia insist the Colombo government is readying a genocide against Tamils. Many journalists are even getting e-mails from Tiger supporters claiming that the Sri Lankan army is preparing to use chemical weapons. This is preposterous: If government troops truly wanted to stage a genocide, they could have done so weeks ago. The only reason that the siege has drawn out this long is that Sri Lanka army wishes to avoid

Eat up, National Post tells LTTE hunger strikers

unnecessary slaughter. Indeed, the Tamils who have managed to escape the Tiger area report being treated better by Sri Lankan troops than they were by the LTTE. If the Tiger supporters in Ottawa truly had the best interests of innocent Tamils at heart, they would be pleading with the Tigers themselves to release their human shields, not declaring their undying support for a terror organization. Our advice to the Ottawa hunger strikers is: Eat up. To the extent anyone is listening to your message, it only serves to disgrace your members. Published by HT Syndication with permission from Sunday Observer (Sri Lanka).

For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

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Column: Israel-Palestine on campus debate calls for activism that matters

University Wire

April 15, 2009 Wednesday

Copyright 2009 Columbia Daily Spectator via U-Wire

Length: 698 words

Byline: By Jonathan Hollander, Columbia Daily Spectator; **SOURCE:** Columbia U.

Dateline: NEW YORK

Body

I find we often get caught up in debates over the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that hardly exist anywhere outside our academy. For instance, the major issue on Columbia University's campus at the moment is the push by the Columbia Palestine Forum to label Israel an "apartheid" state and to pursue a policy of boycotts and sanctions. If these anti-Israel activists ever came to Capitol Hill, I'm pretty certain that all 535 congressmen would laugh in their faces and dismiss their proposal as nonsense. This is not because the United States Congress is trapped within the clutches of the "Israel lobby," but because the policies being advocated by the Columbia Palestine Forum either have no basis in reality or are completely impracticable.

In the face of the apartheid claim lies the fact that Arabs living within pre-1967 Israel carry full Israeli citizenship, with Arabs having served in both the Cabinet and on the Supreme Court. In fact, Israel is one of the few countries in the Middle East where Arab women can vote in meaningful elections, lending credence to the argument that in many respects, Arabs living in Israel have more rights than Arabs living in most Arab countries. Obviously, there still exists a considerable amount of economic and political disparity between Jews

Column: Israel - Palestine on campus debate calls for activism that matters

and Arabs in Israel, but does a similar rift between African Americans and Caucasians not occur in the United States? I say this not to condone these inequalities but rather to question the fairness of applying the apartheid label to Israel when the United States and Europe both have deep-seated racial problems of their own.

The members of the U.S. Congress understand that Israel is in fact a very free society, which is why the Jewish state garners so much bipartisan support. In our meeting with Rep. Charlie Rangel-one of the most powerful (and liberal) members of the House-the congressman outlined a position on Israel that was both measured and productive. Like most Democrats, he wasn't thrilled by the election of Benjamin Netanyahu as prime minister, but at the same time he noted that he did not think it would be a major setback to America-Israel relations, since the connection has more of a foundation in the shared ideals of freedom and democracy than it does in the political leadership of the moment. The key to peace, he said, was to stop groups like Hamas and **Hezbollah** from derailing the process, a position that stands somewhat at odds with the radicals at Columbia who see Hamas as Gaza's democratically legitimate rulers (in the same way that Hitler was Germany's democratically legitimate ruler) and who don't even believe that Israel should exist as a Jewish state .

Rangel was not the only congressman to voice these pro-Israel, pro-peace opinions-virtually every representative we met with that day also reiterated his or her support for Israel as a critical element of U.S. foreign policy. Witnessing this solidarity with Israel gave me a great deal of solace because it highlights just how irrelevant groups like the Columbia Palestine Forum are. By focusing solely on the demonization of Israel and flagrantly ignoring the terrorist (or as they refer to them, "resistance") elements of Palestinian society, the Columbia Palestine Forum effectively removes itself from the mainstream

Column: Israel - Palestine on campus debate calls for activism that matters

discourse and thus from the policy process.

In my opinion, anti-Israel radicals have become so caught up in their twisted perceptions of the situation that they are blinded to the realities on the ground. Like it or not, Israel exists as a Jewish state with both conventional and nuclear deterrent capabilities. This means that, hard as some may wish it, Israel will never cease to be the Jewish homeland. Thus, by calling Israel an apartheid or genocidal state, groups like the Columbia Palestine Forum are accomplishing nothing other than feeding the cycle of hatred-and the bloodshed that results. The only way for peace to ever be achieved is for activist groups to be proactive and work towards the establishment of two states, not the destruction or demonization of one. This was our goal on Capitol Hill, and I am certain that it made more of a difference than screaming slogans on Columbia's campus.

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Dubious poll has dashed hopes for reform in Iran

The Age (Melbourne, Australia)

June 15, 2009 Monday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS; Leaders; Pg. 12

Length: 764 words

Body

Ahmadinejad's win makes Western diplomacy more difficult.

THERE is one thing worse than the re-election of a paranoid, belligerent, Holocaust-denying xenophobe as President of Iran. It is the re-election of a paranoid, belligerent, Holocaust-denying xenophobe in a poll tainted by allegations of widespread ballot-rigging. The doubt cast on the legitimacy of this election means that the hardline Government of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad will now have even more incentive to act repressively, lest the evident discontent at the poll result develop into an open challenge to the Government's authority.

Mr Ahmadinejad has been officially declared the victor in the election with 63 per cent of the vote - far ahead of his reformist rival, Mir Hossein Mousavi, who was credited with 34 per cent. The tallies of Mr Ahmadinejad's other rivals, Mohsen Rezai and Mehdi Karroubi, barely registered as blips on the electoral radar, and the President's apparent landslide win has made unnecessary a run-off election, which had been the most widely expected outcome after Mr Mousavi's strong performance in opinion polls in the past fortnight.

It is clear that the trend in those polls severely rattled the President and his supporters. The election result may reflect the preference of a majority of Iran's voters, but the problem is that this cannot be known. Not only were there no independent international monitors of the balloting, but the final count was held behind closed doors under the direct supervision of the Interior Minister. Scrutineers for Mr Mousavi were not admitted, and the use of many mobile polling stations - originally intended only for hospitals and military posts - has fuelled speculation about ballot tampering. Newspapers were censored and networking websites such as Facebook were blocked, as were mobile-phone text messages, which had been extensively used by the Mousavi campaign.

At the very least, the gulf between opinion polls on the eve of the vote and the official result barely a day later raises questions about the integrity of the electoral process. Those questions will almost certainly go unanswered, since Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, ignored a plea from Mr Mousavi to intervene in the count, and instead ordered the three defeated candidates to accept the result. Mousavi supporters took to the streets in protest, only to be driven off by riot police and militia. Mr Mousavi's whereabouts was unknown yesterday, and rumours that he had been arrested were growing.

For Iranians, the election result dashes the hopes of those who had sought greater personal freedom, especially for women. Mr Mousavi's coalition of his Azeri ethnic group and the urban middle classes had no radical agenda: they did not repudiate Iran's Islamic revolution and the constitution deriving from it, nor was there any indication that a Mousavi presidency would have abandoned the nuclear program that has been a source of tension between Iran

Dubious poll has dashed hopes for reform in Iran

and the wider world. Mr Mousavi did, however, advocate a less confrontational stance towards the West, raising the possibility that he would have been a willing partner in the dialogue proposed by US President Barack Obama.

The Obama Administration clearly would have preferred a Mousavi victory, but its response to the election has been cautious. Officially there has been only a restatement by the White House of its desire for closer diplomatic engagement of Iran; in part perhaps to avoid increasing tension on the streets there, and in part no doubt because President Obama has renounced intervention in the internal politics of other countries to obtain outcomes favourable to the US. In his speech to the Islamic world delivered in Cairo earlier this month, Mr Obama condemned the CIA's role in deposing the government of Mohamed Mossadeq in Iran in 1953. He was right to do so, but rejecting such interventionism also raises the stakes for conventional diplomacy by the US.

The Obama approach may already have had some success, for the President's Cairo speech has been credited with influencing the outcome of Lebanon's election last week, in which a pro-Western Sunni and Christian coalition unexpectedly defeated the Shiite **Hezbollah**, supported by Iran and Syria. The fairness of Lebanon's poll has not been questioned.

In the short term, the greatest uncertainty about events in Iran concerns Israel's attitude to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's continuing grip on power. The Netanyahu Government has refused to rule out military action to extinguish Iran's nuclear program, and that may now be one step closer.

Load-Date: June 14, 2009

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Give Canadians the choice of Al Jazeera TV

The Toronto Star
July 16, 2009 Thursday

Copyright 2009 Toronto Star Newspapers, Ltd.

Section: OPINION; Pg. A23

Length: 724 words

Body

The most vocal critics of human rights commissions often invoke freedom of speech. Yet they were strangely silent when Ottawa effectively blocked Al Jazeera Arabic TV's entry into Canada in 2004. And they are mostly silent now about Al Jazeera English's application before the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission.

Being treated like that in Canada is a minor irritation for the folks at the Qatar-based Al Jazeera, including the Canadian Tony Burman, managing director, English. They have seen far worse.

A-J Arabic was started in 1996 as a way of putting the gas-rich Persian Gulf emirate on the map.

Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani got it started with \$140 million and the freedom to do real journalism. The quid pro quo was that the network wouldn't go after him. As compromising as that sounds, it isn't really. Which Canadian media excoriate their owners?

A-J spread like wildfire. Using its motto, "The opinion and the other opinion," it broke one taboo after another. Are the Saudi royals corrupt? Is Hezbollah a terrorist organization or legitimate resistance?

Jordan, Kuwait and Bahrain shut down A-J bureaus. So did the Palestinian Authority (again, yesterday). Algeria shut down its own power grid 10 minutes into an A-J program on extrajudicial killings in that country.

Saudi Arabia once banned its citizens from watching, appearing on or talking to anyone from A-J. It ran an effective campaign to have advertisers pull their business from Al Jazeera.

It pulled its envoy from Doha.

So did Morocco. Tunisia and Libya severed diplomatic relations.

Egypt dubbed A-J a "Zionist channel."

Al-Jazeera was accused of being a lackey of Osama bin Laden, Saddam Hussein and Hamas - as well as Israel and the CIA.

In November 2001, two American 500-pound bombs were dropped on the A-J bureau in Kabul, levelling the building. No one was inside.

During the Iraq war, its office in a Basra hotel was hit by four American missiles. Again, no one was hurt. Its Baghdad bureau was bombed, killing one correspondent. A-J staff was repeatedly harassed, beaten, arrested.

Give Canadians the choice of Al Jazeera TV

With its many bureaus and enterprise reporting, A-J got scoops galore: the 1998 Anglo-U.S. bombing of Iraq; interviews and tapes of Osama bin Laden; the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, etc.

It was the first Arabic channel to interview Israelis. It was the first with women sports reporters.

In Canada, the A-J Arabic application was approved in 2004 by the CRTC but under strict conditions. To ostensibly protect viewers from possible anti-Semitic material, the channel's distributors were to be held responsible for its content. They balked.

"The effect of the commission's decision is to turn distributors into censors," said Michael Hennessy, president of the Canadian Cable Association. "This sets a frightening precedent."

Now it is the Al Jazeera English network, started in 2006, that's up for consideration. The CRTC is expected to meet next week.

The English network broadcasts 24 hours a day, seven days a week, from four centres - Doha, Kuala Lumpur, London and Washington.

It has developed a following of 140 million households in 100 countries - a footprint that the BBC and CNN took 10 years and more to develop. But unlike them, "our home team is not London or Atlanta. We have no home team to cheer," says Burman, former head of CBC News.

A-J English reports from under-reported regions of this world. It does so in detail, not two- or three-minute clips. This at a time when other media are retrenching, and Canadians are seeing less and less of news from around the world.

The network has a staff of 1,200 from 50 nationalities, "the most diverse newsroom in the world," says Burman. "Our staff is as multicultural as Canada. A-J should have special resonance in Canada."

Burman also says that "Israeli politicians appear on Al Jazeera more than on any other network outside of Israel. We provide more coverage of Israel than any other international coverage outside of Israeli networks.

"We are seen in Tel Aviv but not Toronto, in Haifa but not Halifax, in Kiryat Shmona but not Calgary."

That makes no sense.

The CRTC has no choice but to give Canadians the freedom to see Al Jazeera English. Otherwise, it would place Canada in the company of those autocrats who have tried to silence Al Jazeera.

Haroon Siddiqui writes Thursday and Sunday. [hsiddiq @ thestar.ca](mailto:hsiddiq@thestar.ca)

Load-Date: July 16, 2009

Sex in speeding car

Pretoria News (South Africa)

April 14, 2009 Tuesday

e1 Edition

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Section: Pg. 6

Length: 710 words

Body

A Norwegian, 28, has lost his driver's licence after police had to pursue him at speeds of more than 120km/h while he was driving and having sex with a ***female*** companion at the same time. A police report said that when they gave chase, they saw a woman sitting on the driver's lap, with the couple in hefty motion. There had been considerable danger because the car was "visibly swerving" on the road.

An Irishman brought home to die after being beaten senseless on a street in Sydney, Australia, in August surprised his doctors and his family by coming back from the dead in a Cork hospital on St Patrick's Day, March 17. David Keohane, 29, came out of a coma eight months after sustaining serious head injuries in the attack, reports said yesterday. "He's awake, he's talking, he's recognising everyone," said a friend.

As firemen removed this statue of the Madonna from the top of a church in Paganica following last week's earthquake, Italian Jews and Holocaust survivors hurried to aid communities that sheltered them during World War II. A delegation of 20 elderly survivors and their descendants, as well as Jewish community leaders, offered everything from gym shoes to summer camps for children.

Peru's Shining Path rebels killed 13 soldiers in an ambush of a military patrol in the remote south-east, Defence Minister Antero Flores Araoz has revealed. Dynamite and grenades were used in the weekend attack. The assault, one of the deadliest by the once-formidable guerrilla group in the past decade, also left one person missing and two others wounded.

Dozens of heavily armed Maoist rebels stormed a bauxite mine in eastern India and held about 100 mine employees hostage before police regained control of the facility yesterday. At least 11 police officers and four militants died in the nine-hour shootout in the Panchpatmali area of the state of Orissa. The militants were hoping to steal large quantities of explosives used for mining.

The Turkish state-run news agency says police searched a TV station and several branches of a secularist association as part of a widening probe into an alleged coup plot. More than 200 suspects have been detained since 2007 in the case, which highlights a rift between an increasingly powerful class of pious Muslims and secular elites who fear the government wants to impose religion on society.

The Israeli military says an unmanned Palestinian fishing boat has exploded off the Gaza coast in an apparent attempt to hit Israeli naval patrols in the area. There were no casualties. An army spokesman said the Palestinian boat was "a safe distance" from the nearest Israeli vessel when it blew up yesterday about 300 metres off the northern Gaza coast, near the border with Israel.

Sex in speeding car

China released its first human rights action plan yesterday, pledging to improve the treatment of minorities and do more to prevent detainee torture and address concerns that have sparked international outcries. The two-year plan also promises the communist government will do more to boost the overall living standard of minorities, women, the unemployed and the disabled.

Egypt's attorney general has added espionage to the charges against 49 alleged Hezbollah agents, in addition to plotting to destabilise the country. Abdel-Meguid Mahmoud told Egypt's Mena news agency that the alleged agents, including Lebanese, Palestinian, Egyptian and Sudanese nationals, were spying for a foreign group intending to carry out terrorist attacks in Egypt.

The head of the Mauritanian junta has said during a live radio press conference that he would resign "before the end of the week" to launch his candidacy for presidential elections in June. General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, who took power in an August coup, has to quit before April 22 if he wants to contest the elections. He ousted the country's first democratically elected leader in August.

A passenger has landed a twin-engine plane in the US after the pilot died in flight with a total of six people on board. Federal Aviation Administration officials say the pilot died after take-off from an airport in Naples, Florida, on Sunday. An air traffic controller helped a passenger bring the plane down by calling a friend in Connecticut who knows the King Air plane and relaying instructions.

Load-Date: April 13, 2009

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Ripples from Iran crisis reach far and wide

The Toronto Star
June 18, 2009 Thursday

Copyright 2009 Toronto Star Newspapers, Ltd.

Section: OPINION; Pg. A21

Length: 716 words

Body

What's happening in Iran is domestic but its ripples reach Lebanon, Israel and the United States. And it stirs the 100,000-strong Iranian diaspora in Toronto.

Tehran being ahead of Toronto by 8 1/2 hours, it was clear here by Friday night that something wasn't quite right about the hurried official announcements that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had won handily over Mir Hossein Mousavi.

Mehrdad Ariannejad and Mehrdad Loghmani, Toronto computer engineers, decided to "do something." Human rights activist Lily Pourzand came on board. Her father, a journalist, had been jailed in Iran. Her mother, a lawyer, is in exile, a teaching fellow at Harvard.

There would be a rally on Sunday. More than 2,000 people turned up at Mel Lastman Square.

Some carried signs similar to those in Iran: "Where's my vote?"

Given the wide range of Iranian ideological divisions in Canada, present in the crowd were some monarchists, some Communists and also those from other factions, noted Reza Moridi, MPP for Richmond Hill (the first Iranian Canadian elected to a legislature).

Alluding to the deep divisions, Jian Ghomeshi of CBC Radio (emcee of choice for Iranian Canadian events) said that watching what's happening in Iran "has been devastating. But these are also the kinds of events that can ... bring this community together."

He said Iranian Canadians wanted for Iranians what we have - fair elections. "I am a proud Canadian, I am also a proud Iranian."

To the uninitiated, that may have sounded banal. But it wasn't. Most Iranians who came to Canada after the Islamic revolution were "anti-mullah." Many took to calling themselves Persian (prompting people like to me to ask mischievously: "Where is Persia?") Ghomeshi is proudly re-appropriating the Iranian heritage for them.

In the absence of international monitors, it's hard to know the merits of Mousavi's complaint that 5 million voters were denied ballots, that thousands of scrutineers were barred from polling booths.

The election machinery was indeed controlled by Ahmadinejad's allies. Yet he had something else going for him: the P{+2} factor, his constituency of the poor and pious, which may have been underestimated by the urban elite, on whom the foreign media over-rely.

But it's also clear that the government is facing a crisis of credibility.

Ripples from Iran crisis reach far and wide

The slogans of the tens of thousands of protesters are telling. Echoing the revolutionary Marg bar Imrika (Death to America) and Marg bar Shah, they are shouting Marg bar diktator and Marg bar coupe d'etat. They are on rooftops after dark to shout the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's revolutionary rallying cry, Allah o-Akbar.

This is unprecedented.

So is the crackdown. It is not yet known how many have been killed and how many are under arrest.

Unless the results are overturned, an unlikely prospect, Ahmadinejad's win consolidates the power of hardliners. They control the judiciary and the security services (the dreaded interior ministry, and the Revolutionary Guards and its militias, the "guardians" of the Islamic republic).

Their ascendancy may mean culture wars against women and the young, and a witch hunt against the reformists/pragmatists who may want to compromise with the U.S. ("the Great Satan") and Israel ("the Zionist entity").

However, Ayatollah Syed Khamenei, the supreme leader, retains his veto on all key policies. He reflects the national consensus on the nuclear issue and also Israel. He considers Hamas and Hezbollah as legitimate forces battling Israeli occupation/invasions/oppression. He'll bend only when he thinks Israel has done right by the Palestinians.

If Ahmadinejad would rather talk about Israel than his domestic political and economic problems, Benjamin Netanyahu would rather talk about Iran than Palestine.

But the Israeli prime minister's rhetoric won't budge Iran. It's also not likely to move Barack Obama off his goal of resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Obama has had a sensible response to the crisis in Iran. The U.S. promotes democracy. It wants a peaceful resolution. But it's up to the Iranians themselves to choose their leaders. The U.S. will deal with whomever they choose.

It has no choice, given the centrality of Iran to that whole region.

Bringing Iran out of its isolation also offers the best hope of making it more democratic.

hsiddiq @ thestar.ca

Load-Date: June 18, 2009

We won't be silenced say Iran's opposition

Scotsman

June 26, 2009 Friday

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Length: 745 words

Byline: Michael Purcell

Highlight: WITH an iron-fisted crackdown on the streets, the Iranian regime appears to have weathered the biggest anti-government protests since the 1979 Islamic Revolution - but it has failed to silence a defiant opposition challenge to the disputed presidential election results.

Body

Undeterred by the harassment, Mir Hossein Mousavi, the man millions of Iranians believe was the real winner on 12 June, insisted yesterday that his followers had a constitutional right to protest peacefully. He said the authorities were increasingly isolating and vilifying him in an attempt to get him to withdraw his election challenge - which he vowed he would not do.

"My access to people is completely restricted," he said. He condemned a crackdown on his media group, saying his two websites were being tampered with and his newspaper closed down and its staff arrested.

While the regime has proven it has the muscle to repress the street unrest after conducting one of the harshest crackdowns in its history, it must know that dealing with a possible campaign of mass civil disobedience will be much more difficult.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the official winner of the "stolen" election, meanwhile lambasted Barack Obama for his condemnation earlier this week of the violence in Iran. He warned the United States president not to interfere in Iran's affairs, accusing him of falling into a trap set by some European states, such as Britain, that are led "by a bunch of politically retarded people".

Mr Ahmadinejad's remarks were among the most strident so far in a crude, government-orchestrated campaign to scapegoat western powers for the regime's misfortunes.

The US has been preparing for a historic engagement with the Islamic Republic, but the Iranian president warned Washington that if Mr Obama continued to act like his hawkish predecessor, George Bush, there "will be nothing left to talk about".

Mr Ahmadinejad's outburst is likely to heighten fears that Iran's deeply divided leadership could try to exacerbate tensions in the region to distract attention from its domestic worries. US-backed Arab leaders in Sunni Muslim-majority countries such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt have been quietly gloating over Shia Iran's self-inflicted problems.

We won't be silenced say Iran 's opposition

They regard Mr Ahmadinejad as a dangerous demagogue who is destabilising the region and meddling in Arab affairs by sponsoring groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas. They suspect there is less chance now of a rapprochement between Tehran and Washington, which they had feared could undermine their interests.

The regime's apparent victory on the streets may well prove to be Pyrrhic. Hundreds of opposition activists are believed to have been taken into custody - including 70 academics arrested as they left Mr Mousavi's home on Wednesday night.

Seventeen protesters are officially acknowledged to have died during the crackdown, although reformists say the true death toll is probably higher. But the upper echelons of the regime have never been so divided, its rifts never so publicly exposed. Mr Ahmadinejad's victory party on Wednesday night was snubbed by nearly two-thirds of the members of Iran's 290-seat parliament. The regime and its supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei - who hailed Mr Ahmadinejad's victory as a "divine blessing" - have lost all semblance of popular legitimacy, analysts say. There have been unprecedented chants of "Death to Khamenei!" at opposition demonstrations.

One furious female voter wrote on her Facebook page: "They are changing Iran from an 'Islamic Republic' to 'Islamic' by their actions. This is the death of democracy in Iran."

The president and supreme leader are now confronted by a powerful coalition of insiders who have been forced by events into an unlikely opposition role. Foremost is Mr Mousavi, who was Iran's prime minister during the war with Iraq in the 1980s.

He is being backed by two influential politician-clerics, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, a pragmatic conservative, and Moh-ammad Khatami, a popular reformist: both are former presidents. Their alliance lacks military muscle but has people power.

Today, Mr Mousavi's supporters plan to release thousands of balloons printed with the message: "Neda you will always remain in our hearts" - a reference to the young woman, a philosophy student, killed by security forces last week, who has become an icon of the protests where women have been on the front line.

Nightly, thousands of Iranians have taken to their rooftops in a symbolic and peaceful ritual of opposition unity, chanting "God is Great!" and "Death to the Dictator!" - both rallying cries of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. They are well aware that comparing today's protests with those against the US-backed shah 30 years ago infuriates the regime.

Load-Date: March 14, 2011

Pakistan: Desperate Taliban deliver death 18 killed in Peshawar, Bannu car blasts

Daily Pak Banker

August 28, 2009 Friday

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Length: 1344 words

Dateline: PESHAWAR/BANNU

Body

PESHAWAR/BANNU, Sept. 28 -- Barbaric terrorists struck twice within hours in separate car bombings which claimed at least 18 lives and hurt over 160 in Peshawar and Bannu on Saturday. The Peshawar blast occurred on the busy Fakhre-Alam Road close to the Combined Military Hospital (CMH) in the Saddar area which claimed 11 lives, including two brothers, and injured over 80 others. The explosion outside Askari Bank at 12 noon also damaged over 40 vehicles and almost a dozen multi-storey buildings, housing over 200 offices and shops, on both sides of the road. The front portions of almost all the buildings in the vicinity were damaged. There was devastation all over the place which was littered with charred bodies, debris and damaged vehicles. The explosion also caused cracks in the huge Cantonment Plaza, in which Askari Bank and scores of shops and offices are located. Power supply to the entire area was suspended as the electricity transformer and transmission lines too were damaged. Most of the shops in Saddar Bazaar were closed down immediately by worried shopkeepers. However, the shops re-opened later and the bazaar almost returned to normalcy in a city used to such bombing incidents since the 1980s. Officials of the Bomb Disposal Unit (BDU) estimated that over 100 kilograms of explosives were used in the blast. It was the biggest and most tragic explosion to rock the city after June 9 suicide bombing at Pearl Continental Hotel. The BDU officials and police officers said the bomber hurled a hand-grenade before detonating explosives in his car. A six-foot long and two-foot deep crater was created at the spot. Those identified among the dead were one Faridullah, an auto-rickshaw driver Daulat Khan, a labourer Hameedullah, two brothers Imtiaz and Riaz and a passer-by Hayat Khan. Two women injured in the blast were identified as Nida and Huma. Apart from the 80 wounded people, about 40 others received cuts and bruises when hit by smashed windowpanes. Emergency was declared at city hospitals soon after the blast and around 50 of the wounded were taken to CMH, while over 35 others to the Lady Reading Hospital (LRH). Capital City Police Officer (CCPO) Liaqat Ali Khan first said it was a car bomb blast, but later the BDU officials recovered the leg of the bomber from the debris of the Corolla car that was used in the blast. 'We have constituted a committee under the supervision of the SSP Investigation that has kicked off the probe,' said Liaqat. The official added that engine number of the car and other evidence, including CCTV footage, have been collected for investigation. 'I was reciting the holy Quran when the huge blast shook the entire area. The windowpanes of our office and windscreen of a car parked inside were smashed,' a car showroom owner Ziauddin, who had also escaped the PC blast in June, said. He added that he saw only flesh, blood, rubble and scraps of cars scattered everywhere when the smoke settled down. This is for the third time that this bank was targeted by the terrorists. 'Several people were injured in the first blast outside the bank almost two years back. On the second occasion, explosives placed in a white Suzuki car were defused before it could go off,' Abdul Rahman, a local trader, said. He added that the worries of the traders and workers in the area would continue until the bank is not shifted from the place. The site of the blast is surrounded by the State Bank of Pakistan, CMH and civil and military offices. The Corps Headquarters is also located nearby. Heavy contingents of the Pakistan Army and NWFP police cordoned off the area soon after the blast. An eyewitness said that two suspects were arrested from the site,

Pakistan : Desperate Taliban deliver death 18 killed in Peshawar, Bannu car blasts

who later proved to be a local trader Moeenuddin and his son. The traders of Saddar Bazaar later staged protest against their arrest and raised slogans against the police. The arrested men were subsequently freed. Bara Road, which connects the provincial capital with Khyber Agency, was blocked and the gates at Pishtakhara Chowk were closed to stop movement from and to the tribal areas. In Bannu, a teenage suicide bomber rammed his explosive-laden car into Mandan police station, killing seven persons, including five police and FC officials, and injuring 80 others. Sources told to media that the explosives-packed vehicle driven by a teenager came from Janikhel, a town of Frontier Region (FR) Bannu, at 7:15am and entered Mandan police station after breaking the barriers on Haved Road. They said as soon as the vehicle entered the building, the bomber blew himself up. It triggered another blast in the explosives stuffed in the pick-up truck. As a result, six persons, including five cops and an accused held in the lock-up, died on the spot and 80 others were injured. Those killed were identified as Mir Ali Shah, Yasir, head constable Rahmatullah, Muhammad Akhund and a child. Several police and FC officials were injured and civilians including men, women and children also sustained injuries. An unconfirmed report said that 12 persons, including two children, were killed in the blast. The injured were taken to the District Headquarters Hospital, Bannu where emergency was declared. A large number of people thronged the hospital to donate blood for the wounded. Some of the injured police personnel were identified as Station House Officer (SHO) Abdul Hannan, assistant sub-inspectors (ASIs) Jalil Khan, Said Nawaz Khan, Ghulam Saboor, Fazal Rahim, Head Constable Kiramatullah, FC Naib Subedar Inayatullah and sepoy Kiramatullah, Abdul Wahab, Inshallah Khan, Muzammil Khan, Waheedullah and his namesake, Asal Mir, Ibrahim, Zafar Khan, Jamshed Khan, Bashir Khan, Zahidullah, Asif Bilal, Imranullah, Shahidullah, Barkatullah, Fazal Khan and Hizbullah, while the identity of others could not be ascertained. Some of the civilians wounded in the blast were identified as Hafiz Farmanullah, Waizullah, Kulsoom, Sidra, Faizullah, Najma Bibi, Sakhi Rehman, Baskhushada, Saeeda, Muhammad Raziq Khan, Riffat Bibi, Ghazi Khan, Rizwana, Shehnaz, Salma, Sharifullah, Ghaffar Khan and Khushdil Khan. The sources said some seriously wounded police officials and civilians were shifted to various hospitals in Peshawar. The suicide bombing was being described by government officials and civilians in the area as the militants' retaliation against the military operation carried out recently and still ongoing in the Frontier Region of Janikhel. Eyewitnesses said the blast was so powerful that it was heard in most parts of Peshawar and created a 10-feet deep crater, besides destroyed several houses and shops along with the police station and nearby official quarters, school and a tube-well. It was learnt that over 200 persons were present at the police station at the time of suicide attack. Investigators found the head and legs of the bomber at the blast scene. According to a report, the banned Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has claimed responsibility for the attack. However, the report could not be confirmed by independent sources. District Police Officer Muhammad Iqbal Marwat told reporters that 160 kilograms powerful explosives were used in the attack which caused a huge blast. NWFP Senior Minister Bashir Ahmad Bilour said the blasts could be a reaction to the ongoing military operations in Swat and rest of Malakand Division and the tribal areas. He along with NWFP Health Minister Syed Zahir Ali Shah visited Lady Reading Hospital to enquire after the health of the injured persons. 'The threat of more attacks cannot be ruled out. This seems to be the reaction of Malakand operation,' Mian Iftikhar Hussain, NWFP Information Minister said. He was of the opinion that cleanup operations need to be launched in Peshawar, many other parts of the province and Fata to quell the threat of terrorism. He said that fight against the terrorists would continue till the elimination of the last terrorist. Published by HT Syndication with permission from Daily Pak Banker. For more information on news feed please contact Sarabjit Jagirdar at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

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Load-Date: September 27, 2009

Letters

The Jerusalem Post

November 12, 2009 Thursday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 14

Length: 1238 words

Byline: Batya Berlinger, Jacob Himmelfarb, Yaacov Peterseil, Dan Vogel, M. Miller, Olga P. Wind, Aryeh Newman, Raphael Rosenbaum, Mattias Rotenberg, Jacob Chinitz

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

Three years for a gas mask?

Sir, - Gas mask distribution will take three years (November 11)?! If your area is deemed relatively safe, you have to wait longer?! If Iran, Hizbullah and/or Hamas note where the masks are not being given out, they'll know which areas to aim for!

To add insult to injury, we'll now have to pay a "nominal" fee? What if a family can't afford that? What if they prefer to buy bread and milk or even some vegetables with that 30 shekels? Does that mean they won't get their masks?

BATYA BERLINGER

Jerusalem

Here's why, Mr. Kouchner

Sir, - The French foreign minister should take a look at why the peace movement has all but disappeared ("Kouchner: Israelis no longer aspire to peace," November 11). If only Israelis are willing to give up territory, while Palestinians continue to deny Israel's existence, and if only Israelis agree to a two-state solution, while Palestinians ingrain in their children and their children's children "Kill the Jews for Allah," then the Israeli peace movement has been all but pre-empted by the Palestinian hate movement.

JACOB HIMMELFARB

Jerusalem

Sir, - In a few more years, when the Moslems of his country finish their takeover bid, Kouchner will even understand why there are so few Frenchmen in their peace movement.

YAACOV PETERSEIL

Jerusalem

New task for

Letters

Goldstone

Sir, - In "Fears of proxy war loom as Saudi navy blockades north Yemen coast" (November 11), you reported that "The rebels also confirmed that Saudi air strikes were continuing Tuesday, saying new villages had been hit deep inside Yemen, killing two women." We expect the UN Human Rights Council to assign Richard Goldstone to investigate this brazen attack on a civilian target.

DAN VOGEL

Jerusalem

Call his bluff

Sir, - Mahmoud Abbas is presenting the inhabitants of the Land of Israel with a real opportunity, in his calls for resignation and for dismantling the PA (November 8), for a permanent and lasting solution. Let's call his bluff.

Let the PA dismantle itself. Palestine is Gaza - let Israel be the first country in the world to recognize it. The two million other Palestinians are invited to become Israeli citizens, if they pledge allegiance to the state and undertake national military or civilian service - the identical conditions we must impose on all Jews, including the ultra-Orthodox.

Let us not pass up this chance for an integrated solution, assuring rights, security and economic advancement to all in the country.

M. MILLER

Jerusalem

Healthy hospitals

Sir, - Having had a family member hospitalized for 10 days at Wolfson Hospital in Holon, I slept in his room for the first four nights and the room was spotless, the linen fresh and abundant. Yes, food was simple, but it was fresh. And the nurses, well, were angels. It is we who don't respect public property anymore. Family members sit on patients' beds with their shoes on, or bring in outside food and have a party till 1 a.m. in the patients' rooms. Nurses are sometimes afraid to enforce regulations because of threats; I saw a large man almost attack a nurse.

It is time that we stop blaming the authorities for all that is wrong. We also should be responsible for improving what is not adequate.

And by the way, the choice of the word "horror" was a little too much ("Hospital horrors," Letters, November 10).

OLGA P. WIND

Holon

Wrong volume

Sir, - If only the rabbis who devoted so much of their halachic knowhow to publishing a "book advocating killing gentiles who endanger Jews" (November 11) had, instead, in light of the violence of our Jewish society, published one on the sanctity of all human life. There, they could have detailed when killing is permitted as, for example, in self-defense.

The very idea that the halacha makes any distinction between Jew and non-Jew, besides being abhorrent, was outlawed by one of our most prominent rabbinic authorities, the Meiri (1249-1316). In commenting on Talmudic discrimination against non-Jews, he stated: "All who share the same universal moral code ('the seven Noahide laws') are bound by one and the same law, and there can be no question of favoring ourselves..." If this was recognized in 14th century Provence, where the Meiri flourished, how much more so in our day and age.

Letters

ARYEH NEWMAN

Jerusalem

Prescient Jakobovits

Sir, - The article on Lord Jakobovits ("A modern prophet," November 6) was a beautifully written description of a towering rabbi, brilliant scholar and community leader. He was also prescient. In his article "Rabbis and Deans, which appeared in Tradition, the journal of the Rabbinical Council of America in the early '70s, Lord Jakobovits foresaw the dangers awaiting Jewish life if the rabbinic leaders of the yeshivot, the Deans as he called them, abrogated the influence and authority of community rabbis. He felt that community rabbis were in closer touch with their congregants and more sympathetic to their needs and the pressures of their everyday lives. The Deans, enclosed in their yeshivot, were isolated from the people and therefore tended to be much more demanding and extreme. How sad it is that he was so accurate and that even he and other leading community rabbis have been overshadowed by the extremism so rampant today.

RAPHAEL ROSENBAUM

Kiron

Why Labor has lost it

Sir, - In his oped of November 6, "The Labor Party - of blessed memory," David Forman writes why he thinks Labor has become a threatened species after so many years of being in power. He places great emphasis on the lack of movement by Labor to demand the dismantling of settlements. The picture is far more complicated than that.

Forman has forgotten that it was Labor that put most of the settlements where they are today while being the largest party in the Knesset. While it is true that Labor has abandoned its base and its ideals, it has also been forced to privatize many of its successful institutions - Kupat Holim, Bank Hapoalim, Shikun Ovdim, Sifriyat Hapoalim, the kibbutzim... It was these institutions that gave it so much power.

Forman also neglects to mention that the leaders of Labor, while being socialist on the domestic agenda, were also very hawkish in matters of security and foreign affairs. It was Ben Gurion who forced Moshe Sharett out because of his dovish views, and Golda Meir was very hawkish on defense.

Labor has shifted excessively to the left and the country has not followed. This is especially true after the failure of the disengagement from Gaza, the eight-year shelling in the south, the loss of 1,500 civilians in the last intifada, the Second Lebanon War, Operation Cast Lead, etc.

MATTIAS ROTENBERG

Petah Tikva

The wall and the fig-leaf

Sir, - I am glad to find ideological support from Anetta Kahane's article on the Berlin Wall ("In Germany, the East-West divide is still alive and kicking," November 11)

When the wall fell, I preached from the pulpit that it should have stood forever, as a symbol of what happens when countries follow a Hitler. I was told that I was wrong. Germany must be rebuilt, accepted, turned into a democracy, and the wall must come down to advance this cause. Now we are informed that although west Germany is democratic, and is even a friend of Israel, east Germany is germinating neo-Nazis, enemies of Israel, anti-Semites. If that wall was still standing, this would be obvious to the democratic world. Without it, the virtues of west Germany serve as a fig-leaf covering the evils of east Germany.

JACOB CHINITZ, Jerusalem

Letters

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

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Managing anti-Semitism in Germany

The Jerusalem Post

July 12, 2009 Sunday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 13

Length: 1304 words

Byline: HENRYK M. BRODER and BENJAMIN WEINTHAL

Highlight: Three short-term remedies that could breathe some life and fire into fighting the disease. Henryk M. Broder is one of Germany's leading commentators and writes for Der Spiegel. Benjamin Weinthal is The Jerusalem Post correspondent in Germany.

Body

One of the biggest achievements of political correctness in the Federal Republic of Germany is that there is a "representative" or "commissioner" for everything. There is a "commissioner for the armed forces" in the Bundestag (Lower House of Parliament) to whom soldiers can complain about long hours and bad food, a "federal drug commissioner" who wants to convince children to give up smoking, binge-drinking and the excessive use of computer games, and a "federal government representative for patient interests" at the Ministry of Health from whom we almost never hear anything.

Every large company has an "addiction issues representative" who takes care of employees addicted to alcohol or drugs, and there is an "equal opportunity commissioner" at every German college who ensures that women are not at a disadvantage. It is very fashionable for companies and institutions to have an "environmental issues manager." There is even a "commission for environmental questions" for the Protestant regional churches in Germany, and it won't be long before the Catholics follow their lead.

In this way an entirely new profession has been born, along the lines of "bankruptcy trustee" and "event manager" - another niche in post-industrial society where people who have no idea what else they could do establish themselves.

There have been discussions about an "anti-Semitism representative" since November 9, 2008 (the 70th anniversary of the Krystalnacht pogroms), when the Bundestag called on the federal government to convene a panel of experts to compile an annual "anti-Semitism report" combined with recommendations on how to come to grips with anti-Semitism. All the parliamentary parties agreed (which is quite rare) that a committee "of scientists and practitioners" was necessary.

Of course they did not consider the fact that they must first agree on what constitutes anti-Semitism.

NOW SOME representatives are mad at the government because so much time has passed and nothing has been done. Green Party MP Jerzy Montag (and chairman of the German- Israeli Parliamentary Friendship Group) no longer believes that such a committee will be established before the upcoming elections. Left Party MP Petra Pau has even called it a "disregard" for the German parliament and "ignorance in the light of a major social problem."

Managing anti-Semitism in Germany

These reactions are typical of a conviction, widely held in Germany, that a committee must be established in order to gain control of any problem. The "scientists and practitioners" will then take care of everything else.

Government representatives like Montag and Pau don't even notice that they themselves are standing in the way of understanding and fighting anti-Semitism. Montag quite innocently asked during a hearing of experts in the Bundestag's Committee on Internal Affairs whether there could be such a thing as "pure" anti-Zionism uncontaminated by anti-Semitism.

Pau's understanding of anti-Semitism is just as limited. She likes to travel to Jerusalem for anti-Semitism symposiums, but doesn't say a word when there are discussions within her own party about Israel's right to exist, since those discussions are not considered anti-Semitic but merely anti-Zionist.

Some of Pau's fellow party members have no problem taking part in pro-Hizbullah demonstrations or calling for a political and economic boycott of Israel - none of that counts as anti-Semitism. In Germany, distancing oneself from the classic anti-Semitism of the Nazis is a basic prerequisite before one can act as an anti-Zionist without arousing suspicion of being a common anti-Semite who has merely changed shirts. Establishing an anti-Semitism representative will not change anything. On the contrary, the government would merely be giving its blessing to these bogus claims of innocence.

There is a central paradox at the core of fighting anti-Semitism in post-Holocaust Germany. On the one hand, the German parliament passes resolutions pledging to combat anti-Semitism, and forms an anti-Semitism commission. Politicians lament that anti-Semitism has again "arrived in mainstream society." Morally charged admonitions such as "Never Again Auschwitz" and "stop it before it has a chance to start" are part and parcel of the German anti-anti-Semitism strategy.

ON THE OTHER HAND, anti-Semitism remains a faceless, nebulous concept that allegedly serves to silence criticism of Israel. Wolfgang Benz, director of the Berlin Center for Anti-Semitism Research, which advises the German government in formulating policies to fight Jew-hatred, asserted that the allegation of anti-Semitism is as dangerous as anti-Semitism itself. Referring to the accusation of anti-Semitism, Benz said: "In Germany it has become the discussion killer, in order to shut people up."

Benz and his colleagues at the publicly funded Center are reticent about calling those who hate Jews anti-Semites, and have resigned themselves to managing anti-Semitism and investigating Jews as if they are laboratory hamsters exposed to different forms of anti-Semitism. Yet by "managing" anti-Semitism, Benz has mismanaged it and, bizarrely, contributed to the staying power of modern Jew-hatred. The Berlin Center seems to believe that if you do not subscribe to the anti-Semitic worldview of Hitler's inner circle, then you are not anti-Semitic. Unfortunately, the Center simply reflects the limitations of mainstream thinking in modern Germany.

While there is strong civil resistance to the fragmented and largely impotent extreme right-wing groups that propagate Nazi-based racial anti-Semitism, there is hardly a bleep of resistance when widespread anti-Semitism is dressed up as ostensibly respectable criticism of Israel.

Many German foundations and media have perfected a tried-and-true method to avoid the charge of anti-Semitism - namely, subcontract the job to anti-Israel Jews like Jeff Halper in Israel, Alfred Grosser in France and Norman Finkelstein or Tony Judt in the US, although they articulate views that might meet the European Union's working definition of anti-Semitism. The Jewish origin of these so-called "Israel critics" is believed to insulate journalists, editors and NGOs from the accusation of stoking anti-Semitism.

What cannot be done directly is thus accomplished indirectly, and there is no shortage of subcontractors available. A recent telling example is the decision to award Halper the "Immanuel Kant world citizen prize" in May for his efforts to reconcile Jews and Palestinians. Halper told the Badische Zeitung, a local newspaper in Freiburg where he accepted the award, that "I am a Jewish Israeli and, nevertheless, I say that Hamas should not recognize Israel. You cannot expect from the Palestinians that they support Zionism." Continuing along these lines, Halper characterized Israel as a terror state.

Managing anti-Semitism in Germany

THERE ARE three short-term remedies that could breathe some life and fire into fighting anti-Semitism in Germany:

- * Academics, journalists, NGOs and politicians should attach a human face to modern anti-Semitism (anti-Israelism);
- * The myth that the accusation of anti-Semitism is as lethal as anti-Semitism itself ought to be dismissed for the nonsense it is;
- * And insulating oneself against the charge of anti-Semitism by employing hard-core anti-Zionist Jews should be recognized as a mixture of cowardice and anti-Semitism.

Wallowing in meaningless resolutions and a fluffy anti-Semitism parliamentary commission represents the path of least resistance; it means managing anti-Semitism instead of confronting it when it comes disguised as criticism of Israel.

Anti-Semitism is a disease in society, as is anti-Zionism. Both phenomena fall under the authority of the federal government's representative for patient interests, and that position has already been filled. He just needs to become more active.

Graphic

Photo: THE GERMAN Parliament building. All the parties agreed that it was necessary to establish a committee 'of scientists and practitioners' to fight anti-Semitism, but they failed to provide a modern definition of the term. (Credit: Bloomberg)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

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When people criticize Zionism, they mean Jews, said Martin Luther King

The Jerusalem Post

February 16, 2009 Monday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 15

Length: 1234 words

Byline: ARNO LUSTIGER

Highlight: The war in the Middle East will end when the Palestinians lay down their weapons. If the Israelis were to do the same, Israel would no longer exist. The writer, born in 1924 and a survivor of Auschwitz and Buchenwald, is a leading historian (The Red Book: Stalin and the Jews) who lives in Frankfurt.

Body

Is criticism of Israel anti-Semitic? The Six Day War sparked a wave of anti-Zionistic reactions, triggering the Left's denial of solidarity with Israel, a stance that holds until today. In August 1967, Martin Luther King wrote in Letters to an Anti-Zionistic Friend:

"You declare, my friend, that you do not hate the Jews, you are merely 'anti-Zionist'... When people criticize Zionism, they mean Jews - this is God's own truth. Anti-Semitism, the hatred of the Jewish people, has been and remains a blot on the soul of mankind."

Jean Amery criticized the elitist anti-Zionism of the Left as being nothing more than run-of-the-mill anti-Semitism. In a speech in 1969, Amery stated, "Anti-Semitism was once the socialism of the stupid guys. Today it is about to become an integrating ingredient of socialism as such, and thereby every socialist turns himself, by his free will, into a stupid guy. Anti-Semitism has become respectable again, but there is no such thing as respectable anti-Semitism!"

In 1975, well-known literary scholar and dedicated leftist Hans Mayer wrote, "Whoever attacks Zionism, but by no means wishes to say anything against the Jews, is fooling himself and others. The State of Israel is a Jewish state. Whoever wants to destroy it, openly or through policies that can effect nothing else but such destruction, is practicing the Jew hatred of yesterday and time immemorial."

Unfortunately, these 30-year-old texts still hold true today.

THE ENTIRE Middle East would have become a Jew-free German protectorate called "Greater Arabia" had Rommel's Afrikakorps not been defeated at el-Alamein 66 years ago on November 4, 1942. The "Einsatzkommando Agypten" (SS Task Force Egypt), a subgroup of the Afrikakorps, was under the command of SS Obersturmbannfuhrer Walter Rauff, infamous for his large trucks converted into mobile gas chambers which murdered hundreds of thousands in an excruciatingly painful manner in Russia and Serbia the previous year. Rauff was given the authority to carry out "executive measures on the civilian population," which was the Nazi euphemism for the mass murder of the Palestinian Jews. The move was agreed upon with Grand Mufti Haj Amin el-Husseini, a friend of Hitler and Himmler, and the Arab population was supposed to actively participate.

When people criticize Zionism, they mean Jews, said Martin Luther King

Rauff's extermination unit followed Rommel's army to Tunisia, but the allied Italian army prevented the mass murder of the country's 80,000 Jews.

To this day, the war criminal Husseini remains the ardently cherished idol of the Arab people. During the war, he was the supreme field chaplain of all the Muslim SS divisions and a relentless enemy of the Jews, not just in Palestine. He is also the ideologue behind the genocidal hatred of the Jews of all Islamists today, including Hamas and Hizbullah.

IN LIGHT of this Arab collaboration with the mass murderers of the Shoah, the comparison of the lives of Palestinians in the occupied areas with the starvation and murder of Jews in the ghettos of Europe living under a death sentence is impudent and the product of possible deliberate ignorance. These claims pain and insult us, the survivors of the Shoah, in particular. The war in the Middle East will end when the Palestinians lay down their weapons. If the Israelis were to do the same thing, Israel would no longer exist. This is something that Norbert Blum, the bishops Gregor Maria Hanke and Walter Mixa, and the others who compare the lives of the Palestinians with the Jewish ghettos should ponder. They should worry about the insidious de-Christianization of the Holy Land from their fellow Christians fleeing the Middle East instead.

They might also examine more closely the accusation of Islamophobia.

Arab propaganda invented this term, designed to create an association with the persecution of the Jews. The millions of Muslims living in Europe are in no way subjected to persecution. Quite the opposite, they enjoy the Western freedoms denied the Christians, Baha'i and Jews living in their countries of origin.

Media outlets contribute to disinformation with their exaggerated criticism of Israel. Unfathomable genocidal hatred of the West and the Jews streams from the antennas of the Arabic TV stations Al-Jazeera, Al-Arabiya and Al-Manar, even into homes in Germany. Its effect can be seen in the attacks on those in Germany who are recognizable as Jews.

Islamic anti-Semitism should not be a worry solely for the Jews, because there are forces at work in Europe that want to bomb our civilization back into the Middle Ages. Islamic scientist Bassam Tibi explained, "Not until the German people have fought against this threat in an appropriate manner will we be able to say that they have really understood the lessons of the German past."

Anti-Semitism in Germany gives us reason to worry even today. There appears to be an increased acceptance of right-wing populist propaganda that argues anti-Semitic beliefs.

The hate, the violence against Jews and their institutions, fill me with pain and anger. In this year alone there have already been more than 800 violent and other criminal acts, but not a single arrest. I myself am a witness to the permissiveness of our judicial and constitutional bodies. On November 1, 2007, Vanity Fair reprinted a 10-page interview with Nazi ideologue Horst Mahler and also published the entire text of over 20 pages on its Web site. Much of what Mahler said there, such as his denial of the existence of Auschwitz, was a punishable crime. I filed a request for his prosecution, but the public prosecutor's office refused.

ALLOW ME to make a personal reflection here. When I co-founded the Jewish community in Frankfurt over 50 years ago, I never would have dreamed that today, many years later, our kindergartens, schools, synagogues and meeting halls would have to be guarded by the police. Thank God, Jesus and Muhammad that mosques and churches do not need this protection. Isn't it time that the German Constitutional Court judges started playing hardball when dealing with enemies of our constitution and democracy? I don't just mean the neo-Nazi National Democratic Party (NPD), but also the Islamofascist centers, such as the one in the city of Neu-Ulm, which disseminates anti-Semitic and anti-constitutional propaganda under the cloak of multiculturalism.

What will happen next? The UN's third World Conference against Racism was held in Durban, South Africa, in September 2001. It turned into a festival of anti-Western extremism and hatred of the Jews. Zionism was condemned there as a contemporary form of Nazism and apartheid. The next conference will be held in Geneva,

When people criticize Zionism, they mean Jews, said Martin Luther King

Switzerland, on April 20-24 of this year. The scandal in Durban will be aggravated there even more, as anti-racism degenerates into the ideology of the totalitarian movements.

The dictators and despots of countries such as Libya, Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Cuba and Venezuela, with their automatic majority, have taken over UN institutions. They have started a new inquisition, called "the denigration of religion," which of course only applies to Islam. They are misusing anti-racism for obscurantism and Islamism that will only result in the further suppression of religious minorities and women. Several countries, such as Canada and Israel, will not be attending the planned betrayal of human values in Geneva. How will the German government respond? We can hardly wait.

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

[Living with Cheney's poisonous legacy](#)

Guardian.com

September 3, 2009 Thursday

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theguardian

Length: 806 words

Body

ABSTRACT

AC Grayling: Nine years on, 'war on terror' policies still haunt the US and its allies. Who will stand up to challenge the ex-VP's recklessness

FULL TEXT

The former US vice-president Dick Cheney is almost as busy now as he was when he was running the United States and its wars. Most of his effort, repeated and of course unchallenged on [Fox News last Sunday](#), is devoted to an open and unapologetic defence of torture, aka "enhanced interrogation techniques", which he says have "prevented the violent death of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of innocent people".

He should have said "other people" or "more people", because thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of innocent people have indeed died as a result of the full-scale Bush-Cheney wars unleashed in response to the 9/11 atrocities, as if fighting crime with crime, mass murder with mass murder, was [the obvious and right thing to do](#).

The result? Nine years on in Afghanistan the latest commander of the Nato forces [is this week asking for 20,000 more US troops](#) - nine years on, and escalation: sound familiar? - while in Iraq the convoys taking US military equipment out of the country as part of the drawdown are under threat from Iran-influenced Shia militias on the road south to Kuwait, and under threat from Sunni insurgents on the road west towards Jordan and Aqaba.

Cheney and Bush thought they were planting the firm footprint of the American Colossus in the desert sands of the Middle East, to hold sway there in control of its turbulent and unreliable spirit; instead they have placed 150,000 soldiers and billions of dollars of equipment into the jeopardy of quicksands, surrounded by hostile millions, in the process empowering its enemies in the region and destabilising its friends. Iran has gained, Pakistan has lost, Hamas and [Hezbollah](#) have gained, America has lost.

And dragged tumbling on the coat-tails of this foolish enterprise, confected by ideologues in the fat-insulated comforts of Washington armchairs, is Little Britain in the flap-eared shape of [Tony Blair](#), missal in one hand and missile in the other.

I met a captain in the US Marines who told me how much he admired the courage and supreme professionalism of the British forces he liaised with in Iraq when he was last there. That was good to hear. But is there still a

Living with Cheney's poisonous legacy

justification for their involvement in Afghanistan? Why are we still there? The standard answer is: to stop al-Qaida or its clones from having a base of operations. But al-Qaida is comfortably and [mainly safely now ensconced in Pakistan](#). I would defend a fight against Taliban-style religious fanatics for the purpose of rescuing that half of the Afghan population denied education, opportunities and minimum rights, namely the **female** half.

But Hamid Karzai's government and its western backers seems to have no interest in this; just before the quasi-election last week [Karzai signed a bill legalising rape of wives by husbands](#), to placate the Neanderthal religious tendency which dominates almost all factions in the country, not just the Taliban.

But the corrosive effects of the Cheney-Bush epoch on the world are not limited by the borders of the Middle East. In fact the US's own borders have become a place of malediction because of them. On 26 August, the American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit demanding access to records concerning the US customs and border protection policy of [searching the laptop computers of any traveller](#) even if there are no grounds for suspicion regarding him or her. CPB agents can look at anyone's bank details, personal files, record of websites accessed, contacts, family photos, indeed all and any personal and other documents stored on a laptop, at will and with impunity, in the absence of any prior reason for doing so.

One attorney working for the ACLU's First Amendment Working Group said, "Travelling with a laptop should not mean that the government gets a free pass to rifle through your personal papers. This sort of broad and invasive search is exactly what the Fourth Amendment's protections against unreasonable searches are designed to prevent."

Attorney Larry Schwartz of the ACLU's National Security Project added, "Innumerable international travellers have had their most personal information searched by government officials and retained by the government indefinitely. The disclosure of these records is necessary to better understand the extent to which US border and customs officials may be violating the Constitution."

Hats off to the ACLU. It stands between the better traditions of the US and the efforts of Cheney-Bush to talibanise it after their own fashion. The question is: how long will the poison of the Cheney-Bush years keep on seeping through the veins of the US and the world, given that what they started seems so difficult to stop?

Load-Date: September 3, 2009

World & nation in 60 seconds The nation The world

Chicago Daily Herald

November 25, 2009 Wednesday

L2 Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 791 words

Body

Fines levied over tarmac plane:

WASHINGTON — The government is imposing fines for the first time against airlines for stranding passengers on an airport tarmac, the Transportation Department said Tuesday. The department said it has levied a precedent-setting \$175,000 in fines against three airlines for their roles in the stranding of passengers overnight in a plane at Rochester, Minn., on Aug. 8.

Serial killer sketch released:

LOS ANGELES — Los Angeles police have released a composite sketch of a man believed to have killed at least 11 people since 1985. The sketch released Tuesday was originally compiled in 1988 after a woman who survived a brutal assault gave a description of a man in his 30s. Police believe the man struck at least 11 times between 1985 and 2007, killing 10 women and a man.

Church to settle with victims:

ANCHORAGE, Alaska — The Catholic Diocese of Fairbanks in Alaska and representatives of almost 300 alleged victims of sex abuse by clergy have agreed on a settlement of almost \$10 million. The agreement was discussed Tuesday in federal bankruptcy court and will need to be finalized.

Hostage-taker freed, arrested:

DOVER, N.H. — A man just released from prison for taking hostages at one of Hillary Rodham Clinton's New Hampshire campaign offices in 2007 has been arrested again. Leeland Eisenberg was arrested Monday night on charges of violating terms of his probation by not plugging in an electronic monitoring bracelet to be worn around his ankle. He was released on probation Nov. 18 after serving two years for strapping on a fake bomb and threatening to blow up Clinton's campaign headquarters in Rochester.

No jail time for justice attorney:

WASHINGTON — A tearful former Justice Department attorney was spared a jail sentence Tuesday for his role in the influence peddling scandal of former lobbyist Jack Abramoff. U.S. District Judge Ellen Huvelle said Robert Coughlin did not deserve prison time, even as she marveled at the number of disgraced government officials who had become enmeshed in the Abramoff case. She sentenced Coughlin to a month in a halfway house, three years of probation and imposed a \$2,000 fine.

Death penalty for killing two:

LONG BEACH, Calif. — A judge has sentenced a California man to death for murdering a girlfriend who refused to help him dispose of another girlfriend's body. Santiago Martinez, 28, of Long Beach was sentenced Tuesday in Superior Court to die by lethal injection.

Pony Express items auctioned:

HONOLULU — A New York gallery will auction off what is believed to be one of three known surviving historic envelopes postmarked on the first day of the Pony Express. The envelope postmarked April 3, 1860, is valued at \$300,000. It is among 63 items owned by 88-year-old Thurston Twigg-Smith that will be sold Dec. 5 by Robert A. Siegel Auction Galleries in New York.

Men charged with terror link:

WASHINGTON — A grand jury in Philadelphia indicted four men Tuesday for an alleged plot to support the Lebanon-based terror group Hezbollah through illegal schemes, including buying the group more than a thousand machine guns.

Two executed over tainted milk:

BEIJING — China on Tuesday executed two people for their roles in a tainted milk powder scandal in which at least six children died and more than 300,000 became sick. Zhang Yujun was executed for endangering public safety and Geng Jinping was executed for producing and selling toxic food, according to the official Xinhua News Agency.

Swine flu batch recalled:

LONDON — The pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline says it has advised medical staff in Canada to not use one batch of swine flu vaccine for fear it may trigger life-threatening allergies.

Jaguar mauls miner:

GEORGETOWN, Guyana — Police say a jaguar prowling the lush jungles of Guyana killed a gold and diamond miner as he fetched water from a creek. A police statement says fellow miners found 43-year-old Kurt Rodrigues after the mauling. He died while en route to a hospital.

'Paralyzed' Mafia boss caught:

ROME — A convicted Mafia boss who got out of jail by faking paralysis and anorexia has been arrested at a restaurant after more than two months on the run, police in Sicily said Tuesday. Officers arrested Francesco Di Stefano on Monday as he dined at a seaside village near the Sicilian city of Catania, which he had reached at the wheel of a sports car.

Iran, Bolivia solidify bonds:

LA PAZ, Bolivia — Iran's president inaugurated an Iranian-funded hospital and two milk-processing plants Tuesday in a goodwill visit in which his leftist host defended Iran's "peaceful" nuclear aspirations. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Bolivian President Evo Morales also signed an agreement in which Iran committed itself to help Bolivia investigate industrializing lithium.

Graphic

Sketch of serial killer

Load-Date: November 25, 2009

End of Document

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Western Morning News (Plymouth, UK)

March 7, 2009 Saturday

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Section: Pg. 13

Length: 757 words

Body

Tony Badcock (March 2) is quite entitled to his opinion regarding the Alma Harding case, but I feel his letter is typical of the politically correct, do-good attitude that prevents any sort of discipline being enforced in the home, classroom or on the street, and is one of the reasons for the problems caused by some young people today.

Doubtless Mr Badcock knows how the children of Kenton behave, knows that the individual Mrs Harding admitted hitting with the minutes of a meeting (an A4 sheet of paper or two) stated to the police that he had not been playing football, but his mates stated otherwise; was abusive and intimidatory to a 63-year-old lady.

And will Mr Badcock deny that there are troublesome youngsters in Kenton and that it is the responsibility of local adults to assist the police by dissuading them from disturbing the peace and possibly damaging property, be it private or used by the public at large?

But it is the magistrate at Newton Abbot who requires as much sympathy as Mrs Harding, for such unpaid individuals, who have dedicated themselves to the thankless task of supporting the judiciary in less severe cases of crime, have been denied discretion as to the severity of punishment.

The Home Office has laid down prescriptive tables relating to fines, quite apart from other degrees of punishment; constantly changing as copious new regulations are broadcast from Parliament.

Little do people know that magistrates, as a result of these repeatedly introduced regulations, must attend "courses" run by civil servants, to ensure that they are fully briefed and do not step out of line.

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Of course we were not little angels and the punishment may have hurt at the time, but we soon learned not to misbehave - or not to get caught!

Well done WMN for publicising the case.

Paul Mercer

Peter Tavy

Iran a threat, too

Iran in particular, an oil-rich country, is developing its nuclear industry with the aim of building nuclear bombs.

It has already stated that it seeks the destruction of Israel and funds the terrorist groups Hamas and Hezbollah which, as its proxies, seek to murder all the Jewish population of Israel (over six million). Iran also sponsored and held a Holocaust denial conference.

Iran is responsible for the deaths of many British soldiers in Iraq by supplying bombs and funding for its proxy terrorist groups there.

It intends to buy missile delivery systems with a longer reach than Israel - one that will reach Britain, a country it detests.

In Israel you can spout your anti-nuclear views - but not in Iran, where you will be arrested. And the clerical-Fascist regime of Iran is not too user-friendly to half its population - women.

When Iran finally makes its nuclear warheads and buys its long-range missiles (mainly due to weak European/Liberal Left appeasement of Iran) it will not only be the Israelis quaking in their boots, but us too.

Robin Calendula

Kingsbridge

Huge thank-you

My mother in law is absolutely made up (she has told everyone). I have, thanks to you, ensured a lifelong supply of the finest pasties (Keta is a fantastic cook).

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Believe me when I say my department (A&E) think it's hilarious - she has even been known to complete the crosswords, as well. Anyway thank you again for your help.

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The judgment must surely be on the quantity, and quality, of the end product - and on whether it is a worthwhile contribution.

David Morgans

South Molton

Easy money

Roger Prescott

Plympton

Load-Date: March 8, 2009

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Roger Prescott

Plympton

Load-Date: August 21, 2009

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SWILLING BEER, SMOKING DOPE AND LEERING AT PORN, THE OTHER SIDE OF HATE PREACHER 'ANDY' CHOUDARY

DAILY MAIL (London)

March 14, 2009 Saturday

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Length: 792 words

Body

NEIL SEARS

THE British live 'like animals in a jungle' with their alcohol, gambling, prostitution and pornography.

That is the stated view of Anjem Choudary, the preacher of hate who this week insulted the families of dead soldiers and branded their marching comrades as cowards.

The extremist wants Britain to be brought under Sharia law, with women forced to wear burkas and put to death for adultery.

Yet before he grew his beard and turned to fundamentalism, Choudary, 41, was very much the life and soul of the party at Southampton University.

Photographs obtained by the Mail suggest 'Andy' ñ as he was then known ñ should be inflicting on himself the 40 lashes he prescribes for drunkenness.

As well as downing cider and lager, the cleric is shown playing drinking games with cards, clearly forbidden under his strict Islamic laws, and holding a cannabis joint between his lips before smoking it.

And the woman on the cover of the Mayfair pornographic magazine he is looking at is certainly not wearing a burka.

On the evidence of friends from his student days, Choudary had sex with numerous white Christian girls.

Under his version of Sharia law, he should be stoned to death for sex outside marriage.

One former friend said: 'I can't keep a straight face when I see "fundamentalist Muslim Anjem Choudary" in the papers attacking the British for drinking or having girlfriends.

'When I knew him, he liked to be called Andy, would often smoke cannabis spliffs all day, and was proud of his ability to down a pint of cider in a couple of seconds.

'And he was ruthless with girls. When he briefly worked as an English teacher for foreign students in London, he'd pull one of them every few days, sleep with her, then move on to another.

'If Sharia law was introduced, he would have been whipped and stoned to death many times over.' Choudary, who was born in South-East London to a market stall-holder of Pakistani descent, has become one of the faces of extremist Islam.

SWILLING BEER, SMOKING DOPE AND LEERING AT PORN, THE OTHER SIDE OF HATE PREACHER 'ANDY' CHOUDARY

But in his days as a law student, he experimented with LSD, hallucinating and laughing hysterically for more than 20 hours.

After he qualified as a solicitor, however, he swiftly moved into ever more radical Islam.

Former acquaintances said this was possibly because he was angered by his failure to land a wellpaid job with a big City law firm.

At a mosque in Woolwich he met notorious firebrand preacher Omar Bakri Mohammed and quickly became his right-hand man.

He also mixed with hook-handed demagogue Abu Hamza, who once called for bomb attacks on British civilian aircraft at a meeting chaired by Choudary. Choudary, meanwhile, is an ever-more prominent spokesman for radical Islam in Britain ñ despite the fact that the two groups he ran with Bakri, Al Muhajiroun and Al-Ghurabaa, have been banned.

So he was quick this week to support the radicals who protested against Royal Anglian Regiment soldiers marching in Luton on their return from Iraq. Outrageously, he called them 'cowards who cannot fight, as their uncanny knack for death by friendly fire illustrates'.

Yesterday, the father-of-three, who lives in East London on benefits from the state he so condemns, returned to the attack. When it was suggested he was the most reviled man in Britain, he said: 'That's a badge I would wear with pride.' He added that 'through jihad' ñ which he insists would be jihad of the word, rather than the sword ñ he sought 'a pure Islamic state with Sharia law in Britain'.

'Every woman, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, would have to wear a traditional burka,' he said. 'Anyone who becomes intoxicated by alcohol would be given 40 lashes in public, and people who commit adultery would be stoned to death.'

When confronted about his dubious past, Choudary, who is separated from his wife, denied it.

Last night, Bakri, speaking from Lebanon where he fled to four years ago, said: 'I don't believe the rumours against my good friend Mr Choudary are really true.'

Supported by Choudary, the Muslim protesters who demonstrated against the Royal Anglian Regiment on Tuesday defiantly returned to the streets of Luton yesterday, handing out leaflets criticising the 'racist British public'.

Britain's former most senior Muslim police officer, Tarique Ghaffur, called for the demonstrators to be brought to justice.

Tariq Mahmood, of the Islamic Cultural Society, based at Luton's Central Mosque, said the protesters were notorious for causing trouble.

'This small group of people is not representative of the Muslim community,' he said.

Fanatic Ibrahim Moussawi was yesterday finally denied a visa to enter Britain.

Home Secretary Jacqui Smith ruled the Hezbollah spokesman should not be allowed to travel here, despite at least two previous visits to the UK on her watch.

Britons who hate Britain

ñ Pages 24 and 25

Load-Date: March 13, 2009

SWILLING BEER, SMOKING DOPE AND LEERING AT PORN, THE OTHER SIDE OF HATE PREACHER
'ANDY' CHOUDARY

End of Document

The hijacking of human rights

Ottawa Citizen

November 14, 2009 Saturday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. B6; Leonard Stern

Length: 851 words

Byline: Leonard Stern, The Ottawa Citizen

Body

During a recent visit to Canada, Irene Khan stopped by the Citizen's offices. Born in what is now Bangladesh, this impressive Harvard-trained lawyer is finishing up her term as Secretary General of Amnesty International.

As you'd expect from the leader of the preeminent human rights organization, Khan's commitment to making the world a better place fills the room. It's because many human rights professionals like her are fundamentally decent that it's sad to see the human rights industry in a state of disrepute.

Bad people have been allowed to hijack the discourse of "human rights" and use it to camouflage agendas that, paradoxically, weaken human rights. It's an old trick, of course. A grotesque dictatorship like North Korea calls itself the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in order to erode the meaning of "democratic." In the case of human rights, the inversion is complete.

People call themselves human rights activists while organizing rallies under Hezbollah flags. I receive press releases about human rights events sponsored by people who support Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. When someone self-identifies as a human rights activist, my instinct now is to assume that he or she is as likely to be an enemy of human rights.

Much of the blame can be assigned to the United Nations -- a sad irony indeed, because the UN was established some six decades ago to promote the "inalienable rights of all members of the human family."

One of the first initiatives of the UN was to create the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Due to the peculiar structure at the UN, however, the commission became a club that anyone could join. The most brutal, backward and dangerous regimes signed on to the human rights commission. At one point Libya chaired it.

This created an alternative reality. The most notorious human rights abusers wielded the power to define human rights. In this alternative reality, the stoning of women is not a rights violation and neither is suicide bombing against civilians. The commission passed bizarre resolutions to provide cover for totalitarians and religious extremists, allowing them to turn around and accuse western democracies of being the real human rights violators.

The commission imploded in 2006 under the weight of its own absurdity, not long after it extended membership to Sudan at the very time the Sudanese government was committing genocide in Darfur. The UN has since set up a new human rights body, but the mission was accomplished. Bad people penetrated the UN human rights bureaucracy and poisoned the cause of international human rights (and, sadly, made the whole UN toxic).

The hijacking of human rights

Infiltrate and destroy, that is the blueprint. Look at what's happened to Human Rights Watch. In recent years this once-respected organization developed an unsettling preoccupation.

Through countless reports and press releases it began to invert the language of human rights to demonize Israel, conspicuously the lone democracy in the Middle East.

A few months ago, HRW discovered that a senior official behind this campaign against the Jewish state had a fetish for Naziism, collecting Hitler paraphernalia and using fake names on the Internet, including "Flak88" -- "88" being code for the neo-Nazi salute, "Heil, Hitler" ("H" is the eighth letter of the alphabet).

Human Rights Watch suspended the staffer, but the damage to its credibility was done. Last month, the founder of Human Rights Watch and its chairman for 20 years publicly disowned the organization.

When human rights organizations are corrupted -- be they UN agencies or student clubs on campus -- the chief victims are the oppressed of the world who have no one credible to advocate for them.

Even Amnesty International needs to be careful. Amnesty's 2009 State of the World's Human Rights report opens with three full-page colour photographs to illustrate human rights abuses. Two of the three photographs depict offences committed in democratic countries: a police officer in California tasing a suspect after a foot chase, and overcrowding in a French holding centre for immigrants.

What is the purpose of prominently illustrating a human rights report with photos indicting democratic governments, when the worst and greatest number of human rights violations occur in the undemocratic world? Amnesty, it seems, does this for balance, in order to establish its bona fides as an impartial global arbiter. Democracies are held in no higher esteem than dictatorships.

But that's precisely the problem. Even Irene Khan, when she met with us, couldn't bring herself to agree that Islamist governments (think Saudi Arabia) are less hospitable to human rights than liberal, secular governments.

If the tasing of a criminal suspect in Long Beach, California, is deemed to represent a more relevant image of abuse than, say, the state-sponsored, public hanging of gay teenagers in Tehran, then the "human rights" movement has become an obstacle rather than an instrument in the pursuit of international justice and freedom.

Leonard Stern is the Citizen's editorial pages editor.

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Load-Date: November 14, 2009

**Israel is being confronted with the serious charge for killing of civilians;
MIDEAST: Israeli Soldiers Condemn War on Gaza**

IPS (Latin America)

March 19, 2009 Thursday

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Length: 1227 words

Byline: Jerrold Kessel and Pierre Klochendler

Body

The disclosures created a stir after first publication Thursday in a major front-page spread in the Tel Aviv daily, Haaretz. The charges are all the more telling in that they are based on first-hand accounts from dozens of combat soldiers who served in the war. Their testimonies were compiled by an academic college the soldiers had attended in a prep course before being drafted.

This represents the first uncensored recording in Israel of what occurred within combat units which took part in what Israeli codenamed Operation Cast Lead. The picture drawn by the soldiers differs radically from the refined version of the war provided by military commanders to the public and Israeli media.

The report includes the testimony of one NCO (non-commissioned officer): 'A company commander with 100 soldiers under his command saw a woman walking down a road some distance away, but close enough that you could've gunned down whoever you identified...She was an elderly woman - whether she raised any suspicion, I don't know. But what the officer did in the end was to put men on the roof and with the snipers bring her down. I felt it was simply murder in cold blood.'

As presented in the report, Danny Zamir, head of the army prep-course, who compiled the transcript of the testimonies, intervened: 'I don't get it - why did he have her shot?' The soldier who witnessed the incident replied: 'That what's great in Gaza, you could say - you see someone walking down a track, not necessarily armed, and you can simply shoot them. In our case, it was an elderly woman. I didn't see her with any weapon. The order was to bring the person down, that woman, 'as soon as you sight her'. There are always warnings, and there's always the saying - 'it could be a suicide bomber'. What I felt was a lot of bloodthirstiness. Because, we weren't in many engagements, our battalion was only involved in a very limited number of incidents with terrorists.'

According to the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, 1,434 Palestinians were killed during the Israeli offensive, 960 of them civilians, among them 288 children. Palestinians have spoken insistently of atrocities by Israeli troops and of random destruction of thousands of homes. Israel has brushed off the accusations and calls for investigations into 'war crimes' committed during the war, dismissing it as 'anti-Israel propaganda.'

In the report, another infantry squad leader gave this account of an incident where an IDF (Israeli Defence Forces) sniper shot and killed a Palestinian woman and her two children: 'There was a house with a family inside....We put them in a room. Later we left the house and another platoon entered it. A few days later there was an order to release the family. They had set up positions upstairs. There was a sniper position on the roof,' the soldier said.

Israel is being confronted with the serious charge for killing of civilians MIDEAST: Israeli Soldiers Condemn War on Gaza

'The platoon commander let the family go and told them to go to the right. One of the women and her two children didn't understand the instructions. They went to the left. No one told the sniper on the roof that they had been permitted to go, that it was okay, and he should hold his fire and he...he did what he was supposed to, like he was following orders.'

According to the squad leader's account, 'The sniper saw a woman and children approaching him, they crossed the line he was told no one should cross. He shot them straightaway. In the end, what happened is that he killed them. I don't think he felt too bad about it, because, as far as he was concerned, he was doing his job according to the orders he'd been given. The atmosphere in general, from what I understood from most of my men who I talked to...I don't know how to describe it...The lives of Palestinians, let's say, are very, very much less important than the lives of our soldiers. As far as they're concerned, that's the way they can justify it.'

'I was in shock at what I heard,' said Zamir in an interview on Israel Radio. 'The incidents involving the killing of civilians are the most disturbing and need to be investigated. What I also found very distressing was how the norms of the army's code of conduct have been eroded and how widespread the aberrations are at junior commander level.'

Zamir said the soldiers reported that officers never intervened when troops deliberately damaged property, harassed civilians or wrote 'Death to Arabs' graffiti. The report also quotes individual soldiers reporting that, when they tried to remonstrate with fellow soldiers who were causing wanton damage, they were met with the response, 'Because they're Arabs'. 'This is not the Israeli Defence Forces that we used to know,' said Zamir.

Amos Harel, the Haaretz military affairs correspondent who broke the story, says the accounts have a ring of authenticity. 'The soldiers are not lying, for the simple reason that they have no reason to do so. There's a continuity of testimony from different parts of the Gaza war zone. Read the transcript and you won't find any judgment or boasting. This is what the soldiers saw in Gaza.'

Israel's army is a temple of social consensus and a national melting pot. It is one of the fundamental tenets of Israel's social fabric that the army does not commit war crimes, and operates according to 'the highest ethical standards,' even in war time. They call it 'purity of arms'.

The accounts expose a de-humanising view of 'the enemy' that seems to be more extreme than ever among Israeli soldiers. But the deterioration has been going on for decades - since Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands has meant that the Israeli army has been principally engaged in fighting guerrillas in civilian populated areas; this has included fighting two Palestinian Intifadah uprisings and two wars in Lebanon, one against the Palestinian Liberation Authority and one against Hizbullah.

The report of what happened in Gaza was submitted three weeks ago to Israel's Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Gaby Ashkenazi. The army says it will investigate the allegations thoroughly.

But Harel says that 'if the army never heard about these incidents, it's a reasonable assumption that it didn't want to know. The soldiers describe the reality in combat units, from the level of company commander down. In debriefings, the participants usually include company commanders up. It seems that, except for isolated incidents, the rule is 'you don't ask, we won't tell.'

Asked on Israel Radio to comment on the report, Defence Minister Ehud Barak stuck to the credo: 'I only heard of the charges this morning. I'm convinced that the army will carry out a thorough investigation. There are always exceptions, but our army is the world's most moral. Our soldiers talk openly when they return home.'

Moshe Negbi, a leading legal expert, told IPS that an independent inquiry was essential - 'not only for justice to be seen, but also as a most effective way of heading off increasing world pressure for a war crimes inquiry against the Israeli military.'

Israel is being confronted with the serious charge for killing of civilians MIDEAST: Israeli Soldiers Condemn
War on Gaza

Whether there will be a major public grappling within Israeli society that will press for such an inquiry is improbable. Ever since the beginning of the occupation more than 40 years back, and especially in the last decade since the Second Intifadah, attitudes and public and political discourse in regard to the Palestinians, and to Arabs in general, have been degraded. © 2009 NoticiasFinancieras - IPS - All rights reserved

Load-Date: March 19, 2009

End of Document

The people's hero has blood on his hands

The Australian

June 19, 2009 Friday

3 - All-round Metro Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 9

Length: 804 words

Byline: Ranj Alaaldin, Analysis

Body

ANYONE believing Iranian presidential challenger Mir Hossein Mousavi would be the one to unclench the Iranian fist for a hand-in-hand partnership of peace with the West is guilty of wishful thinking.

Mousavi has been at the vanguard of the unrest this week but it is important to remember the bloodshed that marked his tenure as prime minister from 1981 to 1989 (the Iranian Revolution's most significant years).

It was Mousavi, after all, who was at the centre of the Iran hostage crisis and remains complicit in an operation he commended as "the beginning of the second stage of our revolution".

And Mousavi was the protege of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (chief architect of the Iranian Revolution and founder of theocratic Iran), a former member of *Hezbollah's* leadership council, sworn enemy of Israel, and a prime minister under whose watch thousands of political prisoners were massacred in 1988.

And finally, Mousavi initiated Iran's nuclear program in the 1980s and would probably be intent on carrying through Iran's nuclear ambitions, the foremost issue central to any improvement in relations with the West.

What makes the discontent in Iran dangerous for the Islamic regime is that the widespread unrest, the biggest since 1979, is led not by some opposition group in exile or as part of a foreign-sponsored "colour revolution", but by domestic forces operating under the leadership of Mousavi, who has the backing of fellow presidential candidate Mehdi Karroubi, a collection of senior Islamic clerics, and powerful former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

The regime's reaction in the form of mass censorship, widespread arrests, and unleashing of security forces upon the population in a ruthless and systematic manner shows a government struck with fear and worry, giving the lie to the calm and collected posture of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in his numerous post-election appearances.

For the first time, the very legitimacy of the Islamic republic is being questioned not just abroad, but also at home.

So why is the international community yet to seize on this opportunity? One reason could be that Western leaders think that any so-called "green revolution" would make no difference in the foreign policy challenges that Iran, in its current shape and form, presents them, and as a result are reluctant to back a losing horse.

There's something to this argument. Even with Mousavi in power, Iran's foreign policy would probably be no different than it has been under Ahmadinejad. A 20-year absence from the public eye, coupled with dazzling words

The people's hero has blood on his hands

of change that skilfully capitalise on the ``Obama effect" gripping the world, does wonders to beguile a young generation of supporters who never knew or have forgotten the radicalism and bloodshed that marked Mousavi's tenure as prime minister.

All of this discussion assumes that it is even worth debating whether Mousavi would bring change to Iranian foreign policy when he would have no authority to do so in the first place. Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has the final say on matters of foreign policy, not the president.

Given Khamenei's clear approval of what he called a ``glittering" Ahmadinejad victory, and because it is the theocracy that verifies the count in the absence of any outside monitors -- meaning that any election rigging was done with the Supreme Leader's backing -- it is he who will need convincing if Iran is to divert from a path of nuclear capability, hostility toward the US, and support for terrorism.

Still, these assumptions -- widely held in the international community -- are now open to question. Although a Mousavi presidency itself would probably not deliver a sensational change in Iranian foreign policy, the movement he has spawned might.

The tenacious middle-class, educated, and youthful Mousavi supporters who have cried foul and rallied and bled in the streets could bring a new order to Tehran by forcing the country's Supreme Leader to take into account public opinion that demands engagement with the West.

More likely, however, the unelected mullahs who rule Iran behind the scenes will be concerned about an army of reformists who have undermined its authority in recent weeks by, for example, entering the squares and openly mixing and dancing in groups of males and females in contravention of clerical law. The leadership might therefore double down on its hardline foreign and domestic policies, starting with a ruthless endeavour to keep Ahmadinejad in power through any means necessary, so long as the end remains a theocratic Iran.

Whoever wins this violent showdown, there is one clear loser -- the Islamic republic, whose internal legitimacy has forever been shattered. Should Mousavi go down fighting, that's one victory that can never be taken away from his brave supporters.

Foreign Policy

Load-Date: June 18, 2009

Rising up

Ottawa Citizen

June 17, 2009 Wednesday

Final Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A16; David Warren

Length: 817 words

Byline: David Warren, The Ottawa Citizen

Body

We could begin by blaming George W. Bush for what is now happening in Iran. Not for everything, of course -- not even the crazy Left blames Bush for everything. But the whole intention of the U.S. invasion of Iraq was to shake up the Middle East, and introduce some "regime change" into its darkest, most fetid corners.

The broad picture of Saddam Hussein going down -- available even to the audiences of tightly-regulated State media -- remains, indelible. Precedent is the cutting edge in politics and life; the breaching of taboos. Nothing is possible until it is shown to be possible.

Barack Obama deserves some credit, too. If nothing else, his Cairo speech persuaded those who want an end to tyranny in Iran, as elsewhere in the region, that they are now on their own. The U.S. isn't going to help them. Instead, as Obama said, the U.S. is going to negotiate in "good faith" -- with just such despicable regimes as that of the ayatollahs in Iran.

Quite possibly, in the grander scheme of things, Bush, followed by Obama, will prove a good thing. But if it ends badly, it will end very badly, in Islamist triumph, and perhaps nuclear war.

Of course, it is misleading to look at Iran in western terms. In addition to posing a huge nuclear threat, Iran is its own, very complex affair. The meaning of the current Iranian revolution is contained within Iran. Moreover, if it succeeds, that revolution has also the precedent of the overthrow of the Shah in 1979. Nor is this the first mass uprising against the ayatollahs. It is probably the largest, but several previous have gone almost unreported in western media.

The recent election was not the cause, but the trigger, of what is suddenly happening on the streets. That the result was scripted is plain enough: for it was announced well before the votes could be counted. The rivalry between the factions of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Mir-Hossein Mousavi, which began as a Punch-and-Judy between alternative puppets of the regime, has suddenly become bloody.

But Mousavi's proposed modest reforms could hardly have excited the students, or the masses following in their train. At most they could imagine him as a potential Gorbachev; more likely as another Mohammad Khatami: a valve through which the regime might hope to release growing domestic pressure.

But, *cherchez la femme*! What made Mousavi the fuse for an explosive force was not himself, but his wife, Zahra Rahnavard. In the course of the election campaign, she ignored Islamist precedent, and took to the hustings on her

Rising up

husband's behalf. This tiny grandmother, wearing regulation chador, but with very loud scarves, has wandered around the country lighting fires.

She has used her social authority as a grandmother -- pillar of social order -- to turn conventions upside down. Going well beyond her husband's promises, she has demanded an end to discrimination against women, an end to the morality police, an end to supervision of the universities. It is she who has communicated to the students (in every Asian country the vanguard of the elite): "This is the moment to stand!"

Do I think the revolution will succeed? No, but I am not sure. The regime has already closed out foreign media, and the shootings have begun. I expect the revolution to end in a Tiananmen bloodbath (remember that this was not confined to Beijing; there were little Tienanmens happening all across China, and many had to be shot down).

But there are several reasons to hope. The first is the sheer scale of the uprising, and the confidence this inspires in the faint of heart. The second is practical: the regime has been shutting down Internet websites, but Twitter technology is keeping the revolutionists posted.

The third, and most important, is progressive loss of confidence within the regime itself. To understand this, we must realize that the Iranian leadership is quite unlike that of Communist politburos, or military dictatorships. There is a true range of opinion among the clerics, and it is anchored in genuine religious beliefs -- however twisted these may seem to us, or indeed, to Iranians. Religious believers are capable of manifesting real uncertainty about what God requires.

Moreover, the loyalty of the old Revolutionary Guard is far from assured. The ayatollahs have reportedly brought in non-Persian-speaking goons from Hezbollah in Lebanon, and elsewhere, to do their dirty work in the past. Reports I've seen suggest they have become over-dependent on these "guest workers." I've seen several (by their nature, unconfirmable) reports of the regime's own police going over to the other side, or having to be confined to barracks.

The Beijing regime, in 1989, had its moment of uncertainty about the loyalty of its own Red Army. In their own interest, they acted just in time. With luck, the ayatollahs have left it a little too late.

David Warren's column appears Sunday, Wednesday and Saturday.

Load-Date: June 17, 2009

Questions worth fighting for in fields of Afghanistan

Canberra Times (Australia)

May 12, 2009 Tuesday

Final Edition

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Section: A; Pg. 10

Length: 750 words

Byline: The Canberra Times

Body

David H. Lewis (Letters, May 9), responding to the recent Afghan civilian casualties from a misdirected US airstrike, says the war in Afghanistan is illegal and "utterly illogical".

On the question of the war's legality Lewis is ill-informed. The United Nations Security Council sanctioned the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001.

As to it being illogical, if he finds it illogical to try to defeat a fanatical movement that would again provide safe haven for al-Qaeda, instability to its neighbours and terror and misery to its people, then he has a strangely inverted notion of logic and ethics compared with mine.

I hope he reads the article in the same edition by Virginia Haussegger ("Facing Taliban terror", Panorama, May 9, p16), who among feminists writing in this paper is one of the few who seems willing to keep faith with the women of Afghanistan. As she makes plain, defeat of these fanatical misogynists is the only moral strategy.

Lewis might be surprised to learn that he is not the only person who is appalled and saddened by the loss of life from misguided US airstrikes but instead of using this as a convenient stick to beat Americans can I suggest he asks why airstrikes are necessary at all?

The primary reason is the limp contribution by the supposed leaders of the war, the European Union, which if should ensure there are enough troops on the ground to make air warfare unnecessary. The trouble is, it seems, the governments of Europe are all too willing to cower to people writing in high dudgeon to newspapers who believe that there is no cause in life worth fighting for.

Greg Ellis, Griffith What an interesting range of positions on Afghanistan in Forum on Saturday.

On the one hand we have another of Virginia Haussegger's terrifyingly frank opinion pieces on how the Taliban treat women (and dissenters) in their society, treatment that defies logic and belief, yet as any reader of The Kite Runner and similar novels would know, presumably accurate. On the other hand we have two more letter writers advocating, not unreasonably, either peace talks or complete withdrawal.

I can't see how any civilised society could possibly leave the women of Afghanistan (or Pakistan) to a fate as described by Haussegger through some sort of peace deal with the Taliban or by abandoning them, so perhaps she is right, the only solution is complete annihilation. But that doesn't sound very civilised either.

Questions worth fighting for in fields of Afghanistan

Malcolm Robertson, Chapman The US admits culpability in killing civilians in Afghanistan and we are told that an Afghan whose bicycle has been stolen will go to the Taliban and not (he laughs) to Hamid Karzai's policemen.

Likewise, in Palestine, Hamas, committed to the destruction of Israel, wins popular support. In Lebanon, too, **Hezbollah** help people, so they too enjoy greater popular support than the rest of the elected government.

We'll never bomb out the Taliban.

Clearly they are (up to a point) the people's choice. So, one might well ask, what are we doing there? The answer is that we, along with the other invaders, must talk to them, not bomb them.

A better moral position for Australia than threatening lives and wasting taxpayers' money would be to urge, and broker, US-Taliban talks.

Neither we nor the US have yet learned the lesson of Vietnam.

There has to be a better way out than killing people.

Barrie Smillie, Duffy Jack Waterford wonders if there is much point in Australia's involvement in America's wars, as its contribution is unlikely to affect the outcome ("In combat, and often in vain", Forum, May 9, p8).

I suspect that both sides know this to be so, but the arrangement serves their respective purposes well: America looks upon Australia's support as justification for its adventure, while Australia takes the view that its token gesture would deter the US from referring to us as a fair-weather friend.

What strikes me as unacceptable, however, is how willing our government is to faithfully toe the US line, adopt one meaningless slogan after another and seems reticent to advance a fresh idea, especially when the situation desperately calls for one.

Granted, it is the US that has been making the greatest contribution to the wars, and its leadership is, therefore, likely to have the final say. However, recent events have more than adequately demonstrated that might does not make America right. If the US is willing to take risks and sacrifice its soldiers to a poorly planned war, it is unforgivable if this country were to do the same.

Sam Nona, Burradoo

Load-Date: May 11, 2009

World & nation in 60 seconds The world The nation

Chicago Daily Herald

June 10, 2009 Wednesday

L2 Edition

Copyright 2009 Paddock Publications, Inc.

Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 800 words

Body

New forces a 'game changer':

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan — New U.S. forces in Afghanistan will target insurgents passing into Pakistan and be a "game changer" in a region long dominated by the Taliban, Col. George Amland said Tuesday at Camp Leatherneck, a rapidly expanding base now home to around 7,000 U.S. Marines.

Hamas: Building freeze key:

CAIRO — Khaled Mashaal, leader of militant Hamas, said Tuesday that President Barack Obama's pressure on Israel to freeze construction in West Bank settlements was an essential step toward restarting peace efforts. The militant group has tried to sound more pragmatic since Israel's punishing offensive early this year.

Hariri Lebanon's next PM?

BEIRUT — Saad Hariri, son of a slain former prime minister, is emerging as the favorite to lead Lebanon's government after his pro-Western coalition fended off a challenge from Hezbollah in weekend elections. Hariri, 39, is the moderate leader of the largest parliamentary bloc in the coalition.

Pandemic declaration soon?

GENEVA — The World Health Organization said Tuesday a spike in swine flu cases in Australia may push it to finally announce the first flu pandemic in 41 years. It also expressed concern about an unusual rise in severe illness from the disease in Canada.

WHO wants to avoid "adverse effects" if it announces a global outbreak.

N. Korean prisons brutal:

SEOUL, South Korea — Prisoners spend long days toiling in rice paddies and factories. Survivors say beatings are frequent, hunger is constant and clothing scarce in the freezing winter. But experts said two U.S. journalists recently sentenced to 12 years in a North Korean labor prison probably won't see that brutality.

10 big banks repay bailout:

WASHINGTON — Ten of the nation's largest banks were given the green light Tuesday to repay \$68 billion in government bailout money, freeing them of restrictions on executive pay they say makes it hard to keep top-performing executives. The banks received funds last October, at the height of the financial crisis.

Kansas abortion clinic closes:

WICHITA, Kan. — The Wichita clinic of slain abortion provider George Tiller will be "permanently closed," his family said Tuesday. Operations at Women's Health Care Services Inc. were suspended with Tiller's death May 31. In a statement released by his attorneys, Tiller's family said it will close immediately.

Suspect says he was justified:

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — A Muslim convert charged with fatally shooting an American soldier at a recruiting center said Tuesday he doesn't consider the killing a murder because U.S. military action in the Mideast made the killing justified. "I do feel I'm not guilty," Abdulhakim Muhammad said in a call from jail.

Online poker winnings frozen:

WASHINGTON — An advocacy group for online poker says the federal government froze the accounts of payment processors that handle winnings of thousands of online poker players. The Poker Players Alliance says those winnings are worth \$30 million. The Justice Department has long maintained Internet gambling is illegal.

Sotomayor hearing date set:

WASHINGTON — Senate Republicans protested Democrats' decision to schedule confirmation hearings for Supreme Court nominee Sonia Sotomayor for July 13, saying they need more time to review her record. Alabama Sen. Jeff Sessions, top Republican on the Judiciary Committee, says the date is too early and unrealistic.

Court OKs Chrysler sale to Fiat:

NEW YORK — The Supreme Court on Tuesday cleared the way for Chrysler's partnership with Italy's Fiat, rejecting an appeal by a trio of Indiana pension and construction funds, consumer groups and others to block the automaker's sale. Also, a federal court backed Chrysler's termination of franchise agreements with hundreds of dealers.

Obama backs pay-as-you-go:

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama on Tuesday challenged Congress to pay for increases in federal benefit programs as it goes rather than sink the nation deeper into a debt, calling it a matter of public responsibility. Republicans lashed back that Obama is no voice of fiscal restraint as the deficit continues to soar.

Iraqi spy gets nearly 4 years:

DETROIT — A man described by Saddam Hussein's regime as "our good cooperating source" was sentenced Tuesday to nearly four years in prison for supplying information to Iraq before the U.S.-led invasion in 2003. The federal judge rejected Najib Shemami's claim he acted under duress from the Iraqi government.

Two killed in factory blast:

GARNER, N.C. — A blast at a Slim Jim meat products plant in North Carolina Tuesday killed two workers whose bodies were found in the rubble of the building that is missing part of its roof. The explosion critically burned four people and one worker was still unaccounted for Tuesday evening. More than 40 others were taken to hospitals.

Load-Date: June 10, 2009

Magistrates have a thankless task; I read the letter (March 2) from Tony Badcock, of Ottery St Mary, which shamed Mrs Alma Harding for acting like a vigilante.

Western Morning News (Plymouth, UK)

March 7, 2009 Saturday

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Section: Pg. 13

Length: 757 words

Body

Tony Badcock (March 2) is quite entitled to his opinion regarding the Alma Harding case, but I feel his letter is typical of the politically correct, do-good attitude that prevents any sort of discipline being enforced in the home, classroom or on the street, and is one of the reasons for the problems caused by some young people today.

Doubtless Mr Badcock knows how the children of Kenton behave, knows that the individual Mrs Harding admitted hitting with the minutes of a meeting (an A4 sheet of paper or two) stated to the police that he had not been playing football, but his mates stated otherwise; was abusive and intimidatory to a 63-year-old lady.

And will Mr Badcock deny that there are troublesome youngsters in Kenton and that it is the responsibility of local adults to assist the police by dissuading them from disturbing the peace and possibly damaging property, be it private or used by the public at large?

But it is the magistrate at Newton Abbot who requires as much sympathy as Mrs Harding, for such unpaid individuals, who have dedicated themselves to the thankless task of supporting the judiciary in less severe cases of crime, have been denied discretion as to the severity of punishment.

The Home Office has laid down prescriptive tables relating to fines, quite apart from other degrees of punishment; constantly changing as copious new regulations are broadcast from Parliament.

Little do people know that magistrates, as a result of these repeatedly introduced regulations, must attend "courses" run by civil servants, to ensure that they are fully briefed and do not step out of line.

Mrs Harding admitted, as the majority of people aged 63 (and younger!) would have done, that she was acting in the best interest of society.

I am so pleased that Mr Badcock, from a different town in Devon, has the privilege to voice his opinion in the senior newspaper of the county, and I wonder how many readers (or magistrates!) feel he is correct in his pronouncement?

Lord Clifford of Chudleigh

Chudleigh

Enemy of discipline

Magistrates have a thankless task I read the letter (March 2) from Tony Badcock, of Ottery St Mary, which shamed Mrs Alma Harding for acting like a vigilante.

If any shame should be felt it should be by the boy, who went bleating to the police after receiving a tap on the head from a rolled-up church magazine.

I may be looking through rose-tinted glasses, but those of us of the older generation were brought up to respect parents, teachers and police; if we didn't we got a clout or the cane.

Of course we were not little angels and the punishment may have hurt at the time, but we soon learned not to misbehave - or not to get caught!

Well done WMN for publicising the case.

Paul Mercer

Peter Tavy

Iran a threat, too

Iran in particular, an oil-rich country, is developing its nuclear industry with the aim of building nuclear bombs.

It has already stated that it seeks the destruction of Israel and funds the terrorist groups Hamas and Hezbollah which, as its proxies, seek to murder all the Jewish population of Israel (over six million). Iran also sponsored and held a Holocaust denial conference.

Iran is responsible for the deaths of many British soldiers in Iraq by supplying bombs and funding for its proxy terrorist groups there.

It intends to buy missile delivery systems with a longer reach than Israel - one that will reach Britain, a country it detests.

In Israel you can spout your anti-nuclear views - but not in Iran, where you will be arrested. And the clerical-Fascist regime of Iran is not too user-friendly to half its population - women.

When Iran finally makes its nuclear warheads and buys its long-range missiles (mainly due to weak European/Liberal Left appeasement of Iran) it will not only be the Israelis quaking in their boots, but us too.

Robin Calendula

Kingsbridge

Huge thank-you

My mother in law is absolutely made up (she has told everyone). I have, thanks to you, ensured a lifelong supply of the finest pasties (Keta is a fantastic cook).

My mother in law cuts out articles of interest before sending the papers to me!

Believe me when I say my department (A&E) think it's hilarious - she has even been known to complete the crosswords, as well. Anyway thank you again for your help.

Peter Richardson

Fareham

Glad to have been of assistance - Editor.

Lack of capacity

Magistrates have a thankless task I read the letter (March 2) from Tony Badcock, of Ottery St Mary, which shamed Mrs Alma Harding for acting like a vigilante.

It is said we all have the "capacity" to write a novel, but very few of us do so. To write and produce a novel takes will power. For turbines it takes wind power. Both can be sadly lacking.

The judgment must surely be on the quantity, and quality, of the end product - and on whether it is a worthwhile contribution.

David Morgans

South Molton

Easy money

Roger Prescott

Plympton

Load-Date: June 11, 2009

End of Document

Iran awakens yet again; GLOBALIST

The International Herald Tribune

June 11, 2009 Thursday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 7

Length: 914 words

Byline: Roger Cohen - International Herald Tribune

Dateline: TEHRAN

Body

They're calling it the "green tsunami," a transformative wave unfurling down the broad avenues of the Iranian capital. Call it what you will, but the city is agog at the campaign of Mir Hussein Moussavi, the reformist candidate seeking to unseat President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the 10th post-revolution election.

Iran, its internal fissures exposed as never before, is teetering again on the brink of change. For months now, I've been urging another look at Iran, beyond dangerous demonization of it as a totalitarian state. Seldom has the country looked less like one than in these giddy June days.

I wandered in a sea of green ribbons, hats, banners and bandannas to a rally at which Ahmadinejad was mocked as "a midget" and Moussavi's wife, Zahra Rahnava, sporting a floral hijab that taunted grey-black officialdom, warned the president that: "If there is vote rigging, Iran will rise up."

A Moussavi kite hovered; a shout went up that "It's even written in the sky." I don't know about that, but something is stirring again in the Islamic Republic, a nation attached to both words in its self-description.

That stirring has deep roots. The last century taught that Iran's democratic impulse is denied only at peril. Ever since the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, the quest for representative government has flared. Moussavi is dour but seen as a man of integrity, the anti-Ahmadinejad who can usher back the 1979 revolution's promise rather than incarnate its repressive turn.

Rahnava, a professor of political science, is not dour. She has emerged as a core figure in Friday's vote through her vigorous call for women's rights and the way she goaded Ahmadinejad into a rash attack on her academic credentials during his no-holds-barred televised debate last week with Moussavi.

"Make up your files," Rahnava declared at the rally, in a derisive allusion to Ahmadinejad's Stasi-like brandishing of a document about her before some 40 million TV viewers. "But the file-makers will be defeated!"

Iran's democracy is incomplete (a Guardian Council representing the Islamic hierarchy vets candidates) but vigorous to the point of unpredictability. Nobody knows who will triumph in an election that chooses the second most powerful figure in Iran under the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, but some things are already clear.

Iran awakens yet again GLOBALIST

The first is that the frank ferocity of politics here in recent weeks would be unthinkable among U.S. allies from Cairo to Riyadh, a fact no less true for being discomfiting. The problem with Iran caricatures, like Benjamin Netanyahu's absurd recent description of the regime as a "messianic, apocalyptic cult," is that reality

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not least this campaign's

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defies them.

The second is that while Ahmadinejad still marshals potentially victorious forces, including the Revolutionary Guards and the Basij militia, he now faces a daunting array of opposition ranging across the political spectrum.

If his attack on Rahnavard was rash, his broadside in the same debate against Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the regime's éminence grise, looks like recklessness. It has ushered this election into the inner sanctum of authority. That's a transgression Ahmadinejad may not survive.

Rafsanjani, a former president, was so incensed by Ahmadinejad's accusations of Mafia-like corruption that he responded with a blistering letter to Khamenei, who's supposed to sit above the fray. The president's suggestion that corruption was endemic to the revolution also angered the Qom clerical establishment, which responded with its own dissenting letter: How dare Ahmadinejad defile the very system?

"Ahmadinejad has exposed rifts and spread distrust vis-à-vis the whole regime," said Kavous Seyed-Emami, a university professor. "That's groundbreaking."

The Rafsanjani letter, alluding to "volcanoes" of anger among Iranians, including at the alleged disappearance of \$1 billion from state coffers, will belong in any history of Iran's revolution. It says tens of millions watched as Ahmadinejad "lied and violated laws against religion, morality and fairness, and as he targeted the achievements of our Islamic system." It insists that Khamenei now ensure free and fair elections.

Khamenei has favored Ahmadinejad, but much less so of late. He cannot be impervious to the rage of Rafsanjani, who is chairman of the powerful Expediency Council, which mediates disputes, and the Assembly of Experts, which oversees the supreme leader's office. Ahmadinejad now confronts surging forces from without (the street) and within (the clerical hierarchy).

Why the sudden turbulence? Here we come to the third critical characteristic of this campaign. Radicalism in the Bush White House bred radicalism in Iran, making life easy for Ahmadinejad. President Obama's outreach, by contrast, has unsettled the regime.

With Lebanon denying an electoral victory to Hezbollah, the oil-driven Iranian economy in a slump, and America seeking reconciliation with Muslims, the world now looks a little different.

Moussavi's attacks on the "exhibitionism, extremism and superficiality" of Ahmadinejad's foreign policy resonate.

Rafsanjani believes in a China option for Iran: a historic rapprochement with the United States that will at the same time preserve a modified regime. I also think that's possible

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and desirable

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and that Khamenei's margin for resisting it has just narrowed. So, too, has the margin for the foolishness of anti-Iran hawks.

Iran awakens yet again GLOBALIST

- Readers are invited to comment at
global.nytimes.com/opinion

Load-Date: June 25, 2009

End of Document

Showcase: West Into East; Lens

The New York Times

(Lens)

December 15, 2009 Tuesday 05:00 EST

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Section: MULTIMEDIA

Length: 785 words

Byline: DANIEL J. WAKIN

Highlight: Frederic Lezmi is seeking to find the subtle bridge between Central Europe and the Middle East, Daniel J. Wakin reports; moments where the two blend.

Body

As the son of an expatriate Lebanese father and a German mother, [Frederic Lezmi](#) gave little thought to his Arab origins as a boy. His father worked for the United Nations and the young Frederic spent his early years living in African cities and Geneva before settling, at around 12, in a small Black Forest town near Freiburg.

Then came 9/11 and the extra scrutiny applied by authorities around the world to people of Middle Eastern and South Asian descent. Mr. Lezmi, now 31, experienced his share, which aroused an interest in examining his Lebanese half. "I said, 'If you want to put me in the drawer, I will look at the drawer,'" he recounted.

Mr. Lezmi talked his father into returning to Lebanon, which convinced him to spend a period of study in Beirut, at the Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts. He finished his course a week before war broke out between Israel and the Lebanese militia Hezbollah. Mr. Lezmi stayed for a few weeks, but found that war photography was not for him.

He said he was seeking a third way of depicting the Middle East; neither in romanticized, Orientalist, picturesque photographs nor in "crisis photography" — images of destruction, fighting and privation.

"I was looking for something like hope, or normality, something like a shimmer on the horizon, acknowledging this is a region where there's a lot of problems, but not falling into clichés," Mr. Lezmi said.

That spirit eventually led to "[From Vienna to Beirut](#)," a photographic project that seeks to find an in-between world where the West and the East intermingle. "It is not a clash of cultures," he said. "Somehow it's a blend where something new comes out."

In the introduction to the book, Mr. Lezmi writes: "These pictures represent neither precise documents nor do they create artistic worlds. They rather mean to be constructions of multicolored, fragmented impressions, like looking through a kaleidoscope."

Mr. Lezmi began his trip in August 2008 in the city where he lives, Cologne, leaving town in an Opel Astra station wagon and driving to Vienna, the capital of the old Austro-Hungarian empire and the heart of Central Europe. He proceeded through the Balkans, where the Ottomans held sway for centuries and implanted an Islamic influence, passed through Turkey and Syria and arrived in Lebanon. Mr. Lezmi spent many nights sleeping in his car or camping. Friends joined him for several stretches.

Showcase: West Into East Lens

He tried to avoid taking pictures that made an obvious point, and he is wary about hunting for symbolism. “I was not looking for Ottoman traces,” he said. “I was looking for situations with small twists.” The meaning of the pictures, he said, must come from viewing them cumulatively.

Drawing on a cache of 10,000 frames, he produced a book of 29 images that he makes by hand and sells individually. The book is constructed accordion style, so the pictures can be laid out in a long line.

The journey starts in with a look into a parking garage entrance that spirals downward, as though the viewer were entering a tunnel (Slide 1). The last frame, shown at right, puts the viewer into the sky. It shows some Beirut teenagers in a gondola, over a city under reconstruction.

In between, signs of cultural mingling are subtle. In a picture from Sarajevo (Slide 4), a palm tree is reflected on a car. The word “Miami” can be made out. Women in Soviet-era frumpy dress stand in front of an Italian-style fashion store in Bucharest (Slide 6). The scene is glimpsed through a torn — Iron? — curtain. Western-style graffiti covers an ugly Stalinist bridge in Pristina (Slide 5).

The first Islamic element emerges in a picture from Istanbul (Slide 11). A minaret rises on the edge of a frame, above a wall on which a rakish man sits. The wall separates him from a woman who looks like a Western tourist and has what Mr. Lezmi called a “colonialist” air.

Another minaret appears in a whimsical picture from Mahmatlar, Turkey (Slide 15), but it emerges only with scrutiny. The focus is a rusty and rickety metal rocket, echoed by the minaret, thrusting upward from a dirt patch. A bed of apples lies on the ground nearby. Maybe the rocket runs on apple fuel, Mr. Lezmi mused.

The tensions between secularism and a religious Islamic society in Turkey serve as another subtext. A street shot from Istanbul (Slide 12) shows the head of a sensuous model gazing at the viewer from an ad, with two companion views next door behind window bars, as a woman walks by across the street in a head scarf. The wearing of head scarves is a major source of debate in Turkey. Another Istanbul shot shows the lower half of three women set apart from men strolling across the street. The women are faceless. A vertical part of a window frame divides them.

Load-Date: October 21, 2017

Obama's Cairo speech having an effect

Charleston Gazette (West Virginia)

June 20, 2009, Saturday

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Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. P4A

Length: 840 words

Byline: Trudy Rubin

Body

Two weeks' vacation in Italy is a great way for a foreign-affairs columnist to escape from regular duty. As I left Rome on Thursday, Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi was entertaining Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi, who arrived with a group of female bodyguards and pitched his bedouin tent in a public park.

In the meantime, Berlusconi's wife was accusing him of dallying with an 18-year-old, and a court was investigating whether he used government planes to shuttle guests to parties at his Sardinian villa. But voters still gave his coalition a plurality last week in elections for the European parliament.

After such opera bouffe, it's a bit hard to get back to serious international matters, like President Obama's seminal speech to the Muslim world on June 4 in Cairo.

But let me try.

Some critics have derided Obama's speech as naive for pitching a new beginning between the United States and the world's Muslims. Some say he raised expectations about the Arab-Israeli peace process that he can't deliver on, or that he gave short shrift to promoting democracy or women's rights in Muslim countries.

They are missing the point (although one can find fault with specific passages). This speech won't suddenly transform our relations with Islamic countries. Yet, it laid the ground for a shift in Muslim opinion about America, especially among young people, that could undercut the appeal of militancy.

The impact of that shift can already be seen in Pakistan, and in last week's elections in Lebanon and Iran.

How so? The Bush administration's blanket equation of terrorism with Islam helped stoke popular support for radical Islamists. So did the Bush team's botched handling of the Iraq war and postwar Afghanistan, and its decision to leave the Israeli-Palestinian peace process on ice.

Bush was perceived in the region as hostile to Muslims and Arabs. He openly promoted democracy and tried to impose it in Iraq, but the bloody chaos in Baghdad gave democracy a bad odor. Arab democrats became wary of any association with U.S. financing or support.

In the Arab world and Pakistan, Osama bin Laden could gain traction with videotapes that denounced America's "hatred" of Muslims. Radical Islamic Web sites played on the same message. In Iran, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad could rally Persian nationalists by claiming that imperialist America wanted to attack their country.

Obama's Cairo speech having an effect

Obama's speech undercut those images so valuable to radicals. In fact, a new bin Laden audiotape, broadcast on June 4 condemning Obama, fell flat.

Contrary to critics, Obama did not pull any punches about his determination to fight violent extremists, including the Taliban and al-Qaida. He firmly debunked the myth - still circulating in the Muslim world - that 9/11 didn't happen or had some justification. He explained why we continue to fight in Afghanistan (and stressed that we don't want to keep troops there).

However, he couched that battle in far different language than the Bush administration. He stressed that we are "not at war with Islam." He did not use the words terrorist or Islamofacism, but he emphasized that the militants threaten, and have killed, Muslims.

There was no applause when he talked of the need to isolate extremists in Muslim communities. But there was applause at one crucial passage: when he said the militants' actions were not reconcilable with Islam. "The Holy Koran teaches that whoever kills an innocent is as if he has killed all mankind," Obama said. And the audience clapped.

The reason such words are so important can already be seen in Pakistan. Only weeks ago, Pakistani public opinion was hostile to an open fight against internal militants, terming this "America's war."

But in the past month, the Pakistani Taliban's tactics - blowing up mosques and markets - have turned the public there against the militants. Obama's speech captured that sentiment and stressed the common interests of Pakistanis and Americans in countering such barbarity. It created a possibility (no guarantees) the Pakistani public will now support open U.S. cooperation with Pakistan's army against the militants. Obama's speech placed Americans and Pakistanis on the same side.

Similarly, Lebanese pundits credit Obama's speech with helping a U.S.-backed coalition prevent an expected victory by a Hezbollah-led coalition in Lebanese elections on June 7. "Lebanon is a telling case," Osama Safa, director of a Lebanese think tank, told the New York Times. "It is no longer relevant for the extremists to use the anti-American card."

In Iran, Ahmadinejad has claimed victory in an election many Iranians believe was blatantly stolen. Obama's speech made it easier for the challenger, Mir Hussein Mousavi, to denounce Ahmadinejad's foreign policy. It will make it harder for the Iranian leader to use the American bogeyman as an excuse for future repression.

One speech cannot guarantee change. But it can open the door to new possibilities. In that sense, Obama's Cairo effort definitely hit the mark.

Rubin is a columnist for the Philadelphia Inquirer.

Load-Date: June 22, 2009

Iran, the Jews and Germany; Globalist

The International Herald Tribune

March 2, 2009 Monday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 8

Length: 879 words

Byline: Roger Cohen - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: NEW YORK

Body

So the Jerusalem Post thinks I'm "hardly the first American to be misled by the existence of synagogues in totalitarian countries."

The Atlantic Monthly's Jeffrey Goldberg finds me "particularly credulous," taken in by the Iranian hospitality and friendliness that "are the hallmarks of most Muslim societies." (Thanks for that info, Jeffrey.)

A conservative Web site called "American Thinker," which tries to prove its name is an oxymoron, believes I would have been fooled by the Nazis' sham at the Theresienstadt camp.

The indignation stems from my recent column on Iranian Jews which said that the 25,000-strong community worships in relative tranquility; that Persian Jews have fared better than Arab Jews; that hostility toward Jews in Iran has on occasion led to trumped-up charges against them; and that those enamored of the "mad mullah" caricature of Iran regard any compromise with it as a re-run of Munich 1938.

This last point found confirmation in outraged correspondence from several American Jews unable to resist some analogy between Iran and Nazi Germany. I was based in Berlin for three years; Germany's confrontation with the Holocaust inhabited me. Let's be clear: Iran's Islamic Republic is no Third Reich redux. Nor is it a totalitarian state.

Munich allowed Hitler's annexation of the Sudetenland. Iran has not waged an expansionary war in more than two centuries.

Totalitarian regimes require the complete subservience of the individual to the state and tolerate only one party to which all institutions are subordinated. Iran is an un-free society with a keen, intermittently brutal apparatus of repression, but it's far from meeting these criteria. Significant margins of liberty, even democracy, exist. Anything but mad, the mullahs have proved malleable.

Most of Iran's population is under 30; it's an Internet-connected generation. Access to satellite television is widespread. The BBC's new Farsi service is all the rage.

Abdullah Momeni, a student opponent of the regime, told me, "The Internet is very important to us, in fact it is of infinite importance." Iranians are not cut off, like Cubans or North Koreans.

Iran , the Jews and Germany Globalist

The June presidential election pitting the incumbent, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, against Mohammad Khatami (a former president who once spoke in a synagogue) will be a genuine contest as compared to the charades that pass for elections in many Arab states. No fire has burned down the Majlis, or parliament.

If you're thinking trains-on-time Fascist efficiency, think again. Tehran's new telecommunications tower took 20 years to build. I was told its restaurant would open "soon." So, it is said, will the Bushehr nuclear power plant, a project in the works for a mere 30 years. A Persian Chernobyl is far more likely than some Middle Eastern nuclear Armageddon, if that's any comfort.

For all the morality police inspecting whether women are wearing boots outside their pants (the latest no-no on the dress front) and the regime zealots of the Basiji militia, the air you breathe in Iran is not suffocating. Its streets at dusk hum with life - not a monochrome male-only form of it, or one inhabited by fear - but the vibrancy of a changing, highly-educated society.

This is the Iran of subtle shades that the country's Jews inhabit. Life is more difficult for them than for Muslims, but to suggest they inhabit a totalitarian hell is self-serving nonsense.

One Iranian exile, no lover of the Islamic Republic, wrote to me saying that my account of Iran's Jews had brought "tears to my eyes" because "you are saying what many of us would like to hear."

Far from the cradle of Middle Eastern Islamist zealotry, he suggested, "Iran - the supposed enemy - is the one society that has gone through its extremist fervor and is coming out the other end. It is relatively stable and socially dynamic. As my father, who continues to live there, says, 'It is the least undemocratic country in the region outside Israel.'"

This notion of a "post-fervor" Iran is significant. The compromises being painfully fought out between Islam and democracy in Tehran are of seminal importance. They belie the notion of a fanatical power; they explain Jewish life.

That does not mean fanaticism does not exist or that terrible crimes have not been committed. The Iran-backed bombing of the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires 15 years ago comes to mind.

But the equating of Iran with terror today is simplistic. Hamas and Hezbollah have evolved into broad political movements widely seen as resisting an Israel over-ready to use crushing force. It is essential to think again about them, just as it is essential to toss out Iran caricatures.

I return to this subject because behind the Jewish issue in Iran lies a critical one - the U.S. propensity to fixate on and demonize a country through a one-dimensional lens, with a sometimes disastrous chain of results.

It's worth recalling that hateful, ultra-nationalist rhetoric is no Iranian preserve. Avigdor Lieberman, Israel's race-baiting anti-Arab firebrand, may find a place in a government led by Benjamin Netanyahu. He should not.

Nor should racist demagoguery - wherever - prompt facile allusions to the murderous Nazi master of it.

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Readers are invited to comment at my blog: www.iht.com/passages

Load-Date: March 11, 2009

Worldview: Obama's Cairo speech already having an effect

The Philadelphia Inquirer

June 14, 2009 Sunday

CITY-C Edition

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Section: CURRENTS; Inq Currents; Pg. C03

Length: 840 words

Byline: By Trudy Rubin

Inquirer Columnist

Body

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Worldview: Obama's Cairo speech already having an effect

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E-mail Trudy Rubin at trubin@phillynews.com.

Graphic

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Load-Date: June 14, 2009

Worldview: Obama's Cairo speech already having an effect

End of Document

*** Saint Sebastian Players concludes its season with "The Real Thing," Tom Stoppa**

Chicago Daily Herald

April 24, 2009 Friday

C1 Edition

Copyright 2009 Paddock Publications, Inc.

Section: TIMEOUT; Pg. 27

Length: 936 words

Body

* Saint Sebastian Players concludes its season with "The Real Thing," Tom Stoppard's brainy examination of love, art and fidelity among members of Britain's literati. The show opens Friday, April 24, at St. Bonaventure, 1625 W. Diversey Parkway, Chicago. (773) 404-7922 or saintsebastianplayers.org.

* A frazzled producer copes with a tipsy soloist, a delivery boy looking for his big break and a waitress with stars in her eyes in "The 1940s

Radio Hour," a revue set in 1942 that showcases some well-loved standards. Citadel Theatre Company's production opens Friday, April 24, at the Gorton Center, 400 E. Illinois St., Lake Forest. (847) 735-8554 or citadeltheatre.org.

* Infamous Commonwealth Theatre concludes its season devoted to the topic nature with a revival of Frank Galati's famed adaptation of "The Grapes of Wrath," John Steinbeck's novel about the hardships one family endures and the generosity they display as they struggle through the Depression. The production, directed by founding member Genevieve Thompson, opens Saturday, April 25, at Raven Theatre, 6157 N. Clark St., Chicago. (312) 458-9780 or infamouscommonwealth.org.

* Exciting times at TimeLine Theatre, the mid-size Chicago company that a year ago secured the rights to the Chicago premiere of "The History Boys," Alan Bennett's award-winning coming-of-age drama set in a boys boarding school in 1980s Britain. Jeff Award winner Nick Bowling directs the production, which includes fellow ensemble member and Jeff winner Terry Hamilton. The show opens Saturday, April 25, at 615 W. Wellington Ave., Chicago. (773) 281-8463 or timelinetheatre.com.

* Adventure Stage Chicago hosts its first benefit Spring Fling: A Celebration of New Orleans, from 2 to 6 p.m. Saturday, April 25, at Vittum Theater, 1012 N. Noble St., Chicago. The event includes food, music, a silent auction and family-friendly activities including face painting, palm and tarot card readings and more. (773) 342-4141 or

adventurestage.org.

* Remy Bumpo Theatre stages Harold Pinter's examination of marriage and memory, "Old Times," in which an old friend threatens a long-married couple's domestic stability. Artistic associates Linda Gillum and Nick Sandys star in the production directed by artistic director James Bohnen. It opens Sunday, April 26, at the Greenhouse Theater, 2257 N. Lincoln Ave., Chicago. (773) 404-7336 or remybumpo.org.

* Saint Sebastian Players concludes its season with "The Real Thing," Tom Stoppa

* "Disappearing Acts: Stories by Nikolai Gogol" gets its world premiere at Piven Theatre, located in the Noyes Cultural Center, 927 Noyes St., Evanston. The show consists of two of Gogol's classic absurdist stories: "Nose," about a man's comic efforts to reclaim his vanished nose, and "Overcoat," about a bureaucrat who pays a high price for winter warmth. The production opens Monday, April 27. (847) 866-8049 or piventheatre.org.

* A widower has the ability to perceive a person's color aura which reveals that individual's immediate future in Tommy Lee Johnston's "Aura." Larry E. Wiley and Connie Anderko star in a redtwist theatre's world premiere of this three-character drama. Director Jan Ellen Graves' production opens Monday, April 27, at 1044 W. Bryn Mawr, Chicago. (773) 728-7529 or redtwist.org.

* Babes With Blades celebrates the end of its 11th season with an all-**female** production of Shakespeare's "Macbeth." Next Theatre's Kevin Heckman directs the production, which features young performers from The Viola Project, which offers acting workshops for girls age 8 to 18. Previews continue through Sunday, April 26, at Dream Theatre, 556 W. 18th St., Chicago. The show opens Monday, April 27. (773) 880-0016 or babeswithblades.org.

* Steppenwolf Theatre honors Todd Rosenthal, the award-winning set designer responsible for the company's hit, "August: Osage County," with the Merritt Award for Excellence in Design and Collaboration at 5:30 p.m. Monday, April 27, at the Steppenwolf Garage Theatre, 1624 N. Halsted St., Chicago. Also being honored, Keith Parham for his lighting design of Next Theatre's "Adding Machine: A Musical." Call (312) 344-6105 or e-mail robmillburn@ameritech.net for reservations.

* Michael Menendian directs Raven Theatre's production of "Hedda Gabler," Henrik Ibsen's portrait of a manipulative woman whose schemes conclude in tragedy. Previews begin Tuesday, April 28, at 6157 N. Clark St., Chicago. The show opens Sunday, May 3. (773) 338-2177 or raventheatre.com.

* Silk Road Theatre Project hosts a staged reading of "In the Crossing," Arab American playwright/performer Leila Buck's play chronicling her experience living in Lebanon with her Jewish husband during 2006's Israel-**Hezbollah** war. The reading takes place at 6:30 p.m. Tuesdays, April 28, and Wednesday, April 29, at Anderson Hall in the Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago, 126 E. Chestnut St., Chicago. (312) 857-1234 or srtp.org.

* "Unveiled," London-born playwright Rohina's examination of the lives of five Muslim **women** in the wake of Sept. 11, begins performances Thursday, April 30, at the 16th Street Theater, Berwyn Cultural Center, 6420 16th St., Berwyn. (708) 795-6704, ext. 105 or 16thstreettheater.org.

* "No scripts, no scripture, just supper," is how Chicago Fusion Theatre describes its improvised comedy "12 Hungry Men," about how Jesus and his apostles might have behaved at their first supper. The show previews Thursday, April 30, at Gorilla Tango Theatre, 1919 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago. It opens Friday, May 1. (773) 598-4549 or chicagofusiontheatre.org.

— Barbara Vitello

Load-Date: April 24, 2009

Israel's 'Waltz with Bashir' misses an Oscar, but scores in Lebanon

Christian Science Monitor

February 25, 2009, Wednesday

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 4

Length: 841 words

Byline: Nicholas Blanford Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

Dateline: BEIRUT, Lebanon

Body

It didn't win the Oscar in Hollywood, but the Israeli film "Waltz with Bashir," which had been favored to take the best foreign-language film award, has certainly triumphed in Lebanon.

The animated antiwar feature has become an underground hit - no small feat for a film that is not only banned here but was made in an enemy state. Lebanon and Israel are in a state of war and contacts with the Jewish state are forbidden.

But "Waltz with Bashir" - the title refers to an Israeli-allied Lebanese Christian militia leader - has struck a chord in a country that has never fully come to terms with its 16-year civil war.

"It is one of the most popular DVDs we have," says the owner of a DVD rental store in Haret Hreik, a southern Beirut district and a stronghold of the militant Shiite Hezbollah.

"Waltz with Bashir" tells the story of a former Israeli soldier struggling to recall his repressed memories of Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon. It ends with the bloody massacre of Palestinians in the Sabra/Shatila refugee camp by Israeli-allied Christian militiamen. No one knows exactly how many people died during the three-day killing spree - estimates vary between 400 and more than 2,000.

Israeli troops were guarding the entrances of the camp at the time and also lit up the night sky with flares - the movie's haunting leitmotif - which allowed the militiamen to continue slaughtering the residents during the night. The final scenes morph from the comic book images of Palestinian women wailing in grief to shocking video footage of the actual victims of the massacre.

Few residents of Sabra/Shatila have seen "Waltz with Bashir" yet, but the movie has sparked curiosity due to its sympathetic portrayal of the Palestinian victims of the massacre.

"Of course I want to see it. I feel as though I have a duty to watch this movie," says Nawal Abu Rudeina, who was 6 years old at the time of the massacre.

Ms. Abu Rudeina's father, uncle, and cousin were taken from their home by Christian gunmen, lined up against a wall, and shot dead.

Israel 's 'Waltz with Bashir' misses an Oscar, but scores in Lebanon

Ari Folman, the director, served with the Israeli army in Lebanon in 1982 and it was his unit that fired the flares that illuminated Sabra/Shatila. "Waltz with Bashir" depicts Mr. Folman's personal struggle to come to terms with his experiences from 26 years ago in Lebanon. The movie won the Palme D'Or at the Cannes Film Festival, then received a Golden Globe award, and was the favorite for the foreign film Academy Award. It lost out to the Japanese film "Departures."

Last month, Monika Borgmann, a German journalist, and her Lebanese husband, Lokman Slim, defied Lebanon's censorship laws and held a private screening of "Waltz with Bashir." Such was the interest in the movie, the turnout for the screening was three times larger than expected. "The Israelis and the Lebanese share a painful history," Ms. Borgmann says. "There is a mutual fascination because of these shared chapters [in history] and also because direct contact is forbidden."

The Lebanese government turned a blind eye to the screening. Tareq Mitri, the information minister, conceded that while it was illegal to import and show the movie in Lebanon, the current censorship law "was absurd."

"We need to abolish that law so that we can see films like this and any other films and then, if you abolish the censorship law we have, then whoever is harmed can take the matter to court," he says.

Although Lebanon has one of the most open societies in the Arab world, relations with Israel, in any form, remain sensitive, due to the legacy of war and occupation. But some Lebanese say the censorship laws lack common sense.

"You can read Israeli newspapers on the Web, see Israeli politicians interviewed on Al Arabiya, and buy [former Israeli Prime Minister] Ariel Sharon's autobiography in Beirut bookshops. But you can't show a film like 'Waltz with Bashir,' " says Mr. Slim.

Since the end of Lebanon's 16-year civil war in 1990, there has been little collective effort to come to terms with a conflict in which some 120,000 people perished and another 17,000 are still unaccounted for. In the early 1990s, the Lebanese government effectively shut the door on the preceding two decades by declaring immunity for all crimes committed during the war. That ruling permitted former warlords and militia bosses to freely enter postwar politics, acquiring seats in government while public discussions of their war-time deeds were taboo.

"Lebanon fits the classic example where the one-time [criminal] perpetrators become the rulers of the country. They have no real interest in uncovering what happened in the war and investigating their own crimes," says Ousama Safa, director of the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies in Beirut.

Borgmann and Slim are the founders of Umam, an organization that seeks to encourage the Lebanese to confront and accept their violent past. "It is never too late, and each country has to find its own way to deal with the past. No country can escape this process," Borgmann says.

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Load-Date: February 24, 2009

Iran gives cautious welcome to Barack Obama video message

Guardian.com

March 20, 2009

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theguardian

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Highlight: Aide to Iranian president urges US to end sanctions and drop its support for Israel

Body

Iran today hailed an unprecedented direct appeal by the US president, Barack Obama, for better relations between the two countries, but urged the US to "realise its previous mistakes" as well as end sanctions and drop its support for Israel.

Ali-Akbar Javanfekar, an aide to the Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, welcomed the approach from Washington on the occasion of Nowruz, the Iranian new year.

However, there was no official response from Tehran to a far blunter message from Shimon Peres, the president of Israel, who called on Iran to "return to the enlightened world" and halt the uranium enrichment that could allow it manufacture nuclear weapons.

"The Iranian nation has shown that it can forget hasty behaviour," said Javanfekar in reference to Obama's message, "but we are awaiting practical steps by the United States."

The new US administration needed a "fundamental change in attitude", he said. But Iran would "not show its back" to Obama if the US put its words into practice.

"By fundamentally changing its behaviour, America can offer us a friendly hand. So far what we have received have been unfriendly fists. Unlimited sanctions which have been renewed by the United States are wrong and need to be reviewed," he said.

Javanfekar also singled out US backing for Israel, currently the only nuclear power in the Middle East. "Supporting Israel is not a friendly gesture and the New Year is an opportunity for the United States to change this policy," he said.

The swift but conditional response from Tehran underlined how wide the wide gap is between the two countries even as Obama's carefully-crafted message offered a "new beginning" after 30 years of animosity.

It was the latest chapter in a presidential charm offensive that has so far been conducted at arms length and which has barely touched on several key disputes.

Iran gives cautious welcome to Barack Obama video message

In the three and a half minute video, shown on a number of TV networks in the Middle East, Obama said he wanted to "speak directly to the people and leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran" to make clear his desire to establish "constructive ties".

"My administration is now committed to diplomacy that addresses the full range of issues before us," the president said. Strikingly, though, he mentioned none of them directly: not Iran's nuclear programme, its support for Hezbollah and Hamas, or its profound hostility to Israel.

The timing and format of the broadcast, shown with Persian subtitles, emphasised its broad appeal - to an entire country at a time of traditional celebration rather than solely to a government whose internal complexities compound the difficulty for US policymakers.

"For nearly three decades relations between our nations have been strained," Obama reminded his audience. "But at this holiday we are reminded of the common humanity that binds us together."

The message was a reprise of the commitment to engagement approach he signalled in his inaugural address and was made in an emollient tone that contrasted sharply with that used by George Bush, who included the Islamic Republic in his "axis of evil".

"This process will not be advanced by threats," the president said. "We seek instead engagement that is honest and grounded in mutual respect."

Despite avoiding mention of the nuclear dossier - specifically Iran's refusal to halt uranium enrichment - Obama did warn that "terror and arms" did not sit well with the "real responsibilities" that went with Iran's "rightful place in the community of nations".

Israel's Nowruz message, broadcast on its Persian radio channel, was far less subtle. "Children can't be fed enriched uranium for breakfast," said Peres. "The leaders should let people live, let women breath, let the economy grow, and stop spending their days dealing with bombs and uranium - is this in the name of God? Is this what Allah asked of them?"

Israel's president also attacked Ahmadinejad for his denial of the Holocaust, saying: "Since when is he an expert on the Jewish Holocaust? Was he in Auschwitz? What does he know? All he does is speak and speak all day long."

The White House and state department have been looking at a range of ways to reach out to Iran. It has been invited to an international conference on Afghanistan later this month and the US wants to see it co-operate as US forces prepare to leave Iraq.

Another idea is for Obama to write an open letter to the country's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. US officials want to avoid doing anything that might boost the chances of Ahmadinejad, the populist hardliner who is standing for re-election in June.

Reopening a US interests section in Tehran - scene of the notorious hostage-taking drama at the old US embassy during the 1979 revolution - is reportedly another possibility.

But Iranian memories go back much further, to the 1953 CIA-backed coup that overthrew the nationalist prime minister Mossadegh, and decades of American support for the shah. As Obama pointed out, with presidential understatement, it would not be easy to overcome "the old divisions".

Neither Khamenei nor Ahmadinejad mentioned Obama's appeal in their own Nowruz messages. Khamenei said in his speech that attempts to block Iran's nuclear progress had reached a "dead end."

Iran gives cautious welcome to Barack Obama video message

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Globetrotters (and locals) let loose in Lebanon; Beirut, once known for civil war and a long history of political instability, is quickly becoming the region's nightlife-loving sin city

The Vancouver Sun (British Columbia)

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Final C Edition

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Byline: Natacha Yazbeck, Agence France-Presse

Dateline: BEIRUT

Body

From nudist beach parties and wild bashes hosted by the likes of Paris Hilton, to gay clubs, gambling and showgirls, Beirut is rapidly earning a reputation as the sin city of the Middle East.

Clubbers don't bat an eye in popping \$1,000 for a bottle of champagne to guarantee attention at a trendy nightspot, where less is more as far as women's wear is concerned and fireworks displays regularly light up the skies.

Lebanon has seen it all: a bloody 1975-1990 civil war, military occupation, high-profile assassinations, and unending political instability.

Four years ago, Beirut's seaside Riviera Hotel saw an assassination attempt targeting a leading anti-Syrian minister. Today, it is keeping the neighbourhood awake as partygoers drink and dance the night away.

"We have clubs in Cairo," said 26-year-old Wafiq, as he swayed to the beat on a hot August night holding a glass of whiskey and puffing on a Cuban cigar.

"But nothing beats this," said the Egyptian, a finance consultant. "I need to come here to unwind."

A record one million-plus tourists visited Lebanon in July alone, according to the tourism ministry, which is expecting more than two million tourists by the end of 2009, a figure roughly equivalent to half the country's population.

Many of those flocking to Beirut are Lebanese expatriates, but Arab nationals have also arrived en masse to take advantage of Lebanon's glamorous nightlife and shows like "Hot Legs" at the Casino du Liban.

While Lebanon often flirts with the borderline of civil war -- sectarian strife in May 2008 resulted in the deaths of more than 100 people -- any sign of a political detente is quickly followed by a boom in tourism.

Sami, 30, flew in from Germany for a brief reprieve this summer, which he says turned out to be more exhausting than he had anticipated.

Globetrotters (and locals) let loose in Lebanon ; Beirut, once known for civil war and a long history of political instability, is quickly becoming the region's....

Nursing a sunburn, he described how he had negotiated his way past scowling bouncers into Sky Bar, dubbed the hottest club in Beirut, before stopping at a 24-hour eatery for breakfast at 3 a.m. and hitting the beach a few hours later.

"I'm on three hours of sleep," he told AFP. "I had barely started on my coffee when I got to the beach and my friends threw my coffee away and replaced it with vodka in a plastic cup."

"It's pretty much been downhill since then," said the architect, grinning.

"This city is just so diverse," chimed in his girlfriend Yasmine, a 24-year-old graphic designer. "There's something for everyone. It's just one big non-stop party."

Prices for a bottle of champagne at some clubs run from \$200 to a staggering \$15,000, but regulars at places such as Palais Crystal say it is worth it.

Other clubs take on a different identity: the underground B018 has changed its decor, again gaining renown for its former macabre interior, a reminder of a gruesome past. Built on the site of the 1976 Karantina massacre of mainly Palestinian refugees, the club looks like a bunker.

While Yasmine and Sami represent an emerging face of Beirut -- a hedonists' haven where spirits run as high as the heels -- others are less enthusiastic.

"It's really fun to go out and see all these people and enjoy the music, but I don't understand the hassle, having to reserve months in advance to go to the same places over and over again," said Rana, 28.

"It's as if this is some social obligation that you have to fulfill or you've committed the ultimate sin of not being 'in'," the stockbroker told AFP.

Some Lebanese proudly retell the story of how during the devastating 34-day war between Hezbollah and Israel in 2006, the parties went on, merely relocating their venues.

"It was the same as in Beirut but in a cooler area -- I mean weather-wise," 28-year-old Rania told AFP.

A doctoral candidate in New York, Rania made her reservations at her favourite clubs well before she landed in Beirut.

But while some Lebanese believe the worst is over and their country has shed its reputation for political turbulence, 25-year-old Ziad, a Lebanese engineer based in Qatar, believes the summer of 2009 is merely a breathing space.

"I think they want us to have our summer before they get back to business," he said referring to the country's rival factions.

Graphic

Colour Photo: Ramzi Haidar, Agence France-Presse ; Getty Images; Partygoers hit the dance floor at a club in downtown Beirut. Many believe the city, which is considered by some to be the 'sin city of the Middle East,' has shed its reputation for political turbulence and is quickly becoming a haven for hedonists. ;

Colour Photo: Ramzi Haidar, Agence France-Presse ; Getty Images; A couple gets close while dancing on Beirut's Ajram beach. ;

Globetrotters (and locals) let loose in Lebanon ; Beirut, once known for civil war and a long history of political instability, is quickly becoming the region's....

Load-Date: August 17, 2009

End of Document

Parlour games

Right Vision News

September 2, 2009 Wednesday

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Length: 837 words

Dateline: Pakistan

Body

Pakistan, Oct. 02 -- Mia may be only seven years old but the Lebanese youngster knows what she wants - a manicure and pedicure in purple, a golden star stenciled onto her hair and a facial. And while many an older woman may struggle over what works best for the complexion, to little Mia the answer is simple - chocolate. 'It makes my skin soft,' she explains, as a beautician spreads the dark goo over her face in the Spa-Tacular Salon, a professional beauty centre for children in Lebanon. The salon is one of a handful of parlours that have opened their doors to Lebanon's littlest, and the trend is picking up rapidly in a country reputed for its image-conscious populace. Made of sugar and spice and many things nice, Mia's \$15 chocolate facial is a hit with her friends, who dip their index fingers into the homemade mix and then lick them, squealing as they hold back their freshly-coiffed hair. Dressed in bright pink robes, the little girls, whose ages range from five to 11, pick shades of pink and blue for their nails and settle into brightly-coloured booster seats awaiting their turn. 'It's not about spoiling our children,' says Maya Hilal, 34, the owner of Spa-Tacular, located in Beirut's trendy Ashrafieh district. 'It's a matter of maintaining their cleanliness. It's hygiene. It's feeling good about yourself.' A graphic designer, Hilal created the brightly-coloured salon with the help of her sister when her oldest daughter, now seven, began to show interest in primping and pruning. 'I started feeling that our salons, adult salons, they're not for kids. The colours they use, the treatment, the whole thing,' she said. 'So I got the idea 'why don't I start a place for them, suited to their age, where they can be relaxed and happy'. A place that's fun, colourful.' Across town, six-year-old Hana has just finished hair, makeup and nails at the candy-coloured Bella's Salon. Looking up shyly from beneath eyelids glittering with blue shadow, the tiny brunette explains that this is her first trip to a salon: 'I just wanted to look pretty today, so I showed my mommy the advertisement in a magazine and she brought me here.' The clientele at Bella's range between the ages of four and 17, says beautician Raghida Shuman, and share the common desire to feel like 'a princess'. They like the foot massages and manicures, and they especially like putting on the pink robes and feeling like adults,' said Shuman, who is 19. While there are no official figures on the revenues reaped by Lebanon's beauty industry, it is clear the business is lucrative. In the summer of 2009, the tourism ministry, keen on capitalising on the country's image as a regional hub for plastic surgery, helped promote a private company that handles all bookings and accommodation for tourists seeking surgery in the tiny Mediterranean country. Image Concept, based in Dubai, handles bookings and accommodation for tourists seeking cosmetic surgery in Lebanon. Lebanon has also emerged largely unscathed from a global economic crisis thanks in part to a conservative banking sector, and there are no signs that women - and increasingly men - have been cutting down on their cosmetic expenditures. The image of the impeccable Lebanese female was perhaps best immortalized in a 2006 photograph that captured perfectly manicured young women driving in a red convertible through the rubble of Beirut's southern suburbs, destroyed by Israeli bombing in a war with the Shia militant group Hezbollah that summer. The photograph, by Spencer Platt, won the World Press Photo award that year for capturing the 'complexity and contradiction of real life', according to the jury. And in a country that functions similarly with or without government, the Lebanese beauty craze is, to some, not a luxury but a routine part of life no matter their circumstances - or age. Hilal and Shuman insist that if done right, teaching

Parlour games

children basic beauty care at an early age is a good thing.'I'm getting a lot of good feedback because of the society here, where everybody wants to look good and to take good care of themselves,' Hilal said.'Especially for the girls. You always want them to look nice, to have clean nails, nice hair.'Others, however, worry that the trend may negatively impact on the children.'I think that it surely ingrains the idea in those girls that this is necessary, which is one more reason to feel less self-confident if they do not do it,' said Hiba Morcos, a Lebanese anthropologist and doctoral candidate at the University of British Columbia.'I think it has to do with ascertaining an upper-middle class status,' she added.'It might also make them fit as future brides, to fit the norm as someone who has her hair in order, nails done... Someone who is marriageable. And this is what they're training their daughters to be. It's survival in competition for a man.' Published by HT Syndication with permission from Right Vision News. For more information on news feed please contact Sarabjit Jagirdar at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

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**ACROSS MIDEAST, PRAISE AND CRITICISM; THE PRESIDENT ASKED
LISTENERS IN A REGION ROILED BY HATRED TO TAKE TWO STEPS THAT
HAVE LONG BEEN ANATHEMA: FORGETTING THE PAST AND
UNDERSTANDING AN OPPOSING VIEW.**

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (Pennsylvania)

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SOONER EDITION

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Byline: Michael Slackman, The New York Times

Body

CAIRO, Egypt -- On one level, President Barack Obama's speech succeeded in reaching out to Muslims across the Middle East, winning widespread praise for his respectful approach, his quotations from the Quran and his forthright references to highly fraught political conflicts.

But the president's calibrated remarks also asked listeners in a region roiled by hatred to take two steps that have long been anathema: Forgetting the past and understanding an opposing view. For a president who proclaimed a goal of asking people to listen to uncomfortable truths, it was clear that parts of his speech resonated deeply with his intended audience, and others fell on deaf ears, in Israel as well as the Muslim world.

Again and again, Muslim listeners said they were struck by how skillfully Mr. Obama appropriated religious, cultural and historical references in ways other American presidents had not. He sprinkled the speech with four quotations from the Quran and used Arabic greetings. He took note of longstanding historical grievances like the stain of colonialism, U.S. support for the Iranian coup of 1953 and the displacement of the Palestinian people.

His speech was also embraced for what it did not do: Use the word terrorism, broadly seen here as shorthand for an attack on Islam.

"He spoke really like an enlightened leader from the region, more than like a foreigner," said Mustafa Hamarneh, former director of the University of Jordan's Center for Strategic Studies. "It was very unlike the neocolonial and condescending approach of the previous administration."

In effect, Mr. Obama structured his speech almost like a Friday prayer, blending a political, social and religious message. In style and substance, some regional analysts said, the speech sought to undermine the message of radical terrorists like Osama bin Laden.

"Al-Qaida benefited from the previous rhetoric about the clash of civilizations in mobilizing and recruiting individuals as part of fighting a crusade," said Mohammad Abu Rumman, research editor at Al Ghad daily newspaper in Amman, Jordan. "The speech is positive and allows us to move from the religious-civilization title of the struggle to a political-realistic title."

ACROSS MIDEAST, PRAISE AND CRITICISM THE PRESIDENT ASKED LISTENERS IN A REGION ROILED BY HATRED TO TAKE TWO STEPS THAT HAVE LONG BEEN ANATHEMA: FORGETTING THE P....

Perhaps inevitably, by seeking to present balance to the many conflicts that divide the region, Mr. Obama angered some on both sides. Many Arabs and Israelis alike furiously rejected what they saw as his attempt to present their suffering as morally equivalent. They picked at the content of the speech almost like a biblical text.

"How dare Obama compare Arab refugee suffering to the 6 million Jews murdered in the Holocaust?" asked Aryeh Eldad, a parliamentarian from the rightist National Union Party in Israel.

Ahmed Youssef, deputy foreign minister in the Hamas government in Gaza, said, "He points to the right of Israel to exist, but what about the refugees and their right of return?"

And in Jordan, Rohile Gharaibeh, deputy secretary-general for the Islamic Action Front, the political party of the Muslim Brotherhood, rejected any reference to the Holocaust. "The Holocaust was not the doing of the Muslims; it was the Europeans, and it should not come at the cost of the Palestinian people or the Arabs and Muslims," he said.

The president's speech included a list of topics that have soured relations with Muslims. As each topic was addressed, from religious tolerance and women's rights to nuclear weapons and wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, he was greeted with warm applause or icy stares, depending on who was listening.

In Iraq, after six years of occupation, missed opportunities and failed promises, there was a heavy dose of skepticism. In Iran, some praised the explicit reference to the 1953 coup that toppled a popular Iranian prime minister.

"The coup has become a symbol of nationalism for Iranians, and the fact that Obama acknowledged the United States had intervened sends a positive message to all groups," said Tehran political analyst Alireza Rajaei. "Now, those who favor better ties with the United States have no fear to publicly call for it, because they can say that the United States has admitted to its historic mistake."

While many listeners generally agreed with Mr. Obama's comments about violence and extremism, some said they disliked his characterization of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which they described as bloody catastrophes.

"What is astonishing is that he condemned violence, but he didn't say a word about what the United States did in Iraq," said Khalid Saghieh, executive editor of the Lebanese daily newspaper al Akhbar, which leans toward Hezbollah. "If you want to call for a new beginning, you should at least apologize for tens of thousands of victims in Iraq."

But Israelis and Palestinians also managed to step back from their own concerns and said they understood the broader significance of the speech. Even Mr. Youssef hailed the speech as historic.

The Israeli government said in a statement that it hoped that the speech "will indeed lead to a new period of reconciliation between the Arab and Muslim world and Israel."

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Imaginary One-on-One With Barack Obama

Richmond Times Dispatch (Virginia)

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Section: COMMENTARY; Pg. E-03

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Byline: ROSS MACKENZIE

Body

You are there - sipping green tea with President Obama in this imaginary one-on-one...

Sir, in your Cairo address to Islam you were the first Western potentate since Napoleon to embrace the Islamist narrative dividing humanity into warring religious camps: Christian, Muslim, Hindu, etc. That implicitly supports re-establishment of the caliphate -

On the contrary, one of my applause lines said: "The fourth issue I will address is democracy." It's difficult even for me to express how deeply I believe in democracy.

So are you now belatedly supporting President Bush's freedom agenda for the Middle East - as made tangible by the wars against terror in Iraq and Afghanistan?

I have made it clear that although Bush-Cheney policies are responsible for so much that I am trying to correct, I am for freedom and diplomacy - and against war. I said in Cairo, "The Iraqi people are ultimately better off without the tyranny of Saddam Hussein." I also said I "believe that events in Iraq have reminded America of the need to use diplomacy and build international consensus to resolve our problems."

You may have missed that in Cairo I did not once deploy the word terror or any of its variations. I did use the phrase violent extremism. I have instructed my administration to avoid such Bush-Cheney terms as The Long War and The Global War on Terror. Because I so deplore war and the notion of offending Muslim peoples, I have directed that our actions abroad to confront extremism be rebranded Overseas Contingency Operations. No joke.

Right. No more war... New question: If you so reject Bush administration policies and pronouncements, was it mere coincidence that you echoed Laura Bush when saying in Cairo, "I respect those [Muslim] women who choose to live their lives in traditional roles, but it should be their choice"?

Exactly. It is no surprise that I am pro-choice - long have been. I'm glad you understand that.

Mr. President, could we talk about Israel for a minute? It seems that in Cairo you repudiated - at least - the Bush administration's Road Map for peace. And you redefined Israel's abandonment of settlements in the West Bank, even for natural growth (as emphasized by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton), as not a topic of negotiations but a requirement for them.

Imaginary One-on-One With Barack Obama

I have said these things: (1) America supports Israel and (2) America supports the Palestinians. There is equivalence here, you might call it moral equivalence. Israel must abandon settlements it is building - and has built - on land it took by war. I am against war.

But sir, in almost all cases Israel was defending itself - and winning - in wars waged by Arabs and Muslims. Israel aspires only to be recognized by the world community (including its 57 Muslim-majority nations), to be secure, and to be left alone.

The Palestinians have their aspirations too, and those Israeli settlements are greatly offensive to Palestinian aspirations - so offensive that they have fueled the rise of Hamas and Hezbollah, and could lead to more war. For the Arab street they're a festering sore that can cause, for us, more overseas contingency operations.

Israeli settlements are the genesis of Iranian nuclear ambition for bombs and missiles to obliterate an Israel whose location on the world map Iran refuses even to acknowledge?

I am seeking opportunities for Secretary Clinton and her people - all part of the Obama team - to sit down with the Iranians. The more we talk to them, the more the chances to educate them - and the greater the likelihood they will see the goodness of our ways. As you know, I am a dreamer -

No kidding -

And although they are not yet returning our phone calls, I am hopeful for positive outcomes in talks we want to have with - well, with everyone.

Talks with our avowed enemies tend to be one-way streets - buying time only for those on the other side of the table. Talks haven't worked to our advantage with North Korea. And despite your Cairo apologia for American sins against Islam - wherein you failed to mention all the American blood spilled selflessly for Muslims from Bosnia, Kosovo, and Kuwait to Iraq (twice) and Afghanistan - talks are not likely to soften the Iranian ayatollahs either, if you ever can find the right numbers to call.

My staff has diligently supplied the media with catalogs chronicling the broadly positive response in the Muslim world to my remarks in Cairo.

As in so much, this conversation ought to be a two-way street as well. So let me conclude our discussion with a question for you. How would you characterize my Cairo address to Islam?

You truly want to know?

I'm a dreamer with his feet planted in the concrete of reality.

You are a serious speechifier, sir. Your addresses at the Naval Academy and Normandy were soaring affairs. Yet Cairo was all na*ve academic theory, patronizing feel-goodism, and high-tone loquacity - consisting fundamentally in the elaborate rhetorical window-dressing at which you are so deft.

The operative question is this: Will Cairo do anything -anything at all - to deter and defuse a terror-driven Islamist jihad, and thereby generate solid outcomes for the West and this beloved land?

Ross Mackenzie is the retired editor of the Editorial Pages. Contact him at rmackenzie@tribune.com

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Iran's uncertain path; The protesters in Tehran raise questions about the Iranian government's support

therecord.com

June 23, 2009 Tuesday

Final Edition

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Byline: Barry Kay

Body

The turmoil in Tehran needn't have come to this. If Ayatollah Khamenei was certain of a huge victory by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad over Mir Hossein Mousavi, something few Iranians seem to accept, it would have been a simple matter to resolve the impasse with a runoff vote. However once the supreme leader intervened on behalf of the incumbent, Ahmadinejad's apparent unpopularity became transferred to the ayatollah, who had previously been held to be above partisan conflict.

Now, of course, any climb down or acknowledgment that there had been election fraud would itself reflect upon the supreme leader. As has been evident in many other authoritarian regimes, once weakness is perceived, it is a slippery slope for those in power.

This was understood by tyrants ranging from Josef Stalin to Saddam Hussein, and is the operative rationale in North Korea and Myanmar. Khamenei's gambit of having a limited recount simply did not resonate.

If one engages in electoral fraud in the first place, why would anyone expect the same authority to treat a recount any more fairly, especially when it would lead to their own embarrassment?

All of this is a result of the rigid arrogance of a regime that assumed it could rule indefinitely out of intimidation, and that nothing ever changes in the society. Thirty years after the fall of the shah, many Iranians have no memory of the events used to scapegoat the United States and foreign interests for all the failings in their nation. In hindsight, this confrontation resulted gratuitously from unforced errors by the ruling elite.

Khamenei and his minions ignored public concern with the excesses of Ahmadinejad, who apart from becoming an international buffoon, has mishandled the domestic economy which has inflation and unemployment rates above 25 per cent, despite the country's oil wealth.

Another dimension of the problem that is less reported are personal antagonisms and jealousies among those in power. Former president Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani exchanged personal insults with Ahmadinejad during the campaign, and as a member of the Council of Guardians is in a position to challenge Khamenei himself, if it should ever come to that.

Iran 's uncertain path; The protesters in Tehran raise questions about the Iranian government's support

While in the west, there is widespread antipathy to the entire regime, and hence a concomitant desire to see it completely replaced, that is unlikely to have been the initial goal for many of the demonstrators, including Mousavi himself.

It is far too premature to think that a revolution of comparable proportion to 1979 will inevitably follow. Nonetheless the nation is in ferment and these demonstrations should have a transformative impact upon Iranian governance, even if Ahmadinejad does remain in power.

Both he and the supreme leader have been diminished substantially, both internally and in the eyes of the world. The technological advances of the internet and social media in recent years suggest that authoritarian governments in educated societies cannot impose complete media blackouts, or resist public protests through fear of repression alone.

So long as the numbers in the street persist, the Iranian government runs serious risks in using brute force. To assert short-term authority through violence will lessen long-term regime legitimacy, and jeopardize the entire political system. At the moment, the establishment's hope seems to be that the protesters will tire themselves out, and give up in frustration.

However future events unfold, the fact that the demonstrations have continued to this point means that the government must act with greater caution. As a gesture, some possible reforms include a relaxation of the role of the morality police enforcing modest dress for women and more efficient economic management.

This entire confrontation has ramifications outside of Iran as well. American President Barack Obama had appropriately been leaning over backward to avoid commenting, despite the Iranian regime's desire to blame the United States for everything, but it isn't clear that serious U.S.-Iranian negotiations can now take place in this climate.

What had been seen as expanding Iranian foreign policy influence will now probably be much more limited. The funding and use of proxies Hezbollah and Hamas to export the revolution will have less credibility if that revolution is being questioned at home. The damage associated with Ahmadinejad has also extended to the United Nations, which in an act of supreme misjudgment selected this "holocaust denier" to be the keynote speaker at their conference on racism last April at Geneva.

As has frequently been observed, nobody really knows where this confrontation is going, but it has to cast uncertainty about the hollowness of popular support for the Iranian administration.

It will, of course, depend upon the will of the Iranian people in the street, but nobody is going to put the toothpaste back into the tube.

Barry Kay is a professor of political science at Wilfrid Laurier University.

Graphic

Photo: THE ASSOCIATED PRESS , Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has been dragged into the election conflict after intervening on behalf of the incumbent president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Prior to the election, Khamenei had been held to be above partisan conflict.

Load-Date: June 23, 2009

Iran, the Jews and Germany; Globalist

The International Herald Tribune

March 2, 2009 Monday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 8

Length: 879 words

Byline: Roger Cohen - The New York Times Media Group

Dateline: NEW YORK

Body

So the Jerusalem Post thinks I'm "hardly the first American to be misled by the existence of synagogues in totalitarian countries."

The Atlantic Monthly's Jeffrey Goldberg finds me "particularly credulous," taken in by the Iranian hospitality and friendliness that "are the hallmarks of most Muslim societies." (Thanks for that info, Jeffrey.)

A conservative Web site called "American Thinker," which tries to prove its name is an oxymoron, believes I would have been fooled by the Nazis' sham at the Theresienstadt camp.

The indignation stems from my recent column on Iranian Jews which said that the 25,000-strong community worships in relative tranquility; that Persian Jews have fared better than Arab Jews; that hostility toward Jews in Iran has on occasion led to trumped-up charges against them; and that those enamored of the "mad mullah" caricature of Iran regard any compromise with it as a re-run of Munich 1938.

This last point found confirmation in outraged correspondence from several American Jews unable to resist some analogy between Iran and Nazi Germany. I was based in Berlin for three years; Germany's confrontation with the Holocaust inhabited me. Let's be clear: Iran's Islamic Republic is no Third Reich redux. Nor is it a totalitarian state.

Munich allowed Hitler's annexation of the Sudetenland. Iran has not waged an expansionary war in more than two centuries.

Totalitarian regimes require the complete subservience of the individual to the state and tolerate only one party to which all institutions are subordinated. Iran is an un-free society with a keen, intermittently brutal apparatus of repression, but it's far from meeting these criteria. Significant margins of liberty, even democracy, exist. Anything but mad, the mullahs have proved malleable.

Most of Iran's population is under 30; it's an Internet-connected generation. Access to satellite television is widespread. The BBC's new Farsi service is all the rage.

Abdullah Momeni, a student opponent of the regime, told me, "The Internet is very important to us, in fact it is of infinite importance." Iranians are not cut off, like Cubans or North Koreans.

Iran , the Jews and Germany Globalist

The June presidential election pitting the incumbent, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, against Mohammad Khatami (a former president who once spoke in a synagogue) will be a genuine contest as compared to the charades that pass for elections in many Arab states. No fire has burned down the Majlis, or parliament.

If you're thinking trains-on-time Fascist efficiency, think again. Tehran's new telecommunications tower took 20 years to build. I was told its restaurant would open "soon." So, it is said, will the Bushehr nuclear power plant, a project in the works for a mere 30 years. A Persian Chernobyl is far more likely than some Middle Eastern nuclear Armageddon, if that's any comfort.

For all the morality police inspecting whether women are wearing boots outside their pants (the latest no-no on the dress front) and the regime zealots of the Basiji militia, the air you breathe in Iran is not suffocating. Its streets at dusk hum with life - not a monochrome male-only form of it, or one inhabited by fear - but the vibrancy of a changing, highly-educated society.

This is the Iran of subtle shades that the country's Jews inhabit. Life is more difficult for them than for Muslims, but to suggest they inhabit a totalitarian hell is self-serving nonsense.

One Iranian exile, no lover of the Islamic Republic, wrote to me saying that my account of Iran's Jews had brought "tears to my eyes" because "you are saying what many of us would like to hear."

Far from the cradle of Middle Eastern Islamist zealotry, he suggested, "Iran - the supposed enemy - is the one society that has gone through its extremist fervor and is coming out the other end. It is relatively stable and socially dynamic. As my father, who continues to live there, says, 'It is the least undemocratic country in the region outside Israel.'"

This notion of a "post-fervor" Iran is significant. The compromises being painfully fought out between Islam and democracy in Tehran are of seminal importance. They belie the notion of a fanatical power; they explain Jewish life.

That does not mean fanaticism does not exist or that terrible crimes have not been committed. The Iran-backed bombing of the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires 15 years ago comes to mind.

But the equating of Iran with terror today is simplistic. Hamas and Hezbollah have evolved into broad political movements widely seen as resisting an Israel over-ready to use crushing force. It is essential to think again about them, just as it is essential to toss out Iran caricatures.

I return to this subject because behind the Jewish issue in Iran lies a critical one - the U.S. propensity to fixate on and demonize a country through a one-dimensional lens, with a sometimes disastrous chain of results.

It's worth recalling that hateful, ultra-nationalist rhetoric is no Iranian preserve. Avigdor Lieberman, Israel's race-baiting anti-Arab firebrand, may find a place in a government led by Benjamin Netanyahu. He should not.

Nor should racist demagoguery - wherever - prompt facile allusions to the murderous Nazi master of it.

**

Readers are invited to comment at my blog: www.iht.com/passages

Load-Date: March 11, 2009

This addiction has me totally Wired

The Times (London)

May 27, 2009 Wednesday

Edition 1

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THE TIMES

Section: EDITORIAL; Pg. 24

Length: 779 words

Byline: Robert Crampton

Body

I've got a bloke at work who sorts me out. Brian, up in advertising. We meet up on his corner, outside by the fag shelter, he slips me the latest delivery, no questions asked.

"Go on Bob," says Brian, "knock yourself out." I get the package home, heart racing, kids doing their homework, ignore them and rip open the goods in my study, maybe do a little bit to test the quality. Not very responsible parenting, but I can't help myself.

Pack the children off to bed, do a big yawn, tell my wife I need an early night, sprint upstairs with all the kit and get stuck in properly. Two, three, yeah, just do one more, four, before you know it, it's 2am. Wake up knackered and hating myself, thinking just get through the day then get back on it tonight.

That's The Wire for you. Televisual crack. One episode is too much, ten not enough. Open up the laptop, slide the disc in, hear the bluesy howl of the theme music, feel your veins start jumping. I'm exactly halfway through: series three, episode six. Right in the grip of the addiction. I find myself having to watch three episodes to replicate the thrill of the first time.

A supreme irony, surely, that The Wire is about the perils and pitfalls of drug dealing, and yet Wire-watching has made junkies of half the people I know, scratching and fidgeting and mumbling about "re-ups" (Wire-speak for a resupply of drugs from the main stash to the street dealers) until we can get back in front of a screen.

Those who have already bought the boxed sets are the dealers, reeling you in. Brian's been threatening that now I'm hooked he's going to start being really horrible to me and only lending out his DVDs one disc at a time. "Please, Brian, no, don't do that," I beg. Still, better the humiliation of waiting for the man than being in my colleague Robbie's shoes. He polished off all five series at a blistering pace - "One night I did five back-to-back," he boasts - and ever since hasn't known what to do with his life. "I'm going to have to start talking to people again," he wails.

Driven to it

This addiction has me totally Wired

I came up behind a fellow cyclist at a traffic light, broad daylight, lovely sunny day. His rear light was on. Being a conscientious member of the two-wheeled fraternity, I told him. "I know it is," he grunted in that misanthropic tone shared by a suspiciously high number of my fellow pedallistas. "It's deliberate. Gives them less excuse." He was being deadly serious.

Like many cyclists, this chap appears truly to believe that motorists are actively targeting him because he's on a bike. Trying to hurt him, intimidate him, force him off the road. But he's wrong, isn't he? Because, surely, you're not, are you? It wouldn't be rational.

Who's that man?

To the charming village of Ingatestone, Essex, to give a talk on the joys of journalism to a group called Mothers Off Duty (formerly Mothers Against Domesticity). They've tried out life-drawing, they've tried out salsa, tonight they're trying me out.

We meet in the church hall, 11 of them, stacking chairs arranged in a circle in time-honoured fashion, glasses of cabernet sauvignon all round, very congenial. And another glass of cabernet sauvignon. Even more congenial.

I am asked if I have ever made friends with any of the celebrities I've interviewed for the Times Magazine. Only once, I reply, and that was with Andy McNab, the former SAS soldier turned thriller-writer. And my theory about McNab is that because hardly anybody knows what he looks like, he has avoided the corrupting effect of fame.

"But how can you be sure it's him?" asks one of the women. Excellent question.

Power vacuum

The fight against the London plane tree's peculiarly explosive seedball goes on. They land, they explode, they scatter, they form drifts several feet high in my front yard, I have to tunnel my way out of the door, I exaggerate but slightly. The seed-drifts invade your hallway, your nose, your mouth, your eyes, I tackle them with a broom, a binbag, sunglasses and an old student-era PLO scarf wrapped around the rest of my head, the Hamas horticulturalist, the Hezbollah of handymen, the, er, Sheikh of the Sweep. And so on.

I brush, I clear, I survey. As I turn to go inside, another explodes, and it all starts again. You can win one battle, the war itself is ceaseless.

Except now I've gone nuclear and bought a leaf-vacuum, B& Q. I don't much like leaf-vacuums, or their equally noisy cousin the leaf-blower, there's a municipal one that blights our neighbourhood for months every autumn.

Still, if you can't beat 'em, join 'em, and the leaf-vacuum makes extremely short work of the seed-drifts, as well as being highly amusing to stand astride while pretending your penis is 3ft long.

Load-Date: May 27, 2009

(ADVERTISEMENT) Peter LINDSAY REPORTS 13 COUNTRIES IN 35 DAYS 'A mind expanding experience'

Townsville Sun (Australia)

May 13, 2009 Wednesday

1 - Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 17

Length: 899 words

Body

This newsletter is paid for and authorised by Peter Lindsay, MP, Nathan Business Centre, Cranbrook.

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I have just returned from a major study trip undertaken to meet with the leadership of other countries to discuss policy and to bring back new ideas to benefit Australia.

I undertook to report to the electorate through to the Townsville Sun. The final report runs to more than 130 pages and therefore cannot be presented here to you in its entirety. However, the full report is available on my website.

The major themes that were of interest to me included defence, security, social policy and crime.

However there were other specific issues that I studied in individual countries.

Some people have questioned my choice of countries which at first glance may not seem relevant to Australia. After all, most members of Parliament only ever visit our major alliances including the United States, the United Kingdom, New Zealand and China.

For my part, I purposely added a number of "off the beaten track" countries.

I find that you can take away so much more from countries with different social policies to ours here in Australia.

I've had fascinating meetings with police commissioners, finance ministers, **female** ministers, academics and senior defence staff.

(ADVERTISEMENT) Peter LINDSAY REPORTS 13 COUNTRIES IN 35 DAYS 'A mind expanding experience'

It was a gruelling trip involving great meetings but hours of waiting in airport terminals but it resulted in a report containing 87 recommendations, conclusions and observations.

As much as the world is different, we face many of the same problems.

Just as crime is a significant problem within the Townsville community it is in other parts of the world.

I was privileged to have meetings with the police commissioners of four countries and have returned with a firm view on the most effective ways to fight crime and to keep our homes safer.

I also found that Australia is not alone in trying to deal with the problem of unauthorised boat arrivals.

Many other countries are wrestling with the same problem and there is a clear message for Australia that we should maintain the integrity of our borders and that we should not just allow people to arrive and expect to be admitted to our country.

The consequences of doing so are being felt now by other countries that have had a lax border protection policy.

I've come back with a renewed view that our Australian Defence Force is so very highly regarded in the rest of the world. It's professionalism and training shows wherever our troops are deployed overseas.

In the course of my travels I met many Australians who are serving in our Foreign Service. From our ambassadors and high

commissioners right down to locally engaged staff, our country is served by outstanding people.

I want to thank the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade for doing so much to make my trip the success that it was.

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LESSONS LEARNED

- * Australia badly lags the world in the provision of affordable housing for its people.
- * Residential development adjacent to the Port of Townsville should be opposed.
- * Opportunities are now emerging for Australian junior mineral explorers in Zimbabwe.
- * Grandparents should have right of access to their grandchildren following a family separation.
- * Australias indigenous leaders should use the South African model to inspire their people to achieve better outcomes through their own actions.
- * **Hezbollah** is not the radical group that some think it is. Properly engaged, it can be a force for good in the Middle East.

(ADVERTISEMENT) Peter LINDSAY REPORTS 13 COUNTRIES IN 35 DAYS 'A mind expanding experience'

- * For a small investment, Australia has the opportunity to become a partner in NASA's international space program to return to the moon and to fly to Mars.
- * It is the duty of all Muslims to fight terrorism and for world leaders to disengage terrorism from religion.
- * Australian Military Observers in the Middle East are highly regarded for their professionalism, training and ability. OP Paladin should continue to be supported.
- * Re-building of the world's carbon sink is the most effective response to greenhouse gas production.
- * Australian should embrace the benefits of a National Identity Card and a National DNA database for all citizens.
- * "Boat people" are now a worldwide problem. A coordinated effort is needed to address the difficult issue of unauthorised arrivals.
- * Tough on crime and zero tolerance programs often announced by governments are never effective because they do not address the fundamental underlying causes of crime.
- * There is an opportunity for the Townsville Marine Science community to establish a privately funded oceanographic institute in the pristine St Brandon island group.
- * Australia should re-open and upgrade Woomera to take advantage of the international demand for vehicle testing and launches.
- * A Magnet High School for Health Professionals should be built in the JCU campus health precinct.
- * Europeans have a successful defence acquisition policy where funding is withdrawn if the capability is not delivered on time and on budget.
- * The ADF could have the same powers as the police and customs in remote Australia to more effectively deal with border protection issues.
- * The world should be alert to the implications of the ever spreading influence of China,
- * The new government of Israel needs to be much less heavy handed and far better engaged in the diplomacy of the region.

For more information on the Study Tour go to: <http://peterlindsay.com.au/>

Load-Date: May 13, 2009

Globe-trotters (and locals) let loose in Lebanon; Beirut, once known for civil war and a long history of political instability, is quickly becoming the region's nightlife-loving sin city

The Vancouver Sun (British Columbia)

August 17, 2009 Monday

Final Edition

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Section: CANADA & WORLD; Pg. B3

Length: 690 words

Byline: Natacha Yazbeck, Agence France-Presse

Dateline: BEIRUT

Body

From nudist beach parties and wild bashes hosted by the likes of Paris Hilton, to gay clubs, gambling and showgirls, Beirut is rapidly earning a reputation as the sin city of the Middle East.

Clubbers don't bat an eye in popping \$1,000 for a bottle of champagne to guarantee attention at a trendy nightspot, where less is more as far as women's wear is concerned and fireworks displays regularly light up the skies.

Lebanon has seen it all: a bloody 1975-1990 civil war, military occupation, high-profile assassinations, and unending political instability.

Four years ago, Beirut's seaside Riviera Hotel saw an assassination attempt targeting a leading anti-Syrian minister. Today, it is keeping the neighbourhood awake as partygoers drink and dance the night away.

"We have clubs in Cairo," said 26-year-old Wafiq, as he swayed to the beat on a hot August night holding a glass of whiskey and puffing on a Cuban cigar.

"But nothing beats this," said the Egyptian, a finance consultant. "I need to come here to unwind."

A record one million-plus tourists visited Lebanon in July alone, according to the tourism ministry, which is expecting more than two million tourists by the end of 2009, a figure roughly equivalent to half the country's population.

Many of those flocking to Beirut are Lebanese expatriates, but Arab nationals have also arrived en masse to take advantage of Lebanon's glamorous nightlife and shows like "Hot Legs" at the Casino du Liban.

While Lebanon often flirts with the borderline of civil war -- sectarian strife in May 2008 resulted in the deaths of more than 100 people -- any sign of a political detente is quickly followed by a boom in tourism.

Sami, 30, flew in from Germany for a brief reprieve this summer, which he says turned out to be more exhausting than he had anticipated.

Globe-trotters (and locals) let loose in Lebanon ; Beirut, once known for civil war and a long history of political instability, is quickly becoming the region'....

Nursing a sunburn, he described how he had negotiated his way past scowling bouncers into Sky Bar, dubbed the hottest club in Beirut, before stopping at a 24-hour eatery for breakfast at 3 a.m. and hitting the beach a few hours later.

"I'm on three hours of sleep," he told AFP. "I had barely started on my coffee when I got to the beach and my friends threw my coffee away and replaced it with vodka in a plastic cup."

"It's pretty much been downhill since then," said the architect, grinning.

"This city is just so diverse," chimed in his girlfriend Yasmine, a 24-year-old graphic designer. "There's something for everyone. It's just one big non-stop party."

Prices for a bottle of champagne at some clubs run from \$200 to a staggering \$15,000, but regulars at places such as Palais Crystal say it is worth it.

Other clubs take on a different identity: the underground B018 has changed its decor, again gaining renown for its former macabre interior, a reminder of a gruesome past. Built on the site of the 1976 Karantina massacre of mainly Palestinian refugees, the club looks like a bunker.

While Yasmine and Sami represent an emerging face of Beirut -- a hedonists' haven where spirits run as high as the heels -- others are less enthusiastic.

"It's really fun to go out and see all these people and enjoy the music, but I don't understand the hassle, having to reserve months in advance to go to the same places over and over again," said Rana, 28.

"It's as if this is some social obligation that you have to fulfill or you've committed the ultimate sin of not being 'in'," the stockbroker told AFP.

Some Lebanese proudly retell the story of how during the devastating 34-day war between Hezbollah and Israel in 2006, the parties went on, merely relocating their venues.

"It was the same as in Beirut but in a cooler area -- I mean weather-wise," 28-year-old Rania told AFP.

A doctoral candidate in New York, Rania made her reservations at her favourite clubs well before she landed in Beirut.

But while some Lebanese believe the worst is over and their country has shed its reputation for political turbulence, 25-year-old Ziad, a Lebanese engineer based in Qatar, believes the summer of 2009 is merely a breathing space.

"I think they want us to have our summer before they get back to business," he said referring to the country's rival factions.

Graphic

Colour Photo: Ramzi Haidar, Agence France-Presse ; Getty Images; Partygoers hit the dance floor at a club in downtown Beirut. Many believe the city, which is considered by some to be the 'sin city of the Middle East,' has shed its reputation for political turbulence and is quickly becoming a haven for hedonists. ;

Colour Photo: Ramzi Haidar, Agence France-Presse ; Getty Images; A couple gets close while dancing on Beirut's Ajram beach. ;

Globe-trotters (and locals) let loose in Lebanon ; Beirut, once known for civil war and a long history of political instability, is quickly becoming the region'....

Load-Date: August 17, 2009

End of Document

Dialogue heals division

The Age (Melbourne, Australia)

March 19, 2009 Thursday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS; Opinion; Pg. 19

Length: 898 words

Byline: Philip Freier - Dr Philip Freier is the Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne.

Body

There is much that we can learn from visiting national leaders.

IN THIS newspaper yesterday the president of the Jewish Community Council of Victoria, John Searle, voiced his concerns about the forthcoming visit to Melbourne of former Iranian president Mohammad Khatami. And in a letter to me, Searle has expressed dismay that I have agreed to host an interfaith meeting with Khatami.

There has been no intention on my part to offend the Jewish community. I am a president of the Council of Christians and Jews, and Anglicans in Melbourne have long enjoyed a strong and cordial relationship with the Jewish community. I recently addressed, along with Rabbi Philip Heilbrunn, a meeting of Anglicans and Jews in which both of us acknowledged the relationship of mutual respect that exists between our two faiths in this city.

The Anglican Church enjoys mutual respect with other faiths but mutual respect between people of different faiths is not inconsistent with taking an action that may earn the disapproval of others. If the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne sought to please all others by its actions and statements, it wouldn't stand for much. Our Christian faith is informed by the example of Jesus Christ who met with not only the faithful, but also the unpopular, the social outcasts and the political and religious opponents.

Khatami has been a leader of a significant nation, Iran. In a world that seems locked in a deadly spiral of violence and hatred, particularly in the Middle East, any religious or political leader who seeks an end to the divisions through dialogue should be encouraged.

In welcoming him I am not alone. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, met Khatami at Lambeth Palace and was impressed by his commitment to dialogue as a way forward. Khatami has also given the Anglican Bishop of Iran, Bishop Azad Marshall, encouragement, welcome and hospitality in Iran and I am happy to reciprocate this hospitality while he is in Australia. The request for a meeting with faith leaders came from Professor Joseph Camilleri, director of the Centre for Dialogue at La Trobe University. Camilleri and the centre have organised an extensive program for Khatami, including a meeting with other community leaders.

In an article promoting Khatami as an Iranian leader worth meeting, Camilleri wrote that Khatami's period of office was significant in that he had "articulated a powerful and coherent message in defence of democracy and human freedom, one that clearly resonated with women, young people and a large majority of Iranian people".

Dialogue heals division

Khatami has also actively promoted dialogue among faiths and nations, he is head of the International Centre for Dialogue of Civilisations and is author of Dialogue of Civilisations, a response to Samuel Huntington's The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order.

Speaking at the National Cathedral during his visit to Washington in September 2006, Khatami is reported to have called for "true inter-civilisational dialogue".

"Great religions, particularly Islam, Judaism and Christianity, can help mankind solve modern problems and challenges by a return to their vital, vibrant and common essence," he said. He is also reported to have called the Holocaust a "historical fact" and condemned al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

Again, speaking at Harvard University, he said: "One cannot and ought not engage in violence in the name of any religion, just as one cannot and ought not turn the world into one's military camp in the name of human rights and democracy."

While it is true that Khatami has been a critic of Israel, including its occupation of Palestinian territories, and has defended the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, he is not alone in this regard. In international politics, leaders frequently exercise the right to express criticism of other nations.

A range of faith representatives, including those from Judaism, have been invited to the meeting I am hosting as part of Khatami's visit to Australia. Only through dialogue with one another can we hope to find the path of mutual understanding, respect and even love and friendship that our hurting world is so desperately looking to us to open up.

The lessons of history demonstrate changing international alliances with changing reputations of political figures. How often have so-called enemies in war become friends in peace? As a Christian leader in this city I am seeking to respond to Khatami's genuine desire for dialogue with interest and optimism. I look forward to our conversation.

I hope that Melbourne will have opportunities to meet other such leaders from around the world. Anything that advances mutual understanding and peaceful interaction gives hope to a world where the opposite is often the norm.

The Anglican Diocese of Melbourne will continue to value its warm relationship with the Jewish community but I, on behalf of the diocese, will continue to meet with any visiting leaders if the purpose is for the good of international and interfaith relationships.

Australia is fortunate that the principle of freedom of conscience in questions of faith and belief is well-established among its people. Let's hope that the Australian experience of Mohammad Khatami's visit may have something constructive to bring to all who meet him as well as to the developing political life of Iran.

Dr Philip Freier is the Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne.

Load-Date: March 18, 2009

Iran, the Jews and Germany

The New York Times

March 2, 2009 Monday

The New York Times on the Web

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Section: Section ; Column 0; Editorial Desk; Pg. ; OP-ED COLUMNIST

Length: 878 words

Byline: By ROGER COHEN

Body

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Iran , the Jews and Germany

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Far from the cradle of Middle Eastern Islamist zealotry, she suggested, "Iran -- the supposed enemy -- is the one society that has gone through its extremist fervor and is coming out the other end. It is relatively stable and socially dynamic. As my father, who continues to live there, says, 'It is the least undemocratic country in the region outside Israel.' "

This notion of a "post-fervor" Iran is significant. The compromises being painfully fought out between Islam and democracy in Tehran are of seminal importance. They belie the notion of a fanatical power; they explain Jewish life.

That does not mean fanaticism does not exist or that terrible crimes have not been committed, like the Iran-backed bombing of the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires 15 years ago.

But the equating of Iran with terror today is simplistic. Hamas and Hezbollah have evolved into broad political movements widely seen as resisting an Israel over-ready to use crushing force. It is essential to think again about them, just as it is essential to toss out Iran caricatures.

I return to this subject because behind the Jewish issue in Iran lies a critical one -- the U.S. propensity to fixate on and demonize a country through a one-dimensional lens, with a sometimes disastrous chain of results.

It's worth recalling that hateful, ultranationalist rhetoric is no Iranian preserve. Avigdor Lieberman, Israel's race-baiting anti-Arab firebrand, may find a place in a government led by Benjamin Netanyahu. He should not.

Nor should racist demagoguery -- wherever -- prompt facile allusions to the murderous Nazi master of it.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Load-Date: March 2, 2009

Iran awakens yet again; GLOBALIST

The International Herald Tribune

June 11, 2009 Thursday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 7

Length: 917 words

Byline: Roger Cohen - International Herald Tribune

Dateline: TEHRAN

Body

They're calling it the "green tsunami," a transformative wave unfurling down the broad avenues of the Iranian capital. Call it what you will, but the city is agog at the campaign of Mir Hussein Moussavi, the reformist candidate seeking to unseat President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the 10th post-revolution election.

Iran, its internal fissures exposed as never before, is teetering again on the brink of change. For months now, I've been urging another look at Iran, beyond dangerous demonization of it as a totalitarian state. Seldom has the country looked less like one than in these giddy June days.

I wandered in a sea of green ribbons, hats, banners and bandannas to a rally at which Ahmadinejad was mocked as "a midget" and Moussavi's wife, Zahra Rahnava, sporting a floral hijab that taunted grey-black officialdom, warned the president that: "If there is vote rigging, Iran will rise up."

A Moussavi kite hovered; a shout went up that "It's even written in the sky." I don't know about that, but something is stirring again in the Islamic Republic, a nation attached to both words in its self-description.

That stirring has deep roots. The last century taught that Iran's democratic impulse is denied only at peril. Ever since the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, the quest for representative government has flared. Moussavi is dour but seen as a man of integrity, the anti-Ahmadinejad who can usher back the 1979 revolution's promise rather than incarnate its repressive turn.

Rahnava, a professor of political science, is not dour. She has emerged as a core figure in Friday's vote through her vigorous call for women's rights and the way she goaded Ahmadinejad into a rash attack on her academic credentials during his no-holds-barred televised debate last week with Moussavi.

"Make up your files," Rahnava declared at the rally, in a derisive allusion to Ahmadinejad's Stasi-like brandishing of a document about her before some 40 million TV viewers. "But the file-makers will be defeated!"

Iran's democracy is incomplete (a Guardian Council representing the Islamic hierarchy vets candidates) but vigorous to the point of unpredictability. Nobody knows who will triumph in an election that chooses the second most powerful figure in Iran under the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, but some things are already clear.

The first is that the frank ferocity of politics here in recent weeks would be unthinkable among U.S. allies from Cairo to Riyadh, a fact no less true for being discomfiting. The problem with Iran caricatures, like Benjamin Netanyahu's

Iran awakens yet again GLOBALIST

absurd recent description of the regime as a "messianic, apocalyptic cult," is that reality - not least this campaign's - defies them.

The second is that while Ahmadinejad still marshals potentially victorious forces, including the Revolutionary Guards and the Basij militia, he now faces a daunting array of opposition ranging across the political spectrum.

If his attack on Rahnavard was rash, his broadside in the same debate against Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the regime's éminence grise, looks like recklessness. It has ushered this election into the inner sanctum of authority. That's a transgression Ahmadinejad may not survive.

Rafsanjani, a former president, was so incensed by Ahmadinejad's accusations of Mafia-like corruption that he responded with a blistering letter to Khamenei, who's supposed to sit above the fray. The president's suggestion that corruption was endemic to the revolution also angered the Qom clerical establishment, which responded with its own dissenting letter: How dare Ahmadinejad defile the very system?

"Ahmadinejad has exposed rifts and spread distrust vis-à-vis the whole regime," said Kavous Seyed-Emami, a university professor. "That's groundbreaking."

The Rafsanjani letter, alluding to "volcanoes of anger" among Iranians, including at the alleged disappearance of \$1 billion from state coffers, will belong in any history of Iran's revolution. It says tens of millions watched as Ahmadinejad "lied and violated laws against religion, morality and fairness, and as he targeted the achievements of our Islamic system." It insists that Khamenei now ensure free and fair elections.

Khamenei has leaned toward Ahmadinejad, but much less so of late. He cannot be impervious to the rage of Rafsanjani, who is chairman of the powerful Expediency Council, which mediates disputes, and the Assembly of Experts, which oversees the supreme leader's office. Ahmadinejad now confronts surging forces from without (the street) and within (the clerical hierarchy).

Why the sudden turbulence? Here we come to the third critical characteristic of this campaign. Radicalism in the Bush White House bred radicalism in Iran, making life easy for Ahmadinejad. President Obama's outreach, by contrast, has unsettled the regime.

With Lebanon denying an electoral victory to Hezbollah, the oil-driven Iranian economy in a slump, and America seeking reconciliation with Muslims, the world now looks a little different.

Moussavi's attacks on the "exhibitionism, extremism and superficiality" of Ahmadinejad's foreign policy resonate.

Rafsanjani believes in a China option for Iran: a historic rapprochement with the United States that will at the same time preserve a modified regime. I also think that's possible - and desirable - and that Khamenei's margin for resisting it has just narrowed. So, too, has the margin for the foolishness of anti-Iran hawks.

- Readers are invited to comment at

global.nytimes.com/opinion

Load-Date: June 25, 2009

Khatami is not the conciliator he claims to be

The Age (Melbourne, Australia)

March 20, 2009 Friday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS; Opinion; Pg. 13

Length: 883 words

Byline: JOHN SEARLE - John Searle is president of the Jewish Community Council of Victoria, peak body of the Victorian Jewish community.

Body

Behind the Iranian's benign facade lie inhuman beliefs.

THE front page of Wednesday's Age featured the dramatic headline "Jewish fury at visit by Iran leader". Fury? Hardly. But the Jewish Community Council of Victoria is disappointed in the support for former Iranian president Mohammad Khatami's Australian visit given by the Anglican diocese and LaTrobeUniversity's Centre for Dialogue and we are concerned they have been duped.

Our belief, shared by Iranian dissidents, most Western and, indeed, Middle East governments, members of the Baha'i and other minority faiths in Iran and others, is that Iran is currently the greatest danger to world peace, and representatives such as Khatami are part of its strategy of ill intent.

Nevertheless, we continue our honest and friendly relationship with the Anglican diocese and the Centre for Dialogue as part of our long-standing commitment to interfaith relations.

The JCCV places great store on the benefits of dialogue. However, we do not believe it always works. As the Dalai Lama recently said (Times of India, 19/01), terrorists "are very brilliant and educated ... but a strong ill feeling is bred in them. Their minds are closed." Tragically dialogue is not always possible and can actually thwart peace by bestowing legitimacy on a dishonest partner, as exemplified in the negotiations between Hitler and Chamberlain.

Khatami was president of Iran from 1997 to 2005 and may be considering running again. It cannot be coincidental that Iranians lost even more freedoms during his presidency. More than 50 newspapers were closed, internet services banned and satellite dishes confiscated in this period. The Government continued to harass and kill intellectuals, students and dissidents. Public executions increased and Iran's minorities were intimidated.

Khatami's anti-democratic ways have not been confined to his own people. He has often expressed support for Hezbollah and for terrorist Palestinian factions - including Hamas and Islamic Jihad - which do not merely oppose Israel's policies but are committed to its destruction, and are also blatantly and proudly Jew-hating.

Khatami resembles his successor President Ahmadinejad in his public hatred of Israel, describing it, among other things, as a "plague" and "the greatest enemy of Islam and humanity". In a televised address on October 24, 2000, he declared, "In the Koran, God commanded to kill the wicked and those who do not see the rights of the oppressed ... If we abide by human laws, we should mobilise the whole Islamic World for a sharp confrontation with

Khatami is not the conciliator he claims to be

the Zionist regime ... If we abide by the Koran, all of us should mobilise to kill." And only last year, this supposed champion of dialogue called Israel "an old, incurable wound on the body of Islam, a wound that really possesses demonic, stinking, contagious blood".

At an international conference in 2007, Khatami refused to speak with Israeli journalists and reportedly told them to "go to hell". He then refused to participate in a panel presentation because an Israeli was also scheduled to speak. These are not the actions of a man committed to honest dialogue and peace.

Further, Iran is a totalitarian theocratic state. In 2008 Amnesty International reported the following: "The authorities continued to suppress dissidents. Journalists, writers, scholars, and women's rights and community activists were subject to arbitrary arrest, travel bans, closure of their NGOs and harassment ... [S]tate repression of Iran's minority communities [continued]. Discrimination against women remained entrenched ... Torture and other ill-treatment were widespread in prisons and detention centres ... [At] least 335 people were executed, among them seven child offenders. Sentences of stoning to death, amputation and flogging continued to be passed and carried out."

It is also common knowledge that Iran is developing a nuclear capacity and has threatened on numerous occasions to wipe Israel off the map. In 2007 its Government sponsored a conference debunking the Holocaust and a cartoon competition that mocked it. Last year, all the members of the Baha'i National Committee in Iran were imprisoned and are still detained.

This is the country of whose political establishment Khatami is a respected member and which he may possibly lead again. Khatami has not sought to dissociate himself from these threats, statements or actions in any way. Indeed, the opinion has been expressed that his more moderate pronouncements when president were deliberately framed to reduce world scrutiny of Iran.

Iran's mullahs forbid dissent. If Khatami did not support their heinous policies and ideologies, he would not have been president before and certainly would not be permitted to run again. While he may spout pious words of coexistence, behind his benign facade lie truly inhuman beliefs and actions.

We do not doubt that Archbishop Freier and Professor Camilleri are well intentioned in hosting Khatami. But sometimes you need to remove the packaging to see what really lies within. Just to meet this man legitimates his actions and words, and Iran and its terrible plans. The JCCV respectfully asks that they reconsider.

John Searle is president of the Jewish Community Council of Victoria, peak body of the Victorian Jewish community.

Load-Date: March 19, 2009

'I ask for your trust in this time of crisis'. As government sworn in, Netanyahu promises action on Iran and economy, vows to bring Schalit home

The Jerusalem Post

April 1, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1400 words

Byline: SHELLY PAZ and TOVAH LAZAROFF

Body

Israel seeks peace with the entire Arab and Muslim world but continues to be threatened by the forces of Islamic extremists, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said several hours before he was sworn in Tuesday evening.

He took the oath of office just before midnight, after the Knesset voted 69-45 to approve the new government.

"These are irregular times," Netanyahu told the Knesset plenum. "Today Israel is faced with two tests - an economic crisis and a security crisis. The source of these crises are neither our past actions nor past mistakes.... Our [current] actions, however, will determine the results of these crises."

Netanyahu was interrupted numerous times by critics of his extra-large government as he presented it and its guidelines to the Knesset. In the past, Netanyahu himself expressed opposition to large governments due to the expense involved.

"It is not with a victor's joy that I stand here today in front of you, but with a great sense of responsibility," Netanyahu began. "I ask for your trust at this time of worldwide crisis of a kind we haven't known before, and it is with a sense of worry, but also with hope and faith, that the State of Israel confronts two major challenges: the economic challenge and the security challenge. I am certain that the people of Israel will cope successfully with the challenges that lie ahead of it."

Regarding Iranian threats to "erase Israel from the map," Netanyahu criticized the international community for its lack of response.

"The Jewish people has experience with dictators and it cannot overestimate megalomaniac dictators who threaten to destroy it," he said.

The new prime minister added that the worst thing for the State of Israel and the world would be "that a radical regime obtains nuclear weapons."

The threat to Israel came from the spread of extremist Islam in the region and in the world, Netanyahu said.

'I ask for your trust in this time of crisis'. As government sworn in, Netanyahu promises action on Iran and economy, vows to bring Schalit home

"I separate extremist Islam from the general Muslim world, which is also threatened by extremist Islam," he told the plenum. "The Muslim culture is a rich culture that knew times of prosperity, of Arabs and Jews who lived together and created things together."

Six prime ministers had strived for peace with the Palestinians but failed, he said, adding that "the failure was not their fault. If the heads of the Palestinian Authority want peace, I tell them now - we can achieve it."

Netanyahu said his government would work for peace with all of Israel's neighbors on three levels: economic, political and security.

"We will carry out ongoing negotiations for peace with the Palestinians in an attempt to reach a permanent agreement," he said. "We don't want to rule another people, and the agreement will give the Palestinians all the rights to rule themselves, except for those that endanger Israel."

Netanyahu also explained how his government would handle the "truly unprecedented" economic crisis, saying it threatened the livelihood of tens of thousands of Israelis and that no one could tell when and how it would end.

"But I know that the Israeli market has clear advantages that enable it to cope with many challenges," he said. "The fact that we are a small country provides leverage in getting out of this crisis. The Israeli market is like a small and light speedboat whose direction can be changed more easily. I myself will lead this change of direction and the government I head will operate to protect work places, to resolve the shortage of credit in the market, and to maintain macroeconomic policies."

Netanyahu also promised a revolution in the education system and set a goal to place Israel among the top 10 countries in the world within 10 years.

"From my experience, when you set a goal, a process to achieve the goal starts right away," he said.

Netanyahu also discussed his plans to address the increase in crime, promising to strengthen the police, implement more severe punishments and advance reforms.

"It is unacceptable that the Jewish people, who were dispersed in more than a hundred countries in the Diaspora where they maintained high standards of morality, came back to their country where crime organizations that deal in murder, women and drug trafficking are emerging," he said.

Netanyahu also said he was committed to the Declaration of Independence from 61 years ago, "including the obligation for full equality for all people regardless of their religion, gender and race."

He praised departing prime minister Olmert and thanked him for the work he had done for the state, its security and its citizens.

Finally, Netanyahu read out the long list of ministers and deputy ministers that he asked the Knesset to approve - to loud catcalls from the opposition.

He explained that the coalition agreements had been checked with the relevant legal bodies, adding that when he was in the opposition, he had never shown disrespect for the Knesset.

He paused and look out to the spectators gallery where Aviva Schalit sat along with Karnit Goldwasser and Esther Wachsman.

Aviva's son Gilad was kidnapped by Hamas in June 2006. Until two weeks ago, hopes had remained high that Olmert would find a way to conclude a prisoner swap with Hamas for Gilad's return.

Now, it was Netanyahu's turn to speak of prioritizing Gilad's release.

It is right before Pessah, he said.

'I ask for your trust in this time of crisis'. As government sworn in, Netanyahu promises action on Iran and economy, vows to bring Schalit home

"At our national table, there is an empty chair. It is Gilad Schalit's chair. I will do everything in my power to ensure his speedy return, healthy and whole, to his family's bosom," Netanyahu said.

Then he moved from a personal address to the Schalit and said that as an expression of his feelings as Pessah approaches, he had chosen to read to the plenum a portion of one of the last letters that his brother Yonatan had written before he was killed in July 1976 leading a raid in Entebbe, Uganda, to rescue hostages.

His brother, Netanyahu said, had written that Pessah was the best holiday, because it focused on the liberty of the Jews. The Jews had gone through many long years of suffering, oppression, vagrancy and degradation, Yonatan wrote.

For many years, there appeared to be no ray of light, but that is no longer true, he wrote.

This holiday is a testament to the eternal goal of freedom.

"Pessah awakens an emotional bond, because of the Seder, and like all of us, I recall old memories from my personal past," Yonatan wrote.

But even, he said, as he reflected on his past, "I also see myself as an inseparable link in the chain of the existence and independence of Israel."

Then Netanyahu continued where his brother had left off.

"Israeli citizens, in this fateful hour, we are all an integral link" in that chain.

"From this podium in Jerusalem, which is our eternal capital, I am uttering a prayer to God, to bless that the work of our hands will be blessed, and that the unity with which we started on our way will be a good sign... that will ensure our future."

Kadima leader and outgoing foreign minister Tzipi Livni followed Netanyahu with a fiery speech that gave an indication of how her tenure as head of the opposition would be.

She criticized Netanyahu for the large government he had presented and warned that the public would soon tire of paying the heavy cost of the coalition's stability.

"You imposed this pompous government on the 'thin' public, a government of ministers of nothing and deputy ministers for anything," she said.

Livni attacked Israel Beiteinu chairman Avigdor Lieberman, as well as Netanyahu for giving Lieberman's party ministries responsible for enforcing the law while its leader was facing criminal investigations.

She also accused the Labor party and its chairman, Defense Minister Ehud Barak, for joining the new government, accusing them of being stuck to their seats at the cabinet table.

In a speech that was a farewell to political life, Olmert said earlier that there had been an "unbearable gap between the criticism this [outgoing] government absorbed and its achievements," although he added that he was leaving with no complaints or bitterness.

He talked about the main event of his tenure, the Second Lebanon War, and said that time was changing perspectives on the war, which eventually brought quiet to a border that had suffered rockets attacks between 2000 and 2006.

Olmert spoke of his partners in waging that war, thanking Labor MK Amir Peretz, at the time defense minister, whom he described as a "decent man," and retired chief of General Staff Dan Halutz, "a noble man and a hero."

'I ask for your trust in this time of crisis'. As government sworn in, Netanyahu promises action on Iran and economy, vows to bring Schalit home

Graphic

2 photos: PRIME MINISTER Binyamin Netanyahu addresses the Knesset before presenting his new government last night. Esther Wachsman), whose son Nachshon was murdered by Hamas terrorists in 1994, Aviva Schalit, whose son Gilad is being held by Hamas, and Karnit Goldwasser, whose husband Ehud was killed by **Hizbullah**, watch at the Knesset last night. (Credit: Ariel Jerozolimski/The Jerusalem Post)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

End of Document

As Obama offers Muslims 'a new beginning,' Israel gives a wary pledge to play its part. US president, in landmark Cairo speech, hails ties to Israel but says Palestinian plight 'intolerable,' demands 'stop to settlements,' says Iran has right to peaceful nuclear power

The Jerusalem Post

June 5, 2009 Friday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1416 words

Byline: HERB KEINON, AP contributed to this report.

Highlight: Lead Story

Body

Israel cautiously applauded US President Barack Obama's sweeping speech in Cairo Thursday, even as it was gearing up for tough negotiations with the Americans in the coming days over how to transform some of the rhetoric into a program.

During the 56-minute address to some 3,000 invited guests at Cairo University, Obama reconfirmed and pledged continued US support for Israel, but was uncompromising in his demand for the establishment of a Palestinian state, and called for a "stop to settlements."

"For decades, there has been a stalemate: two peoples with legitimate aspirations, each with a painful history that makes compromise elusive," Obama said, adding that it is "easy to point fingers."

"But if we see this conflict only from one side or the other, then we will be blind to the truth: the only resolution is for the aspirations of both sides to be met through two states, where Israelis and Palestinians each live in peace and security," he said.

Regarding the settlements, Obama - to perhaps the loudest applause he received during his address - said, "The United States does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. This construction violates previous agreements and undermines efforts to achieve peace. It is time for these settlements to stop."

In a speech whose primary goal was reconciliation with the Muslim world, Obama quoted from the Koran for emphasis, and called for a "new beginning between the United States and Muslims."

He said that together, Americans and Muslims could confront violent extremism across the globe and advance the search for peace in the Middle East.

"This cycle of suspicion and discord must end," he said. "And I consider it part of my responsibility as president of the United States to fight against negative stereotypes of Islam wherever they appear."

However, he said, "change cannot happen overnight."

As Obama offers Muslims 'a new beginning,' Israel gives a wary pledge to play its part. US president, in landmark Cairo speech, hails ties to Israel but says Pa....

Obama's remarks were broadcast on all radio and television outlets in Israel, and with Arabic voice-over translations by satellite stations Al-Arabiya and Al-Jazeera, Egyptian TV and Hizbullah's Al-Manar. The speech was not shown in Iran, where the government jammed signals to block satellite owners from watching.

Senior Israeli government sources said Thursday evening that they had been apprised beforehand of what Obama was going to say both about two states and about the settlements. Negotiations with the Americans over this issue will continue on Tuesday with the arrival of US special Middle East envoy George Mitchell.

While the officials did not criticize the president for his comments on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, they did say Jerusalem had expected Obama to take a stronger stand regarding Iran's nuclear program, at least saying what he has already said in the past - that the American engagement with Teheran would not be unlimited in time, but would be reassessed by the end of the year, and that the US was not taking any option off the table in dealing with Iran.

"It is clear to all concerned that when it comes to nuclear weapons, we have reached a decisive point," he said of Iran. "This is not simply about America's interests. It is about preventing a nuclear arms race in the Middle East that could lead this region and the world down a hugely dangerous path."

Obama also said he felt that any nation, including Iran, "should have the right to access peaceful nuclear power if it complies with its responsibilities under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. That commitment is at the core of the treaty, and it must be kept for all who fully abide by it."

Some four hours after the speech, the Prime Minister's Office issued a statement saying the government "expresses hope that President Obama's important speech in Cairo will lead to a new period of reconciliation between the Arab and Muslim world, and Israel."

"We share Obama's hope that the American efforts will signal the opening of a new era that will bring about an end to the conflict, and [lead] to pan-Arab recognition of Israel as the Jewish state living in peace and security in the Middle East," the statement read. "Israel is obligated to peace and will do as much as possible to help expand the circle of peace, while taking into consideration its national interests, the foremost of which is security."

The somewhat low-key response was crafted after Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu consulted with the members of the inner cabinet who are currently in the country: ministers Dan Meridor, Moshe Ya'alon and Bennie Begin, all from the Likud. The two other members, Defense Minister Ehud Barak (Labor) and Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman (Israel Beiteinu), are currently abroad, but also issued statements praising the speech.

Obama, during his long-awaited speech on relations between the US and the Muslim world, placed "the situation between Israelis, Palestinians and the Arab world" as the second major source of tension between the US and the Muslim world.

"America's strong bonds with Israel are well known. This bond is unbreakable. It is based upon cultural and historical ties," he said. He also spoke of the history of the Jewish people and their pursuit of a Jewish homeland.

"Around the world, the Jewish people were persecuted for centuries, and anti-Semitism in Europe culminated in an unprecedented Holocaust," Obama said. "Tomorrow, I will visit Buchenwald, which was part of a network of camps where Jews were enslaved, tortured, shot and gassed to death by the Third Reich. Six million Jews were killed - more than the entire Jewish population of Israel today."

"Denying that fact is baseless, ignorant, and hateful," he told the Arab and Muslim world, in which Holocaust denial is rampant. "Threatening Israel with destruction - or repeating vile stereotypes about Jews - is deeply wrong, and only serves to evoke in the minds of Israelis this most painful of memories while preventing the peace that the people of this region deserve."

"On the other hand," Obama went on, "it is also undeniable that the Palestinians... have suffered in pursuit of a homeland. For more than 60 years, they have endured the pain of dislocation. Many wait in refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza and neighboring lands for a life of peace and security that they have never been able to lead."

As Obama offers Muslims 'a new beginning,' Israel gives a wary pledge to play its part. US president, in landmark Cairo speech, hails ties to Israel but says Pa....

"They endure the daily humiliations - large and small - that come with occupation," he said.

"The situation for the Palestinians," he stressed, "is intolerable."

Asserting that "the Palestinian Authority must develop its capacity to govern, with institutions that serve the needs of its people," he also cited the Middle East Quartet's conditions for Hamas: that the terrorist group must "put an end to violence, recognize past agreements and recognize Israel's right to exist."

"At the same time, Israelis must acknowledge that just as Israel's right to exist cannot be denied, neither can Palestine's," he said. "It is time for these settlements to stop."

Obama demanded that Israel "live up to its obligations to ensure that Palestinians can live, and work, and develop their society."

And then, in a criticism of Israel's Gaza policy, Obama added, "Just as it devastates Palestinian families, the continuing humanitarian crisis in Gaza does not serve Israel's security; neither does the continuing lack of opportunity in the West Bank.

"Progress in the daily lives of the Palestinian people must be part of a road to peace, and Israel must take concrete steps to enable such progress," he said.

The president was adamant in his call for the Palestinians to end terrorism.

"Palestinians must abandon violence. Resistance through violence and killing is wrong and does not succeed," he said.

"Violence is a dead end. It is a sign of neither courage nor power to shoot rockets at sleeping children, or to blow up old women on a bus," he said. "That is not how moral authority is claimed; that is how it is surrendered."

In a gesture, Obama conceded at the beginning of his remarks that American tension with the Muslim world "has been fed by colonialism that denied rights and opportunities to many Muslims, and a Cold War in which Muslim-majority countries were often treated as proxies without regard to their own aspirations."

Obama said some people in the United States viewed Islam as hostile to Western countries, but that this was not the case, despite fear and mistrust. At the same time, he said the same principle must apply in reverse: "Just as Muslims do not fit a crude stereotype, America is not the crude stereotype of a self-interested empire."

Graphic

2 photos: 'Islam has a proud tradition of tolerance'. US President Barack Obama waves to the audience after speaking at Cairo University yesterday. EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT Hosni Mubarak welcomes US President Barack Obama upon his arrival at Qubba palace in Cairo yesterday. (Credit: AP)

Load-Date: October 4, 2011

Riding the holy wind

The Jerusalem Post

July 31, 2009 Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 14

Length: 2800 words

Byline: ARIEH O'SULLIVAN

Highlight: Paragliding in Israel presents the unique risks of landing in a minefield or being blown over the borders. But how else can one soar hundreds of meters in the air, breaking the bonds of gravity and getting a bird's-eye view of the country's glories, from the Kinneret to the Dead Sea? Box at end of text.

Body

He flew swiftly on a winged creature; he traveled on the wings of the wind. - Psalms 18:10

Okay, so you've rafted down the Jordan River, hiked the Negev canyons and scuba dived in the Red Sea. But if you're feeling that when it comes to Israel you've been there and done that, guess what? You haven't seen the country until you've soared over it with the birds, literally, in a paraglider.

Yes it's true; paragliding, as they say, is the slowest and apparently riskiest way to get from one place you don't really need to be to another. But ah, the journey is breathtaking. And where else in the world can you have as much fun and at the same time risk sparking a war or at least landing on a minefield?

Okay, so there are some disadvantages. But it's only in the Holy Land that you can leap off the same mountain on which King Saul fell onto his own sword. Or retrace the route Jesus took when he leaped off an abyss to escape a lynch mob.

Despite this, or because of it, paragliding is one of the most exciting extreme sports in the country.

Not only that but word is out and more and more foreigners are flocking to the country to throw themselves off perfectly good mountains and ridges. Most locations around the world are seasonal, but Israel is uniquely situated so that despite its tiny dimensions there are enough winds, cliffs and hills to let enthusiasts find a spot to jump from nearly every day of the year.

IT'S GOING on dusk here on the cliffs of Mevo Hama on the southern Golan Heights. The setting sun is a deep yellow and it's starting to silhouette the hills across Lake Kinneret to the west. More than 30 paragliders are already in the sky hovering over the 400-meter plateau. One after another, they yank their chutes by the lines like they're pulling up a kite, turn around and literally push themselves off the edge of the cliff for half an hour of soaring before the sun sets completely. Syria and the outskirts of Damascus on the eastern horizon, the fading white Gilad mountains of Jordan to the south and the shadowy, craggy slopes of Galilee to the west; it's a stunning view that only a privileged few get to see.

It is the annual paragliding festival of a group calling itself Holy Wind (in Hebrew it could also be translated as the "holy spirit," a name chosen in deference to the Holy Land). About 100 gregarious paragliders, their spouses and

Riding the holy wind

kids gather in mid-July for the overnight event at the country's main high mountain paragliding site. There were even some who came from abroad.

It was here that the Syrian gunners aimed at the kibbutzim and moshavim along the shores of the lake below until the IDF captured the strategic heights in the 1967 war.

"Better watch out on your take off," they told me the first time I jumped from this place. "If it goes wrong, you risk landing in a minefield."

At first I thought they were just ribbing me in some kind of psychotic joke. But alas the barbed wire on the slopes actually marks off old Syrian minefields. About once or twice a year someone lands in a minefield somewhere in the country. So far, no one has actually landed directly on a mine and set it off. And even though these mines are likely more than 50 years old and may not still be lethal, who wants to chance it? Not only that but the army has to be called in to rescue the pilot.

PILOT. GLIDER. Floater. Ever since the days of the Greek high-flyer Icarus, people have dreamt of soaring with the birds. Nothing simulates it better than paragliding.

"Everyone starts paragliding for a different reason and enjoys it for different reasons," says Amir Malik, who picked up the sport with his wife some six years ago. "For some it's the quest for the altitude, for some the challenge of finding thermals. For some it's the aerobatics. Some do it for the silent flying along the ridges and some for the noisy flight with a motor on their backs. I personally joined the sport because it was my dream to fly. I really wanted to fly with a motor in the skies of Israel. That was my dream but with time, after my Level 1 course, I realized that free flight was the kind of flying for me. I even bought a motor and tried it, but I saw that it wasn't for me.

"I enjoy high flight, the higher the better. Flying just before dusk as the sun sets over Lake Kinneret is the ultimate flying experience for me. My most beautiful moments of my flights till today are the evening flights from Mevo Hama."

The paraglider evolved from a kippa-shaped parachute and today resembles a sort of inflated, banana-shaped wing. It's made out of siliconized cloth and inflates with the wind that gives it enormous lift that allows the pilot, dangling beneath in a well-padded harness, to fly. The pilot controls the glider by pulling on brakes, lines that literally bend down the trailing edge of one side of the wing. Pull the left brakes and the wing turns to the left, and vice versa. Some have purchased motors that are strapped on the back and allow them to fly without the need to jump off a mountain. This is called paramotoring.

The paragliding sport came into prominence here in the mid-1990s with the advent of light, strong materials, better understanding of aerodynamics and growing awareness of extreme sports in the increasingly affluent society.

Paragliders are often seen in the summer buzzing the coastal bluffs that stretch from Herzliya past Netanya. Other favorite sites are off Mount Tabor in the Lower Galilee and the Golan Heights. In the winter the flying shifts to Mount Gilboa and the cliffs over the Dead Sea when the easterly winds are blowing or down to the Negev craters.

"That's the beauty of paragliding in Israel," explains Tsahi Reil, a farmer from Kibbutz Merhavia and one of the doyens of the sport. "There are nearly year-round flying options available and every site is within a one- to three-hour drive."

"Our scale makes us unique, but it also is our greatest limitation," he added.

REIL MEANT the borders, of course. The ultimate goal of most paragliders once they have mastered the sport is not only to stay aloft with the winds and thermals, but to actually fly someplace, to cross the country. Here it's not like Europe where paragliders can take off in the Swiss Alps, cross over Italy and land in Slovenia without second thought for border control. Here one risks starting a war, if he flies over the border.

In November 2005, Adam Wexler, a paraglider test pilot, took off without authorization from Kibbutz Menara and instead of soaring east toward the Hula Valley as he planned, a gust sent him right over the border into tense

Riding the holy wind

Lebanon. He asked for permission but was reportedly rejected. He jumped anyway. Hizbullah gunmen tried to capture him and opened fire in his direction. But alert IDF troops engaged them in a fierce gun battle to allow him to sprint back over a minefield to a border gate where he scuttled in. No one was hurt. But Wexler not only left his chute on the Lebanon side, he was charged with disobeying military orders and negligent operation of a flight vessel. He was eventually acquitted because he proved he had indeed received verbal authorization.

Minefields and Hizbullah! Not to mention low-flying IAF fighter jets during weekdays. As if dangling from thin nylon strings under a parachute 1,000 meters above the earth wasn't extreme enough. What kinds of people are drawn to this?

There is no real typical paraglider; some are in the hi-tech fields, some are farmers, bus drivers, Web designers, cops and businessmen. There are a handful of Arabs, but this sport has not caught on with that community. One reason it is attractive to Israelis is that despite the fact that it looks like a loner sport - just you and the clouds - it requires a supportive social network. And Israelis are social animals.

"This is not an individualistic sport. If it was, it would never have taken off in Israel because we all like to run and tell our friends," says Nir Aruesti, 36, a bus driver. "You have 10 minutes of flying and two hours of story telling to your mates. Not only that but there will always be someone to pick you up from wherever it is you land."

Avi Shaul, 36, an air-conditioning technician, got into the sport after falling down three stories in a work accident.

"I was afraid of heights and I told myself I needed to deal with that," he said. "Now I've got the opposite problem - I see heights and I want to jump off!"

"This sport sucks you up. Not everyone who does the course sticks with it, but those who do end up investing a lot of time in it. You become crazy about it," interjects Reil.

Old-timer Beni Yishai always flies with a loaded pistol tucked into his belt. "Why?" I asked him. He quickly draws it out and says, "You never know what you might encounter out there. You never know."

Indeed, this is mainly a man's sport. Israel mirrors the rest of the world and here roughly 5 percent of paragliders are women. (In Brazil about one in three paragliders are women.)

IS IT expensive? The price of a chute, padded harness (which contains a reserve parachute) and helmet is about NIS 14,000. Used equipment costs about half that. The basic course that teaches you to fly off high mountains and bluffs costs about NIS 7,000. Courses in thermal flying and other advanced topics are usually taken after pilots accumulate 100 to 150 hours of flying which takes about a year or two.

There are about 200 active paragliders in the country and another 200 or 300 who occasionally participate. Israel is even home to APCO, one of the most formidable paragliding manufacturers in the world.

There are four schools in the country that can be recommended. But the sport is wide open and there is no longer a need for accreditation and you don't actually need any formal license to fly.

Is it dangerous? There are always accidents, mostly due to pilot error on takeoff and landing or not obeying the rules, but also due to sudden weather shifts and inexperience. There have been a number of fatal accidents, but statistically it's one of the safest sports in the country.

I kept repeating this to myself as I stood on the cliff edge at dusk waiting for the wind gusts to die down. Exactly a year ago, with two years of experience under my belt, I had a bad takeoff. The wind threw me back violently against the cliff (above the minefield) and I broke my collarbone. That kept me grounded for a few months.

But I was back because I have always had this inner urge to fly like a bird. I wasn't afraid of the parachute - just my wife.

Riding the holy wind

One of the best ways to experience the paragliding thrill without going through the course and buying equipment is to be taken aloft in a tandem with an experienced pilot.

For the experienced, Mount Tabor is the mecca, drawing enthusiasts from around the world. A virtual thermal machine, from here paragliders can lift off, soar over the monastery and head east. Sometimes the currents will take you toward Lake Kinneret, just over where the Jordan River picks up again. Or if the winds are right you can continue to the eastern shores of the lake.

"That's the pinnacle achievement of our sport," says Eitan Shabiro, one of the organizers of the Holy Wind gathering on the Golan Heights. "The moment someone does that complex 20-kilometer cross from Mount Tabor to the Golan Heights for the first time, he runs and plasters it all over the Web. I know I did, because when I landed here that was such a great thrill."

Just north of Mount Tabor, near Nazareth, is the Mount of the Precipice, or Mount of the Leap. According to tradition, this is where an angry mob dragged Jesus to this cliff, his poor mother watching in horror. But before they could toss him off, he calmly "walked through the crowd" and leapt over the precipice.

Tradition says Jesus soared the eight kilometers and landed on the top of Mount Tabor where he went through the process of transfiguration. Depending on how you interpret the New Testament, one could say that thermal conditions must have been pretty good and Jesus may have made one of the first "cross-country" flights in the Holy Land. This past May, Pope Benedict XVI visited what had been an inaccessible site. The new road paved for him has thus opened up a new paragliding launch site.

When he jumped off the Mount of the Precipice for the first time, Tsahi Reil wasn't thinking about Jesus. "The only thing I was thinking of was how to keep my leading edge from running forward and causing a stall," he recalls.

No matter where you fly you pass over ancient sites. The winter take off site at Mount Gilboa is called "Saul's shoulder." It was here that King Saul fell on his sword and died instead of being taken captive by the Philistines. At the Arsuf bluffs, paragliders get a bird's eye view of the Crusader castle of Appolonia (and the nudist beach just to the north).

MOST ACTIVE paragliders will tell you that the sport has changed their life. Like farmers, they notice the seasons more. Like sailors, they are more keen to the changes in the winds. Like hunters, they can identify most birds. Weekends and many evenings in the week are spent linking up with fellow gliders and flying.

"When I drive past those filled parking lots of shoppers at the strip malls on the weekends, I pity them. I used to be one of them, wasting my time. Now I'm seeing the country, making great new friends and flying," says Shaul.

Moshe Edri, 46, is a recently retired flight technician with thousands of hours of helicopter flight in his logbook.

"I look at the skies and see the clouds and wind direction every morning when I wake up. Even my family has become infected. They see the flags fluttering in the wind and they say 'Dad, there's an easterly wind today,'" he says.

Paragliding for this airman is drastically different.

"In the air force I was up there all wrapped up in metal and glass. But hanging under a paraglider, I feel the wind and am literally flying with the birds. In fact one of the most moving moments I ever had was when I found a thermal. Then a short-toed eagle joined me and we circled higher and higher. That was the biggest compliment I have ever received," Edri recalls.

After a night of merrymaking in a Beduin tent and singing around a campfire, we paragliders awoke with hopes of a good westerly wind for an early morning flight.

Peter Kostal, 49, a visitor from Austria, was anxious to fly but a bit apprehensive about the minefields. He's flown all over the world but this was a first for him.

Riding the holy wind

"I'm excited to be in Israel because when I fly here, I have no idea what will happen," Kostal says.

I'M ALL strapped up in my gear and off I go. Once airborne I turn north and start hunting for thermals. My altimeter chirps when I ascend and "burps" when I descend. I'm listening for the chirps and find them over a spring and start to circle. Many times I have soared high and returned for a top landing on the Golan, but alas it is still early and the sun has not yet warmed up the earth for a strong thermal. After 25 minutes of peaceful flying, I head out to the landing zone near the shores of Lake Kinneret. I am ecstatic.

Not far behind me is Kostal, who lands disappointed with his first flight from the Golan.

"I pulled away from the ridge on top quickly because I was afraid of landing in one of the minefields," says the Austrian. "I guess I'll have to come back and try again."

(BOX) How to make the leap

The most popular Web site and forum for the sport is Holy Wind (www.holywind.co.il).

Excursions with tourists can be arranged at a number of sites. The most popular are at Netanya and Arsuf (Ga'ash) bluffs over the Mediterranean. But the higher flights and cross-country flights are from Mount Tabor or Mevo Hama on the Golan Heights.

Tandem Flights

The average cost is from NIS 300 for about a 20-minute flight over the coastal bluffs, and NIS 450 for a longer flight from the mountains in Galilee or the Golan.

The market is wide open since there is no licensing required for tandem flying. But the most reputable pilots offering safe tandem flights are:

* Neshet (www.flyneshet.co.il) from NIS 300 for about a 20-minute flight over the coastal bluffs and NIS 450 for a longer flight from the mountains.

* Agur (www.flyagur.co.il) from NIS 350 for half hour coastal flight and NIS 450 for mountain flying.

* Shamayim Paragliders 052-222-3221, (09) 954-9788

* Dvir Paragliding (www.dvirparagliding.co.il) 050- 833-3100, (09) 899-0277

* Dekel (www.dekel5.co.il) (03) 506-0063

Schools

* Agur (www.flyagur.co.il) - The Israel hang gliding and paragliding club, established 1977, Sea Palace Beach, Bat Yam. Arnon Har-Lev 054-245-4346

* Sitvanit (www.sitvanit.com) - The Sitvanit Paragliding Club, established 1994. Shimon "Shimi" Hanegbi, (03) 518-9618, 050-559-0894

* Udi Doron (www.glide.co.il) 052-803-3824

* Seven Winds (www.7winds.co.il), Roman Kirpak 054- 464-3969

Graphic

Riding the holy wind

11 photos: Beni Yishai - an 'old-timer' who flies with a pistol tucked in his belt. 'You never know,' he says. Tzahi Reil, in a 'Holy Wind' T-shirt, measures wind speed on the Golan Heights. The author, post-flight. (Credit: ARIEH O'SULLIVAN)

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International: The US and Islam: Obama woos Muslim world with call for a new understanding: President urges 'mutual respect' in landmark address, and strongly backs two-state solution to Palestinian conflict

The Guardian - Final Edition

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theguardian

Section: GUARDIAN INTERNATIONAL PAGES; Pg. 20

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Byline: Ian Black, Cairo

Body

Barack Obama used his long-heralded speech to the Muslim world yesterday to call for a new beginning in relations and made an impassioned plea for a two-state solution to resolve the bitter conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

Seeking to draw a line under the war in Iraq, Guantanamo Bay and other Bush policies, Obama went out of his way to display understanding of the causes of Muslim resentment and mistrust of the west.

But as he left for Germany and France for D-Day celebrations his landmark address drew mixed reviews for a performance many found sensitively crafted and sincere but lacking substance or novelty.

"I have come here to seek a new beginning between the US and Muslims around the world, one based upon mutual interest and mutual respect," the president told an invited audience at Cairo University. "America and Islam are not exclusive, and need not be in competition."

Obama's messages on the hot-button issues of Israel, the Palestinians and Iran did not break new ground, while passages on Afghanistan, Iraq and fighting violent extremism also replayed familiar themes. Still, some of his strongest words were reserved for the ever-contentious issue of Israel and the Palestinians, whose life under occupation was "intolerable".

There was loud applause when he said emphatically: "The US does not accept the legitimacy of continued Israeli settlements. This construction violates previous agreements and undermines efforts to achieve peace. It is time for these settlements to stop."

But comments that presage a clash with Binyamin Netanyahu's rightwing government were balanced with an appeal to the Palestinian movement Hamas to abandon violence. "It is a sign of neither courage nor power to shoot rockets at sleeping children, or to blow up old women on a bus," he said.

International: The US and Islam: Obama woos Muslim world with call for a new understanding: President urges 'mutual respect' in landmark address, and strongly b....

Obama also referred to America's "unbreakable bond" with Israel, which he coupled with a bold attack on "baseless, ignorant and hateful" denial of the Nazi Holocaust - a staple of the hardline Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

The Cairo speech had been billed as one of Obama's most important, and was keenly awaited after a fleeting visit to Iraq, a Persian new year message to Iran, and a speech to the Turkish parliament in Ankara.

Obama painted a flattering picture of Islamic religion, culture and civilisation, starting with the traditional Arabic greeting, assalaamu alaykum - "peace be upon you" - drawing a thunderous ovation.

As expected, he referred to his own Muslim roots, mentioning the azaan call to prayer that he heard while a child in Indonesia. He played the religious card deftly. America would never be at war with Islam. "The Holy Qur'an teaches that whoever kills an innocent, it is as if he has killed all mankind; and whoever saves a person, it is as if he has saved all mankind.

"The faith of over a billion people is so much bigger than the narrow hatred of a few. Islam is not part of the problem in combating violent extremism - it is an important part of promoting peace."

He referred to his decision to close the Guantanamo Bay detention camp and did not use the Bush-era phrase "war on terror". Religious freedom and women's rights were also emphasised - a challenge to intolerance and bigotry.

Obama's comments on democracy - a burning issue in US allies Egypt and Saudi Arabia and most Arab countries - were detailed but non-specific, a disappointment if not a surprise to activists.

"America does not presume to know what is best for everyone, just as we would not presume to pick the outcome of a peaceful election," the president said. "But I do have an unyielding belief that all people yearn for certain things: the ability to speak your mind and have a say in how you are governed; government that is transparent and doesn't steal from the people; the freedom to live as you choose.

"Those are not just American ideas, they are human rights, and that is why we will support them everywhere."

Reaction was varied. In Damascus, the Hamas leader Khaled Meshal told Time magazine: "Undoubtedly Obama speaks a new language. We are looking for more than just mere words . . . We are keen to contribute to this. But we (believe that can not happen) merely with words."

"It was basically a very conciliatory speech," said Hisham Kassem, one of Egypt's leading commentators. "Obama was saying 'I'm not George Bush'. But there was very little policy and very little you could hold him accountable to."

Mohamed Habib, deputy leader of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, the Islamist movement that poses the strongest opposition to Hosni Mubarak's authoritarian regime, called the speech "a public relations address". Iran and Hezbollah in Lebanon both attacked it.

In the speech Obama defended US strategy in Afghanistan and Iraq but made it clear he did not wish to maintain a permanent military presence in either country.

Obama's message on Iran - where Ahmadinejad is facing crucial presidential elections next week - repeated a commitment to "mutual respect" between the old adversaries.

But he issued a warning on the burning issue of nuclear weapons. "We have reached a decisive point. This is not simply about America's interests. It is about preventing a nuclear arms race in the Middle East that could lead this region and the world down a hugely dangerous path."

International: The US and Islam: Obama woos Muslim world with call for a new understanding: President urges 'mutual respect' in landmark address, and strongly b....

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LETTERS

Geelong Advertiser (Australia)

May 1, 2009 Friday

1 - Main Edition

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Section: LETTERS; Pg. 18

Length: 879 words

Body

We can't compromise our values

IN reference to the Pageant Queen and the gay-rights spat (GA 22/4), this young lady was asked for her opinion on same-sex marriage and said she was raised to think marriage should be between a man and woman.

Fair enough, she was asked for her opinion, and she gave it. The gentleman who asked her the question had his own opinion. Fair enough, that's his opinion.

I think the young lady should be applauded for not compromising her values, her morals, her standards, her principles. Well done!

The testimony of today's society is that too many people over too many years have compromised their and societies values, morals and principles.

The fruit of compromising values can easily be seen in legalised killing (abortion) and legalised adultery (prostitution).

We, our society, has allowed evil to be legalised, ``all it takes for evil to succeed is for a few good men to do nothing".

It is time that people once again became committed to Christian values, morals and principals, because, clearly, very clearly, compromised values lead to decay and death.

David and Kaye McKinlay, Bell Post Hill

Why depression is an illness

I DON'T understand with all the facts now published to make people more aware that depression is an illness, there are still some organisations not accepting this.

I have been receiving treatment for some time, and up till an incident in January 2009 had been able to cope well enough to work part-time with medical aid and some counselling.

I was lucky, my employer worked my hours out so I had very little stress, but I gave notice because I could no longer handle even this.

LETTERS

If I was stressed before, it was even worse dealing with Centrelink.

I don't blame the people behind the counter, they have set rules to follow.

If I couldn't work because I hurt my knee or back that's fine, they will pay you an allowance, but severe depression?

No. Because I resigned I was told I would have to wait 13 weeks and then go on to Newstart and I would have to look for work or do 15 hours a week voluntary.

If I could handle work I would have stayed where I was.

Except for five years when I had my children, I have worked since I was 15 and am now 62.

I supplied a doctor's certificate, but they sent me to their own psychologist and, though she agreed with my doctor, I still have to wait and go on Newstart.

The Government is spending all this money to make people aware of mental illness but refuses to recognise it in its own department.

Name and address provided

Support or not, what's the answer?

JASON Bishop stated (GA 14/4) ``I would like to say that I personally do not support abortion", but obviously you do support it writing ``women have the right to choice in having an abortion".

On what basis do you not support abortion?

In supporting a woman's choice, you argue against the fact that abortion is painful to the unborn baby writing, ``Much scientific research has been done, with the general consensus being that the foetus does not develop the ability to perceive pain until near full term".

Can you give us the source of this research so it can be read?

Aborting babies causes women as well as their babies physical and emotional harm (Abortion Facts.com), perhaps that's why you do not support abortion.

Kevin Guinane, Gheringhap

Report the animals

SEXUAL predators are the people of this planet who cannot control thier emotions or urges and become animals towards their counterpart, be it man or woman.

Reporting these attack is hard on the women as the mindset that has evolved with men and the role women should have in society has backfired for the male because the female species is intelligent in ways man is not.

I say come forward ladies, girls, teens and little ones, come forward and report the animal who has attacked your very soul and destroyed your dream.

Gavin Couzens, Belmont

Which side of the fluoride fence?

MR McLarty, I would welcome an anti-anti-fluoride group, any publicity is good.

But would you please consider the fact that I know that in the short term you will not be receiving fluoridated water, as you have tanks and a filter system fitted.

LETTERS

So on which side of the fence are you sitting?

Sandra Camm, Highton

Let's talk and end the bloodshed

HAVING no compassion for refugees , or whatever you call them does not solve the problem . One has to widen one's horizon a little to realise that refugees are mainly a product of war.

I grew up in a northwest German port directly in the war-zone during WWII and was 10 years old when it finished.

I grew up hating war and still do.

Towards the end, the refugees fleeing before the ruthless Russian army marching towards Berlin were mainly Jews.

America refused to take any more refugees and the Russian Navy obliged, sinking several refugees ships in the Baltic Sea.

Twelve ships in all with casualties of 18,056.

Right now we are involved in three unjust, unwinnable wars, compliments of the US.

The Palestine/Israel conflict produces millions of Arab refugees; luckily for us they are put in concentration camps in neighbouring Jordan.

That conflict, plus the Iraqi war, is the catalyst of terrorism and the anti-American sentiment and I firmly believe without that conflict there would be no Hezbollah, Hamas, Fatah, al-Qaeda, Taliban or even 9/11.

E. Ruseler, South Geelong

Load-Date: May 1, 2009

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Gulf friends look to us as Iran flexes its muscles

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

March 31, 2009 Tuesday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS AND FEATURES; Opinion; Pg. 11

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Byline: PETER HARTCHER. Peter Hartcher, the Herald's international editor, travelled to the UAE as a guest of the Lowy Institute for International Policy.

Body

Australia has a new friend in the Middle East. It's not the prettiest regime in the world but as Arab autocracies go, it's about as good as it gets. In this case the real estate adage applies - as far as Australia is concerned it's about location, location, location.

The Federal Government has moved to permanently base Australia's various Middle Eastern regional military assets in the United Arab Emirates. In return, Australia has about 30 personnel in the UAE training its fast-growing special forces troopers.

Behind the details of the arrangement are the two countries' larger needs. Australia has decided to stop pretending. Instead of pretending that we are occasional visitors to the Middle East, only rushing in when the US decides to go to war there and rushing out again when it finishes, Australia is now acknowledging that it has permanent interests in the area.

The UAE is a small, young, vulnerable state trembling on the lower lip of the Persian Gulf, anxious for the reassurance of friends and influence.

Both countries are now girding for the coming crisis with Iran, which lies just across the Gulf from the UAE.

The United Arab Emirates is an authoritarian country with a population of 4 million, of whom only 800,000 are locals. The rest are foreign workers, most living in squalid conditions, who can never become citizens.

It's a federation of seven sheikdoms, forged in 1971 when the British withdrew from the region. The silliest of these seven sisters is Dubai, which has become famous worldwide for its flashy extravagance, building lavish hotels and snowfields in the desert.

It's so extravagant that its debts became insupportable the moment the world's lenders decided to tighten credit standards last year. Dubai's bigger, richer, more prudent sister, Abu Dhabi, came to its rescue. Abu Dhabi, also the capital of the UAE, made an initial payment of \$US10 billion to keep the emirate of Dubai from insolvency. More payments are on the way.

The source of the UAE's wealth is oil. It is one of the world's 10 biggest producers, pumping about 2.5 million barrels a day, more than Iraq. It has the sixth biggest proven reserves in the world, about 98 billion barrels, more

Gulf friends look to us as Iran flexes its muscles

than Russia. The global recession, and the collapse in the price of oil, has dealt the UAE a blow. Its government budget, usually in surplus, is expected to be in deficit this year, and its economy in recession. Still, it will be one of the world's better-performing economies.

Although it is an authoritarian state, it is a relatively liberal one. There is opportunity for women at all levels except, of course, the ruler's. Freedom of religion is guaranteed. The UAE is leading a UN campaign against trafficking in people. The gateway to the compound of the Sandhurst-educated Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi is decorated with a metallic artwork - the word "tolerance" spelled out in metre-high letters. All this is enough to have the UAE considered a highly dubious country by its fundamentalist Wahabi Muslim neighbours in Saudi Arabia.

And its foreign policy is pro-US. This simplifies Australia's relationship with the UAE, but it creates tension with the UAE's big northern neighbour, Iran. As the Iran crisis approaches, the UAE leadership is increasingly fearful. Iran continues to develop its nuclear capacity in defiance of the UN Security Council. Although Tehran swears that it is for peaceful purposes only, the rest of the world is unconvinced, and Israel is terrified.

Israel and the US are weighing options for bombing Iran's known nuclear facilities before it is able to produce a nuclear weapon. Speculation centres on the second half of this year or early next. If this should happen, the UAE fears it will be one of the subjects of Iranian retaliation. Specifically, the UAE expects Iran could fire missiles into its cities and activate Hezbollah terrorist cells among the 400,000 Iranian workers living in the UAE.

This helps explain why the emirates are so keen for Australia's help in developing their special forces, the front line in rebuffing any Iranian attack.

The UAE has built special forces of about 2000 men, about the same number as Australia's, and is trying to increase this to 5000 over the next few years. But special forces are the most specialised and training intensive of troops. There is a shortage of eligible emirates recruits for the forces and a shortage of skilled trainers to equip them for their task.

The urgent build-up of the UAE's special forces is a key priority of the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, himself a former special forces trooper.

The UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Dr Anwar Mohammed Gargash, last week set out his understanding of Iran's positioning: "A large part of Iran's behaviour is connected to how they see the international system.

"They think that this is the twilight of the unipolar world" ruled by the US, "and that we are entering a period where US power will be less and less relevant, and there is room for Iran to do two things - one, to be maximalist in its demands; and, two, to increase its influence in the world.

"Australia, the US and others have to emphasise that if Iran sees this shift, it doesn't mean it will be replaced by another system, but by a system of mores and rules that must be abided by."

As the Iran crisis approaches, Australia and the UAE will be facing it together.

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Thousands march in Iran opposition protests

Daily News Egypt

September 18, 2009 Friday

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Body

TEHRAN: Hardliners attacked senior pro-reform leaders, including former President Mohamad Khatami, in the streets of Tehran Friday as tens of thousands marched in competing mass demonstrations by the opposition and government supporters.

Opposition protesters, chanting "death to the dictator," hurled stones and bricks in clashes with security forces.

The opposition held its first major street protests since mid-July, bringing out thousands in demonstrations in several parts of the capital. In some cases only several blocks away, tens of thousands marched in government-sponsored rallies marking an annual anti-Israel commemoration.

The commemoration, known as Quds Day, is a major political occasion for the government - a day for it to show its anti-Israeli credentials and its support for the Palestinians. During a speech for the rallies, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad railed against Israel and the West, questioning whether the Holocaust occurred and calling it a pretext for occupying Arab land. Quds is the Arabic word for Jerusalem.

But the opposition was determined to turn the day into a show of its survival and continued strength despite a fierce three-month-old crackdown against it since the disputed June 12 presidential election.

The four top opposition leaders joined the protests, in direct defiance of commands by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who barred anti-government demonstrations on Quds Day. That could provoke an escalation in the crackdown: hardline clerics have been demanding the past week that any leader backing the protests should be arrested.

Tens of thousands joined the government-organized marches, starting in various parts of the capital and proceeding to Tehran University. Police and security forces, along with pro-government Basij militiamen, fanned out along main squares and avenues and in many cases tried to keep nearby opposition protesters away from the Quds Day rallies to prevent clashes, witnesses said.

But at one of the several opposition rallies around the city, a group of hard-liners pushed through the crowd and attacked Khatami, a cleric who is one of the most prominent pro-reform figures, according to a reformist Web site. The report cited witnesses as saying the opposition activists rescued Khatami and quickly repelled the assailants.

Thousands march in Iran opposition protests

Another reformist webs site said Khatami's turban was disheveled and he was forced to leave the march.

Hardliners tried to attack the main opposition leader, Mir Hossein Mousavi, when he joined another protest elsewhere in the city, a witness said. Supporters rushed Mousavi into his car when the hard-liners approached, and the vehicle sped away as his supporters pushed the hard-liners back, the witness said. He and other witnesses spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of government retaliation.

In one of the main Tehran squares, Haft-e Tir, baton-toting security forces tried to break up one of the opposition marched, and were met with protesters throwing stones and bricks, witnesses said. Several policemen were seen being taken away with light injuries. At least 10 protesters were seized by plainclothes security agents in marches around the city, witnesses said.

The opposition claims that Ahmadinejad won the June election by fraud and that Mousavi is the rightful victor. Hundreds of thousands marched in support of Mousavi in the weeks after the vote, until police, Basij and the elite Revolutionary Guard crushed the protests, arresting hundreds. The opposition says 72 people were killed in the crackdown, though the government puts the number at 36. The last significant protest was on July 17.

On Friday, opposition supporters poured out on the streets in green T-shirts and wearing green wristbands - the color of the reform movement - and marched with fingers raised in the V-sign for victory, chanting "Death to the Dictator."

Others shouted for the government to resign, carried small photos of Mousavi, while some women marched with their children in tow.

There were also chants of: "Not Gaza, not Lebanon - our life is for Iran" - a slogan defying the regime's support for Palestinian fighters in Gaza and Lebanon's Hezbollah guerrilla.

Two other opposition leaders appeared at the protests - Mahdi Karroubi, who also ran in the June election, and former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, according to the semiofficial Fars news agency. Rafsanjani is a senior cleric in Iran's leadership but has been a behind-the-scenes supporter of Mousavi.

His appearance at the rally is a rare overt show of backing for street protesters. It comes after Rafsanjani was banned this year from his customary role delivering the Friday prayers on Quds Day, which he has done the past 25 years. On Friday, the prayer sermon was delivered by a hard-line supporter of Ahmadinejad, Ahmad Khatami.

In sheer numbers, the opposition turnout was far smaller than the mass pro-government Qods Day marches - not surprising given the state's freedom to organize the gathering. Customarily on Quds Day, Tehran residents gather for pro-Palestinian rallies in various parts of the city, marching through the streets and later converging for the prayers ceremony. The ceremony was established in 1979 by the leader of the Islamic Revolution and founder of present-day Iran, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Just hundreds of yards (meters) away from opposition protesters on the main Keshavarz Boulevard, thousands of Ahmadinejad supporters marched carrying huge photographs of the president and Supreme Leader Khamenei. Some in the government-sponsored rally chanted: "Death to those who oppose the supreme leader!"

At the climax of the occasion, Ahmadinejad addressed worshippers before Friday prayers at the Tehran University campus, reiterating his anti-Holocaust rhetoric that has drawn international condemnation since 2005. He questioned whether the "Holocaust was a real event" and saying Israel was created on "false and mythical claims."

Load-Date: September 18, 2009

'We pray for his release every day'; Israelis cling to hope young soldier captured in 2006 by Palestinian militants will be freed

The Toronto Star

February 14, 2009 Saturday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A15

Length: 849 words

Byline: Oakland Ross, Toronto Star

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

There's a white booth by the corner of Azza and Balfour streets, bordered by stylized photographs of a certain young Israeli soldier and with the number "964" emblazoned on a large poster.

At least, those were the digits that appeared yesterday.

Today, the calendar takes another turn, and the "4" becomes a "5," indicating that 965 days have now crept past since June 25, 2006, when a young Israeli conscript named Gilad Schalit was taken prisoner by Palestinian militants from the Gaza Strip.

The shy, soft-spoken army corporal - since promoted to staff-sergeant and now aged 22 - has been a hostage ever since, the only Israeli soldier currently being held captive by Israel's adversaries.

"We pray for his release every day," said Tamar Kaplan, a 20-something Israeli woman who was taking a turn staffing the booth yesterday, along with her husband, Yariv. "It's important not to forget someone who is still alive."

By mid-morning, the couple had collected 24 more signatures on a running petition that is regularly presented to Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, whose official residence is located only a couple of doors from the booth.

Tended every day for the past several months by friends, relatives, and supporters of the Schalit family, the marquee is a reminder, as Tamar puts it, "that there is still an Israeli soldier out there."

But possibly not for long.

Hopes for Schalit's release have been raised and dashed before, but there have lately been signs, however tenuous, that his freedom could at last be close at hand.

Unfortunately, those signs could also be the flashes of a cruel and double-edged sword.

"It's now or never," said Gershon Baskin, co-director of the Israeli-Palestinian Center for Research and Information, who in the past has played a behind-the-scenes role in attempts to free the soldier. "I think, if there isn't a deal before Olmert leaves office, there won't be a deal."

'We pray for his release every day' Israelis cling to hope young soldier captured in 2006 by Palestinian militants will be freed

Forced to step down as prime minister over so far unproven allegations of financial wrongdoing, Olmert will complete his term in office within a matter of weeks.

It is very unlikely, said Baskin, that Olmert's successor - thought likely to be right-wing politician and former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu - will be either willing or able to strike an early deal for Schalit's freedom.

The problem is that any such agreement will inevitably come with a huge and politically risky price tag - the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, perhaps as many as 1,400.

"No new government will want this to be their first act in power or their second or their third," said Baskin. "Now is the ideal time."

Schalit's capture nearly three years ago set off a chain of events that eventually resulted in Israel's month-long war against Hezbollah guerrillas in Lebanon.

Three handwritten letters and a videotape have provided evidence the Israeli soldier remains alive.

There are other reasons to believe a bargain for Schalit's release may be possible, if far from assured.

Less than a month after the formal end of a punishing 22-day Israeli military offensive in Gaza, indirect peace talks are underway in Cairo, as Egyptian mediators seek to forge a long-term ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, which holds power in Gaza.

Israeli negotiators are now making the fate of Schalit an integral part of those indirect discussions, proposing his release as a quid pro quo for their agreement to a key Hamas demand - the lifting of this country's economic siege of Gaza.

Since March 2006, but with increased severity since Hamas seized sole control of Gaza in June 2007, Israel has restricted the movement of people and goods across the border, part of an effort to alienate Gaza's 1.5 million people from the militant Islamist organization now in power.

Hamas desperately wants to see those restrictions lifted and may be willing to meet Israel's terms, particularly if Palestinian leaders calculate Israel's next administration would be less amenable to a deal than Olmert is now.

"There may be a window of opportunity," said Eran Lerman, a former Israeli army colonel who now specializes in military intelligence and strategic analysis.

As for a prisoner exchange, Hamas has proposed a list of some 350 Palestinian men it wants released from Israeli-run jails, plus all the Palestinian women and minors currently being held.

Some of the men on the list were responsible for notoriously bloody acts of political violence against Israel.

"Really foul crimes," said Lerman. "Letting these people go would be very difficult."

As a lame-duck prime minister with little to lose, Olmert may be in a far better position than any conceivable successor to strike what would be a politically treacherous deal. He has said he is willing.

"The prime minister would like to have this resolved before he finishes his term," Olmert spokesperson Mark Regev said yesterday.

"What I can say is that, with the end of the operation in Gaza, conditions are now more conducive to Gilad's release."

Meanwhile, the talks continue in Cairo, talks that may or may not bear fruit.

Cautioned Regev: "I cannot report there has been any progress."

'We pray for his release every day' Israelis cling to hope young soldier captured in 2006 by Palestinian militants will be freed

Graphic

MENACHEM KAHANA afp getty images Protesters hold portraits of captured Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit outside Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's residence in Jerusalem last month.

Load-Date: February 14, 2009

End of Document

Pakistan: 1300 patients treated in Medical Camp

Daily Pak Banker

July 14, 2009 Tuesday

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Length: 194 words

Dateline: LARKANA

Body

LARKANA, Aug. 14 -- A one-day medical Camp was organized by the Al-Fateh Social Welfare Association Larkana in collaboration with the USAID-Pak and National Trust for Population Welfare here in village new Gud Taluka Dokri of Larkana district here on Wednesday. On the occasion Doctors and paramedics of health department, staff of family planning and Local NGO workers participated in the services. The Medical Camp was inaugurated by the **Hizbullah** Bughio Ex-MNA and District Coordination Officer Larkana Mohammed Jaffer Abbasi on the occasion. They also visited the medical camp and various services and awareness theatre for spreading awareness to the common men about the behavior change and **women** health issues on the occasion. In a medical camp Abdul Majeed Ansari the Regional Officer and President Ghazi Social Welfare Association Bandah Ali Bugti gave briefing about the medical camp and other activities. They told that in a camp about 1300 patients treated and medicines were distributed on the occasion. Published by HT Syndication with permission from Daily Pak Banker. For more information on news feed please contact Surit Das at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

Load-Date: August 13, 2009

The tragedy of the left's discourse on Iran (Part I)

Daily News Egypt

September 8, 2009 Tuesday

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Length: 1047 words

Body

The electoral coup and the subsequent uprising and suppression of the revolting voters in Iran have prompted all sorts of analyses in Western media from both the Right and the Left. The Right, mostly inspired by the neo-con ideology and reactionary perspectives, dreams of the re-creation of the Shah's Iran, looks for pro-American/pro-Israeli allies among the disgruntled Iranian public, and seeks an Eastern European type velvet revolution. As there is very little substance to these analyses, they are hardly worth much critical review; and one cannot expect them to try to understand the complexities of Iranian politics and society.

As for the Left in the West, confusions abound. The progressive left, from the beginning openly supported the Iranian civil society movement. Znet, Campaign for Peace and democracy, Bullet, and some other media provided sound analysis to help others understand the complexities of the Iranian situation.

Some intellectuals signed petitions along with their Iranian counterparts, while others chose to remain silent. But disturbingly, like in the situations in Gaza or Lebanon, where Hamas and Hezbollah uncritically became champions of anti-imperialism, for some other people on the left, Ahmadinejad has become a champion because of his seemingly firm rhetoric against Israel and the US.

Based on a crude class analysis, he is also directly or indirectly praised by some for his supposed campaign against the rich and imagined support of the working poor. These analyses also undermine the genuine movement within the vibrant Iranian civil society, and denigrate their demands for democracy, and political and individual freedoms as middle class concerns, instigated by western propaganda (a view shared by Shamenei, Ahmadinejad and his supporters).

MRZine and Islamists

The most bizarre case is the online journal MRZine, the offshoot of Monthly Review, which in some instances even publicized the propaganda of the Basij (Islamic militia) hooligans and criminals.

The website has given ample room to pro-Islamist contributors; while they can hardly be considered to be on the left, their words are appreciated by the leftists editing the site. One writer claims that the battle in Iran is about "welfare reform and private property rights", and that Ahmadinejad "has enraged the managerial class", as he is "the least enthusiastic about neo-liberal reforms demanded by Iran's corporate interests", and that he is under

The tragedy of the left's discourse on Iran (Part I)

attack by "Iran's fiscal conservative candidates". The author conveniently fails to mention that there are also much "corporate interests" controlled by Ahmadinejad's friends and allies in the Islamic Guard and his conservative cleric supporters, and that he has staunchly followed "privatization" policies by handing over state holdings to his cronies.

During the 1979 revolution, the late Tudeh Party, under the direction of the Soviet Union, was unsuccessfully digging deep and looking hard for "non-capitalists" among the Islamic regime's elements to follow a "non-capitalist path" and a "socialist orientation". Now it seems that MRZine magazine is beginning a new excavation for such a breed among Islamists, not understanding that all factions of the Islamic regime have always been staunch capitalists.

Azmi Bishara's imagined Iran

In "Iran: An Alternative Reading", Israeli Arab politician and former Knesset member Azmi Bishara argues that Iran's totalitarian system of government differs from other totalitarian systems in two definitive ways: Firstly, it has incorporated "such a high degree [of] constitutionally codified democratic competition in the ruling order and its ideology". Bishara does not explain however that these "competitions" are just for the insider Islamists, and all others, including moderate Muslims or the wide spectrum of secular liberals and the left are excluded by the anti-democratic institutions within the regime.

The Second differentiation Bishara makes is that "... the official ideology that permeates institutions of government ... is a real religion embraced by the vast majority of the people". He is right if he means the majority of Iranians are Muslim and Shia, but it is wrong to assume that all are religious and share the same obscurantist fundamentalist version as those in power. He also fails to recognize the existence of a large number of secular people in Iran, one of the highest percentages among Muslim-majority countries.

He praises "such tolerance of political diversity", "tolerance of criticism", and "peaceful rotation of authority" in Iran.

One wonders if our prominent Palestinian politician is writing about an imaginary Iran, or the real one. Could it be that Bishara has not heard of the massacres of thousands of political prisoners, chain killings of intellectuals, and silencing of the most able and progressive voices in the country? Doesn't he know that a non-elected 12-member conservative body (The Guardianship Council) only allows a few trusted individuals to run for President or the Parliament, and that the real 'authority', the Supreme Leader, does not rotate, and is selected by an all-Mullah Assembly of Experts for life? The unelected Leader leads the suppressive apparatuses of the state, and since 1993 has created his own "Special Guards of Velayat" (NOPO) for quick suppressive operations.

So much for tolerance and democracy.

Bishara undermines the genuine massive reform movement and claims that "expectations regarding the power of the reform trend ... were created by Western and non-Western media opposed to Ahmadinejad...". Had Bishara done his homework, he would have learned about the massive campaigns led by large number of women's organizations, the youth, teachers and select groups of workers. He warns us of "elitism" and "arrogant classist edge", and implicitly dismisses these movements of "middle class backgrounds" and claims that these people are not the majority of young people but rather the majority of young people from a particular class". It is unclear on what basis he makes the assertion that most of the youth from poor sectors of the society support Ahmadinejad.

Saeed Rahnama is Professor of Political Science at York University, Canada.

Part II of this article will be published tomorrow, Wednesday Sept. 9, 2009.

Load-Date: September 7, 2009

Buzzers at the ready; Parlour games for boys, an angry young man's guide to 2009, and everything you wanted to know about the year's news but were too afraid to ask - Brian Schofield unwraps seasonal fact-filled treats

The Sunday Times (London)

December 6, 2009

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Section: CULTURE;FEATURES; Pg. 50

Length: 975 words

Body

DON'T SWALLOW YOUR GUM by AARON CARROLL and RACHEL VREEMAN Penguin £7.99

Compiled from columns in the British Medical Journal, this is a work of feisty and authoritative popular science. Working through more than 80 popular misconceptions about the human body - "You lose most of your heat through your head" - the book uses up-to-date research to prove them wrong (put on a hat, take your trousers off, and presto, you lose the same amount of heat through your legs). Particular fun is had shredding such concerns as sugar making children hyperactive (untrue), caffeine making you dehydrated (wrong again) and Vitamin C preventing colds (sadly not).

IS IT JUST ME OR HAS THE SHIT HIT THE FAN? by STEVE LOWE and ALAN MCARTHUR Sphere £9.99

For the bitter blogger in your life, the fourth effort from this pair of angry young men is a misanthrope's guide to 2009, revelling in everything from Grant Bovey's business failures to the joyous irony of Nicky Hambleton-Jones being replaced on 10 Years Younger by someone much, erm, younger. It's very swearsy, so not for prudish aunts, but also extremely funny. Everyone from Vince Cable to Bob the Builder gets a satisfying mauling, but the best bile is reserved for anyone who spent 2009 saying, "I don't think it'll affect property prices around here" - "That's right. Because you are very, very special."

ON THE TIP OF MY TONGUE Questions, Facts, Curiosities & Games of a Quizzical Nature by DAVID GENTLE Bloomsbury £7.99

Now, can you name 20 Mr Men? Twelve Carry On regulars? All the Reservoir Dogs? Such are the challenges contained within this deviously different quiz book. The idea is to pose questions that you're almost certain you know the answer to - the name of all six Monopoly pieces, or all the Cluedo weapons - but actually leave you flagging once your bluff is called.

HOW TO MAKE A TORNADO by NEW SCIENTIST Profile £7.99

Buzzers at the ready Parlour games for boys, an angry young man's guide to 2009, and everything you wanted to know about the year's news but were too afraid to

Australian men fart more than women; a syringe of LSD will kill an elephant almost instantly; male turkeys will mate with a piece of wood with a dead turkey's head nailed to it. Such products of frivolous academic research illuminate the latest seasonal compilation from New Scientist magazine. In contrast to their previous books, which have collected their Questions and Answers column, this ranges across the publication's whole cuttings file, and is subsequently more patchy, but relatives looking for scientific inspiration will get plenty from it.

WHAT'S NEXT? edited by MAX BROCKMAN Quercus £14.99

Twenty young scientists write essays explaining the big ideas they're working on. All dark matter and mirror neurons, it's probably too heavy for kids, but it's also fascinating. I now understand how much energy there is inside a vacuum, and the chemical differences between brains raised under eastern and western cultures. Chapter 13 also sets a fascinating challenge: squeeze your toe and your ear at the same time. Why did you feel the two sensations simultaneously, when one travelled 10 centimetres through your nerves, and the other several feet?

THE QI BOOK OF THE DEAD by JOHN LLOYD and JOHN MITCHINSON Faber £16.99

Karl Marx once downed a pint in all 18 pubs between Oxford Street and the Hampstead Road; as an infant, Oliver Cromwell was abducted by a monkey; Catherine de Medici invented the fork, and Genghis Khan pioneered zero-tolerance policing. Such is the fibre of this collection - from the producers of the BBC2 show - of 68 breezy, witty mini-biographies of great, good and simply odd lives, from Epicurus to Tallulah Bankhead. It's a much wordier, longer book than previous QI spin-offs, though the irreverent, lively tone should inspire the recipient to ask for full-length lives of some of the fascinating subjects covered.

MONTEGUE BLISTER'S STRANGE GAMES The Friday Project £9.99

For a less cerebral loved one, this is a blokey trove, the product of a blog dedicated to collecting puerile playground and parlour games. The rules of every mindless pursuit ever devised by men (and it is largely men) with time on their hands are carefully laid out - some genius, for instance, has devised 101 extra hand-shapes you can add to Rock, Paper, Scissors, including Chainsaw, which beats Porcupine but loses to Tornado. If yours is traditionally an alcoholic Christmas, I recommend initiating a round of Human Skittles, Underpants Jumping, or Russian Egg Roulette.

THE INSECT THAT STOLE BUTTER? ed JULIA CRESSWELL OUP £10.99

This Oxford dictionary of word origins will get a lot of use from a language-loving relative. The tiny "orig." sections of the definitions in traditional Oxford lexicons have been expanded into light but authoritative descriptions of the journeys of meaning different words have taken. A typically fascinating odyssey is "cockney", which originally described an effeminate, cosseted child, then a soft-handed city sort, before becoming a badge of East End honour.

* All available at Bookshop prices (including p&p) on 0845 271 2135

All bestseller lists have been prepared by The Bookseller using data supplied by and copyright to Nielsen BookScan, taken from the TCM for 28/12/08 to 14/11/09

Stocking filler of the year

WHAT ON EARTH IS GOING ON? A Crash Course in Current Affairs by TOM BAIRD and ARTHUR HOUSE Fourth Estate £12.99

A sharp and sober collection of succinct, background briefings on the current-affairs subjects we all pretend to know about. From the origins of Hezbollah to how hedge funds actually work, it starts with the basics without being patronising - the perfect topical catch-up, perhaps, for any relative who wasted 2009 tweeting about Jedward, or any parent who's developed "nappy brain" after a year of sleep deprivation. It can also function as a dinner-table row-settler, with sections covering such vein-popping topics as immigration, climate change and Palestine, all awash with authoritative statistics.

Buzzers at the ready Parlour games for boys, an angry young man's guide to 2009, and everything you wanted to know about the year's news but were too afraid to

Graphic

Brain box: Stephen Fry, centre, and QI panellists

BBC

Load-Date: December 6, 2009

End of Document

Iran not legitimate state

The Calgary Herald (Alberta)

August 26, 2009 Wednesday

Final Edition

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Section: Q: QUERIES - QUIBBLES - QUIRKS; Pg. A15; Christopher Hitchens

Length: 974 words

Byline: Christopher Hitchens, For The Calgary Herald

Body

U. S. President Barack Obama has said that he wants "the Islamic Republic of Iran" to be welcomed back into the "community of nations." Unfortunately, it is precisely the fact that it is an Islamic republic that excludes it from such consideration.

A pointed reminder of this was provided last week, when the country's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, freshly blooded from his recent military coup, nominated his choice for defence minister. This turns out to be Ahmad Vahidi, who if confirmed will be the only holder of the defence portfolio in the world to be wanted by Interpol.

Vahidi used to head the Quds Force, a shadowy arm of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps that conducts covert operations overseas. In 1994, according to an Argentine indictment adopted by Interpol's red notice, or most-wanted index, he was one of those responsible for "conceiving, planning, financing and executing" the demolition of the Jewish community's cultural centre in Buenos Aires. There were 85 deaths and hundreds of injuries. Among the five other named co-conspirators in this atrocity were Mohsen Rezai, formerly the head of the Revolutionary Guards and more recently a candidate for the presidency, and the late Imad Mugniyeh, the Damascus-based leader of *Hezbollah*'s military wing, itself a declared proxy of the Islamic Republic.

At the time, Interpol's secretary general Ronald K. Noble said that "a red notice chills travel--limits travel --and places the government in power at risk of explaining why a person for whom a red notice is issued is able to move freely."

A different version of this very point occurred with particular force to Canada's foreign minister in 2006. His office noticed that a certain Saeed Mortazavi was scheduled to travel from Iran, via Frankfurt, to Geneva. Mortazavi was then and still is Tehran's much-detested and feared prosecutor general, in which capacity he oversaw the rape and murder of a Canadian citizen, a photojournalist named Zahra Kazemi, in 2003. He had also freed her rapists and murderers after two independent commissions had found them responsible. (Need I add that Mortazavi was en route to Geneva as a member of Iran's official delegation to the Human Rights Council?) Foreign Minister Peter MacKay telephoned his counterparts to try to have Mortazavi arrested and extradited to Canada, but he wasn't quite quick enough.

There's really quite an impressive backlog of cases to be considered. In 1997, a court in Germany found that the shooting of several Iranian Kurds at the Mykonos restaurant in Berlin in 1992 had been sanctioned and ordered by an Iranian government committee that included "Supreme Leader" Ali Khamenei and then-president Rafsanjani.

Iran not legitimate state

This would not be the first time that a criminal investigation has touched the men who stand at the head of the Iranian state: Mark Bowden has produced some persuasive if not conclusive testimony that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was among the hostage-takers and kidnappers who violated diplomatic immunity at the American Embassy in Tehran, and there are legislators in the Austrian parliament who have demanded an inquiry into his role as a Revolutionary Guard leader in furnishing the weapons and money that were employed by an Iranian death squad to murder Iranian-Kurdish leader Abdul-Rahman Ghassemlou in Vienna in 1989.

The term Revolutionary Guard was not, until recently, as much of a byword as it has since become. But this year's military coup in Tehran, of which that organization was the main engine, has put it at the forefront of our attention. The rape and torture of young Iranians, the sadistic public bullying and sometimes murder of women, the closing of newspapers and the framing-up in a show trial of opposition politicians and intellectuals--all this is the fruit of Revolutionary Guard activity and ambition. We may be limited in what we can do to help and defend the Iranians who are confined within their borders.

But surely it is time the international community spoke with one voice and said that the leaders of this criminal gang must stay inside their borders, as well. Perhaps fewer invitations to "President" Ahmadinejad to speak at Columbia University and fewer countries putting out the red carpet for his defence minister. As for the sending of known supervisors of murder and torture to human rights summits in Geneva: conceivably that could become a slight no-no, as well.

Hiding somewhere in Iran are people who were paid by its government to commit sectarian murders in Lebanon and Iraq, and who organized and carried out assassinations and assassination attempts against the editors and publishers of Salman Rushdie, a novelist then living in London. Everybody can now see that the Iranian government has forfeited any claim to legitimacy at home. Of scarcely less importance is the fact that it presents the face of a criminal enterprise to the outside world as well. There is no family of nations, except in the colloquial sense of "crime family," to which it can conceivably be invited to belong. We should ground its leaders for a start, demand the extradition of their many wanted accomplices and exact hefty penalties from their overseas proxy organizations.

The week in which the Obama administration was so voluble about the British humiliation at the hands of Libya's Col. Gadhafi is an excellent moment to recall our own responsibilities in this regard, including our duty to our Canadian neighbours. But remember: Gadhafi, after the fall of Baghdad, at least decided to surrender his nuclear materials. In the case of Iran, it won't be very long before the theocratic thugs and crooks and assassins have their very own fissile and missile capacity. Please bear it in mind, as they so obviously do.

Christopher Hitchens Is A Columnist For Vanity Fair And Slate Magazine, Where This Column Originally Appeared

Load-Date: August 26, 2009

A debate worth noting

The Nation (AsiaNet)

November 15, 2009 Sunday

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Section: Vol. XXIII; No. 285

Length: 1031 words

Byline: Dr James Zogby

Body

A story universally missed last week was the extraordinary debate that occurred in Congress in advance of a vote on a resolution against the Goldstone Report. It may have been that this story not seen as newsworthy as others playing out at the same time: the fallout over Secretary of State Clinton's "whip lash" performances in Jerusalem, Marrakesh and Cair

o; Palestinian President Abbas' announcement that he would not run in 2010; and Israel's seizure of a ship it claimed was transporting weapons from Iran to Hezbollah.

Then again, the significance of the Congressional debate may have been ignored given what appeared to be the lopsided vote in favour of the anti-Goldstone resolution.

It will be recalled that when the report was first released, members of Congress were quick to denounce it using, at times, near hysterical language. Since Goldstone had no vocal champions, when Foreign Affairs Committee Chair Howard Berman and ranking Republican Ileana Ros-Lehtinen introduced their AIPAC supported anti-Goldstone resolution, one might have thought that the matter would be quickly resolved with a near unanimous vote.

But that was not to be the case.

For his part, Justice Goldstone mounted a vigorous defence of his work. In an open letter to the Congressional sponsors, the justice offered a point-by-point rebuttal of what he detailed as the misleading and factually incorrect statements in the resolution. In addition, two members of Congress, Keith Ellison (D-MN) and Brian Baird (D-WA) who had visited Gaza after the war, wrote articles and pressed their colleagues urging a more thoughtful consideration of the Goldstone Report. And the NGO community (including leading human rights organisations, Arab American and American Jewish groups, and a coalition of Christian churches) mobilised their memberships and addressed letters to Congress.

As a result, instead of a quick and quiet vote, an extended debate took place. At least 16 members of Congress rose to speak eloquently and passionately about their opposition to the bill.

In their remarks, the members: defended the integrity of Justice Goldstone and the report; spoke of the importance of defending the rule of law; decried the efforts of some to cover up the horrors that occurred in Gaza; and expressed concern with the lack of any open and transparent process that rushed this anti-Goldstone measure to a vote.

What follows are a few excerpts from some of those who spoke:

A debate worth noting

Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-CA): "The tragic deaths of innocent civilians in Gaza and the devastation brought upon their homes, schools, and infrastructure has worsened a humanitarian crisis that cannot be ignored. Residents of Gaza and the West Bank continue to lack appropriate access to the most fundamental needs, including food, fuel, water, sanitation, education, health care, and the basic materials needed to rebuild their communities."

Congressman William Delahunt (D-MA): "This resolution came to the floor on suspension without a hearing, despite the willingness of Judge Goldstone to come before the United States Congress and answer any questions that we might pose to him."

Congressman Brian Baird (D-WA): "My friends who have described the Goldstone Report, as a colleague just did, I'm not sure if they have read it. Unlike most of my colleagues here, I have been to Gaza and I have read in its entirety the Goldstone Report. And I will tell you he says many things that, though unpleasant, are true and must not be obstructed. Do not pass this resolution. Support this fine jurist. Give justice, true justice, a chance to be heard."

Congressman John Dingell (D-MI): "Neither Israel nor Hamas, nor any other country or other non-state political actor is exempt from international human rights laws or free of consequence for violations of them. If nothing else, the Goldstone Report should serve as a document that Israel, Hamas, and the rest of the international community can use to ensure that future human rights violations do not take place in civilian areas..."

Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D-OH): "Almost as serious as committing war crimes is covering up war crimes, pretending that war crimes were never committed and did not exist....Because if this Congress votes to condemn a report it has not read concerning events it has totally ignored about violations of law of which it is unaware, it will have brought shame to this great institution."

Congresswoman Betty McCollum (D-MN): "This resolution seeks to hide the ugliness of the Gaza war by covering up violent excesses committed against innocent civilians by both Hamas and the Israeli Defence Forces. Why does the US House want to reject an accounting of Hamas' terrorism against Israeli civilians, as if thousands of rockets were not fired at Israel? And why would this resolution want to deny that hundreds of Palestinian women and children and elders were needlessly killed?"

Congresswoman Lois Capps (D-CA): "I think that in this body's haste, we've overlooked some of the depth of unspeakable tragedies that have occurred during the war on Gaza. Innocent Israeli and Palestinian lives were lost."

Congressman George Miler (D-CA): "I fully support efforts to provide clarity, honesty and accuracy to the debate about the conflict in Gaza, just as do many of my constituents who have contacted me this week urging me to oppose this resolution."

Following this extraordinary debate, with both Democratic and Republican leadership actively pushing their members to vote for the resolution, passage was a foregone conclusion. But, the final vote, though appearing to be lopsided, yielded more votes in opposition than in any previous similar vote on an AIPAC supported resolution, with: 344 For, 36 against, 22 present, and 30 not voting (against and present votes are opposed, and about one-half of those 'not voting' were also opposed).

What this debate and vote point to is the growing resolve of some significant members of Congress (a Committee Chair and several sub-Committee Chairs, the Chairs of the Congressional Black Caucus and Progressive Caucus, and some Jewish members) to speak out and challenge pro-Israel orthodoxy.

It should not go unnoticed.

Load-Date: November 23, 2011

TRAVEL What I didn't have the guts to tell you as minister Don't be an idiot

The Advertiser (Australia)

May 25, 2009 Monday

1 - State Edition

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 19

Length: 904 words

Byline: ALEXANDER DOWNER

Body

I DON'T know about you, but it's always nice to get emails. Once upon a time you'd look with pleasure at a handful of letters which dropped through the letter box. Now all you get are those threatening looking envelopes with windows. Or if you're Tom Koutsantonis, those nasty missives which tell you about passing unknowingly through a speed camera.

But this is a generalisation. At the height of the Schapelle Corby affair I received 5000 emails in one day from fellow Australians pleading with me to save ``our Schapelle" from the horrors of the Indonesian legal system. Or, to be a bit more honest, the few I looked at said that.

I'm sure my successor as foreign minister, Stephen Smith, had his in box bursting last week as people demanded he save the beer mat mum, Annice Smoel, from the ravages of the Thai police.

I felt for him especially when the media started demanding he ``do something" to save her.

After about 10 minutes as foreign minister I was a little surprised to learn I was ``responsible" for miscreant Australians who got into trouble in foreign countries.

No, no, no, don't get it wrong - drug traffickers, drunks, kleptomaniacs and fraudsters weren't responsible for their own stupidity - I was.

It's about time that great nanny in Canberra, the Federal Government, turned around and told people they are responsible for their own decisions.

I was in Lebanon the other day and went down to the southern cities of Sidon and Tyre. They're fascinating places - old Crusader castles, bustling souks, colourful little food stalls with generous owners offering you a taste of their wares.

But I couldn't help remembering the awful events in those same places three years ago when Israel went to war with Hezbollah.

There were said to be 20,000 Australians in Lebanon at that time and a hefty percentage of them were demanding the Australian Government save them and fast.

TRAVEL What I didn't have the guts to tell you as minister Don't be an idiot

Lebanese support groups hit the airwaves screaming that the Government was too slow getting those Australians who wanted to be evacuated to safety. But hang on, Australia's about 15,000km from Lebanon and we don't dock ships in the eastern Mediterranean ready to ferry Australians to safety.

And there was something else. We'd issued a travel advisory months earlier warning Australians of the dangers of southern Lebanon and the risks of going there.

It didn't matter - apparently we had to get them out.

We were lucky. The Australian ambassador, a petite, charming professional called Lyndall Sachs, worked day and night chartering ferries and providing comfort to the evacuees, who hadn't cared about the travel advisories, and whisked them to safety.

It was one of the great achievements of an Australian diplomat. Almost single handedly, she managed to get around 5000 Australians to Cyprus and Turkey.

We then chartered planes to take them back to Australia. I hope they built shrines to her. Some did, at least metaphorically.

But some just whinged. They felt seasick on the ferry and that was our fault. Could they get frequent flyer points for the free flight back to Australia? And all this cost around \$30 million dollars - your dollars.

I'll tell you this - I didn't get 5000 emails of thanks but I got plenty of abuse because we weren't fast enough, the ferries didn't go from their port of choice and we were slow because we were racist, and so on. I mean, we'd warned them and told them not to go to the south of Lebanon. They went all the same. And when the proverbial hit the fan it was, you guessed it, ``our fault".

Then there was Hurricane Katrina, which flooded much of New Orleans. A mother of an Australian who arrived in New Orleans the day the hurricane hit came to see me in Stirling and demanded I get her son out. Americans couldn't get out but I had to get her son out. I asked if he'd heard the warnings from the U.S. Government that week to avoid New Orleans.

She started shouting. He doesn't follow the news, he doesn't watch TV or read the newspapers. I see, I said. It was my fault he was in New Orleans, was it? What were we to do? Fly helicopters from Australia to America and pick up Australians and leave the Americans

behind?

I didn't have the guts to say this as foreign minister but don't you think you should take responsibility for yourself when you go overseas?

If you're too dumb or idle to read the travel advisories and too mean to take out travel insurance when you go overseas then you ought to take responsibility for your own behaviour.

Sure, if there's a catastrophe like the Bali bombings or you're trapped in a corruption scam the government should try to help. But not if you're too lazy and silly to help yourself.

Remember two things when you travel. First, there are no special laws for Australians overseas. Foreigners make the laws over there, not us. And secondly, foreigners do things differently and they're entitled to.

If you go to a Muslim country and get wildly drunk and women start dressing down (if you know what I mean) it can be bloody offensive to the locals. You'll soon be in trouble.

And learn to take responsibility for your own behaviour. Stealing is wrong, even stealing beer mats. I know, I know, the beer mat mum had a few drinks but, no, she wasn't drunk and she was charmingly polite to the local police.

But she was in a foreign country with a different culture and all of us ought to respect that.

TRAVEL What I didn't have the guts to tell you as minister Don't be an idiot

* Alexander Downer was Australia's Foreign Affairs Minister from 1996 to 2007

Load-Date: May 24, 2009

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Syria, in a bet that's paying off, opens up a bit; Better ties with Turkey offer range of political and economic rewards

The International Herald Tribune

December 15, 2009 Tuesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 9

Length: 1036 words

Byline: Robert F. Worth

Body

Ever since Syria and Turkey lifted their visa restrictions in September, Turkish visitors have poured into this picturesque northern city.

Hawkers in Aleppo's ancient souk now call out to shoppers in Turkish, and cross-border commerce has soared. The two countries have embarked on a very public honeymoon, with their leaders talking about each other like long-lost friends.

But this rapprochement is about far more than trade, or the collapse of old Turkish-Arab enmities. At a time of economic and political uncertainty here, the new warmth with Turkey has stirred hopes about Syria's future direction, in areas ranging from religion to oil and gas to peace with Israel.

For some here, the new closeness with secular, moderate Turkey represents a move away from Syria's controversial alliance with Iran. For others, it suggests an embrace of Turkey's more open, cosmopolitan society. For many - including Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad - it conjures different dreams of a revitalized regional economy, less vulnerable to Western sanctions or pressure.

"It's much more than an economic relationship," said Samir al Taqi, the director of the Orient Center for International Studies in Damascus. "It's about regathering the region, and a feeling that the West is much weaker, less liable to do anything here. I think Syria has lots of ambitions to redefine its geopolitical position."

Those ambitions became apparent in October, when Syria delayed signing an economic agreement with the European Union that it had sought for years, hinting that it wanted better terms. The agreement had been initialed in 2004, when Syria felt threatened by the United States invasion of Iraq and desperate for economic and political succor. Now Syria's leaders feel far more confident, analysts say.

That confidence has less to do with Syria's still-ailing economy than with its political position.

The West's isolation of Syria has given way to engagement, despite Syria's continuing support for the militant groups Hamas and ***Hezbollah***. The United States is expected to send a new ambassador to Damascus soon, ending a long freeze in diplomatic relations.

Syria , in a bet that's paying off, opens up a bit Better ties with Turkey offer range of political and economic rewards

Syria's relationship with Turkey, which has been slowly warming for years, helped to bring about this political realignment. Turkey mediated indirect talks between Syria and Israel in 2008, fostering renewed hopes in the West for a peace deal.

But the widespread notion that Turkey will draw Syria toward moderation and a regional peace deal may be something of a fantasy, albeit a useful one. Turkey's own alliance with Israel has cooled noticeably since Israel's war in Gaza a year ago, which provoked outrage in the region and reaffirmed the political value of Syria's ties to Hamas. Israel expressed interest in restarting indirect talks with Syria this month, but many here are skeptical. Syria is keenly aware of the backlash it might face from domestic radicals - or even from Iran - if it drew closer to Israel.

Instead, the new Turkish alliance may be valuable precisely because it helps Syria hint at change while keeping its options open, said Peter Harling, a senior Damascus-based analyst with the International Crisis Group, and lead author of a report on Syria's foreign policy that is being published Monday.

"In a region full of unresolved conflicts, Syria has chosen to hedge its bets," Mr. Harling said.

"Aligning with Turkey helps Syria to offset competing pressures from Iran and the West while strengthening its position economically."

But the relationship is not just about providing Syria with political cover.

Mr. Assad has made clear that he hopes to foster a regional energy network building on Turkey's natural gas pipelines. Trade between the countries doubled between 2007 and 2008, and doubled again in 2009, to an estimated \$4 billion, according to the Aleppo Chamber of Commerce.

"I think there is a sort of vision developing between Syria and Turkey where they could serve jointly as a regional trade hub, linking Europe with the Gulf and other parts of the East," said Nabil Sukkar, an economic analyst also based in Damascus.

It is too soon to tell how far that vision will go, or whether Syria will start to feel swamped by imports from Turkey's more powerful economy.

In the meantime, the political opening has corresponded to a real social and cultural rediscovery, with Turks and Arabs warming to each other after long years of hostility.

Syria, after all, was born out of the Ottoman Empire's dismemberment in 1920, and its identity was built in large part on the rejection of its former masters in Istanbul.

On a popular level, there was bitter resentment over Turkey's annexation of the Arabic-speaking Hatai district, which had been Syrian. As recently as 1998 the two countries were on the brink of war over Syria's support for Turkish Kurd rebels. Relations improved slowly after Syria expelled Abdullah Ocalan, the rebel leader.

The thaw has accelerated dramatically in recent months, with Turkish journalists writing glowing accounts of their travels here.

Many Syrians say Turkey feels much closer to them culturally than Iran or Saudi Arabia, two important allies of recent decades.

Turkish films and television shows are often dubbed into Syrian Arabic and become huge hits here. One of them, "In the Valley of the Wolves," portrays Turkish agents taking revenge on American soldiers for massacres carried out on Arabs in Iraq, in a neat parable of recent policy shifts.

For Syrians, the warmth is partly aspirational: Many hope that Turkey's gradual shift over the past decade from military autocracy to a more democratic and tolerant political system will be replicated here. For the moment, they must be content with having new friends.

Syria , in a bet that's paying off, opens up a bit Better ties with Turkey offer range of political and economic rewards

"Before, we were afraid to come here," said Omer Sonmez, a Turkish businessman who first visited Syria three months ago, and now crosses regularly to trade roasted pumpkin seeds and other foods.

"We thought it would all be so closed, with no women on the street. But when you talk to Europeans, they say the same thing about Turkey!"

"And look," Mr. Sonmez added, glancing around at the crowds emerging from Aleppo's covered market. "We are not so different. Even our faces are similar."

Load-Date: December 14, 2009

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**Hints of change as old friends get back together; Syria takes new direction
as it reconnects with a more modern Turkey**

The International Herald Tribune

December 16, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 6

Length: 1030 words

Byline: ROBERT F. WORTH

Dateline: ALEPPO, Syria

Body

Ever since Syria and Turkey lifted their visa restrictions in September, Turkish visitors have poured into this picturesque northern city. Hawkers in Aleppo's ancient souk now call out to shoppers in Turkish, and cross-border commerce has soared. The two countries have embarked on a very public honeymoon, with their leaders talking about each other like long-lost friends.

But this reconciliation is about far more than trade, or the collapse of old Turkish-Arab enmities. At a time of economic and political uncertainty here, the new warmth with Turkey has stirred hopes about Syria's direction in areas that include religion, oil and gas, and peace with Israel.

For some here, the new closeness with a secular, moderate Turkey represents a move away from Syria's controversial alliance with Iran. For others, it suggests an embrace of Turkey's more open, cosmopolitan society. And for many - including Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad - it conjures different dreams of a revitalized regional economy, less vulnerable to Western sanctions or pressure.

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That confidence has less to do with Syria's ailing economy than with its political position. The West's isolation of Syria has given way to engagement, despite Syria's continuing support for the militant groups Hamas and **Hezbollah**. The United States is expected to send an ambassador to Damascus soon, ending a long freeze in diplomatic relations.

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The thaw has accelerated strikingly in recent months, with Turkish journalists writing glowing accounts of their travels here. Many Syrians say Turkey feels much closer to them culturally than Iran or Saudi Arabia, two important allies of recent decades. Turkish films and television shows are often dubbed into Syrian Arabic and become huge hits here. One film, "Valley of the Wolves: Iraq," portrayed Turkish agents taking revenge on American soldiers for massacres carried out on Arabs in Iraq, in a neat parable of recent policy shifts.

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Hints of change as old friends get back together Syria takes new direction as it reconnects with a more modern Turkey

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Battling mistrust in the growing shadow of Iran; DIPLOMACY

The Age (Melbourne, Australia)

March 14, 2009 Saturday

First Edition

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Section: INSIGHT; Pg. 4

Length: 1068 words

Byline: Daniel Flitton - Daniel Flitton is diplomatic editor

Body

Three decades after the revolution, Tehran's rulers still represent a major headache for the world.

MARKING the 30-year anniversary of Iran's religious revolution last month, the regime's hardline daily Jomhuri-i-Eslami mused over what it saw as a historical irony. Just as with Jimmy Carter before him, the newspaper opined, the destiny of Barack Obama as US President will not be shaped by an electoral campaign or in competition with political rivals - but instead far away, in a country such as Iran.

This reflects a national conceit, perhaps, but there is no doubting Iran does pose a major headache for the US Administration. Obama is not confronted by a drawn-out hostage crisis of the kind that sapped faith in the Carter White House, yet there are long-term challenges that will bedevil relations between the two countries and carry the potential to derail the new President.

Questions over nuclear weapons are only the most obvious. Iran sits in the centre of America's two wars, with Iraq to the west and Afghanistan to the east. Iran neighbours Pakistan, and casts a shadow right across the Middle East, all the way to Israel, America's closest ally in the region. Iranian oil reserves are among the world's largest, and it has the very real ability to disrupt the passage of Saudi and Iraqi crude through the Persian Gulf.

Add to this, Iran's crucial part in contests within the Islamic world, between ethnic Arabs and Persians, and over the place of Shi'ite Muslims, for so long a disadvantaged minority compared with the Sunni majority but now finding confidence in the modern era.

How these changing strategic, cultural and religious trends will intersect with the wider economic malaise spreading across the globe is an open question. But it is clear the contest with Iran will have a major impact on America's regional standing. Close observers of the region point to a widespread feeling inside the regime that, as a country of almost 66 million, Iran deserves recognition as a major power. Yet, as is the way of debates inside any country, there are diverging views across Iran's political spectrum over what this might mean.

People who might be termed as nationalists see US hostility as the main problem. Only when Iran is accommodated, and US hegemony curtailed, can Iran take what they see as its rightful place on the international stage. Then there are more fervent ideologues who also champion Iran's rise yet are irreconcilable in their belief a conflict with the US and the West is inevitable.

Battling mistrust in the growing shadow of Iran DIPLOMACY

Fatemeh Alia is an Iranian politician - having spent the past five years as a member of the Majlis, the country's parliament - who sits on the Committee for National Security and Foreign Affairs. A conservative, Alia is also said to be more inclined towards the nationalist strand of thinking.

In Melbourne this week, Alia spoke of the ways she believes Iran is often misunderstood. "It's just 30 years since the Iranian revolution," she says, speaking through a translator. "Much progress has happened during this time."

She points to industrial and scientific advances, along with Iran's rich cultural heritage, and sought to dispel perceptions of the country as a harsh and repressive theocracy.

"Iranian women have had much progress in the case of education," she says. Iran's media is free, she says, and protected by law.

Such claims are hotly disputed. Iran is portrayed as a country that fosters violence abroad - the US lists it as the world's most dangerous state sponsor of terrorism - and limits the freedom of its people at home. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is ridiculed in the West for his mercurial nature and virulent denunciations of Israel.

Alia is politely dismissive of such claims: "Those countries who condemn us (as supporting) terrorists, they supported terrorists like the Taliban and (al-Qaeda chief Osama) bin Laden in Afghanistan in the past," she says. "You have to not pay attention to propaganda and you have to come to Iran to hear and see the facts."

But determining facts is a challenge. The US suspects Iran is aspiring to build a nuclear weapon - an allegation Tehran feverishly denies.

"Although we do not know whether Iran currently intends to develop nuclear weapons," Dennis Blair, the top US intelligence official, last month told a congressional hearing, "we assess Tehran at a minimum is keeping open the option to develop them."

Once more, Alia dismisses the concerns. "We don't need nuclear arms or bombs," she says. "Some people in some countries condemn us, but (world nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency) has visited many times and reported the focus is on scientific and peaceful activity."

According to Dan Gillerman, Israel's former ambassador to the United Nations who this month visited Melbourne, mistrust of the regime is entirely well placed. "Iran, to me, is the most dangerous country in the world today," he says.

Gillerman served at the UN from 2003 until last year, a critical time in which the world grappled with Iran's nuclear ambitions.

Sanctions have progressively strengthened in the face of Iran's lack of co-operation, but Gillerman accuses Tehran of being masters of dragging out time.

"I don't necessarily think that the real danger is that Iran will one day have a leader who will be crazy enough - although the present leader looks crazy enough as it is - that he would push a button and launch a ballistic missile at Israel, or at any other country.

"But at the same time, I think Iran would have absolutely no compunction about making those dirty bombs and weapons of mass destruction available to rogue regimes and terror organisations."

Iran's backing of violent extremists, particularly Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the West Bank and Gaza, but also Shi'ite organisations in neighbouring Iraq, has caused some Sunni Arab leaders to openly express concern over a looming Shi'ite crescent across the Middle East.

Gillerman believes the concern over Iran's influence presents a historic chance to finally settle Israel's place in the region.

Battling mistrust in the growing shadow of Iran DIPLOMACY

"I think it is precisely the fear of Iran that may make the Arab and Muslim world finally act in a much more pragmatic and realistic way, and support and legitimise the peace process" - an alignment where Israel is seen as an ally, not an enemy.

Yet even such a momentous prospect leaves open the question: what to do about Iran?

Daniel Flitton is diplomatic editor.

Graphic

PHOTO: Visiting Iranian MP Fatemeh Alia says much has changed since the revolution. PICTURE: JASON SOUTH

Load-Date: March 13, 2009

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Letters to the Editor

Canberra Times (Australia)

March 8, 2009 Sunday

Final Edition

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Section: A; Pg. 20

Length: 1003 words

Byline: The Canberra Times

Body

Look harder Bettina BETTINA ARNDT apparently says in her new book (which I admit I haven't read) that women should be more willing to have sex even if they don't feel like it.

Even if they don't feel like it!

I am a single woman "of a certain age" who feels like it almost all the time, and cannot find a willing partner.

Probably because the blokes suitable for my age group can find someone younger and more attractive.

Perhaps you men should look at the middle-aged woman next to you in the supermarket queue ... You might be surprised!

Name and address supplied Rights should be first TWO INTERNATIONAL stories in a recent Sunday Canberra Times reveal how basic human rights can become marginalised in the wake of economic and political factors.

The first ("US woos China as crisis deepens", February 22, p19) begins with the comment that during United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's recent meeting with her Chinese counterpart, Yang Jiechi, both countries agreed to put aside human rights differences to focus on the global economic crisis.

This is what one would expect, given China's leverage over the US economy.

China will continue to purchase US Treasury bonds, which is "seen as vital for the US to pay for its \$US787billion dollar stimulus package." It then becomes apparent that concerns about human rights will take the back seat.

The second story discusses the Israeli shelling of southern Lebanon in response to what Israel claims have been Hezbollah rocket attacks on its border.

Although the US is one of the main players in the Middle East, it is not mentioned in this piece and neither is human rights. But the dire consequences of such actions have been well documented in the aftermath of Israel's attack on southern Lebanon in 2006 and the more recent incursions into Gaza.

It seems economic and strategic interests will always take precedence over human rights.

Dan Bigna, Weston Who's carrying the can?

Letters to the Editor

I AM MYSTIFIED by the way in which the media is attacking the military side of the Defence Department in the SAS pay issue. The latest contributor is Paul Daley ("Generals' heads may soon roll", March 1, p27).

In the past week the media focus has been entirely on either the clearly unwell Defence Minister, the Chief of the Defence Force or the Chief of Army.

In Senate Estimates hearings the only representatives of the Defence Department who spoke, at least as far as I could judge from print and television coverage, were uniformed officers.

While they may have been present, nothing seems to have been reported as being said by the department secretary or any of the high-level civilian generals at Russell. I had always understood that in matters of administration the civilian side of Defence carried such responsibility.

Why is it now that apparently the military has been left carrying the (administrative) can?

E.L.Fisher, Kambah Bringing back memories MY SYMPATHIES are with the residents of the Causeway, who, having lived long in the area, want to keep their homes. When I read their story ("Residents fight for their homes", March 1, p25) a wave of nostalgia swept over me.

I married a Causeway boy and enjoyed much time in that suburb. The house pictured being demolished could well be where his family lived in the last street, before the one leading to the dairy. I wish the residents well in their fight to stay.

Evelyn Bean, Ainslie Taking home too much THE ISSUE of huge payments to company chief executive officers has finally reached crisis proportions.

The real issue is what to do about it.

That requires political will.

Remember there is little or no correlation between a chief executive officer's compensation and organisational performance.

The "pay peanuts and you get monkeys" justification of high packages is nonsense. Let's be guided by fairness in relation to the average wage of around \$52,000 per annum. The package of the Pacific Brand chief executive officer is now 35 times that and there are packages that come to 75 times, even 100 times, that amount.

The spiral is out of control and there is no sound reason why governments should not mandate executive remuneration levels.

This could be done by introducing a ratio between the average wage and the maximum base salary package for a chief executive officer. I suggest a ratio of 1:10. That would result in a maximum base salary for a chief executive officer of \$520,000.

Klaas Wolddring, Pearl Beach, NSW Solar inequity IT IS depressing to see Crispin Hull taking the "greed is good" line in his views about solar panels on household roofs ("Say you want a solar revolution?", Forum, March 7, p15).

The poor sods he refers to who don't go rooftop solar are tenants, lower income earners and anyone who now can't afford to make an investment of \$32,500. They are the ones who will pay the \$6000 electricity bill he suggests. Does he not see the irrationality of the Federal Government paying an \$8000 subsidy to wealthy households, to direct and subsidise their investment choices? This would be better spent getting green electricity into every household on an equitable basis, not just the homes of more affluent people.

Peter White, Flynn Down in the mud IT'S A shame your Today column writer chose to mock the Greens MLA for asking a legitimate question of an animal welfare official during a committee hearing ("Times up for porkies", March 6, p14).

Letters to the Editor

It was quite proper of Caroline le Couteur to ask whether a permit was issued for the exploitative and degrading pig racing and diving events at the Canberra Show. The ACT Animal Welfare Act states a circus with performing animals has to have a permit.

It was unacceptable the official was not sure if a permit had been issued (in fact, did not believe one had) and disrespectful of him to respond by asking whether Ms le Couteur, "Did you back a winner?"

The fact that an inept official suggested the show had committed an offence should have been focused on by Today not the trite attempt at point-scoring that seems to have prevailed.

Mike O'Shaughnessy, Spence

Load-Date: March 7, 2009

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Bridging the Gulf; International politics The West claims that it wants democracy in the Middle East, but is it ready for the consequences?

The New Review

May 10, 2009

First Edition

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Section: ARTS; Pg. 26

Length: 1039 words

Byline: Reviewed by Sholto Byrnes

Body

"Always keep a hold of nurse/ for fear of finding something worse." David Gardner does not actually quote Hilaire Belloc but, according to his wide-ranging and provocative new book, the last lines of his "Cautionary Tale" could well be used to describe Western policy towards the Middle East for most of the past century. Europe and America have found it convenient to prop up or do business with an array of autocrats, differing only in the degrees of repression they inflicted, because we fear the alternative that democracy may unleash - the "men in turbans" - even more. "The Arab world," writes Gardner, remains "marooned in tyranny", while those who try to "claw their way out of that pit" find that the West keeps "stamping on their fingers".

These are harsh words, although their truth is evident in the West's long-term alliances with the absolute monarchies of the Gulf; in its shameful inaction during the Shia and Kurdish uprisings in Iraq; in its friendly relations with Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, who, since 1981, has kept his country under emergency laws that allow for indefinite detention without trial; and in its tolerance of the secret police state run by the father-and-son Syrian presidents, Hafez and Bashar al-Assad (the latter of whom enjoys a rather innocuous reputation in Britain, perhaps because it is hard to think of a man who used to be a London ophthalmologist as a callous dictator - Gardner sets the reader straight on that one).

The consequence of our failure to stand by our values, this loss of our "democratic nerve", says Gardner, has been the rise of the Islamic extremism we feared all along. "Damming up [the] political mainstream" has given "violent force to the Islamist tributaries". The last chance of the book's title is for the West to stop indulging in "shallow realism" or ignorant meddling (as in Iraq). Instead, we must pursue a just and clear-headed solution to Israel-Palestine, embrace Iran in a workable bargain, and do everything we can to open paths to democracy throughout the region.

The first two, many would agree with. Gardner, an associate editor and former Middle East editor at the Financial Times, is blunt about Israel's choice: land or peace. He points out that the long, violent stalemate since the creation of that state has suited many Arab leaders, who could justify their despotism by holding up the threat of aggression

Bridging the Gulf International politics The West claims that it wants democracy in the Middle East, but is it ready for the consequences?

from the "Zionist entity". An Iran given status and security, Gardner thinks, could be freed from the "faux nationalist blackmail of the mullahs", and cease to be a hostage of a history that includes both the Anglo-American coup against the nationalist prime minister Mohammad Mossadegh in 1953, the Tehran embassy hostage crisis of 1979-81, and the bombing of the American barracks in Beirut that killed 241 US servicemen in 1982.

The third, however, is a somewhat trickier proposition. Gardner himself admits that letting go of despotic nurse could lead to something much, much worse. "Those who argue for democracy," he says, "often do so in the mistaken belief that it will bring stability to the region. It may not." It could also "open a long period of illiberal politics". Democratic elections have already elevated Hamas to government in Gaza and Hezbollah to a coalition in Lebanon, and there can be no doubt that most, if not all, administrations in the Middle East would have a strongly Islamist complexion if democratically elected. Gardner's hope is that such governments would eventually come to resemble Turkey's AKP, the Justice and Development Party of the Prime Minister Recep Erdogan. The AKP is Islamist, but presents itself as moderate, and has won power twice now in a state that is constitutionally secular. This best case scenario would see governments of a socially and religiously conservative, but also dynamic and entrepreneurial stripe, take the reins. It remains a hope, though, not a prediction to which can be ascribed any great accuracy. It is just as likely that theocratic regimes would be elected whose first act was to raise the democratic drawbridge behind them. Gardner quotes former president Khatami of Iran approvingly: "If religion comes into conflict with freedom, then it will be religion that suffers." But what happened when he was in office was quite the opposite; much of his legislation was blocked by the religious Council of Guardians, and 2,000 fellow reformist candidates were banned from standing for election.

Either way, there will be precious little room for the liberal, secular values that are implicit when the West uses that totemic word, "democracy". Gardner correctly identifies this problem: "Liberals tend to be coteries who like whisky and the West but the masses incline towards men in beards." Freedom and liberty are often used as synonyms, but that is a dangerous elision in this context. The freedom Gardner advocates we encourage in the Middle East may bring Islamists into the political mainstream and consign to the margins extremists who prefer the bomb to the ballot box. We should not, however, expect that freedom to bring any advancement of liberty for women, for free thinkers or non-Muslims, for homosexuals, whisky drinkers and all those of "degenerate" tendencies whose freedom of expression is an integral part of the West's concept of liberal democracy.

Gardner is clear-eyed about the damage that "Arab exceptionalist" support for despotism has done in the region, and has managed to cover an impressive swathe of history, with concise overviews of Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Israel-Palestine in particular. He castigates the West for viewing the Middle East and its interminable, seemingly intractable disputes with "a curious mix of bleakness and complacency". But, although anyone who reads his book is certain to have any complacency dispelled, I fear the conclusion to be drawn from his arguments is far bleaker than he allows. The chances of democracy producing Middle Eastern states in which that liberty we so treasure thrives are slim. This particular "last chance" saloon serves a bitter, unpalatable brew that we are going to have to learn to swallow, like it or not. n

The Last Chance: The Middle East in the Balance

By David Gardner IB Tauris £18.99

Load-Date: May 10, 2009

Warmer Relations With Turkey Kindle Hopes in Syria

The New York Times

December 15, 2009 Tuesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 6

Length: 1045 words

Byline: By ROBERT F. WORTH

Dateline: ALEPPO, Syria

Body

Ever since Syria and Turkey lifted their visa restrictions in September, Turkish visitors have poured into this picturesque northern city. Hawkers in Aleppo's ancient souk now call out to shoppers in Turkish, and cross-border commerce has soared. The two countries have embarked on a very public honeymoon, with their leaders talking about each other like long-lost friends.

But this reconciliation is about far more than trade, or the collapse of old Turkish-Arab enmities. At a time of economic and political uncertainty here, the new warmth with Turkey has stirred hopes about Syria's future direction, in areas that include religion, oil and gas, and peace with Israel.

For some here, the new closeness with secular, moderate Turkey represents a move away from Syria's controversial alliance with Iran. For others, it suggests an embrace of Turkey's more open, cosmopolitan society. And for many -- including Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad -- it conjures different dreams of a revitalized regional economy, less vulnerable to Western sanctions or pressure.

"It's much more than an economic relationship," said Samir al-Taqi, director of the Orient Center for International Studies in Damascus. "It's about regathering the region, and a feeling that the West is much weaker, less liable to do anything here. I think Syria has lots of ambitions to redefine its geopolitical position."

Those ambitions became apparent in October, when Syria delayed signing an economic agreement with the European Union that it had sought for years, hinting that it wanted better terms. The agreement had been initialed in 2004, when Syria felt threatened by the United States invasion of Iraq and desperate for economic and political succor. Now Syria's leaders feel far more confident, analysts say.

That confidence has less to do with Syria's still-ailing economy than with its political position. The West's isolation of Syria has given way to engagement, despite Syria's continuing support for the militant groups Hamas and Hezbollah. The United States is expected to send a new ambassador to Damascus soon, ending a long freeze in diplomatic relations.

Syria's relationship with Turkey -- which has been slowly warming for years -- helped bring about this political realignment. Turkey mediated indirect talks between Syria and Israel in 2008, fostering renewed hopes in the West for a peace deal.

Warmer Relations With Turkey Kindle Hopes in Syria

But the widespread notion that Turkey will draw Syria toward moderation and a regional peace deal may be something of a fantasy, albeit a useful one. Turkey's alliance with Israel has cooled noticeably since Israel's war in Gaza a year ago, which provoked outrage in the region and reaffirmed the political value of Syria's ties to Hamas. Israel expressed interest in restarting indirect talks with Syria this month, but many here are skeptical. Syria is keenly aware of the backlash it might face from domestic radicals -- or even from Iran -- if it drew closer to Israel.

Instead, the new Turkish alliance may be valuable precisely because it helps Syria hint at change while keeping its options open, said Peter Harling, a senior Damascus-based analyst with the International Crisis Group, and lead author of a report on Syria's foreign policy published Monday.

"In a region full of unresolved conflicts, Syria has chosen to hedge its bets," Mr. Harling said. "Aligning with Turkey helps Syria to offset competing pressures from Iran and the West while strengthening its position economically."

But the relationship is not just about providing Syria with political cover. Mr. Assad, the Syrian president, has made clear that he hopes to foster a regional energy network, building on Turkey's natural gas pipelines. Trade between the countries doubled between 2007 and 2008, and doubled again in 2009, to an estimated \$4 billion, according to the Aleppo Chamber of Commerce.

"I think there is a sort of vision developing between Syria and Turkey where they could serve jointly as a regional trade hub, linking Europe with the Gulf and other parts of the East," said Nabil Sukkar, a Damascus-based economic analyst.

It is too soon to tell how far that vision will go, or whether Syria will start to feel swamped by imports from Turkey's more powerful economy. In the meantime, the political opening has corresponded to a real social and cultural rediscovery, with Turks and Arabs warming to each other after long years of hostility. Syria, after all, was born out of the Ottoman Empire's dismemberment in 1920, and its identity was built in large part on the rejection of its former masters in Istanbul.

On a popular level, there was bitter resentment over Turkey's annexation of the Arabic-speaking Hatay district, which had been Syrian. As recently as 1998 the two countries were on the brink of war over Syria's support for Kurdish rebels. Relations improved slowly after Syria expelled Abdullah Ocalan, the rebel leader.

The thaw has accelerated strikingly in recent months, with Turkish journalists writing glowing accounts of their travels here. Many Syrians say Turkey feels much closer to them culturally than Iran or Saudi Arabia, two important allies of recent decades. Turkish films and television shows are often dubbed into Syrian Arabic and become huge hits here. One film, "Valley of the Wolves: Iraq," portrayed Turkish agents taking revenge on American soldiers for massacres carried out on Arabs in Iraq, in a neat parable of recent policy shifts.

For Syrians, the warmth is partly aspirational: many hope that Turkey's gradual shift over the past decade from military autocracy to a more democratic and tolerant political system will be replicated here. For the moment, they must be content with having new friends.

"Before, we were afraid to come here," said Omer Sonmez, a Turkish businessman who first visited Syria three months ago, and now crosses over regularly to trade roasted pumpkin seeds and other foods. "We thought it would all be so closed, with no women on the street. But when you talk to Europeans, they say the same thing about Turkey!"

"And look," Mr. Sonmez added, glancing around at the crowds emerging from Aleppo's covered market. "We are not so different. Even our faces are similar."

Graphic

PHOTOS: A British tourist at the Mosque of Abraham in the Aleppo Citadel. Syria, once part of the Ottoman Empire, has shown hostility toward Turkey in the past.

Turkish tourists at the Grand Mosque in Aleppo, Syria. The lifting of visa restrictions has brought a flood of Turkish visitors to the city. (PHOTOGRAPHS BY TAMARA ABDUL HADI FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES) MAP: Signs of a Turkish-Syrian thaw can be seen in Aleppo, in northern Syria.

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Will the obama effect crash in Iran?

Western Morning News (Plymouth, UK)

June 26, 2009 Friday

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Section: Pg. 10

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Body

N sharp contrast to the unwelcoming shoe hurled at President Bush in his last media conference in the Middle East, President Obama and his speech were very well received in Egypt and the rest of the Muslim-majority world.

The audience in Cairo University interrupted the speech 23 times by waves of applause (and this is not the usual cheering crowd handpicked by the Egyptian State Security Investigations - they were invited by the mighty American Embassy and included several political dissidents).

There are several reasons for the Middle East's Obama-mania. The crowd in Cairo has no recollection of Clinton's eloquent speeches and did not care to hear Bush's. In other words, they have not much comparative references. But much more important, this is the first time Arabs and Muslims are hearing a very eloquent, "politically correct" speech from a black American President who has Muslim relatives.

For many, that is revolutionary in content and rhetoric - if not necessarily in policies. But let us not dance around this jarring disconnect: on a normal day in Cairo or al-Azhar Universities (the two institutions that sponsored the speech), there is little time and space for genuine, open-minded contemplation or debate. Both universities are big intellectual prisons ruled by the State Security Services. It is State Security Generals who decide which professor gets hired, which one gets promoted, which one gets fired, and which one gets detained.

If Obama were to visit Cairo University on a normal day, he would find four trucks of Central Security Forces parked on the right side of the main entrance. They never go away - 24/7.

Al-Azhar as an institution is not hospitable to political correctness or Egyptian democrats. It did establish itself, however, as a leading authority behind censorship of books and creative ideas. It is also the institution that constantly calls for punishing and harassing secular intellectuals, most notably Dr Nasr Abu Zeid. Dr Ayman Al Zawahri, Al Qaeda's second-in-command, and Dr Omar Abd Al Rahman, the radical cleric imprisoned in the US for the World Trade Center bombing in 1993, were both radicalised in, and graduated from, Cairo and al-Azhar Universities. The constant cycles of repression that plagued the two universities between 1960s and the 2000s made them strongholds for radical groups.

Yet the core idea of repressive autocrats breeding violent theocrats was absent from the President's speech.

The impact of the speech continues though. Coming on the heel of it, the swift march of events seem to have energised voters in Lebanon and Iran, who turned out in a record number.

President Obama did mention the imperative of upholding minority rights; and singled out both the Christian Maronites of Lebanon and the Copts of Egypt. By the same token, he emphasised women's right to full

Will the obama effect crash in Iran ?

inclusion in public life. At least in the case of Lebanon, both Maronites and women voted at an unprecedented rate (60 per cent). Last month, not only a similar high turnout took place in Kuwait, but also four women were elected for the first time, despite the fierce resistance of a coalition of tribal and Islamist elements.

The parliamentary elections in Lebanon earlier and from Kuwait last month clearly indicate that Islamist parties lost significant grounds to secular liberal counterparts. Along with Turkey, these two countries have had well-established democratic traditions by Middle Eastern standards. Scholars of the subject maintain that societies which manage to have four or more consecutive, free and fair elections are usually judged to have achieved an irreversible democratic transition.

Without direct visible foreign intervention, both Lebanon and Kuwait seem to have such transition well under way. The fear that Islamists might impede the process have not materialised. Leaders of competing Islamist forces conceded defeat and accepted the result. To his credit, the much-demonised Hassan Nasrallah of Hezbollah made an eloquent sport-like concession. The often-repeated contention that, with Islamists in the fray, it would be a "one man, one vote, one time" is yet to be proven.

Now, enters Iran and the optimism for democratic transition starts to fade a bit. The 10th presidential elections of the Islamic Republic were held on June 12. The incumbent president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, had won the election with 66 per cent of the votes cast and Mir-Hossein Mousavi, the reformist candidate, had received 33 per cent. There was a big outcry of foul, both domestically and internationally. Ayatollah Khamenei, the supreme leader of Iran's dual system (the theocratic and democratic ones) came out in the prayers sermon last Friday declaring that the winner was definitely Ahmadinejad.

The whole sermon (yes, supposedly a religious, spiritual ritual) was centred on the election results. The sermon was basically four messages to the four *raisons d'être* of the Islamic Republic: the people of Iran, the Islamist political elite, the enemies of the Islamic Republic of Iran (or the imperial forces), and the hidden Imam. The conclusion of the Supreme Guide, who supposedly should be above factionalism, was siding publicly and heavily with Ahmadinejad. That was expected. The election had to be stolen because otherwise Iran's hardliners would have been confronted by a democratically elected president determined to revive republican values and institutions.

But the interesting part was the message delivered to America under Obama's administration. It was not the regular "death to the imperialists" (despite the chants of the crowd). It was challenging Obama on his own turf: "Human Rights?! You Democrats burned Davidians' children alive in Texas!" Ayatollah Khomeini recalled.

So will the "Obama effect" crash when it comes to Iran? This we will yet have to see. But the defiance of the Iranians for democracy and freedom, the outpouring applause the President received in Cairo, and the electoral results of Lebanon and Kuwait all show that the overwhelming majority of Arabs and Muslims are yearning for democracy, not the Caliphate, and abhorring repression, not the West.

Obama's electoral victory and rhetorical changes are new and historic. They raised the hopes and the expectations of many Arabs and Muslims. The rhetoric needs to change into policies now. The hope is that the President will not sacrifice America's core values of freedom and self-determination for short-term political expediency by supporting repressive autocrats and/or maintaining a double standard policy: no for electoral fraud in Iran, but mass-rigging elections in Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria, or lack thereof in Saudi Arabia is OK!

Only then can the United States reclaim its moral force in the Arab- and Muslim-majority world.

Omar Ashour is a lecturer in Politics at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter. He is the author of *The De-Radicalisation of the Jihadists: Transforming Armed Islamist Movements*

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Will the obama effect crash in Iran ?

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In Iran, a Real Race, and Talk of a Sea Change

The New York Times

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Byline: By ROBERT F. WORTH; Nazila Fathi contributed reporting.

Dateline: TEHRAN

Body

Less than two months ago, it was widely assumed here and in the West that Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iran's hard-line president, would coast to another victory in the elections on Friday. Many of the reformists who sat out the vote in 2005 seemed dejected and unlikely to raise a strong challenge.

As voters went to the polls Friday, that picture has been transformed. A vast opposition movement has arisen, flooding the streets of Iran's major cities with cheering, green-clad supporters of Mir Hussein Moussavi, the leading challenger. Mr. Ahmadinejad, seemingly on the defensive, has hurled extraordinary accusations at some of the Islamic republic's founding figures, but the tactic has served to unify a diverse and passionate body of opponents of his populist economic policies and confrontational approach to the West.

Some Iranians believe that the unruly democratic energies unleashed over the past few weeks could affect this country's politics no matter who wins. Mr. Ahmadinejad's radical policies and personal attacks, they say, have galvanized powerful adversaries who will use his own accusations of corruption and mismanagement against him. Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, who has the final say in affairs of state and prefers to avoid open conflict, may force Mr. Ahmadinejad to steer a more moderate course if he is re-elected.

"The elite will not let go of Ahmadinejad's neck" if he wins, said Muhammad Atrianfar, a journalist and former government official who supports Mr. Moussavi. "The official institutions will be in conflict with him, including the Parliament."

But hope has often outpaced reality in Iran, and similar democratic movements have been stifled in the past by the country's clerical leadership. In 1997, a burst of student demonstrations was followed by mass arrests, and a broader crackdown has taken place since Mr. Ahmadinejad succeeded his reformist predecessor, President Mohammad Khatami, in 2005.

And for all the hopes placed in him, Mr. Moussavi is no liberal. Another candidate, Mehdi Karroubi, is more closely associated with the core causes of the Iranian reformist movement, including the freeing of political prisoners and women's rights.

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Moreover, there are limits to what any Iranian president can do. Although Mr. Ahmadinejad has tried to augment the powers of the presidency, it is Ayatollah Khamenei, as supreme leader, who controls the direction of foreign policy.

Still, Mr. Moussavi would clearly push for a less confrontational stance toward the West. He implicitly criticized Iran's support for militant groups like Hezbollah and Hamas, saying the government should focus on domestic problems instead.

Perhaps more important to Iranians, Mr. Moussavi would change economic policy; Mr. Ahmadinejad has been criticized for economic stagnation, including rising inflation and unemployment. A former prime minister in the 1980s, Mr. Moussavi is given great credit for managing Iran's economy effectively during the war with Iraq.

Much of Mr. Moussavi's popularity derives from support by Mr. Khatami, the charismatic reformist cleric who was president from 1997 to 2005. But in some ways he could be more effective as president, analysts say. He is more pragmatic than Mr. Khatami, and because he is less distasteful to the hard-line clerical elite, he could have more success than Mr. Khatami did in promoting his agenda.

Moreover, opposition leaders say Mr. Moussavi, if elected, would have the advantage of a powerful popular movement behind him, and not just because the street demonstrations of the past weeks have been bigger than those of earlier elections. Women have become a potent force in this campaign for the first time in the Islamic republic's 30-year history, with all three opposition candidates making major efforts to win their votes.

Mr. Moussavi broke with precedent by campaigning alongside his wife, Zahra Rahnavard, a prominent professor and artist who was famous before he was. Other candidates have promised to extend women's rights as well. Campaign rallies for Mr. Moussavi often seem to include more women -- who make up half the voters in Iran -- than men.

Some say this is another aspect of the campaign that could remain important regardless of who wins. In April, a number of secular and conservative women's groups joined forces and submitted a list of demands for greater rights from Iran's next president.

Political and economic factors could also play a role. Iran's oil revenue has dropped precipitously over the past year. The country is facing political challenges in Iraq and Afghanistan, and its allies in Lebanon lost an important election there on Sunday. All these things could moderate Mr. Ahmadinejad's aggressive, free-spending style if he is re-elected, analysts say.

Mr. Moussavi's supporters say they are confident that change is coming. Mr. Ahmadinejad sounded defensive during his last allotted television spot on Wednesday night, repeating again and again that he was not a liar, as his opponents have claimed. One of his final campaign rallies was canceled Wednesday afternoon after the university where it was to be held unexpectedly refused to delay exams to accommodate the president. A large crowd of students chanting anti-Ahmadinejad slogans forced him to change his plans again, and he ended up speaking to a much smaller group of supporters.

Opposition leaders say they expect a huge turnout on Friday, with many of the reformists who sat out the vote in 2005 saying they will take part this time, to help unseat Mr. Ahmadinejad.

Mr. Moussavi's supporters say they remain concerned about the possibility of fraud, but a determined campaign -- led in part by Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, an influential former president -- has kept that issue in the public eye. Mr. Rafsanjani urged Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, to prevent any fraud in an extraordinary public letter on Tuesday, and on Thursday he met with the ayatollah for three hours.

For all the confidence of the opposition, it would be wrong to count Mr. Ahmadinejad out. He has the strong support of most of Iran's rural voters, and his populist economic policies have won the loyalty of many pensioners and state employees, as well as the pious poor.

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If he wins a second term, many here are now asking what will become of the "green wave" -- the name given to the vast crowds of people who have filled the streets in recent weeks dressed in the signature color of the Moussavi campaign, demanding change.

"It depends on us," said Mr. Karroubi, the reformist cleric who is running against Mr. Ahmadinejad, in an interview at his campaign offices. "What sort of action shall we take? Shall we continue on our way, or shall we go into a coma?"

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTO: Zahra Rahnavard has often accompanied her husband, Mir Hussein Moussavi, as he campaigns against Iran's president.(PHOTOGRAPH BY NEWSHA TAVOKLIAN/POLARIS, FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)(A3)

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As a CIA spy, I saw in Iran what the West cannot ignore; We must defend freedom in Iran soon - or deal with nuclear-armed fanatics later.

The Christian Science Monitor

August 5, 2009 Wednesday

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Byline: Reza Kahlili

Body

Today the West must make one of the most important decisions of our era. Will we defend what remains of democracy and freedom in Iran, or will we succumb to Tehran's murderous government? It's a question that goes to the heart of our own security. Iran is a thugocracy of Islamic mullahs, and it will soon have nuclear arms.

Any misconception about the intentions of fanatics with nuclear bombs will have grave consequences. I know because I spent years alongside them as a CIA spy working under cover in Iran's Revolutionary Guards starting in the 1980s. The Guards Corps was set up as a check on the regular Army and to serve and secure the Islamic revolution. Thirty years of Western appeasement hasn't stopped them from terrorizing the West - or Iranians. Today, with Tehran's leaders caught in a power struggle over the June 12 election and the legitimacy of the regime, the Guards, led by zealots, are calling the shots. The Guards - and the hardliner clerics they protect - are vulnerable, however. This summer's grass-roots uprising has put them on the defensive. A strong Western hand now could tip the balance. We don't have a moment to lose. If we can't upend the Guards now, how can we do so once they have nuclear bombs? Washington could lead the way by refusing to recognize President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who earlier today took the oath of office for his second, four-year term. Instead, the United States should demand the freedom - and the freedom of speech - for all who've been arrested and tortured in recent weeks. And we should toughen sanctions to include cutting off Iran's gasoline supplies. The people of Iran are desperate for a show of support from the West. By standing with them, we can uphold our duty to defend democracy and take a stand for the security of the free world. Such a stand would mark a radical policy change. For the past 30 years, the West has tried very hard to appease Iran's mullahs. In the 1980s, I helped make known a secret pact between Iranian mullahs and some European governments. Thirsty for Iranian oil, the Europeans gave the go-ahead to Iranian agents to assassinate opposition members abroad without interference, as long as European citizens were not at risk. Hundreds of dissidents were gunned down. The US has also been guilty of trying to appease the mullahs. Almost every administration after the 1979 Iranian Revolution has tried in vain to create better relations through back channels. Yet those efforts haven't stopped Iran's rulers from arming terrorists, taking hostages, and suppressing their own people. The brutal killing of Iranians by their leaders that we're seeing today is nothing new. Ruling clerics have been killing political opponents, along with their families and friends, for 30 years - but inside prison walls. I've been inside those walls and I've seen teenage girls who were raped before execution so they were no longer virgins and therefore, according to their Islamic beliefs, couldn't go to heaven. I've seen hundreds hung on cranes. I've seen women and men lined up in front of firing squads after being severely tortured; their families would be forced to pay for the cost of the bullets. Western officials were quite aware that this was happening, but they let their thirst for oil blind them. Today, however, the screams of Iranians young and old calling for democracy and freedom cannot be ignored. The post-election uprising has started the countdown of the end of the thugocracy in Iran. This is the desire of the Iranian people. It should be our desire, too. So far, the West

As a CIA spy, I saw in Iran what the West cannot ignore We must defend freedom in Iran soon - or deal with nuclear-armed fanatics later.

has kept fairly quiet about Iran's unrest. President Obama and others say they don't want to give credence to Tehran's claims of a Western conspiracy behind the protests. And by not ruffling the regime's feathers, they hope to negotiate improved ties and resolve the nuclear impasse. But how do you negotiate with a government composed of terrorists? Right now, the Revolutionary Guards have near-complete control of Iran. This terrorist organization is expanding its power throughout the Middle East. Its ultimate goal is to bring the demise of the West. With the help of North Korea, the Guards are working on long-range ballistic missiles in tests that are concealed by their space project. The Guards have also accelerated their production of Sejil, solid fuel missiles, and are working nonstop to improve the range of those missiles. Today they can strike Tel Aviv, Riyadh, US bases in Iraq, and the US Navy's Fifth Fleet headquarters in Bahrain. Their goal is to be able to target all of Europe. The Guards are also working on their nuclear bomb project in facilities unknown to the West. Iran's defense minister, Mostafa Najjar, who oversees the development of missile and nuclear technology, was in charge of the Revolutionary Guards forces in Lebanon that facilitated the attack on the Marine Corps barracks in Beirut on Oct. 23, 1983, killing 241 US servicemen. The current deputy defense minister, Ahmad Vahidi, who oversees the distribution of arms and missiles to terrorist groups such as Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, and Hamas, was the commander of the Guards' elite Quds Forces and the chief intelligence officer of the Guards in charge of the terrorist activities outside of Iran. Mr. Vahidi is currently on Interpol's Most Wanted List for the attack on the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires on July 18, 1994 that killed 85 and injured more than 100. Many Iranian officials have Interpol arrest warrants, and even supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei has been recognized in courts as one who has ordered such acts. Fanatic radicals such as these are incompatible with a free Iran. This is the best opportunity in 30 years to change course and stop succumbing to thugs. Will we seize it? "Reza Kahlili" is a pseudonym for an ex-CIA spy who requires anonymity for safety reasons. He is writing a book about his life and experiences as a CIA agent in Iran's Revolutionary Guards.

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Pelosi Tells of a Briefing By Officials on Colleague

The New York Times

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Byline: By DAVID M. HERSZENHORN

Dateline: WASHINGTON

Body

Speaker Nancy Pelosi acknowledged for the first time on Wednesday that she had been briefed by the Bush administration "maybe three years ago" that Representative Jane Harman, Democrat of California, had been picked up on a wiretapped phone conversation as part of a government investigation.

Ms. Pelosi said she had been barred from telling Ms. Harman about the recorded call.

She also said Ms. Harman was apparently not a target of the surveillance, and insisted that the incident did not factor in her decision to deny her colleague the top post on the House Intelligence Committee after Democrats won the majority in 2006.

That decision is still a source of friction between the two Californians, who are both powerful and wealthy women, and yet in other ways as different as the districts they represent. Ms. Pelosi's district covers most of San Francisco, while Ms. Harman represents parts of the West Side of Los Angeles and beach areas to the south.

Their tussle over the committee post was back in the spotlight this week after reports that Ms. Harman had been secretly recorded agreeing to intercede on behalf of pro-Israel lobbyists, who were under investigation for violations of the Espionage Act, in exchange for help in pressing Ms. Pelosi to give her the intelligence job.

While the two women do not display overt hostility, Ms. Harman seems to have never quite gotten over the slight. Colleagues say that since Ms. Pelosi, 69, thwarted her ambitions for a more prominent role on security issues, Ms. Harman, 63, has grown weary of Congress and has been eyeing a post in the Obama administration, perhaps as an ambassador.

Those hopes may be clouded by revelations about the taped call. Ms. Harman has forcefully denied the accusation that she offered to aid the operatives for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, known as Aipac. And she has demanded that the government release a full transcript of the wire-tapped call.

On Tuesday, responding to questions about Ms. Harman, Ms. Pelosi seemed to indicate that she did not recall being told about the eavesdropping. But on Wednesday, during a round-table discussion with reporters at the Capitol, Ms. Pelosi said she had been briefed as part of a routine process in which Congressional leaders are

Pelosi Tells of a Briefing By Officials on Colleague

informed whenever a lawmaker is picked up on a wiretap. Ms. Pelosi said she was given no details and was not allowed to inform Ms. Harman.

A spokesman, Brendan Daly, said Ms. Pelosi had intended to say on Tuesday that she did not know who the targets of the surveillance were but that she was aware Ms. Harman had been recorded taking part in a conversation.

Ms. Pelosi said she could not recall the precise date of the briefing, but aides said it apparently took place before the November 2006 elections in which Democrats won control of the House.

Ms. Pelosi said that the information about the wiretap had played no role in her decision about the Intelligence Committee post, which she said was based solely on a House rule limiting lawmakers to four years in the committee's top slots.

Ms. Harman had succeeded Ms. Pelosi as the ranking Democrat on the panel in 2002, when Republicans were still in the majority.

"The only reason Jane is not the chairman is because she already served the two terms," Ms. Pelosi said. "It had nothing to do with her position on Iraq. It had nothing to do with donors, nothing to do with eavesdropping, wiretapping. It had nothing to do with anything. It had only to do with the fact that this extraordinarily talented member of Congress had served her two terms."

Of course, the rules of the House generally can be changed rather easily, as they were in January, when Democrats eliminated the six-year terms that had been in place for the chairmen of standing committees. (Select committees like intelligence are subject to different rules.)

Ms. Pelosi had made clear that she would not give Ms. Harman the post even before the 2006 elections. And while Ms. Harman had served for four years as the committee's top Democrat, she was also seen as a bit too close to President George W. Bush on security issues while Democrats were running successfully on an anti-Bush platform.

Still, Ms. Harman made a fierce, public push for the job, angering Ms. Pelosi.

There were phone calls from supporters, an editorial in The Los Angeles Times accusing Ms. Pelosi of putting personality issues ahead of national security, and intense news coverage of a power struggle that op-ed columnists chauvinistically dubbed a "catfight," even noting that the two women frequented the same Georgetown hair salon.

At the time, some lawmakers and Congressional aides said Ms. Pelosi, during her initial rise through the Democratic leadership, had been irked by Ms. Harman's high level of publicity, including numerous appearances on television talk shows after the start of the war in Iraq.

Unlike Ms. Pelosi, who opposed the resolution authorizing the use of force in Iraq, Ms. Harman was an early supporter of the war.

And Ms. Pelosi on Wednesday acknowledged that in 2006 she had discussed her difference in opinion on Iraq with Haim Saban, a Beverly Hills entertainment mogul and big Democratic campaign contributor, who had urged her to appoint Ms. Harman to the intelligence post.

"One of my major disagreements with Haim was the issue of Iraq, and that was something we talked about at the time," Ms. Pelosi said. "Many, many, many of Jane's friends talked to me about her being named chair of the Intelligence Committee, none of them in any threatening way."

Ultimately, Ms. Pelosi turned to a compromise candidate, Representative Silvestre Reyes of Texas, who was ridiculed over his inability to answer basic questions about terror groups, including whether Al Qaeda was Shiite or Sunni (he guessed wrong and said Shiite) or even what Hezbollah is.

Pelosi Tells of a Briefing By Officials on Colleague

On a trip to Jerusalem last spring, Ms. Harman took time out to buy a necklace for the speaker, a gift on behalf of the high-powered delegation that Ms. Pelosi led to celebrate Israel's 60th anniversary. Ms. Pelosi, who favors bold chokers, was touched and has worn it several times since.

On that trip the two women seemed at ease with each other, lawmakers and aides who traveled with them said, enjoying a rapport reminiscent of the friendlier days when Ms. Pelosi threw an ice cream party at the Capitol to wish Ms. Harman well in her bid for governor of California in 1998.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

PHOTO: Jane Harman, left, and Nancy Pelosi conferred before a hearing of the House and Senate Intelligence Committees in 2002. The relationship between the women has sometimes been tense.(PHOTOGRAPH BY KEN LAMBERT/ASSOCIATED PRESS)

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Iran disqualifies itself from legitimacy

Weekend Australian

September 5, 2009 Saturday

2 - All-round First Edition

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Byline: Christopher Hitchens

Body

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's choice for defence minister is sought by Interpol for planning the bombing of a Buenos Aires Jewish centre

US President Barack Obama has said he wants "the Islamic Republic of Iran" to be welcomed back into the "community of nations". Unfortunately, it is precisely the fact it is an Islamic republic that excludes it from such consideration.

A pointed reminder of this was provided last week, when the country's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, freshly blooded from his recent military coup, nominated his choice for defence minister. This turns out to be Ahmad Vahidi, whose nomination was approved by Iran's parliament on Thursday. Vahidi is now the only holder of the defence portfolio in the world to be simultaneously wanted by Interpol.

Vahidi used to head the so-called Quds Force, a shadowy arm of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps that conducts covert operations overseas. In 1994, according to an Argentine indictment adopted by Interpol's red notice, or most wanted index, he was one of those responsible for "conceiving, planning, financing and executing" the demolition of the Jewish community's cultural centre in Buenos Aires. There were 85 deaths and hundreds of injuries. Among the five other named co-conspirators in this atrocity were Mohsen Rezai, formerly the head of the Revolutionary Guards and more recently a candidate for the presidency, and Imad Mugniyeh, who died last year, the Damascus-based leader of Hezbollah's military wing, itself a declared proxy of the Islamic Republic.

At the time, Interpol's Secretary General Ronald K. Noble said that "a red notice chills travel -- limits travel -- and places the government in power at risk of explaining why a person for whom a red notice is issued is able to move freely".

A different version of this point occurred with particular force to Canada's foreign minister in 2006. His office noticed that a certain Saeed Mortazavi was scheduled to travel from Iran, via Frankfurt, to Geneva. Mortazavi was then and still is Tehran's much-detested and feared prosecutor-general, in which capacity he oversaw the rape and murder of a Canadian citizen, a photojournalist named Zahra Kazemi, in 2003. He had also freed her rapists and murderers after two independent commissions had found them responsible. (Need I add that Mortazavi was en route to Geneva as a member of Iran's official delegation to the Human Rights Council?) Peter MacKay, who was Canada's foreign minister at the time, telephoned his counterparts to try to have Mortazavi arrested and extradited to Canada, but he wasn't quite quick enough.

Iran disqualifies itself from legitimacy

There's really quite an impressive backlog of cases to be considered. In 1997, a court in Germany found that the shooting of several Iranian Kurds at the Mykonos restaurant in Berlin in 1992 had been sanctioned and ordered by an Iranian government committee that included "Supreme Leader" Ali Khamenei and then president Akbar Rafsanjani. This would not be the first time that a criminal investigation has touched the men who stand at the head of the Iranian state: Mark Bowden has produced some persuasive if not conclusive testimony that Ahmadinejad was among the hostage-takers who violated diplomatic immunity at the American embassy in Tehran, and there are legislators in the Austrian parliament who have demanded an inquiry into his role as a Revolutionary Guard leader in furnishing the weapons and money that were employed by an Iranian death squad to murder Iranian Kurdish leader Abdul-Rahman Ghassemlou in Vienna in 1989.

The term Revolutionary Guard, until recently, was not as much of a byword as it has since become. But this year's military coup in Tehran, of which that organisation was the main engine, has put it at the forefront of our attention. The rape and torture of young Iranians, the sadistic public bullying and sometimes murder of women, the closing of newspapers and the framing-up in a show trial of opposition politicians and intellectuals: all this is the fruit of Revolutionary Guard activity and ambition. We may be limited in what we can do to help and defend the Iranians who are confined within their borders.

But surely it is time that the international community spoke with one voice and said that the leaders of this criminal gang must stay inside their borders as well. Perhaps fewer invitations to "President" Ahmadinejad to speak at Columbia University and perhaps fewer countries putting out the red carpet for his defence minister. As for the sending of known supervisors of murder and torture to human rights summits in Geneva, conceivably that could become a slight no-no as well. Some of these people have bank accounts overseas, in consequence of their years of fleecing the helpless and torpid Iranian economy: freeze these accounts or confiscate them and hold them in escrow for the day when democracy comes.

Hiding somewhere in Iran are people who were paid by its government to commit sectarian murders in Lebanon and Iraq, and who organised and carried out assassinations and assassination attempts against the editors and publishers of Salman Rushdie, a novelist then living in London. Everybody can see that the Iranian government has forfeited any claim to legitimacy at home. Of scarcely less importance is the fact that it presents the face of a criminal enterprise to the outside world as well. There is no family of nations, except in the colloquial sense of "crime family", to which it can conceivably be invited to belong. We should ground its leaders for a start, demand the extradition of their many wanted accomplices and exact hefty penalties from their overseas proxy organisations.

The week in which the Obama administration was so voluble about the British humiliation at the hands of Libya's Colonel Muammar Gaddafi is an excellent moment to recall our own responsibilities in this regard, including our duty to our Canadian neighbours. But remember: Gaddafi, after the fall of Baghdad, at least decided to surrender his nuclear materials. In the case of Iran, it won't be long before the theocratic thugs and crooks and assassins have their very own fissile and missile capacity. Please bear it in mind, as they so obviously do.

>> Christopher Hitchens is a columnist for Vanity Fair and Slate. He is the Roger S. Mertz media fellow at the Hoover Institution in Stanford, California

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US-Iran thaw could bolster Afghanistan rebuilding efforts

Christian Science Monitor

April 3, 2009, Friday

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Byline: Anand Gopal Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Dateline: Kabul, Afghanistan

Body

In a crowded section near the western edge of the capital sits a sprawling new university compound, a structure of ornate white stone and blue-tiled domes.

As hundreds of students here file in for morning classes, many say they have one country to thank for helping to improve higher learning in this education-starved country: Iran.

The \$100 million university is one of Iran's many development projects across Afghanistan - and just the type of contribution Washington wants to bring positive change to this troubled country.

At an international conference on Afghanistan in The Hague this week, Iranian officials offered to cooperate with the United States on developing and reconstructing Afghanistan. Though deep mistrust remains between the two countries, the move marked a thaw in relations and could facilitate Washington's efforts to turn the situation around here.

"The conference underlines Iran's willingness to play a cooperative role and can jump-start Obama's policy of getting more support throughout the region," says Marvin Weinbaum, a former State Department analyst on Afghanistan-Pakistan and currently a scholar in residence at the Middle East Institute based in Washington.

More cooperation between Washington and Tehran could bolster development efforts. For example, according to "Afghanistan's Other Neighbors: Iran, Central Asia, and China," a recent report from the Washington-based think tank, the Hollings Center for International Dialogue, the US forbade contractors to purchase cheaper and more readily available Iranian asphalt to build a key highway here, presumably because of the hostile relations between the two countries.

Iran's support is crucial, Mr. Weinbaum says, because of its longstanding political, cultural, and economic interests in Afghanistan.

For example, Tehran has been working on an ambitious development plan here since 2001, mostly near its shared border with Afghanistan but also in the north and in major cities. Iran's projects provide a glimpse of how much more it could help the country in the future, says Weinbaum.

According to the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief, an umbrella organization that tracks aid here, Iran has disbursed nearly a half-billion dollars in aid since 2001. In fact, Iran is one of the most effective donors in the

US - Iran thaw could bolster Afghanistan rebuilding efforts

country, delivering 93 percent of the aid it has pledged. By comparison, the US has delivered only 48 percent of \$5 billion in pledged aid; India has contributed 24 percent of its \$200 million in pledged aid.

The western city of Herat has boomed with Iran's beneficence. Unlike most of the country, the city boasts 24-hour electricity, dozens of industrial zones, paved roads, and more. Iran is responsible for much of this, according to government officials. Elsewhere, Iran has built mosques and education centers and provided loans to Afghan businessmen. Iranian entrepreneurs have poured investment dollars into the country.

These investments might be the driving factor in Iran's interest in the country. Afghanistan is a valuable market for the Iranians, says Weinbaum: "Iranian businessmen are operating pretty freely in Afghanistan, and more consumer goods are being exported into the country from Iran."

Iran doesn't want an unstable neighbor

Another motivation for Iran might be the fear of a destabilized Afghanistan. "Their nightmare is that a radical Sunni group like the Taliban come to power next door," Weinbaum continues.

The Taliban and Tehran have been at odds for years. The ultraconservative Sunni militants view Shiite Islam and its adherents with severe hostility. During Afghanistan's civil wars in the 1990s, Iran supported Shiite groups and other non-Pashtun groups. It later backed the arch rivals of the Taliban government, the Northern Alliance.

Iranian officials also worry that a destabilized Afghanistan could spark a refugee crisis within its borders. Iran is already home to more than 2 million Afghan refugees, most of them illegal. The problem has caused tensions between Tehran and Kabul, as Iran periodically expels the illegal refugees.

Drug smugglers frequently infiltrate the 560-mile border between the two countries, driving up crime and opium addiction rates. Iranian officials have pledged to cooperate with US counter-narcotics efforts. "While Afghanistan is the world's largest producer of opium, Iran is the world's largest consumer," writes the Hollings Center in its recent report.

Iranian officials have not yet outlined how they plan to help fight the drug trade, but some officials say they might increase border security to limit smuggling.

US, Afghans question Iran's motives

Despite pledges of cooperation, the US and Iran have much mutual suspicion to overcome. "Iran is certainly fearful of the US developing a strategic partnership with Afghanistan," says Weinbaum.

Officials in Tehran worry that the Americans will build permanent military bases in Afghanistan that could one day be used to launch attacks against Iran. Iran has been critical of US troop presence in the region, saying at Tuesday's conference that the planned increase in forces "will prove ineffective."

The US, for its part, has accused Iran of surreptitiously supporting the Afghan insurgency, citing instances in which Iranian-made weapons were recovered from the insurgents. But Iranian officials respond that such weapons are readily available on the black market and do not indicate active support from Tehran.

Many Afghans suspect Iran's motives. Due to its historical, religious, and cultural ties with Afghanistan's Persian-speaking minorities, who together make up roughly half of the country, Iran is sometimes perceived as favoring them with their support.

"They build everything for Shiites," says Kabul resident Fazel Minlallah.

"They don't help the Pashtun people," says lawmaker Najib Kabuli. "They use their money to win influence, like they do in Lebanon," where Iran supports the Shiite group Hezbollah.

US - Iran thaw could bolster Afghanistan rebuilding efforts

Other Afghans are wary of Iran's cultural influence - the country is more socially liberal than Afghanistan and many returned refugees bring such ideas back home, causing tensions in this ultra-conservative society. In some cases, young Afghan women return from Iran and dress less conservatively, for example.

But the overlapping American, Afghan, and Iranian interests here suggest that the countries can find areas to work together. None of the countries involved, notes Weinbaum, wants Afghanistan to descend into instability or civil war, and therefore they have an interest in helping to rebuild and develop the country.

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As a CIA spy, I saw in Iran what the West cannot ignore

Christian Science Monitor

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Byline: Reza Kahlili

Dateline: Los Angeles

Body

Today the West must make one of the most important decisions of our era. Will we defend what remains of democracy and freedom in Iran, or will we succumb to Tehran's murderous government?

It's a question that goes to the heart of our own security. Iran is a thugocracy of Islamic mullahs, and it will soon have nuclear arms. Any misconception about the intentions of fanatics with nuclear bombs will have grave consequences.

I know because I spent years alongside them as a CIA spy working under cover in Iran's Revolutionary Guards starting in the 1980s.

The Guards Corps was set up as a check on the regular Army and to serve and secure the Islamic revolution. Thirty years of Western appeasement hasn't stopped them from terrorizing the West - or Iranians. Today, with Tehran's leaders caught in a power struggle over the June 12 election and the legitimacy of the regime, the Guards, led by zealots, are calling the shots.

The Guards - and the hardliner clerics they protect - are vulnerable, however. This summer's grass-roots uprising has put them on the defensive. A strong Western hand now could tip the balance.

We don't have a moment to lose. If we can't upend the Guards now, how can we do so once they have nuclear bombs?

Washington could lead the way by refusing to recognize President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who earlier today took the oath of office for his second, four-year term. Instead, the United States should demand the freedom - and the freedom of speech - for all who've been arrested and tortured in recent weeks. And we should toughen sanctions to include cutting off Iran's gasoline supplies.

The people of Iran are desperate for a show of support from the West. By standing with them, we can uphold our duty to defend democracy and take a stand for the security of the free world.

Such a stand would mark a radical policy change. For the past 30 years, the West has tried very hard to appease Iran's mullahs.

As a CIA spy, I saw in Iran what the West cannot ignore

In the 1980s, I helped make known a secret pact between Iranian mullahs and some European governments. Thirsty for Iranian oil, the Europeans gave the go-ahead to Iranian agents to assassinate opposition members abroad without interference, as long as European citizens were not at risk. Hundreds of dissidents were gunned down.

The US has also been guilty of trying to appease the mullahs. Almost every administration after the 1979 Iranian Revolution has tried in vain to create better relations through back channels. Yet those efforts haven't stopped Iran's rulers from arming terrorists, taking hostages, and suppressing their own people.

The brutal killing of Iranians by their leaders that we're seeing today is nothing new. Ruling clerics have been killing political opponents, along with their families and friends, for 30 years - but inside prison walls.

I've been inside those walls and I've seen teenage girls who were raped before execution so they were no longer virgins and therefore, according to their Islamic beliefs, couldn't go to heaven. I've seen hundreds hung on cranes. I've seen women and men lined up in front of firing squads after being severely tortured; their families would be forced to pay for the cost of the bullets. Western officials were quite aware that this was happening, but they let their thirst for oil blind them.

Today, however, the screams of Iranians young and old calling for democracy and freedom cannot be ignored. The post-election uprising has started the countdown of the end of the thugocracy in Iran. This is the desire of the Iranian people. It should be our desire, too.

So far, the West has kept fairly quiet about Iran's unrest. President Obama and others say they don't want to give credence to Tehran's claims of a Western conspiracy behind the protests. And by not ruffling the regime's feathers, they hope to negotiate improved ties and resolve the nuclear impasse.

But how do you negotiate with a government composed of terrorists?

Right now, the Revolutionary Guards have near-complete control of Iran. This terrorist organization is expanding its power throughout the Middle East. Its ultimate goal is to bring the demise of the West.

With the help of North Korea, the Guards are working on long-range ballistic missiles in tests that are concealed by their space project.

The Guards have also accelerated their production of Sejil, solid fuel missiles, and are working nonstop to improve the range of those missiles. Today they can strike Tel Aviv, Riyadh, US bases in Iraq, and the US Navy's Fifth Fleet headquarters in Bahrain. Their goal is to be able to target all of Europe.

The Guards are also working on their nuclear bomb project in facilities unknown to the West.

Iran's defense minister, Mostafa Najjar, who oversees the development of missile and nuclear technology, was in charge of the Revolutionary Guards forces in Lebanon that facilitated the attack on the Marine Corps barracks in Beirut on Oct. 23, 1983, killing 241 US servicemen.

The current deputy defense minister, Ahmad Vahidi, who oversees the distribution of arms and missiles to terrorist groups such as Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad, and Hamas, was the commander of the Guards' elite Quds Forces and the chief intelligence officer of the Guards in charge of the terrorist activities outside of Iran.

Mr. Vahidi is currently on Interpol's Most Wanted List for the attack on the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires on July 18, 1994 that killed 85 and injured more than 100.

Many Iranian officials have Interpol arrest warrants, and even supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei has been recognized in courts as one who has ordered such acts.

Fanatic radicals such as these are incompatible with a free Iran. This is the best opportunity in 30 years to change course and stop succumbing to thugs. Will we seize it?

As a CIA spy, I saw in Iran what the West cannot ignore

"Reza Kahlili" is a pseudonym for an ex-CIA spy who requires anonymity for safety reasons. He is writing a book about his life and experiences as a CIA agent in Iran's Revolutionary Guards.

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Israel goes to polls

Prince George Citizen (British Columbia)

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Final Edition

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Body

Israel's election has suddenly become too close to call, though hardliners will have a clear edge in the horse trading that is sure to follow Tuesday's vote. Whoever emerges victorious will likely have little to celebrate, with polls pointing toward a fractious coalition government and a period of political paralysis. That could complicate international efforts to create a Palestinian state alongside Israel, and pose big challenges to the new U.S. president, who has made Middle East peace a top priority. The race pits former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who opposes giving up land in the name of peace, against Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, a centrist who hopes to become the country's first female leader in nearly 40 years.

For months, opinion polls have predicted a decisive victory by Netanyahu's Likud party. But new polls released over the weekend showed Livni's Kadima party closing.

the gap. Neither, however, is expected to get more than 30 seats in the 120-seat parliament, meaning the winner will have to form a coalition with smaller parties.

Netanyahu seems to be in a far better position to lead the country, since his natural allies in the nationalist right wing of Israeli politics are all polling well. In particular, Netanyahu's former protege, Avigdor Lieberman, appears poised to make huge gains on a platform that calls for Israeli Arabs to swear loyalty to the state or lose citizenship.

While Livni could still eke out a victory, it appears mathematically impossible for her to form a coalition without bringing in Lieberman or some other hardline party. That would hinder her ability to pursue a peace agreement with the Palestinians, as she has promised to do.

"It seems it is going to be decisive, the right wing is probably going to have the majority," said Avraham Diskin, a Hebrew University political scientist who is the chief statistician for Israel's Central Election Commission.

The strength of the Israeli right is a reflection of the times. Israel recently wrapped up a three-week offensive against the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip. The campaign came just over two years after an offensive against Hezbollah guerrillas in Lebanon.

Israel goes to polls

These conflicts have reinforced a sense that the Jewish state is surrounded by enemies and left a public highly skeptical about the prospects for peace. Throughout the campaign, Livni and Netanyahu have tried to outdo each other with their threats against Hamas.

"In the end, there won't be a choice but to topple the Hamas government in Gaza," Netanyahu told the French-language Guysen TV on Monday. "That's clear. The job wasn't completed in the latest operation and we will have to compete it later."

Netanyahu has tried to capitalize on the country's mood by criticizing the current peace efforts with Hamas' rival, the moderate Palestinian government in the West Bank.

Livni, who has been the government's chief negotiator, wants to continue the talks, which would require a large West Bank withdrawal as part of an agreement. She has repeatedly urged voters to choose "hope" over "fear."

Although Netanyahu has talked of forming a broadbased government, he has taken great pains to stress his hardline credentials in the closing days of the campaign - a direct result of Lieberman's growing popularity.

Over the weekend, he visited a West Bank settlement overlooking Israel's international airport and vowed never to withdraw from the area. On Sunday, he travelled to the Golan Heights and declared he would never return the strategic plateau to Syria.

POSITIONS

JERUSALEM (AP) -- Key campaign issues and positions of the main parties for Israel's Feb.10 election.

BORDERS

The centrist Kadima party of Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni wants to determine Israel's final borders based on the U.S.-backed "road map" peace plan. The centre-left Labour party, led by Defence Minister Ehud Barak, also supports peace talks and retaining major settlement blocs. The hawkish Likud party of former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said it is willing to make limited territorial concessions, but only after the Palestinians halt violence and disarms militant groups.

THE PALESTINIANS

There is broad consensus across the mainstream Israeli parties that there can be no talks with Hamas, the Islamic militant group that controls the Gaza Strip.

Both Kadima and Labour are willing to seek a peace deal with Hamas' rival, moderate Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, though they say there can be no final agreement until he regains control of Gaza.

Likud does not believe Abbas is capable of implementing a peace deal.

THE SAUDI PEACE PROPOSAL

Kadima and Labour are willing to negotiate over the plan, which calls for an Israeli withdrawal to pre-1967 borders in exchange for a sweeping Middle East peace.

Likud and Lieberman oppose it.

QUICK GLANCE

JERUSALEM (AP) -- Key facts about Israel's general election:

WHAT'S AT STAKE: Voters will elect a 120-member parliament, or Knesset, Israel's 18th.

Israel goes to polls

Citizens vote for party lists, not individual candidates. Seats are allocated in the Knesset according to the percentage of the vote the parties win.

WHO'S RUNNING: Thirty-three parties are fielding candidates. Key parties are the governing Kadima party, led by Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, Israel's chief negotiator with the Palestinians and a supporter of conciliation with the Arab world; Likud, led by Benjamin Netanyahu, a former prime minister who takes a hard line against the Palestinians, and Labour, headed by Defence Minister Ehud Barak, another former prime minister and a retired army chief who won widespread public approval for his role as pointman in Israel's three-week offensive against Hamas in Gaza last month.

FORMING A GOVERNMENT: In Israel's 60-year history, no party has ever won an outright majority of 61 seats, and the country has always been governed by a coalition.

THE VOTE: There are 5,278,985 eligible voters. Voter turnout in the last election in 2006 was 63.2 per cent, the lowest in Israel's history.

Election day is a national holiday, and workers have the day off.

ISRAEL BY THE NUMBERS:

Population: 7.2 million of whom 75 per cent (5.5 million) are Jews, 20 per cent (1.4 million) are Arabs and the rest are classified as "others," most of them non-Jewish immigrants.

Per capita GDP: \$28,900

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Will the obama effect crash in Iran?

Western Morning News (Plymouth, UK)

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Body

N sharp contrast to the unwelcoming shoe hurled at President Bush in his last media conference in the Middle East, President Obama and his speech were very well received in Egypt and the rest of the Muslim-majority world.

The audience in Cairo University interrupted the speech 23 times by waves of applause (and this is not the usual cheering crowd handpicked by the Egyptian State Security Investigations - they were invited by the mighty American Embassy and included several political dissidents).

There are several reasons for the Middle East's Obama-mania. The crowd in Cairo has no recollection of Clinton's eloquent speeches and did not care to hear Bush's. In other words, they have not much comparative references. But much more important, this is the first time Arabs and Muslims are hearing a very eloquent, "politically correct" speech from a black American President who has Muslim relatives.

For many, that is revolutionary in content and rhetoric - if not necessarily in policies. But let us not dance around this jarring disconnect: on a normal day in Cairo or al-Azhar Universities (the two institutions that sponsored the speech), there is little time and space for genuine, open-minded contemplation or debate. Both universities are big intellectual prisons ruled by the State Security Services. It is State Security Generals who decide which professor gets hired, which one gets promoted, which one gets fired, and which one gets detained.

If Obama were to visit Cairo University on a normal day, he would find four trucks of Central Security Forces parked on the right side of the main entrance. They never go away - 24/7.

Al-Azhar as an institution is not hospitable to political correctness or Egyptian democrats. It did establish itself, however, as a leading authority behind censorship of books and creative ideas. It is also the institution that constantly calls for punishing and harassing secular intellectuals, most notably Dr Nasr Abu Zeid. Dr Ayman Al Zawahri, Al Qaeda's second-in-command, and Dr Omar Abd Al Rahman, the radical cleric imprisoned in the US for the World Trade Center bombing in 1993, were both radicalised in, and graduated from, Cairo and al-Azhar Universities. The constant cycles of repression that plagued the two universities between 1960s and the 2000s made them strongholds for radical groups.

Yet the core idea of repressive autocrats breeding violent theocrats was absent from the President's speech.

The impact of the speech continues though. Coming on the heel of it, the swift march of events seem to have energised voters in Lebanon and Iran, who turned out in a record number.

President Obama did mention the imperative of upholding minority rights; and singled out both the Christian Maronites of Lebanon and the Copts of Egypt. By the same token, he emphasised women's right to full

Will the obama effect crash in Iran ?

inclusion in public life. At least in the case of Lebanon, both Maronites and women voted at an unprecedented rate (60 per cent). Last month, not only a similar high turnout took place in Kuwait, but also four women were elected for the first time, despite the fierce resistance of a coalition of tribal and Islamist elements.

The parliamentary elections in Lebanon earlier and from Kuwait last month clearly indicate that Islamist parties lost significant grounds to secular liberal counterparts. Along with Turkey, these two countries have had well-established democratic traditions by Middle Eastern standards. Scholars of the subject maintain that societies which manage to have four or more consecutive, free and fair elections are usually judged to have achieved an irreversible democratic transition.

Without direct visible foreign intervention, both Lebanon and Kuwait seem to have such transition well under way. The fear that Islamists might impede the process have not materialised. Leaders of competing Islamist forces conceded defeat and accepted the result. To his credit, the much-demonised Hassan Nasrallah of Hezbollah made an eloquent sport-like concession. The often-repeated contention that, with Islamists in the fray, it would be a "one man, one vote, one time" is yet to be proven.

Now, enters Iran and the optimism for democratic transition starts to fade a bit. The 10th presidential elections of the Islamic Republic were held on June 12. The incumbent president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, had won the election with 66 per cent of the votes cast and Mir-Hossein Mousavi, the reformist candidate, had received 33 per cent. There was a big outcry of foul, both domestically and internationally. Ayatollah Khamenei, the supreme leader of Iran's dual system (the theocratic and democratic ones) came out in the prayers sermon last Friday declaring that the winner was definitely Ahmadinejad.

The whole sermon (yes, supposedly a religious, spiritual ritual) was centred on the election results. The sermon was basically four messages to the four *raisons d'être* of the Islamic Republic: the people of Iran, the Islamist political elite, the enemies of the Islamic Republic of Iran (or the imperial forces), and the hidden Imam. The conclusion of the Supreme Guide, who supposedly should be above factionalism, was siding publicly and heavily with Ahmadinejad. That was expected. The election had to be stolen because otherwise Iran's hardliners would have been confronted by a democratically elected president determined to revive republican values and institutions.

But the interesting part was the message delivered to America under Obama's administration. It was not the regular "death to the imperialists" (despite the chants of the crowd). It was challenging Obama on his own turf: "Human Rights?! You Democrats burned Davidians' children alive in Texas!" Ayatollah Khomeini recalled.

So will the "Obama effect" crash when it comes to Iran? This we will yet have to see. But the defiance of the Iranians for democracy and freedom, the outpouring applause the President received in Cairo, and the electoral results of Lebanon and Kuwait all show that the overwhelming majority of Arabs and Muslims are yearning for democracy, not the Caliphate, and abhorring repression, not the West.

Obama's electoral victory and rhetorical changes are new and historic. They raised the hopes and the expectations of many Arabs and Muslims. The rhetoric needs to change into policies now. The hope is that the President will not sacrifice America's core values of freedom and self-determination for short-term political expediency by supporting repressive autocrats and/or maintaining a double standard policy: no for electoral fraud in Iran, but mass-rigging elections in Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria, or lack thereof in Saudi Arabia is OK!

Only then can the United States reclaim its moral force in the Arab- and Muslim-majority world.

Omar Ashour is a lecturer in Politics at the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter. He is the author of *The De-Radicalisation of the Jihadists: Transforming Armed Islamist Movements*

Load-Date: June 27, 2009

Will the obama effect crash in Iran ?

End of Document

Inside the Times

The New York Times

May 26, 2009 Tuesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Metropolitan Desk; Pg. 2

Length: 1101 words

Body

International

IN LEBANON, NEW FOCUS

On Armenian Influence

Lebanon's Armenian Christians have been the focus of new attention after the group's main political bloc decided to support Hezbollah's alliance in the coming parliamentary elections. PAGE A4

SIKH'S DEATH PROMPTS RIOTS

Riots erupted across the Punjab region of India following the killing of the leader of a Sikh sect who died after an attack on a temple in Vienna on Sunday. PAGE A4

STATUE OF FLU SURVIVOR

A Mexican official said that a statue the Mexican kindergartner who is the first person known to have contracted the swine flu now circling the globe could help attract tourists to La Gloria, a poor village hard hit by the virus. PAGE A4

IRAN'S POPULAR CHALLENGER

Mir-Hossein Moussavi, the strongest challenger to President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran, attracted a crowd of about 30,000 for a campaign speech just weeks before an election that the incumbent appears to stand a serious chance of losing. PAGE A8

IRAQI MINISTER STEPS DOWN

Iraq's embattled trade minister resigned as part of what is expected to be a significant turnover in the prime minister's cabinet as part of the government's campaign against corruption. PAGE A8

National

JUSTICES' QUESTIONS

Predict Outcome of Cases

Inside the Times

Two studies -- one by a law student and another by Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. of Supreme Court when he was an appellate justice -- found that the number of questions asked by Supreme Court justices during oral arguments was a reliable predictor of which side would lose and which would win. Adam Liptak, Sidebar. PAGE A10

RULING ON MARRIAGE LAW

The California Supreme Court will decide Tuesday on Proposition 8, the voter initiative passed that outlawed same-sex marriage, and is expected to address the legal status of the nearly 18,000 same-sex couples who were married during the period of legalization. PAGE A10

Bill on Internet Gambling A11

Test for Senate Majority Leader A11

New York

GOVERNOR TO PROPOSE

Revision of Ethics Panel

Gov. David A. Paterson is expected to put forth plans for a major overhaul of the commission that enforces state ethics laws, including changes meant to shield the panel from political interference. PAGE A14

LINGERING ANXIETY OVER FLU

Representatives of the teachers' and principals' unions said that they supported the decision to reopen 20 city schools closed during the swine flu outbreak. But at many schools, anxiety remains high. PAGE A14

Business

A TOP DIVORCE LAWYER,

Busier than Ever

More British women than ever are turning to Raymond Tooth, Britain's premier divorce lawyer, to make sure they get as much money as they can, even as their husbands' riches buckle under the weight of the financial crisis. PAGE B1

FACING AUTOMOTIVE REALITY

Europe's carmakers are resisting the wave of consolidation that is transforming the industry. But Europe may be forced to grapple with the fact that it does not need all the auto plants it has to meet consumer demand. PAGE B1

STATES SEEK BAILOUT MONEY

As the economic downturn has eaten into their tax bases, state and local governments are asking Washington for federal bailout money to back their debt. PAGE B1

ECONOMIES' RECORD DECLINE

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development said the economies of the developed world have had their worst quarterly showing in decades. PAGE B2

LAUGHING OFF THE DOWNTURN

The prime-time lineups for 2009-10, presented to Madison Avenue last week, are full of comedies meant to make recession-weary viewers feel better. PAGE B5

SELLING URANIUM TO U.S.

Russia, already a large supplier of nuclear reactor fuel to Europe and Asia, is scheduled to sign its first purely commercial contract on Tuesday to sell low-enriched uranium to American utility companies. PAGE A7

Moves Toward Telecom Merger B3

Wi-Fi In-Flight Entertainment B6

Sports

AN ANTICIPATED SHOWDOWN

That May Not Come

Everyone wants to see a showdown between LeBron James and Kobe Bryant in the N.B.A. finals, though the way things are going, fans will be lucky if either of the two make it. William C. Rhoden, Sports of the Times. PAGE B11

A STAR'S PLAYOFF MATURATION

With each postseason win, Dwight Howard, the Orlando Magic's jovial center, is breaking down the barrier to become an elite player -- with a noticeable gripe. PAGE B9

SHOWING OFF HIS ENDURANCE

Park Ji-sung, Manchester United's tireless midfielder from South Korea, is expected to become the first Asian player to participate in the European Champions League final when Manchester United faces Barcelona. PAGE B9

NO DECISION ON CHAMPION

The owner of the Preakness champion Rachel Alexandra is still not ready to commit to the Belmont Stakes on June 6, with an opportunity to become the first filly to win two legs of the Triple Crown. PAGE B10

Arts

REVISITING A HIT FORMULA,

Perhaps Too Closely

"Mental," a new Fox television series, is essentially "House" set in a psychiatric ward, with everything transposed to the new setting without a hitch -- or much imagination. Review by Alessandra Stanley. PAGE C1

FROM UPDIKE'S SUNSET

The protagonists in the final volume of John Updike stories share the same preoccupations with mortality of his other characters. Review by Michiko Kakutani. PAGE C1

THE GREAT DEBATE OF 1858

"The Rivalry," a play by Norman Corwin, uses excerpts from the Lincoln-Douglas debates and the barest minimum of side plot to turn history into compelling theater. Review by Neil Genzlinger. PAGE c3

SEQUEL VERSUS SEQUEL

"Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian," sequel to the 2006 adventure film, won the Memorial Day box office fight with \$70 million in ticket sales. "Terminator Salvation," the latest installment in the action franchise, finished with a \$53.8 million haul. PAGE C1

Science Times

A FLURRY OF TEXTING

May Be Taking a Toll

American teenagers sent and received an average of 2,272 text messages per month in the fourth quarter of 2008, and the phenomenon is beginning to worry physicians and psychologists. PAGE D1

THE ESSENTIAL FUNGI

Fungi are everywhere, and though some species are pathogenic and will kill the living tissue they have penetrated, the vast majority are benign, and many are essential to the life around them. PAGE D1

SLOWING DOWN TIME

The new Discovery Channel television series "Time Warp" applies high-speed imaging to an array of events, like a droplet of water coalescing into a pool or a gasoline-soaked bullwhip bursting into flame. PAGE D3

How Referrals Hurt Health Care D5

Treatable Ailment, Easily Missed D7

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Load-Date: May 26, 2009

Learn how to carry your own baggage

Weekend Australian

May 30, 2009 Saturday

1 - All-round Country Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 26

Length: 1007 words

Byline: DAVID PENBERTHY

Body

THE PUNCH

ONE of the best columns of the year to date was this week's hilarious, bang-on rant by former foreign minister Alexander Downer, who used his regular spot in Adelaide's The Advertiser to get 11 years' worth of fury off his chest about our more half-witted countrymen and women who get into scrapes overseas.

Under the pithy headline "Idiot Aussies: Grow up and take responsibility", Downer used as his starting point Melbourne's so-called "Beer Mat Mum" who, having been jailed for stealing a Singha-sodden terry-towelling mat from some Thai dive bar, is surely just as compelling a bogan pin-up as the chk-chk-boom girl.

Beer Mat Mum became a cause celebre for a few minutes the other week when an angry nation (or the angry parts of an otherwise sensible nation) railed that Canberra clearly wasn't doing enough to save middle-aged Australian ladies who flogged bar accessories from overseas drinking establishments.

"I'm sure my successor as foreign minister, Stephen Smith, had his in-box bursting last week as people demanded he save the beer mat mum, Annice Smoel, from the ravages of the Thai police," Downer wrote.

"I felt for him especially when the media started demanding he 'do something' to save her. After about 10 minutes as foreign minister I was a little surprised to learn I was 'responsible' for miscreant Australians who got into trouble in foreign countries.

"No, no, no, don't get it wrong; drug traffickers, drunks, kleptomaniacs and fraudsters weren't responsible for their own stupidity, I was."

Downer's piece went on to recount the appalling conceit of Lebanese-Australians who were knowingly holidaying or in many cases living permanently in the middle of a war zone, despite repeated warnings from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade that Israel was about to bung on one hell of a stink in its war against Hezbollah.

He recalled how, at a cost to the Australian taxpayer of \$30 million, 5000 of these Aussies of Lebanese descent were ferried to Turkey and Cyprus. There was some gratitude, but as Downer writes: "Some just whinged. They felt seasick on the ferry and that was our fault. Could they get frequent flyer points for the free flight back to Australia?"

Learn how to carry your own baggage

Downer's column reminded me how The Daily Telegraph in Sydney was pilloried (again) for crimes of insensitivity when it published a Warren Brown cartoon at the time featuring an Australian passport under a glass box reading, "In case of emergency break glass."

The cartoon captured the legitimate and heartfelt cynicism of the majority of Australians at the demands of a foolish minority, many of whom had no demonstrable commitment to Australia, and probably remembered they had an Australian passport only when the missiles started hailing down.

It was just one example of a mindset that transcends ethnicity.

A good friend of ours works for Foreign Affairs in Fiji and had a wonderful time at Christmas being berated and abused by Australians on package tours who, on arriving at Nadi, discovered the country was under water. DFAT met many of these people at the airport and arranged for dozens of them to be put up for free at five-star hotels. Many of them were grateful, but many were not and vilified our friend, who was working around the clock with young kids of her own at home in a country where she'd only just arrived.

The complaints ran to the lack of activities at the hotel, the inability to access the beaches, the sheer horror of having to eat anything other than room-service club sandwiches. Underpinning it all was a sense of disbelief at Canberra's failure to realise that torrential rain was about to hail down on Fiji and to stop it from falling.

It's a bit queer how so many people can rail against government and its failure to do anything, then turn around and demand that it magically step in to prevent acts of God or to save people from foreseeable acts of war that were themselves the subject of overt and repeated warnings.

Earlier this year, when shark fever was gripping Sydney in the wake of three attacks, I wrote a column for The Telegraph teasing out the absurdity of the demands for government action on sharks.

Remember here that the demands were being levelled against a Government in NSW that would be flat out delivering a pizza, let alone a viable train service or paying its hospital bills.

It was decreed -- again, by the non-sensible minority, cheered on by brain-dead public statements from an opportunistic Opposition -- that it was about time Premier Nathan Rees got tough on sharks and tough on the causes of sharks.

In an exhaustive bit of research I discovered that sharks were killing people at the rate of one a year yet the vastly more sinister bee was knocking them off almost twice as effectively, claiming 1.8 lives a year, and asked how many more innocent people had to die before the Rees Government finally got tough on the bee question?

The response to the column was particularly heartening because it showed there is an enormous and eminently sensible group of Australians out there -- most of whom never ring talkback or write mad emails to websites -- who think government should look after schools, transport and hospitals, and pretty much leave it at that.

This too was demonstrated by Downer's piece. Just as good as the column itself was the readers' reaction to it; people who openly admitted they couldn't stand the bloke saying they had never agreed more with something they read in a newspaper.

Downer's piece can become the latest entry to Michael Costa's political memoir. When he stormed out of NSW politics last year, the former treasurer and now columnist with The Australian joked that he was working on a book entitled "I'm Fat, Ugly and Stupid: What's the Government Going to Do About It?". It's a pity he was only joking. It would sell like hotcakes because the sensible and silent majority could not agree more.

You can read Downer's piece at www.adelaidenow.com.au or by typing this tiny url into your browser: <http://tinyurl.com/pf8lcj>

penberthyd@thepunch.com.au

Learn how to carry your own baggage

Load-Date: May 29, 2009

End of Document

Livni, Netanyahu both claim victory in Israeli election

The New Zealand Herald
February 11, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: NEWS; World

Length: 1123 words

Body

JERUSALEM - Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and hard-line rival Benjamin Netanyahu both claimed victory in Israel's parliamentary election which early returns suggested was too close to call.

With over two-thirds of the votes counted, Livni's centrist Kadima Party had 29 seats in the 120-seat parliament while Netanyahu's hawkish Likud Party was right behind with 28, Israel's state-run Channel 1 TV said. Soldiers' votes on bases around the country won't be tallied until Thursday evening, and that could shift the results by a seat or two.

"With God's help, I will lead the next government," Netanyahu told a raucous crowd of cheering supporters chanting his nickname Bibi. "The national camp, led by the Likud, has won a clear advantage."

Soon after, Livni took the stage before a crowd of flag-waving supporters and flashed a V-for victory sign. "Today the people chose Kadima. ... We will form the next government led by Kadima."

Earlier, exit polls showed Livni with a slight lead, but strong gains by right-wing parties overall would make it difficult, and perhaps impossible, for Livni to form a government.

Even if Livni could overcome the formidable obstacles and become Israel's second **female** prime minister after Golda Meir, exit polls suggested she would have to rely on the participation of right-wing parties opposed to her vision of giving up land in exchange for a peace deal with the Palestinians.

Despite the uncertainties, both sides claimed victory.

Applause, cheers and whistling erupted at Kadima headquarters in Tel Aviv as television stations began reporting their exit polls, with supporters jumping up and down and giving each other high-fives and hugs.

Netanyahu told his supporters in a speech early Wednesday that he was proud of the gains by his hard-line party and pledged big changes in the country's policies.

The partial results marked a dramatic slide for Netanyahu, who had held a solid lead in opinion polls heading into the election.

The results showed hard-line parties winning 64 seats in the 120-member parliament, while liberal parties captured just 56 seats.

Israelis vote for parties, not individuals. Since no party won a parliamentary majority, the leader of one of the major parties must try to put together a coalition with other factions - a process that can take up to six weeks.

Livni, Netanyahu both claim victory in Israeli election

In coming days, President Shimon Peres will ask the leader who he believes is most capable of forming a coalition to try to put together a government.

If he chooses Livni, she would have to reach out to hard-liners. The elections were called after she failed to put together a ruling coalition when scandal-plagued Prime Minister Ehud Olmert announced he was stepping down last fall.

Alternatively, Peres could turn to Netanyahu, who appeared to be in a better position to put together a majority.

Netanyahu, who opposes giving up territory to make room for a Palestinian state, could find himself on a collision course with President Barack Obama, who is promising an aggressive push for Mideast peace. Netanyahu says he would allow West Bank settlements to expand and is seen as likely to contemplate military action against Iran - positions that would likely put him at odds with Obama.

If Livni's projected victory holds, it is likely due to a strong showing by ultranationalist candidate Avigdor Lieberman, who appears to have taken a sizable chunk of votes that would have otherwise gone to Netanyahu.

The partial results gave Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu Party 16 seats, placing it in third place behind Kadima and Likud - and ahead of Labor, the party that ruled Israel for decades. That gives Lieberman, who based his campaign on denying citizenship to Israeli Arabs he considers disloyal, a key role in coalition building. Livni would almost certainly not be able to form a government without his support.

Lieberman said his party's strong showing means he holds the key to forming the new Israeli government. He said he had spoken to both Livni and Netanyahu and told them he could be persuaded to join either one of them.

"It is up to Lieberman who will form the next coalition," said Menachem Hofnung, a professor of political science at Hebrew University. "Lieberman has emerged as the kingmaker. He is the winner of these elections and it depends on who he sides with over the next few weeks as to who will be prime minister."

Netanyahu, who was prime minister a decade ago, portrayed himself as the candidate best equipped to deal with the threats Israel faces - Hamas militants in Gaza, Hezbollah guerrillas in Lebanon and behind them an Iranian regime that Israel believes is developing nuclear weapons.

He has derided the outgoing government's peace talks as a waste of time, and said relations with the Palestinians should be limited to developing their battered economy.

Livni, who has led Israel's peace talks the past year, has pledged to continue the negotiations with the moderate Palestinian government in the West Bank. At the same time, she advocates a tough line against the Hamas government in the Gaza Strip, and was one of the architects against a bruising Israeli military offensive in Gaza last month.

At Likud headquarters, activists dismissed Kadima's edge and predicted Netanyahu would be tapped to form the next government.

"I am certain that Netanyahu will be the next prime minister," said Likud lawmaker Gilad Erdan. "Netanyahu has a clear advantage because the right wing parties have a larger bloc. The test is not which party gets the most votes, but which candidate has the best chance to form a coalition, and that person is Benjamin Netanyahu."

Kadima lawmaker Haim Ramon predicted the party would lead the next government.

"We are the only party that can approach both the right wing and the left," he told Channel 2 TV. But he acknowledged the results would make it difficult for anyone to govern.

Israel's Palestinian peace partners in the West Bank said the next Israeli government would have to stop building in the West Bank before talks could resume.

Livni, Netanyahu both claim victory in Israeli election

"We now have clear conditions for whoever heads the Israeli government," said Rafiq Hussein, a senior aide to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. "The conditions for negotiations to resume begin with the immediate halt of settlement activities."

Peace talks have not included the Gaza Strip's Hamas rulers, who do not recognize Israel's right to exist and recently were the target of a devastating Israeli military offensive.

In Gaza, Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said the election results don't make a difference in the lives of Palestinians because Israel "is still working to eliminate the Palestinian existence.

"Anyone who thinks that new faces might bring change is mistaken," Barhoum said, before the exit polls were released.

-AP

Load-Date: February 11, 2009

End of Document

Iran disqualifies itself from legitimacy

Weekend Australian

September 5, 2009 Saturday

1 - All-round Country Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 23

Length: 1059 words

Byline: Christopher Hitchens

Body

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's choice for defence minister is sought by Interpol for planning the bombing of a Buenos Aires Jewish centre

US President Barack Obama has said he wants "the Islamic Republic of Iran" to be welcomed back into the "community of nations". Unfortunately, it is precisely the fact it is an Islamic republic that excludes it from such consideration.

A pointed reminder of this was provided last week, when the country's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, freshly blooded from his recent military coup, nominated his choice for defence minister. This turns out to be Ahmad Vahidi, whose nomination was approved by Iran's parliament on Thursday. Vahidi is now the only holder of the defence portfolio in the world to be simultaneously wanted by Interpol.

Vahidi used to head the so-called Quds Force, a shadowy arm of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps that conducts covert operations overseas. In 1994, according to an Argentine indictment adopted by Interpol's red notice, or most wanted index, he was one of those responsible for "conceiving, planning, financing and executing" the demolition of the Jewish community's cultural centre in Buenos Aires. There were 85 deaths and hundreds of injuries. Among the five other named co-conspirators in this atrocity were Mohsen Rezai, formerly the head of the Revolutionary Guards and more recently a candidate for the presidency, and Imad Mugniyeh, who died last year, the Damascus-based leader of Hezbollah's military wing, itself a declared proxy of the Islamic Republic.

At the time, Interpol's Secretary General Ronald K. Noble said that "a red notice chills travel -- limits travel -- and places the government in power at risk of explaining why a person for whom a red notice is issued is able to move freely".

A different version of this point occurred with particular force to Canada's foreign minister in 2006. His office noticed that a certain Saeed Mortazavi was scheduled to travel from Iran, via Frankfurt, to Geneva. Mortazavi was then and still is Tehran's much-detested and feared prosecutor general, in which capacity he oversaw the rape and murder of a Canadian citizen, a photojournalist named Zahra Kazemi, in 2003. He had also freed her rapists and murderers after two independent commissions had found them responsible. (Need I add that Mortazavi was en route to Geneva as a member of Iran's official delegation to the Human Rights Council?) Peter MacKay, who was Canada's foreign minister at the time, telephoned his counterparts to try to have Mortazavi arrested and extradited to Canada, but he wasn't quite quick enough.

Iran disqualifies itself from legitimacy

There's really quite an impressive backlog of cases to be considered. In 1997, a court in Germany found that the shooting of several Iranian Kurds at the Mykonos restaurant in Berlin in 1992 had been sanctioned and ordered by an Iranian government committee that included "Supreme Leader" Ali Khamenei and then president Akbar Rafsanjani. This would not be the first time that a criminal investigation has touched the men who stand at the head of the Iranian state: Mark Bowden has produced some persuasive if not conclusive testimony that Ahmadinejad was among the hostage-takers who violated diplomatic immunity at the American embassy in Tehran, and there are legislators in the Austrian parliament who have demanded an inquiry into his role as a Revolutionary Guard leader in furnishing the weapons and money that were employed by an Iranian death squad to murder Iranian Kurdish leader Abdul-Rahman Ghassemlou in Vienna in 1989.

The term Revolutionary Guard, until recently, was not as much of a byword as it has since become. But this year's military coup in Tehran, of which that organisation was the main engine, has put it at the forefront of our attention. The rape and torture of young Iranians, the sadistic public bullying and sometimes murder of women, the closing of newspapers and the framing-up in a show trial of opposition politicians and intellectuals: all this is the fruit of Revolutionary Guard activity and ambition. We may be limited in what we can do to help and defend the Iranians who are confined within their borders.

But surely it is time that the international community spoke with one voice and said that the leaders of this criminal gang must stay inside their borders as well. Perhaps fewer invitations to "President" Ahmadinejad to speak at Columbia University and perhaps fewer countries putting out the red carpet for his defence minister. As for the sending of known supervisors of murder and torture to human rights summits in Geneva, conceivably that could become a slight no-no as well. Some of these people have bank accounts overseas, in consequence of their years of fleecing the helpless and torpid Iranian economy: freeze these accounts or confiscate them and hold them in escrow for the day when democracy comes.

Hiding somewhere in Iran are people who were paid by its government to commit sectarian murders in Lebanon and Iraq, and who organised and carried out assassinations and assassination attempts against the editors and publishers of Salman Rushdie, a novelist then living in London. Everybody can see that the Iranian government has forfeited any claim to legitimacy at home. Of scarcely less importance is the fact it presents the face of a criminal enterprise to the outside world as well. There is no family of nations, except in the colloquial sense of "crime family", to which it can conceivably be invited to belong. We should ground its leaders for a start, demand the extradition of their many wanted accomplices and exact hefty penalties from their overseas proxy organisations.

The week in which the Obama administration was so voluble about the British humiliation at the hands of Libya's Colonel Muammar Gaddafi is an excellent moment to recall our own responsibilities in this regard, including our duty to our Canadian neighbours. But remember: Gaddafi, after the fall of Baghdad, at least decided to surrender his nuclear materials. In the case of Iran, it won't be long before the theocratic thugs and crooks and assassins have their very own fissile and missile capacity. Please bear it in mind, as they so obviously do.

Christopher Hitchens is a columnist for Vanity Fair and Slate. He is the Roger S. Mertz media fellow at the Hoover Institution in Stanford, California

Load-Date: September 4, 2009

In black & white

Herald Sun (Australia)
February 12, 2009 Thursday
1 - FIRST Edition

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 23

Length: 952 words

Byline: STEVE PERKIN

Body

Tankers top the class

LABERTOUCHE Primary School was one of the fortunate buildings to survive the fires that raged through the Bunyip State Forest.

On Sunday morning, acting principal Pat Alexander was overjoyed to arrive and find her school still standing.

Under the door was a note. It read: ``Lang Lang and Beaconsfield tankers saved your school. Can we have an A-plus?"

``When I saw it I just sat on the steps and bawled my eyes out," Pat said.

``If the fire crews had not been there, it would have been burnt."

Streets ahead in generosity

IN East Croydon, two women decided they'd create a drop-off area at a local oval for anybody who wanted to donate something for the fire victims.

Tess Slater and Julie Thompson weren't expecting too much. After all, they only letter-dropped three streets.

But word got out and by the time they'd finished on Tuesday night they had clothing, bedding, towels, food, torches, toiletries and even money.

The Ringwood Salvos eventually had to organise for the truckloads of items to be gathered and delivered to Kinglake.

Tip top effort by baker

THE people at Tip Top Bakeries are pretty upset that Deano, who runs the general store at Redesdale and is currently surrounded by bushfires, is pretty upset about his lack of bread supplies.

Deano complained to us yesterday that he wasn't getting bread supplies and that his pleas for help had gone unanswered.

In black & white

Bread has been delivered to nearby Axedale, but Deano says he can't get there to collect it.

Well, Tip Top says it will get the bread through to Deano if it's at all possible.

Tip Top has gone to extraordinary lengths to donate bread in fire-ravaged areas.

It has also donated nine cars to the bushfire appeal and taken care of all insurance problems caused by loss of paperwork due to the fires.

BBQ with the works a delight

NARRE Warren businessman Mark Dickinson was feeling helpless and wondered what he could do.

“I decided to organise a sausage sizzle so I went to the local Bakers Delight and Foodworks stores and they said they'd give me whatever I wanted,” Mark said.

“Now, things have gone crazy and on Sunday we'll be having a massive fundraiser at the Amberley Park Shopping Centre.

“We've got vintage cars, jumping castles, rides, tattoo artists . . . people and businesses who just want to do something to help those in the area who have lost their homes.”

Festivities kick off at 8am.

Stamp of approval

STAMP collectors are even doing their bit for the fire victims.

On March 13, Prestige Philately will hold a special auction to raise funds for the relief efforts.

The auction will be conducted without buyer or vendor commissions and every cent generated will be donated to the Red Cross Bushfire Relief Fund.

For more information, ring 9754 7666.

Holiday for volunteers

BOB has a time-share apartment near Batemans Bay and he'd like to make it available to a volunteer firefighter.

“It's for a week from May 15 and it can accommodate six people,” Bob said.

“I'd like to offer it to a volunteer firey because there will be plenty of them who will have lost income from fighting these fires.”

Contact us and we'll put you in touch with Bob.

Doona and out

CAROL. Remember Carol? She's the one who asked if anybody could tell her how to put a doona cover on a doona without sending yourself crazy.

Well, dozens of you had suggestions for Carol, some easier to follow than others.

Barbara, for example, says the best way is to fold the doona in three, lengthwise, in the shape of a Z. It got even more confusing after that.

Mark's theory ended by jumping on the bed to shake the doona down. “But a word of warning . . . turn off the ceiling fan.”

In black & white

In the end we went with Paul because he once won a bed-making competition at Myer.

``Turn the doona cover inside out, slip the hands up to the upper most corners, hold the corners of the doona through the inside-out cover, then shake the cover down over the doona. This method takes not much longer than a minute."

And, Carol, if it doesn't work, try Patricia's suggestion. ``Toss the whole lot in the bin and buy a bedspread."

Bare truth about Teddies

JANE read in our weekend paper that television identity Fifi Box still has a teddy bear. ``Fifi talked about her bear and it's a `he'. Are all teddy bears male? Or are there actually female bears out there? My two daughters and I are like Fifi. Our bears were also boys."

Lost appetite

SPELLING on menus, and Judy liked the blackboard in a Geelong pub advertising a ``Three-Coarse Meal".

``I saw `coarse' and set my course and departed."

Spells trouble

WE'RE reliably informed that if you try to do a spell-check on Hatzola, the Jewish ambulance service, it gets changed to Hezbollah, the Shi'a Islamic group currently at war with Israel.

Hocks walk out deli

MORE supermarket madness, and Julie asked the girl at the deli section for ``a couple of hocks".

``She looked at me and replied: `Sorry, they don't make them any more'.

``I informed her that she may not have had any at that moment, but that it was most unlikely they didn't still make them."

Ants take the cake

CHERYL has ant problems and wanted to know where she could buy boracic acid, which she combines with other things to kill them.

Several people rang to say Cheryl might have problems because it's been removed from general sale because drug addicts use it in the making of illegal drugs.

Matt did, however, say that some jewellery suppliers stock it to stop gold oxidising.

Plenty of people suggested that ants hate talcum powder, while Anthony uses cornmeal.

``They eat it, take it home, can't digest it so it kills them," he says.

``It may take a week or so, especially if it rains, but it works and you don't have the worry about pets or small children being harmed."

Load-Date: February 11, 2009

Letters

The Jerusalem Post

September 2, 2009 Wednesday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 14

Length: 1640 words

Byline: Angela Levine, David Geffen, David Herman, M. Van Thijn, Yonatan Silverman, John Fitzgerald, Thelma Jacobson, Olga P. Wind, Linda Silverstone

Highlight: Readers' Letters

Body

Mike Ronnen

Sir, - I will remember Meir (Mike) Ronnen with gratitude and deep respect. In 1985, as Arts editor of The Jerusalem Post and at the height of his influence at the paper, he gave me a job, joining the team of art critics (Ronnen and Gil Goldfine) which would for a further 20 years deliver a two-page weekly coverage of the local art scene.

Nurtured by Mike, I came to appreciate not only the breadth and accuracy of his knowledge in a great many fields, but also his integrity, his refusal to court cheap popularity by writing positively about artists whose work he could not bring himself to admire.

Above all, I will remember him for the high professional standards he set for himself, expecting the same from those who worked with him ("Meir Ronnen, 1926- 2009," August 31).

ANGELA LEVINE

Ra'anana

Sir, - I spent a lot of time around the Post newsroom in the 1980s and frequently saw Meir Ronnen granting court to editors and writers. He seemed to know everything.

I once got lucky and found in an Israeli magazine a photo of a young soldier in Jerusalem in 1949 or 1950. Some old-timer at the paper said, "Show it to Mike."

Timidly, I went up to him with the picture. He glanced at it briefly, then swept it up and left quickly, shouting back to me: "Thanks - that soldier is me!"

DAVID GEFFEN

Jerusalem

Guy von Dardel's

search for Raoul

Letters

Sir, - Holocaust survivors and admirers of the lost hero of the Holocaust, Raoul Wallenberg, were greatly saddened to hear of the death in Geneva of Raoul's half- brother, Guy von Dardel, at the age of 90. He spent much of his life in a vain search for Wallenberg and for clues to his mysterious fate.

In the course of his research, he compiled a vast amount of documentation, but unfortunately, despite many visits to Russia, he was unable to unearth definitive evidence about Raoul's fate.

His daughters, Louise and Marie, gave him great support in his search activities. They will carry on his work, together with the Jerusalem Working Group for Recognition of Leading Rescuers during the Holocaust and other Wallenberg organizations, until the truth of what really happened to the Swedish diplomat who saved 100,000 Jews in Budapest in 1945 - only to disappear into the Soviet Gulag - becomes known.

DAVID HERMAN

Jerusalem

But war?

Sir, - Never before have I thought of myself as a pacifist, but I couldn't help considering the possibility when I read the analysis by Yaakov Katz, who daily shows he is well-informed about the Israeli army ("Assassinating Ashkenazi would likely have led to war," September 1).

The understatement that such a hit "would likely leave Israel with no choice but to respond" is granted - but war? Thousands risking life and limb; hundreds on both sides, fighters and civilians, getting killed or maimed; daily calm and the economy taking a nosedive for who knows how long, just because our security was faulty and we are bad losers?

Katz sees this as a likely scenario because the abductions of Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser led to the Second Lebanon War. But if there was anything to be learned from that campaign, it was that it was needless, senseless and too costly.

In the case of a similar assassination attempt, God forbid, let us hope that instead of seeking revenge, someone at the helm will strive to improve the protection of our highest officials and gain satisfaction by trying to catch and punish the attacker and his handlers.

M. VAN THIJN

Jerusalem

Real root cause

Sir, - I beg to differ with Herb Keiron's statement in "Reframing the conflict" (August 28) that "the root cause... is the refusal of the Palestinians to acknowledge or recognize Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people." It most decidedly is not.

The tragically petrified and embedded psychological root cause of the problem is that the Palestinians hysterically, and with insane persistence, insist the land of Israel has no connection whatsoever with the Jewish people and, in fact, is a Palestinian Islamic wakf from the days of the caliphate under the Ottomans. In other words, they are striving for Israel to be Palestine.

If all they did was refuse to recognize Israel as the Jewish state, there still might be some room to negotiate over the future allocation of land and sovereignty in this neck of the woods. But the Palestinians seem adamant, wanting nothing but to displace the Jews.

Letters

That is the root problem. And no negotiations will bear fruit until something is done to demoralize the Palestinian leadership, bring their heads down from out of the hallucinatory clouds and knock a measure of reasonableness into them - a recognition, at least, that the State of Israel's existence also has a measure of justice.

As things are now, whether Israel builds in the settlements in Judea and Samaria or not has no influence whatsoever on the core problem.

YONATAN SILVERMAN

Tel Aviv

Blueprints for death

Sir, - The presentation to the Israeli prime minister of the architectural blueprints of the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp was an event of great poignancy and historical significance. Apart from exposing the crazy claims of Holocaust deniers, it must also serve as a reminder of the crimes that evil or fanatical regimes are capable of ("Hinting at Iran, PM urges world to avoid Shoah-era apathy," August 27).

I stress are, not were, because right now another Nazi-like regime is growing militarily stronger and more menacing by the day.

Iran, a country governed by a de-facto doomsday cult, is engaged in developing nuclear power and a capacity to build viable nuclear weapons, while at the same time threatening openly to "wipe Israel off the map." Its armed forces are updating and perfecting their missiles and missile delivery potential at a ferocious rate and make no secret of their ambitions.

When you add to these factors the non-stop supply of sophisticated weaponry and training by Iran to Hamas and ***Hizbullah*** - two organizations dedicated to the total destruction of the Jewish state - you have abundant evidence of Iran's intention toward the nation founded a few short years after the liberation of the death camps.

But the Jewish people are not going to be pushed around this time. They will not have to wait helplessly for the present-day blueprints for annihilating Israel to be implemented.

I believe Israel has a right to exist, and the Jewish people have a right to prevent an Iranian "Final Solution."

JOHN FITZGERALD

Co. Kilkenny, Ireland

We didn't elect Obama

Sir, - Gershon Baskin's articles fascinate me. In one of the first sentences of "President Obama: Pro-Israel, pro-Palestinian, pro-peace" (September 1), he hit the nail right on the head. Read further, and he misses all the remaining nails, and even the wall they are in.

Baskin is absolutely right: "Obama does not face elections in Israel." In other words, nobody here elected him to be responsible for our safety. We elected a supposedly right-wing government, and not out of an inexplicable outbreak of obstinacy. The obstinacy has been rocketed into us. It's been mortar-bombed into us. This is what happened when we gave away Gush Katif for nothing.

Eighteen years ago, when the first Oslo Agreement was signed, many of us walked around with a sense of doom, for which we were called all sorts of nasty names. We didn't know how very right we were. More than 1,000 of our citizens were subsequently blown up in our pizza parlours, in our restaurants, on our streets.

Baskin now advocates giving away the Temple Mount, Judaism's most holy site, to our implacable enemies. Enemies? Read the statements that came out of the Fatah conference in Bethlehem just a couple of weeks ago. Baskin makes this offer as if all of the above had never happened.

Letters

No one, not even Obama, has the right to force us to relive those terrible times. Certainly no one who lives elsewhere. Certainly no one whom the Israeli people did not democratically elect.

THELMA JACOBSON

Petah Tikva

Crime prevention

begins in school

Sir, - A plan to curb crime will be successful only when it begins in the schools, though home rules are important too. A teacher should be formally addressed, and not just by his or her first name. Similarly, pupils should not be called yeled (or yalda) - they have names.

A dress code would help more than we think, in and even out of the classroom. The idea is to instill self- respect and respect for others.

With the New Year almost here, let's hope for more enforcement, and positive reinforcement ("Netanyahu presents 5-point program to combat 'intolerable violence,'" August 31).

OLGA P. WIND

Holon

'Friends'

Sir, - I read Herb Keinon's "Facebook reality" (August 30) with a wry smile. I too couldn't see any benefits to joining Facebook. If I wanted to contact friends and family, I e-mailed or phoned them. What did I need to put messages on Facebook for? Nor did I need to be "friends" with people I see regularly. Until my 16-year-old grandson in England stepped in, and Grandma was "forced" onto Facebook.

I don't want to be "friends" with the world and his wife, but I was able to contact an old friend I had lost touch with, and that is a big plus.

With regard to school reunions - Herb, don't ever go there! I went to one five years ago. I had attended an English girls' grammar school and left at 16; the gap was 50 years!

I was shocked at the "old women" who walked into the hall. Where was that dare-devil who hid in the cupboard the whole of the French lesson? She had turned into a grey- haired, retired schoolteacher, as were most of them. My best friend, a lively Catholic girl, had been a civil servant, in the same job for 30 years!

Having lived here for many years, I had very little to talk to them about apart from a few shared school memories. When another reunion was suggested, to be held in five years, I shuddered.

Best to keep the happy school-day memories intact.

LINDA SILVERSTONE

Herzliya Pituah

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Australian

August 12, 2009 Wednesday

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Body

Is Kerry being primed by the Labor spin doctors?

MOST TALKED ABOUT

O'BRIEN V TURNBULL

FOR many years I have regularly defended Kerry O'Brien from accusations of bias, but I must confess I was saddened to see the depths to which he descended in Monday night's interview with Malcolm Turnbull.

He persisted with questions relating to a possible Senate privileges committee inquiry into Godwin Grech's appearance before the Senate estimates committee in spite of Turnbull asking him to return to the more important issues facing the nation -- jobs, the economy and the government's emissions trading scheme.

The possible privileges committee inquiry will be tasked to investigate whether there was improper coaching of the witness before it. The way that O'Brien pursued Turnbull posited whether he was provided with a line of questioning from Labor spin doctors. Sauce for the goose, sauce for the gander.

R.T. Hawksley

Benowa, Qld

SO Malcolm Turnbull now wants to move on and stick to important issues such as climate change and the economic crisis. A pity he hadn't done this instead of instigating the Utegate affair in the first place.

N. Anderson-Smith

Buderim, Qld

WE all should know when it's time to retire. I did. After watching Kerry O'Brien's interview with Malcolm Turnbull on Monday night's 7.30 Report, it's my considered opinion that O'Brien should resign/retire. His body language was suggesting that if he'd had Turnbull across the table, he would have thrown a punch. Good on you, Malcolm, for remaining calm, as usual.

Carl Coffin

Belrose, NSW

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WHAT makes the ABC think it can condone such bad manners as demonstrated by Kerry O'Brien in the 7.30 Report? I strongly object to the aggressive approach taken in interviews with opposition members and in this case with Malcolm Turnbull. O'Brien was not only aggressive, but rude and insulting. His infatuation with the Labor Party is blatantly evident, belying claims of unbiased reporting.

Gail Bullock

Barraba, NSW

``CRINGE-worthy" is about the only way to describe Kerry O'Brien's tortuous interview with Malcolm Turnbull on the 7.30 Report. Isn't it time the ABC replaced O'Brien with someone who is less adversarial and less blinkered, and gave viewers a break?

John Wilson

Daisy Dell, Tas

I WATCHED Kerry O'Brien ``interview" Malcolm Turnbull. It definitely was not an interview. It was more like a direct attack using statements rather than questions. I found it very aggressive, almost like a stage show. It makes me wonder if O'Brien has been directly employed by Kevin Rudd.

Leif Groundstroem

Deep Creek, NSW

FROM Monday night's 7.30 Report the morphology of the name ``Turnbull" appears to relate to ``turn" (round and round, with no answers or outcome) and ``bull" (its most polite meaning being ``ox meat on a rotisserie"). Kerry O'Brien suitably supplied the heat beads, ensuring that the leader of the opposition was done to a turn.

Barrie Smillie

Duffy, ACT

HOW can the ABC justify the continuing employment of Kerry O'Brien after his disgraceful performance while ``interviewing" Malcolm Turnbull on Monday night?

Bruce Thorpe

Auburn, SA

KERRY O'Brien, in his interview with Malcolm Turnbull, seemed to suggest that equal time devoted to discussing the proposed emissions trading scheme and matters Grechian constitutes balanced reporting. If he believes this, the tilt of his political leanings is an issue. The overall impression of the interview was that it was good time wasted.

Peter Crammond

Kadina, SA

MALCOM Turnbull's proposed ETS is essentially the same as Kevin Rudd's, in that they both burden the taxpayer and the community rather than the big polluters.

Rudd wants to give big polluters 95 per cent of their permits for free whereas Turnbull wants to give them 100 per cent for free. I agree with the Greens who are calling for 100per cent auctioning of all permits.

Both sides of politics appear to have lost sight of what emissions trading is supposed to do. It's supposed to give a clear market signal so that the incentive is there for everyone to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. Neither Rudd's nor Turnbull's ETS will provide that incentive.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dawn Jecks

Safety Bay, WA

KEVIN Rudd and his team seem to be spending an inordinate amount of time and energy trying to discredit Malcolm Turnbull and paint him as incompetent and unsuitable as a potential prime minister.

If he's so incompetent, wouldn't it be in the government's interests to have him continue as leader of the opposition, thereby ensuring their success in the next election?

In my humble opinion, Turnbull should see all this attention as a resounding endorsement of his potential, and the threat he really poses to the future of this government. And I thank Machiavelli for this insight.

John Vickary

Westcourt, Qld

China has shown contempt for our national integrity

THE Chinese embassy had no compunction in interfering in the internal affairs of Australia when it bussed Chinese students into Canberra to howl down pro-Tibetan protesters during the Olympic torch relay last year, and has done it again in having its political counsellor try to heavy the National Press Club into cancelling a national televised speech by Uighur leader Rebiya Kadeer ("Chinese pressure media", 11/9).

Article 55 of the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, which derives from customary international law, provides that a country enjoying diplomatic immunity must not interfere in the internal affairs of the host nation and must not use its consular premises in any fashion incompatible with the exercise of diplomatic functions.

The Chinese, through the act of their diplomatic officials in organising the anti-Tibetan protest during the Olympics torch relay, ignored the normal diplomatic conventions and showed contempt for freedom of speech and the right to protest peacefully in Australia. Having been permitted to get away with it once, the Chinese have proceeded to do it again. That the federal government allows these abrogations of our national integrity to pass without formal protest and diplomatic expulsions shows just how far it is in thrall to Beijing.

Terence Lee

Chatswood, NSW

NOBODY should be surprised by the actions of the Chinese communist government. China is, after all, a totalitarian state. Dissent is not allowed within China and the government seeks to suppress it outside China wherever it may occur. Beijing should be told to take a long running jump into the Yangtze.

Judith Fisher

South Geelong, Vic

WHY all the publicity about a Chinese dissident in Australia bad mouthing her own country and intent on causing trouble. If I had time to be concerned about how other nations treated their citizens, there are plenty of others to choose from as well as China.

Barry Runnstrom

Farrer, ACT

SO the all-powerful communist Chinese government is trying very hard to make us believe that a chatty 63-year-old grandmother is a terrorist. It seems that her only weapon is exposing Beijing's mistreatment of her Uighur minority people in western China.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

In attempting to silence her, China has shot itself in the foot. She has gained publicity that money can't buy and, inadvertently, China's actions have provided her with a platform to express her views on the oppressive Chinese attitude to the Uighur people.

After the Tiananmen Square massacre, the violent crackdown in Tibet and now the brutal treatment of the Uighur people in Urumqi Province recently, Kadeer has gained not only valuable international publicity for her cause but sympathy as well. In the meantime, China looks like an international bully.

Coke Tomyn

Melbourne, Vic

Don't just blame principals

EDUCATION policymaker Ken Boston is reported as being in favour of the sacking of the principals of chronically underperforming schools ("Call to close failing schools", 11/8). This might seem a necessary though regrettable measure but does it go far enough?

In the state and some church education systems, school principals are supervised by some form of district director. In the state systems these officers are in turn supervised by an executive at head office. Shouldn't these bureaucrats also be held accountable for failing to provide the leadership, support and quality control that schools need to improve?

Presumably there were some so-called failing schools in NSW when Boston was the director-general. Shouldn't he have also been sacked for having failed to ensure that all kids received a quality education on his watch?

Garry Collins

Stafford Heights, Qld

End current funding system

AS a pediatrician, I see children with a wide variety of developmental and behavioural problems. I have a rule of thumb that I only use a diagnostic label if it's clearly accurate and absolutely necessary. Yet I'm constantly faced with the following statement from worried parents -- "But the school says he/ she can't get help without a diagnosis".

You have correctly identified dysfunctional, diagnosis-based funding models within education and disability services as the main contributor towards over-diagnosis ("The danger of labels", Editorial, 10/8). A shift towards an alternative funding system that is based on assessment of functional need, rather than simply on diagnosis, is long overdue.

Dr Mick O'Keeffe

Brisbane, Qld

Decriminalise abortion

THE decision to grant Marie Stopes International a licence to prescribe RU486 is a good one. It improves access to safe abortion for Australian women ("Abortion pill rules loosened at clinics", 11/8). But steps must be taken to bring the law up to date in this area.

The current case in Queensland in which a teenage girl has been prosecuted with procuring an abortion must be avoided. Women should not be the subject of criminal charges for undergoing what is a safe health procedure. The Victorian example last year, in which abortion was removed from the Victorian Crimes Act, has ensured that women's reproductive rights are respected in Victoria. Other states should follow suit.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Marilyn Beaumont

Executive Director, Women's Health Victoria

THE Marie Stopes International chain of abortion surgeries is now authorised to dispense more death sentences on unborn human beings via the RU486 pill.

Cairns obstetrician and abortion facilitator Professor Caroline de Costa tells us that ``we (abortionists) all want the same thing in terms of helping women". In other words they are motivated by altruism. Presumably, the fact that the abortion business is a very lucrative one is purely coincidental. Right?

Richard Congram

Carindale, Qld

Interpreting the Koran

BEING a regular reader of The Australian, I invariably see letters or articles by non-Muslims purporting to know what Islam and the Koran are about, with yesterday's letters (Most Talked About) being a case in point. It bemuses me that non-Muslims think they can interpret my faith for me. Nowhere did Markus Frank or Stuart Burrows state any references to back up their claims, merely promoting their prejudice as educated opinion.

It takes knowledge of formal Arabic and years of study to be able to interpret the Koran in its entirety and proper context, something none of your correspondents seems to have acquired. For the record, the Koran does not tell Muslims they cannot take non-Muslims as friends: the word that is consistently used in this regard means protectors or masters, not friends. Of 47 personal guests at my wedding, all but three were non-Muslim. Very few Muslims I know shun non-Muslims, and this trait is not exclusive to any religion with the Exclusive Brethren being a fine example. Furthermore, as any scholar of the Koran worthy of the name can tell you, the references to ``infidel" in the text concern the oppressive pagan Arabs at the time of the Prophet, it doesn't refer to anyone else. Christians and Jews are described as ``People of the Book".

And the absurd claim that ``nearly two-thirds of the Koran" discusses non-believers is mere ego-tripping. Believe it or not Markus, Islam is not obsessed with you as much as you are with it.

Mohammed Alfakhrany

Gladesville, NSW

Democracy and al-Manar

I FIND it quite inconsistent and completely absurd for Bren Carlill to advocate for the effective banning of the broadcast into Australia of al-Manar, the Hezbollah-owned TV station, while at the same time he is able to freely express his views on Islam and Muslims on these pages (``Pull the plug on Hezbollah TV", Opinion, 11/8.

In a democracy, people are allowed to express their views. The last time I checked, Australia was a functioning democracy and, as a result, al-Manar should also, as the Australian Communications and Media Authority rightly finds, be allowed to broadcast and express its views.

Matarr Njie

Wembley, WA

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Coalition should give Kevin Rudd his double dissolution trigger. If he has the bottle to go early, the electorate will turn the poll into a referendum on the ETS, his handling of the cheque book and his performance on health.

Ross Logan

Cooktown, Qld

I hope Malcolm Turnbull realises that the heat he is currently feeling is caused by global warming.

Bill Carpenter

Bowral, NSW

Nick Xenophon is as independent a senator as Malcolm Turnbull is a natural politician.

Bill Forbes

Wingham, NSW

I hope the Melbourne Football Club has more success with their priority picks than the Liberal Party has had in recent times.

Max Vallis

Wembley, WA

So what if climate change will cause bleaching of the Great Barrier Reef at a cost of \$37.7 billion to our national income ("Life's a bleach for Barrier Reef as climate changes", 10/8)? So what if climate change could "topple governments, feed terrorist movements or destabilise regions" ("Climate change to hit security", 10/8)? So what if it could lead to awful temperature increases, sea level rises and massive loss of biodiversity? My lifestyle is non-negotiable.

Joel Dignam

Hampstead Gardens, SA

If only all of the world's terrorists were like Rebiya Kadeer.

Michael Kellock

Foster, Vic

Such is the extraordinary media power of the Chinese government in Australia they should consider marketing their strident dissent as a way of promoting interest in hitherto unknown people and products.

Sandra Eckersley

Marrickville, NSW

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Obama's Arabian dreams

The Jerusalem Post

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Body

US President Barack Obama claims to be a big fan of telling the truth. In media interviews ahead of his trip to Saudi Arabia and Egypt and during his big speech in Cairo on Thursday, he claimed that the centerpiece of his Middle East policy is his willingness to tell people hard truths.

Indeed, Obama made three references to the need to tell the truth in his so-called address to the Muslim world.

Unfortunately, for a speech billed as an exercise in truth telling, Obama's address fell short. Far from reflecting hard truths, Obama's speech reflected political convenience.

Obama's so-called hard truths for the Islamic world included statements about the need to fight so-called extremists; give equal rights to women; provide freedom of religion; and foster democracy. Unfortunately, all of his statements on these issues were nothing more than abstract, theoretical declarations devoid of policy prescriptions.

He spoke of the need to fight Islamic terrorists without mentioning that their intellectual, political and monetary foundations and support come from the very mosques, politicians and regimes in Saudi Arabia and Egypt that Obama extols as moderate and responsible.

He spoke of the need to grant equality to women without making mention of common Islamic practices like so-called honor killings, and female genital mutilation. He ignored the fact that throughout the lands of Islam women are denied basic legal and human rights. And then he qualified his statement by mendaciously claiming that women in the US similarly suffer from an equality deficit. In so discussing this issue, Obama sent the message that he couldn't care less about the plight of women in the Islamic world.

So, too, Obama spoke about the need for religious freedom but ignored Saudi Arabian religious apartheid. He talked about the blessings of democracy but ignored the problems of tyranny.

In short, Obama's "straight talk" to the Arab world, which began with his disingenuous claim that like America, Islam is committed to "justice and progress, tolerance and the dignity of all human beings," was consciously and fundamentally fraudulent. And this fraud was advanced to facilitate his goal of placing the Islamic world on equal moral footing with the free world.

In a like manner, Obama's tough "truths" about Israel were marked by factual and moral dishonesty in the service of political ends.

Obama's Arabian dreams

On the surface, Obama seemed to scold the Muslim world for its all-pervasive Holocaust denial and craven Jew hatred. By asserting that Holocaust denial and anti-Semitism are wrong, he seemed to be upholding his earlier claim that America's ties to Israel are "unbreakable."

Unfortunately, a careful study of his statements shows that Obama was actually accepting the Arab view that Israel is a foreign - and therefore unjustifiable - intruder in the Arab world. Indeed, far from attacking their rejection of Israel, Obama legitimized it.

The basic Arab argument against Israel is that the only reason Israel was established was to sooth the guilty consciences of Europeans who were embarrassed about the Holocaust. By their telling, the Jews have no legal, historic or moral rights to the Land of Israel.

This argument is completely false. The international community recognized the legal, historic and moral rights of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel long before anyone had ever heard of Adolf Hitler. In 1922, the League of Nations mandated the "reconstitution" - not the creation - of the Jewish commonwealth in the Land of Israel in its historic borders on both sides of the Jordan River.

But in his self-described exercise in truth telling, Obama ignored this basic truth in favor of the Arab lie. He gave credence to this lie by stating wrongly that "the aspiration for a Jewish homeland is rooted in a tragic history."

He then explicitly tied Israel's establishment to the Holocaust by moving to a self-serving history lesson about the genocide of European Jewry.

Even worse than his willful blindness to the historic, legal and moral justifications for Israel's rebirth, was Obama's characterization of Israel itself. Obama blithely, falsely and obnoxiously compared Israel's treatment of Palestinians to white American slave owners' treatment of their black slaves. He similarly cast Palestinian terrorists in the same morally pure category as slaves. Perhaps most repulsively, Obama elevated Palestinian terrorism to the moral heights of slave rebellions and the US civil rights movement by referring to it by its Arab euphemism, "resistance."

BUT AS disappointing and frankly obscene as Obama's rhetoric was, the policies he outlined were much worse. While prattling about how Islam and America are two sides of the same coin, Obama managed to spell out two clear policies. First, he announced that he will compel Israel to completely end all building for Jews in Judea, Samaria, and eastern, northern and southern Jerusalem. Second, he said that he will strive to convince Iran to substitute its nuclear weapons program with a nuclear energy program.

Obama argued that the first policy will facilitate peace and the second policy will prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. Upon reflection, however, it is clear that neither of his policies can possibly achieve his stated aims. Indeed, their inability to accomplish the ends he claims he has adopted them to advance is so obvious, that it is worth considering what his actual rationale for adopting them may be.

The administration's policy toward Jewish building in Israel's heartland and capital city expose a massive level of hostility toward Israel. Not only does it fly in the face of explicit US commitments to Israel undertaken by the Bush administration, it contradicts a longstanding agreement between successive Israeli and American governments not to embarrass each other.

Moreover, the fact that the administration cannot stop attacking Israel about Jewish construction in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, but has nothing to say about Hizbullah's projected democratic takeover of Lebanon next week, Hamas's genocidal political platform, Fatah's involvement in terrorism, or North Korean ties to Iran and Syria, has egregious consequences for the prospects for peace in the region.

As Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas made clear in his interview last week with The Washington Post, in light of the administration's hostility toward Israel, the Palestinian Authority no longer feels it is necessary to make any concessions whatsoever to Israel. It needn't accept Israel's identity as a Jewish state. It needn't minimize in any way its demand that Israel commit demographic suicide by accepting millions of foreign, hostile Arabs as full citizens. And it needn't curtail its territorial demand that Israel contract to within indefensible borders.

Obama's Arabian dreams

In short, by attacking Israel and claiming that Israel is responsible for the absence of peace, the administration is encouraging the Palestinians and the Arab world as a whole to continue to reject Israel and to refuse to make peace with the Jewish state.

The Netanyahu government reportedly fears that Obama and his advisers have made such an issue of settlements because they seek to overthrow Israel's government and replace it with the more pliable Kadima party. Government sources note that White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel played a central role in destabilizing Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's first government in 1999, when he served as an adviser to then president Bill Clinton. They also note that Emmanuel is currently working with leftist Israelis and American Jews associated with Kadima and the Democratic Party to discredit the government.

While there is little reason to doubt that the Obama administration would prefer a leftist government in Jerusalem, it is unlikely that the White House is attacking Israel primarily to advance this aim. This is first of all the case because today there is little danger that Netanyahu's coalition partners will abandon him.

Moreover, the Americans have no reason to believe that prospects for a peace deal would improve with a leftist government at the helm in Jerusalem. After all, despite its best efforts, the Kadima government was unable to make peace with the Palestinians, as was the Labor government before it. What the Palestinians have shown consistently since the failed 2000 Camp David summit is that there is no deal that Israel can offer them that they are willing to accept.

So if the aim of the administration in attacking Israel is neither to foster peace nor to bring down the Netanyahu government, what can explain its behavior?

The only reasonable explanation is that the administration is baiting Israel because it wishes to abandon the Jewish state as an ally in favor of warmer ties with the Arabs. It has chosen to attack Israel on the issue of Jewish construction because it believes that by concentrating on this issue, it will minimize the political price it will be forced to pay at home for jettisoning America's alliance with Israel. By claiming that he is only pressuring Israel to enable a peaceful "two-state solution," Obama assumes that he will be able to maintain his support base among American Jews who will overlook the underlying hostility his "pro-peace" stance papers over.

OBAMA'S POLICY toward Iran is a logical complement of his policy toward Israel. Just as there is no chance that he will bring Middle East peace closer by attacking Israel, so he will not prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons by offering the mullahs nuclear energy. The deal Obama is now proposing has been on the table since 2003, when Iran's nuclear program was first exposed. Over the past six years, the Iranians have repeatedly rejected it. Indeed, just last week they again announced that they reject it.

Here, too, to understand the president's actual goal it is necessary to search for the answers closer to home. Since Obama's policy has no chance of preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, it is apparent that he has come to terms with the prospect of a nuclear armed Iran. In light of this, the most rational explanation for his policy of engagement is that he wishes to avoid being blamed when Iran emerges as a nuclear power in the coming months.

In reckoning with the Obama administration, it is imperative that the Netanyahu government and the public alike understand the true goals of its current policies. Happily, consistent polling data show that the overwhelming majority of Israelis realize that the White House is deeply hostile toward Israel. The data also show that the public approves of Netanyahu's handling of our relations with Washington.

Moving forward, the government must sustain this public awareness and support. By his words as well as by his deeds, not only has Obama shown that he is not a friend of Israel. He has shown that there is nothing that Israel can do to make him change his mind.

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Are you proud to be a leftist?

The Jerusalem Post

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Body

In an article in interview with Teheran Times two weeks ago, Norman Finklestein, the notorious *Hizbullah* and Hamas supporter and all-purpose anti-Semite, called Israel a "vandal state," and "insane state," a "terrorist state," and a "satanic state." Last week Finklestein was the keynote speaker at both Emory University and Fordham University during their weeklong annual anti-Israel hate festivals.

Speaking to a cheering crowd at a packed auditorium on Emory's Atlanta campus, Finklestein claimed that Israel conducted its recent Operation Cast Lead in Gaza for two reasons. These did not include Hamas's deliberate targeting of Israeli civilians, Hamas's alliance with Iran, its charter that calls for the physical eradication of the Jewish people, its illegal imprisonment of Israeli hostage Gilad Schalit, or its decision to renew its attacks against Israel after a six month period of relative restraint.

In Finklestein's view, the first reason Israel launched Operation Cast Lead was because Hamas had begun expressing interest in peace. In his words, "Hamas were being too moderate, too reasonable. They wanted a diplomatic settlement to the conflict. To Israel, this is a recurring nightmare." The second reason that Finklestein alleged that Israel launched its offensive was because, well, Israel is just plain mean. As he put it, the operation was Israel's way of "reminding the Arabs who were [sic.] in charge." It was an attempt to "restore the Arab world's fear of Israel." Finklestein cited an unnamed "chief military analyst" to support his claim that Israel conducted a "massacre" in Gaza and did so with malice of forethought.

According to Emory's student paper, for his libelous, wholly fallacious remarks, Finklestein received a prolonged standing ovation.

In 40 university campuses throughout the US and Canada as well as in Europe and South America, last week students marked what Palestinian terror apologists have dubbed "Israel Apartheid Week." This was the seventh such week in the US, and the fifth in Canada.

In the lead up to this annual Israel vilification week, pro-Israel students were physically assaulted at San Francisco State University and at York University in Canada by their anti-Israel counterparts. In both cases, university officials opened disciplinary proceedings against the pro-Israel students.

At SFSU, two students were arrested by police for assaulting college Republicans who held an anti-Hamas rally. The two - from the campus's Palestinian student club and its Socialist union - now insist not only that the charges

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against them be dropped, but that the university re-educate its students to ensure that they understand that criticizing Hamas and other genocidal terror groups is a form of prohibited hate-speech.

THE LIBELOUS assertion that Israel - the only free, pluralistic, liberal democracy in the Middle East - is analogous to apartheid South Africa first took hold at the 2001 UN-sponsored anti-Jewish diplomatic pogrom at Durban, South Africa. In the action plan approved by the various non-governmental organizations that participated in the conference, activists were called on to bring about the international demonization of Israel as a racist state, and of Zionism - the Jewish national liberation movement - as a form of racism.

When Israel Apartheid Week was launched the next year, many local Jewish student and community activists in the US and Canada demanded that university authorities ban the clearly bigoted event from their campuses. To their chagrin, university presidents and administrators would do no such thing. Claiming that doing so would restrict academic freedom, the propaganda war against the Jewish state went forward and grew. And, in its wake, the freedom of pro-Israel students on college campuses throughout the West has become increasingly constricted and threatened.

Both through formal speech codes barring criticism of anti-Israel propaganda and violence, and through academic and physical intimidation of pro-Israel students by an increasingly vocal and aggressive coalition of pro- Palestinian professors, Muslim and leftist students, Israel's supporters on university campuses find themselves under assault. Today, seven years after the Durban Conference, Israel Apartheid Week has become a mainstay on the academic calendar, nearly as taken for granted as Homecoming Week and mid-terms.

The use of the term "apartheid" to describe Israel was a deliberate move on the part of Israel's enemies. It was aimed at neutralizing the capacity of Israel's supporters to defend the Jewish state and attack its enemies. Case in point is the campus debate which preceded Israel Apartheid Week at the University of Toronto. The student paper published two topical opinion pieces on the upcoming events. One asserted that Israel is an apartheid regime. The other argued that Israel isn't an apartheid regime.

On the surface, this seems fair enough. But it is nothing of the sort. Israel is the only free country and free society in the region. Pinning its defenders down by confining discussion of the region to the pros and cons of a complete lie serves to only obfuscate the depravity of Israel's enemies, not to enlighten the public about Israel.

While Israel provides the full rights of citizenship to its Arab minority, Jews are denied the rights of citizenship in every Arab League member state, and the Palestinians' fundamental demand is that no Jew be permitted to live in a future Palestinian state.

Then too, while Israeli women enjoy full equality under the law, women and girls in the Arab and Muslim world are systematically subjugated and enslaved. Muslim men who wantonly murder their wives, sisters, mothers and daughters can expect to receive little to no punishment for their crimes. The same holds for men who abuse their female relations. For their part, women in the Muslim world have either no legal rights to citizenship and civil rights or those rights are severely limited.

Gays, blacks, migrant workers, Christians, Hindus and Buddhists are systematically persecuted for their sexual preferences, their skin color and their religious beliefs. Even dogs feel the wrath of these societies where, since they are considered "unclean," children and adults alike routinely engage in their torture and killing.

But under the full protection of self-described liberal university professors, administrators and presidents, and due to the indifference of groups like the World Council of Churches, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Organization of Women, Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, anti-Israel propagandists have been allowed to co-opt the language of liberty to advance the political aims of terrorists who aim to destroy liberty.

THE ACTIVE and passive support conferred on anti- Israel leftists and Muslims by these officials and groups has provided them with the ideological cover to take their activism to the next level: anti-Jewish violence aimed at

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intimidating states, universities, businesses and private organizations into cutting off all ties to Israel. Evidence of the success of this campaign is rife throughout Europe today.

In just one notable instance, for the past week Israeli tennis players, Amir Haddad and Andy Ram have been suffering the consequences of the Left's collusion with these anti-Jewish groups in Sweden. Haddad and Ram competed in the Davis Cup tennis championships in Malmo, Sweden. In an article in Yediot Ahronot on Sunday, Ram wrote, "In my entire athletic career, I have never before experienced such hatred and such a mixing of sports with politics." In spite of repeated entreaties by Israel, Swedish authorities refused to move the games from Malmo to Stockholm. With its enormous Muslim population, in recent years Malmo has been the site of some of the worst Islamic violence against non- Muslims - and particularly Jews, women and girls - in the Western world.

Due to threats of violence against Ram and Haddad, Swedish authorities barred fans from attending their tennis matches. As they played their opening match in an empty stadium on Saturday, thousands of violent Muslims and leftists rioted against police and attempted to break down the barriers protecting the stadium with the stated aim of killing Ram and Haddad.

The protesters claim that their desire to murder Israeli tennis players is due to Operation Cast Lead. But this is pure propaganda. Their desire to murder Ram and Haddad stems not from Israel's military actions to defend its citizens from murder, but from the protesters' hatred of the Jewish state. And that hatred stems from the same source as their misogyny, their hatred of the US and their support for the likes of Osama bin Laden and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

A 2005 Swedish government report indicated that in 2004, incidents of rape had increased 50 percent throughout the country. A Malmo police report noted that 68 percent of the rapists were minorities. As Islamic scholar Robert Spencer has noted, Islamic teaching views rape as a legitimate act against women and girls who behave in "non-Islamic" ways. In much of Scandinavia as well as in Muslim neighborhoods in France, women have begun wearing veils in order to protect themselves against roving gangs of Muslim young men.

The defilement of women and girls, like gay bashing, has nothing to do with IDF operations in Gaza. It has to do with the pathological nature of the cultures that condone and encourage the violence, and the Western governments and intellectuals who make excuses for it.

ALL OF THIS is hidden away from the public thanks to Western liberals' willingness to accept the legitimacy of events like Israel Apartheid Week. Due to the complicity of leftist authorities, the international discourse about the Arab and Islamic world and the cultures they have produced is diverted to false allegations against Israel.

Any attempt to point out that Hamas is genocidal; that Iran stones women to death, and systematically executes homosexuals; that Saudi Arabia is the most repressive society on the planet; that Egypt permits and indeed encourages female genital mutilation; that Jordan does not prosecute fathers, sons, husbands and uncles who murder their female relatives; is attacked and delegitimized. Those who raise these issues are accused of hating Muslims and of being secret Zionist agents.

So too, Islamic violence in the West is swept under the rug. For example, to date, no mainstream US media organ has reported that in Buffalo, New York Muzzamil Hassan decapitated his wife Aasiya on February 12 after he stabbed her to death. Just a few years earlier that same mainstream media had embraced this murderer as a paragon of Islamic moderation after he established Bridges TV network, which was supposed to show the American public how moderate Islam is.

For some reason, the same media don't consider it noteworthy that their moderate Muslim poster boy chopped off his wife's head a week after she filed for divorce. Certainly, no connection can be drawn between her ritual slaughter and Islam.

Sunday was International Women's Day. Throughout the West, feminists spent the day congratulating themselves for their great sacrifices for women's rights.

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Last Wednesday Saudi authorities arrested a woman for driving. Her arrest drew no protest from her Western sisters. Obviously, they were too busy defending Finklestein's freedom to disseminate lies about Israeli women to ignorant college kids to care.

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Graphic

Photo: BEHIND THE VEIL. According to Islamic scholar Robert Spencer, Islamic teaching views rape as a legitimate act against women and girls who behave in 'non-Islamic' ways.

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Entrapping Netanyahu

The Jerusalem Post

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Body

Negotiations between the Likud and its coalition partners toward the formation of Israel's next government have only just begun. But the campaign to undermine the government-in-formation's ability to determine Israel's future course is already well underway.

Incoming Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu must understand the traps being set for him and their sources. And as he builds his government, he must appoint ministers capable of working with him to extricate Israel from those traps and discredit their sources.

On Thursday, US President Barack Obama's Middle East envoy George Mitchell arrived in Israel for his second visit. Whereas Mitchell's last visit - which took place in the last days of the electoral campaign - was touted as a "listening tour," Mitchell made clear that during his current stay, he intends to begin calling shots.

His first order of business, we are told, is to pressure the outgoing government to destroy the so-called outpost communities in Judea and Samaria and expel the hundreds of Israeli families who live in them. To defend this call for intra-Israeli instability and violence, Mitchell notes that Prime Minister Ehud Olmert gave his word to former president George W. Bush that he would destroy these communities.

Lest Israelis believe that Mitchell will drop this demand once Olmert leaves office, he has made clear that as far as he is concerned, Olmert's pledge was not his own - but Israel's. In Mitchell's view, it binds Netanyahu no less than Olmert. So if Olmert leaves office without having sent IDF soldiers to throw women and children from their homes, Mitchell, Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton will feel free to pressure Netanyahu to take on the task, and to punish him if he refuses.

If the Obama administration believes that the presence of Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria is the primary obstacle to peace, then the Hamas regime in Gaza is the second greatest obstacle to peace. As long as Hamas, a recognized terror group, is in charge, the administration will be hard-pressed to push Israel to accept a Palestinian state.

To remedy this situation, the Obama administration has opted for a political fiction. The president and his aides have decided that a Hamas-Fatah government will moderate Hamas, and that therefore such a government will not only be legitimate, it is desirable. Whereas when the first Hamas-Fatah government formed in March 2007, the Bush administration refused to have anything to do with it, today the Obama administration is actively backing its reestablishment.

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As the Obama administration apparently sees it, a Hamas-Fatah government will provide cover for stepped up pressure on Israel to surrender land to the Palestinians in Judea and Samaria, because Israel will no longer be able to claim that it has no Palestinian partner. A Hamas-Fatah government will also allow the US to directly support the Palestinians in Gaza, by coercing Israel to transfer full control over its borders with Gaza to Hamas (which will be represented by Fatah), and by enabling the US to provide direct aid to Palestinian Authority agencies in Gaza.

To advance the administration's efforts to legitimize Hamas, Clinton will begin her first visit to the region at a conference in Cairo on Monday that seeks to raise some \$2.8 billion for Gaza. She will pledge nearly a third of that amount - \$900 million - in the name of US taxpayers.

The administration claims that none of this money, which it plans to funnel through UNRWA, will go toward funding Hamas. But this contention is demonstrably false.

UNRWA openly collaborates with Hamas. Its workers double as Hamas combatants. Its refugee camps and schools are used as Hamas training bases and missile launch sites. Its mosques are used as recruiting grounds. And as UNRWA's willingness to transfer a letter from Hamas to US Sen. John Kerry during his visit to Gaza last week demonstrated, the UN agency is also willing to act as Hamas's surrogate.

While it makes sense for Hamas to agree to join a unity government that will leave it in charge of Gaza and expand its control to Judea and Samaria as well, on the surface it makes little sense for Fatah to agree to a deal that would subordinate it to the same forces who brutally removed it from power in Gaza in 2007. But Fatah has several good reasons to be enthusiastic about the deal.

First, by joining Hamas, Fatah will be able to get its hands on a considerable portion of the international aid money expected to pour into Gaza. Second, by joining Hamas, Fatah neutralizes - at least in the short term - Hamas's interest in destroying it as a political force in Palestinian society. Fatah leader Mahmoud Abbas's term in office as PA chairman expired last month. Were elections to be held today, he would lose a bid for reelection to Hamas's candidate by a wide margin. By joining a Hamas government, he will probably avoid the need to stand for reelection anytime soon.

For Israel, a US-supported Hamas-Fatah government is a hellish prospect. The political support such a government will lend to the terror war against Israel will be enormous. But beyond that, such a government, supported by the US, will likely cause Israel security nightmares.

As a goodwill gesture ahead of the opening of unity talks this week in Cairo, Fatah released the Hamas operatives its US-trained forces had arrested. Due to US pressure, over the past year, Israel allowed those forces to deploy in Jenin and Hebron, and in recent months they took some significant actions against Hamas operatives in those areas. Based on this record of achievement, Clinton and Mitchell have been pressuring Israel to transfer security control over all the Palestinian cities in Judea and Samaria to these forces.

But now that Fatah and Hamas are acting in concert, any such transfers of authority to Fatah will constitute a surrender of control to Hamas. While no Israeli government could accept such a demand, the Obama administration, which supports the Hamas-Fatah government, is likely to view Israel's refusal to continue to cooperate with Fatah as a reason to criticize Israel.

THE OBAMA administration's ability to disregard the will of the Israeli voters and the prerogatives of the incoming government owes a large deal to the legacy that the outgoing Olmert-Livni-Barak government is leaving behind.

The outgoing government set the conditions for the Obama administration's policies in three ways. First, by not defeating Hamas in Operation Cast Lead, and then agreeing to negotiate a cease-fire with the terror group, the government paved the way for Hamas's acceptance by the US and Europe as a legitimate political force.

Just as its willingness to conduct negotiations with Syria paved the way for the administration's current courtship of Iran's Arab client state, and its willingness to accept UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which placed Hizbullah on equal footing with Israel at the end of the Second Lebanon War, so, too, the outgoing government's willingness

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to negotiate with Hamas has facilitated the current US and European drive to accept the Iranian proxy as a legitimate political force in Palestinian society.

Second, since Hamas's electoral victory in January 2006, the outgoing government accepted the false narrative that the Palestinian people in Gaza, who freely voted Hamas into power and have supported its regime ever since, bear no responsibility for the consequences of their actions. This false distinction between Hamas's supporters and Hamas tied Israel's hands each time it was compelled to defend itself against Hamas's aggression. After all, if Gazans are all innocent, then Israel's primary responsibility should be to make sure that they are safe. And since its counterterror operations necessarily place them at risk, those operations are fair game for international condemnation.

Moreover, at the same time that Israel accepted the dishonest distinction between Hamas and its supporters, it willingly took on responsibility for the welfare of Gaza residents. As Hamas shelled Sderot and Ashkelon and surrounding communities, Israel bowed to international pressure to supply its enemy and its enemy's supporters with food, medicine, fuel, water and anything else that Hamas and the West could reasonably or unreasonably claim fell under the rubric of humanitarian aid. Had Israel not accepted responsibility for a population that freely chose to be led by a group dedicated to its annihilation, today Clinton would be hard pressed to pressure Israel to open its border crossings into Gaza, or to justify giving \$900m. to Gaza.

Finally, through its unlimited support for Fatah, the outgoing government has made it enormously difficult for the incoming government to explain its objections to the Obama administration's policies, either to the Israeli people or to the Americans themselves. By supporting Fatah, the Olmert-Livni-Barak government set up a false distinction between supposed moderates and supposed extremists. That distinction ignored and so legitimized Fatah's continued involvement in terrorism, its political war against Israel and its refusal to accept Israel's right to exist.

If Fatah is legitimate despite its bad behavior and bellicose ideology, then two things must be true. First, abstaining from terror can no longer be viewed as a precondition for receiving international legitimacy. And second, there is no reason not to accept Hamas. Based on the latter conclusion, many European leaders and Israeli leftists now openly call for conducting negotiations with Hamas. And based on the former conclusion, the Obama administration feels comfortable escalating its demands that Israel give land, security powers and money to Fatah, even as it unifies its forces with Hamas and so expands Hamas's power from Gaza to Judea and Samaria.

DUE TO the Olmert-Livni-Barak government's legacy, when it enters office the Netanyahu government will lack the vocabulary it needs to abandon Israel's current self-defeating course with the Palestinians and defend its actions to the international community in the face of the Obama administration's use of dishonest terms like "peace processes" and "moderates" and "humanitarian aid" to constrain Israel's ability to defend itself. To surmount these challenges, Netanyahu must move immediately to change the terms of debate on the Palestinian issue.

Despite his great rhetorical gifts, Netanyahu cannot change the terms of international debate by himself. He needs two seasoned public figures who understand the nature of these challenges at his side. If Netanyahu appoints Natan Sharansky foreign minister and Moshe "Bogie" Ya'alon defense minister, he will have the top-level support he needs to overcome his predecessors' legacy and change the nature of contemporary discourse on the Palestinians and on Israel's strategic significance to the West in the face of staunch opposition from Washington.

Like Netanyahu, Sharansky and Ya'alon understand the basic dishonesty of the current international conversation relating to the Palestinians. Both men have come out publicly against the false policy paradigms that have guided both the outgoing government and the US and Europe. Both are capable of working with Netanyahu to free Israel from the policy trap being set for him.

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Egypt and Saudi: change looms; Political shifts may be in the offing as ageing Mideast leaders give way to a new guard, writes Jeffrey Fleishman

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Body

THEY are a desert king and a military officer turned president. Drive through their capitals and their images glow from billboards and painted walls, old men with their eyes fixed everywhere, even as whispers grow about who will rise to replace them.

King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak are in their 80s, durable US allies whose governments have crushed political dissent at home while playing leading roles across the Middle East. But these days, talk of succession reverberates as Washington, as well as Riyadh and Cairo, plans how to navigate an era without two of the region's dominant personalities.

The men have given no indication that they will step down. Mubarak's term runs until 2011, and the king's reign lasts as long as he sees fit. But Mubarak and Abdullah are frail.

In Egypt, there is chatter that the president's younger son Gamal will follow his father, and in Saudi Arabia several leadership scenarios are unfolding within the ruling House of Saud.

A senior official at the US State Department said the relationship with the two countries is "deep enough and broad enough to withstand the strains of any kind of transition".

But the official, who spoke anonymously because of the sensitivity of the matter, added that the eventual absence of Mubarak, who has been in power since 1981, and Abdullah, who took the throne in 2005 but has run Saudi Arabia since 1996, when the since-deceased King Fahd suffered a stroke, raises concerns about the future of a jittery Middle East.

The ageing leaders have left indelible imprints. Mubarak has kept peace with Israel - at a stiff cost to his domestic credibility - while pushing for a Palestinian state. Abdullah has transformed his kingdom's oil wealth into diplomatic power.

The pair have brushed aside historical animosities between their nations to co-operate in confronting what they regard as major threats: the prospect of a nuclear-armed Shia Iran and the violence sparked by Islamic militancy extending from North Africa to Indonesia.

Their overall strategies, which complement US interests, are not expected to be significantly altered by their successors, especially since new leaders almost certainly will come from the ranks of the ruling regimes. What will

Egypt and Saudi : change looms Political shifts may be in the offing as ageing Mideast leaders give way to a new guard, writes Jeffrey Fleishman

vanish are decades of experience and the visages the world has grown accustomed to: Mubarak, 81, with his oversized sunglasses and Air Force salute, and Abdullah, 85, with his endless entourages and jet-black goatee.

It is likely that Iran, Syria and their Islamist allies Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza Strip will move quickly to provoke whoever follows the two leaders. At the same time, domestic reformers and opposition groups, especially the radical Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, are expected to push for broader political freedoms and to stem state security networks that have been criticised by international human-rights organisations and the US for torture, imprisonment and other violations.

"The US should be worried about the possibility of either of these two leaders leaving the scene. Iran and Syria will move to exploit the loss of Mubarak and King Abdullah," said Amr Hamzawy, a Middle East expert with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Topping the list of potential successors in Egypt are Mubarak's son Gamal, 45, and Omar Suleiman, who is in his early 70s, a long-time confidant and head of the country's intelligence network. Gamal, a leading voice within the ruling National Democratic Party, lacks government and foreign policy experience but supports economic reform and appears more attuned to human rights than his father. Suleiman has the institutional pedigree of Mubarak and previous Egyptian presidents and, as a chief mediator dealing with the Palestinians, has close ties with Washington. It is unclear, however, whether he wants to lead the country.

Egypt's bonds with Washington, fuelled by \$1.2 billion (R9.31bn) in annual US aid, have survived political transitions and tense relations.

"President Mubarak and George W Bush didn't have great personal ties, but that never affected the strategic, military and security relations between the countries," said Diaa Rashwan, an analyst at Al Ahram Centre for Political and Strategic Studies in Cairo.

The successor scenario in Saudi Arabia is complicated by age, illness and a struggle within the royal family between moderates and hard-liners. Next in line for the throne is Crown Prince Sultan ibn Abdulaziz, but he is in his early 80s and has been ailing for years.

Following him could be Prince Nayef ibn Abdulaziz, 76, the Saudi interior minister, whom Abdullah elevated this year to second deputy prime minister. Nayef is close to fundamentalist Wahhabi clerics who have resisted the king's attempts at modest reforms to ease religion's grip on schools, courts and other institutions.

Riyadh's ties to the US remain vital, but over the years the kingdom's oil wealth has allowed it to widen its strategic interests, including to the emerging energy markets of India and China. Such shifts could alter the tenor of relations with Washington if personal connections fade.

"With the kingdom facing the prospect of enthroning a new king every two or three years, the US president faces the prospect of having to work with several Saudi monarchs during one term alone," noted a policy paper written by Simon Henderson, an expert on Saudi Arabia and a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

Mubarak and Abdullah, and what awaits their successors, can be viewed best through the prism of domestic pressures. Mubarak rose to power after the assassination by Islamists of Anwar Sadat, who shortly before had made peace with Israel.

Mubarak has kept Egypt under emergency law for nearly 28 years, grinding down political opponents while proving unable to improve the lives of his 82 million countrymen, more than 40 percent of whom live on less than \$2 a day.

Hamzawy of the Carnegie Endowment said that if the Egyptian regime couldn't agree on a post-Mubarak candidate, and economic and social anxieties spread, the country could enter a "chaotic succession... that the Muslim Brotherhood could exploit by using the street to demonstrate their influence".

Egypt and Saudi : change looms Political shifts may be in the offing as ageing Mideast leaders give way to a new guard, writes Jeffrey Fleishman

Abdullah was named crown prince in 1982 and largely ran Saudi Arabia after Fahd, his half-brother, became incapacitated. His attempts at reform won him early praise, but he has been criticised for not pushing hard enough against religious conservatives and not providing freedoms for women or opportunities for Saudis younger than 25. The latter make up half the population and are poorly educated.

The oppressed of Egypt and the young of Saudi Arabia are angry and restless. Many listened to US President Barack Obama's June speech in Cairo and were disappointed by the lack of criticism of their nations' corrupt regimes, which often ignore American principles of democracy.

"Predicting what will happen in Saudi Arabia is very difficult," said Mohammad Fahad Qahtani, a reformer and assistant economics professor at the Institute of Diplomatic Studies. "You live in an oil bonanza. The country is flush with money, but you have unemployment and 30 percent of the people living in poverty. Only 22 percent of families own their own homes.

"It's a gloomy picture. The regime is losing its credibility." - Los Angeles Times

I Staff writer Paul Richter in Washington and Amro Hassan of the Times' Cairo bureau contributed to this report.

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