

Date and Time: Friday, May 3, 2024 3:56:00 PM EEST

Job Number: 223444387

Documents (100)

1. [*Democracy not an export item*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

2. [*A life of war might have ended in peace When REVIEW*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

3. [*To Lead the Faithful in a Faith Under Fire*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

4. [*How will Cameron's Tories defeat those who hate us?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

5. [*9/11 and five years of folly*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

6. [*Delusion in Britain*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

7. [*Hostage: The Jill Carroll Story - Epilogue * Family reunion*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

8. [*A new kind of true believer*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

9. [*Saudi Arabia 's moment of redemption? Moderating Islam*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

10. [*War without victors*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

11. [News Summary](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

12. [More Airstrikes as Hezbollah Rockets Hit Deeper](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

13. [Crisis in the Middle East](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

14. [Two nations: divided by war but united by fear 'If our Prime Minister is crying, what are we to do?'](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

15. [A Perverse Habit](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

16. [*TheirSpace*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

17. [*Economical victory*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

18. [*The man with an answer for everything*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

19. [*Quest for a Homeland Gains a World Stage*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

20. [*We all live on Martyr StreetThe answer is simple, he said. Be nice to other people*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

21. [*Freed Reporter in Recovery In U.S. Zone in Baghdad*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

22. [*Saviour or nemesis - is Sadr the answer to Iraq 's ills?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

23. [*Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Two clocks are ticking: Obsessed with trying to stop Tehran from going nuclear, we are neglecting democracy*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

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

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

25. [*Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Next phase of Sharonism: The new prime minister must perform a deed that proved too hard for greater men - pullout from the West Bank*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

26. [*Revealed: civilian toll of a deadly assault that has ravaged Gaza PALESTINIAN CRISIS*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

27. [Revealed: civilian toll of a deadly assault that has ravaged Gaza PLESTINIAN CRISIS](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

28. [Revealed: civilian toll of a deadly assault that has ravaged Gaza PALESTINIAN CRISIS](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

29. [9/11 the fifth](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

30. [Guardian Weekly: Le Monde Diplomatique: Neither-nor is not enough](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

31. [If this ISWorld War 3, whose side are we on?](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

32. [*The war rages on*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

33. [*Crisis in the Middle East, day by day*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

34. [*Debate on the crisis in the Middle East*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

35. [*Despite Risks, Freed Reporter Loved Iraq*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

36. [*Enemy soldiers gather - to strive for peace*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

37. [*In Wake of Bombings, Egyptian Resort Confronts Its Fear*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

38. [*Will Paris be my perfect match?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

39. [*Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Letters*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

40. [*Price of free nation may well be blood; Emerging democracies likely to go to war as they have weak political institutions*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

41. [*Drawing the ire of Islam*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to

Sep 30, 2006

42. [*The Lebanonization of Europe*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to
Sep 30, 2006

43. [*Comment & Debate: The next phase of Sharonism might have defeated Sharon himself: The new prime minister must perform a deed that proved too hard for greater men - pullout from the West Bank*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to
Sep 30, 2006

44. [*A Man Called Hitler Runs For a Seat He May Not Fill*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to
Sep 30, 2006

45. [*G2: The strong man: For years he was a man of war, idolised and demonised in equal measure. But in recent years, Ariel Sharon has seemed the man most likely to bring peace to the Middle East. Israeli novelist David Grossman and Palestinian academic Karma Nabulsi assess his legacy: Karma Nabulsi: He is no statesman and his motives have never been opaque - conquest by military means*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to
Sep 30, 2006

46. [*The conqueror*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

47. [*A beach scene that hides waves of despair THE WAR OF IDEAS - SEPT 11 - FIVE YEARS ON*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

48. [*Chill Karo, Masti Karo*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

49. [*Crisis in the Middle East*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

50. [*Conflict Polarizes the Mideast, Leaving Little Middle Ground*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

51. [*For Muslims and West, antipathy and mistrust In global survey, both see each other as violent and disrespectful of women*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type

Narrowed by

News

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

52. [*Nadia's wedding*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

53. [*Tamil tigers blacklisting lauded*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

54. [*What did Tessa Jowell know?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

55. [*Firebrand politics of Iranian leader resonate on the streets*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

56. [*Put job-shy scroungers to work*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

57. [*That was the Week that Was...*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

58. [*LETTERS FROM READERS*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

59. [*Israel - Lebanon War Sparks Gifts to Relief Groups*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

60. [*Terrorism is rotting the Islamic revolution it craves*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

61. [*No ceasefire imminent*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

62. [*THE BOMBING*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

63. [Weck off now, Israel warned](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

64. [The Wrap: Back off now, Israel warned](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

65. [RESPECT? YOU'RE An MP in the house - He's taken on Tony Blair and won a seat in Parliament for the anti-war Respect Party. He's taken on a US Senate committee and emerged victorious. But has George Galloway's decision to go on the reality television show 'Celebrity Big Brother' damaged his reputation irreparably? Terry Kir by reports](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

66. [12 ISRAELIS DIE; SHEIK THREATENS TO BOMB TEL AVIV](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

67. [Musharraf vows to end load-shedding, price-hike](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

68. [Confusion in court -it's the messy matter of whose human rights you want to guard today, m'lud](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

69. [Jill Carroll: finally free](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

70. [G2: 'Why depict Israel as a chamber of horrors like no other in the world?': This week's Guardian report on the parallels between Israel and South African apartheid was muddled and disappointing, argues Benjamin Pogrund . Overleaf, we publish reaction from other experts and from readers. !](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

71. [Strange Bedfellows](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

72. [G2: 'We're tired of blood': In November, a former Moroccan trade unionist was elected leader of Israel 's Labour party. Since then the political landscape has changed beyond recognition. Ariel Sharon founded a new party in response - then fell into a coma. As Israelis prepare to go to the polls, Linda Grant reports from a country losing faith in the old political certainties: 'My dream is the dream of Greater Israel , from the Jordan to the sea, but I don't think many will join me' Eli Moyal: 'We need a prime minister who will start a war to put an end to the Palestinians' violence' Yossi, Sderot resident](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

73. [Middle East crisis: A new war, but both sides recall old ones: Exodus from Beirut as Israel tightens vice and vows to disarm Hizbullah](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

74. [METROPOLITAN NEW YORK](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

75. [Pointing the finger of blame in Middle East](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

76. [Guardian Weekly: Weekly Review: The unlikely first lady: Israel 's prime minister, Ehud Olmert, is a rightwing nationalist: Married to Aliza, a leftwing artist who openly criticises his policies. Rachel Shabi profiles an unconventional political wife](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

77. [THE DEMONS THAT HAUNT SRI LANKA Civil war in the jungle The deserted beaches are littered with rubbish. The jungles are burning, torched by troops trying to flush out the Tamil Tigers. Eighteen months after the tsunami, Justin Huggler reports from Trincomalee on the disaster confronting a seeming paradise](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

78. [This man's young disciples, trained in the cause of martyrdom, wrap themselves in explosives and blow up innocent Jewish civilians](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

79. [Farmers suffering a variety of blows](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

80. [ISRAEL PUSHES ON DESPITE AGREEING TO AIRSTRIKE LULL](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

81. [Debate on the crisis in the Middle East](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

82. [LETTERS TO THE EDITOR](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

83. ['Clash of civilizations' orchestrated: Global protests were anything but spontaneous](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

84. [Orchestrated 'clash of civilizations': Global protests were anything but spontaneous](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

85. [A New Face in Iran Resurrects an Old Defiance](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

86. [G2: The unlikely first lady: Ehud Olmert is the rightwing nationalist who has just become Israel 's prime minister. His wife Aliza is a leftwing artist who is openly critical of his policies - and had never voted for him until this year. Rachel Shabi on the world's least conventional political wife](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

87. [Asbos do work and the public support them](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

88. [MIDDLE EAST SPECIAL: Land of my fathers It took David Baker 40 years to get to Israel . But when he did he found peace in the most surprising of places](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

89. [LETTERS](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

90. [What makes a martyr? The wave of arrests of British Muslims suspected of plotting to destroy passenger jets over the Atlantic again raises the question posed after 7/7 last year: what tips religious fundamentalism into murderous intent? Olga Craig and Alasdair Palmer report](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

91. [Bernard-Henri Levy](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

92. [*Insurance problems for homeowners grow more frustrating*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

93. [*WAR CAPITALISM Vladimir Putin sends the nation to the front*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

94. [*THE RUSSIAN SECRET SERVICES ARE MOVING IN THE WRONG DIRECTION A non-government report: does international terrorism really need Chechnya ?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

95. [*The Cabinet*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

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96. [*Identifying the real basis for responsibility*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
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97. [*FOCUS: ISLAM AND CENSORSHIP: SPECIAL REPORT: How cartoons fanned flames of Muslim rage: Embassies burning. Riots and demonstrations across the globe. Journalists in hiding. Presidents and preachers joining the furious debate. But just how did a series of second-rate cartoons buried deep inside the pages of a small Danish newspaper produce such an incendiary dispute?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

98. [*FOCUS: ISLAM AND CENSORSHIP: SPECIAL REPORT: How cartoons fanned flames of Muslim rage: Embassies burning. Riots and demonstrations across the globe. Journalists in hiding. Presidents and preachers joining the furious debate. But just how did a series of second-rate cartoons buried deep inside the pages of a small Danish newspaper produce such an incendiary dispute?*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
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Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

99. [*Looking forward, and backTHE MUSLIM MALAISE*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers; Timeline: Jan 01, 2006 to Sep 30, 2006

100. [*Wimmin at war*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: Hamas

Search Type: Natural Language

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Democracy not an export item

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Length: 1068 words

Byline: Leon Hadar

Body

MATP

The irrational response to the Danish cartoons shows that the Middle East may not be fit for democracy after all, argues Leon Hadar

IN a new film, *Looking for Comedy in the Muslim World*, comedian Albert Brooks is dispatched to south Asia by humourless Bush administration officials to look for, well, comedy in the Muslim world.

Trying to cope with the depressing reality of a post-September 11 world in which Americans now occupy some parts of an angry anti-American Muslim universe, the gloomy bureaucrats in Washington hope a Jewish comic from Hollywood will help them discover what makes Muslims laugh.

After all, laughter is a universal trait, and if we Westerners laugh, the Muslims will probably laugh with us. And who knows? This could be a form of Preventive Comedic Diplomacy: A laugh a day in Baghdad, Kabul and Tehran could keep the US military away.

Unfortunately, Brooks's mission of making the Muslim world safe for comedy proves to be a sad joke. As with most of his liberal Hollywood colleagues, Brooks believes that all cultures can be brought together by shared commitment to universal values. But these fellows in India and Pakistan just don't get his sarcastic and self-deprecating sense of humour, not to mention the double entendres and sexual innuendoes.

His *Comedy Hour* is a flop and he discovers to his chagrin that while Muslims do laugh "like us", their concept of what is funny is not the kind that might work for a stand-up comedian in New York, Melbourne or, for that matter, a

cartoonist in Copenhagen. It's not that the 12 cartoons of the prophet Mohammed published in the small Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* were very funny; they were quite tasteless and offensive. But you could say that about much of the stuff that we find any day of the week in our Western media, including caricatures that mock Jesus, bash Catholic priests, offend Jews and insult racial minorities.

If you don't like what you see, feel free to send angry letters to the editor, boycott and demonstrate against the offensive newspaper and ask public figures to condemn it. But in a society where freedom of expression is valued, you don't threaten the life or use violence against those who disturb your political beliefs or religious sensibilities. And that includes crude anti-fill-the-blank cartoonists.

Democracy not an export item

That this kind of commitment to a free exchange of ideas and tolerance of dissent that those of us who were raised and educated in the West seem to take for granted, like the air we breathe, is not shared by many Muslims across the world, and especially those residing in the Arab Middle East, has become quite evident in a very dramatic way in recent days.

The violence perpetrated by the mobs in centres of Arab civilisation, such as Beirut, Damascus and Cairo, is very disturbing and reflects an illiberal political culture that is breeding religious intolerance and anti-modern attitudes. And it is strengthening the power of radical Islamic groups, ranging from the Arab-Sunni Muslim Brotherhood to the Shia Hezbollah.

What is even more disturbing is that some of this anti-Western frenzy has exploded in places in the Arab Middle East -- in the new Iraq and in Palestine -- where the Bush administration has been promoting its campaign to spread freedom and where open elections were show-cased by Washington as highlighting its Wilsonian agenda of making the region safe for democracy.

Indeed, members of the radical political Islamist groups elected to power during this US-produced celebration of democracy -- Iraq's Shia clerics and Palestine's Hamas terrorist group -- have, with rare exceptions, been serving as cheerleaders for mobs attacking Americans and Europeans, including Danish troops maintaining peace in Iraq and officers of the European Union in Gaza, which is the main source of economic assistance for the Palestinians.

But the neoconservative intellectuals who have been the driving force behind the pro-democracy campaign in the Middle East refuse to admit that, not unlike Brooks's comedy spiel, their own democracy shtick has been a policy disaster. In two strategic parts of the Middle East -- the Persian Gulf and Israel/Palestine -- it has led to the victory of political parties whose values run contrary to that of the US.

These groups, for instance, would reverse women's rights and give second-class citizenship to non-Muslims. And their goals -- in Iraq, an alliance with Iran, and in Palestine, a refusal to recognise Israel -- would harm US strategic interests, the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and hinder efforts to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

So much for the idea that free elections give birth to liberal pro-Western governments. As policy analyst Fareed Zakaria argues, elections that take place in societies that lack the necessary institutional foundations -- a functioning civil society, free markets, independent press and judiciary, religious tolerance -- tend to produce an "illiberal democracy" that only exacerbates the problems of divisions and dysfunction and bring to power nationalist and religious populists who exploit their people's fears of the "other".

From that perspective, the US push for democracy in the Middle East has been a self-defeating strategy that has made the region safe for nationalism and other radical forms of ethnic, religious, and tribal movements that regard the US and its allies in the region as the source of all evil. It's difficult for American neoconservatives who fantasise about a global multicultural community committed to liberal democratic values to admit that perhaps the Muslims are not "like us" after all.

They laugh, but don't appreciate our sense of humour. They want to be free, but don't share our concept of liberal democracy, a set of values and institutions that can only develop through a long process of trial and error and in a hospitable environment. Perhaps the time has come for Washington to adopt a more realistic approach and stop looking for democracy in the Middle East while pursuing a policy that secures the real interests of the Western democracies in the region.

After all, liberal democracy, like humour, is not an export commodity. And, unlike humour, it's a very serious business.

Leon Hadar, a research fellow in foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute in Washington, is author of *Sandstorm: Policy Failure in the Middle East* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

Democracy not an export item

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A life of war might have ended in peace When; REVIEW

Mail on Sunday (London)

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Byline: WILLIAM REES-MOGG

Body

a man lies gravely ill, it is natural that people should modify their language about him, and speak as well of him as they can. This can be an unrealistic rule if applied to politicians whose work is still an active influence on events.

President George W. Bush has said of Ariel Sharon that he is 'a good man'.

One can see why the President came to make so eccentric an observation: to him it is a mere compliment of state.

It is, nevertheless, the opposite of the truth. By any normal standard, Sharon has been a bad man, a ruthless killer, a general reckless of the lives of his own men, let alone civilians, an unreliable political ally, arguably corrupt, for decades a crude nationalist even against his country's real interests, an aggressor in the 1981 Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

As an Israeli commission found, he was 'indirectly responsible' for the Sabra and Shatila massacres of Palestinian refugees, including women and children. If Slobodan Milosevic can properly be charged with war crimes, so could Sharon; indeed he already has been, by his own country, and found guilty. Milosevic himself is, after all, an unquestioned Serbian patriot.

The point about Sharon is that he may be a bad and ruthless man, but he is undoubtedly an Israeli patriot. That is the reputation he has earned. He has spent his whole life at war.

He was 20 when he was wounded defending Israel in 1948; even before that he had joined the Haganah, the underground Jewish army that defended Jewish interests in Palestine in the last years of the British mandate.

Sharon was a senior officer in the Arab-Israeli war of 1956 and commanded a division in the war of 1967.

He played an important role in throwing back the Egyptian attack in 1973.

As a general he did not hesitate to put his troops' lives at risk, but he fought for Israel, and he won his battles.

Israel has had other generals who went into politics, but the last of the formal wars ended more than 30 years ago and Sharon is the last of a breed which included Moshe Dayan and Yitzhak Rabin, who was assassinated by an Israeli fanatic in 1995.

Nations rightly treasure their war heroes. Sharon has gained a national authority which could only stem from war. Rabin was the last Israeli politician to win for himself an equal degree of national authority. It is similar to the

A life of war might have ended in peace When REVIEW

authority which enabled Charles de Gaulle to give France a new constitution in 1958. After 57 years at war, Israel is more than usually grateful to generals who won battles.

No one other than Sharon would have been able to persuade the Israeli people to support the withdrawal of settlements from the Gaza Strip. Yet, and this is part of the paradox of Sharon, no other politician did more to encourage the expansion of the settlements.

If fewer Jewish immigrants had been allowed to settle on Palestinian land after the Six-Day War, it might have been much easier to negotiate peace between an independent Israel and an independent Palestine.

No one other than Sharon could have left his own party, Likud, which he helped to found, and set up a new centre party, Kadima which, until his stroke, had every prospect of winning the March general election.

Kadima had a peace mission rather than a detailed peace programme, but it attracted senior political figures and, while Sharon was in good health, gained massive support in the opinion polls.

Sharon alone had the will and the support to found the new party no one knows whether anyone else will be able to sustain his creation. Yet the initial backing for Kadima does suggest there is sufficient support for the sacrifices required to make a two-state solution possible.

There are many political obstacles in the way. There is extreme uncertainty about Sharon's possible recovery. If he lives through to the election, perhaps only in the poor health Pope John Paul II suffered in his last months, that would have a positive political effect.

Kadima can scarcely expect any active lead from Sharon that would require a miracle. But it could still be a party with his blessing.

Kadima will have to choose a new leader; Sharon's deputy, Ehud Olmert, is obviously a serious possibility. It is too early for the new party to take that decision. This month there will probably be a Palestinian election, though that is not certain. If it does go ahead, it is only too likely to produce a good result for the terrorist party of **Hamas**.

That would be favourable news for the Right in Israel, but bad news for peace.

Likud must not be underestimated. It is opposed to Sharon's peace policy and would not have accepted his likely proposals for the withdrawal of settlements. It is now led by Benjamin Netanyahu, a formidably gifted younger politician of the Israeli Right.

Likud, naturally, has the support of many settlers on the West Bank, some of whom would have to leave if their land became subject to an independent Palestinian state.

Perhaps the best hope for the peace policy would be an election result that achieved a two-party coalition between Kadima and Labour. The Labour leader is Amir Peretz, an active trade unionist who won the leadership against Labour elder statesman Shimon Peres last November.

Peres himself has joined Kadima. He is now 82 and has been a member of the Israeli parliament the Knesset since 1959. He is a former prime minister and could be the broker between Kadima and Labour. He is one of the most admirable as well as most experienced of Israeli leaders. He is a real hero of the cause of peace.

The loss of Sharon's active authority makes it more difficult to persuade the Israelis that peace is possible and worth the risk. But Sharon himself was responding to a real shift in Israeli public opinion. He usually gets his political calculations right.

The Israelis want peace and are prepared to make real sacrifices for it.

On the Palestinian side, the loss of Sharon as an active politician may be a blessing, though a mixed blessing.

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Most Israelis thought Yasser Arafat was an implacable enemy, whatever he might say, and that there would be no peace while he was alive. For them, Arafat's death removed an obstacle to peace.

For many Palestinians, Sharon is a similarly big but threatening figure, also seen as an implacable enemy.

Sharon and Arafat never could negotiate peace together. Perhaps it will be possible for smaller, but more human, men to lower the barrier of fear.

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To Lead the Faithful in a Faith Under Fire

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Late Edition - Final

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Byline: By ANDREA ELLIOTT

Series: AN IMAM IN AMERICA -- Second of three articles: A Delicate Balance

Body

The F.B.I. agent and the imam sat across a long wooden table at a Brooklyn youth center last August.

Would the imam, the agent asked, report anyone who seemed prone to terrorism?

Sheik Reda Shata leaned back in his chair and studied the agent. Nearly a year had passed since the authorities had charged two young men, one of whom prayed at Mr. Shata's mosque, with plotting to blow up the Herald Square subway station in Manhattan.

The mosque had come under siege. Television news trucks circled the block. Threats were made. The imam's congregants became angry themselves after learning that a police informer had spent months in their midst.

At the meeting, the imam chose his words carefully. It is not only the F.B.I. that wants to stop terrorism, he answered; Muslims also care about keeping the country safe.

"I would turn him in to you," Mr. Shata finally said, pointing his finger at the agent, Mark J. Mershon, the top F.B.I. official in New York City. "But not because I am afraid of you."

The moment captured one of the enduring challenges for an imam in America: living at the center of a religion under watch.

Mr. Shata is under steady pressure to help the authorities. At the same time, he must keep the trust of his congregants, who feel unfairly singled out by law enforcement.

The balance is delicate. It requires a willingness to cooperate, but not to be trampled on; pride in one's fellow Muslims, yet recognition that threats may lurk among them.

"It's like walking a tightrope," said Mr. Shata, 37, speaking through an Arabic translator. "You have to give Muslims the feeling that the police are not monsters. And you have to give the police the feeling that Muslims are respectful and clean."

Months spent with Mr. Shata, both around the city and in his mosque, the Islamic Society of Bay Ridge, revealed the vastly complex calling of imams in the United States.

To Lead the Faithful in a Faith Under Fire

In the Islamic world, imams are defined as prayer leaders. But here, they become community leaders, essential intermediaries between their immigrant flocks and a new, Western land. When Islamic traditions clash with American culture, it is imams who step forward with improvised answers. Outside the mosque, many assume the public roles of other clergy, becoming diplomats for their faith.

But in the years since Sept. 11, diplomacy has given way to defensiveness. For American imams, no subject is more charged than terrorism. While under scrutiny themselves, imams are often called upon to usher the authorities past the barriers of fear that surround their communities. Many are reluctant. They worry that their assistance will backfire in unwarranted investigations, or a loss of credibility at the pulpit.

At Mr. Shata's mosque, people can recite a list of dubious cases as easily as popular verses of the Koran: The three Moroccan men in Detroit who were falsely accused of operating a terrorist sleeper cell; the Muslim lawyer Brandon Mayfield, who was mistakenly linked to bombings in Madrid; the two teenage girls from New York City who were held for weeks but never charged after the F.B.I. identified them as potential suicide bombers.

At the same time, imams must contend with their own mixed reputation, which is marked by a few high-profile cases, like that of Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, the blind Egyptian cleric who was convicted in 1995 of plotting to blow up New York landmarks.

Imams like Mr. Shata -- men who embrace American freedom and condemn the radicals they feel have tainted their faith -- rarely make the news.

The authorities are well acquainted with Mr. Shata, and speak highly of him. The officers of Mr. Shata's local police precinct often turn to him for help when Muslims in Bay Ridge refuse to be questioned. The senior F.B.I. counterterrorism official in New York, Charles E. Frahm, described his interaction with Mr. Shata as "very positive."

Mr. Frahm was in the room last August when Mr. Mershon challenged the imam. Mr. Shata and other Muslim leaders had agreed to meet the agents at the Muslim Youth Center in Bensonhurst in an effort to improve relations between the two camps.

"I have been impressed with his desire, as he's expressed it to me, to do good and do right," Mr. Frahm said.

Yet for Mr. Shata, cooperation brings conflicting emotions. He can charm a class of rookies at the 68th Precinct in Brooklyn, turning a perfunctory cultural sensitivity seminar into a comedy hour. But he is quietly outraged that an unmarked car shadows a respected Palestinian board member of his mosque.

The imam is saddened to see so many Muslims leave America, pushed out by new immigration policies, intimidation or despair. He also fears for those who have remained: for the teenage boy in his mosque who is suddenly praying at dawn, having drifted from a high school that left him alienated.

Still, Mr. Shata said, the anger and fear, no matter how deeply felt, are tempered by something greater: the devastating impact of Sept. 11 on non-Muslim Americans.

"It will take them a while to come to terms with us," he said.

A Necessary Dialogue

The competing demands on Mr. Shata became plain when he arrived in Bay Ridge about a year after Sept. 11.

Crisis gripped the city's Muslim neighborhoods. Law enforcement agents searched businesses and homes, and held hundreds of men for questioning. Women were harassed in the subway. Elementary schools lost Muslim children as their families packed up and left.

Mr. Shata's predecessor, Mohamed Moussa, was drained. "I needed a change or I would destroy myself," said Mr. Moussa, who now works as one of three imams at a well-funded mosque in Union City, N.J.

To Lead the Faithful in a Faith Under Fire

Like many mosques in struggling immigrant neighborhoods, the Islamic Society of Bay Ridge had little choice but to search abroad for a replacement. America produces few imams with the qualities sought by foreign-born Muslims: fluency in Arabic, and a superior command of the Koran and the laws that codify Islamic life.

Mr. Shata was an enticing candidate. Like Mr. Moussa, he had trained at Al Azhar University in Cairo, a citadel of Islamic scholarship. Through an Azhar professor, Mr. Moussa found Mr. Shata in Germany, where he had been working as an imam.

The men who sit on the mosque's board were pleased to find charisma in their new imam. The white brick mosque on Fifth Avenue in Bay Ridge survives largely on the donations of its congregants. Only a riveting speaker can draw them.

But soon after Mr. Shata arrived, he became aware of another, less visible audience. In mosques around the city, informers were hidden among the praying masses, listening for what officials call "double talk" -- one voice of extremism inside the mosque, and another of tolerance outside.

The attention did not worry Mr. Shata, he said, because he had nothing to hide. "My page is clean," he said.

But when the authorities came seeking his help, he faced a choice. He could welcome them and improve the mosque's public standing, or he could rebuff their inquiries at the risk of seeming obstructionist.

"There's a wall of silence around these mosques," said Representative Peter T. King, a Long Island Republican and chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee. "It's not necessarily the imam himself who is actively engaged, but he looks the other way or allows activities in his mosque that could be dangerous."

Mr. Shata viewed cooperation as his Islamic duty. "Whoever is afraid of dialogue is hiding something," he said.

Mosque Under a Microscope

The greatest test of Mr. Shata's relationship with the authorities came with the arrest of a young Muslim congregant who was accused of plotting terrorism.

Shahawar Matin Siraj, 23, was a chatty Pakistani immigrant who worked in the Islamic bookstore next to the mosque. On the job, he was sometimes seen talking to James Elshafay, 21, a soft-spoken Muslim American from Staten Island. In August 2004, both were charged in Brooklyn federal court with conspiring to blow up the 34th Street subway station at Herald Square.

The men had been videotaped discussing the plot and scouting the subway station with a paid police informer who told them he belonged to an Islamic "brotherhood."

In the days after the arrests, reporters swarmed into Bay Ridge. Anonymous threats were called in to the bookstore, Islamic Books & Tapes. One letter to the store read, "You're all dead meat."

The imam and others at the mosque soon realized they knew the informer: a gray-haired Egyptian who called himself Osama Daoudi and said he lived in Staten Island.

"He used to say, 'My name is Osama, like Osama bin Laden,' " Mr. Shata recalled.

Mr. Daoudi had surfaced at the mosque a year earlier, said Mr. Shata. He tried to interest the imam in a real estate deal, proposing that Mr. Shata use his influence over Muslims to collect money owed to Mr. Daoudi in exchange for a secret cash commission, Mr. Shata recalled.

The imam wanted nothing to do with the scheme, he said, and kept his distance. He found Mr. Daoudi off-putting. He claimed to be the son of a famous Egyptian sheik and was known at the mosque for weeping when he prayed. But he also smoked.

To Lead the Faithful in a Faith Under Fire

"Piety in Islam forbids smoking," Mr. Shata observed.

Most striking was the anti-American sentiment that Mr. Daoudi espoused, Mr. Shata said. During visits with the imam, Mr. Daoudi complained that Americans might fear him because he had a Ph.D. in nuclear engineering. He also said that the F.B.I. wanted to search his home, the imam recalled.

"I told him, 'As long as you do nothing wrong, open your house and your heart to people,' " said Mr. Shata.

The imam said he believed that after Mr. Daoudi found him uninterested, he turned his focus to Mr. Siraj and Mr. Elshafay.

Starting in September 2003, the informer spent months drawing Mr. Siraj into the plot, teaching him about violent jihad, said Mr. Siraj's lawyer, Martin R. Stolar.

The authorities would say little about the case, which is set for trial next month. Efforts to locate Mr. Daoudi, whose name was provided by Mr. Stolar, were unsuccessful.

The Police Department's chief spokesman, Paul J. Browne, dismissed Mr. Stolar's claim that the police had manufactured the plot. "We didn't propose that," he said. "We took action to stop it and there's a big difference."

Mr. Siraj had an "interest in violence" that was known to the authorities prior to an informer's involvement, Mr. Browne added.

For the imam, the informer's supposed maneuvering was not surprising. Mr. Shata shares a view common among Muslims in Bay Ridge that confidential informers are untrustworthy because some have criminal records or work for pay.

This perception irks Mr. Frahm, the F.B.I. official. Informers' reports are closely vetted, he said, and their motives are irrelevant if they provide correct information.

Mr. Frahm devotes much time to building trust among Muslim leaders. But he also warns them not to turn a blind eye to questionable activity. "You can't play part-time American," he said.

'From the Stones of Insults'

Anger at the authorities came easily at the mosque. But a quiet, if disturbing, question soon followed: Entrapped or not, what had caused these young men to entertain thoughts of terrorism?

The imam looks for answers on the crowded sidewalk outside the mosque.

The worn cement slabs along Fifth Avenue have long been divided into two social camps. After the Friday prayer, the section in front of the mosque fills with the neighborhood's Arab pioneers, gray-haired and balding Palestinians and Egyptians.

Several feet south, under the marquee of a movie theater, the neighborhood's Arab teenagers gather. Before Sept. 11, the groups rarely mingled. But in the years since, many of the younger set have returned to their faith.

The imam now rises to deliver his Friday khutba, or sermon, before rows of young men, some in low-hanging jeans and baseball caps turned backward. Many have come to learn more about their religion so they can defend it at work or at school. Others no longer feel at home elsewhere. They have been passed over for jobs, or stopped and questioned by the authorities too many times.

It is these men, and their sense of alienation, that most worry Mr. Shata. The mosque is not their only refuge. A new crop of sheesha cafes opened along the avenue after Sept. 11, filling with male chatter and the sweet smoke of water pipes.

To Lead the Faithful in a Faith Under Fire

"I once read a Spanish proverb," Mr. Shata said one evening. "The wall of hatred was asked, 'How were you built?' And the reply was, 'From the stones of insults.' "

Over the last three decades, the European immigrant enclave of Bay Ridge has given way to Gazan barbers, halal butchers and Egyptian jewelers. But the newest settlers have not always been welcome.

"It became, 'This ain't Bay Ridge anymore, it's Beirut,' " said Russell Kain, a retired community affairs officer from the 68th Precinct.

America has brought the imam his own share of taunts. A woman on a plane once asked him if he was Muslim and then demanded to change seats. Mr. Shata grew up wearing the long robes of his Egyptian homeland. He now travels in a suit.

But in Bay Ridge, he fights alienation with an open heart. He is increasingly a blend of East and West, proudly walking to the mosque in a robe and sandals, while warding off the cold with a wool Yankees hat. "I feel like I'm living in my country," he said.

It is a message he repeats everywhere he goes, one he says is the antidote to hatred. He meets with Muslim youth groups at mosques around the city, telling them not to wait for an invitation to embrace America. Even if Muslims feel singled out, Mr. Shata often says, America is still the freest country in the world.

The imam plans to stay for "as long as God wills it," he said. He got his green card in November.

Mr. Shata knows most of his congregants by face, and the 400 who pray daily by name. If he sees a young person taken by sudden devotion, his impulse is to probe. Is the person driven by faith or isolation? He can't always be sure.

The imam's concerns are shared by the F.B.I. Several officials said the bureau had recently focused its surveillance on the city's Muslim youth after learning that the London bombings last July were mostly carried out by South Asians raised in Britain. Mr. Shata and the authorities agree that young Muslims are most captive to the messages of militant sheiks.

"Islam is a religion based on intellect," he tells his young listeners. "Islam says to you: 'Think. Don't close your eyes and just follow your emotions. Don't follow the sheik. Perhaps you have a better mind than his.' "

"If you do wrong," he says, "you do wrong to the whole Islamic world."

One Imam, Many Audiences

One evening in July, Mr. Shata sat in the neat, air-conditioned living room of a brick row house in Queens. An Egyptian family had invited him over to bless their newest member, a 5-week-old girl.

The infant, swathed in soft pink cotton, slept in a car seat on the floor as her mother and grandmother offered tea and pastries. On a wide-screen television, Al Jazeera flashed news that two Algerian diplomats had been killed in Iraq.

Mr. Shata was bothered by the killers' description of the victims as "infidels." The world, he said, needed to agree on a definition of terrorism. "What I may see as terrorism, you may not see that way," he said.

Few subjects pose a more complicated test of loyalties for Mr. Shata than the struggle between Arabs and Israelis. Many Palestinians attend his mosque. When he discusses the conflict, one gets the sense that he is, again, speaking to several audiences.

Like Arabs around the world, Mr. Shata disagrees profoundly with the United States' steadfast support of Israel, and views the militant group Hamas as a powerful symbol of resistance.

To Lead the Faithful in a Faith Under Fire

When Sheik Ahmed Yassin, the founder and spiritual leader of Hamas, was killed by Israelis in March 2004, Mr. Shata told hundreds who gathered at a memorial service in Brooklyn that the "lion of Palestine has been martyred."

Mr. Shata is also acutely aware that the United States classifies Hamas as a terrorist group. In the same speech, he condemned all violence. "We don't hate Jews," he recalled saying. "To kill one man is to kill all mankind."

Yet in another sermon, the imam exalted a young Palestinian mother, Reem Al-Reyashi, who blew herself up in 2004 at a crossing point between Gaza and Israel, killing four Israelis. Mr. Shata described the woman as a martyr.

When asked about the speech, Mr. Shata seemed unusually conflicted. He has forged friendships with rabbis in New York -- something he never imagined in Egypt. Engaging in a discussion about the Arab-Israeli struggle would invite controversy, he said, both within his mosque and outside it. "I worry this will cause trouble with my Jewish brothers," he said. He rarely broaches the topic in sermons and addressed it only reluctantly in interviews.

"I do not accept suicide operations that target civilians at any time or place," Mr. Shata said. But striking Israeli soldiers "as a means of defense" was justifiable.

The Israelis, he said, have "killed Palestinian women, destroyed their homes, taken their land and materials and made them into refugees," while Palestinians lack the military means to fight back. Islamic law forbids suicide, he said, but the Koran says Muslims can defend themselves if attacked. Ms. Al-Reyashi killed two soldiers, a border police officer and a security guard, though Palestinian and Israeli civilians were hurt.

Mr. Shata acknowledged that his opinion, while common among Arabs, is strongly opposed not only by many non-Muslims, but even by some of his congregants. "Some Muslims, if they hear this, would make me out to be a nonbeliever because they see that all these suicide operations are a must," he said. "And there are other Muslims who feel that all of these operations are forbidden."

"My nature is always to be in the middle," he said. "It's always the person in the middle who ends up being the enemy of the right and the left. I don't want to open up two fronts against me."

Mr. Shata is forceful in his condemnation of terrorism in the West, a message he feels is rarely heard. After the suicide bombings in London last year, he and other Muslims called a news conference in Brooklyn to denounce the violence. Nobody came.

In his sermons, Mr. Shata repeatedly makes the point that terrorism violates the tenets of Islam. "I feel that I breathe underwater, or that I cry in a desert," he said recently. "That nobody responds."

It was part of Mr. Shata's annual Sept. 11 speech, a tradition he began in 2003. Recordings of the sermon, titled "What Muslims Want From America," sold out at the mosque overnight.

The three Sept. 11 speeches echo the imam's journey in America. His first speech was conciliatory in tone; a treatise on the peaceful nature of Islam. In 2004, he urged Muslims to respect the law, and trust that America is not "the enemy." Last September, his message hardened.

"We want the U.S. to be just in dealing with our issues," Mr. Shata declared. A man "should not feel that he is under surveillance for every word he says, every move he makes and every piece of paper he signs."

Muslims feel isolated, yet crave acceptance, he said, likening them to their ancestors 14 centuries ago, who sought refuge from the king of Abyssinia.

"O king, we have come to thy country having chosen thee above all others," he said, reciting the words of the group's leader, Jafar Ibn Abi Talib.

"It is our hope, o king, that here, with thee, we shall not suffer wrong."

TOMORROW

To Lead the Faithful in a Faith Under Fire

The life of an imam in America is full of hardship. But there is also joy. Sheik Reda Shata finds sweet relief in his work as a matchmaker. He arranges meetings between Muslims who are seeking a spouse. It is his way of fostering a future for Islam.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Photos: Between Two Worlds in Brooklyn -- Fadi Alkhatiba, 23, like other young Muslims, has embraced his Islamic identity more fully since 9/11.

BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS -- Sheik Reda Shata begins a seminar in cultural sensitivity at the 68th Precinct in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. Through these kinds of efforts, the imam hopes to foster better understanding between law enforcement and his fellow Muslims.

FIGHTING ALIENATION-- Mr. Shata, center, joined more than 1,000 Muslims in Manhattan last month to protest cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad. Insults, the imam said, can breed alienation and anger among Muslims.

AN ARREST, AND THREATS -- Siraj Rehman, left, with Saleem Noorali, who owns the bookstore next to the Bay Ridge mosque. Mr. Rehman's son, Shahawar Matin Siraj, worked at the shop and has been charged in a bomb plot. The bookstore received threats after the arrest. (Photographs by JAMES ESTRIN/The New York Times)(pgs. A26, 27)

(Photo by James Estrin/The New York Times)(pg. A1)

Load-Date: March 6, 2006

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How will Cameron's Tories defeat those who hate us?

The Daily Telegraph (LONDON)

September 2, 2006 Saturday

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 22

Length: 1195 words

Byline: Charles Moore

Body

A headline on this newspaper's front page yesterday read "Blair to target problem children in the womb". It confirmed the fantastical state of British politics. Our Prime Minister has reached a stage in his career where everything he does or says has become unreal. If it had read: "I'll fly to Mars, says Blair", one would hardly have been surprised.

In the minds of some of the Opposition, this is all the more reason to "get Blair". Obsessed with how successfully he has kept them out for so long, many Conservatives want to concentrate on kicking him now that he is down.

This is a tremendous waste of energy. The undermining of Mr Blair is best left to his own party, which is doing it with a dedication that it has never shown in running the country. One reason that David Cameron is a better leader than his Tory critics give him credit is that he understands this. The political landscape which he seeks to dominate is a post-Blair one. That is partly why his party's recent statement of "aims and values" is called Built to Last. If he wins at all, Mr Cameron will only be there once Mr Blair isn't.

This point may seem a very long way from this week's news that Iran has ignored the UN deadline to end its uranium enrichment programme. But it seems to me that the Tories' thinking ahead about the shape of post-Blair Britain is not being joined up with what they think about the state of the world.

The mood in Tory circles on foreign policy is pretty much of the "Get Blair" kind. Many Conservatives still feel sore at being tricked, as they see it, into supporting the war in Iraq. Substantial numbers of them have a low regard for George W. Bush. They want to get away from taint by association, and so they edge towards a more EU/Arabist/Foreign Office-y view of the world, in which "disproportion" and "confrontation" (i.e., aggressive Israelis and crude Yanks) are seen as the main problems, and good old mandarin inter-state diplomacy by latter-day Douglas Hurds can sort things out.

There is, indeed, no earthly reason why Cameron should expend political capital bolstering either Blair or Bush. But Bush will quite certainly be gone by January 2009, Blair very likely so. As at home, Cameron needs to show that he has an idea of how he wants the world to look in the era in which he hopes to have some say in running it.

He can't match Churchill in Fulton, Missouri, in 1946, when he spoke of an "iron curtain" of Communism descending on Europe. Unlike Churchill, Cameron has not led his country to victory in a world war. But his position is not so unlike that of Margaret Thatcher 30 years later. It is interesting that it was her view of the world, not of domestic matters, that first made her really famous.

How will Cameron's Tories defeat those who hate us?

Less than a year after winning the leadership in 1975 - roughly, therefore, at the stage that David Cameron has reached - Mrs Thatcher made a speech in Kensington Town Hall in which she attacked the fashion for détente with the Soviet Union when the Soviets were still building up their armaments and oppressing their own people. Freedom here was ultimately indivisible from freedom there, she argued. An enraged official Soviet newspaper called her the Iron Lady. It was her big break.

Thirty more years have passed. On the sombre occasion of the fifth anniversary of September 11, Mr Cameron is due to make a big speech on world affairs. It is not his style to seek a Thatcher effect. He is calm, genial and understated, where she was passionate and combative, but that does not mean that his speech can afford to be platitudinous and establishment-minded.

The Conservatives could easily lose an election to a Labour Party that, with the likes of John Reid around, presents itself as robust against terrorism. Blair himself has given an articulate account of the Islamist threat, which, the recent Spectator poll showed, many people believe, even if they no longer trust him. Voters won't hand the future of the country to a party that has not worked out how to defend it against threat.

If you read *Built to Last*, a picture is painted of the sort of liberal society that modern Conservatives want. I am here not using "liberal" as a boo word meaning "Lefty", but in its proper sense of offering freedom and opportunity. This society is linked in the document with an outlook much wider than our national borders - the "moral obligation" of fighting global poverty, the benefits that derive from an orderly movement of peoples, the environmental condition of the entire planet.

It is ridiculous that the word "terrorism" is not mentioned in any of *Built to Last*'s eight points. Mr Cameron's own foreword to the text states: "The global terrorist threat demands not just new international security efforts abroad, but new efforts to integrate at home." This is not followed up.

Yet the Cameron liberal society will be no more real than some holiday brochure of a beautiful deserted beach if it cannot defeat the people who hate it. There is a doctrine of hate available on the internet, active in many mosques, funded by some regimes, capable of persuading some of our own citizens to blow themselves and us up. What will the Conservatives do about it?

To this question, foreign policy is only part of the answer. It is certainly an important part. Why is it, for example, when all sides claim to support the existence of a Palestinian state, that there isn't one? And why do Hizbollah and Hamas terrorists strive so hard to prevent it coming about? Why will the non-Muslim world not concert either to prevent Iran getting nuclear weapons or to help the Iranian people replace their clerical dictatorship? What of the ambiguous effect of Pakistan, which does have the Bomb, particularly its relation to trouble here in Britain?

When David Cameron stood for his party's leadership, he rightly pointed out that people nowadays are as concerned about Darfur as they are about Gibraltar. It would be good if he explained, as few yet have, how much of the misery in Darfur is caused by a failed state falling into the hands of Islamists.

But the problem goes wider than foreign policy because it is not, at root, about the relations between states. It is an argument, in some places a war, about how people should live their lives. In his own party, Mr Cameron wants more women candidates, more candidates from ethnic and religious minorities, more gay people. The Islamist ideology wouldn't countenance women, or homosexuals, or non-Muslims standing for anything, or, indeed, elections that we would recognise as free.

Yet public policy in this country likes to treat with Muslim citizens through self-appointed religious leaders, does little to encourage the use of English, stands aside at the oppression of women in many Muslim families, and allows preachers of hate to incite violence. Remarkably little thought is given to what it is like to be a Hindu or a Sikh or a Jew or a Muslim who resents clerical power or, increasingly, a Christian in a heavily Muslim area, in Britain today.

"To protect the country we love" is the sixth aim in *Built to Last*. It is time for Mr Cameron, in his decent and moderate way, to explain how this can be done.

How will Cameron's Tories defeat those who hate us?

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9/11 and five years of folly

Yorkshire Post

September 11, 2006

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Length: 1161 words

Body

Lord Howell of Guildford was a Minister in the governments of Edward Heath and Margaret Thatcher. From 1987-97, he was chairman of the Commons Foreign Affairs Committee.

JUST for a moment after 9/11, the United States held the goodwill of almost the entire world in the palm of its hand.

From Beijing to Delhi, from Paris to Moscow, from Tehran, from Damascus and, yes, even from Baghdad, came expressions of support for wounded America in its agony.

What had been perpetrated was so obviously evil, so obviously against all principles of human civilisation, and so threatening to the existence of every nation state, that it had virtually no approval - at least among governments.

Only the ugly picture of Palestinian women, apparently jumping up and down in glee at the slaughter, marred the image of almost universal sympathy and commiseration at what had occurred.

And it was more than just perfunctory words. Promises of positive co-operation flowed from numerous capitals in rounding up the people behind the perpetrators, cornering Osama bin Laden and his henchmen, sweeping the terrorism-friendly Taliban out of Afghanistan and bringing peace, democracy and freedom to an autocratic and unsettled Middle-East, the apparent hothouse of alienation and violence, as well as the repository of two-thirds of the world's oil reserves.

Five years later, not one of these objectives has been achieved.

Blood-soaked Iraq is more infested with terrorists than ever. Iranian influence and power to make trouble has been enlarged. Peace between Israel and Palestine is as remote as ever. Extremist groups have multiplied and grown more violent. Support for Hezbollah and Hamas is stronger than ever.

Worst of all, the reputation, image and influence of the United States, its "soft power", has gone into steep decline almost everywhere in the world, taking Britain's reputation a good part of the way with it.

For Americans, this has been not five years of gaining new strength from alliances and friendships to fight terrorism, but five years of losing friends and the power to shape events, its vast military arsenal and reach notwithstanding.

This must surely have been one of the most damaging periods in the history of the United States on the international stage.

All the examples set by America's giant post-war statesmen, such as Harriman, Marshall and Truman, on how to handle the rest of the world sensitively and diplomatically, have seemingly been forgotten.

9/11 and five years of folly

Instead of firm diplomacy, the war on terror was launched, Western values and versions of governance were going to be imposed, and everyone who did not agree - or behave like a compliant friend - was declared an enemy. That was it.

Some in Britain argue that when it came to both the war on terror strategy, and to the subsequent Iraq invasion, Tony Blair had little choice but to follow George W Bush along his chosen warpath, potholed as it was, with misunderstanding of the subtleties and dynamics of Middle-East politics and cultures.

The only choice facing him, so the contention went, was between supporting America and the Atlantic alliance or siding with the overtly anti-American Continental powers, as well as with Russia and China.

But, of course, there was a third course for Britain - one which it had followed wisely way back at the time of the Vietnam war - which was to stay uninvolved, not hostile or openly critical, but developing its own robust diplomatic strategy for dealing with the new situation and drawing on its own unrivalled experience in dealing both with Middle-Eastern and Asian power and societies.

That was not Blair's way. Plainly lacking any deep experience of international affairs (or, indeed, any Ministerial experience at all except life in No 10), he signed up straightaway to the flawed Bush strategy for "A New Middle East", where "democracy and freedom" would be applied like sticking plasters and soldered on as necessary by "overwhelming force".

At Suez 50 years ago, another British Prime Minister, Anthony Eden, plunged into a disastrous Middle-East venture, on that occasion in defiance of an all-powerful America.

This time, the British Prime Minister joined forces in a military venture with weakened America in defiance of warnings almost everywhere else about the quagmires into which it would lead. He has thus become a sort of Eden-in-reverse, assured of a place in history, but not the one that he would have wished for.

The Conservative Opposition offered no alternative way forward. Led at the time by the courageous but also highly-inexperienced Iain Duncan Smith, it found itself committed to the Bush world view almost from day one.

Later, when it emerged that the Iraq invasion prospectus had been dodgy, and there were no weapons of mass destruction in Saddam's hands, and no discernible links with the 9/11 terror network, a new leader, Michael Howard, tried to distance himself from the Washington approach, and got slapped down by the Bush White House for his pains.

David Cameron will presumably inch that way as well when he expands his ideas on the new international scene.

Hints have also drifted into the Press from the Gordon Brown camp, that when his time comes he also will change, amend, adjust, re-assess (or whatever) the unqualified commitment to the Bush strategy.

But amend it to what? Can we possibly escape at this late stage being tied to the American chariot wheel? Can we just pull British troops out of Iraq in short order and leave the Americans struggling on, trying to stem the unending flow of killings?

A change of tone in dealing with Washington would certainly be possible, and maybe a change in the line-up of Britain's partners. There are plenty of countries who are by no means anti-American but who are prepared to speak with candour and force to the present administration in Washington and to urge a change of strategy - not to appeasement of terror and extremism, but to a skilled and firm diplomatic engagement with every state, including some of the Middle-East awkward squad such as Syria and Iran, who in the end are just as much threatened by non-state terror and anarchy as anybody else.

This would be a big step. Britain would need to take the lead, not so much with its unreliable European partners, many of whom remain incurably anti-American, as with the other "cutting-edge" nations, now coming to the global forefront.

9/11 and five years of folly

India, Japan, Australia, Canada, some from "New Europe" such as Poland and the lively Baltic three - these are the team players representing, along with Britain, a large chunk of the world's population and GNP, to whom America might just listen.

Is there any hope of this kind of fresh start? Probably not until Blair goes, and not until Bush goes. Both are irredeemably committed to the present path, with its immensely damaging consequences for the interests of both the US and its chief ally.

Only when these two are gone can we start to bring a dismal period of five years of folly to a close.

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Delusion in Britain

New York Sun (Archive)

August 31, 2006 Thursday

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Byline: DANIEL JOHNSON

Body

Americans are at last waking up to the threat posed by British-born Islamists. Since the exposure of a plot to blow up transatlantic airliners three weeks ago, alarm bells have been ringing in publications as diverse as the New Republic and the Wall Street Journal. The Investor's Business Daily has even demanded an end to the visa waiver program, which allows four million Britons to enter America every year without visas. The Heritage Foundation's Nile Gardiner describes Britain as "a hornet's nest of Islamic extremists" and warns that Congress will react harshly to terrorist attacks emanating from Britain.

The fact that Americans are worried is gratifying. This column was among the first to warn about the radicalization of the British Muslim community. But there is a risk that, having ignored the danger hitherto, Americans may now overreact by penalizing all Britons, not just the minority who really do threaten security.

It is true that opinion polls show that a significant proportion of British Muslims have at least some sympathy for jihadist extremism, and that even their leaders are unwise or unscrupulous enough to use the threat of terrorism to put pressure on Tony Blair to abandon his support for America and Israel.

It is also true, however, that the overwhelming majority of non-Muslim Britons are just as hostile to Islamist terrorism as Americans. Recent polls have reinforced the impression that the British no longer need persuading - as they still did after 9/11 or during the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq - that the West is engaged in a war on terror that may last for many years and will demand great sacrifices if it is to be won.

Even more significantly, the British - like the Americans - are now much more concerned about Islam than was the case five years ago. They no longer believe the assurances of "moderate" Muslim leaders or their non-Muslim apologists that Islam is a religion of peace. People are much better informed and understand that there is a real problem about Islamic theology, which is constantly used to justify jihad against America, Britain and Israel, while suicide "martyrs" are glorified.

About half of all Britons now see Islam as such, not merely its most extreme versions, as a potential threat to their way of life - not before time. It is not only the war on terror that has to be won; there is a culture war, too. This involves resisting the encroachments of aggressive multiculturalism, which acts as a Trojan horse for Muslim demands to live under Shariah law or to censor legitimate criticism or comment.

One deep-seated problem arises from the doctrine that all humanity is born Muslim. This implies not only proselytizing among non-Muslims, but laying claim to those who have yet to convert to Islam.

Delusion in Britain

I heard this week about a young Asian woman whose father was a non-practicing Muslim. She and her siblings had been brought up by their mother as Christians, with their father's consent. When she arrived at medical school in the northeastern city of Hull, however, she immediately found herself visited by fellow students who sought to win her over to their Islamist beliefs. They disapproved of her sharing a house with Hindu or Christian friends, and treated her as if she were a Muslim. I have also been told by a non-Muslim student of demands by her Muslim peer group to cover her head.

Such demands can and should be resisted, but in other circumstances they are backed by violence. The Fox TV men who were released by Hamas terrorists in Gaza earlier this week had been forced to convert to Islam. I have yet to hear this practice condemned by Muslim clerics, who appear to regard conversion by fair means and foul as legitimate. Conversion to Islam is also irreversible - the punishment for apostasy is death.

It is worth recalling the last time that Western civilization faced a comparable threat from Islam. From the 15th to the 17th centuries, Europe lived in permanent fear of the Ottoman Turks, whose relentless jihad conquered first the Byzantine empire and much of the Mediterranean, then the Balkans, and was twice halted only at the gates of Vienna.

During this era, voluntary conversion to Islam was seen as "turning Turk," and treated in Christian Europe as potential treason. But forced conversion was also practiced by the Turks, and on a massive scale. Indeed, the elite of the Turkish army - the Janissaries - consisted of such converts or their children.

Today, a common sight on the streets of London and other British cities is a stall with Muslim missionaries advertising their faith. Everywhere you see "Islamic bookshops" which sell not only the Koran, usually described as "the last testament," but also poisonous anti-Semitic and anti-Christian propaganda. That is unacceptable.

In a free society, all religions enjoy the right not only to practice but also to pass on their faith to the next generation and to make new converts. I wonder, however, if these rights are being abused in Britain today. There have been a number of horrible "honor killings" of Muslim women by their fathers or brothers, as punishment for marrying or even associating with non-Muslims. These barbaric murders are rarely condemned in public by Islamic clerics.

If Islam is ever to find a modus vivendi with the rest of British society, it is going to have to change at least some of its doctrines. The ambiguity about jihad, one of whose Koranic interpretations is holy war, must be ended. I am not comfortable even with the "peaceful" interpretation of jihad - the talk of "inner struggle" sounds too much like "Mein Kampf" for my taste. But there can be no toleration of a faith that excuses terrorism under the rubric of "martyrdom."

Nor is there any place in civilized society for forced conversions, including the denial of liberty to reject a family faith, let alone brutal punishments for apostasy. These doctrines must be unequivocally condemned if the suspicion that surrounds Islam in the West is ever to be dispelled. This is a matter of theology, not merely politics. I have yet to hear any such theological condemnation from Islamic scholars.

It is true that we do not face a threat as visible and direct as the Ottoman Empire once posed. But Iran's defiant pursuit of nuclear weapons is potentially more deadly than the Turkish fleets and armies that were defeated at Lepanto and Vienna. Iran, however, would be much less dangerous without terrorist "sleepers" in the West.

The British are confused about how to win this war on terror. Many of them imagine that there is a "European" alternative to the Atlantic alliance, which would somehow make Britain less vulnerable to attack. There is no such alternative. The British can and must deal with their own internal Islamist threat, but they need their American allies to deal with the external one.

Load-Date: September 1, 2006

*Hostage: The Jill Carroll Story - Epilogue * Family reunion*

Christian Science Monitor

August 28, 2006, Monday

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 1

Length: 1112 words

Byline: Peter Grier Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Body

On April 2, 2006, a white Lufthansa 747 with the designation "Hamburg" written on its side taxied up to a gate at Boston's Logan Airport. At 12:22 p.m., Jill Carroll stepped off the plane and onto US soil.

As she passed through customs, agents and other officials on duty crowded around for a chance to see her. Whisked into a waiting car, she was driven to the Monitor's headquarters in Boston's Back Bay, a police escort around her and news helicopters overhead.

Jill was traveling light. She'd left a big yellow bag of clothes and toiletries from her captivity in the Green Zone in Baghdad. She'd decompressed there for a day, talking to members of the US Embassy's Hostage Working Group, before traveling on an aircraft carrying American casualties to Ramstein Air Force Base in Landstuhl, Germany.

In Boston, her car went straight into the underground garage of the Christian Science church headquarters. In a preplanned bit of evasion, she was led through basement corridors under the complex to a loading dock on a nearby side street. She then jumped into a blue van - easily missing the media horde camped outside the Monitor building.

The van went only a few blocks, to a nearby church-owned townhouse. There, Jim, Mary Beth, and Katie crowded around an open window, yelling her nickname, "Zippy!"

Jill met them coming down the hallway in a whole-family embrace. She wept and said, "I'm sorry." She was home.

* * *

Nearly five months on, what's to be learned from Jill Carroll's kidnapping and release?

Monitor editors and correspondents were heartened by the global condemnation of the kidnapping, especially from Muslim religious leaders and even militant groups, such as Hamas. They remain proud of the media campaign they helped mount, from the solicitation of statements on Jill's behalf to the public service announcements that ran in the Iraqi media. They believe it was targeted to the right audience - the Middle East - and well placed. They know the kidnappers saw some of it.

It's presumptuous to say it led directly to her release, but "I do think that changed the mental climate," says Richard Bergenheim, editor of the Monitor.

Hostage: The Jill Carroll Story - Epilogue * Family reunion

Another obvious conclusion is that Iraq has become a very dangerous place for the news media. More than 100 journalists, including interpreters and assistants, have died there since March 2003.

Since Jill's kidnapping, the Monitor has upgraded its security measures in Baghdad - both because of what had happened to her and because of the worsening situation on the ground. Editors won't detail those measures, so as not to undermine their effectiveness. The paper has kept a British security firm on retainer for consultation.

As for Jill herself, she says that her experience taught her about priorities. Throughout her 82-day ordeal, she missed her family and her friends. Work and success didn't seem so important anymore. "I never once wished I'd filed one more story," she says.

But she doesn't regret going to Iraq in the first place. She was doing what she had always wanted to do - foreign reporting. Since her release, she has returned to Egypt, and is glad of it. She experienced again the distinctive culture of the Islamic world in a peaceful context.

"What happened to me is not the whole Middle East," she says.

Jill is no longer a freelancer. To provide financial support in anticipation of her eventual release, the Monitor quietly made Jill a full-time employee a week after she was abducted. This fall, she's been accepted into a journalism fellowship program at a major university. After that, she plans to return to writing from overseas.

Why was she released? Probably no one really knows except for her kidnappers. Maybe the public pressure worked. Maybe private whispers via Western and Middle Eastern intelligence convinced influential Sunnis that harming Jill wasn't in their best interest.

Maybe as the political situation changed, so did the priorities of her kidnappers. Maybe the kidnappers just got what they wanted - publicity or the release of women from Abu Ghraib prison. Or maybe Jill herself - the smart, young American who spoke Arabic - helped alter her captors' plans.

"One of the most effective weapons against terrorism is the truth. The truth was that Jill Carroll was not the enemy of her captors. Her father spoke that truth, and the rest of the world repeated it," says Christopher Voss, special agent with the FBI's Crisis Negotiation Unit in Quantico, Va.

As far as the Monitor and Jill's family can determine, no ransom changed hands to win her release.

Earlier this month, the US military announced that it had captured four of Jill's suspected kidnappers, after raiding a total of four locations in Baghdad, Abu Ghraib, and a village west of Fallujah. US sources in Baghdad have told staff writer Scott Peterson that the man Jill knew as "Abu Ahmed" (aka Sheikh Sadoun, say US military sources) was arrested by US Marines on May 19. The others in custody are guards, not the top figures in the group.

Members of murdered translator Alan Enwiya's immediate family have left Iraq, where they felt endangered. They are applying for US government permission to join their extended family in the US.

Jill never met the man who shot Alan. She was told that Alan's killer died a few weeks later during an insurgent military operation.

Driver Adnan Abbas, having survived the abduction, was initially a suspect. He passed a polygraph test, and was cleared by Iraqi police. He, his wife, and four children (including a newborn) have also moved to another country. Their future remains uncertain, but their ambition is to live and work in the US.

The Monitor has established two funds to help these families start new lives. Among the donations received so far: The \$800 cash the mujahideen gave Jill just prior to her release. She plans to sell the gold necklace and donate those funds, as well.

How to help

Hostage: The Jill Carroll Story - Epilogue * Family reunion

Alan Enwiya is one of more than 100 journalists and media assistants killed in Iraq since March 2003. Alan (left side of photo) is survived by his wife, Fairuz, his two children, Martin and Mary Ann, and his parents. They have left Iraq and hope to move to the US where they have relatives.

Jill Carroll's driver, Adnan Abbas, is a witness to Alan's murder. He, his wife, and their four children (including a newborn) have also fled Iraq for their own safety.

In response to readers, the Monitor has established funds to help each family start a new life. Donations may be sent to:

The Alan Enwiya Fund

c/o The Christian Science Monitor

One Norway Street

Boston, MA 02115

The Adnan Abbas Fund

c/o The Christian Science Monitor

One Norway Street

Boston, MA 02115

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A new kind of true believer

The Australian (Australia)
August 23, 2006 Wednesday
All-round Country Edition

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Byline: PAUL KELLY EDITOR-AT-LARGE

Body

MATP

We are witnessing rising tensions between secularism and faith in Australia

RELIGION and religious friction are on the rise worldwide and Australia's political system is starting to confront a new challenge: how to manage tensions between secularism and faith.

Contrary to much Western orthodoxy from the Enlightenment onwards, modernisation and science have not killed religion. God, in varying manifestations, is making a comeback. The collapse of the Christian churches in Europe is not the defining trend of the age but the exception.

"The belief that outbreaks of politicised religion are temporary detours on the road to secularisation was plausible in 1976, 1986 or even 1996. Today the argument is untenable," says Pew Forum's Timothy Samuel Shah and Harvard University's Monica Duffy Toft in the latest issue of Foreign Policy magazine.

"At the beginning of the 20th century, a bare majority of the world's people, precisely 50 per cent, were Catholic, Protestant, Muslim or Hindu. At the beginning of the 21st century, nearly 64 per cent belonged to these religious groupings and the proportion may be closer to 70 per cent by 2025.

"Not only is religious observance spreading, it is becoming more devout. The most populous and fastest-growing countries in the world, including the US, are witnessing marked increases in religiosity. In Brazil, China, Nigeria, Russia, South Africa and the US, religiosity became more vigorous between 1990 and 2001.

"God's comeback is in no small part due to the global expansion of freedom. As politics liberalised in countries like India, Mexico, Nigeria, Turkey and Indonesia in the late 1990s, religion's influence on political life increased dramatically.

"As a framework for explaining and predicting the course of global politics, secularism is increasingly unsound. God is winning in global politics. And modernisation, democratisation and globalisation have only made him stronger."

This confronts one of the deepest orthodoxies of Australia's opinion-makers: that secularisation is the model of the future. The opposing message has been disguised because it is complex and takes so many different forms.

A new kind of true believer

Two years ago Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi, at a glittering Sydney dinner devoted his entire 40-minute speech to a discussion of religion and Islam; George W. Bush's re-election in 2004 saw the religious Right more influential in a US election than ever before; in the past fortnight (as my colleague Dennis Shanahan outlined on this page) Coalition politicians such as Bruce Baird and Barnaby Joyce have invoked religion in explaining their opposition to John Howard's migration bill.

The sharp decline in the number of Australians practising religion and declaring themselves as believers conceals this paradoxical trend, that religion is penetrating more into our politics and our foreign policy. This is only going to intensify. It is a challenge for the anti-religious secularists.

What are the elements of this religious revival and what do they mean for Australia?

These complex questions defy easy answers but there are two immediate responses.

First, the Islamic resurgence is global in nature, winning new believers and touching every Muslim community. From the 1979 Iranian revolution to ***Hamas***'s 2006 victory in Palestine to the assertion of Islam within Britain, a more Islamic Southeast Asia and global demonstrations against the Danish cartoons of Mohammed, Islam is claiming a political destiny. Muslims anywhere in the world are starting to identify with Muslims everywhere in the world. It will shake every Western polity.

This force has different manifestations within the West. It sees religion pushing into politics with demands that Islam and its observances be accorded greater respect. This is to be expected. Yet it has another extreme dimension, as an attack on the multicultural state (by elevating religious loyalty over national norms), as an attack on the international system of sovereign states (by claiming a religious loyalty that transcends national interests) and as an attack on the secular state (by demanding the introduction of religious or Sharia law).

Take the Iraq debate. It is one thing to oppose the war on moral or strategic grounds but another to oppose the war on religious grounds, namely, that Muslims will not accept conflict with a Muslim state. In the post-9/11 strategic environment, this is a core issue for Western societies.

The Western secular state is under pressure, intellectually and emotionally, at this unique Islamic revival. It has not separated the legitimate demands for Islamic recognition from those demands that cross the foundation lines of the Western secular state. It has trouble discerning the line between accommodation and resistance, both of which are essential.

The second religious element, apparent yet still weak in Australia, is the Christian revival, notably within the evangelical churches. This has penetrated US politics in a dramatic fashion: the best indicator of support for Bush is not income but church attendance. In the US, values have beaten class as a dividing line in politics.

In Australia religion lacks the same traction, yet disillusionment with an arid secularism is now palpable. Religious-based and values-based organisations seek a new political leverage. This is driven by many elements not just limited to Christian influence.

The dilemma, remarkably unrecognised in Australia, is that the values-based neutrality of the modern secular state is unravelling. Its philosophy is state tolerance to accommodate the culture of individual libertarianism and to avoid moral judgments.

The postwar advances in ***women's*** rights, abortion, sexual freedoms, acceptance of different family types and abolition of censorship were won within this glorious framework.

The new problem, as Francis Fukuyama explains in his book, *The Great Disruption*, is "liberal democracy has always been dependent upon certain shared values to work properly" and that agreement on those shared values is now contested. The culture of intense individualism is fraying the bonds that hold family, community and nations together.

A new kind of true believer

Liberal democracies such as Australia have entered a new debate, a struggle over state values between the secularists and faith-based advocates. The divisions are not always clear. Christian values do not translate into an automatic position on refugees or industrial relations or welfare.

Yet the rising debate in the West is unmistakable: liberal secularism is under challenge from a diverse coalition of faith-based advocates seeking a more explicit declaration of values within the state. John Howard's genius has been to stand on both sides, as champion of the secular state yet advocate of traditional values, to achieve social harmony.

The frustration of the secularists was vented on this page last week when Melbourne writer Pamela Bone said it was "now too dangerous for religion to be given the special status it has always had".

She appealed to the media to cover religion with a new aggression in the cause of a less religious and more secularist world.

This would be a serious mistake, provoking a religious backlash based upon rejection and alienation. Australia, instead, has to learn to live with a changing public debate in which religion and religious values (encompassing different religions) will be far more prominent in both its domestic and foreign policy. It means neither the end of the secular state nor the end of religion's legitimacy in the secular state.

Load-Date: August 22, 2006

End of Document

Saudi Arabia's moment of redemption?; Moderating Islam

The International Herald Tribune

September 2, 2006 Saturday

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Section: OPINION; Pg. 6

Length: 1258 words

Byline: Afshin Molavi

Dateline: WASHINGTON

Body

Flush with cash from high oil prices, ascendant in its battle with homegrown jihadists, buoyed by a newly robust private sector and entry into the World Trade Organization, and led by a popular, reform-minded king, Saudi Arabia has sputtered to life. After the dark days of the 1990s, marked by stagnation, drift and policy paralysis, the kingdom faces a brighter future.

As custodian of Islam's two holiest shrines, Mecca and Medina, and a heavyweight in councils of Islamic states, Saudi Arabia is a natural leader of a Muslim world in tumult. As the kingdom gets its own house in order, it's time it moved to assertively shape a more moderate, prosperous Muslim world.

King Abdullah clearly sees himself in this role. Last December, at the meeting of the Organization of Islamic Conference, he called on his fellow Muslim leaders to emulate "the radiant beacon" of medieval Islamic civilization a time of scholarship, moderation and wise jurisprudence that proved to be the "decisive catalyst in bringing enlightenment to the dark ages."

Abdullah decried today's extremist bloodletting as the act of miscreants and said he looks forward to "the spread of moderation that embodies the Islamic concept of tolerance" and the success of "Muslim inventors and industrialists, to an advanced Muslim technology, and Muslim youth who work for their life just as they work for the Hereafter, without excess or negligence, without any kind of extremism."

Few paid heed to Abdullah's speech at the time. It was drowned out in the headlines when President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran called for Israel to be wiped off the map. Today, across the Muslim world, Ahmadinejad's defiant speeches and incendiary rhetoric have made him a hero to many. Abdullah's voice of moderation barely registers a ripple. But the world should watch Abdullah closely. If his words are backed up with real action, Saudi Arabia could help transform a troubled swath of lands encompassing nearly one-fifth of humanity.

So far, Saudi Arabia's power to shape the Muslim world has mostly been exercised in damaging ways. The kingdom has used its clout and riches to fund a web of nongovernmental organizations, charities and religious schools that purvey the views of its intolerant Wahabbist establishment, poisoning seminaries and scholars from Bangladesh to Belgium.

Meanwhile, as the government looked the other way, private Saudi funds found their way into the coffers of Al Qaeda and **Hamas**. And Saudi Arabia's support for the Taliban a brutal, backward, deviant government that did a disservice to Islam should blacken the pages of Saudi history for many years.

Saudi Arabia 's moment of redemption? Moderating Islam

Teachers in Saudi Arabia's own schools both Saudis and the Syrians, Egyptians and Palestinians who came to the kingdom as radical Islamist "refugees" from their secular establishments at home purveyed a noxious blend of anti-Semitism, anti-Shiism and anti-Americanism that infected a generation of Saudis.

This indoctrination, coupled with the failings of modernity and anger at U.S. policies, helped produce 15 young Saudis willing to fly suicide missions into American towers, thousands of Saudis willing to do battle in Iraq and a lingering sense of anti-Shiism that could cause lasting instability in the kingdom.

Saudi Arabia's unwillingness even today to meaningfully challenge the entrenched Wahabbi establishment that dominates religious discourse in Mecca, the beating heart of the Islamic world, means that a city that could potentially be a lodestar of Islamic cosmopolitanism is instead a barren field of religious reactionaries. Western capitals may quietly applaud when Saudi religious scholars blast Hezbollah, but we should understand where such reaction comes from: a twisted anti-Shiite view of the world that will come back to bite the kingdom.

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A year after the accession of King Abdullah, however, a new day seems to be dawning for Saudi Arabia. Citizens are pushing for and receiving more freedoms, a genuine civil-society space is emerging, newspaper opinion pages are experiencing a renaissance, the powers of the notorious religious police have been curbed, princely corruption is on the wane, and the economy is booming (and reforming).

Meanwhile, Abdullah has reached out to traditionally marginalized groups: women, disenchanted youth, the urban poor, liberal intellectuals, and Shiite, Sufi and Ismaeli minorities. He has been hailed by many Saudis as the "people's king." For the first time in several years, Saudis harbor hopes for a better future.

Amid today's crises the recent fighting in Lebanon, the showdown with the West over Iran's nuclear program, the war for Iraq's future, and the rising sense of Sunni-Shiite tension regionally Saudi Arabia plays potentially pivotal roles.

Riyadh is the only Arab capital that has meaningful influence over Tehran, and it also holds significant sway in Damascus. Its alliances with the Sunni tribes of Iraq could play a key role in gathering intelligence on Sunni insurgents, and its religious legitimacy makes it a potential arbiter of peace between Sunni and Shiite.

Saudi Arabia also has a strong voice in Japan and China two key markets for Saudi oil. And Abdullah's recent visit to Turkey marks a milestone, the Atatürkian-secularist state meeting the royalist-religious one on the field of pragmatism.

*

For Saudi Arabia to be an effective pan-Islamic leader, however, it must avoid alliances and decisions that make it look like a status-quo Sunni power protecting its narrow interests as the Cairo-Amman-Riyadh axis blaming Hezbollah for the war suggested. Attacking Hezbollah "adventurism," as the Saudis called it, won praise in Washington, but in Muslim popular opinion, it made Saudi Arabia look, at best, like a Sunni old-guard heavyweight protecting its interests; at worst, a U.S. lackey.

Riyadh also needs to find ways to reach out to Shiite communities across the region, in much the same way that it has done with some measure of effectiveness at home.

Saudi Arabia must also avoid a "cold war" with Iran. Like it or not, Iran's leaders have won a measure of respect on the Arab and Muslim street that Saudi Arabia could hardly match. Iran also remains a natural regional power, despite long-standing attempts to isolate it.

The Muslim world faces a critical moment in its history: The wheel could turn either toward greater Shiite-Sunni tension, a mounting standoff with the Western world, rising extremism and geopolitical rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia, or toward enacting the principles of moderation and prosperity outlined by Abdullah at the Mecca summit meeting.

Saudi Arabia 's moment of redemption? Moderating Islam

To enact those principles, Saudi Arabia should lead the way in promoting a new web of institutions that tackle the serious problems facing the Muslim world: unemployment and underemployment; religious intolerance; Shiite-Sunni tension; women's rights; human rights. It must also continue to strengthen its network of relationships with senior Iranian officials, cultivated over the past seven years.

What is standing in the way is the same Wahabbi religious establishment that helped create many of the problems in the first place. The Al-Saud rulers, wedded to this Wahabbi religious establishment in an old bargain of power dating back nearly three centuries, will never fulfill their potential to lead the Muslim world unless they effectively marginalize those voices.

Afshin Molavi is a fellow at the New America Foundation. He lived and worked in Saudi Arabia as a reporter in the 1990s.

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Load-Date: September 3, 2006

End of Document

War without victors

Weekend Australian

August 19, 2006 Saturday

All-round Country Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Inquirer; Pg. 27

Length: 1216 words

Byline: Martin Chulov

Body

MATP

After the Lebanese incursion comes the argument over who won. Middle East correspondent Martin Chulov reports from Beirut

ALONG the streets of south Lebanon's battered villages are two things that sit oddly amid the chalky dust and rubble: rose petals and millions of rice grains. Late on Thursday, as another rare sight turned up in the destroyed border town of Ain al-Shaab -- the Lebanese Army arriving in the south for the first time in 28 years -- the source of the litter became obvious.

The troops had been greeted by dozens of women throwing rice and petals at their feet in a symbol of celebration and victory. The men of Hezbollah, who loitered around a dusty town square farther up the road, were given the same treatment. And, by the signs of the banners and flags being prepared in their honour on a makeshift parade ground, they were in for a lot more feting.

The leading Lebanese officer on the scene read out the unit's orders, providing a telling sign of the looming dynamic. "The army will deploy on the wounded Lebanese land alongside the men of the resistance," he said.

Since the tenuous ceasefire took hold almost a week ago, reactions on either side of the Israeli border have been sharply different. In Lebanon, especially in the Hezbollah heartland of the south, it is back to business as usual. Most of the 500,000 or so people who fled their homes during the fighting have returned to start again, and what remains of Hezbollah has melted back into village life.

In Israel, the end to 33 days of fighting has brought soul-searching and deepening fears that the war it didn't ask for has led to a result it did not want. The wash-up has left many Israelis believing that they have lost important strategic ground in a region that is steadily turning as hostile as it has ever been. It has led others to ponder new ways of engaging its enemies to bed down a safer home for its citizens in a neighbourhood in which they are finding it increasingly difficult to safely co-exist.

Analysts, commentators and even politicians suggest that the war of perceptions is playing out in Hezbollah's favour. While the true political implications of the savage conflict will take months to play out, an early read suggests that Hezbollah and its nation-state proxies, Iran and Syria, have done more to achieve their objectives than the Jewish state.

War without victors

The war has led to Sunni Muslims across the region developing a new-found affinity with the Shi'ites of Iran and Hezbollah who they believe led them to a heroic victory over a historic enemy. Iran, in particular, feels greatly emboldened, with its Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khomeini, this week praising Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah for leading his Shia guerillas to a "divine victory".

"Your unprecedented holy war and steadfastness are beyond the limits of my description," Khomeini said. "It's a divine victory. It is a victory of Islam. With God's help you were able to prove that military superiority is not [measured] in the number [of soldiers], planes, warships and tanks. Rather, it depends on the power of faith and holy war. You have ridiculed the myth that the Zionist army is invincible."

Israel did not suffer a military defeat in the war, although Hezbollah's ability continually to fire rockets across the border in the face of overwhelming air power did alarm Israeli military chiefs.

The soul-searching in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv centres on whether the Jewish state was able to achieve its strategic objectives through its military might alone. A snapshot of rice-strewn Lebanon offers a resounding no.

One week after the adoption of UN Security Council resolution 1701, none of Israel's three key demands have been met. Hezbollah remains in southern Lebanon, it has no intention of handing in its weapons and the two Israeli soldiers captured on July 12 are still being held somewhere in Lebanon.

Hezbollah, too, has been left unsatisfied by the resolution, with up to 20,000 Israeli troops remaining in southern Lebanon ahead of the mobilisation of the Lebanese Army and an international stabilisation force. However, the buoyant support it enjoys across the Arab world means it is unlikely to break the truce and bring war back to a region that is brimming with its returning supporters.

Before the war Hezbollah was in danger of losing relevance; its initial reason for being had been to fight Israel during its 18-year occupation of Lebanon that ended in 2000. Since then it had attempted to morph into a broader resistance group that aimed to liberate all Arab land from Israeli presence.

Apart from a small parcel of contested land on the Israeli, Syrian and Lebanese border, Hezbollah was struggling for an arena until it sprung to the defence of the Palestinian Authority in Gaza, which was under Israeli siege when the Hezbollah guerillas struck.

Israel will never agree to negotiate with a threat to its existence.

However, the shakeout from the war, and particularly the reaction to it in the Arab world, has given it cause for thought about the key issue of the Palestinian occupation. After six years of eschewing diplomacy in favour of military muscle, it is under domestic and international pressure to recalibrate the mix. There is a growing realisation in Jerusalem that Condoleezza Rice's "New Middle East" does not mean more of the past six years in which political dialogue with the Arab world was severely limited.

Defence Minister Amir Peretz said during the week that Israel wanted to re-engage Lebanon and Syria, and maybe even Hamas. The maxim that occupation is the root cause of all the Middle East problems has gained impetus.

Australia's John Howard lent his voice to this view during the week, establishing a clear point of difference between his administration and the US in a rare foreign policy divergence from President George W. Bush, who insists that a panacea will be found when the Arab world recognises Israel's right to exist.

For decades, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Iran have been insisting that the problem does not have a "chicken before the egg" dimension and have promised better times ahead if the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza is first sorted out.

As the dust settles and the 4000 or so injured on both sides recover, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert appears to be backing away from a key thrust of his domestic policy, which threatened to further inflame the Arab world: moving ahead with a unilateral withdrawal from the West Bank.

War without victors

Some Israelis believe the decision to leave Lebanon in 2000 and Gaza in 2005 on its own terms created more problems than answers. Both withdrawals were perceived at the time as acts of good faith.

But in Gaza and Lebanon many saw the Israelis slamming the door behind them and no longer being prepared to talk about grievances they still held close.

In conversations with ministers and senior members of his Kadima party this week, Olmert backed away from his staunch support before the war for a further unilateral withdrawal. He said he was not ignoring that something fundamental had changed in recent weeks and recognised that his Government's views needed to shift.

Israel, the US and the Arab world are all starting to take out of the war the notion that diplomatic engagement of each other's enemies is the only way forward.

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End of Document

News Summary - Correction Appended

The New York Times

July 10, 2006 Monday

Late Edition - Final

Correction Appended

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Section: Section A; Column 3; Metropolitan Desk; Pg. 2

Length: 1111 words

Body

INTERNATIONAL A3-10

Rampages and Bombs Kill Dozens in Baghdad

A mob of gunmen went on a daytime rampage through a predominantly Sunni Arab district of western Baghdad, pulling people from their cars and homes and killing them in what officials and residents called revenge by Shiite militias for the bombing of a Shiite mosque. Reports of the death toll ranged from less than a dozen to more than 40. Later a bomb in a Shiite mosque in another Baghdad neighborhood killed at least 19 people and wounded 59. A1

U.S. Stresses Talks with Korea

The top American negotiator with North Korea, Christopher R. Hill, left, said his priority was to get back to the negotiating table, signaling that the United States was seeking a diplomatic solution instead of punitive economic sanctions against North Korea for test-launching seven missiles. A6

India Tests Long-Range Missile

India test-fired its longest range nuclear-capable missile for the first time, government officials said. But it was unclear whether the test was successful, with at least one report saying that the missile failed at some point during its flight. A6

Israel Vows Ongoing Action

Israel will continue its military offensive in the Gaza Strip at its own pace until Palestinian militants release a captured Israeli soldier and halt their rocket attacks, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, above, told his cabinet. Mr. Olmert also ruled out negotiations with Hamas, saying that would only support another kidnapping. A10

Polish Leader Elevates Twin

President Lech Kaczynski of Poland announced that he would appoint his twin brother and longtime political partner, Jaroslaw, to succeed Prime Minister Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, according to a Polish news agency. A3

Russian Plane Crash Kills 122

News Summary

A Russian passenger plane crashed after landing, claiming 122 lives. The reason for the crash was unclear. The official Russian Information Agency cited an investigator who said the airplane's hydraulic braking system had failed. A6

Wolfowitz Urges Trade Talks

Paul D. Wolfowitz, left, president of the World Bank, has called on President Bush and other world leaders to make further compromises to revive the faltering global trade talks that are at an impasse over the issue of farm subsidies. Mr. Wolfowitz said the failure to reach an agreement on trade would be a blow to the world's poorest countries. A9

NATIONAL A11-15

Republican Gives Details Of Intelligence Withheld

Peter Hoekstra, left, the Republican chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, said the Bush administration briefed the panel on a "significant" intelligence program only after a government whistle-blower alerted him to its existence and he pressed Mr. Bush for details. A11

Court's Decision Divides G.O.P.

The Supreme Court decision striking down the use of military commissions to bring terrorism detainees to trial has set off sharp differences among Republicans in Congress over what kind of rights detainees should be granted and how much deference should be shown the president in deciding the issue. A1

Tough Race for Republican

Rick Santorum, the third-ranking Republican leader in the Senate, is fighting for his political life, trying to convince his Pennsylvania constituents that he has not gone "Washington." A former symbol of the conservative movement, he is now trying to show his kinder, gentler side. A1

Florida Mayor Pushes Fines

The mayor of Avon Park, Fla., is pushing a proposal to root out and punish landlords who rent to illegal immigrants, fining them \$1,000 for every such tenant. The plan has supporters across the country, but civil rights organizations and the town's immigrant community and farmers want to strike it down. A11

Football Lures Male Students

Some small American colleges, eager to attract men to increasingly female campuses, have taken notice of how many students can be lured to attend by adding a football team. Officials say football can bring in more tuition-paying students than any other course or activity -- and not just players themselves. A1

NEW YORK/REGION B1-5

Small Towns Resist High-Voltage Towers

Private power companies looking to supply the New York City area with electric power from upstate sources are facing opposition from residents in small hamlets where high-voltage transmission towers would be built. They have become the first battleground over a law that expanded federal powers to meet energy needs. B1

Gap in Campaign Money

Republican candidates in New York are struggling to raise money this year, and in some cases are competing against one another, while Democrats, particularly Eliot Spitzer and Hillary Rodham Clinton, have turned their popular support into large war chests. B1

Five Killed in Car Crash

News Summary

Five people were killed and two others critically injured when their car jumped a barrier into oncoming traffic on the Bronx River Parkway and was crushed by another vehicle, the police said. B1

SPORTSMONDAY D1-8

Italy Wins World Cup Title

Italy won its fourth World Cup title, defeating France, 5-3, in a penalty-kick shootout after overtime ended with the score tied at 1-1. France went into the shootout without its captain and star midfielder, Zinedine Zidane, who had been ejected after he head-butted the Italian defender Marco Materazzi in the chest after the two exchanged words. A1

ARTS E1-8

Harvard Divided Over a Room

A renovation of a Harvard University poetry reading room designed by the Finnish architect Alvar Aalto has drawn heated objections from architects and preservationists who say the room should be maintained exactly as Aalto created it. E1

BUSINESS DAY C1-8

Data on Defibrillators

Federal health officials are expected to release records showing that patients with severe heart disease suffered complications, including infections and deaths, when they underwent surgery to have heart devices implanted in their chests. C1

Executive Turmoil at EBay

After a trying week in which one of the company's top executives resigned, eBay is facing new concerns over executive turnover and management succession, adding to what may be an even bigger challenge: an invasion of its turf by Google. C1

AOL's Strategy Shift

In two weeks, the board of Time Warner Inc., which owns AOL, will hear a proposal from AOL's chief executive calling for a near halt in marketing for AOL's Internet access service, price cuts for existing customers and thousands of layoffs. C1

Business Digest C2

EDITORIAL A16-17

Editorials: The U.N. sideshow on Korea; drafting the future of the parks; lobbyists yes, the people maybe; Lawrence Downes on day laborers.

Columns: Bob Herbert, Paul Krugman.

Bridge E6

Crossword E2

Metro Diary B2

Obituaries B7

TV Listings E8

Weather B8

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Correction

An article and picture caption yesterday about the decision of President Lech Kaczynski of Poland to appoint his twin brother as the country's prime minister misspelled the given name of the brother in some copies. It is Jaroslaw, not Jaroslav. (The error was repeated in some copies in a front-page contents entry and in the News Summary.)

Correction-Date: July 11, 2006

Graphic

Photos

Load-Date: July 10, 2006

End of Document

More Airstrikes as Hezbollah Rockets Hit Deeper

The New York Times

July 15, 2006 Saturday

The New York Times on the Web

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Section: Section ; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 0

Length: 1083 words

Byline: By GREG MYRE

Dateline: METULA, Israel, July 15

Body

In another day of cross-border shooting exchanges, Israeli airstrikes killed more than 20 Lebanese civilians on Saturday, including at least 15 who died when their convoy of vehicles was attempting to flee the south Lebanon border area, according to news reports.

In another development, an Israeli military official claimed that Iranian Revolutionary Guards were involved on some level in a missile strike that badly damaged an Israeli naval boat off Lebanon's capital Beirut on Friday, killing one Israeli sailor and leaving three missing.

The official said the exact role of the Revolutionary Guards was not clear, but the Iranian forces were working closely with Hezbollah in Lebanon, as they have for more than two decades.

Israel's military initially said that the ship was hit by an unmanned drone aircraft packed with explosives. But the military revised its assessment on Saturday, saying the ship was hit by a radar-guided, C802 missile fired from the Lebanese shore. The missile came from Iran, the military said.

The Israeli war ship, which had been imposing a naval blockade of Lebanon, returned home on Saturday, the military said.

Meanwhile, many residents on both sides of the Israel-Lebanon border have fled the frontier to avoid the heavy shooting, which was in its fourth day Saturday.

The Lebanese convoy was evacuating from the border village of Marwaheen when it came under attack, and at least 15 people, including women and children, were killed when two cars were hit, according to Reuters.

There was no letup in the shooting Saturday, particularly on the Israel-Lebanon front, where the fighting erupted Wednesday with a Hezbollah attack that led to the capture of two Israeli soldiers and the deaths of eight more.

Despite talks at the United Nations, the Group of Eight leaders meeting in St. Petersburg, Russia, and an emergency session of Arab League foreign ministers in Cairo, there were no signs of a diplomatic progress. The crisis has raised concerns that the turmoil could further destabilize the region.

More Airstrikes as Hezbollah Rockets Hit Deeper

Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, declared an open war against Israel on Friday after his offices were bombed in Beirut. Israel responded by bombing the office again on Saturday. Israel also hit several other sites in Beirut on Saturday, Lebanese officials said.

Overall, more than 80 Lebanese have been killed, most of them civilians, and more than 200 wounded, in the past four days, according to Lebanese officials.

Israeli leaders have warned that the battle could be a long one, and say that Israel will not accept a return to the conditions that existed before the fighting broke out, with Hezbollah and not the Lebanese army controlling Lebanon's southern border with Israel.

We can't go back to the status quo, said Mark Regev, a spokesman for Israel's Foreign Ministry. That would mean that Hezbollah still has its finger on the trigger and can start a regional crisis whenever that serves its interest.

Israel's military goal is to push Hezbollah away from the border so it cannot strike at Israel, Mr. Regev said. The political goal, he said, is the implementation of a United Nations Security Council resolution, passed two years ago, which calls for the Lebanese government to take control of its southern border and disarm militias, such as Hezbollah.

The Lebanese government has demanded an end to the Israeli air, naval and artillery strikes on Lebanon. The government has also disavowed the cross-border raid by Hezbollah that ignited the fighting. But the Lebanese leadership has said and done little as the crisis has escalated, and the government has not given any indication that it will act against Hezbollah, which receives support from Iran and Syria.

Also, Hezbollah kept up its fire, unleashing more than 40 Katyusha rockets deep into northern Israel on Saturday, and for the first time, striking the resort town of Tiberias.

Several buildings were hit and damaged, though there were no serious injuries, Israeli officials said. Sunbathers scrambled for cover following the attacks, and the town, which had been full of activity, quickly fell quiet and the streets became deserted.

Israeli security officials have said for some time that Hezbollah had longer range rockets, but the recent attacks have still alarmed many Israelis.

Tiberias, on the Sea of Galilee, is about 20 miles south of the Lebanese border, and no Hezbollah rockets had landed near the town. However, Hezbollah demonstrated its increased range when on Thursday it struck the Mediterranean port city of Haifa, which is also around 20 miles from the border.

Most northern Israeli cities are now ghost towns, with residents having fled south, taken refuge in bomb shelters or simply remaining inside their homes.

Several Katyusha rockets scored direct hits on empty buildings Saturday. In Hatzor Haglilit, a small hillside community surrounded by pine trees, a rocket crashed through the red tile roof of a home and damaged the living room, but the residents had gone to Tel Aviv, according to neighbors.

Prior to this week, the last time the community was shelled was in the 1960s by Syrian forces in the Golan Heights, several miles to the east, according to the mayor, Shaul Kamisa. Israel captured the heights from Syria in the 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

But more than 20 rockets have hit in and around the community in the past four days.

We never dreamed the terror would arrive here, Mr. Kamisa said as he inspected the damaged home.

One Israeli man, Rafi Cohen, traveled north to show solidarity with people in the coastal town of Nahariya, which has been hard hit. But when he showed up at the beach, which is usually crowded on Saturdays during the summer, he found himself alone, and a bit surprised.

More Airstrikes as Hezbollah Rockets Hit Deeper

We should show Hezbollah how strong we are and live our lives as normal, Mr. Cohen told Israel radio.

The Hezbollah rockets have killed four Israeli civilians and wounded more than 150 since the barrage began on Wednesday.

In the Gaza Strip, meanwhile, the Israeli air force bombed in Gaza City, hitting the Palestinian Economy Ministry and a factory suspected of making rockets.

Palestinians said one man was killed and about a dozen injured in the attack on the factory, which was in a residential area of Gaza City, Palestinians said. **Hamas** militants quickly took control of the bomb site, which left a deep crater.

Palestinian militants also fired rockets into southern Israel on Saturday, but they did not cause damage or injuries.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Photos: Israeli artillery near the border fired into southern Lebanon today. (Photo by Kevin Frayer/Associated Press)

Smoke rose from the Beirut airport after Israeli planes bombed it on Friday. (Photo by Paul Taggart/World Picture News)

A Lebanese soldier stood next to a crater produced by an Israeli airstrike in Beirut Friday. Hezbollah fired more than 100 rockets into Israel. (Photo by Pierre Bou Karam/Associated Press)

The Israeli Army fired artillery shells into southern Lebanon yesterday. Its air force also bombed the Beirut airport for a second day as clashes with Hezbollah intensified. (Photo by Kate Brooks/Polaris, for The New York Times)

Lebanese men watched the Beirut airport burn after an Israeli airstrike. (Photo by Kate Brooks/Polaris, for The New York Times)

The ruins of Hezbollah's headquarters in Beirut Friday. (Photo by Pierre Bou Karam/Associated Press)

Lebanese civilians fled their home south of Beirut today. (Photo by Ramzi Haidar/Getty Images)

Load-Date: July 17, 2006

Crisis in the Middle East

The Irish Times
July 18, 2006 Tuesday

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Section: LETTERS; Pg. 15

Length: 1281 words

Body

Madam, - George Bush has been supportive of Israel's actions in Lebanon. This does not surprise many people, but on examination it is a huge contradiction in American foreign policy.

On the one hand the Americans argue that Israel has a right to defend itself, but they seem to have forgotten they also have an interest in a successful Lebanon. Since the end of the civil war there, Lebanon has been on its way to becoming an unprecedented success story in cross party co-operation. This is George Bush's dream scenario for Iraq and now it is being threatened because Israel doesn't want to be outsmarted.

It was obvious from the start that Hizbullah's attack on the Israeli border post was a tactical move and did not really represent the reopening of a Lebanese front. It was designed to support the people of Gaza. Instead of attempting to negotiate the release of their soldiers, Israel decided to make the Lebanese people pay. How are the Lebanese people supposed to respond to that? They don't have any option. To attempt to disarm Hizbullah would start another civil war.

The only benefit Israel gains by this action is to make the Israeli public feel good about themselves, to show that Israel's hand cannot be forced. For this, 100 Lebanese had to die, and the power-sharing arrangement in Lebanon is put under enormous stress. How can the US support that?

Lebanon is the model for Iraq. Why is a transient Israeli tactical advantage more important than the success of Lebanon or Iraq? George Bush should realise that US interests in the Middle East are not being served by the continuing Israeli actions. - Yours, etc,

MICHAEL BERMINGHAM.

Droichead na Dothra,

Baile Átha Cliath 4.

Madam, - Why does the civilised world stand idly by while Israel murders large numbers of innocent civilians in Gaza and Lebanon?

I do not condone the taking of Israeli troops as hostages, but the response has been way over the top. To date more than 100 innocent civilians have been killed by Israeli action in Gaza and Lebanon.

Crisis in the Middle East

In addition, can anyone explain why it is necessary to deprive innocent citizens of their basic right to electricity, water and sanitary services, the destruction of which appear to serve no useful purpose whatsoever? Similarly, the attack on Beirut International Airport and the blockading of the country's ports are needless and pointless.

When are democratic governments going to condemn what the Israelis are doing? On a personal level, I absolutely refuse, and have done for many years, to purchase any Israeli-produced goods. - Yours, etc,

WE SHEPHERD,

Blackwater,

Co Wexford.

Madam, - As Senator Brendan Ryan well knows when he refers to "the murder of innocent civilians, many of them children" (July 15th), murder is the deliberate, premeditated unlawful killing of another human being. Israel has not "murdered" any civilians.

The civilians killed in the Israeli retaliation against Gaza and Lebanon for the respective invasions by Hamas and Hizbullah were not targeted by Israel.

Israel aims to hit only military targets and infrastructure that helps the military. Civilians have never been targeted, but they are killed collaterally, and often because Islamicist fighters purposely choose to hide and fight from among civilians, or pretend to be civilians.

Islamicist fighters (including Palestinians), on the other hand, deliberately and openly target Israeli civilians, in schools, shops, restaurants, nightclubs, buses, etc, with no military target in sight.

The death statistics for the period October 2000 to December 2003 show this up: for every Palestinian combatant killed by Israelis, 0.7 non-combatants were killed. For every Israeli combatant killed, 3.6 non-combatants were killed. - Yours etc,

TONY ALLWRIGHT,

Killiney,

Co Dublin.

Madam, - So the prevailing moral imperative in the Middle East is Israel's "right to defend herself", according to bully boys Blair and Bush. What, one may ask, is then left to the Lebanese and Palestinian civilians, men, women and children? Merely the "right" to be incinerated in the Israeli blitzkrieg? How reassuring, how moral, how Christian. - Yours, etc,

Senator DAVID NORRIS,

Seanad Éireann,

Dublin 2.

Madam, - Paul Scanlon (July 14th) claims that the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza was part of a broader political strategy and may have been some sort of diversion from the construction of the wall between the West Bank and pre-1967 Israel. Working on that premise, perhaps Israel's most recent incursion into Lebanon was a calculated ploy to divert attention from hostilities in Gaza.

Crisis in the Middle East

Nobody is denying that Palestinians have suffered greatly during the intifada, as have many Israelis. However, no matter how blunt it may appear, if an electorate votes in politicians that have openly campaigned for the destruction of Israel while "driving the Jews into the sea", then it must be prepared to face the consequences. Israel has a right to defend itself and has been doing so since its creation in 1947.

Mr Scanlon accuses Israel of trampling on Palestinian human rights and ignoring international law. As usual, not only he, but the Irish media at large pay scant attention to the sufferings of thousands of Israelis who have been the victims of terrorist campaigns that have always defied not only international law, but basic human decency. Blowing up buses full of innocents is not a convincing method of Palestinians defending themselves. It only incurs further wrath from a nation that has had to contend with such awful attacks since its inception. Is Mr Scanlon aware that Israelis have suffered terribly at the hands of terrorism? Does he know that "suffering" has been second nature to the Jewish people since the time of Abraham?

Little mention is made of the fact that Israel is a democratic society founded on similar principles to our State, but has had to remain on a permanent war footing because of Arab and Palestinian hostility. Most Israelis would prefer not to have to do army service to defend their country against those who campaign for its destruction. Sadly, the status quo will remain so long as Israel has to defend itself against constant terrorist incursions that so many in the media have failed to condemn. Until the Palestinian nation accepts that Israel will never give in to those that want to destroy her, the future is indeed bleak.

Regrettably, suffering on both sides will continue until the Palestinian people elect leaders who are willing to come to the negotiating table after ceasing all hostilities and acknowledge that there is room for two nations to co-exist peacefully. So to answer Scanlon's final question, yes these are the actions of a democratic country. - Yours, etc,

DAVID PETER FINE,

St Pappin's Road,

Dublin 11.

Madam, - Few things educate better than experience. After completing a 2,000-mile journey by bicycle to the Holy Land and spending a week there I have returned a newly educated person.

To see at first hand the wall that separates the Palestinians from the Israelis is saddening in the extreme. My visit brought me to Bethlehem, which the locals rightly describe as an open prison. They are cut off from employment and economic opportunities. They are cut off from their own land and even their own families. They do not have control over their own water or electricity supplies.

Passing through the checkpoint controls into the town, I felt humiliated, intimidated and fundamentally disrespected. Fortunately for me, I only had that experience twice; Palestinians "lucky" enough to have permits into Israel are subjected to the experience twice daily.

It is clear who are the oppressors and who the oppressed. - Yours, etc,

ELEANOR DUNN,

Chapelizod,

Dublin 20.

Load-Date: July 26, 2006

End of Document

Two nations: divided by war but united by fear; 'If our Prime Minister is crying, what are we to do?'

The Independent (London)

July 17, 2006 Monday

First Edition

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The  **INDEPENDENT**

Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 1178 words

Byline: ROBERT FISK in Beirut

Body

You could see the Israeli missiles coming through the clouds of smoke, hurtling like thunderbolts into the apartment blocks of Ghobeiri, the crack of the explosions so loud that my ears are still singing hours later as I write this report.

Yes, I suppose you could call this a "terrorist" target, for here in these mean, fearful streets is - or rather was - the Hizbollah headquarters. Even the movement's propaganda television station, Al-Manar, lay apancaked ruin in the street, its broadcasts still being transmitted from the station's bunker beneath the rubble. But what of the tens of thousands of people who live here?

The few who were not lying in their basements ran shrieking through the streets - not gunmen, but women with screaming children, families holding suit-cases, desperate to leave the heaps of broken buildings, entire apartment blocks smashed to bits, the roadways covered in smashed balconies and torn electrical wires. "You don't have to help the resistance," Sayed Hassan Nasrallah, the Hizbollah leader, told the Lebanese on television last night. "The resistance is on the front line and the Lebanese are behind them."

Untrue, of course. It is the Lebanese - and their 130 dead, almost all civilians - who are also on the front line. In Israel, 24 have been killed, 15 of them civilians. So the exchange rate for death in this filthy war is now approximately one Israeli to five Lebanese. So many Lebanese have now fled Beirut for Tripoli in the north of Lebanon, or for the Bekaa Valley in the east - or to Syria - that Beirut, where one and a half million people live, is a ghost city, its remaining residents sitting in their homes amid the hopelessness of all those who believed that this country was at last emerging from the shadows of its 15-year civil war. It was Nasrallah who said that there are "more surprises to come", and the Lebanese fear that the Israelis, too, have some more surprises for them.

I watched one of these from my sea-front balcony at dusk on Saturday, an American-made Apache helicopter turning three times over the Mediterranean before firing a single missile - perfectly visible, with smoke pouring from the tail - that smacked into Beirut's brand new lighthouse on the Corniche in a cloud of brown muck. So what was this for? Another "terrorist" target, I suppose. Like the gas stations bombed in the Bekaa Valley. Like the convoy of

Two nations: divided by war but united by fear 'If our Prime Minister is crying, what are we to do?'

20 civilians incinerated in an Israeli airraid on Saturday after being ordered by the Israelis themselves to leave their home village on the border.

Last night, Hizbollah's missiles after killing 10 Israelis in Haifa were falling on the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, setting the forests alight, and on the Israeli city of Acre. The Syrians warned of an "unlimited" response if Israel attacked them - the Israelis have been saying, untruthfully, that Syrian troops and Iranians are present in Lebanon, helping Hizbollah in their battle and the preposterous response of the G8 summit was greeted with despair. Tony Blair, who is now also, it seems, the Minister of Root Causes, believes Syria and Iran are behind the original Hizbollah attack. He is right. But it is to Damascus that the West will have to go to switch this dirty war off.

Certainly, the powerless Lebanese Prime Minister, Fouad Siniora, cannot do so. With his government accused by Israel of responsibility for Wednesday's capture of two Israeli soldiers - a claim as preposterous as it is wrong - he went on television in tears to appeal to the United Nations to arrange a ceasefire for his "disaster-stricken nation". The Lebanese appreciated the tears, but those tears are unlikely to have had President Bush shaking in his boots. Churchill in 1940, Siniora-asincere and good man, uncorrupted by Lebanese politics - is not. "If our Prime Minister is crying," one Lebanese woman astutely pointed out to me yesterday, "what is the civilian population of our country supposed to do?"

But where are the other supposed political titans of Lebanon? What is Saad Hariri, son of the assassinated ex-prime minister Rafiq Hariri - who rebuilt the Lebanon which Israel is now destroying - doing in Kuwait, chatting to the Kuwaitis about his country's predicament? The Kuwaiti army is scarcely going to come to defend Lebanon. Why isn't Hariri the son on his private jet to the G8 summit in St Petersburg to demand of President Bush that he protect the democratically-elected government and the nation he praised for its "cedar revolution" last year? Or doesn't democracy matter when Israel is smashing Lebanon? Answer: no, it doesn't.

UN Security Council Resolution 1559 demanded a Syrian retreat from Lebanon - which was accomplished - but it also demanded the disarming of Hizbollah, which was definitely not accomplished. Many here suspected that 1559, designed by the French and the Americans, was intended to weaken Lebanon and prepare it for a peace treaty with Israel. Well, not any more. It was the Lebanese President, Emile Lahoud, who still cravenly follows Syria's line - he is, after all, Syria's man - who said yesterday that Lebanon "will never surrender". Lahoud as Churchill. There is something obscene here

Nasrallah, meanwhile, told the Israelis that: "If you do not want to play by rules, we can do the same." It was a grim little threat that was obviously meant to counter Ehud Olmert's equally grim little threat that there would be "far-reaching consequences" for the missile attack on Haifa. Nasrallah's televised argument - that Hizbollah originally wished to confine all casualties to the military - will not wash with Israel, but may encourage those many Lebanese who were originally outraged by Hizbollah's attack across the border on Wednesday, only to be silenced by the cruelty of Israel's response

"This is the last struggle of the 'umma'," Nasrallah said, the "umma" being the Arab "homeland". Alas, that is what the Arab leaders said when they joined Lawrence of Arabia's battle against the Ottoman empire in the First World War. It is always the "last struggle".

D The weapons of war

Fajr-3 missile

An Iranian-built rocket with range of 45km which can carry a 45kg warhead. Israel accused Hizbolah of firing 240mm Fajr-3 missiles against Haifa. Iran denies supplying the missiles to Hizbolah

Fajr-5 rocket

Longer-range version of Fajr-3 that can strike targets up to 72km away

Raad missile

Two nations: divided by war but united by fear 'If our Prime Minister is crying, what are we to do?'

Iranian-built missile with range of 120km. Could reach central Israel. Israelis accused Hizbolah of firing Raad ("Thunder") missiles yesterday. Hizbolah said last week it had fired Raad for the first time

Katyusha

Previously the Hizbolah missile of choice, the Russian-designed Katyushas have a range of 22km and variable accuracy. Israel accused Syria of supplying Hizbollah with a longer-range model

Kassem

Rockets with range of up to 10km, used by **Hamas** guerrillas in Palestinian-ruled Gaza. Israeli town of Sderot has been a frequent target of the notoriously inaccurate missiles

F-16 fighter

The US-made "fighting Falcon" is a multi-role fighter which has been dropping quarter-ton bombs on targets in Lebanon

Graphic

Aterrified Lebanese woman in Nabatiyeh finds her city turned into the front line KAMEL JABER /REUTERS' The fifth day of bombing

Load-Date: July 17, 2006

A Perverse Habit

New York Sun (Archive)

July 10, 2006 Monday

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Section: EDITORIAL & OPINION; Pg. 9

Length: 1175 words

Byline: Daniel Johnson

Body

A year ago, four young British Muslims blew themselves and over 50 of their fellow countrymen to pieces, maiming hundreds more. Two weeks later, a similar group tried again. They failed only because their home-made bombs failed to detonate. The 7/7 London bombings changed everything. They changed Great Britain almost as profoundly as the far bloodier and more spectacular atrocities of 9/11 changed the United States.

This, remember, was not an attack by foreign terrorists. These suicide bombers were born and bred in Britain. The attacks forced Britons to admit that their United Kingdom was no longer united - that a large and growing proportion of the Muslim minority was living in a virtual state of war with British society.

Worse, the attack was predictable and had been predicted, but the government still seemed unprepared. And as more facts came out, the picture emerged of a nation and its officials in denial about the scale of the problem. The fact that there has been no repetition of the attacks does not mean that Britain has abandoned the disastrous policies that allowed London to become a major source of Islamist terrorism.

What has happened since 7/7? First, I take some satisfaction in what did not happen. Unlike the Spanish, the British did not change their government to appease the terrorists. Even if the London bombings, like those in Madrid, had taken place on the eve of last May's general election, the nation would not have blamed the government. Tony Blair did not, like the Spanish and Italians, withdraw troops from Iraq, and he has reinforced the British presence in Afghanistan to meet the resurgent threat of the Taliban. British foreign policy is not dictated by Al-Qaeda - yet.

However, not one of the counter-terrorism measures that were announced by the Prime Minister in the immediate aftermath of the attacks has come into effect as he intended. One policy after another has been abandoned or emasculated due to the implacable resistance of an increasingly insubordinate Labor Party, liberal judges, and the House of Lords.

What about the Muslims themselves? One of Mr. Blair's less bright ideas was to set up Muslim task forces to tackle extremism "head-on." As might have been foreseen, these task forces were selected by the same Home Office officials who had been underestimating the threat posed by Islamists over the previous decade.

Among those appointed were Ahmad Thomson, a Muslim lawyer who was on record as stating that both Mr. Blair and President Bush were controlled by a "sinister" alliance of Jews and Freemasons. Another devotee of Zionist conspiracy theories was Inayat Bunglawala, the spokesman for the "moderate" Muslim Council of Britain, who thinks the British media is controlled by an "elite club" of Jews. Mr. Bunglawala has been an apologist for Mr. bin

A Perverse Habit

Laden and other terrorists. So has another task force member, Professor Tariq Ramadan, grandson of the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, who sees Hamas and the Iraqi insurgents as "resistance" movements.

Not surprisingly, the Muslim task forces' recommendations made Mr. Blair's hair stand on end. They wanted him to replace Holocaust Memorial Day with a "Genocide Day" that would place Palestine on a par with Auschwitz. They blamed the Government for Islamist terrorism, which was apparently caused by discrimination, Islamophobia, and British foreign policy. They wanted more Islamic separatism in schools and for women, government-funded Muslim propaganda and a ban on the use of "Islamic" in connection with words such as "terrorism" or "extremism."

This week a Labor legislator, Sadiq Khan, protested that the Government had only adopted three of the task forces' proposals, and that "all these talented British Muslims" would now be disillusioned and alienated - in other words, more inclined to make excuses for terrorists. Sir Iqbal Sacranie, the former Muslim Council leader, claimed that Mr. Blair's refusal to hold a public inquiry into 7/7 was "alienating" Muslims. The truth is that many Muslims prefer to believe in conspiracy theories rather than admit any communal responsibility for terrorism.

Mr. Blair, grilled by a parliamentary committee for two hours on Tuesday, responded with exasperation: "I am not the person to go into the Muslim community and explain to them that this extreme view is not the true face of Islam. People [i.e. Muslims] should stand up and say, 'You are wrong in your view about the West, you are wrong in your sense of grievance. The whole ideology is profoundly wrong.'"

Have Muslim attitudes changed in the past year? The latest polling evidence suggests that, if anything, their sense of grievance is growing. Some 13% of British Muslims see the 7/7 suicide bombers as "martyrs," rising to 16% who justify attacks on "military" targets in Britain. More than a third (36%) see British values as a threat to Islam and degrading to women. Even higher percentages of Muslims want to live under Shariah rather than British law. Four fifths think the right of Muslim girls to wear Islamic dress, however impractical, should override school uniform policies.

Yet 65% of the same Muslims agree that they need to do more to integrate. Their community leaders have done nothing to make this happen. About half of all Muslim families are living on welfare benefits; a large proportion still have arranged marriages with relations in Pakistan or Bangladesh; and even third-generation Muslims are much poorer and less educated than their Hindu or Sikh peers.

The reaction to the death of a British Muslim soldier in Afghanistan this week was revealing. Newspapers such as the Times and Telegraph treated Lance Corporal Jabron Hashmi as a hero, splashing his portrait on their front pages. But when his brother appeared on news programs, only his silhouette was shown, to protect him from his own community. The Muslim Council's spokesman, the above-mentioned Mr. Bunglawala, would only say that, while the community opposed the war in which Cpl Hashmi had died (i.e. took the side of the Taliban), he "could not condemn Muslims who fought for the British Army" because "they have to follow orders."

So the British have plenty to feel apprehensive about as they mark the first anniversary of 7/7. The fear of Islamist terror, while a necessary spur to action, also has a less desirable consequence: it is a driving force of both anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism. A recent poll disclosed that America has never been held in such low esteem by the British before: three quarters think that Mr. Bush is a bad leader, almost as many that his talk of democracy is a cover for U.S. interests, 77% think America is not "a beacon of hope," and 58% that it is an imperial power. Israel, too, is again in the firing line for its robust response to the kidnapping of a soldier by Islamist terrorists. This perverse British habit of blaming anybody other than Muslims for Islamist terrorism has the even more perverse result that we no longer know who our real friends are. But that is a subject for a future column.

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TheirSpace

The New York Times

June 25, 2006 Sunday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section 7; Column 1; Book Review Desk; Pg. 21

Length: 1266 words

Byline: By ROBERT F. WORTH

Robert F. Worth, a reporter at The Times, has covered Iraq since 2004.

Body

TERROR ON THE INTERNET

The New Arena, the New Challenges.

By Gabriel Weimann.

309 pp. United States Institute of Peace Press. \$24.95.

LAST October, the British authorities arrested a 22-year-old London man named Younis Tsouli and charged him with conspiring in a bomb plot. Tsouli, it soon turned out, was no novice. Investigators believe he was a celebrated militant known by the teasing Arabic nickname Irhabi ("Terrorist") 007. His capture, by some accounts, was an important milestone in the effort to take down Qaeda-affiliated terror cells in Britain.

But Irhabi was not known for his involvement in any actual terror attacks. Instead, his reputation came entirely from his role as one of Al Qaeda's most effective computer hackers and propagandists. He helped distribute online weapons manuals and videotapes of bombings and beheadings. He taught seminars on how to operate undetected on the Web, and how to hack into vulnerable Web sites and upload material onto them.

Irhabi, in other words, was part of a new generation that has helped make the Internet central to the strategy of today's terrorist movements. Two years ago insurgent groups in Iraq released a handful of e-mail statements a week, usually claiming credit for attacks. Today there are dozens every day, including attachments with videotapes of battles and executions, testimonials from suicide bombers and fatwas supporting them from radical clerics. Al Qaeda now views the Internet not only as an essential recruitment tool and means of communication with volunteers, but as a virtual training camp. No more need for Afghanistan: would-be terrorists can download manuals and videotapes that show them how to make explosive vests, car bombs, chemical weapons and poisons, and a library of tips on how to use them all effectively. The danger is not just theoretical. There is evidence that some of the newest terrorists were recruited and sometimes trained this way.

Gabriel Weimann, a professor of communications at the University of Haifa in Israel, is one of a handful of people who began tracking terrorist Web sites almost a decade ago, long before most analysts were aware of the problem. "Terror on the Internet" usefully outlines the basic contours of his subject, giving a taste of Al Qaeda's Internet

rhetoric and strategies, along with those of less well-known militant groups from Colombia to the Basque country to Chechnya. The book also includes chapters on related issues, from the risks of cyberterrorism to the debate over surveillance techniques.

But terrorist Web sites are more than just an alarming trend. They are a window onto a bizarre and fascinating subculture. Spend an hour trolling through the Internet postings of Al Qaeda in Iraq and you will see videotapes of smiling suicide bombers affectionately patting their explosives as they prepare to die for the cause. You will also see jihadists who seem more like frustrated high-school actors, bitterly complaining that they don't get enough attention. There are weird attempts at humor, like the compilation of footage of mutilated American soldiers that was called "Jihad Candid Camera," or another one sarcastically titled "The Truth: Americans Don't Die." A few months ago the Victorious Army Group announced an entirely serious competition to design its new Web page. The winner would get to fire a rocket at an American base.

A little more of this kind of material would have brought the terrorists to life and enlivened Weimann's dry account. Instead, he spends a whole chapter on cyberterrorism, which he rightly dismisses as a mostly bogus threat. There is not one recorded example of terrorists causing serious harm by hacking into Western computer systems, despite much hand-wringing on the subject in recent years. Weimann also cites far too many news and journal articles (including some of his own), making his book sound at times like an academic conference report. When faced with debates about policy over the Patriot Act and civil liberties, for instance, he mostly quotes advocates on both sides, offering little serious analysis of his own.

Still, Weimann is persuasive on the Internet's role in spreading terrorist goals and methods. In an example he cites, a Qaeda site posted a proposal three months before the 2004 Madrid bombings that virtually sketched out the attacks in advance. The writer described how multiple bombings, timed just before the Spanish elections, could force Spain to withdraw from Iraq. Although a Norwegian researcher saw the posting and filed it, no one recognized the clue in time.

Nowadays a tip like that might not go unnoticed. A new generation of freelance Web hounds and vigilantes has emerged in the past few years. Because of the American government's lack of Arabists and the Web's open nature, many of these people appear to be more tuned in than the counterterrorist authorities. Rita Katz, whose SITE Institute tracks and translates terror-related Web postings almost as soon as they appear, has become a crucial resource for American military and intelligence officers in Iraq, and for journalists. (She was recently profiled in *The New Yorker*.)

Others pursue the jihadists more aggressively, hacking into their Web sites and defacing them, or rerouting would-be readers to pornographic sites. But this kind of cyberdefense, Weimann argues, is largely futile. He tells us about the exponential growth of terrorist Web sites since the late 1990's, when Al Qaeda had one Web site (www.alneda.com). Originally registered in Singapore, it was forced off servers in Malaysia, Texas and elsewhere, but always resurfaced within days or hours, usually in a more obscure location. In March 2003, a group associated with Al Qaeda hijacked the Web site of an Alaskan fishing town.

Today, Al Qaeda is present on scores of sites, if not hundreds. Most communication takes place in chat rooms or Web forums that are password-protected and prohibit postings from unapproved users. Outsiders can monitor some of these, but not all. Weimann argues that jihadist groups see the Internet not only as a way to reach followers and recruits, but as a broader link with mainstream Arab and Muslim populations. In one sickening example, he describes a Hamas Web site that is aimed at children, with cartoon-style graphics, songs and stories. In October 2004 the site showed a photograph of the decapitated head of a young female suicide bomber, Zaynab Abu Salem. "The perpetrator of the suicide bombing attack, Zaynab Abu Salem," the accompanying text read. "Her head was severed from her pure body and her headscarf remained to decorate [her face]. Your place is in heaven in the upper skies, oh Zaynab, sister [raised to the status of heroic] men."

What can governments do about all this? Not a lot, by Weimann's reckoning. He summarizes the debate over various "sniffer" technologies that can scan large volumes of e-mail traffic. These have proved useful in some prosecutions, and terrorists are certainly more vulnerable to having their messages intercepted than they were

before 9/11. But broad programs like the National Security Agency's telephone surveillance efforts are already controversial in the West. The prospects for more aggressive methods like those now used in China and Singapore are dim. The fact is that the Internet's signature virtues -- anonymity, easy access and global reach -- make it perfect for terrorists. For a technology invented during the cold war to protect the American government in the event of a nuclear attack, that is no small irony.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Drawing (Drawing by Viktor Koen)

Load-Date: June 25, 2006

End of Document

Economical victory

Guardian.com

June 26, 2006

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theguardian

Length: 1263 words

Highlight: Welcome to the Wrap, Guardian Unlimited's digest of the best of the day's papers.

Body

AN ECONOMICAL VICTORY

"Unconvincing" it may have been (the Times) - but England's 1-0 victory against Ecuador yesterday was enough to put them through to a quarter-final game against Portugal in the World Cup next Saturday.

The Independent, whose staff clearly enjoyed the post-match celebrations, actually splashes with a prediction that the result will inspire Britons - most of them English, presumably - to spend "an extra GBP100m". The chief executive of the Centre for Economics and Business Research explains: "People are happy; they will stay in pubs and clubs and celebrate more." Thanks for that, Douglas McWilliams. No one at the Independent asked him whether we will cut back a bit after losing in the quarter-finals.

More football below. Meanwhile, in other foreign coverage, the Times reports on page 33 that the "olive branch" extended by the Iraqi government to Shia insurgents is not quite as generous as it suggested last week.

"The text was ... a watered down version of the document shown to the Times on Thursday," says the paper. "Iraq's presidency council and representatives from the Shia ruling coalition cut the document from 28 to 24 articles on Saturday night ... Noticeably missing was a call for the government to recognise the difference between resistance and terrorist groups and a written invitation for resistance groups to join a national dialogue." The new text also dropped a demand for a timeline for the withdrawal of foreign troops.

The new Palestinian government also suffered a setback yesterday when Israel threatened "serious retaliation" for a **Hamas**-led attack on Israeli soldiers. Eight militants tunnelled into Israel and killed two soldiers, wounded four and kidnapped another, whom they took back to Gaza. Corporal Gilad Shalit is the first Israeli soldier to be kidnapped since 1994.

* Independent: The feelgood factor

* Times: Shias cut back Iraq olive branch

* IHT: Israel threatens to strike Gaza after raid

MEASURE BY MEASURE

Economical victory

The news that households may soon be billed for the water they actually use comes as an unpleasant shock to the Daily Express.

"WATER METERS IN EVERY HOME ... Secret plan will see family bills rocket by GBP200 a year," says the paper. This is because families use more water than single people and couples, who will generally pay less.

Unscrupulous individuals who no longer subsidise families' water bills may soon be able to spend the proceeds on staying out of jail, according to the Mail's splash. "Violent criminals can dodge a jail sentence by paying a GBP500 fine under government plans ... They would not appear in court and their 'punishment' would not even count as a conviction. The system of 'conditional cautioning' would cover crimes including ABH, affray, carrying a knife, possession of class A drugs ... and criminal damage."

The Telegraph is equally upset about plans to maintain electronic files on all children. "Family life faces State 'invasion' ... Government surveillance of all children, including information on whether they eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, will be condemned tomorrow as a Big Brother system."

"Unbelievably," says the paper in its leader column, "these changes are being sought in response to the failures that led to the death of Victoria Climbié in 2000 ... The true lesson of the case is not that our social services departments need more power; it is that they are inept."

The Guardian leads with a report that accuses drug companies of "widescale marketing malpractices," including bribing doctors, encouraging people to think they are ill and misrepresenting the results of safety tests.

* Drug firms' a danger to health'

* Telegraph: Family life faces state 'invasion'

* Mail: GBP500 to stay out of jail

STEEL DEAL

The FT and Herald Tribune both splash with Lakshmi Mittal's USD33.1bn takeover of Arcelor to form the world's biggest steel company - a "transformational deal that makes sense", according to Lex.

The deal, which was five months in the making, "caps a wrenching turnaround for Arcelor's management, which once dismissed Mittal as a 'company of Indians' but were forced to backtrack after shareholders threatened to revolt", says the IHT.

The Herald Tribune describes Mittal himself as "something of a symbol of globalisation for its supporters and critics ... [he] acquired factories in Trinidad, Mexico, Kazakhstan, the United States and beyond, reviving them by combining the best practices with extraordinary standardisation and rigour ... Some Europeans suggest he has risen precisely because he has passed his costs on to society."

* FT: Arcelor and Mittal agree to merger

* IHT: Mittal's stormy quest

THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

The latest changes to constituency boundaries will favour the Tories, the Times predicts. "Several wafer-thin marginals will be created in the south ... Had the changes been in place at the last election, Labour's 64-seat victory would have dropped to 44 with several more seats too close to call ... It means that a national swing of just 1% will be needed at the next election to wipe out Labour's Commons majority."

David Cameron wants to replace the Human Rights Act with a Bill of Rights, the Telegraph reports. The paper complains that it will be of little use if a European court can overrule it.

Economical victory

* Times: New boundaries favour Tories

* Telegraph: Tories pledge bill of rights

A SICKLY PERFORMANCE

David Beckham vomited at the end of England's match yesterday. Had England lost, it might have served as an apt metaphor for a "game of painful dullness" (the Herald Tribune). As it is, the Mirror's picture of the goal-scoring captain retching up a green substance reminds everyone just what a hero he is. "QUEASY DOES IT," screams the Sun. "HERE WE THROW," groans the Mirror. "England continue to stumble their way towards whatever final appointment destiny has in store during their time in Germany," writes Richard Williams in the Guardian. "In some respects yesterday's defeat of Ecuador was their worst performance to date ... this was a thoroughly dispiriting victory, not least because it was being witnessed by the rest of the world."

"It wasn't pretty but ... England are through, Beckham hit a belter, Rooney survived ... They'll play better (won't they?)" says the Times.

* Richard Williams

* Sun: Queasy does it

SKIRTING THE ISSUE

The papers are less interested than usual in Wimbledon, and page 21 of the Sun explains why. "You setsy thing ... KILLJOY tennis chiefs have outlawed skimpy outfits at this year's Wimbledon ... They want spectators to keep their eye on the ball, not on the athletic figures of the gorgeous female players." Nonetheless, even the Guardian devotes around a third of its coverage to the ladies' outfits.

The paper interviews a rather desultory Greg Rusedski: "Certainly my career hasn't gone the way I imagined it," he says. Come on, Greg! Even Tiger Tim wouldn't come out with a line like that. Speaking of whom ... Henmania is totally absent Welcome to the Wrap, Guardian Unlimited's digest of the best of the day's papers.the unseeded Briton?

* Sun: You setsy thing

* Rusedski takes adversity in his comeback stride

COMING UP ON GUARDIAN UNLIMITED TODAY

England soccer fans were released from custody in Stuttgart today after more than 100 were held for the entire weekend.

British police are starting moves to have a 26-year-old man extradited from Morocco after he was arrested in connection with Britain's biggest cash robbery.

East Timor's embattled prime minister has announced his resignation.

Wimbledon 2006 begins, but bad weather looks likely to affect most of today's play.

Load-Date: June 26, 2006

The man with an answer for everything

Yorkshire Post

June 14, 2006

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Length: 1214 words

Body

Edward de Bono has something to say about most things, as you would expect from one of the world's foremost thinkers and self-help gurus. He has a few thoughts about religion, so he's launched a new one of his own. Sheena Hastings met him.

EDWARD de Bono's London pied á terre is a ground floor apartment in Albany, an exclusive address off Piccadilly. There's a plaque on the outside wall commemorating William Gladstone, a former resident who used to take prostitutes there to "rescue" them.

It's the middle of the day, but the room is dim and almost cave-like. Piles of books, files, papers, little toys and artefacts cover every surface. Several clocks cluster together - not, as you might expect, set to different timezones. Yorkshire Post

Maybe he sees buying clocks as somehow buying time. More time to write books - he has already turned out 67, which have been translated into 32 languages.

More time to teach - he has lectured in 52 countries, and last year travelled about 250,000 miles ("that's the same distance as to the moon, says my friend Buzz Aldrin"), preaching the gospel of lateral thinking, the idea for which he is most renowned, to schools, academics, civic leaders and multinational corporations including Shell, Microsoft and Ford.

Above all, more time to think. Thinking is both work and relaxation. Thinking has reportedly made him a multi-multi-millionaire, a restless, globe-trotting thinker, who collected islands (in Ireland, Italy, Australia and the Bahamas) until he had to sell them recently to finance his divorce settlement. Now, he says, with a slightly macabre chuckle, "I just collect women".

De Bono, an indefatigable 73, was the precociously bright child of a Maltese professor of medicine and his journalist wife. He graduated in medicine back in Malta, won a Rhodes scholarship to Oxford, where he gained a masters degree in psychology and physiology, followed by a DPhil in medicine.

His first book, *The Mechanism of Mind*, was published in 1969 and explored the neurological coding behind human perception.

After that he coined the phrase "lateral thinking" to describe alternative ways of looking at problems and life, and caught the self-help zeitgeist with books on popular psychology with such titles as *I Am Right, You Are Wrong*, *How To Be More Interesting*, *De Bono's Thinking Course* and *Teach Your Child to Think*.

De Bono has thoughts about everything - economics, history, politics, football... more of that later.

The man with an answer for everything

He's now thinking about religion, and has met top rabbis, Muslim leaders, and Christian theologians in an attempt to thrash out what might be missing from other religions, and how some new thinking could make both individuals and society better.

He came up with the creed of H+. But why do we need a new religion?

"Religions, as such, don't emphasise happiness and positivity enough. They are mainly rather negative, about avoiding sin. You could sit still, do nothing, say some prayers, and be considered to be 'good'. I see H+ as a religion in the sense of a belief system, like Buddhism.

"It's meant to be complementary to other religions.

"It's about making yourself feel good by helping others with regular, daily small acts of kindness. It's also about humour, the most important ingredient in life and best social lubricant".

There aren't many laughs in religion, it's true.

The good acts are known as "Pons", short for positive actions, and each disciple has to set themselves a daily quota to be achieved.

Failure to do so, says de Bono's book, H+ A New Religion? incurs financial penalty, with the money being sent to H+ HQ and used to help spread the word. Giving money to beggars is not a valid Pon, as de Bono says it encourages "begging as a lifestyle".

There will be no rituals like group worship, although there is a community website where ideas for good acts can be shared. The only scripture is the guru's wide-spaced 96-page book.

De Bono seems particularly keen to market his new idea to young people. "Society is lacking, particularly for young people, in small, attainable achievements. Some youngsters go in for crime because crime offers achievement - you've stolen something, you've smashed a window, done some graffiti.

"If you could replace those 'achievements' with small good acts which make the doer feel good about themselves, then we could change things".

So could Pons replace ASBOs? "Possibly," says de Bono. "And they could also counteract the 'me-me-me' attitude and idea that being 'Cool', distant and aloof, is everything".

He has coined the word "Waffo" (from "warm form") to describe the spiritual opposite of Cool - "it means that you are warm, generous and human".

He says he's trying "not to talk so much in interviews".

That seems to mean he will allow dialogue, rather than the soliloquies for which he is famous. He is trying - very hard, at first - but it is sometimes difficult to get a word in edgewise.

He launches into a round-up of some of his other ruminations: how children are not taught to think (although many schools in Asia use his methods), how democracies tend to be less than good at spawning creative ideas, how employment could be increased by allowing business to make so much profit per employee, so to make more money they'd have to hire more people.

He thinks penalty shoot-outs are a terribly unfair way of deciding the result of a football match, so he would keep a tally of how many times each team's goalkeeper has touched the ball.

The man with an answer for everything

The team whose keeper notches up fewest touches wins, thus encouraging more attacking play, fewer time-wasting passes back to the goalie, and more fairness.

De Bono has a gambit to kick-start peace in the Middle East: "Israel and Palestine are two of the most intelligent nations on earth. They've known for 60 years that they have to live together but they can't do it.

"One solution would be for each to allow the other to vote in their elections. There's no way the Israelis would have elected Hamas, and the Palestinians would vote for Sharon, so more constructive people would be elected, to figure out ways of living together".

His brainwave for Iraq ("although I'm not saying I'm totally happy with it yet") would be for the US to declare its intention to leave on June 1 next year, but that every insurgency killing would delay the departure by three days.

"Suddenly, the killings would be seen as stupid, rather than heroic. Something has to be done to look at the problem in a different way".

De Bono's Six Thinking Hats system has been adopted in many businesses around the world.

It is credited with encouraging new ideas and drastically shortening the length of meetings.

A subject is explored first with everyone wearing the imaginary black hat for negatives, so everyone in the room looks at the minuses. When the yellow hat for positivism is put on, the pluses are considered, and so on, It's an approach that's said to take much of the argument and ego out of decision-making.

"Argument is so primitive, but so many of us approach problems with arguments, through complacency and slowness, and through the conviction that we are already pretty good. The story that sums it up is about the man who commits suicide by jumping from the top of a skyscraper. After a few floors he says: 'So far, so good'".

sheena.hastings@ypn.co.uk

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Quest for a Homeland Gains a World Stage

The New York Times

April 16, 2006 Sunday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section 9; Column 3; Style Desk; Pg. 2

Length: 1166 words

Byline: By DAVID KAUFMAN

Body

ON a warm afternoon in early March Eddie Butler glided through the lobby of the Tel Aviv Hilton like a modern-day king of Israel. Pausing repeatedly for hugs and high-fives, Mr. Butler radiated an aura of ubiquitous familiarity that comes with being a very big pop star in a very small country. On March 15 Mr. Butler, 34, was chosen to represent Israel in this year's Eurovision contest: the kitschy, annual, pan-European extravaganza in which viewers will crown the region's best pop song.

On May 20 Mr. Butler will be in Athens for Eurovision's finale as the great hope of the entire Jewish nation.

With his cocoa-colored skin and fade of tight curls, Mr. Butler clearly isn't a typical Israeli. Despite being born and raised in Israel, many would argue he's not even Jewish. Mr. Butler is a member of the Black Hebrews, or the African Hebrew Israelites as they call themselves, a 2,000-strong community in the Negev desert originally from the blighted South Side of Chicago. Led by Ben Carter, a former factory worker who changed his name to Ben Ammi Ben Israel, the original group of about 350 arrived in Israel in 1969 claiming to be descended from one of ancient Judaism's lost tribes.

Ethnically African-American as well as polygamists and vegans, the Black Hebrews have never been formally recognized as Jews by Israel's religious authorities and have lived since arrival in a southern city, Dimona, an impoverished development town and site of Israel's not-so-secret "secret" nuclear weapons program.

"Israel is my home, my nation, but we've always been treated like outsiders," Mr. Butler said. "Israelis didn't want to accept us, but we've come closer and closer to the day they will."

As a professional pop artist who has been performing in Israel since he was 18, Mr. Butler has long been bringing the cause of his people to public light. In 1999, as part of a racially diverse group called Eden, he made his first appearance in the Eurovision contest, though in that round he was chosen to compete by judges, not fellow Israelis, as he was last month.

This year, along with his manager, two publicists and four back-up singers, Mr. Butler leaves for Athens as a soloist armed with "Ze Hazman" ("This Is the Time"), a soulful, English-Hebrew anthem he wrote that reflects the influence of his years singing in the Black Hebrews' gospel-style New Jerusalem Fire Choir when he was a boy. Mr. Butler's Afro-Judeo harmonies will be pitted in Athens against 37 equally ambitious contestants, all hoping Eurovision will do for them what it did for veterans like Abba and Celine Dion.

Quest for a Homeland Gains a World Stage

Even if Mr. Butler comes home empty-handed, his performance -- with its televised audience of more than 120 million -- will be the first time the spotlight has shined on a single Black Hebrew. Separated by a remote desert location and unorthodox lifestyle, the group has long been a controversial presence in Israel, seen by some as a cult.

"For years we struggled," said Mr. Butler in cadences more suggestive of Detroit than Dimona. "For everything from feeding ourselves to being recognized as Jews."

While that struggle remains far from over, the Black Hebrews are slowly achieving a semblance of Israeli cultural normalcy. Aided by powerful friends abroad like the Rev. Jesse Jackson and a stream of high-profile visitors -- including an infamous, theatrics-filled 2003 tour by Whitney Houston and Bobby Brown -- the community now has its own school, operates a successful tofu factory and owns a string of vegan restaurants in Israel and the United States.

In 2003 Black Hebrews were granted permanent residency status by the Israeli government. In addition to leading to the possibility of permanent citizenship, that also means that Black Hebrews must serve in the Israeli army.

"The Black Hebrews add to the richness and diversity of all of Israel," observed Mr. Jackson, who has lobbied on their behalf with American Jewish leaders.

Even though Israel isn't exactly in Europe, Eurovision has evolved over time into a quaint, feel-good respite from the harsh realities of everyday Israeli life, be they the recent arrival of Avian flu or the long-term threat of Hamas terror.

Israel also has a history of choosing Eurovision candidates who are unlikely springboards for progressive social causes. The most progressive of them all is easily Dana International, a postoperative male-to-female transsexual who represented Israel in Birmingham, England, in 1998. Her song, the aptly named "Diva," was a cheesy, Kylie Minogue-style techno-ditty that -- to the horror of Israel's ultra-Orthodox right and the delight of its pan-sexual left -- took home first prize and helped to shed light on an otherwise hidden population. Would a Butler victory at Eurovision do the same for the Black Hebrews?

"At the very least it will raise awareness of their economic and social situation," said Yuval Niv, culture writer at Yedioth Ahronoth, the daily newspaper. "But a community so small will probably never really be part of the mainstream agenda."

On the morning before Ehud Olmert's recent election as Israeli prime minister, Mr. Butler was back in Dimona showing reporters around the Black Hebrews' compound, where he first began to sing along with his 11 brothers and sister. As he sat between his mother, Kara Liah, and his father's three other wives -- whom he also calls mother, ima in Hebrew -- Mr. Butler began to give a human face to the world he left more than a decade ago to pursue his dreams of musical stardom.

The compound, now officially Kibbutz Shomrei HaShalom (Protectors of Peace), is almost otherworldly in its cultural inclusiveness. Clad in free-flowing, brightly-colored robes and headdresses, the adults look like the 60's-era pan-African activists many once were, while their hundreds of children are dressed in neat blue Israeli school uniforms. All speak a mixture of Hebrew and English with varying accents, depending on their age and place of birth.

Later that day in Tel Aviv, Mr. Butler was backstage at a special election-night taping of the Dudu Topaz show (a sort of low-rent Israeli Jay Leno) and one of the numerous media appearances he'll make in the coming weeks. Stylishly attired and glowing with the confidence of a man who knows he has already beaten the odds, Mr. Butler effortlessly outshined the rest of the night's guests -- B-list actors, models and the Israeli famous-for-being-famous.

With his Israeli girlfriend and two Israel-born children cheering him on, Mr. Butler brought the crowd to its feet with yet another rendition of "Ze Hazman," the song he'll soon sing for a homeland that may never fully embrace him as one of its own. Still, as chants of "Eddie, Eddie, Eddie" filled the studio, it was as if the audience -- and perhaps all

Quest for a Homeland Gains a World Stage

of Israel -- can't get enough of Eddie Butler. "It's like winning 'American Idol,' he said of the endless adoration. "I feel like Ruben Studdard or Kelly Clarkson."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Photos: SEEKING FAITH -- Mr. Butler at a synagogue near Tel Aviv.

SEEKING SUCCESS -- Eddie Butler, a member of the Black Hebrew group that has settled in Israel, works on a song with Amit Tzah. (Photographs by Rina Castelnovo for The New York Times)

Load-Date: April 16, 2006

End of Document

*We all live on Martyr Street**The answer is simple, he said. Be nice to other people*

The Toronto Star
May 7, 2006 Sunday

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Section: IDEAS; Pg. D01

Length: 1127 words

Byline: Olivia Ward, Toronto Star

Body

Schoolgirls Najilah al-Khatib and Neria Arnon live a few metres away from each other in Hebron, but they have never met.

That is hardly the stuff of tragedy. But Najilah is a Palestinian and Neria the daughter of Jewish settlers. The street that divides them, appropriately named Martyr Street, is ground zero for the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, encompassing the despair of the region and the dreadful events that are so often accepted with a shrug of "What do you expect here?"

The answers are fatalistic: Ancient hostilities. Religious hatreds. Ethnic conflicts. Or simply "ongoing violence."

The same lugubrious phrases are repeated in reports on Iraq, the Balkans, African countries, and a variety of Asian conflicts, as though people in certain areas carry a killing gene that goes into overdrive when others with a matching, but antithetical, gene come into view.

But in Hebron, the theory carries a special weight. Because it is here that three major religions intertwined in one human tree of faith and culture, then branched off in directions so different that they threaten to topple it altogether.

It was with those gloomy thoughts that I watched Shelley Saywell's film *Martyr Street*, which won the best feature-length Canadian documentary award at the Hot Docs film festival. (It's being repeated at noon today at the ROM theatre.)

Having just returned from the region after the hardline *Hamas* government came to power in the Palestinian territories, and a new Israeli government declared that peace efforts were at an end, I had little reason for optimism.

Saywell is a friend, producer and fellow traveller in several productions of her company, Bishari Films. She had told me of her own discouragement during five laborious years of intermittent filming in Hebron, turning her lens repeatedly on a scene that grew darker by the year. Seen as a whole, the film's impact is shattering - a chronicle of 4,000 years of turbulent history condensed in the lives of the two modern families, echoing back to the ancient family of the patriarch, Abraham.

Abraham, or Ibrahim, say the holy books of Judaism and Islam, was born in Ur in ancient Mesopotamia but travelled to the land of Canaan and in old age had two sons by different *women*. The elder, Ishmael, became the ancestor of the Arabian people, including the Muslim Prophet Muhammad.

We all live on Martyr StreetThe answer is simple, he said. Be nice to other people

The younger, Isaac, was the forefather of the Jewish people, who inhabited the land that would be known as Israel.

But it was the burial of Abraham and his family in the cave of Machpelah in Hebron that became the centre of a bloody controversy that haunts the people of Martyr Street today.

The cave is one of the holiest sites of Islam, Christianity and Judaism.

On its site is the Ibrahimi mosque, part of which is used as a Jewish synagogue. But no spirit of kinship is visible now - there, or in Hebron itself. Instead there is a pitched battle for ownership.

"I want Hebron to be ours," 12-year-old Neria told Saywell. "(I want) the Israeli people to be united; the Messiah to come and the holy temple to be built."

Said Najilah, "My religion is the Holy Koran, and her religion is different from mine. My Koran is much better than hers."

That the two girls learned of each other only through the film is a chilling commentary on life in the divided city, where Neria lives in a Jewish settlement of about 600 people across from the now almost deserted Palestinian district that used to be a bustling marketplace.

Hebron's Jewish population had been driven out by violent Arab attacks in 1929. But in 1979 a group of Jewish settlers entered the town and took possession of a hospital in central Hebron, saying they were taking back their ancient Jewish heritage.

Today they are a contentious enclave within a mainly Palestinian town of more than 100,000, protected by Israeli soldiers but opposed by many Israeli civilians. What was a thriving neighbourhood is now an armed camp.

Life for the Palestinian families on bullet-scarred Martyr Street has become increasingly isolated, their livelihoods disappearing and the future of their children shrivelling. Many have fled, but a handful of families, like Najilah's, remain to stake their claim on their historical roots.

After numerous military sieges, killings and violent confrontations, the children on both sides of the conflict are growing into bitter adulthood.

What is the answer? Governments and peace and religious groups have tried to find one, in vain. When Hebron is mentioned, Israelis and Palestinians in other cities roll their eyes and shrug: Like the decades-old conflict between them, it is one of those intractable things.

But historical complexity breeds defeat. And as I sat reading the latest dire news from the Middle East at a Toronto coffee shop last weekend, I distracted myself by listening in on a heated conversation.

A middle-aged man had offered to buy a cup of coffee for the woman standing in line ahead of him, as she groped for change in her large handbag.

As he put down his debit card on the counter, she turned on him angrily, accusing him of embarrassing her because she was slow to find her money.

As he returned to his seat, the man shook his head. "I believe in random acts of kindness," he said "Yet it's such an aggressive and hostile world, with so many people desperate to get ahead that people find it hard to recognize kindness when they see it."

The speaker, Douglas Chaddock, was a professional conflict negotiator, he told me. He deals with government departments and labour relations rather than vast international disputes. But, he said, "The principle is the same. It's so easy it sounds silly: Be nice to other people."

In the Middle East, and other conflict zones, there is much talk of political will but little of good will. And historical "certainties" too often block the way to a liveable future.

We all live on Martyr StreetThe answer is simple, he said. Be nice to other people

"In a conflict, each side looks at the other and insists that their own hands are clean," Chaddock said. "They believe that the other side is wrong and should change. But the solution is in what each of them can do for the other. That's what it means to be human."

Imagine Hebron's settlers and Palestinians deciding to overcome the hatreds and horrors of the past and agreeing to share their common heritage, I thought. And the same could be true of the region, and of so many warring parts of the world. After all the negotiations, failures and renewed conflicts, could it really be that simple?

As Saywell reminds us in her film, Abraham's long-separated sons Isaac and Ishmael came together only briefly as adults, when their father was buried.

"Could this be the legacy of Abraham," she asks, "that death is the common ground?"

The answer, alas, won't come from a divine revelation. Only from a simple human choice.

Graphic

bishari film productions Najilah al-Khatib and Neria Arnon: They've never met, but they know they don't like each other.

Load-Date: May 7, 2006

Freed Reporter in Recovery In U.S. Zone in Baghdad

The New York Times

April 1, 2006 Saturday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 1; Foreign Desk; Pg. 8; THE STRUGGLE FOR IRAQ: CAPTIVE

Length: 1213 words

Byline: By EDWARD WONG; Kirk Semple contributed reporting from Baghdad for this article, and Laurie Goodstein from New York.

Dateline: BAGHDAD, Iraq, March 31

Body

Jill Carroll, the American reporter who was released Thursday after three months in captivity, spent Friday recovering in the heavily fortified Green Zone where the American Embassy is housed, despite a warning from her captors to avoid the area and not to cooperate with American officials.

"She's in good spirits; I've spoken to her," said Scott Peterson, a reporter in Baghdad for The Christian Science Monitor, where Ms. Carroll worked as a freelance reporter before her kidnapping. "She's doing well and keeping it all together, and enjoying very much breathing the fresh air."

Ms. Carroll, 28, stayed in the Green Zone on Thursday night, undergoing health checks, and was still there on Friday evening. The four-square-mile area, on the west bank of the Tigris River, houses the American Embassy, the main military hospital and the headquarters of the Iraqi government. Foreign hostages who are released are usually taken there and debriefed by Americans or other foreign officials before being flown out of the country.

In their warning to Ms. Carroll, the kidnappers told her that the area had been "infiltrated by the mujahedeen" and that she might be killed if she cooperated with the Americans, according to The Christian Science Monitor.

But after her release on Thursday, she agreed to be transferred to the Green Zone at the urging of Mr. Peterson, who had spoken to her by telephone. "He persuaded her that was the best and safest course of action," the newspaper said in a report on its Web site that was co-written by Mr. Peterson.

American Embassy officials declined to say Friday when Ms. Carroll would be flown back to the United States.

An article on The Christian Science Monitor Web site on Friday said a video Ms. Carroll made with her captors shortly before her release had been produced under duress and did not represent her beliefs.

In the video, distributed on the Internet, Ms. Carroll, wearing a pale head scarf and apparently knowing she would be released, calmly answered questions asked in English by one of her captors. She denounced the "lies" told by the American government and predicted that the insurgents would defeat the Americans in Iraq.

Freed Reporter in Recovery In U.S. Zone in Baghdad

The video had raised questions about whether Ms. Carroll was suffering from Stockholm syndrome, in which hostages become sympathetic to their captors, or had made the statements either out of fear or as a practical matter, to facilitate her release.

The Monitor article states that Ms. Carroll's captors approached her the night before her release, saying "they had one final demand as the price of her freedom: She would have to make a video praising her captors and attacking the United States." According to her father, Jim Carroll, who was interviewed for the Monitor article, "she felt compelled to make statements strongly critical of President Bush and his policy in Iraq."

Mr. Carroll is quoted as saying the captors "obviously wanted maximum propaganda value in the U.S. After listening to them for three months she already knew exactly what they wanted her to say, so she gave it to them with appropriate acting to make it look convincing."

It remained unclear on Friday exactly why her captors had set her free, though the shadowy group holding her, the Revenge Brigade, had said in the video with Ms. Carroll that the American government had agreed to some of its conditions. The group had demanded that the United States release all Iraqi women from its prisons.

In late January, the American military announced the release of five Iraqi women being detained, but insisted the release had nothing to do with the kidnappers' demands. Five others are still being held.

The American ambassador, Zalmay Khalilzad, said Thursday that the embassy in Baghdad had not "entered into any arrangements with anyone" to secure Ms. Carroll's release. Editors at The Christian Science Monitor also said they had conducted no negotiations.

American Muslim groups had worked hard on her behalf. Nihad Awad, executive director of the Council on American Islamic Relations, said his group and many others were spurred to action because Ms. Carroll was a journalist, one who had gained a reputation in Iraq and Jordan for reports that were sensitive, even sympathetic, to people in the Arab world.

Other influential voices in the Arab world pleaded for her freedom: the militant Palestinian group Hamas; the Muslim Brotherhood, an Islamist group active in many countries; Al Azhar University in Cairo; and Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi, an influential preacher with a regular program on Al Jazeera.

The evening before Ms. Carroll was released, her twin sister, Katie, appeared on Al Arabiya, another popular Middle Eastern satellite television network, to plead for her freedom. In public messages since Jan. 7, when Ms. Carroll was seized in western Baghdad, the Carroll family had sought to portray her as an intrepid reporter who had gone to Iraq out of her love for Islamic culture and the Iraqi people.

Ms. Carroll's release also coincided with a rapprochement between the American Embassy and Sunni Arab political leaders. Some of those Sunni leaders have praised Mr. Khalilzad for openly pressuring Shiite politicians in recent weeks to disband their militias and to be more accommodating to the political aspirations of the Sunnis.

It was to a branch office of the Iraqi Islamic Party, one of the leading representatives of conservative Sunni Arabs, that Ms. Carroll was delivered Thursday. The party's leader, Tarik al-Hashemi, has been working closely with Mr. Khalilzad during the fraught negotiations to form a new government. Mr. Hashemi comforted Ms. Carroll on Thursday after receiving her at his headquarters and made a separate videotape of her, which was shown on the party's television station.

Mr. Hashemi, one of many politicians who made public pleas for Ms. Carroll's release, disavowed any connection to her captors.

About 430 foreigners have been kidnapped in Iraq since the start of the war, nearly 50 of them Americans, according to an American official working closely with the Hostage Working Group, an interagency task force based at the American Embassy here. Thirteen Americans, all presumed to be in captivity, are still missing, the official said. Most are Iraqi-Americans.

Freed Reporter in Recovery In U.S. Zone in Baghdad

Ms. Carroll's ordeal began when she was kidnapped at gunpoint after leaving the offices of Adnan Dulaimi, a prominent Sunni Arab politician. She had gone there to conduct an interview with Mr. Dulaimi, only to find he was unavailable, leading some to suspect she was set up. The kidnappers cut off Ms. Carroll's car, killed her interpreter and snatched her after chasing her down the street. Her driver escaped.

In a series of videotapes, the captors threatened to kill Ms. Carroll unless the Americans released all Iraqi women detainees. In one of those videos, she seemed to be in extreme distress, but in the televised interview with Mr. Hashemi's party, she said she had been neither mistreated nor threatened by her captors.

The Christian Science Monitor reported that Ms. Carroll's release followed half a dozen false leads from people who had contacted The Monitor or her family. Some demanded exorbitant ransoms without proof that she was alive.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Load-Date: April 1, 2006

End of Document

Saviour or nemesis - is Sadr the answer to Iraq's ills?

South China Morning Post

March 11, 2006 Saturday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 13

Length: 1156 words

Byline: With a private army ready to do his bidding and his leadership pedigree, the radical Shi'ite cleric wields significant power, writes Peter Kammerer

Body

As Iraq inches towards civil war amid political infighting and growing sectarianism, one figure stands out as the nation's potential saviour, or nemesis: radical Shi'ite leader Moqtada al-Sadr.

Just 32, anti-American to the hilt, closely linked to extremist groups in the Middle East and backed by a personal militia, Mr Sadr's strength is rooted not in political savvy or negotiating skills, but his impeccable religious credentials: He can trace his ancestry directly to the founder of Islam, the Prophet Mohammed. In a country where everything from electricity to security has failed, that counts for a lot.

In recent weeks, though, he has gained a nation-wide voice that none will challenge for fear of unrest spinning out of control at his say so.

In Baghdad today, Mr Sadr will lead a rally uniting Shi'ites, who comprise 60 per cent of the country's population and wield real political power, and Sunnis, one-fifth of Iraqi's population and the former rulers under ousted dictator Saddam Hussein. A big turnout would cement his increasingly apparent position as Iraq's foremost political force.

Respect - or perhaps more likely, fear - for his authority was the reason Vice-President Adel Abdul Mahdi broke a weeks-long deadlock on Wednesday and signed a presidential decree allowing parliament to meet. He has set in motion the process for the formation of the country's first democratically elected government.

Mr Sadr's followers won 30 of the 275 parliamentary seats in the December election, and his backing enabled Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari to win the nomination of the Shi'ite bloc for a second term. But the outbreak of sectarian violence between Shi'ites and Sunnis after a sacred Shi'ite shrine was bombed on February 22 in the town of Samarra provided him with an opportunity he was quick to exploit.

Reprisal attacks against Sunni mosques around the country was swift. As many as 1,300 people have since died, pushing Iraq to the brink of civil war.

Observers contend many of the attacks against Sunnis were orchestrated by Mr Sadr's Mahdi Army militia, which operates in the Shi'ite slum of Baghdad's Sadr City and in Shi'ite strongholds throughout the country. The young cleric has denied such claims, saying he was in Lebanon at the time. Nonetheless, the worst of the violence began to die down when he joined moderate Shi'ite clerics in calling for peace.

Whatever his connection to the unrest, the message was loud and clear: Mr Sadr controls the streets and no deal to restore order would be successful without his support. Instantly, all of Iraq's political and religious leaders and

Saviour or nemesis - is Sadr the answer to Iraq 's ills?

even the US paid attention. None - not even the foremost Shi'ite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani - would at this stage dare challenge him.

That was apparent when Mr Abdul Mahdi finally caved in and signed the decree. As a result, a looming political crisis may also be stifled: Opponents of Dr Jaafari's candidacy on grounds he would be unable to form a government of unity due to his links to Mr Sadr may yet reconsider their campaign.

Dr Jaafari's confirmation as prime minister would be a major challenge to mainstream Shi'ite parties and the US and its allies, which had been hoping a stable government would allow them to gradually withdraw troops. He would undoubtedly give Mr Sadr's followers important posts in the new government, providing them with the power to make key decisions.

The cleric has already hinted at what that might mean. Returning to his home in the city of Najaf, south of Baghdad, last month, he suggested his militia not be disbanded and instead be given a formal role to work "in co-ordination with the Iraqi government, army, police and people". That would undercut efforts to create a professional Iraqi military and prevent foreign troops from leaving any time soon.

Further proving his vision for Iraq's future is markedly different from other leaders, he told followers that "there is no such thing as Sunni or Shi'ite mosques - the mosques are for all Iraqi people and all Muslims".

In the southern city of Basra, his militiamen have reportedly bombed shops selling alcohol and entertainment material considered improper, while women wearing what is deemed improper clothing are berated.

Mr Sadr also supports the hardline regimes in neighbouring Iran and Syria, which he visited to much acclaim last month. In Syria, he praised the victory of the militant group Hamas in Palestinian elections, saying: "I hope it is the beginning of an Islamic awakening and that it will be the start ... of Islam's triumph in other Islamic countries."

Despite such statements, Mr Sadr does not have the scholarly background in Islam that other leaders of his stature enjoy. His lack of religious education puts him at a middle rank within Shia Islam; only in a decade, assuming he fulfils his scholarly obligations, would he attain the top-most position, which would permit him to interpret the holy book the Koran and hand down edicts.

Nevertheless, he has a loyal following of thousands of supporters, many of whom vow they would die for him. Mostly from the slums of Iraq - his lack of religious credentials have made better-educated, middle-class Iraqis wary - they refer to him as "al-Sayed", or master, and he wears the black turban reserved for descendents of Mohammed.

His pedigree to lead is flawless. His father was Iraq's top Shi'ite cleric, but fell out with Hussein's regime and was assassinated along with Mr Sadr's two elder brothers in 1999. The same fate befell his uncle, a prominent ayatollah and philosopher, in 1980. His grandfather was Iraq's prime minister in 1948.

With Hussein's removal by the US-led invasion in 2003, Mr Sadr began his rise to prominence, first setting up his militia in defiance of American orders, and then a newspaper that was temporarily shut down for allegedly inciting anti-US violence.

The radical cleric has led uprisings against US forces at Najaf, prompting the intervention of Ayatollah Sistani. He has also evaded an arrest warrant over the murder of a moderate Shi'ite leader killed just two days after the fall of Baghdad.

Mr Sadr is not a great orator; he stands woodenly before his supporters, reading his speeches in a hesitant, often awkward, manner. He makes up for the lack of this skill by showing compassion.

"I feel for you my beloved demonstrators and find that you tire yourself greatly," he said in calling off street protests in April 2004. I am with you in heart and body and will never leave you to face difficulties alone."

Saviour or nemesis - is Sadr the answer to Iraq 's ills?

Such sentiments are met with gusto at rallies. His mostly young supporters wave giant photographs of his father and chant their readiness to die for him. Such devotion could take him a long way in Iraq. He has manipulated himself into a strong position and the rewards could be many.

But Iraq is also going through tumultuous times and what may seem certain now could well be tragedy tomorrow.

Graphic

Credit: Illustration: Terry Pontikos

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Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Two clocks are ticking: Obsessed with trying to stop Tehran from going nuclear, we are neglecting democracy

Guardian Weekly

March 17, 2006 Friday

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***The*GuardianWeekly**

Section: Pg. 5

Length: 1216 words

Byline: Timothy Garton Ash

Body

Rome was not built in a day and Persia will not be changed in a day. As we contemplate our very limited options for influencing that ancient, self-referential and now defiant country, we must be clear that we are in for a long haul. We cannot make Iran peaceful and democratic; we can only help to create conditions in which Iranians themselves might eventually make it so.

Two clocks are ticking in Iran: the nuclear clock and the democracy clock. The strategic objective of western policy must be to slow down the nuclear clock and to speed up the democracy clock. Our problem is that some of the things we might do to slow down the nuclear clock are likely to slow down the democracy clock as well.

Millions of Iranians who are fiercely critical of the country's theocratic regime, and of its wildly ranting president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, also believe that Iran is entitled to civilian nuclear power. Many of them think that it's entitled to nuclear weapons as well. If the West imposes sanctions just on the nuclear issue, without linking them to respect for human rights inside Iran, there will be an anti-western backlash among parts of the population who would otherwise be a force for change. That may well be what Ahmadinejad is counting on. There is method in his madness.

Last week's report of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) puts the issue of Iran's nuclear programme firmly before the UN security council but, despite American and European pressure, Russia and China are extremely reluctant to bring things to a crunch. The next step in the diplomatic dance will probably be a "presidential statement" from the security council, something well short of a condemnatory resolution and sanctions. Even that may be many weeks in the making.

If the security council does finally "impose meaningful consequences", as the US vice-president, Dick Cheney, put it last week, the Islamic Republic of Iran can strike back in two ways. First, it can do what it has already promised to do, and let rip with its nuclear enrichment programme, while stoking up a siege mentality at home with a propaganda of patriotic resistance to nefarious British-American imperial diktat. It can also make lots more trouble for the West and its allies in the Middle East by supporting more extreme elements in the Shia south of Iraq, in **Hamas** and in Hizbullah. Already Iran's revolutionary guards are busy recruiting candidates for what they call "martyrdom-seeking operations". All this under the banner of leading Islamic resistance to western imperialism.

Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Two clocks are ticking: Obsessed with trying to stop Tehran from going nuclear, we are neglecting democracy

So as the nuclear diplomacy grinds on, we need to think urgently about the other track: speeding up the democracy clock. At first glance, we seem to have the familiar spectacle of a hard line from Washington and a soft line from Europe. In fact, Washington's line on democracy promotion is more complicated and Europe's is non-existent.

It's true that the same American neocons who talk of bombing Iran will also tell you their preferred option is to foment a revolution to overthrow the mullahs. Brave of them to risk other people's lives. Meanwhile the Bush administration has announced a budget allocation of \$85m to finance satellite television broadcasting to Iran, and other forms of support to civil society and elements of democratic opposition in the country. The senior state department official spearheading this effort is Elizabeth Cheney, the daughter of Dick Cheney - in itself enough to damn her in the eyes of many Europeans. In a recent speech to the Foreign Policy Association, she argued that there are "many similarities and more than a few differences" between what happened in central Europe in the 1980s and the wider Middle East today. The "most direct parallel" she finds with the Solidarity movement in Poland is the role of women as the spearhead for change across the wider Middle East.

Now you may - and I would - question the historical comparison with Solidarity. But you also have to answer these questions: do you think movements for the emancipation of women in the Muslim world are a good thing? Do you think we should be supporting them? If the answer is yes, then why don't you agree with her? Is it just because she's an American called Cheney?

Rather than sitting on the sidelines carping at whatever Washington does, we Europeans should do something better ourselves. Instead of merely expressing (justified) scepticism about an American satellite TV channel for Iran, which will be widely seen there as Bush administration propaganda, we should be urging the British parliament to make money available for a 24-hour BBC satellite television service broadcasting to Iran in Farsi. For the BBC does have real credibility in Iran. Rather than just sniping at Washington's sometimes clumsy efforts at democracy promotion, we should be developing our own.

When I say we, I mean all the member states of the European Union, pooling their resources and know-how. After all, we - not the Americans - have the diplomats, business people and journalists on the ground in Iran. Between our 25 countries, we have a unique body of experience about how democratic states can encourage peaceful change in their less democratic neighbours. In the last decades of the cold war, West Germany tried to do this with its Ostpolitik, and Poland, having been on the receiving end, can help us to learn from the mistakes of that Ostpolitik. Not all the European precedents fit Iran, but some do. For example, we should be weaving a dense web of human contacts between Iranians and freer countries, as we did between the western and eastern halves of a divided Europe.

Our universities should invite their academics and students, who have often been in the vanguard of standing up for free speech and human rights in Iran. Our newspapers and journalism schools should bring over their journalists. Our trades unions should hitch up with their unionists, some of whom have organised major strikes. Our parliaments should establish links with their parliament which, though far from fully democratic, has been giving Ahmadinejad a rough ride. Writers, artists and filmmakers should be encouraged to travel, carrying ideas in both directions. Women's movements in Iran, representing half the population systematically discriminated against, should be supported by women's movements in Europe. Iran's Islamic thinkers and jurists, both reformist modernisers and conservatives, should be engaged in dialogue by theologians and scholars from other faith traditions.

All this should be done less by our governments than by our own societies, and not just by America and Britain - traditionally distrusted by many Iranians - but by all European countries, working separately and together. We need a European Iranpolitik.

We cannot know in advance which parts of such a catalytic action will have what effects over what period. Certainly we are talking years, not months. Iran is not Poland, and when change does come it will come from Iranians working in a distinctively Iranian way.

Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Two clocks are ticking: Obsessed with trying to stop Tehran from going nuclear, we are neglecting democracy

It may be that the nuclear clock will still tick too quickly and the democracy clock too slowly. However, to work only on the nuclear clock, and not make any systematic attempt to speed up the other, is to condemn ourselves in advance to almost certain failure.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Australian (Australia)

July 24, 2006 Monday

All-round Country Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Letters; Pg. 9

Length: 2600 words

Body

MATP

Israeli aggression helping lose battle for hearts and minds

MOST TALKED ABOUT

LEBANON CRISIS

YOUR editorials ("Israel must win the war of ideas", 21/7, "Foes must accept the Jewish state", 22-23/7) are correct. The battle of ideas -- or, to use an older phrase, the battle for hearts and minds -- is being lost for Israel. But the answer is a radical change of behaviour by Israel. Compassionate people cannot stand to see Lebanon destroyed this way and hundreds of innocents killed.

The Israeli ambassador to Australia said on ABC radio that this is happening because Hezbollah hide themselves and their arms amid civilians. This was surely known to Israel before it retaliated and should have meant it adopted other means.

Prisoners have been exchanged with Hezbollah before, in 2004, for example. Given the danger to civilians, a prisoner exchange should have been agreed to this time.

The best way to deal with Hezbollah is via Iran and not this frontal attack which has only strengthened the militia and led to global hostility towards Israel. Many believe Israel fell into Hezbollah's trap and it appears so.

Mike Rubbo

Avoca Beach, NSW

YOUR editorial (22-23/7) was a disgrace. I didn't realise you were on the Israeli Government payroll. Israel can never win the war of ideas -- unless the media totally distorts the truth -- because it cannot win the war of facts. Why don't you tell your readers why Hezbollah and Hamas challenge Israel's right to exist?

Why don't you tell readers that less than 100 years ago, 90 per cent of the population of the land that is now Israel was Palestinian? Why don't you tell them that the West gave Israel to the Jews to assuage their Holocaust guilt without regard for the wishes or intrerests of the Palestinians.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Why don't you tell your readers about Security Council Resolution 242 and all the other resolutions that Israel has ignored? Why don't you tell them about the ruling of the International Court of Justice against Israel's apartheid wall, which it has also ignored? You are a newspaper not a propaganda sheet.

S. Q. Marsden

Fitzroy, Vic

THE editorial (22-23/7) makes depressing reading. Most people would agree with Israel's desire to exist. Yet, until it and its supporters acknowledge and address the root cause of Palestinian unrest everyone will continue to suffer and Israel will lose the war of ideas.

D. Kilgariff

Rivervale, WA

YOUR editorial (22-23/7) came as a bolt from the blue: a carefully considered, humane and pragmatic insight. No one should have to thank a newspaper for accurate, honest and unbiased reporting, but it is so rare these days that I have no hesitation in expressing gratitude. You have shown me and those who support Israel, a glimmer of hope in the murky mire of anti-Israel bigotry that pervades journalism, from the BBC to the pseudo-intellectual rabid rags of Fleet Street, such as The Guardian. The Australian stands as a bastion protecting the true craft of journalism that elsewhere has become another casualty in this war.

Barry Walters

Subiaco, WA

THE federal Government has it wrong or else it is pandering to the racist minority by charging refugees for some of the costs of their evacuation from Beirut. Australian tourists caught up in the conflict must surely have travel insurance from which they can claim the cost. Those with dual citizenship but have been domiciled in Lebanon are the true refugees and should not be charged the cost of their rescue. They are severely disadvantaged and in need of our ongoing support.

Loucille McGinley

East Brighton, Vic

I AM absolutely fed up with the insulting and ungrateful attitude of some Lebanese-born Australians banging on about how little our government is doing to extricate them from the consequences of their decision to return to Lebanon. I understand there may be those there on holidays or cultural tours but there are many thousands living there simply because the exchange rate and other circumstances suit. These self-interested, self-absorbed and selfish individuals, abuse the privilege of citizenship by using a passport as nothing more than an emergency escape hatch. We really don't need egocentric people like these who are stuck in the pain of past conflict and not prepared to make a new life here. Australia needs to be a damn sight choosier about who we allow here and concentrate our efforts on people who wish to genuinely contribute to this wonderful nation.

Steve Graham

Hawthorn, Vic

I WONDER what the general reaction would be if a foreign power sent a raiding party into Australia and kidnapped two of our soldiers then threatened to kill them if their demands were not met. Would the media and general population of Australia be calling for restraint and a measured diplomatic response or baying for blood and revenge?

Doug Steley

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Maroochydore, Qld

THE Lebanese protesters (in Sydney and other capitals) would find more Australians standing shoulder to shoulder with them if they also protested in the same numbers, and with the same emotion and vigour against Hamas and Hezbollah killing Jews.

N. Ford

Kambah, ACT

Economists should try living on the minimum wage

DAVID Uren's article ("Push to freeze wages of low paid", 22-23/7) seems to highlight severe problems. Economists seem to take the economy as an abstract without realising that there are real people on the end of their decisions. With the University of Canberra's Phil Lewis saying there was no reason for an increase, may I suggest Professor Lewis try to live on \$484.40 a week, year after year, and replace motor vehicles, go to the dentist, raise and educate children etc. He would very quickly come face to face with a reason.

I find it interesting that these people always look to cut the wages of those who can least afford it. They never do a survey of how many more people would be employed if the billions that are siphoned out of the community every year in corporate profits were funneled into extra jobs. It is time to recognise that these people suffer from a severe lack of empathy.

Rob Duff

Cairns, Qld

ALL those who wish to freeze the wages of the low paid, such as Phil Lewis, should come to the US and see what such policies encourage: homeless people in droves living under freeways with not enough money to pay the bond for an apartment. The US has not raised the minimum wage in nine years and it remains at \$US5.15 (\$6.85) per hour. It is a disgrace when the wealthiest in wealthy countries profit from the sweat of the least wealthy and refuse to pay a fair wage.

David Jamieson

Houston, Texas

ARE your headlines ("Push to freeze wages of low paid", "Scrap migrant pay safety net: bosses", "Restaurant man 'kept as a slave'", 22-23/7) a taste of the future for employment in Australia? With the introduction of the IR laws it seems that not only are the low paid going to suffer a decline in real wages but also migrant workers are going to be paid even less. Will we see more headlines about unscrupulous employers paying migrant workers a pittance and keeping them as slaves? If the rate of pay for Australian workers is too high, will we see an influx of unskilled migrant workers working for less? Will profits for Australian companies be made on the back of slaves from the Third World?

Robert Pallister

Punchbowl, NSW

THROWING our country open to temporary foreign workers will create the same problem that exists in the US which attracts illegal immigrants, such as Mexicans. The people we bring in will take a look at our lifestyle and vanish in the cities. Don't let greed drive us to an even greater problem.

Gary Gillies

Minyama, Qld

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

AUSTRALIA'S Joint Strike Fighter is due in 2012. How could making something that small take so long? We need more foreign workers.

Derek Budd

Tweed Heads, Qld

Dogs always get the blame

I READ that police may lay charges over the mauling death by dogs of Tyra Kuehne. What about the child's mother? I feel sorry for all involved but it is always the dog and dog owner who get the blame. The animals were tethered in their yard. They are territorial, so when someone intrudes, they act naturally.

I am not a fan of hunting dogs and would be happy to see them eradicated from Australia. As a nurse in an emergency department, I have seen many unprovoked attacks on children and adults by common-breed pet dogs. Australian Veterinary Association president Kersti Seksel states: "The failure of owners to responsibly care for and control their dog is one of the major underlying problems." Try inserting the child for dog.

Margaret Ann Clarke

Mount Colah, NSW

I READ the distressing report ("NSW to get tougher on dangerous dogs", 20/7) of the savage attack on Tyra Kuehne and my heart melted with sympathy for the family. But why should this be? There are breeds that are known for their savagery but we allow them to be kept by owners that cry, "mine would not do anything like that". The answer is simple: defang the dogs. This allows the animals to be kept as companion animals and any family would be confident that the animal could never harm any child or person even if it escaped on to the street.

James A. Foster

Panania, NSW

Lessons on curriculum

I WAS most disconcerted to read Christopher Pearson's reckless advocacy of the postmodern scam of critical literacy in the secondary history curriculum through students developing a speculative attitude towards the seeming certainties of the times ("Let history be the judge", 22-23/7). The eminently reasonable Pearson has otherwise been a bulwark against the new age, politically correct mantras of faux-Marxist educationalists who appear determined to dumb down the curriculum and make relativism the order of the day.

The recent example of students audaciously satirising the Howard Government's new industrial relations laws in an impertinent rock eisteddfod piece suggests that encouraging critical thinking in schools, rather than the acceptance of received wisdom, will lead to the political hijacking of the nation's classrooms by the worst extremes of progressivism.

Mark Howie

Lawson, NSW

CHRISTOPHER Pearson's article (22-23/7) contained an illustration of Sir John Monash and, more particularly, his helmet, said to be used at Gallipoli. The steel helmet could not have been worn by Monash as they were not on general issue until 1916 when the Australian troops had arrived in France.

Des Martin

Mountain Creek, Qld

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FROM his rather narrow range of topics, Kevin Donnelly is again attacking English syllabuses ("It's all depths and deconstruction", 22-23/7). One basic concept about effective writing is shared by the sort of traditional English teaching that Donnelly hankers after and the quality of work being done in progressive English classrooms around the country. It is the notion that subject matter and the vocabulary selected to represent it should be appropriate for the intended audience. An explanation about jet engines in a primary school science book should certainly use different language from an article on the same topic in a journal for aeronautical engineers.

It is well to remember that the target audience for syllabus documents is the teaching profession and not, in the first instance, the general public. What can be cheaply decried as impenetrable jargon can also be seen as appropriate technical language. Is there a media outcry because professional publications in medicine, science and engineering contain vocabulary that the person in the street is unlikely to understand? A large chunk of human knowledge would have to be jettisoned if we were to restrict ourselves to ideas and vocabulary that the uneducated can readily understand.

New syllabus documents provide an opportunity for teachers to be presented with cutting-edge ideas. They should provide an element of challenge rather than being dumbed down to be within easy reach of the lowest common denominator.

Garry Collins

Stafford Heights, Qld

Defending the indefensible

GREAT hatchet job on the legal liberal Peter Breen ("MP with stars in his eyes for killers", 22-23/7). I had no idea the hysterical lynch-mob of Jonestown was the new target demographic of The Australian. You should be warned that competition in this target group is very crowded. Perhaps you should direct reporters to do "Inside story" pieces on the evils of refugee advocates, welfare recipients and nasty church leaders who say nice things about disgusting people, such as the poor.

Daniel Barnes

Brighton, SA

THE "Inside story" on Peter Breen (22-23/7) has clarified an otherwise incomprehensible situation. Learning that Mr Breen was elected on a platform of "reform the legal system" makes his otherwise seemingly bizarre actions somewhat more comprehensible though not more justified. My wife and I, who are campaigning for the reform of aspects of the legal system in South Australia following our 2005 experience with the system after the death of our daughter on the road, were left with the impression that there is a need to fix an unfair system. We doubt Mr Breen will be re-elected but we are not at all surprised that he was elected in the first place, such is the disenchantment in the community with the legal system. Mr Breen understands this community concern. Unfortunately, as far as we are concerned, he has chosen the wrong people to defend. He should have chosen instead the innocent victims.

Robin Percy

Redwood Park, SA

FIRST BYTE

letters@theaustralian.com.au

The twin problems of the wine glut and the water shortage might be solved if only we could identify someone who could turn wine into water.

Paul Phelan

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mount Beauty, Vic

There's no such thing as a free shopping bag, so charging an extra 10c seems to indicate collusion somewhere.

M. Mitchell

Lindenow South, Vic

Buying some frozen fish at Coles in Fremantle this weekend, the label revealed the country of origin as "Taiwan, Province of China". Is this an example of appeasement of China being taken too far?

Rod Steed

Bull Creek, WA

Nobel laureate Patrick White is honoured daily on Australian golf courses with a putt named after him. A "Patrick White" is a bad read way off to the left.

Frank Anning

Ascot, Qld

There is a chronic shortage of women in country Australia. The Government could introduce a Vietnam-style draft for women. Conscript the required number and send them out bush for a year. Farmers would appreciate an influx of young city girls every six months.

Russell Metcalfe

Glebe, NSW

I FEEL sorry for Wendell Sailor. I thought the crackdown on drugs in sport was about performance-enhancing drugs. While he may have broken some social taboos and exposed himself to prosecution for his private excesses, it does seem a bit over the top. Doesn't anyone know the difference between cocaine and EPO?

Peter Clark

Toowoomba, Qld

Goodbye Sailor!

Peter Thornton

Kureelipa, Qld

I'm of two minds. Should Howard stay on just to continue to infuriate Phillip Adams or should he retire just to shut Adams up?

Christopher Hanley

Mt Egerton, Vic

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GPO Box 4162, Sydney, NSW, 2001 Fax: 02 9288 3077

E-mail: letters@theaustralian.com.au (no attachments)

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Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Next phase of Sharonism: The new prime minister must perform a deed that proved too hard for greater men - pullout from the West Bank

Guardian Weekly

January 20, 2006 Friday

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***The*GuardianWeekly**

Section: Pg. 6

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Byline: Jonathan Freedland

Body

With death at least, there are rules. All campaigning has to be suspended, journalists wear black ties, and politicians pretend to come together in a spirit of national unity. But with a medical situation that hovers close to death without ever quite touching it - a prime minister struck down but still alive - the rules are less clear. Like a man unsure whether to dress for a funeral, Israel has found itself unsure of its footing.

Accordingly, Israelis have spent the two weeks since Ariel Sharon's massive stroke engaging in a quintessential Jewish pastime: second-guessing the doctors, filling up newspaper columns and television airtime with a national debate on the quality of Sharon's treatment. The politicians, meanwhile, have been politicking.

After a decent interval of a few hours, they started assessing the new, transformed landscape. Before the stroke, most assumed that the March 28 elections would be a walkover for Sharon and his newly formed Kadima party. With him gone, it should be a genuine three-way contest, but that's not quite how it looks.

In the red corner stands Labour's new leader, Amir Peretz. A lifelong campaigner for workers' rights and a committed peacenik, he generated enormous enthusiasm when he took over in November. But his campaign stalled, damaged by the defection of the seemingly immortal Shimon Peres to Kadima. His enemies say Peretz is simply not prime ministerial timber, that he is a trade unionist rabble-rouser. Even his fellow Mizrahim, Middle Eastern Jews who should have been his natural constituency, have not rallied. "He's not one of the ones they can be proud of," says a Likud official acidly. His focus on domestic issues and lack of experience in the security sphere mean few see him as a serious contender for the top job. Labour hopes to turn that around in the next two months, but it won't be easy.

Back from the margins, returned as Likud leader, is Binyamin Netanyahu, who had looked set to be wiped out by Sharon. Now he is the sole former prime minister in the contest. "He has experience - the trouble is, it was not a good one," Yuli Tamir, a Labour Knesset member and close Peretz adviser, told me as she fidgeted with an anti-Sharon leaflet that will now have to be pulped. She reckons Israelis have not forgotten Bibi's last spell at the helm in the late 1990s, or his recent stint as Sharon's uber-Thatcherite finance minister, imposing a series of "cruel" cuts on the most vulnerable.

Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Next phase of Sharonism: The new prime minister must perform a deed that proved too hard for greater men - pullout from the....

That leaves Sharon's deputy, the acting prime minister, Ehud Olmert. Widely disliked personally and with little security background, few would ever have tipped him for the top in normal circumstances. But suddenly the premiership is his to lose. So far he has played it well, acting humbly, continuing to work out of his own office rather than the PM's. If he runs a smart campaign - using Sharon's face on Kadima posters, keeping his own in the background - he could come through.

None of these men will win an outright majority; Israel's election system allows for no such thing. Instead, two of them will end up as coalition partners. What then?

Sharon had not exactly spelled out his next move. Indeed, that was part of his political strategy. He kept his ideas vague and secret, giving the electorate little to disagree with. He discovered his personal standing was so great, Israeli voters were ready to give him a blank cheque. Don't bother us with the details, they said; if you think it's right, that's good enough.

Nevertheless, few doubted that Sharon was planning more of the policy that had come to define him: he would follow August's disengagement from the Gaza Strip with further unilateral withdrawals from the West Bank. Why else would he have formed a new party at the age of 77 unless he planned a major initiative, one that could not be thwarted by the dogmatists of the Likud?

The outlines were clear too. Whatever he said publicly, Sharon saw the security barrier, or wall, as the putative border for Israel. That way the major settlement blocks on the West Bank would stay under Israeli rule, while the Palestinians would get the rest. This would, of course, be hugely imperfect. Israel would be formally annexing territory that, officially speaking, it occupies only temporarily (albeit a temporary period of 39 years). And it's a real question whether the terrain Sharon left on the Palestinian side of the wall would, combined with Gaza, be enough to constitute a viable state.

Nevertheless his next move would have represented greater progress - the partial ending of the occupation and the dismantling of illegal settlements - than at any time for four decades. Now that prospect, near certain if Sharon had stayed on, is in peril. Optimists will note that Olmert shares the Sharon vision; indeed, he had a big hand in forming it. (Privately, Olmert would speak of Israel eventually withdrawing from all but 6% to 8% of the West Bank.) They will also argue that there is a genuine constituency in Israel for a party that sits between the zealous nationalism of Likud and the dovelike instincts of Labour, with its call for a negotiated peace with the Palestinians, a project too many Israelis regard as a lost cause - and which they will see as even more hopeless if Hamas triumphs in this month's Palestinian elections. "Sharon did not create Kadima in a vacuum," the former Likud cabinet minister Dan Meridor told me. Its support will not melt away just because Sharon has gone; it represents a national consensus.

Pessimists will see something else. Olmert has none of his mentor's strongman credentials, essential for driving through a second round of territorial withdrawals. He would need the public approval of the military brass, a group that could never outrank Sharon. Olmert will have to argue for his every move.

More depressing, the next phase of Sharonism might have defeated Sharon himself. The most striking conversation I had in Jerusalem was with a key player in religious Zionism, a man with a keen ear for rightist politics. He reports a new mood among the settlers. "There is tremendous criticism of the leadership, that they were too moderate over Gaza." Hardliners felt the Gaza Jews rolled over too easily, refusing to raise a hand to the soldiers who came to remove them.

The West Bank settlers will not go so quietly. "They are planning armed confrontations with the army, even mass suicides," he says. It will be the Masada manoeuvre: the shock of finding men, women and children dead by their own hand would stun Israel into calling a halt to the disengagement.

If Sharon would have struggled to withstand such an event, what chance Olmert? Withdrawing from Gaza - a place of next to no biblical significance to Jewish literalists - will be nothing alongside a pullout from the West Bank lands revered as Judea and Samaria. And these are not easy people to take on: witness the hardcore settlers whooping

Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Next phase of Sharonism: The new prime minister must perform a deed that proved too hard for greater men - pullout from the....

and cheering at Sharon's stroke, convinced it was the "finger of God" punishing him for the crime of disengagement.

So Olmert faces a year of great challenge: if he wins in March, he has to perform a political deed that has proved too hard for men both stronger and greater. Whether the occupation deepens or shrinks now depends on him.

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Revealed: civilian toll of a deadly assault that has ravaged Gaza;
PALESTINIAN CRISIS

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September 19, 2006 Tuesday

First Edition

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The  **INDEPENDENT**

Section: NEWS; Pg. 2

Length: 1213 words

Byline: By Donald Macintyre In Rafah

Body

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He says he clearly saw a bright flash next to the control tower of the disused Gaza International Airport, occupied by Israeli forces after Corporal Gilad Shalit was seized by militants on 25 June. "I went two or three steps and the missile landed," said Nayef, 24, "I thought I was dying. I shouted 'La Ilaha Illa Allah' [There is no God but Allah]."

When Jihad's older brother Kassem, 20, arrived at the scene: "My brother was already dead. There was shrapnel in his head. Nayef was shouting Allah, Allah'. The missile landed about four metres from where Jihad had been standing. There was shrapnel in his body as well, his legs, everything. He had been bleeding a lot everywhere."

Jihad Abu Snaima was just the most recent of more than 37 children and teenagers under 18, killed [out of a total death toll, including militants, of 228] during the operations mounted by the Israeli military in Gaza since 25 June, according to figures from the Palestinian Centre of Human Rights. Of these, the PCHR classifies 151 as "civilian", although beside non-combatants and bystanders, that total also includes militants or faction members not involved in operations against Israel at the time - for example those deliberately targeted in Israeli air strikes because of their involvement in previous attacks. Israeli defence forces have always maintained that being under 18 does not automatically exclude a person from taking part in action against them.

Gaza has remained a war that the world has known little about what with Israel's invasion of Lebanon gathering most of the headlines. But still the death toll rises.

Speaking from his hospital bed, Nayef has multiple, shrapnel-inflicted cuts on his arms and legs. His right leg was broken in the blast. But he was lucky compared with Jihad.

A school caretaker, with a five-year-old daughter, Nayef insists the evening of Jihad's death was just a family get-together. It is normal, he said, in this Bedouin community in the Abu Shoukha hamlet outside the southernmost Gaza town of Rafah, to socialise at each other's homes on a summer evening, and that he and Jihad were

Revealed: civilian toll of a deadly assault that has ravaged Gaza PALESTINIAN CRISIS

especially close. "I was always with him. He was an innocent person, kind. He was talking to me about how he was going to inherit part of his father's land and farm it and how he was going to get married and stay here." Nayef added tearfully: "He was a boy who had hopes.

He wanted to live his life." He added: "What is my daughter going to think? She is going to grow up hating the Israelis."

The family say that there was no shelling in the area at the time either before or after the incident' and that they therefore presume Jihad and Nayef were targeted by a tank crew. Equally, they insist there was no activity by militants in the vicinity against Israeli positions on the day of the attack. "This is an open area," said Nayef. "The resistance would not go there because they would be seen."

By contrast, the Israel Defence Forces said, without specifying Al Soukh, that on 10 September it had identified and hit "two men" moving near its forces in southern Gaza crouching on the ground, and "apparently planting explosives". It goes without saying that Nayef is adamant that on the night in question he and Jihad were merely pausing on an evening stroll to his own house.

The PCHR, which seeks to monitor every violent Palestinian death, does not only focus on the Israel-Palestinian conflict. It has, for example, repeatedly condemned the killing and injuring of growing numbers of civilians, also including children, during mounting inter-Palestinian disputes in Gaza' shootings by Palestinian security forces themselves' attacks on Christian churches by Muslims protesting against the Pope' the injury of civilians, including children, by Palestinian-fired Qassam rockets which fall short of targets in Israel' and the kidnapping last month of two Fox TV employees which has deterred journalists from visiting Gaza.

But Hamdi Shaqqura of PCHR's Gaza office - which accuses Israel of using repeated closures and destruction of the power supply to operate a policy of "collective punishment" in breach of international law in Gaza, argues that the excuse of "collateral damage" cannot justify the "very high" death toll in the operations since 15 June. He adds: "Israel's forces have been acting excessively and disproportionately, and this explains the high figures for the number of innocent civilians killed by them."

At the other, northern end of Gaza, close to al-Nada apartment blocks between Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahiya, Aref Abu Qaida, 16, was killed by an artillery shell on 1 August. Sharif Harafin, 15, said: "We had been playing football and we had just finished. I was carrying the ball. I was going to my home, and [Aref] was going to his home. I heard a loud boom and then I saw him cut to pieces."

As his family displayed Aref's shredded red baseball cap, Sharif said he saw his friend's severed head on the ground, adding: "His chest was torn out by the rocket. People were collecting parts of his body. I was crying a lot."

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Although the area had been shelled before, and some residents had fled in response to Israeli warnings the previous week, Mr Abu Qaida said the area had been quiet on the day - except that Qassam rockets had been fired about four hours earlier from northern settlements more than a kilometre away from the flats.

The IDF said last night that, of those killed in Gaza, it had the "positive identities of over 220 gunmen killed in fighting, and can confirm their affiliation with terror organizations." The 220 figure - said to be "unbelievable" by Mr Shaqqura - coupled with another 20 dead which the military acknowledges as genuine civilians - is all the more strikingly at variance with PCHR figures since it produces a total exceeding the centre's own records.

Revealed: civilian toll of a deadly assault that has ravaged Gaza PALESTINIAN CRISIS

Mr Shaqqura said that, at the absolute minimum, the IDF figures do not take into account the casualties under 18 - from which he said teenagers with militant connections had been excluded - or eight women killed since 15 June. "We do not believe their figures," he added. "We do not believe their investigations."

The IDF said: "Since the abduction of Cpl Gilad Shalit by the Hamas and PRC Terror organizations, the IDF has been operating in the Gaza strip against terrorist infrastructure and in order to secure the release of Cpl Shalit. In the course of the operations, the IDF engaged in intense fighting with Palestinian gunmen, who chose heavily populated areas as their battlegrounds. The IDF takes every measure to prevent harm to civilians, often at a risk to its soldiers."

Graphic

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The  **INDEPENDENT**

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"I was always with him. He was an innocent person, kind. He was talking to me about how he was going to inherit part of his father's land and farm it and how he was going to get married and stay here." Nayef added tearfully: "He was a boy who had hopes.

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Letters, Page 34

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9/11 the fifth

Hindustan Times

September 10, 2006 Sunday 12:46 PM EST

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Byline: Hindustan Times

Dateline: NEW DELHI, India

Body

NEW DELHI, India, Sep 10 -- Another anniversary of September 11 and another round of assessments: who's winning the war on terrorism? The answer is nobody. Neither George W. Bush nor Osama bin Laden is doing well. But the real response is that the nature of the struggle has metamorphosed to the point that the question is redundant.

Let us first look at it from al-Qaeda's perspective. Bin Laden knitted together an otherwise motley crew of militant Islamic movements, each focused on overthrowing some specific Arab regime. He told them: hey, the country behind all these regimes is the US, so let's join together against this common enemy. He, or more likely al-Qaeda's ideologue Ayman al Zawahiri, argued that a spectacular terrorist attack would expose US weakness and, to use Jason Burke's words, "radicalise and mobilise" the Muslim masses against the likes of the House of Saud, Hosni Mubarak and, over time, Hugh Hefner.

Initially, 9/11 had a spectacular effect on the Arab Muslims. Newspaper surveys said 94 per cent of Saudis and two-thirds of Egyptians had put bin Laden on their personal pedestals. But things went downhill rapidly after that. The US speedily over-ran Afghanistan and disrupted al-Qaeda's global network in the immediate post-9/11 years. By 2003, militant webchats were asking whether the network had bitten off more than it could chew in taking on the US. Bin Laden moved on to the internet. Wannabe al-Qaeda groups have continued to mushroom, taking inspiration from bin Laden tapes and bomb-making websites.

However, the loss of even a modicum of central control has meant that bin Laden's overall attempt to lift Islamic militancy to a new level - go for the spectacular terrorist attack, the type that can arouse the ummah - has been lost. Islamic terror is back to what it was in 9/11: random, local, so amateurish that most plots are foiled and most victims are fellow Muslims. Several surveys have shown that admiration for bin Laden has fallen rapidly in the Islamic world in the past few years.

In Pakistan, says a Pew Global Survey, confidence in bin Laden fell from 51 per cent in 2005 to 38 per cent in 2006. Jordan saw a decline from 60 per cent to 24 per cent. Large parts of the Islamic world have been turned off suicide bombing and terrorism in general. What residual support there exists for such tactics is because of its use in Palestinian, Chechen or Kashmiri militancy rather than al-Qaeda's endorsement.

In December 2001, bin Laden had exulted, "My life or death does not matter. The awakening has started." Fat chance. The decline of al-Qaeda tracks a similar decline in approval and trust of the US among Muslims. Post 9/11, the Bush administration concluded, in a curious echo of al-Qaeda, that the present Arab Muslim polity had to be

changed. The rottenness of the Islamic State was the reason why middle-class, educated Arabs were flying aircraft into skyscrapers.

Unfortunately, for lack of any other blueprint, Bush accepted one put forward by the so-called neoconservatives. They argued the solution lay in conquering a bit of the Arab world, paving it over with liberal democracy and having it serve as an example to the rest of the Muslim world. For a number of reasons, including oil and Saddam Hussein's proclivity for weapons of mass destruction, Iraq was the guinea pig. However, the guinea pig is on its back, bloody and bloated, thanks to a US post-war Iraq policy that consisted of a long string of wildly wrong decisions.

Those who argue that the Iraq war has made al-Qaeda stronger are, simply, wrong. Islamic terror groups have never had any problems in local recruitment. Before Iraq, young Muslims bought one-way dynamite tickets because of Palestine, Chechnya or Kashmir. After the US leaves Iraq, they will sign up for the same old reasons. The two Lebanese would-be terrorists caught in Germany wanted revenge for the Danish cartoons of the Prophet. Members of a wounded civilisation find grievances in every MTV video.

Which is why healing that civilisation remains the overall US strategy and, to be fair, the solution advocated by most thinking Arabs. No one really has an alternative. The real debate is over tactics. What is dawning on the world is that the most likely solution, democratisation, will primarily benefit Islamist political movements. Some scholars call them neo-traditional rather than fundamentalist, but the various subspecies include Khomeinism, the Muslim Brotherhood and Hezbollah. They want to create conservative but modern Islamic States, yet have no interest in al-Qaeda's talk of mythological caliphates. They also have a broad measure of popular support and, if allowed, would probably win elections in a stretch of the Arab world running from Egypt to Iraq.

But the Arab polity they would seek to create would be, in Western or even Indian eyes, illiberal. It would be regressive about the rights of women, gays and minorities. It would not be secular in any sense of the word. But it would be wealth-creating and welfare-oriented, representative and legitimate, but uninterested in terrorism and reconquering Moorish Spain. Willy-nilly, a neo-traditionalist Islam is going to be the dominant political discourse in a large swathe of the Arab Muslim world. But this discourse is not the one bin Laden wants. Note how Hezbollah and Hamas make it clear they have no taste for 9/11, al-Qaeda and its works.

So where does this leave the war on terrorism? Crudely speaking, the last five years have seen the collapse of two radical solutions to the Arab world's discontent. Al-Qaeda has lost its way, its message reduced to decapitation videos and ghetto youngsters attacking commuters. The Bush agenda is similarly lost in the woods. 'Amnesty International with bombers' is no longer taken as a serious option when it comes to changing the Arab world. And the terrorist-in-the-neighbourhood fear that provided the domestic support for a pre-emptive foreign policy is waning. This month's Foreign Affairs magazine asks: "Is There Still a Terrorist Threat?"

The two principal antagonists of the war on terrorism have disarmed themselves, at least in the struggle for hearts and minds. Ironically, the damage that each has suffered has been largely self-inflicted. But it has left the door open to plenty of other contenders, each interested in providing the template for 21st century Islam. The leading contender right now is Iran, experiencing a sort of Khomeinist revival under Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and thanks to fat oil revenues. It is a sign of the vacuum in Islamic polity that almost anyone can fill the leadership void. Islamic media in Pakistan, for instance, has suddenly taken to hero-worshipping Hezbollah's Sheikh Nasrullah.

The Europeans, led by the French, are trying to position themselves as the West's guide for the Arab world. The point is that no one can claim a sure-shot solution to Arabic angst. Whether it is neocons, Ahmadinejad or Indonesian Sufi singers - they are all experiments in civilisational therapy. This is the new war on terrorism. It is no longer about stopping bombs and paper-cutters. That is still there. But that was there even before 9/11 and was largely a law-enforcement business. The new struggle is about changing the Arab world. It is a search for the means to spark off and spread an Islamic renaissance. And it will be such a protracted and titanic effort that many decades from now, the annual commentative frenzy on 9/11 will be seen as little more than a comical footnote to history.

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9/11 the fifth

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Guardian Weekly: Le Monde Diplomatique: Neither-nor is not enough

The Guardian - Final Edition

August 11, 2006 Friday

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Length: 1380 words

Byline: JEAN BRICMONT, TRANSLATED BY KRYSTYNA HORKO

Body

THE fall of communism caused much collateral damage, especially to leftwing thought. As long as communism existed it obliged both supporters and opponents to think politically, suggest short and long-term policies, set priorities and gauge the balance of power.

The underlying moral philosophy during that time, whether scientific or materialistic, placed great and small tragedies and crimes in the chain of cause and effect; there was a belief that the human condition would improve if social and economic structures could only be improved. Even social democrats (and in those days, social democrats were just what their name claimed) thought along the same lines, as did most anti-colonial movements. International law and most peacemaking efforts were built around this philosophy.

At the other, "religious" end of the spectrum, good and evil were regarded as existing independently of any historical context. This resonated with the Nouveaux Philosophes (1), as it does now with President George Bush. Evildoers, including Hitler, Stalin, Milosevic and Osama bin Laden, were simply devils that popped out of a box, results without causes. The only way to combat evil was to mobilise good, which had to be shaken out of its lethargy, armed and deployed to attack evil. That, of course, is the philosophy of a perpetual clear conscience and also of a war without end.

The world's reaction to 11 September 2001 and subsequent events illustrates the difference between the two philosophies. The minority in the West who sought to understand "why they hate us" were considered apostates by those who "understood" the reaction of the United States (the invasion of two countries, an interminable war, many dead). These are often the same people who "understand" the Israeli reaction when a single Israeli soldier is captured.

But shouldn't the same understanding be applied to the Soviet Union's need to turn eastern Europe into a buffer zone in 1945, after the deaths of millions of its citizens in the second world war? Or to China's self-imposed isolation from the rest of the world in the Maoist era, after the western incursions of the opium wars, the Japanese invasion and many international humiliations over two centuries? Or to the Arab world's reactions to the Franco-British betrayal after the fall of the Ottoman Empire in 1918, the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and the West's support of Israel through five Arab-Israeli wars?

All humans have irrational fears that may cause excessive reactions, including a desire for vengeance if attacked. But revolutionary violence is preceded by counter-revolutionary violence (oppression by the dominant classes and foreign invasions), not vice versa. Pro-western intellectuals like to cite the revolutionary violence of the Pol Pot

regime in Cambodia, but that regime could never have come to power without the bombing of Cambodia, the March 1979 coup against Prince Norodom Sihanouk and the destabilisation of the country by the US.

Rather than accept that line of thought, current western foreign policies towards the non-western world (especially the Middle East) continue to combine condemnation and interference. The condemnation is usually of countries' records on democracy, human rights and (in the world of Islam) women's rights. If a country is a dictatorship, the dictator can be blamed for all the ills.

If it's not a dictatorship, then elections are never transparent enough, the press never independent enough, minorities never protected enough, women not equal enough.

That mocks the process of history. Only after a long period of economic growth and cultural development, both accompanied by brutal violence - colonialism, the exploitation of workers, world wars - did western nations begin to respect human rights. It is not realistic to expect countries that were still living under colonial or feudal rule just 60 years ago suddenly to achieve western standards in human rights. (Peacetime standards at that: in war we have the US's behaviour at Guantanamo and Israel's treatment of Palestinian and Lebanese populations.)

There is a more serious objection: the argument always emphasises political and individual rights, but ignores social and economic rights, even though these were as much a part of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Economists Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen have come up with a perfect illustration: China and India started out from similar places but followed different paths of development. The difference in their social systems in healthcare results in 3,900,000 more deaths a year in India (2). Similar comparisons can be made between Cuba and the rest of Latin America. So what gives such organisations as Reporters without Borders, whose members generally enjoy political and social freedoms, the authority to prioritise ?

Imagine the US and Europe without a constant flow of raw materials, immigrant labour, or goods manufactured for a pittance; without the South-North flow of capital (repayment of "debt", capital flight) and the brain drain from the non-western world to help patch the West's collapsing systems. What would happen to our successful economies? They are still addicted to imperialism, but that is a drug that might not always be available given current conditions.

Faced with the instrumentalisation of human rights, critical or leftwing thought appears feeble, especially in its opposition to the US wars in Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq, which have all been justified by the defence of minorities, democracy and women. Perhaps this weakness reflects the unease felt by ex-Communists, ex-Trotskyites and ex-Maoists who remember that individual and political rights were indefinitely put on hold during the Leninist period. There is no point in substituting another form of blindness.

A good illustration of the weakness of the left is the neither-nor ideology that has dominated the protests against recent conflicts: neither Milosevic nor Nato, neither Bush nor Saddam, neither Olmert nor Hamas. But these are false symmetries. In all wars there is an aggressor and a victim. To put both on the same level is to abandon any notion of national sovereignty. In each case there is no comparison possible between the two parties' ability to inflict damage, since it is the US and its military might that is the current pillar of the world order. The US is confronted by progressive forces and will continue to be so in most conflicts, and not only in countries we have mentioned. Now that Milosevic is dead and Saddam in prison, what has the neither-nor faction to say about Nato or Bush?

The neither-nor faction behaves as though we are all above the fray and outside time and space, whereas we live in the aggressor countries and allied nations; we work and pay our taxes there. Of course the neither-Bush-nor-Saddam position has a completely different meaning for the Iraqi people, who have had to live under both.

Instead of sharing the western view of the world, the left should try to make westerners understand how the rest of the world sees us and oppose anything that strengthens our feelings of superiority or moral sanctity.

The 20th century was not the century of socialism but of decolonisation, which enabled millions to free themselves from extreme oppression. It might be possible to imagine the 21st century as the century when US hegemony will end. If that happened, another world would really be possible.

Guardian Weekly: Le Monde Diplomatique: Neither-nor is not enough

Only after our economies have been weaned from the profits they derive from their position in the world order may we talk seriously about socialism again.

TRANSLATED BY KRYSTYNA HORKO

(1) The Nouveaux Philosophes were a group of late 1970s French thinkers who wanted to escape the ivory tower of traditional philosophy because it was too far removed from national and international political realities and incapable of solving the barbarous results of fascism and communism.

(2) Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, *Hunger and Public Action*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989.

Kiss goodbye to Marx and Lenin, East Berlin, 1990: the slogan reads 'Next time it will all be better'

Jean Bricmont is professor of physics at the

University of Louvain and author of 'Humanitarian

Imperialism: Using Human Rights to Sell War' (New York University, forthcoming)

Load-Date: August 23, 2006

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If this ISWorld War 3, whose side are we on?

Daily Mail (London)

August 5, 2006 Saturday

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Section: ED IRE; Pg. 15

Length: 1277 words

Byline: EAMON DUNPHY

Body

A SUMMER day in Ireland.

The sun shines (occasionally). Our people enjoy unprecedented prosperity.

The beautiful escapism of the Galway Races, the hurling, football, horse racing and the World Cup.

The young worry about house prices, urban dwellers fret about the traffic and bitch about a government that has been in office long enough to be offensively arrogant.

Our troubles as a nation are few. It is not impossible to conceive of a future generation looking back to 2006 with fondness, claiming that this was a good time to be alive. In this country, at least.

However, unless you are brain dead, a not unknown condition among the Irish nouveau riche, it is impossible to ignore the suffering of millions in the Middle East, the victims of American foreign policy.

The murder of innocent people, many of them children, by the U.S. armed Israeli army is an unmitigated evil.

According to one of the Republican Party's most influential politicians, Newt Gingrich, the Third World War has already begun. During the Clinton presidency, the Republicans gained control of both houses of Congress. The Christian Right formed the base for this success.

Those God-fearing folk hold the key to electoral success in the United States.

They are against abortion and sexual promiscuity. They are for Israel. An estimated 80 million of those fundamentalists believe in The Rapture, a concept you may know little about. At the moment.

With The Rapture will come the end of life as we know it. Some terrible event for example, a mutually destructive nuclear conflict between America and Israel's enemy, Iran will consume the world.

Only those who have been 'saved' by Born Again Christianity will ascend to heaven to find everlasting peace.

NO NEED, therefore, to worry about house prices, traffic on the M50 or the destiny of the next World Cup.

Of rather more concern is the probability that Rapture Man and Woman will determine who governs the United States for the foreseeable future.

If this ISWorld War 3, whose side are we on?

The existence of this Christian Coalition is the reason why no ambitious American politician dissented when Iraq was invaded.

Hillary Clinton approved of Iraq.

She refuses to condemn the evil we are witnessing in the Lebanon.

Mrs Clinton is, for now, the most powerful Democrat in America.

She is unlikely to reach the White House, but she knows that whatever slender hope there is depends on Middle America's Enraptured Believers. The same applies to all Democrats and Republicans. Newt Gingrich fell from grace several years ago, infidelity his crime. But he is back, rehabilitated, a possible runner for the Republicans in the 2008 Presidential election.

So we must consider seriously the Third World War as he defines it.

Who will fight who, and for what?

In Newt's view, the war will be against terror. On BBC's Newsnight last week, he identified the enemy as those who don't share his values. Or Israel's. Or, indeed, the values of America's most powerful electoral constituency, the Christian Coalition.

Every warmonger needs an enemy.

In Newt's case, there are some obvious candidates, the Iranian theocracy being the most visible.

Hezbollah, a relatively small Islamist militia which currently threatens Israel, is also on the list.

Hamas, the Palestinian equivalent of the IRA, is another foe.

Osama Bin Laden and other disparate elements of Al Qaeda are, for obvious reasons, high on Newt's list.

More significant than those on the Gingrich list are those who are not. The totalitarian kleptocracy of China poses no threat to U.S. interests, at the moment.

Maybe the Chinese will fight the coming war on Newt's side.

Russia, where democracy diminishes by the day, is now a U.S. ally and a supplier of energy. So we can safely count Russia out.

Nominally, North Korea is on Newt's hit list, but with a mad leader, nuclear weapons and a famished population, we can assume that no U.S.-led invasion of Korea is imminent.

For Europeans, a serious question arises: whose side will we take in Newt's Third World War?

If the question is serious, the answer is obvious. We have no choice: Newt will have to be our man.

At the core of European despair as we witness the murderous destruction of Lebanon lies the certainty that we can do nothing to influence events.

Like the Pope, who last Sunday pleaded for mercy for those innocent yet dying, we have no battalions. America regards us with contempt.

And without America and the cheap energy that derives from its conquest of the Middle East, the prosperity in which we presently wallow would disappear.

To be fair to the Government and the Oireachtas Foreign Affairs Committee, the disgust of Irish people has been expressed.

If this ISWorld War 3, whose side are we on?

But expressions of concern provide little comfort for the Lebanese as they watch their country being destroyed - or for the Palestinians caged in Gaza like animals by America's ally, Israel.

Our prison is more comfortable.

Marred only by whatever guilt we feel at our dependence on the country Newt may one day lead.

When Newt or someone of his ilk assumes the leadership of the so-called free world, there will be very little cause for rapture. The War on Terror will continue.

And surely after Iraq and the obscenities of the past three weeks, there will be many more Islamic terrorists to fight.

Tragically, we may well be witnessing the catalyst for a Third World War.

Without a just settlement of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, a prospect now almost inconceivable-Islamic terrorism will grow exponentially.

In this country, we know something about terrorism and the oppression that causes it.

Over the past decade, compromise has led to peace. A peace that is imperfect, but infinitely preferable to the wanton slaughter we knew before.

Intriguingly, the minority in this country who support Israel/ America's brutal oppression of the Palestinian people also deride the historic achievement of all who contributed to Irish peace.

Most disgracefully slandered are the Sinn Féin leaders, who possessed the courage, wisdom and guile to call off their war.

For now, the Middle East, bereft of such leadership, must endure never-ending pain.

A final reflection on Israel and its origins perhaps explains that country's iron fist approach to the present conflict.

Terrorism was introduced to Palestine by Jewish terrorists.

Through the Thirties and Forties, the Irgun terrorists committed the most heinous atrocities in pursuit of a Jewish state.

JUST three weeks ago, as Israel prepared to destroy Lebanon or 'set the clock back 20 years' in the words of an Israeli cabinet minister a small group of surviving Irgun members met to celebrate the 60th anniversary of their decision to blow up Jerusalem's King David Hotel.

This was a defining moment in Irgun's quest for a Jewish home.

Ninety-one people were slaughtered, 28 of them British.

Irgun did not favour suicide bombing. However, the carnage was just as bloody and random.

Buses, marketplaces and cafes were targeted.

In one terrible incident, the Irgun 'freedom fighters' murdered the entire population of a village 251 men, women and children were shot.

Less virile than Newt, the Brits then launched no War on Terror.

Irgun achieved its goal and one of its bravest sons, Menachem Begin, went on to become prime minister.

Two members of the present Israeli cabinet will be familiar with Irgun and its heroic terrorist deeds.

If this ISWorld War 3, whose side are we on?

Prime Minister Ehud Olmert spent the first three years of his life in a terrorist training camp while his parents worked as gunrunners.

Tzipi Livni, Israel's Foreign Minister who greeted Condi Rice last week, is also, as it were, connected.

She is the daughter of Irgun's Director of Military Operations, effectively the brain behind so much civilian killing.

Anyone for World War Three?

Load-Date: August 9, 2006

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The war rages on

University Wire

July 27, 2006 Thursday

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Section: COLUMN

Length: 1271 words

Byline: By Kristen Trotter, The Crimson White; **SOURCE:** U. Alabama

Dateline: TUSCALOOSA, Ala.

Body

I said goodbye to Beirut on Saturday morning through the back of a Chinook helicopter. The helmet and hearing protection a Marine slid on my head right before I boarded blocked out the roar of the helicopter but trapped my thoughts inside my head, where they bounced around and fought for supremacy over my conflicting emotions.

The square gray buildings stacked on the hillside next to the vibrant blue sea were blurred both by my tears and by the exhaust heat from the helicopter, but I could still make out the plumes of smoke rising from the neighborhood that was bombed while I boarded the Chinook.

My time in Beirut had come to a close, and I left far differently than I came. I had expected to bring back suitcases full of sheeshas, carpets and a Turkish coffee pot.

Instead I was evacuated, leaving most of my clothes behind and bringing back only a new understanding of an age-old conflict and a compassion for the people on both sides who are caught in the middle.

I am not a Jew hater. I have never been one.

While I was living in Cairo, I took a trip to Jerusalem. At the border crossing between Taba, Egypt and Eilat, Israel, me and three companions were detained and interrogated for seven hours by Israeli border guards.

One of my friends had two Iranian visas in her passport, reason enough to detain us, and another of our group was Egyptian, though her last name Salib, which means "cross" in Arabic, should have given a clue that she was not a Muslim fanatic.

But I didn't complain. Israel had a right to be suspicious, and I was happy to wait however long it took the guards to figure out we were not a threat.

One of the soldiers was particularly gruff. A far cry from the mustachioed Egyptian soldiers, she had short cropped hair and wore her uniform pants low around her hips in a soldier-chic sort of way. When I asked her not to stamp my passport with the Israeli stamp so I could gain entry to Arab countries, her questioning reached the third degree.

As we were finally leaving, I mentioned her gruffness to my Norwegian friend Hilde, the one with the Iranian visas. She shot me a sharp look.

The war rages on

"Did you know her brother was killed by a Hamas suicide bomber?" she asked. Apparently that had come out during Hilde's marathon interrogation session.

And the gruffness made sense. I didn't complain. She had a right to be gruff.

I didn't even complain when they arrested me several days later. I was accustomed to the laxness of Egyptian security, and didn't think twice about buying a souvenir knife in the old city. When I went through security at the bus station, however, I quickly realized that although Israel was only a day's bus ride away from Cairo, it occupied a completely different world.

I was questioned again and searched, and then detained in a small room with two female soldiers. I admitted my own stupidity, and we laughed and joked and compared apartment prices from Cairo to Jerusalem to Tuscaloosa. Jerusalem is slightly more expensive than Tuscaloosa, we decided before they took me to the police station.

I didn't resent the tight security. When suicide bombers are a fact of life, you can't afford to relax. I accepted this, and I loved Jerusalem. I loved Israelis and their matter-of-fact approach to life in the face of death. I especially loved their falafel.

But just as I don't hate Israel, I also don't unequivocally support everything the nation does. Just as suicide bombs are a fact of life there, daily Israeli bombing of innocent civilians has become a fact of life in Lebanon, and the suffering there is hard to ignore when you're in the middle of it.

In the newsroom of my newspaper in Beirut, we watched in amazement as the world media distributed pictures of Israelis hiding in bomb shelters from Hezbollah rockets that killed eight people in Haifa. The almost 400 Lebanese civilians killed and 750,000 displaced from the bombings merited only an after mention. The suffering we watched firsthand was not so real, not so close to home to the rest of the world.

And that is understandable, but not easy to handle. It was hard to watch the world cheering for the planes that dropped bombs around us, on our friends and family. It was difficult to listen to my fellow Americans call me naive for reporting what I saw around me. As I left on the helicopter Saturday, I felt as if I was abandoning Lebanon, abandoning the people who had no voice to convey their plight.

What they want to tell the world is simple. They do not support Hezbollah; in fact, most Lebanese hate the organization. Sunni Muslims and Christians would love to see Hezbollah eliminated; they resent Hezbollah for dragging them into this conflict and causing their suffering. While many Americans may see a news video of masked Hezbollah men carrying Kalashnikovs and equate them with all of Lebanon, nothing could be further from the truth. Most Lebanese are just ordinary people who want to go on with their lives, who want to be free of war.

But getting rid of Hezbollah means civil war, something this country has seen too much of. The huge loss of civilian life during the previous 15-year civil war is not something people here want to repeat, so in a sense Hezbollah holds the nation hostage. But while they detest Hezbollah, what the Lebanese detest even more is the heavy-handed Israeli military campaign that has absolutely destroyed their country and swelled Hezbollah's ranks.

People in Lebanon are shocked when the rest of the world tells them that it is reasonable to hold them responsible for a group they cannot control and do not support, that it is fair to kill their families and destroy their homes in retaliation. I shared their amazement when the rest of the world denied Israeli attacks on civilians.

Just two days ago Israel bombed two Red Cross ambulances. Do the huge red and white crosses painted on top of the vehicles look like Hezbollah rocket launchers? Last week a school in Tyre was targeted and tens of children died. Does an elementary school look like a Hezbollah training camp? In south Lebanon, entire villages are cut off and isolated; humanitarian organizations cannot reach them to dig civilians out of the rubble because of Israeli attacks.

Hospitals are running out of medicine; people lack food and water. In Tyre, bodies were left rotting on the bombed roads because those who came to collect them were targeted. The city resorted to mass graves after running out of wood for coffins.

The war rages on

It is true that Hezbollah hides behind civilians. It is true that the militant, fundamental organization has hijacked a nation. It is true that Hezbollah provoked this attack, and it is detestable. I do not support or defend Hezbollah, its grisly tactics, or the suffering it brings to innocent people. But that does not mean that I must unequivocally support an Israeli response that has gone beyond reasonable retaliation, a response that has no regard for human life or suffering.

All the Lebanese want is the world to recognize they are not a nation of terrorists who want to wipe Israel off the map. All they ask for is a reasonable consideration of their plight, one that considers their side and their suffering alongside Israeli suffering. All they want to tell the world is that just because you hate Hezbollah doesn't mean you must ignore the injustice of Israel's response.

All they ask is that you consider their plight.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Kristen Trotter has been in Beirut, Lebanon, for most of the summer working for the Lebanese paper, The Daily Star. This is the second part of her first-person account of her experiences in the war-torn region.

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Crisis in the Middle East, day by day

The Toronto Star
July 22, 2006 Saturday

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Section: NATIONAL REPORT; Pg. F03

Length: 1314 words

Body

June 9

Eight members of a Palestinian family are killed while picnicking on a beach in Gaza in an apparent Israeli shelling. The bloody images of dead Palestinian civilians and wailing survivors on the beach kindle anger against Israel.

June 10

After the beach bombing and Israeli forces' killing of a top Gaza militant, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas declares a three-day mourning period, and **Hamas**' military wing says it would no longer honour a 16-month cease-fire with Israel.

June 25

Palestinian militants infiltrate into Israel through a tunnel at a Gaza border crossing, kill two Israeli soldiers and capture another, Cpl. Gilad Shalit. The militants

demand the release of detained Palestinian **women** and children in return for information about Shalit.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert rejects the demands and orders the military to prepare for combat. Israel sends ground troops into Gaza after the assault and warns that militants and their leaders would be killed if the abducted soldier is harmed.

July 12

Hezbollah militants attack Israel, kill seven Israeli soldiers, wound eight and capture two. The group says it captured the soldiers to secure the release of detainees held in Israeli prisons.

Israeli rockets target roads and bridges in southern Lebanon in an apparent attempt to block escape routes, and troops enter the country to search for the abducted soldiers. Eight soldiers are killed and two injured in fighting with Hezbollah.

July 13

Israel's first wave of air strikes cripple and destroy essential infrastructure in Lebanon, including runways and fuel storage tanks at Beirut's international airport, military bases, and the main highway between Beirut and Damascus. About 60 people in Lebanon are killed during the missile strikes.

Crisis in the Middle East, day by day

Hezbollah reacts to the Israeli strikes, launching over 100 Katushya rockets into northern Israel and killing two civilians. A rocket strikes Haifa, Israel's third-largest city.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper calls the Israeli response to Hezbollah's initial attack "measured."

July 14

Israeli air strikes continue to pummel Lebanon. More roads and runways are destroyed and Hezbollah's headquarters in Beirut is hit.

Following the attack, Hezbollah TV airs a recorded audio speech during which Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, the group's secretary general, says: "You want an open war, we will go to the open war. We are ready for it. War, war on every level."

It is reported that a Hezbollah rocket launched into the northern Israeli town of Meron kills a woman and 4-year-old girl.

The United Nations Security Council meets in an emergency session to discuss a request by Lebanon to condemn the Israeli attacks. It is unable to agree on a response, but issues a brief statement calling for countries in the region to co-operate with UN efforts to arrange a ceasefire.

July 15

An Israeli air strike in southern Lebanon kills 15 people, including several children, Lebanese police report. Eighteen Lebanese villagers attempting to flee to the southern city of Tyre are killed when missiles hit their vehicles.

Hezbollah volleys rockets at the Israeli city of Tiberias, near the Lebanon-Israel border. Rockets also hit other Israeli cities near the border. No injuries are reported.

July 16

The Israeli military initiates air strikes targeting central Beirut, its suburbs and a key power plant. Eight Canadians are killed, including Ali El-Akhras, his wife Amira, and their four children aged 1, 4, 6 and 8. The extended family from Montreal was on holiday in the village of Aitaroun.

Hezbollah missiles target a rail repair station in Haifa. Eight people are killed.

Foreign Affairs Minister Peter MacKay announces the government intends to evacuate Canadian citizens from Lebanon as soon as possible.

July 17

Israeli air strikes extend to the north, killing at least 15 people in and around Lebanon's second-largest city, Tripoli. Also under attack are Beirut, the eastern city of Baalbek and the port of Abdeh. Ten people are reportedly killed while driving across a bridge south of Beirut as Israeli missiles strike, as are nine Lebanese soldiers in Abdeh and nine Lebanese civilians in a missile attack in the city of Tyre - all were from one family, six of them children. Six Lebanese civilians are killed in an air strike on the village of Aitaroun, witnesses tell Hezbollah TV.

In Israel, Olmert says the attacks will not end until the two captured Israeli soldiers are freed and Hezbollah is no longer a threat.

Hezbollah continues to fire rockets into Israel, destroying an apartment block in Haifa and killing three people. A rocket lands near a hospital in Safed, reportedly injuring six people.

UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair suggest sending an international force to Lebanon to halt the Hezbollah attacks, but Israel says it is too soon to consider such a move.

Crisis in the Middle East, day by day

Palestinian gunmen in the West Bank city of Nablus ambush Israeli troops, killing one and wounding six.

In Gaza City, Israeli air strikes destroy the Palestinian foreign ministry building.

The international community steps up its evacuation of foreigners from Beirut, as thousands of Lebanese flee their homes. Canada hires seven ships from Cyprus to provide passage to Canadians who wish to evacuate Lebanon.

July 18

Israeli strikes continue for a seventh day, again hitting Beirut and Tyre. Eleven Lebanese soldiers die and 35 are injured in an air attack in the east of Beirut, and six bodies are pulled from the rubble of a building in the town of Aitaroun.

Hezbollah rockets continue to target the Israeli port city of Haifa.

The UN warns of a humanitarian disaster as Lebanese flee their homes, with air strikes on roads and bridges making it difficult for help to reach those in need. Annan calls for an international force to stop the fighting but the U.S. and Israel indicate they're not in agreement with the suggestion.

July 19

About 270 Canadians are evacuated from Beirut, after just one of seven ships shows up, while hundreds of other people are turned away at the city's port.

Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora says 300 people have been killed in the Israeli offensive, including at least 55 Lebanese civilians in air strikes. He appeals for an end to the hostilities and says Lebanon "has been torn to shreds."

Twenty-nine Israelis have died - including 15 civilians killed by rocket attacks - since the Israeli offensive against Hezbollah militants began.

Residents in the southern village of Srifa say at least 12 people are killed, while at least six people die in the southern town of Nabatiyeh.

Scores of Hezbollah rockets are fired into northern Israel, where two children in Nazareth are killed. Rocket fire also hits other cities, including Haifa and Tiberias.

Relief agencies announce that 500,000 people are now displaced within Lebanon and the need for water, food and shelter will soon be dire.

July 20

Nearly 1,400 Canadians are evacuated by ship from Beirut. The Canadian embassy says it could be two weeks before all the Canadians who want out can be evacuated.

Meanwhile, Harper meets the first evacuees in Cyprus, and flies 88 of them home to Canada aboard a government plane.

Israeli army strikes in a refugee camp in the Gaza Strip kill three people, including a 10-year-old girl, according to Palestinian medical personnel.

Annan presses for an "immediate" ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah, and unveils a settlement plan involving the early release of two captured Israeli soldiers and the deployment of a stabilization force.

July 21

About 850 Canadians are evacuated by ship out of Beirut.

Crisis in the Middle East, day by day

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice rejects the idea of an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah.

The death toll: at least 335 people in Lebanon, 34 in Israel.

Israeli tanks mass at the Lebanese border, apparently in preparation for a full-scale land invasion.

Compiled by Victoria Kent

Sources: Star files, Reuters

Graphic

ap photo Canadian nationals in Beirut wait to be evacuated on ships Wednesday. Fewer than 300 people managed to get out that day.

Load-Date: July 22, 2006

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Debate on the crisis in the Middle East

The Irish Times
August 4, 2006 Friday

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Section: LETTERS; Pg. 17

Length: 1361 words

Body

Madam, - The issuing of a watered-down statement by EU foreign ministers on Tuesday is an appalling indictment of the failings of Western democracy. The West is paralysed by its desire to preserve diplomacy at all costs. The lack of cohesion and the absence of moral conscience on this Middle East crisis is repeatedly demonstrated by the miserable efforts of Condoleezza Rice, Tony Blair and EU foreign ministers.

Meanwhile the innocent citizens of Lebanon are slaughtered. How is it possible to falter before the horror of children's bodies being removed from rubble? Child after child after child. We fail them and we fail ourselves by refusing to challenge US and British support for Israel's war in Lebanon as a severe breach of international humanitarian law. - Yours, etc,

D WATKINS, Clifden, Co Galway.

Madam, - I would like to congratulate Minister for Foreign Affairs Dermot Ahern, who ensured that, along with France and Sweden, Ireland was one of the EU countries calling in the strongest terms for a ceasefire resolution at the EU foreign ministers' meeting on Tuesday.

Now that our Government has rediscovered its conscience on the Middle East, may I urge it to continue along this road, both at an EU and national level? At the EU level there is no excuse any more not to call for the suspension of the Euro-Med agreement which gives Israel favoured trade relations with the EU.

Furthermore, while the plight of Palestinians has been obscured by the equally horrific treatment Lebanon is now receiving from Israel, this plight is only worsened by EU sanctions against the democratically elected government of Palestine; it is past time these sanctions are lifted.

On the national level, delaying the accreditation of a new Israeli ambassador until Israel releases the kidnapped Palestinian parliamentarians and withdraws from Lebanon would send a clear signal as to how unacceptable Israeli behaviour is to Irish people. - Yours, etc,

DAVID LANDY, St Thomas Road, Dublin 8.

Madam, - Vincent Browne (Opinion, August 2nd) pretty much blames Israel for all that is wrong in the Middle East.

He quotes from the Bible and from history but there has to be a point when history is left in the past. The Middle East needs to move on and face the reality of the existence of Israel, existence which is mandated by the United Nations as a sovereign independent state.

Debate on the crisis in the Middle East

Why are there so many women and children among the casualties in southern Lebanon? Where are the men? How do you deal with people who are willing to leave defenceless women and children while they go into hiding? What is the point of having a ceasefire and signing yet another peace agreement when the basic principle of Israel's right to exist in peace is not accepted by those who will be party to such an agreement? Such false agreements solve nothing because they fail to address the issue and just postpone the next crisis for a few more years.

At what point will people realise that a stand needs to be taken against state-sponsored terrorism? The state of Lebanon allowed these terrorists to build a state within a state and never asked for help in controlling them.

The UN as usual sits on its hands for years doing nothing and then appeasers, like Mr Browne, want us to believe that there can be a war without civilian casualties.

It seems we have learnt absolutely nothing from the 20th century. From the comfort and safety of our homes in the West we cast judgment on Israel, but when Iran fires a nuclear weapon will we then finally get the message that we ought to have faced up to Muslim terrorists once and for all? By then it will be far too late. - Yours, etc,

DESMOND FITZGERALD, Canary Wharf, London E14.

Madam, - Vincent Browne has shown great courage in speaking the truth about the root causes of the conflict in Palestine. Watch now as the slur of anti-Semitism is hurled at him. Over the years, this has been a persistent tactic of those who wish to keep hidden the truth of what was done to the Arab people of Palestine at the time of the foundation of the state of Israel. - Yours, etc,

MARTIN LOUGHNAN, Skerries, Co Dublin.

Madam, - On reading Michael D Higgins's latest contribution to your Letters page (August 2nd), you would have to conclude that he could survive as a politician only in somewhere like Ireland. We can sit quite comfortably off the west coast of Europe, safe from any real military threat, pontificating to the rest of the world on the rights and wrongs of their actions. People like Michael D Higgins are of no use at all when faced with violence, because they believe in meaningless UN resolutions, statements of condemnation and anti-war protests, but not action. That's not much use if your neighbours, such as Iran, are striving to wipe you off the map.

Israel, like any other state, is responsible for the defence of its citizens and it has every right to continue its actions against Hizbullah until it is satisfied that any threat to its citizens is removed. If Hizbullah members decide to use residential areas to launch attacks, then it is they, and not the Israelis, who are putting Lebanese civilians at risk. - Yours, etc,

KEVIN WINDLE, Glencairn View, Leopardstown, Dublin 18.

Madam, - On April 18th, 1996 the Israeli defence forces were responsible for the massacre of 106 people in the village of Qana - refugees in a UN compound seeking safety from Israel's third invasion of Lebanon - malignantly named "Operation Grapes of Wrath". More than half the dead were children. This was initially claimed by Ehud Barak to be an "unfortunate mistake" but was subsequently proven to be a fully authorised bombardment of the compound with knowing consequences.

Similar scenarios are being played out again and while Israel has an absolute right to defend itself against terrorist attacks, no right of self-defence can be invoked to justify the recent slaughter at Qana, the killing of the UN observers, the hundreds of civilian deaths and the mass destruction of civilian infrastructure in southern Lebanon. Israel's response to Hizbullah is grossly disproportionate and can objectively be described as state terrorism.

There is an immediate need for a ceasefire and a realisation on the part of Israel that its response to conditions in the Middle East is a vital ingredient that sustains Islamofascist organisations such as Hizbullah and Hamas. The past 20 years have seen both these organisations grow in popularity to a point where they are both represented in governments. A sustainable ceasefire or peace is not one that can be defined exclusively by Israel in its own interests. - Yours, etc,

Debate on the crisis in the Middle East

Cllr JIM O'LEARY, (Fine Gael), Parkvale, Dundrum, Dublin 14.

Madam, - Why should Israel kowtow to the United States, Britain and the EU and call a halt to its military activities in Lebanon? Given that it has been terrorised by the belligerent forces of Islamic fundamentalism, its decision to go to war seems logical and entirely reasonable. Certainly, the conflict in Lebanon is far easier to justify than the US-led invasion of Iraq.

We can at least be grateful that the current, limited IDF attacks have served to flush from cover the inherent anti-Semitism of many Europeans, not least in correspondence to The Irish Times. The stark and unpalatable reality is that disproportionate response is the only way to win a war, otherwise all conflicts would result in stalemate.

All right-minded people should support Israel in its actions, and let the Jewish state know that we stand squarely behind them. - Yours, etc,

JOHN DYLAN O'DONOGHUE, Ard Keale, Rochestown, Cork.

Madam, - Further to the report in your edition of August 2nd that Israel is now issuing telephone warnings before it bombs, I would like to commend it for raising its standard of morality to that of the IRA. - Yours, etc,

FINIAN McCLUSKEY, Carrickmacross, Co Monaghan.

Madam, - Martyn Turner's cartoon in your edition of August 1st is deeply offensive - and not only, I am sure, to believing Christians.

Qana is heartbreaking enough without the addition of such gross irreverence towards Christ.

Shame on you for publishing this tasteless effort. - Yours, etc,

SEÁN MAC CÁRTHAIGH, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.

Load-Date: August 4, 2006

Despite Risks, Freed Reporter Loved Iraq

The New York Times

April 2, 2006 Sunday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section 1; Column 1; Foreign Desk; Pg. 8; THE REACH OF WAR: THE FORMER HOSTAGE

Length: 1292 words

Byline: By ROBERT F. WORTH

Body

One warm night last fall, Jill Carroll was sitting at a patio table in Baghdad with a group of friends, ticking off the many dangers journalists face in Iraq. Kidnapping was high on the list, along with car bombs and random shootings.

But Ms. Carroll, a 28-year-old freelance reporter who had lost one of her best friends in a suicide bombing a few months earlier, said she could not imagine leaving.

"I've never been as happy as I am here," she said. "It sounds strange and kind of morbid to say it, but I really love this place."

Only a few months later, Ms. Carroll became one of the most lurid items in the story that meant so much to her.

After being kidnapped on a west Baghdad street in January, she was held captive for 82 days by armed militants who twice issued threats to kill her if their demands were not met. They released three videotapes in which she was alternately seen calling for the release of female Iraqi prisoners and sobbing in terror as she pleaded for help.

In the end, her captors freed her for no clear reason, dropping her off on Thursday on a street not far from where she was taken. They also posted a videotape of her praising the Iraqi insurgency and condemning the American presence, adding that she felt "guilty" about being released when Iraqis were still suffering.

She arrived in Germany yesterday morning on her way back to the United States.

In her first comments about that tape, in a statement released yesterday by the newspaper she has written for, The Christian Science Monitor, she said had been coerced.

"During my last night of captivity, my captors forced me to participate in a propaganda video" to secure her release, the statement said. "I was living in a threatening environment, under their control, and I wanted to go home alive. So I agreed."

She said that her comments on the tape were not her own views, and that her kidnappers had threatened her many times. She called them "criminals, at best."

Through her captivity, Ms. Carroll struck a chord in the Arab world as well as in the West, perhaps in part because of her passionate attachment to Iraq and its people. Conservative Islamist politicians in Iraq issued emotional pleas for her release, as did some of the most militant anti-American groups in the Middle East, like Hamas and the

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Muslim Brotherhood. Her earnest face -- usually framed by a traditional Muslim head scarf -- became familiar on television screens across the globe.

In her statement, she said she was "humbled" by so much sympathy and support.

And finally, she asked for privacy. "This has been a taxing 12 weeks for me and for my family," the statement said. "Please allow us some quiet time alone, together."

Even after her release, there were signs that her captors retained some power over her. She was initially reluctant to go to the Green Zone, where the American Embassy is based, because her kidnappers had told her it was "infiltrated by the mujahedeen" and that she might be killed if she cooperated with Americans, The Monitor reported.

Ms. Carroll has yet to say much about her ordeal beyond the bare facts. She was kept in a small room where she was well fed but cut off almost completely from the sounds and sights of everyday life, she told The Monitor. The room had a window that was obscured, and most of the time she sat in silence. She was allowed to watch television and read a newspaper only once.

"If I had to take a shower I walked, you know, two feet, to the next door to take a shower or go to the bathroom and come back," she said. She had occasional contact with Iraqi women and children in the house, and found that comforting.

The reasons for her capture and her release remain mysteries. The little-known group that was holding her, the Revenge Brigade, said the American government had agreed to some of its conditions. But American officials said emphatically that they had "not entered into any arrangements with anyone" to free her. The Monitor also said it had not had any negotiations with her kidnappers.

Some of Ms. Carroll's friends said they suspected that her love for Iraq helped her survive through the months of fear and isolation, and may have helped win her release.

"I think she had to bank on the fact that she could connect in some way with her captors," said Jackie Spinner, a reporter for The Washington Post who was based in Baghdad until recently, and who has been a friend of Ms. Carroll. "Unlike most Western journalists, she spoke good Arabic. And if you look at her work, she comes across as compassionate, as balanced."

Ms. Carroll went to Iraq in 2003 after spending a few months learning Arabic in Jordan. A freelancer, she belonged to a small and daring group of reporters who work without the protections afforded by big news organizations.

Writing about her experience last year in The American Journalism Review, she made clear that she understood the risks and relished the adventure. She even said she believed her low-budget, low-profile status made her safer.

"All I ever wanted to be was a foreign correspondent, so when I was laid off from my reporting assistant job at The Wall Street Journal in August 2002, it seemed the right time to make it happen," she wrote of her decision to try to cover the war in Iraq.

Ms. Carroll was close to Marla Ruzicka, a young American aid worker who was killed in a suicide bombing in Baghdad in April 2005. She helped organize a memorial service for Ms. Ruzicka days afterward, collecting a vivid collage of impressions from other reporters and reading them aloud at the service.

Afterward, Ms. Carroll took a long vacation in Bali, to try to overcome her grief and exhaustion. She had always sought solace in the water, swimming regularly in the pool at the Hamra Hotel compound in Baghdad, and organizing raucous water polo games. In Bali, she tried to learn to surf.

She did not shy away from risky assignments after she returned to Iraq. In November, she traveled by car to Najaf to report on tensions within Iraq's Shiite community, a dangerous journey that few reporters were willing to undertake at that time.

Despite Risks, Freed Reporter Loved Iraq

Her kidnapping, on Jan. 7, electrified the dwindling Baghdad press corps. American reporters had been abducted before, but the circumstances in Ms. Carroll's case were especially worrying. She was taken in western Baghdad, an area rife with Sunni Arab insurgents, and her translator, Allan Enwiyah, was shot and killed.

After fevered talks among reporters -- mostly people who knew her well -- a decision was made to not report the kidnapping immediately, in the hope that without publicity, her captors would release her quickly.

But within a few days, the reporters, and The Monitor, decided that there was nothing to be gained in hiding the story. Her family and The Monitor also began working with American officials in Baghdad in a long, tortuous effort to secure her release.

Over the following weeks, various people approached the family or The Monitor claiming they could help, including some who demanded large ransoms, The Monitor reported. None of the trails led anywhere.

Meanwhile, an unusual campaign began in Iraq, in which several Iraqi newspapers and television stations editorialized for her freedom. Some donated public-service announcements designed by The Monitor asking for her release.

Ms. Carroll's friends in Baghdad never gave up hope. They often thought of a word she had coined, "feeh" (pronounced "fee," apparently derived purely from her imagination), which she used when saying goodbye to friends, Ms. Spinner said.

"It was a kind of code word, meaning love and respect," Ms. Spinner said. "But it also meant, 'I'm going to see you again.' "

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Photo: Jill Carroll, who was released Thursday, was welcomed by Col. Kurt Lohide yesterday in Ramstein, Germany. (Photo by Michael Probst/Associated Press)

Load-Date: April 2, 2006

End of Document

Enemy soldiers gather - to strive for peace

Christian Science Monitor

April 6, 2006, Thursday

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Section: FEATURES, CURRENTS; Pg. 13

Length: 1315 words

Byline: Amelia Thomas Correspondent of The Christian Science Monitor

Dateline: ARRAM, WEST BANK

Highlight: Shunned by their respective governments, former Israeli and Palestinian fighters have been meeting in secret, seeking common ground.

Body

The stark white room buzzes with Arabic and Hebrew conversation as a group of about 50 men jovially shake hands and arrange themselves in seats around its perimeter. The men range in age from 20 to 60. Some wear suits and polished shoes; others are dressed casually in sweat pants and T-shirts.

They have one thing in common: All are former combatants who struggled to defend their state - but half of them are former Israeli soldiers or pilots, while the other half are former Palestinian "freedom fighters," many of whom served time in Israeli jails.

These men once fought against each other. Together they form a new organization called Combatants for Peace, which - after being kept secret for a year - will make its public debut in Jerusalem on April 10. The date coincides with the Jewish holiday of Passover and Palestinian Prisoners Day, which is devoted to those detained in Israeli prisons.

Combatants for Peace brings together these ex-fighters to encourage dialogue, peace, and an end to conflict in the region.

Former commander Zohar Shapira, an elite Israeli Defense Force (IDF) soldier for 15 years, started the ball rolling when he left the army because he felt its actions and incursions in Palestinian territories were "immoral." He contacted a group of former Palestinian Fatah fighters from around Bethlehem. In their first meeting, Mr. Shapira says, all were stunned to find so much common ground, and they decided to formalize an alliance.

"Our members are fighters from all ranks of Israeli military and Palestinian militant factions," says Bassam Aramin, one of the Palestinian cocreators of the group. They "know the meaning of freedom, and the price of war."

The group's monthly meetings are charged with emotion, says Yonatan Shapira, Zohar's brother and another cofounder. For new Palestinian members, it may be the first time they have seen an unarmed Israeli soldier, Yonatan says. "For Israelis," he continues, "they're often at first afraid of talking in front of Palestinians about what they did during combat. For every new member, it's a frightening experience, but it's also exhilarating."

Mr. Aramin, who served seven years in an Israeli jail for "acts of defiance" against Israeli soldiers, agrees.

Enemy soldiers gather - to strive for peace

"It's a paradox," he says. "You hear a man talking about how he shot, killed, damaged your neighbor's house. But you feel empathy for him. You realize that we are all from the same background, but just from different sides. The soldier wanted to protect his people, and so did we. But we've all discovered we were wrong in how we did it."

On this particular night, eight new Israeli and Palestinian members attend, bringing the total membership to roughly 90, evenly divided between both sides. After a brief introduction from two chairmen, a new Israeli member stands up and nervously greets the group. The new member remains anonymous - there is no pressure for attendees to reveal their names.

The room becomes quiet. At first he is hesitant, but then he opens up, describing the turning point that made him decide to refuse army orders in Palestinian territories.

"I was a soldier in Nablus," he explains, "and was told to fire 'light bombs' [powerful exploding flares] to illuminate the sky one night during a military operation. I fired seven, but the eighth had a problem. I knew it would explode somewhere on the ground if I fired it."

His commanding officer, however, ordered him to fire the bomb regardless of possible civilian casualties.

"When I fired," he recalls, "I asked myself how I could be doing something that could kill innocent people."

This is not an uncommon experience in this group. Another member, a former Israeli Air Force pilot, was ordered to bomb a building in Gaza in order to assassinate an alleged terrorist. It was only when he returned home and turned on the television that he realized 15 innocent women and children had been killed in the attack.

"At first I asked him," says Aramin, "how he could live, how he could look at his wife and children. But this is his way of making amends."

Raed, a Palestinian father of two from Hebron, stands up next. He relates how, after an Israeli soldier killed his best friend, he engaged in "activities against soldiers," including throwing Molotov cocktails at Israeli troops. He was a fugitive for a year before he was caught and put in jail. His time there, however, only made him more committed to his cause, and he began planning a "large attack" against Israel.

"But then, my cousin was killed, and something changed," he says. "I suddenly started thinking there must be another way. First I lost my friend, then my cousin. I didn't want to lose more. There had to be a way out of this violent circle. I hope," he says, adding, "this group will become an important part of both our societies, and an example to the world of how peace is possible, even among fighters."

The leaders of Combatants for Peace felt it was important to keep their group secret until they had established clear goals. Their aim: To press for an end to Israeli settlements and military incursions, and for the creation of clear frontiers between independent Israeli and Palestinian states.

So far, the group's low-key approach has confined it to speaking at smaller public events, to Jewish groups in the United States and young Palestinians and Israelis. Following their official public launch on Monday, though, they will start addressing larger international audiences, promoting their vision of a "road to peace."

That road is not without obstacles.

First, it's difficult for the group to find a meeting location. It is illegal for Israelis to enter most of the West Bank. For most Palestinians, procuring entry permits into Israel is time-consuming and often fruitless. But the group has been able to meet in Arram, an area just north of Jerusalem that is part of the Palestinian Territories, surrounded by security checkpoints and roadblocks administered by Israel.

Members say it will become even more difficult to meet as the "security wall" goes up. Half-finished sections of wall currently slice through a main road in the center of town.

Enemy soldiers gather - to strive for peace

Despite its efforts to promote peace and understanding, the group has opponents on both sides of the conflict. Group member Elazar Elchanan says they are "staunchly opposed by the Israeli government." Aramin says Hamas, too, sees the group as part of the opposition.

"We may be putting our lives in danger just by meeting," says Yonatan Shapira, "but we need to do this for the sake of everyone. Palestinians have tried for years to oppose the occupation, and everything they've done has just made the response more brutal. So we want to create an alternative to the military, so that young people on both sides can join us instead of army or militia groups."

Yonatan knows, though, that the group's decision to go public will have repercussions for its members. He was an instrumental figure in the creation of the September 2003 "Pilots' Letter" signed by 27 Israeli Air Force pilots that stated, "We, who were raised to love the state of Israel ... refuse to take part in Air Force attacks on civilian population centers."

"I was at the center of a storm," he says. "It was a real crisis in my life when that letter went public."

Nevertheless, he says, as the new members' introductions come to an end and the group divides up to discuss strategies for the upcoming launch, these former fighters are willing to face another storm in order to "truly serve their families, to finish the occupation and be able to live in peace together."

"It doesn't cease to be hard," says Aramin with a smile and sighing deeply. "You must listen to what each person has to say, even though he might be the one who once hit you, or killed a member of your family. But you must listen, and you must forgive, even for the most difficult things."

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Load-Date: April 5, 2006

In Wake of Bombings, Egyptian Resort Confronts Its Fear

The New York Times

April 26, 2006 Wednesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 3; Foreign Desk; Pg. 6

Length: 1270 words

Byline: By MICHAEL SLACKMAN; Mona el-Naggar contributed reporting from Dahab for this article, and Abeer Allam from Sharm el Sheik.

Dateline: DAHAB, Egypt, April 25

Body

As the police began to round up suspects on Tuesday in the triple bombing of this small seaside resort the day before, Dr. Muhammad Hussein was cataloging body parts at the local hospital, and hundreds of Egyptians, some marching in protest, expressed fear that the attack would destroy the tourist industry, and with it their chance to earn a living.

This community, a refuge for scuba divers and backpackers, pressed up against the sea by the soaring bare cliffs of the Sinai, is so close-knit that it took almost half the day on Tuesday for the shock to subside enough for anyone to wash the blood from the pedestrian walk, to board up shattered store fronts or even to remove the plates of food left on restaurant tables.

There were conflicting reports on the number of fatalities, with some officials saying 18 had died and others saying the toll had reached 24. (In the first confused hours, officials had put the toll at 30.)

The bombing was condemned by two leading Islamist groups, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and **Hamas**, the militant Palestinian faction that recently came to power in the West Bank and Gaza.

Many of the most critically injured were flown by military planes to Cairo, where some may have died, accounting for the discrepancy in the figures. Dozens of the less seriously injured were taken to a hospital at Sharm el Sheik, a larger town on the southern tip of the Sinai peninsula.

"It is hard to explain how I felt at that moment," said Muhammad Yousri, 22, who works in a scuba store very close to the blasts. "I felt loss, people dying and destruction everywhere, and at that moment I knew what it meant to be safe. It is very difficult when someone loses this sense of safety. Feeling safe is a blessing."

Some voiced more concrete fears.

"I came here for my sisters -- to help them get married -- and to help me have some kind of future," said Maged Eissa, 20, of Mansoura, a city in the Nile delta, whose right leg was badly burned. "We came here to work, but we now have nothing."

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Egyptian security officials said they had begun picking up dozens of people believed to have connections to, sympathy for or information about those involved in the bombing.

Scuba divers continued to troll the turquoise waters of the Gulf of Aqaba looking for body parts. Security men in dark glasses and freshly pressed suits zoomed in and out of town in big S.U.V.'s.

This was the third bombing attack on a Sinai town in less than two years, and the third to come at the time of a national holiday.

Egyptians were celebrating the end of the Coptic observance of Easter and the national spring holiday of Sham el Nessim, and were planning for Sinai Day on Tuesday, the anniversary of the final withdrawal of Israeli troops from the area in 1982.

The celebrations were canceled in many places.

While investigators and government officials said it was far too soon to draw any firm conclusions, some said they believed that the profile of this attack was so close to that of the other two, in Taba in 2004 and Sharm el Sheik in 2005, that they would prove to be connected. And that only served to underscore a reality that has already unnerved the authorities: that the Sinai, a place that historically has not bred radical thinking, may have become an incubator for terrorism.

"What happened actually has all the markings of a local group," said a high-ranking government official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the investigation publicly. He cited the fact that the suspects obviously knew the area very well.

The attack began at 7:15 p.m. on Monday, when the center of this quaint village was packed with Egyptians and foreigners, young and old. Three bombs detonated, maybe 15 seconds apart, witnesses said.

The first exploded in the middle of a pedestrian walkway near the Lantern, a restaurant with tables on the beach. The second went off just north of there, over a small wooden bridge, beside the outdoor Al Capone Restaurant. The third hit seconds later, on the south end of the walkway, near the Ghazala Supermarket.

In an instant, a stretch no larger than a soccer field was splattered with flesh and blood, and littered with shattered glass.

"Everything was pleasant, and there was nothing shady looming," said Galal Rabee, 30, who was working at a shop near the first explosion. "Then suddenly, it all changed. We found dead people and injured people bleeding."

Government officials said Tuesday that the bombs were small crude devices and appeared to have been detonated by timers -- though suicide bombers had not absolutely been ruled out. No matter how small the devices, the devastation was considerable. The blasts were set off in the middle of a crowded walkway, which would be like placing three bombs in the Faneuil Hall market in Boston or South Street Seaport in New York on a holiday weekend.

Dr. Hussein was working at Dahab Hospital, a small, single-story first aid center about a mile from the beach. The hospital keeps only a few supplies on hand, he said, accustomed as it is to dealing with diving injuries, not wounds more common to a war zone. He said he was eating dinner when he heard the three blasts, and immediately dispatched his three ambulances to pick up the wounded.

The little hospital was quickly overwhelmed.

"We were all trying to do anything we could," he said.

As his staff worked Tuesday to clean the blood off the floors, he read off a grisly inventory of body parts he was storing in a freezer for identification: "Two heads, right arm, left arm, three right legs, three left legs."

In Wake of Bombings, Egyptian Resort Confronts Its Fear

Officials said a small number of foreigners were killed, perhaps four. The primary target seemed to be Egypt, its tourist industry and its citizens: mainly the men who leave their homes in Cairo and small towns along the Nile, where jobs are scarce, to earn a living along the Gulf of Aqaba. Tourists generate jobs, they tip fairly well and they thus allow thoughts of a future, workers here said.

Muhammad Abdel Azim moved here from Cairo and had been saving for nine years to get married. John Samir moved from Sharqiya, and Fayez Tolba moved from Minya. They were working in the Da Vinci Bazaar at a busy corner when the third blast detonated, near the front of the shop. People standing guard inside the shattered remains of the shop said all three men were killed.

They said that Mr. Abdel Azim was to be married, finally, next month.

But keep walking down the street, called Mashaya, and it is clear who will suffer the reverberations.

Ibrahim Ahmed, 19, moved from Cairo a year ago to make a living at the Ghazala Supermarket. Osama Ramsis, 34, moved from Cairo 16 years ago and worked in the Santa Clause Jewellery store. (English spellings are sometimes unconventional.) In Mona Lisa, another jewelry store, was Ahmed Tabakh, 23, who moved from Banha five years ago. In the spice shop was Abdullah Hassan, 21, who moved from Qena a year ago. In the Carpet Center was Ahmed Melihah, 20, who moved from Kafr el Sheik.

From all corners they came to Dahab on Tuesday, after the shards of glass had largely been cleared and the police had taken down the yellow tape that had closed off the small bridge in the middle of town. Dozens of Egyptians, men, women and children, marched up and down the main street, condemning terrorism and praising God.

"We want peace, we want to be able to live," they chanted as they waved hastily made signs condemning the killing.

When 9-year-old Faisal Samir was asked why he was marching, he said, "We want to eat and drink."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Photos: Off the beach at Dahab, Egypt, yesterday, divers found what they thought were human remains from the waterfront attacks on Monday.

Egyptian police investigators searched for evidence yesterday along a bridge that was a terrorist target. (Photographs by Shawn Baldwin for The New York Times)

Load-Date: April 26, 2006

Will Paris be my perfect match?

The Times (London)

March 17, 2006, Friday

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Section: FEATURES; Bricks and Mortar; Pg. 6

Length: 1181 words

Byline: Janine di Giovanni

Body

Janine di Giovanni has exchanged the world's war zones for family life in France. Her latest battle is where to put the plasma TV.

EVER SINCE I was a child I have had a fascination with property. What would Freud say about this? I think I already know. My parents moved my large, strange family into a spanking new home when I was six months old. It was one of those 1960s faux-Frank Lloyd Wright homes that were springing up all over the East Coast of America, with streets named after war heroes.

My parents were obsessed with property and one of their great pastimes was going for a Sunday drive -to look enviously at other houses, of course. So I am obsessed, too. An early memory is of riding my red tricycle up the hill to watch builders pour cement into the foundation of other new homes being built.

In my later incarnation as a war correspondent, I never ceased to stop looking at property. I have examined lovely, high-ceilinged Ottoman buildings in east Jerusalem. I once considered buying an abandoned theatre in Gaza, long before Hamas took over. I saw many chalet-style "weekend" houses in the mountains of Bosnia that were for sale at a few thousand dollars (Paddy Ashdown bought one). I remember entering a sniper's nest in Sarajevo and taking the time to explore the large Habsburg-style rooms while the soldiers were busy taking aim at someone. The present focus of my attention is a property in a more peaceful spot.

It's a typical Haussmann Paris flat at Notre Dame des Champs in the sixth arrondissement, in front of the Luxembourg Gardens. Hemingway used to live in this street, and Gertrude Stein across the way. But more importantly there is the best school in Paris, l'Alsacienne, close by. Around the corner are those great brasseries, La Coupole and Le Select.

After much drama -mortgages turned down, frantic scrambling as my husband, Bruno, and I emptied our accounts of cash in three currencies -we signed the papers last month. Afterwards, we went to Le Select, our new local, and the waiter brought us two glasses of a disgusting sweet party drink to celebrate. We ate steak frites, and my husband took my hand and started to speak poetically about how wonderful it was to build a family life together.

All I did was worry. Because now the tough part begins. The flat has not been rewired or the plumbing done since 1936, which is around the time Nancy Mitford was wandering around Paris with a broken heart. To put it simply -it needs a lot of travaux. Like most property in a good Parisian neighbourhood, it was expensive, although not by London standards. It cost Euro 880,000 (£ 600,000) roughly the same sum that my 1-bedroom Notting Hill flat is

Will Paris be my perfect match?

under offer at -before the hefty notaire fees, which bumped it up by Euro 100,000. Added to that is the travaux, which will cost another Euro 100,000.

By French standards it is spacious: 113 sq m (1,216 sq ft) plus a chambre de bonne, a minute but precious room two floors up that will be transformed into my study or a guest room. It is laid out in a typical French manner: small, cosy rooms and huge hallways. Our plan is to knock through everything, making it light and airy and spacious and totally un-French.

We are at the mercy of Bob and Gerd. Gerd is a German architect, blond and stunningly handsome. Bob is a Pole. He comes from the mountains of Poland and understands wood; that is important to us because we both like something of a country feel.

Gerd is what you would expect of a German architect. His designs are modern and clean, his expertise is making space out of small places. He originally arrived with his partner, a Croatian builder by the curious name of "E", who was even more handsome than Gerd.

But looks are not everything, and for someone like me, who worked in the Balkans for nearly a decade, a German-Croat alliance is not a good thing. Apart from that, "E" was super-expensive. We found Bob through my Argentinian friend, Maria Laura, and he gave us a far lower quotation for the work. When we put Bob together with Gerd, the Pole and the German eyed each other as though they were opposing armies.

But the Second World War was a long time ago, and now they have no choice but to get on with things.

Now Gerd has given us three plans of action. All of them involve knocking every wall down, rebuilding every corner and adding cupboards throughout. This is a strange French architectural feature: there are never any cupboards. I have no idea where they put their clothes.

Yesterday was a breakthrough. After two weeks of looking helplessly at Gerd's designs over glasses of Ricard and bowls of olives, Bruno and I -the two most indecisive people in history -made a decision.

We go with option two, which means one enormous sitting room with a cuisine americaine in the corner, and a bathroom off that. Then we will have a combined library and office in the next room, where our son, Luca, can also play, then a wing with our two bedrooms and our own bathroom.

But today the war begins. Did I mention that my husband and I are also the two most stubborn people in Christendom? Today's battle is about the laundry room.

"I insist on having a place for the laundry to be hung to dry," I say. Bruno looks startled. "We have a dryer in the kitchen."

This is such a quintessential male-female argument that it seems as though we are in a Woody Allen movie. We argue for five minutes. Then Bruno changes the subject abruptly and talks of the second bathroom, off the kitchen. He wants a small shower. I say that a bath is more practical for Luca.

"Children don't take showers," I point out, "they take baths."

"He will take a shower in a few years. When he is four."

Then phase two of the battle begins. Bruno pulls out Gerd's plans, pointing to the fireplace in the main room. He says something that chills my heart. "We can get a flat-screen plasma TV over the fireplace," he says. I resist the urge to hit him.

"Are you mad?" I say. "You put paintings above a fireplace, or a mirror. Not a TV screen! I don't even watch TV!"

"I do," he says. "All the time. And it's the perfect place for the TV. Otherwise, the light is not good. We can put my Bose speakers here...and my Buddha heads here..."

Will Paris be my perfect match?

He starts to draw up an elaborate plan to turn what I thought would be a lovely, elegant Parisian sitting room into a Boy's Own fantasy.

"I will not live with a plasma screen above the fireplace!" I say shrilly.

On that note, he takes his helmet and speeds off on his motorcycle, shouting back over his shoulder *Arrete tes betises!* (Stop this nonsense). We call a truce to go to look at kitchens. I want Aga, he wants Ikea. We avoid the topic of TVs. But next week, he tells me sternly, the walls begin coming down ...

Janine di Giovanni will be reporting regularly from her bricks and mortar battlefield.

FOR SALE

This two-bed apartment is on the 4th floor of a traditional Parisian building near Saint Augustin in the 8th arrondissement. It has a large reception room and dining room, and each bedroom has its own bathroom.

Price: £ 1.07 million. Contact: Emile Garcin, 020-7590 3130, www.emilegarcin.co.uk

Load-Date: March 17, 2006

Guardian Weekly: Comment & Analysis: Letters

Guardian Weekly

March 3, 2006 Friday

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TheGuardianWeekly

Section: Pg. 4

Length: 1361 words

Byline: Dominic Simler, Rafael Bloom, Karl Sabbagh, Renate Peters, Xavier Romero-Frias, Patrick Lewis, Philip Machanick, Paul Barber, Bor West

Body

Israel and Palestine

As a South African-born British citizen who has lived in London for more than 26 years, I take great offence at your inaccurate comparison of Israel and South Africa (A world apart, February 17). The two countries' problems are entirely different. As a Jew, I am doubly ended by the bias that infects any objectivity this piece could have had, given its faulty premise. It leads me to the conclusion that in Britain attacking Israel is an acceptable proxy for anti-semitism. It should not be forgotten that South African Jews were among the most prominent champions of Nelson Mandela and the ANC, and that Israel was formed on land that was bought and paid for from the Arabs. The sad plight of the Palestinians is a failure of their own leadership and more widely of the Arab world, which regards their situation as Israel's problem rather than its own.

Dominic Simler

London, UK

As a Zionist, South African-born Jew, I must applaud Chris McGreal's article. Among Nelson Mandela's first utterances upon release was a plea to put down the gun. What a pity, then, for the Palestinian nation that instead of leaders of the calibre of Walter Sisulu and Mr Mandela they have been consistently betrayed and robbed by their own leadership. So long as two-state solution is deemed the answer, Israelis and Palestinians do not share the promise of the new South Africa. I do not see my own Zionism as a reason to deny self-determination to another nation. In turn, **Hamas**, and other anti-Zionist groups, owe it to the Palestinian people not to make their raison d'être the denial of another nation's rights.

Rafael Bloom

London, UK

Chris McGreal is to be commended for his comprehensive survey of the similarities between Israel today and South Africa under apartheid. But his report merely details the institutionalisation of an anti-Arab racism that pervades Israeli society. The most insidious aspect of this is that ordinary Israelis see nothing wrong with it. On my recent visit to Israel, I was interviewed by a young immigration officer who asked where I would be staying. When I

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said the American Colony Hotel in East Jerusalem she said: iBut that is an Arab hotel. Why do you stay there? What's wrong with all the Jewish hotels in Jerusalem?i il stay there because I like it,i I said. iYou like Arabs?i she said, a note of disgust in her voice.

Karl Sabbagh

Newbold on Stour, Warks, UK

Guilty by association

Jonathan Freedland is not the fi rst to criticise Muslims for not attending Holocaust commemorations (Shoah casts a long shadow, February 3). But why does he expect that they should? Does Freedland also expect followers of Shintoism or Buddhism to attend? And do representatives of the Jewish community attend commemorations of the atrocities perpetrated in Cambodia and Rwanda, among others? His implication is that the Muslims

are in some way complicit in the Holocaust, which is a subtle form of guilt by association. The Holocaust should never be used as a stick to punish the Muslims.

Renate Peters

Silver Spring, Maryland, US

Spanish practices

The relationship between Catalonia and the central Spanish government is complex (Catalonia wants to go its own way, February 10). Perhaps the best way to portray it is as a dysfunctional marriage, an unhealthy relationship where one partner (the government in Madrid) is used to abusing his partner (Catalonia), who is full of doubts and insecurities about herself since the lack of consideration and the brutalities of the Franco era. The sad truth is that Franco's shadow still looms large over the Iberian peninsula. Thus the easiest way to get votes for any politician in central and southern Spain is not by promising jobs or development, but by abusing Catalonia and the Catalans as ibad Spaniardsi. No party

programme is sure to draw Spanish crowds in greater numbers than the insults against people who, technically at least, are fellow Spaniards. The blindness of Spanish politicians, especially from the rightwing PP party, to the fact that their technique of sowing hatred is potentially harmful to a united Spain, is staggering. Logically, a country where Catalans would feel that they are valued as citizens, and that their rights and their language are respected, would have less incentives for separatist tendencies. But by routinely portraying the Catalans and their aspirations as iSpain's worst enemyi, the neo-Franquistas are undermining the very foundation of the Spanish kingdom. Even politicians who seem friendly to the Catalan cause, such as Zapatero, have been lukewarm at best in their support of Catalan issues. Their silence about the abuse of the image of Catalonia by Spanish

politicians, and about the lies that have been told on the language issue, are meaningful. The socialists' need to derive some benefi t from the pervading anti-Catalan mood that has been whipped up by a nostalgic and unimaginative right wing is at best a sign of weakness. Catalans are often easily portrayed as bigoted and intolerant people because they stick to their language, deemed obsolete and jejune by the Spanish state. But nothing could be further from the truth: Catalonia absorbed many Spanish-speaking immigrants during Franco's time and the Catalans have done a good job in making them feel welcome. My father, who had migrated to Catalonia from a Spanish-speaking region before I was born, used to say: iCatalonia is not only its landscape, you have to get to love its people.i

Xavier Romero-Frias

Ambalamukku, India

Scientific evidence

With regard to George Monbiot's column on the funding of medical research (Just follow the money, February 17), it should be pointed out that the vast majority of scientific academic journals have, and have had for some years, a policy of printing both the source of funding for research and any conflicts of interest that may impact on a scientist's impartiality. Of course, should human nature prove fallible and someone deliberately try to hide a potential source of bias, this would not be highlighted. As the recent retraction of Dr Hwang Woo-suk's work on cloned human stem cells exemplifies, scientists are as human as anyone.

Patrick Lewis

Washington DC, US

George Monbiot's column illustrates that the University of Reading is not a real university, otherwise they would not be so keen to condone academic fraud. For Reading to portray this as an issue of academic freedom is absurd. Many funders do insist that they be acknowledged. Is that a denial of academic freedom? It is usual in academia that funders expect to be acknowledged, so it would not be hard to insist that funders be named in any case where academic judgment is in question. Anyone wishing to fund academia anonymously has many outlets that do not influence academic outcomes, such as sponsoring a general-purpose building or paying for the toilets to be cleaned. The latter is the most recognition the tobacco industry deserves.

Philip Machanick

University of Queensland, Australia

Papuan fears

It is a terrible irony that a week or so before scientists announced the discovery of rare wildlife in West Papua (Lost world found, February 17), the UN reported that the territory's indigenous population is at risk of extinction. In January 43 Papuan men, women and children were forced

to flee to Australia to seek asylum from persecution by the Indonesian authorities. The human rights abuses suffered by the Papuans at the hands of the Indonesian security forces are gross and widespread; tens of thousands have died since Indonesia took control of the territory in 1963.

Paul Barber

Tapol, the Indonesia Human Rights

Campaign

eWar is always corrupt'

Why is the story, Britain's image tarnished by video of troops beating Iraqis, headline news (February 17)? I thought the Blair government went to war to beat the Iraqis and in this postmodern world one would surely expect a video, a T-shirt and a soap opera of moral outrage like the

one in your leader column. The British at war are no more dignified than another nation in the act of conquest. War is always a corrupt and dirty business. So, let's drop the pretence of moral frameworks being transgressed.

(Dr) Bor West

MEzeilles, France

Load-Date: June 19, 2006

**Price of free nation may well be blood;
Emerging democracies likely to go to war as they have weak political
institutions**

The Business Times Singapore

January 17, 2006 Tuesday

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Section: VIEWS AND OPINIONS; BT Comment Others

Length: 1332 words

Byline: Leon Hadar Washington Correspondent

Body

IF YOU'VE been listening to the recent 'democracy is the way to go' sermons by US President George W Bush and his advisers, you'll have to conclude that embracing 'democracy' - a concept that is open to different interpretations - is the cure for most of humanity's ills, ranging from political violence and economic under-development to male baldness and erectile dysfunction.

Even in the more modest version, the global democratic crusade launched by the White House and inspired by the Wilsonian neoconservative ideologues adopts what the neocons consider to be an axiom of international relations, that democracies rarely, if ever, wage war against one another.

Translating that maxim into policy terms means that Washington has the obligation based not only on moral considerations but also on pure self-interest to promote democracy worldwide as the most effective way to establish international peace and stability.

Indeed, Mr Bush has proclaimed that 'the survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands; the best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world'.

He and his foreign policy aides have argued that one of the main rationales for ousting Saddam Hussein and occupying Iraq - especially since no weapons of mass destruction were discovered there - was the need to rid Mesopotamia of a tyrant and establish a democratic system and pursue similar regime changes and advance freedom in the rest of the Arab Middle East.

The Bushies argue that democracy would not only respond to the legitimate demands of those living under authoritarian systems, but also reduce the chances for domestic instability and international wars, and in that context, would retard the spread of terrorism. Not surprisingly, the Pentagon and the State Department have become major instruments for nation building and democracy promotion, as most members of the policy community in Washington seem to subscribe to a catchy slogan: 'Make Democracy, Not War'.

The debate hasn't been on whether the spread of democracy helps to strengthen the foundation for international peace, but on the most cost-effective way to promote political freedom.

But two academics are challenging this conventional wisdom. In a new book, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War* (The MIT Press, 2005), Edward D Mansfield of the University of Pennsylvania and Jack

Price of free nation may well be blood; Emerging democracies likely to go to war as they have weak political institutions

Snyder of Columbia University seem to pull the intellectual rug from under the rationale presented by the Bush administration for what it's doing in Iraq and the rest of the Middle East - arguing that states in the early phases of transition to democracy are actually more likely than other states to become involved in war.

Prof Mansfield and Prof Snyder say that emerging democracies tend to have weak political institutions. Leaders of these countries attempt to rally support by invoking external threats and resorting to belligerent, nationalist rhetoric and slogans. They point to this pattern in cases ranging from revolutionary France to contemporary Russia. One of the most interesting case studies is the collapse of the former Yugoslavia.

Bloody chapter

As the mostly peaceful and relatively prosperous communist Yugoslavia started transitioning into democracy, the leaders of all the major ethnic groups in that country, like Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia and Franjo Tudjman in Croatia, succeeded in exploiting nationalist sentiments as a way of getting to power and mobilising public support through an open democratic process, including free elections, creating the conditions for a civil war that has turned out to be the bloodiest chapter in European history since the end of World War II.

The thesis is backed by complex statistical models but is in its essence quite simple: Be afraid, very afraid of new democracies as they are more likely than not to be unstable and warlike. It provides a mostly 'institutional' explanation for that phenomenon, noting that such countries often lack the rule of law, organised political parties and professional news media and other political and legal institutions that can place constraints on the political leaders. In a period of sweeping political changes and uncertainty that characterises the transition to democracy, many voters aspire for a sense of identity and security and elects populists and demagogues who promote bellicose nationalism that lead to civil and inter-state wars.

Pointing to the Bush administration's campaign to build up democracy in Iraq and spread it to Palestine, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the authors warn that 'unleashing Islamic mass opinion through a sudden democratisation could only raise the likelihood of war'.

In a way, the political changes in Iraq and the rest of the Middle East have become a political science laboratory to test the author's theories, and it seems that they have been corroborated by what has been happening in these countries.

In Iraq, the recent parliamentary elections helped to consolidate the power of the leaders of radical Shiite parties and those who represent the Kurdish separatist national movement; not surprisingly, the Arab-Sunnis also voted in support of their sectarian representatives. If anything, the ousting of Saddam Hussein and the free elections has led to more political instability and ethnic and religious violence and is creating the conditions for a Yugoslavia-like civil war.

In Egypt, the members of the anti-western Moslem Brotherhood movement have strengthened their position in the last elections, while in Palestine, most observers expect the radical Islamic Hamas to gain more power in the coming parliamentary vote there.

Unstable states

And let's not forget that last year's presidential election in Iran - which is clearly more open than in, say, Saudi Arabia - has ended with the victory of the most radical anti-American figure in the race. In short, as the authors suggest, the collapse of the old authoritarian regimes in the Middle East has given birth to weak and unstable states and to the rise to power - through free elections - of warlike ultranationalist politicians.

Prof Mansfield and Prof Snyder focus most of their discussion in their book on emerging democracies and suggest that mature democracies tend to be peaceful.

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Hence, their implication is that Washington and other western powers have an interest to help create the foundations of functioning political, economic and legal institutions in emerging democracies before moving to hold elections there.

But they don't explain why would, say, Iraqis or Palestinians accept such an arrangement, that is, postponing free election until their country would be ready for democracy?

Who will make that decision and who will take control of the country's security until a democratic elected government comes to power sometime in the future? Moreover, it seems to me that you don't need to apply complex statistical models to figure out that the main cause of wars in the modern age, since the time of the French Revolution, has been nationalism, and that democracy is the most loyal ally of nationalism in a sense that it indeed empowers the people to rally behind their nation, ethnicity, religion and tribe and help drive into power populist figures that thrive during times of civil wars and wars between nation-states.

If anything, the history of Europe in the 19th century suggests that authoritarian governments were more successful in maintaining a relative peace in the continent for close to a century.

Similarly, the most peaceful European states during World War II and the ones that avoided entering into the war were Franco's Spain, Salazar's Portugal, and Turkey, three non-democratic regimes, and Switzerland that granted women the right to vote only in 1971(!).

Perhaps the time has come for an innovative political scientist to conduct a research to determine whether - and I know that's not very PC - non-democracies are actually more peaceful than democratic states.

Load-Date: January 16, 2006

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Drawing the ire of Islam

The Irish Times

February 4, 2006 Saturday

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Section: NEWS FEATURES; Pg. 3

Length: 1424 words

Body

Cartoons in European newspapers depicting Muhammad as a terrorist have met with fury from the Muslim world, writes Lara Marlowe

In Jakarta in Indonesia, 300 men ransacked the Danish embassy. In Pakistan, they burned the Danish prime minister in effigy, along with Danish and French flags, to cries of "Death to Denmark". Palestinian gunmen twice seized the European Union office in the Gaza Strip, and warned citizens of Denmark, Norway and France to leave their territory or die. Demonstrators marched in Yemen and Mauritania. In Europe, newspaper offices received repeated bomb threats.

Saudi Arabia, Syria and Libya recalled their ambassadors from Copenhagen, where satirical drawings of the Prophet Muhammad were first published last September. Residents of the Iraqi city of Falluja burned Danish goods. The Danish-Swedish dairy group Arla, which sells EUR 402 mn-worth of products in the Middle East annually, watched helplessly as its sales collapsed. Swiss company Nestlé was so eager to dissociate itself from Denmark's "sin" it published a front-page advertisement in the Saudi newspaper Ash-Sharq Al-Awsat noting that its Nido powdered milk is "neither produced in nor imported from Denmark".

In Copenhagen, the Danish prime minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen met Muslim ambassadors yesterday in the hope of defusing the crisis, but his gesture was too little too late. Last October, when the Muslim ambassadors wanted to see him, Rasmussen refused. Denmark has a free press, he said. If the ambassadors were unhappy about the newspaper cartoons, they could file a lawsuit. They took Rasmussen's refusal as an affront.

Ironically, "the Muhammad affair", as it is known in Denmark, started with a plea against self-censorship by the author Kåre Bluitgen. He wrote to Jyllands-Posten newspaper complaining that he could not find an illustrator for his book about Muhammad following the assassination of the Dutch film-maker Theo Van Gogh. Twelve artists responded to the newspaper's challenge. Their drawings were published on September 30th under the title "The Faces of Muhammad".

Muslims find two of the 12 drawings particularly offensive: the Prophet wearing a turban with a Koranic inscription, wrapped around a bomb; and a blind-folded, snarling Prophet, flanked by two women in Islamic dress, clutching a sword.

In Copenhagen, local Muslim leaders demanded an apology, which was not forthcoming. On October 12th, Carsten Juste, the newspaper's editor-in-chief, received death threats. Two days later, 5,000 Muslims marched in protest.

In late December, 20 Danish-Muslim groups sent a delegation to Lebanon and Egypt. Danish officials believe the delegation carried out a disinformation campaign which caused the issue to blow up again in January. Arab

Drawing the ire of Islam

newspapers alleged that Danes had burned the Koran, and falsely claimed that Jyllands-Posten was a government newspaper.

On December 29th, Arab League foreign ministers condemned the drawings. In early January, a prosecutor in Copenhagen ruled against 11 Muslim groups who tried to sue Jyllands-Posten for blasphemy and racial discrimination.

Then Magazinet, a small Protestant publication in Norway, re-published the 12 drawings on January 10th. The International Union of Muslim Ulemas called on all Muslims in the world to boycott Danish and Norwegian products.

Last Monday, Jyllands-Posten issued a feeble apology on its website. "We are sorry the matter has reached these proportions and repeat that we had no intention to offend anyone, and that we . . . respect freedom of religion," Carsten Juste said in an editorial.

Magazinet followed suit, expressing its "regrets" on Tuesday. But the genie was out of the bottle. Arab interior ministers meeting in Tunis demanded that the authors of the cartoons be punished. The Arab League secretary general Amr Musa, by no means a radical, accused the European press of employing double standards. "They are afraid of being accused of anti-Semitism, but when they caricature Islam they invoke freedom of expression," Musa said.

PUBLICATION OF THE cartoons offended Muslims for three reasons: Muslim tradition forbids images of the Prophet; the founder of Islam was portrayed as a terrorist; like George W Bush's "war on terror", the drawings were viewed as deliberate incitement of hatred against Muslims. The Koran does not mention images, but strict Muslims sometimes equate human likenesses with idols. "Wine, games of chance and idols are abominations invented by Satan. Abstain from them," the Koran says.

On the other hand, the Hadith, or sayings of the Prophet, gleaned from his followers after his death, forbid human images. "Angels do not enter a house which shelters a dog or an effigy," goes one Hadith. Those who produce images of God purport to be his "equals" and "will be punished on the day of the last Judgment", goes another.

DURING THE MIDDLE Ages, Persian miniaturists nonetheless painted the Prophet's face. By contrast, under the Sunni Ottomans, the Prophet was portrayed with his face blanked out, or a flame over it, often with sleeves covering his hands entirely.

The nuance continues to this day, with Sunni Wahhabis in Saudi Arabia seeking out and destroying images, while portraits of the Prophet are tolerated among poor, uneducated Shias in Iran.

The Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad nonetheless joined the outcry over the drawings, demanding an explanation from the Danish ambassador to Tehran for "insults which have hurt more than a billion Muslims" and calling King Abadallah of Saudi Arabia on the telephone. On Thursday, the Iranian foreign ministry summoned the Austrian ambassador (who represents the EU) to protest against the publication of the cartoons by newspapers across Europe.

For centuries, Europeans have portrayed the Prophet in paintings, engravings and more recently on magazine and book covers - without complaints by Muslims. The Muslim intellectual Ghaleb Bencheikh says the problem with the Danish cartoons is elsewhere, "in the base insinuation that the message of the Koran is fundamentally violent".

Malek Chebel, the author of *Islam and Reason*, agrees. "The problem with the Danish caricatures is that they intentionally represent the Prophet as a terrorist or as someone who professes terrorist violence," he told the Catholic newspaper *La Croix*. "For Muslims, the Prophet is someone who works for peace, in the service of all mankind. Would Christians accept Mary, mother of Christ, being drawn as a prostitute? Or Jesus with a knife between his teeth, or as a homosexual?"

MUSLIM RULERS, EVEN those with close ties to the West, such as Afghan president Hamid Karzai, were unanimous in condemning what the French newspaper *Libération* calls "the Satanic drawings". "Any insult to the Holy Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) is an insult to more than one billion Muslims and an act like this must never be

Drawing the ire of Islam

allowed to be repeated," said a statement issued by Karzai. Leaders in pro-Western Tunisia, Morocco, and Egypt made similar statements. In the Palestinian territories, armed groups associated with Fatah vented their rage at having lost parliamentary elections to Hamas by threatening Europeans.

By week's end, a slew of European newspapers had published some or all of the cartoons: France-Soir and Libération in France; Die Welt in Germany; ABC, El Periodico and El Mundo in Spain; La Stampa and Il Corriere della Sera in Italy; Blick and La Tribune de Genève in Switzerland; De Volkskrant, De Telegraaf and NRC Handelsblad in Holland. Freedom of expression and a high news value were the arguments given. Most British newspapers refrained from printing the drawings, on the grounds it would create unnecessary offence.

Only one Arab newspaper, Shihan in Jordan, published three of the caricatures of Muhammad, under the title "Muslims of the World, Be Reasonable". "What hurts Islam more?" the editor-in-chief Jihad Momani wrote: "These drawings, or images of a kidnapper slashing his victim's throat in front of the camera, or a suicide-bomber blowing himself up in the midst of a wedding in Amman?" Like his counterpart at France-Soir in Paris, Momani was sacked for publishing the drawings. Shihan was taken off news-stands.

Jyllands-Posten editor-in-chief Carsten Juste, when asked would he do it again, knowing that Danish soldiers in Iraq and civilians elsewhere in the Middle East would be threatened, told the New York Times: "As my finger hovered one centimetre above the send button for publishing the drawings, would I have hit it? No. No responsible editor-in-chief would have."

Load-Date: February 4, 2006

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The Lebanonization of Europe

New York Sun (Archive)

February 23, 2006 Thursday

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Section: ARTS & LETTERS; Pg. 15

Length: 1431 words

Byline: By FRED SIEGEL

Body

The storm over the Danish cartoons has been mistakenly described as a debate over the limits of free speech. One of the milder posters carried during a Londonistan anti-cartoon protest read "FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IS WESTERN TERRORISM." The coverage in the mainstream American press has ranged from the banal to the bizarre, depicting broad-minded Danes and Dutchmen as raving xenophobes for refusing to tolerate Muslim intolerance.

But the controversy is actually about a struggle for power involving Muslim intimidation and the mandatory multiculturalism of the European political class. Flemming Rose, the Jyllands-Posten editor who published the cartoons in response to ongoing self-censorship by a cowed European press, has explained that what the rioters and their politically correct apologists are demanding is not "respect" but "my submission."

Judging by the craven response of the British government and most of the European political class, they are succeeding. The Islamist leadership across Europe seems now to have largely achieved veto power over the press - except in Denmark - while in the name of multiculturalism, Muslims are subject to no such restraints.

"They think they have won the debate," a British researcher and a convert to Christianity who attended a madrassa as a child in his native Guyana, Patrick Sookhdeo, said. "They believe that the British Government has capitulated to them, because it feared the consequences if it did not." The lesson for Europe's Muslims, he said, is that violence and the threat of violence work. What will follow, according to ICM Research, well-respected pollsters of British Muslims, is a demand in England (and elsewhere) for Islamic extraterritoriality, granting official government recognition to Shariah law in predominantly Muslim areas.

In practice, Shariah has already been partly imposed by Islamic thugs in sections of the British Midlands, as well as the suburbs of Paris and Stockholm. Since women walking in these neighborhoods are subject to stoning and rape, even non-Muslim women have donned the chador as a way of protecting themselves. And in the Netherlands, the upper-middle-class response to aggressive Islamism has been migration to the United States, Canada, and Australia.

Fortunately, two new commanding and readable books illuminate the landscape of Europe's constricting future. Bruce Bawer's "While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam Is Destroying the West From Within" (Doubleday, 256 pages, \$23.95) and Claire Berlinski's "Menace in Europe: Why the Continent's Crisis Is America's, Too" (Crown Forum, 288 pages, \$25.95) are remarkably complementary. Mr. Bawer, who is an American from Queens, and fluent in both Dutch and Norwegian, is best on Scandinavia and Denmark. Ms. Berlinski, an American who now makes her home in Paris and Istanbul, covers Britain, France, and Germany.

The Lebanonization of Europe

They both make it clear that part of the problem of the European welfare states is not so much that Muslim integration has failed but that it has never really been tried. Immigrants to Britain, notes Ms. Berlinski, don't need to learn English. Social-service pamphlets are translated into their languages by an already large and growing social-service bureaucracy that lives well off the failure to incorporate the newcomers. For his part, Mr. Bawer describes the numerous methods by which Muslims have actively resisted integration. There is the practice known as "dumping," in which Muslim parents send their children back to the home country to be "educated" at schools where the Koran is virtually the only text. Similarly, women accused of leading a "European life" are sent back by their families or clans to their native lands for re-education. In their place, brides steeped in Islamic tradition are imported from the old country. The effect is that growing populations are in Europe but not of it. To

make matters worse, the rigid structures of the European economies make it difficult to get work while an easy access to welfare makes it unnecessary, so that the newcomers aren't even integrated into the workplace.

Still, despite Europe's slow growth and generous benefits for not working, many thousands of dark-skinned Hindus in England, Armenians in France, and Poles in Germany are climbing the European ladder. But Muslims are different, notes Mr. Bawer: They see themselves as having a God-given authority that has "made them superior to infidels."

The job of turning Muslims in the Netherlands into Dutch Muslims, both Mr. Bawer and Ms. Berlinski argue, is made all the more difficult by the European loss of identity. First nationalism replaced Christianity, notes Ms. Berlinski, and now, in reaction to the memories of the two world wars, the European Union has, with some success, hollowed out the idea of distinct national characters. Today, for the European political class, nationalism, or any form of populism, carries a distinctly fascist odor. But membership in the European Union is not an identity with any emotional resonance.

Even more significant is the sense, which both authors discuss at length, of European self-loathing. The "spice" of multiculturalism is seen as a welcome addition to the bland European stew. When a Swedish integration official was asked, "Is Swedish culture worth saving?" she replied, "What is Swedish culture?" Her assumption and that of the E.U. political class is that Europeans have to adapt to Muslims, not the other way around. And indeed Sweden, in the wake of the Danish cartoon affair, now seems to have given its imams veto power over what's said about Islam in the Swedish press. Behind the selfloathing is the sense that after World War I, totalitarianism, and World War II, there is only a botched civilization that can provide the security of the welfare state but not much more than a bureaucratic identity.

Still, there is one part of what was once the West that Europeans loathe more than their own: the United States. Europe's largely unaccountable political class and the Islamists are brought together by a shared hostility to the United States. In fact, they tend to fear America far more than Al Qaeda. Western Europe's left-wing lumpen-intellectuals, Mr. Bawer notes, are "half in love with tyranny." The British House of Commons even gave a minute of silence for the memory of the slain Hamas leader Sheik Yassin. Anti-Americanism, Mr. Bawer and Ms. Berlinski note, is increasingly the political glue that holds Europe together, if only to repudiate the American cowboys who had the bad taste not only to liberate the Continent repeatedly but to surpass it in the process. Thus Europeans invariably defend antiquated labor practices that restrain job creation as an alternative to "the American [read: savage] condition."

Worse yet, criticism of Muslims - even when they engage in female genital mutilation, honor killings, or attacks on gays and Jews - is almost invariably defined as "Islamophobic." This has led the Danish journalist Helle Brix to comment bitterly, "If at some time in the not-too distant future fundamentalist Muslims began rounding up Jews, it would be racism to resist."

But then again the Danes are different. They were the one who saved their Jews in World War II, and it was the Danes, remembering Sweden's collaboration with the Nazis, who quipped, "What is a Swede? But a German in human form." The question for self-destructive Europe now is whether Danish courage will spread or remain merely an anomaly.

The Lebanonization of Europe

It's hard to do full justice to the rich material in these two books. Ms. Berlinski, for instance, has a fascinating chapter on the Nazi aesthetic of Rammstein, Germany's most popular band. But if the books have any weaknesses it is the lack of a historical framework. In 1979, the combination of Khomeinei's revolution in Iran, the second oil shock, which gave Saudi Arabia even more money to fund Wahhabi mosques in Europe, and the victory of mujahedeen in Afghanistan changed the way European Muslims defined themselves. Their sense that Islam was once again on the march is the essential backdrop to these books.

Europe, smug in its certainty that its vast sophistication - as opposed to American "militarism" - would pave the way to the future, has been slow to react to the problems posed by Muslim immigration. When there is rioting, the answer is always more dialogue. But then again, Europe's insistence on dialogue as the solution to all problems is often difficult to distinguish from appeasement.

Mr. Siegel is the author of "Prince of the City: Giuliani, New York and the Genius of American Life" from Encounter Books.

Load-Date: February 23, 2006

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Comment & Debate: The next phase of Sharonism might have defeated Sharon himself: The new prime minister must perform a deed that proved too hard for greater men - pullout from the West Bank

The Guardian - Final Edition

January 11, 2006 Wednesday

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Section: GUARDIAN COMMENT AND DEBATE PAGES ; Pg. 25

Length: 1216 words

Byline: Jonathan Freedland

Body

With death at least, there are rules. All campaigning has to be suspended, journalists wear black ties, and politicians pretend to come together in a spirit of national unity. But with a medical situation that hovers close to death without ever quite touching it - a prime minister struck down but still alive - the rules are less clear. Like a man unsure whether to dress for a funeral, Israel has found itself unsure of its footing.

Accordingly, Israelis have spent the near-week since Ariel Sharon's massive stroke engaging in a quintessential Jewish pastime: second-guessing the doctors, filling up newspaper columns and television airtime with a national debate on the quality of Sharon's treatment. The politicians, meanwhile, have been politicking.

After a decent interval of a few hours, they started assessing the new, transformed landscape. Before the stroke, most assumed the March 28 elections would be a walkover for Sharon and his newly-formed Kadima party. With him gone, it should be a genuine three-way contest, but that's not quite how it looks.

In the red corner stands Labour's new leader, Amir Peretz. A lifelong campaigner for workers' rights and a committed peacenik, he generated enormous enthusiasm when he took over in November. But his campaign stalled, damaged by the defection of the seemingly immortal Shimon Peres to Kadima. His enemies say Peretz is simply not prime ministerial timbre, that he is a trade unionist rabble rouser: Bob Crow with a Hebrew accent. Even his fellow Mizrahim, Middle Eastern Jews, who should have been his natural constituency, have not rallied. "He's not one of the ones they can be proud of," says a Likud official acidly. His focus on domestic issues and lack of experience in the security sphere mean few see him as a serious contender for the top job. Labour hopes to turn that around in the next two months, but it won't be easy.

Back from the margins, returned as Likud leader, is Binyamin Netanyahu, who had looked set to be wiped out by Sharon. Now he is the sole former prime minister in the contest. "He has experience - the trouble is, it was not a good one," Yuli Tamir, a Labour Knesset member and close Peretz adviser, told me as she fidgeted with an anti-Sharon leaflet that will now have to be pulped. She reckons Israelis have not forgotten Bibi's last spell at the helm in the late 1990s, or his recent stint as Sharon's uber-Thatcherite finance minister, imposing a series of "cruel" cuts on the most vulnerable.

That leaves Sharon's deputy, the acting prime minister, Ehud Olmert. Widely disliked personally and with little security background, few would ever have tipped him for the top in normal circumstances. But suddenly the

Comment & Debate: The next phase of Sharonism might have defeated Sharon himself: The new prime minister must perform a deed that proved too hard for greater me....

premiership is his to lose. So far he has played it well, acting humbly, continuing to work out of his own office rather than the PM's. If he runs a smart campaign - using Sharon's face on Kadima posters, keeping his own in the background - he could come through.

None of these men will win an outright majority; Israel's election system allows for no such thing. Instead, two of them will end up as coalition partners. What then?

Sharon had not exactly spelled out his next move. Indeed, that was part of his political strategy. He kept his ideas vague and secret, giving the electorate little to disagree with. He discovered his personal standing was so great, Israeli voters were ready to give him a blank cheque. Don't bother us with the details, they said; if you think it's right, that's good enough.

Nevertheless, few doubted that Sharon was planning more of the policy that had come to define him: he would follow August's disengagement from the Gaza strip with further unilateral withdrawals from the West Bank. Why else would he have formed a new party at the age of 77 unless he planned a major initiative, one that could not be thwarted by the dogmatists of the Likud?

The outlines were clear too. Whatever he said publicly, Sharon saw the security barrier, or wall, as the putative border for Israel. That way the major settlement blocks on the West Bank would stay under Israeli rule, while the Palestinians would get the rest. This would, of course, be hugely imperfect. Israel would be formally annexing territory that, officially speaking, it occupies only temporarily (albeit a temporary period of 39 years). And it's a real question whether the terrain Sharon left on the Palestinian side of the wall would, combined with Gaza, be enough to constitute a viable state. Nevertheless, his next move would have represented greater progress - the partial ending of the occupation and the dismantling of illegal settlements - than at any time for four decades. Now that prospect, near certain if Sharon had stayed on, is in peril. Optimists will note that Olmert shares the Sharon vision; indeed, he had a big hand in forming it. (Privately, Olmert would speak of Israel eventually withdrawing from all but 6-8% of the West Bank.) They will also argue that there is a genuine constituency in Israel for a party that sits between the zealous nationalism of Likud and the dovish instincts of Labour, with its call for a negotiated peace with the Palestinians, a project too many Israelis regard as a lost cause - and which they will see as even more hopeless if Hamas triumphs in this month's Palestinian elections. "Sharon did not create Kadima in a vacuum," the former Likud cabinet minister Dan Meridor told me. Its support will not melt away just because Sharon has gone; it represents a national consensus.

Pessimists will see something else. Olmert has none of his mentor's strongman credentials, essential for driving through a second round of territorial withdrawals. He would need the public approval of the military brass, a group that could never outrank Sharon. Olmert will have to argue for his every move.

More depressing, the next phase of Sharonism might have defeated Sharon himself. The most striking conversation I had in Jerusalem was with a key player in religious Zionism, a man with a keen ear for rightist politics. He reports a new mood among the settlers. "There is tremendous criticism of the leadership, that they were too moderate over Gaza." Hardliners felt the Gaza Jews rolled over too easily, refusing to raise a hand to the soldiers who came to remove them. The West Bank settlers will not go so quietly. "They are planning armed confrontations with the army, even mass suicides," he says. It will be the Masada manoeuvre: the shock of finding men, women and children dead by their own hand would stun Israel into calling a halt to the disengagement.

If Sharon would have struggled to withstand such an event, what chance Olmert? Withdrawing from Gaza - a place of next to no biblical significance to Jewish literalists - will be nothing alongside a pullout from the West Bank lands revered as Judea and Samaria. And these are not easy people to take on: witness the hardcore settlers whooping and cheering at Sharon's stroke, convinced it was the "finger of God" punishing him for the crime of disengagement.

So Olmert faces a year of great challenge: if he wins in March, he has to perform a political deed that has proved too hard for men both stronger and greater. Whether the occupation deepens or shrinks now depends on him.

Comment & Debate: The next phase of Sharonism might have defeated Sharon himself: The new prime minister must perform a deed that proved too hard for greater me....

freedland@guardian.co.uk

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A Man Called Hitler Runs For a Seat He May Not Fill

The New York Times
January 22, 2006 Sunday
Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section 1; Column 1; Foreign Desk; Pg. 6

Length: 1225 words

Byline: By GREG MYRE

Dateline: JENIN, West Bank, Jan. 18

Body

The candidate's name is Jamal Abu Roub, but everyone here calls him Hitler because, well, that is the name he has answered to quite comfortably since he was a teenager.

Mr. Roub, 40, is a leader of the militant Al Aksa Martyrs Brigades in this turbulent corner of the West Bank, and has spent the past five years leading his ragtag band of gunmen in frequent clashes with the Israeli military. Mr. Roub's deeds include hauling a Palestinian suspected of collaborating with Israel and of molesting his own daughters into a town square, where the man was shot to death.

Now Mr. Roub is a candidate for the Palestinian Parliament and is virtually assured of winning a seat in elections next Wednesday. He is wanted by Israel, and therefore does not appear at rallies, yet that seems only to have bolstered his reputation.

In an interview in Jenin, Mr. Roub said with a crooked smile that it was his first campaign appearance, and probably his last.

"I leave the campaigning to my brother and my supporters, but this is not a problem because people here know me and trust me," Mr. Roub said. His eyes are bloodshot and his hair is tousled, giving him the look of a man pursued. He chain-smokes Marlboros and gulps his coffee. His face features several days worth of stubble, and he does not look like someone who has slept in his own bed recently.

He is the rare fugitive who likes to see posters of himself. Mr. Roub and other candidates for the Fatah movement appear in campaign advertisements that vie for space among the thousands of posters plastered on every flat surface in town.

Yet his candidacy is more than an oddity involving a man with a provocative nickname and a history of violence.

The Palestinian leader, Mahmoud Abbas, is seeking to co-opt the militants who have been fighting Israel, and the election is sure to bring at least a few of them into Parliament. It is not clear how they will participate, though, since Israel has said it will not grant them immunity if they are elected.

The Al Aksa Martyrs Brigades, which is made up of members of Mr. Abbas's Fatah party, emerged soon after the latest Palestinian uprising began in 2000.

A Man Called Hitler Runs For a Seat He May Not Fill

Mr. Abbas has repeatedly called on Al Aksa to lay down its weapons, but the various Al Aksa factions have largely ignored his call and have been responsible for much of the internal Palestinian chaos, like taking over government offices and election centers to demand jobs. At Mr. Abbas's urging, a large number of militants have been incorporated into the Palestinian security forces in the past year, and the Islamic faction Hamas is taking part in national elections for the first time.

Mr. Abbas hopes that these steps will persuade the militants to join his effort to restore order in the Palestinian areas and revive peace talks with Israel, but it remains far from clear whether his plan will work.

Indeed, Israelis often argue that Mr. Abbas, who came to power after the death of Yasir Arafat in 2004, is rewarding men he should be jailing.

While Palestinians generally support Mr. Abbas's effort, they tend to describe the results as mixed.

"We are in the post-Arafat era, and we can no longer be governed by the same old, impotent cardinals of Fatah," said Mahdi Abdul Hadi, a moderate who heads Passia, a Palestinian research center in Jerusalem. "Fatah is very much divided and fragmented, and Abbas is trying to bring it together."

Mr. Roub contends the election offers him a better way to continue his struggle with Israel, which has consumed his whole life.

Mr. Roub said he has always been adamant about his beliefs, so much so that when he was 16 a high school friend began calling him Hitler, and it stuck. Mr. Roub said Hitler's slaughter of the Jews was wrong, yet he seems quite willing to keep the nickname.

When Mr. Roub was leaving after an interview, a group of Palestinian women spotted him and a buzz swept through the room. "It's Hitler; it's Hitler," they said, one after another. Mr. Roub could not resist speaking to them for 15 minutes.

One of the few men present asked Mr. Roub if it was time to put guns aside.

"Some groups have misused their weapons," he said. "If it's necessary to keep them, with the agreement of the political leadership, then we will. But if it's not necessary, then we can hand them in."

But the questioner persisted. "What are you doing now?" he asked.

"I'm carrying my gun, but just for protection," Mr. Roub said.

In a July 2004 episode captured on camera, Mr. Roub and his Al Aksa gunmen dragged a Palestinian man into the central square of Qabatiya, Mr. Roub's hometown, a few miles south of Jenin.

The suspect was accused of collaborating with Israel and sexually abusing his own daughters, and the Al Aksa men asked the crowd what should be done. When the crowd replied, "Kill him immediately," the gunmen riddled the man with bullets.

Mr. Roub has been arrested by Israel six times, starting when he was 17, and has been imprisoned for a total of more than seven years. He also has a degree in banking, and reels off the dates of his arrests and releases with a banker's precision.

The oldest of his five children, Khaled, was born the day after Mr. Roub was arrested in 1989. Khaled, now 16, was himself detained by Israeli troops two months ago.

"I'd love to live a normal life," Mr. Roub said. "It's not my hobby to live like this. But we will not have a normal life until we have a state."

A Man Called Hitler Runs For a Seat He May Not Fill

His first foray into politics was the Fatah primary election in November, and Mr. Roub drew the largest number of votes out of more than 40 candidates in the Jenin region. As a result, he was given the No. 12 position on Fatah's list of parliamentary candidates.

Fatah is expected to get at least 35 percent of the vote, the most recent polls indicate. As long as it gets at least 20 percent, Mr. Roub will make the cut for a seat in Parliament.

Actually taking his seat could be a problem, however, because Israel has its own ideas about where Mr. Roub should be sitting.

"No person involved in terrorism can use the election campaign as a way to receive immunity," said Mark Regev, a spokesman for Israel's Foreign Ministry.

As an example, Mr. Regev cited Marwan Barghouti, a hugely popular figure among young Palestinians who is at the top of the Fatah election list.

Mr. Barghouti was already a member of the Palestinian Parliament in 2002 when he was arrested by Israel and subsequently convicted of orchestrating the killings of five civilians. He is now serving five life sentences, and Mr. Regev said the election would not change his status.

During the past few years of fighting, Israeli travel restrictions have often made it impossible for Palestinian legislators in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to gather in the same place.

On several occasions, Gaza legislators met in Gaza City, while their West Bank counterparts convened in Ramallah in a session linked by videoconference.

The sessions could become even more complicated if Mr. Roub and others sought by Israel join the legislature.

Mr. Roub would risk arrest at an Israeli checkpoint if he traveled the main roads from his home area to Ramallah. Asked how he planned to reach Parliament, Mr. Roub said: "Initially, we will try to get official permission. If that doesn't happen, then we have our own ways."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Photo: Jamal Abu Roub, seen at left through a bullet hole in a house window in Jenin, West Bank, is considered a shoo-in for the Palestinian Parliament. (Photo by Rina Castelnovo for The New York Times)

Load-Date: January 22, 2006

G2: The strong man: For years he was a man of war, idolised and demonised in equal measure. But in recent years, Ariel Sharon has seemed the man most likely to bring peace to the Middle East. Israeli novelist David Grossman and Palestinian academic Karma Nabulsi assess his legacy: Karma Nabulsi: He is no statesman and his motives have never been opaque - conquest by military means

The Guardian - Final Edition

January 6, 2006 Friday

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Section: GUARDIAN FEATURES PAGES; Pg. 8

Length: 1195 words

Byline: Karma Nabulsi

Body

Everybody knows that Ariel Sharon had a dark past. For us Palestinians, for me as a Palestinian, he is our dark present. The entire destruction of the fabric of our civic and political society over the past five years has had the looming presence of Sharon at its black heart. That single moment when in the year 2000 Sharon went to the Haram al-Sharif (Temple Mount) to light the chaotic, atavistic fuse of his return to political power - the moment that sparked our revolt against everything that he represented, and which began his rise to power - that single moment was the essence of his persona, the uniquely ruthless, relentless dynamic of his role as conqueror.

With the return of this man, we were lost, again, and one could not let his return be witnessed without an active daily resistance to it, and the fate he had in store for us. It was this single fact that mobilised me to work again in the political realm. Having lived in Beirut with my family and friends, and having worked, and fought, and stayed alive throughout the Israeli invasion of Lebanon that Sharon engineered in the spring and summer of 1982, I had no doubt what he had in store for us when he began his final climb back to power. And just so: in February of 2001, within three days of being elected prime minister, he was replaying across the West Bank and Gaza his dark arts, a mad echo of his practices of 20 years before in Lebanon: the assassination and destruction of the fighters, the local defence committees, the refugee camps. Women and children and young men killed, our buildings demolished, our institutional infrastructure, our records, our art, broken, gone. And, of course, our leadership encircled and besieged.

If he destroyed our leader, he believed, he would destroy our collective aspirations for freedom and for an independent Palestine. His vision of our destiny was quite simply one of apocalyptic proportions, he was no politician, nor elder statesman. To us, he was always the classic military conqueror and adventurer - we never found him "controversial", nor his motives opaque. He never left us guessing. His practices, his aims, his intentions were made clear through his policies. Every Palestinian man, woman and child witnessed, lived, or died under that vision, and they each understood it well.

But during the new war launched by Sharon against our people, the generation of 1982 that I was part of were more scattered, further flung to the four corners of the world, farther away from being able to do anything to help, even

G2: The strong man: For years he was a man of war, idolised and demonised in equal measure. But in recent years, Ariel Sharon has seemed the man most likely to

more powerless than before. So to those of us who had fought in those earlier battles and were still living, his return did something more cruel than simply bring back haunting reminders of those days, and how many of friends had died. It changed the look of what we did, our luck, our motives, how we had failed to stop him when we were younger.

Sharon has shaped everything for us: young, or old, in exile, or at home in an Israeli prison under occupation. He is emblematic of our condition; worse than emblematic, it is his very fist we feel. To this day I have not been able to watch him on television, but must avert my eyes at the immense presence of this avatar - there is no one else who evokes this terrible reaction.

I know this is shared by Palestinians everywhere, especially the survivors of the Sabra and Shatila massacres, for which, let us not forget, he was culpable, according even to an Israeli tribunal, the Kahane Commission. They recommended that he never be allowed to return to public office.

To us, to me, his mission had always been thus: to kill our resistance, our organisations, our solidarity, our institutions, and above all our national liberation movement. He did not want us to have a national framework, his desire was to reduce us to small quarrelling groups and factions trapped under his prison rule, disorganised, disintegrated, or co-opted; he planned actively and provocatively (and carefully) to create such an impoverishment of our people's public and private life.

This he did through the iron tools of military rule: assassination, imprisonment, violent military invasion. His fate for us was a Hobbesian vision of an anarchic society: truncated, violent, powerless, destroyed, cowed, ruled by disparate militias, gangs, religious ideologues and extremists, broken up into ethnic and religious tribalism, and co-opted collaborationists. Look to the Iraq of today: that is what he had in store for us, and he has nearly achieved it.

His great skill was breaking ceasefires whenever he felt cornered to make a political concession towards peace, he sought to provoke an inevitable response, which could then be used to advance his military aims, and free his hands to expand settlements, expropriate land in Arab East Jerusalem and the West Bank. He never cared for Gaza, it was a military asset. Indeed he won internationally uncontested control of the West Bank (which was always his goal), by returning it.

We Palestinians saw how well he understood the west, how far he could push it - he had an almost magical ability to measure how craven the response could be to his violations of common decency and international law, how much he could get away with. He would test, and test the limits of his actions, would he get a red light? Would the Americans stop him?

I watched him at this, day after day, during the invasion of Lebanon in 1982, from besieged Beirut, which was in flames. Every time he would break the ceasefire, break his word to the Americans. We, on the other side of this equation, were waiting, hearts in mouths, for international protection, intervention, help of any kind not to be left at his mercy. How many times in these last years did he break the ceasefire in Gaza through a provocative assassination, an aerial assault, a military raid killing dozens of civilians to provoke **Hamas** to attack Israel? His pattern was set in stone, a stone around our necks.

Two summers ago, I went back to Shatila Camp where I had lived and worked for so many years, the first time since 1982, and I have returned many times in the past two-and-a-half years. Twenty-three years ago we had been evacuated from the city, with the rest of the PLO, at the end of the siege of Beirut, and only two weeks before the massacres. But we only agreed to leave with international guarantees that the civilian refugee camps would be protected from the fascist Lebanese militias. Instead Sharon invaded Beirut (that he could not take while we were there), surrounded the refugee camps, and had his forces light up the night sky with flares, while the Lebanese militia did their work with knives and axes and guns, day after day. He let busloads of them in, no Palestinians allowed out.

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Karma Nabulsi is a politics fellow at St Edmund Hall, Oxford and a former PLO representative.

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The conqueror

Hindustan Times

January 8, 2006 Sunday 10:40 AM EST

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Length: 1237 words

Byline: Hindustan Times

Dateline: NEW DELHI, India

Body

NEW DELHI, India, Jan 8 -- Everybody knows that Ariel Sharon had a dark past. For us Palestinians, for me as a Palestinian, he is our dark present. The entire destruction of the fabric of our civic and political society over the past five years has had the looming presence of Sharon at its black heart.

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The conqueror

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We, Palestinians, saw how well he understood the West, how far he could push it - he had an almost magical ability to measure how craven the response could be to his violations of common decency and international law, how much he could get away with. He would test, and test the limits of his actions, would he get a red light? Would the Americans stop him? I watched him at this, day after day, during the invasion of Lebanon in 1982, from besieged Beirut, which was in flames. Every time he would break the ceasefire, break his word to the Americans.

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The conqueror

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A beach scene that hides waves of despair; THE WAR OF IDEAS - SEPT 11 - FIVE YEARS ON

Sydney Morning Herald (Australia)

September 2, 2006 Saturday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS AND FEATURES; International News; Pg. 17

Length: 1319 words

Byline: Paul McGeough

Body

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict creates a deep, daily bitterness, writes Paul McGeough in Gaza City.

IT COULD be anywhere in the world. Colourful umbrellas, flags taut in the breeze and the life-saver's shrill whistle. It's late on a hot, humid day and no one wants to leave the beach.

School holidays are almost done and small boys squeal in delight as they dart away from languid family picnics - off again to conquer the foaming surf with all the fearlessness of youth.

It is picture-postcard perfect. But this is Gaza City, and it's too good to be true.

Beneath this veneer, more than 1.3 million Palestinians are trapped in deep misery. For six months now, they have been squeezed in a global vice of collective punishment.

First, the US and the European Union cut virtually all aid funding because the Palestinians elected a government that refuses to explicitly recognise Israel and to eschew violence. More recently, Israel launched a campaign of Lebanon-style destruction because the local militias captured an Israeli soldier in a cross-border raid.

If all of that is not cause enough for anxiety, sour-grapes infighting between the Palestinian factions since the surprise election in January of the Islamist party ***Hamas*** threatens to erupt into what many fear will be a cruel civil war. This is the context that makes the Gaza beach scene so surreal.

There is not a bikini to be seen. Some mothers move their plastic chairs to the water's edge - revealing only their naked toes. In the 40-plus heat, there is great hilarity when a few plunge right in - still dressed head-to-toe in swathes of black cloth as white water washes over them.

But a comment by the Herald on the size of the crowd elicits an early explanation of the grim reality of civilian life in a tiny strip of territory that has become an Israeli shooting gallery.

Over coffee on the terrace at the Beach Hotel, the chef, Abu Omar, explains: "Most families come here now because they are frightened of Israeli shelling on the other beaches".

A beach scene that hides waves of despair THE WAR OF IDEAS - SEPT 11 - FIVE YEARS ON

"Now" began in June, when pictures flashed around the world of a distraught 10-year-old, Huda Ghalia, as she fell weeping beside the body of her dead father on one of Gaza's popular northern beaches. Nearby lay the mangled remains of the girl's step-mother and five of her brothers and sisters.

The Israelis admit their tanks were in action at the time, but they deny firing the killer shell. Eyewitnesses, foreign reporters and Marc Garlasco, a former Pentagon battlefield analyst now working for the New York-based Human Rights Watch, disagree.

"My three-year-old saw the images on TV and now she freaks out at the suggestion of any of us going to the beach," says Abu Omar.

Apart from their toes, the women on the beach also reveal their hands - and paler-skin reminders of wedding bands that have been sold, either to feed their families or to buy clothes and books for children, who started the new school year yesterday.

It's a measure of the intractable nature of this conflict that the United Nations' Relief and Works Agency is now in its 56th year of caring for Palestinians who became refugees when the state of Israel was established. So the agency's director, John Ging, draws on officials records when he declares: "It's dangerous and miserable. This is the largest, most enduring crisis of modern times."

Since the West cut funding to the Palestinian Authority, as many as 170,000 families are without an income and there is little else to prime the local economy. About 90 per cent live below the poverty line, as many as 85 per cent are said to be jobless, and close to 1 million individuals depend on UN handouts of oil, flour, beans, rice, sugar and milk.

The shelling has driven hundreds from their homes and forced farmers to abandon crops in the fields.

When the Herald takes a wrong turn in traffic we are caught amid stone-throwing and wild gunfire as police try to break up a mob of protesters who are breaking up one of the city's main banks.

They are government workers venting their anger at a decision by the banks to unilaterally deduct loan arrears from a one-off, partial salary payment that the Palestinian Authority has deposited in their accounts. The Jordan Bank caves in, leaving the loan repayments for another day.

Elsewhere, housewives such as Um Fatima complain they can no longer save by cooking in bulk because they cannot rely on refrigeration - an Israeli attack on the main power station has reduced them to a few erratic hours of power each day. And no power means no domestic pumps, which means no water. One hand instinctively covers the other when Um Fatima catches the Herald observing her band-less wedding finger. But this woman still has dignity and she declines to discuss her last visit to the Gaza gold market.

Plying their trade against the stone walls of the seventh-century Great Omari Mosque, the 25 gold traders are idle after a surge in business in April and May, when they each were buying as much as 15 kilograms of gold a day when families first began to feel the pinch.

No customers are buying gold these days. Traditionally, Arab women hold as much solid gold as they can afford, which they sell in bad times - but when they come offering their light wedding rings for sale, the traders know their families have hit bottom.

The gold trader Hamdi Basal says: "Usually, summer is a time for weddings and brides buying their first gold in great excitement. Now the women only come to sell."

Back at the beach, there is more excitement as children rush in to help six men haul in their nets, but it's a mistake to conclude the fishermen are spared from the hardship.

Abu Omar explains: "They net from the beach because the Israelis enforce a navy blockade along the coast - the fishermen get shot at if they take their boats into deep water. There's not a lot of fish in the shallows."

A beach scene that hides waves of despair THE WAR OF IDEAS - SEPT 11 - FIVE YEARS ON

As if on cue, there is a combat chorus to prove that Israel has this place covered. A destroyer heaves into view, the thump of its turbines pulsing through the water as it carves a south-bound course. A series of thuds signals more artillery in the north of Gaza, and overhead there are twin sounds - the lawnmower squawk of a surveillance drone and, much higher, a growling fighter jet. Such is the level of infrastructure bombing now that European aid officials have concluded that rebuilding any of Gaza in the absence of a viable peace process is a waste of good money - the roads, bridges and buildings will only be bombed again, they say.

One of the fishermen says he has been too scared to venture out since the June 25 capture of the Israeli soldier. But when other boats pull in, three of them take their combined haul to market on the back of a bicycle.

Darwesh Abu Mustafa still ventures out - despite three past incidents in which he says his small boat was confiscated for months at a time by the Israeli Navy. His friend Ahmad, who has just returned from five hours of casting his nets in the shallows, fumes because his haul of sardines does not even fill a plastic bucket and when he sells them at the dockside, he gets only 30 shekels (\$9).

"How does he feed a family on that?" Darwesh demands. "It's God who feeds our children. But we can't forget the martyrs, so this is the tax we all have to pay for the resistance."

The ability of the Palestinian people to keep paying that "resistance tax" is being tested yet again. And Raji Sourani, head of the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, warns that Israel should take account of what he calls the locals' "camel" psychology.

Mindful of a UN estimate that about 9000 Israeli artillery shells have been lobbed into Gaza in the last year, he explains: "You can make the camel so thirsty and hungry and you can make it carry too great a load, you can beat it and insult it, but watch out when the animal revolts - it will kill you."

Part 2 of Paul McGeough's account of life in Gaza will appear in the Herald next week.

Graphic

PHOTO: Under the surface ... Palestinians try to enjoy a warm day at the beach of Gaza City, but in reality they are trapped in deep misery. Photo: Khalil Hamra

Load-Date: July 17, 2007

Chill Karo, Masti Karo

The Nation (AsiaNet)

July 27, 2006 Thursday

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Section: NATIONWIDE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Length: 1460 words

Body

By M. A. NIAZI: Chill Karo-Mango Masti Karo. Its author, presumably a copywriter in an advertising agency, did not intend this slogan to send any sort of political message. It has been designed solely to promote the sales of a mango ice-cream confection, which a multinational fast-food franchise has added to its menu. However, it encapsulates the message that the Bush administration would love to send to the Third World in general, and the Muslim world in particular. In addition, it would delight the Musharraf government if Pakistanis were also to follow this slogan.

'Chill' is the new 'cool'. A previous generation told each other to 'cool it', whenever someone seemed to get impassioned about something else, whether it be a perceived insult from a fellow collegian, or the plight of the world. Now, they are telling one another to 'chill.' Coolness is the result of sitting under a fan; chilliness comes only in an air-conditioned room. Coolness might be taken as keeping things in perspective; chilling means total indifference. To be cool, youngsters used to smoke; to chill, they need charas in their cigarettes. Remember, their parents were cool (or thought they were), so to be different, they have to chill.

In addition, which meaning of masti are we to follow? Masti has two meanings. One is the masti of a bull elephant, which is its state when in heat. This applies to the behaviour of young people, who might not be in heat in the technical sense, but whose behaviour is driven more by hormones rampaging through the blood rather than rational thought. This is the time when loud music, energetic physical movement (dancing, jogging, fighting, swimming) and general letting off of high spirits, helps deal with the masti, to the extent of becoming a new meaning of the word.

Then there is the masti of the Sufi, which is supposed to be for the select few a state of spiritual enhancement, but which for too many is drug-induced. The true Sufi's masti is achieved only by a highly disciplined spiritual progression, attained after much prolonged effort. The shortcut, or instant version, is licence to do anything. Those who think that head banging to Pappu Sain's dhol or Ustad Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan's qawalis are spiritual experiences have lost the plot.

That is emotional self-indulgence. However, both the higher Sufi experience and its ersatz version both lead to the same practical result: the practitioner detaches himself from the evils of this world, and is absolved of the responsibility to do anything about what the unenlightened are doing.

It is interesting that chilling and masti (of the second type) both involve acceptance of everything and indifference to the 'slings and arrows of outrageous fortune', even if that requires the use of drugs. At one level, this is attractive. It means that the individual accepts with calmness whatever is happening, and does not get into a bother about anything.

Chill Karo, Masti Karo

The message of the slogan is therefore twofold in its strength, multiple in its application for the target of the communication. (My congratulations, by the way, to the copywriter: it is a very communicative jingle, not just in its meaning, but in its euphony, both spoken and sung.) It says that you should turn away from the mess around you, the heat and dust, the problems and the issues, and just have fun ('chill'). It also says that you should let loose, get moving, burn off some energy ('masti').

The positive parts of the message is that instead of achieving this effect by doing drugs and attending a rave, do it by having their mango ice-cream confection, at one of their restaurants. As a teenager, I could not think of anything duller or more boring, but as a middleaged parent, it sounds like positive and healthy activity for my offspring, much more than many publicly available activities that come to mind.

I am sure the copywriter and the multinational behind the slogan did not think of it that way, but this is the message: Chill Karo, and forget about the dead babies in Lebanon. Masti Karo, and forget about how the USA is backing Israel in killing them. Chill Karo, and ignore the hypocrisy that lets the USA send Israel precision-guided bombs to 'defend itself against Hezbollah's Cold-War vintage Katyusha rockets. Masti Karo, and don't bother about the massive disparity in casualties, 10 Lebanese for every Israeli.

Chill Karo, and remember that this isn't Pakistan, which is being bombed. Masti Karo, and if you can be bothered to think about any country, think of Pakistan First. Chill Karo, and stop getting emotional about the ummah and such outmoded concepts. Masti, Karo and concentrate on getting ahead in life, making money, building up property and living the good life as defined by Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous. Chill Karo, and don't worry about anything except yourself. Masti Karo, and you will still go to heaven, because you at least are a good person who hasn't killed any Israeli babies (or was it Palestinian old women? Whoever. Whatever.)

Chill Karo, and don't bother about what Pakistan is doing at this juncture. Masti Karo, and pay no attention to how the national interest is being promoted. Chill Karo, because we know what is the national interest, and you don't. (Why don't you? Because you're too busy doing masti, which is actually OK, because you're not asking too many questions.)

Chill Karo, and don't think about what is happening in Balochistan or Waziristan. Hey, but isn't it Pakistan First, and aren't these parts of Pakistan? Masti Karo, and don't ask stupid questions like that. Chill Karo, and don't pay any attention to how Pakistan is being governed, how its Constitution is being undermined, how its President is also a serving general, and the Chief of Army Staff to boot. Masti Karo, and leave these issues to those who are better than you, more intelligent, more mature, wiser, better trained. In addition, they don't chill, nor do they do masti.

Guantanamo: chill. Abu Ghuraib: Masti. Iraq's 100,000 dead: chill. Afghanistan's tens of thousands killed: Masti. Hamas: chill. Occupation of sovereign states: Masti. Double standards on democracy: chill. Kashmir: chill. Palestine: Masti. Chill. Masti. I am being so unfair to this slogan that at this point I should perhaps apologise, but I am about to place yet another burden on it. Here goes: this slogan actually stands for the method by which the capitalist corporate elite rules its workforce, for it is all a work force.

Remember, those 3000 American servicemen who have died doing their duty in Afghanistan and Iraq is like a factory workforce for the chicken hawks in the bush administration. They too are being fooled into behaving inhumanly, for inhuman ends, fighting wars which will not bring their people prosperity or security, but which will fatten the treasuries of many corporations.

Corporations are no longer sub-national entities. They can be supra national, and are certainly extra-national. The fast food franchise I have been talking about is seen as a symbol of the USA the world over. Yet, in Pakistan, it is staffed by Pakistanis, and is owned by Pakistanis. This corporation, which is powerful in the USA as a taxpayer, if nothing else, has branches in 61 markets worldwide, making it an international entity.

A senior executive of this corporation, sitting in its US HQ, has more common interests (as an executive) with a Russian executive of the same corporation, than with his own government, and vice versa. This is replicated in corporations all over the capitalist system (which has achieved 100 percent coverage of the globe, except perhaps parts of Myanmar and Cuba).

Chill Karo, Masti Karo

They desire to pursue their supra-national interests worldwide to maximize profits. The only restraints on them are the guardians of the people's interests. However, if one realizes how easily such organizations can influence, and even control, elected legislatures and office bearers, through the power of capital, then this safeguard becomes fragile and porous. It is marginally better than dictatorships or monarchies, because there is less need to pay attention to public opinion, and instead of a majority of legislators, the corporation needs only buy one or two members of the ruler's inner circle. However, this is faint praise for democracy.

Are there any alternatives? Is there a better way of doing things, which is more humane, less suspect to the power of capital? We could look to our Islamic roots to find much that is different, much that is definite, and much that is never discussed by Maulvi or moderate, Jihadi or Islamist, fundo or liberal, almost as if there is a conspiracy of silence. However, who is bothered? Chill Karo, Masti Karo. E-mail queries and comments to: maniazi@nation.Com. Pk

Load-Date: July 28, 2006

End of Document

Crisis in the Middle East

The Irish Times

August 10, 2006 Thursday

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Section: LETTERS; Pg. 17

Length: 1425 words

Body

Madam, - Labour councillor John McManus (August 1st) is right when he says "there is confusion and some plain bad politics being propagated by some on the left" with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the threat posed by growing Islamic fundamentalists. His colleague, Cllr Aidan Culhane (August 3rd) is also right to acknowledge that "the left is too ambiguous" about those who want to bring the Middle East back to the Middle Ages and that it has failed to come to terms with Islamic fanaticism. However, in fairness, this criticism is not exclusively a malaise of the left. It also applies to some politicians within all of our political parties and to a number of independent TDs and senators.

Trevor Sargent TD, as leader of the Green Party, lumbered into the tragic Israeli-Lebanese conflict with a call last Friday for both diplomatic and trade sanctions against Israel "given the country's refusal to date to call a ceasefire." No such call was made for sanctions on either Iran or Syria for using Hizbullah to provoke the conflict or for funding and arming that organisation's fundamentalist militants.

Mr Sargent's statement was made on a day when more than 230 rockets provided by Iran were fired indiscriminately by Hizbullah fanatics into Israeli cities and towns. The Greens and, apparently, the Joint Oireachtas Foreign Affairs Committee - whose members are supposed to understand the history and complexities of the conflicts in the Middle East - have adopted the politically unique and disgraceful position of proposing that sanctions be imposed on Israel for defending itself against attack by a fanatical terrorist group committed to its destruction and which to date is responsible for the death of over 100 Israelis and for injuring over 700. Too many members of the Oireachtas are ensnared in Michael D Higgins's world of knee-jerk anti-Americanism and dewy-eyed sentimentality and appeasement when confronted by Islamic fundamentalism.

Joschka Fischer, former German foreign minister and leader of the German Greens for over 20 years got it right in The Irish Times of July 28th when he wrote that "the current war in Lebanon is not a war by the Arab world against Israel: rather it is a war of the region's radical forces - Hamas, Islamic Jihad among the Palestinians, Hizbullah together with Syria and Iran - that fundamentally reject any settlement with Israel". Politicians on this island will have something relevant to contribute to the resolution of the current conflict only when they wake up to this reality.

What we need is better politics. In particular, we need our elected politicians to address the role Iran has played over the past 15 years in sabotaging the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and to understand that the Iranian president's call to wipe Israel off the map is not mere fanciful rhetoric. Perhaps this is something members of the Joint Oireachtas Foreign Affairs Committee are presently loath to do for fear that if they criticise the Iranian regime that committee's current open invitation for a junket to Tehran might be withdrawn.

Crisis in the Middle East

For now, Iran is apparently a four letter word that members of that Committee dare not utter in criticism. Is it too much to hope that they will have the courage during their autumn visit to Tehran to ask the hard questions and advocate a radical change in Iranian policy? - Yours, etc,

ALAN SHATTER, Upper Ely Place, Dublin 2.

Madam, - As residents of Beirut, we have read your paper's coverage of the situation in Lebanon with both interest and dismay. Allow us to ask some questions that we feel have not been addressed by your coverage and analysis. Where were the Israeli soldiers captured - in Israel or on Lebanese soil? Is the capture and exchange of soldiers an unprecedented outrage or a common practice in the region? Does Hizbullah want to capture soldiers merely because it can or because it wants to free Lebanese men, women, and children who are in Israeli prisons?

How did those first four Israeli soldiers die - in a Hizbullah attack or by hitting a mine? Which came first - the rocket barrage from Hizbullah or the Israeli bombardment? Was the Israeli invasion a legitimate defence of its territory or a plan hatched long before in the infamous "Clean Break" document and in visits to the US in May (Olmert) and June (Netanyahu at the American Enterprise Institute in Colorado)? Does Hizbullah deny the right of Israel to exist or deny the legitimacy of the state of Israel and its apartheid system?

Does Israel believe that the Lebanese army can really take over in the South when any Beiruti knows that Lebanese soldiers are little more than traffic cops with guns? Can the Lebanese army defend Lebanon or, as Noam Chomsky notes, is Hizbullah the only protection it has? What does Israel want more: a 20-mile security zone or precious water from the Litani River? Is Israel a helpless victim of terrorism or a perpetrator of state terrorism? The utter calumny of accusing Hizbullah of using women and children as human shields does not deserve formulation into a rhetorical question.

We look forward to reading your answers. - Yours, etc,

COLLEEN MacDONELL and DOMINIC LARKIN, Beirut, Lebanon (currently in Cork).

Madam, - Further to various letters and columns on Israel's relationship with the US, one might bear in mind that in the short term it may suit US governments' regional strategic goals to support Israel. However, in the medium and long term this is not assured. If access to oil and/or closer links with stridently Islamic, anti-Israel states become the priority, then whither Israel?

The present and future difficulties concerning the continued existence of Israel should not be underestimated. - Yours, etc,

SEAN CASSIDY, Gardiner Street, Dublin 1.

Madam, - The suggestion that I am at odds with my party over Lebanon is not fully correct. I fully support Michael D Higgins's long-standing call for an immediate cessation of violence. The military action being undertaken by Israel is ill-conceived and counter-productive, even taking into account its right to defend itself.

The civilian deaths are an outrage.

Yet Israel's capacity to wage this war seems more than matched by Hizbullah's capacity to fire rockets into Israel. One side, Hizbullah, seems to have done its strategic thinking. The other, Israel, has not. I suspect that had Ariel Sharon remained healthy this war would not be taking place.

That Hizbullah is delighted by the response it has drawn forth from Israel shows its indifference both to Lebanon and to ordinary citizens who want to get on with their day-to-day lives. That the West seems more intent on holding Israel responsible for this particular catastrophe is to ignore those who orchestrated it. Again, it needs to be restated: Israel's over-reaction cannot be allowed to obscure the actions and motives of a group whose world view is fundamentally hostile to all that progressives believe.

Crisis in the Middle East

Finally, Michael D Higgins rails against the charge of anti-Americanism against those who hold his position. I understand his frustration. But when the deputy lord mayor of Dublin, a member of our party, was heard recently on the airwaves telling the elected governor of Florida to go home, is it any wonder that the charge is levelled against us? - Yours, etc,

Cllr AIDAN CULHANE, Meadow Grove, Dundrum, Dublin 16.

Madam, - Stiofán Ó Cléirigh (August 7th) has completely misunderstood my grounds for criticising Martyn Turner's cartoon about the tragedy of Qana (August 4th).

I agree with Mr Ó Cléirigh that the cartoon tried to contrast Christ's gentle kindness to an embarrassed young couple on the occasion of their wedding with the brutality of the Israeli bombing of civilians in Qana. In this Martyn Turner's intentions were good and acceptable, however clumsy his attempt to express them.

The point of my objection was quite a different matter: the irreverent and near-blasphemous depiction of Christ as a figure of fun, gesturing in some kind of silly mumbo-jumbo over the water jars. - Yours, etc,

SEÁN MAC CÁRTHAIGH, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4.

Madam, - Louis Lentin (August 5th) castigates the Irish Film Institute for rejecting sponsorship from the Israeli embassy. I applaud the IFI.

Is Mr Lentin seriously suggesting that State-sponsored bodies should not make any moral judgment on their potential sponsors? Is he suggesting also that these bodies should not take into account the overwhelming views of their paymasters, namely the taxpayers of Ireland? - Yours, etc,

ALAN McPARTLAND, Grange Court, Rathfarnham, Dublin 16.

Load-Date: August 10, 2006

Conflict Polarizes the Mideast, Leaving Little Middle Ground

The New York Times

August 9, 2006 Wednesday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 1; Foreign Desk; Pg. 1; HOSTILITIES IN THE MIDEAST: BACKLASH

Length: 1443 words

Byline: By NEIL MacFARQUHAR; Mona el-Naggar contributing reporting from Cairo for this article.

Dateline: DAMASCUS, Syria, Aug. 8

Body

Moderate reformers across the Arab world say American support for Israel's battle with Hezbollah has put them on the defensive, tarring them by association and boosting Islamist parties.

The very people whom the United States wanted to encourage to promote democracy from Bahrain to Casablanca instead feel trapped by a policy that they now ridicule more or less as "destroying the region in order to save it."

Indeed, many of those reformers who have been working for change in their own societies -- often isolated, harassed by state security, or marginalized to begin with -- say American policy either strangles nascent reform movements or props up repressive governments that remain Washington's best allies in the region.

"We are really afraid of this 'new Middle East,' " said Ali Abdulemam, a 28-year-old computer engineer who founded the most popular political Web site in Bahrain. He was referring to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's statement last month that the situation in Lebanon represented the birth pangs of a "new Middle East."

"They talk about how they will reorganize the region in a different way, but they never talk about the people," Mr. Abdulemam said. "They never mention what the people want. They are just giving more power to the systems that exist already."

His plight is shared by reformers across the Arab world.

Fawaziah al-Bakr, who promotes educational change and women's rights in Saudi Arabia, helped organize women to protest the Israeli attacks. "Nobody is talking about reform in Saudi Arabia," she said. "All we talk about is the war, what to do about the war. There is no question that the U.S. has lost morally because of the war. Even if you like the people and the culture of the United States, you can't defend it."

The statement by Ms. Rice -- during a fleeting stopover in Beirut last month -- is being juxtaposed with the mounting carnage to rally popular opposition against all things American.

In Lebanon, Israel continues bombing despite the fact that the violence could destabilize the government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, elected last year in a vote that the United States hailed as a democratic example for the Middle East. Iraq was the previous such example, reformers note bitterly.

Conflict Polarizes the Mideast, Leaving Little Middle Ground

In Bahrain, Mr. Abdulemam fears that a proposed new anti-terrorism law could severely curb the freewheeling discussions on BahrainOnline.org, his Web site, perhaps even shutting it down, because among other things the law bans attacking the Constitution. Recently, the government cut off access to Google Earth, he said, probably because too many citizens were zeroing in on royal palaces.

Members of Islamist political organizations, in particular, consider American actions a godsend, putting their own repressive governments under pressure and distancing their capitals from Washington, reformers say.

The Americans "wanted to tarnish the Islamic resistance and opposition movements, but in reality they only served them," said Sobhe Salih, a 53-year-old lawyer in the Muslim Brotherhood, which was swept into the Egyptian Parliament in an election last fall after capturing an unprecedented 20 percent of the seats. "They made them more appealing to the public, made them a beacon of hope for everyone who hates American policies."

Glance at any television screen -- they are everywhere -- and chances are that the screen will be showing mayhem in Lebanon, Baghdad or Gaza. It usually takes a minute or so to decipher which Arab city is burning. Popular satellite news channels like Al Jazeera say repeatedly that the carnage arrives via American policy and American weapons.

Before 2003, the hardest step for any Islamist movement was recruitment, noted Mohamed Salah, an expert on Islamic extremist movements who writes for the pan-Arab daily Al Hayat from Cairo. Moving someone from being merely devout to being an extremist took a long time. No longer, he said. Moderate Arab governments, which have pursued peace with Israel for nearly 30 years, have seen that policy undermined among their publics by Hezbollah's ability to strike at Israel.

"Recruitment has become the easiest stage because the people have already been psychologically predisposed against the Americans, the West and against Israel," Mr. Salah said.

Moderate reformers say they are driven to despair by what they see as inconsistencies in Washington's Middle East policy. For example, in Lebanon lives a black-turbaned Shiite cleric who runs a secretive militia close to Iran. His name is Sheik Hassan Nasrallah and Washington approves of Israel's bombing campaign to stamp out his organization, Hezbollah.

There is another black-turbaned Shiite cleric who runs a different secretive militia close to Iran. His name is Abdel Aziz al-Hakim, and he lives in Iraq. He is an American friend.

"In Iraq the same kind of group is an ally of the United States, while in Lebanon they are an enemy whom they are fighting," said Samir al-Qudah, a Jordanian civil engineer. "It has nothing to do with reform, but where America's interests lie."

The overwhelming conclusion drawn by Arabs is that Washington's interests lie with Israel, no matter what the cost.

"Those calling for democratic reform in Egypt have discovered that once Israeli interests are in conflict with political reform in the Middle East, then the United States will immediately favor Israel's interests," said Ibrahim Issa, the editor of the weekly Al Dustour, who faces a jail sentence on charges of insulting President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt.

Reformers invariably add that a credible effort to solve the issue of Arab land occupied by Israel, which they believe is the taproot of extremism, does not even seem to be on Washington's radar.

Sheik Nasrallah is particularly adept at exploiting public anger at civilian deaths in Lebanon by talking about how fickle the United States can be as a friend.

"I want you never to forget that this is the U.S. administration, Lebanon's friend, ally and lover," he mocked in a speech on Thursday. He also issued a pointed warning to other Arab leaders that if they spend more time defending their thrones than the people of Lebanon, they might find themselves pushed off those thrones.

Conflict Polarizes the Mideast, Leaving Little Middle Ground

Reformers also worry that the chaos in Iraq has fueled public perception that a despot can at least keep violence and sectarian differences at bay. In Syria, war news drowned out dismay over the jailing of activists in a crackdown by the Syrian government this spring.

Omar Amiralay, a Syrian documentary filmmaker, was in a taxi recently when the radio broadcast a news bulletin about a suicide bombing in Baghdad that killed some 35 people.

"The Americans should just let Saddam out of jail for a week," he quoted the driver as saying, only half joking. The dictator would slay one million Iraqis and "everything would be peaceful again."

Mr. Amiralay is convinced that change will come only with an eruption from within, but people have no time to think about that now. "Uncertainty has become the order of the day," he said.

There is a general sense in the region that the Bush administration soured on pushing democracy because of the successes of Islamist parties in the most recent Egyptian and Palestinian elections -- the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Hamas, an offshoot of the Brotherhood, in the Palestinian territories.

For the first time in a while, political analysts are again comparing governments like that of Mr. Mubarak of Egypt to that of the late Shah of Iran -- an isolated despot who ignored the broad wishes of the population while currying favor with the American administration. Some rulers are clearly nervous.

King Abdullah of Jordan initially criticized Hezbollah when the fighting erupted nearly a month ago, but in an interview with the BBC on Tuesday he was dismissive of American plans for a "new Middle East." The monarch said he could "no longer read the political map" of the region because of black clouds gathering from Somalia to Lebanon.

That kind of attitude may prove beneficial, reformers say, allowing more breathing space for public debate as leaders try to quiet public anger. But they doubt moderates will find much of a platform.

"There is no room on the street for a moderate like me," said Mr. Qudah, the civil engineer in Jordan. "We are all against Israel attacking Lebanon, but I am also against hitting cities in Israel where there are civilians. If I tried to say the things in public that I am telling you on the phone, I might be beaten. In a war like this, the extremists alone own the streets."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Photos: The Hezbollah station was on at a restaurant in Damascus. Moderate voices are being drowned out by a rising tide of anti-American sentiment. (Photo by James Hill for The New York Times)(pg. A1)

A soldier cleaned portraits of Syria's leaders, past and present, in Damascus. War news has trumped worries over the recent jailing of activists. (Photo by James Hill for the New York Times)(pg. A10)

Load-Date: August 9, 2006

For Muslims and West, antipathy and mistrust; In global survey, both see each other as violent and disrespectful of women

The International Herald Tribune

June 23, 2006 Friday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 1

Length: 1470 words

Byline: Meg Bortin

Dateline: PARIS

Body

Westerners and Muslims around the world have radically different views of world events, and each group tends to view the other as violent, intolerant, and lacking respect for women, according to a new international survey of more than 14,000 people in 13 nations.

In what the Pew Global Attitudes Project called one of the survey's most striking findings, majorities in Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, and Turkey Muslims countries with fairly strong ties to the United States said, for example, that they did not believe that Arabs carried out the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on New York and Washington.

This was just one finding illustrating the chasm in beliefs between the two groups following another year of violence and tension centered around that divide. The past 12 months saw terrorist bombings in London, riots in France by unemployed youths, many of them Muslim, a global uproar over Danish cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad, and no letup to the war in Iraq.

This led majorities in the United States and in countries in Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East to describe relations as generally bad, Pew found.

Muslims worldwide, including the large Islamic communities in Britain, France, Germany and Spain, broadly blamed the West, while Westerners tended to blame Muslims. Muslims in the Middle East and Asia depicted Westerners as immoral and selfish, while Westerners saw Muslims as fanatical.

The results were not uniform, however, and delivered some surprises:

Support for terrorism declined in some Muslim countries surveyed, dropping dramatically in Jordan, where terrorist bombings killed more than 50 people in Amman in November.

Two-thirds of the French public expressed positive views of Muslims, and even larger majorities of French Muslims felt favorable to Christians and Jews.

Muslims in Europe are less inclined to see a "clash of civilizations" than general publics in Europe and Muslims elsewhere.

For Muslims and West, antipathy and mistrust In global survey, both see each other as violent and disrespectful of women

Pew conducted the survey, part of Pew's Global Attitude Project for 2006, in April and May in Britain, Egypt, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia, Spain, Turkey and the United States.

Pew, which interviewed Muslims in Europe as a group for the first time this year, said their views represented "a bridge" between the widely divergent views of other Europeans and Muslims in Asia and the Middle East.

The overall results, said Andrew Kohut, director of the Pew Research Center, show that "even though relations are not good, there hasn't been a spike in outright hostility between the two groups over the past year." While both sides see relations as bad, he said, "at least it's not getting worse."

Nonetheless, majorities in every country surveyed except Pakistan expressed pessimism about Muslim-Western relations, with Germany most strongly viewing the situation as bad (70 percent), followed by France (66 percent), Turkey (64 percent), Spain and Britain (61 percent), and Egypt (58 percent).

Of those who saw relations as bad, four-fifths in Turkey blamed the West, as did majorities in Indonesia, Jordan, and Egypt. In Nigeria, divisions between Christians and Muslims were sharp on this question, as on others: While 69 percent of Nigerian Christians blamed Muslims for the poor state of relations, 83 percent of Nigerian Muslims blamed Westerners.

In follow-up interviews by the International Herald Tribune, Muslims attributed the poor relations to everything from differing values to the media. But many pointed to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians as the main cause and accused the West of double standards on terrorism.

"Whenever the Israelis strike the Palestinians, the international community and the UN turn a blind eye or keep quiet," said Saleh Bayeri, a politician and Muslim community leader in Jos, Nigeria. "But when the Palestinians launch a counterattack, it is condemned by America, the U.K. and other friends of Israel as a terror attack. That is the problem. It shows that the West is biased in dealing with Muslims."

Pew asked respondents to give their opinions of Christians, Muslims, and Jews, and it found anti-Jewish sentiment to be "overwhelming" in the Muslim countries surveyed. It reached 98 percent in Jordan and 97 percent in Egypt.

In the follow-up interviews, some respondents indicated that Muslims saw Jews and Israel as identical. "You see, Muslims generally see Westerners as supporters of the Jews Israel," Bayeri said. "As a friend of the Jews, you are automatically an enemy in the eyes of most Muslims."

Majorities in the Muslim world, Pew said, also expressed the opinion that the victory of Hamas in Palestinian elections in January would "be helpful to a fair settlement between Israel and the Palestinians a view that is roundly rejected by non-Muslim publics."

In the follow-up interviews, the U.S.-led war in Iraq, now in its fourth year, was cited by Muslims and Westerners alike as another primary cause of bad relations. Muslims, in comments reflecting historic tensions with Christianity, described Iraq and the Bush administration's war on terrorism as a "crusade" against Islam, while in the West people said that terrorist attacks by Muslims had undermined trust.

European Muslims lined up with European general publics on some issues, indicating that integration might be moving ahead better than recent events would suggest. While Muslims outside Europe generally saw Westerners as violent and immoral, for example, this view was not shared by Muslims in France, Germany and Spain. But British Muslims were highly critical of Westerners, the survey found, holding negative views resembling those of Muslims in Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, and Nigeria.

In Turkey, negative opinions of the West have increased in tandem with opposition across Europe to Turkish admission to the European Union. Only 16 percent of those surveyed in Turkey now hold a positive view of Christians, down from 31 percent in 2004.

For Muslims and West, antipathy and mistrust In global survey, both see each other as violent and disrespectful of women

Turkey also stood out because of the high percentage now saying they do not believe that Arabs carried out the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Fifty-nine percent express disbelief, up from 43 percent in a Gallup survey in 2002.

Disbelief was equally strong in Egypt, and stronger still in Indonesia (65 percent). Even in Britain, 56 percent of the Muslims surveyed did not believe that Arabs carried out the attacks; only 17 percent said they believed it.

The results, Kohut said, show that "many Muslims are still in denial" about something that even Osama bin Laden has acknowledged.

As for suicide bombings, however, Pew found that support declined over the past year in Pakistan, Indonesia and especially Jordan, where 29 percent now say violence against civilian targets can often or sometimes be justified, down from 57 percent in 2005. Support remained sizable in Turkey, at 17 percent, and even higher in Egypt, at 28 percent.

In Pakistan, where 69 percent now say suicide bombings can never be justified, up from 46 percent last spring, those seeing relations as generally good (30 percent) outnumbered those viewing relations as bad (25 percent), although 39 percent were undecided. In follow-up interviews, people cited the Pakistani government's support of the U.S. war on terror as one reason for the mixed view.

"Many perceive this bond with the West, and America especially, as not just important but necessary," said Reem Khan, a magazine editor based in Lahore. Pakistanis, she said, feel "the alternatives are all much worse and that an alliance with America can yield important economic and societal benefits."

Among Western publics, despite the events of the past year the London bombings in July, the French riots in November, the cartoon controversy that erupted in January overall opinions of Muslims remained favorable in Britain, France and the United States, Pew found. In Russia, where the government has claimed successes over rebels in Chechnya, favorable views of Muslims increased over the last two years.

But distrust grew in Germany, where 54 percent now hold unfavorable views of Muslims, and skyrocketed in Spain, with 62 percent holding negative opinions, up from 37 percent last year.

Spanish opinions of Jews also declined sharply, with 45 percent of the public expressing a favorable view, down from 58 percent last spring.

France stood out because of the harmonious views of Muslims and non-Muslims on a range of topics.

Publics in both the West and the Muslim world agreed that Muslim countries should be more prosperous, Pew found, though their views on the reasons for the current situation differed widely. Many in the Muslim world blamed the policies of the West, but others cited corruption among their own governments. In the West, people cited Islamic fundamentalism, inadequate education and lack of democracy.

Load-Date: June 27, 2006

Nadia's wedding

The Irish Times

June 3, 2006 Saturday

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Section: WORLD; Under the Crescent; Pg. 13

Length: 1490 words

Body

When a female suicide bomber tried to blow up another Muslim woman's wedding, for many it epitomised the tensions in modern Islam, Mary Fitzgerald

The call of the muezzin sounds different in Amman. In this city built on seven hills the Muslim summons to prayer bounces and echoes through the deep valleys that cleave Jordan's sprawling capital. It's a sound that Nadia al-Alami has found comforting since childhood, a sound she says reinforces her sense of faith.

In many ways, Nadia is a typical modern Muslim woman. She prays. She fasts at Ramadan. She watches the younger generation of Muslim preachers on TV because she likes the way they apply Islam to contemporary life. Although she doesn't wear hijab - the Muslim headscarf - many of her friends do. She felt offended by the Danish cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad but abhorred the violent protests that followed. At ease with her faith, the 24-year-old graduate describes Islam as her compass - "It's the deepest, most basic thing I depend on. It's my connection with God. It's what gives me directions for the map of my life."

Faith is also important to Sajida Mubarak al-Rishawi, an Iraqi woman whose brother died fighting US troops in Falluja. Last November Sajida and her husband stood among guests at Nadia's wedding reception in an Amman hotel, explosives belts strapped around their waists. Her husband detonated his belt but Sajida failed to set off hers. The bombing claimed the lives of 27 wedding guests, including Nadia's parents and her husband Ashraf's father.

Admitting responsibility, Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and his organisation al-Qaeda in Iraq employed language echoing that used to justify similar attacks in New York, London, Madrid, Bali, Turkey, Egypt and Morocco. The intention was not to kill Muslims, they insisted, rather to target "the dens of evil that were established on Muslim soil in Amman, in order to protect the faith and raise the banner of tawhid [monotheism]".

Sajida later appeared on Jordanian state TV, wearing a white headscarf and the explosives belt she failed to detonate. With a calm voice, she explained how she and her husband had carried out the attack. "He took a corner, and I took a corner," she said. "There was a wedding in the hotel, children, women and men. My husband detonated his belt. I tried to detonate mine, but it did not explode. I went out. The people started running and I ran away with them."

At the opening of her trial last month, where she appeared veiled and chained at the ankles, Sajida was defiant. "I have God to defend me," she said.

Nadia and Sajida frame what many have described as a battle for the soul of Islam, an ideological struggle that has taken on a new urgency in the wake of the September 11th attacks.

Nadia's wedding

Repelled by those who use violence in the name of Islam, ordinary Muslims throughout the world are refusing to allow their religion to be hijacked by an intolerant minority fuelled by what they see as obscurantist ideology.

"Using the name of Islam to justify this violence is making the world see us Muslims as terrorists," Nadia says, shaking her head. She says her faith has grown stronger since the bombings and she plans to start wearing hijab later this year.

"The people who do this kind of thing are terrorists. They do not have any relationship with Islam. When I saw Sajida wearing hijab on TV, I was shocked. How dare she? The people who killed my parents have nothing to do with my religion.

"The message of Islam is peace. Peace with ourselves, peace with others, peace with the whole universe."

The debate within the Islamic world is not just limited to combating extremism. Nor is it something new - the Muslim faith has always included different schools of thought and varying interpretations. What makes it different this time is the increasing sense of urgency.

Fourteen centuries after the Prophet Muhammad received the divine revelations that would form its core, Islam stands at a critical juncture. The world's fastest growing religion is caught in an existential dilemma, experiencing one of the most dynamic revivals in its history while trying to establish what it means to be Muslim in a globalised world dominated by a secular West that appears to many omnipotent, even predatory, in its politics, economy and culture.

As Sally (36), an Egyptian Muslim whose British husband converted to Islam, puts it: "We are different. That doesn't mean that we hate the West and what it stands for. It just means that we are different and we don't necessarily want to be like you. We want that difference respected."

The debate about the meaning and message of Islam in the 21st century takes place every day in mosques, study groups and televised sermons across the Muslim world from Cairo to Jakarta, as traditionalists and those who see themselves as reformers try to mesh Islamic principles and precepts with the realities of modern life.

In a faith with no central authority and no formal clergy, it is no easy task. The result is a cacophony of competing voices - from the moderate to the extreme - all claiming to hold the only true version of Islam. The spectrum of this debate reflects the immense diversity of the Muslim world, divided as it is by geography, language, culture and often turbulent histories.

Far from being homogenous, Islam is practised and observed differently across countries and cultures. Embracing some 1.4 billion people, ranging from the taxi driver in Indonesia who unfurls his prayer mat at the side of the road when he hears the muezzin, to the Egyptian student who wears her sequined headscarf with the latest boho chic fashion, its vast territory stretches eastward from the west coast of Africa to Indonesia.

Muslims form the majority in some 45 countries, with the largest number concentrated in Asia. Among them are members of three main groups - Sunni, Shia, and Sufi - all of which splinter into various subdivisions and sects.

Muslims talk of an Islamic reawakening that has been building for decades, powered by a groundswell in personal piety that is not limited just to the poor and disadvantaged. Whether it's more women choosing to wear hijab or more men shunning alcohol, many Muslim countries have witnessed a surge in devotion matched by strict observance of Islamic rituals.

It is not all confined to the personal. Financial institutions have sprung up offering a range of alternatives for saving, lending and investment that respect Islam's strict prohibition on interest. Technology has helped too - through the internet, satellite TV and telecommunications, the core idea of umma (community of believers) has taken on a whole new meaning, particularly for young Muslims eager to carve out a distinct faith-based identity.

They use Muslim matchmaking websites to find husbands or wives and use online fatwa services for advice on how to live their lives. They prefer to watch young TV preachers instead of the bearded sheikhs of the past and listen to

Nadia's wedding

modern reworkings of nasheed, Islamic devotional singing. Their mobile phones are as likely to ring with an exhortation to Allah as the latest hit.

For some Muslims, this revitalised sense of faith has crossed over to the ballot box. In recent years Islamist political parties of all hues, from the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Jordan, **Hamas** in the Palestinian territories, Hizbullah in Lebanon and the Justice and Development party in Turkey, have made electoral gains by espousing democracy within a frame based on and protective of Islamic values. Underpinning all this is the idea that Islam is not merely a faith but an all-encompassing social system.

Many in Europe and the US have viewed these developments with dismay or fear, equating the rise of political Islam in particular with extremism and militancy. They question Islamist politicians' commitment to democracy and their position on the role of **women** and minorities.

In return, many Muslims accuse the West of being hostile towards Islam and Muslims. They cite US foreign policy and the publication of newspaper cartoons lampooning the Prophet Muhammad to support the sense that theirs is an embattled faith.

Amr Khaled, one of the Muslim world's most popular and influential TV preachers, believes there are misunderstandings on both sides. He recently attended a conference in Denmark to discuss the impact of the cartoon controversy.

"Many people in the West believe all Muslims are extremists and that Islam leads people to become extremists. That's just not true. Muslims have to accept part of the responsibility for this image but so do some people in the West," he says.

"There is a lack of justice, freedom and rights in many Muslim countries and in a lot of cases this is backed up by the West. These conditions encourage extremist thinking and terrorism.

"I believe there is extremism on both sides but we must not allow their voices to become louder than ours."

maryfitzgerald@irish-times.ie

Load-Date: June 3, 2006

Tamil tigers blacklisting lauded - Correction Appended

Ottawa Citizen

April 12, 2006 Wednesday

Final Edition

Correction Appended

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Section: CITY; Pg. C5; Jennifer Campbell

Length: 1109 words

Byline: Jennifer Campbell, Citizen Special

Body

The Conservative government's move to add the Tamil Tigers military organization to Canada's list of known terrorists shows a "pattern of consistency" and a hard line against terrorists, said Elliot Tepper, a professor who specializes in Asian studies in Carleton University's department of political science.

"There was a pattern of consistency in regards to the Conservative party policy," Mr. Tepper said. "While in opposition, the party took the principled position in regards to terrorism in general. Now in power, they're following through on that position."

Mr. Tepper pointed out that one can see the pattern in terms of Canada's role in Afghanistan, as well as the party's position on sending aid to the **Hamas** regime in Palestine and now, the listing of the Tamil Tigers as a terrorist organization.

The fact that this position aligns Canada and the U.S. is also helpful, Mr. Tepper said.

The move by the Conservatives last week, ushered by Minister of Public Safety Stockwell Day, comes with an edict that it is now illegal for the controversial Tamil Tigers to raise money in Canada. It is also illegal for individuals to donate to the group. Those caught doing so could face up to 10 years in jail.

According to Human Rights Watch, the Tamil Tigers have used intimidation, threats, extortion and violence in Canada to finance operations in Sri Lanka. Mr. Tepper said that report was probably also a factor in the announcement.

"In terms of timing, the fact that the government announcement comes so soon after the release of the Human Rights Watch report on the extortion of Canadians of Tamil descent undoubtedly also played a role," he said.

A. J. Pathiraja, Sri Lanka's acting high commissioner, did not return calls when asked to comment on the move.

The Ottawa mission has been without a high commissioner since Geetha de Silva returned to Sri Lanka to take a senior position in the ministry of foreign affairs more than a year ago.

Tamil tigers blacklisting lauded

A high-profile Russian delegation was in Ottawa this week to discuss the priorities for Russia's G-8 presidency and the upcoming summit in St. Petersburg.

Igor Shuvalov, a top aide of Russian President Vladimir Putin, who is also known as a "Russian G8 sherpa", led the delegation hosted by Russian Ambassador Georgiy Mamedov. The delegation's meetings in Ottawa were also scheduled to look at relations between Canada and Russia.

Russia's priorities for the G-8, which it hosts for the first time in July, are international issues of energy security, education and health care.

As the giant country's officials point out, securing a reliable energy supply "is crucial for sustainable economic development and political stability in the world." The leaders must look at energy security in the context of global climate change and the fact that many of the world's poorest countries can't access "pure and affordable energy," the embassy noted in a release.

When it comes to education, the Russian embassy officials said expert knowledge and access to information are crucial to the growth of national economies and the quality of life of their citizens. Even G-8 countries have problems with education, particularly in linking educational systems and labour markets, the Russians explained, adding that there's also a disconnect between education and required fields of expertise.

Meanwhile, poor countries' inability to adopt new technology that would enable them to compete in unskilled-labour fields internationally may seriously obstruct the progress of the global economy and social prosperity, the Russians contended.

On the health care front, they want G-8 members to take a serious look at the threat infectious diseases pose to humanity.

"That such diseases spread at a different rate and take a different toll in various regions and communities is a litmus test of aggravating hardship, discrimination, social injustice, and a widening gap and strengthening tension between developed and developing nations," the embassy notes. "Such diseases as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, and new ones like avian flu grossly impede nations economically and socially and are a threat to sustainable development."

Helping the Community

Diplomats and representatives from Taiwan's government are getting on board to help the Shirley E. Greenberg Women's Health Centre.

A luncheon series begins April 25 with Kuwaiti Ambassador Musaed Al-Haroun hosting. Karen Fung Kee Fung, medical director of obstetrics and gynecology at the Ottawa Hospital, will be the special guest. On May 9, Thomas Chen, representative for the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office, hosts a luncheon featuring speaker Deborah Hannah, of the "Look Good Feel Better" program for women living with cancer.

Finally, on June 1, Roshan Reddaway, wife of British High Commissioner David Reddaway, hosts a luncheon with two guest speakers: Maureen McTeer, the patron of Osteoporosis Canada, and Dan Beamish, a personal trainer.

Tickets cost \$125 and can be purchased by calling 569-7100.

The Women's Health Centre, Ottawa's first, is dedicated to the diagnosis and treatment of disease and the promotion of good health in women of all ages. Proceeds from the luncheons will go toward buying equipment.

Jennifer Campbell is a freelance writer and editor in Ottawa.

Reach her at Diplomatica@sympatico.ca.

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Tamil tigers blacklisting lauded

Insight Into Japanese Art

Kyoko Numata, wife of Japanese Ambassador Sadaaki Numata, hosted a gathering of the Friends of the National Gallery Thursday. Ms. Numata offered a tour of her Rockcliffe residence and described its art, including some from her personal collection.

Jazz, Danish Style

Danish Ambassador Poul Kristensen hosted a jazz evening with the Danish group PET Douglas at his Rockcliffe residence Monday.

Friendship Between Canada and Bangladesh

The Canada-Bangladesh Parliamentary Friendship Group held its founding meeting in Ottawa last week.

A Sri Lankan Dance Experience

The Sri Lankan High Commission hosted a cultural dance show at the Bronson Centre Sunday evening. The Channa-Upuli Dance Group presented a fusion of modern ballet and Sri Lankan traditional dance, accompanied by traditional drum and contemporary east-west jazz, blended with traditional drum patterns.

Introduction to Yemeni Cinema

Yemen Ambassador Abdulla Nasher presented the award-winning feature film *A New Day in Old Sana'a* by Yemeni-British director Bader Ben Hirsi Friday at the World Exchange Plaza theatre.

Some Irish Eyes are Smiling

Irish Ambassador Martin Burke and British High Commissioner David Reddaway hosted a reception at Mr. Burke's Rockcliffe residence in support of the annual Emerald Ball of the Ireland Fund of Canada. The ball takes place April 22.

Correction

A Sri Lankan dance show at the Bronson Centre was hosted by the Beatrice Sevana Community House. Incorrect information appeared April 12 in a photo caption on the Diplomatica page.

Correction-Date: April 21, 2006

Graphic

Colour Photo: Tara Walton, The Ottawa Citizen; (1. Ms. Numata displaying kimonos from her personal wardrobe.);
Colour

Photo: Tara Walton, The Ottawa Citizen; (2. Ms. Numata in the dining room of her home describing the place settings of a formal dinner.);

Colour Photo: Tara Walton, The Ottawa Citizen; (3. From left to right: Tor Berntin Naess, ambassador of Norway, Poul Kristensen, ambassador of Denmark, Else Philipp, wife the the Danish ambassador, and Bob Mills, MP for Red Deer.);

Tamil tigers blacklisting lauded

Colour Photo: Tara Walton, The Ottawa Citizen; (4. From left: Arif Lalani (director, Foreign Affairs), Reaz Rahman (foreign affairs adviser to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh), Deepak Obhrai MP (parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs), Bangladesh High Commissioner Rafiq Ahmed Khan, his wife Juyena Khan, and Japanese Ambassador Sadaaki Numata.);

Colour Photo: Aaron Lynett, The Ottawa Citizen; (5. The Sri Lankan High Commission hosted a cultural dance show at the Bronson Centre Sunday evening. The Channa-Upuli Dance Group presented a fusion of modern ballet and Sri Lankan traditional dance, accompanied by traditional drum and contemporary east-west jazz, blended with traditional drum patterns.);

Colour Photo: Aaron Lynett, The Ottawa Citizen; (6. The Sri Lankan High Commission hosted a cultural dance show at the Bronson Centre Sunday evening. The Channa-Upuli Dance Group presented a fusion of modern ballet and Sri Lankan traditional dance, accompanied by traditional drum and contemporary east-west jazz, blended with traditional drum patterns.);

Colour Photo: Aaron Lynett, The Ottawa Citizen; (7. The Sri Lankan High Commission hosted a cultural dance show at the Bronson Centre Sunday evening. The Channa-Upuli Dance Group presented a fusion of modern ballet and Sri Lankan traditional dance, accompanied by traditional drum and contemporary east-west jazz, blended with traditional drum patterns.);

Colour Photo: Bruno Schlumberger, The Ottawa Citizen; (8. Mr. Ben Hirsi with Dr. Nasher.);

Colour Photo: Tara Walton, The Ottawa Citizen; (9. From left: Julian Evans (deputy British high commissioner), Shawn Murphy (MP Charlottetown), Mary Burke (wife of Mr. Burke), Patrick Murray (ball chairman), and Jason Kenney (MP Calgary Southeast).)

Load-Date: April 12, 2006

What did Tessa Jowell know?

Guardian.com

February 28, 2006

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theguardian

Length: 1432 words

Highlight: Welcome to the Wrap, Guardian Unlimited's roundup of the best of the day's papers.

Body

PRESSURE ON JOWELL INCREASES

Steve Bell's Magritte pastiche aptly sums up the mood of the press. "Ceci n'est pas un bung," runs the caption underneath a picture of a grinning David Mills surmounting a free-floating cork. In other words: Come off it.

The difficulty of Mr Mills's position - and now that of his wife, Tessa Jowell - was neatly summarised in an Economist article on Friday, which concluded that the lawyer was "either a knave or a fool". Mr Mills's explanations, the Independent says today, "have seemed bizarre and implausible in the extreme".

The Times's editorial describes it as "at best embarrassing" for the culture secretary, who signed a mortgage application that acted as a conduit for a large sum of money from abroad - allegedly a bribe from Silvio Berlusconi after Mr Mills had testified to the Italian prime minister's advantage in a trial.

"Ms Jowell may have reason to gripe at the way that her household accounts are being tied suggestively to the murky Berlusconi business empire," says the paper. "But she provided the link with her own hand. ... The question for Ms Jowell, no less comfortable for being familiar, has thus become: what did she know, and when did she know it?"

True, the Times says, she appears to have done nothing that undermined her role as culture secretary. But the ministerial code of conduct is rather more demanding. It requires ministers "to behave according to the highest standards of constitutional and personal conduct in the performance of their duties" and also to provide a list of their spouse or partner's business interests. "Did she do so?" asks the paper. "When?"

The irony of Miss Jowell's position - she is currently launching a government report on women's work and pay - is not lost in the Independent, whose cartoonist depicts her urging women to "demand the right not to bother your pretty heads about money ... just let your hubbies manage the finances!"

The Mail heaps further suspicion on the Jowell-Mills financial affairs by revealing that the couple have had eight mortgages on their two homes, and that the one allegedly paid off with a bribe was not the only loan to have been repaid within weeks.

* Jowell fails to quell bribe claims

What did Tessa Jowell know?

* Times: On the dotted line* Mail: Speculation munts over Jowell's finances

CAMERON SETS OUT TORY GOALS

Newly returned from paternity leave, David Cameron throws down the gauntlet to his rightwing critics with the publication of a new Conservative mission statement today. It will be put to a vote by the party's membership this summer.

The document - which the Mail describes as "an early draft of the manifesto he will present to voters" and a "move away from Thatcherism" - sets out eight aims the party is "fighting for".

Tomorrow's papers will doubtless pore over its wording, but the pledges include: "It is our moral obligation to make poverty history," "The more we trust people, the stronger they and society become," "The right test for our policies is how they help the most disadvantaged in society, not the rich" and, in a deliberate reworking of Baroness Thatcher's infamous phrase, "There is such a thing as society; it's just not the same thing as the state."

* Cameron redefines Tory goals

FLABBY APPROACH TO TACKLING OBESITY

The Times splashes with one of those now-familiar pictures of an obese juvenile belly enclosed by a tape measure. Accompanying the flab is a jumble of boxes and interconnecting arrows showing the "delivery chain" for tackling childhood obesity. The implication - simple problem, over-complex solution - is clear.

"It has already taken 31 experts 18 months simply to agree how obesity should be measured, the National Audit Office, the Healthcare Commission and the Audit Commission found," says the paper. "That delay means it is likely to be 2007 before children are routinely weighed and measured for obesity, just three years before the target [to reduce their number] is due to be met."

* Times: Children fatter, experts dither

GAZ DE FRANCE MERGER 'IS PROTECTIONISM'

There are loud grumbles from the FT and the Telegraph at what the French PM calls "economic patriotism" and the papers call protectionism. The French PM, Dominique de Villepin, has engineered a merger between Gaz de France and Suez, a Franco-Belgian power and water company, to thwart a possible hostile bid from Italy's Enel.

"In his eight months in the Hotel Matignon, Mr de Villepin has systematically erected barriers against foreign capital as the core of his bid for the presidency in 2007," complains the Telegraph.

"The prime minister is leading his country down a blind alley. At the European level, he and his imitators should be pursued by the commission. At home, it is [Nicolas] Sarkozy's job to prevent him from ever holding elected office."

The FT says holding on to national energy firms is tempting in an era of rising fuel prices, but warns that the eurozone will never prosper unless capital is allowed to flow freely within it.

* FT: Suez and Gaz de France set to merge

* Telegraph: The single market and Gallic delusions

HAMZA'S SON RAPS OUT MESSAGE

"I was born to be a soldier, Kalashnikov in my shoulder, peace to Hamas and Hezbollah, that's the way of the lord Allah . . . we're jihad through, defend my religion with the holy sword." Not, perhaps, the top-selling download on iTunes, but the Sun reveals that the Islamic rap group Lionz of Da Dezert is fronted by Mohammed Kamel Mostafa, the son of the jailed cleric Abu Hamza.

What did Tessa Jowell know?

The paper can't resist using the headline "Son of a preacher man" for its editorial: "His rap lyrics spurt bile and export terror." Odd, then, that the paper invites readers to "watch vile Hamza's rap at www.thesun.co.uk from 10am." Wasn't it just this kind of religious hatred that the Sun deplored when Hamza senior broadcast sermons online?

* Sun: Chip off the old hook

FLINTOFF TO MISS BIRTH OF CHILD

Should a cricketer on tour fly home for the birth of his child? No, if half the rest of the team are crocked and you've been appointed as the stand-in captain. That was Freddie Flintoff's decision, and the Mail ("Would Botham have missed a Test for a birth?") approves.

Flintoff said his wife, Rachael - whose baby is due during the third Test in India - supported him.

"The dashes back home have always dismayed old-timers," says the Telegraph. "They used to set off by ocean liner for Australia with no more than a wave of a well-laundered handkerchief, returning six months later to any number of new children."

Michael Vaughan has already flown home with a knee injury, Marcus Trescothick returned for "personal reasons", and the Guardian pictures Simon Jones - his face twisted in agony - as he suffered a knee injury in the nets yesterday. He, too, is on his way back to England for tests.

* Jones leaves England in disarray

* Telegraph: Country before family

DA VINCI CODE COURT BATTLE BEGINS

Your Wrap writer is one of the eight people in Britain who have never read The Da Vinci Code, so please forgive her if this item has been given less prominence than it deserves.

Briefly, the authors of a 1982 book called The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail allege that the Da Vinci Code author, Dan Brown, stole their "Jesus theory" for the plot of his own novel.

This theory posits that Jesus did not die on the cross but married Mary Magdalene, had a child by her and emigrated to the south of France, where they founded a dynasty that enjoyed the protection of the Knights Templar. (If that has, by any chance, spoiled it for you, take comfort from the Times's initial review, reprinted today - "the silliest, most inaccurate, ill-informed, stereotype-driven, cloth-eared, cardboard-cutout-populated piece of pulp fiction that I have read".)

Brown says the similarity is incidental.

The Guardian's Maev Kennedy files the most entertaining report from the copyright action in the high court. "Every now and then, in a day of tortuous legal argument about what constitutes "the architecture" of a book, of how plagiarism can be proved in the era of instant information, and of whether a single phrase about the Emperor Constantine being baptised on his deathbed could have copyright, the softly-spoken judge, Mr Justice Peter Smith, threw a remark or question into the proceedings that fell like the clonk of a concrete boot."

* New twist in Da Vinci code tale

COMING UP ON GUARDIAN UNLIMITED TODAY

Details of the government's flagship education reforms will become clearer today with the long-awaited publication of the schools bill.

David Cameron will set out his blueprint for modernising the Conservatives with an official "statement of values".

What did Tessa Jowell know?

Load-Date: February 28, 2006

End of Document

Firebrand politics of Iranian leader resonate on the streets

The International Herald Tribune

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Byline: Michael Slackman

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Body

Since he took office as Iran's president nearly six months ago, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has been the subject of many jokes sent via text messages on cellphones across Iran. He has been spoofed on television and radio, here and abroad, as a bumpkin and a bigot for declaring the Holocaust a myth and causing international outrage over Iran's nuclear program.

One joke has the president combing his hair in a mirror and saying, "O.K., male lice to the left, female lice to the right," ridiculing him as a religious extremist who wants to separate the sexes in public places.

But that is just part of the picture.

Leave the prosperous tree-lined hills of north Tehran and Ahmadinejad appears to be solidifying his support. He has traveled around the country, doling out promises of economic aid in some of the poorest regions, sticking with humble clothing and religion-infused language that attracted his voters in the first place.

"He is leading a simple life," said Zabiollah Baderlou, 18, as he worked in a bakery in the city. "TV showed us his house. It was very simple. He is making these efforts for the people and all he wants is Iran's dignity."

Most of all, despite the limited powers of Iran's presidency, Ahmadinejad, an ultraconservative former militia member, has used Western opposition to Iran's nuclear program to generate national unity and purpose. Those dynamics have compelled even people who oppose him to give him room to maneuver. Stop Iranians on any street in any neighborhood and they are likely to demand that Iran be allowed to pursue a nuclear energy program, a sentiment that has served as a launching pad for Ahmadinejad's firebrand politics.

"You get the feeling that Iran, under the present leadership, is looking for isolation and to go it alone," said a Western diplomat based in Tehran who spoke on the condition of anonymity so as to be able to continue working here. "They want to show their way is the right way, and the former guys were wrong."

While the top leadership had decided to take a more confrontational approach to the West even before Ahmadinejad was elected, the new president began with such a harsh style that many officials were initially unnerved. But when the West failed to stop Iran from defiantly starting its nuclear program, or to punish it, some opponents reluctantly accepted that the president was right and they were wrong.

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"First, we thought he is not right," said a senior government official who consults frequently with the ruling clergy. "Now we understand he is right. You need us more than we need you," he said of the West.

The nuclear issue has provided fertile ground for the president to try to cultivate a new political class, one that is ideologically driven to provide a new, and at the same time reactionary, face to Iran. After years of reformers controlling the government, Ahmadinejad is doing exactly what he promised, resurrecting the priorities of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini founder of Iran's Islamic revolution, who called for Israel "to be wiped off the map" chastising the West at every turn, and striving to forge a distinctly anti-Western national identity while re-establishing Iran's revolutionary influence across the Muslim world.

At a conference in October titled "The World Without Zionism," he effectively called for wiping not just Israel, but America, too, off the map.

"Many have tried to disperse disappointment in this struggle between the Islamic world and the infidels," he said. "They say it is not possible to have a world without the United States and Zionism. But you know that this is a possible goal and slogan."

While sprinkling like-minded people into positions of power across the country, Ahmadinejad and his allies have demonstrated that they are undeterred by complaints of the establishment, whether liberal or conservative. They have instead taken their appeal directly to the poor and middle class masses generally disgusted with a system widely viewed as corrupt and uncaring.

For the time being, they also have the quiet support of the nation's ultimate ruler, the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Even those members of Parliament who charge that the president's foreign and domestic policies are sending the nation hurtling toward disaster find there is little to do but watch from the sidelines.

"Right now, Ahmadinejad is an individual representing a new body in the whole Iranian political system that had been marginalized and disorganized," said a political professor who has close ties to many people in government and feared retaliation if identified. "They are in the process of making their identity and making history."

Ahmadinejad was largely unknown when he ran for office in June. He was the mayor of Tehran, the son of a blacksmith who had served in the hard-line Basiji militia and the Revolutionary Guard, and he was not expected to win. When he was elected, he was expected to fall into lock step with the conservative forces that controlled every other institution of government.

Instead, he has charted his own course. From the start he alienated many hard-liners by ignoring their nominees for important cabinet posts, turning to people he knew well but who were largely unknown. Most of his choices had backgrounds in the military, the Basiji or the security services.

With his team around him, Ahmadinejad has become the public face of Iran: aggressive, provocative and heatedly anti-American. He has adopted the phrase "World Oppressor," in place of "Great Satan," and his speeches are laced with religious references including an emphasis on one of the central principles of the Shiite sect of Islam: an appeal for justice.

Since ultimate power here is vested in the hands of appointed clergy, Ahmadinejad does not exert direct control over foreign affairs or nuclear policy. But his ascension came at a time when the region was in turmoil, with Iraq bogged down in a bloody insurgency, Islamic groups like Hamas in Gaza and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt emerging as powerful political forces, and Iran itself determined to develop a nuclear program which it says is peaceful and the West charges is aimed at developing weapons. And that insulates him from criticism.

"If it wasn't for the foreign pressures, perhaps Mr. Ahmadinejad, and his ministers, would have been called to the Majlis many times to explain themselves," said Akbar Alami, a member of the foreign affairs committee of the Majlis, or Parliament, and an outspoken critic of the president. "As the pressure has increased, the safety margins for him to operate have widened."

Firebrand politics of Iranian leader resonate on the streets

It is still very early in the president's term, and there is ample evidence that many powerful people within the establishment are still worried by the tone and direction Ahmadinejad has taken. And some people speculated that the Supreme Leader might in the end muzzle him, should consequences turn out to be too dire. But for now, hampered by nationalist reaction to the West's pressure on Iran, even some of his harshest critics are treading lightly.

From the sidelines, reformers are now trying to regroup. Many of them say that the best factor in their favor is the president himself. The feeling is that the president cannot, ultimately, meet all his economic promises, and that his policy of confrontation will undermine, rather than improve, people's lives.

Abdullah Momenie, a leader within the student movement that called for a boycott of the presidential election, said: "We see the sensitivity of the world community as a positive thing. Although we think it is an unwise action of power which may take the country to destruction, this might produce an opportunity for a democratic movement."

But so far the president has the upper hand. Ahmadinejad's comments at an Islamic conference in Mecca about wiping out Israel brought him international condemnation and applause from his target audience.

"He raised the question in Mecca and he received a huge amount of praise," said Mehdi Chamran, head of the Tehran City Council and a close adviser to the president who often travels with him. "The people living in these countries, within their hearts, they are happy to hear these statements. If we can strengthen ties with the people that is most important. When we hear the Egyptians take him as a role model this is a real sign he has reached the people."

In practical terms, the management of Iran has begun to change since the new government came to power. The Parliament has been fighting with the executive branch over a budget proposal, saying that its generous spending could threaten inflation. But the budget seems to reflect the president's campaign promise to spend more money on people's immediate needs. The president has taken a few swipes at tightening up some social freedoms, banning Western music, for example, but that edict has hardly been enforced.

Load-Date: January 30, 2006

Put job-shy scroungers to work

Yorkshire Evening Post

September 2, 2006

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Body

I burst out laughing when I read A Hague's letter (YEP Aug 24) inferring that there is no work in the UK and suggesting that the jobs available here are mainly part time and meant for women.

Since May 1, 2004, more than one million people have travelled from Eastern Europe to secure employment here in the UK and the majority of these migrants are young men.

Jobs are available in the UK but the benefits system here is easy to exploit, thus allowing these lazy people who don't want to work to avoid doing any.

The large influx of migrant workers to the UK is a government ruse to help the business leaders drive down labour costs, yet the trade unions are unwilling to complain because they fear being labelled as racist.

This multi-cultural engineering experiment to appease the capitalists is now placing a great strain on our schools, NHS and social services. Inflation is now starting to rise because of this problem and it will gradually get worse.

Other EU countries had the sense to place restrictions on migrant workers and this off-loading effect has resulted in our own population rising to 60 million.

We are now one of the most densely populated countries in the world and I ask how many more people should we allow into the UK to work?

The answer to the labour shortage in the UK is not to infill our country with migrant workers - this is madness.

The government should force the dole cheats and benefit scroungers to work for a living. It's as simple as that.

PAUL COCKCROFT, Tingley, Wakefield

Moving film with a message we should heed

I have just seen the award-winning film *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* directed by Ken Loach, about the events leading up to the Partition of Ireland and the resultant civil war.

It is one of the saddest, most powerful films I have ever seen and it moved me to tears.

Unfortunately, many reviewers in the right-wing press vilified this film as poisonous, anti-British propaganda although the events narrated are taken straight from the pages of history.

Put job-shy scroungers to work

The film's main message is that when people take up arms for a passionately held belief against a perceived injustice such as the occupation of their country by a foreign power, and they have the support of the local population, it is utterly useless for a conventional army to try to defeat them with brute force in the long term.

Such an approach leads to more hatred and violence on both sides with civilians suffering in between, and Ken Loach's film shows this.

History is full of such examples - Vietnam being one of the most tragic.

Yet, instead of learning from history the 'leaders' of the West continue to send more soldiers to their deaths in Afghanistan and Iraq, instead of addressing the root causes of the conflict, and they stand back while Israel destroys the lives of people in Gaza and Lebanon, in defiance of international law.

The suffering in the film was portrayed by actors.

The suffering on TV screens is by real people.

We should bombard our government with demands to stop supporting the US and, therefore tacitly, Israel, and to use its influence to tackle the real causes of terrorism, which are poverty and injustice.

MS E WELLS, Ash Gardens, Leeds

Blot on landscape

My wife and I took advantage of your featured walk,(YEP, Saturday August 26) around Fountains Abbey, which we both enjoyed immensely and rounded off with a smashing pub lunch at the Black Bull in Ripon.

Part of the final stages of the walk caused concern as travellers had set up camp on a lay-by on Fountains Lane, which seems to have been established for some time, due to the scrap heap, caravan awnings, horse carts, bird coops on both sides of the road and notices for drivers to "Drive slow, hens on road".

All a blot on the beautiful Fountains Abbey countryside.

HW IBBETSON, Rothwell, Leeds

Backward look for Leeds

Recent announcements of a planned massive new programme of house building on the sites of two redundant chemical works in Leeds is welcome news indeed, given today's serious housing shortage. However, there is NO mention of what these new residents will have by way of doctors, dentists, school, even shops, because there are none present.

Both Kirkstall Road and Hunslet Road enjoy, or is it suffer, enormous volumes of traffic and the pollution associated with it and are surrounded by the remnants of Leeds' heavy industries.

It seems a supreme irony that years ago, Leeds City Council cleared away all the old slums there and moved people out to the greener suburbs to enjoy fresh air, parks and other leisure facilities, yet now wish to return them to almost derelict areas devoid of facilities of any kind.

Sometimes you have to wonder if this city, and the country overall, isn't going backwards.

DS BOYES, Bramley, Leeds

Wait for hearing aids is no surprise

RNID was appalled, but not surprised, to read about the experiences of hard of hearing pensioner Audrey Carcone in the article 'Pay up £4,000 to avoid hearing aid wait, 16th August 2006.'

Put job-shy scroungers to work

Every day, RNID hears of more people who are waiting for up to three years to get a digital hearing aid from the NHS following their initial visit to their GP.

RNID believes everyone who needs hearing aids has a right to receive them free of charge and in good time.

We are urging the Government to tackle the unacceptable length of waiting times for hearing aids. Until then, thousands of deaf and hard of hearing people will continue to face unnecessary exclusion and isolation.

We are grateful to MPs such as John Battle, who have supported RNID's parliamentary campaign for shorter waiting times.

If readers would like more information about hearing aids and hearing loss they can call RNID's information line on 0808 808 0123 (freephone), email informationline@rnid.org.uk or visit www.rnid.org.uk

Brian Lamb, OBE, RNID Director of Communications and Anna Hollis Senior Media Relations Officer Campaigns

First class wail

They closed all the little Post Offices

beloved by the old and infirm

who now take taxis or buses

Do you wonder it's making them squirm?

Now, in their wisdom, they've altered the price

and given us sums to work out

There are numbers to ring if you want their advice

with a ten minute wait I've no doubt!

The envelope size, the stamp and the weight

Will have to be studied with care

I think I will get me some pigeons

and send all my letters 'by air'!

Mrs E. Martin, Hollin Pk. Mount Leeds

Look after the pennies...

I am sorry DS Boyes (YEP Aug 28): I agree with the head of Yorkshire Bank.

I have been a member of this bank since it was the Yorkshire Penny Bank, when we took our pennies to school on a Monday morning to put in our account.

This is the only bank I have known who encourages children to save.

Today I have my money paid direct into the account. My bills are paid by direct debit. We have savings accounts, where we have a little put in every month, plus a little in a PEP. To avoid any forgotten direct debit or cheque, which could tip our account into the red, we took out an overdraft facility for £100.

Put job-shy scroungers to work

Now because of this we run our accounts with no worries, taking the advice the Yorkshire Bank gives us. So I say take the advice of the bank and live in peace, debt free.

LE SLACK, Lingfield View, Leeds

Why we owe the Poles

We owe a debt of gratitude to the Poles for their support throughout the Second World War.

About 40,000 served with great bravery and distinction.

Those who served in the RAF helped us win against great odds the Battle of Britain.

We abandoned them after the war and handed their country on a plate to Stalin.

We benefit from the Polish people who make their permanent homes with us.

M NICHOLSON, Barwick, Leeds

Out of touch

Why on earth do judges give such lenient sentences for a variety of crimes that should warrant years of imprisonment, not months?

These people on the benches are mostly old, antiquated, out of touch with reality.

If it's because the jails are full then bring back hard labour and boot camps.

J SHEDLOW, Moortown, Leeds

Bus stopped!

Regarding our recent letter in your column about buses failing to observe the bus stop at Portage Avenue - this matter has been noted by Coun Mick Lyons (Temple Newsam Ward) and he has dealt with this on our behalf.

We have been assured that all companies concerned are instructing staff to take note.

Notices have also been placed in the bus shelter involved with an address where any more complaints may be sent.

We can assure Coun Lyons of our support in the future.

MR & MRS DOWLING

Portage Crescent, Halton, Leeds

At fault in war

I totally agree with Roy Pearson's letter. I remember well the carnage of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem when Jewish terrorists murdered British officers, men and civilians.

They were trying to make a point to get their own land and the British caved in to these terrorists through the Balfour Declaration.

Is it not the same for the Palestinians, Hamas, Hezbollah, etc, who only want their land and their freedom back and yet they are called 'terrorists'.

I don't agree that Hezbollah started this war.

Put job-shy scroungers to work

The Israelis captured a doctor and his son and also killed an innocent family picnicking on the beach BEFORE Hezbollah captured Israeli soldiers.

Where is the conscience of the world?

R ROBINSON, Harrogate

Load-Date: September 2, 2006

End of Document

That was the Week that Was...

The Sunday Telegraph (LONDON)

September 3, 2006 Sunday

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Byline: Compiled by Anne-Marie Conway

Body

Home news

Blairs and their power struggles

"Let me get on with the job," the newly blond Prime Minister reiterated through the week, dashing hopes that he might step down - or even announce a date for his departure - at the party conference later this month.

The publication of Forbes magazine's list of the world's most powerful women on Friday must have been a blow to the Blair household, with no mention of Cherie Blair (ranked 62 last year), leaving the Foreign Secretary, Margaret Beckett, as our top woman at No 29.

So much for Government spending on spin, which, we learned on Wednesday, amounted to pounds 154 million on advertising alone last year.

Thousands under surveillance, say police

Scotland Yard said yesterday it was watching "thousands of people" who might be involved in supporting or encouraging terrorism. At least 16 of them were arrested in separate raids in London and Manchester on Friday night.

Child abuse database not safe for famous kids

Wednesday's disclosure that famous people's addresses will not go on the pounds 241 million Children's Index "for security reasons" threw a doubt on the confidentiality of the database, which is intended as an early warning system for children at risk of abuse. The index might also break data protection laws.

Possession of "violent and extreme pornography", online or offline, will soon carry up to three years' imprisonment, the Home Office minister Vernon Coaker announced on Wednesday. At present it is only an offence to publish or distribute such materials.

No to greenhouse gases, yes to the hard shoulder

Thirty-eight environmental activists were arrested during protests at Drax, Europe's biggest coal-fired power station, in North Yorkshire, on Thursday. They might have appreciated the Tories' promise to increase the proportion of "green" taxes, albeit without going into specifics; the Forestry Commission's vow to do more for trees by reducing

That was the Week that Was...

its paperwork; BP's membership of a global consortium to share green technology, and California's decision to take official action to reduce industrial emissions of greenhouse gases.

And new measures allowing British drivers to use motorway hard shoulders at certain times could reduce the need to build more lanes, although critics said there were safety issues.

Fat is no longer just a feminist issue

Obese women were told on Wednesday that they would have to lose weight if they wanted free NHS fertility treatment; though appropriately sized single women and lesbians will now be eligible. And a 29-stone man was forced to cancel his holiday when Thomas Cook Airlines said it could not fit him on the plane.

Elderly starve in hospital

Nine out of 10 nurses told the charity Age Concern that they did not have time to feed elderly patients, leaving them at risk of malnutrition and prolonging their time in hospital.

International news

Israel stands firm on blockade

United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan left Jerusalem empty-handed on Wednesday, having failed to persuade Israel to end its sea and air blockade of Lebanon without the unconditional release of the two soldiers seized by Hezbollah in July. However, the Israeli army did withdraw from a section of the border zone on Thursday. And a donor conference in Stockholm raised almost pounds 500 million in aid pledges for Lebanon and pounds 262 million for the Palestinian territories.

Meanwhile, Israeli police commandos stormed a British embassy compound in Tel Aviv on Thursday to capture a Palestinian man who broke in and demanded asylum in the UK; two Western journalists kidnapped in Gaza were released on Sunday after converting to Islam - at gunpoint; and the Hamas government's official spokesman surprised the world by telling Palestinians to stop blaming Israel for all their ills and look at their own failures.

Pakistan erupts

Days of rioting in Baluchistan followed the death of the 79-year-old tribal warlord Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti, after a Pakistani commando raid on his "cave complex" last weekend. The authorities then refused permission for a public burial for the Oxford-educated Nawab of the Bugtis, who had led the armed struggle for autonomy for the gas-rich but poverty-stricken province.

Stay away, tourists told

A Kurdish separatist group warned tourists to stay away from Turkey, after claiming responsibility for four of the five bombs that killed three people and injured dozens, including 10 Britons, in Istanbul, Marmaris and Antalya. There were further bombs in rubbish bins in other resorts through the week.

As one door closes...

Just as the Government admitted that it was considering making Bulgarians and Romanians take a skills test to get a permit to work in Britain, when they join the European Union in January, Poland decided to open its doors to unskilled workers to fill the gaps left by the 400,000 Poles now working in the UK.

People

Solo across the Atlantic

That was the Week that Was...

Despite the breakdown of his fresh-water machine, Rob Munslow, a 28-year-old Territorial Army recruitment officer from South Wales, became the fastest rower to cross the North Atlantic unassisted, when he landed at the Scilly Isles on Wednesday, 64 days, 10 hours and 48 minutes after leaving Canada.

Polygamist leader no longer wanted in US

Warren Jeffs, a polygamist sect leader who has been on the FBI's 10 Most Wanted List, was arrested in Las Vegas on Monday while driving with his brother and one of his 70 or so wives. He had been in hiding since May after being charged with arranging marriages between under-age girls and older men.

Gone but not forgotten

Vladimir Tretchikoff, whose painting The Chinese Girl aka "the Green Lady", is the highest-selling print in history, at 92.

The 90-year-old actor Glenn Ford, star of Gilda, The Big Heat and The Blackboard Jungle, found dead at his Beverly Hills home on Wednesday.

The Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz, the first writer in Arabic to win the Nobel Prize for literature, on Wednesday aged 94.

The National Hunt trainer David "The Duke" Nicholson, aged 67, who wished to be remembered as "a good tutor of jockeys, a good schooler of horses and a hard bastard".

The great West Indian batsman Sir Clyde Walcott, the first non-British chairman of the International Cricket Board, at the weekend, aged 80.

Business

A 'divi' for the 21st century

The Co-operative Group, which owns the Co-op Bank and CIS, said on Tuesday it was bringing back the members' profit-related dividend it dumped 30 years ago, and rebranding its 3,000 outlets as "The Co-operative". The group wants to capitalise on its "ethical" trading approach and increase membership from today's 600,000 to four million by 2010.

The danger of gambling with relationships

The Greenwich plan for Britain's first Las Vegas-style supercasino hit a snag on Wednesday, when the developer Anschutz Entertainment Group admitted that its contract with a proposed casino operator on the site of the Millennium Dome could be illegal. AEG's owner had already attracted unfavourable attention because of his relationship with John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, prompting the head of the Casino Advisory Panel to remark that the licence was certainly not "a done deal".

Then came news of Harrah's Entertainment's bid for London Clubs International, which, if accepted, would put the Las Vegas giant in place to bid for the supercasino licence.

No need to Google eBay

On Monday, eBay, the world's biggest internet auction company, signed a deal with Google to create a range of online advertisements individually tailored to each of its customers. On Thursday, the Information Commissioner was asked to investigate whether eBay was in breach of the Data Protection Act.

For the record

More than 30 years after the Beatles split up, a New York court gave them and their heirs the go-ahead to sue Capitol Records and its parent company EMI for more than pounds 10.5 million in lost earnings from recordings that

That was the Week that Was...

were allegedly secretly sold. Meanwhile, Universal Music, the world's biggest record company, was said to be backing SpiralFrog, an online start-up that will allow consumers to download music free.

An international consortium led by builder Laing O'Rourke won the pounds 100 million job of making sure that the London Olympics are constructed on time and on budget.

Ford said on Thursday that it wants to sell off Aston Martin, makers of James Bond's preferred cars.

Airfix, whose models kept millions of schoolboys occupied for 50 years and more, went into administration on Wednesday.

Sport

Murray and Agassi still in

Andy Murray's preparations for the US Open were disturbed on Monday when it emerged that his new coach, Brad Gilbert, is being sued for an alleged breach of contract by his management company. The British teenager still sailed through his first two matches, unlike Tim Henman, who beat fellow Briton Greg Rusedski in straight sets on Wednesday, only to be seen off himself by Roger Federer on Friday.

Despite having to have cortisone injections before going on court for his second round, the American veteran Andre Agassi still beat his 21-year-old opponent, and staved off his promised retirement a little bit longer.

That's enough transfer talk for now

The window for Premiership football club transfers closed on Thursday, to the relief of all those overcome by endless speculation about where Arsenal's Ashley Cole might end up (Chelsea, for pounds 5 million and a swap with William Gallas). They know it's all over now, at least until 2007.

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LETTERS FROM READERS

St. Louis Post-Dispatch (Missouri)

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Body

Raunchy: A floater's view of behavior on the river

Regarding "Raunchy on the river" (July 30): A group of about 15 friends and I were floating recently. The harassment was so ridiculous that we don't want to go back to that spot. We are all 21 years old or older. At the camp site, park rangers literally were hiding in the woods with night-vision goggles in the middle of the night to spy on us. I would understand that behavior if we were being rowdy, doing drugs or causing a disturbance, but all we were doing was playing guitars around a campfire. We like clean fun, and, yes, we do drink. It was an invasion of our privacy to be watched constantly.

I could see if they had received complaints about us, but we were the only people at the walk-up campsites, so we were not disturbing anyone.

Yes, some people are vile and irresponsible. But constantly invading privacy and watching campers or floaters is not the solution. In fact, it often is the cause of the problem. These young adults are going to party whether we like it or not. Every person needs time to do his own thing and have a little freedom. Why are we changing this country with laws that make us less free? Our country's new motto should be "America, home of the law-makers."

Casey Govero | St. Louis

Education as mandate

Regarding "The proper duties of a school board" (Aug. 1): If Jim Fox attended St. Louis Public Schools board meetings and got involved from a pro-education vantage point, he would understand that the current board, under the presidency of Veronica O'Brien, takes public education as a mandate to this community.

If Mr. Fox is interested in the well-being of students, why has he not questioned the use of "scripted instruction" for students in four core subjects? Could it be that Mr. Fox is more interested in adding negativism in hopes of undermining the enormous task before the board? Is questioning and insulting the board the level to which we, citizens and commentators, have fallen? If so, get a copy of the circus route at City Hall, not at the Board of Education.

James Wiswall | St. Louis Teacher, Cleveland High School

Seeking justice

LETTERS FROM READERS

It should come as no surprise to the Catholic school teachers of the Archdiocese of St. Louis that their bishops have continued to ignore their pleas for social and economic justice in the workplace ("Teachers union plugs away, despite lack of recognition," July 28). Witness how the church regards the service of a woman who has dedicated her entire life to the church: A 64-year-old nun is required to beg for a job in the private sector when her teaching position is eliminated for economic reasons. When a Catholic nun in the Archdiocese is treated this way, should lay teachers expect anything better of their church leaders?

Mary Reinhardt | St. Louis

Supporting harmony

In "Primary candidates II" (July 31), an endorsement for the Missouri Senate's 4th District, the Post-Dispatch said my role on the Board of Aldermen was "divisive." Now we should discuss issues that have an impact on the 4th District.

I am opposed to the wasteful war in Iraq, which drains sorely needed resources from our citizens, fosters super-high gasoline prices and wastes human life. I am opposed to taking homeowners' property by eminent domain. I am opposed to the sale of Forest Park and Fairgrounds Park. I am opposed to the reversal of Roe v. Wade. I am opposed to taking resources from the public school system to divert to private interests.

I support the U.S. National Health Insurance Act and restoration of the Medicaid cuts because I believe that health care is a human right. I continue to support affirmative action in employment for African-Americans, other minorities and women. I support project labor agreements, a living wage, increasing the minimum wage and collective bargaining for public employees. I support stem cell research and a new Mississippi River bridge with an affirmative action component; both would create economic stimulus for our region. I support equality for the gay, lesbian and transgendered community. I support building social and political relationships that will lead to black, brown and white people living in peace, love and harmony, like brothers and sisters ought to live.

Kenneth Jones | St. Louis

Art restoration

I was amazed to learn that Webster Groves plans to replace the apples and the World War II memorial in its "Wedge" park with a "Back Flip" sculpture by Allan Jones.

Mr. Jones is a pop artist famous for his exhibition of erotic sculptures. His art generally is thought to be anti-feminine. It does not belong in the Wedge.

It seems inappropriate that a town that has a female mayor and boasts of a worldwide university founded by women would allow this sculpture to be installed. Even if the item itself is relatively benign, it will draw attention to the artist and imply a measure of respect for his work, which includes a lot of things I wouldn't let my underage children look at.

The WWII sculpture should stay. And the apples are OK, too.

Connie Abeln | Pacific

Animals in need

Regarding "Horribly abused dog said to be recovering" (July 30). Again we hear about an atrocity committed by a human being on a defenseless animal. Charlotte, a Chihuahua found with a wire tie around her neck, is the latest innocent victim. Much public outrage and offers to adopt ensued.

Are people aware of the hundreds of animals such as this in area shelters? Why does it take headline news to make people want to adopt one of these animals? If they cannot adopt Charlotte, many other animals need homes.

LETTERS FROM READERS

Joan Becker | Richmond Heights

Learn from mistakes

Eric Mink's commentary "Finally, the networks are mad as (heck)" (Aug. 2), about networks shying away from broadcasting certain shows for fear of large fines, misses the most important aspect of this story. Like an out-of-control child, the networks created this problem and now must live with the consequences.

Without restrictions, networks will air shows with whatever content brings in money or makes their political or social point. That's to their shame because this robs the public of opportunities to see valuable shows, such as World War II veterans speaking from the hearts. Don't blame the parents for putting a curfew on the kids. Blame the kids and hope they learn from their mistakes.

Mark Davidson | Webster Groves

Vermin eradication

People are wailing about "civilian" Lebanese casualties. Israel aims at military targets, and civilian casualties are either accidental or the result of Hezbollah embedding its assets in civilian areas. Meanwhile, Israeli civilians are intentionally targeted by Hezbollah. Hezbollah uses munitions loaded with ball bearings that are intended to inflict maximum suffering on civilians, contrary to the Geneva conventions.

Since our Supreme Court thinks it should be running foreign policy, maybe it should tell Hezbollah and **Hamas** to obey the Geneva conventions regarding weapons and the treatment of kidnapped Israeli soldiers.

A fundamental difference is that Israel, the United States and their allies target the enemy and try to avoid the innocent; terrorists target civilians and attempt to maximize the suffering of the innocent to achieve a political end. We need to wake up and eradicate these vermin.

Tom Jeffrey | St. Louis County

Long-range view

Democrats said, "The president has destroyed personal freedom for thousands of citizens and, after four years of war, has no idea where this conflict is going." That was 1864, in the middle of the 1864 election.

Pressure from Democrats came within an eyelash of getting Abraham Lincoln removed from the ballot. They screamed, "Remove the troops now." Attacks on Mr. Lincoln were so vicious I can't repeat them. But Mr. Lincoln had a long-range view. So does President George W. Bush. Think of what Iraq could be: a democracy in the middle of Islamic dictatorships. What a miracle. What a great thing for peace in this world. But it never will happen if Democrats have their way. Democrats always want to cut and run. Remember Vietnam?

Bob Strain | Ellisville

Compensation coming?

While I find AmerenUE's letters and advertisements in response to the extended power outages commendable, they fall woefully short of an adequate response to those who were without power.

Ameren should issue a credit on future bills to all households affected by the storms; \$100 per day of lost power seems reasonable. That's less than what people had to pay for hotels, restaurant meals, ice, laundromats, lost food, etc., but it would be an acknowledgment of the additional expenses, hassle and inconvenience. If so, those who waited the longest for restored power would reap the greatest compensation for their trouble.

Those who were last to have power restored should be first next time.

Carol A. Truesdale | Glendale

LETTERS FROM READERS

Courage breeds hope

Watching morning television in Perth, Western Australia, I heard of the utterly selfless actions of skydiver Robert Cook, who helped a young Australian woman survive a horrible plane crash.

I ended up in tears at his actions. How brave he was at such a young age and how kind he was. I am sure his family, while devastated, must be proud.

In this day and age where selfishness is rewarded, where "me, me, me" is the norm, it is gratifying to hear of the courage from one person to help another in surely the most dreadful moments of their lives. There is hope for us all.

Patricia Cross | Perth, Australia

Notes

OPINION

Load-Date: August 7, 2006

End of Document

Israel-Lebanon War Sparks Gifts to Relief Groups

The Chronicle of Philanthropy

August 3, 2006 Thursday

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Section: MANAGING; Pg. 24; Vol. 18; No. 20

Length: 1619 words

Byline: Caroline Preston

Body

Amid growing fears of a humanitarian catastrophe in the Middle East, aid organizations, religious groups, and other charities are raising money to help victims of the fighting in Lebanon, Israel, and Gaza.

While some nonprofit organizations have received strong financial support from Jewish donors and other people with personal ties to the region, many aid groups say they have yet to see much of a response, in part because the political dimensions of the crisis have overshadowed the humanitarian needs.

Mercy Corps, for example, has raised just \$70,000 for its work to provide food, blankets, and other supplies to the approximately 800,000 people in Lebanon who have fled their homes because of bombings and other violence; the organization is also providing aid in the Palestinian territories.

Matthew de Galan, chief development officer of the Portland, Ore., organization, says that the charitable response is sluggish in comparison with other crises like the earthquakes in Pakistan and Indonesia, which affected comparable numbers of people. (About 3.3 million individuals were left homeless by the 2005 Pakistan earthquake, while approximately 1.5 million people lost their homes in the 2006 temblor.)

"People respond to wars very differently, as donors, than they do to natural disasters," he says. "Initially, the media focuses on the story as a political-military story, and not as much as a humanitarian story. Therefore, the humanitarian needs really aren't as top of the mind."

\$12-Million for Israel Fund

Despite a slow initial response from some donors, several Jewish organizations have raised significant sums.

United Jewish Communities has already raised nearly \$12-million through its Israel Crisis Fund, including a \$5-million grant from the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation, in Baltimore.

"There's almost a reflexive desire to respond when Israel finds itself in need," says Doron Krakow, a senior vice president at the organization.

In the past two weeks, the charity has increased the new fund's fund-raising goal -- now \$18-million -- on four separate occasions because of the growing needs in the region.

At the moment, the organization is earmarking contributions to aid elderly people, new immigrants, and other vulnerable people who remain in the north of Israel, which has borne the brunt of attacks by the militant Lebanese

Israel - Lebanon War Sparks Gifts to Relief Groups

group Hezbollah. It is also working to help open camps for those who have fled to the south and to respond to other needs.

Other groups have raised far less. Save the Children, which is assisting people in Gaza, Israel, and Lebanon, has received just \$5,800 for relief efforts so far.

Eileen Burke, a spokeswoman for the charity, says that donors are often slow to contribute to humanitarian crises created by war because they want to ensure their gifts will help those in need. "We usually see fund-raising levels increase once people see it's easy to reach children and women with life-saving materials," she says.

Zahir Janmohamed, Amnesty International's advocacy director for the Middle East and North Africa, agrees that the potential for donations to fall into the wrong hands gives some donors pause.

"People are nervous about donating humanitarian aid to Lebanon because of a fear that the money could end up with a group like Hezbollah," he says. "There is a lot of trepidation and people aren't donating."

Donors may also worry that their gifts could send a political message, says Mr. Janmohamed. "People have a fear their donations might be construed as endorsing either a political agenda or side, or worse, might even be construed as endorsing a terrorist or disfavored group in the eyes of the U.S. government," he says.

'Too Early to Gauge'

Despite some hesitation among donors, several groups aiding Lebanon and Gaza are beginning to see stronger fund-raising results. American Near East Refugee Aid, which is distributing medicine and other supplies to the displaced in those regions, has raised \$150,000 in response to the fighting. The U.S. Fund for Unicef has raised more than \$42,000 for such efforts, \$14,000 of it in response to an online appeal sent last week.

Even as donations increase, many groups caution that it is too soon to measure donors' response to the crisis. Most charities have only begun to send out appeals or contact donors in recent days.

"It's still too early to gauge," says Mostafa Mahboob, a spokesman for Islamic Relief, which sent out an e-mail appeal a week ago to its approximately 30,000 donors. The group is trying to raise \$5-million for aid efforts in Lebanon and Gaza, and has allocated \$1-million thus far.

Some relief groups are also turning to Lebanese-Americans for support. Mercy Corps, for example, has started contacting Lebanese-American organizations to ask for donations.

While Mercy Corps officials say it is too early to tell if their appeals have been successful, many Lebanese-American groups say they are beginning to raise money to send to Lebanon. Elie Najm, chairman of the Council of Lebanese American Organizations, in Raleigh, N.C., says his group is encouraging members to give to the Lebanese Red Cross.

And at least one nonprofit group has been established in Lebanon with the mission of helping people made homeless by the violence. A group of young Lebanese friends and acquaintances started Mowatinun, or Citizens, out of frustration with the political situation and a desire to take action.

"It started out making sandwiches and collecting money and second-hand clothes within our circle, and giving them to places where refugees were staying," says Talia Khalil, the group's New York representative.

The group then received \$20,000, as well as office space in Beirut, from a Lebanese family to expand its efforts. It has since raised another \$20,000 and is providing food and other aid to 3,800 people. Ms. Khalil is in the process of applying for nonprofit status for the group in the United States.

Gaining Attention

Israel - Lebanon War Sparks Gifts to Relief Groups

American aid groups are hopeful that the news media's growing interest in the humanitarian aspects of the crisis, as well as increasing attention from the U.S. government to humanitarian needs in recent days, will also help their fund-raising efforts.

The United Nations announced an appeal on July 24 for \$150-million for Lebanon, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice -- during her trip there that same day -- announced a commitment to provide \$30-million in federal aid to the beleaguered country.

"Now that the U.S. government has stood up and announced this as an issue, this is hopefully something that could garner more attention," says Elizabeth Griffin, director of communications at Catholic Relief Services, which is providing aid to people who have fled or are trapped in their homes because of the violence.

Meanwhile, charities working in Lebanon and elsewhere in the region say their efforts to help those in need have been handicapped by a lack of security. The south of Lebanon is virtually inaccessible to humanitarian workers, and groups like Mercy Corps, which worked there before the outbreak of fighting, have relocated to other parts of the country.

Civilian trucks and other vehicles in southern Lebanon have been hit by the Israeli army, and aid trucks bearing relief supplies for displaced people were held up at the Syrian border because of violence.

"A lot of truck drivers don't want to go out there and put their lives at risk, and a lot of food, water, and day-to-day supplies aren't getting to the people," says Ms. Griffin of Catholic Relief Services. "Should these humanitarian supplies not get through, we're looking at a major humanitarian catastrophe."

Many relief organizations are calling for the establishment of a "humanitarian corridor," 50 miles long and five miles wide, into Beirut and southern Lebanon so that aid can arrive safely.

Some progress on the humanitarian front was made last week.

According to the United Nations, Israel has agreed to create a safe route for ships and aircraft, as well as for ground transportation to travel from the Syrian border crossing at Arida to Beirut. But while the first 10 of 100 U.N. trucks traveled south of the capital last week to provide aid, humanitarian groups say it is still unsafe for them to transport supplies in many parts of the country.

Charities have also been unable to travel to assess the extent of the need because of the dangers involved.

CARE, for example, is waiting until safety improves before sending staff members into Lebanon to determine the scope of the crisis and how much money will be required to help victims of the conflict.

And in Gaza, aid groups say that humanitarian needs fueled by the cut-off of international assistance after the January election of **Hamas** have only been exacerbated by recent air strikes and other violence.

Refugees Given Aid

Some charities are now helping those who have fled Lebanon for the United States. As part of a plan administered by the federal government, the American Red Cross has provided food, water, mental-health services, and assistance in finding housing to approximately 1,000 people in five cities.

Even groups that do not provide relief say their work has been affected by the crisis. Seeking Common Ground, a Denver charity that runs a program for Palestinian and Israeli girls, says that its staff members have spent more time discussing the mental health of the young girls it serves over the past two weeks than in previous years and are now seeking ways to provide psychological support.

But if the charity's work has become more challenging, it may well benefit from increased attention and additional contributions this year, says Melodye Feldman, the executive director.

Israel - Lebanon War Sparks Gifts to Relief Groups

"We are an alternative to the mayhem."

Load-Date: August 29, 2006

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Terrorism is rotting the Islamic revolution it craves

The Sunday Times (London)

August 6, 2006

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Section: FEATURES; News; Pg. 12

Length: 1578 words

Byline: Amir Taheri

Body

Hezbollah's men of terror are both the strength and the Achilles heel of a movement that seeks to spread Islamic states, says Amir Taheri

The scene is Beirut, some years on, when Hezbollah has driven out the "Crusader-Zionists" and begun building the model Islamic state it has promised since the 1980s.

The rallying cry of Tony Blair -for western democracies to remain united in the global war against terror and engage in a battle of values -has not been heeded.

The western powers, led by the United States, have run away from the Middle East, allowing the Islamic republic and its newly acquired allies in Al-Qaeda to set the agenda.

The former American University of Beirut has been replaced by the Iranian-sponsored Islamic University. As teenage "volunteers for martyrdom" chant "Allah, Koran, Khomeini", the new chancellor of the Islamic University prepares to read a message from Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the Iranian president.

He calls on the Lebanese to prepare for more sacrifices because his "jihad to wipe the Jewish stain of shame" off the map is only the beginning. He plans to liberate Egypt, north Africa and Spain.

Much has changed in Lebanon since the Party of God seized power. Women have been put into purdah and men forced to grow beards. Bars, pubs, discotheques, hotels with a louche reputation, and other "places of sin" have been closed.

Swimming on some beaches is allowed, though not for women, and men are required to enter the sea fully dressed. Gone are cinemas, theatres, the opera, comedy saloons, and bookshops selling publications that are "at variance with Islamic values".

Newspapers and magazines that had once criticised the Party of God or its patrons in Tehran have been banned. In accordance with the slogan "Hizb faqat Hizballah" (Only one party: Hezbollah!), Lebanon has become a one-party state.

All that is but a glimpse of what Lebanon could look like if and when Hezbollah, armed to the teeth and flush with Iranian cash, realises its dream of extending south Beirut to the whole of Lebanon.

Terrorism is rotting the Islamic revolution it craves

The Lebanese know what all that could mean because they have seen it first hand in Beirut's suburbs controlled by Hezbollah. But how many might wish to live in such a system?

The answer came in Lebanon's first free general election last year: Hezbollah and its allies won 14 of the 27 seats allocated to the Shi'ite community in the 128-seat national assembly. This means that some 89% of the Lebanese, including half the Shi'ite community, do not share Hezbollah's vision of an Islamic state modelled on Iran.

Much of Hezbollah's current power and prestige is due to the fact that it is the best funded and best armed political-military machine in the country, feeding thousands of families through employment in its businesses or with subsidies and stipends.

Nevertheless, it would be naive to deny the fact that the message of Hezbollah, which is in fact that of the Khomeinist revolution in Iran and the various Salafist movements in other Muslim countries, appeals to large segments of opinion in the Islamic world and beyond.

The message, first put by Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, is simple: the modern world, a creation of Crusader-Zionists, cannot reflect the values and aspirations of Muslims. It declares that Islam has the right, indeed the duty, to offer an alternative to the western model.

To build the Islamic model, Muslims must expel the Crusader-Zionists from their land, regain control of their destiny, build powerful states and proceed to liberate Muslim lands lost to the "infidel".

The same message is put by Muhammad Khatami, Iran's former president, in a more sophisticated way: the modern West, a child of the Renaissance, has led to colonialism, imperialism and world wars, pushing mankind to the brink of extinction through thermonuclear exchanges or environmental collapse. Western civilisation has undermined the family, done away with moral scruples, encouraged sexual licentiousness and promoted greed as man's highest motivation. It is Islam's mission to offer all nations, Muslim or not, an alternative vision.

Such a purely political interpretation of Islam illustrates why the West must engage in a battle of values, as Blair suggests. For this political interpretation has several advantages for its proponents.

It challenges western-style nationalist, liberal, democratic, socialist and communist parties. It also prevents theological discussions that would reveal divisions within Islam, even inside rival Sunni and Shi'ite camps.

Inside the Muslim world rival sects persecute and murder each other because of religious differences. The Egyptian government does not allow Shi'ites to have a mosque in Cairo while the Khomeinist regime denies that right to Sunnis in Tehran.

Sectarian killings have become part of daily life in some Muslim countries, most glaringly in Pakistan and Iraq.

The more fanatical Sunnis and Shi'ites even refuse to shake hands with one another for fear of being "sullied". However, when it comes to hating the West and dreaming of planting the flag of Islam on every capital, they are at one.

Another advantage of transforming Islam into a purely political anti-West movement is that it can attract support for its various "causes" inside the West itself.

There are many westerners who, prompted by self-loathing or as a result of ideological passions, share the hatred that Hezbollah and Al-Qaeda have for the "infidel" West. The problem is that while most self-loathers in the West no longer use violence to express their views, Islamism of the type represented by Al Qaeda and Hezbollah is wedded to terrorism.

But there lies both the strength and the Achilles' heel of the Islamist movement.

Terrorism allows small groups to punch above their political weight. The Taliban militia consisted of just 6,000 men. The Fedayeen Islam, the backbone of the Khomeinist movement that rules Iran, originally consisted of just a few

Terrorism is rotting the Islamic revolution it craves

hundred assassins and their mentors. Even if we accept exaggerated figures presented by Israel, Hezbollah has a maximum of 8,000 fighters.

All those groups, however, were able, and some still are, to exert greater influence on their societies because they were ready to do something most people would not do: to use murder as an instrument of politics. By using systematic violence and terror, these groups hold their societies hostage. But terrorism could also be the undoing of Islamism.

The majority of Muslims abhor the use of indiscriminate violence even in response to genuine grievances let alone in pursuit of dreams of world conquest. And the history of the past three decades shows that Islamic terrorism can be defeated.

This happened in Egypt, where Islamists fought an exceptionally vicious campaign for a quarter of a century. It also happened in Algeria, where Islamic terrorism claimed some 150,000 lives in a decade. Turkey has managed to smash Islamist groups, most notably the Turkish branch of Hezbollah.

In the past five years Saudi Arabia has also crushed several Islamist groups, thus loosening their hold on segments of the population. Pakistan, too, has scored significant blows against Islamists -a fact largely ignored by the western media.

There is no doubt that force is often needed to break the terror machines that hold whole societies hostage. Algeria could not have returned to normal political life without defeating armed Islamists. Lebanon cannot live in peace unless Hezbollah is disarmed and turned into an ordinary political party.

Iraq will not know stability unless the insurgents and foreign terrorists are militarily crushed. But the war on terror has been won in several countries and can be won in others provided all those who wish to defeat Islamism remain united, resolute and patient.

The defeat of Islamism, an enemy not only of the West but also of the majority of Muslims, can be speeded up if force is complemented with political, ideological and cultural campaigns to reveal the bankruptcy of the Islamist doctrine. What is urgently needed is a common understanding in the West, and among modernising forces within Islam, of what is at stake.

This is not the first time that western values, of which many are now universal, have been challenged by mortal foes prepared to use violence, terrorism and war.

In every previous instance those foes were defeated because they offered despotism and despair.

There is no reason why the outcome should be different this time -or that the Khomeinist University should ever replace the American University of Beirut.

* THE ARC OF EXTREMISM: BATTLEGROUND OF VALUES AS WELL AS MILITARY MIGHT

Tony Blair says the West must confront Islamist extremists across the Middle East and beyond

LEBANON

Hezbollah, a militant Islamic group backed by Iran, has built up a strong military and political base

SYRIA

Supports Hezbollah and **Hamas**, a Palestinian group in Gaza. Has more than 300,000 military personnel and stockpiles of Scud missiles

IRAQ

New government remains weak. Some elements want Islamic state. Al-Qaeda also has a presence in the country

Terrorism is rotting the Islamic revolution it craves

IRAN

Led by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who has called for Israel to be 'wiped off the map'. Suspected of developing a nuclear weapons programme

AFGHANISTAN

Taliban extremists are resurgent. British troops, who form part of a Nato force, facing stronger opposition than expected

PAKISTAN

Strong Islamic fundamentalist opposition to President Pervez Musharraf, who supports the West. Lawless borderlands are haven for Al-Qaeda

Load-Date: August 6, 2006

End of Document

No ceasefire imminent

Guardian.com

August 1, 2006

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theguardian

Length: 1544 words

Highlight: Welcome to the Wrap, Guardian Unlimited's digest of the best of the day's papers.

Body

OLMERT: NO CEASEFIRE IMMINENT

Israel moved quickly to dampen down any expectations of an early ceasefire. "The fighting continues. There is no ceasefire and there will not be any ceasefire in the coming days," Ehud Olmert said yesterday, in comments reported by all the papers. The Telegraph says the Israeli PM was criticised by his own generals after offering a 48-hour ceasefire to enable the Lebanese to leave southern Lebanon - a move Hizbullah described as a "deception".

The Guardian says the Israeli PM wants an international force in place before he halts the offensive; the countries that may join the force want a ceasefire before they go in. The result is stalemate.

"Mr Olmert's defiance is rooted in rock-solid domestic support," says the Times. "Polls show 80-95 per cent support for continued strikes, with no evidence that the Qana killings or last week's bombing of a UN observer post caused a flicker of the needle. Overwhelmingly Israelis have internalised their Government's portrayal of the conflict as an existential one: Hizbullah as the proxy of Iran's mullahs, determined to exterminate the Jewish people."

Ian Black, writing in the Guardian, says "doveish" Israelis are aghast at the war: "Israeli doves hate Hizbullah but oppose Olmert's disproportionate response, which looks weak because he is relying only on force ... Some of the agonising now being heard in Israel flows from a flattering self-image that few Palestinians or foreigners would recognise. One successful Hebrew TV drama has a storyline about a pilot who has a nervous breakdown after killing civilians in Gaza while pursuing Hamas suicide bombers. The concept of 'shooting and weeping' has been around since Golda Meir expressed her fury at the Arabs who forced nice Jewish boys to fight and kill ...

"In the background are real worries about Israel's power to see off its enemies, an erosion of the old certainty that it can fight its way to security. And there is unease, not to be underestimated, about the very legitimacy of the Jewish state. If there are answers to these concerns they can only be in redoubled efforts, with whatever help others can give, to find a just settlement with the Palestinians."

Condoleezza Rice acknowledged that she found herself in "dicey circumstances", a remark the Telegraph says indicates that America is making little progress in trying to negotiate a settlement. But, it says, "there were signs that some of Israel's goals were being met. Hizbullah fired only two missiles into Israel yesterday and military sources claimed its rocket launching capacity had been largely destroyed."

No ceasefire imminent

The FT says Israel is deluding itself if it thinks it can destroy Hizbullah. "The prestige of Hizbullah has soared, in Lebanon and in the Arab and Muslim world ... Lebanon, whose 2005 'Cedar Revolution' Washington prematurely and opportunistically banked as a success for its Middle East freedom drive, is being destroyed ... The country could soon be a failed state."

* 'There will not be any ceasefire'

* Ian Black

* How ceasefire hopes foundered

* Telegraph: We will not cease fire, says Israel

SAYING NO TO DRUGS CLASSIFICATIONS

"DRUGS: THE REAL DEAL," splashes the Independent, publishing the "first ranking based upon scientific evidence of harm to both individuals and society. It was devised by government advisers - then ignored by ministers because of its controversial findings."

Predictably, heroin and cocaine come top, with alcohol at number five and tobacco at nine. Cannabis, a class C drug, is at 11, above solvents, LSD (class A), anabolic steroids and ecstasy (also class A), with the stimulant leaf khat at number 20.

The existing drug classifications "owe more to fear than reason", the paper says. The Guardian agrees. "The anomalies are staggering. Last year, for example, fresh magic mushrooms were criminalised and put in the most serious class A. Yet the drug is not addictive and not linked to crime ... With class A status comes a jail term of up to 14 years - as many youngsters have found to their cost. A brutalising spell inside can snuff out a bright future just as surely as any drug, and the adverse effects go beyond the unfortunate individuals caught: the misclassifications fuel a bulging prison population, which is costly for taxpayers and detrimental to the hope of reforming dangerous criminals."

* Class matters

* Independent: Drugs: the real deal

TWO MEN ARRESTED OVER 1967 SCHOOLBOY MURDER

The reopening of a 39-year-old murder case makes the front page of the Mirror. Two men were arrested yesterday over the killing of Keith Lyons, a schoolboy who was stabbed to death on a path near Brighton in 1967, "probably by teenage bullies from a rival school," the paper says. "Now 55 and 56, the suspects have been released on bail pending further inquiries," it reports.

The discovery of the murder weapon - which had been mislaid - under a pile of boxes in a police station basement, together with the use of DNA samples, have enabled police to reopen the case. They have appealed for information about a family who emigrated to Canada soon after the boy's murder.

* 39 years after boy's murder, police arrest two men

* Mirror: Nicked ... after 39 years

REFUSE OFTEN OFFENDS

"110 FINE IF YOU PUT BIN BAGS OUT EARLY," fumes the Mail in one of its threat-not-a-promise splashes. The paper says bin bags left out on the street are "an increasing problem" and councils are considering on-the-spot fines.

No ceasefire imminent

The Conservatives' local government spokesman tells the paper that fridge dumping is a much more serious problem and that "a smelly kipper or yesterday's vindaloo" should not have to be kept inside the house.

* Mail: Fine if you put bin bags out early

ROONEY'S A WINKER TOO

The first encounter between Wayne Rooney and Cristiano Ronaldo since the infamous winking incident intrigues all the papers. The Star says the Manchester United player greeted the "Portuguese winker" with "venom". But everyone else thinks they have made up thanks to a diplomatic lunch hosted by Sir Alex Ferguson.

According to the Sun, Rooney "winked at the World Cup winker" and the rest of the team fell about laughing.

* Sun: They wink, it's all over

UNBAREABLE STRESS

It is August and, despite the efforts of Hizbullah and Ehud Olmert, the silly season is in full swing. Today, the Herald Tribune applies itself to the vexed question of how little a lady on an artificial beach in Paris ought to wear.

Two policeman gaze searchingly at a couple of bikini-clad women lying thigh-to-thigh on a towel. "Nudity and thongs have been banned, but several women said that unwanted stares were already enough to deter them from baring too much. Page 3," says the front-page caption. Well, quite.

"This being France, there are rules for just about every sort of behaviour," reports the paper. "And this being France, even when there are rules, there also may be tolerance when they are broken, particularly when it comes to beach attire."

The monokini - a bikini minus its top half - has been banned, although no fines have yet been issued since the police and security staff have found that sunbathers generally oblige when asked to cover up. "If people want to see breasts, they should go to the Lido or the Moulin RouNo ceasefire imminentaris Plage advises.

"To stop women from wearing thongs, it's just so outrageous," a "tanned and well-oiled Brazilian property manager whose tiny Speedo was rolled down to reveal his buttocks", tells the paper. (Can Speedos be singular?)

A civil servant in a "revealing green bikini" offers some perspective on the issue. "We have so many problems in our country that deciding whether you take off your top or wear a thong is so trivial. What's more important is that people who have to work all summer have a place to sunbathe and feel like they're on vacation. If it's forbidden to be bare, I don't care."

Indeed. If the Wrap only worked 35 hours a week, she would definitely feel as though she were on holiday, beach notwithstanding.

Meanwhile, the Mail carries the cautionary tale of a man who decided his Cillit Bang all-purpose cleaner wasn't up to the job and mixed it with an eggcupful of petrol. "This turned out to be a mistake," the paper reports. "For the cocktail of fluids gave off vapours which were then ignited by the pilot light in his living room boiler." Ronald Cox was unhurt, but his bay window and kitchen ceiling will need to be replaced.

* IHT: Paris beach is all but au naturel

* Mail: The day my house went Cillit Bang!

COMING UP ON GUARDIAN UNLIMITED TODAY

Two British soldiers were killed today when their patrol vehicle came under attack from insurgents in Afghanistan.

No ceasefire imminent

The Israeli army will move deeper into southern Lebanon and hold on to that territory for several weeks, until a multinational force can deploy there, senior Israeli officials said.

Tony Blair has attended a climate-change summit with California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, BP boss Lord Browne and Virgin chief Sir Richard Branson.

The future of the Government's policy of imposing "control orders" on terror suspects when there is insufficient evidence to bring them to trial will be decided by the Court of Appeal this afternoon.

* Apologies for the late arrival of yesterday's Wrap, which was due to technical difficulties at our end.

Load-Date: August 1, 2006

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THE BOMBING

The Toronto Star
July 31, 2006 Monday

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Section: NEWS; Pg. A01

Length: 1481 words

Byline: Oakland Ross, Toronto Star With files from Associated Press, Reuters

Dateline: JERUSALEM

Body

Israel has suspended its aerial bombardment of south Lebanon for 48 hours, following the bloodiest day of the Middle Eastern war so far.

But even yesterday's horrors - more than 50 dead civilians, most of them children, in a single Israeli attack - are unlikely to bring the conflict to an early end.

That was the consensus of a clutch of experts on the battle-scarred region who spoke to the Toronto Star yesterday in the wake of an Israeli air force attack earlier in the day that flattened a four-storey apartment building in the village of Qana in southern Lebanon, with a shocking loss of life.

"The government of Israel is determined not to halt the operation until it reaches a successful conclusion," said Ephraim Halevy, former head of the Israeli intelligence service, Mossad, and now director of the Center for Strategic and Policy Studies at Jerusalem's Hebrew University.

"And I don't expect a blatant demand by the United States, calling on Israel to reach an immediate ceasefire."

Most experts interviewed by the Star yesterday said they expect the war to continue for some time to come, never mind mounting international demands for a ceasefire and a negotiated settlement that might impose an end to a conflict that seems to grow more reckless and destructive with each passing week.

More than 50 civilians, including at least 37 children, were killed in yesterday's aerial attack on Qana, the worst one-day death toll since the war erupted nearly three weeks ago.

Speaking before the United Nations Security Council, Israeli Ambassador Dan Gillerman called it a "horrible, sad and bloody Sunday." He apologized for the air strike but blamed Hezbollah, which he said uses Lebanese civilians as human shields while intentionally targeting Israeli civilians.

In Jerusalem, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said the campaign to crush Hezbollah could last up to two more weeks.

"We will not stop this battle, despite the difficult incidents (yesterday) morning," he told his cabinet, according to a participant. "If necessary, it will be broadened without hesitation."

THE BOMBING

Israel's announcement last night of a 48-hour suspension of aerial sorties over south Lebanon was intended to allow humanitarian agencies to deliver emergency aid to people stranded in the war-wracked south and to help them flee the area.

Last night, Israeli officials raised questions about just what occurred in Qana and said they also wanted to take time to investigate events leading up to the building's collapse at around 9 a.m. yesterday, or about seven hours after the Israeli air force says it made its bombing run over the village.

Israeli officials left open the possibility that Israel might hit targets to stop imminent attacks, and that the suspension could last less than 48 hours if the military completes its inquiry before then. It is unlikely Israel would maintain a ground offensive without air support.

Early today, Israeli warplanes launched raids on eastern Lebanon, Lebanese security sources said. The sources said at least two air strikes hit roads near the border with Syria in the early hours.

The Security Council expressed "extreme shock and distress" at the attack on Qana. A statement adopted unanimously last night by the 15-nation council "strongly deplores this loss of innocent lives" but did not call for an immediate truce, as requested by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan but opposed by the United States.

Instead, it stressed "the urgency of securing a lasting, permanent and sustainable ceasefire" and affirmed the council's determination to work "without any further delay" to adopt a resolution "for a lasting settlement of the crisis."

In Europe and elsewhere, there were growing calls for an immediate end to the conflict, which had already claimed hundreds of lives and inflicted hundreds of millions of dollars in economic damage even before yesterday's attack in Qana.

"This is going to make it more difficult for the Americans to fend off European pressure for a ceasefire," said Aluf Benn, diplomatic correspondent for the Israeli newspaper Haaretz.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice cancelled a planned trip to Beirut yesterday and spent the day in Jerusalem instead, where she held meetings with Olmert and Israeli Defence Minister Amir Peretz.

She called for "an urgent end to the fighting," but this seemed to fall well short of pressing Israel to accept a prompt ceasefire or to withdraw its ground forces from southern Lebanon.

"This is the first time we have had a clear-cut green light (from Washington) in this regard," said Yaacov Bar-Sim-Tov, director of the Swiss Centre for Conflict Research, Management and Resolution at Jerusalem's Hebrew University.

The conflict between Israel and Hezbollah guerrillas erupted into open war earlier this month after Hezbollah's irregular forces killed eight Israeli soldiers, captured two more, and began firing salvos of rockets - erratically aimed for the most part, but sometimes deadly - toward populated areas of northern Israel.

In response, political and military leaders in this country vowed to destroy the organization as an effective military force, and the war was on.

Three weeks later, Israel has still not managed to squash Hezbollah. The imperatives for Olmert's government now seem to be political as well as military.

"If the Israeli operation ends prematurely, in a way that allows Hezbollah to attack in six weeks or six months from now, the government will be in very great trouble," said Gerald Steinberg, director of the Program on Conflict and Diplomacy at Tel Aviv's Bar-Ilan University. "A premature ceasefire could cost this government dearly."

Meanwhile, there was no letup yesterday on the other side of the conflict, as Hezbollah put in its busiest day of the war so far, launching 156 rockets into northern Israel as of 11 p.m., more than on any other day since the conflict

THE BOMBING

broke out July 12. Some 30 rockets landed in or around the town of Keryat Shmona. At least eight people on the Israeli side were injured in yesterday's attacks

"The other side is not so eager to end hostilities, either," said Benn.

The attack on Qana flattened a building where more than 60 displaced people were in the basement. Many died as they slept. Rescue workers called off the search for bodies or survivors after hours of digging through the rubble with their hands, lifting out the twisted, dust-caked corpses of children.

Israel said it was unaware civilians were in the building and accused Hezbollah of firing rockets from Qana. Hezbollah vowed to retaliate, and the governing Palestinian movement **Hamas** also pledged to hit back with attacks on Israel. "Those people including **women** and children who were killed in this horrible tragic incident may have been killed by Israeli fire but they are the victims of the Hezbollah," Gillerman, the Israeli ambassador, told the Security Council.

"They are the victims of terror. If there were no Hezbollah this would never have happened."

Qana is already a potent symbol of Lebanese civilian deaths at Israeli hands. In April 1996, Israeli shelling killed more than 100 civilians sheltering at the base of UN peacekeepers in Qana during Israel's "Grapes of Wrath" bombing campaign.

Lebanese Prime Minister Fuad Saniora said yesterday any talk of a larger peace package must wait until the firing stops.

"We will not negotiate until the Israeli war stops shedding the blood of innocent people," he told a gathering of diplomats. But he underlined that Lebanon stands by ideas for disarming Hezbollah that it put forward earlier and that Rice praised.

He also hinted that any Hezbollah response to the air strike at Qana was justified.

Benn said all indications are that Israel will keep its military operation going, noting: "We have virtually no (domestic) opposition to the war now."

That was true before yesterday's distressing loss of life amid the wreckage and rubble at Qana, and it may well be true still.

However, say the experts, the war will end eventually, and the terms of an eventual ceasefire will have to include such matters as the deployment of an international force to patrol southern Lebanon, as well as a possible exchange of prisoners between Israel and Hezbollah, and perhaps the turnover by Israel of a small parcel of land claimed by Lebanon and located on the Golan Heights.

It seems doubtful, however, that either the current fighting or an eventual ceasefire agreement will bring long-term peace to the region. "The future," said Steinberg, "is going to be murky."

Elsewhere, the Lebanese army opened fire yesterday on Israeli helicopters trying to land near a town in the Bekaa valley, security sources said. The four helicopters appeared to be trying to land soldiers near the town of Yammouni, they said. The helicopters flew away before Israeli warplanes launched air raids on the area, the sources said.

With files from Associated Press, Reuters

Graphic

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July 14, 2006

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RESPECT? YOU'RE; An MP in the house - He's taken on Tony Blair and won a seat in Parliament for the anti-war Respect Party. He's taken on a US Senate committee and emerged victorious. But has George Galloway's decision to go on the reality television show 'Celebrity Big Brother' damaged his reputation irreparably? Terry Kir by reports

The Independent (London)

January 11, 2006 Wednesday

First Edition

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The  **INDEPENDENT**

Section: FEATURES; Pg. 12

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Byline: Terry Kir

Body

It is a busy week in the deprived but vibrant inner-city community of Bethnal Green in east London. Yesterday was the important Islamic feast day of Eid al-Adha, which was being observed by the majority-Muslim population while tomorrow sees a major Parliamentary debate on the cross-London rail link, a crucial factor in the economic future of such a deprived area. And many local people are still gravely concerned about the implications of the Department of Health's decision just before Christmas to put a hold on plans to re-build the prestigious but crumbling Royal London Hospital on the White chapel Road.

Meanwhile, the area's MP has chosen to insulate himself from this time of both celebration and discussion and spend his days instead on a television reality show, in the company of two cross-dressers, a Paris Hilton lookalike, a glamour model, an ex-star of Bay watch and a former television entertainer whose fall from grace involved sex, drugs and a death in his swimming pool. It is a fairly rich mix, even by the normal standards of Celebrity Big Brother.

When he was elected as the Right Honourable Member of Parliament for Bethnal Green and Bow in May after a bitterly fought contest, George Galloway promised that he would provide a powerful voice for the area's Muslim community. They were the people whose opposition to the Iraq conflict had given him the support he needed to defeat the incumbent and Blairite Labour MP Oona King, whom he accused of backing the war and ignoring the needs of locals.

Yesterday, instead of- as some Muslim leaders might have preferred - making courtesy visits to neighbourhood mosques, he was wearing a white coat as "Big Brother's Lab Assistant" and taking part in a strange task designed to test some scientific theories - such as "Does spinach make you strong?" - which involved his follow housemates

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all wearing purple, including the one sporting fishnet tights, high heels and showing his rear to the audience. But at least Mr Galloway is being paid - a rumoured pounds 60,000 - for the privilege of being involved.

"On a day like today, which is an important day for the local Muslim community, one would have expected him to at least have visited the local mosque to show his respect. Instead, he appears to be in some kind of brothel," said Abdal Ullah, a member of the local Metropolitan Police Authority and chair of its community engagement committee. "This is an area that needs strong representation and he was elected because that was what he promised. But now we are seeing his true colours. This is all about George Galloway."

Mr Ullah is not the only Muslim leader to attack Mr Galloway: "Frankly, it is bizarre. His work should be here, not in the Big Brother house," said Sirajul, Islam, a member of Tower Hamlets Council for Bethnal Green. Muhammad Bari, chairman of the East London Mosque, could not be contacted yesterday because of the holiday, but has been reported as saying that many Muslims would find Mr Galloway's actions "unpalatable". His view is significant: during the election, it was the non-political Mr Bari who urged Muslims to vote, despite a campaign by extremists urging them to avoid the ballot box.

A substantial groundswell of opinion against Mr Galloway now appears to be building up in the constituency. Last Friday, as he enjoyed his second day in the Big Brother house, the MP's constituency surgery was taken by colleagues from his Respect party against a backdrop of protesters marching up and down outside carrying banners saying "Get back to work, Galloway" and "Where Are You?"

An online petition has also been set up by a body calling itself the United Residents of Bethnal Green and Bow. Their website calculates the amount it has so far cost local taxpayers to have their MP in the house: yesterday afternoon it stood at pounds 812.46.

In Brick Lane yesterday, down which Mr Galloway was carried shoulder-high on the morning after his victory, there were also critics: "He shouldn't be on Big Brother because there's a lot that needs to be done here. There are huge community concerns about housing and cleaning," said Ak-thar Hussain, 23. There was, however, one voice of support: "It's a good opportunity to get the anti-war message across. George can't actually do much on a local level here anyway as Labour control the council. Celebrity Big Brother allows him to wake people up to what is happening," said Azmal Hussain, 53, who also happens to be a committee member of Respect.

Criticism extends beyond the constituency itself and Mr Galloway's political opponents have not been slow to exploit it. Jim Fitzpatrick, Labour's Minister for London accused him of being a "C-list politician with an A-list ego" while Meg Hillier, who represents the neighbouring Hackney South and Shoreditch constituency for Labour, said she was considering making a complaint about Mr Galloway's absence to the Speaker of the House of Commons. And Tony Blair himself indicated yesterday (as if he really had to), that he would disprove of any Labour MP entering the Big Brother house.

Mr Galloway could have ridden out the furore had he established a decent record as a local MP. But since the election, he has had one of the worst attendance records in the Commons, coming 643 out of 645 MPs. He has spoken in only four debates since the election, putting him 556th out of 645 MPs. "He didn't even turn up for the debate on the anti-terror legislation," says Murad Qureshi, a member of the London Assembly.

"Gorgeous" George Galloway is, as they say, no stranger to controversy. Formerly Labour MP for Glasgow Hillhead, he was dismissed by the party in 2003 for his outspoken comments over the Iraq conflict. He was later accused by a US Senate inquiry of taking backhanders, through charities he backed, from the Iraq government. He won a libel case against the Daily Telegraph over similar accusations, receiving pounds 150,000 in damages.

He was widely criticised when he visited Iraq in the wake of the first Gulf war and was filmed alongside Saddam Hussein. His personal life is equally colourful: twice married, he is being divorced by his Palestinian second wife for alleged infidelity.

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The MP says his reasons for doing the show are twofold. First, it will raise money for the British-based Palestinian charity, In-terPal, which he supports and which the US Treasury has, in the past, accused of raising money for the Palestinian militant group Hamas. (Money for the chosen charities of BigBrother participants comes via a percentage of charges for the text and telephone votes for evictees.)

Second, Mr Galloway says he wanted the opportunity to talk to an audience of millions - particularly the "politically untouched" young people who form a large part of its viewers, about the problems of his constituency, and about "war and peace, about Bush and Blair".

But the man who even his critics admitted triumphed in the face of a US Senate sub-committee and whose instincts for political survival are pretty well-honed, may have made a wrong call, misjudging not only Channel 4's ability to give him a platform but also the level of interest of his celebrity housemates in subjects like the Iraq conflict and the Palestinian question.

Channel 4 stresses it was made clear to Mr Galloway beforehand that it would have to abide by the restrictions of the Broadcasting Act. Anything vaguely polemical is thus edited out, thanks to the time delay used to prevent anything libellous or legally difficult being broadcast - a move that has led to a formal complaint by Respect about "censorship".

Not that Mr Galloway appears to have actually spent much time attempting to discuss the politics of the Middle East with such individuals such as cross-dressing basketball star Dennis Rodman or Traci Bingham, a former Baywatch actress. "He seems to have expected a more intelligent level of conversation," said one Channel 4 source.

Instead Mr Galloway has complained that no one shows any interest in him or what he does and has been reduced to muttering in the corner with actress Rula Lenska about the other, younger contestants. "Someone of my age and class is not used to young women talking as they do in here, with no orifice left unopened," he confessed. "There's only so much about plastic surgery and genital humour I can take." Clearly, the company of Saddam Hussein must have been considerably more stimulating.

He later added, somewhat pompously: "When you see people coming on to each other in a grotesque way I have a duty to step in. The public who know me would expect it."

Some observers point out that his low-key, un confrontational demeanour is exactly the right tactic for winning the show - previous winners such as comedian Jack Dee and former Take That member Mark Owen succeeded precisely because they declined to be outrageous. Perhaps "Gorgeous George" is simply playing a long game.

However, salvation maybe at hand. Yesterday, he was named as one of this week's potential evictees, alongside Jodie Marsh, the glamour model, and Pete Burns, the transvestite former singer of 1980s band Dead or Alive, who boasts a surgically enhanced pout. On Friday, Mr Galloway will learn whether he will be evicted from the house. Whether he gets evicted from the other House at the next general election is another matter.

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12 ISRAELIS DIE; SHEIK THREATENS TO BOMB TEL AVIV

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Section: Section A; Column 6; Foreign Desk; Pg. 1; HOSTILITIES IN THE MIDEAST: THE OVERVIEW

Length: 1649 words

Byline: By RICHARD A. OPPEL Jr. and STEVEN ERLANGER; Hassan M. Fattah and John Kifner contributed reporting from Beirut for this article, and Warren Hoge from the United Nations.

Dateline: MAALOT-TARSHIHA, Israel, Aug. 3

Body

The Lebanese militia Hezbollah killed 12 Israelis -- 8 civilians and 4 soldiers -- on Thursday, making it Israel's deadliest day in more than three weeks of conflict.

As Israeli troops tried to create a narrow buffer zone inside Lebanon and bombed southern Beirut, Hezbollah's leader, Sheik Hassan Nasrallah, warned that he would send his long-range missiles into Tel Aviv if the airstrikes continued.

"If you bomb our capital Beirut, we will bomb the capital of your usurping entity," he said on Lebanese television. "We will bomb Tel Aviv." But he also offered to halt Hezbollah's missile barrage into Israel if it stopped bombing Lebanon.

The Israeli defense minister, Amir Peretz, told the army to begin preparing to push to the Litani River, some 15 miles north of the border, according to the newspaper Haaretz, a move that could mean a further call-up of military reservists. That would expand the security zone Israel is trying to create. But it is not clear whether he will receive government approval to do so.

Hezbollah launched more than 100 rockets on northern Israel in less than an hour, with most of the damage on the western edge, in Maalot, its associated Arab Israeli village of Tarshiha and the town of Acre.

Five Israelis, including a man and his daughter, were killed in Acre and another three, young Arab Israeli men, were killed when a rocket exploded in Tarshiha. Thirteen people were seriously wounded. Lebanese security officials said an Israeli missile killed a family of three in the border village of Taibe.

In Gaza, Israeli forces killed five Palestinian militants and three civilians in fighting on the edges of the southern town of Rafah as Israeli troops searched for tunnels to Egypt.

Israeli airplanes struck again at Hezbollah strongholds in southern Beirut, in the Bekaa Valley and in Nabatiye, while four Israeli soldiers were killed and four wounded in intermittently fierce fighting. Three were hit by an antitank missile fired by Hezbollah fighters near the southern village of Rajmin, and one was killed by an antitank missile in

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Taibe, the Israeli military said. The Israelis said they moved to take over new positions along the border and now control some 20 villages.

The Israelis are trying to create a new defensive line about four to five miles north of the border, recreating a security zone Israel intends to occupy until a multinational force can take its place. The zone is similar to that held by Israel in an occupation that ended in 2000. The government is debating whether to extend that zone north to the Litani River.

Maj. Zvika Golan, a spokesman for the northern command, said the zone would be expanded. "We are looking to clear 15 kilometers into Lebanon within the next few days," he said. "We're going to need more brigades, probably two more, and that will depend on government authorization."

Adding two brigades could bring the number of Israeli soldiers in Lebanon to more than 12,000.

But Israeli troops have run into stiff resistance from Hezbollah fighters. One Israeli military official, who was not authorized to speak publicly, said that it had taught Israeli forces a "lesson" about the resolve, skill and discipline of the guerrillas.

Prime Minister Fouad Siniora of Lebanon said in a televised speech to an emergency meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, meeting in Malaysia, that 900 people had been killed, 3,000 wounded, and more than a million, a quarter of Lebanon's population, displaced.

Mr. Siniora's figures for deaths, like the Lebanese Health Ministry's, appear to include those who are missing, and not just the 548 confirmed deaths, according to The Associated Press. The United Nations estimated last week that 500,000 Lebanese had been displaced.

At the United Nations, France and the United States stepped up negotiations on the text of a Security Council resolution calling for an end to hostilities and establishing a path for a political settlement. Diplomats said the talks centered on two issues, which would take some time to resolve.

One, according to Jean-Marc de la Sabliere, the French ambassador, was how to characterize the halt in fighting. A French-drafted resolution calls for "an immediate cessation of hostilities" while the Americans are insisting on a broader measure.

The other is the nature of the force in southern Lebanon once a truce begins. The French resolution suggests that it could be made up of the existing United Nations force and the Lebanese Army. The Americans favor Israel's proposal to leave its own military there, with some restrictions on its power to conduct offensive operations but the right to respond if attacked.

Under this plan, Israeli troops would leave only when a new international force arrives. The international force would be authorized by a subsequent resolution that would also create a buffer zone in southern Lebanon, set up a way to disarm the Hezbollah militia, establish Lebanon's borders and extend the Lebanese Army's authority throughout the south.

One difficulty will be to persuade Hezbollah to accept any United Nations resolution. Its chief spokesman, Hussein Rahal, said Hezbollah would not agree to a cease-fire until all Israeli troops left Lebanon, a condition unacceptable to Israel.

"Declaring a cease-fire is not the concern of the people of Lebanon as long as there is one Israeli soldier on Lebanese soil," he told Al Jazeera television.

Israeli aircraft dropped leaflets over parts of southern Beirut on Thursday warning residents to leave immediately, signaling attacks on the battered southern suburbs.

"Do it!" the leaflet warned.

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[Israeli warplanes bombed the southern suburbs of Beirut early Friday. The Israeli Army said it had aimed at offices of Hezbollah, the house of a Hezbollah official and a building used by the Palestinian group Hamas, Reuters reported.

[Hours later, Israeli aircraft struck several bridges linking Beirut to the north of the country, Reuters and Agence France-Presse reported, based on security sources and witnesses. Previously, Israel had focused on Lebanon's east and south and Beirut's southern suburbs.]

In a television appearance, Sheik Nasrallah spoke in a measured tone, occasionally peering at notes before him, flanked by a Lebanese flag on one side and a signature yellow Hezbollah flag on the other.

"You are victims, like the Lebanese and Palestinian people, of a personality complex in your Prime Minister Olmert," he said, addressing the Israeli public directly. "The only choice before you is to stop your aggression and turn to negotiations to end this folly," he said.

Sheik Nasrallah also taunted Arab leaders, calling on them to "be men for just one day" and work for an end to hostilities.

And he accused the United States of complicity in Israel's attacks, saying, "the blood of children and women and civilians smear the faces of Bush, Condoleezza Rice, Cheney and Rumsfeld. This is the U.S. administration, which is supposed to be the friend of Lebanon and which wanted to make Lebanon an exemplary democratic country."

The eight Israeli civilian fatalities represented the highest number of Israeli dead in a rocket attack since eight people were killed in the port city of Haifa on July 16.

The barrage of Hezbollah rockets -- 120 for the day -- displayed the continued ability of the militia to keep northern Israel paralyzed. Cars screeched to a halt as motorists ran for cover at the sound of explosions. Smoke rose over Maalot-Tarshiha and a nearby forest.

Tarshiha is a village of 4,000 Israeli Arabs, both Muslim and Christian, legally attached to the Jewish city of Maalot, which contains roughly 20,000 people, half of them immigrants from the former Soviet Union. The three young men, Muslim Arabs, were killed when a rocket struck next to the rock where they had taken cover.

"They had just parked to go to work," said Capt. Gabby Elyahu of the Israeli border police, as he stood near the foot-deep crater left by the rocket. "They left their car and went to go hide behind the rock, and they were killed."

In Milya, a Christian Arab village nearby, at least 10 people suffered slight wounds when rockets fell Thursday afternoon, said the mayor, Fathi Assaf. In Acre, five people died as they went out from a shelter to look around after an initial wave of rockets. The dead included Shimon Zaribi, 44, and Mazal, his 16-year-old daughter. One body lay on the front lawn by a small stone fence topped with a white-picket extension, covered with a blanket.

"People have been holed up in shelters," said Mayor Shimon Lancry of Acre to Israeli television. "It's difficult, but people understand that soldiers are still fighting in Lebanon, and we will get through this period."

The area of southern Beirut that Israel attacked is the center of Hezbollah's presence in the city. Much of the area is deserted, a ruin of crushed buildings and burned-out cars and trucks. Some of the rubble was still smoking at midday. Most of the residents have fled.

The Israeli Army also released the conclusions of its inquiry into the bombing on Sunday in Qana that resulted in the deaths of 29 civilians sheltering in a basement. The Israelis, in a brief announcement, said that more than 150 rockets had been launched since July 12 "from within the village of Qana itself and the immediate surrounding area" and repeated that "the residents of Qana and the villages surrounding it were warned several times, through various media, to evacuate." The report did not assert that rockets had been launched before the bombing.

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The report said that the army did not know there were civilians in the building. "Had the information indicated that civilians were present in the building, the attack would not have been carried out." The army said it regretted the loss of life.

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Photos: Israeli warplanes destroyed a building in the Lebanese border town of Kham yesterday. The Israeli Army says it now has control of about 20 Lebanese villages. (Photo by Joao Silva for The New York Times)(pg. A9)

A woman and two children at the scene of an attack in Acre, Israel. Five Israelis, including a man and his daughter, were killed there yesterday. (Photo by Yonathan Weitzman/Reuters)(pg. A1)Map of Israel highlighting Maalot: More than 100 rockets landed around the Israeli town of Maalot. (pg. A9)

Load-Date: August 4, 2006

End of Document

Musharraf vows to end load-shedding, price-hike

The Nation (AsiaNet)

July 20, 2006 Thursday

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Section: NATIONWIDE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Length: 1814 words

Dateline: ISLAMABAD JUL 20

Body

President General Pervez Musharraf Thursday said the government is determined to overcome power shortage in the country and would add 28850 MW by 2016 through short, medium and long-term strategy. In his radio and television address to the nation, President Musharraf spoke about Pakistan's relations with India and Afghanistan, Lebanon crisis and highlighted the success of the government in improving law and order in FATA, the strategy to impede Talibanisation, restoring the writ of government in Balochistan and improvement in economic situation.

He termed electricity shortage in the country a development related problem as a number of new industries have been set up during the past few years and all new and old industries are working at 100 per cent capacity due to market demand. He said the government has prepared a comprehensive short, medium and long-term strategy to overcome the electricity shortage. Under the short-term strategy, 1100 megawatt of electricity would be added up to December 2007. In the medium-term strategy 8600 MW would be added through gas turbine, wind power projects and hydropower projects in 2008-2011.

About 19150 MW will be added in the national grid through the long-term strategy between 2011 and 2016 by installing 31 hydro and nuclear power projects, he said. He appealed to the nation to face this difficulty for some time. However, he directed the government and WAPDA that whenever there is power shortage load shedding should be in an organized manner.

On Lebanon, President Musharraf appealed to the world to achieve a negotiated settlement of Lebanon crisis and termed Israel's bombing on Lebanon as an "open attack." He also urged the international community to help resolve the lingering Palestinian dispute, which was at the heart of the crisis in the Middle East. "The conflict has escalated and the fear is that Syria or Iran may be dragged in the conflict."

"I appeal to the world to intervene and move towards ceasefire," he said, adding, "Israel was already in conflict with **Hamas** and Hizbullah but now it has openly attacked Lebanon that has serious repercussions." President Musharraf also feared that the escalating violence in the Middle East could have an impact on Pakistan. "It could have an impact on Pakistan. So we need to ensure our own security that can only be achieved by exhibiting national solidarity."

Unveiling the new strategy to tackle "Talibanisation" of Waziristan area, the President said that to achieve peace in the area the Grand Jirga and Maliks would be strengthened and Army would be pulled back gradually. The President asked the foreigners either to leave the area or they will be killed. "If the foreigners want to stay in the area, they must surrender and ensure a peaceful stay there."

Musharraf vows to end load-shedding, price-hike

He also categorically stated that no Pakistani would be allowed to enter Afghanistan for ulterior motives and Talibanisation of Pakistan's area bordering Afghanistan would be thwarted. President Musharraf urged India and Afghanistan not to resort to blame game. "This is the first sign of defeat to level unsubstantiated allegations." The President expressed sympathy and solidarity with families of the victims of Mumbai blasts and assured the Indian government and people of Mumbai that Pakistan would fully cooperate in finding out the real culprits of the blasts.

"We condemn the heinous act. Pakistan itself is a victim of terrorism and extremism. We are successfully fighting the menace and ready to help our neighbours." He expressed his disappointment over Indian attitude towards the ongoing peace process. "This amounts to playing in the hands of terrorists," he added. Talking about Afghanistan, the President said the situation has changed after we succeeded in breaking the network of al-Qaeda. They are now on the run. "A transformation from al-Qaeda to Taliban has taken place. Taliban are operating in Southern Afghanistan and Qandahar under Mulla Umer and that is creating problems for Pakistan."

He said there are some elements connected to Taliban in Waziristan area and our forces are very effectively operating against them. The President said the government took an action against terrorism and the focus was at Al-Qaeda. Six to seven hundred al-Qaeda members were arrested in cities and government took an action against others in mountains and succeeded. Now focus has shifted to Taliban.

General Pervez Musharraf said the government has decided to reinforce the institutions of political agents; maliks and FATA secretariat under the new governor has been reorganized. He said the governor has full support of the government in his strategy for the formation of grand jirga. He categorically stated that no foreign terrorists will be allowed on Pakistani soil and no person will go from Pakistan to Afghanistan for any terrorist activities.

He said we have launched operations against certain elements that are active on our side of the border. President said we are partners in the fight against terrorism. On price hike, the President said the main reason of the price-hike was the gap between demand and supply. He said there has been an upsurge in economic activity, per capita income doubled and with increased resources, people are spending more.

This price-hike must be controlled and the government is taking all actions to check inflation, which has been brought down from double digit to less than eight percent. He said the prices of pulses and sugar have come down considerably, he added. President Musharraf also underlined the efforts of the government that have resulted in bringing the inflation rate down to single digit and added that the government will take steps to provide essential items on controlled prices through the chain of Utility Stores across the country.

The President promised to establish Utility Stores in 6000 union councils and at tehsils' level. All essential food items will be available on these out-sourced stores at subsidized rates and the prices of these items will be publicized in newspapers and on TV regularly with telephone numbers of the price control magistrates to complain about any over charging.

He said the government is extending a subsidy of 104 billion rupees on electricity, fuel, food items and fertilizers as well as provision of assistance to the needy through Bait ul Maal. All these subsidies are aimed at facilitating the masses. He said prices in Pakistan of essential items are still lower than the entire region. He, however, assured the nation that he and the government would take all actions not only to control prices but also bring them down.

President Musharraf said that the new budget is a people friendly with maximum allocation for development works that is Rs 415 billion. The PSDP allocation reflects the economic turnaround and a massive increase in revenue collection that touched 710 billion rupees during last financial year as against 304 billion rupees in 1999, he added.

On poverty and unemployment ratio, President Musharraf referred to the reports of World Bank, Asian Development Bank, UN Poverty Centre in Pakistan that corroborate with the poverty figures of Pakistani government that the poverty has come down from 34 to 24% in the last five years. "The situation is still not good and poverty will go down further every year," he said.

Musharraf vows to end load-shedding, price-hike

The President said that there was sharp decline in unemployment as big sectors like telecom, IT, construction industries are expanding rapidly. Several hundred new industries have been set up while others are now running into two and three shifts thus providing more jobs.

He also talked about the increased production of motorcycles, cars, refrigerators, air-conditioners, tractors and said this was also an indication of economic activity and more job opportunities. Giving break-up of jobs generated by different sectors, the President said, 1.5 million people are employed in IT sector, 8 lakh got direct employment opportunity in government initiated mega development projects while 1.6 million got jobs indirectly.

As such, poverty and joblessness have been brought down and the government has taken care of the salaried people and increased their pay by about fifty percent during the last three to four years. He said the Rozgar Pakistan Programme has been launched which will create 1.9 million self-employment jobs. Under the programme, people would get special credit at low interest rates.

On Balochistan, the President said writ of the government had been restored in most parts of troubled areas in Balochistan and FC and the intelligence agencies did the wonderful job as they successfully dealt with the situation. The President said the situation has improved considerably and in a period of short time normalcy would be fully restored. He said mega projects are being implemented to end the sense of deprivation and bring prosperity to the people of the province.

He said in Balochistan three Sardars out of 77 are anti-development, anti-democracy and they want their own dictatorship in their areas. These Sardars were maintaining private armies to blackmail the government and subjugate their people. He said they had established forty Ferrari camps in different parts of the province for sabotage activities that included mine blasts, gas pipeline blasts and damaging railway lines, pylons and killing foreigners including our Chinese friends.

He said these Sardars had even forced their own sub-tribes to leave their homes and these people are now returning to their homes. He said there was only one clash in Dera Bugti, which was due to firing by the supporters of Akbar Bugti aimed at forcing his people to leave the area. He said out of 9000 population of Dera Bugti, 5000 have returned home including his cousin Ahmdan Bugti. All military commanders of Bugti have surrendered with their arms.

He said the situation has become peaceful and there are no bomb blasts, rocket fire or sabotage of railway lines, electricity pylons. He said the main actor is now on the run. He said even several bomb blasts in Karachi, Lahore and Quetta were the handiwork of the people of Akbar Bugti.

He rejected misperception in the media of human rights violations in Bugti and Marri areas. He said the Government is taking action against those who killed their own people and forced their sub-tribes to leave along with their families including women and children and stay in Punjab and Sindh.

The President asked the people raising hue and cry over violations of human rights that where they were when these sardars threw out almost fifteen thousand people from their homes. In the end, President Musharraf urged the nation to fight the menace of extremism as it is tainting the image of Pakistan and Pakistani nation in the world. "We cannot progress until we leave the path of intolerance. We must promote tolerance and show the world that ours is tolerant society."

Load-Date: July 21, 2006

Confusion in court -it's the messy matter of whose human rights you want to guard today, m'lud

The Sunday Times (London)

May 14, 2006

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Section: FEATURES; News; Pg. 14

Length: 1682 words

Byline: Peter Millar

Body

We Brits invented 'human rights' but the application of the law has become an abuse of common sense. It is time to rebalance the scales, writes Peter Millar

The situation was explosive. The hardmen of the SAS were lurking in readiness, armed police surrounded the Boeing 727 as it sat on the runway at Stansted airport. Inside, armed hijackers held passengers and crew to ransom.

When, after 70 hours of tense negotiations they gave up, it was seen as a classic operation, a victory for common sense. And so it turns out to have been: for the hijackers.

Mr Justice Sullivan's ruling last week that the nine hijackers can stay in this country indefinitely because to return them home to liberated Afghanistan would be an abuse of their human rights suggests that crime pays after all.

The prime minister, for once in tune with the majority of the electorate, thought otherwise: "It is an abuse of common sense."

But then common sense -as it is commonly understood -doesn't seem much in demand of late. As witness drug-addicted prisoners from jails across Britain suing the Home Office for violating their human rights by subjecting them to the "cold turkey" of enforced withdrawal.

They were encouraged by £ 2,400 awarded Robert Napier, an armed robber in Barlinnie prison, Glasgow, who complained the practice of "slopping out" his cell degraded his human rights.

The case of the paedophile John Callison, who demanded compensation because prison was boring, was rejected. But not before running up large sums in legal aid.

All this pales before the case of the rapist Anthony Rice, who despite psychiatric reports recommending he be kept incarcerated was freed from jail by a probation panel convinced that his human rights were being abused -and within months murdered a woman. But then that's par for the course, with a parole and probation service in chaos while the Home Secretary is forced to resign because more than 1,000 foreign prisoners who could -and in most cases should -have been deported were released, often to offend again.

Confusion in court -it's the messy matter of whose human rights you want to guard today, m'lud

Everybody's whipping boy is the Human Rights Act, hailed in 1998 as one of this government's great achievements not only by the prime minister but also, more tellingly, his wife, a lawyer whose Matrix chambers have benefited massively by its introduction.

Now even Tony Blair, a lawyer, professes not to understand its working or implications. So is it the law that is an ass, or just the lawyers?

Some of the press has gone into overdrive, proclaiming that Britain has once again fallen victim to foreign diktat and political correctness. Why don't the French or the Germans have these problems? Max Hastings, writing in the Daily Mail, said: "As ever, Britain is the most scrupulous adherent to this law."

But this popular belief that Britain is the good citizen in a corrupt Europe embodies two fallacies: first -that we alone apply the rules when sometimes it is our own officials who interpret them bizarrely; second -that there is one Europe out there, rather than 24 other countries.

The tension between human rights and the rule of law is as old as the concept of individual freedom. Which is not all that old.

The first modern code of laws was the Codex Maximilianus laid down in Bavaria in 1756, based on ancient Roman law. It went on to become the German Burgerliches Gesetzbuch (citizens' law book) hailed in 1900 as the most liberal in Europe.

Despite temporary corruption by the Nazis, it remains the basis of law in Germany, but also Japan, South Korea and Taiwan.

The Code Napoleon introduced in post-revolutionary France in 1804 became the basis for legal systems also in Spain, Portugal, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands.

British common law began as a collection of Anglo-Saxon customs and traditions homogenised by the Normans and modified by parliament and countless courtroom decisions (similar to much of Scandinavia).

A key difference with France is that because the Code Napoleon was drawn up after the revolution the judiciary was seen as much more a branch of the "people's government". Or as one influential British human rights lawyer has it, "more inclined to bend to the wishes of the executive".

Britain, by contrast, as Margaret Thatcher uncomfortably reminded President Francois Mitterrand at the 200th anniversary of the French revolution in 1989, had cut off its king's head more than a century earlier.

The 1689 Bill of Rights, which ended the tumult of the English civil war and subsequent royal succession squabbles, established the judiciary as an independent bulwark against the potential tyranny of government.

The fact that it was intended initially to keep the king in check in no way diminishes its basic function when the powers that the monarch then had are now held and exercised by a prime minister with a commanding majority.

The US Bill of Rights, a century later, was based on the English original -it still is, including the citizen's right to bear arms which we have written out -- and in turn gave birth to the French revolution's famous declaration of the rights of man and the citizen.

That was the model for the United Nations universal declaration of human rights in 1948, and then the European convention on human rights in 1952. In other words, if we want to know where all this fuss started, the answer is on our own doorstep.

The 1998 Human Rights Act is merely the adoption of the convention into British law, meaning cases no longer have to go to Strasbourg. In fact, the two cases on which the controversial Afghan decision was based were dealt with in Strasbourg before 1998.

Confusion in court -it's the messy matter of whose human rights you want to guard today, m'lud

The first, in 1989, concerned a German citizen living in the UK who successfully fought extradition to the US for a murder he admitted on the grounds that death row conditions in Virginia were inhumane.

The decision, widely seen as indicating European disapproval for the death penalty, was made under article 3 of the convention which forbids torture or "inhuman or degrading treatment", and by extrapolation prevents suspects from being deported to any country where this might be expected to happen to them.

The second case, in 1996, concerned an illegal Sikh immigrant into the UK, later regularised under an amnesty, whom the home secretary wished to deport after serious criminal charges were brought against him.

The case went to Strasbourg where the court ruled -on a hotly disputed majority verdict -that he would be liable to "mistreatment" if returned to India.

Significantly, the judgment stated: "In the circumstances the activities of the individual in question, however undesirable or dangerous, cannot be a material consideration."

That wording sent shockwaves down Whitehall, and through the interior ministries of other European signatories. It was not binding, but such is the moral force of the Strasbourg court that it has been widely adhered to.

Martin Howe, who has written on the act for the centre-right think tank Politeia, maintains that "states signing the convention at the time would have been horrified if they'd been told this document deprives you of your right to remove people who are a threat to your security".

In other words, it's all in the interpretation, precisely where British legal tradition and history come into play, with judges seeing themselves as not just an arm of the state but a check on its powers. And more than a few see the Blair government as rampantly authoritarian. It was the same Mr Justice Sullivan who ruled in the Afghan hijack case who said the Home Office's "control orders" on terror suspects amounted to house arrest and were incompatible with the Human Rights Act's guarantee of a fair hearing.

In the Afghan case he called the Home Office's defence a "transparent attempt to find a form of words" to justify itself. The Home Office's response to the control orders ruling was to say it would appeal and meanwhile ignore it.

France's lack of similar embarrassment can be attributed not just to a different judicial history and attitude but also the system of putting investigating magistrates in charge of a case from the outset. Dismissed by some libertarians as a "fig leaf", it nonetheless establishes a framework for detaining suspects legitimately.

It is a framework that some MPs and judges favour introducing here. David Cameron, the Tory leader, has said he would reform or repeal the Human Rights Act. But seriously abandoning it is hardly an option for the country that first enshrined its principles. One option might be to withdraw and sign up again with new "reservations", such as those chosen by France which exempts its military discipline. But then given the scandals at Deepcut barracks, that option might not be attractive.

Part of the problem is that the human rights convention was drawn up in a different world, in the aftermath of cataclysmic war, by countries anxious to protect their citizens from future despotism, domestic or foreign.

But the universal principles, based originally on the 18th-century French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau's vision of humanity, suggest the same rights must be accorded to everyone, whatever their nationality.

Howe has called this a "form of moralistic imperialism: seeking to impose European convention notions of human rights on those with other traditions and cultures".

Its proponents would not deny this but hold that it is time that humanity as a whole recognised universal rights although many, notably the rights accorded women in Europe, are flouted in much of the rest of the world.

What might be necessary is to take a leaf from the German book where judges are required to interpret the spirit -or intention -of the law, rather than the letter.

Confusion in court -it's the messy matter of whose human rights you want to guard today, m'lud

It is easy to talk of our belief in human rights in the same breath as that in democracy, but we don't like it when democracy gives us **Hamas** or Nazis. The reality is that the society we call the West rests on a conservative-liberal consensus, in effect a high-wire balancing act, performed simultaneously by both judiciary and government.

The representation of justice as a blindfolded figure holding scales is idealistic; what matters is keeping them balanced.

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End of Document

Jill Carroll: finally free

Christian Science Monitor

March 31, 2006, Friday

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Section: WORLD; Pg. 1

Length: 1603 words

Byline: Dan Murphy and Scott Peterson Staff writers of The Christian Science Monitor

Dateline: CAIRO AND BAGHDAD

Body

Katie Carroll went from a deep sleep to instantly awake when she saw the Iraq country code on her caller ID.

She grabbed the phone. It was 5:45 a.m. and the ringing heralded the news about her twin sister, Jill, who had been held hostage in Iraq for nearly three months. "Katie, it's me," said the voice on the other end of the line. "I'm free."

It was Jill herself, safe after 82 days.

"Then she burst into tears and I did, too," says Katie.

Journalist Jill Carroll was freed in Baghdad Thursday ending a period of captivity marked by an enormous global outpouring of support and calls for her release.

"I'm just really grateful. The overwhelming emotion is gratitude. I am glad this day has arrived and thank whatever forces, divine and otherwise, that helped bring about this day," says Jill.

On Jan. 7, Monitor freelancer Carroll traveled to interview Sunni Arab politician Adnan al-Dulaimi in Baghdad's western Adil neighborhood. He was not in his office, and, after waiting some 20 minutes, Carroll and her Iraqi driver and interpreter left.

After traveling about 300 yards, they were attacked by gunmen. Carroll was seized, and her interpreter, Allan Eniwy, was killed.

Thursday, Carroll's captors simply drove her to Amariyah, stopped the car, pointed her in the direction of the Iraqi Islamic Party (IPP) office at about 12:20 p.m. local time and then drove off.

Carroll, who was on assignment for the Monitor when she was kidnapped, gave a short interview to Baghdad TV, which is owned by the IIP, before being transported to the Green Zone by the US military. She was told the interview was for internal party uses only, and didn't realize it would be broadcast. In that interview Carroll said that for most of her ordeal she was kept in a darkened room which she later described as a "cave."

"I really don't know where I was. The room had a window but the glass you know, you can't see," she said, making a motion with her hand as if the window was blocked, "and you couldn't hear any sound, and so I would sit in the room."

Jill Carroll: finally free

"If I had to take a shower I walked, you know, two feet, to the next door to take a shower or go to the bathroom and come back." From time to time, she says, she had contact with Iraqi women and children in the house which she found comforting.

She was only allowed to watch television and read a newspaper once and had little information about what was going on in the world at large.

"I was treated well, but I don't know why I was kidnapped," Carroll told the TV station about her kidnappers. In videotaped statements her captors had implied they would kill her if Iraqi prisoners held by coalition forces weren't released. But Carroll said, "They never hit me. They never even threatened to hit me."

Carroll says she asked an IIP official to call the Monitor's Baghdad hotel. He refused, and called the Washington Post's Baghdad office. Carroll is close personal friends with two of the Post's Iraqi staffers.

Her next call was to twin sister Katie. She then called her parents, Jim and Mary Beth.

The first thing she told me today was, 'I love you,'" says Mary Beth. "She said, 'Every single day I was in captivity, I cried over how worried you must be, and what a burden this must be for the family.' "

In fact, the day before release, Katie Carroll had appeared on the Arab TV station Al Arabiyah, where she had talked of the effect of the kidnapping on the family and pleaded for information that might lead to her sister's release.

"I was dreaming that this would be the way I'd find out - that she'd call me in the middle of the night like this," says Katie. "She sounded great. I just want to thank everyone who's prayed and given us support through this time, and we're obviously looking forward to some private time with Jill."

Monitor Editor Richard Bergenheim said Thursday: "This is an exciting day, we couldn't be happier. We are so pleased she'll be back with her family. The prayers of people all over the world have been answered."

President George Bush had said Carroll's release was a top priority for his administration, and her freedom was welcomed by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice at a press conference in Berlin. Ms. Rice spoke of the "great delight and great relief of the United States, the people of the United States and, I'm sure, the people of the world at the release today of Jill Carroll."

Carroll's release followed half a dozen false leads in the effort to free her - people who contacted the Monitor or the Carroll family. Some demanded exorbitant ransoms, but never managed to produce a "proof of life." One scam artist, calling himself a repentant member of the kidnapper group and seeking a payoff, turned out to be a young Nigerian and was arrested in Germany. Other would-be players said they had contacts and could free her, but never delivered.

Her support among Iraqis appeared to be quite strong. Several Iraqi newspapers and television stations took up her cause. They reported her story, editorialized for her freedom, and donated public-service announcements designed by the Monitor's Baghdad correspondents that pleaded for Carroll's release.

Even the mother of a young Iraqi woman detained for months by the government without charges and finally released in late January was willing to speak publicly on Carroll's behalf. Politicians across the Iraqi political spectrum, especially leaders from the Sunni sect also spoke out emotionally on Carroll's behalf.

Across the Muslim world, voices not normally heard on behalf of an American, called for Jill's release: Hamas in the Palestinian territories, the Muslim Brotherhood in Cairo, and many others.

Hope rose with the release of the remaining three Christian Peacekeepers hostages last week. But it had been nearly two months since Carroll's last video was dated, and many experts were privately beginning to express discouragement about her status. It had been quiet too long, and without a single confirmed attempt to negotiate.

Jill Carroll: finally free

For the Monitor's "Team Jill" - an informal group of editors and writers who worked on her case, each assigned separate tasks - it was a difficult time.

Washington bureau chief David Cook every day passed a photo of Carroll taped to the door of the bureau's building. "You'd come in the door and see her picture and think, 'have I done everything I could today to help get her out?'" says Cook.

Monitor editor Bergenheim said no money had been exchanged for Carroll's release.

Following Carroll's arrival at the IIP office Thursday, the party's Secretary General Tariq al-Hashimi led a ceremony in which he handed the freed journalist gifts, and praised her release.

Mr. Hashimi is a rival for influence among Iraq's Sunni Arab minority of Adnan al-Dulaimi's, the politician Carroll had sought to interview on the morning of Jan. 7. Mr. Dulaimi has repeatedly denied involvement. Dulaimi has said that his political rivals - both Shiite and Sunni - were trying to hurt his political standing.

Leading IIP member Naser al-Ani said her appearance at their office, in a blue Islamic robe and wearing a light green headscarf identical to the one she wore in a Feb. 28 video issued by her captors, was completely unexpected. He said guards at the office "thought she was a party member - dressed Islamically like that, they thought she worked in [the Iraqi government's] Women's Affairs department."

Mr. Ani said she was dropped off near the office, in a Sunni stronghold in Western Baghdad. In a press conference, Hashimi said she bore a letter from her captors that she gave to the IIP guards.

A measure of the extent to which she was cut off from the outside world was that she didn't know if her driver had escaped on Jan. 7 during the abduction. News of his safety was a great relief to Carroll, her father Jim Carroll said.

"She knew about Alan, but did not know about [the driver]," Mr. Carroll says. "She started to break down when we were talking about it, so I didn't pursue that too much."

Shortly before her release, her kidnappers also warned Carroll about talking to the US or going to the Green Zone, alleging to her that it was "infiltrated by the Mujahideen" and that she might be killed if she cooperated with the Americans, her family says.

When the US military arrived at the IIP offices to escort her to the Green Zone, she was at first reluctant to go. But in a brief phone call the Monitor's staff writer Scott Peterson in Baghdad, he persuaded her that was the best and safest course of action.

Kidnappers in Iraq have tried to scare former hostages like this in the past. When Italian journalist Guiliana Sgrena was released by her captors in February last year, they told her there was a CIA threat to kill her, and that she should rush to the airport rather than go to the Green Zone. As her car sped down the airport road, at the time one of the most dangerous stretches of Iraq, the US military opened fire on the car, killing Nicola Calipari, the Italian intelligence agent who helped secure her release.

Italy's Corriere della Sera newspaper said the kidnappers had phoned the US military with an anonymous tip and the cars description, warning that it was a car-bomb.

At the time of writing, Ms. Carroll is receiving medical attention in the Green Zone.

Fully in character to all those who know her, Jill has repeatedly expressed concern for Allan and his family, and all the friends and family who've been worrying about her through her ordeal - particularly her parents and her sister.

* Staff writer Peter Grier contributed to this report from Washington and Awadh al-Taei contributed from Baghdad.

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Jill Carroll: finally free

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**G2: 'Why depict Israel as a chamber of horrors like no other in the world?':
This week's Guardian report on the parallels between Israel and South
African apartheid was muddled and disappointing, argues Benjamin
Pogrund . Overleaf, we publish reaction from other experts and from
readers. I**

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Body

Nearly three years ago I underwent an operation in a Jerusalem hospital. The surgeon was Jewish, the anaesthetist was Arab. The doctors and nurses who looked after me were Jews and Arabs. I lay in bed for a month and watched as they gave the same skilled care to other patients - half of whom were Arabs and half of whom were Jewish - all sharing the same wards, operating theatres and bathrooms.

After that experience I have difficulty understanding anyone who equates Israel with apartheid South Africa. What I saw in the Hadassah Mt Scopus hospital was inconceivable in the South Africa where I spent most of my life, growing up and then working as a journalist who specialised in exposing apartheid. It didn't happen and it couldn't happen. Blacks and whites were strictly separated and blacks got the least and the worst. And this is only one slice of life. Buses, post offices, park benches, cinemas, everything, were segregated by law. No equation is possible.

That is what came to my mind as I read the Guardian's two-part report this week about Israel and apartheid. The writer, Chris McGreal, is an outstanding reporter. I admire his dispatches from Israel/Palestine. Day by day he honestly and correctly portrays the conflict. But these articles are disappointing. He has lost his way in thickets of information. He has been unable to untangle the confusion and complexities of group relations here. He is muddled in distinguishing between the situations of Israeli Arabs and West Bank Arabs and Jerusalem Arabs.

It is not that he is wholly wrong. Arabs suffer severe discrimination. Israel is in occupation of the West Bank and is responsible for oppressive and ugly actions. But he fails to explain the why and the wherefore. He had a choice in deciding how to decipher the situation. He could have adopted the approach of Heribert Adam and Kogila Moodley, well-known Canadian academics specialising in South Africa and the Middle East. In their book, *Seeking Mandela*, published last year, they say: "Although Israel and apartheid South Africa are often equated as 'colonial settler societies', we argue that the differences outweigh the similarities." They warn that the "simplistic assumption that the South African model readily lends itself to export may actually retard necessary new solutions by clinging to visions or processes of negotiation that may not work in another context". That assessment is surely far more relevant than quoting the debased views about South Africa and Israel of the late Hendrik Verwoerd, a father of apartheid, as McGreal has strangely done.

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McGreal had to decide whether the glass is half-full or half-empty. His approach could have been that here is a tiny country which came into being, in the shadow of the Holocaust, less than 58 years ago. It has been under continual attack since the start and is still beset by enemies sworn to its destruction, whether Islamic Jihad and Hamas through suicide bombings, the Arab states through their refusal to recognise its existence, the recent "wipe-out" call by Iran's president, or the actions and declarations of a mixed bag of malevolent forces, anti-semites and semi-Jews. That induces a siege mentality among Israel's Jews. They fight to live and do not always do it pleasantly. They make horrible mistakes and inflict suffering on others. It is not secret. I do not know why Chris McGreal says the Israeli public is unaware of what is happening: newspapers publish the details in profusion, provoking discussion and action.

Yes, racism does exist in Israel - directed against Arabs, and also among Jews. Amir Peretz, new leader of the Labour party, is said to be having problems with western-born Ashkenazi voters because he is Moroccan-born and Sephardic. An explanation offered for the police violence in clearing the Amona outpost last week was the antagonism between the protesting young people, who were mainly religious Ashkenazi, and the police, who were a mixture of Moroccan and Russian immigrant stock, Bedouin and Druze.

Is Israel so different from other countries that struggle to come to terms with their minority groups? Why depict this country as a chamber of horrors like no other in the world?

The glass is indeed half-full. In South Africa, change for the better was simply not possible: the apartheid system had to be eradicated. In contrast, change is possible in Israel. An accusation by a member of the Knesset, Ahmed Tibi, who is Arab, that the central Bank of Israel had a discriminatory employment policy with no Arabs among its 800 staffers, drew the assurance from the bank's then governor that tenders would be advertised in the Arab-language press. He added: "Bank of Israel hires according to criteria of merit, and ignores differences in religion, sex, race or nationality." Tibi also complained that the state monopoly Israel Electric did not employ Arabs; a start has since been made with the hiring of six Arabs. There is continual progress: the evidence is there if you want to see it. The first Arab was appointed to the high court of justice two years ago. Last year, for the first time, an Arab was appointed director-general of a government ministry.

McGreal notes that inside Israel, 93% of the land is reserved for Jews while South Africa's whites kept 87% of the land for themselves. Thus Israel and apartheid South Africa are the same. But the QED is not as straightforward as his citing of these figures would have us believe. In law, land in Israel is open to everyone but, yes, in practice, through legal stratagems, 93% of the land has been only for Jews. This, however, has been breached by the Arab Ka'adan family: in a 10-year legal struggle, they have established their right to buy land and build a home in the "Jewish" community settlement of Katzir in northern Israel. The high court of justice has given a precedent-setting decision that the state cannot discriminate on the basis of religion or nationality when allocating state land to Israeli citizens. The case has dragged on but final success is in sight. Other court actions are underway. Land exemplifies both the negative and positive aspects of the lives of Israel's Arabs: it conveys the discrimination - and the movement towards change; slow, slow, but underway.

On education, McGreal states that separate and unequal education systems were a central part of the apartheid regime's strategy to limit black children to manual and service jobs - something I observed firsthand and fought against in South Africa. But I have to question his reference to what he says is the current belief among Arab parents that their children's schools are deliberately starved of state resources so that Arabs will be doomed to lesser jobs. Every government school, whether Jewish or Arab, gets identical funding; differences, and hence resources, arise through what parents pay and what local authorities pay (most local authorities in Israel are in poor financial shape; Arab local authorities are even worse off with problems in collecting local property taxes). The Jewish schools are Jewish day schools. The Arab schools are Muslim and use Arabic, which is an official language in Israel. There is no bar to Arabs attending Jewish schools, and some do.

I am also puzzled by the health ministry figures that McGreal has chosen to use about state spending on development of health facilities in Arab areas (the clear implication being that Arabs are starved of health care). Contrary to the picture painted, health is a visible indicator of the differences between apartheid South Africa and

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Israel. In South Africa, the infant mortality rate (IMR) in 1985 was 78 per 1,000 live births. Among colour groups: whites 12, Asians 20, coloureds 60, blacks 94 to 150. In Israel, in the 1950s, the IMR among Muslims was 60.6 and among Jews 38.8. Major improvements occurred in health care during the 1990s and by 2001 the IMR among Arabs was 7.6 (Muslims 8.2, Christians 2.6, Druze 4.7). Among Jews, 4.1. According to the health ministry, the higher Muslim figure was due mainly to genetic defects as a result of marriages between close relatives; poverty is also a factor. Other countries in 2000: Switzerland, 8.2, and 12.3 for Turks living there; United States, whites 8.5, blacks 21.3.

He is also mistaken in saying that Arabs have been singled out for discrimination in getting reduced child allowances. They are the same as Jewish ultra-Orthodox families. These two groups have the largest number of children and have suffered equally from cutbacks in allowances, especially for the fifth child and beyond.

Here in Jerusalem on Monday, I watched the BBC's Auschwitz on television. The episode dealt with French collaboration in delivering Jews to the Nazis for destruction, and how British policemen on Guernsey handed over three Jewish women. It was a reminder, if any be needed, of why Israel exists: to fulfil the centuries-old dream of a homeland for Jews and as a sanctuary for Jews. It's not a perfect society. It struggles to find itself as a Jewish state (with no consensus about what that means), and it struggles to evolve as a democratic society with full rights for minorities. It deserves criticism for its flaws and mistakes. It also merits sympathy and support in facing unfounded attack *

Benjamin Pogrund was born in South Africa and was deputy editor of the Rand Daily Mail in Johannesburg. He is the author of books on Robert Sobukwe, Nelson Mandela and the press under apartheid. He has lived in Israel for more than eight years and is founder of Yakar's Centre for Social Concern in Jerusalem, which encourages dialogue across political and ethnic lines.

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Strange Bedfellows

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Body

Americans, stunned by the 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and on the Pentagon, asked themselves, "Why did this happen?" The denizens of the extreme right in America believed they knew why. While mainstream commentators and public officials claimed that it was our values of freedom and democracy that made us targets, shortly after the attacks, extremist Internet discussion groups buzzed with a far different message: The United States had been attacked because of its support for the state of Israel.

That sentiment was shared by many followers of what is generally referred to as militant Islam.

Indeed for years, going back to the Third Reich in Germany, these two seemingly different groups have not only agreed on a common enemy—Jews and, after it was formed, Israel—but they have increasingly cooperated to forge a narrative of propaganda against their enemy. Last year, when President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran stirred worldwide condemnation by dismissing the Holocaust as a "myth," purportedly used as a pretext for the creation of a Jewish state in the heart of the Islamic world, one of the voices that rose to his defense was David Duke, the former Klan leader (and Louisiana representative) who says he "has dedicated his life to the freedom and heritage of European American peoples."

The collaboration of Islamic militants and the extreme right cries out for further study. For there are some indications that the narrative they tell could become more mainstream.

At first glance, there would seem to be little common ground between right-wing extremism and militant Islam. After all, the segment of the right concerned about the racial survival of white people generally tends to be derisive of nonwhites; they would not consider Muslims—the majority of whom trace their ethnic ancestry to third-world countries—to be part of the ideal, exclusively white community. For their part, Islamic fundamentalists tend to look askance at non-Muslims, whom they sometimes designate as "infidels" and a threat to the ummah, the universal community of Muslims.

Yet, as I found out in studying the linkages between the two movements, they have some strikingly similar characteristics. For example, both evince a high degree of exclusivity as they endeavor to create their own utopian versions of homogeneous societies. More and more, they have a meeting of the minds on several important political issues—for one, the cause of Palestinian independence. The two groups also offer similar critiques of American foreign policy in the Middle East, the American news media, modernity, and globalization. And both see the U.S. government as hopelessly under the control of Jews or Zionists.

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Right-wing extremists and Islamic radicals have actually made strange bedfellows for quite some time. Adolf Hitler maintained a cordial relationship with the grand mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini, who spent several of the World War II years in Berlin, where he was received as a foreign dignitary after fleeing British-occupied Palestine.

Hitler's war against the British and French electrified many Arabs, as Germany's struggle dovetailed with their own anticolonialist aspirations in the Middle East. In Egypt a protofascist organization, Young Egypt, also known as the Green Shirts, attracted many army officers, including a young lieutenant colonel, Anwar el-Sadat, who was involved in a failed scheme to provide Rommel's Afrika Korps with secret information on British strategy and troop movements. The grand mufti was instrumental in the group's formation. To support Hitler's war efforts, al-Husseini also helped organize the Waffen-SS Handschar division in Yugoslavia, which was composed of Bosnian Muslim volunteers. Other Wehrmacht units included Muslims who wanted to fight the repression of Islam in various Soviet republics.

For his part, Hitler was proud of his stature among Muslims. According to private conversations he had with staff members, which were later published, near war's end he regretted that he had not done more to take advantage of the alliance, lamenting that his association with Italy had alienated some people in the Muslim world, who looked on Mussolini's invasion of North Africa as imperialistic aggression. "All Islam vibrated at the news of our victories," Hitler said. "We had a great chance of pursuing a splendid policy with regard to Islam. But we missed the bus, as we missed it on several other occasions, thanks to our loyalty to the Italian alliance."

After the war, several former German military officers and Nazi party officials, such as Otto Skorzeny, Johann von Leers, and Otto Remer, were granted sanctuary in Arab countries, most notably Egypt. German National Socialism continued to appeal to many of the early pan-Arab leaders, like Gamal Abdel Nasser, as an attractive model for nation building in the Middle East. At this stage, both camps cooperated out of expediency. It was not until later that they would develop a similar critique of their shared enemies: Jews and Zionists.

The rise of Palestinian terrorism in the early 1970s caused some elements of the extreme right in Europe to once again take interest in the Middle East. Members of a small German neo-Nazi group, Hoffmann-Wehrsportgruppe, for example, sought to develop an operational alliance with Middle Eastern terrorist groups. Some of the neo-Nazi groups received paramilitary training in Al Fatah camps in Jordan and fought alongside Palestinians during Black September, when the Jordanian army launched an assault on Palestinian guerilla groups in 1970. François Genoud, a leader of a Swiss far-right organization, financed Palestinian groups such as the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Fatah, and Black September. And a Belgian, Jean-François Thiriart, served both as an adviser to the PLO's Fatah organization and as the secretary for a neo-Nazi group called La Nation Européenne. The Palestine Liberation Front and a small neo-Nazi group, the VSBD, also carried out joint attacks on Israeli and Jewish targets in Europe.

Libya's Muammar el-Qaddafi was frequently involved in international terrorism during the 1970s and 80s. To forge a broad anti-imperialist coalition, Qaddafi developed an ideology known as the Third Position — an alternative to Communism and capitalism — that took a strong anti-Zionist and anti-American posture. Qaddafi's defiance of the U.S. government, which was increasingly becoming the bete noire of the international extreme right, appealed to, for example, members of Britain's National Front, an extreme right-wing political party. Qaddafi invited members of that group and other right-wing organizations to conferences in Libya to create a coalition against the United States. But like earlier attempts to forge alliances between militant Islam and the extreme right, his efforts were ephemeral.

Throughout the late 1970s and 1980s, however, both the extreme right and militant Islam became more radical. As each escalated its denunciation of its enemy, they found more common ground.

In 1979 the success of the Iranian revolution and the establishment of a theocratic regime further strengthened the legitimacy and appeal of militant Islam as a means by which to effect change in the Middle East. That same year, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan sounded the clarion call for jihad throughout the Islamic world, making Afghanistan the incubator of the major jihadist organizations that would go on to bedevil the United States in the years to come. The intifada, which began in the occupied territories of Palestine in 1987, set off a similar kind of "Islamicization" of the Palestinian resistance movement. While, before the rebellion, Palestinian militants had

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generally been secular and left wing, the new militants sought inspiration from Islam and used it as an organizing principal for resistance. Most notable was Hamas, whose charter contained elements of the notorious anti-Semitic Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion.

During that same period, the extreme right also went through a process of radicalization. Characteristic of that trend was a small underground group in the United States led by Robert Jay Mathews: the Order. Starting in 1983, the Order conducted a campaign of terror in the Pacific Northwest that included several armored-car heists, bank robberies, bombings, and homicides declaring war against the United States, which it believed was controlled by Jews working for the destruction of the white race. According to the accounts of some of its members, the group reached out to Egyptian Islamists in an effort to forge an anti-Zionist terrorist alliance. Although strategically the Order did not accomplish much by early 1985, virtually all known members had been arrested, and many would subsequently be given long prison sentences its campaign crystallized the increasingly revolutionary orientation of the American extreme right. The tragedies at Ruby Ridge, when government agents killed family members of a purported sympathizer with the Aryan Nation, and Waco, when an FBI raid ended with the burning of a Branch Davidian compound, contributed further to that trend. More and more, the far right in the United States viewed the government as irrevocably lost, an implacable enemy. Consequently its rhetoric became more extreme, revolutionary, and millennial.

Moreover, increasingly the chief target of the extreme right's animus crystallized as well. Although anti-Semitism had loomed large in the extremist subculture for many years, Jews had shared the right's animus with other groups like Communists, liberals, "insiders" (a term John Birch Society members used to refer to shadowy plutocrats who allegedly ruled America), the Illuminati, the Trilateral Commission, the Council on Foreign Relations, et al. What intensified in the 1980s was the identification of Jews as the primary enemy, indeed the puppet master of all the extreme right's enemies. That notion was expressed in the acronym "ZOG," which stands for Zionist Occupational Government. The focus on ZOG attained great currency in the international far-right movement and did much to link together disparate groups in the West. As that happened, ZOG began to be viewed as a global Leviathana Pax Judaica, as it werewith tentacles reaching into the innermost recesses of government and society.

Ideological developments in both the extreme right and militant Islam thus contributed to the convergence in their worldviews. Both Jews and the U.S. government were seen as the principal enemies with Jews pulling the strings.

That meeting of the minds has continued. Shortly after September 11, 2001, the Bush administration accused a Swiss national and convert to Islam, Ahmed Huber, of being an important cog in Al Qaeda's global financial network. According to Huber himself, he has been an intermediary between right-wing extremists and radical Islamists in Europe. Over the past 40 years, he says, he developed ties with major figures in the Middle East, including the Grand Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini, Egyptian President Nasser, and the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini of Iran; he claims to have been the first European Muslim to speak before the Iranian Parliament (which he did for the first time in 1983).

Still other European extreme rightists have been drawn to the dynamism of militant Islam. While the right has often appeared as a caricature of ineffectuality, militant Islam seems disciplined, resolute, and strong. Chief among the admirers is David Myatt, arguably England's principal proponent of the contemporary neo-Nazi ideology and theoretician of revolution. Several years ago, he converted to Islam, assumed the nom de guerre "Abdul Aziz," and openly announced his support for Osama bin Laden and his declared war against the United States and Israel. Myatt's articles on the World Wide Web exhort his Aryan followers to make common cause with the Islamists. The primary battle against ZOG, he says, has shifted from the West to the Islamic world, in areas such as Afghanistan, Palestine, and Iraq.

Despite the episodes of cooperation in the past, an enduring terrorist alliance has yet to be established. Several obstacles militate against that happening. For one, there is no real extreme-right terrorist infrastructure in place. Leaderless resistance by individuals or small cohesive groups accounts for the vast majority of acts of right-wing violence. Thus, even if Middle Eastern terrorists were willing to collaborate with American right-wing terrorists, they would be hard pressed to find a viable network to work through. What's more, the extreme right is closely monitored

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by law-enforcement agencies and private groups, such as the Anti-Defamation League and the Southern Poverty Law Center, which would make cooperation a risky proposition for both parties.

However, in the area of propaganda, a greater potential for collaboration exists. Indeed, there appears to be increasing cooperation between the two movements on a rhetorical level. Traditionally such efforts tended to move only in one direction—the extreme right voicing support for Islamic radicals, with the latter being less reciprocal. Anecdotal evidence suggests that could be changing, as right-wing extremist propaganda is being acquired and recycled by Islamic radicals.

For example, the Holocaust denial of so-called "revisionist historians" in the West has gained currency in the popular newspapers and magazines in the Arab world. In fact, in the summer of 2001, revisionists planned a conference on "Revisionism and Zionism," scheduled for late March in Beirut. It was organized by the American Institute for Historical Review and the Swiss-based Vérité et Justice, and was to have included lectures in English, French, and Arabic. The Swiss organizer, Jürgen Graf, had fled in November 2000 to Iran—a country where other revisionists in the last few years have received a warm welcome—after his appeals of a Swiss conviction for hate-speech violations were denied. The conference incited fierce opposition from the Jewish defense organizations like the Simon Wiesenthal Center, the Anti-Defamation League, and the World Jewish Congress, which put pressure on the Lebanese government to cancel the event. The U.S. State Department weighed in against it as well. After a last-minute cabinet meeting on the subject, the Lebanese government did cancel the conference, although a smaller meeting was eventually held in Amman, Jordan, sponsored by the Jordanian Writers Association. Both the aborted and final conferences were evidence of a growing cooperation between the Western revisionists and Islamic sympathizers.

The cross-fertilization of rhetoric between the two parties reached new heights in 2005 when the Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, made his claim that the Holocaust was a myth. A few weeks before his pronouncement, he had called for the destruction of Israel. Although Ahmadinejad's comments were condemned by officials in the West, they drew praise in some quarters in the Muslim world. A spokesman for Hamas, Khaled Meshal, commended the Iranian president for his "courage"; Muhammad Mehdi Akef, leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, the largest opposition force in Egypt, reiterated that the Holocaust was a myth (although his office later said he wasn't suggesting it had never happened). For their part, representatives and organizations of the extreme right in the West—including David Duke and the Institute for Historical Review—expressed satisfaction that a head of state had publicly impugned the generally accepted version of the Holocaust. In March 2006, Iran played host to a seminar entitled "The Holocaust: Myth or Reality." Revisionist historians from the West participated. Later in the month, on an interview program with Charlie Rose, President Bashar Assad of Syria remarked that the six-million figure of the number of Jews who had perished in the Holocaust was "exaggerated."

In recent years, Duke has been in the forefront of the effort to reach out to the Islamic world. In the fall of 2002, he presented two lectures in Bahrain on "The Global Struggle Against Zionism" and the "Israeli Involvement in September 11." Duke claims to have found a receptive audience in Bahrain. That same year, he appeared on a talk show, *Without Borders*, which is broadcast by the Qatar-based Al Jazeera satellite network. More recently, in November 2005, he traveled to Syria, where he held a news conference expressing support for the Syrian people and pledging to do his best to convey to the world the "real peace-loving Syrian" positions. Attendees at the event included several members of the Syrian Parliament and Arab and foreign correspondents.

Another factor drawing the extreme right in the West and militant Islam together is that both increasingly see their struggles in global terms: Both are searching for an identity in an era of globalization. Just as Osama bin Laden encourages Islamists around the world to view their regional conflicts not as isolated, parochial battles, but rather as theaters of a larger war in the defense of Islam against the West and Zionism, some elements of the extreme right view their individual nationalist movements as part of a larger struggle for white racial survival against a rising tide of nonwhite demographic expansion, said to be orchestrated by the forces of globalization and international Judaism. Here the Internet has been important, allowing disparate groups to spread their message and exchange ideas.

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In his study *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (Columbia University Press, 2004), the noted French scholar of Islam, Olivier Roy, argued that Muslims in the West often experience a trauma of "deterritorialization" because they feel estranged from their native lands. To overcome their anomie and alienation, young Muslims, in particular, look for solace in a new, purified Islam and attach themselves to a "virtual ummah," a Muslim community built on the World Wide Web. In similar fashion, Jeffrey Kaplan and Leonard Weinberg observed, in their study *The Emergence of a Euro-American Radical Right* (Rutgers University Press, 1998), that scattered elements of the extreme right in the West, faced with declining white birth rates, sweeping third-world immigration, diminishing life opportunities for working-class youths, and perceived cultural decadence, have come to feel like strangers in their lands. Communicating through chat rooms and other Internet media, they have found solace in the slogan "white power" and sought to develop a new pan-Aryan identity based on race and civilization that transcends national borders.

To be sure, anxiety about immigrants inhibits cooperation between the extreme right and militant Islam: The former, after all, fears demographic inundation by the latter. But despite their concern with nonwhite immigrants, extremists on the right still see Jews as the principal enemy of the Aryan peoples. And although militant Islam generally eschews racial themes, its version of anti-Zionism in many ways parallels that anti-Semitism.

Both the extreme right and militant Islam charge that a Jewish conspiracy is undermining their societies through "cultural poisoning." According to the standard extreme-right narrative, the chief aim of the Jewish conspiracy is to defile the white race through miscegenation, thus ultimately leading to its extinction as a distinct racial group. (Jews are said to see whites as their most dangerous "rivals.") Using a similar narrative, but in the framework of religion, militant Islamists argue that Jews seek first and foremost to destroy Islam because it constitutes the strongest moral challenge to perceived Jewish perfidy. Both right-wing extremists and Islamists also often invoke the status of the Palestinians as a symbol of what awaits them if they do not act swiftly. Thus David Duke, Kevin Alfred Strom (of the white-separatist organization National Vanguard), and the late William Pierce (leader of the National Alliance) have expressed admiration for the dedication and valor of Palestinian militants. Pierce even went so far as to eulogize Wafa Idris, the first ***female*** Palestinian suicide bomber.

Both movements are also very critical of the Bush administration's decision to wage war against Iraq. The fact that several of President Bush's neoconservative advisers who were among the most adamant in clamoring for the war also happened to be Jewish was not lost on either group. What does that presage?

If the situation in Iraq continues to deteriorate, it is conceivable that the extreme right's critique of American foreign policy in the Middle East, and its focus on Israeli influence on it, could become more mainstream. Recently two prominent academics—John J. Mearsheimer, a professor of political science at the University of Chicago, and Stephen Walt, a dean at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government—released a working paper on "The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy." In it, they asserted that the various interest groups lobbying on behalf of Israel have subverted foreign policy in the Middle East to the detriment of the national interests of the United States. The report has occasioned considerable controversy. Critics like Harvard Law School's Alan M. Dershowitz have been quick to point out the stylistic parallels between the study and traditional anti-Semitic canards of Jewish dual loyalty and malfeasance. Dershowitz, according to *The Harvard Crimson*, has gone so far as to aver that the authors culled information for their report from "hate sites" on the Internet. Although such allegations appear spurious, the paper did contain motifs—about, for example, the power of Jews in the news media and Jewish manipulation of the political system—that have formed the basis of classic anti-Semitic narratives. The report, indeed, has been enthusiastically received by representatives of the extreme right, including Duke, who expressed satisfaction that his criticism of Israel has been vindicated by such esteemed academics.

It is difficult to predict how the unexpected and alarming convergence between militant Islam and the extreme right will unfold in the future. Over the past two decades, several countries have imploded due to centrifugal ethnic rivalries. The extreme right is worried that large-scale immigration, the ascendance of multiculturalism, and the decreasing popularity of the assimilationist ideal could one day foreshadow a similar situation in the United States. The September 11 attacks and their consequences have the potential to amplify their fears. If the "war on terror" should falter, more people in the United States and Europe could become receptive to their views.

Strange Bedfellows

The meeting of the minds among what are now just some groups and individuals could presage strange alliances in the future.

George Michael is an assistant professor of political science and administration of justice at the University of Virginia's College at Wise. Next week the University Press of Kansas will publish his book *The Enemy of My Enemy: The Alarming Convergence of Militant Islam and the Extreme Right*.

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G2: 'We're tired of blood': In November, a former Moroccan trade unionist was elected leader of Israel's Labour party. Since then the political landscape has changed beyond recognition. Ariel Sharon founded a new party in response - then fell into a coma. As Israelis prepare to go to the polls, Linda Grant reports from a country losing faith in the old political certainties: 'My dream is the dream of Greater Israel, from the Jordan to the sea, but I don't think many will join me' Eli Moyal: 'We need a prime minister who will start a war to put an end to the Palestinians' violence' Yossi, Sderot resident

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Body

From a small hill in southern Israel, about an hour and a half south of Tel Aviv on the edge of the Negev desert, the political geography of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict is apparent in one sweeping vista. Immediately ahead is the Mediterranean Sea, sometimes described as "Israel's only good border". To the left are the dense towers of Gaza City. In the centre is a sandy gap, where, until last August, three northern Israeli settlements stood, now demolished. To the right of them is a power station, which serves the city of Ashkelon, itself visible on the edge of the horizon. Far behind is the private farm of Ariel Sharon, known in these parts as "our neighbour", though he is unlikely ever to return there or emerge from the coma into which he slipped in December. Immediately to the rear is the small town of Sderot, the nearest town in Israel to the Gaza Strip, on one of whose streets is a small memorial commemorating the names of two Ethiopian children killed two years ago by primitive Qassam rockets, launched from Gaza.

In front of the municipality, lounging before a row of run-down shops, a crowd of unemployed men hangs about with nothing to do. The place smells of the monotony of poverty and despair. The people of Sderot may be richer than their Palestinian neighbours, but it is hard to feel wealthy when you cannot get to the end of the week without running out of food. Like Gaza, Sderot is propped up by welfare, but instead of the UN or NGOs, it comes from private donations from the Jewish community of Italy. Small workshops and factories have been built to provide jobs, but even these are subsidised by rich Israeli philanthropists.

On Tuesday, Israel goes to the polls, voting in a political landscape almost unrecognisable from last summer, when the last Israeli settler was forcibly removed from Gaza. In November, the country awoke to learn that the centre-left Labour party had ousted as its leader the veteran politician Shimon Peres and replaced him with the Moroccan-born head of the Histadrut, the Israeli TUC. Modelling himself on the Brazilian president, Lula, Amir Peretz said he wanted to place welfare, unemployment and health at the top of his agenda. "Within two years of taking office I will

G2: 'We're tired of blood': In November, a former Moroccan trade unionist was elected leader of Israel's Labour party. Since then the political landscape has c....

have eradicated child poverty in Israel," he told the media. This was earth-shattering enough, in a country where national security has been the number one issue in every election since the founding of the state in 1948. But his surprise victory signalled an even greater revolution: it was the first time that a Sephardi (non-European) Jew had been elected head of what most Israelis regard as the party of the middle-class Ashkenazi elite.

Peretz's win was quickly overshadowed by Sharon's response to it: the formation of the centrist Kadima party a couple of weeks later, which stole leading politicians, including Peres himself, from both Labour and the rightwing Likud party. A month after that, Sharon had the massive stroke from which he has not recovered. The pundits pronounced the death of Kadima by the end of the week, but it survived, under the new leadership of Ehud Olmert, Sharon's number two at Likud, which he too had abandoned. Three weeks later, the Palestinian elections were won by Hamas. The once mighty Likud, meanwhile, which until a few months ago seemed like Israel's natural ruling party, has been reduced to a rightwing rump.

Nowhere represents this election in microcosm better than Sderot. This is the town where the Peretz family was placed when they arrived in Israel in 1956 from Morocco and where the Labour leader still lives, commuting to his Tel Aviv office every day. It was here that he laid the foundations of his political career, as mayor in the 1980s. Founded in 1951 as a tent city for new immigrants, Sderot has achieved the dubious status of "development town" - a depressing, run-down place of high unemployment. Roughly half the 16,500 population is Moroccan, just under half are recent Russian immigrants, and the remainder come from Ethiopia. As the town's Likud mayor, Eli Moyal, says, "We have here the whole catastrophe."

Election banners are all over town, but the little shops with their cheap goods are plastered with Peretz posters. Eliyahu Biton, prematurely aged, his face sunken, his jaw toothless, is voting for the town's most famous son. "When Peretz was mayor of Sderot, he helped me a great deal," he says. "When my daughter graduated from high school, Amir told me to bring her school records and he found her a job at the ministry of defence. She worked there for 10 years and now she has a villa and four children. Because of this I am going to repay him with my vote. If he gets elected, he'll help the little man."

When Peretz won the Labour leadership, the question everyone asked was whether he could deliver to the party the one-million-strong working-class Moroccan vote, which has traditionally cast its ballots for Likud or the Sephardi religious party, Shas. Biton insists that is not the reason the former mayor is getting his vote. "I'm Moroccan, but I'm not voting for him because of that, but because he's a decent human being."

Indeed, along the street just a few minutes earlier I had spoken to another unemployed Moroccan, Claude. His brother had lost his job at a local factory and had gone to Peretz for help. "I don't believe Peretz," he said. "He's a liar. I know him in person. He said he'd help my brother and he didn't. He lied to him, he lied to me, he lied to my family. How can I trust him?" Claude was thinking of voting for the far-right racist party Yisrael Beytenu. "We can't make peace with the Arabs," he said. "I don't believe in peace any more. Bombing is their mentality."

One problem for Peretz will be if his votes really do rely on what he did for people in the past, whether as mayor or later head of the Histadut - a practice widespread in Israeli politics known as protekzia or patronage. The other question is whether Israelis can really be persuaded by Peretz to consider the economy more important than what, in Israel, passes for security. Biton thinks Peretz might be bluffing: "There's no question that the economy is important, but if he becomes prime minister, he'll be even more hard-line on defence than (Menachem) Begin was," he says, referring to the former prime minister who is considered to be the visionary of the Greater Israel movement. "People need to remember that he's a Moroccan, and when you slap a Moroccan he won't wait for the Americans' green light to go in. The Palestinians know what a Moroccan is."

These are the standard views of the poor of Sderot. "Arabs are animals, all of them," says 26-year-old Yossi, half Moroccan, half Egyptian, who runs a cafe. "Did you see the pictures from the lynching of our soldiers in Ramallah (in October 2000)? If an Arab came here we wouldn't treat him the way Arabs treated Israelis. Business here sucks, but Peretz only says he'll help the poor so he can get elected; once people like him get in, they do nothing. They're all corrupt, they only care about themselves. Peretz is a populist who isn't respected on the international stage."

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Instead, he says, he is going to vote for Benjamin Netanyahu, the hardline former prime minister who is now once again leader of Likud. "We need a prime minister who will start a war to put an end to the Palestinians' violence."

The current mayor of Sderot, Eli Moyal, is a celebrity in Israel. He grew up in a small town north of Marrakech, the son of a rabbi and an illiterate mother. Like Peretz, his family came to Israel in the mid-50s when he was a child, and was placed in Sderot; his mother would later win the Israel prize, the most prestigious award the country offers, for sending all 11 of her children to university and into the professions. After nearly 50 years in Israel, she still speaks to the children in her native Moroccan Arabic and has only limited, broken Hebrew; their Sderot house remains, inside, a typical Moroccan home. Moyal studied law at Brandeis University in Boston and opened a law office in Jerusalem. Peretz has a similar biography: he was born in the Moroccan town of Boujad, where his father was the leader of the Jewish community and owned a petrol station, but where Peretz's ideology is working-class solidarity, Moyal represents something akin to Thatcherism: success through individual effort.

Israelis like these, originating in Arab countries, have not historically shown a greater affinity with the Palestinians. The anger of the Moroccans at their treatment by the Ashkenazim when they arrived in Israel in the 50s, the racism they experienced, the menial jobs they were obliged to do, has festered for decades. In the early 70s, radical Moroccans formed a Black Panther party, fighting for civil rights and class struggle against the Ashkenazi elites. Seen from outside, the Moroccans ought to be heavily represented in any leftwing opposition party, and some Palestinians, such as the late Edward Said, have seen in the Sephardim a natural constituency which would join with Palestinians to press for a single state. What has happened is the exact opposite.

While the history of the Jews in Arab and Muslim countries was considerably less bloody than in Christian eastern Europe, it has been far from untroubled, certainly not recently. Most Moroccan Israelis have first-hand tales about life before they came to Israel, or at least the stories their parents have passed down to them. "I can testify about the feelings of my parents," Moyal says. "We lived quietly and in peace as long as we obeyed the rules. We had no political power, no say. It was against the law for a Jew to be involved in politics. It was a ghetto we lived in. . . We know the Arabs better than the Ashkenazim. We obeyed Arab regimes for centuries; we know their traditional and cultural way of life - we ran away from the Arabs."

Although ethnically Ashkenazi, many of the million-strong Jewish immigrants who came from the former Soviet Union in the early 90s share their opinions and prejudices with the Sephardim. Moyal explains that the Russian Jews of Sderot come from the eastern, Muslim republics: Chechnya, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan. They call immigrants from Moscow and Ukraine the "white Russians", he says. Like the Moroccans, they say they know Muslims, having lived among them and having fought as Soviet soldiers in the war against the mujahideen in Afghanistan, and later in Chechnya.

Nor do Peretz's economic policies appeal to them. For those who lived for nearly 70 years under Soviet communism, a socialist as prime minister is not necessarily an attractive proposition. Even his large moustache (which keen-eyed political students have noted is getting smaller as the campaign advances) is said to be a major factor in the Russians' alienation. As Moyal jokes, summing up the prevailing view of Russian attitudes to Peretz: "If he looks like Stalin, and he walks like Stalin, and he talks like Stalin, then he must be Stalin."

For some voters, Peretz's leadership victory was a breath of fresh air, a return to the country's socialist roots. They see this election as at last putting economic issues to the front of the agenda, and Peretz as the only politician who cares about the poor and wants to reverse Netanyahu's Thatcherite economic policies. They describe him as inspirational, clear about what he wants and how to do it - an honest man in a country with notoriously corrupt politicians. But even among those planning to vote for him in Sderot, Peretz has a reputation of being stubborn, of not taking advice, of bullying his way into getting what he wants. Some say Ashkenazi voters are leaving Labour for Kadima because they can't bear the idea of a Moroccan prime minister. Older Labour voters bear a grudge against him for snatching the leadership from Peres. His meagre army experience is held up by some as evidence of his weakness in defence. Others describe him as inspirational, clear about what he wants and what needs to be done, the only politician who cares about the poor and who wants to reverse Netanyahu's Thatcherite economic policies.

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"I agree he's very politically unripe and has a lot to learn," one Labour voter concedes, "but he has a pretty good team and maybe that's the advantage."

On a Saturday afternoon at the park on the Hayakon river, outside Tel Aviv, families are picnicking in the spring sunshine. Labour activists have said that there would be a tent, with food, and I am expecting that it will become a political meeting point, where Israelis will intensely argue the issues of the campaign. But there is no tent - the campaign can't afford it. The activists decide to fan out across the park and approach the picnickers to hand out mock \$1,000 bills which Labour has printed, in an attempt to illustrate Peretz's key campaign promise: to increase the minimum wage from \$600 to \$1,000 a month (Israel's minimum wage is expressed in dollars rather than shekels). First, though, they discuss how to deal with questions about an interview the previous day in Ha'aretz in which Peretz conceded that he did not expect to become prime minister but would form part of a centre-left coalition with Kadima. They are stuck with a leader who does not even believe his own propaganda.

A large group of Palestinian-Israeli women in hijabs, 30 or 40 of them, have laid out blankets under the trees along with their children. They go over to a group of activists from the Hetz party and collect some balloons which they give to the children - not, I suppose, because they are supporters of a secular party overwhelmingly voted for by Ashkenazim. A free balloon is a free balloon to a child, whatever is written on it.

A young, bare-headed woman says she is voting for Da'am, a new party led by a 32-year-old Palestinian-Israeli woman - the only party in the elections led by a woman. The number two on the list is a Jewish leftwing activist. The party's programme is defiantly communist: "We consider ourselves part of the worldwide anti-war and anti-globalisation movement," its website proclaims. "We seek to advance a new alternative that will replace the do-nothing Arab leadership inside Israel, the Palestinian Authority which has integrated the Palestinian national movement into the American system, and the Islamic current, which seeks to lead the Arab masses toward a dead end of otherworldly extremism. Our alternative will be closely connected to the regeneration of the global working-class movement along socialist lines." In real life its aims are, more modestly, to advance the position of Palestinian-Israeli women, two-thirds of whom are unemployed and vulnerable to abuse at home. The party is trying to defeat the hamullah - the delivery of votes en bloc by the clans.

Later that night I go to a Kadima rally in Nes Tziona, a small town south of Tel Aviv whose main employer is its winery. The rally is held in a banqueting hall, normally hired out for weddings. Twelve hundred people have squeezed in to hear Peres and the new rising star in Israeli politics, the new foreign minister Tzipi Livni, who has an impeccable rightwing family heritage and has made a long journey to the centre. Kadima has inherited the opaque vision of Sharon; no one knows what his plans were before his stroke.

Kadima, Moyal had told me, will self-destruct within three years. It has no core ideology, no vision; it was an opportunistic construct, he says. But it is self-evident that Kadima is merely a mirror that reflects what is called in Israel the national consensus, expressed succinctly by a friend who has previously voted Labour. "Peretz is a thug," he says. "He doesn't know about politeness, what to say or how to behave. As far as I'm concerned, the only issue in this election is the final borders, and when I think about who is going to make up the coalition it will be Kadima and Labour, and that's my choice. I liked last summer's pullout and I'm looking forward to the next one. I don't want to lose the momentum of the pullout." Peretz, he says, wants to talk, but "there's nobody to talk to . . . I don't want to do any more talking, I'm for doing."

I say that I don't think that Kadima's vision of a final settlement, which would mean retaining settlement blocks around Jerusalem, would ever be acceptable to the Palestinians. My friend's response is forthright. "I don't give a shit what the Palestinians don't want. I don't think anything will ever be acceptable to them and I received that message with the results of the last Palestinian elections (in which Hamas were elected)."

Inside the hall, the activists are well dressed and of a large spread of ages. I notice that there is a disproportionately large number of Ethiopians, the men in suits and neat kippahs, the women in dreadlocks. On screens around the hall, scenes from the history of Zionism are projected, featuring Israel's great national heroes, from Theodor Herzl, the father of Zionism, to Ariel Sharon.

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Peres, startlingly young for his 82 years, delivers a speech in English to new immigrants from what he calls the Anglo-Saxon world. It is a political history of Israel so babyish that it makes Leon Uris's Zionist novel Exodus sound like a Fatah lecture. Then Livni appears, to huge applause. In a black trouser suit, her blonde hair reaching to her shoulders, she has the oratorical force of Margaret Thatcher and the looks of Hillary Clinton. It is clear that the toothless unemployed man on the poverty-stricken streets of Sderot and the Arab woman in the park are being pushed aside by the Kadima juggernaut.

And yet the voices on the stage are anxious. They fear that the polls are telling the voters that the election is won already, and that people will stay at home. When Kadima was formed last November, it said it would sign up 100,000 new members; it has got only a tenth of that.

What will happen on Tuesday? Pollsters are predicting a record low turnout. Forty-five per cent of voters between 18 and 32 say they that will not vote; this figure rises to two-thirds among the secular young. The Green Leaf party, which campaigns on the single issue of legalising marijuana, might even get a seat in the Knesset. And this is the real story of this election: that in the most contested vote, in the most controversial, most closely scrutinised and most argued-about country in the world, in the place that declares itself "the only democracy in the Middle East", many have given up altogether on democracy. The frontline soldiers of occupation will spend election day chilling out, or conducting business as usual, at the other end of a gun. Voting has never seemed so meaningless.

"We are at the end of ideology," says Moyal. "My dream is the dream of Greater Israel, from the Jordan to the sea, but I don't think many will join me. If you're looking for justice, you're talking about ideology, and justice can only be achieved with blood, and we're tired of blood. It's now definite that the Israelis will stay here and the Palestinians will stay here. The old slogans brought us seven wars." But there used to be other slogans, ones that Moyal's vision of a Greater Israel have obscured and gradually destroyed. The election should be about a question: why a society which enshrined Jewish values in its declaration of independence, and which promised "complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex", should have abandoned the poor, the old and the sick, and left its Arab citizens feeling much as the Moyals and the Peretzes did when they were a minority in Morocco.

Last Monday, Peretz's battle bus visited what should be his natural constituency, a kibbutz - once the heartlands of Israeli socialism. They showed him its industry - not agriculture, but the largest printing press in the Middle East. It was spewing out cheque books for every bank in Israel

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Middle East crisis: A new war, but both sides recall old ones: Exodus from Beirut as Israel tightens vice and vows to disarm Hizbullah

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Body

The three Syrian guest-workers arrived before dawn yesterday, as they did every morning, to set up their coffee stall beneath the flyover, hoping to catch the breakfast trade from early risers in the southern suburbs of Beirut. That was when the bomb blew them away, along with a large section of the road above their heads. Nobody seemed to remember their names: they were just Syrians.

Kaseem Moqdad, who lives nearby, had woken in darkness to the sound of jets overhead. By the time the overpass was bombed he was out in the street in a crowd of people, looking up at the sky. In addition to those killed, he said, 20 people were injured by flying glass and rubble.

A former corporal in the Royal Fusiliers, Mr Moqdad had been back in his native Lebanon for only a year and a half, and Israel's assault on its capital left him with a sense of torn loyalties. "I don't like Hizbullah and I don't hate Hizbullah," he said, in an accent that was half Lebanese, half north London. "We have to fix why people get mad, and we're not treating the cause." He was proud to be British, he said. "But you do get angry with the west. The Israelis don't see that they kill children and women and innocent people."

The Israeli rockets and bombs that struck southern Beirut yesterday appear to have hit their intended targets, mainly roads. Most of those roads, though, are yards away from shops and homes. In the Shia neighbourhoods where the damage was worst some residents sought to salvage what they could, while others just gaped, looking shellshocked.

"I thought they might hit (the Hizbullah TV station) al-Manar," said Ahmad, a barber, standing amid broken glass and torn metal in his shop. "I didn't think they would hit people's homes."

Al-Manar later reported that Israeli warplanes had destroyed the building housing the headquarters of Hizbullah guerrillas in south Beirut. Late last night, an Israeli missile ship off the coast of Lebanon was crippled by an unmanned Hizbullah aircraft rigged with explosives. The ship, which was carrying several dozen sailors, was set ablaze and had to be towed back to Israel. Although there were no official reports of casualties, the Arab satellite channel al-Jazeera said four Israeli sailors were missing following the attack.

A mass exodus from Beirut, mainly of young families, was gathering pace, but the options for escape from Lebanon were evaporating. The capital's airport has been bombed, its sea routes blockaded by warships, and the main highway into Syria is impassable. Air attacks have left 53 people dead so far, as part of an Israeli campaign to win

Middle East crisis: A new war, but both sides recall old ones: Exodus from Beirut as Israel tightens vice and vows to disarm Hizbullah

the release of two soldiers captured by Hizbullah militants in cross-border raids on Wednesday. Hizbullah's counter-assault continued yesterday, with dozens of rockets reaching into northern Israel, and deep into the Israeli psyche.

Civil war reminder

On both sides of the border the recent crisis has fuelled a powerful sense of *deja vu*. For the Beirut residents frantically hoarding food, candles, batteries and petrol, the atmosphere recalled the country's 15-year civil war, and the 18-year Israeli occupation they thought had ended in 2000. For some in Israel the historical parallel was with the run-up to the war of 1967, and the prospect of direct military conflict between Israel and neighbouring countries—although some diplomats have voiced the view that the current actions are restrained compared with some Israeli military operations, for example in the 1982 war. For most of the day roads in northern Israel were empty, most people apparently obeying official instructions to stay inside. Many of the houses and apartment blocks have underground bunkers used in past conflicts. In mid-afternoon, in the almost-deserted centre of Nahariya in northern Israel, a Hizbullah rocket landed in the middle of a normally busy avenue, shattering windows in a shopping centre.

"We will continue suffering like this until the military makes them stop," said David Shevli, 32, who closed his grocery store on Thursday and spent yesterday fielding calls from worried friends. "We hope they will terminate them. People who criticise our attacks on Lebanon should come and live here themselves at a time like this. Then they will see." He added: "There will be no peace as long as Hizbullah is there on the border. They say they want Jerusalem. Then they will take Haifa. Give them a finger and they'll take your whole body. Let's erase Hizbullah and everything connected to them."

Israel is still reeling from the double assault on its military prestige by separate attacks from Hizbullah and ***Hamas***, which captured an Israeli soldier, Gilad Shalit, a month ago. Not only was the strongest army in the Middle East taken by surprise, but its assailants managed, through capturing soldiers, to prolong the pain.

Most Israelis could ignore the rocket attacks on Sderot and the farming communities that surround the Gaza Strip. The bombardment of northern Israel, home to 300,000 people, is physically much further from Tel Aviv than Sderot is, but psychologically much closer. Many Israelis have visited Haifa, or holidayed in Galilee. While there is little criticism in the media or on the street of Israel's attacks across the border, under the surface there are fears that Lebanon could again become a graveyard for its soldiers.

"This reminds me of a period before the 1967 war that was also characterised by mutual humiliations," said the Israeli historian Tom Segev. "From a military point of view the abduction of the soldiers should not have happened, but instead of admitting this the army uses it as a pretext to destroy the delicate political balance that exists in Lebanon . . . (Hizbullah leader Hassan) Nasrallah is a nasty guy. He's a bit like Saddam. So it's similar to the Iraq situation. We find it easier to relate to war in Lebanon than in Gaza."

Condemnation

The international response to the situation in Lebanon has been broadly condemnatory of Israel, but the US has given cautious backing to the attacks, and the issue seems likely to dominate the G8 summit in St Petersburg, starting today. In New York the UN security council was also expected to discuss the emergency, following an appeal from Lebanon's prime minister, Fouad Siniora, for it to intervene. Kofi Annan, the secretary general, has dispatched a three-person delegation to the region, and the EU's foreign policy chief, Javier Solana, was expected to follow.

But the immediate and longer term impact of the crisis will be measured inside Lebanon. As George Bush cautioned on Thursday, the attacks could destabilise the Beirut government and tear apart a fragile society made up of Shia and Sunni Muslims, Christians, and Druze. Just as problematically, it could also unite the population behind Hizbullah.

In Lebanon, unlike Israel, Hizbullah cannot be dismissed simply as a terrorist organisation. It has two seats in the coalition government, and essentially controls a swath of the south of the country.

Middle East crisis: A new war, but both sides recall old ones: Exodus from Beirut as Israel tightens vice and vows to disarm Hizbullah

If Israel's aim is to drive a wedge between Hizbullah and the rest of Lebanon there are signs it may not be succeeding. The patriotic music now playing on some of the Christian channels is one indication of the way the wind is blowing. Initial anger at Hizbullah has become more muted as attention focuses on the severity of the Israeli bombardment.

Israel's attempt to hold the Lebanese government responsible has also caused resentment. In remarks quoted by the Beirut Daily Star yesterday, the Druze leader, Walid Jumblatt, condemned "the use of violence against a state that did not wage war and does not assume the responsibility for it".

In Beirut yesterday Amal, seeing off relatives on a specially chartered coach to Syria, said she was not a Hizbullah supporter, but did not blame them for the current tragic turn of events. "They've been killing people in Gaza without anybody even raising a voice," she said. "That's why I don't see that Hizbullah is doing something wrong." Asked if the Lebanese government should hand Mr Nasrallah to Israel, her nephew Salah chipped in: "Nasrallah is like your annoying little brother. It is right to punish him, but he's still part of the household."

The Foreign Office last night warned against all travel to Lebanon and urged the 10,000 Britons who live there to "get ready for departure at short notice". The US state department also warned the 25,000 US citizens who live in Lebanon to consider leaving - if they could find a way out - while the Pentagon said it had ships in the region which could be used in the event of an evacuation.

Israel says its blockade of the country is, in part, an attempt to stop the captured soldiers being moved to Iran. The prime minister, Ehud Olmert, yesterday, vowed the offensive would continue until Hizbullah was disarmed. Ronnie Bar-On, the interior minister, said Mr Nasrallah had "issued his own sentence. I doubt if he would be able to find a life insurance agent these days".

The scale of the operation may also be an attempt by Mr Olmert and his defence minister, Amir Peretz, to establish military credibility in the eyes of the Palestinians and other states in the region: neither man has a long track record of military experience, and neither has been in power for more than a few months.

"I believe the current (Israeli) government will see this through, not because they are strong but because they are weak," said Israel Harel, a settler leader. "Neither the prime minister nor the defence minister has a security background, and the army has made tactical mistakes. They all have to prove that they can do what previous governments, who were led by stronger personalities such as Ariel Sharon and Ehud Barak, can do . . . on the surface this is all about freeing captured soldiers. But underneath it is about the prime minister ensuring that he can carry out the next phase of disengagement."

Whatever the logic of the attack, it was playing itself out with painful repercussions yesterday in, among other places, the now inaccessible Lebanese coastal village of Doueir. Israeli planes had been dropping leaflets in Hizbullah strongholds warning residents to evacuate.

"There are air raids all over," said Ahmed Ali, Doueir's supervisor of civil defence. A family with 10 children died just outside the village when missiles hit their home on Thursday night, he said. "Now, in Yater village, there has been a similar attack," Mr Ali said. "We don't know the casualties, because the bodies are still under the rubble."

Not many miles away, at an agricultural community in northern Israel, Amit Bar-on, a computer systems engineer, stood watching smoke from Hizbullah rockets rise into the sky. "It is a very bad situation that Israel has got into," he said. "We don't have a problem with Lebanese society, most of the Lebanese are good Christian people. We have a problem with Hizbullah. We got out of Lebanon six years ago and that was a good strategy. We thought there might be peace, not immediately but perhaps in 20 or 30 years. Now we don't see peace at all."

Load-Date: July 15, 2006

Middle East crisis: A new war, but both sides recall old ones: Exodus from Beirut as Israel tightens vice and vows to disarm Hizbullah

End of Document

METROPOLITAN NEW YORK

The Forward

June 9, 2006

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Body

Exhibit

Artful Communication: Vision /Action: Designers of the Next Generation is an exhibition featuring works by students and faculty of the Neri Bloomfield WIZO Academy in Haifa, Israel. The multi-media show reflects the ways in which such mediums as graphic design, digital communication, photography, architecture and video are used to promote tolerance, community and a global society. Founded 30 years ago by the Women's International Zionist Organization, the academy has some 750 students of diverse backgrounds, including Jews, Christians, Israeli Arabs and immigrants from countries around the world. Hebrew Union College -- Jewish Institute of Religion Museum, 1 W. 4th St. (between Broadway and Mercer St.); through Sept. 22; Mon.-Thu. 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; Fri. 9 a.m.-3 p.m.; free. (212-824-2205 or www.huc.edu/museum/ny)

Films

Odets: Set in New York in 1938, John Jacobs's made-for-television-film adaptation of Clifford Odets's play "Rocket to the Moon" (1986) focuses on the life of Ben Stark (John Malkovich), a 40-year-old dentist who falls in love with his young assistant, Cleo (Judy Davis), and faces the unraveling of his marriage and career. The film probes human feelings of failure, lost dreams and loneliness. Presented by the Center for Jewish History and the American Jewish Historical Society, the screening is part of the Clifford Odets Centennial Film Retrospective. A post-screening discussion follows. Center for Jewish History, 15 W. 16th St. (between Fifth and Sixth Aves.); June 14, 7 p.m.; \$10, \$5 for students. (212-294-8301 or www.cjh.org)

Forum: Documentaries that reflect different perspectives on the relationship between people living in the Middle East and the United States are featured in Hadassah's New York Film Forum. The four films, which are presented in two programs, were selected by graduates of the Hadassah Leadership Academy. "Program A" includes Michael Grynspan's "The Forgotten Refugees" (2005), which examines the exodus of 1 million Jews from such Arab counties as Egypt, Yemen, Libya and Iraq and includes personal stories and footage of rescue missions. "Program B" includes Pierre Rehov's recent "Suicide Killers," which presents an inside look at the pathology and motivations of suicide bombing and includes interviews with members of Hamas and with Israelis and psychologists. Panel discussions and question-and-answer sessions with the directors follow each program. Center for Jewish History, 15 W. 16th St. (between Fifth and Sixth Aves.); June 15; Program A: 4:30 p.m.-7 p.m.; Program B: 7:30 p.m.-10 p.m.; \$20 per program. (212-575-8193, ext. 232)

Lectures and Discussions

METROPOLITAN NEW YORK

Roth: Kenneth Libo discusses the career and works of renowned contemporary writer Philip Roth, a controversial figure in American Jewish literature. A prolific, award-winning writer, Roth was selected by the Library of America for publication. He is the author of the recently published book "Everyman" (Houghton Mifflin). Libo is a professor of American Jewish history at Hunter College. The talk is part of a series of events sponsored by the Hevesi Jewish Heritage Library of the Central Queens YM & YWHA. Central Queens YM & YWHA, 67-09 108th St., Forest Hills; June 13, 1:30 p.m.; \$4. (718-268-5011, ext. 151)

Arab Kingdom: Have you ever wondered, "Who are the Saudis?" Ralph Buultjens and Rachel Bronson discuss Saudi Arabian society and America's connections to the Arab kingdom in a conversation presented as part of the 92nd Street Y's series with Buultjens on world politics and foreign policy. An international affairs expert, Buultjens is author of some 10 books and holds positions at New York and Cambridge Universities. Bronson is a senior fellow and the director of Middle East and Gulf studies at the Council on Foreign Relations. She is the author of the recent "Thicker than Oil: America's Uneasy Partnership With Saudi Arabia" (Oxford University Press). 92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. and 92nd St.; June 15, 8:15 p.m.; \$25. (212-415-5500 or www.92Y.org)

Music

Coffee House: Rabbi Leyzer Abarbanel performs "Hassidic Songs, New and Old" at a kavehoyz (coffee house) concert presented by the Congress for Jewish Culture. Congress for Jewish Culture at the Atran Center, 25 E. 21st St.; June 15, 7 p.m.; \$8.

Klezmer: Head to Park Slope for a chance to see Yale Strom & Hot Pstromi, a klezmer group led by violinist, composer and writer Yale Strom, a leading figure in the contemporary revival of klezmer. The ensemble includes vocalist Elizabeth Schwartz, reed player Norbert Stachel and accordionist Peter Stan. Percussionist David Licht and bassist Nikki Parrott are featured as special guests. Barbes, 376 9th St. (corner of Sixth Ave.), Brooklyn; June 15, 8 p.m.-9:30 p.m.; \$10. (718-965-9177)

Performance

Love Fest: Everyone loves a good Jewish wedding. Celebrate Gay Pride Month with "Queer Wedding Sweet," a musical love story that blends Yiddish songs, juggling, poetry, jazz and humor. The production, which features renowned trumpeter and composer Frank London, Yiddish vocalist Adrienne Cooper, singer and accordionist Lorin Sklamberg, jazz pianist Marilyn Lerner and master juggler Sara Felder, explores the history, emotions and politics associated with queer Jewish culture. The multidisciplinary performance piece is presented in its United States premiere by the JCC in Manhattan. JCC in Manhattan, 334 Amsterdam Ave. (at 76th St.); June 14, 8 p.m.; \$20, \$15 for members.

Tour

Word on the Street: Oh, how the East Village has changed. Once the center of New York's punk rock scene and now overtaken by trendy cafés and deluxe apartment buildings, the neighborhood was known in the 19th century as Kleindeutschland (Little Germany) and was home to a significant number of German Jews. The JCC in Manhattan explores the history of the East Village on a walking tour that includes stops at forgotten synagogue buildings and the former Yiddish theater row. Meeting place: Sol Goldman Y, 344 E. 14th St.; June 11, 1 p.m.; \$15, \$10 for members. (646-505-5708 or www.jccmanhattan.org)

CALIFORNIA

Sudan: Journalist, novelist and poet Gabriel Meyer, author of "War and Faith in Sudan" (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), discusses his book at an event presented by the Skirball Cultural Center. The work offers a personal account of the second civil war in Sudan, and focuses on the experiences of the Nuba people. In 2005, Meyer traveled through the countryside in central Sudan and lived in several Nuba villages. The book includes a number of photographs by James Nicholls. A book signing will follow the discussion. The event is presented in association with Town Hall Los Angeles and in conjunction with Skirball's exhibition Rwanda/After, Darfur/Now: Photographs by Michal Ronnen Safdie. Skirball Cultural Center, 2701 N. Sepulveda Blvd., Los

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Angeles; June 20, 7:30 p.m.; \$12, \$10 for Skirball and Town Hall Los Angeles members, \$6 for students. (866-468-3399 or www.ticketweb.com)

Withdrawal: The events in Israel that led to last year's highly emotional Gaza withdrawal are the topic of "The Rule of Netzarim," part four of Chaim Yavin's controversial five-part documentary, "The Land of the Settlers." A renowned journalist and leading figure in Israeli television news, Yavin has made a film that presents a deeply personal and critical examination of the Israeli settlements. A discussion will follow the screening, which is presented by the Workmen's Circle/Arbeter Ring and by the Los Angeles Chapter of Brit Tzedek v'Shalom. Refreshments will be served. The Workmen's Circle/Arbeter Ring, 1525 S. Robertson Blvd., Los Angeles; June 21, 7:30 p.m.; \$5 suggested donation. (310-552-2007 or www.circlesocal.org)

ILLINOIS

Amazing Grace: Do you have two left feet? Never fear! Move your body to the beat at the 10th annual Chicago SummerDance series. The 11-week festival features one-hour dance lessons by professional instructors, followed by live music and dancing on an open-air dance floor. Learn Mediterranean and Balkan dances, including devetorka, chichovata, halay, debki, chocek, pharo and sota, with instructor Paul Collins. Show off new moves after the dance lesson, when Balkan Beat Box takes over the stage and plays Israeli Gypsy punk and electronica. Spirit of Music Garden, 601 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago; June 22; dance lesson: 6 p.m.-7 p.m.; live music: 7:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m.; free. (312-742-4007 or www.chicagosummerdance.org)

MASSACHUSETTS

Multicultural Sounds: Formed in 1977, Israeli musical ensemble Habrera Hativheet is a true testament to the possibility of bridging cultures and embracing diversity. The group features musicians of Sephardic, African, Indian and Middle Eastern backgrounds, and performs songs from Andalusian Spain, Yemen and Morocco. The band's repertoire, which is inspired by biblical tales and by contemporary life in Israel, also includes Hasidic chants from Eastern Europe and modern Israeli poetry. Led by composer and singer Shlomo Bar, the group performs at a concert presented by Boston's Museum of Fine Arts and the Boston Jewish Film Festival. Museum of Fine Arts, Remis Auditorium, Huntington Ave., Boston; June 18, 1 p.m.; \$25-\$30; \$20-\$25 for MFA and BJFF members, students and seniors. (617-369-3306 or www.mfa.org)

Coming of Age: The classic tale of a nice Jewish boy who is not athletically inclined is told in Paul Morrison's film "Wondrous Oblivion" (2003). Set in London in 1960, the film focuses on David Wiseman, an 11-year-old boy who loves to play cricket but is terrible at the game. The son of a Polish man and a refugee woman, David befriends his new neighbor, Dennis, a black Jamaican man who becomes his mentor and cricket coach. As their friendship develops, David becomes aware of race, cultural differences, religion, and the meaning of tolerance and loyalty. National Yiddish Book Center, Hampshire College, 1021 West St., Amherst; June 18, 2 p.m.; \$7. (413-256-4900 or www.yiddishbookcenter.org)

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Comical: On first glance, comedian Sarah Silverman appears to be a sweet, wide-eyed Jewish girl. But then she opens her mouth and speaks. As Silverman is known for her merciless, politically incorrect humor, the film "Jesus Is Magic" (2005), which she wrote and in which she stars, is not for those who are easily offended. The movie, which was directed by Liam Lynch, blends footage from a live stand-up comedy show in California with over-the-top musical numbers. When it comes to Silverman, nothing is taboo, so whatever your ethnicity or sexual orientation, you won't feel left out. The film is presented by the Washington Jewish Film Festival. The Passion of Sarah Silverman After Party follows the screening. The Washington Jewish Film Festival, 1529 16th St. N.W.; June 26, 7:30 p.m.; advance tickets: \$8.50; \$7 for seniors, students and members; tickets at the door: \$10, \$9 for seniors, students and members. (202-777-3248 or www.wjff.org)

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METROPOLITAN NEW YORK

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Pointing the finger of blame in Middle East

Yorkshire Post

August 14, 2006

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Length: 1867 words

Body

From: G Ambler-Shaw, Carleton Drive, Boston Spa, Wetherby.

THE whole tumult in the Middle East has its origins in 1948 when the British Labour government, newly elected and callow, washed its hands (reminiscent of Pontius Pilate, some 2,000 years before) of the British Mandate and the State of Israel was born, under the auspices of the United Nations.

This sudden wrench and uprooting resulted in the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians that formed the vast majority of the people who lived in the land and who, from then on, did not have a country to call their own. Since then justified resentment has been born and bred in each generation with widespread sympathies in Arab stock in the Middle East and elsewhere.

The tragedy of Palestine, and the suffering of its people for nearly 60 years, has made its indelible mark and while moral injustice prevails there can be no peace and Israel will continue to be an unhappy state. Ironically, a finger has long pointed at the "promised land". Israel accuses (as do some others) Hezbollah and **Hamas** of being terrorists, but what function did the Jewish Stern Gang and Irgun Svei Leumi perform, during the period 1945-48, in Palestine, at whose hands hundreds of British Palestine Police and civilians alike met barbaric deaths?

I speak as a former member of the Palestine Police, who saw the death of Palestine, and as an historian.

From: Ken Fraser, Dacre Banks, Harrogate, North Yorkshire.

"Cry havoc! And let slip the dogs of war!" Conflicts such as the Middle East war profit nobody but inflict pain and suffering on countless innocent people.

The human psyche is capable of creating great works, of finding the technology to put a man on the moon and split the atom. It can cure countless awful diseases and find the tenderness to nurse sick children.

Yet the psyche can also find the cruelty to kill thousands of fellow humans in pursuit of religious bigotry. It makes you wonder if mankind will ever learn from the past, or whether existence is just a vicious circle.

Promotion of senior police is on merit

From: David Wright, Little Lane, Easingwold, North Yorkshire.

THE report about the senior Muslim police officer (Yorkshire Post, August 8) who claims that discrimination and prejudice had blighted his attempts to secure a top job, after three attempts to become a chief constable, is another example of someone from the ethnic minorities wanting special treatment instead of accepting that a vacant appointment should go to the best person irrespective of sex, religion or ethnicity.

Pointing the finger of blame in Middle East

The Channel 4 programme on August 7, presented by Jon Snow, clearly showed how a growing number of British Muslims are rejecting the host country's traditional liberal, tolerant beliefs and, more worryingly, consider themselves to be Muslims first and British citizens second.

No, it is not right to manipulate any further our over-tolerant attitudes and laws; but we should expect newcomers and immigrants of all races and religions to assimilate and not expect special treatment over the indigenous population as this will only cause even more problems for all of us.

From: Donald Leach, Shaw Street, Holywell Green, Halifax.

SO Britain's most senior Asian police officer thinks that tougher anti-terror laws are discriminating against Muslims (Yorkshire Post, August 9).

I know mistakes were made over the Stockwell shooting when an innocent man was shot and killed, but circumstances were on a knife-edge then over the London Tube and bus bombings.

We are living in a terrorist

age and all people, irrespective of their creed and religious beliefs, are, at times, under suspicion.

I am afraid that it is a sign of present day situations, not a sign of criminalising innocent British Muslims.

From: Richard Michael, Scalebor Square, Burley in Wharfedale.

I am amazed that no one is pointing out the lack of

rights for women under fundamental Islam. Where

have all the women's libbers gone?

And why isn't Peter Tatchell shouting about the lack of any gay rights under Islam?

Travellers welcomed

From: Coun Mike Gardner, leader, Harrogate Borough Council.

In response to the letter

from Stella Harrison (Yorkshire Post, August 3), I do not need

to take up her invitation to

visit Leeds Art Gallery to visit the exhibition Paranoia.

Travellers in our district are made welcome, which is why

we are one of the few local-authority areas in the region

to have provided static sites which are very well run and managed.

What we will not tolerate

is travellers who illegally

break into and set up site on private and publicly owned land.

If they want to be treated as part of our community, then they have to be bound by the same laws.

Pointing the finger of blame in Middle East

We accept only one standard of behaviour for all, including matters such as anti-social behaviour and fly-tipping, and travellers are no exception.

I would invite Ms Harrison to visit us in the days after these travellers have upped sticks for their next site.

The mess they leave behind is disgusting and has to be cleared by either council staff, at council taxpayers' expense, or by companies who pay their taxes only to have their profits diminished by having to clear up unlawful fly-tipping.

I have no apology to make regarding urging residents not to employ itinerant travellers. And as regards setting an example to the work-shy, I would remind Ms Harrison that there is less than one per cent unemployment in the Harrogate district - way below the national average.

Toll roads deeply unfair

From: John McGoldrick, National Alliance Against Tolls, Hambledon Drive, Greasby, Wirral.

YOUR report on predicted gridlock on the M62 suggests that road pricing may be a possibility (Yorkshire Post, August 10).

The report also quotes the views of the Freight Transport Association and the RAC Foundation. Both those bodies have elsewhere made clear that they support road pricing or tolls.

We believe that their views do not represent those of the majority of Britain's drivers.

All tolls will do is force some

of the poorer drivers off the road, with little effect on traffic levels.

Drivers already pay £1bn a week in taxes on road use, but only one pound in seven is spent on the roads.

The lack of adequate roads frustrates drivers, increases accidents and damages the economy.

Road users are already

in effect voting with their money for better roads, but, unfortunately, the politicians not only fail to provide

them, they want us to pay

even more.

Of lonely windfarms and weaving sheds...

From: J Toothill, Ryefield Avenue, Clayton, Bradford.

A NEW report suggests that wind farms should be kept away from homes (Yorkshire Post, August 7).

All the wind farms I know about are situated on lonely hill tops, or moorland well away from homes of any kind.

My thoughts went back to my boyhood days when coming home from school, I passed the open doors of the local weaving shed.

The clatter of 40 or 50 machines was deafening. The girls who tended these machines developed a form of lip reading to communicate with each other.

No mention was ever made of any damages to the health of these girls being subject to eight or nine hours of deafening noise every day. But then, they were only mill girls and had to put up with it.

Pointing the finger of blame in Middle East

One of them was my mother who went deaf long before old age.

It is our social duty to recycle as much as we can

From: Ben Bradshaw, Environment Minister, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Nobel House, London.

I make no apology for describing people who fail to make use of the ever expanding recycling services provided by local councils as behaving anti-socially and irresponsibly (Yorkshire Post, August 9).

A lot of people (perhaps including your editorial writer) still don't realise that recycling helps to reduce climate change. First, because landfill - where most non-recycled waste goes - creates methane, one of the most potent of greenhouse gases.

And second, because recycling uses less energy than making new products from raw materials. Recycling also saves local authorities' - and hence council taxpayers' - money because it reduces the amount of waste that councils have to send to landfill. This means that they pay less landfill tax.

Also, it helps councils, and the UK as a whole, to meet our obligations under European Union law to send less waste to landfill, avoiding costly fines which would otherwise fall ultimately on the taxpayer.

So people who fail to recycle when they could easily do so are contributing unnecessarily to climate change - the biggest threat the world faces - and are adding unnecessarily to the council tax bills of their neighbours.

Your readers can judge whether such people are behaving irresponsibly and anti-socially.

You also describe the idea of people paying depending on how much non-recycled waste they produce as "laughable". But most of the rest of Europe and North America operate such systems and they have been shown to have a marked effect in reducing waste and increasing recycling.

Given the ever increasing amounts of waste that councils are having to deal with, plus the serious climate-change impacts of the way we treat our waste, to suggest that the Government should not look seriously at innovative policies that have proved a success overseas is itself laughable.

Points

A match made in heaven

From: IR Bolton, Knightsbridge Walk, Bradford.

I may have missed any suggestion about a cricket match in Fred Trueman's memory but, just in case, I would like to suggest a four-day match, hopefully with first-class status, between 11 Yorkshiremen and 11 Lancastrians.

This offers the prospect of Darren Gough, Chris Silverwood and Ryan Sidebottom back in the same side and a certain Michael Vaughan playing for the opposition.

If my pipe-dream is a starter, how about a trophy named the Trueman-Statham Trophy? Maybe Dickie Bird could be persuaded to come out of retirement to umpire such a match?

A face which

fits the bill

From: CM Watson,

Norman Road, Hatfield, Doncaster.

Pointing the finger of blame in Middle East

REGARDING Jayne Dowle's article about "New faces of Yorkshire" (Yorkshire Post, July 27), I must nominate Ian McMillan. Despite his Scottish surname, he is the epitome of the down-to-earth Yorkshireman. He speaks his mind, he knows what he likes and he's obviously as proud as Punch to have been born in God's own country and, what's more, close to Barnsley. What more could anyone want?

I would also like to add that I read Jayne Dowle's article sitting at the breakfast table opposite exactly the type of Yorkshireman that she describes.

P

ower to people

From: Michael McGowan, Town Street, Leeds.

WHEN so many good friends have left the Labour Party because of Tony Blair and New Labour, it is great as a member to be able to vote for Walter Wolfgang, the veteran peace activist, to join the National Executive Committee of the party after he was thrown out of the party's conference last year for heckling the then Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw.

Calling it quits

From: Ruthven Urquhart, High Hunsley, Cottingham, East Yorkshire.

I'M a shade older than the Prime Minister, but, despite having worked hard for over 44 years, if I'd made as many mistakes and aged as rapidly as he, I'm sure I'd bow to public opinion and step down gracefully - that is, if my meagre pension would allow such an action.

Load-Date: August 14, 2006

Guardian Weekly: Weekly Review: The unlikely first lady: Israel's prime minister, Ehud Olmert, is a rightwing nationalist: Married to Aliza, a leftwing artist who openly criticises his policies. Rachel Shabi profiles an unconventional political wife

Guardian Weekly

May 26, 2006 Friday

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***The*GuardianWeekly**

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Byline: Rachel Shabi

Body

Just before the Israeli election in March, a photograph of prime minister Ehud Olmert's wife Aliza was circulating on the internet. It pictured her hugging Muhammad Abu Tir, the henna-bearded **Hamas** leader. Apparently the rightwing Jewish National Front party was behind the spoof photo, intending to use it in a campaign pamphlet alongside the text: "Aliza Olmert's friends", while suggesting that "the Olmert family will tear Israel apart". At that time, Efraim Inbar, a political science professor at Bar-Ilan University, described Ehud Olmert's domestic background like this: "It would be the equivalent of George W Bush running for election with a family full of communists."

In Israel it is widely known that Olmert's wife is a lefty - as are their children. The new prime minister, however, has always been rightwing, a nationalist allied to the settler movement. Olmert, who took over the reins of the new Kadima party following Ariel Sharon's stroke in January, only recently moved toward the centre, first as deputy prime minister within the rightwing Likud party when he backed disengagement from Gaza, now with the Kadima-led coalition that speaks of further pull-outs from the West Bank. Aliza Olmert has always been open about her leftist views and had never voted for her husband until the recent election. Even then, she told the press, her vote was cast "with a certain amount of hesitation".

An accomplished artist, photographer, writer and social worker, Aliza Olmert has her own life, causes and career. She does not seem to belong to the world of parliamentary politics. She is not a smilingly compliant trophy wife to be wheeled out at public engagements. The 59-year-old is quiet and unaffected. Now that her husband is prime minister, many are wondering how she will play the role of Israel's first lady.

She is unlikely to embrace it with open arms. When America's Frontline/World programme asked her how she felt about the prospect of her husband becoming prime minister, she replied: "It has been imposed on me in many ways and it's not my choice." Is her role any fun, she was asked. "No, it's not fun at all. None of it."

Guardian Weekly: Weekly Review: The unlikely first lady: Israel 's prime minister, Ehud Olmert, is a rightwing nationalist: Married to Aliza, a leftwing artist

She recalled the night that the then prime minister, Ariel Sharon, fell into a coma and her husband, as deputy, was asked to stand in for him: "When we came home we realised the house had turned into a fortress, surrounded by security people . . . by media, by curious people . . . and I said, 'Bye bye, freedom.'"

Her apparent dislike of the political arena has led some friends to believe that she will do the absolute minimum required of her as PM's wife. While her 60-year-old husband seems to revel in the company of Israel's rich and powerful, she avoids it. "She hates bullshit, which means that she hates to go to cocktail parties and is annoyed by being recognised in the street and aghast at losing her privacy," says Tommy Lapid, former head of the secular, free-market liberal party Shinui and a close friend of the Olmerts. "If this had been on a lower level, she would shun it, but she understands that she can't." Lapid thinks that, in terms of attending functions, the first lady will "cooperate" with her husband, "but only to a limited degree, and when her absence will be more meaningful than her presence".

And yet the Israeli premier - and by extension his wife - is a critical international figure. Isn't there a chance, once she steps on to the White House lawn, as she was scheduled to do this week, that this new level of influence will go to her head? No, say her friends.

"For many years, she remained modest and never took advantage of the possibilities offered when [Ehud] was minister of health and then mayor of Jerusalem," says Savyon Liebrecht, an Israeli author who has known Aliza since they were both eight years old. "There is no reason why that would change now. She is not dazzled by anything, neither money, nor names, nor power."

Olmert herself admits that her husband's tenure as Jerusalem mayor from 1993 until 2003 was their most difficult time. His period of office was characterised by a strongly nationalist line and his support for Jewish expansion in the Old City and East Jerusalem. "He was actually creating realities that I disagreed with," she told the Frontline programme. "So this was really our worst time as a couple."

One of the most testing moments came in 1996, when Olmert, along with the then prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, opened a tunnel in Jerusalem's Old City. It was a politically charged move: the tunnel lay close to the Temple Mount or Haram al-Sharif. It is a site that Muslims hold sacred and they felt that Olmert's actions had desecrated a holy site. Stones were thrown and the Israeli army fired shots in retaliation. Within three days 80 people were dead. "I could see the consequences. I completely disagreed with it," she said.

"I know that, politically, [Aliza] was totally opposed to it and very upset by this act," says Edna Sobol, a set and costume designer who, along with her playwright husband, Joshua, had been a long-time friend of the Olmerts. Appalled, the couple broke off social relations with the Olmerts, although the two women remained in contact (and they have all recently been reconciled). "My husband and I could not accept what Ehud did, which was quite painful because we like him as a person and Aliza is very dear to me," says Sobol. "But she is much more tolerant, more accepting than I am."

When Ehud was elected mayor of Jerusalem, Aliza found another good friend in Michal Smoira-Cohn - her husband's political opponent. Cohn was elected to the city council at the same time as Ehud, but as a candidate for Meretz, the leftwing party that stands for an Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories. "Ideologically, Aliza is quite close to me," she says.

The widow of Haim Cohn, the famously liberal Israeli supreme court judge and keen defender of human rights, Michal recalls: "When I first met Aliza, she said, 'Invite us to your home. Maybe Haim can have some influence on my husband.'" Today, the issue of influence is still pertinent. Many wonder if, after 35 years of marriage, it was Aliza's sway that pulled her husband towards the centrist position that he now holds, where he is prepared to concede at least some Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank.

The couple met in 1970, while both were students at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, he studying politics, she social sciences. According to Amnon Dankner, a family friend and the editor of the Israeli tabloid Ma'ariv, Ehud did not impress her. "She couldn't stand him at first," he says. "She remembers seeing him at some political activity, a

Guardian Weekly: Weekly Review: The unlikely first lady: Israel 's prime minister, Ehud Olmert, is a rightwing nationalist: Married to Aliza, a leftwing artist

debate or something, and he seemed too pushy." Ehud persisted, tailing Aliza to the Jerusalem cafe where she worked as a waitress. "Reluctantly, she agreed to see him," says Dankner. After spending just a few weeks together, the couple decided to marry. "Ehud can be very charming," says Liebrecht. "There were no other assets then, apart from his personality."

Though the Olmerts will now move into the prime minister's official residence in Jerusalem, they have lived for years in the Arab suburb of Katamon in west Jerusalem. They have five children, one of whom is adopted. The eldest son, Shaul, lives in New York and signed a petition refusing to do reserve duty in the occupied territories. The younger son, Ariel, did not serve at all and currently studies in Paris. One of their daughters, Danna, was involved with Machsom Watch, the all-female organisation that monitors the conduct of Israeli soldiers at checkpoints. None of the children is on their father's side, politically.

Those who know the family speak of a warm, tolerant home without tensions, and an obvious love between husband and wife. On election night, as his party emerged the winners, Olmert gave a speech worthy of an Oscar acceptance, in which he thanked his family: "Your patience, your wisdom, your ability to disagree with me frequently and your understanding in agreeing with me infrequently - all these gave me strength, enthusiasm, faith and hope." For his wife, he added: "With her, everything becomes possible, right and reachable. This moment, more than anyone else, is all yours."

Political influence on the PM has also come from the couple's social circle. "[Aliza] was organising the social life of Olmert, so it was her friends he was meeting," says Lapid. "Her friends were more leftwing than his." But commentators insist that Ehud's gradual move to the centre has been shaped as much by Israel's new reality as by his domestic circumstances. "The most important influence [on Olmert] was the reality of things here, a reality that is coercing itself on to our political beliefs," says Dankner. According to this view, Olmert changed tack because he thought his political survival depended on it. Tellingly, when interviewed recently, he said of his family's politics, "I never questioned their right to be wrong."

She attributes the ideological differences between them to their very different backgrounds. He was born into an ultra-nationalistic Jewish community in the small town of Nachalat Jabotinsky, near Hadera in central Israel. His parents were members of Irgun, the militant Zionist organisation that was defined by the British and the Jewish mainstream at the time as a terrorist group. She was born in a displaced persons camp in Eschwege, Germany in 1946, the daughter of Holocaust survivors who were, she says, grateful to find in Israel a tiny bit of land to call their own.

This background inevitably shaped Olmert's art as well as her politics. As a writer, her work includes *Slice of the Sea*, a television drama about a Holocaust survivor returning to her home village in Poland, and *Synonym/Dead Line*, another TV drama, this time about the relationship between a Holocaust survivor and her children. She has also written both novels and plays.

Much of her visual art makes use of fragmented materials - bits of wire, strips of measuring tape, broken eggshells. Currently, her work can be seen at the Museum on the Seam, located on the boundary of East and West Jerusalem. Entitled *Dead End*, the exhibition deals with violence as a feature of Israeli life. Her contribution is a series of photographs depicting graffiti on the walls of Jerusalem's Old City. "The writing on the wall is not always verbal but it does chronicle the spirit of time," read the artist's accompanying notes. "It pictures the erosion of the continuing war, the weariness in the eyes of the people, the impatience with solutions far off on the horizon, the tide of escalation, the shout for calm and identity."

When not busy painting, she is also involved with several charities. These include Orr Shalom, which cares for children of all religions from troubled backgrounds, and others that focus on children or poverty.

While some Israelis, with typical cynicism, insist that deeper digging would be certain to unearth some dirt, her friends are clearly incredibly loyal. "I know that I am talking in superlatives," says Sobol, "but I really don't know anyone else like Aliza. She is very, very special." Alas, she is not currently talking to the press, though Dankner,

Guardian Weekly: Weekly Review: The unlikely first lady: Israel 's prime minister, Ehud Olmert, is a rightwing nationalist: Married to Aliza, a leftwing artist

who ran one of her last interviews in Ma'ariv, now says: "Our reporter was amazed that this woman has no enemies - even her husband's bitterest enemies sing her praises."

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THE DEMONS THAT HAUNT SRI LANKA; Civil war in the jungle The deserted beaches are littered with rubbish. The jungles are burning, torched by troops trying to flush out the Tamil Tigers. Eighteen months after the tsunami, Justin Huggler reports from Trincomalee on the disaster confronting a seeming paradise

The Independent (London)

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The  **INDEPENDENT**

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Body

The guide books say the beach at Uppuveli is the finest on Sri Lanka's east coast. The setting is the stuff of tropical island paradise, a graceful curve of white sand with palm trees leaning over it, and emerald water as far as the eye can see. But today the beach is covered in discarded rubbish. The hotels and beach huts are empty and boarded up, no tourists come here any more. As evening falls menacing packs of dogs roam the empty beach.

It has nothing to do with the tsunami that devastated Sri Lanka's beaches a year and a half ago. A different disaster is looming over Sri Lanka: a man-made disaster. The tourists are not coming here any more because Sri Lanka seems to be slipping inevitably back into civil war.

Tourists still flock to the other side of the islands, to the beaches of the south and west. You can still eat freshly grilled fish at a table on the water's edge, while the waves wash over your feet, or drink the water from a bright orange king coconut while you float in the Indian Ocean, or doze under a palm tree as the sun slowly sinks into the waves. The tsunami is a thing of the past, and paradise is back in business. But all the while there is an air of impending disaster.

If you drive through the jungle in the east, you can see herds of wild elephants crossing the road. Long-tailed monkeys watch you go by from the trees. At night, fireflies hang by the roadside, and green snakes are caught in the car's headlights as they slither across the tarmac. This is the unspoilt Sri Lanka tourists flock from around the world to see.

But these days even the elephants are on edge. They watch as Sri Lankan soldiers set fire to the foliage they feed on. The fires burn through the night and send blinding columns of smoke into the sky. The army is trying to clear the roads of hiding places for Tamil Tiger guerrillas, so they are burning the unspoiled jungles of Sri Lanka.

THE DEMONS THAT HAUNT SRI LANKA Civil war in the jungle The deserted beaches are littered with rubbish. The jungles are burning, torched by troops trying to flu....

The tsunami on Boxing Day in 2004 was a defining moment. There was no compassion fatigue, the world shared in Sri Lanka's tragedy. The relief camp built for tsunami survivors just outside Sampoor village is full again. But this time it is sheltering people who fled air strikes on their village last week, more than 10,000 of them, using the makeshift lavatory facilities put up by international NGOs for those made homeless by the tsunami.

"I was in my house with my husband," says Nadaraja Parthipillai. "I heard a huge noise. My neighbour's house was hit, the Nahaiyas, and the whole family was killed, all 10 of them. Four of them were children. After we saw that we just started running and came here." Ms Parthipillai and her husband sleep in the open under the shelter of a palm tree. Like everyone else here, they say they are too scared to return home, afraid of more air strikes. At least 12 people died in the village last week. But Sampoor is not just any Sri lankan village. It lies inside territory controlled by the Tamil Tigers, right on the frontline.

At least 64,000 people died during the two-decade war between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and government forces, before an uneasy ceasefire was negotiated in 2002 by Norwegian mediators. That ceasefire has been slowly crumbling this year, until this week the European mission that monitors it admitted that while it is still technically in force, on the ground there is no longer a ceasefire.

The air strikes came after months of attacks on Sri Lankan security forces using remote-controlled mines and grenades, which culminated in the attempted assassination of the army chief by a **female** suicide bomber last week. The heavily pregnant woman entered the army headquarters in Colombo with explosives strapped to her body. Once inside, she detonated the bomb. At least eight people were killed, and the army chief is still in a serious condition.

Though they have strenuously denied responsibility, suicide bombing is the calling card of the Tamil Tigers. Long before Osama bin Laden or **Hamas** got in on the act, the Tamil Tigers were the militant group that first used suicide bombers deep inside their target's territory.

The attack was just the biggest in a series of strikes on Sri Lankan security forces. Last month, two British tourists were injured during a mine attack on a navy bus. The driver of the bus was killed, and it veered out of control into the minibus in which the Britons were travelling.

Every time the violence has begun to calm, there has been a new attack. Sri Lanka called off air strikes on Sampoor last week under intense pressure from its giant neighbour, India. But within days there were new attacks. On Monday, a remote-controlled mine exploded in Trincomalee's city centre. The target was a naval patrol, but a tuk-tuk auto-rickshaw bore the brunt of the blast, and four civilians were killed, as well as one sailor. It seems someone wants the violence to keep intensifying.

The Tigers deny responsibility for the attacks, but everyone in the diplomatic and aid community in Sri Lanka is convinced they are behind them. The international community has been trying all year to bring the two sides together for talks. At one point, they met in Geneva, in the first serious peace talks for years. But the Tigers have been refusing to travel to a second round of talks, citing government restrictions on their commanders travelling to meetings.

Crossing from government-held territory to the Tiger areas is a tense affair. At the front lines, barbed wire snakes across dusty fields. There is a government checkpoint with nervous soldiers. Then a short no-man's land, and you are inside Tiger territory.

There are only dirt roads inside the Tiger enclave at Sampoor, and there is little food - Sri Lankan journalists insist on loading up on biscuits before making the crossing. But the tiny enclave, only a few square miles, is fully administered by the Tigers - including a courthouse and government offices. And, amid the fields and bomb-damaged buildings, fighters in the tiger-stripe camouflage of one of the most effective guerrilla forces in the world. The Tigers have been fighting for more than two decades for a separate homeland for Sri Lanka's Tamil minority in the north and east of the country, saying they are discriminated against by the Sinhalese majority. At its height

THE DEMONS THAT HAUNT SRI LANKA Civil war in the jungle The deserted beaches are littered with rubbish. The jungles are burning, torched by troops trying to flu....

during the civil war, the LTTE controlled large areas of Sri Lanka, including the cities of Jaffna and Batticaloa. That is now reduced to a portion of the north, plus small enclaves, such as this, in the east.

The Tigers have carefully nurtured their mystique. Every guerilla fighter is issued with a cyanide suicide capsule the day he is accepted into the Tigers' military ranks - to take if he is ever captured alive. Suicide bombings, carried out by an elite unit known as the Black Tigers, have been at the heart of the Tigers' extraordinary effectiveness as guerrilla fighters.

Puli Kutty's ambition in life is to become a suicide bomber. Just 22 years old, he already wears the tiger-stripe uniform of the LTTE. He joined the Tiger ranks as a child soldier, at 14 - the Tigers say they do not recruit children any more, but international NGOs have accused them of continuing to do so. He says his three brothers were killed by Sri Lankan government forces. Puli Kutty is not his real name, it means Son of the Tiger. "I am ready for death," he says. "When I die I expect Tamil Eelam for our people one day." Tamil Eelam is the name the Tigers have given to the homeland they seek.

Talking to Puli Kutty is unsettling. There is none of the talk of a guaranteed place in heaven for martyrs you hear from Muslim suicide bombers. He says he is not religious and believes that there is nothing after death. "When I make a suicide attack, only one person can inflict major losses on the enemy," he says calmly. "If we fight conventionally, we will lose several people to inflict the same losses.

There is a sort of fanaticism to the young man, he is utterly devoted to the cause. The only proviso he makes is that he would not want children to die in any suicide bombing he carries out.

The head of the Tigers' political wing in Sampoor, S Elilam, does not shed any light on why Sri Lanka is lurching back towards civil war. He sticks to the official line: the Tigers have not been involved in any of the attacks. "We have not broken the ceasefire," he insists, "we are maintaining the ceasefire agreement. It was broken by the Sri Lankan government. One army commander was injured and the Sri Lankan government is targeting the entire Tamil people with these air strikes," he says. "The LTTE has a right to defend the lives of Tamils. The government is there to defend the Sinhalese, so who is going to defend the Tamils?" On the drive back from Sampoor, a huge tree is burning, the victim of a grenade attack only minutes before I passed by.

Jehan Perera of the National Peace Council, a widely respected Sinhalese peace campaigner, says there is "absolutely no doubt" the Tigers are behind the attacks on the Sri Lankan military. "The slide back towards war is primarily because of the LTTE's loss of confidence that it can achieve its objective through peace talks," he says. "They say they have met six or seven times with the government but the talks have yielded nothing. So they have gone back to what brought them the best results: military strength." The Tigers have reduced their original demand for an independent homeland to autonomy within a federal Sri Lanka, but the government has refused to countenance it. Mahinda Rajapaksa, the Sri Lankan President, was elected last year on a promise not give in to Tiger demands.

"What the LTTE is trying to achieve from the current violence is either to provoke a full-scale war, or to make the cost of a military campaign so high for the government that it will give in to their demands," says Dr Perera. In particular, the Tigers are demanding the government reins in the activities of a breakaway Tiger faction led by Colonel Karuna - it is an open secret in Sri Lanka that the government is supporting his renegade faction against the Tigers. Col Karuna, which is the nom de guerre for Vinayagamoorthi Mu-ralitharan, is formerly the Tigers' most senior field commander and represents a real threat to Tiger security.

In a full-scale war, the Tigers may well believe they can win back the major towns they once controlled, Jaffna and Batticaloa.

"The present situation can't continue," says Dr Perera. "The only option the government has is to strike the LTTE at its roots, and that means war. I guess there is another option, for the international community to find some way to put pressure." With the violence intensifying by the day, the future looks bleak for paradise. The repercussions of

THE DEMONS THAT HAUNT SRI LANKA Civil war in the jungle The deserted beaches are littered with rubbish. The jungles are burning, torched by troops trying to flu....

the violence in the east are already being felt along the beach resorts of the south and west. As the sun sets and the tourists order another round of drinks, the party is still going on. But it may not be for much longer.

Graphic

A Tamil rebel guards his territory in Sampoor, the eastern port of Trincomalee. Above, one of the idyllic beaches that bring thousands of tourists to Sri Lanka BUDDHIKA WEERASINGHE/REUTERS

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This man's young disciples, trained in the cause of martyrdom, wrap themselves in explosives and blow up innocent Jewish civilians

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Body

Christine Toomey was invited to lunch with one of Israel's most wanted and implacable enemies to discuss the politics of murder

The black cloud of minute shrapnel shard shrouding much of Zakaria Zubeidi's face, including the whites of his eyes, is so surreal and sinister-looking that I am momentarily mesmerised as he approaches me to take a seat by my side for lunch.

Even before we start talking I unconsciously strain a little closer to make out the full extent of the disfigurement. When I realise I am staring and may cause offence, my eyes drop to waist level and I catch sight of the man on Israel's list of most wanted terrorist suspects adjusting his belt before sitting down. There is a large revolver - a 9mm Smith & Wesson, I later learn - prominently tucked into the top of his jeans.

This is not someone, I remind myself, anyone would want to upset in a hurry. Suddenly I no longer feel hungry. "Just a little for me, please," I whisper to the wife of our host, a neighbour of one of the safe houses used by this head of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade in the Jenin refugee camp on the Palestinian West Bank.

As far as the Israelis are concerned, this man is a chief strategist of suicide bombers in the camp they refer to as "the capital of suicide terrorism". Over the past four years, according to Israeli government sources, at least 83 Israelis have been killed and 686 more wounded in suicide attacks for which the al-Aqsa brigades have claimed responsibility.

But to those in Jenin, who call him simply by his first name, Zakaria is both a godfather of the Palestinian resistance movement and a Robin Hood figure to the poor. To the children of the camp, raised amid the gun culture of so many years of warfare, he is a cross between a superhero and a pied piper, a man they idolise and yearn to follow.

In seeking a rare interview with Zakaria I am fully expecting that, if he does agree to see me, the meeting will last only a few minutes. "Zakaria never stays in one place for long," my interpreter warns me more than once.

So when he does come, I constantly anticipate he will cut off our interview and leave. As the photographer zooms in on his face, I motion her to back off again to avoid rankling him prematurely. This is much to the later chagrin of my editors.

This man's young disciples, trained in the cause of martyrdom, wrap themselves in explosives and blow up innocent Jewish civilians

Yet Zakaria seems relaxed. He is dressed in a much more casual manner than I've been led to expect. Instead of the usual combat gear, semiautomatic M-16 rifle and lines of ammunition strung across his chest, he is wearing Fila trainers, jeans and a cream-coloured T-shirt with the logo "13lbs of denim attitude" printed across the right breast. He is in a reflective mood and not only stays to finish lunch but, once the plates have been cleared away, eases his tall, lean frame back in an armchair to sip strong, sweet tea and carry on talking.

Just before he appears in the room, a tall, gaunt figure identifying himself only as "Ramsey" takes a position on a sofa opposite me. As we exchange greetings, I notice that Ramsey keeps eyeing the open door behind my back. I calculate that he must be some sort of scout making sure the coast is clear. But as we await the arrival of the man described by one prominent Israeli politician as an "accomplished and proud terrorist", Ramsey seems happy to answer questions. So, if Zakaria is such a prime target, I ask, how is it he has not been arrested or assassinated in one of the Israeli security forces' "targeted killing" operations?

"There have been intense campaigns to get him. But so far he has been lucky. The people who move around Zakaria are extremely intelligent and, up until now, no collaborator has managed to get into his circle," Ramsey replies cautiously. "Usually the people who get killed have weaknesses," he adds. "They love money or they love women."

Yet Zakaria, just 29, clearly loves the latter. When he does slip behind me with feline agility a few minutes later, to be greeted by outstretched arms from Ramsey and our host, one of the first things he mentions is he has become a father for the second time. His son, aged two, now has a sister.

And two years ago a 29-year-old Israeli woman, accused of being Zakaria's girlfriend, was arrested and charged with "contact with a foreign agent in a time of war". Both the woman, a former legal secretary called Tali Fahima, and Zakaria have denied their friendship was romantic. But the allegations stuck with the Israeli public, for whom the "Fahima affair"

became a national scandal. As a result, Fahima, who openly boasted her admiration for the man "who does so much for his nation! yet cannot even remain in the same place for half an hour", is still sitting in an Israeli jail.

Before speaking to me for the first time, Zakaria smiles to acknowledge congratulations on the birth of his daughter. Apart from his disturbing facial disfigurement - the result of fragments of shrapnel embedded in his flesh as he mishandled a bomb three years ago - I see that, when he smiles, he could be described as handsome. His smile bares a perfect set of teeth in a curiously symmetrical crescent moon, a feature that has led some to describe him as clownish. But Zakaria is no fool, despite his education being interrupted at an early age by a lengthy spell in prison for throwing stones and Molotov cocktails.

Unlike me, Zakaria has a healthy appetite. As we start to talk he tucks into a large plate of makloobeh - a mix of rice, roasted cauliflower and chicken flavoured with cinnamon, cumin and cardamom. He smothers dollops of yoghurt on top of the mix before spooning it into his mouth and chewing thoughtfully, considering each question before answering. For most of the hour we sit talking, he speaks in quiet, measured tones. He displays little emotion until he mentions the death of his mother, killed in the spring 2002 Israeli offensive against the refugee camp. The army raid followed a suicide bombing by a Jenin resident in which 29 Israelis died. As tanks rolled into the camp, hundreds of homes were reduced to rubble, leaving 2,000 Palestinians homeless. At the end of 10 days of fighting, 23 Israeli soldiers and 52 Palestinians, including women and children, were dead.

As the call to prayer echoes through the narrow, winding and still battle-scarred streets of Jenin, Zakaria talks about the special affinity he feels he has with its children, and the loss of childhood, including his own. He recalls being sent to a prison as a boy of 14 at the outbreak of the first intifada uprising against Israeli occupation. The previous year he had been shot in the leg by an Israeli soldier for throwing stones.

Despite six months in hospital undergoing four operations, he was left with one leg shorter than the other and a slight limp that is still noticeable.

This man's young disciples, trained in the cause of martyrdom, wrap themselves in explosives and blow up innocent Jewish civilians

"I had already been injured by soldiers, then I was sent to prison for six months; there they made me the representative of the other child prisoners and I started taking their problems to the head of the jail," he explains.

Soon after his release, he was sent back to jail; this time for 4 1/2 years for throwing Molotov cocktails. "I was transferred from the child area to the adult area of the prison, and the adults dealt with me as a child. I could not absorb what was happening. In the children's section I was looked upon as a leader. How could I be demoted to a child again after so much experience as a leader?" While in prison he was recruited to the ranks of Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement. After he was released from jail in the wake of the 1993 Oslo peace accords, he joined the Palestinian Authority's (PA)

police force. But disillusioned by the PA's nepotism and rife corruption, he soon left and got a job, briefly, as a construction worker in Tel Aviv.

Arrested again for failing to possess a work permit, he was sent back to Jenin, where he took a job as a truck driver transporting flour and olive oil. He lost this job when the occupied territories were sealed off by the Israelis at the beginning of the second intifada in September 2000. It was after witnessing the killing of a close friend by Israeli soldiers the following year that he turned to armed militancy and bomb-making.

But it is what happened before he was jailed the first time as a child, and what happened after the outbreak of the latest intifada, to which Zakaria returns again and again. It is this that holds the key to the man he is today. It is here that his bitterness and buried pain lie. "I was injured at 13, put in jail at 14. Where is my childhood? Where has my childhood gone?" he repeats with self-pity. "Did you know we had a children's theatre in the camp before that? Arabs and Israelis. They used to come to my house to practise," he says with a sudden, sour laugh.

The theatre group he talks of was the initiative of an Israeli peace activist called Arna Mer-Khamis, who married a Palestinian and became a prominent human-rights campaigner. During the first intifada in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when Israel closed all Palestinian schools in the occupied territories for a time, she started a series of learning centres for Palestinian children in the West Bank and Gaza. As part of an initiative to foster understanding between Palestinians and Israelis, she opened a children's theatre in Jenin called Arna's House, run by a group of dozens of Israeli volunteers. The rehearsal space for the theatre troupe was the top floor of Zakaria's house. It had been offered by his mother, Samira, a widow struggling to raise eight children alone, who believed peace between the two warring sides was possible. Zakaria's father had been an English teacher prevented from teaching by the Israelis because of his membership of Fatah. To support his family he became a labourer in an Israeli iron foundry until he died of cancer.

At the core of the troupe were six boys: Zakaria, then 12, his older brother Daoud, and four others around the same age. There was Ashraf, an extrovert who dreamt of becoming a professional actor; Yusuf, whom Zakaria described as "the most romantic and sentimental of all of us"; Yusuf's neighbour and best friend, Nidal; and Ala'a, a withdrawn boy traumatised by the demolition of his home by Israeli forces as collective punishment for the actions of an older, jailed brother. Zakaria talks of the time he spent with the troupe as one of the happiest of his life. A time when the children "felt like real people, people who mattered".

As the boys acted out their fantasies and frustrations in this room in Zakaria's house, Arna's son, the Israeli actor Juliano Mer-Khamis, started making a documentary about their lives. Over a decade later, following the 2002 Israeli incursion into Jenin, he returned to find out what had happened to the boys and complete his documentary, *Arna's Children*, released in 2004 to critical acclaim. Zakaria was by then a member of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades. His brother Daoud had been sent to jail for 16 years for terrorist activity. The other four - Ashraf, Nidal, Ala'a and Yusuf - were all dead (see box on page 51). Also dead was Zakaria's mother, killed a month before the incursion, when Israeli forces had already started staging lightning raids on the camp. Samira had sought refuge in a neighbour's home, but had briefly popped her head out of a window and was shot by an Israeli soldier and bled to death. Zakaria's brother Taha was killed by Israeli soldiers shortly afterwards.

But it is not just the deaths of his mother, brother and friends that have embittered Zakaria. It is the deafening silence afterwards of those in Israel's peace camp who he had thought were his friends. "Not one of those people

This man's young disciples, trained in the cause of martyrdom, wrap themselves in explosives and blow up innocent Jewish civilians

who came to the camp and were our guests as part of the theatre group, fed every day by my mother, called to say they were sorry my family had died," he says. "Not one of them picked up a phone."

Perhaps I have not spent long enough with the Israeli families of those killed by suicide bombing attacks, although I have spent many hours sitting with them. But in these moments, before Zakaria adopts a more bravura performance, what I hear are the words of a still wounded child. "That is when we saw the real face of the left in Israel; the left who later joined the Sharon government," Zakaria continues. "So anybody talking about the peace camp in Israel does not convince me. I have no more confidence in the left, and this is a scary development. When you lose hope, your options are limited," he says with a deep sigh, slumping back in his chair again. "So this is how suicide attacks happen. When people lose hope. When a suicide bomber decides to carry out an attack, he's fully convinced there is no more hope."

"Look," he says, "there is a war being waged against us on every front, including economic. What else can we do? How can we pit our strength against the power and military capabilities of the Israelis? How can we fight on the same level? If you use Apaches (helicopters) and F-16s (fighter jets) against me, of course I am going to use a suicide attack against you."

As he fixes me with his gaze, I consciously try not to look away before he does, as a challenge to what he says. But he outstares me. So how can this bloody cycle of violence on both sides ever come to an end, I ask, fully expecting the pat answer he duly returns: "It will only end with the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, and with making sure that Palestinians have their rights."

Unlike the recent victors in the Palestinian election - the radical Islamic movement Hamas, which refuses to recognise the right of Israel to exist - those allied to Fatah, such as al-Aqsa (see box on page 49), still support a two-state solution of an independent Palestine alongside the state of Israel. Within this context, the power and influence of extremists such as Zakaria cannot be overestimated. In the run-up to the election of Mahmoud Abbas as Palestinian president in early 2005, Abbas travelled to Jenin to pay court to Zakaria. When crowds chanted Zakaria's name, not that of Abbas, as the gun-toting militant hoisted the 69-year-old former schoolteacher onto his shoulders to carry him through the streets, the message was not lost on the elderly politician. Even Arafat paid homage to the young firebrand, Zakaria recalls, once patting him on the back and saying: "Zakaria, buddy, I love you. We're marching to Jerusalem!"

"Look," Zakaria says. "Whoever thinks we can live under occupation is mistaken t-o-t-a-l-l-y," drawing out the last word for emphasis. "We are present and we have the right to live. Our children have the right to live, and if we feel we have come to the point where Palestinian children don't have the right to live, then childhood and the whole concept of childhood in the world is finished." So we return to childhood. But what about those whose childhood is cut short by Palestinian suicide-bombing atrocities, I badger him. And it is here our discussion enters the realm of fantasy. "I have not in all my resistance hurt a child. I am against hurting children."

In the Aqsa-brigade suicide attacks never did a child die. Most of the acts I've been involved in are shooting acts," insists the man sat before me with a gun at his hip.

Exactly what he has and has not been involved in should be a matter for the courts to decide. According to Israeli sources, at least six children have been killed and many more injured in suicide attacks for which al-Aqsa have claimed responsibility. Yet it will almost definitely never come to a court appearance. If Zakaria does not himself become a shahid, or martyr, as suicide bombers call themselves, he faces the near certainty that he will be targeted and killed by Israeli security forces, as have previous heads of the al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades.

Zakaria admits he does not expect to grow old and seems resigned to the prospect that his children will grow up without their father. There have been numerous attempts to assassinate him. One, by an elite unit of Israeli border police two years ago, left five Palestinians, including a 14-year-old boy, dead in a shoot-out. Soon after we meet, Israeli security operations are again stepped up throughout the West Bank. Nine Palestinians are killed close to Jenin and nearby Nablus, and Zakaria is again on the run.

This man's young disciples, trained in the cause of martyrdom, wrap themselves in explosives and blow up innocent Jewish civilians

When I dismiss his claim about avoiding child targets as nonsense, Zakaria starts to backtrack. When a suicide bomber walks into a shopping mall or cafe or onto a crowded bus and blows himself up, he is oblivious as to whether or not there are children among those he intends to murder, I insist. "When kids are targeted, that's a mistake," Zakaria blusters, before cranking his political posturing up a gear. "Every time we have a suicide attack it is a reaction to an aggressive Israeli attack. Our attacks are not strategic attacks. All the attacks of the Aqsa brigades have been reaction to big Israeli aggressive attacks. Since we all feel that we are targeted, we follow an Arabic saying, 'Don't die before showing you're a strong opponent.' We have no problem with Israel. We have a problem with the occupation. We in Palestine have the highest level of independence and integrity of thinking."

From here our discussion descends to absurdity. When I challenge him about the fundamental barbarity of the act of suicide bombing and the waste of the young lives of the suicide bombers, he insists the al-Aqsa brigades have never used a child in attacks. The case of a 16-year-old boy who, four years ago, positioned himself alongside a group of elderly people playing chess before detonating the bomb he was carrying, killing himself and two others and wounding 40 more in an attack attributed to al-Aqsa is ignored.

And what about even younger boys, I argue, caught at checkpoints with bomb belts strapped to their waists? "Ah yes," Zakaria concedes. "But they were intending to be caught. A true suicide bomber will never be stopped by any checkpoint. These boys you are talking about go to the checkpoint desiring to be caught to escape their bad economic situation. They want to go to prison - they can study better there."

The idea that teenage suicide bombers are deliberately allowing themselves to be caught by the Israelis so they can get a bit of peace and quiet to do their schoolwork behind bars is clearly preposterous. But when I laugh out loud, Zakaria tries to drive the point home, gesticulating with his finger in the direction of my pen and notepad. "I would like you to know. Write it down! We do not use children for such acts."

As the tension in the room rises, the curtain billows away from the window again to reveal the wide-eyed children gathered outside, clearly listening to what is going on inside. Glancing at the innocent faces pressed against the tilted glass slats at the window, Zakaria muses on his attraction to the children of the refugee camp. "They like me because I can talk to them."

I always come down to their level. They are proud to know me. Other kids will ask, 'Do you know Zakaria? Have you spoken to him?' Kids look up to me as a fighter. I am a symbol of resistance. It is important they see I am not too big to pay attention to them, that I care about them. I want them to know Zakaria is easy to reach. Zakaria is there to speak to. These things make kids come near to you."

So, pied piper? Manipulator of innocence? Terrorist? Wounded child? Resistance fighter? Superhero? To understand is in no way to excuse, but Zakaria Zakaria is no enigma. Following the arc of his life in this extraordinary encounter, I conclude it little wonder he is all of these.

Then, just as he had entered with no warning, little ceremony and children following in his wake, the man who has been compared to a cat with nine lives slinks quietly from the room

AL-AQSA MARTYRS' BRIGADES

The al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades emerged at the start of the second intifada.

The intifada was sparked by Palestinian outrage that Ariel Sharon and 1,000 armed guards had entered their holy site - the Haram al-Sharif, or "Noble Sanctuary" containing the al-Aqsa mosque - in east Jerusalem. The brigades consist of local clusters of armed activists believed to be affiliated with Fatah - the political organisation founded by Yasser Arafat that ruled the Palestinian Authority until Hamas won an overwhelming majority in January's elections. Fatah leaders claim there is no supervisor-subordinate role between Fatah and al-Aqsa, and that they have never been able to exercise effective control of the martyrs' brigades. Local al-Aqsa brigades are believed to be loosely structured and driven by charismatic personalities such as Zakaria Zubeidi. When I try to confirm with Israeli authorities the charges Zubeidi is wanted on, I am stonewalled. I am instructed to trawl through government records

This man's young disciples, trained in the cause of martyrdom, wrap themselves in explosives and blow up innocent Jewish civilians

of 135 suicide and other bombing and shooting attacks carried out in Israel since September 2000 to see how many the al-Aqsa brigades have claimed responsibility for. Total: 20.

THEATRE OF WAR: THE CHILD ACTORS WHO BECAME KILLERS

In 1989 the Israeli peace activist Arna Mer-Khamis opened a children's theatre group in Jenin called Arna's House. Zakaria is one of the few members still alive

YUSUF SWEITAT

After graduating from high school, Yusuf became a homicide investigator with the Palestinian police. But in 2001, after witnessing the killing of a 12-year-old girl by an Israeli tank, he joined the Islamic Jihad extremists. At 22, after making a video of himself and a friend reading the Koran, the two drove into an Israeli town and opened fire, killing four, before being shot dead by Israeli police.

ASHRAF ABU EL-HAJE

Ashraf (above, with a friend from the theatre group) joined the al-Aqsa brigades in early 2002. He and Yusuf's cousin Nidal died at the age of 22, at the height of fighting during the Jenin incursion. They were killed by an Israeli helicopter missile after hacking out a hole to make a firing position in a wall of Zakaria's house (the same room he and the other child actors used as a rehearsal space).

ALA'A SABAGH

After Arna's theatre group disbanded, Ala'a dropped out of school and joined the al-Aqsa brigades. During the Jenin incursion he was captured by the Israelis. On his release, after giving a false name, he returned to Jenin and became head of the camp's al-Aqsa brigade. In 2002 an Israeli aircraft fired a missile into the house he was hiding in with the leader of the Islamic Jihad. Both were killed.

ZAKARIA ZUBEIDI

Juliano Mer-Khamis, who made the documentary Arna's Children, calls Zakaria "a charmer, who always took care of his appearance". While few of those in Israel's peace camp, hosted by Zakaria's mother, took any interest in what happened to his family after she was killed, Mer-Khamis stayed in touch and is now founding a theatre in Jenin: www.thefreedomtheatre.org

Load-Date: June 30, 2006

Farmers suffering a variety of blows

Yorkshire Post
August 12, 2006

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Length: 2184 words

Body

From: Gordon Downey, Upper Halstead, Thurstonland, Huddersfield.

WE have a smallholding here of 40 acres (16 hectares) and submitted our claim to the Rural Payments Agency for the Single Payment Scheme. The 35-page application form was duly completed by the requested date in May 2005.

There followed lengthy correspondence for errors in measurement for various fields and the fact that another farmer had apparently claimed for two fields from this property - name withheld by RPA on grounds of confidentiality.

Further validation checks are still required but entitlement may result in payment of 220 euros. No payment has yet been made although application has been made for 2006.

This scheme is an administrative nightmare and the only purpose seems to be to provide employment for more public servants. Why not make a flat payment for any farmer with less than 30 hectares?

From: NDN Welford, Sandhutton, Thirsk.

I WAS delighted that you gave pride of place to the "disgraceful piece of bureaucratic blundering" as described by Lord Haskins, when referring to the Rural Payments Agency (Yorkshire Post, August 5).

It is a year since we bought our farm and in that time have spent many hours, either on the telephone or writing letters to the RPA.

None of our efforts has produced either a returned telephone call as promised, nor a letter in reply to our concerns as to when we can expect payment of monies due.

From: I Miskin, Clotherholme Road, Ripon.

I WOULD like to add my voice to the protests about the closure of the sugar beet factory in York. The poor farmers are suffering so much through lack of trade, and growing sugar beet and selling it for the production of sugar must have been a great encouragement for them.

I lived in York for seven years and got used to the smell from the sugar beet and was glad to think that the farmers were receiving some recompense for their labour.

So much of the local trade in the North is suffering from a reduction in the sugar trade.

May public opinion bring pressure to bear on those who are influencing this decision so that the factory is able to stay open.

Farmers suffering a variety of blows

Striking the right balance in Middle East

From: John Richmond, Harrogate Road, Ripon.

THE letter from Rev Richard Kayes (Yorkshire Post, August 4) prompts me to put forward a much different view relevant to Israel and the Palestinians.

I, too, visited Israel back in 1995 when there was at least an element of peaceful co-existence between the two, owed mainly to Yitzhak Rabin, Israel's then premier. Unfortunately, a few weeks after my visit, he was murdered by one of the Jewish fanatics of the day, and it is fair to say that things have gone downhill since Rabin's death.

However, it did appear to me at that time that when we travelled through areas like Bethlehem, Jericho and the area that is now called the West Bank, it was very obvious that on reaching land that was Israeli it was well tended... with every inch of soil used to grow as much as possible, whether it was fruit, vegetables and the like, whereas the Palestinian areas were unkempt and residents were quite happy to sit under a palm tree and hold out a begging bowl.

Richard Kayes says he is in no position to offer a solution to the Middle East problem, yet at the same time shies away from Old Testament records. That, I'm afraid, is his dilemma.

Until Hezbollah and **Hamas** and others who support terrorism accept that Israel has a right to its land, the fighting and war will continue.

The Palestinians deserve land and have had Gaza handed back, but still have little idea how to use such a prime site for peaceful co-existence.

From: MP Hellowell, Cross Lane, Scarborough.

THE Rev Mark Madeley is absolutely right in his statement about Israel and its neighbouring states (Yorkshire Post, August 8). Also, he is to be admired for standing up to be counted.

It is now time for a concerted effort by all peace-loving nations to combine and wipe the forces of evil off the face of the earth. Until they are seen off, there will be no lasting peace anywhere.

Let's have an end to ignorance and interfering from those who think they know it all when they know nowt, and an end to skewed media reporting.

From: B Bates, Fairways, Keighley.

SOME of the recent anti-war, anti-USA letters are becoming more extreme and hysterical.

It would have been quite easy for this country to have ignored the danger of Islamic fundamentalism and left it for others to combat. Much less expensive, no immediate problems for the government and no loss of life among our Armed Forces.

The difficulty is that if everyone adopted this attitude we would at some point pay a greater price when the fanatics became stronger through support from countries in the Middle East and Afghanistan, unhindered by any Western resolve.

The current President of the USA may not be everyone's cup of tea but we and the West have a lot to thank the United States for over the last 50 years.

The world is a dangerous place and history reminds us that a pacifist approach to dictators and fanatics is a path to disaster.

Threat of immigration

Farmers suffering a variety of blows

From: G Ambler-Shaw, Carleton Drive, Boston Spa, Wetherby.

THAT shortages in manpower, or insufficient growth of home population, always calls for increased immigration to satisfy demand - as Labour proclaims - is mistaken for such a swell in population automatically re-creates shortages in manpower: one moment immigration makes up for shortfall, the next it is negated.

The proverbial dog tries to catch its tail, vainly going round and round in circles, expending more muscle and energy, but it can never catch up.

Without curbs, too much immigration can and does cause serious problems, with compound effects on housing, water supply, the NHS and other essentials for the country's well-being, thereby putting the economy off balance.

The bottom line is: cheap labour and low prices may sound attractive, yet damaging side effects will inevitably occur in its wake.

Next year still more countries of Eastern Europe will be joining the EU (and perhaps Turkey later on) with the prospect of yet more migration to Britain.

Governments have allowed Britain to become very vulnerable (more than any other EU country) to immigration, and this does not augur well for the future.

Too soft on crime

From: BJ Cussons, Curly Hill, Ilkley.

THE trial of the killers of Damilola Taylor has finally come to an end after huge emotional cost to his parents and astronomical cost to the taxpayer.

When is our society going to wake up to the fact that the softly, softly approach to crime is never going to solve its problems? Surely we have enough proof that it actually turns amateur baddies into professional criminals and creates anguish and destroys the future life of victims and/or their relatives.

For my money every liberal campaigner, every magistrate, juror, judge and lawmaker that has been responsible for the advancement in crime of the Freddie boys are equally responsible for this terrible waste of life and resources.

When the Government wants to inflict yet more bureaucracy on the Home Office, it runs pilot schemes.

Let us have three areas of pilot schemes where young people receive corporal punishment in proportion to their crime and monitor what happens to them and to their communities.

Airport bus 'success'

From: JR Thomas, Huby, Leeds.

I WRITE about Brian Dooks's article (Yorkshire Post, August 3) regarding the so-called success of the 767 Harrogate-Leeds Bradford Airport bus service.

To get the success into context, the summer of 2005 produced 1.5 passengers per journey. In the same period this year, the average was 2.9.

It amazes me how these success stories are trotted out when it suits North Yorkshire County Council and the bus company.

Only last month NYCC withdrew funding for the 904 Harrogate-Otley evening and Sunday bus service.

Passenger numbers on this service were at least three per journey and as many as 10 at weekends.

NYCC could easily have arranged to run the journeys to the airport via Otley (taking just four minutes longer).

Farmers suffering a variety of blows

Because they have not done this, some 200 passenger journeys have been lost overnight, hence the local service provided by the current airport bus from Harrogate to Pool (West Yorkshire) is of limited value.

Points

Control hospital visiting hours

From: J Greenwood, Low Town, Kirkburton, Huddersfield.

HAVING sensible and commonsense controls on visitors to hospital wards is long overdue.

I would suggest the following should be implemented as soon as possible throughout the country, although children's wards may require special consideration.

1. Restrict the visiting hours so that nurses and staff can perform their duties more effectively.
2. Only two visitors allowed at the bed-side at any one time.
3. No sitting on beds.
4. Use of the ward toilets by visitors should be forbidden.

In other words, a return to the situation which existed some years ago before MRSA became such a problem.

Taxing times

From: J Bennett, Taptonville Road, Sheffield.

PEOPLE often refer to the fact that inheritance tax is a double tax - you are taxed on your earnings from when you pay your mortgage and then taxed on death.

In fact, there is a third tax - the VAT you pay on the maintenance work and improvements to your house - which is often a considerable amount. Without such expenditure, the property would be worth much less and the Chancellor would get less.

Stop and search

From: Jack Kinsman, Stainton Drive, Grimsby.

I AM absolutely livid that the Assistant Commissioner of Scotland Yard can make derogatory remarks about the stop and search policy being carried out on his Muslim brothers by our over-worked policemen and women (Yorkshire Post, August 8).

His actual words were: "The search is often led by the physical appearance of the suspect, rather than by specific intelligence."

Could I please be allowed to point out to this high ranking officer that there is no "intelligence" on every suspect. If he acts guilty, he's "pulled". End of story.

Road plan

From: Arthur Quarmby, Underhill, Holme.

A NEW motorway from South Manchester to the M1 through Longdendale and taking in the (half-a-motorway) Stocksbridge bypass is the only way to relieve the pressure on the most congested section of the M62.

At opposite ends of the social spectrum

Farmers suffering a variety of blows

From: Carol Vaines, Spen Lane, Gomersal, Cleckheaton.

HOW will I compare thee?

Two pictures on page 2 of the Yorkshire Post (August 10) speak volumes.

The fabulous 19-year-old heroine, Michelle Norris, who risked her life under fire to save her colleague in Iraq. And the spineless 28-year-old, Craig Moore, who blew up a speed camera to dodge a road ban.

Say no more?

Trying to see the funny side over a load of rubbish

From: Philip Walls, Priestley Avenue, Heckmondwike.

OKAY - I admit it - I'm guilty. On Wednesday, I deposited some greenery in the dustbin, and a sticker was placed on the bin by a waste disposal operative telling me why it had been left unemptied.

The offending material? Tops from two spring onions. My wife had already tied the bag up ready for me to place in the bin, and I pushed the leaves into the opening. I did not push them down far enough, obviously.

When my wife, later that day, telephoned the appropriate department and told them what had happened, the lady who took the call at least had the decency to laugh, and said maybe it WAS going a bit too far, but staff were only carrying out government instructions.

Accepting garden refuse as part of general refuse could result in the withdrawal of funding. However, we could leave the dustbin out again the following day, just in case the waste could be collected on Thursday.

I dutifully wheeled the bin to the front of the house again and, out of curiosity, looked inside. I couldn't see any greenery at all. But wait a moment - yes - there is some greenery there. The container was only half full, and I had to really peer inside to see clearly. After all, it was such a small opening in the bag. Well done, eagle-eyed operative.

Now, what do I do the next time I buy my wife a bunch of flowers, and when I need to dispose of them? Do I secretly push them to the bottom of a bag and hope that nobody notices? Or do I ring the appropriate department and ask them to collect my wife's dead flowers? I really do not wish to be publicly humiliated again.

HAVE YOUR SAY...

Letters to: The Editor, Yorkshire Post, Wellington Street, Leeds LS1 1RF. Fax: 0113 238 8537. e-mail: yp.editor@ypn.co.uk. Phone: 0113 238 8910 (after 4.30pm, max 150 words please).

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Load-Date: August 12, 2006

ISRAEL PUSHES ON DESPITE AGREEING TO AIRSTRIKE LULL

The New York Times

August 1, 2006 Tuesday

Late Edition - Final

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Length: 1886 words

Byline: By CRAIG S. SMITH and STEVEN ERLANGER; Craig S. Smith reported from Metulla for this article, and Steven Erlanger from Jerusalem. Helene Cooper contributed reporting from Washington, Hassan M. Fattah from Beirut, and Mona el-Naggar from Cairo.

Dateline: METULLA, Israel, July 31

Body

As Israel poured soldiers and artillery shells into southern Lebanon, it vowed Monday to press ahead with its war on Hezbollah and made a number of airstrikes after promising a 48-hour pause in its air campaign.

"The fighting continues," Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said. "There is no cease-fire, and there will not be any cease-fire in the coming days."

Israel promised Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on Sunday that it would halt air operations for two days, except to respond to "imminent threats," like rocket-launching teams, and to support ground forces.

Ms. Rice said she had accepted Israel's explanation for resuming airstrikes barely 12 hours after the suspension was announced.

Before leaving Jerusalem, Ms. Rice said she believed that a cease-fire and a United Nations Security Council action on it were on the immediate horizon. "I am convinced we can achieve both this week," she said.

On her flight to Washington, she appeared a little less assured, and aides said the timing had slipped to the end of the week. "I can't tell you when to pack just yet," she told reporters on board. "We're working very hard to make it this week."

Meanwhile, Hezbollah held its fire, with the Israeli Army counting only three mortar shells landing in Israel on Monday and no rockets, compared with a record 156 rockets launched on Sunday and about 100 daily before. More than a million Israelis are in bomb shelters.

Israel's defense minister, Amir Peretz, told a special session of Parliament that the army "will expand and deepen its operations against Hezbollah." He suggested that the fighting would not stop until a multinational force was ready with a mandate to use its weapons against Hezbollah if the group breached any eventual cease-fire agreement. He said Israel would demand outside supervision for the border crossings between Syria and Lebanon.

Israel said it began a 48-hour suspension of airstrikes in Lebanon at 2 a.m. Monday after it fired at a rocket-launching team in Qana on Sunday and killed dozens of civilians in a nearby building.

ISRAEL PUSHES ON DESPITE AGREEING TO AIRSTRIKE LULL

While bombs did fall across Lebanon on Monday, they came at a slower pace and struck at more limited targets, Israeli officials said.

"It's reduced compared to regular days," said Capt. Jacob Dallal, an Israeli Army spokesman, adding that the military was not bombing roads, bridges or structures that might interfere with civilian movements.

But he said the airstrikes were aiming at "immediate threats," including rocket launchers and other weapons, as well as providing air support for ground troops. On Monday, Israeli forces hit a Lebanese Army jeep that Israel said it had mistakenly thought was carrying a senior Hezbollah commander, killing a Lebanese soldier and wounding three others.

The air force also destroyed a truck full of weapons near Lebanon's border with Syria, the army said.

And the Israelis made a ground raid into Lebanon in the Aita al Shaab area. Hezbollah said its fighters were resisting the advance.

In an interview with Reuters on Sunday after the Israeli airstrikes on Qana, Khaled Meshal, a **Hamas** leader based in Syria, called for "an acceleration of the resistance in Lebanon and Palestine" and asked, "Is there anything left for our people except resistance to protect our **women**, children, land and honor in this Zionist-American age?"

Some Lebanese civilians took advantage of the bombing lull to move north out of southern Lebanon, and aid agencies drove convoys of food and medical supplies into the south. Lebanese rescue workers retrieved at least 49 bodies from destroyed buildings, Reuters said.

An Israeli Foreign Ministry official said Israel had agreed to the suspension and a 24-hour safe-passage period for civilians heading out of southern Lebanon as a way to "take the steam" out of Sunday's bombing in Qana. But he also said the fight against Hezbollah would continue until there was a diplomatic solution that stopped the rocket fire against Israel and that deployed an international force on the border. "We couldn't ignore Qana," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity, as is customary. "And if we want to continue to get the full cease-fire we want, with an international force, it was important to change the tone and the conversation."

Vice Prime Minister Shimon Peres, speaking at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, said the bombing in Qana was aimed at rocket launchers 300 yards from where the civilians were, a distance commanders considered large enough to avoid the risk of hitting them. He said Israel was investigating what had gone wrong.

On Monday, President Bush appeared to back the Israeli position of continuing the war, repeating his insistence that any cessation of hostilities must be "sustainable."

"A multinational force must be dispatched to Lebanon quickly so we can help speed the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Lebanese people," he said in Miami. "Iran must end its financial support and supply of weapons to terrorist groups like Hezbollah. Syria must end its support for terror and respect the sovereignty of Lebanon."

Meanwhile, Israel continued to call up reserve troops and move fresh soldiers to its northern border, to reinforce troops already fighting and to "prepare for any eventuality," a military spokesman said. While the military has not said how many troops are involved, the maneuvers have led some analysts to suggest that it is planning an accelerated push on the ground before diplomacy closes the window for action.

"I think the only way that they can get in under the wire here is by launching a major ground offensive in southern Lebanon," said Michael Oren, senior fellow at the conservative Shalem Center. "Otherwise they have no leverage, no tangible gains."

In Beirut, Iran's foreign minister, Manouchehr Mottaki, whose country is a main supporter of Hezbollah, arrived from Syria and was dining at the Iranian Embassy on Monday with Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy of France, a French diplomat said. It was unclear what they discussed, but Mr. Douste-Blazy said earlier Monday that Iran was "a great country" that "plays a stabilizing role in the region," a view at odds with the American one.

ISRAEL PUSHES ON DESPITE AGREEING TO AIRSTRIKE LULL

Israel has come under heavy criticism for what many abroad see as a disproportionate response to the July 12 Hezbollah attack that started the fighting. Yet Israelis are critical of their government for failing to strike more swiftly on the ground to push Hezbollah back from the border.

The battles on Monday gave a startling demonstration of how far Israel is from creating an effective buffer between northern Israel and Hezbollah fighters in southern Lebanon; after more than two weeks at war, much of the fighting still took place within sight of the border.

The Israeli leadership has favored air power with guided munitions, which minimizes casualties to its troops but can lead to civilian casualties, as in Qana, when civilians were sheltering in the basement of a building that collapsed after the Israeli strike. The result has been slow progress on the ground and growing international condemnation.

"Israel started this crisis with the most favorable diplomatic position it has ever had in its history, and over the course of three weeks the Olmert government has managed to squander that advantage," Mr. Oren of the Shalem Center said.

The fighting Monday focused on the villages of Taibe, Al Adeisa and Kafr Kila across the border from Metulla, which is near the Golan Heights. Israeli military officers said the villages were the source of repeated recent rocket barrages on northern Israel, in particular the town of Kiryat Shimona, which was hit Sunday by more than 80 rockets.

Airstrikes may have slowed over Lebanon, but they continued apace over the Gaza Strip, the other front in this war. Five Palestinians were wounded when Israeli aircraft bombed a house in the Sheik Radwan neighborhood of Gaza City. For days now, Israel has targeted homes in residential areas where it suspects weapons are being stored.

One of the major questions remains the timing of any cease-fire. The sentiment of much of the world, including crucial members of the Security Council like France and Russia, is that a cease-fire should begin no later than the passage of a Council resolution authorizing an international force for southern Lebanon.

But that force may not be on the ground for weeks. Israel, Mr. Olmert said, wants a cease-fire only when the international force arrives, so there is no vacuum. An immediate cease-fire with no international presence, the Israelis argue, would allow the rearmament of Hezbollah through the Syrian border and even its reinfiltration to the Israeli border.

"If there's a cease-fire tomorrow and no international presence, how do you prevent the rearming of Hezbollah?" asked a senior Israeli official. "And if you can't control that, how can you move to disarm Hezbollah?"

Israel is asking for more time to hit Hezbollah and is asking those like the French, who want an immediate cease-fire, to take concrete actions to help create the conditions for a sustainable peace, the official said.

Another senior official said he expected that a Council resolution could take a week and be capped by a session with foreign ministers, perhaps next Monday. If a resolution, with an acceptable political package, resulted in a cease-fire, Israeli forces would remain in southern Lebanon until an international force arrived, he suggested.

In such a cease-fire, to which Hezbollah would have to agree through the Lebanese government, the official said, Israeli forces would only fire if fired upon, or if rockets continued to be launched against Israel.

The Council extended the mandate of the United Nations observer force in Lebanon for one month to allow more time to formulate a new peacekeeping force.

Israeli reaction to Qana was largely one of sorrow, mixed with determination not to end the fighting too quickly and for what many here consider the wrong reasons.

ISRAEL PUSHES ON DESPITE AGREEING TO AIRSTRIKE LULL

But the country's most influential columnist, Nahum Barnea, writing in Yediot Aharonot, raised questions about Israeli tactics and leadership. Mr. Barnea wrote about the government's decision to allow the army to attack civilian houses if Hezbollah rockets and war materiel were stored inside and the population was warned in advance to leave.

In an interview, he said the policy, however justified, courted the Qana bombing, and he criticized Mr. Peretz for being "stupid enough to make it seem like a moral statement."

In his column, he said Israel had to respond to Hezbollah's attack with military action, but added, "The question is how and at what cost." He criticized Mr. Peretz for describing "proudly how he relieved the army of restrictions on harming civilian population that lives alongside Hezbollah operatives."

"I can understand accidentally harming civilians in the course of combat," he wrote. "But a blanket directive regarding the entire civilian population of southern Lebanon and the Shiite neighborhoods of Beirut is a hasty and lightheaded act, which courts disaster. We saw the outcome of this yesterday, in the bodies of the women and children that were taken out of the bombed house in Qana."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Photos: A Gaza home destroyed by Israel yesterday. The Israeli Army called the homeowner to warn him about the attack, and his family was evacuated. (Photo by Michael Kamber for The New York Times)

An Israeli soldier provided cover for soldiers evacuating a tank damaged by Hezbollah missiles yesterday near the village of Kafr Kila. (Photo by Rina Castelnovo for The New York Times)(pg. A8)Chart/Map: "Moving Aid Into the South"Relief agencies took advantage of the lessened violence yesterday by moving more food, water and medical assistance into southern Lebanon.STAGING AREA -- Several convoys have moved from Beirut to Tyre, a 50-mile trip that now takes nine hours.RESCUE -- One Red Cross convoy reached Qana.NO ACCESS -- In Aitarun, a Red Cross convoy was halted because of ongoing violence.EVACUATION -- One Red Cross convoy reached Bint Jbail to evacuate wounded and stranded residents. Doctors Without Borders sent medical supplies by taxi.CANCELED -- On Sunday, a convoy was canceled here because of airstrikes.Map of Israel and Lebanon highlighting the areas listed above.(Sources by World Food Program, Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders)(pg. A8)

Load-Date: August 1, 2006

Debate on the crisis in the Middle East

The Irish Times

August 3, 2006 Thursday

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Section: LETTERS; Pg. 17

Length: 2056 words

Body

Madam, - While confusion still surrounds the precise series of events which led to the deaths of over 50 civilians in Qana last Sunday, an Israeli bomb will almost certainly prove to have been the tragedy's proximate cause - an indication that the IDF, while never intentionally targeting civilians, must do more to minimise non-combatant casualties.

However, this cannot be allowed to obscure the fact that ultimate responsibility for the killings in Qana lies not with the IDF but with Hizbullah, which is waging its war against Israel from behind the double-sided shield of Lebanon's civilian population and UN personnel. In what are just the latest examples, residents fleeing Ain Ebal angrily told the New York Times last weekend that Hizbullah was using the town as a rocket-launching base, firing them "from between houses" while a former south Lebanese Shia, writing in Berlin's Der Tagesspiegel, described Hizbullah's concealment of a weapons depot under a school in his village. Qana itself has been similarly exploited. The IDF has released footage of both the arrival of rocket launchers into the town and their subsequent firing from neighbourhoods including Hariva, in which Sunday's air strikes took place.

This "cowardly blending. . . among women and children" (as the UN's Jan Egeland described it last week) inevitably results in heavy Lebanese non-combatant casualties which are then adduced as evidence of Israel's "disproportionate" response. But Israel's response to Hizbullah's offensive is not disproportionate to the threat which it faces.

The principle of proportionality in war relates, not to provocation-reprisal ratios of scale, but to the proportion between the amount of force employed and the amount of force required to achieve legitimate military objectives, which must be determined with reference to the conflict's broader contexts. The objective of Israel's current operation in Lebanon is not solely the rescue of its two captured soldiers but the termination of the Iranian-sponsored cross-border campaign by Hizbullah, to which they and scores of other Israelis have fallen victim since May 2000.

Israel is determined to defeat this campaign because it represents not a mere localised terrorist assault but the front-line battle in Iran's 27-year war of annihilation against the Jewish state. Since its foundation in 1979, the Islamic Republic has officially held that the very existence of Israel "humiliates Islam, the Qu'ran, the government of Islam and the nation of Islam" and that it must be "eliminated from the pages of history". The present Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei has stated that "setting Israel on fire" topped Iran's foreign policy agenda while ex-President Rafsanjani has pledged that the Islamic world will "vomit it out from its midst". Most recently, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has repeatedly demanded that Israel be "wiped off the map."

Debate on the crisis in the Middle East

Those dismissing these statements as mere rhetorical sound and fury overlook the fact that Iran has spent the past 15 years working to achieve its ambition through the sponsorship of Palestinian terrorism, completely bankrolling Islamic Jihad, channelling significant logistical and financial support to Hamas and, since September 2000, increasing its associations with the Fatah-affiliated militias to the extent that, before the declaration of last year's "ceasefire", it had a hand in almost all of Al-Aqsa Martyrs' attacks. With regard to Hizbullah, Iran has spent around \$100 million a year transforming it into an anti-Israel military force more like a national army than a terrorist militia.

This Jerusalem can no longer be expected to endure. On withdrawing from Lebanon six years ago, it warned that any future attacks from this territory would be met with a forceful response "based upon the pure, simple and compelling right to self-defence". Israel's current action is a legitimate and proportionate exercise of that right. - Yours, etc,

SEAN GANNON, Chairman, Irish Friends of Israel, Ontario Terrace, Dublin 6.

Madam, - Cathal McCann (August 1st) concludes his defence of Israel with the question: "What would you do in Israel's position?"

If I were prime minister of Israel, I would have proclaimed publicly to the world that Israel has no interest whatever in any territory beyond the 1967 borders. I would have offered to share Jerusalem with my Palestinian neighbours. I would have committed my country to the development of a truly democratic secular state; and I would have formally recognised Islam as being of equal status within the state as Judaism.

Having done all this, I doubt if "my citizens" would be dying in the street of Haifa, and I imagine that terrorist rhetoric and action would have been consigned to history.

But the government of Israel, in its wisdom, has not chosen this path. Instead, it insists that it has the right to retain some of the occupied territories in any peace treaty. It demands the right to develop a Jewish State for a Jewish people. It continues to build settlements in the occupied territories. It routinely assassinates and abducts persons it suspects of being members of militias; and it reacts to any resistance to these measures with the indiscriminate slaughter of civilians.

May I respond to Cathal McCann's question with one of my own: "What would you do in this situation if you were a Palestinian?" - Yours, etc,

JOHN McGRATH, Kilbride, Co Wicklow.

Madam, - Given that in recent days those who have found it difficult to condemn the actions that have led to so many civilian deaths have stopped just short of declaring the inevitability of a war between civilisations and belief systems, or more specifically between the West and Islam, it might be useful to recall the words of Prof Benjamin Barber in his book *Jihad vs McWorld* (1996):

"Jihad forges communities of blood rooted in exclusion and hatred, communities that slight democracy in favour of tyrannical paternalism or consensual tribalism. McWorld forges global markets rooted in consumption and profit, leaving to an untrustworthy, if not altogether fictitious, invisible hand issues of public interest and common goods that once might have been nurtured by democratic citizenries and their watchful governments. . . Today. . . we seem intent on recreating a world in which our only choices are the secular universalism of the cosmopolitan market and the everyday particularism of the fractious tribe. "

We desperately need a moral and intellectual commitment that does not lock us into such a desperate and arid choice. Cllr John McManus (August 1st) would be better seeing the task of the left in such a project rather than tacitly accepting the bogus inevitability of the clash of civilisations. Those of us who believe in undertaking the task of developing a position for the left in relation to the Middle East and the task of building peace are not offering a knee-jerk anti-Americanism. We do, however, regard it as an act of moral honesty to condemn the indiscriminate loss of civilian life.

Debate on the crisis in the Middle East

Falling back on the cheap option of the easy accusation of anti-Americanism is something one might expect from Mr Alan Shatter, but not from a member of the left, even the revised left. - Yours, etc,

MICHAEL D. HIGGINS, Dáil Éireann, Dublin 2.

Madam, - John McManus (August 1st) has it about right when he says that there is an "unfortunate tendency on the left to identify all who oppose America as objectively progressive".

The present situation across the Middle East is clearly very complex, but the left is too ambiguous about those who want to bring the region back to the Middle Ages, and, as in Iraq, those who attempt to foment civil war to create a viciously repressive state. That war is over: there is a UN-recognised regime in place and the Iraqi people have voted far more frequently in recent years than we have. In their opposition to the US and the Bush regime in particular, many on the left turn a blind eye to what my party colleague, Mr McManus, has correctly identified as the rise of "theocracy and fanaticism".

The left has been indolent in the face of a number of international issues in recent years. Lazy cries for UN reform excuse international inaction in the face of atrocities from Bosnia to Darfur. We on the left were not even united in support of the Nato campaign to prevent further genocide in Kosovo.

On questions such as Cuba, a state which, according to Human Rights Watch, has an "undemocratic government that represses nearly all forms of political dissent" and in which a dictator of 40 years and more has just handed power to his brother, the left remains hopelessly soft.

John McManus says: "It is the job of all those on the left to be clear where they stand on the basic principles of liberty and equality". To state it more baldly, the Left must support democracy, respect for human rights, and the rule of law. - Yours, etc,

Cllr AIDAN CULHANE, Meadow Grove, Dublin 16.

Madam, - In the aftermath of the second Israeli massacre of innocent civilians at Qana, we read Charles Krauthammer lecturing us on how the world has lost its moral bearings by criticising Israel for its attacks on Lebanon (Opinion, August 31st).

Mr Krauthammer persists in his apologia for murder by asserting that Israel has no desire to kill Lebanese civilians. As proof of this, he says that if it really wanted to, Israel could flatten all of South Lebanon and Beirut. A moral stance indeed.

Mr Krauthammer and his ilk persist in demonising Hizbullah and blaming "Islamic terrorism" for the current crisis, thereby avoiding discussion of the fundamental cause of instability in the region: the injustice done to the Palestinian people at the creation of Israel. Similarly, they refuse to recognise that Hizbullah began as a defensive reaction to the 18-year illegal occupation of South Lebanon by the Israelis.

If there is to be peace in the region, Israel must recognise the validity of the claims of the Palestinians and allow the displaced to return. Israel must also recognise that its neighbours have a right to security that is equal to its own. Instead, Israeli actions create the impression that its attitude to its neighbours is that "two of ours are worth a thousand of yours". In other words, racism. - Yours, etc,

BARRA Ó DONNABHÁIN, Aghabullogue, Co Cork.

Madam, - Alan McPartland (August 1st) asks two questions that deserve a reply. The first amounts to an appeal to observe the same standards of criticism in matters concerning Israel as applied to other countries. The reply is that in order to do that one would have to study the fairly recent history of the region, say 100 years, as it is obvious that most of your correspondents are totally ignorant of that history. The second question was his wondering when "we" are going to stop feeling guilty about the Holocaust? I presume that the "we" in question are Christians and the answer to that is another question. Do you know how guilty you are? If you do I hope that you never forget it.

Debate on the crisis in the Middle East

He then goes on to accuse "Israelis and Zionists" of using the Holocaust as a stick to beat public opinion as a cover for Israeli atrocities. What he really means to say is not Israelis or Zionists but Jews, but he lacks the courage to use the dreadful word. Let me assure Mr McPartland that we Jews do not use the Holocaust to remind you of your sins but to remind our fellow Jews that never fighting back against the murder, humiliation, rape and banishment we suffered for 16 centuries almost led to our obliteration. - Yours, etc,

MONTY ROSS, Templeogue Road, Dublin 6W.

Madam, - The national outcry over the Israeli bombing of innocent children and civilians in Lebanon must be matched with equal concern at the use of Irish-manufactured weapons support systems in the current military conflict.

As a long time republican and civil rights campaigner I am calling on the 26-county administration to ban the export of computer systems by Irish firms which assist American arms companies.

It is time for this Fianna Fáil-PD coalition to back up their words of condemnation with firm action against the Irish weapons industry. It is no use crying crocodile tears over the awful deaths of young children in Lebanon if Irish computer expertise is being used by American companies to make the weapons that cause these deaths. - Yours, etc,

DES LONG, Corbally, Limerick.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Weekend Australian
June 10, 2006 Saturday
All-round Country Edition

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Body

MATP

No doubt Iraq has many Zarqawis ready to fill the vacancy

MOST TALKED ABOUT

DEATH OF A TERRORIST

IRRESPECTIVE of whether we should be in Iraq or not, the world is a better place with the elimination of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. This individual used the Islamic religion for his own ends and was prepared to murder at complete random, including public executions. This was demonstrated by his attack on a wedding reception in Jordan killing more than 50 people who had no involvement whatsoever in the Iraqi war.

Whether Zarqawi's removal from the scene decreases the insurgent attacks in Iraq is another question altogether and only time will tell. Without a doubt, there are probably many Zarqawis ready to fill the vacancy.

But the real issue in Iraq is still what happens over the longer term. The ill-conceived planning of the invasion in the first place is the reason for the current mess, and this will be much enhanced if the US and its allies leave prematurely. Zarqawi's demise in no way relieves George W. Bush and his fellow travellers of responsibility for the decision to invade in the first place.

Richard Slater

Berowra Heights, NSW

ZARQAWI'S supporters and fellow terrorists claim that as a martyr he is enjoying the pleasures of "Heaven". When will the Muslim world declare that as a murderer of innocent people he is actually in their equivalent of the "other place"?

Peter McDougall

Townsville, Qld

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

FORTUNATE, isn't it, that all coalition troops had not been withdrawn from Iraq by June 7, 2006? Otherwise, Zarqawi would be leaving his farmhouse today after a good night's sleep, ready for another day of making hell on earth.

George Alexander

Balmain, NSW

US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, on radio yesterday morning, proclaimed Zarqawi as the person responsible for the highest number of civilian deaths in the world over the past three years. I'd put Zarqawi at number five -- behind Bush, Rumsfeld himself, Blair and Howard. There is no limit to their blind hypocrisy.

David Goldstraw

East Fremantle, WA

IF Donald Rumsfeld or Condoleezza Rice had been wiped out by jihadists, the Muslim world would have displayed scenes of unbridled glee -- dancing in the streets and firing weapons in the air. While the majority of Americans and Australians take the death of Zarqawi with sombre dignity, the Left will whine that he should have been captured, given a long, expensive and pointless trial (like Saddam Hussein) and finally interred in a holiday camp. I don't know the cost of the two 220kg bombs used for the raid that killed Zarqawi, but whatever the cost we got a bargain.

Graham Egan

Chermside, Qld

LET'S pay tribute to the humanity of Michael Berg, whose son was killed by Zarqawi, for refusing to rejoice at the execution of his child's killer ("A tragedy: Berg's dad", 9/6). Killing an enemy may be justifiable but no one's death justifies celebration.

Norm Neill

Leichhardt, NSW

THE targeted assassination of a terrorist leader in Iraq -- Zarqawi -- by US and Iraqi forces and the international community approves. When Palestinian terrorist and Hamas leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, responsible for hundreds of suicide bomb attacks against civilians, was assassinated by the Israelis, there was worldwide condemnation and demands for UN Security Council resolutions against Israel. What hypocrisy.

Michael Burd

Toorak, Vic

IT'S a sad sign of the times when the good news from Iraq is that another person has been murdered.

David Walker

Somerton Park, SA

FOR all the back-slapping, spin and media hype triggered by the US-sanctioned execution of Zarqawi, the point conveniently forgotten is that the invasion of Iraq created the breeding ground for the thousands of Zarqawis who are more than willing to carry on the fight and ultimately become martyrs. No amount of 220kg "smart" bombs will stop the madness that has been unleashed in Iraq.

G.Unwin

Gold Coast, Qld

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE unapologetic rejoicing in the death of Zarqawi by world leaders, including George W.Bush and, to a lesser extent, John Howard, devalues human life. What is more, the triumphalism surrounding the death of Zarqawi negates any potential benefit to be gained from the death of a terrorist leader.

While there may be some counter-terrorism benefits to be had from incapacitating an operational leader, to celebrate his destruction as a victory in the global war on terror is to elevate Zarqawi to hero-status and to martyrdom. A preferable approach is to treat terrorists as criminals, allowing them a fair trial and, if convicted, a term of imprisonment. An opportunity to transcend the cycle of violence has been wasted.

Emily Camins

Claremont, WA

CAN I ask that those claiming the war on terror is not a conflict of cultures, civilisations and religions go and personally explain that to the terrorists?

Chris Horn

Summer Hill, NSW

Why should any marriage

need government approval?

I DON'T understand why gay people are fighting so hard to be "allowed" to marry in the same way that heterosexual people are allowed to do so. Why, instead, are we as a society not protesting in our millions for government to get its pesky collective nose out of our personal lives? Why does anyone require a licence from a faceless bureaucrat before they are permitted to marry? Surely a marriage is an agreement between two people (or three or four, if that's what you believe).

Frankly, I hope that government-sanctioned gay marriage is never a reality. I dream instead of a world in which we as a society have developed enough intestinal fortitude to dismiss the need for any marriage to be legitimised by any government.

Bernadette Bean

Payneham South, SA

LEGAL marriage of heterosexuals carries with it the role of propagation of the species, plus the responsibility of rearing those so created. Logically, then, those participating in this contract should be required to prove they are fertile. If not, then heterosexual contracts are more a partnership agreement and not "marriage" in its intended meaningful state.

In like manner, all non-heterosexual contracts are basically partner agreements. Such couples proclaim their allegiance to one another and contractually become "one". Call it a civil marital contract or whatever, but the right to express one's allegiance to another person should not be disqualified based on a definition restricting marriage to fertile propagating heterosexuals.

Boyd Granzow

Coburg North, Vic

Find a way to make it work

SADLY, the republic debate continues to suffer from experts such as Greg Craven always finding a reason why something won't work ("Cowen 'wrong over republic'", 9/6).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Surely, if a majority of Australians want a directly elected president, as polls tell us they do, people such as Professor Craven should be trying to find ways of making that work. There are enough opponents getting away with outrageous arguments against a republic without the legalistas continually chucking in a few more barriers. Come up with some positive ideas to make it happen, Greg.

James Mahoney

McKellar, ACT

Mini cultural revolutions

PERHAPS young Australians "have little enthusiasm for storming the ramparts and occupying the vice-chancellor's office" ("Cultural cringe", Editorial, 9/6) because social inequalities have already been righted by their parents.

For example, women can choose a career or motherhood because their mothers fought to create a society that allows it and people can be openly homosexual without being ostracised because of gay activism. You continually sneer at the cultural activists of the Left without acknowledging the good created by these mini cultural revolutions.

Rob Findlay

Highgate, WA

THANK you for your editorial "Cultural cringe". It is the best I have read in years.

Paul Francis

Carina, Qld

Neglect of rural healthcare

THE death of a baby delivered by the roadside in central Queensland reflects the appalling state of rural healthcare across this nation ("Dead baby born at roadside after hospital turns parents away", 8/6). The state and federal governments stand condemned for more than a decade of neglect.

The provision of safe birthing services is a fundamental right in a first world country such as Australia. The facts are, though, that birthing services in many parts of rural Australia are worse than a generation ago and lives have been lost as a result.

In the case of Steven and Sharon Walker, their baby never had a chance. To imagine what this couple went through on the side of the road alone is beyond comprehension.

As well as the neglect of our governments, we should not forget the role predatory plaintiff lawyers have played in driving doctors out of practising obstetrics everywhere. We need a solution to our healthcare crisis but, sadly, no politician, federal or state, seems to have a clue.

Dr Stewart Jackson

Ingham, Qld

Brendan Nelson 'didn't ask'

IN his story "Singapore open to request for troops" (8/6), Greg Sheridan reported incorrectly that Australian Defence Minister Brendan Nelson, in private talks with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, had raised the possibility of Singaporean troops going to East Timor. In fact, Mr Nelson voiced concerns about East Timor and his hopes that more Asian countries would send troops to help in a public speech at the Shangri-la Dialogue in Singapore. He made the same points in private with Mr Lee but the issue of sending Singapore troops to East Timor was never discussed.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sheridan's statement that the Singapore and Indonesian governments have been discussing the sensitivities of sending ethnic Chinese troops to East Timor is also incorrect. The two governments have never discussed this matter.

Eddie Teo

Singapore high commissioner, Canberra

Sounds worth hearing

KIT Moodie's letter (8/7) on the need to introduce children to classical music at school is timely. I believe that the state orchestras should have a responsibility to give concerts for schoolchildren in both city and regional areas. If children are not exposed to classical music and only ever hear pop, how can they make choices? Children deserve better.

Marguerite Webber

Buderim, Qld

Standard procedures

IN reaction to your story "Vizard in spin over claims of perjury" (9/6), I feel that I must apologise for following what used to be standard journalistic procedures.

Yes, I had lunch with Steve Vizard. I was hoping to get an on-air interview. I failed. Sorry for trying to do my job. I should have been content to snipe from the sidelines.

Yes, I am a friend of Mike Smith and declared that after interviewing him as Vizard's spokesman. Sorry for being honest with my audience.

Neil Mitchell

Presenter, 3AW, Melbourne

FIRST BYTE

letters@theaustralian.com.au

With the divorce rate so high, we straight people are not doing a very good job of marriage, so maybe it's time for the gays to have a shot at it.

Todd McLennan

Coorparoo, Qld

Jonathan Whybird (Letters, 9/6) wants referendums on some of the more pressing issues of the day. I'm all for it, just as long as we can have one on daylight saving here in Western Australia.

Mark Fisher

Mosman Park, WA

There is much mention of Mark Viduka and Harry Kewell in the lead up the World Cup, but I'd like to point out that without Mark Schwarzer -- the goalkeeper, if anyone has forgotten -- the Socceroos would not be in Germany.

Hans Sander

Ashmore, Qld

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

You have to hand it to the spin doctors at Cricket Australia. After its dismal performance at the box office last week, CA has had the gall to email members of the Australian Cricket Family and describe the Ashes series ticketing debacle as a "mixed experience". Although the email went on to say that CA has a 1300 Help Line, it didn't mention whether counselling was available.

Col Shephard

Yamba, NSW

I'm not interested in John Cahill (First Byte, 9/6). Sophie Delezio is special to most of us and her name should not have appeared on his list.

Bill Brooks

Camp Hill, Qld

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GPO Box 4162, Sydney, NSW, 2001 Fax: 02 9288 3077

E-mail: letters@theaustralian.com.au (no attachments)

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'Clash of civilizations' orchestrated: Global protests were anything but spontaneous

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Body

When a dozen deliberately provocative cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad appeared in a Danish newspaper four months ago, they barely raised a ripple.

Now, with riots convulsing continents, embassies aflame, people dying in the streets and world leaders pleading for tolerance and calm, pundits are depicting the conflict created by the cartoons as a "clash of civilizations."

In reality, it may be nothing more than a carefully orchestrated protest that spiralled out of control through a combination of authentic religious outrage and cynical political manipulation.

Flemming Rose, cultural editor of Jyllands-Posten, which first published the cartoons, says he believes the crisis was stoked by a small group of radical Danish imams who toured the Middle East this winter inflaming religious passions after they were unable to meet Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Denmark's Prime Minister.

The imams took the Jyllands-Posten cartoons with them, along with three drawings from other sources that included images depicting the Prophet as a pig and having sex with animals and children.

"All that gratuitous rubbish was trumped around to trigger a campaign of senseless hatred," Mr. Rose said yesterday.

He insists something that began as a commentary on self-censorship has been turned into a global crisis because radical religious leaders tried "to stir up the crowds by telling lies."

Ahmed Abu-Laban, the Danish Muslim cleric who helped instigate the worldwide protests against the cartoons, admits to touring the Middle East, saying he felt compelled to do so after the Danish Prime Minister refused to meet Muslim leaders and the ambassadors of 11 Muslim nations who objected to the cartoons.

"We were running a campaign, trying to create pressure," Mr. Laban, head of Copenhagen's Islamic Cultural Centre and one of Denmark's most prominent Muslim clerics, said yesterday.

He was at the forefront of a campaign to demand an apology from the Danish government.

'Clash of civilizations' orchestrated: Global protests were anything but spontaneous

A political activist who once hosted Omar Abdel Rajman, the blind sheikh jailed for life for the 1993 World Trade Centre bombing in New York, Mr. Laban has had ties to other radical Islamists and once served in the 1990s as translator for Osama bin Laden's top aide, Ayman al-Zawahri.

On Sept. 30, at the beginning of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, Jyllands-Posten published the 12 cartoons under the headline " Muhammeds ansigt," ("The Face of Muhammad").

Mr. Laban said he regarded them as an insult to his religion and a smear against all Muslims in Denmark.

"This protest is not about the cartoons, offensive as they are," he said. "The cartoons are merely the final drop that caused the cup to overflow. We have heard Western politicians relate our faith to terrorism, over and over again, and it is too much. This was the response."

The Koran does not explicitly prohibit the depiction of human figures, but Muslim tradition and interpretations of certain of its verses suggest Allah and his Prophet cannot be captured in an image drawn by a human hand, lest this lead to idolatry or blasphemy.

The cartoons were commissioned after Jyllands-Posten's editors heard that a local author was having difficulty finding an illustrator for a children's book on Muhammad. They decided artists were turning down the commission for fear of reprisals and set out to explore the issue of self-censorship by inviting 25 cartoonists to "Draw Muhammad as you see him."

Twelve responded and their work was published in the newspaper, including caricatures that depicted Muhammad with a bomb in his turban and with a broken halo that looks like satanic horns. There was also a cartoon in which he meets some suicide bombers at the gates of heaven and tells them to stop because "We've run out of virgins."

Mr. Rose now says he regrets he "didn't know more beforehand" about Islamic taboos, but he refused to apologize, insisting it's an issue of free-speech.

Danish Muslims were infuriated by the images. They launched street protests and complained to the newspaper and the government.

During a demonstration in Aarhus, home to the newspaper's main offices, a local Muslim leader reminded Mr. Rose of what happened to Theo Van Gogh, a Dutch film maker who was murdered in 2004 after making a film on violence against women in Islamic societies.

Danish Muslim leaders formed the European Committee for Honouring the Prophet and, along with ambassadors from 11 Muslim nations, demanded to meet the Danish Prime Minister.

When Mr. Rasmussen refused, insisting he had no right to intervene in an issue touching free speech, the group decided to internationalize their protests.

In the meantime, a Dutch newspaper, De Volkskrant, published the offending cartoons.

After consulting diplomats from Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the Danish imams decided to send a delegation to the Middle East to drum up support.

"We went there because the Danish government turned a deaf ear to our protests," said Ahmed Akkari, a spokesman for the group .

Landing in Cairo in December in the midst of that country's first-ever free multi-party elections, in which the outlawed Islamic fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood played a major role, the group's protests rapidly became much more than a simple bid to defend the Prophet's dignity.

Egyptian officials furious over the perceived indignity of the Danish cartoons were also conscious of the fact their Islamist political opponents were attacking them for not being pious enough.

'Clash of civilizations' orchestrated: Global protests were anything but spontaneous

They hurried to support the protest and seethed with indignation when they studied a 43-page portfolio prepared by the Danish group, which included all 12 published cartoons as well as the three other offensive caricatures.

Mr. Akkari says the additional images were included as examples of anti-Islamic propaganda that circulated in Denmark.

He said the images, while never published or distributed publicly, were e-mailed to some Danish Muslims in the wake of the cartoon controversy.

Copies of the portfolio were distributed all over the Middle East as the Danish delegation toured the region in December and January meeting top government officials, academics and religious leaders.

News of the offensive material spread rapidly over the Internet and became the topic of enraged religious discussions on Islamic chat rooms.

At the end of December, the Arab League's foreign ministers publicly condemned the Danish publication and on Jan. 26 Saudi Arabia announced it was withdrawing its ambassador from Denmark.

As the Danish delegation continued its tour, visiting Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, pressure grew to mount a worldwide Muslim boycott of Danish goods.

Meanwhile, other European newspapers republished the offending cartoons and Muslim indignation erupted as rioting protesters hit the streets from Iraq to Indonesia.

In Britain, protesters waved signs reading "Massacre those who insult Islam" and "Freedom of expression go to hell." One dressed provocatively as a suicide bomber.

In Syria and Iran, government officials exploited the protests and encouraged demonstrators who attacked Danish embassies in Damascus, Beirut and Tehran.

Iran's spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was quick to declare the Danish cartoons a "conspiracy by Zionists who were angry because of the Hamas victory" in last month's Palestinian elections.

The controversy has triggered profound debate about freedom of expression and religious sensibilities. It has allowed extremists to vent their violence and pose as defenders of their faith.

It has also tapped the seething resentments that lie just below the surface in many Muslim immigrant communities in Europe -- the kind of resentment exposed by last year's riots in France.

While some commentators demand to know why non-Muslims should pay attention to Muslim concerns in their own countries, their Muslim neighbours complain of being treated as second-class citizens and potential terrorists.

"The cartoons are only the fuse that set off a combustible mixture of pressures and tensions anchored in a much wider array of problems," Rami Khouri, editor of the Beirut-based Daily Star, wrote yesterday.

"These problems include the cartoons themselves, provocative and arrogant European disdain for Muslim sensitivities about the Prophet Muhammad, attempts by some Islamist extremists and criminal-political elements to stir up troubles, the Europeans' clear message that their values count more than the values of Muslims and a wider sense by many citizens of Islamic societies that the West in general seeks to weaken and subjugate the Muslim world."

In Britain, however, columnist Jasper Gerard, writing in The Sunday Times, saw things differently.

"Islam is protected by an invisible blasphemy law," he said. "It is called fear."

PREVIOUS INCIDENTS

'Clash of civilizations' orchestrated: Global protests were anything but spontaneous

There have been several instances in recent years in which Muslims have denounced publications or artworks as blasphemous. Some examples:

1989 Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini called on all Muslims to kill British author Salman Rushdie for blasphemy against Islam in his book *The Satanic Verses*.

1994 Taslima Nasreen fled Bangladesh for Sweden after a court charged her with "maliciously hurting Muslim religious sentiments." Some Muslims demanded she be killed for her book *Lajja* (Shame), and banned for blasphemy and suggesting free sex.

1995 An Egyptian court branded academic Nasr Hamed Abu Zaid an apostate because of his writings on Islam and annulled his marriage on grounds that a Muslim may not be married to an apostate. Mr. Abu Zaid and his wife moved to the Netherlands.

2002 Nigerian journalist Isioma Daniel incensed Muslims by writing in *ThisDay* newspaper that the Prophet Muhammad would have approved of the Miss World contest and might have wed a beauty queen. Muslim-Christian riots in the northern city of Kaduna killed 200. Ms. Daniel fled Nigeria after a fatwa urged Muslims to kill her.

2004 Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh was murdered after release of his film *Submission* about violence against women in Islamic societies. Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a Somali-born member of the Dutch parliament who wrote the script, plans another film about Islam's attitude to gays. She has received death threats.

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'Clash of civilizations' orchestrated: Global protests were anything but spontaneous

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Graphic

Black & White

Photo: Hazem Bader, AFP, Getty Images; Palestinians throw stones at the offices of the Temporary International Presence in the West Bank city of Hebron yesterday. A team of European observers pulled out of Hebron after its offices were attacked in riots over the publication of cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad.; Black & White

Photo: Rushdie.; Black & White

Photo: Theo Van Gogh.; Black & White

Photo: Newspaper.

Load-Date: February 9, 2006

Orchestrated 'clash of civilizations': Global protests were anything but spontaneous

National Post (f/k/a The Financial Post) (Canada)

February 9, 2006 Thursday

All but Toronto Edition

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Section: WORLD; Pg. A12; Peter Goodspeed

Length: 2116 words

Byline: Peter Goodspeed, National Post; with files from news services

Body

When a dozen deliberately provocative cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad appeared in a Danish newspaper four months ago, they barely raised a ripple.

Now, with riots convulsing continents, embassies aflame, people dying in the streets and world leaders pleading for tolerance and calm, pundits are depicting the conflict created by the cartoons as a "clash of civilizations."

In reality, it may be nothing more than a carefully orchestrated protest that spiralled out of control through a combination of authentic religious outrage and cynical political manipulation.

Flemming Rose, cultural editor of Jyllands-Posten, which first published the cartoons, says he believes the crisis was stoked by a small group of radical Danish imams who toured the Middle East this winter inflaming religious passions after they were unable to meet Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Denmark's Prime Minister.

The imams took the Jyllands-Posten cartoons with them, along with three drawings from other sources that included images depicting the Prophet as a pig and having sex with animals and children.

"All that gratuitous rubbish was trumped around to trigger a campaign of senseless hatred," Mr. Rose said yesterday.

He insists something that began as a commentary on self-censorship has been turned into a global crisis because radical religious leaders tried "to stir up the crowds by telling lies."

Ahmed Abu-Laban, the Danish Muslim cleric who helped instigate the worldwide protests against the cartoons, admits to touring the Middle East, saying he felt compelled to do so after the Danish Prime Minister refused to meet Muslim leaders and the ambassadors of 11 Muslim nations who objected to the cartoons.

"We were running a campaign, trying to create pressure," Mr. Laban, head of Copenhagen's Islamic Cultural Centre and one of Denmark's most prominent Muslim clerics, said yesterday.

He was at the forefront of a campaign to demand an apology from the Danish government.

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A political activist who once hosted Omar Abdel Rajman, the blind sheikh jailed for life for the 1993 World Trade Centre bombing in New York, Mr. Laban has had ties to other radical Islamists and once served in the 1990s as translator for Osama bin Laden's top aide, Ayman al-Zawahri.

On Sept. 30, at the beginning of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, Jyllands-Posten published the 12 cartoons under the headline " Muhammeds ansigt," ("The Face of Muhammad").

Mr. Laban said he regarded them as an insult to his religion and a smear against all Muslims in Denmark.

"This protest is not about the cartoons, offensive as they are," he said. "The cartoons are merely the final drop that caused the cup to overflow. We have heard Western politicians relate our faith to terrorism, over and over again, and it is too much. This was the response."

The Koran does not explicitly prohibit the depiction of human figures, but Muslim tradition and interpretations of certain of its verses suggest Allah and his Prophet cannot be captured in an image drawn by a human hand, lest this lead to idolatry or blasphemy.

The cartoons were commissioned after Jyllands-Posten's editors heard that a local author was having difficulty finding an illustrator for a children's book on Muhammad. They decided artists were turning down the commission for fear of reprisals and set out to explore the issue of self-censorship by inviting 25 cartoonists to "Draw Muhammad as you see him."

Twelve responded and their work was published in the newspaper, including caricatures that depicted Muhammad with a bomb in his turban and with a broken halo that looks like satanic horns. There was also a cartoon in which he meets some suicide bombers at the gates of heaven and tells them to stop because "We've run out of virgins."

Mr. Rose now says he regrets he "didn't know more beforehand" about Islamic taboos, but he refused to apologize, insisting it's an issue of free-speech.

Danish Muslims were infuriated by the images. They launched street protests and complained to the newspaper and the government.

During a demonstration in Aarhus, home to the newspaper's main offices, a local Muslim leader reminded Mr. Rose of what happened to Theo Van Gogh, a Dutch film maker who was murdered in 2004 after making a film on violence against women in Islamic societies.

Danish Muslim leaders formed the European Committee for Honouring the Prophet and, along with ambassadors from 11 Muslim nations, demanded to meet the Danish Prime Minister.

When Mr. Rasmussen refused, insisting he had no right to intervene in an issue touching free speech, the group decided to internationalize their protests.

In the meantime, a Dutch newspaper, De Volkskrant, published the offending cartoons.

After consulting diplomats from Egypt and Saudi Arabia, the Danish imams decided to send a delegation to the Middle East to drum up support.

"We went there because the Danish government turned a deaf ear to our protests," said Ahmed Akkari, a spokesman for the group .

Landing in Cairo in December in the midst of that country's first-ever free multi-party elections, in which the outlawed Islamic fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood played a major role, the group's protests rapidly became much more than a simple bid to defend the Prophet's dignity.

Egyptian officials furious over the perceived indignity of the Danish cartoons were also conscious of the fact their Islamist political opponents were attacking them for not being pious enough.

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They hurried to support the protest and seethed with indignation when they studied a 43-page portfolio prepared by the Danish group, which included all 12 published cartoons as well as the three other offensive caricatures.

Mr. Akkari says the additional images were included as examples of anti-Islamic propaganda that circulated in Denmark.

He said the images, while never published or distributed publicly, were e-mailed to some Danish Muslims in the wake of the cartoon controversy.

Copies of the portfolio were distributed all over the Middle East as the Danish delegation toured the region in December and January meeting top government officials, academics and religious leaders.

News of the offensive material spread rapidly over the Internet and became the topic of enraged religious discussions on Islamic chat rooms.

At the end of December, the Arab League's foreign ministers publicly condemned the Danish publication and on Jan. 26 Saudi Arabia announced it was withdrawing its ambassador from Denmark.

As the Danish delegation continued its tour, visiting Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, pressure grew to mount a worldwide Muslim boycott of Danish goods.

Meanwhile, other European newspapers republished the offending cartoons and Muslim indignation erupted as rioting protesters hit the streets from Iraq to Indonesia.

In Britain, protesters waved signs reading "Massacre those who insult Islam" and "Freedom of expression go to hell." One dressed provocatively as a suicide bomber.

In Syria and Iran, government officials exploited the protests and encouraged demonstrators who attacked Danish embassies in Damascus, Beirut and Tehran.

Iran's spiritual leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was quick to declare the Danish cartoons a "conspiracy by Zionists who were angry because of the Hamas victory" in last month's Palestinian elections.

The controversy has triggered profound debate about freedom of expression and religious sensibilities. It has allowed extremists to vent their violence and pose as defenders of their faith.

It has also tapped the seething resentments that lie just below the surface in many Muslim immigrant communities in Europe -- the kind of resentment exposed by last year's riots in France.

While some commentators demand to know why non-Muslims should pay attention to Muslim concerns in their own countries, their Muslim neighbours complain of being treated as second-class citizens and potential terrorists.

"The cartoons are only the fuse that set off a combustible mixture of pressures and tensions anchored in a much wider array of problems," Rami Khouri, editor of the Beirut-based Daily Star, wrote yesterday.

"These problems include the cartoons themselves, provocative and arrogant European disdain for Muslim sensitivities about the Prophet Muhammad, attempts by some Islamist extremists and criminal-political elements to stir up troubles, the Europeans' clear message that their values count more than the values of Muslims and a wider sense by many citizens of Islamic societies that the West in general seeks to weaken and subjugate the Muslim world."

In Britain, however, columnist Jasper Gerard, writing in The Sunday Times, saw things differently.

"Islam is protected by an invisible blasphemy law," he said. "It is called fear."

PREVIOUS INCIDENTS

Orchestrated 'clash of civilizations': Global protests were anything but spontaneous

There have been several instances in recent years in which Muslims have denounced publications or artworks as blasphemous. Some examples:

1989 Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini called on all Muslims to kill British author Salman Rushdie for blasphemy against Islam in his book *The Satanic Verses*.

1994 Taslima Nasreen fled Bangladesh for Sweden after a court charged her with "maliciously hurting Muslim religious sentiments." Some Muslims demanded she be killed for her book *Lajja* (Shame), banned for blasphemy and suggesting free sex.

1995 An Egyptian court branded academic Nasr Hamed Abu Zaid an apostate because of his writings on Islam and annulled his marriage on grounds that a Muslim may not be married to an apostate. Mr. Abu Zaid and his wife moved to the Netherlands.

2002 Nigerian journalist Isioma Daniel incensed Muslims by writing in *ThisDay* newspaper that the Prophet Mohammad would have approved of the Miss World contest and might have wed a beauty queen. Muslim-Christian riots in the northern city of Kaduna killed 200. Ms. Daniel fled Nigeria after a fatwa urged Muslims to kill her.

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Photo: Salman Rushdie.; Black & White

Photo: Theo van Gogh.; Black & White

Photo: Newspaper.

Load-Date: February 9, 2006

A New Face in Iran Resurrects an Old Defiance

The New York Times

January 30, 2006 Monday

Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 2; Foreign Desk; Pg. 1; IRAN'S NUCLEAR CHALLENGE: TEHRAN

Length: 2076 words

Byline: By MICHAEL SLACKMAN; Nazila Fathi contributed reporting for this article.

Dateline: TEHRAN, Jan. 29

Body

Since he took office as Iran's president nearly six months ago, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has been the subject of many jokes sent via text messages on cellphones across Iran. He has been spoofed on television and radio, here and abroad, as a bumpkin and a bigot for declaring the Holocaust a "myth" and causing international outrage over Iran's nuclear program.

One joke has the president combing his hair in a mirror and saying, "O.K., male lice to the left, female lice to the right," ridiculing him as a religious extremist who wants to separate the sexes in public places.

But that is just part of the picture.

Beyond the prosperous tree-lined hills of northern Tehran, Mr. Ahmadinejad appears to be solidifying his support. He has traveled around the country, doling out promises of economic aid in some of the poorest regions, sticking with the humble clothing and religion-infused language that attracted his voters in the first place.

"He is leading a simple life," said Zabiollah Baderlou, 18, as he worked in a bakery in the city. "TV showed us his house. It was very simple. He is making these efforts for the people and all he wants is Iran's dignity."

Most of all, despite the limited powers of Iran's presidency, Mr. Ahmadinejad, an ultraconservative former militia member, has used Western opposition to Iran's nuclear program to generate national unity and purpose.

Those dynamics have compelled even people who oppose him to give him room to maneuver. Stop Iranians on any street in any neighborhood and they are likely to demand that Iran be allowed to pursue a nuclear energy program, a sentiment that has served as a launching platform for Mr. Ahmadinejad's firebrand politics.

"You get the feeling that Iran, under the present leadership, is looking for isolation and to go it alone," said a Western diplomat based in Tehran who spoke on the condition of anonymity so as to be able to continue working here. "They want to show their way is the right way, and the former guys were wrong."

While the top leadership had decided to take a more confrontational approach with the West even before Mr. Ahmadinejad was elected, the new president began with such a harsh style that many officials were initially unnerved. But when the West failed to stop Iran from defiantly restarting its nuclear program, or to punish it, some opponents reluctantly accepted that Mr. Ahmadinejad was right and they were wrong.

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"First we thought he is not right," said a senior government official who consults frequently with the ruling clergy. "Now we understand he is right. You need us more than we need you," he said of the West.

The nuclear issue has provided fertile ground for the president to try to cultivate a new political class, one that is ideologically driven to provide a new, and at the same time reactionary, face to Iran.

After years of reformers controlling the government, Mr. Ahmadinejad is doing exactly what he promised, resurrecting the priorities of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, chastising the West at every turn and striving to forge a distinctly anti-Western national identity while re-establishing Iran's revolutionary influence across the Muslim world.

At a conference in October titled "The World Without Zionism" he effectively called for wiping not just Israel off the map, but America, too.

"Many have tried to disperse disappointment in this struggle between the Islamic world and the infidels," he said. "They say it is not possible to have a world without the United States and Zionism. But you know that this is a possible goal and slogan."

While sprinkling like-minded people into positions of power across the country, Mr. Ahmadinejad and his allies have demonstrated that they are undeterred by the complaints of the establishment, whether liberal or conservative.

They have instead taken their appeal directly to the poor and middle-class masses who are generally disgusted with a system widely viewed as corrupt and uncaring.

For the time being, they also have the quiet support of the nation's ultimate ruler, the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Even those members of Parliament who charge that the president's foreign and domestic policies are sending the nation hurtling toward disaster find there is little to do but watch from the sidelines.

"Right now, Ahmadinejad is an individual representing a new body in the whole Iranian political system that had been marginalized and disorganized," said a political professor who has close ties to many people in the government and was afraid he would suffer retaliation if identified. "They are in the process of making their identity - and making history."

Mr. Ahmadinejad was largely unknown when he ran for office in June. He was the mayor of Tehran, the son of a blacksmith who had served in the hard-line Basiji militia -- a volunteer Islamic vigilante force -- and the Revolutionary Guard, and he was not expected to win. When he was elected, he was expected to fall into lockstep with the conservative forces that controlled every other institution of government.

Instead, he has charted his own course.

From the start he alienated many hard-liners by ignoring their nominees for important cabinet posts, turning to people he knew well, but who were largely unknown. Most of his choices had backgrounds in the military, the Basiji or the security services.

Mr. Ahmadinejad has come to represent a generational split among conservatives, some political analysts said. They said he belonged to a group of ideologically conservative veterans of the Iran-Iraq war who effectively parked themselves among the so-called hard-liners. With Mr. Ahmadinejad's election, they have begun to coalesce into their own political force.

With his team around him, Mr. Ahmadinejad has become the public face of Iran: aggressive, provocative and heatedly anti-American. He has adopted the phrase "world oppressor," in place of Great Satan, and his speeches are laced with religious references, including an emphasis on one of the central principles of the Shiite sect of Islam: an appeal for justice.

Since ultimate power here is vested in the hands of appointed clergy, Mr. Ahmadinejad does not exert direct control over foreign affairs or nuclear policy.

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But his ascension came at a time when the region was in turmoil, with Iraq bogged down in a violent insurgency, Islamic groups like ***Hamas*** in Gaza and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt emerging as powerful political forces, and Iran itself determined to develop a nuclear program that it says is peaceful and the West charges is aimed at developing weapons. And that insulates him from criticism.

"If it wasn't for the foreign pressures, perhaps Mr. Ahmadinejad, and his ministers, would have been called to the Majlis many times to explain themselves," said Akbar Alami, a member of the foreign affairs committee of the Majlis, or Parliament, and an outspoken critic of the president. "As the pressure has increased, the safety margins for him to operate have widened."

Moreover, Mr. Ahmadinejad is looking beyond Iran, seeking to fashion himself as a pan-Islamic leader, much the way Ayatollah Khomeini did. His ideological framework has been heavily influenced by his mentor and spiritual leader, Muhammad Taqi Mesbah Yazdi, a senior hard-line cleric who runs a school in the religious center of Qum and who advocates a strict Islamic government.

It is not clear whether Mr. Ahmadinejad decided to push to make Iran a regional leader, or whether he is trying to carry out a decision made at a higher level. But that posture is increasingly part of Iran's defiant public statements.

"The nuclear challenge is a big deception in the West where they know we do not want nuclear weapons," Muhammad Javad Larijani, brother of the nation's chief nuclear negotiator said during a Friday prayer ceremony. "What they are really concerned about is an advanced Islam. They are concerned the Islamic expansion will be a success, following the same concern they had for Communism."

It is still very early in the president's term, and there is ample evidence that many powerful people within the establishment are still worried by the tone and direction Mr. Ahmadinejad has taken. And some people speculated that the supreme leader might in the end muzzle him, should consequences turn out to be too dire. But for now, hampered by nationalist reaction to the West's pressure on Iran, even some of his harshest critics are treading lightly.

"I am saying that we have reached a sensitive point," Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the chairman of the Expediency Council, which has oversight of the executive branch, said in a recent speech, referring to Iran's relations with the West. "There is a need for prudence on both sides." Mr. Rafsanjani ran against Mr. Ahmadinejad in the election for president, emphasizing a platform of engagement with the West.

"We all agree in the country that we should have a peaceful nuclear program," said Kazem Jalali, a member of Parliament. "The difference is over how we can have an effective diplomacy. In the past months we have seen our officials use tough language in the foreign policy. They are adopting a confrontational approach, which does not seem to be acceptable by the international community. This is not balanced. We must pursue our interests in our foreign policy based on balanced relations with all countries."

From the sidelines, reformers are now trying to regroup. Many of them say that the best factor in their favor is the president himself. The feeling is that the president can not, ultimately, meet all his economic promises, and that his policy of confrontation will undermine rather than improve people's lives.

Abdullah Momenie, a leader within the student movement that called for a boycott of the presidential election, said: "We see the sensitivity of the world community as a positive thing. Although we think it is an unwise action of power which may take the country to destruction, this might produce an opportunity for a democratic movement."

But so far the president has the upper hand.

President Ahmadinejad's comments at an Islamic conference in Mecca about wiping out Israel brought him international condemnation -- and applause from his target audience.

"He raised the question in Mecca and he received a huge amount of praise," said Mehdi Chamran, the chairman of the Tehran City Council and a close adviser to the president who often travels with him. "The people living in these countries, within their hearts, they are happy to hear these statements. If we can strengthen ties with the

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people that is most important. When we hear the Egyptians take him as a role model, this is a real sign he has reached the people."

In practical terms, the management of Iran has begun to change since the new government came to power. The Parliament has been fighting with the executive branch over a budget proposal, saying that its generous spending could threaten inflation. But the budget seems to reflect the president's campaign promise to spend more money on people's immediate needs. The president has taken a few swipes at tightening some social freedoms, banning Western music, for example, but that edict has hardly been enforced.

President Ahmadinejad is forging a distinct style. For the first time, an Iranian president is regularly holding cabinet meetings in provinces around the country. He has so far visited five provinces and one city with his cabinet, walking the streets, shaking hands, kissing local people and promising a bevy of development projects.

After a cabinet meeting in Hormozgan in the south, his aides announced that the government would allocate money to rebuild old buildings, install a gas pipeline, build and equip health centers, provide land for building a mosque, buy equipment for a hospital, build an athletic center for women and offer low-interest loans to families who lost their homes in an earthquake.

No one says where the money will come from, or when, but the retail politics has won him affection from the base he continues to cultivate.

"In my opinion, Ahmadinejad is a good person, a trustful person who believes in God, and I hope he is able to fulfill his pledges," said Morovat Asaadi, 36, a construction painter as he walked near Tajrish Square in Tehran. "I like him very much. He is a good person."

<http://www.nytimes.com>

Graphic

Photos: Anti-American demonstrators in Tehran on Friday with posters of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, left, and Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

An anti-American painting in Tehran. Iran's leader is forging an anti-Western national identity while reaffirming Iran's role in the Muslim world. (Photographs by Lynsey Addario for The New York Times)(pg. A10)

Load-Date: January 30, 2006

G2: The unlikely first lady: Ehud Olmert is the rightwing nationalist who has just become Israel's prime minister. His wife Aliza is a leftwing artist who is openly critical of his policies - and had never voted for him until this year. Rachel Shabi on the world's least conventional political wife

The Guardian - Final Edition

May 5, 2006 Friday

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Section: GUARDIAN FEATURES PAGES; Pg. 10

Length: 2196 words

Byline: Rachel Shabi

Body

Just before the Israeli election in March, a photograph of prime minister Ehud Olmert's wife Aliza was circulating on the internet. It pictured her hugging Muhammad Abu Tir, the henna-bearded **Hamas** leader. Apparently, the rightwing Jewish National Front party was behind the spoof photo, intending to use it in a campaign pamphlet alongside the text: "Aliza Olmert's friends", while suggesting that "the Olmert family will tear Israel apart". At that time, Efraim Inbar, a political science professor at Bar-Ilan University, described Ehud Olmert's domestic background like this: "It would be the equivalent of George W Bush running for election with a family full of communists."

In Israel, it is widely known that Olmert's wife is a leftie - as are their children. The new prime minister, however, has always been rightwing, a nationalist allied to the settler movement. Olmert, who took over the reins of the new Kadima party following Ariel Sharon's stroke in January, now heads the coalition government that was presented to parliament yesterday. He only recently moved toward the centre, first as deputy prime minister within the rightwing Likud party when he backed disengagement from Gaza, now with the Kadima-led coalition that speaks of further pull-outs from the West Bank. Aliza Olmert has always been open about her leftist views and had never voted for her husband until the recent election. Even then, she told the press, her vote was cast, "With a certain amount of hesitation."

An accomplished artist, photographer, writer and social worker, Aliza Olmert has her own life, causes and career. She does not seem to belong to the world of parliamentary politics, not even in a support role. She is not a smilingly compliant trophy wife to be wheeled out at state functions and public engagements. The 59-year-old is quiet, unaffected and apparently untouched by the glamour of her new position. And now that her husband is prime minister, many are wondering how she will play the role of Israel's first lady.

She is unlikely to embrace this new role with open arms. When, before the elections, America's Frontline/World programme asked her how she felt about the prospect of her husband becoming prime minister, she replied: "Well, I wish that he gets what he wants, what he always wanted, even though if it was for me I would give it up. It has been imposed on me in many ways and it's not my choice." Is her role any fun, she was asked. "No, it's not fun at all. None of it." She recalled the night that the then prime minister, Ariel Sharon, fell into a coma and her husband, as deputy, was asked to stand in for him: "When we came home we realised the house had turned into a fortress,

G2: The unlikely first lady: Ehud Olmert is the rightwing nationalist who has just become Israel's prime minister. His wife Aliza is a leftwing artist who is o....

surrounded by security people . . . by media, by curious people. I was watching the house and I said, 'Bye bye, freedom.'"

Her apparent dislike of the political arena has led some friends to believe that she will do the absolute minimum required of her as PM's wife. While her 60-year-old husband seems to revel in the company of Israel's rich and powerful, she avoids it. "She hates bullshit, which means that she hates to go to cocktail parties and is annoyed by being recognised in the street and aghast at losing her privacy," says Tommy Lapid, former head of the secular, free-market liberal party Shinui and a close friend of the Olmerts. "If this had been on a lower level, she would shun it, but she understands that she can't." Lapid thinks that, in terms of attending functions, the first lady will "cooperate" with her husband, "but only to a limited degree, and when her absence will be more meaningful than her presence".

And yet the Israeli premier - and by extension his wife - is a critical international figure. Isn't there a chance, once she steps on to the White House lawn, as she is scheduled to do later this month, that this new level of influence will go to her head? No way, say her friends. "For many years, she remained modest and never took advantage of the possibilities offered when (Ehud) was minister of health and then mayor of Jerusalem," says Savyon Liebrecht, an Israeli author who has known Aliza since they were both eight years old. "There is no reason why that would change now. She is not dazzled by anything, neither money, nor names, nor power."

Olmert herself admits that her husband's tenure as Jerusalem mayor from 1993 until 2003 was their most difficult time. His period of office was characterised by a strongly nationalist line ("I couldn't cope with this rhetoric," she has said), and his support for Jewish expansion in the Old City and East Jerusalem. "He was actually creating realities that I disagreed with," she told the Frontline programme. "So this was really our worst time as a couple."

One of the most testing moments came in 1996, when Olmert, along with the then prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, opened an underground tunnel in Jerusalem's Old City. It was a politically charged move; the tunnel lay close to the Temple Mount or Haram al-Sharif. It is a site that Muslims hold sacred and they felt that Olmert's actions had desecrated a holy site. Stones were thrown and the Israeli army fired shots in retaliation. Within three days, 80 people were dead. "I could see the consequences. I completely disagreed with it," she said.

"I know that, politically, (Aliza) was totally opposed to it and very upset by this act," says Edna Sobol, a set and costume designer who, along with her playwright husband, Joshua, had been a long-time friend of the Olmerts. Appalled, the couple broke off social relations with the Olmerts after this event, although the two women remained in contact (and they have all recently been reconciled). "My husband and I could not accept what Ehud did, which was quite painful because we like him as a person and Aliza is very dear to me," says Sobol. "But she is much more tolerant, more accepting than I am."

When Ehud was elected mayor of Jerusalem, Aliza found another good friend in Michal Smoira-Cohn - her husband's political opponent. Cohn was elected to the city council at the same time as Ehud, but as a candidate for Meretz, the leftwing party that stands for an Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories. "Ideologically, Aliza is quite close to me," she says. The widow of Haim Cohn, the famously liberal Israeli supreme court judge and keen defender of human rights, Michal recalls: "When I first met Aliza, she said, 'Invite us to your home. Maybe Haim can have some influence on my husband.'" Today, the issue of influence is still pertinent. Many wonder if, after 35 years of marriage, it was Aliza's sway that pulled her husband towards the centrist position that he now holds, where he is prepared to concede at least some Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank.

The couple met in 1970, while both were students at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, he studying politics, she social sciences. According to Amnon Dankner, a family friend and the editor of the Israeli tabloid Maariv, Ehud did not initially impress her. "She couldn't stand him at first," he says. "She remembers seeing him at some political activity, a debate or something, and he seemed too pushy." Ehud persisted, tailing Aliza to the Jerusalem cafe where she worked as a waitress. "Reluctantly, she agreed to see him," says Dankner. After spending just a few weeks together, the couple decided to marry. "Ehud can be very charming," says Liebrecht. "There were no other assets then, apart from his personality."

G2: The unlikely first lady: Ehud Olmert is the rightwing nationalist who has just become Israel 's prime minister. His wife Aliza is a leftwing artist who is o....

Though the Olmerts will soon move into the prime minister's official residence in Jerusalem, they have lived for years in the Arab suburb of Katamon in west Jerusalem. They have five children, one of whom is adopted. The eldest son, Shaul, lives in New York and signed a petition refusing to do reserve duty in the occupied territories. The younger son, Ariel, did not serve at all and currently studies in Paris. One of their daughters, Danna, was involved with Machsom Watch, the all-**female** organisation that monitors the conduct of Israeli soldiers at checkpoints. None of the children is on the father's side, politically. Pre-election, one of the settler movement leaflets read: "Will you give the most extreme leftwing movements a foothold in the prime minister's office?"

Those who know the family speak of a warm, tolerant home without tensions, and an obvious love between husband and wife. "I am sure that she has quite an influence upon him . . . open people change their minds, even if they are politicians," says Yitzhak Livni, a family friend and chairman of the Israeli Channel 2 News Corporation. On election night, as his party emerged the winners, Olmert gave a speech worthy of an Oscar acceptance, in which he thanked his family: "Your patience, your wisdom, your ability to disagree with me frequently and your understanding in agreeing with me infrequently - all these gave me strength, enthusiasm, faith and hope." For his wife, he added: "With her, everything becomes possible, right and reachable. This moment, more than anyone else, is all yours."

Political influence on the new PM has also come from the couple's social circle. "(Aliza) was organising the social life of Olmert, so it was her friends he was meeting," says Lapid. "Her friends were more leftwing than his." But commentators insist that Ehud's gradual move to the centre has been shaped as much by Israel's new reality as by his domestic circumstances. "The most important influence (on Olmert) was the reality of things here, a reality that is coercing itself on to our political beliefs," says Dankner. According to this view, Olmert changed tack because he thought his political survival depended on it. Tellingly, when interviewed on the Frontline programme, he said of his family's politics, "I never questioned their right to be wrong."

She attributes the ideological differences between herself and her husband to their very different backgrounds. He was born into an ultra-nationalistic Jewish community in the small town Nachalat Jabotinsky, near Hadera in central Israel. His parents were members of Irgun, the militant Zionist organisation that was defined by the British and the Jewish mainstream at the time as a terrorist group. She was born in a displaced persons camp in Eschwege, Germany in 1946, the daughter of Holocaust survivors who were, she says, grateful to find in Israel a tiny bit of land to call their own.

This background inevitably shaped Olmert's art as well as her politics. As a writer, her work includes *Slice of the Sea*, a television drama about a Holocaust survivor returning to her home village in Poland, and *Synonym/Dead Line*, another TV drama, this time about the relationship between a Holocaust survivor and her children, written with Savyon Liebrecht. She has also written both novels and plays. In addition, much of her visual art makes use of fragmented materials - bits of wire, strips of measuring tape, broken eggshells. The notes for *Tikkun* (Repair, the Jewish concept of social justice), her exhibition at New York's Hebrew Union College last year, read: "Olmert's conceptual art offers impossible constructions that convey the fragility of existence, the obstacles to survival." She has exhibited widely, both in Israel and internationally.

Currently, Aliza Olmert's work can be seen at the Museum on the Seam, located on the boundary of East and West Jerusalem. Entitled *Dead End*, the exhibition deals with violence as a feature of Israeli daily life. Her contribution is a series of photographs depicting graffiti on the walls of Jerusalem's Old City. The museum's director, Raphael Etgar, says: "What makes her work suited to this exhibition is that she documented the art of graffiti in Israel, which is so different from the graffiti we know from around the world." It shows a style of graffiti where one artist paints on top of the work of another, thereby erasing the original. "The writing on the wall is not always verbal but it does chronicle the spirit of time," read the artist's accompanying notes. "It pictures the erosion of the continuing war, the weariness in the eyes of the people, the impatience with solutions far off on the horizon, the tide of escalation, the shout for calm and identity."

When not busy painting in the family cellar, she is also involved with several charities. These include Orr Shalom, which cares for children of all religions from troubled backgrounds, and others that focus on children or poverty.

G2: The unlikely first lady: Ehud Olmert is the rightwing nationalist who has just become Israel 's prime minister. His wife Aliza is a leftwing artist who is o....

While some Israelis, with typical cynicism, insist that deeper digging would be certain to unearth some dirt, her friends are clearly incredibly loyal. "I know that I am talking in superlatives," says Sobol, "but I really don't know anyone else like Aliza. She is very, very special." She is said to have a close coterie of mostly **female** friends; one of them urges me to speak with Aliza herself, in order to truly appreciate how wonderful she is. Alas, she is not currently talking to the press, though Amnon Danker, the editor of Maariv, which ran one of her last interviews, now says: "Our reporter was amazed that this woman has no enemies - even her husband's bitterest enemies sing her praises"

Load-Date: May 5, 2006

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Asbos do work and the public support them

Yorkshire Post

April 5, 2006

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Length: 2384 words

Body

From: Hazel Blears, Home Office Minister, Home Office, London.

YOUR leader article, "Get tough on the causes of crime", (Yorkshire Post, March 31) claims that Asbos are fundamentally flawed in tackling anti-social behaviour. I disagree.

Asbos offer protection, while reassuring victims, witnesses and communities that anti-social disorder is being addressed. In many cases, they have rescued communities from the menace of one individual's behaviour.
Yorkshire Post

It is not the case that it takes months for action to be taken as interim Asbos can be issued overnight to deal with nuisance behaviour swiftly and effectively in response to communities' needs.

But Asbos are only one of a range of tools to deal with this problem; dispersal orders, fixed penalty notices and parenting orders all contribute to addressing anti-social behaviour.

Asbos are not a soft option. Breach of an Asbo carries a five- year prison sentence and ensures that the lives of ordinary decent people are not overtaken by the selfish behaviour of an inconsiderate minority

I know, from meeting many people across the country, that the public support Asbos and they have a vital role to play in strengthening communities.

From: Donald H Buxton, Radley Avenue, Wickersley, Rotherham.

I READ the article, "Asbos: wrong arm of the law", by Geoff Ogden (Yorkshire Post, March 31) with equal measures of relief and then deep profound regret.

Relief that here was a reasoned analysis from an experienced senior professional from the law-enforcement field who clearly understands the beginnings, the consequences and the solutions for law-breaking and law-enforcement.

Here were the words from a man with a wealth of experience of dealing with young criminals and his efforts to successfully deter them from descending into a life of perpetual, unsuccessful crime with its untold cost to the rest of the community.

My profound regret came when I read that Geoff Ogden is now a retired police officer, and a former drug action team co-ordinator. What a pity that a man with such an insight into how young people become criminals and how to deter them from their life of crime is no longer serving the public in his former role. The public are now more in need of expertise such as his than ever before.

Asbos do work and the public support them

The sense of regret was deepened when I reflected on how our Government now uses statistics and percentages to spin its way around our lives. They can lay claim to more "partnerships, stakeholders, inputs, outputs, outcomes, action plans, strategies, impact assessments, community support officers, neighbourhood wardens etc", but what they can't do is to convince the ordinary man and woman in today's Britain that their local neighbourhood is safer now than when Geoff Ogden and his colleagues were professionally engaged in the task of keeping the nation safe.

How nice it would be one day to read in a Home Office media report that a Government minister has been listening to the wise words and advice from someone with Mr Ogden's experience, and better still, decided to act on his recommendations.

In praise of post office pensions

From: Richard Riley, Dyke Bottom, Shepley, Huddersfield.

I READ Douglas Hartley's letter with interest (Yorkshire Post, April 1). We still have a local post office in Shepley run by a young couple who I always find very helpful.

My retirement pension is paid into a long-standing current account held in Huddersfield. I have access to cash through the cash-back scheme at Morrison's, but that will not be forever, as there will come a time when we are unable to drive to a supermarket.

I do feel guilty as I will be using the local post office as a fall-back rather than a first choice.

At a time when the changeover to the new payment system was being introduced, I was using the post office for its various other services quite frequently. The thing that struck me most was the amount of time and patience that was given to each customer to make sure that they fully understood the system and were able to make best use of it.

There were a number who had not had bank accounts before, some of whom were disabled or quite frail. Each one was given the help they needed, with no annoyance expressed despite requests to repeat instructions.

Balancing act

From: Lance Green, Haisborough Avenue, Newport.

A DAY or two ago a Christian friend of mine claimed that agnostics abandoned their belief and cried out to God when they are near death. I have heard that argument before. Promoters of capital punishment have asked me if my mother were murdered, would I want to kill the perpetrator?

Those people are saying that I would agree with them if my mind were completely unbalanced. That is hardly the point at issue, is it? Important matters must be considered when our minds are cool and clear and undistorted by trauma. Take no notice of death-bed conversions. True views are expressed when one is rational and dispassionate.

Pay query

From: Ann Clarke, Wold Croft, Sutton-on-Derwent, York.

I HAVE a problem which has puzzled me for some time. Perhaps your readers can help? Why is it that all employers these days persist in using the iniquitous system of giving their workers percentage pay rises across the board?

It does not require the brain of Einstein to work out that however small a percentage is offered to a hospital consultant (Yorkshire Post, March 31), the amount in his pay packet will be considerably more than that received by a nurse, and even less will find its way into the hospital porter's pocket.

Inevitably, the outcome for people who work in the same industry is divisive.

Asbos do work and the public support them

Could this be part of the reason that the gap between rich and poor is now greater than before this Government came to power?

Cheating facts

From: Mrs J Booth, Skipton Road, Keighley.

AFTER listening to Today on Radio Four, and reading the Yorkshire Post, as I have done for 60 years, one could be misled into believing that 27 per cent of children are cheating by using mobile phones and other gadgets in their GCSE exams (Yorkshire Post, March 27).

A very articulate woman came on to Today later on, to explain that last year 0.06 per cent of the candidates were caught cheating.

This means that the 27 per cent is based on last year's figure of 0.06 per cent. Some people only read the headlines and are therefore misled into believing that 27 per cent of children are cheating. I am 87 years of age, all my grandchildren are through the education system and thankfully, have all done well, but with all the bad news about our schools and about our young people, let's have the headlines giving us the true facts.

Rocky road

From: Graham E Hancock, Rosehill Drive, Birkby, Huddersfield.

IN this day of award ceremonies for anything, we are missing a trick - the Gordon Brown Team surely are worthy of a medal for the manner in which they extract money from us under the subterfuge that it is good for us.

The latest ploy is the introduction of an increase in road tax on gas guzzlers.

The reason given is to deter the use of 4x4s. The increase in the Budget was not large enough to do this, but see how the money rolls in.

At the same time there has been a shortfall of £1.6bn in the budget for highway maintenance. The idea is that the roads will deteriorate to such a state that only 4x4s will safely negotiate them, leading to a greater use of them and more money rolling in. So much for a green policy and encouraging the use of cycles.

Nearly the end

From: RC Curry, Adel Grange Close, Leeds.

THE Lord Chancellor, in stating his plans to cut through the legal system with more administrative penalties instead of allowing people justice, reportedly says that it takes 153 days to get a case dealt with by the magistrates. Whose fault is that?

Senior magistrates will recall plenty of cases which were dealt with in a few days, but successive governments, this one especially, have brought this on themselves by imposing tiers of administrative junk. The originally worthy, but now "free for all" legal aid system has been totally abused by those who think it worth having a go to prolong the process, only pleading guilty at the court door when all else has failed.

Handling offenders in a "bulk processing centre", as is now announced, treating people like lumps of meat, is just about the end and the final degradation of what used to be the world's finest legal system. The Lord Chancellor should resign in shame.

Protesters should remember rights of others

From: Mark Andrew, Manor Heath Road, Halifax.

Asbos do work and the public support them

THERE is an increasing problem with our relationship with the United States, and the recent visit to Blackburn and Liverpool by their excellent Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, has provoked many to protest.

Can these people who carry banners and shout insults please remember that the US did not invite the terrorists to fly aircraft into New York and Washington and kill thousands of people on 9/11?

The US has always been a very open country tolerant to worldwide immigrants of all races and religions. Many from Yorkshire made their way there centuries ago and helped to found a great nation.

Where would we be now if the US had not become the free-world partner against Hitler? Not much chance to protest if there had been a different ending to the Second World War.

And please can these protesters remember the recent London suicide bombings and loss of lives of innocent civilians.

It is no good shouting about Palestine, that is being racist against Jews, while **Hamas** remains a terrorist organisation committed to the destruction of Israel.

It is no good shouting about Iraq without remembering the Kurds and Marsh Arabs murdered by Saddam's henchmen, or the fact that he took his country to war against his neighbours.

It is no good shouting about Afghanistan without recalling the days of Taliban rule and the way **women** were treated.

Protest if you wish, but be mindful about the rights of others.

Misreading of headline proved to be more appropriate

From: Keith Gaines,

Main Street, Kellington,

near Goole.

I was nodding in full agreement with your headline, "MPs get staggering two per cent pay rise" (Yorkshire Post, March 31), when I realised that I had mis-read it. It was, in fact, a "staggered" pay rise.

Years ago, I recall listening to Sir Keith Joseph, Mrs Thatcher's financial guru and Education Minister. He was addressing a teacher trade-union conference, at a time when strike action over teachers' pay was being threatened.

Sir Keith argued that there were only three valid reasons for a pay increase: to recruit, to retain and to motivate.

Applying his reasoning to MPs, each election shows no shortage of candidates for the jobs.

I don't see MPs resigning to take up more rewarding jobs and, as for motivation, our politicians seem to be causing enough chaos and waste without further encouragement.

I think my original mis-reading of your headline was more appropriate.

From: Mary Armstrong, Main Street, Thornton-le-Moor, Northallerton.

ALL politicians are now tarred with the same brush of mistrust.

Buying titles and getting into Parliament isn't democracy and nor is cronyism.

A Prime Minister can lead us into war for spurious reasons. A Chancellor can ruin the pensions industry. We are not allowed a vote on our future in the European Union. Council tax is increasing, as is the amount that the English pay to subsidise Scotland.

Asbos do work and the public support them

Meanwhile, Scots are allowed to vote on English matters. And isn't £40m a disgraceful amount to be spent by all parties before an election?

We could wipe the slate clean. How? Easy.

Before the next General Election we could limit each party to say £2m, or less, in election expenditure (they wouldn't have to scrounge so much then).

We could require each party to rely on its manifesto, which would be published by the media without comment or criticism.

We could limit appearances on TV and radio by each party leader to one pre-election broadcast.

We could limit appearances in a constituency to candidates only.

We could stop searching for charisma and look for statesmanship.

And we could bring in proportional representation instead of allowing a party with a minority vote to rule the country.

Points

Beckett should be sacked

From: Patricia Schofield, Park Lane, Blaxton, Doncaster.

WITH reference to your "Farming fury" comment (Yorkshire Post, April 1), perhaps Prime Minister Tony Blair should consider sacking his Environment Secretary, Margaret Beckett, and Lord Bach because it is obvious that they are not going to resign.

He should replace them with a minister who understands the farm-subsidy payments (if there is anyone in the Government who does understand this subject).

It is high time that the farmers were paid their long-overdue payment.

Smoky pubs

From: Maurice Goddard, Exeter, Devon.

HAVING just spent most of the week in Leeds, I was struck by how smoke-filled your pubs are.

I'm not sure whether this is in keeping with the rest of the North, but I think the pub-goers of Leeds are going to have more difficulty than usual when the ban on pub smoking begins.

Pension poser

From: M Milne, Pocklington.

REGARDING John Prescott's quote in your Words of the Week column (Yorkshire Post, April 1), that he does not make any money out of politics, would the Deputy Prime Minister, as a starter, mind publishing the amount he will receive as his annual pension, please?

Business view

From: Godfrey Bloom MEP (United Kingdom Independence Party, Yorkshire and Humber), Main Street, Wressle, Selby.

While your editorial on healthcare (Yorkshire Post, March 29) was spot on in many ways, I feel I must take issue with your rose-tinted view of Sir Derek Wanless.

Asbos do work and the public support them

His review of the National Health Service was woefully inadequate and wrong-headed, as is now beginning to show.

What is needed is a businessman with serious credentials to review out-of-control public spending on welfare, now more than £140bn. May I suggest Tim Martin, of Wetherspoons, or our home-grown Paul Sykes?

Unfair ruling

From: AF Holroyd, Westwood Court, Dark Lane, Huddersfield.

SO the police are told to let off offenders with a caution if they commit any one of more than 60 crimes ranging from assault to under-age sex.

These rules, of course, don't apply to the average honest, insured and fully-taxed motorist. No caution for him or her if two large men in blue catch them speeding at 35mph with not a pedestrian in sight.

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MIDDLE EAST SPECIAL: Land of my fathers It took David Baker 40 years to get to Israel. But when he did he found peace in the most surprising of places

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Byline: By DAVID BAKER

Body

When I was growing up in the north-east of England in the 1960s, we had a little blue and white collecting tin on the shelf in our hallway. Printed on one side was a stylised map of Israel and the Hebrew letters for JNF, or Jewish National Fund. In the top was a slot for coins and, impressively as Pounds 1 was a lot in those days, a little hole you could push a rolled-up banknote through. The idea was that, even from faraway Middlesbrough, we could all contribute a little of what we had to the Jewish state.

I never saw much money put into the tin - I guess my parents sent a cheque instead - and I couldn't really understand why Israel needed our help. The pictures we were shown at the synagogue Sunday school were of happy children running around under bright blue skies, which looked a lot better than the rain-blasted, slate-grey days we endured for much of the year. In fact, even as I got older, I never really got to grips with the idea of Israel as a reality. In my mind the little strip of land along the eastern Mediterranean coast was much more suited to the role it had played in Jewish consciousness for 2,000 years: a symbol, a repository of the longing, regret, hope and introspection that for me made the Jewish faith so potent. I wanted the Israel of Abraham, Isaac, Rachel and Rebecca. After all, I could get falafel in Camden Market.

When I started travelling on my own I found there were other reasons not to visit Israel. Israelis I met abroad often seemed arrogant and ill mannered, tramping into Buddhist temples with their shoes on in south-east Asia or pushing to the front of queues for ferries or planes. The political situation

in the region was, for a young liberal, at best problematic. And while I was, and am, happy enough in my Judaism - going to synagogue, celebrating the festivals, finding time for some theological reflection - loyalty to Israel seemed to come as some sort of obligatory extra that I hadn't asked for.

Yet Jews can escape Israel's spiritual pull and, for much of my 20s and 30s, I circled around it, travelling in the Islamic world, in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Iran. There, in a kind of pan-Semitic idealism, I found echoes of the synagogue service in the chanting of the Koran. There the landscape seemed more biblical than the greened deserts and kibbutz enclosures of Israel itself. And there I could pretend - or I thought I could - that much of the Arab world wasn't threatening to push the Jewish homeland into the sea.

I had developed a fairly voyeuristic habit of searching out synagogues in Islamic countries, only to run away in embarrassment when I realised how desperate the situation was of the Jews I met there. In Isfahan in the south of

MIDDLE EAST SPECIAL: Land of my fathers It took David Baker 40 years to get to Israel . But when he did he found peace in the most surprising of places

Iran I found a sorrowful, lonely community desperate for new blood or escape or both. Anyone who could afford it had emigrated to Israel. The Rabbi, tears running down his face, showed me his dusty, dying synagogue and almost forced his daughter's hand on me in a panicky attempt to get her out of the country. I was embarrassed, helpless and appalled and, as I made (yet another) hasty exit, stuffing money into his hand from the wad of useless Rial notes I had in my pocket, I knew I had to end all this prevarication and pay a visit to The Land, as it is invariably known in modern Hebrew.

Which was how, this February, I boarded an El-Al flight to Tel Aviv and five days of self-discovery.

Istanbul is usually held up as the archetypal mixture of east and west, but for me Tel Aviv was like a butterfly, constantly flitting between Europe and Asia, old and new, never quite settling down, always questioning its identity. It was Friday night when I arrived and while my hotel had a shabat lift that automatically visited every floor, so orthodox Jews wouldn't have to operate an electric switch on the sabbath, the city itself was revving up for a secular weekend. Sure, a few people were walking back from synagogue, but mostly it was groups of slightly Eurotrashy young clubbers bustling down the boulevards from bar to bar and their parents hailing cabs outside some very New York-looking restaurants.

But bars and restaurants I could get in Europe. As I walked the next morning in the glorious February sun, I realised that, like so many visitors to the Middle East, I had really come to Israel to find something of my God. And for that I needed to go back in time.

Take a stroll along the boardwalk that runs the length of Tel Aviv's golden-sanded beaches and in 5km you can cover 4,000 years. At its northernmost point is a brand new marina, with young families, open-air restaurants, European-style bars and an ultra-modern centre for women. But walk south, past the towering tourist hotels, the commercial centre and the city's Bauhaus downtown and in a blink you find yourself in the ancient port of Jaffa.

I had high hopes for Jaffa. Its origins lost in prehistory, this is where Jonah set off on his ill-fated voyage, where the cedars of Lebanon arrived to become the doors of Solomon's great temple, where thousands of pilgrims disembarked on their way to Jerusalem. Yet when I got there I found it strangely unsettling.

The old town, scrubbed up and restored, is home now to carefully selected artists and their galleries. Some fishermen still sell their catches on the dockside but theirs seem to be little more than a cameo role (the commercial port closed after the Arab Revolt of 1936). And for someone used to the bustle of Arab medinas, Jaffa is far too quiet. You do wonder where the Arabs live now.

In fact, signs of Israel's conflict with the Arab world are everywhere. Security guards scan you with a metal detector on the way in to almost every public place. About halfway down the seafront in Tel Aviv I found an open-air nightclub, padlocked and decaying, the scene of a particularly vicious suicide bomb attack in 2001. I was in the country just after Hamas had won power in the Palestinian Authority and in conversations in bars and cafes I was reminded of residents of a gated community peering anxiously over the fence. And everywhere there was the fear of being abandoned by the rest of the world. "You will write something nice about us, won't you?" said one woman I met on a downtown Tel Aviv walking tour.

For secular visitors to Israel Tel Aviv is a destination in itself but for those on something of a spiritual quest, it is just a stepping stone to perhaps the greatest sacred city in the world, Jerusalem. So the next morning I climbed aboard an air-conditioned Eged bus and headed south.

Like Los Angeles, Jerusalem is a city you feel you have arrived in long before you actually get there. Geographically, it spreads its suburbs far outwards in little white and off-white housing developments over low-slung hills. Spiritually, though, for almost four millennia its influence has filled the western world. This, for Jews, Muslims and Christians, was quite literally the centre of the world, the place where Abraham was ready to sacrifice his son, where Jesus rose from the dead, where Mohammed began his night journey. Like all great religious sites, it was a place where heaven and earth came a little closer - and if you stop to listen, you can feel it pulsing with the transcendent.

MIDDLE EAST SPECIAL: Land of my fathers It took David Baker 40 years to get to Israel . But when he did he found peace in the most surprising of places

As I pushed my way through the crowds outside the bus station - soldiers, Orthodox Jews, women overladen with shopping - I took a wrong turn and, instead of walking in the direction of the famous Old City and the Temple Mount, I found myself 180Degrees out, heading towards the suburbs. I turned around and went back past the bus station but, when I checked the map again, somehow I was still walking away from the centre. It turned out that my map had a misprint, but it felt as if the city was warning me not to approach too lightly, the streets turning under my feet. This was after all a place pilgrims came to in a state of ritual purity. Tel Aviv you can drop into, Jerusalem, I was discovering, requires more care.

The following morning I awoke before dawn to go to the Western Wall, the only remaining part of the Jewish temple destroyed by the Romans in AD70 and, according to rabbinical legend, the place where God's presence still resides.

There is a sense of sacred and the mundane at the Western Wall. You approach the site through an airport-style metal detector and down into a large honey-coloured plaza. Notices around the area ask you to respect the holiness of the place and, on sabbaths and festivals, not to use your mobile phone or camera. And then there stands the wall: sandy-coloured, oddly featureless, surprisingly low, one of those places that works better in photographs than in reality.

Clustered around little reading desks, groups of ultra-Orthodox Jewish men (the women are to one side behind a screen), dressed in that time-freezing, 18thcentury garb of long black coat and heavy suit, were swaying back and forth in prayer. Dotted about the place were little carts where you could pick up a prayer book and a skullcap.

Then there was the wall itself. This was, ostensibly what I had come for. I squeezed through, put my face up against the stone, shut my eyes and felt - precisely nothing. I looked around me. A couple of feet down, a young boy, maybe 11 or 12, was rocking back and forth in ecstatic devotion. To my left a man stared as if in rapture at the stones in front of us. A group of soldiers was saying the mourners' kadish in unison. A old man in a tight-fitting, shabby suit left the area walking backwards so as not to turn his back on the wall. But I felt nothing for the place. I am Jewish but, for the people around me, I knew, I was not Jewish enough; observant, but not observant enough. I left, as I had left so many synagogues before, unobserved, unfulfilled, incomplete.

That afternoon I finally found what I was looking for. I was walking through the Judaica section of Jerusalem's spectacular Israel museum, when I stumbled across something called the Horb Synagogue. I wandered in and found a treasure.

The Horb Synagogue is little more than the ceiling of a wooden barn that had been brought to Israel from southern Germany. No more than 10ft by 20ft, it had been built in 1735 as a synagogue, though later it had become just another agricultural building. The walls had been too damaged to restore but the ceiling was a delight. Painted in a rich, folkloric style, every square inch of it was covered with animals, trees, rivers, cities and sacred symbols.

I lay down on one of the benches to look at it more closely and heard a familiar sound. A speaker in the wall was playing synagogue music that would have been sung in Horb in the 18th century, music that by wonderful coincidence was still used every year at my own London synagogue's service on the Day of Atonement. Jerusalem-Horb-London: the connection suddenly seemed complete.

Thanks to a phenomenal level of security, Israel is a relatively safe place to travel around but you do get a sense of constant, low-level carping between the Jewish and Arab communities.

My guide in Jerusalem's Old City was keen to point out how much cleaner the streets were in Jewish quarter than in the Arab part of town. He was right but only because Arab old Jerusalem is a bustling marketplace, jammed with stalls selling fish, meat, fruit, vegetables and spices.

There is a danger that you can leave the country with a depressing sense of the impossibility of reconciliation. But in fact there are plenty of organisations working to bring the two sides together and one of them I stumbled across just north of the Old City's Damascus Gate.

MIDDLE EAST SPECIAL: Land of my fathers It took David Baker 40 years to get to Israel . But when he did he found peace in the most surprising of places

Perched on the cusp between Arab Jerusalem and the ultra-Orthodox Jewish district of Mea Sha'arim, in a small, bullet-scarred building that before 1967 was a military outpost on the line between Israel and Jordan, is the Museum on the Seam.

Established in 1999, the museum has a inspiring, semi-permanent exhibition of works by contemporary artists both from Israel and the Palestinian authority and from further afield, brought together under the theme of coexistence.

There is plenty of painting, collage and photography here, such as "Clonexistence" by Sarajevo artist Lejla Bulja (below), dealing with war, oppression, changing frontiers and displaced populations. But, perhaps appropriately in this modern country, the most powerful pieces are the video installations.

Near the entrance to the exhibition a monitor broadcasts looped footage of politicians shouting down their opponents - in television interviews, in staged debates, across the floor of the Israeli parliament - blocking out dissent and stifling dialogue. Israeli artist Miki Krazman's "The Reality of Roadblocks" (2002) features seven hours of juddery images filmed from inside a car as it negotiates the militarised labyrinth of the occupied territories. But for me the most affecting installation was Tali and Ziv Reif's "Love Thy Neighbour As Thyself".

You push a switch and three wall-sized video screens burst into action, enveloping you with cross-cut images of news footage of the 2000 intifada and the Israeli army's response to it. Men shout, throw stones, open fire, protest and attack. **Women** look on, scoop up children, weep and despair. Everywhere is chaos, explosions, gun fire and police sirens. Both sides are hurt. Both go on the attack. I watched the film through three times. For the the first time I began to understand how hard it is for those who live in the region to see a way out of the conflict they find themselves in.

The Museum of the Seam, 4 Chel Handasa Street, Jerusalem 91016. Tel: +972 2-628 1278;
www.coexistence.art.museum

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LETTERS

THE AUSTRALIAN

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Body

MATP

Increasing the number of doctors will not solve the issue

MOST TALKED ABOUT

HEALTH CRISIS

I AM concerned that two words -- "health" and "doctors" -- seem to somehow be used interchangeably in the recent media reports regarding health reform (11-12/2). Is this how Australians see their health care needs being addressed, by merely increasing the number of doctors?

It might certainly be one small part of the equation, yet the nursing professionals, who also experience a significant global shortage, outnumber the medical professionals five fold, and allied health professionals experience similar shortages, particularly pharmacists in rural and remote Australia.

I agree that what we need in health is a revolution. But it is a revolution in thinking. It should not just result in putting more expensive bums on seats. We need to start with the big picture of health and determine what is required for our ageing population and the projected impact of chronic disease for the year 2020. We then need to look at the scope of practice of each health practitioner and determine if this is the right fit for this population's needs -- research tells us it is not. Then we need to look at each profession and determine if they could expand their scope of practice to take on certain skills of other professions, such as doctors or physiotherapists, and if there are any gaps. Then we need to develop strategies and national policy to bring about reform. This might include such things as: foundational programs for generic health workers, expanding nurse practitioner roles in general practice, shortening doctor training programs and developing interdisciplinary educational programs. We know that the biggest stuff-ups we have in health are often the result of poor communication within the health care team.

Janie Smith

Ocean Shores, NSW

THE premiers and prime minister are cannibalising what was once the best health system in the world. A policy of attrition has seen funding shortfalls reduce the numbers of doctors being trained. Currently 25 per cent of our GPs are poached from overseas.

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The proposed solution will see doctors emerge at around 30 years of age after six years' study and four years' training with a massive debt of \$200,000 around their necks. On a personal level they will have little chance of buying a home and starting a family and on a professional level this debt will force them into high income luxury areas of medicine, not those providing healthcare to the rural or industrial sector or public medicine.

This deal is designed to take the heat off both state and federal politicians in the short term but offers no long-term solution to Australia's future health needs. At a time when there is more taxpayers' money sloshing through the federal coffers than ever before, it is a scandal that our Government would impose this financial burden on the next generation.

Pamela Curr

Brunswick, Vic

HOWARD was right -- there won't be \$100,000 university degrees under his Government -- we see this week that medical degrees will cost \$200,000.

Langford B White

Rose Park, SA

PETER Beattie is now a "born again" health minister. He has been enlightened to know that we need more doctors. Let's be grateful for small mercies. Two years ago he told us we had the best health service in the world, there were no problems with health portfolio in his care, the negative reporting on the health issue was a beat-up of a few "pests" that complained.

Praise God for whatever enlightened our Premier. We obviously need more doctors, but I still have trouble believing it took Beattie this long to wake up to that.

Doug Belot

Yeppoon, Qld

THE national depression initiative, beyondblue, commends the Prime Minister and premiers for the \$1.1 billion injection of funds into health reforms with a focus on prevention. This recognises the desperate need for better support for people living with depression and mental illness in Australia.

While acknowledging the great leap forward by Council of Australian Governments, we are impatient to see significant changes and improvements in the health system.

With a million people in Australia living with depression and only a third getting appropriate help, this commitment to improving mental health services hasn't come a moment too soon.

Leonie Young

beyondblue

Hawthorn West, Vic

THE Prime Minister should know better than to suggest that people with mental illness should get on with life. This does nothing to inform the community who already have a similar viewpoint. People with mental illness struggle daily to get on with their lives.

Perhaps if governments put more money and resources into community care and support for people with mental illness, this could be achieved. Be assured that people with mental illness can and do recover and lead fulfilling and satisfying lives in the community. However, many need the help and support of mental health services and non-government agencies to achieve this outcome.

LETTERS

Talking about the need for re-institutionalisation and the mistakes of the 1960s is less than helpful. Peer support programs go a long way to achieving life in the community.

Helen Connor

Australian Mental Health

Consumer Network, West End, Qld

Privileges and penalties of batting first

MALCOLM Conn ("Caught short", 11-12/2) says the team batting first in Sydney usually wins. That the toss of a coin determines which team has a distinct advantage and which one a real handicap is ridiculous.

The only way to ensure a level playing field is to auction off the privilege to choose whether to bat or bowl first. If the first captain thinks the privilege is not worth more than 50 runs, whereas the second captain thinks it is worth more than 50 runs, the first captain will stop the bidding at 50 runs, and will get a 50-run headstart. This bidding process will add an interesting facet to captaincy.

Frikkie Maas

Kenmore Hills, Brisbane

Frontiers of freedom

WALEED Aly (Inquirer, 11-12/2) is right to object to the way in which legal action forbidding the "denial" of genocide and, in particular, the Holocaust prevents people from mounting certain arguments.

However, his assertion that "such arguments are uncivilised nonsense" is quite baseless. The dissident theses of many Holocaust revisionists are genuinely academic in both contents and style.

They are not claiming that there was no Nazi persecution of the Jews, but only that in some respects this has been very seriously exaggerated. There is nothing inherently unethical or absurd in taking up such a position.

Nigel Jackson

Belgrave, Vic

YOUR editorial (11-12/2) on the controversial cartoons puts things in perspective at both general and global levels.

Some Muslims are not capable of taking a joke, and Middle East clerical and secular dictators are using religion as a weapon against democracy and freedom. Publishing cartoons may offend, but does not infringe the freedom of others.

Regimes that repress freedom intellectually, religiously, socially and economically will ultimately fail. It is inevitable.

N. King

Cremorne, NSW

DESPITE its balanced approach, your editorial repeats two very dubious positions.

The first, the belief that there is nothing in Islam that is inimical to democracy, has been much debated. The defining activity of democracy is not voting, but tolerance -- hardly a noted aspect of fundamentalism. Regrettably, the cartoon affair only demonstrates how unready Islamism is for tolerance and therefore, democracy.

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The second -- the notion that the real risk to peace does not come from ordinary Muslims but from the clerical and secular dictators who pervert the religion to protect their power -- ignores that fact that, perversion or not, extremism can infect an entire culture.

There was a time when Israelis, too, told each other that ordinary Palestinians wanted peace and it was only their corrupt unelected leaders who were benefiting from continued conflict. The popular handing of power to Hamas has finally buried the few remains of that idea.

Dov Midalia

Nedlands, WA

Hail democracy

THE Senate voting to overturn the ministerial veto on RU486 is good news for democracy and good news for women's health. This reflects the broad community attitudes that politicians are not medical experts and these complex medical decisions must be referred to the TGA, as it is for all other drugs.

Now it depends upon the House of Representatives to get it right next week.

Incidentally, RU486 does not cause the abortion of pregnancies; it simply reduces the natural progesterone and makes the uterus respond to the second medication, prostaglandin (which is an approved drug). All this hysteria about RU486 is not relevant. However, we can't expect the politicians to know that. Besides, it gets in the way of a good media story.

Pieter Mourik

Wodonga, Vic

Victory on a platter

TRUE to his word, Kim Beazley spent last week attacking the Howard Government over the AWB scandal. Assisted by Kevin Rudd, he continued his relentless onslaught. When this attack failed to deliver the desired result, Beazley burst into a tirade against Howard and National Party ministers.

All week long, not a question on the economy, health or education. A week wasted on the AWB saga, which is being adequately addressed by the Cole Inquiry. If this is what the Australian people can expect from Labor, Howard may well be on his way to serve longer in office than Sir Robert Menzies.

Winston Coffey

Brisbane, Qld

UNDER the wheat deals negotiated, the Iraqis required the AWB to overcharge them for wheat delivered, disguising the overpayment as a freight charge to be returned to the regime via an Iraqi-controlled company.

While this contravened UN sanctions, it wasn't bribery, as American wheat interests were quick to label it.

John O'Hara

Mount Waverley, Vic

Rebuttal stuff of journalism

IF Christopher Pearson (Inquirer, 11-12/2) wants to defeat arguments contrary to his opinion with such rhetoric as "these [arguments] are barely worth the bother of rebutting", I'm afraid he's going to find himself out of a job rather quickly. Especially given that they still stand as cogent testimony.

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For those of us who do view dogmatic servility to mythical beings as "a form of intellectual incapacity", his most recent article only serves as further proof that the enlightenment of our people still has some way to go, and that the media is rife with more hindrance than help.

Kane Wishart

Clayton, Vic

READING Pearson, I felt deep shame at the diatribe uttered by the feminist politicians. I cannot ever recall such concerted nastiness against a colleague.

I also cannot recall ever hearing of such ugliness spoken by a male colleague to his female colleagues.

It all centred around the fact that Tony Abbott happens to be a Catholic by religious belief. I wonder if he had been a Muslim or a Jew whether they would have spoken thus. I think not.

I am now to presume that these so-called enlightened women do not have a religious belief, because if they do then they are very dangerous hypocrites.

Anne Lastman

Melbourne, Vic

ONE of the most striking features of the Senate debate on ministerial control of RU486 was the very high standard of oratory from senators on both sides of the debate.

I heard some great examples of simple conviction and passion expressed in clear English.

Standout performances were those by Amanda Vanstone, usually an unpleasantly aggressive stonewaller, Andrew Bartlett, usually wishy-washy, and Nick Minchin, usually just silent.

I was dismayed, as apparently was Christopher Pearson at the apparent anti-Roman Catholic rhetoric aimed at Tony Abbott. However, the Catholic church's open and consistent anti-abortion philosophy will always make it an easily-identifiable target. Abbott's attackers should beware of the sympathy backlash for him if they get too personal.

This was and will always be an inter-gender debate, until such time as men accept and teach their sons that contraception and abortion are equally their responsibility.

H.Neill

Biggera Waters, Qld

I HAVE news for Pearson. Many educated people regard all forms of religion, not just Roman Catholicism, as one more form of intellectual incapacity.

Marie Wynne

Wembley, WA

Drawing the unseen

BILL Leak's cartoon showing the invisible Prophet Mohammed not wishing to be "drawn on the subject" certainly gave my friends and me a few laughs.

I. Yusuf

Ryde, NSW

LETTERS

FIRST BYTE

There seems to be a feeling abroad that Islamic fundamentalists do not understand satire. They understand it all right, and they recognise it as the most potent weapon against their campaign of hate. This explains the violence of the orchestrated reaction.

Cam Battersby

Kangaroo Point

The predominantly male letters writers on the abortion drug RU486 would do well to remember that all pregnancies have a male contributor. It seems to me that the solution to all these unwanted pregnancies is for the guys to either wear a condom or keep it zipped up, unless you are planning a pregnancy. Simple really.

Susan Ford

Busselton, WA

If Morris lemma thinks Graham Mulligan is a "dimwit" (or words to that effect), then where does that leave lemma and his Government in the stupidity stakes? After all, it was lemma's Government that endorsed the tunnel operators in the first place.

Jim Millett

Kippa-Ring, Qld

With the impending outcome of the AWB inquiry, it seems someone in the Government may soon be subjected to Biblical justice and feel "Coles of fire upon his head".

Roy Stall

Mount Claremont, WA

If Tony Abbott thought it was now the right time for him to leave politics maybe Howard could arrange for him to be the chief executive of the Australian Wheat Board.

Peter Guppy

Moruya, NSW

If criminalisation of cannabis is an appropriate response to health threats resulting from its use ("Health battle target marijuana", 11-12/2), is not similar action appropriate for that other weed, tobacco, which kills about 19,000 Australians each year and costs the nation \$21 billion in health care, business and other social costs?

Robert Ginn

Mermaid Beach, Qld

letters@theaustralian.com.au

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GPO Box 4162, Sydney, NSW, 2001 Fax: 02 9288 3077

E-mail: letters@theaustralian.com.au (no attachments)

Emails and letters should bear a full postal address and day and night telephone numbers.

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What makes a martyr? The wave of arrests of British Muslims suspected of plotting to destroy passenger jets over the Atlantic again raises the question posed after 7/7 last year: what tips religious fundamentalism into murderous intent? Olga Craig and Alasdair Palmer report

The Sunday Telegraph (LONDON)

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Body

The shock, the disbelief, the utter inability to comprehend that their British-born sons and siblings might conspire to bomb their fellow citizens was, when it came, inevitable. "My brother loves fish and chips and Liverpool Football Club," said Safeena Zaman incredulously. "His favourite programme is Only Fools and Horses. He even wanted to join the police as a forensics expert when he finished university, for Goodness sake."

Ms Zaman could hardly have offered more credible, moderate or, indeed, British credentials on behalf of her brother, Waheed, one of the 23 who remain in custody after last week's alleged foiled terror attack. Her surprise was heartfelt, but it had a familiar ring. Only last summer, when 52 Britons were murdered in the 7/7 bus and Tube suicide attacks, the families of the British-born terrorists responsible were similarly incredulous: how, they asked, could our loved ones, brought up in this country to be law-abiding, respectful citizens, have turned to terrorism?

It is a year now since the streets of Walthamstow in east London, long known as fertile ground for Islamic extremists looking for recruits, reverberated to the shrill sound of al-Muhajiroun loud-hailers urging young Muslims: "Now is the time for jihad. Now is the time for all British troops to be slaughtered in Iraq."

The militant organisation's leader, Omar Bakri Mohammed, who openly recruited young Muslims to his chilling cause at a sprawling market stall in the district, is now in exile in Lebanon, still bleating that he should be safe in Britain with his children. His stall has long gone, his organisation now outlawed. But his magnetism, and that of the militant imams - 80 per cent of whom came to Britain largely from the Indian subcontinent, with little knowledge of the English language or British culture and society - is as strong as ever.

Today, however, it is an altogether more sophisticated network that casts its net wide over many hitherto-moderate Muslim youngsters. Its modus operandi is now a well practised, psychological approach aimed at brainwashing "clean skins" - those with moderate backgrounds. And, according to an NOP poll conducted last week, its influence is expanding. While a quarter of all Muslims surveyed said that they felt the 7/7 bombings were justified, that figure rose to a third among younger Muslims.

It is this group, many of whom are moderates, that is particularly targeted by the recruiters of terror. There are 1.6million Muslims in this

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country - almost half of whom are born here - making them our largest ethnic minority. And, according to a dossier drawn up last year by the Home and Foreign Offices on young Muslims and extremism, intelligence reports estimate that almost one per cent of British Muslims who support terrorist activity. If that figure is correct, it represents about 16,000 Muslims who are sympathetic to or involved in terrorism.

Fed a diet of violent videos depicting the dead bodies of Muslim women and children in Iraq, Chechnya and Lebanon, their passions are swiftly inflamed. Islamist websites pour out vicious and violent anti-Western propaganda. In radical bookshops in London, Luton, Birmingham, Bradford and Manchester, they gather to read literature decrying the murderous infidels and glorifying jihad. For the disaffected seeking purpose in life, it is ravenously consumed.

But it is in British universities and in mosques that those vulnerable to "brainwashing" are particularly preyed upon, especially those specialising in engineering and information technology. In the halls of higher education, the lonely and vulnerable can be easily seduced.

Outside mosques, too, where increasing numbers feel no affinity with the reverential, old-fashioned imams and feel positively disfranchised by what many see as an elderly, hierarchical community, they are easily enchanted by the radicals who lurk at the gates with their militant talk once prayers are over.

As Shiraz Maher, once a member of the radical Hizbut-Tahrir, points out: "The mosques aren't able to offer any effective leadership to young Muslims and the vacuum that we see at the minute is really only being filled by extremists. Mosques can't really engage. Their committees are based on old tribal bradri systems that revolve around a concept of honour. Muslim youths can't question the wisdom of elders, so, at a time when they are crying out for leadership, the only people willing to come forward or who are in a position to do so are the radicals.'

It is little wonder that education has been singled out as a fertile recruitment ground. There are 110 Muslim schools in Britain - and university degrees are highly valued. While the Muslim community has the highest percentage of members without qualifications, it has churned out more post-graduates than any other ethnic minority. Both groups - the well-educated and the disaffected poor - are ripe for conversion, first to radicalism, sometimes then to terrorism: the former in our universities, the latter in mosque or prisons.

As the government report of last year points out: "Often disaffected lone individuals, unable to fit into their own community, will be attracted to university clubs based on ethnicity or religion, or be drawn to mosques or preaching groups in prison through a sense of disillusionment with their current existence."

Indeed, it was in Feltham Young Offenders Institution where Richard Reid, the shoe bomber, fell under the spell of terrorism. At first, he was attracted to Islam because he felt it offered succour to the disillusioned. But it was not long before devotion turned to obsessive extremism. As Madeline Reid, his aunt, has said: "He was a lonely lad with an empty life who found solace with his Muslim brothers. It became more than a religion - they became his family." Reid, it became clear at his trial, was a vulnerable, easily manipulated misfit with a grudge against what he saw as a cold and unjust society: a young man who latched on to a faith that, he believed, would give him the identity he lacked and the revenge he sought against the society in which he had been raised.

But the universities and mosques remain the recruiters' preferred territory. That way, it enlists youngsters who have never appeared on the security radar. Many are from well-to-do backgrounds or convert to Islam only in adulthood. As the government reports notes: "By and large, most young extremists fall into one of two groups: well-educated or under-achievers."

Last year, surveillance by MI5 and Special Branch consistently noted the targeting of middle-class, moderate students. Among those it has closely monitored was a group of postgraduates at Imperial College and others at Brunel University in west London. Highlighting the extent of the problem, the report noted that extremists argue: "It is not possible to be Muslim and British." They also "call upon Muslims to reject engagement with British society and politics and advocate the creation of an Islamic state in Britain".

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For too long, such recruitment went unchecked. As one MoD official points out: "London is paying for allowing all those radical organisations, from Saudis to Pakistanis, to set up shop in London, put out newsletters, recruit and gather funds."

Many came to Britain during the 1990s to escape security forces in their home countries - particularly those from Algeria and Morocco, including members of Islamist armed organisations. They were granted asylum and many have since lived on welfare. Supporters of the Armed Islamic Group used mosques in Brixton and Finsbury Park to raise funds to buy guns and bankroll a terror campaign against the Algerian government. They engaged in blackmail, drug dealing and credit-card fraud to support their fundraising in London, Manchester and Birmingham.

Some older moderates in the Muslim community have long blamed the increase in Islamic terrorism directly on the Government's foreign policy. Even yesterday, in an open letter to the Prime Minister, signed by three Muslim MPs, three peers and 38 Islamic groups, it was claimed that Britain's policies abroad have put civilians at increased risk of extremism both in the UK and abroad. "The debacle of Iraq, and now the failure to do more to secure an immediate end to the attacks on civilians in the Middle East not only increases the risk to ordinary people in that region, but it is also ammunition to extremists who threaten us all," the letter said. Sadiq Khan MP, one of the signatories, insisted yesterday: "Whether we like it or not, such a sense of injustice plays into the hands of extremists."

Tony Blair has long argued that his support of America in both the Iraq war and the Middle East crisis has not been responsible for the increasing numbers of British Muslims supporting terror. Whatever the truth, there are those both outside and within the Muslim community who argue that it is time for the voice of moderate Islam to counteract the influence of firebrand, fanatical clerics. As one officer in the security services told The Sunday Telegraph: "It is impossible to tell why some people flip from being devout into being terrorists. The explanation has more to do with the individual's own psychological history than anything else. It is a bit like trying to explain why one individual falls in love with a particular woman or man - if you try to use general sociological theories to explain it, you will fail."

"So the Muslim community has a vital role to play in isolating those who are drawn to extremism, and in condemning the extremist ideologies within Islam. The trouble is - that isn't happening at the moment. There is, in parts of the Muslim community, such a strong hatred of the West and, indeed, of the whole secular, liberal society, that it helps to incubate the attitudes that breed terrorists. There can also be a reluctance to condemn terrorism in all its forms which helps to reinforce the conviction that terrorism is justified."

The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) is one of the biggest, and most important, umbrella organisations for Muslim groups. It has close links with the Government - indeed, it owes its origins partly to Labour's eagerness, in 1997, to ensure that there was a group representing mainstream Muslim opinion that ministers could talk to and deal with. Its leadership is among those who have been criticised for failing to tackle the Muslim extremist element effectively.

When the BBC reporter John Ware investigated the council for a Panorama programme last year, he was surprised to discover that some of the groups affiliated with the MCB had distinctly unsavoury views. For instance, when Abdul Bari, then deputy general secretary of the MCB, opened a new Islamic centre in east London in 2004, he chose the prominent Saudi cleric Sudais as the guest of honour. Sudais has said that "the worst of the enemies of Islam are those whom he made monkeys and pigs - the aggressive Jews and the oppressive Zionists, and those that follow them. The callers of the Trinity and the Cross worshippers [by which Sudais meant Christians]... the poison of their ideas and the followers of secularism."

When Ware asked Abdul Bari about whether Sudais was a suitable person to have as a guest of honour, the defensiveness of Abdul Bari's response did not contain the ringing condemnation of Sheikh Sudais's views that might be hoped for. While Abdul Bari insisted that "denouncing any faith is not acceptable in Islam", he also made it clear that he was concerned that "character assassination of Muslims scholars and leaders is getting very widespread".

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Ware also found that Ahl-e-Hadith, another another affiliate of the MCB - it has 41 branches across Britain - took a very hostile attitude. "Be different from the Jews and Christians," its website advised. "Their ways are based on sick or deviant views concerning their societies... imitating the Kuffaar [a derogative term for non-Muslims] leads to a permanent abode in hellfire."

Yet Sir Iqbal Sacranie, the former general secretary of the MCB, was surprisingly reluctant to condemn Ahl-e-Habith, saying it was part of the "diversity... of the Muslim community in the UK... it may be an objectionable view, but the fact is that it exists within the community".

Sir Iqbal has also been very reluctant to condemn the claim, made by many of the more extremist Muslim preachers, that the "War on Terror" is actually a "War on Islam". Ware put it to him that it was his "responsibility, as leader of the Muslim community in effect in Britain ... to disabuse the Muslim population of Britain of the notion that, whatever is going on in Iraq, it is not a war against Islam". Sir Iqbal replied that "in terms of the motives ... nobody knows about it, we don't know about it".

Notoriously, Abdullah Jamal, who exploded a bomb on July 7, 2005, which killed 26 people on the Piccadilly Line, attended the Grand Mosque in Leeds. Although one imam there, Shayk Muhammed Taher, has condemned 7/7, some of his sermons have stated explicitly that "the war on terror is, in truth, a war on Islam".

The British Government, which has given the MCB almost pounds 150,000 over the past two years, continues to fund and aid Muslim groups that seem equivocal in their condemnation of terrorism. For example, last month, the Foreign Office funded a conference in Istanbul, flying 180 leaders from Europe, Egypt and Saudi Arabia to the city, and putting them up in a luxury hotel. The conference did produce an unequivocal condemnation of terrorism - one which stated that terrorism was "in direct contravention to the principles of Islam".

But it also featured Muslim clerics such as Dr Yusuf Qaradawi. Qaradawi is famous for insisting: "We must plant the love of death in the Islamic nation." He also supports Hamas's suicide bomb attacks on Israel, which he does not classify as terrorism, but as "resistance". He is a leading member of the Muslim Brotherhood, which states that: "The Prophet is our leader. The Koran is our law. Jihad is our way. Dying in the way of Allah is our highest hope."

It hardly needs stating that most British Muslims condemn terrorism unequivocally. When The Sunday Telegraph sampled British Muslims in London and in High Wycombe last week, we found them all united in the conviction that terrorism "had nothing to do with Islam... People who kill innocent women and children are hated by Muslims."

Mahboob Hussein, who sits on High Wycombe's local council, insisted: "Every Muslim has a duty and responsibility to work with the police to stop such atrocities as could have happened if the police and intelligence services had not been so prompt in their actions on Thursday."

Saira Khan, who appeared on the television show The Apprentice, spoke for many Muslims in the UK when she wrote last week that: "I am tired of being represented by men with beards and women in the hejab. I believe you can wear Western clothing and even sit in a pub, and still be a good Muslim... It's about time that the moderate Muslim community woke up to the radicalisation that has been happening to British Muslims for the past 15 years, and started to do something about it."

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Bernard-Henri Levy

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Body

Bernard-Henri Levy, a French philosopher and writer, is the author, most recently, of *American Vertigo: Traveling America in the Footsteps of Tocqueville* and an essay in *The Times Magazine* about Israel and Lebanon. He recently answered readers' questions about the current state of the Mideast conflict.

Q. 1. Why do you only paint your story from the point of view of Israelis? Why do you assume that Hezbollah is an organization that is not wanted by the people of Lebanon, if they provide services, have elected representatives, and are the only ones able to defend their country? Cornelius Diamond, La Jolla, Calif.

A. Three questions in one, dear Cornelius. First, why the Israeli viewpoint? Because only the other viewpoint is seen and I do not like conformism, much less injustice. In other words, it's okay to criticize Israel and debate the strategy adopted by the military command, which is not necessarily the right one. But-a little equity, please let one begin by listening to what Israelis say and looking at what they are enduring: that's what I did in this reporting. Next: Isn't Hezbollah "wanted by the people of Lebanon"? Don't they "provide services" and "have elected representatives"? Yes, of course, there is no dispute about this, but since when would that be contradictory with the fact of being totalitarians and even perfect fascists? Wasn't Hitler even though it's not comparable democratically elected? Didn't Mussolini provide the Italian people every possible service? Indeed, isn't that in a general way the precise definition of fascist populism? Things get complicated with your third question and the idea that the people of Hezbollah are "the only ones able to defend their country." I hope you are joking! For in truth Hezbollah has been bleeding Lebanon and has literally taken it hostage and taken its own people hostage, turning them into human shields with mind-boggling cynicism a bizarre way to "defend" a country.

Q. 2. Why do you say "Inevitable War"? It is inevitable and endless because of your attitude. How do you feel about committing Israel to endless war? Mark Ravitz, Santa Barbara, Calif.

A. I do not say "endless." I say "inevitable," which does not at all mean the same thing as "endless." And I say "inevitable" for the simple reason that Hezbollah, and thus Iran, have decided on it. The arsenal on the Israeli border, the bunkers, tunnels and missile launchers, this entire offensive apparatus predicated on, as clearly proclaimed by Iran, the will to "wipe Israel off the map" means precisely that: one day or another, war - a war that Israel did no more than anticipate, for it knew that in a year or two such a war would be yet more difficult, yet more costly in lives, and yet more uncertain for an Israel threatened in its very existence. Forgive me for insisting on "threatened in its very existence," but that is what is at issue. And herein lies the difference between this war and a war linked to the Palestinian question. The latter would have the practical goals of war, and were Israel to come to some kind of agreement with its adversaries on the settlement of the Palestinian question, war would be avoided.

Hezbollah's war, on the other hand, is a war of a new kind, which no longer has any real tie to the Palestinian question or any concrete question whatsoever, and on that account is a war that I wish to say is non-negotiable.

Q. 3. Very simply, I have always wanted to know why the moderate Muslim voices have not been screaming full throttle against the fanatical stranglehold of these Islamic fascists? Is it really fear for their own safety, do they agree with their radical brethren, do they have any power to reign in the terrorists who threaten the entire planet? Many thanks for a clear and brilliantly written article. Anita Bensabat, Montreal, Quebec

A. There certainly is fear. There is the fact that a moderate Muslim or, worse, a secular Muslim is someone who is genuinely in mortal danger in some countries. Look at the number of Arab intellectuals and intellectuals in the Asian Islamic world who at the time of the Rushdie affair felt immediate solidarity with their English colleague but could not or did not dare say it! That's the reason, moreover, that it's so important for us Westerners to proclaim our solidarity with moderate Islam loud and clear, with this Enlightened Islam that does not dare declare itself in the face of the ambient terror. For those Muslims who are faithful to this kind of Islam and do battle on the front lines, so to speak, against criminal fundamentalism, our support is vital. It is one of the last reasons they have for not falling into despair.

There's something else as well. It's the eternal rivalry between what in France we call the Girodins and the Montagnards, the moderates and the hardliners, the partisans of compromise and the apostles of violence or simply of radicality. We have known since 1789 that it is the latter who most often defeat the former. We know that there is a frightful prestige associated with the radical spirit. More precisely: we know that there is a terrible seductiveness, an ideological and symbolic advantage, that goes with the Montagnard spirit. That, I think, is what is happening in the Muslim world today.

Q. 4. It's clear that you believe Israel is at a crossroads, as it begins to see a new threat to its very existence unveil itself. I think that the Iranians should be credited for their incredible honesty. If your enemies wish to annihilate you, it's good to know that for a fact. My question to you is whether you believe Europe will at some point in the near future realize that it isn't only Israel that now finds itself at a crossroads, but the entire world? When I read that Mr Zapatero was overheard saying he understands why the Nazis did what they did to the Jews, I despair. But setting leaders with no backbone like Mr. Zapatero aside, what will the brighter minds of Europe do? James Basman, San Francisco, Calif.

A. You are absolutely right. This war is not Israel against Hezbollah, but the democracies against neototalitarianism and, in particular, an Iran which is trying to take ideological and political leadership over it. That's what makes the war so important and makes it so crucial, for everyone, that Israel win or at least not come out of it weakened. This is what I meant at the beginning of my article when I evoked the Spanish Civil War. A war as a general rehearsal. A war where all must be done so that it not be for our generation what the Spanish Civil War was for our elders.

Q. 5. I am struck by a common thread now emerging in reporting, that Hezbollah and similar movements feed upon shared feelings of anger and humiliation. There are thousands of references online and in print, many pointing out that such Muslim feelings are key to the rise of Islamic Fascism and Iranian President Ahmadinejad's call for Israel to be wiped off the map. Do you think this is correct? Janet Haigh, St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands

A. I am rather dubious when it comes to this longstanding, recurrent explanation in terms of Arab humiliation. Or, let's accept it on the condition of adding that Germans in the 1930s also felt humiliated (by the Treaty of Versailles). And on the condition of adding that that did not excuse, so far as I know, Nazism! For indeed there lies the problem, namely, the ulterior motives of people who tell us about humiliation and put it at the source of the fascism of Muslim inspiration. Someone who is humiliated has an excuse for what he does. Someone who is humiliated is only half guilty of his crimes. He is pitied not condemned. Now, Arab or Muslim fascism deserves, in my view, to be condemned just like any other fascism. It is, moreover, what Arabs themselves are expecting from us. It's what the antifascists of the Arab and Muslim world-and they are numerous-are hoping for. They, of all people, know that this discourse of humiliation is a red herring and an evasion of the real problems. See Paul Berman's theses. It's all there.

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Q. 6. Do you, as an intellectual in France, feel that you are afforded more credibility in speaking out and writing in support and understanding of Israel than other Jews who seem rather too intimidated by French anti-Semitism to speak out and be visible in French society? Deidre Waxman, Newton, Mass.

A. I don't even understand what you are saying! For me, anti-Semitism is a form of terrorism and the very idea of letting myself be intimidated by any terrorism whatsoever completely horrifies me. Jewish or non-Jewish, intellectuals must speak out. Jewish or non-Jewish, they have a duty to truth. And, conversely, to tell them-or tell oneself-"A Jew has, because a Jew, a duty to reticence" would be to give into anti-Semitic terrorism. Not my style. I want to add that my defense of Israel is not so closely tied as you perhaps think to the fact that I am Jewish. There is an element of that, of course. But it is certainly not the essential. I defend Israel because I defend democracy. I defend Israel because I have a horror of all fascisms. I defend the Israelis in this war as in the past I have defended other peoples who have nothing to do with Judaism. Bosnia, for example. The Bosnian Muslims whom I defended, I believe, with no less ardor or passion.

Q. 7. Yesterday, at a bat mitzvah, I was discussing the war with fellow peaceniks who had just returned from visiting their in Israel. What struck me was how confused they were about the war. That was the word they used, confused, to describe their feelings of ambivalence. No longer could they feel that Israel should put down its weapons. They felt conflicted because of the real threat from Iran. But my question as a child psychiatrist, a pacifist, and a Jew is: what about the effects, on both sides, on generations to come? Will we ever be able to have children, both Israel and Arab, grow up without trauma? My concern is that the traumatization leads to fear of, and therefore hatred of, the Other, so that future violence is guaranteed. How can we stop this cycle without putting Israel at risk of annihilation? Celeste Wiser, M.D., Napa, Calif.

A. Everyone is "confused." Inevitably "confused." If only because this is a war of a new kind that is led by a historical actor that is itself different from what we have known in the past. Take a look at Hezbollah. It has the strength of a State without being a State. It has all the advantages of a terrorist State while simultaneously having the workings of a criminal NGO of the al Qaeda-type. In other words, its organization, including its military strategies and tactics, constitutes a relatively unprecedented synthesis. And that is inevitably disorienting.

Q. 8. Has this war tipped the balance of European sympathy more to the Israeli side? Are people there preparing themselves for the possibility of a much larger conflict? Joshua Salafsky, Burlingame, Calif.

A. This war is a bit like the developing solution used in the old darkrooms. At first the image is blurry. Pale and blurry. And then the shadows, contours, tints and half-tints, and contrasts gradually emerge, and the latent image that was seen without being seen is suddenly revealed and fixed. That's what is happening at this moment. Whether regarding the nature of Hezbollah; the state of moral and political corruption of a largely Hezbollahized Lebanon; Iran and its geopolitical game and nuclear ambitions ; or the slipping of moderate Islam toward fundamentalist Islam and, within this, at the heart of this sectarian international in the making, the slipping of the Arab zone of Islam toward the Asian, or Indo-European, zone where Iran aspires to be the hegemonic power-this war functions as a magnifier and revealer. At least, I hope so.

Q. 9. I'd be interested in your view on a couple of issues: The confusion of the American/Israeli identities in France in light of rising anti-semitism, the interchangeable use of "Jew" and "Israeli" in the French media, the difference between the words "colon" in French and "settler" in English, and lastly your views on the difference between the representation of this "new" conflict in the French European and American medias. Don Device, Paris, France

A. As with the media, I do not want to globalize. Contrary to the impression sometimes given by the American press, neither public opinion nor the political class in France is globally anti-Semitic. There are some limits that are being breached, to be sure. And there is a certain loosening of speech that one didn't feel ten or twenty years ago. It can even be said that we are witnessing in France as elsewhere the construction of a new anti-Semitic machinery based on the three pillars of anti-Zionism, historical revisionism, and the obsessive competition over victim status. But it cannot be said that France has for all that become a country unlivable for Jews. It cannot be said that the country's political institutions have yielded in the face of pressure. Quite the contrary. And I would even add that this mechanism I am speaking of, this new machinery, this way of saying that Jews are guilty of (1) supporting the

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"criminal State" of Israel, (2) exaggerating the degree of their suffering through an alleged "religion of the Shoah," and (3) blocking, through their own tears and grief, the attention that the tears and grief of other peoples deserve-all this, I want to stress, you find in the United States at least as much as in France. That's right!

Q. 10. I wonder what impact you think women's voices and feminism in its multiple forms have on the way our modern cultures are facing the terrorist/facist rage of Iran/Syria/Hezbollah/Hamas. Do you think their rage against "democracy," "the west," and "Jews" for all of these are in fact diverse and multiple is at all connected to how they view women? Freedom of choice? Dialogue? I do not mean this to be a simplistic question. Somehow, in the words of war and peace throughout time, but especially post-911, I see some connections. Jodi Tharan, California

A. Obviously yes. The question of women is at the heart of the problem. It is there, if I dare say, negatively in the sense that the hatred of women has always been at the heart of all the fascisms, including this fascism in particular (the phobia toward the feminine and its supposed impurity, the sexual panic, the fear of actual women: consider Mohammed Atta, the other 9/11 terrorists, or my portrait of Omar Sheikh, the organizer of Daniel Pearl's kidnapping). And it is easy to deduce that this question has an importance in the positive sense as well, in that women can be, and often are, a factor of resistance. Consider the democratization of Morocco: it happens via family laws and the rights that King Mohammed VI has courageously given women. Consider Algeria and the role that women played in the 90s in the resistance to the religious fanatics of the Islamic Salvation Front and the Armed Islamic Group. Consider the heroism of Afghan and Pakistani women.

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Graphic

Photo (Photo by Alexis Duclos/Polaris)

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Insurance problems for homeowners grow more frustrating

St. Petersburg Times (Florida)

May 13, 2006 Saturday

0 Edition

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Section: NATIONAL; Pg. 13A

Length: 2591 words

Body

Re: Florida's insurance solution: free puppies for everyone! by Howard Troxler, May 9.

We are one of the thousands of homeowners who are being dropped by our homeowner insurance company, and the company's reason is "reducing exposure to catastrophic hurricanes." We have filled out forms on the Internet to help us "find" a company willing to insure us. Either Florida, or Pinellas County, is red-flagged because reply after reply says they are sorry they cannot cover us at this time!

We are so frustrated with the insurance industry! Citizens Property Insurance will charge us \$3,500! We have never had to file a claim because we take care of our property, especially during the hurricane season.

We think one solution to this insurance fiasco should be that a company cannot drop you if you've never filed a claim no matter where you live. Also, those homeowners who abuse their insurance by filing frivolous claims constantly should be forced to be put into Citizens and pay those ridiculous premiums!

Pat Przyojski, St. Petersburg

Make sure companies can do the job

Re: Florida's insurance solution: free puppies for everyone! by Howard Troxler.

My question is what have the insurance companies done in other states with recurring natural disasters? In California there are mud slides and fires. Kansas, Oklahoma, etc. have tornadoes. There are snowstorms in the North and flooding in Louisiana.

These natural events sometimes occur annually at high costs to insurers for payoffs and to property owners for higher premiums. That is the process, I believe.

A lot of money is made and so far from what I've read, all these disasters do is lower the companies' profit margin. Which of course is unacceptable. What should be legislated is the financial ability to withstand such events without closing the office doors and leaving property owners in the cold having to scramble for aid from the state and federal authorities.

Before you can be licensed as a carrier in this state you should have the resources to cover what your customers pay you for. Let's at least try to ensure that the people we allow to perform such a vital service are capable of providing that service.

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John M. Fonseca, Oldsmar

Immigration policies are sickening

I am literally becoming ill over the disintegration of our immigration policies. I am watching my country implode. Reportedly the flow of illegal immigrants from Mexico has increased, because the Mexicans sense that amnesty is a done deal. All they have to do is be here in our country, regardless of method of entry or status, and they believe they will be given citizenship without ever earning it.

Now it has been rumored that the gallant efforts of our undermanned Minutemen volunteers are being thwarted by some of our own U.S. agents who are giving the Mexicans information as to the positions of said volunteers, thereby abetting the Mexicans in the illegal act of crossing into America.

Where is it all going to end, and why in the world are we kowtowing to the president of Mexico? We are aware of the billions of dollars that are being sent to his country and what impact that has on the state of Mexico's economy, but that is a problem he should be striving to correct in his homeland and not by leeching off those funds that are exiting my country.

Neither the Republicans nor the Democrats have demonstrated the will to correct these absurd policies and uphold the laws of the land. Enforcement against those employers who are hiring cheap illegal labor to their greedy advantage is nonexistent. They are the magnet that continues to draw illegals across the border and it is time they be degaussed. This do-nothing Congress needs to be purged!

Orfeo Trombetta, Seminole

Put an end to remittances

Re: Work here, send the money home, May 10.

Some \$40-billion a year (not including the uncounted remittances) is being sucked out of our economy and reinserted into the economies of other nations, including many in Latin America. Immigration and Customs Enforcement needs to put a stop to this.

Mexico has oil, silver, tourism and agriculture to sustain itself. The Mexicans can afford to eliminate their poverty. Using the United States to do that task for them is an act of war.

Taking out \$40-billion a year ? Attila and his Huns would be envious. Republicans should press President Bush to act forcefully or they will lose in November.

Miguel Berreradad, Tampa

Audacious extractions

Re: Work here, send the money home.

What audacity! Billions of dollars are being ripped out of our country by illegal aliens sending out remittances, and we're supposed to believe it's okay because some hotshot professor at a prestigious university says so ?

If anybody believes that poppycock, I've got the Brooklyn Bridge to sell them .

Timothy Gagnon, Clearwater

Leaders have let us down

I can't make it any clearer to all Americans when I say that these idiots we all have elected to run our country have let us down and have been only interested in remaining in Washington on their ego trips and in financial paradise.

Insurance problems for homeowners grow more frustrating

They have refused to face our oil and energy problems, our immigration problems and our national debt problems. They have abandoned the middle class. These problems are so immense that correcting them is almost impossible.

I believe that a mammoth backlash would shame them by actually voting them out, setting a precedent and starting anew with patriots instead of politicians. However, most Americans are puppets for their party, right or wrong.

Roy L. Schand, Pinellas Park

Let's have no more of Harris

Re: Katherine Harris.

Please institute a news blackout on this woman. She is a big reason our country is in the terrible shape it's in, and the voters are going to reward her for this by refusing to vote for her. I am tired of looking at her bad-taste clothes and overly made-up face.

This should not be hard for you to do. You did it to Ralph Nader. Enough already with her. Even her own party hates her. Consign her to oblivion.

Susan Ham, Dunedin

Stop the ridicule

I've written before about your poison-pen columns and editorials on Katherine Harris. Now I see in the Thursday Times that you are switching to "poison photos" as well as an editorial on this "terribly flawed" candidate. Rather than ridiculing Harris, let us readers have some facts and information on why you call her a "flawed candidate."

Your published photo of Harris with her arms outstretched looks pretty typical to me of when someone feels a few drops of rain. If you remember, on Tuesday morning we had a few showers, so perhaps Harris felt a few drops coming down. You could compliment her on her nice smile while perhaps getting a little wet.

Charles E. Macneill, Crystal River

Change the seats of power

A front-page story on May 4 about the last days of the Florida legislative session was highlighted with a picture of two legislators "at work" in Tallahassee, listening while a bill was read. They both seemed to be comfortably enveloped in oversized padded leather chairs.

The picture unintentionally captured the reason why some politicians acquire an unpopular reputation for being part of bureaucratic waste. While watching a televised Pinellas School Board meeting, I noticed that the board members, too, sit in large leather chairs.

Would our politicians work more efficiently if their chairs had a leaner design? Form follows function.

Jill Rommel, Oldsmar

'Jury' could be in for a fall

Re: Work is paeon to democracy, May 11.

I was so happy to see that Pinellas County has \$90,000 to spend on giant steel chairs that are supposed to be art.

If, as the "artist" suggests, people "climb all over them," it will only be a matter of time until someone falls off and gets hurt. It would be ironic if a piece of "art" called Face the Jury causes the people who spent our tax money on it to "face the jury" in a lawsuit!

Jerry Pell, St. Petersburg

Insurance problems for homeowners grow more frustrating

Evidence of excess

Re: Work is paeon to democracy, May 11.

The next time our Pinellas County leaders want to raise our taxes, I will remember the \$90,000 spent on those red chairs.

Jim Callaway, Largo

Beware the false prophets

Re: Churches aim to debunk "Da Vinci" May 9.

I read with interest this article about the movie The Da Vinci Code. I can understand why churches would try to educate their flocks to the truth, but what I cannot understand is why it is necessary in the first place. Why any Christians already deeply rooted in their Christian faith and abreast of the "signs of the times" would even consider exposing themselves to things like The Da Vinci Code or The Gospel Of Judas defies all spiritual logic.

"False prophets will arise in great numbers and mislead many" (Matthew 24:11).

Len Vivolo, New Port Richey

There are threats more real

Re: The Da Vinci Code

People are so concerned over this movie. Don't they understand that it is just a work of fiction, and as such, its main objective is entertainment? It seems to me that these same Christian critics should be as aware of situations in real life as they are with movie plots. Case in point, Scientology buys into Plant City ... (April 14)."

As a Christian I am more concerned with a "religious cult" that stealthily takes over cities, towns and government in its attempt to preach its false doctrine.

Tom Hanks and The Da Vinci Code to challenge or change religious history? No more than Tom Hanks and Forrest Gump challenged or changed American history.

Now a real box office hit would be "Forrest Gump to Run for Florida Senator." Oh, wait...

Dave Ware, Oldsmar

Accentuate the positive

Re: Churches aim to debunk "Da Vinci."

Why? It's a story! It was written to entertain, just like any novel. How can you debunk something that isn't true? There are a lot of books in the marketplace that sound reasonably true. They make their stand and then disappear. Let this book follow that path.

I think the ministers in this town have a lot more on their plates than they can handle now. Let's pick something positive and push it to new heights. We have bad influences in our midst that need eliminating and go unaddressed. These ministers should concentrate on the truths they know and preach to those who are not familiar with these truths.

Taking a line from an old song: Let's accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative.

Hartley Steeves, Tampa

Of movies and Moussaoui

Insurance problems for homeowners grow more frustrating

This concerns two letters on your May 6 Opinion page. First, in Film's profiting is unseemly, the writer bemoans the fact that someone is making money from a film whose subject is 9/11. Has this person completely forgotten the large number of films done on the Holocaust, the two world wars, or the Vietnam War, all of which involved the death of a large number of innocents? Should none of these films have been made? I think they all serve to educate those who come after, and this film is no exception.

And the writer of the second letter, An unsavory expense, doesn't want to foot the bill to incarcerate the terrorist Zacarias Moussaoui. It takes more of our tax dollars to execute someone than it does to imprison him for life. Besides, death is what Moussaoui wanted, so he could realize his dream of martyrdom. Personally, I'm glad he was denied his dream. I hope he goes "cage crazy" in prison, before dying in silent anonymity.

Sandra Furey, St. Petersburg

Iranian's letter was an opening

Re: Surprise letter from Iran gets cool reception from Washington; May 9.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice dismissed the letter from the Iranian president, but at this point, it doesn't matter what is in the letter or what was left out of it. The letter serves as an invitation for direct communication between the leaders of the two nations. I would hope George W. Bush could hold his own on this one.

Iranian leaders believe they have a right to build nuclear facilities that could be used to build a nuclear weapon (a position I also take).

Bush and Rice take issue with being spoken to about history, religion and philosophy by the letter's writer. But why? Those topics should be a part of any communications between the two countries. They are a few of the reasons we have such poor relations today.

Since Bush and Rice are so quick in dismissing things, I pray they will be as quick in dismissing any notions of attacking, invading or otherwise sending our servicemen and women into Iran. They should have been as quick in dismissing the notion of going into Iraq.

Bobby McGill, Valrico

A challenge for the president

Re: Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's letter to President Bush.

After my close reading of the 18-page letter written by the Iranian president to our president, I became convinced that this letter was not a personal attack as I had heard, but rather a challenge for President Bush.

The letter was centered around religion, and it challenged our president's Christian values, and even the entire country's. Ahmadinejad called into question the war in Iraq, the establishment and support of Israel, the oppression of Latin Americans and Africans, the handling of the Sept. 11 attacks, and lack of aid for our own citizens in poverty.

Ahmadinejad claims that Bush's policies and actions overseas and at home contradict Christian values, repeatedly asking, "How can these actions be reconciled with the tradition of Jesus Christ?" In the end Ahmadinejad recognizes that "All divine religions share and respect one word, and that word is monotheism, or belief in one God, and no other in the world." Ahmadinejad urges Bush to "return to the teachings of prophets" such as Moses and Jesus. By this Ahmadinejad hopes that Bush will move toward peace and away from war and deceit.

I do not agree with all of Ahmadinejad's accusations, but I do not find this an attack on Bush. Rather I applaud President Ahmadinejad. This letter may be an opening to new diplomacy between the United States and Iran, possibly with the entire world. Ahmadinejad has peacefully expressed his wishes for peace, and opened up a whole new playing field for diplomacy in which we all share something, monotheism, and a desire for peace.

Insurance problems for homeowners grow more frustrating

James Lewis, Clearwater

Underscore terrorism faced by Israelis

Re: U.S. backs new Palestinian program, May 10.

Starting at paragraph six of this 10-paragraph article, it tells of the Israeli military intercepting more than a half-ton of TNT being shipped from Egypt to the Gaza Strip by boat.

Needless to say, this story buried within an entirely different story warrants more attention than just some insignificant mention suggesting a minor event. It is apparent that this captured TNT was going to be used in some way against Israelis and was probably condoned by the **Hamas**-led government of the Palestinians.

I believe your readers should be made more aware of how the Israelis have to live with a daily fear of terrorism supported by a government elected by a people who somehow do not get it. The people accept the responsibility for the government they elect, and they alone are the only ones who can change it. Humanitarian aid is essential, but so is responsible leadership.

Jesse Starr, Tampa

A wonderful outlook on life

I had recently mentioned to a friend how sad it is to pick up a paper like the wonderful St. Petersburg Times and read nothing but sad stories about crime and war.

Then I looked at the front page of the May 8 Times and saw the beautiful article about Lee Williams Jr. (He lost everything, but found a voice.) I was touched to tears.

I am a poet and in the International Poetry Hall of Fame, but nothing can exceed the wonderful outlook on life that Lee Williams has. I wish him the very best his whole life through.

Alma W. Hudson, Clearwater

Graphic

PHOTO, JOHN PENDYGRAFT; PHOTO, CHERIE DIEZ

Load-Date: May 13, 2006

WAR CAPITALISM; Vladimir Putin sends the nation to the front

What the Papers Say Part A (Russia)

May 12, 2006 Friday

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Section: PRESS EXTRACTS;; No. 82

Length: 2731 words

Byline: Konstantin Smirnov, Rustem Faliakhov

Highlight: The highlights of President Putin's address to parliament; For the seventh time, President Vladimir Putin has delivered his annual address to the federal parliament. In effect, he declared mobilization. At one time, Russia had war communism - and now Putin is working on war capitalism.

Body

For the seventh time, President Vladimir Putin has delivered his annual address to the federal parliament. In effect, he declared mobilization. At one time, Russia had war communism - and now Putin is working on war capitalism.

"Delivered" is a dull, formal term. What took place in the Marble Hall of the Kremlin's 14th Wing on May 10 should be described in entirely different words: a theater with more than one player. Putin's performance was a solo, of course. But a supporting actor also emerged: Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov. He permitted himself to prompt Putin, out loud, with the most important word in Russia: "love." This interplay between the two of them suggests that the supporting actor may soon aspire to the leading role.

Mobilization

Evolution is unstoppable. It all began in 2003, with the arrest of Mikhail Khodorkovsky. That marked the start of Putinomics. Its distinguishing feature is reliance on the state. That's the difference between the Putin era and the Yeltsin era, when the situation was reversed. Having started by strengthening the state, however, Putin then broke several taboos, one after another. First: restoring social justice should not be to the detriment of private property. Second: the state should not replace private enterprise; its task is to establish conditions in which private companies can operate successfully. But Putin's approach is different. He knows only one way of solving the problems Russia faces: strengthening the state. Deep down, he still believes in the presumption of guilt for big business (his KGB years have left their mark). In the address, he repeated that "some" members of the business community "disregarded both laws and ethics in favor of enriching themselves at the expense of the majority of citizens, to an extent unprecedented in our country's history."

Mobilization for tycoons has been declared. In effect, their fortunes are being placed outside the law. Although Putin included the proviso that he will "support Russian business," he included a warning for billionaires and state officials or bureaucrats "of all ranks" (the final warning, apparently). "The state shall not turn a blind eye to their activities if they derive unlawful benefits from special relationships with each other." Such relationships are called corruption. But definitions are beside the point here. In effect, Putin identified corruption's main culprits: ex-oligarchs.

Then again, they aren't the only targets. Also under the gun are those who should be able to fire it: security and law enforcement agencies, federal and regional ministers, other bureaucrats, and even demographers.

WAR CAPITALISM Vladimir Putin sends the nation to the front

Duality

Still, the federal government was fortunate. Its members (no names or titles mentioned) were praised for successful efforts to comply with Putin's directive from the address of 2003: doubling GDP. "Overall, we are succeeding in this task, and over the past three years average economic growth has been right on target, around 7%." Indeed, GDP growth of just over 7% per annum would suffice to double the GDP of 2000 by 2010, or (as the government has now decided) double the GDP of 2002 by 2012. In general, it's possible to play with the numbers indefinitely. But growth rates are slowing. GDP growth for 2005 wasn't 7%, as Putin seems to thin, but 6.4%. And Economic Development Minister Herman Gref's most optimistic forecast for this year is only 6% (or perhaps only 5%).

Then again, Putin also proposed a kind of prescription for faster growth. All measures come down to this: innovation. Putin expressed support for the government's measures aimed at introducing innovations into the raw materials economy. He approves of state investment - although he did warn that investment volume isn't as important as "the ability to choose the right priorities."

It's good that Putin isn't opposed to private investment. All investment (private and state) should, in his view, help the Russian economy to "develop its potential in high-technology fields like the modern energy sector, communications, and aerospace," as well as exporting intellectual services.

Since Putin considers these sectors to be Russia's traditional strengths, he is once again setting the objective of "using them as driving forces for development." Energy and aerospace will change the structure of Russia's economy and enable it to claim "a worthy place in the global division of labor."

It's interesting to note that Putin's "modern energy sector" includes not only nuclear power, but also Gazprom. The natural gas monopoly earned some special praise for its prize-winning performance in the global capitalization race.

Another of Putin's directives is to make the ruble fully convertible from as soon as July 1. Apparently, he hopes to cure Russia of the "Dutch disease." Indeed, before 1917, the international trade in furs (Russia's equivalent of oil, at the time) was conducted in rubles. And there was no "Dutch disease." However, although Russia's economy has always relied on exporting some form of natural resources, it was never as dependent on fur exports as it is now on energy exports.

In short, doubling GDP would only be detrimental for an economy of this kind.

Children

In President Putin's view, the economy is not the most important issue (although he did speak of the need to maintain macroeconomic stability). For him, it's more important to supply the regime with future voters and soldiers.

It has to be acknowledged that Putin did this quite artistically. Even the word "demography" in his address didn't sound dull; it was surrounded by sacred words like "love," "family," "motherhood," "children." According to Putin, children will get a great deal of money. In effect, he announced a fifth national project - more costly than any of the other four. Benefit payments for mothers with one child will more than double, from 700 rubles to 1,500 rubles a month, as soon as 2007. The benefit for a second child will be 3,000 rubles a month. And that's not all. Mothers who were officially employed will receive 40% of their average income from the state for 18 months after having a child (although the government will have to set an upper limit for these payments).

President Putin maintains that it's vital for families to have more than one child. Besides providing 3,000 rubles a month for a second child (payable until the child is 18 months old), Putin promised a one-time payment of 250,000 rubles - described as "primary, basic maternity capital." Not in cash, of course. According to Putin, this money could either be invested in a mortgage or saved for a rainy day by placing it in a personal pension account. VneshEkonombank might well be glad of these funds. As Putin admitted, this project will be very costly. Judging by his expression, Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin was astonished (to put it mildly) by the scale of federal spending involved. Nevertheless, as an executive official, he calculated how much the President's Children will cost the federal budget: 30-40 billion rubles a year. And that's not counting the "primary maternity capital."

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Putin made no mention of how these large-scale payments will affect macroeconomic indicators. The word "inflation" only appeared once in his address - when he instructed the government to index the 250,000-ruble benefit "in line with inflation." Although inflation will eat up all his national projects, including the birth-rate project, Putin doesn't seem to give a damn - after all, the government will be held accountable for everything.

Asymmetry

Having announced mobilization, Putin went on to specify who is Russia's enemy. The major external threat to Russia is still the terrorist threat; what's more, "opponents" are artificially promoting localized conflicts. "I know that some would greatly prefer it if Russia... couldn't achieve any of the objectives of full-fledged development," said Putin. And he explained who stands to benefit from a weak Russia: the United States, and the West in general.

With unconcealed envy, Putin pointed out that the military budget of the United States is almost 25 times greater than that of Russia: "And good for them. Good for them!" Putin's voice grew stronger and more animated: "After all, we see what is happening around the world. As the saying goes, Comrade Wolf knows whom to eat. So he eats them, not listening to anyone else, and doesn't seem inclined to start listening."

Putin called for continued efforts to ensure Russia's national security "despite the financial disparity." He gave a detailed description of how the Armed Forces should be reformed, and what kind of weaponry should be purchased, so that Russia will be feared. "Over the next five years, the strategic nuclear forces will be equipped to a substantially greater degree with modern long-range aircraft, submarines, and launch facilities for the Strategic Missile Forces."

Putin didn't miss a saber-rattling opportunity.

"Successful efforts are already under way to produce unique precision weapons systems and maneuverable warheads that will not give the potential opponent a predictable flight trajectory." In Putin's opinion, since we can't afford to spend as much as the Americans on the military, "our responses should be based on intellectual superiority: they will be asymmetric and less costly, but they will certainly make our nuclear triad more reliable and effective."

By mentioning the "nuclear triad," Putin killed two birds with one stone: threatening the West and scoring points with Russian voters. Maxim Dianov, director of the Regional Studies Institute, says: "There is a great deal of public demand for the symbols of a strong state, including a powerful military." So Putin's words about strengthening the Armed Forces are sure to be a hit with the public.

Putin seems to have taken note of how the West's attitude to Russia has been changing. The Western media have already expressed displeasure about a Hamas delegation being invited to Moscow and Moscow's indecision with regard to Iran's nuclear program. US Vice President Dick Cheney's speech in Vilnius could be the last straw: he criticized the Russian authorities for deviating from democratic values. Russia's critics seem to have received an asymmetric response in the presidential address.

A number of observers are saying that Putin's harsh remarks about "Comrade Wolf" might make some G8 leaders decide to stay away from the July summit in St. Petersburg.

Alexei Makarkin, deputy director of the Political Techniques Center, maintains that "the West will not break off dialog with Russia - that would be strategically disadvantageous." But the G8 summit will be a formality. "They'll talk about bird flu and see the sights in St. Petersburg," says Makarkin. "This conclusion is prompted by the address itself, since President Putin has aimed to reduce the level of expectations regarding the summit."

Vladimir Putin's address: the greatest hits

"What is the most important issue for us? The Defense Ministry knows what the most important issue is. Indeed, we shall speak about love, women, and children. About the family."

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"Millions of people held great hopes when the changes of the early 1990s began, but neither government nor business lived up to those hopes. What's more, some members of those communities disregarded both laws and ethics in favor of enriching themselves at the expense of the majority of citizens, to an extent unprecedented in our country's history."

"It's high time to stop managing nationwide construction of schools, bath-houses, and sewers from Moscow."

"There is a potential threat with regard to production and proliferation of low-powered nuclear weapons. What's more, the media and expert circles are already discussing plans to use ICBMs with non-nuclear warheads. The launch of such a missile could provoke an inappropriate response from nuclear powers, up to and including a full-scale retaliatory strike using strategic nuclear forces."

"All that pathos about the need to fight for human rights and democracy - wherever does it vanish when the talk turns to the need to pursue one's own interests? When it comes to that, it turns out that everything is permitted, no limits apply."

"After all, we see what is happening around the world. We see it. As the saying goes, Comrade Wolf knows whom to eat. So he eats them, not listening to anyone else, and doesn't seem inclined to start listening."

Is President Putin playing at war?

Yuri Glotser, vice president of the Entrepreneur Protection Federation: "He isn't playing at war, but attempting to reorganize the military, making it more combat-capable and professional. President Putin's actions are aimed at the quality of service in the military, not just getting through a compulsory period of military service. In order to make a soldier professional, it is necessary to reinforce material foundations as well as patriotic emotions. All armed forces in the West use this principle, so I don't believe President Putin is thinking up some sort of special Russian military."

Yevgeny Yasin, research director, Higher School of Economics: "We are seeing a certain trend toward muscle-flexing in the international arena, in imitation of the United States. The Soviet Union used to do the same kind of thing. Why did the presidential address mention that Russia's defense spending, as a fraction of GDP, is less than that of France or Britain? Their GDPs are greater than ours, but we have set ourselves the task of doubling GDP, or quintupling it - in order to make our international standing mean more than the quantity of our weapons. Yes, rearmament and strengthening the Armed Forces is a relevant task. But our primary tasks today involve economic growth and making Russia more competitive - and we have some unique opportunities to do so at present. So we shouldn't scatter our energies across all kinds of military objectives or excessive social security guarantees. And there is some danger of that, due to the heady aroma of oil."

Eduard Vorobiev, reserve colonel-general: "President Putin isn't playing at war, but the state of affairs in the military is such that declarations in support of the Armed Forces aren't enough: some practical steps need to be taken to get the Armed Forces out of their present condition. Yes, the situation in the military is somewhat better than it was five or six years ago. But morale and the psychological climate remain low, and the human factor has been neglected. Continuing to say that the president and the government support the Armed Forces, while not taking any practical steps - that amounts to undermining the credibility of the president and the government. What President Putin said in his address to parliament gives me hope that the situation in the military will improve."

Nikita Belykh, Union of Right Forces leader: "It's hard to argue with the idea that two-thirds of Armed Forces personnel should be serving under contract by 2008. Yes, there should be civil oversight for increased spending on Armed Forces development - but can the 'civilian' Defense Ministry provide such oversight? Spending on the Armed Forces is already a substantial item in the federal budget, and it's not a question of how much - it's a question of effective spending. Our defense budget is a kind of mystery box, since it's impossible to determine how effectively the money is spent."

Anatoly Lukianov, former chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (the Soviet Union's last parliament), now chairman of the Central Advisory Council for the Communist Party's Central Committee: "No, in this case President Putin is not playing at war. Some very important issues have been raised, and there is indeed a huge disparity

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between defense spending in the United States and in Russia. The Yeltsin regime did indeed destroy the military to a substantial degree, and Putin is right to be outraged about that - recalling that there weren't enough suitable troops to send to Chechnya. The president has to be concerned about that situation, as the public in general is concerned about it. And the people are somewhat nostalgic for the time when the Soviet Union used to flex its muscles, so to speak. If the president wishes to express the people's opinion, and considers it necessary, he does express it."

Source: Gazeta, May 11, 2006, pp. 1, 6-7

Translated by Elena Leonova

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**THE RUSSIAN SECRET SERVICES ARE MOVING IN THE WRONG
DIRECTION; A non-government report: does international terrorism really
need Chechnya?**

What the Papers Say Part A (Russia)

April 25, 2006 Tuesday

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Section: PRESS EXTRACTS;; No. 73

Length: 2706 words

Byline: Andrei Soldatov, Irina Borogan

Highlight: Suicide bombers, the global jihad, and the situation in Chechnya; An analysis of how the role played by Al-Qaeda in the Caucasus has changed over the years. Compiled by experts from the Institute of Defense and Security Studies (Singapore) and Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies (Israel).

Body

All experts agree that Al-Qaeda's presence in any given region is signified by public beheading of hostages, terrorist attacks on Western targets, and the use of suicide bombers (shakhids).

All this is evident in Iraq. Experts at the IDSS (Institute of Defense and Security Studies) say it will all be evident in Afghanistan as well in 2006. They point out that the Taliban wasn't exactly skillful from the military standpoint in the past, but interaction with foreigners enabled them to hone their skills. Some sources imply that Taliban activists are split into groups of 10 to 25 men each, and each group includes an Al-Qaeda member or a mercenary from the Persian Gulf countries who teaches the rest the tactics deployed in Iraq. Coordination of terrorist attacks has improved greatly as a result.

The Taliban started using suicide bombers in late 2005. These tactics were largely unknown in Afghanistan before September 11, because "istishhad" (the eagerness to become a suicide bomber) was alien to the Afghan culture. Not any more.

Beheading hostages is becoming a widespread tactic in Afghanistan. The Taliban is using these executions to emphasize its contacts with the global jihad movement.

All this is essentially absent in Chechnya. Chechen terrorists don't use suicide bombers nowadays (the most recent terrorist attacks of that kind took place in 2004), and don't attack American or British targets. Al-Qaeda leaders don't call Chechnya the third battlefield of the global jihad (after Iraq and Afghanistan). Moreover, Russian secret services have never uncovered any evidence that any act of terror in Russia was organized under Al-Qaeda's direct command.

And yet, the conflict in Chechnya retains its considerable role in propaganda for the global jihad. The Al-Qaeda suicide terrorists who hijacked passenger jets on September 11 had once intended to fight in Chechnya. These days, video recordings of battles in Chechnya are being viewed in Iraq.

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In fact, experience in Chechnya is being widely used in other countries. Iraq's first suicide bomber blew herself up on September 28, 2005. Although some extremists had used women in this capacity in the past, it was in Chechnya that women first began blowing themselves up for religious rather than political motives.

The first female suicide bomber drove a KamAZ truck loaded with high explosives into the building of a federal forces commandant's office in Alkhan-Yurt in Chechnya in June 2000 - and that incident sparked a series of similar explosions worldwide. Israel's first female suicide bomber blew herself up in January 2002, and two women followed suit in Uzbekistan in March 2004.

However, it is highly unlikely that Al-Qaeda abandoned the actual Chechen front (not the propaganda front) only because of the absence of American military contingent there.

IDSS experts John Harrison and Rohan Gunaratna believe that Al-Qaeda is in decline nowadays. Yoram Schweitzer agrees. He maintains that Osama bin Laden's organization never succeeded in transformation from a group into a movement. Moreover, the second generation of fighters appeared in the global jihad now - from Iraq, Europe, and South Africa - and they pushed bin Laden's Afghani and Bosnian followers into the background. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the head of the Iraqi Al-Qaeda network, makes an emphasis on this new generation and is practically out of bin Laden's control now.

Bin Laden built his global terrorist network using Afghanistan, and al-Zarqawi is now using Iraq in the same manner. Aware of the fact that a great many Al-Qaeda ringleaders and senior officers are arrested, al-Zarqawi would not mind taking over its cells on the territory from North America to Asia.

Al-Zarqawi has enormously boosted his influence in Libya, Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, and Persian Gulf states. Terrorist web-sites usually post information on al-Zarqawi's operations nowadays, leaving Al-Qaeda as such and bin Laden in the periphery of attention. Using his considerable skills in dealing with media outlets, al-Zarqawi is becoming the symbol of global jihad.

What information is available at this point indicates that emissaries of both structures (Al-Qaeda and al-Zarqawi's network) operated in the Caucasus until recently. Bin Laden was represented in Chechnya by Abu Omar al-Saif between 1995 and November 2005 when he was killed. Al-Zarqawi has been represented since 2002 by Abu Hafs al-Urdani.

Al-Saif of Saudi Arabia was an ideologue rather than field commander. He bears a lot of titles, all of them with religious undertones: legal advisor to Chechen mujahedin, member of the Shar'ah court, head of the Court of Appeals in Chechnya, etc. Al-Saif's opinion was not valued in the Caucasus alone.

Calling the war in Iraq "the third wave of Crusades against Muslims," al-Saif actually viewed peace as a never-ending battle for the triumph of Islam. He did not really care about regional and cultural differences between Muslims from different countries.

Al-Urdani is a Jordanian. He represents al-Zarqawi and Chechen diaspora in Jordan. It is common knowledge that "Arab" Chechens have played a major role in the conflict in the Caucasus ever since 1995. The first Foreign Minister of Ichkeria Shamil Beno was a Jordanian Chechen. Zijad Sabsabi, representative of Chechnya in Moscow, was born in Syria.

US Secretary of State Colin Powell was the first to mention al-Urdani's name in his speech at the UN Security Council on February 5, 2003. It was Powell who called al-Urdani an emissary of al-Zarqawi's "terrorist network with Iraqi connections."

When Abu al-Walid was killed in Vedeno in April 2004, Al-Jazeera released a statement of the Majlis al-Shura to the effect that Abu Hafs succeeded to him as commander of foreign mujahedin in Chechnya.

Abu Hafs of Jordan became the first non-Saudi to command foreign mercenaries in Chechnya. When the school was seized in Beslan, Abu Hafs was blamed as the sponsor of the operation. By the way, the Federal Security

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Service also said at first that al-Saif was involved in the Beslan attack. The investigation, however, failed to uncover any evidence of Al-Qaeda's or al-Zarqawi's involvement in the Beslan horrors on September 1-3, 2004.

In the meantime, the Jordanian's accession is hardly surprising. IDSS experts say that a new generation of foreign mercenaries is fighting in Chechnya nowadays. Mostly Arabs before 2001, they are mostly Turks and Chechens from Arab countries now.

Al-Urdani's promotion to foreign mujahedin commander may also mean a shift to new financial sources from Saudi trusts to the funds raised by organizations of Chechen diasporas.

It isn't hard to see that the influence wielded by Abu Hafs and the dead al-Saif is not a match to the influence wielded by Shamil Basayev. How the war in Chechnya should be viewed (as an element of the global jihad or as a war for independence) depends precisely on the latter.

Basayev in the meantime is not exactly logical in his statements.

He denounced any religious motives of his actions in the interview with Babitsky ran by ABC channel in July 2005. "No, this is first and foremost a war for independence for me," he said. "When I'm not free, I cannot live by my faith. I want to be free. Freedom is primary, that's what I think. Shar'ah is secondary."

In an interview with Caucasus-Center.org posted on January 9, 2006, Basayev called the attack on Nalchik "performing the duty to carry out the jihad." "Adopted at the majlis in 2002, the jihad expansion strategy is being successfully implemented," Basayev bragged. He even promised expansion of the hostilities to across the Volga in summer 2006.

Along with everything else, Basayev has been trying since last autumn to incorporate his struggle into the global jihad. The first non-Chechen video became available on Caucasus-Center.org in November 2005, the film was titled "Genocide in Indonesia." Films like that are perfect instruments of recruitment.

The so-called Caucasus Front was established in May 2005, when Aslan Maskhadov was already history and replaced with Abdul-Halim Saidullayev. It was established to organize the hostilities all over the Caucasus including Stavropol and Krasnodar. Gunmen chose guerilla tactic of attacks on military objects only, never on civilian targets. The federal forces all but accepted the rules of the game, responding with police and military measures - merciless raids, use of armored vehicles in towns, and so on. Armored vehicles have not been used in Stavropol on the scope of the operation in Tukui-Mekteb on February 6 since the capture of Budennovsk.

It follows that what gunmen are going is a war for independence on the scale of Chechnya and jihad on the scale of the Caucasus as such.

There is only one explanation possible. Al-Qaeda, the first truly global terrorist network, is putting its interests above interests of local movements. Separatists do not want foreigners attack Americans on their own territory. It interferes with their own struggle for their own political objectives: bargaining with the government, appealing to the international community, etc.

As for Al-Qaeda, its own view on political objectives is quite specific. Its spiritual guru Abdulla Azzam wrote article "Solid Basis" in April 1988 and formulated the group's central principle in it: transformation of the jihad from a means to the end. Azzam was killed, and new leaders of the organization (bin Laden, al-Zawahiri, al-Zarqawi) proved themselves perfect tacticians but weak ideologists. As a result, ideology of the group has not changed these last two decades: liberation of the Islamic world from Western-Jewish colonialism, establishment of a state by the divine laws of Islam.

That is why Al-Qaeda refused to participate in the election in Iraq and declared a war on the government of Saudi Arabia. Triumph in a single country is nothing compared to the global war on Crusaders.

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All this doesn't really concur with interests of national-liberation movements. It explains Al-Qaeda's failure to penetrate the regions where local separatists are strong - first and foremost Palestine (even though the importance of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to Islamists is undeniable).

Al-Qaeda attacks Western targets only wherever local terrorists themselves are weak - the way it was in Kenya and Tanzania.

Basayev is not going to give Chechnya over to global jihad zealots just like HAMAS is not going to hand Palestine over to Al-Qaeda. Basayev knows that he is not going to benefit politically or economically from it because for years already his war has been sponsored by Chechen diasporas who find the idea of a Chechen state dearer to their hearts than bin Laden's Apocalyptic ideology.

In the meantime, Basayev is eager to play the part of a "local bin Laden" for the as yet weak but promising Islamic movements of the Caucasus. In fact, he has a serious rival - al-Zarqawi's organization that may soon find itself capable of investing considerable sums in inflammation of the jihad in the Caucasus.

Paradoxical as it may appear, but the tactic of the Russian security structures is objectively playing into the hands of al-Zarqawi and Al-Qaeda. Tough response to the attack on Nalchik makes a political dialogue impossible. It means that the local Islamists have the example of their brothers in Egypt, Algeria, or Morocco to follow as the only option, and the brothers in question recognized priority of the goals of the global jihad.

Yoram Schweitzer, an analyst at the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies (Israel). He spent ten years in Israeli army intelligence, where he headed a department dealing with international terrorism. He is a recognized authority on suicide bombers, and has interviewed failed suicide bombers in prison.

Question: Is there anything that distinguishes the use of suicide bombers by Al-Qaeda and others?

Yoram Schweitzer: Al-Qaeda's suicide bombers work in pairs. It helps terrorists, you know. It offers them support. Al-Qaeda made an emphasis on finding a pair for every terrorist used in terrorist acts including the ones on September 11. Al-Qaeda needs it to prevent would-be terrorists from thinking too much of the suicide they are about to commit. Besides, the pair lessens the discomfort of the isolation needed to keep the terrorist act a secret.

Question: But these are not the tactics used in Chechnya.

Yoram Schweitzer: If you mean the Beslan school hostage siege or the Dubrovka theater hostage-taking in Moscow, these terrorist acts required many more terrorists to be involved - just because of the size of the targets.

Question: Chechnya's suicide bombers are inactive at present. Why?

Yoram Schweitzer: The role of public opinion must be taken into consideration here. I don't think Chechen society supports suicide bombing.

Question: But it's unlikely that Chechen society would support the operation against children in Beslan more than a suicide bombing in Moscow.

Yoram Schweitzer: Correct, but there are also differences between terrorists. Al-Qaeda, for example, cares for public opinion as little as the Palestinians do.

Question: And meanwhile, propaganda materials from Chechnya are found in the possession of European Islamists.

Yoram Schweitzer: There is a difference between Palestinian suicide bombers and European Islamists. Videos of the Chechens' war on the Russians do have a considerable effect on the European youth, that's a major part of their recruitment and training. But the Palestinians do not care as they have problems of their own.

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Adam Dolnick, senior instructor at the IDSS International Center of Studies of Political Violence and Terrorism (Singapore).

Question: How would you describe Al-Qaeda's presence in the Caucasus?

Adam Dolnick: Al-Qaeda does wield ideological and financial influence there, but its influence is not decisive. Basayev and his camp are purely anti-Russian, and the Chechens don't attack Western targets like terrorist groups infiltrated by Al-Qaeda throughout the world.

The absence of further suicide bombings since Beslan (there was but one attempt in Dagestan and even that was thwarted) corroborates Basayev's strategic decision to back Saidullayev's strategy of expansion of the conflict throughout the Caucasus. Should Basayev decide that it doesn't work, he may revert to using suicide bombers again.

There are fewer incidents corroborating foreign mercenaries' presence in Chechnya now, and we do not see Chechen instructors involved in other conflicts.

Reuven Paze, director of PRISM (Israeli Project of Islamic Movement Studies), ex-chief of Shabak Department of Research, one of the leading experts on Islamic ideology.

Question: Chechen guerrillas stopped using Al-Qaeda tactics after Beslan. When do you think Al-Qaeda's interest in Chechnya ebbed?

Reuven Paze: I'd say that Al-Qaeda never viewed Chechnya as a priority as a part of the global jihad. Khattab's Arab battalion came to Chechnya from Afghanistan or Bosnia in the middle of the 1990's but it was not following Al-Qaeda's orders. Al-Qaeda has never solved the ideological problem of how it should treat wars for independence like the ones in Chechnya or Palestine. I think that 2003 became a turning point for Chechnya, the period when volunteers started coming to Iraq. An emphasis on Iraq as an alternative to Afghanistan compelled Al-Qaeda to forsake its rapt attention to Chechnya. Arab volunteers go to Iraq nowadays, they are no longer interested in Chechnya. In the meantime, some Saudi Islamists like Yusef al-Ajiri [commander of the Al-Qaeda cell in Saudi Arabia and bin Laden's personal bodyguard killed in 2003 - Authors did try to view the Chechen conflict as a part of the global jihad. The impression now is, however, that Chechnya has faded into the background in Al-Qaeda's plans - at least for the time being.

Question: Can al-Zarqawi, unlike bin Laden, solve the problem of national-liberation movements Al-Qaeda cannot penetrate?

Reuven Paze: Unlike Al-Qaeda and bin Laden, al-Zarqawi is making a special emphasis on involvement in local and ethnic conflicts. His Jordanian origin may help him in establishment of contacts with Chechen Arabs.

Source: Novaya Gazeta, No. 32 (1152), April 24-26, 2006, pp. 10-11

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The Cabinet

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Body

GORDON O'CONNOR

Minister of National Defence

1 The new choice for Defence Minister immediately came under fire from opposition parties for his lobbyist ties.

Gordon O'Connor is an ex-general who later became a lobbyist for eight years with a major Ottawa firm, representing many companies in the military industry. On Feb. 23, 2004, Mr. O'Connor terminated his association with eight firms, including Airbus Military, a European consortium that is expected to offer up its A400 transport plane as the replacement for Canada's ageing fleet of Hercules transport planes.

Other clients included BAE Systems, an advanced military aerospace technology company; Stewart and Stevenson Services Inc., a Houston-based builder of armoured vehicles; and Alenia Marconi Systems, a European military electronics company.

Mr. O'Connor said he is not receiving any benefit from his old clients, saying, "just watch me," when asked whether he was in any conflict of interest.

He said he had no plans to recuse himself from any decisions on future government contracts that might involve old clients. "Years ago, I went and represented companies to find out what was involved in projects to advise them how to approach projects, how to bid, how to produce their documents, that sort of stuff," Mr. O'Connor said.

"No, I will not recuse myself from anything. I do not have any links to any company whatsoever."

Duff Conacher, of the public interest group Democracy Watch, said Stephen Harper made a bad choice given that a departing politician must have a cooling-off period of two years before taking a lobbyist job.

Source: Mike Blanchfield, CanWest News Service

BEV ODA

Minister of Canadian Heritage and Status of Women

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2 Experience: Ms. Oda, first elected in 2004, is a former broadcaster who was the vice-president of CTV. The 61-year-old former schoolteacher was the heritage critic. Burning issues: Responsible for arts and cultural issues, including funding for the Canada Council for the Arts.

JIM PRENTICE

Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development

3 Experience: First elected in 2004, Mr. Prentice served as a commissioner on the Indian Specific Claims Commission of Canada for 10 years. Burning issues: Although Mr. Harper has promised to honour the objectives of a new \$5.1-billion deal, some native leaders remain wary of the Tories.

JOHN BAIRD

President of Treasury Board

4 Experience: A former Ontario Conservative Cabinet minister, he has experience in portfolios such as energy and social services. He also acted as the finance critic under former premier Mike Harris. Burning issues: Will assess and respond to Justice John Gomery's latest report on accountability following the sponsorship scandal.

MAXIME BERNIER

Minister of Industry

5 Experience: The newly elected Quebec City region MP and former vice-president of Standard Life of Canada holds degrees in finance and law. Burning issues: Faces a variety of challenges, including how to help the manufacturing industry, and how to wean the auto and aerospace industries off government subsidies.

LAWRENCE CANNON

Minister of Transport

6 Experience: The newly elected Quebec MP will likely draw on his experience with urban transit authorities. The 58-year-old was also a member of Quebec's National Assembly from 1985 to 1994 and served in Robert Bourassa's government. Burning issues: He will face calls for improving federal transportation infrastructure.

TONY CLEMENT

Minister of Health

7 Tony Clement brings intimate knowledge of federal-provincial relations to his post as Canada's new Health Minister.

A former health minister for Ontario, Mr. Clement credited the Liberals' health care accord with straightening out funding arrangements between the federal and provincial governments and said it will make negotiations easier.

"Now the issue is how do we make sure that that money is leveraged for the benefit of patients and Canadians generally," Mr. Clement said.

Mr. Clement said his top priority will be to implement the Tory election promise of working with provinces to develop nationwide guarantees on acceptable wait times for treatment. He also said he'll focus on a cancer care strategy. The Tories promised \$260-million over five years to improve cancer screening and prevention. Mr. Clement said Canada also has to prepare for the possibility of an avian flu pandemic.

Mr. Clement will have to contend with the fact Quebec and Alberta have indicated they're contemplating plans to introduce private health insurance plans.

The Cabinet

His portfolio also includes responsibility for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario.

Mr. Clement was an Ontario MPP from 1996 to 2003. He won his Parry Sound-Muskoka riding last month by 28 votes.

Source: Carly Weeks, CanWest News Service

JIM FLAHERTY

Minister of Finance

8 Tax cuts will be a top priority of newly appointed federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty.

Immediately after the swearing-in of his new Cabinet, Prime Minister Stephen Harper said his new government will "move quickly to reduce taxes, starting with a cut to the GST."

But paying for those tax cuts and other election commitments will be one of Mr. Flaherty's major challenges, the head of the country's largest business group suggested.

"It's very good that the Minister of Finance has experience, albeit in a provincial government," said Canadian Chamber of Commerce president Nancy Hughes Anthony.

"He's got a big job pulling together the election commitments, and making that first budget is going to be the key," she said. "His experience and background is going to put him in good stead."

However, she added that it will also be important for Mr. Flaherty to work closely with newly appointed Treasury Board President John Baird, who will be in charge of federal government spending and who, through maintaining a tight grip on federal spending, holds one of the keys to keeping the Conservative platform affordable.

"To make that budget work, there's a commitment to expenditure reduction, so I think there's some teamwork going to be required," Ms. Hughes Anthony added.

Mr. Flaherty, a Greater Toronto Area lawyer, held several posts in the Ontario Conservative governments of Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, including minister of finance.

However, Mr. Flaherty dismissed concerns that he will not be able to meet the government's election commitments while still balancing the budget.

"Don't worry, we'll balance the budget," he said as he emerged from his first Cabinet meeting.

Mr. Flaherty is known for both his fiscal and his social conservatism.

Source: Eric Beauchesne, CanWest News Service

JOSEE VERNER

International Co-operation and Minister for La Francophonie and Official Languages

9 Experience: Ms. Verner, 46, is a former Speaker of the Quebec National Assembly. She has 20 years of experience in communications and public service. Burning issues: Ensuring Quebec plays an international role in UNESCO, as promised during the recent campaign.

MICHAEL FORTIER

Minister of Public Works and Government Services

The Cabinet

10 Experience: A financing director in Quebec for TD Securities, he has worked as senior advisor at Credit Suisse First Boston. The 44-year-old lawyer ran and lost to Joe Clark for the PC leadership in 1998. Burning issues: Restoring credibility to Public Works after the sponsorship scandal.

GARY LUNN

Natural Resources

11 Experience: A former lawyer, mine superintendent and safety officer with a forestry company, Mr. Lunn was first elected in 1997. Burning issues: Outrage over rising gas prices has abated somewhat, but will remain a concern. Mr. Lunn will also hear from Alberta's oil giants if there is any talk of further reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

PETER MACKAY

Minister of Foreign Affairs

12 Canadians may best know the new Conservative Foreign Affairs Minister as the jilted ex-lover of defecting Liberal MP and billionaire Belinda Stronach.

But, as he heads out on the bigger stage, Peter MacKay will become Canada's face to the world, whether it is at international forums on Middle East peacebuilding or in the United States where fence-mending with Canada's closest neighbour and top trading partner will become a major preoccupation.

Mr. MacKay, 40, has no specific experience in international relations. But as a former Crown prosecutor and one-time leader of the former Progressive Conservative party, he brings both intellectual acumen as well as political sophistication to his role as Canada's leading international statesman.

"He's getting a high-profile post in part in recognition for his senior status within the party," said David Rudd, the executive director of the Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies in Toronto. "I don't think this is necessarily a hatchet-burying exercise between him and Harper."

While Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Mr. MacKay have had their differences in the past, Mr. Rudd said that would not interfere with Mr. MacKay's flexibility at the helm of Foreign Affairs.

At home, Mr. MacKay will preside over a major bureaucratic restructuring -- the reunion of Foreign Affairs and International Trade into one department. The Paul Martin Liberals disbanded the two departments when they took power in December, 2003.

Mr. MacKay will also play a leading role in whether Canada follows through on its commitment to fund economic and social development initiatives for the Palestinian Authority, a question that has become all the more thorny with the recent victory of terrorist group Hamas in the Palestinian elections.

The Nova Scotia MP was also made the minister responsible for Atlantic Canada.

Source: Mike Blanchfield, CanWest News Service

LOYOLA HEARN

Minister of Fisheries and Oceans

13 Experience: The 62-year-old former Newfoundland education minister was first elected as an MP in 2000. He served as fisheries critic in opposition. Burning issues: Drawing federal attention to the low-priority fishing industry that is not on the radar screen outside Atlantic and Pacific Canada.

STOCKWELL DAY

Minister of Public Safety

The Cabinet

14 Experience: Held senior portfolios in the Alberta government, left in 2000 to become Canadian Alliance leader, but quit after party lost election. Was foreign affairs critic in opposition. Burning issues: Inherits a file critical to Tory pledge to mend U.S. relations. Responsible for counterterrorism, border security and disaster management, overseeing the RCMP and CSIS.

CAROL SKELTON

Minister of Revenue

15 Experience: Ms. Skelton, who was both social development and western regional development critic in opposition, was first elected in 2000. She formerly helped manage the family farm. Burning issues: Faces the task of collecting the revenues needed to pay for election promises. Ms. Skelton will also be Minister for Western Economic Diversification.

VIC TOEWS

Minister of Justice and Attorney-General

16 Vic Toews assumed the job as Canada's top lawmaker yesterday under the cloud of a conviction for breaking the law by spending more than the legal limit in his failed bid to win a provincial election.

While there is no legal impediment to Mr. Toews taking over the Justice post, Opposition leader Bill Graham said, "there's a moral and ethical problem that Mr. Toews will have to explain."

In appointing Mr. Toews, Prime Minister Stephen Harper went for a hard-line choice to oversee the Conservatives' ambitious law-and-order agenda that focuses on stiffer punishment for criminals, including youths.

Mr. Toews pleaded guilty last year to violating Manitoba's Election Finances Act by spending more than the law allowed during the 1999 provincial election campaign when he was the attorney-general. Mr. Toews was fined \$500 for overspending by \$7,500.

He defended himself yesterday, saying he didn't deliberately overspend and that he took responsibility for the actions of his campaign staff.

"I think that demonstrates some leadership that I am willing to take responsibility even when I am not personally involved."

Mr. Toews was not convicted under the Criminal Code. However, if he were fined for spending in a federal election, he would have been precluded from running again for another five years, according to the Canada Elections Act.

Mr. Toews opposes revamped laws for young offenders, saying they are too soft on youths who have broken the law. He wants more youths charged with serious crimes to be tried as adults. He is against prisoner voting. He favours tougher jail sentences, bail terms and conditions for release. He has called for parliamentary override of court decisions allowing same-sex marriage.

Mr. Toews has also frequently railed against "radical" and "activist" judges for having too much power over politicians.

Source: Janice Tibbetts, CanWest News Service

RONA AMBROSE

Minister of Environment

17 Experience: Led the offensive against the Liberals' child-care plan while also serving as intergovernmental affairs critic. Worked in Alberta bureaucracy before election in 2004. Burning issues: Nothing will burn hotter than

The Cabinet

her handling of greenhouse gas emissions. Must juggle a commitment to the Kyoto accord with Tory opposition to it.

MICHAEL CHONG

President of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister for Sport

18 Experience: Mr. Chong is a former information officer for the NHL Players' Association. At 34, he is the youngest Cabinet member. Burning issues: It is expected his priority will be to start talks with the provinces to settle the so-called fiscal imbalance.

DIANE FINLEY

Minister of Human Resources and Social Development

19 Experience: First elected in 2004, she was the Tory agriculture critic. She was an administrator at the University of Western Ontario's French immersion school before becoming an MP. Burning issues: She will have to contend with job strategies for Canada's multicultural population and strategies for youth employment.

ROB NICHOLSON

House leader, Minister for Democratic Reform

20 Experience: The 53-year-old lawyer from Niagara Falls had a short stint as science minister in the government of Kim Campbell. Burning issues: Walking a tightrope of managing a minority government. Overseeing compromise to keep the Conservatives from falling.

DAVID EMERSON

International Trade, Minister for Pacific Gateway and B.C. Olympics

21 Experience: First elected two years ago, he was re-elected as a Liberal this year. Mr. Emerson, an economist, has experience as a B.C. politician, and in the private sector as head of the Western and Pacific Bank of Canada. Burning issues: Working with trade ministers of other countries to try to salvage a deal from world trade talks.

JEAN-PIERRE BLACKBURN

Minister of Labour

22 Experience: The 57-year-old public relations consultant from Quebec's Jonquiere-Alma riding was a member of Brian Mulroney's Conservative government in the 1980s. Burning issues: Bringing profile to a portfolio that is not mentioned in the Tory election platform.

GREG THOMPSON

Minister of Veterans Affairs

25 Experience: Businessman and former schoolteacher. Elected five times in New Brunswick Southwest between 1988 and 2006. Held numerous critic posts. Burning issues: Will oversee implementation of a new veterans charter designed to help the soldiers transition to civilian life and support injured personnel.

MARJORY LEBRETON

Leader of the government in the Senate

26 Experience: One of Stephen Harper's most valuable advisors during the election. Senator LeBreton, 65, has served every Tory leader since John Diefenbaker. Burning issues: Mr. Harper has said his new government is committed to moving forward with the appointment of elected senators.

The Cabinet

MONTE SOLBERG

Minister of Immigration

27 Experience: Has been one of the Conservatives' most effective voices in opposition, most recently as finance critic. Burning issues: Mr. Solberg will oversee a Conservative election platform that calls for the elimination of the \$975 per head landing fee for immigrants, as well as initiatives to recognize the foreign credentials of highly skilled immigrants.

CHUCK STRAHL

Minister of Agriculture

28 Experience: First elected to the House of Commons in 1993. Became deputy Speaker in 2004. Was a partner in a logging firm before entering politics. Burning issues: As cases of mad cow disease continue to pop up in Canada, food safety and associated trade issues will dominate the agenda.

Graphic

Black & White

Photo: Chris Wattie, Reuters; The Cabinet.; Graphic/Diagram: (See hard copy for graphic/diagram.); Black & White

Photo: J.P. Moczulski, Reuters; Ben Harper, 9, got the day off school yesterday along with sister Rachel to watch with mother Laureen as their father's government is sworn in.

Load-Date: February 7, 2006

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Identifying the real basis for responsibility

Yorkshire Post
February 9, 2006

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Length: 2525 words

Body

From: JG Riseley, Harcourt Drive, Harrogate.

LORD Ahmed (Yorkshire Post, February 4) appears to blame the kidnapping of a German backpacker on a Danish newspaper rather than on the Palestinian kidnappers.

I may be oversensitive, but I get the impression lately of a lot of veiled threats flying around.

I hear people say, "You need to be responsible about what you say", when I suspect they actually mean, "If we don't like what you say, we will become violent".

This is like an adolescent tantrum, an immature person saying, "I'm going to trash the house and it'll be your fault for upsetting me".

Yorkshire Post

There are people demanding respect who would do better to examine themselves, take responsibility for their own emotions and actions, and grow up.

Some may find this interpretation offensive, but they have the chance to disprove it by the way they now behave.

It makes no sense to rampage because you take offence at others saying you are the kind of person who goes on the rampage when offended.

It is reminiscent of the old joke: "I'm not violent and I'll punch anyone who says I am".

From: R Potter, Low Lane, Grassington.

LORD Ahmed of Rotherham remarked (Yorkshire Post, February 4) that he would like the opportunity to clear up some of the misconceptions people hold about the way Muslim women are treated (12 paces behind men, not allowed to drive cars in Saudi Arabia, etc etc). Well, if they can be cleared up, then surely they should be.

From: Phil Hanson, Idle, Bradford.

I AM British and have British values of democracy and free speech. I am ashamed of how politically correct we have allowed Britain to become, sensitive to anyone else's needs before our own.

I can only blame it for the failure of the London police to take action against the Muslim demonstrators who blatantly threatened and incited more acts of terrorism.

Identifying the real basis for responsibility

From: R Sharp, Beverley.

THE cartoon demonstrators have received high-profile press and media coverage, and 22 year-old Omar Khayam has publicly apologised by saying it was wrong, unjustified and insensitive for him to protest dressed as a suicide bomber.

It was also a stupid act, which fortunately for him and his family, did not result in tragic consequences.

If an armed police officer had a genuine belief he was a potential suicide bomber then he may wish to reflect on the fact that he may not have had a 23rd birthday.

No doubt the police officer would have been suspended, and there would have been demands for a public inquiry.

Let's hope the next time this young man demonstrates (having completed his prison sentence), he does so peacefully and with responsibility.

Test drivers more often to improve skills

From: Brian Ward, Broadlands, Shann Park, Keighley.

WITH regard to the letter from

D Uttley (Yorkshire Post, February 4), surely the answer to the problem of low standards of driving skills is to weed out those very many people who are incapable of handling the level of cars in today's traffic conditions by making them undertake regular re-tests?

In this day and age, they can be conducted, over say a two-hour test period, on computer simulators which allow every driver to be tested in every sort of traffic and weather condition.

I have held this view for some 20 years. Now that I am over 60 years of age, I still hold it. All drivers over that age should be re-tested every five years, as should those who have held a licence for, say, less than two years.

Over time, those in between could be drawn into the net. The test standard should be at least akin to that of the Institute of Advanced Motorists' test, and those who fail in any serious level should be barred from further driving until they can pass a new Department for Transport test.

This would be very unpopular and would not be a vote catcher. But I am willing to wager that it would achieve the desired result of reducing road accidents and the costs associated therewith.

In defence of bikers

From: John Fuller, Grange Cottages, Marsden.

REGARDING the letter "Kamikaze bikers" (Yorkshire Post, February 4), I should point out that many times groups are tarnished by the actions of a few within their midst.

I have been a keen motorcyclist for many years and am all too aware of the rogue element within our group. My contribution to help reduce the problem is to be involved with the Institute of Advanced Motorists and help guide people to a higher level of road craft. However, I admit we have rather an uphill battle.

To paint ramblers, horse-riders and pedal cyclists as shining elements of society hides any rogue elements in each of those groups. For example, what about all those "Kamikaze pedal cyclists" who flout red traffic lights, cycle on the pavements or choose to ride at night in dark clothing and without lights?

Being a keen walker, I'm incensed by the state of some hill and mountain tops where fellow walkers fail to carry their litter back home with them.

Identifying the real basis for responsibility

I have read several times now that our equestrian friends have a reasonable opinion of us motorcyclists, indicating that of all motorised road users, motorcyclists are generally the most courteous. So please don't let the actions of a few form your opinion of most; you would be surprised at how many otherwise decent people choose to ride a motorcycle.

Absolutely correct

From: C Horsman, Coppergate, Nafferton,

Nr Driffeld.

BERNARD Dineen received some stick from class-conscious Messrs Don Burslam and Geoffrey Bryant (Letters, February 4). Of course, Dineen is absolutely correct.

I was a grammar school boy for my sins - but my parents were poor and I received free uniforms and school meals. Entry was on ability but what is often forgotten by the do-gooders is that a pupil could resit the test at 13 and transfer to grammar/high school. There was never any animosity between selective schools and secondary moderns.

Ours was academic where Latin, Greek etc were compulsory - the secondary modern was a practical school where skills were taught and from where many students went on to reach the top of their trade - eg building, plumbing, cookery.

A friend of mine there went on to become area manager of the electricity board. A plumber or builder now earns more than the average teacher - if you can get one.

As for my own school with its honour boards of achievement, it is now a comprehensive down near the bottom.

You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.

US did not support IRA

From: John Patrick Murphy, Roger Road, Burton Grange, Barnsley.

I WOULD like to answer the undeserved anti-American criticism of Paul Emsley (Yorkshire Post, February 2). The United States government did not support the IRA, it was classed as an illegal terrorist organisation.

I lived and worked for many years among the Irish/American communities of New York City and Boston, and although they did contribute money towards the old country, that money was donated for all the victims of violence, Catholic and Protestant. Not a cent was knowingly contributed towards the IRA.

The ancestors of the 40 million-plus Irish-Americans had

bitter memories of the potato famine, and the "Troubles", but the descendants, my relatives, are sophisticated enough not to bear grudges, although they would like to see a united Ireland. Similarly, my relatives in the west of Ireland do not,

nor ever have, supported the IRA.

The United States government does not condemn all Palestinian people, all they ask is that Hamas renounces terrorism. The American people and their government do not wish to see "big piles of rubble and full cemeteries".

They wish to live in peace, and in spite of their imperfection, they are still the greatest society that this planet has yet produced.

Identifying the real basis for responsibility

Mr Emsley, and all other anti-Americans who regularly submit letters to the Press, never mention the savagery inflicted upon the American people on 9/11. Their response, in view of this, has been modest. Tony Blair is right in supporting President Bush. God bless America. Long live the Queen.

Draining of Ings is a disaster for the birds

From: D Waudby, Whitehouse Rise, off Tadcaster Road, York.

The recent and sudden draining of Wheldrake Ings ("Fears for migrating birds after water drained from reserve", Yorkshire Post, February 2) is a disaster of a magnitude that cannot be over-emphasised. Some 15,000 birds have been displaced. These are birds of several species that need the special habitat which Wheldrake Ings provided.

Michael Krause of Yorkshire Wildlife Trust is far too glib in trying to defend their incompetence. "It's a difficult site to manage and not an exact science," he is reported to have said.

Well, they really ought to be better at it than they are. This is not the first disaster inflicted upon Wheldrake Ings, and why were they letting water off when conditions were almost perfect? Consequences for the birds go far beyond losing a safe haven to feed and rest. Many duck species find mates at this time of year. This is a slow process but it means they arrive together at Northern breeding grounds already paired and can take full advantage of the short summer.

No doubt some of the displaced birds will find habitat locally but for many others it is only a matter of conjecture where they've gone.

Wheldrake Ings, which is part of a National Nature Reserve, is one of the premier sites for wintering wildfowl in Britain.

Normally the concentration of so many birds is one of the finest avian spectacles in the UK. For the time being at least this is no more.

Character assassination of Lib Dem politicians 'unwarranted'

From: David Crowther, Oakdale Crescent, Lindley, Huddersfield.

I SEE the Yorkshire Post's resident reactionary, Bernard Ingham, has been at it again (February 1).

He has every right to offer his opinion on what he sees as the deleterious effects on British society of "liberal ideology". What he cannot be allowed to get away with is using this as an excuse to assassinate the characters of certain Liberal Democrat politicians.

Sir Bernard sees the last 40 years as the period during which the rot set in. Perhaps he needs to remember that the Liberal Democrats have not formed a government during that time, and can hardly take the blame.

He dismissively describes Sir Menzies Campbell as "ageing", but he is younger than Sir Bernard's beloved Margaret Thatcher was when forced from office by her own colleagues; younger, too, than Churchill when he began to lead Britain through the Second World War.

He also describes him as a "Scot", as if this were an opprobrious epithet. I wonder whether he considers the two young Scots servicemen killed in Iraq a few days ago, "too Scottish" to serve this country. Xenophobia has a foul odour however it is disguised.

Next, he makes a tasteless reference to Simon Hughes's bisexuality. Of course this is just a thinly-veiled attack on Mr Hughes's homosexuality as I am sure Sir Bernard has no quarrel with his heterosexuality.

Finally, he disparages Chris Huhne's lack of parliamentary experience at Westminster. He conveniently overlooks David Cameron's scarcely greater experience.

Identifying the real basis for responsibility

Moreover, while Mr Cameron has spent his short time wholly in opposition, Mr Huhne has, for six years, helped in the decision-making process of the European Parliament, and so has some experience of actual government. I suggest Sir Bernard restricts his opinions to policies and issues and refrains in future from unwarranted personal attacks.

From: Coun Keith Wakefield, Leader of the Labour Group, Civic Hall, Leeds.

I WAS very interested to read Coun Stewart Golton's letter (Yorkshire Post, February 3) highlighting the achievements of the "Lib Dem-led" Leeds City Council. While Coun Golton and his Liberal colleagues are very happy to take the plaudits for any recognition that the authority may receive, they are less reluctant to tell the people of Leeds what a "Lib Dem-led" council actually is and how it works in practice.

A "Lib Dem-led" council is in fact a three-way party coalition made up of the Liberal, Conservative and Green parties. Despite having more elected councillors than either other party, the Liberals have simply sat back and allowed the Tories to take the driving seat in the policy-making decisions of the city since the coalition took charge in June 2004.

This unwillingness by the Liberals to stand up to the Tories has meant that the most vulnerable people of Leeds have been hit with a series of cuts and price rises in a number of vital services.

Rather than basking in the day-dream that Leeds City Council is "Lib Dem-led", I would suggest that Coun Golton and his colleagues finally wake up and begin to play a much bigger part in the city's policy making process so they can stop any more similar damaging cuts being undertaken in the future.

If not, then using Leeds as an example, I have to agree with Tom Richmond's view (Yorkshire Post, January 28) that they may find it hard to build upon their existing support levels in future elections.

I doubt Liberal voters in the city will be impressed, for instance, when they hear that their votes at the last election meant not a "Lib Dem-led" council but a Tory one in everything but name.

School's bun ban beggars belief

From: Jack Kinsman, Stainton Drive, Grimsby.

THE head of The Oaks primary school in Ipswich, Norfolk, has banned "hot cross buns" at her school in case it might upset people of other religions.

Not one person from any other religion has complained.

If this woman is not sacked immediately, it will not be very long before we will have to knock down all the churches and chapels along all the different routes taken by the children on the way to her school, in case they offend some other religion.

I would respectfully like to ask Tina Jackson: would this include mosques and Sikh temples? After all, they might offend the beliefs of British children, might they not?

When we have people like Miss Jackson in charge of our children it is time to give up hope.

Towns need room to grow

From: Coun Tony Wallis, Wakefield Council, Weetworth Avenue, Castleford.

MANY of the urban areas in Yorkshire are full of homes, and yet new homes are supposed to be built there. Almost any open space within the urban sprawl is considered to be suitable. The resulting increase in pollution, traffic and noise brings about stress that leads to tension, antisocial behaviour and even crime.

Identifying the real basis for responsibility

That is why I am disappointed that there is an outcry when it is decided to build some new homes on a bit of Yorkshire's huge open countryside (Yorkshire Post, February 4).

Of course, we must have a lot of green areas to enjoy, but we cannot continue building in areas that are already well- populated.

After all, a large town or city is just a small village that has exceeded its growth in dwellings.

Status quo not good enough

From: Anna Chester,

Broom Lane, Rotherham.

JOYCE Blades seems a little confused in her letter about the EU Constitution (Yorkshire Post, February 2). There is no question of telling the French and Dutch that they "got it wrong".

On the contrary: what the French and Dutch voters did was to tell us that they were unhappy with some elements of the EU.

The solution, then, is to demonstrate that the EU has listened and put their fears to rest by making changes.

Load-Date: February 10, 2006

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FOCUS: ISLAM AND CENSORSHIP: SPECIAL REPORT: How cartoons fanned flames of Muslim rage: Embassies burning. Riots and demonstrations across the globe. Journalists in hiding. Presidents and preachers joining the furious debate. But just how did a series of second-rate cartoons buried deep inside the pages of a small Danish newspaper produce such an incendiary dispute?

The Observer (London)

February 5, 2006

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TheObserver

Section: OBSERVER FOCUS PAGES; Pg. 23

Length: 2998 words

Byline: Jason Burke, Paris, Luke Harding, Berlin, Alex Duval Smith, Copenhagen, Peter Beaumont, Ramallah and Bartle Bull, Damascus

Body

If the consequences are global, the source is farcically local. You reach number 3 Grondals Street by taking the number 9 bus to the outskirts of the Danish city of Aarhus and getting off by the red post box halfway up the hill. The single-storey yellow brick building is the head office of Jyllands-Posten, a national newspaper with a circulation of 150,000. It is where Flemming Rose, the arts editor, decided that publishing a page of cartoons of the prophet Mohammad would provoke a debate on multiculturalism and spice up a paper whose highlight for many is the diamond wedding listing on page 18.

This weekend, the fallout from that editorial whim six months ago has left half the globe reeling. A week of violent rhetoric and action, of statements by scores of heads of state, of commercial boycotts and diplomatic intervention, of strife and anguish and emotion, has exposed deep tensions and fissures, tensions between the Islamic world and the West, between religion and secular society, between journalists and politicians, between conceptions of the role of faith and a free press in society, tensions that look unlikely to disappear soon.

Jan Lund, the Jyllands-Posten foreign editor, said there was little discussion when the decision to run the cartoons was taken. 'I don't remember anyone raising any objections. The idea seemed good. The intention was to provoke a debate about the extent to which we self-censor in our coverage of Muslim issues.'

Rose said the exercise had been inspired by a conversation with Danish comedian Frank Hvam, who said he did not dare make fun of the Koran, while children's author Bent Bludnikow, who had written a book about the Prophet Mohammad, had lamented the fact that all the illustrators he approached wanted to work anonymously. Rose said last autumn's Danish theatre season included three productions in which President George W Bush was criticised or ridiculed, but not one featured Osama bin Laden.

FOCUS: ISLAM AND CENSORSHIP: SPECIAL REPORT: How cartoons fanned flames of Muslim rage:
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The result was 12 cartoons on page 3 of the second section of the paper on 30 September. One showed the prophet with a bomb as a headdress, another with either horns or half a halo growing out of his head, a third showed a ragged line of suicide bombers arriving in heaven to be greeted by an anxious-looking prophet telling them: 'Stop stop, we ran out of virgins!'

Crude in execution and thought, the cartoons offended not just because they breached the prohibition of representations of Mohammad, but because they depicted the prophet, a man of peace and justice, as a man of terror and violence. It is unclear whether Jyllands-Posten journalists recognised the significance of their act, but in an editorial Rose invoked the highest of justifications. 'Among writers, artists and theatre people, there is a trend for self-censorship,' he wrote. 'This means artists are avoiding the major issue of our time: the meeting of secular and Muslim cultures.'

Yet Rose's use of words - surely, one analyst said last week, he meant 'secular' and 'religious' - was revealing. In a continent struggling to integrate Muslim minorities, his designation of 'Muslim' as the 'other', the opposite pole to Europe's secularism, expressed a growing sense that the world faces 'a clash of civilisations'. Such sentiments, stoked in the Netherlands by the stabbing of a Dutch film director by a Muslim militant, in Britain and Spain by bombings in London and Madrid, and in France by riots, blamed erroneously on Islam by many. They are also on the rise in countries such as Denmark, known for tolerance. For many commentators, 'Muslim culture' is the opposite of the progressive heritage of European 'Judaean-Christian' Enlightenment. Denmark has, like other countries, been marked by a xenophobic backlash against moves towards greater inclusivity.

If Rose's aim was to provoke debate, he succeeded. The initial publication of the cartoons brought no response other than some angry letters. But when in mid-October two of the artists received death threats, the menaces were widely reported and rekindled debate, prompting vicious, anti-Muslim comments on Danish talk shows. Coming soon after a series of new, strict laws relating to marriage and citizenship, enforcing obligatory Danish lessons and clamping down on imams, the row plugged straight into pre-existing tensions. A minor storm was on its way to becoming much bigger.

First came a demonstration by 5,000 Muslims in Copenhagen. A week later, diplomats from Islamic states complained to the Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen. A group of ultra-conservative Danish imams set off for a tour of Saudi Arabia and Egypt with a dossier of the cartoons and several other cartoons, unrelated to the Jyllands-Posten drawings, showing Muhammad with the face of a pig and as a paedophile.

A flurry of diplomatic activity ended in an 'explication' by the Danes to the head of the Arab League which was to be distributed throughout the Middle East. Then on 10 January a Norwegian Christian publication, *Magazinet*, published a selection of the cartoons. More diplomatic protests ensued, and Saudi Arabia and Libya recalled their ambassadors from Copenhagen. Suddenly, Danish goods were being boycotted and its national flags burnt.

Though still restricted to Scandinavia, the row was getting vicious enough for Rasmussen - who had earlier refused to meet ambassadors from 11 Islamic nations - to perform a U-turn, expressing his regrets and admitting the caricatures had hurt Muslim sensitivities. Separately, Carsten Juste, the editor of the *Jyllands-Posten*, issued his own apology. His paper had 'indisputably offended many Muslims', he admitted. If either thought this would defuse the row, he was mistaken.

For Roger Koppel, the cerebral, 40-year-old Swiss-German editor of the Berlin-based *Die Welt* newspaper, the Danish apologies amounted to a capitulation. Instead of standing up for freedom of expression, Denmark had succumbed to bullying, Koppel felt. He decided it was time for the rest of Europe to take a stand.

'The fact that a European country - "one of us" - had caved in was for us the trigger to say that this is a really important story,' Koppel said. 'It is at the core of our culture that the most sacred things can be subjected to criticism, laughter and satire. We also know that moral double standards sometimes guide certain reactions in the Arab world. If we start to stop using our right to the freedom of expression within our legal boundaries then we start to develop an appeasement mentality.'

FOCUS: ISLAM AND CENSORSHIP: SPECIAL REPORT: How cartoons fanned flames of Muslim rage:
Embassies burning. Riots and demonstrations across the globe. Journalist....

The row moved up a gear. With the re-publication of the cartoons, European newspapers had drawn a line in the sand, resisting the theoretical extensions of strictures in the Islamic world over the West - and what they felt was their own governments' weakness in the face of intimidation. If the 1988 Salman Rushdie affair had been an attempt by a radical regime in Iran to extend authority over the West, the row over the cartoons could be seen as a similar, bigger, exercise.

Koppel ran the story on Die Welt 's front page under the headline 'Protests against Mohammad pictures successful', together with a blown-up version of the most provocative of Jyllands-Posten 's cartoons, the one of the prophet with his turban as a bomb.

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But too many deep and troubling questions have been asked for calm to return easily. For newspapers, there are questions over the new responsibility bought by an interconnected, broadband world - where no images are without consequence. For broadcasters, there are questions about whether the representation of 1.3 billion Muslims by a few isolated violent images is fair. For nations such as France, Germany and Britain, there are questions about how the fundamentals of secular liberal democracy can be reconciled with religion and with growing minority communities for whom religion is a crucial part of their identity.

In the Muslim world beyond the West, there are profound questions, too. For regimes that endorse anti-Semitic propaganda and sentiment, last week's events show the risks of demagoguery. More broadly, it is clear the correlation of the prophet and terrorism touched a raw nerve, exposing a profound sensitivity at street level regarding Western societies that are economically and politically more powerful and an ambivalent mixture of shame and pride in young men who blow themselves up in Islam's name.

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Load-Date: February 6, 2006

FOCUS: ISLAM AND CENSORSHIP: SPECIAL REPORT: How cartoons fanned flames of Muslim rage: Embassies burning. Riots and demonstrations across the globe. Journalists in hiding. Presidents and preachers joining the furious debate. But just how did a series of second-rate cartoons buried deep inside the pages of a small Danish newspaper produce such an incendiary dispute?

The Observer (London)

February 5, 2006

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TheObserver

Section: OBSERVER FOCUS PAGES; Pg. 23

Length: 2998 words

Byline: Jason Burke, Paris, Luke Harding, Berlin, Alex Duval Smith, Copenhagen, Peter Beaumont, Ramallah and Bartle Bull, Damascus

Body

If the consequences are global, the source is farcically local. You reach number 3 Grondals Street by taking the number 9 bus to the outskirts of the Danish city of Aarhus and getting off by the red post box halfway up the hill. The single-storey yellow brick building is the head office of Jyllands-Posten, a national newspaper with a circulation of 150,000. It is where Flemming Rose, the arts editor, decided that publishing a page of cartoons of the prophet Mohammad would provoke a debate on multiculturalism and spice up a paper whose highlight for many is the diamond wedding listing on page 18.

This weekend, the fallout from that editorial whim six months ago has left half the globe reeling. A week of violent rhetoric and action, of statements by scores of heads of state, of commercial boycotts and diplomatic intervention, of strife and anguish and emotion, has exposed deep tensions and fissures, tensions between the Islamic world and the West, between religion and secular society, between journalists and politicians, between conceptions of the role of faith and a free press in society, tensions that look unlikely to disappear soon.

Jan Lund, the Jyllands-Posten foreign editor, said there was little discussion when the decision to run the cartoons was taken. 'I don't remember anyone raising any objections. The idea seemed good. The intention was to provoke a debate about the extent to which we self-censor in our coverage of Muslim issues.'

Rose said the exercise had been inspired by a conversation with Danish comedian Frank Hvam, who said he did not dare make fun of the Koran, while children's author Bent Bludnikow, who had written a book about the Prophet Mohammad, had lamented the fact that all the illustrators he approached wanted to work anonymously. Rose said last autumn's Danish theatre season included three productions in which President George W Bush was criticised or ridiculed, but not one featured Osama bin Laden.

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The result was 12 cartoons on page 3 of the second section of the paper on 30 September. One showed the prophet with a bomb as a headdress, another with either horns or half a halo growing out of his head, a third showed a ragged line of suicide bombers arriving in heaven to be greeted by an anxious-looking prophet telling them: 'Stop stop, we ran out of virgins!'

Crude in execution and thought, the cartoons offended not just because they breached the prohibition of representations of Mohammad, but because they depicted the prophet, a man of peace and justice, as a man of terror and violence. It is unclear whether Jyllands-Posten journalists recognised the significance of their act, but in an editorial Rose invoked the highest of justifications. 'Among writers, artists and theatre people, there is a trend for self-censorship,' he wrote. 'This means artists are avoiding the major issue of our time: the meeting of secular and Muslim cultures.'

Yet Rose's use of words - surely, one analyst said last week, he meant 'secular' and 'religious' - was revealing. In a continent struggling to integrate Muslim minorities, his designation of 'Muslim' as the 'other', the opposite pole to Europe's secularism, expressed a growing sense that the world faces 'a clash of civilisations'. Such sentiments, stoked in the Netherlands by the stabbing of a Dutch film director by a Muslim militant, in Britain and Spain by bombings in London and Madrid, and in France by riots, blamed erroneously on Islam by many. They are also on the rise in countries such as Denmark, known for tolerance. For many commentators, 'Muslim culture' is the opposite of the progressive heritage of European 'Judaean-Christian' Enlightenment. Denmark has, like other countries, been marked by a xenophobic backlash against moves towards greater inclusivity.

If Rose's aim was to provoke debate, he succeeded. The initial publication of the cartoons brought no response other than some angry letters. But when in mid-October two of the artists received death threats, the menaces were widely reported and rekindled debate, prompting vicious, anti-Muslim comments on Danish talk shows. Coming soon after a series of new, strict laws relating to marriage and citizenship, enforcing obligatory Danish lessons and clamping down on imams, the row plugged straight into pre-existing tensions. A minor storm was on its way to becoming much bigger.

First came a demonstration by 5,000 Muslims in Copenhagen. A week later, diplomats from Islamic states complained to the Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen. A group of ultra-conservative Danish imams set off for a tour of Saudi Arabia and Egypt with a dossier of the cartoons and several other cartoons, unrelated to the Jyllands-Posten drawings, showing Muhammad with the face of a pig and as a paedophile.

A flurry of diplomatic activity ended in an 'explication' by the Danes to the head of the Arab League which was to be distributed throughout the Middle East. Then on 10 January a Norwegian Christian publication, *Magazinet*, published a selection of the cartoons. More diplomatic protests ensued, and Saudi Arabia and Libya recalled their ambassadors from Copenhagen. Suddenly, Danish goods were being boycotted and its national flags burnt.

Though still restricted to Scandinavia, the row was getting vicious enough for Rasmussen - who had earlier refused to meet ambassadors from 11 Islamic nations - to perform a U-turn, expressing his regrets and admitting the caricatures had hurt Muslim sensitivities. Separately, Carsten Juste, the editor of the *Jyllands-Posten*, issued his own apology. His paper had 'indisputably offended many Muslims', he admitted. If either thought this would defuse the row, he was mistaken.

For Roger Koppel, the cerebral, 40-year-old Swiss-German editor of the Berlin-based *Die Welt* newspaper, the Danish apologies amounted to a capitulation. Instead of standing up for freedom of expression, Denmark had succumbed to bullying, Koppel felt. He decided it was time for the rest of Europe to take a stand.

'The fact that a European country - "one of us" - had caved in was for us the trigger to say that this is a really important story,' Koppel said. 'It is at the core of our culture that the most sacred things can be subjected to criticism, laughter and satire. We also know that moral double standards sometimes guide certain reactions in the Arab world. If we start to stop using our right to the freedom of expression within our legal boundaries then we start to develop an appeasement mentality.'

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Load-Date: May 14, 2006

*Looking forward, and back*THE MUSLIM MALAISE

The Toronto Star
August 20, 2006 Sunday

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Length: 3087 words

Body

He who wrongs a Jew or a Christian will have me as his accuser on the Day of Judgment.

- Prophet Muhammad

Contrary to the popular belief that the West is under siege from Muslim terrorists, it is Muslims who have become the biggest victims of the attacks of September 11, 2001, as inconceivable as that would have seemed in the aftermath of the murder of 2,900 Americans. Since then, between 34,000 and 100,000 Iraqis have been killed by the Americans or the insurgents. Nobody knows how many have been killed in Afghanistan. In the spots hit by terrorists - from London and Madrid to Amman, Istanbul, Riyadh and Jeddah, through Karachi to Bali and Jakarta - more Muslims have been killed and injured than non-Muslims.

None of this is to say that Muslims do not have problems that they must address. They do. But the problems are not quite what many in the West make them out to be.

One of the strangest aspects of the post-9/11 world is that, despite all the talk about Muslim terrorism, there is hardly any exploration of the complex causes of Muslim rage. Muslims are in a state of crisis, but their most daunting problems are not religious. They are geopolitical, economic and social - problems that have caused widespread Muslim despair and, in some cases, militancy, both of which are expressed in the religious terminology that Muslim masses relate to.

Most Muslims live in the developing world, much of it colonized by Western powers as recently as 50 years ago. Not all Muslim shortcomings emanate from colonialism and neo-imperialism, but several do.

As part of the spoils of the First World War, Britain and France helped themselves to much of the Ottoman Empire, including Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and what is now Israel, Jordan and the Palestine Authority. In later years, they and other European colonial powers created artificial states such as Kuwait and Nigeria. Or they divided peoples and nations along sectarian lines, such as bifurcating India in 1947 into Muslim Pakistan and largely Hindu India. In more recent years, the United States has maintained repressive proxy regimes in the Middle East to stifle public anti-Israeli sentiments, keep control of oil and maintain a captive market for armaments.

While the past casts a long shadow over Muslims, it is the present that haunts them. Hundreds of millions live in zones of conflict, precisely in the areas of European and American meddling, past and present - U.S.-occupied Iraq, U.S.-controlled Afghanistan, the Israeli Occupied Territories, and Kashmir, the disputed Muslim state on the border of India and Pakistan in the foothills of the Himalayas. Only the Russian war on Muslim Chechnya is not related to the history of Western machinations, but even that has had the tacit support of the Bush administration. These

Looking forward, and backTHE MUSLIM MALAISE

conflicts, along with the economic sanctions on Iraq, have killed an estimated 1.3 million Muslims in the last 15 years alone. Why are we surprised that Muslims are up in arms?

In addition, nearly 400 million Muslims live under authoritarian despots, many of them Western puppets, whose corruption and incompetence have left their people in economic and social shambles.

It is against this backdrop that one must look at the current malaise of Muslims and their increasing emotional reliance on their faith.

Economic Woes

The total GDP of the 56 members of the Islamic Conference, representing more than a quarter of the world's population, is less than 5 per cent of the world's economy. Their trade represents 7 per cent of global trade, even though more than two-thirds of the world's oil and gas lie under Muslim lands.

The standard of living in Muslim nations is abysmal even in the oil-rich regions, because of unconscionable gaps between the rulers and the ruled. A quarter of impoverished Pakistan's budget goes to the military. Most of the \$2 billion a year of American aid given to Egypt as a reward for peace with Israel goes to the Egyptian military.

The most undemocratic Muslim states, which also happen to be the closest allies of the U.S., are the most economically backward.

The Arab nations, with a combined population of 280 million, muster a total GDP less than that of Spain. The rate of illiteracy among Arabs is 43 per cent, worse than that of much poorer nations. Half of Arab women are illiterate, representing two-thirds of the 65 million Arabs who cannot read or write. About 10 million Arab children are not in school. The most-educated Arabs live abroad, their talents untapped, unlike those of the Chinese and Indian diasporas, who have played significant roles in jump-starting the economies of their native lands.

A disproportionate percentage of the world's youth are Muslim. Half of Saudi Arabia's and a third of Iran's populations are younger than 20. There are few jobs for them. "Young and unemployed" is a phenomenon common to many Muslim nations.

A majority of the world's 12 million to 15 million refugees are Muslims, fleeing poverty and oppression. Europe's 20 million Muslims suffer high unemployment and poverty, especially in Germany and France. It was inevitable that many Muslims would find comfort in Islam.

Islamic Resurgence

Fundamentalism has been on the rise, and not just in Islam. There has been a parallel rise in Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism, with its inevitable political fallout - in the Israeli settler movement in the Occupied Territories, the politicization of the American conservative right (culminating in the election and re-election of George W. Bush), the rise to power of the Hindu nationalists in India, the Sikh separatist movement in the Punjab in India, and the aggressive nationalism of the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka.

That many Muslims have become "fundamentalist" does not mean that they are all fanatic and militant. Nor is the Muslim condition fully explained by the use of petro-dollars. First, Arab financial support for Islamic institutions around the world is still no match for the resources available for Christian global missionary or Zionist political work. Second, and more to the point, the rise of Islam is not confined to areas of Arab financial influence; it is a worldwide phenomenon.

Mosques are full. The use of the hijab (headscarf) is on the rise. Madrassahs (religious schools) are packed. Zakat (Islamic charity) is at record levels, especially where governments have failed to provide essential services. In Egypt, much of the health care, emergency care and education are provided by the Muslim Brotherhood, in the Occupied Territories by Hamas, in Pakistan and elsewhere by groups that may be far less political but are no less Islamic.

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With state institutions riddled with corruption and nepotism, some of the most talented Muslims, both rich and poor, have abandoned the official arena and retreated into the non-governmental domain of Islamic civil society.

The empty public sphere has been filled with firebrands - ill-tutored and ill-informed clergy or populist politicians who rally the masses with calls for jihad (struggle) for sundry causes. The greater the injustices in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Israeli Occupied Territories, Chechnya or elsewhere, the greater the public support for those calling for jihad. Jihad has also proven to be good business for many a mullah (Muslim priest) who has become rich or influential, or both, preaching it. Meanwhile, unelected governments lack the legitimacy and confidence to challenge the militant clerics, and fluctuate between ruthlessly repressing them and trying to out-Islamize them.

To divert domestic anger abroad, many governments also allow and sometimes encourage the radicals to rant at the U.S. and rave at Israel, or just at Jews. Sometimes even the elected leaders join in, as has Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmedinijad, denying the Holocaust and calling for Israel to be "wiped off the map."

In reality, most Muslim states are powerless to address the international crises that their publics want addressed. They have neither the military nor the economic and political clout to matter much to the U.S., the only power that counts these days. Or, as in the case of Egypt, Jordan, and the oil-rich Arab oligarchies, they are themselves dependent on Washington for their own survival.

Feeling abandoned, the Muslim masses find comfort in religion. The Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation was a secular struggle before it became "Islamic." The same was true of the Lebanese resistance to the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon, and also of the Chechen resistance to Russian repression.

Similarly, domestic critics of authoritarian regimes have found a hospitable home in the mosque. Islam being their last zone of comfort, most Muslims react strongly - sometimes irrationally and violently - when their faith or their Prophet is mocked or criticized, as the world witnessed during the Danish cartoon crisis. They react the way the angry disenfranchised do - hurling themselves into the streets, shouting themselves hoarse and destroying property, without much concern for the consequences, and engendering even more hostility in the West toward Muslims and Islam. But, as the American civil rights leader Martin Luther King famously said, riots are the voice of the voiceless.

Muslims have developed a "siege mentality, which is what the screaming, dogmatic and atavistic clerics" appeal to, says Chandra Muzaffar, Malaysian Muslim human rights activist. As he was telling me this in Kuala Lumpur in 2005, Sharifa Zuriah, a founder of Sisters in Islam, an advocacy group for Malaysian Muslim women, intervened: "Muslims have developed a complex. They think they won't be heard if they don't shout. Every statement is like a war."

Then there is real war, the war of terrorism.

Terrorism's Fallout

"That a majority of Al Qaeda are Muslims is not to say that a majority of Muslims are Al Qaeda, or subscribe to its tenets," Stephen Schulhofer, professor of law at New York University, told me in 2003. But it is also true that most terrorists these days are Muslims. That may only be a function of the times we live in - yesterday's terrorists came from other religions and tomorrow's may hail from some other. Still, terrorism has forced a debate among Muslims, who are divided into two camps. One side says that Muslims should no more have to apologize for their extremists than Christians, Jews or Hindus or anybody else, and that doing so only confirms the collective guilt being placed on Muslims. The other side believes that as long as some Muslims are blowing up civilians in suicide bombings, slitting the throats of hostages and committing other grisly acts, it is the duty of all Muslims to speak out and challenge the murderers' warped theology.

The latter view has prevailed. Terrorism - suicide bombings in particular - has been widely condemned. Just because an overwhelming majority of Muslims condemn Osama bin Laden and other extremists, however, does not mean that they feel any less for Muslims in Iraq or Palestine. Or that the internal debate that he has forced on

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Muslims is new. Throughout their 1,400-year history, Muslims have argued and quarrelled over various interpretations of the Qur'an and religious traditions.

But it is a sign of the times that the most extreme interpretation of the Qur'an appeals to Muslim masses these days, and that far too many clerics are attacking Christians and Jews and delivering fire-and-brimstone sermons full of the imagery of war and martyrdom. This is contrary to the message of the Qur'an - Do not argue with the followers of earlier revelation other than in the most kindly manner (29: 46) - and the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad: "Do not consider me better than Moses," and, "I am closest of all people to Jesus, son of Mary."

For all the emphasis that today's clerics put on the Prophet's war record, he spent a total of less than a week in actual battle in the 23 years of his prophethood. He advised his followers to "be moderate in religious matters, for excess caused the destruction of earlier communities." A moderate himself, he smiled often, spoke softly and delivered brief sermons. "The Prophet disliked ranting and raving," wrote Imam Bukhari, the ninth-century Islamic scholar of the Prophet's sayings. Ayesha, the Prophet's wife, reported that "he spoke so few words that you could count them." His most famous speech, during the Haj pilgrimage in AD 632, which laid down an entire covenant, was less than 2,800 words.

Muhammad was respectful of Christians and Jews. Hearing the news that the king of Ethiopia had died, he told his followers, "A righteous man has died today; so stand up and pray for your brother." When a Christian delegation came to Medina, he invited them to conduct their service in the mosque, saying, "This is a place consecrated to God." When Saffiyah, one of his wives, complained that she was taunted for her Jewish origins, he told her, "Say unto them, 'my father is Aaron, and my uncle is Moses.'"

Yet angry Muslims, not unlike African Americans not too long ago, pay little heed to voices of moderation. This is partly a reflection of the fact that there is no central religious authority in Islam. Only the minority Shiites have a religious hierarchy of ayatollahs, who instruct followers on religious and sometimes political matters. The majority Sunnis do not have the equivalent of the Pope or the Archbishop of Canterbury. A central tenet of their faith is that there is no intermediary between the believer and God. This makes for great democracy - everyone is free to issue a fatwa (religious ruling) and everyone else is free to ignore it. But the "fatwa chaos" does create confusion - among non-Muslims, who are spooked by the red-hot rhetoric, and also among Muslims, who are left wondering about the "right answers" to some of the most pressing issues of the day.

Muslim Apologetics

There are two kinds of Muslim apologetics. The first is denial: there's little or nothing wrong with Muslims, when there clearly is. The second, seen among some Muslims in the West, takes the form of self-flagellation, of apologizing for their faith or distancing themselves from it. To wit:

"Yes, the problem is Islam, and we must fix it." (Why is Islam any more of a problem than any other faith? And how are they going to fix it?)

"I am a Muslim but I am not a fundamentalist Muslim." (Do Christians say, "I am Christian but not an evangelical Christian?")

"I am a Muslim but ashamed to call myself one." (Do all Hindus have to apologize for those few who, in 1992, went on a mosque-ravaging rampage in India?)

Some of these sentiments may be genuinely held. More likely, they reflect the immigrant pathology of catering to majority mores, a new twist on the past practice of immigrants to North America anglicizing their names.

Such defensiveness aside, Muslims do suffer from deeper problems. Many are preoccupied with the minutiae of rituals (Should one wash the bare feet before prayers or do so symbolically over the socks?) at the expense of the centrality of the faith, which is fostering peace, justice and compassion, not just for Muslims but for everyone. Many Muslims are too judgmental of each other, whereas a central tenet of their faith is that it is up to God to judge - Your Lord knows best who goes astray (53: 30) (also, 6: 117, 16: 125, 17: 94, 28: 56, 68: 7).

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Some Muslims have taken to a culture of conspiracy theories. Hence the notion that Princess Diana did not die in an accident but was killed because the British royal family did not want her to marry Dodi Al Fayed, a Muslim. Or the canard that Jews working at the World Trade Center had advance notice of 9/11.

There is too much of a literalist reading of the Qur'an (a trait, ironically, also adopted by anti-Islamists in the West). There is too little *ijtihad* (religious innovation) as called for by Islam to keep believers in tune with their times. Theological rigidity and narrow-mindedness have led, among other things, to Sunni hostility toward the minority Shiites, as seen in the sectarian killings in Pakistan.

Muslims complain about the West's double standards, yet they have their own. While they often criticize the United States and Europe for mistreating Muslims, they rarely speak up against the persecution of non-Muslims by Muslims. They also show a high tolerance for Muslims killing fellow Muslims. The Sudanese genocide of the non-Arab Muslims of Darfur drew mostly silence. The killing of Shiites by the Sunnis in Iraq was shrugged off as part of the anti-U.S. resistance. The overt and subtle racism of the oil-rich Arab states toward the millions of their guest workers goes unmourned.

Muslims do not have much to be proud of in the contemporary world. So they take comfort in their burgeoning numbers. At the turn of the millennium in 2000, there were many learned papers projecting the rise in Muslim population. But if Muslims have not achieved much at 1.3 billion, they are not likely to at 1.5 billion, either.

To escape the present, many Muslims hark back to their glorious past: how Islam was a reform movement; how Muslims led the world in knowledge, in astronomy, chemistry, mathematics, medicine, natural sciences, philosophy and physics; and how the Islamic empires were successful primarily because, with some egregious exceptions, they nurtured the local cultures and respected the religions of their non-Muslim majority populations. This is why Egypt and Syria remained non-Muslim under Muslim rule for 300 years and 600 years, respectively, and India always remained majority Hindu.

As true as all that history is, it is not very helpful today unless Muslims learn something from it - to value human life; accept each other's religious differences; respect other faiths; return to their historic culture of academic excellence, scientific inquiry and economic self-reliance; and learn to live with differences of opinion and the periodic rancorous debates that mark democracies.

It may be unfair to berate ordinary Muslims, given that too many are struggling to survive, that nearly half live under authoritarian regimes where they can speak up only on pain of being incarcerated, tortured or killed, and that they are helpless spectators to the sufferings of fellow Muslims in an unjust world order. Yet Muslims have no choice but to confront their challenges, for Allah never changes a people's state unless they change what's in themselves (13: 11).

"Being Muslim" is scheduled to be released Sept. 15. For more information, visit www.groundwoodbooks.com

Graphic

ERIC GAILLARD Reuters A Lebanese Shiite Muslim and her child last week: Living in an empty public sphere filled by 'ill-tutored and ill-informed clergy.'

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Wimmin at war

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It is 25 years since the Greenham Common protests began. Sarah Baxter was there, but now asks why feminist ideals have become twisted into support for groups like Hezbollah

When Ann Pettitt, the mother of two young children, and her friends set off in August 25 years ago on a 120-mile trek from Cardiff to the little known American air base at Greenham Common in Berkshire, they gave themselves the ambitious name of "Women for Life on Earth". Their numbers were tiny but the stakes, they felt, were dauntingly high.

The cold war world was bristling with Soviet and American nuclear weapons, posing the threat of mutual assured destruction (Mad). In a dramatic escalation of the arms race between the superpowers, shiny new cruise missiles were due to be delivered to Greenham, placing Britain's green and pleasant land in the bull's eye for targeting by the Soviet Union.

The modest peace march was largely ignored by the media, so on arrival at the base the women decided to borrow the eye-catching tactics of the suffragette movement.

They chained themselves to the gates of Greenham and dared the police to remove them. Sympathisers began to turn up bearing makeshift tents, clothing and pots and pans. Many came and went but others stayed. Thus was the women's peace camp born a quarter of a century ago this month and a new chapter in the history of feminism opened.

"I was motivated by fear and terror," Pettitt recalled last week. "I was the mother of a two-year-old and a four-year-old and weapons of mass destruction were the ultimate denial of the fact that I'd created life. There was such brinkmanship, I really thought that nuclear weapons might be used."

Mercifully, they weren't. President Ronald Reagan once blurted out in front of a live microphone that the bombing of Russia was going to begin in 15 minutes, but it was nothing more than a tasteless joke. In hindsight Reagan's hardline negotiating stance helped to bring about the collapse of the Soviet Union. By the end of the 1980s the Berlin Wall was down and the velvet revolutions in eastern Europe were under way.

The peace movement lost a foe in Reagan but has gone on to find new friends in today's Stop the War movement. Women pushing their children in buggies bearing the familiar symbol of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament marched last weekend alongside banners proclaiming "We are all Hezbollah now" and Muslim extremists chanting "Oh Jew, the army of Muhammad will return."

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For Linda Grant, the novelist, who says that "feminism" is the one "ism" she has not given up on, it was a shocking sight: "What you're seeing is an alliance of what used to be the far left with various Muslim groups and that poses real problems. Saturday's march was not a peace march in the way that the Ban the Bomb marches were. Seeing young and old white women holding Hezbollah placards showed that it's a very different anti war movement to Greenham. Part of it feels the wrong side is winning."

As a supporter of the peace movement in the 1980s, I could never have imagined that many of the same crowd I hung out with then would today be standing shoulder-to-shoulder with militantly anti-feminist Islamic fundamentalist groups, whose views on women make western patriarchy look like a Greenham peace picnic.

Nor would I have predicted that today's feminists would be so indulgent towards Iran, a theocratic nation where it is an act of resistance to show an inch or two of female hair beneath the veil and whose president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, is not joking about his murderous intentions towards Israel and the Jews.

On the defining issue of our times, the rise of Islamic extremism, what is left of the sisterhood has almost nothing to say. Instead of "I am woman, hear me roar", there is a loud silence, punctuated only by remonstrations against Tony Blair and George Bush - "the world's number one terrorist" as the marchers would have it.

Women are perfectly entitled to oppose the war in Iraq or to feel that Israel is brutally overreacting to Hezbollah's provocation. But where is the parallel, equally vital debate about how to combat Islamic fundamentalism? And why don't more peace-loving feminists regard it as a threat?

Kira Cochrane, 29, is the new editor of The Guardian women's page, the bible of the Greenham years, where so many women writers made their names by staking out positions on the peace movement. She has noticed that today's feminists are inclined to keep quiet about the march of radical Islam. "There's a great fear of tackling the subject because of cultural relativism. People are scared of being called racist," Cochrane observes.

Whatever the merits of unilateral nuclear disarmament, women were a lot braver a quarter of a century ago. Pettitt remembers how "we tried to crash the top table at Greenham. You had to be rude to interrupt because you're never going to be invited to speak".

I had just left university in the early 1980s when I got swept up in the peace movement. My Saturday afternoons were often spent marching from Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square and on the day when cruise missiles arrived in Britain, I rushed to a protest outside the Houses of Parliament, was arrested by the police, dragged into a black maria van and shoved overnight into a south London police cell. It was nothing compared to what the women of Greenham Common endured, but I felt like a heroine when the next day my male boss at Penguin Books, where I worked as a junior copywriter, paid my fine.

I was a bit sniffy about the all-women's peace camp because I was partial to men and disliked much of the mumbo-jumbo surrounding it. In her forthcoming memoir, *Walking to Greenham* (published by Honno), Pettitt writes about the "delightful irony" of liberated women using "emblems of conformist democracy" such as knitting needles and wool to protest against war, but I used to see the ghastly spider webs and children's mittens tied to the razor wire on the perimeter fence and shudder.

Nevertheless, I attended several "embrace the base" demonstrations in support of the women who had put the issue of nuclear disarmament so defiantly on the map. I went on to get a job at Virago, the feminist publisher, and marvelled at the way the "peace wimmin" had energised the brand new field of women's studies, sparking lively debates on the virtues and vices of separatism from men and the extent to which nuclear weapons were "boys' toys" (a tricky one in the age of Margaret Thatcher, Britain's first woman prime minister).

Later, as a journalist, I broke into the base with a group of Greenham women, stood somewhat pointlessly on top of the silos where the cruise missiles were stored and went on to become friends with one of the peace campers, who had been abused as a child and had found comfort in the new "family" she had made living in the rough and ready "benders" constructed of branches and plastic sheeting.

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It is now largely forgotten that Greenham inspired many women to free themselves from the narrow world in which they had been brought up to live instead in ways which we take for granted today.

Looking back I think I was wrong about Reagan and too sympathetic towards the Soviet Union. There were plenty of fellow travellers in the peace movement who were cheering on the Soviet Union under their breath. I can remember making a lot of silly excuses about it myself. But the fear of mutual assured destruction was genuine enough. As long as it worked, Mad was a plausible strategy. Were it to fail, the results would be catastrophic. As President Dwight Eisenhower said after the testing of the hydrogen bomb in the 1950s: "Atomic war will destroy civilisation." If war came, "you might as well go out and shoot everyone you see and then shoot yourself".

The situation today is very different. Writing in The Wall Street Journal last week, Bernard Lewis, the noted scholar of Islam, pointed out that Iran's messianic rulers are not constrained by such fears. According to their theology, the day of judgment will be glorious. "At the end of time there will be general destruction anyway," Lewis writes. "What matters will be the final destination of the dead - hell for the infidels and heaven for the believers. For people with this mindset, Mad is not a constraint, it is an inducement."

Hassan Nasrallah, the Shi'ite cleric who leads Hezbollah, Iran's proxy in Lebanon, regularly issues bloodcurdling threats against the Jews. "If they (the Jews) all gather in Israel," he has said, "it will save us the trouble of going after them on a worldwide basis."

For some on the left such words are merely understandable hyperbole, provoked by decades of Israeli ill-treatment of the Palestinians, but I prefer to take Islamic fundamentalists at their word when they spout insults about Jews being the descendants of "pigs and apes" and launch their chillingly apocalyptic tirades.

Why? Because they not only talk centuries-old nonsense about the place of women in society, but they also purposely oppress the female sex whenever they are given the chance. As regards their treatment of women, there is no discernible difference between their acts and their words.

In my own life I have been lucky enough not to experience a great deal of sexism.

The 1980s and 1990s were decades of progress for western career women and working mothers. But I felt how it was to be invisible when I interviewed Hamas militants and clerics many years ago in Gaza. They were very courteous and helpful and I tried to be respectful by covering my hair with a black scarf. But they never looked me in the eye or addressed me directly. I would ask the questions; they would answer the male photographer who accompanied me.

Phyllis Chesler, 65, the writer and a founder feminist in the 1960s, has experienced some of the more disturbing aspects of Muslim patriarchy at first hand.

In the summer of 1961 Chesler married Ali, her western-educated college sweetheart, and went to live with him in Afghanistan. Nothing had prepared her for the restrictions and humiliations which Muslim women endured there, nor the gradual personality change that her husband underwent. The worst of it, she discovered, was "nothing unique happened to me". It was the way of the world.

"The Afghanistan I knew was a prison, a police state, a feudal monarchy, a theocracy rank with fear and paranoia," Chesler recalls in The Death of Feminism, published last year. "Afghanistan had never been colonised. My Afghan relatives were very proud of this fact. 'Not even the British could occupy us', they told me, not once but many times.

"I was ultimately forced to conclude that Afghan barbarism, tyranny and misogyny were entirely of their own making and not attributable to colonialism or imperialism. It is what they themselves would say."

Six months later, travelling on false papers obtained by a sympathetic German born friend, Chesler secretly fled the country. The ardent feminism that she embraced on her return to America was forged in Afghanistan, she told me last week. She has not recanted her support for women's rights, she insists, but she has seen the views of others morph in alarming new directions.

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"The compassion for people of colour has been translated into feminists standing with terrorists who are terrorising their own women," she says. In the week when a massive bomb plot against civilians was uncovered in Britain, Chesler's critique of women's complacency in her book is prophetic. "The Islamists who are beheading Jews and American civilians, stoning Muslim women to death, jailing Muslim dissidents and bombing civilians on every continent are now moving among us both in the East and in the West," she writes.

"I fear that the 'peace and love' crowd in the West refuses to understand how Islamism endangers our values and our lives, beginning with our commitment to women's rights and human rights." Women's studies programmes should have been the first to sound the alarm, she points out: "They did not."

Chesler has fallen out with many old friends in the women's movement. They have in effect excommunicated her for writing in right-wing publications in America, but she has found it impossible to get published on the left. There are whispers that she has become paranoid, mad, bonkers, a charge frequently levelled against the handful of women writers who are brave enough to tackle the same theme.

In Britain there is the polemicist Julie Burchill, who has written incisively about the desire of terrorists to commit acts "not so that innocents may have the right to live freely on the West Bank, but so that they might have the right to throw acid in the face of innocent, unveiled women". Well, the outrageous Julie has always been bonkers, hasn't she.

Then there is "mad" Melanie Phillips, the Cassandra of our age, banging on that "if we wish to learn what was going on in Europe in 1938, just look around". Of course she would say that, wouldn't she. She's Jewish, and anyway didn't you know that she is crazy enough to believe in two-parent families?

In America the radical feminist Andrea Dworkin died last year virtually unmourned by women on the left in part, as her friend Christopher Hitchens remembered, because "she wasn't neutral against a jihadist threat that wanted, and wants, to enslave and torture females."

"That she could be denounced as a 'conservative'," he concluded, "says much about the left to which she used to belong."

In Italy Oriana Fallaci, the 77-year-old journalist famous for interviewing Ayatollah Khomeini, recently went on trial accused of defaming Muslims. It is true that many of her comments about Islam - "a pool that never purifies" - are undeniably offensive, but no more so than comments routinely made by Muslim extremists about "the Jews". In her cancer-stricken twilight years, the once glamorous Fallaci has been written off as a deranged old bat.

Fallaci has grown accustomed in recent years to living with death threats, as have the formidable Muslim women critics of Islamic extremism such as Irshad Manji, the Canadian feminist, Taslima Nasreen, the exiled Bangladeshi writer (and critic of the Iraq war), and Somali-born Ayaan Hirsi Ali, whose film Submission resulted in the murder by Islamic militants of Theo van Gogh, the gay Dutch film director.

Hirsi, after enjoying a brief succes d'estime, has been virtually hounded out of the liberal Netherlands and is due to arrive in America next month, where she has been offered a perch at the American Enterprise Institute, the neoconservative think tank. It is too easy to say she has sold out to the right. Where, one might ask, are her friends on the left?

Something has gone badly wrong with a politically correct feminism that prefers to take aim at the United States, a haven of free speech and relative sexual equality, than to tackle the threat posed to women by Islamic fundamentalism. Just as the existence of Thatcher, the Iron Lady, at the helm of British government in the 1980s failed to impress the women's peace movement, so the presence of Condoleezza Rice, a black woman who grew up in segregated Alabama, as US secretary of state has not dimmed the cries against American "racism".

For this the 1980s peace movement must take some of the blame with its overbearing emphasis on the evil Reagan empire and soft-peddalling of the Soviet Union. But I am surprised, all the same, by the persistence of the ideological

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blind spot that has led women who are so quick to condemn the failings of the West to make transparent excuses for the behaviour of some of the world's most anti feminist regimes.

Recently Kate Hudson, chairwoman of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, wrote a breathtaking apologia for the Iranian nuclear energy programme, which took at face value Ahmadinejad's claims to be developing it for "strictly peaceful" purposes.

(Since when, by the way, has CND regarded Britain's nuclear power plants so benignly?) Never mind the preposterous dancing with enriched uranium around the doves of peace nor the missiles marked "Tel Aviv" paraded in the streets.

It is fair to say that Pettitt, the original Greenham woman, has wrestled with some of these problems. She is passionately against America's "wars of revenge" for September 11, but makes it clear in her memoir that she is no pacifist: "I didn't regard myself as being in a peace movement, I was in a movement against nuclear weapons. There are enormously hard decisions for which there are sometimes only military solutions."

Pettitt's mother, Solange, was a teenager in northern France when it was occupied by the Nazis and her family sheltered a British soldier for six months.

Pettitt's father was a communist in the 1930s who was unsettled by Stalin's pact with Hitler. At home after the war, Pettitt remembers hearing the stories of friends of her parents who had escaped the Holocaust.

"I can understand where Israel is coming from," she says. "I'm not a fan of Hezbollah. It worries me a lot." But like so many Stop the War protesters, she says that Bush and Blair have opened a "Pandora's box", as if the birth of Islamic extremism began only with the invasion of Iraq.

It is certainly plausible, as Pettitt claims, that Bush's actions have "accelerated the radicalisation of the Islamic world tremendously", although this popular view conveniently downplays the growing Islamic fundamentalist movement before the September 11 attacks and the huge psychological boost that it received from Al-Qaeda's strike on America.

Let us assume that what Pettitt says is true. I can remember when the women's movement was told that its persistent demands for equality were leading to a "backlash". Susan Faludi wrote a feminist bestseller of that name, based on the premise that men were fighting back tooth and nail in the gender wars.

I have just got the book down from my shelves. It says on the back cover: "The backlash against women is real. This is the book we need to understand it, to struggle through the battle fatigue and to keep going." There was no question of slinking away out of fear that men were being emboldened to find new ways of oppressing women.

The Middle East is engaged in a titanic struggle between modernity and theocracy.

Whatever one's views about the Iraq war or the conflict in Lebanon, it deserves more than slogans about "We are all Hezbollah now" and fury against Bush and Blair.

I don't agree with Chesler that we are witnessing the death of feminism, but for now it is MIA: missing in action.

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